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Abstract

It has long been acknowledged that the main problem associated with deaf education is one of language. To remedy this issue, education policies and methods have focused on the children's inability to communicate effectively in the majority language and have imposed strict regimes within schools aimed at enabling deaf children to talk. This thesis offers a critical examination of such methods and also of the relevant discourses influencing deaf children within education. This thesis argues that the problems associated with deaf children's experience within education starts, not at their point of entry into formal education, but at birth. My research highlights the fact that deafness is not primarily the deprivation of sound; it is the deprivation of a functional language. The arbitrary imposition of particular language policies within schools be it sign or spoken languages do not really address the underlying issues.

This thesis is primarily a critique of the relevant discourses which are complemented by the experiences of the deaf children highlighted in my sample. This thesis show that without the consideration of deaf children's views and experiences the problems inherent within deaf education will not be addressed adequately

Deafness, Discourse and Identity: Critical Issues in Deaf Education

Ricardo Solario Estee-Wale

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**A Thesis Submitted in partial fulfilment of
the Degree of Doctor of Education**

**University of Durham
School of Education**



2004

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*This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Ana Maria
Milheiro Pires, for her help and encouragement she gave to
me even when she was ill*

Declaration

I declare that this thesis, which I submit for the degree of Doctor of Education at the University of Durham, results entirely from my own work and has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or any other university.

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Chapter 1

Can You ‘Hear’/See Me?

1.1 Introduction

The voice of Deaf people of the modern age is one of cultural explicitness and self-consciousness and a centeredness around a signed language that is not reflected in previous images of the Deaf self. However, the tension within communities of Deaf people across the country reflect that, as always (Humphries, 1996, p.100).

Deaf children, on average continue to achieve markedly lower academic attainments than their hearing counterparts (Powers et al 1998). This study demonstrates that the reasons for low academic attainment amongst deaf children in general, have been due principally, to the dominant discourses that have influenced and constructed their lives which, over time, and until recently have remained unchallenged.

Within this framework a further key problem emerges, that is, the ‘voice’/views of the deaf children themselves, have not been properly heard, but inferred by people who themselves are not deaf. This has resulted in educational experiences of deaf children which at best could be described as unsatisfactory. My thesis argues that the educational discourse has constructed deaf children as failures without acknowledging that the origins of the problems deaf children face is located within the discourse itself. The discourse is part of the problem.

The challenge in a study like this is to see how we can go beyond the existing discourses. This can be done, I argue by, acknowledging that deafness is a social construction. If deafness is a social construction then it can be re-constructed by allowing the views and experiences of the deaf child to be considered and taken seriously. A key challenge is to listen to what deaf children are saying about their own views and experiences. This will be a marked departure from the existing discourses.

Deaf education has been championed by ideological competing discourses each claiming to be the 'holy grail' of deaf education. What is evident from these debates and research is that the 'voice'/hand of the deaf child is often not heard or seen. This invisibility or silence according to Friere (1970) is a feature of oppressed groups.

There have been biographies written about the experience of deaf students within education but these have normally been after they have left school and have often been claimed by the competing discourses in the furthering of their own causes. What this thesis aims to do is to consider deaf education in ways that are outside the deaf discourse, in terms which are not normally discussed. As each competing discourse claims to hold the truth, a process of de-construction is needed. Each discourse has to be stripped to the bare bones to see what truth it holds. The truth, I argue is located within the experiences of deaf people themselves.

Objectivity within discourse analysis is difficult. Even though I claim to come from a neutral standpoint, without eliciting the views of the deaf children, I too may also be guilty of favouring one discourse over the other. The only way of presenting my findings from a neutral standpoint is to present the 'voices'/hands of the deaf children themselves and in doing so re-construct their experiences in the light of the discourses that surround them.

It should be noted that the term 'deaf' will have different meanings depending on the context in which it is used. There are a number of people who in addition to having a hearing loss, use a sign language as their preferred means of communication. Often, these people do not refer to themselves as disabled or hearing impaired but as Deaf (upper case 'D'). In this thesis 'Deaf' will refer to such people, and terms such as Deaf community and Deaf culture will be used to denote this cultural classification.

Throughout the thesis the lower case 'd' will be used to describe the children in my sample and other deaf people who do not see themselves as being part of a Deaf community. As the students I interviewed gave no clear indication as to where in the deaf discourse they located themselves, I refer to them as deaf (lower case 'd'). This classification is supported by Lewis and Kellett (2004):

Thus, children with hearing impairments born to Deaf parents would be most appropriately described as Deaf children. However, children with hearing impairments born to hearing parents are not born into Deaf culture, although they may become part of it as they get older. It is therefore appropriate to describe these children as deaf children (Lewis and Kellet, p.192).

1.2 The Genesis of the Discourses

To deconstruct the discourses on deafness, it has to be described and considered within a historical framework. By doing so its roots can be explained and reasons can be sought for its legitimisation. The language used to describe deaf people through the ages, for example, 'dumb', 'mute', 'impaired', is evidence of the power of discourse to label and to treat people according to the labels it ascribes.

Commentaries and research on deaf education are not a new phenomenon. In the early 18th century in France, a monk named l'Epee was reported to have developed a method of educating deaf people which included the use of sign language. His successor, Sicard continued l'Epee's work. Sicard used the vocabulary of a sign language and organised it in accordance the rules of spoken French. In 1778, in Germany, a man by the name of Heinicke opened a school for deaf children. Having rejected the methods of l'Epee and Sicard in the education of deaf children: his methods of teaching focused on teaching deaf children to speak. Within deaf education therefore, methods of instruction which employed the use of sign language was known as the French method, and the use of speech in the instruction of deaf children was referred to as the German method. It would appear that these methods existed alongside each other without much debate until the 19th century (Lang, 2003). Education in Europe during this period was not a universal provision, with limited opportunities for those who could not afford it. Education was therefore not a matter of choice and was usually provided by religious establishments as a charitable service or by private tutors to those who could afford it. It has been argued by a number of authors such as Lane (1984), that the education of deaf children only became a contentious issue after the International Congress of Deaf Education in 1880 in Milan (hereafter referred to as the

Milan Conference). The conference decreed that 'the oral method ought to be preferred to that of signs for the education and instruction of the deaf and dumb' (cited in Gregory and Hartley, 1992, p.118). Of the 164 people who attended the conference, none were deaf. It is important to mention this fact because up until recently the main discourses regarding the education of deaf children have been written and postulated by people who are not deaf themselves. As the thesis will show, the main discourses have problematised the issue of deaf education. The British Association of Teachers of the Deaf (BATOD) state:

As deaf children in the UK came to participate in compulsory education after 1893, communication became a very obvious concern for educationalists. The problem arose of how deaf children were to access a curriculum devised and delivered by hearing people. The obvious solution seemed to be to promote oral language as the medium of instruction (cited in Gregory and Hartley, p.107).

Although the oral method has been beneficial to some deaf children, research has shown that it has been largely responsible for poor academic attainments of the majority of deaf children (Conrad 1979, Quigley and Paul 1984). Oralism (which is discussed at length in the subsequent chapters), works on the premise that the effects of deafness can be reversed if deaf children taught how to speak. While Oralism may be of some benefit to children who have a functional residual hearing, those with severe to profound hearing on the whole have not found it to be beneficial for them.

As a response to the mainstream discourse, deaf people and those who support the use of a sign language in the education of deaf people have argued that the use of oral methods in schools not only results in low academic standards in deaf education, it also denies deaf children the opportunity to acquire a language naturally and access to the Deaf community and Deaf culture (Lane 1984, Booth 1988, Ladd 1993).

1.3 Why Deaf Studies?

It is not uncommon for a researcher to have limited knowledge of the field at the outset of the study. I became interested in deaf people when I was a social work student at

Durham University. At the time the Social Work Department was situated right next to the Deaf Studies Research Unit. Even though I often witnessed the members of staff using sign language, deafness to me was just the absence of hearing, and BSL was just the English language represented in hand gestures. Looking back, it was quite evident that I knew close to nothing about deafness and more specifically, d/Deaf people. It did strike me, however, that social work as a profession claims to be a service which meets people at their point of need. Not being able to communicate with a Deaf person is one need not being met. Hence my initial interest in Deaf Studies.

Having worked in a school for deaf children and also a college for deaf school leavers, I was surprised about the lack of preparedness and life skills the latter group had for entry into further education and the world of work. Most of them had very poor reading and writing skills. There also seemed to be a lack of motivation on the part of the students to engage with their courses and an over-reliance on the members of staff for guidance. I was later to discover that the students were the products of an educational system which had equipped them with poor skills and which in turn created this dependency. The children I interviewed were all provided with taxis to take them to and from school. Although some lived far away from the school there is still an underlying notion that deaf children will be 'lost' in a hearing world. Here the discourse constructs the deaf child as one who is dependent on hearing people for 'survival'. It is this unintended consequence of deaf education that becomes embedded in the 'career' of the deaf person. This created dependency can also be seen in the actions of the professionals in their relationship with deaf children right from birth. This issue is discussed further in Chapter five. To understand the experiences of deaf people and deaf education better, I chose my sample from deaf schools where deaf children were encouraged to use sign language.

1.4 My Sample

A group of 26 students from three special schools for deaf children were studied over a period of two years (2002-2003). The students in my sample had to be in year 10 (fourth form) and expected to leave school after year eleven. Children who attend deaf residential schools are more likely to use sign language than children who attend oral or mainstream schools. Powers et al (1998) found that deaf students, who attend 'signing'

schools, achieve poorer GCSE results than their deaf counterparts in oral and mainstream schools. The children in my sample were not a homogenous group; they differed according to gender, ethnicity, and severity of hearing loss.

Table 1.1
Gender and Ethnicity

	White ¹	Black ²	Asian ³
Boys	11	0	3
Girls	7	4	1

1.5 Gender

Table 1.2
Academic Attainments of Students in Relation to Gender and Ethnicity
(Students attaining GCSE grade ‘C’ and above)

		Art	Geo	D & T	Science	Maths	Drama	Total
Boys	White	1	1	2			1	10
	Non-white	1		2				3
Girls	White	1	1	2				8
	Non-white			1			2	5

¹ All the students were born in England and who have British parents
² Two students were born in Nigeria and one in Uganda. On student whose parents hail from Jamaica was born in England
³ Here, ‘Asian’ refers to those students whose parents hail from India, Pakistan or Bangladesh

In relation to GCSE attainments, my findings did not reveal any significant differences between boys and girls (see Table 1.2). My findings are supported by Wood et al (1986) and Kluwin (1994).

1.6 Ethnicity

Powers et al (1998) report that of the ethnic minority children surveyed in their research, in 12% of the households, English was not the first language spoken. Of the eight ethnic minority children in my sample, only one confirmed that English was the only/main language spoken at home. The rest claimed that the languages of their parents were the ones most likely to be used. As none of the children sat the GCSE English exam, I am not able to deduce the effect this variable had on their overall academic attainments; one can surmise, however, that they were not of a standard to sit it.

1.7 Hearing Loss

Table 1.3
Degree of hearing loss

<u>Hearing loss</u>	Mild (26-30 dB)	Moderate 31-50 dB	Severe 71-90 dB	Profound > 90 dB
Students	0	3	16	7

My research showed that there were no significant differences amongst the deaf students in my sample in relation to their GCSE results. Regardless of their hearing loss, their results were more or less the same. Put differently, my research revealed no correlation between the degree of deafness and subsequent performance in exams. Powers et al (1998) urge caution regarding such findings:

It is important particularly in those studies reporting a lack of correlation, that there is invariably significant underachievement of deaf learners when compared

with hearing learners, both for relative and absolute outcomes. Therefore it would be wrong to conjecture about hearing loss not being a significant characteristic in education. (Powers et al p.104).

It should be noted that the focus of this thesis is primarily on the experiences of deaf children and where they are located within the dynamics of power within the education system and not on academic performance *per se*. This thesis introduces the concept of the 'career' of the deaf child and how it is affected by their family dynamics and the competing discourses within schools and education policies. This thesis, however, argues that the identity of the deaf child is shaped by their school experiences, which in turn is shaped by the various discourses and policies governing them. It is through this melange that the voice or hand of the deaf child emerges.

1.8 Organisation of Chapters

The first chapter is an overview of the discourses which help shape the 'careers' of deaf children. It locates the discourses within history and its effects within deaf education. In other words this chapter provides the framework for the overall thesis and in doing so encapsulates the main arguments in their initial guiding ideas. The chapter shows that the discourse relating to deaf children, through time has shaped their access to education and to the Deaf community. The language policies which emanated from Europe in the 19th century had a profound effect on deaf children's access to a sign language and also to Deaf culture. This chapter shows that the influence of the discourse is still prevalent today.

The second chapter of this thesis looks at the issue of deafness as a social construction. It looks at how deafness has been described and defined by people with disabilities, Deaf people, and educationalists. In doing so it examines historical incidences that have located deaf education and deaf children in their current position. It is only by analysing and de-constructing these discourses that the reader will get a clearer picture of why the debates in deaf education have not really changed for over 300 years.

The third chapter is an analytical critique of the notion of culture, community and identity. Rather than this chapter being just a collection of books and journals on this subject, a more structured approach is taken. There are specific issues which relate to my sample within education and so the literature reflects this fact. Literature regarding the concepts of community, culture and identity will be reviewed as there is much debate as to the existence and make up of a Deaf community. Contingent to the idea of community is culture and identity. The Deaf discourse claims that modern day education policies prevent deaf students from accessing the community and are therefore being hindered or deprived of access to Deaf culture and identity. It is argued that all this is linked with the educational provision for deaf children. This chapter highlights the main arguments in relation to deaf education. The mainstream discourses claim that the only way deaf children can access the wider society readily is to be taught how to communicate in the majority language, English. The Deaf discourses on the other hand support the notion that education in deaf schools and through sign language would be more beneficial for their psycho-social development. Other literature reviewed in this chapter relates to power, discourse and change.

In order to record interviews with deaf children who use sign language the interviews were filmed using video equipment. The methodology chapter therefore highlights the methods I used for data collection and analysis and also the advantages and disadvantages of the methods used. This chapter takes the reader through the process of searching and locating appropriate schools, the criteria for choosing the students, and the process of data collection. Qualitative methods that are used, such as participant observation and video interviews, are discussed in detail. Throughout the thesis I make the point that the main purpose of my research is to bring to the forefront the views of deaf children. This chapter highlights the importance of getting the methodology right in order to satisfy these intentions.

The fifth chapter highlights the experiences of deaf children within education. Using Goffman's framework of the patient in 'Asylums' this chapter will show how the career of the deaf child is determined for him/her from birth and is continued through school. This chapter once again highlights the existing tensions between discourses regarding the deaf child; however, in this chapter the views of the deaf children are highlighted. By putting forward the views of the deaf children it can be seen that their experiences

do not fit in neatly with any of the current discourses which attempt to influence their career. This chapter concludes by highlighting the importance that should be ascribed to children's views especially since EU (The European Convention on Human Rights) and British legislation (e.g. The Children Act, 1989) makes this a legal requirement. It further develops the argument that unless deaf education is flexible and adaptable enough to meet the requirements of the variety of children it aims to serve, deaf children will still be leaving school with very poor academic achievements and not being full members of either the hearing or Deaf communities.

The final chapter looks at theoretical issues that underpin the education of deaf children. Primarily, it is a critique of the methods highlighted in the previous chapters, namely, Oralism and Total Communication. This chapter suggests that the use of these methods have not resulted in a noticeable improvement in the education attainment of deaf children. Due to this fact the Deaf community and educationalists interested in deaf education have proposed that bilingualism may be the best way forward in the education of deaf students. This chapter offers a critical analysis of bilingualism and suggests ways in which deaf children can be better served through education.

This thesis concludes with a summary of the important points raised. It also offers a critique of the work done and highlights gaps in the study. As deaf education has always been embroiled in debate and controversy, the thesis offers policy recommendations that the author feels may take the debate forward.

Chapter 2

Constructing Deafness

2.1 Introduction

What is Deaf culture? Am I Deaf or deaf? Deaf people ask these pointed questions of each other, of scholars, and of themselves. There are no answers, of course, because the questions themselves are born of evolving images of self and self-representation. (Humphries, 1996, p.100).

The terms 'deafness' and 'deaf education' are found in many articles and books relating to special education. However, it has become very apparent that the meanings of these terms are by no means set in stone. The meanings of these terms depend on the particular discourses defining them. Simply defined deafness is regarded by those who use the medical model as their point of reference, as an impairment of the senses associated with hearing loss. Many culturally Deaf people reject this classification. To Deaf people, deafness is more about being a member of a distinct group who have a common language and culture. The fact that they have a hearing loss is of secondary importance in this context. Deaf people therefore reject the label of deafness as a disability because of the way dominant discourses have treated them through the ages. The power to define and label a group of people is evidence of control over that particular group of people. In contrast Deaf people who use a sign language describe their situation from within a linguistic minority model. This chapter aims to highlight the dichotomy amongst the competing discourses and to show how definitions affect identity. A key issue discussed in this chapter is the concept of deafness, how it is constructed, and how dominant discourses legitimise the treatment of deaf people in society. In this chapter, I do not assume any definition or identity for the deaf students; the competing discourses already do that. What cannot be denied however is the importance of definitions in the careers of deaf people. Meadow (1980) highlights this importance in the light of the two competing discourses and states that:

This controversy is an important part of the social and cultural context of the deaf child's development, because it influences all the developmental issues related to deafness (Meadow, 1980, p.17).

Related to the idea of deafness is deaf education. The controversies and debates concerning the ways in which deaf children should be educated has been the main battleground where competing discourses have fought for supremacy. Once again the purpose of this chapter is not to favour one method over the other but to bring to the forefront the relevant issues that affect deaf education.

The overall purpose of this chapter is therefore to identify the processes of deafness and to see how certain definitions and perspectives have emerged and changed through time. It also aims to show that discourse is not neutral, thereby showing that issues regarding deaf education which have been prominent since the 19th century are still relevant today especially in relation to my sample.

2.2 The Social Construction of Deafness

Deafness may be viewed as a social construction and is therefore invariably, difficult to define. The difficulty arises from the various discourses by which it is identified. The definition of a term which depicts a group of people brings with it social attitudes and status. It also has implications for a person's identity and the need for self-determination. Discourses and definitions change through time even though the people remain the same physically. Black people, for example, through the ages have been referred to as negroes, niggers and coloured. These terms have been used to describe a group of people identifiable through their skin colour and general physical appearance. 'Black' was once a term of oppression, but has now been reclaimed by this group of people, not only to depict certain physical characteristics, but also a mind set of emancipation and specific cultural identities. It should be highlighted, however, that not everyone accepts the term and not everyone wants to be regarded as such. In other words, social constructions may bring about a new sense of identity or identities but at the same time, they can also exclude certain groups of people. Deafness is no different.

The medical model views deafness purely as a disability (Oliver, 1996). According to this model, deafness is a sensory impairment, which is defined by the degrees of hearing loss. This model derives from a number of discourses which have defined disability or impairment as a deficit in a person's physical and/or mental capabilities. In other words, people with disabilities have been defined by what they do not have and cannot do and this has led to social exclusion.

Historically, people with disabilities were generally referred to as 'handicapped' from the phrase 'cap in hand'. This invokes images of beggars and groups of people relying on charity and the alms of well intentioned able-bodied people for their day- to- day existence. Middleton (1992) in her book portrays some sections of the bible as being discriminatory to people with disabilities. She highlights a section in the book of Leviticus which appears to exclude people with disabilities from certain religious practices due to the fact that they were considered 'unclean'. My research lays no claim to theological expertise but from a lay point of view I see that major religions, for example, Islam encourages Muslims to give alms to poor and disabled people after Friday worship. Some religious authorities in the bible saw disability as a punishment from God as a result of our sins.

And as he passed by he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him saying: Rabbi, who did sin, this man, or his parents that he should be born blind? (KJV: John 9: 1-2).

There are a number of stories in the bible that appear to present disability as a condition to be cured. It is a condition that requires divine intervention to ameliorate it. Jesus Christ, in the gospels is quoted as saying:

Go tell John the things which you hear and see. The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear (NKJV: Matthew 11: 4-5).

The image of disability as something to be cured feeds into the medical model and invariably the politics and discourse of disablement. Finklestein (1993) further states that:

How a disabled person sees her or himself may not only affect the way problems that they face are identified but also influence the way help is offered or rejected. Seeing oneself as suffering because of an impaired body or function could lead to demands for assistance to become as 'normal' as possible (Finklestein, 1993, p.9).

Within social constructions is the power to define and exclude. It is a person's degree of deafness as defined by a professional that will decide what kind of educational and medical interventions are provided. Rosen (2003) calls this 'jargon':

In essence, the jargons for deafness are social institutional constructions of the deaf body. In this process, the social institutions construct and proffer services to certain individuals who they consider as deaf people. The jargons may impact on the lives of deaf people...Consequently these institutions exclude other deaf people whose characteristics do not meet their constructions of deafness. (Rosen, 2003, p.922).

The overthrow of oppression usually begins when the oppressed reject the labels and discourses written about them in favour of self- definition. Williamson (2002) commenting on a different issue, talks about the complacency and naivety of western societies who think they can solve the developing world's problems (such as the Middle East) through democracy, capitalism and globalisation. The reality, however, is that these problems still remain. The difficulty here is that people in western societies have tended to see the pervading issues and problems through their own understanding and have thus tried to solve these problems from their own perspectives. Such people who have had no physical or cultural knowledge of deafness in the same sense have sought to solve the 'problems' of deaf people and deaf education, but the reality is that deaf people are still underachieving in schools despite centuries of educational and medical intervention by the experts who are not necessarily knowledgeable about 'cultural' deafness. The good intentions of the educators have resulted in the social marginalisation of deaf school leavers who have often failed to acquire spoken language or adequate reading skills. Williamson states further that the only way forward is to see the problems through the eyes of the subjects of these discourses, for example, in the case of the Middle East, through the eyes of the Palestinians. Their own perspectives

need to be valued and in doing so will be empowered to direct their own destiny. In other words Palestinians need to have their voices heard and their own discourses created. Likewise Deaf people have rejected the dominant discourses which defined them through the ages and have attempted to create their own discourses (Lane 1992, Lane et al 1996, Ladd 2003).

The new discourses view deafness, not in terms of sensory impairment or disability, but in terms of language and culture. Hence, deafness is no longer used as a euphemism for people, who in addition to having a hearing loss have no language or academic capabilities. Deaf people are now defined by membership of a distinct community which shares a unique culture and sign language - British Sign Language, thereafter, BSL (Padden 1980; Brien 1981; Ladd 1988). Padden and Humphries (1988) add:

In a variety of ways, Deaf people have accumulated a set of knowledge about themselves in the face of the larger society's understanding-or misunderstanding-of them. They have found ways to define and express themselves through their rituals, tales, performances, and everyday social encounters. (Padden and Humphries, 1988, p.11).

It needs to be highlighted, however, that this definition and explanation of what deafness is excludes a number of people with hearing impairments. Only a fraction of deaf people use BSL as their first or preferred language and the majority who do not use BSL do not view themselves as being members of a distinct community. Kyle and Woll (1985) illuminate this view by adding that:

Not all deaf people wish to be associated with the deaf population and many of them choose to work and socialise with hearing people...29% of profoundly deaf people (in our study) rarely go to the deaf club. (Kyle and Woll, p.7).

The overwhelming majority of people who have varying degrees of hearing loss feel integrated into the hearing world and see no value in being members of a community which excludes people on the basis of language (which ironically is the claim deaf people make against the hearing world). The new discourses also reject the

classification of deafness as a disability. Lane (1993) makes no apologies for distancing the deaf community from general disability movements:

To embrace the representation of the members of the deaf community as infirm is to endorse the very principle of oppression the community has so long struggled to overthrow; it is to undermine the community's effort on behalf of some of its most cherished goals...and it is to go against the common sense of most members of American deaf culture, who are simply baffled when told they are disabled. (Lane, 1993, p.22).

The problem with this stance is that a number of Deaf people assume the label of 'disability' to access services and benefits aimed at people with disabilities. Deaf students are assessed under the Statement of Special Educational Needs for further support in the classroom. Deaf students in higher education benefit from the ability to access Disabled Student Awards, in which provision is given in the form of aids and adaptations together with non-medical help (for examples note takers and interpreters). Finklestein (1990) is of the opinion that deafness is a disability as the oppression deaf people face in society is more akin to the discrimination that other disabled groups experience. Finklestein further states that even though the new Deaf discourses regard the Deaf community as being based along linguistic and cultural lines, the discrimination they face is not based on such. Deaf people are more likely to be discriminated against, not because they use BSL but because they cannot hear. Corker (1996) adds an interesting point to this argument:

Deaf futures hinge not only upon the recognition that stereotyped beliefs, values and attitudes are the scourge of minority communities, but upon an understanding that a restriction of diversity prevents growth and adaptability. (Corker, 1996, p.202).

Most discourses relating to deafness feed into educational policies and practice. The resultant effect of this is that for many deaf people, education has become a very disempowering experience. For people to whom sign language is their first language, not being able to use one's own language and forced to take on a mode of communication which is 'alien' to them only goes to show the hegemonic nature of the

relationship between deaf and hearing people within the larger society. The history of deaf people and deaf education is one which shows the majority (hearing culture) assuming almost total control over all matters pertaining to deaf students within the educational system. Ladd (2003) draws parallels between the subjugation of deaf people and colonialism. Prior to the 'scramble for Africa', Europeans had seen the value of trading within the Continent in purely business terms. The dynamics of power within the roles and relationships of the trading partners was based on humanity and mutual respect for the different cultures involved (although the goods exchanged would suggest that the Europeans were the more 'powerful' trading partners). When the Europeans decided to change the relationship from a commercial into a colonial one, the Continent and its inhabitants became demonised, that is, they were seen as savages who needed to be humanised by the redemptive power of Christianity and Western civilisation. The process of this change involved the destruction of indigenous cultures, beliefs and languages in favour of the languages and ideals of the colonial powers:

Even though colonialism is traditionally seen as economically driven, those who have been colonised affirm that culture is often the battleground upon which the colonial hegemony is established, and that cultural liberation or independence cannot be successful without the de-colonisation of the mind. (Wa Thiong'O 1986 cited in Ladd, 2003).

The colonial inferences to deafness, however, may only be taken so far. Ladd fails to mention the fact that at no point in history were deaf communities forced into slavery or made to abandon their homes, Deaf communities have never been forced to cease their religious practices neither have they been subjugated by foreign powers. The deaf people I interviewed and have worked with provided no such evidence or insight into the dynamics of power between deaf and hearing people as highlighted by Ladd. The use of sign language was, and has been an issue but it appears that Ladd's juxtaposition of the experiences of deaf and black people is something that will need further attention but not in this thesis. However, it would be apt to point out that Ladd does equate the mainstream discourses and education policies to foreign powers because according to him Deaf people have been forced to communicate in a language which is alien to them.

There is however, overwhelming evidence to show that prior to the late 16th century deaf and hearing people co-existed side by side and within equal relationships (Groce 1985, Lane 1984, Miles 1988). Unfortunately, however, the relationship between deaf and hearing people changed. Users of sign language were seen as people who were unable to attain the status of full human beings unless they were able to speak. This according to Ladd (2003) was the beginning of a crucial discourse that meant that Deaf people's attainment of humanity was now dependent on an education system, whose sole aim was to make Deaf people 'hearing'. The rise of this discourse coincided with the medical discourse, which sought scientific methods of making the deaf hear; and also the eugenics discourse (championed by Alexander Graham Bell) which sought to forbid marriage amongst deaf people for fear of spreading the deaf 'gene':

If the laws of heredity that are known to hold in the case of animals also apply to man, the intermarriage of congenital deaf mutes through a number of successive generations should result in the formation of a deaf variety of the human race (Bell. 1884, p.4).

Ladd (1984) in reviewing the medical discourse espoused by Bell illustrates the effect it had on deaf people in the late 19th and early 20th centuries

News of it (the memoir) spread like wildfire amongst parents of the deaf, their family physicians, and among surgeons generally throughout the world...He (the rector) came to know many deaf couples who were childless and unhappy as a result of being sterilised in infancy, he laid the blame on Bell (Ladd,1984, p.358).

The search for the 'cure' for deafness still goes on. Apart from the proliferation of aids and adaptations, medical science failed to reverse the *malady* of deafness. As a matter of principle, a number of deaf adults object to the use of hearing aids and other medical interventions aimed at 'curing' deafness. Recent medical advancements such as cochlear implants have been firmly rejected by the Deaf community. Cochlear implants seek to restore the sensation of hearing even in profoundly deaf people. Robinson (1998) highlighted studies which showed that deaf children with cochlear implants were able to access spoken languages more readily than children who wore conventional

hearing aids. Studies also demonstrated that such children fared better academically. Despite the benefits the Deaf community have responded by saying that such medical advancements are aimed at destroying their identity. The medical discourse is 'Kryptonite' to the Deaf community. Loeb (1993) said that:

The cochlear prosthesis, on which I have worked for years with many other scientists, engineers and clinicians, will lead inevitably to the extinction of the alternative deaf culture. (Loeb, 1993, p.8).

Spencer and Marschark (2003) also highlight the negativity cochlear implants have received from the Deaf community:

Provision of cochlear implants to children has been attacked on the grounds that they are insufficiently effective and that they interfere with children developing their identity as a Deaf person, becoming part of a Deaf community, and acquiring the sign communication skills needed to participate in that communicate (Spencer and Marschark, 2003, p.435).

The Deaf community use the example of black people to support these arguments. Ladd says that, due to the oppression a number of black people face in majority white cultures, there would be an outcry if they were offered an operation which could make them 'white'. Where this analogy may lack credibility is the fact that one does not become black due to meningitis, rubella or German measles. Furthermore, being born black does not necessarily result in a sensory loss. What the Deaf discourse is trying to convey, however, is that their identity should not be determined by others. It should also be noted that illness is not the only cause of deafness, deafness can also be hereditary and so some parallels can be drawn with black people. During the era of racial segregation in the USA it was reported that some black people would bleach their skin and straighten their hair to become more like white people. The majority culture perpetrated the myth that they were inferior to white people and hence the denial of their history and identity. Although the comparison with Deaf and black people concerns an enhancement of an (auditory) sense and a cosmetic change respectively, what is highlighted is that the fact both groups of people accepted 'change' as a passport to acceptance.

It should be emphasised that the medical discourse does not operate in isolation to other discourses. History has shown us that the medical discourses are often embedded within education discourses. Ladd (2003) asserts that practitioners within the various education systems started to focus on the teaching of speech:

The extent to which this idea spread amongst the European intelligentsia means that this period marks the beginnings of a crucial discourse. (Ladd, 2003, p.103).

Put differently, that Deaf people's attainment of humanity depended upon education' and the ability of this system to bring about speech in their deaf charges. This system became commonly known as Oralism.

Oralism as a bona fide method of teaching deaf children came into prominence in the 19th century and in particular through the Milan International Conference in 1880, which Lane (1989) stated as being:

the single most critical event in driving the languages of the deaf beneath the surface – more important than hearing loss – are the limited educational achievements of today's men and women, 80% of whom in America, are engaged in manual or unskilled work. (Lane, 1989, p.387).

The participants at the Milan Conference (all hearing people) passed a resolution that sign language be banished in all areas of deaf education. The conference affirmed 'the incontestable superiority of speech over sign'. Modern Oralists such as Lynas (1994) take a softer stance in their promotion of speech over sign language but their conclusions and methods still suggest that speech is functionally more expedient than sign:

Deaf people do not live in exclusive deaf neighbourhoods nor are they employed in exclusive deaf workplace. Deaf adults are surrounded for most of the time by normally hearing people, and even if the deaf individual chooses most of his or her significant contact within the Deaf group, the demands of everyday life

necessitate a considerable amount of exchange with people who speak and do not sign. (Lynas, 1994p.13).

A number of authors such as Groce (1985) in opposition to the above, gives the 17th century example of Martha's Vineyard which contained a sizeable deaf population (about 25% of the island: population were profoundly deaf and communicated in sign language). In the book 'Everybody here spoke sign language' Groce (1985) explains that everyone (both the hearing and the deaf) were able to communicate using sign language. Power was not situated in any one language and both hearing and Deaf people lived in harmony. What Groce fails to explain, however, is why the numbers Deaf people declined together with the use of sign language, furthermore, no strong reasons are given for why there are no Deaf people on the island today, beyond the memories passed down to certain hearing of the island: current community.

Communities like languages and living organisms constantly adapt to their environment so as to enhance survival. If the island had been a sustaining organism for both sets of people, it could be argued that there would have been traces of Deaf people left on the island today. What Groce (1985) does stress, however, is that in reality, Deaf communities did not actually exist on the island. Due to the fact that both hearing and deaf people were able to communicate effectively with each other, there was no need for separation or a separate identity. It could therefore be argued that communities are a mark of separation or exclusion.

Although explained more in depth in the next chapter, it is important to understand the notion of community or more precisely, the Deaf community. According to Cohen (1985) the concept of community is used in everyday speech in a range of different ways without much thought to what it actually means. Contingent to the term 'community' is the idea of boundaries.

The boundary encapsulates the identity of a community and, like the identity of an individual, is called into being by the exigencies of social interaction. Boundaries are marked because communities interact in some way or other with entities from which they are, or wish to be. (Cohen, 1985, p.12).

Boundaries according to Cohen, do not have to be physical; they can be racial, religious or any other cause that sets people apart from one another. This is important because the Deaf experience in Martha's Vineyard is a rare occurrence. The Deaf community uses a common language and culture to define itself rather than physical boundaries. The Deaf community is therefore defined mainly by their language, in the case of Britain, BSL. It is their insistence that BSL should be used as the main medium of communication within deaf education that has put them at loggerheads with educators who insist on spoken English as the main or only language of instruction.

Lynas et al (1998) and other educators in favour of the oral/aural approaches point to the fact that deaf people cannot exist in isolation from others and that it is only by accepting speech that communication barriers will between deaf and hearing people will be broken down. Speech is the passport out of isolation.

Brill (1991) a deaf person himself, in support of oral/aural states that:

...we must be realistic as deaf people that we form a minority in society and thus we cannot expect all hearing people to learn Sign Language for the benefit of a few deaf people whom they may never encounter anyway. (Brill, 1991, p.109).

Oralism is deeply embedded in the discourses pertaining to deaf education. The various writing and research on deafness have portrayed an image of the profoundly deaf person as failing to obtain academic attainment at the same level as their hearing peers; a language deficient person who is likely to be unemployed (or at best underemployed) if s/he does not learn to communicate via speech with the hearing majority (Webster 1986; Quigley and Kretschmer 1982, Conrad 1979). What proponents of this discourse have failed to highlight, however, is that the education of deaf children only became an issue when the use of any form of sign language was prohibited in favour of speech (Ladd 2003). Over the last century this resulted in a number of deaf children being removed from special schools and placed in mainstream schools, which, in turn led to language alienation, disruption and academic failure. Blaming the under-achievement on schools alone, is, I wish to argue, inappropriate. Researchers such as Powers et al (1998) have shown that under the 'right' conditions a deaf person's academic attainments would not

be markedly different from that of a hearing person's. Moores (2001) writing on the potential of deaf students, believes that it is not unrealistic for deaf students to obtain academic attainments comparable to those of their hearing counterparts, but for this to be achieved the curriculum needs to be adapted to their needs. Moores, however, admits that the reasons for the under-achievement of deaf people involves etiology, severity of hearing of loss, the status of parents (whether they are deaf or not), and early access to an appropriate language. Moores (2001) states further that a number of children in schools are already disadvantaged by the variables mentioned above and it is the schools who take the blame for their under-achievement. It is due to these facts that it is important to place the deaf child in the right educational setting. Andrews et al (2004) agree with Moores and add that:

Due to the long standing documentation of academic under-achievement at the time of school completion for the majority of deaf students, it is important to consider the type of academic environment in which deaf children can flourish and maximise their skills (Andrews et al, p.111).

It is important to note that no one method is advocated; the actual methods used in educating the deaf student needs to be relevant to his/her needs. A blanket approach to deaf education will not suffice.

Research and various texts on deafness and education all agree that Oralism as a blanket policy for all deaf people does not work. In order to tackle the failings of Oralism a new method (or better still, a new philosophy) was introduced in the 1970s – Total Communication, hereafter (TC):

Total Communication involves the use of all modalities of communication- sign, finger spelling, speech, hearing, lip reading, facial expression and gesture. By having access to all channels of communication, it is believed that the deaf children can make use of all of his or sensory mechanisms to develop language and acquire a means of communication. (Lynas, p, 35).

On the surface, this system appears to be more suitable and less oppressive to deaf people especially when compared to Oralism. On deeper inspection, however, one could argue that it is an offshoot of the Oralist discourse. It works on the premise that it will enable deaf people to develop language and acquire a means of communication. Deaf people in the UK according to Brennan (1987) already have a language, it is called British Sign Language (BSL). TC is not aimed at developing sign language skills in deaf children; its main aim is that deaf children are able to communicate with hearing people. In other words, like Oralism, TC aims to make deaf children 'hearing' by learning spoken languages. Most deaf schools in the UK that use sign language maintain a preference for TC over other approaches, such as bilingualism. Although BSL⁴ is not necessarily the main medium for teaching, deaf children are not banned from using it. Furthermore, studies have shown that within these settings deaf children are able to develop their BSL skills informally e.g. in the playground. Like children who have been educated orally, the academic attainments of these children educated in TC settings are still very poor compared to their hearing peers.

Broadly analysed, it could be argued that the past and current discourses regarding deaf education have been centred on the struggle between different education approaches engaged in seeking supremacy in the education of deaf children.

The only common denominator is that deaf children are still far behind their hearing counterparts in academic attainments and literacy. (Conrad 1979, Powers et al, 1998). Meadow's (1975) reaction to the continuing debate between the two main discourses is thus:

For more than 200 years practitioners in the field of deafness have been engaged in a bitter controversy about the relative benefits and disadvantages attending the use of oral and manual communication with deaf children. These discussions have proceeded on the basis of very limited research evidence. The polemic attached to the conflict and the impassioned commitment with which participants pursue their points of view make scientific objectivity both difficult and suspect. (Meadow, 1975, p.173).

⁴ Sign Supported English is most likely to be used because the majority of hearing teachers have not had the opportunity to learn the language properly and therefore sign in relation to English word order

Quigley and Paul (1984), in analysing the limited successes of Oralism and TC state that:

In spite of almost 200 years in the United States and more than 300 years in Europe, only limited success has been achieved in developing language in deaf children to the extent where it serves as an adequate vehicle for educational development. (Quigley and Paul, 1984, p.21).

It is essential to highlight the fact that virtually all discourses about deaf people have been conceived, controlled and written by people who are not deaf themselves. In relation to this, however, it should be noted that Ladd (2003) is one of the few discourses written by a Deaf academic. This is why the hegemonic nature of the dynamics of power between Deaf and hearing people has been firmly tilted towards the latter. Until the Deaf discourse is heard and developed, this imbalance of power will remain. It should be emphasised that there are a number of hearing people who support the Deaf discourse and advocate on behalf of Deaf people (for example: Terstriep 1993, Turner 1994, Woll 2001).

In order to gain a better understanding of deafness and the often conflicting views that surround it, one needs to come from a position of objectivity. Objectivity, or the truth in relation to deafness (as with all social constructions), will be difficult to acquire and may take more than one form. The difficulty stems from the fact that language is never neutral. Layder (1994) states that:

It is important to understand that language is never innocent; it is not a neutral medium of expression. Discourses are expressions of power relations and reflect the practices and the positions that are tied to ... In this sense, the ability to employ a discourse reflects a command of knowledge of a particular area. It also implies that this facility is employed in relation to people who lack such command and have no legitimate claim to such knowledge. (Layder, 1994, p.97).

The various discourses relating to deafness are always seeking power and pre-eminence. As a consequence there is not one truth, objectivity and meaning. Layder in explaining Foucault's view of discourse says that:

Meaning is a product of the internal relations between elements of the discourse which define and facilitate the social practices of individuals. People live their lives through constructed meanings available to them. (Layder, 1994, p.95).

In other words what Foucault (1980) is saying is that we, as, individuals do not approach social phenomena or inquiry with a *tabula rasa* for we are surrounded and affected by the various discourses at play.

Truth is a thing of the world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its general politics of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (Foucault, 1980, p.31).

A person's understanding of deafness therefore will be based on the social discourses 'which position subjects in a field of power relations and within particular sets of practice (Layder, 1994, p. 95). Britzman (2000) adds that:

Every discourse constitutes, even as it mobilizes and shuts out, imaginary communities, identity investments and discursive practices. Discourses authorise what can and cannot be said; they produce relations of power and communities of consent and dissent, and thus discursive boundaries are always being drawn around what constitutes the desirable and the undesirable and around what makes particular structures of intelligibility and unintelligibility (Britzman, 2000, p.36).

2.3 The Construction of the Deaf Student

The CESAD⁵ explained that they developed these jargons in order to aid educational administrators in the labelling, classification and placement of school-age children in schools to provide deaf education services...to certain school-age populations and to use research to advance the knowledge of the profession (Rosen, 2003, p.930).

Due to the fact that discourse is related to power there will always be a struggle to present what we may view as being the real truth. Oralism is presented as the 'truth' or the best way of educating deaf children to the detriment of other methods and discourses that are available. Thus truth, according to May (1996), is ahistorical and is constituted in history. Discourse, therefore, in May's view is a process and says that:

In the process a history of the present is written according to which history is not excavated to reveal deeper meaning but, instead, is viewed as a battleground between relations of power (May, 1996, p.182).

Of the 26 students I interviewed, 24 of them had attended mainstream schools before being assessed for special education. When asked why they had to leave their previous schools they replied with answers such as '*I couldn't understand what the teacher was saying*'; '*I was not coping well*', and '*I was disruptive*'. The dominant discourse at play was the deaf discourse as viewed by hearing people. It could also be said to be the discourse of mainstream education. It was this discourse that made the students feel that they were deficient in many ways and led to the decision to move to a special school. What this overarching discourse did not reveal was the fact that the set up of mainstream education was inherently exclusive and discriminatory. It did not take their language needs into consideration. Its curriculum and teaching methods were geared towards the majority population who are hearing.

Maclure (2003) says that discourses, especially those relating to mainstream education, have always been exclusionary. The difficulties experienced by the students I

⁵ The Committee of Executives of American Schools for the Deaf

interviewed are not unique to them alone. People are also discriminated against due to their socio-economic background, gender and ethnicity. Maclure also adds that the social and economic benefits that come from access to mainstream discourses are not evenly distributed. Children who do not get a proper 'apprenticeship' before starting mainstream education run the risk of not being 'heard'. Maclure states that many children from white, middle class backgrounds are often taught the fundamentals of infant education before they even start school. Prior to formal schooling, most of them would already know how to spell their names and how to listen to stories. Gee (1992) goes on to say that:

They engage their children in conversation and keep them on a single topic even when the children can hardly talk at all. They play alphabet games, recite nursery rhymes, read books aloud with effect...They get them to watch Sesame Street for hours on end (Gee, 1992, p.123)

Children from other backgrounds are not necessarily exposed or mentored in the discourse of mainstream education, and therefore would not be starting on a level playing field in relation to children from white middle class backgrounds. These children who do not fit the stereotype, according to the standards set by the white middle classes may therefore be subject to negative labelling.

Children who tell their stories in the idiom, language/vernacular of black and working class cultures are often perceived as disorganised, rambling, exaggerating or repetitious -the wrong type of infant school pupil. These children's experiences are not objectively viewed or understood because 'knowledge, expertise and identity are all implicated in this particular discourse' (Maclure, 2003. p.9).

If children from non-white middle class families are likely to experience difficulties in mainstream education, it may be anticipated that deaf children will experience even greater difficulties. Children from non-white middle class families, although disadvantaged in mainstream education, would have at least had an induction into the hearing world. They would have been able to access speech, to communicate and be aware of different types of environmental sounds. Being able to communicate in

English is an invaluable tool, because our whole education system is based on a person's ability to write and speak English.

Although the Deaf community is likely to focus more on the cultural aspects of deafness it cannot be denied that the impositions that a hearing loss causes in education are significant, especially since the medium of communication in mainstream schools is based entirely on speech. The incidence of hereditary deafness is quite rare; many parents of deaf children happen to be hearing. It is estimated that about 90% of all deaf children have hearing parents, and in 86% of these cases, they are the only deaf members of the family (Quigley and Paul 1986, Conrad 1979)⁶. A common occurrence in these families is that at the point of birth the deaf child's significant others have no prior knowledge of sign language. Coupled with the late diagnosis of deafness in children (mean age 18 months) the deaf child would have had little or no signed input during this period. Invariably this leads to a delay in language development. Linguistics and psychologists (for example Chomsky 1965; Lennenberg 1967; Slobin 1973) stress that the 'critical period' for acquiring a language occurs between birth to around 5 years of age; the most important interval being from 2 years to 5 years old. Meadow (1980) is also aware of the seriousness of language delay caused by deafness:

The basic deprivation of profound deafness is not the deprivation of sound; it is the deprivation of language. The deaf child cannot communicate clearly about her own needs, nor can her parents, teachers, and friends communicate with her easily. We take for granted that a four year hearing member of any culture has a complete working grasp and knowledge of her native language (Meadow 1980, p.17).

As language acquisition is closely linked to cognition, it is of no great surprise that the reading attainments of deaf children are much lower than those of their hearing counterparts. (Powers et al 1998). Powell (1995), in his review of GCSE results from 1993 - 1994 found that 43% of the general population attained grades A – C, but that only 17 % of students (in oral/aural setting) attained the same results. This, however, still contrasts sharply with the attainments of deaf students in deaf/special schools

⁶ In my sample none of the students had deaf parents and in all cases they were the only deaf members of their family

where only 1% of the students attained grades A-C. This is more in line with the GCSE results achieved by the students in my sample as expressed in the tables below.

School A⁷

Table 2.1
GCSE Results for School A

	Art/Design	Geography	H.E	Science	Design & Textiles	Maths
Student 1	E	F	E	E	D	F
Student 2	E	F	C	E	D	E
Student 3	F	F	D	F	E	E
Student 4	F	F	D	F	E	E

⁷ Of the 7 students in the school only 4 were regarded as academically able enough to sit GCSEs. The other 4 students did pieces of assessed work which focused more on life skills.

School B⁸

Table 2.2

GCSE Result for School B

	Art/Design	Geography	Science	Design & Textiles	I.T
Student 1	E	D	D	-	E
Student 2	B	C	D	-	E
Student 3	C	A	E	-	F
Student 4	-	-	-	C	-
Student 5	-	-	-	B	-
Student 6	E	-	-	-	-

⁸ In this school 6 out of the nine students were regarded as academically able enough to sit GCSEs, but none of them sat the mathematics exam.

School C⁹

Table 2.3

GCSE Results for School C

	Art	Design & Textiles	Drama
Student 1	-	B	-
Student 2	-	C	A
Student 3	-	-	B
Student 4	-	D	-
Student 5	-	C	-
Student 6	-	B	-
Student 7	-	-	B
Student 8	-	C	-
Student 9	-	-	D
Student 10	D	-	-

It has long been known that the presence of a severe sensori-neural hearing loss in a child has the potential to greatly impinge on the child's access to mainstream education and also on his/her academic achievements and performance (Maller 2003; Marschark 2003). It is apparent that a hearing loss has an effect on cognition especially when certain variables such as having non-deaf significant others in the family are present. The problem with equating deafness to poor achievements and difficulties in schools is that it creates a label for the deaf child. It is the labelling of the deaf child as language deficient and educationally backward which is arguably at the heart of the mainstream education discourse relating to deafness. The main problem with this discourse is that academic attainments seem to be the central issue. Issues such as identity, personal and social development do not seem as important. In fact, various governments have proclaimed the rhetoric of wanting to improve the general standard of education but their view of education has been, in my view, very narrow. These government initiatives have attempted to improve the general standard of education by introducing league tables for schools and Statutory Assessment Tasks (SATs) for the students. In doing so it gives the illusion that every child develops at the same rate and therefore

⁹ The students in this school are generally encouraged to stay on for an extra year before sitting more GCSEs. The head teacher informed me that by year 11 most deaf students are not ready to sit exams at this level.

starts on a level playing field. If a student therefore fails to achieve at a certain level in their tests the fault is either that of the student or the schools. Ironically though, David Blunkett, the then Minister of State for Education said that education is more than just academic attainments:

As well as securing our economic future, learning has a wider contribution. It helps make ours a civilised society, develops the spiritual side of our lives and promotes active citizenship. Learning enables people to play a full part in their community. It strengthens the family, the neighbourhood and consequently the nation (The Learning Age- Government White Paper, 1988 p.7).

This view shows the holistic purpose of formal education. Current practice within education has no mechanism capable of quantifying the emotional, social, and personal development of students. It is important to stress that citizenship has recently been added to the school curriculum and personal social and health education (PSHE) has been part of the curriculum for some time but against long established core subjects like Maths and English these subjects do not have equal status. As long as deaf students are judged and assessed by a narrow definition of academic success (i.e. raw exam results) a number of deaf students (especially those with severe to profound hearing losses) will always be labelled as under-achievers.

The interviews I conducted with the deaf students revealed a number of issues. Whilst they remained in mainstream settings, they were achieving low academic grades in comparison to their hearing counterparts. Their GCSEs, which were completed whilst they attended deaf schools, also revealed lower than national average grades. Looking at raw scores alone, it would be easy to deduce that they are academic failures. The poor achievements of these students, according to the dominant discourses, are the result of their deafness. The dominant discourses do not necessarily consider more holistic reasons behind their poor academic performance. The psychology of deafness, as espoused by Mykleburst (1960) and Brookes (1978) seems to suggest that hearing loss and poor academic attainments are inextricably linked. Such discourses fail to highlight the fact that given a different set of variables these students may be on par with their hearing counterparts regarding academic attainments. These discourses also fail to highlight the important fact that these children are often taught by hearing people

who may not be totally conversant in sign language. This is an important variable especially if it concerns children who use a sign language. An example of how a change in the variables can result in different conclusions regarding deaf people could be seen in research done on the academic attainments of deaf children who have Deaf parents. This is not surprising because discourse is often exclusionary. In studies on reading attainments carried out by Sass-Lehrer and Bodner-johnson (2003) and Paul & Jackson (1993), it was shown that deaf children of deaf parents (DCDP) perform significantly better than deaf children of hearing parents (DCHP). As I have mentioned previously however, looking at raw scores alone may produce overly simplistic results and assumptions. Powers et al (1998) suggest a number of contributory factors that may account for the relative success of DCDP:

- (1) Deafness in DCDP is most likely to be genetic, while deafness in DCHP is likely to be caused by illnesses such as meningitis which affects the brain which then leads to developmental delay as suggested by studies in the field of the psychology of deafness.
- (2) DCDP are more likely to establish basic pre-lingual skills necessary for subsequent language development as result as having deaf parents. This highlights the importance of early language learning and the dangers of simplistic arguments that equate deafness with failure.

I mentioned previously that the various discourses relating to deafness have attempted to bring about a process of normalisation. The application of the medical model has endeavoured to make deaf people 'hearing' by ways of surgical intervention and by the development of aids and adaptations. Education has tried to reverse the process in which deaf students have been deemed as academic failures by closing down special schools for deaf children in favour of mainstream education.

2.4 Policy and the Construction of Deafness

Just as the major debates regarding language and communication have been between those favouring oral/aural methods and those supporting the use of a sign language, so the major debate regarding schools has been dominated by those favouring integration/mainstreaming and those who prefer separate/special schools. For the first part of the 20th century, deaf education meant special and separate education. A

significant change occurred in 1947, with the introduction of Partial Hearing Units (PHU's) which were attached to mainstream schools. This trend was accelerated by the Warnock Report (DES 1978), which encouraged the integration of those students deemed as having special needs into the mainstream arena. A significant piece of legislation which complemented the Warnock Report was the Education Reform Act (1988), which brought about the introduction of the National Curriculum. It could be argued, that this brought deaf education in line with mainstream education, for, in theory both types of schools would have access to the same syllabus/subjects (thereby providing the same educational, employment and training opportunities). As it can be seen from the tables above, these schools only have limited access to the National Curriculum judging by the limited number of subjects they are able to offer their students

Both the Warnock Report and the Education Reform Act (1988) accelerated the process of the 'normalisation' of deaf children. The former encouraged deaf children to attend mainstream schools, while the latter brought about the demise of a number of deaf schools, because local authorities were reluctant to spend money on special education, as it was deemed more expensive than mainstream education. This is a problem two of the schools in my sample are facing. Due to the local authorities' insistence on mainstreaming almost all of their students, these schools are being starved of funds.

At the same time we might imagine a total reform of the present mainstreaming policies which are bleeding Deaf schools to death. Since 95.7% of all deaf children are currently mainstreamed in the UK, it is easy to conceive of the scale of the potential damage being caused. (Ladd, 2003, p.441-442).

It could be argued that the dominant discourses as espoused by the Warnock Report equates special education to 'second class' education, hence their emphasis on improving academic expectation and achievement. Ladd (2003) is of the opinion that deaf education needs to be examined differently. For deaf children, these 'special' schools are the only places where deaf culture and language can be developed. The opportunity to develop sign language and deaf culture at home is hardly possible because all of the family members are most likely to be hearing and having very limited

experience of deafness. The same applies to mainstream schools. In other words, mainstreaming is obliterating the deaf community. Gross (1973) asserts that:

Where blacks have been forcibly excluded (segregated) from white society by law, Indians have been forcibly included (integrated) into that society by law. That is what is meant by coercive assimilation- the practice of compelling, through submersion, an ethnic, cultural and linguistic minority to shed its uniqueness. (cited in Kymlicka, 1997, p.238).

Here Ladd (2003) compares disabled people to black people as cited in Gross. He relates the experience of deaf people to the experiences of the Native American people (Indians). Once again, Ladd is trying to distinguish Deaf people (whom he refers to as a linguistic minority), from the general disabled movement. Ladd, through this particular stance and discourse, in my opinion is making the same mistakes as the mainstream discourses: that is, in trying to impose a blanket education policy on deaf children. Ladd refers to deaf people as if they are a homogenous group all requiring the same method of language and education. Oralism, as a blanket policy for all deaf children failed, and so would a policy encouraging all deaf children to attend deaf schools. As mentioned earlier, the new discourse on deafness has tried to move away from defining deafness as a hearing loss. The main point of focus has been the membership of a distinct linguistic community. Hearing loss can range from being hard of hearing to a profound hearing loss. Studies, such as Conrad (1979), show that it is the latter group that is in most need of sign language input. People with a moderate hearing loss may not want to attend a deaf school because they are able to communicate effectively with the hearing world. The issue here should be choice and not the education of all deaf students into special schools.

The question therefore should be asked, who is most able to make choices on behalf of the deaf child? Under the guise of partnership and openness with parents, my experience via my research and working within the Deaf community has shown that the professionals within the realm of education and medicine appear to have the greatest influences on the careers of deaf children. The Deaf community in Britain have long campaigned that the Scandinavian model be adopted. Authors such as Collins (1998) and Pickersgill (1997) highlight the fact that in Sweden and Denmark, members from

the Deaf community assist hearing parents in bringing up their deaf children. The Deaf person provides language support for the child and thereby makes sign language acquisition and his/her socialisation into the deaf community easier. In such circumstances members of the Deaf community contribute in the parent's decision making process with regard to the child's education. It is quite apparent in my research that the parents of the children in my sample, due to their limited understanding of deafness, had very little say in the overall decisions with regard to their children's education. This issue will be addressed further in the fourth chapter 'The Process of Deafness' where it is argued that the career of the deaf child is determined almost from birth with limited choice available to the child's parents.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the complexities involved in deafness and deaf education and why deaf children appear to be passive bystanders in relevant issues that have a direct effect on them. The various discourses at play assume a great deal about deaf children without actively eliciting their views. An apt titled for this chapter could therefore be: Who Decides for Deaf Children? I have not highlighted everything there is to be said about the experiences of deaf children but I have tried to present their narratives in a way that it is independent of the competing discourses. Presently it appears that the discourses claim to do this but not at a level which is accessible to deaf children, or their parents. What is apparent, however, is that deaf children are still being disadvantaged regardless of the type of school they attend. A new discourse is therefore needed, one which actively involves the children themselves so that education can meet their needs rather than vice versa as it appears today. I am aware that by writing this thesis I too am contributing to the discourse but as an outsider as I am not Deaf. Being an outsider does have its advantages especially in relation to objectivity or as May (1997) suggests:

While it is advantageous to be an insider, outsiders (as researchers) can raise questions which may not have been thought of by those who take their own practices for granted. (May, 1997, p.185-6).

The issues regarding objectivity are discussed in the next chapter together with the methods I used in collecting my data. The chapter shows how the discourse shaped the methods I used and how I arrived at my conclusions.

Chapter 3

The Culture and Community of the Deaf: A Critique

3.1 Introduction

Historical research published on local deaf communities is virtually non-existent. Deaf people have been marginalized in many historical writings about culture. The tendency is to focus on a few highly literate and successful late-deafened people rather than everyday members of the deaf community. Thus, one rarely gets a broad view of what it means to be part of an average community. (Katz, 1996 cited in Andrews et al 2004).

The quotation above suggests that what has been written on particular aspects of deaf people's lives has not been balanced or representative of the Deaf community at large. It is apt to emphasise the fact that there is not a deaf community in the same way that it may be argued there is a Deaf community. As I have suggested earlier, deaf people (as opposed to Deaf people) view themselves as members of the hearing community. The marginalization of deaf people in general, according to Katz (1996), has been created by the prevailing dominant discourses. In other words, the discourse is part of the problem. This chapter therefore is not set up to be a mere collection of material that is relevant to my research topic, or a review of acquired and received wisdom. It is a critique of an academic discourse which I wish to suggest, is in itself is part of the problem. It is therefore the analysis of the discourse which forms the bulk of my data and of my thesis in general. My methodology which in part elicits the children's views is organised in such a way that it makes apparent the influences of the competing discourses on the process of deaf education.

This chapter first of all tackles the idea of community, culture and identity from a sociological point of view. It reveals how the parameters which defined these terms are

changing. It discusses for instance, the idea of nationality and the nation state and shows how these concepts are changing since Britain started to take a more active role in Europe. In the same vein I highlight the issues relating to the Deaf community and reveal that its membership is not as clear cut as it once was.

It is impossible to discuss deaf education without making reference to poor academic attainments, the language(s) of instruction, and the teaching methods used. Rather than promote one teaching method over the other, this chapter discusses the relative advantages and disadvantages of the current methods used in deaf education today.

Another theme that is discussed in this chapter is power. Discourses have the power to control and define groups of people. This chapter stresses the importance of power and its role in the construction of discourses and subsequently of people's lives.

Notwithstanding, I will show how, despite these constructions and re-construction, the 'voice'/views of the deaf person can still be identified and presented. As one of the deaf students commented:

This school is great. People talk to me and when I talk to them they understand me. Last week a teacher asked me what I wanted to do when I leave school. I told him that I didn't know...It just nice when people talk to you and don't think that because you are deaf you are stupid.

As highlighted in the previous chapter the literature pertaining to deaf education has been primarily written by hearing educators and researchers, which in itself is an issue. Issues relating to poor reading skills, low academic achievements, and the reasons behind this have been the main focus of research in this area. The new discourse on deafness undertaken mainly by Deaf people, has looked at deaf education in particular, and tends to focus on sociological issues such as identity, language and culture. Such discourse has also focused on the negative aspects of mainstream education which through their policies of integration and normalisation (see Warnock Report, 1978) have impeded the socialisation of deaf children into the Deaf community. This, therefore, has once again highlighted the historical differences between the proponents of mainstream education who have favoured speech as the medium of communication for deaf children, and Deaf people who have advocated the use of BSL within special

schools for deaf children. All these issues are linked to a certain degree but for the purpose of this chapter I shall attempt to discuss these issues thematically and in doing so examine the topics as separate entities.

3.2 Community, Culture and Identity

The terms community, culture and identity are ideas which are to be found throughout the literature pertaining to Deafness. These issues are not only relevant to deaf education. They are also current debates within national, European and foreign policy in relation to countries beyond Europe. Within education the idea of citizenship and citizenship education are now embedded within the national curriculum. Children are to be made aware of what it is to be an active citizen in one's own immediate community and the rights and responsibilities associated with it. In the socio-political realm there has been much debate surrounding the unification of Europe and the subsequent fears of people in relation to the relaxing of border controls. People are now having to reassess their once 'taken for granted' ideas of community and identity. Foreign nationals who aspire to become British citizens have to prove that they have a sufficient awareness of 'British' culture i.e. the culture of the majority, and the ability to speak the indigenous language of the majority, i.e. English. Put differently, the current themes of community, culture and identity as assumed under the umbrella of citizenship are having a paradigmatic effect on our views of the nation state. Habermas (1994) explains that hitherto, the nation state provided both the infrastructure for rational administration and the legal framework for free individual and collective action. The nation state laid the foundations for cultural and ethnic homogeneity on the basis of which it was proved possible to push ahead with the democratisation of government from the late 18th century. Citizenship therefore meant the rights and duties of a homogenous people living within a defined geographical space.

The idea of the nation state as described above cannot absorb the idea of a Deaf community or a Deaf identity which actively distinguishes itself from mainstream society. The Crick Report states that:

A main aim for the whole community should be to find a common sense of citizenship including a national identity that is secure enough to find a place for the plurality of nations, cultures, ethnic identities and religions in the United Kingdom. (Crick/QCA, 1998. 3.14).

It is the idea of the acceptance of 'plurality' which would enable the Deaf community to promote the existence of their distinct culture and language. To understand what is actually meant by these terms however, it would be appropriate to compare the Deaf community with other minority groups.

The terms community and culture are major concepts in the literature pertaining to deafness and Deaf people. Sociologically, the concept of community has moved on from the classical theorists such as Durkheim, Tonnies and Comte who saw 'community' as any set of social relationships operating within certain boundaries, locations or territories (Jary & Jary 1991). As highlighted in the previous chapter Deaf people do not necessarily live within a defined geographical location. Community therefore has a different connotation for Deaf people as opposed to other ethnic or linguistic minority groups such as the African and Caribbean communities in Brixton and the Hasidic Jewish community in Gateshead. Apart from their geographical location, the members of these communities are instantly recognisable due to their outward physical appearance such as the colour of their skin and/or the clothes they wear. Deaf people are not recognisable in these ways. This being the case, it has become an issue of debate as to whether the 'Deaf community' actually exists, and if it does, what are the criteria for membership of the community. Higgins (1980) believes that the mere audiological condition of being deaf does not automatically qualify a person for membership of this community. He then goes on to give three criteria for membership of the Deaf community, namely: identification with the Deaf world; the shared experience which comes with being deaf which could be the sharing of a common language and the discrimination faced by Deaf people in the hearing world; and in the participation in the activities of the community. Although Higgins says that the presence of a hearing impairment does not guarantee membership, it is still the basic requirement any person wishing to be part of the community must have along with use of the community: sign language.

This concept of membership differs from that suggested by Padden (1980) who states that:

A deaf community is a group of people who live in a particular location, share the common goals of its members and in various ways, and work toward achieving these goals. A deaf community may include those who are not themselves Deaf, but support the goals of the community and work with Deaf people to achieve them. (Padden, 1980, p.41).

The above statement appears to be contradicting what was presented earlier. The particular location referred to does not necessarily relate to a specific area where a concentration of Deaf people reside, such as in Martha's Vineyard in the 19th century but in places such as residential schools for deaf children. The main bone of contention with regard to membership of this community is whether the medical condition of deafness is an imperative. Padden (1980) distinguishes between those who are culturally Deaf and are therefore members of the community and those who are medically deaf and therefore, do not see themselves as being members of a distinct Deaf community. The latter are more likely to see themselves as having a hearing impairment (and thus a disability) and choose to communicate via the medium of speech rather than sign language. Padden (1980) believes that the ability to communicate in sign language and identify with Deaf issues such as the opposition to the main discourses on deafness as understood within the hearing world should grant a person membership of this community. Ladd (2003) believes that a hearing loss is imperative for membership but that the degree of hearing loss is inconsequential: what is important is the person's attitude. He does however conclude that partial membership of the community may be granted to hearing children of Deaf adults, hearing parents of deaf children, a person married to a Deaf spouse, or those vocationally involved in the Deaf community through such professions as social work and sign language interpreting.

The whole idea of Deafness, Deafhood and membership of the Deaf Community according to Ladd (2003) is important, not just because they are social constructions but because they also have a direct relevance for the identity and culture of deaf children in schools. As roughly 10% of all deaf children have at least one /Deaf parent (Lewis and

Kellett, 2004), it is safe to assume that without any Deaf role models, their socialization into the Deaf world and the Deaf community will be difficult. The presence of a hearing impairment at birth or within early childhood, introduces a plethora of social, educational, audiological and medical services aimed at normalising the deaf child into the hearing world (Middleton 1992). It is at this point one needs to consider membership of the Deaf community and how this is based on the degree one communicates primarily via the medium of sign and the person's ability to identify with issues relating to deafness. The deaf child has very little control over the medical treatment he or she receives and the subsequent schools they are placed in; the dominant discourse decides that (Rosen, 2003). Of the 26 students I interviewed 25 of them had attended mainstream schools before being transferred to special schools for the deaf. It could be argued that it was only at the point of being 'rejected' by the hearing world due to their inability to adjust to mainstream education that the participation within the Deaf community became an option. Densham (1995) adds that:

Prior to the nineteenth century, the concept of the deaf community did not exist. Deaf people were isolated and dispersed sporadically throughout the whole population, uneducated, undervalued and neglected by society. They were not seen as citizens with rights, but were at first despised, and later pitied, by the ignorant public. (Densham, 1995, p.87).

This highlights the exclusionary nature of communities. Through the years, as Deaf people have been excluded from mainstream society due to education, unemployment and the non-acceptance of their right to use sign language, they too have excluded hearing people from their community through the rejection of hearing aids and the pre-eminence of speech. It is a way of establishing identity. Some Welsh and Irish politicians refuse to speak English in public insisting on their own vernaculars. In doing so they believe that they are pushing to the forefront, their 'national' identities.

It is a strongly held belief by the two spectrums of the discourse relating to deafness that it is within these schools for deaf children that children start to experience what it is to be members of a distinct community. It is argued that it is here students become accustomed to sign language and Deaf culture. This however raises another question: what is culture? Culture according to Brooks (1975)...

Is the distinctive life-way of a people, whether tribesmen, townsmen, or urbanites, who are united by a common language. The dual nature of culture links the thoughts and acts of an individual to the common patterns acceptable to the group (Brookes, 1975, p.21).

Emphasis here is placed on being able to communicate via a common language. In my cohort of 26 students none of them had deaf parents or siblings who were deaf. It is therefore be safe to assume that it was only when the deaf children started at special schools that their primary medium of communication changed from the language spoken by their family members. Sign language was adopted at a later stage in their lives. In a particular sample of 10 students from one of the schools I accessed: 6 of them were born outside of Britain (Uganda, 1; Pakistan, 1; Nigeria, 2; Bangladesh, 2). All of these students confirmed that they all communicated, to varying degrees of competence, in the spoken language of their parents. English was the language in which they were educated and by which they communicated when they first started school in Britain; it was only after they had left their mainstream school setting for their present school that sign language was learned and used as a main medium of communication. This has implications for language acquisition and cognition but this will be discussed in later chapters. The main issue here is the connection with culture and the ability to communicate effectively amongst the members of the group you identify with. Brien (1981) says that the ability to communicate effectively and fluently in BSL is imperative:

Fluency does appear to be related to the level of acceptance one may hope to achieve. In that the values of the community are transmitted by its language, the need for fluency is self evident (Brien, 1981, p.49).

Deaf people in Britain consider BSL to be the natural language of the Deaf community. What was evident during my video interviews with the students was that a majority of the students used Sign Supported English, hereafter (SSE) rather than BSL. Relevant literature would suggest that Deaf people code-switch when communicating with non-deaf people (Woll 1998, Gaustad 1992, Groce, 1985); however it was apparent that for the 3 African students SSE was the limit of their sign communicative abilities. They

admitted that sign language was their third language, English being their second. It should be noted that unlike their Asian peers they did not have a profound hearing loss and so were able to communicate much more readily via speech as well as sign language. The Asian students had a severe to profound hearing loss and their speech was unintelligible. Due to their very limited access to speech their preferred medium of communication invariably became BSL. The Deaf discourse stresses the importance of deaf children being given the opportunity to attend special schools. Due to the realities of family dynamics, it is in these settings that deaf children first learn what it is to be Deaf. In some of these schools students are taught through the medium of sign but it is usually SSE and not BSL. SSE relates to the practice of TC where deaf pupils are encouraged to sign but in English word order so as to develop their speech and/or because this is the form of sign known to the teachers. This was the medium of instruction used in the 3 schools that participated in the study. SSE therefore does not relate directly to Deaf culture because it is an artificially created visual representation of English. A further question to ask, therefore, is whether Deaf schools equate to Deaf communities. Erting (1994) suggests that establishing a basic identity with respect to membership in such a Deaf group is a complex process for deaf children in that the children are surrounded by parents and teachers who are not Deaf. She goes on to state that schools for deaf children are complex linguistic and social environments with interaction among parents, teachers and children shaped, in part, by tensions between two competing identities, Deaf and hearing which are shaped by two languages BSL and SSE in Britain. It appears that this particular discourse on deafness does not appreciate the tensions and the dichotomy faced by deaf people in that membership of two communities (Deaf and hearing) does not appear to be a possibility. This situation becomes even more complex when the children involved are also members of other ethnic minority groups. The issue of identity amongst black children born in Britain has been well documented but relatively very little has been written about deaf children from ethnic minority backgrounds in Britain. The main body of work in this area has been undertaken by Waqar et al (1998) and although it does deal with the issues of culture and identity amongst diverse ethnic groups, it still makes deafness the overarching feature of a person's identity. In my interviews with the students, I asked them to introduce themselves, and did not tell them what to say. One of the students responded thus:

My name is...I am Nigerian, I was born in Nigeria. I came to London because my parents said that I would get a better education here...At home there are not many schools that deaf children can go to.

The issue I am trying to point out here is that the student did not start by saying, 'I am deaf': being Nigerian appeared to be the foremost factor in her identity. Andrews et al (2004) also highlight the issue of ethnicity and nationality as important facets of one's identity:

Ethnic groups emerged as the deaf community became more diverse and as deaf people of different ethnic origins sought each other out...For these reasons, and because people with common ethnic origins tend to bond together and affirm their unique cultural heritages, local and national groups were formed. (Andrews et al, 2004, p.210).

The new discourse on deafness focuses on the discrimination Deaf people face in the hearing world. Much of the literature focuses on how a hearing loss leads to discrimination in schools and access to public services and employment. Deaf people are seen as a homogenous group and members of the Deaf community. Membership of the community is often based on shared experiences however it could be argued that Deaf people from ethnic minorities may suffer discrimination not solely due to their audiological status but also because of their specific race, culture, and ethnicity, as Andrews et al (2004) point out:

Additionally, the experiences of black deaf persons and deaf persons of other ethnic origins clearly differed from the experiences of white deaf persons despite common bonds of deafness. This was due to racist attitudes, both overt and subtle, that have continued to prevail in white American society. (Andrews et al, 2004, p.210).

As cited in the previous page, Andrews et al (2004), believe that ethnic minority groups come together to 'affirm their cultural heritage'. Culture here does not relate to deafness but to the specific observation of religious practices, the eating and avoidance of certain types of food, marriage conventions and clothes which represent nationalities

and ethnicities. The discourse on deafness in relation to culture may put too much emphasis on the acquisition of BSL. Although the definition of culture given by Brooks (1975) does make a common language essential, he also mentions the fact that an important facet of culture is a distinct way of life. There was a time when two of the schools in my sample had a vibrant residential section where deaf children from all over the country boarded, living a distinct 'way of life' outside of their home. It was in these settings that their signing skills were developed and enhanced and where they had the opportunity of living within a distinct community. All the students in my sample live with their families and hence within the hearing world. It is therefore not clear whether they see themselves as deaf or Deaf. What is clear though is that the two competing discourses on deafness try to define who these children are by proposing different educational paths for them. As previously mentioned, the prevalent educational policy which is supportive of mainstreaming resulted in 25 out of the 26 students attending mainstream schools. The students commented that they were given extensive speech therapy, medical check ups and hearing aids so as to aid speech and thereby better access to mainstream education.

For many people deafness is primarily a problem of communication (Lynas, 1994). Watson et al (1999) add:

Indeed, the first concern of many mainstream teachers expecting a deaf child in their class for the first time is how they and other pupils will communicate with the new pupil. Most deaf children in mainstream schools communicate through spoken English, the use of residual hearing through hearing aids and speech-reading (Watson, et al 1999, p.18).

In a way, the education system, which has encouraged the mainstreaming of these pupils, has attempted to make them hearing. It is only when all the support systems fail to make them so that they are transferred to special schools. When interviewed, there was evidence of a common thread which highlighted the fact that unlike before, they no longer felt different nor did they feel the need to fit in. It could be argued that they had assumed a Deaf identity by being exposed to Deaf culture especially since the spoken word was no longer their main channel of communication. Identity, however, should not be solely dependent on which educational setting or environment one is in. A

number of Black people living in Brixton may feel 'culturally' Caribbean and yet some may feel British. On the other hand some may feel an allegiance to both cultures. In other words, people should be allowed to define and identify who they are and to which cultures they align themselves to. This is not a choice which is apparently accorded to deaf children. Kim (1988) gives us a clearer understanding of this point by stating that:

The inseparable relationship between these cultural patterns and an individual's internalized conditions are incorporated into a person's cultural identity...as a complex process of continuing interpretive activity internal to individuals as a result of their acculturation experience (Kim, 1988, p.47).

The 25 students who first attended mainstream schools had common experiences of displacement and isolation. All 26 students were able to access their lessons through sign language which gave them the opportunity to communicate via sign language and also speech if they were able to; but this is where what they have in common ends. The Deaf discourse suggests that by having formed a sense of a Deaf identity in schools these pupils will continue to develop their association with each other by attending youth clubs for young Deaf people (Lane et al 1996). I observed that this 'progression' was only prevalent in one of the schools, perhaps because it still had a skeletal residential facility and the highest number of Deaf staff. There appears to be a link between Deaf members of staff and residential schools. Due to the criteria and qualifications needed for qualified teacher status many would be Deaf teachers have been excluded from this profession (only one of the schools I surveyed had a qualified Deaf member of staff). Andrews et al (2004) report that:

There is an urgent need to train deaf teachers and administrators. One significant hurdle has been the difficulties in obtaining professional certification in many states. Moores (2001) reports that none of the deaf teachers in one residential school passed the state teacher's competency test at the first try. The test had a vocal component, which is an invalid representation of these deaf teachers' communicative abilities. (Andrews et al p.130).

Deaf people working in schools have traditionally been employed as teaching assistants and residential care workers. The demise of residential schools for deaf children has

resulted in a huge reduction in the number of Deaf members of staff in special schools. It should be highlighted that the situation within mainstream settings is even worse:

One of the social consequences of oral approaches for the development of identity is that Deaf people themselves have been excluded from the education of deaf children, with obvious consequences for the development of their Deaf identity (Gregory, 1992, p109).

I took part in a six month participant observation in one of the schools and discovered that the Deaf members of staff took charge of the out of school activities which involved taking the pupils to age related Deaf clubs. This was a vital link between school and the Deaf community at large.

If the sample I interviewed had a positive Deaf identity one would have expected their association with Deaf people outside school to have continued. The after school activities revealed that a significant majority of the pupils often associated with their siblings and friends in their neighbourhood who were all hearing. When asked how they managed to communicate with hearing children, they all mentioned the use of various methods of communication ranging from sign, speech, gestures and the written word. The non-association with other deaf people outside of school does not, according to Lane et al (1996), only affect their acculturation into the Deaf community, it can also have a detrimental effect on their academic attainments:

Since out of school activities contribute to academic achievement in hearing children, their lack in most non-residential Deaf education programs in the U.S. (sic) today may be contributing to the poor achievement of most Deaf students (Lane et al, 1996, p291).

Lane et al (1996) do not distinguish between after school activities which are purely educational in nature and those which have a more social/leisure aspect to them.

My conclusions are that not being exposed to BSL and positive Deaf role models from a very early age located these pupils more in the hearing world than the Deaf community. The advent of new technology such as subtitled and signed films and programmes has

meant that deaf people have been able to participate in activities that were once the sole domain of hearing people.

It is the case that special schools for deaf children are not as prevalent as they once were about 20 years ago. According to Watson et al (1999) 85% of all deaf students attend mainstream schools. There is also no longer the number of Deaf members of staff that there once was. Also medical technology in the form of cochlear implants as (Robinson) 1998 asserts, has resulted in many of these deaf pupils being able to regain some sensation hearing and being placed in a mainstream. However, all the pupils I interviewed all felt more comfortable in their present special school settings. The pressure of audiological tests and speech therapy was no longer an issue. A number of the pupils I interviewed felt pleased because they were able to develop other areas of their lives such as sign language and friendships. These issues are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

The special schools might represent a microcosm of the Deaf community but a community is only what people make it. These schools do not just address the issues of sign language and more appropriate methods of teaching, but also other areas of culture such as race and religion.

As mentioned above, a signifier of a community is its coming together to fight for certain causes. The Deaf community is adamant in its opposition to the mainstreaming of deaf children, the non-promotion of BSL as the primary language of instruction in schools and various forms of medical input aimed at making Deaf people 'hearing'. The fragmentation of the Deaf community has, to some extent been caused by the closure of a number of schools for deaf children (both residential and day). This has, it may be argued, in effect weakened this community. A weakened community, it could be argued, will have a weakened culture. Urion, (1991) however, warns of the identification and liberation of the Deaf community being linked to culture. According to him, culture is a nebulous feature because it can never be described adequately but more importantly it implies 'that Deaf culture exists only as reactive to majority hearing culture' (p.12).

3.3 Educational Provision

Investigations into the education of deaf children have focused mainly on educational provision and academic attainment and such studies have tried to show a link between provision and attainments (Quigley and Kretschmer 1982; Paul, 1988; Lynas 1994; Powers, 1998). Although there have been a lot of arguments and counter-arguments as to the best way of educating deaf students, what is evident is that deaf school leavers have relatively poor reading and comprehension skills compared to mainstream school leavers (Conrad 1979; Powers et al). As I mentioned in the previous chapter, much of the debate has centred on the relative benefits of mainstreaming and special education which equates to oral instruction in schools as opposed to tuition which is undertaken through the medium of a sign language. Ostensibly, Oralism attempts to minimise the deficiency of a hearing loss by making the most of an individual's residual hearing through the use of various aids and adaptations. Sign language is discouraged in favour of the 'normal language' of speech of the majority population. The goal of oral education has been to assimilate the deaf child as much as possible into the hearing world (Gregory, 1992). It is thought that if deaf students are able to negotiate mainstream education successfully, they will be able to access the hearing world more readily in that they will have the opportunity to apply for the same jobs hearing people do. Recent research by Powers et al (1997) suggests that deaf students in mainstream schools attain better GCSE results than their counterparts in special schools. A non-critical reading would suggest that Oralism is educationally more effective than methods which use sign language as the medium for instruction. This deduction would, however, be unfounded, because the deaf students within mainstream settings would not have experienced disruptions in their education by being compelled to attend special schools. Also a number of the deaf students who have successfully negotiated mainstream education are more likely to have mild or moderate hearing losses, unlike deaf students within special schools, who are more likely to have a hearing loss within the severe to profound range. The former are, therefore, able to access spoken language and speech more readily than the latter. Oralism has been beneficial but only for a very few such deaf students. Due to the fact that Oralism is premised on the claim that all deaf students can be taught in the same way, it has been a failure for a significant

number of deaf students. Conrad (1979) in his seminal study concluded that there is a correlation between hearing loss and reading ability. He also concluded that the mean reading age of the average deaf school leaver was about nine. He noted that roughly 50% of all deaf school leavers with a hearing loss of 85db and over (i.e. a severe to profound hearing loss) had very poor reading and comprehension skills and therefore, classed them as being illiterate. Conrad's research was mainly carried out amongst deaf students in mainstream settings. Just as the 1880 Milan Conference was the impetus for Oralism within schools in Europe and North America, Conrad's seminal work brought about an appraisal of Oralism with schools. According to Gregory (1992):

At that time the results created quite a stir and one reaction was the introduction of signing into some classrooms...The approach is still English based and in the USA this is more often referred to as manually coded English...While there has been some local success, it is still clear that that many deaf children are still not reaching their full potential. (Gregory 1992, p.110).

Manually coded English or Total Communication as it is referred to in Britain has afforded a number of deaf students access to education which was once denied them in mainstream/oral settings. As I have mentioned previously Total Communication has offered some deaf students the opportunity to use sign which has had a positive effect on their language development and culture. What is also evident is that just as Gregory asserts, these students are still failing to attain their full academic potential. Of the 20 who sat GCSE exams, none of them had managed five passes at 'C' grade and only two of them managed passes higher than 'C'. The break down of their results is included in the table in the chapter two.

Paul (1988) adds credence to the poor academic attainments under this method by saying that in relation to the USA:

Since the 1970's, most deaf students have been educated in Total Communication programmes in which some form of signing and speech is used simultaneously for communication and instructional purposes...most students are still functionally illiterate upon graduation from high school. (Paul,1998, p.87).

Once again it would be overly simplistic to claim that there is a direct correlation between deafness and academic under-achievement for there are a number of other variables such as socio-economic factors and access to appropriate language that come in to play. Equating deafness with academic failure adds credence to a popular view of deafness that was put forward by psychologists such as Mykleburst (1960) who stated that:

A sensory deprivation limits the world of experience. It deprives the organism of some of the material resources from which the mind develops. Because total experience is reduced, there is an imposition on the balance and equilibrium of all psychological processes. (Mykleburst, 1960, p.1).

The poor academic achievements of deaf school leavers over the years would suggest that the psychological perspective offers an accurate account of their cognitive ability Fitz-Gibbon (1996) however, warns us about reading too much into raw quantitative data in the form of performance indicators. She asks us to look closely as to what exactly is being measured and how these measurements are done. A very important feature that is often over-looked is the value added dimension (both qualitative and quantitative). There is evidence to suggest from my research that the students started making significant academic progress after they were transferred to special schools. For a start they were deemed able enough to sit GCSE exams, but more importantly for them, they had assumed a sense of self worth. This can be seen in some of the responses the student gave when I asked them about their identity as a deaf person:

I don't know how I feel about being deaf, I'm just deaf. I not sick, I'm just a person who can't hear properly. I don't see deafness as a problem but I think that some hearing people do. I see them staring at me when I am signing to my friends.

I hated my old school; I hated the teachers because they were always shouting at me if I couldn't follow what they were saying. I like this school because I can understand everything the teacher tells me. I will never go back to my old school.

I'm not stupid, I am deaf.

Levine (1981) a contemporary of Mykleburst, highlighted the fact that the psychological tests he administered to his sample of deaf children were not appropriate. Levine used The Hand Test which is more suited to deaf children. Andrews et al (2004) point out that because of this change of test:

...her works have stood the test of time. She was among the first to suggest that the environment was a critical factor in the development of the deaf child, and therefore its influence required critical study. (Andrews et al, 2004, p.4).

Also, as I have already mentioned, the special schools added a cultural and positive identity aspect, which was lacking in their previous schools. Bullinger and Ravens-Sieberer (1995) equate this added dimension to 'quality of life':

...how a person feels. Psychologically and physically, how he or she gets along with other persons a how he or she copes with everyday life... a multidimensional construct covering physical, emotional, mental, social and behavioural components of well-being...the ability to fulfil age related activities. (Bullinger and RavenSieberer, 1995, p.245).

This is what the recent discourse on deafness has been trying to champion, by insisting on an educational system and environment that can deliver these goals even though they are not easily quantifiable or feature prominently in things that are assessed in regards to league tables. What Deaf people are insistent on is an educational system which promotes the use of BSL as the primary medium of instruction and as a language of study. In my study, however, the children did not appear to be overly concerned regarding what mode of sign language was used in their schools:

The reason why I like my school is because I am not forced to speak. In ...school, the teachers kept telling me to use my voice, they didn't like me signing. Although the teachers in this school tell me to use my voice we all use sign language.

I find sign language much easier than English but I know that it is good to learn how to talk because you can use the phone. I just prefer sign language because it is easy.

I don't know the kind of sign language I use, I just use sign language.

Arguably both Oralism and TC have not delivered with regards to this aspect of education. Also what is indisputable is the fact that both Oralism and TC have not significantly raised the academic standards of the majority of deaf school leavers.

The success of a school in terms of academic attainments is what a number of parents look at when deciding what school their charges should attend. This means that exam results still play a significant part in the selection of schools. Using this criteria as a standard it is quite relevant to state that schools for deaf children using the oral/aural methods and TC have not ranked amongst schools that could be classed as 'successful' or 'good'. This however is not necessarily directly due the children's loss of hearing but that deaf children are exposed to an education system which is not based on their first language. It should be emphasised, that just because TC has not been beneficial, in terms of academic attainments for the majority of deaf children, it does not mean that this method of teaching should be stopped. Some deaf children do thrive academically in TC environments. Heathlands School in Berkshire received a very positive assessment does it last Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) inspection in 2002. It should be noted that the School operates within the philosophy of TC:

The school has a Total Communication approach to its work. As each child's language develops, the type of communication varies according to each child's needs and preference. (OFSTED Report, 2002, p.7).

The report also mentions that the standard of education which is evidenced in the students' GCSE grades. What this Report highlights is the flexibility of approach the School has towards languages. The Report highlights this as being one of the main reasons why the students attending this school thrive. The problems deaf children face in a number of other schools is that the system of education is based solely on spoken

English. Due to this fact many Deaf children are attempting to access information in a language which they do not fully grasp. This is why a number of Deaf people advocate bilingual schools.

Proponents of the Deaf discourse such as Pickersgill (1991, 1997) and Mashie (1995) believe that both Oralism and Total Communication have failed a significant number of deaf students due to the fact that these methods do not employ the natural language of Deaf people- BSL. They therefore propose a relatively new method in Deaf education called Sign Bilingualism which has BSL as the primary means of communication. Simply defined, a bilingual person is someone who has the ability to communicate effectively in two languages. Bilingualism as it relates to deaf education is common in Sweden and Denmark. In Britain the theory of bilingual education is not new, only its practice is. As far back as 1975 the importance of bilingual and bicultural education was being raised. The Bullock report 1975 for instance stated that:

The school should adopt a positive attitude to its pupils' bilingualism and wherever possible help to maintain and deepen their knowledge of their mother tongue. (cited in Gregory, 1992).

The Swann report (1985) in line with the Bullock report also encouraged the bilingual/bicultural approach:

Children should not lose contact with the language, culture and religion of their family and community from which they derive important features of their sense of identity and cultural community. (cited in Gregory, 1992, p.111).

It is evident from these two reports that bilingual education has a very important role to play in the cultural and language development of a child. Although the Deaf discourse champions bilingual education, it should be noted that bilingual education as proposed by Bullock and Swann involves spoken languages rather than sign languages. They are, therefore, ostensibly a blueprint for the speakers of more than one language. Bilingualism in deaf education may therefore not work as smoothly as it does for speakers of two languages within mainstream settings. An important feature of

bilingual education is that the native speaker has competence in two languages (Bloomfield, 1935). Titone (1972) defines bilingualism as:

the individual's capacity to speak a second language while following the concepts and structures of that language rather than paraphrasing his or her mother tongue (Titone, 1972, p.11).

For Sign Bilingualism to work, Deaf people would need to achieve native 'speaker' competence in BSL. As I have intimated previously, this will be very difficult for a number of deaf people to achieve. As over 90% of deaf children have hearing parents it is very unlikely that the first language within the family will be BSL. If we are to believe that there is a critical period for language learning as stated by linguists like Lenneberg (1967), then by the time a deaf child starts attending a special school for deaf children, this period may have elapsed. As SSE is the most likely form of sign to be used in these settings one needs to ask how BSL can be implemented at diagnosis.

It should be noted here that according to the proponents of Sign Bilingualism the priority is to of acquire a second language but in its written form. The argument in deaf education which follows this model, is that deaf children who have a solid first language foundation in BSL can use this language to buttress their learning of the majority language (English) in its written form. Lynas (1994) believes that for this approach to be successful:

A verbal language such as English should only be taught when the first language, sign language, has become established in the developing deaf child (Lynas, 1994, p.60).

Pickersgill (1997) believes that this approach to deaf education will have optimum benefits (educationally and culturally) for deaf students. Due to the fact that BSL is at the core of this approach, native sign language users (Deaf people) will have to be employed:

A sign bilingual policy places emphasis on the role of Sign Language and Deaf adults in the linguistic and educational development of deaf children. An

effective bilingual education should reflect a range of criteria beyond those purely related to academic achievement (Pickersgill, 1997, p.89).

The reason why bilingualism in deaf education has risen in prominence since the 1990's has been due to the fact that the previous methods employed in deaf education resulted in very low academic attainments for deaf students as a whole. Cummins (1984) believes that bilingualism can stem this flow:

We can predict that students instructed through a minority language for all or part of the school day will perform in majority language academic skills as well or better than equivalent students instructed entirely through majority language (Cummins, 1984, p.150).

Sign bilingualism is not without its problems. It is a relatively new concept in deaf education in Britain and there are still a number of issues that are yet to be resolved concerning the status of BSL in this approach. This concept will be discussed in greater detail in the sixth chapter.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter has strived to portray the history of deaf education as a catalogue of inappropriate school placements, low academic attainments, and a system which does not involve consultations with its pupils. Until very recently the only prominent discourse on deafness was by those who were not Deaf themselves. Since the 1980's however, Deaf people themselves have contributed to the discourse and have attempted to redress this imbalance of perspective. Authors such Bahan (1996), Hoffmeister (1995) and Lane (1996) have all attempted to relay the 'truths' of deaf education from a Deaf perspective. What needs to be highlighted, however, is that the views and perspectives from the different sides of the discourse do not reflect or account for the experiences of a number of deaf students in my survey. There did not appear to be a tension of being members of both the hearing and Deaf communities. For a number of them, the label of deafness was not the over-arching symbol of their identity. Other aspects of their identity such as nationality, religion, gender and race appeared to play a greater part. What my interaction with these students has shown is that they are not

lending their identity to interpretation of others. Their interaction with the hearing world has meant that their association with the Deaf community has been significantly reduced. Their access to BSL is equally difficult due to their non-attendance at Deaf clubs but this, however, has not affected their Deaf identity: it has helped them to redefine it.

Chapter 4

Recording and Observing 'Silence'

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is intended as a brief overview of issues relating to the methodology I have used in this study. In this chapter the concepts of language, power and policy and how they relate to the methods I used are addressed. The researcher is the link between what is observed, recorded and analysed. The researcher is therefore in a position to observe and analyse phenomena according to the particular point of view he may hold. The researcher's perceived subjectivity is therefore a hindrance to objective analysis. A particular problem associated with discourse analysis is that of neutrality: every discourse claims to hold the truth. Discourse is never neutral, or as Rushdie (1990) claims: '...for every story there is an anti-story (p.60). As an outsider and supporting no particular perspective within the deaf discourses, I argue that I have taken steps to be as objective as it is possible within the framework of my research. My methods address both sides of the argument. The methods I used, for example, interviews, gave the deaf children the chance to discuss their views and relay their experiences of education in a way the various discourses have not done. In effect, to a certain extent, my methods and analysis did not support one discourse over the other.

4.2 Methodology

The previous chapters have highlighted the fact that the history of deaf education cannot simply be reduced to a debate on academic attainments of deaf children alone. The traditional deaf school is a microcosm of the wider Deaf community and it has been claimed that through these schools, deaf children become knowledgeable about Deaf culture and sign language, (in Britain, BSL). Although culture and language are

important components in deaf education, there have been differences between the main discourses regarding the importance of these components (Lane et al 1996, Wamae and Kang'ethe-Kamau 2004). This has meant that the education of deaf children is still premised by the relative advantages and disadvantages of the various methods employed within deaf education. It is the case that education in Britain today is very much attainment led and therefore the success and failure of schools and their methods of teaching are under constant scrutiny. Due to this fact, the various methods of teaching deaf children have been espoused often to the exclusion of other issues. The main issues in deaf education, until very recently has been whether deaf students should be taught through the medium of a spoken or a signed language. Both of these methods have advantages and disadvantages. Proponents of the use of the English language as a medium for teaching deaf children (the oral/aural method) argue that English is a language of power. It is one of the most widely used languages in the world and is the medium through which people access good jobs and higher education (Phillipson, 1992). Pennycook (1995) adds further that it is the language for upward and outward mobility. Unfortunately, it is also the language of exclusion, for many people with varying degrees of deafness have limited access to both its written and spoken form. Unlike English, a signed language, such as BSL, is not as widely used and accepted. It has therefore been argued that if deaf children are only proficient in sign language their choices in life will be greatly limited. In other words, unlike English, BSL does not have the power, status and recognition needed to access the main apparatuses in society. Ogden and Lipsett (1982) sum up this contemporary view very well by stating that:

Speech and the comprehension of speech should be the primary objective of educating the deaf. Oralists' attempt to provide deaf children with the tools that will enable them to become integrated in the hearing world – speech and speech reading. They argue that with these tools deaf people have the same opportunities as hearing people to participate and benefit from society and that without them deaf people are cut off from most of society, psychologically, if not functionally. (Ogden and Lipsett, 1982, p.92).

This does not, however, mean that spoken English is superior to BSL or that sign languages are inferior to spoken languages. The primary purpose of any language is communication. A significant number of deaf people find that sign language offers them

the most effective means for communication. For a number of deaf people, sign language gives them access to a distinctive community and membership of a unique culture which is based on their use of sign language. In chapter 1, I mentioned the fact that the polemic between which method(s) of communication will best meet deaf students needs has meant that since the Milan Conference in the 19th century, deaf education has not really progressed beyond this debate. It should be noted, however, that there have been recent advances in technology ranging from digital earphones to cochlear implants which, it is suggested, resulted in an increasing number of deaf children able to access speech and sound and therefore attend mainstream schools. Not all authors, it should be stressed, view the debate in 'either' 'or' terms. Robert Johnson in his foreword in Erting (1994) states:

Erting implies that the optimal learning environment for deaf children may need to include both deaf and hearing educators, partly so that a model of parity and cooperation between a deaf and hearing adult can be witnessed, but also so that a repertoire of linguistic, socio-linguistic, and cultural skills can be consciously developed. (Erting, 1994, p.vi).

Research has highlighted the plight of deaf people within education (Conrad 1979; Powers et al 1997; Andrews et al 2004). Although most research focuses on the difficulties deaf children experience in primary and secondary schools, it needs to be stressed that these difficulties are not confined to primary and secondary education. The difficulties experienced in schools are mirrored within further education. Anderson (1993) highlights this trend and claims that the skills (or lack of) deaf children acquire in secondary schools do not equip them for education at a higher level. She recalls the statement made by a deaf student:

The deaf that do go to college have to keep trying hard to stay in the program...Compared to hearing people; there is a greater number of deaf people that fail in college. They fail during college because they have big problems understanding and do not learn anything at all. (cited in Anderson, 1993, p.32).

My research highlights the fact that very few students in my sample who sat their GCSE's achieved a pass at grade 'C'. In this, my research is similar to a number of

other studies in this area (for example Paul and Quigley, 1994). Rather than focus on quantitative data, my methodology has tried to focus on the qualitative reasons for their academic achievement. Furthermore, it tries to encapsulate the experiences of these students within education in a way that will enable their views to be considered within the competing discourses. This process in itself is problematic for the researcher. France (2004) stresses the view that the researcher has the power to influence the presentation of views by the design of the questions he asks. He argues that:

It is impossible to separate out the voice of the researcher- given that they have selected the topic, designed the questions and constructed the final report. To see 'giving a voice' as a valueless project is to deny the politics of doing research. (France, 2004, p.179).

France (2004) does acknowledge, however, that it is important to consider other perspectives even though the aim of the research is to present the views of the children:

Others may also have important contributions to make:, for example, parents and professionals may have an alternative perspective that adds to our understanding of the broader social and cultural processes that help shape and impact upon the lives of young people. (France, 2004, p.179).

It was not my intention to undertake a large scale survey of deaf school leavers' GCSE results but a study that would carefully examine variables such as disruption, links with the Deaf community in school, family dynamics and how these affect a cohort of deaf students' views on their identity and culture. At the same time my research has attempted to move away from the 'deafness equals academic failure' strand of research and tried to incorporate the views of deaf students. By approaching my research in this way, I have been able to highlight the plight of deaf students both within formal education and from their own perspectives. My methodology has been qualitative; in line with the focus of my research i.e. the experiences of deaf students within formal education. I have, however, used both qualitative and quantitative findings to support the argument presented in the thesis.

4.3 Issues of Power Relating to Research and Methodology

Within education, deaf students are relatively powerless. They are taught by teachers who are, in the majority of cases, not deaf and through a medium that is largely based on English. This in itself creates problems in comprehension. In the fifth chapter of the thesis (*The Process of Deafness*) I discuss the fact that it is not uncommon for deaf children to feel frustrated within mainstream settings. Wilbur and Hoemann (1982) support this view and add that:

With generally negative attitudes towards education, English grammar, and hearing authority figures, and overwhelming feelings of inferiority, frustration and failure, deaf students are not positively motivated to communicate in the ways which are encouraged by hearing society. (Wilbur and Hoeman, 1982, p.9).

The students in my sample all attended schools which adhered to the philosophy of Total Communication. Although sign language is permitted, its use in the classroom takes the form of Sign Supported English (SSE) i.e. signs organised in the same word order as the English language. These students were being prepared for the hearing world, hence their preparation for their GCSE exams which presumes a linguistic and cultural knowledge of English. I was therefore wary of entering into this subject as a hearing researcher trying to understand a culture of which I was not a part. I was embarking on this particular research project as a non-Deaf person.

Ladd (2003) is aware of this power differential and states that:

Broadly speaking, the traditional structures and discourses of academia are characterised by a privileged subject investigating an underprivileged object. This is closely linked to traditional beliefs about objectivity in social science research, which expresses concern about the accuracy of results presented by members of minority groups investigating their own communities. (Ladd, 2003, p.267).

Participant observation formed part of the methodology and I was conscious of the fact that I did not want to present myself as an archetypal 19th century anthropologist such as Malinowski, studying cultures that were deemed inferior to my own. Whether deliberate or not, the writings of such ethnographers revealed the supposed superiority of European culture over the ones in that they were studying. Studies relating to deafness according to Ladd (2003) can be compared to the work done by European ethnographers in Africa in the 19th century. Ladd (2003) argues that research into deafness has mainly been undertaken by people who are not Deaf themselves; such studies have shown people without hearing loss to be cognitively and educationally superior to deaf people. Hence, the discourse relating to deaf people has been characterised by accounts of under-achievement, under-employment and a level of dependency associated with low socio-economic status. In order to counter the predominant discourse on deafness, Ladd (2003) believes that Deaf people should study their own community, rather than adhere to what has hitherto been written about them. This will, however, raise questions regarding the objectivity of the research undertaken. It has long been thought that studying one's own 'culture' or community would result in less objective research than that produced by neutral researchers. The advantage of being an 'outsider' or 'stranger' is that my findings are much more likely to be treated as authentic and valid. I do however realise that my status as a 'hearing person' may be viewed as value-laden by some Deaf people and therefore my conclusions may not be seen as neutral or valid. Validity in qualitative research is not simply a matter of the exact findings being replicated; the issue of good practice is central. Tindall (2002) in explaining the term says that:

Validity is an integral element. It has to do with the adequacy of the researcher to understand and represent other people's meanings. Validity instead becomes largely the quality of the knower, in relation to his/her data and enhanced by different vantage points and forms of knowing- it is, then, personal, relational and contextual. (Tindall, 2002, p.143).

I hope that the methods I used within my research enabled the deaf students to present their views freely and allowed them to engage with me in a way that helped them truly to represent their experiences. I was aware of the power differential between myself and the students and therefore of the need mindful to reduce it. Rather than interview

the students on my first visit, I joined them in the playground and had lunch with them. Having an informal chat with them made them more relaxed with me. In one of the schools I had spent six months in 'residence' so the students were already used to me. Tindall (2002) acknowledges the power of the researcher/observer and the importance of reducing it; she advises that:

The aim is here is to equalize the power relationship, to democratise the process to the extent that we can ensure that there is no exploitation. This begins from the very first point of contact and has much to do with the researcher qualities and values, their interpersonal skills and the degree to which they choose to become actively engaged with participants (Tindall, 2002, p.154).

Before I started interviewing the students, permission was sought and received from their parents, the school, and from the deaf students themselves. I also raised the issue of confidentiality, and gave assurances that none of them would be personally identified in the thesis. They were also given the opportunity to opt out of the research process at any time. It is hoped that my approach helped to reduce the power differential between the students and myself.

The next sections of this chapter focus on the actual methodology employed; the process, and its strengths and weaknesses.

4.4 The Process

As previously discussed, I wanted to move away from the negativity associated with deaf students. I also wanted to avoid treating deaf students as a homogenous group because doing so would not necessarily highlight the different experiences of deaf individuals. As my research was to focus on the experiences of deaf students who use sign language as their first or preferred means of communication, I sent letters to eight (deaf) establishments in the country. In the letter (see Appendix A) I briefly explained what my research was about and asked if they had students who matched my criteria, I also enquired whether or not sign language was used as a medium for teaching within the schools. Of the eight schools, six responded and of the six schools that responded

one was a primary school; the other refused me permission to include their school. Four schools agreed to participate in this study but I decided to use three because the fourth was in the South West of England and was, therefore, deemed too far for me to visit regularly.

Table 4.1
Participating Schools

School	Number of Students = 26 (Year 10)
School A (North-East England)	7
School B (North Yorkshire)	9
School C (London)	10

Unlike mainstream schools, schools for deaf children have relatively small numbers of pupils¹⁰. In one of the schools in my sample, there were no students in year 11. Due to the fact that my research was to focus on students in their final two years of school, I sent out a questionnaire to each of the schools to find out if they had a range of students within the criteria I had established (see Appendix B). I needed to know if they had enough students in year 10 who would be moving in to year 11 (see breakdown of schools and students in the table above). Powers et al (1997) are aware of the declining student numbers in schools for deaf children, they state that:

Special schools are solely for deaf pupils. Fewer pupils are now in special schools as increasing numbers are educated in mainstream schools. (Powers et al 1997, p.141).

I was initially surprised at the small numbers of students in each of these schools and wondered how a sense of belonging to a Deaf community could be developed amongst such a small population. I was also aware that such small numbers would equate with limited funding. At the time of writing my thesis, two of the schools that participated in my research had been threatened with closure due to falling numbers. Falling numbers meant that there were other immediate concerns such as the limited number of subjects

¹⁰ The incidence of severe to profound deafness amongst school-aged children is quite low. Children who have mild to moderate hearing loss are likely to be fitted with hearing aids and deemed able to access education in a mainstream setting

students could choose to study. As each school had relatively few teachers, some teachers taught a number of subjects. In School B, one teacher taught three specialist subjects areas: Design and Technology, IT and Science. In School A, some teachers taught in both the primary and secondary sections of the school. As I did not have a control group which had one teacher per subject, I could not say with any great confidence that the students were not adversely affected by such teachers being responsible for the teaching of more than one subject. The issue regarding student numbers is discussed in more detail in the fifth chapter.

4.5 Triangulation

The nature of my research required that information be gathered using different methods. With the deaf children, I communicated using sign language (see Appendix C regarding interviews with the students) and with the teachers and other members of staff I used speech. Using speech alone to gather information would have meant that the views of the deaf students would not have been obtained. I also discovered that collecting data from students and teachers alone would not give me the historical and theoretical background I needed to produce an overview of their situation. For validity and academic rigour, I decided to use a triangulation of methods. Triangulation, according to Tindall (2002):

...allows illumination from multiple standpoints, reflecting a commitment to thoroughness, flexibility and differences of experience. Traditionally there has often been the reliance on one method of data collection and analysis. We need to recognise that all researchers, perspectives and methods are value laden, biased, limited as well as illuminated by their framework, particular focus and blind spots. Triangulation makes use of combinations of methods, investigators, perspectives etc., thus facilitating richer and potentially more valid interpretations. (Tindall, p.145).

Manion and Cohen (1980) further explain that over-dependence on a particular method of data collection and interpretation will invariably distort the overall picture. As my research focuses on competing discourses, using one method to collect data may result

in one discourse being discussed more fully to the exclusion of the other. They are of the opinion that:

Much research has employed particular methods or techniques out of methodological parochialism or ethnocentrism. Methodologists often push particular pet methods either because those are the only ones they have familiarity with, or because they believe their methods are superior to others. (Manion and Cohen, 1980, p.209).

Manion and Cohen (1980) are quick to point out that triangulation does not prescribe or suggest which methods the researcher should use. The potential problem with triangulation therefore is deciding which methods to use. I did not have a problem in deciding which research methods to use. As the research was discourse based I was aware that a review of the literature on deafness and deaf education would have to be undertaken. The previous chapter highlighted the main areas of discourse on which I focused. Other material collected included information on the various schools gathered from members of staff and the schools' prospectuses. In addition to reading relevant information relating to deafness, I chose to undertake a period of participant observation in one of the schools. Other methods of data collection included semi-structured interviews and questionnaires.

4.6 Data Collection

Before I decided which methods I was going to use to obtain information from the deaf students, I first of all collected some background information. The purpose was to gain a better understanding of the issues which have impacting on the experiences of the deaf students through the years. Engaging in this process gave me the opportunity to form various hypotheses and therefore structure my questions accordingly. Without knowing that the majority of the students in my sample had attended mainstream schools previously, I would not have asked them to relay these experiences to me. Reading policy documents relating to deaf education gave me a clearer understanding of the direction the main discourses were following. Such policy documents included the Warnock Report (1978). This policy document is largely responsible for the

mainstreaming of a number of students who are assessed as having special educational needs. The Report clarified for me the reasons why schools for deaf children were experiencing a perennial fall in student numbers. The direct effect of this policy was that the demand for special schools were 'politically' stifled resulting in school closures. The result of this has been that most deaf students are now educated within Partial Hearing Units or mainstream classes which in effect means mainstream education with additional support. The students who are not able to access mainstream education with added support are then given the opportunity of attending special schools for deaf children. Reading the policy documents gave me an understanding as to why deaf schools have relatively small pupil populations. In one of the schools, which formed part of my sample, each year group had an average of 10 students.

4.6.1 School Prospectuses:

As mentioned above, I had written to various schools to find out if they had the right type of students of the type I wished to research and an education policy that encouraged signed communication as a medium for teaching. I also collected from each of the schools a copy of their latest prospectus. Within these publications were the schools' mission statements and ethos, educational policy, the range of academic work undertaken, as well as school numbers. The information I gleaned from these publications formed the basis of my interviews with the head teachers and year heads of year:

School A: The school provides a Total Communication environment. Two handed finger spelling and Sign Supported English are used to supplement speech, lip reading and appropriate aided residual hearing to facilitate language development and successful communication. British Sign Language is recognised, accepted and used as an important part of the school's Total Communication approach.

School B: At...School we provide education for deaf children aged from four to seventeen who will benefit from specialist help we can offer in supporting the on-going development of language and communication skills and in providing a

range of teaching approaches...Children can be admitted at any time during the school year and at any age from four to sixteen.

School C: The particular language needs of deaf children are considered in methods of presentation used. For this reason the use of language (both BSL and SSE) is an integral part of the school's communication policy.

It was only when I started analysing the data that I had collected that I realised that the school brochures/prospectuses was also part of the discourses. Each of the schools portrayed themselves as being somewhere in between the ongoing polemics within deaf education. This is important because affirming one method of education over the other is likely to alienate a certain group of people. In other words these documents serve as tools of marketing. School A, being an independent school has to market itself more rigorously than the other two schools because the Local Education Authority in which it is located does not refer its deaf children to the school. The practice of the Authority is to send all deaf children within its catchment area to mainstream schools. The survival of the school therefore depends on the patronage of other Educational Authorities. Although I did not explore this with the Head Teacher, my feeling is that due to its independent status it may try and be all things to all people. In the market place supply has to be tailored to meet demand. My argument is that, if there is an overwhelming demand to for a particular approach to educating deaf children then the school may have to adapt to meet this demand.

It is also interesting to note that School A is very frank about its adherence to the principles of Total Communication. Total Communication may be located as being between Oralism and Manualism.

4.6.2 Interviews with Head Teachers:

Regarding interviews, Edwards and Talbot (1997, p.86-87) are of the opinion that:

Interviews, if well done, allow the voices of the participants to be heard and so to direct the analysis and interpretation of events...While poor questionnaires may nevertheless yield useful data, a poor interview is of little use.

The interviews were semi-structured and recorded on to audio tape cassettes. Having the interviews recorded on to tape meant that I could transcribe them in my own time and contact the interviewees again if I needed certain issues to be further clarified. Due to the fact that all the head teachers were not deaf, video recordings were not deemed necessary. Using a tape recorder was cheaper and less cumbersome for me. It was also more convenient for the head teachers as interviewing them did not mean having to set up complex apparatus.

Prior to interviewing the students, I interviewed the three head teachers (see interview schedule in Appendix D). I wanted to know their views on deaf education and on the types of students they had in their schools. It was interesting to note that, even though these three schools were separate and in different parts of the country, they all seemed to have similar viewpoints regarding their students. They commented on their belief that the educational system had failed their students rather than the students themselves being failures. They also concurred that a number of mainstream schools possess neither the expertise nor the resources to cope with all levels of deafness. Within their own schools, the majority of the qualified teachers had in addition to their standard teaching qualifications, specialist training in teaching deaf students. It is not mandatory for teachers in mainstream schools to have this qualification and training. As I mentioned in the first two chapters, the majority of deaf students within special schools are likely to have attended a mainstream school before moving to the special school. In the London school (School C), all but one had had uninterrupted education. The only person who had been in the same school without change was a child with additional educational needs.¹¹

All the head teachers mentioned that the students who had transferred from mainstream settings to their school all came with 'baggage'. When asked the question: 'Describe what the students were like at the point of transferring to your school?' The head teacher (School A) replied:

'They had very poor self-esteem, disruptive behaviour, and language skills below what would be considered appropriate for their age. This is not surprising, since all the students came from families who did not sign and attended schools where sign language was neither used nor encouraged'.

¹¹ All three schools had a nursery, primary and secondary section on the same site. Some students (not necessarily in my sample) had attended the same school right from nursery to secondary school.

The response from the head teacher (School B) was similar:

Being in a school where you are the only deaf person can be very alienating.

Invariably, when such a person transfers from a mainstream school into my school, a lot of work has to be done in the area of confidence boosting and the building of their self esteem. Being in a school with similar people has given the students confidence and a more positive outlook overall.

The response from the head teacher (School C) was also along similar lines:

You need to take into account the fact that these children have not had the same sort of socialisation in education as hearing children. After a lot of disruptions in their previous schools, it can take a lot of time for them to regain their confidence. Some of my students have even said that they wished that they were hearing so that they could communicate with others.

One of the students (School B) I interviewed confirmed this when asked the question: 'Tell me about your previous school':

When I attended...school I found it difficult to express myself. I knew that I was different because I was deaf. I used to wish that I was not deaf so that I could mix with the other children at school.

This view is conveyed also an interview Anderson (1993) had with a deaf student. The transcription is in its original form:

They sent me to hearing impaired programmes without no using sign language. I transferred to the other school for the deaf that can use sign language. I was happy there...I was eight years old when I entered this school for the deaf. It was the first time I had seen so many deaf students used sign. I learn sign language about three or four months after I was there. (Anderson, 1993, p.32).

The head teacher (School C) stated that having other people who are like you '*creates a safety in numbers kind of attitude*'. In the schools for deaf children, the children were able to develop their signing skills, as the school's approach encouraged sign language use.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, these interviews were recorded on cassette tape so that I could access the exact content when necessary. I am aware that in such situations the interviewee will present their position/school in the best possible light. Humberman and Miles (2002) are of the opinion that:

An account based on interviews may be descriptively, interpretively, and theoretically valid as an account of the person's actions and perspectives in that interview, but may miss other aspects of the person's perspective that were not expressed in the interview, and can easily lead to false inferences about his or her actions outside the interview situation. (Humberman and Miles, 2002, p.54).

What I was able to do however, was to contact the head teachers after the initial interview and ask them to clarify certain issues about which I was not clear. On one such occasion I was able to ring a head teacher (School A) to help clarify what he meant by a term (conductive education) that was not clearly explained on the day I interviewed him. Also during an interview the head teacher (School C) had informed me that one of the students had opted for year 12 instead of college. As I had never heard of students doing an extra year in school before, I rang the head teacher to clarify the issue further.

4.6.3 Interviews with the Heads of Year:

As with the head teachers, I used semi-structured interviews to elicit the views of the heads of year. As I spent considerably more time in School A, it afforded me time in classroom with the students and their teachers. By doing so I was able to frame questions to ask both staff and students to add to the ones that I had already written.

The head teachers have the remit of overseeing all aspects of school administration. For a more intimate discussion about the students in a particular year, I thought it best to

interview their various heads of year. The main information I wanted was a brief history of each of the students in my sample, the subjects they were studying and the exams for which they were being prepared. I asked questions to gauge the influence the school had over their pupils (see interview schedule in Appendix E). I noticed that in all three schools none of the pupils were taught subjects that had a significant English component. Subjects such as English, English Literature, History, and Religious Studies were not part of the syllabus. As deafness affects a person's ability to develop speech, modern European languages were not taught. As French, German and Spanish have oral components, it was felt that deaf students would be disadvantaged if they were required to do these subjects. I highlighted the fact that the students were being offered a restricted syllabus which, in turn, could limit their life chances after secondary school. All three heads of year informed me that it was important to focus the students on their strengths rather than expose them to subjects that they were not going to be able to access and engage with adequately. When asked the question: Why is such a restricted syllabus used? The heads of year responses were as follows:

School A: ...exposing the students to the full range of the national curriculum is not in their best interest; language will always be an issue. The best thing to do is to prepare them for the subjects they have the most chance in passing. This means subjects with minimum amount of English in them.

School B: A deaf student would have a better chance in doing well in subjects such as Design and Textiles rather than History. The English language content in History would be much too high.

School C: We try to offer our students the widest possible range of subjects. The more able students may be encouraged to take subjects like Geography which requires a good level proficiency in English. If the students are not able to produce written work at an acceptable level then they will be encouraged to take more technical subjects such as IT.

The heads of year were quick to highlight the fact that in the students' previous schools, they were expected to access education without adequate support. Having poor English language skills and being asked to access subjects with a high English content would in their view, be setting them up to fail. Overall, by talking to the heads of year I got a

better understanding of the students and how they operate within their various schools. However, I, do acknowledge the fact that the views and comments of the year heads (and head teachers) presented their own perspectives on issues relating to deafness and education. They were all hearing professionals who are in relative positions of power compared to their deaf students.

4.7 Participant Observation

The ethnographic approach is that of anthropology, and, to a more limited extent, sociology, under the stiff but precise tag, participant observation. As practiced, this approach allows a fieldworker to use the culture of the setting to account for the observed patterns of human activity. (Maanen, 2002, p.101).

In previous chapters I have attempted to show that deafness and deaf children are social constructions. It is therefore possible, when constructing realities or phenomena to have a construction that bears very little resemblance to the true meaning of things.

Anthropologists who studied African cultures in the 19th century often 'constructed' Africans and their way of life within a rubric in which they understood. In doing so they constructed a reality that did not really exist. Within participant observation there is therefore a danger of observing things we do not understand, and in doing so adding to the false constructions that already exist. Conversely my aim of employing participant observation was to be as far removed from popular the constructions about deaf children and observe them directly. My interviews with the head teachers and heads of years gave me important information about deaf children. It provided me with a framework which I used to structure my observations. Agar (1996, p.9) is of the opinion that interviews and other ethnographic methods provide the basic data which participant observation builds on:

Observation is subordinate to what one learns in interviews. Observations are ways to test out what you've learned, ways to complicate and contradict the encyclopaedia and develop additional interviews and conversations based on those problems.

Kondo's (1990) seminal work gives a fluid account of participant observation conducted within a Japanese family. Kondo, an American woman of Japanese descent found that the people she was observing were less likely to relate to her freely if she presented as a 'researcher' from America. Due to the fact that she was willing to become more 'Japanese' by speaking the language and adapting to the cultural norms of her immediate society (which were often determined by gender and age); she was accepted as part of the group. What Kondo surmises is that the participant observer has to as to give up a sense of one's own identity in order to be embedded and accepted by the people one is observing. In doing so the participant observer is more likely to construct realities in the way the 'indigenous' people do, thereby reducing the possibility of creating false realities.

Hammersley (1998) gives five points as to the nature and purpose of ethnography and particularly participant observation. These five points are relevant to my study also:

- To study people in their 'natural' surroundings and everyday context
- To gather data directly from the people being observed rather than from secondary sources (thereby reducing the possibility of false constructions)
- To gather data in a reflexive manner rather than following a set rubric as in structured interviews
- Participant observation is an effective tool when the focus is on a single setting or small group of people
- Data in the form of descriptive analysis takes precedence over statistical data (this point is particularly relevant because my study involved small groups of people)

Before I started to interview the students I knew that I had to familiarise myself with Deaf culture and more importantly, with sign language. I spent six months in School A as a helper/ teaching assistant. During the day I interacted with the students during lessons and play-time which allowed me to observe the students in their natural surroundings (as opposed to 'laboratory-like' settings which can be the case during recorded interviews). As the school had boarding facilities for the students, I often stayed with them after school hours and was, therefore, able to observe them in less formal settings. I engaged in extra-curricula activities with them, which sometimes meant going with them to Deaf clubs. During these activities, I was able to learn the

rudiments of sign language and have first-hand experience of what it is like to live within a Deaf community. It also gave me some understanding of Deaf culture. Breakwell et al (1995) suggest that participant observation offers the researcher a number of advantages. Firstly, it enables the researcher to access events which subjects might not normally allow the observer to witness. Secondly, it can give access not only to behaviours but also to the 'attitudes, opinions, and feelings and it overcomes the problem of observer effects' (p.216). The observer effect is the 'unnatural responses' seen in people who know they are being observed. This is sometimes seen in people who have been video-taped or tape recorded.

Recording my observations did pose difficulty at first. Using a video camera or camcorder would have defeated the object and purpose of participant observation. Writing down things as I observed the deaf children's interactions would have meant that a lot of information would have been lost because sign language is a visual language – I had to make visual observations at all times. I therefore had to wait till the end of the day when I wrote down my observations in a diary I kept which was my main tool of recording events during my stay at the school.

Although participant observation allowed the students to react to me normally and freely, this method does have its limitations. Breakwell et al (1995) are of the opinion that participant observation may compromise a researcher's objectivity:

The main criticisms are that it is impossible for the participant observer to be objective, that the observations will be subjected to fluctuations in the attention of the ethical and procedural problems of becoming an observer if the person has a role in the setting and the not inconsiderable personal demands made on the researcher by the dual role and the possibility of role conflict. (Breakwell, et al 1995, 216).

Being involved closely with this set of students did affect my objectivity; my earlier writing was very much pro-sign language and very anti-oral/aural methods. This was mainly due to the fact that apart from interacting with the deaf students I was also able to spend time with the deaf members of staff who shared their educational experiences with me. It must be mentioned that School A was the only setting in which I was able

to employ participant observation. In schools B and C, I interviewed the students without having the time to get to know them very well first.

Manion and Cohen (1980) suggest the use of 'investigator triangulation', a method whereby more than one participant or observer is used for the purpose of greater objectivity and validity:

Perhaps the greatest use of investigator triangulation centres around validity rather than reliability checks. More to the point, investigators with differing perspectives or paradigmatic biases may be used to check out the extent of divergence in the data each collects. Under such conditions if data divergence is minimal then one may feel more confident in the data's validity. On the other hand, if their data is significantly different, then one has an idea as to the possible sources of biased measurement which should be further investigated (Manion and Cohen, 1994, p.213).

The problem with this method is one of resource. The researcher would have to go through Criminal Record Checks and obtain permission from the schools, parents and the students. This would require time that is not always available to the researcher.

One other problem was the recording of data. As I did not go around the school with a video camera, the only way I could record the data I was observing was to write down what I had observed at end of the day. In doing so I was aware that I was only recording what I saw: this in its self is limiting. If I were to use participant observation again, I would introduce a degree of reflexivity into it. I would ask the people observed, if what I have recorded is a true representation of what was happening. As most of the communication in the school was in sign language, I should have made a greater effort to check that my views of events were accurate.

During my video interviews with the students I asked them what their plans were on leaving school. A number of them stated that they wanted to attend certain specialist colleges for deaf people. The most prominent ones mentioned were based in Doncaster, Derby and London. As these colleges were supposed to be a continuation of the Deaf community after leaving school, I thought it appropriate to observe the students in these

setting as well. I worked and lived amongst the students in Doncaster for 10 months. My role was to help deaf students in their transition from college into employment, work based experience or higher education. Having a close working relationship with the students gave me an insight into the difficulties deaf people face when they try to compete with hearing people in the world of work. It also gave me a first hand view of the reaction employers have to people who are deaf. As the experience during this period of participant observation did not impinge directly on my original sample, the issues of subjectivity and objectivity did not arise as issues of concern at the time.

4.7.1 Video Interviews:

The problem with interviews is that there is a possibility that respondents will tell the researcher what they think the researcher wants to be told. The validity of the exercise is therefore liable to be brought into question. Cohen (1987) calls this 'naturalness'. He states that ideally, people should be observed in their natural settings and in ways in which they are unaware that they are being recorded. Doing so he says will allow the researcher to collect uninhibited data. A criticism of the 'natural' method concerns ethics. I think that it is wholly unethical to collect data on people without them being aware that you are doing so. Video-taping my interviews had advantages. Breakwell et al (1995) suggest that:

Video recordings offer a cheap and semi-permanent record which can be played back repeatedly for analysis at a level of detail and reliability not previously possible from observations made directly in the laboratory or field. (Breakwell et al, p.223).

As my respondents were all deaf and primarily used sign language, the use of audio-visual equipment for my interviews appeared to be the best possible method. This is not to say that there were no difficulties. To properly decipher the signing and facial expressions, a person's hands and face need to contrast sharply with his/her clothes and the background. This was not the case in all instances and so I did experience difficulty in understanding what some pupils were saying. The video camera I used was placed on a tripod facing the individual respondents. I had no other person to help me with the

operation of the equipment. This meant that I was not able to refocus and manoeuvre the camera when the respondents were slightly out of focus or the frame. If the aim of my research was an analysis of signing skills then the quality of my recordings would not have been good enough for this purpose. What might have made the signing easier to decipher, however, was the fact that most of the students, Sign Supported English in the interviews. Even though their speech was not clear, due to fact that I had spent a lot of time with a number of these students I was able to understand what they were saying especially since they used signs to back up what they were speaking.

Another problem posed by my camera set-up was camera angles. As I only had one camera which was focused on the individual student I was interviewing, there, were no shots of me. I was asking the students questions off camera but there was nothing to show that my signing skills were clear enough for the students to understand. I have CACDP (The Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People) Level 2 in BSL which is intermediate level and the minimum requirement for people who work directly with Deaf people. When I interacted with the students off camera we seemed to understand each other so I assumed that they understood me when on camera.

4.7.2 Focus Groups:

A problem with my video interviews was the fact that I could only interview one person at a time. I would have preferred if I had had a group meeting with the students to discuss their experiences of deaf education to date. This is generally what is known as a focus group:

The focus group is a discussion based interview that produces a particular type of qualitative data. It involves the simultaneous use of multiple respondents to generate data. (Breakwell et al, 1995, p.275).

The 'focusing' component of focus group research- that is, its distinguishing characteristic- refers to the concrete and specific character of discussion in relation to a particular stimulus object, event or situation. (Breakwell et al, 1995, p.277-278).

This method of data generation would have benefited my research purpose. As my role would have been that of a relatively passive facilitator, the students would have been empowered to control the content and direction of their discussions. This would have reduced the power differential between the researcher and the respondents. Having deaf students within the same room discussing issues pertaining to their experiences would have been valuable. However, the attempt to record group behaviour in sign with one camera is difficult. I would have needed more than one camera in the room so that each signed contribution could be picked up. The sequencing and transcription of the tapes would also have been cumbersome and expensive.

4.8 Narrative Analysis

I had initially intended that the bulk of my research could be based on the narratives given by the students. Using a narrative approach, in my opinion, would mean that the views of the deaf students would be presented over the competing discourses. This approach locates power in the narrator. Burman (2002) is also of the opinion that this approach empowers people:

...while following the ethos of valuing what people say and treating this as meaningful and informative, research is viewed as a collaborative enterprise which not only involves the full participation of the interviewees but also incurs responsibility on the part of the researcher to be accountable to, and in some cases to conduct research agendas according to the demands of the participants. Here we see the traditional model of the researcher-researched relations undergoing upheaval as the researcher strives to carry out research in a non-exploitative, non-dehumanising way (Burma 2002, p.53).

Nelson (2004) says that via this process, children are able to reconstruct their histories thereby affirming a sense of identity. This is because what they say to the interviewer is considered to be valid data, their own discourse. Daiute (2004) discusses this process further:

Autobiographical narrations are also, to be sure, personal and unique, but the social nature of narrating is often overlooked in research and education. In particular, to appreciate what young people are doing when we ask them to share their personal experiences in public institutions like school, we need a theory to guide our reading of narratives as conversations (Daiute, 2004, p.111).

By constructing their own stories, people, regardless of the discourses that define them, are able to see things from their own perspective. As Boje (1999) suggests: Storytelling theory is all about who is in control of the story – who is shaping and influencing the story (p.354).

Narrative analysis within Deaf Studies has tended to be focused more on linguistics and the acquisition of sign language, for example, Hoiting and Slobin (2002) observed a group of deaf children, and their focus was not on what was being communicated but how it was communicated.

Our data on the acquisition of both ASL and SLN show that by age 3, children are adept at integrating hand shapes into poly-componential signs, along with other meaning components. Their hearing parents also have productive control of these basic morphological structures...This is especially clear in narrative productions, where the signer has to create a spatial and temporal scenario and maintain reference to individuals and events while shifting perspective (Hoiting and Slobin, 2002, p.72).

My knowledge of sign language is not advanced enough to make such pronouncements regarding a person's use of a sign language. More importantly, however, is the fact that I was more interested in the students' life experiences from their earliest memories and their understanding of the process of education had shaped their identity. As previously mentioned, focus groups would have allowed the deaf students to 'talk' more freely. In some of my video sequences some of the students could be seen giving monosyllabic responses rather than full narratives, therefore making it difficult for me to get a sense of their experiences. Here is a partial transcript of such an example:

Interviewer: What school did you attend before coming to this one?

Respondent:...Comprehensive School

Interviewer: Tell me about your experiences in that school.

Respondent: I didn't like it.

Interviewer: What did you not like about the school?

Respondent: Don't know, just didn't like it.

Interviewer: Please explain further.

Respondent: Didn't like teacher, teacher didn't like me.

Interviewer: In what ways is this school better than your previous one? (lengthy pause...) I go swimming and play football

Admittedly, not all my interviews were this short but it does highlight the problem of selecting to undertake a narrative analysis with a very limited narrative. In School A where I had considerably more time to spend with the students and not just restricted to the school hours, I was able to elicit a more detailed responses from student as typified below:

The school I used to attend was alright at first but then I started falling behind with my school work. Sometimes the teacher would sit next to me and show me how to do my work correctly, but I could not read her lips and watch her explain things in my exercise book at the same time. Afterwards I became very frustrated and angry because I couldn't understand what the teachers were saying. Afterwards my parents decided that it would be better if I went to a different school.

Schools are very much structured by time so this meant that I only had a limited time to spend with each student. I was only permitted to interview the students during their lunch break (one hour). This required logistical operations of near military precision.

The priority was to video as many students as possible within their lunch break.

Alternatively, I could have interviewed them after school hours but all of the students except for the ones in London had pre-booked taxi cabs (a feature of special schools for deaf children) to take them home. The time restrictions imposed on me meant that there was a knock on effect on the quantity and quality of the interviews I recorded on video tape. If I were to advise a fellow researcher interested in undertaking narrative analysis with deaf students, I would advise not to have so many in the sample. Having twenty six students ensures quantity but not necessarily quality. For in-depth narrative analysis I would advise that no more than ten students be included in the sample.

4.9 Grounded Theory

Edwards and Talbot (1997) assert that:

Grounded theory is developed inductively from the content of analysis of records of phenomena that occur in natural settings. The theories or frameworks produced in this way can provide new ways of seeing these phenomena (Edward and Talbot, 1997, p.157).

Robin Williams in the film 'The Dead Poets' Society', advises, his students to look at phenomena from a multi-faceted angle: he says 'When you think you know a thing well, try and look at it from a different perspective'. This approach allowed me to constantly reappraise my views about the phenomena I was studying. I mentioned in the section on Participant Observation, that I was initially quite fixed in my views about deaf education. I believed that all deaf children should have the opportunity of accessing sign language in schools. As my research progressed, so did my ideas. Grounded theory allows for flexibility and reflection. Orona (2002) states that:

I believe the beauty and strength of this approach is that it is not linear. Instead this approach allows for the emergence of concepts out of the data- in a schema that allows for introspection, intuition, ruminating as well as analysis in the 'traditional' mode. Indeed, qualitative research especially grounded theory

tradition, is not for those who need tight structure with little ambiguity (Orona, 2002, p.374).

There is a latent danger with grounded theory that the researcher may be tempted to analyse phenomena to the point of over-analysis. Morrison (1998) calls it ‘analysis leading to paralysis’. To guard against this I had to specify from very early on which strands of the research I would be mainly focusing on. The areas I chose were the presenting discourses (past and present) and the experiences of the deaf students as they represented them.

4.10 Summary of Methods Used

Table 4.2
Interview schedule

School	Visiting Periods
School A ¹²	May 14 th , 15 th , 27 th 2002; June 4 th , 5 th , 6 th 2003
School B	June 12 th , 13 th , 14 th 2002; 18 th , 19 th , 20 th 2003
School C	Feb 25 th , 26 th , 27 th 2002; April 2 nd , 3 rd , 4 th 2003

Table 4.3
Methods used in individual Schools

	School A	School B	School C
Video Interviews	Yes	Yes	Yes
Participant Observation	Yes	No	No
Interviews: Heads	Yes	Yes	Yes

¹² This does not include the six month period of participant observation

of Teachers			
Interviews: Heads of Year	Yes	Yes	Yes
Focus Groups	No	No	No

4.11 Headline Findings

Although three different schools (in three different parts of the country) were used, the responses I got from the participants were remarkably similar:

Head Teachers:

- A majority of their students had come from mainstream schools
- All the head teachers report that self esteem was an issue on arrival
- Total Communication was the preferred medium of communication
- School A had stronger links with the Deaf community due to the fact that the school had boarding facilities.
- School B had the best exam results probably because they had a higher number of students who were not profoundly deaf
- School C being situated in London had the highest ethnic and racial mix

Heads of year:

- A paternalist approach was taken regarding exams. Only those who were deemed able enough were allowed to sit GCSEs
- The more academically able students were the ones stayed longer in mainstream schools before transferring to the special schools. Coincidentally they were the ones who were not profoundly deaf
- Heads of year had more influence on the student's post secondary school options than the parents or the students themselves

Students:

- All reported that language was the main problem in their previous schools
- Alienation from the rest of the student population due to language barriers

- Labels such as 'thick', 'disruptive' and 'stubborn' used to describe them in their previous schools
- All preferred their present schools
- Sign language skills developed more rapidly when they transferred to special schools
- All would prefer to be in a sign language environment when they leave school.

4.12 Conclusion

The strength of my methodology lies in the fact that the methods I used were varied and used to fit the context. With the resources I had at my disposal participant observation and semi-structured interviews recorded on video were the most effective methods to use with the deaf students. Each student was interviewed in year 10 and year 11, and their progress was followed up a year after they had left their various schools. The review of literature gave my research a theoretical foundation and this was further strengthened by the information I gathered from the members of staff and the various schools' promotional literature. The triangulation of methods used is testament to the rigorousness of my research and also its validity.

If I were to do undertake the same research again, I would ensure that I used the same methods in each of the schools. Using participant observation in one of the schools and not the others meant that I only really got to know one set of students well. A lot of my inferences regarding deaf education therefore came from that particular school. In my critique of my attempt to use narrative analysis, I cite this as the main reason for only using it to a limited extent in my thesis.

Chapter 5

The Process of Deaf Education

5.1 Introduction

The analysis so far has demonstrated that deafness may be understood as social constructions. Invariably different social constructions decide the type of education deaf children will experience. This chapter therefore is an attempt to highlight the experiences of a particular group of deaf children (i.e. those who have hearing parents) within the education system. It is this experience or journey through the system that I call 'career'. The career of deaf children is not something that necessarily starts at their point of entry into formal education; it is something that is decided for them the moment the diagnosis of deafness is made. In the preceding chapters, I have highlighted the fact that the competing discourses view deafness in different ways, and insist on the primary use of one language over an other. It is still surprising to note that amongst some professionals, the idea that BSL is a language in its own right is still a strange concept. Stokoe (1960) is acknowledged to be the first linguist to provide a comprehensive analysis of a sign language. His study showed that American Sign Language had all the features of a spoken language (the same applies to BSL). Andrews et al support Stokoe's findings:

American Sign Language is a fully developed language with a complex grammar. It has formal structures at the same level as spoken language. Both languages have similar organizational principles and a constrained set of features...Just as a person cannot make up a word with a set of random letters, likewise, a person cannot make up a sign with random handshapes, location, and position. (Andrews et al, 2004, p.70-71).

Wamae and Kang'ethe-Kamau (2004) believe, like many other people who support the mainstream discourse, that deaf children should attend mainstream schools. Their insistence on mainstreaming is in line with Lynas (1994) who argues that deaf people should be able to communicate in English. Where they differ from Lynas is that they do not readily accept sign language as a language in its own right. They view sign language as a rudimentary collection of non-verbal symbols:

The extensive use of non-verbal symbols only permits rudimentary generalisation...Obviously, therefore, language is essential in learning and in thinking. We live, we perceive, we think in a world permeated by words. Almost all higher activity is a matter of words, to the near total exclusion of others...Children with hearing impairments grow up with speakers whose perception and thinking are permeated by language. (Wamae and Kang'ethe-Kamau, 2004, p.36).

This view, however, still forms part of the discourse on deafness, and so a number of parents may be led to believe that, without mainstream schooling, their children will not acquire language. Invariably, therefore, the parents are part of the process in deciding which 'career' path they 'choose' for their children. For a number of parents, education is seen as a long process of enabling their children to speak. For Lynas (1994), the yardstick used to decide what type of school a deaf child should attend is based on how the child will acquire English (written and spoken). The main aim of deaf education, according to mainstream discourse is therefore to enable deaf people to fit adequately into the hearing world by developing their English language skills. Supporters of the Deaf discourse although they may support special education have been critical of the methods used (for example, Total Communication) in a number of such schools. As I have mentioned in the previous chapters, although such methods allow for the use of sign in schools, the form used bears very little resemblance to BSL. Ladd in his criticism of Total Communication programmes comments that:

The US Deaf community has become increasingly concerned that instead of using Deaf people's own sign languages, cultures and epistemologies at the core of the Deaf education process, many deaf professionals in the field still cling to what is known as a 'Hearing' perception of deafness, where artificial sign

systems and Deaf staff are seen no more than 'educational tools' towards achieving normalcy'. (Ladd, 2003, p.25).

Although Ladd refers to the education policies within the US, these same issues are also relevant to the educational system within the UK. Knight and Swanwick raise issues in relation to the UK which mirror Ladd's viewpoint.

The process of deaf education therefore has been a process of normalisation, normalisation being the compulsion to adapt to hearing culture. (Knight and Swanwick, 1999, p.22).

In the world today normalisation is sometimes substituted with the word 'standardisation', which is a euphemism for 'sameness'. It is ironic that the governments in Britain since the late 1970's have up until now championed the right for parents to choose which schools their children attend. What is apparent with choice is that it is only an option for those with power. Power could be in the form of wealth and/or knowledge. As I argue later in this chapter, many parents of deaf children know very little about deafness and so at the point that their children are born, the professionals take over. In the case of my sample, the professionals advised the parents to send their children to 'normal schools'. As I mentioned in the second and third chapters, Warnock Report (1978) was the main policy document that aided the 'normalisation' process for children who would have otherwise attended special schools. The Report championed integration on three levels i.e. locational, social and functional. Knight and Swanwick in their consideration of the Report add that:

Deaf children are fully integrated into mainstream school when they are participating in all the three of these areas. Then they are on equal footing with their hearing peers. (Knight and Swanwick, 1999, p.123).

The Report assumes that mainstream education is a panacea for all deaf children, capable of addressing the linguistic, cognitive and identity issues associated with deaf children within the education system.

The United Nations through UNESCO has, however, challenged the assumption of normalisation via mainstreaming and in effect has become part of the 'opposition' in declaring its dissatisfaction with the lack of choice within deaf education today.

UNESCO in their charter on deaf education specifically states the importance of deaf children being educated in their natural language.

Educational policies should take account of individual differences and situations. The importance of sign language as a medium for communication among the deaf, for example, should be recognised and provision made to ensure that all deaf people have access to education in their national sign language...their education may be more suitably provided in special schools or special classes within mainstream schools. (UNESCO, 1994, p.18).

This might sound like a blueprint for global deaf education, but this statement in itself makes a generalisation thereby going the way of other commentators on deaf education. Lang (2003) states that the argument pertaining to the education of deaf people is not only between the manualists and oralists but has now been joined by the combinists (those favouring a mixed approach, as in Total Communication and the bilingualists). The main problem with UNESCO's statement is that it assumes a definition of deafness. It assumes that all deaf people have no hearing at all and therefore have to access sign language. It also assumes that all deaf people can sign or want access to sign language. McCracken sums this view up by stating that:

In asserting the right of 'all deaf children' to have access to the curriculum through the medium of sign language, UNESCO fails to take into account a number of ethical issues that face families and professionals alike. The term 'deaf' left undefined, encompasses a homogeneous population of individuals. (McCracken, 2001, p.123).

As my research has shown (in Chapter, One), deaf people have different levels of hearing loss (ranging from mild to profound), come from different countries, and were different ages when deafness became a significant factor in their education and life in general. The situation of deaf is a microcosm of society as a whole in relation to its

diversity. McCracken makes a good point about the folly of blanket assumptions about deafness by adding that:

The learning needs of children with mild to hearing losses are dissimilar to other children with severe or profound hearing losses. (McCracken, 2001, p.123).

McCracken also adds that:

Each child, in addition to being deaf, will also have a personality, a range of hopes and dreams – as do their parents – that demand an individual approach. (McCracken, 2001, p.123).

Erting (1994) highlights the complexities involved in deaf education by also stressing once again, that the deaf population cannot be viewed as a homogenous group and that deaf children within the education system will be affected and influenced by hereditary, environmental and cultural factors. In my sample there were three students who had a moderate to severe hearing loss and with the use of hearing aids were able to access speech and cope adequately well within hearing environments. Subjecting them to a 'sign language only' approach would not have been expedient.

In my second chapter I mentioned the fact that deafness is a social construction and therefore would mean different things in different contexts. As the terms deaf and deafness are social constructions and in turn open to interpretations, so is the whole idea of the process of deaf education. Of the 26 students studied in my sample, no pair had exactly the same experience or the same set of variables (such as degree of hearing loss, time spent in mainstream settings, academic attainments etc). This is not to say that there was no commonality of experience – they all had experiences of deaf education, of sign language and low academic attainments. The point being stressed here is that by generalising with regard to deaf education, one is liable to make the same mistake as UNESCO and other commentators which deny the individual experiences of deaf people. It is this kind of approach which brings about blanket policies in deaf education, such as: 'To sign or not to sign' and in thesis I wish to raise the question whether this is the only question?

Arguably, the process of educating a deaf child should not be markedly different from the education of any other child. Education begins informally within the family home where the bond and attachment between the child and significant adults makes learning and mimicking a natural process. As I mentioned in the second chapter, Lennenberg (1967) stresses the importance of cognitive stimulation during the child's 'critical period' (from birth till five). It is during this period that the foundation is laid for the child's future cognitive and language ability. This is where the problem in the process of deaf education (especially for children born to hearing parents) starts.

Densham (1995), in stressing the importance of early cognitive stimulation for deaf infants, states that deaf children, especially those who have hearing parents, are most likely to have restricted development during this phase:

Normally children learn through communication, observation, imitation and through listening. Because they cannot hear, deaf children cannot absorb the basic everyday happenings that hearing children do. (Densham, 1995, p.28-29).

Lansdown (1980), in the same vein, suggests that this period of accelerated development is impeded due to the communication barrier between parent and child. It is this communication barrier that brings about frustration in the deaf child and very limited responses in the case of their parents. Densham is aware of the fact and adds that:

Successful socialization, leading to individual self-development and fulfilment; mutually satisfying interactions, and effective participation and involvement in such things as the education system and hearing society all revolve around the major pivot of communication and language. (Densham, 1995p.29).

What appears apparent here is that language and communication between parent and child are imperative if successful socialisation is to take place. It has long been assumed that the problem of adequate socialization is an issue mainly faced by hearing parents of deaf children, as deaf children of Deaf parents are unlikely to be impeded by the language barrier. Lang states that:

We know that early access to meaningful language is essential for normal cognitive development and academic success in both deaf and hearing children. We also know that early use in sign language is a good predictor of academic success of deaf children (Lang 2003, p.18).

Knight and Swanwick urge caution, as it should not be assumed in all circumstances that just because Deaf parents of deaf children are able to communicate via sign language, that problems still do not exist. They quote a Deaf parent of a deaf child who experienced psychological difficulties when she realised that her child was profoundly deaf:

Deep down I knew he was deaf but to be stone deaf was extremely rare. I was taken aback...to say I was a bit upset was an understatement (Knight and Swanwick, 1999, p.38).

Nevertheless, Deaf parents of deaf children, apart from being able to communicate effectively with their children, would normally have experienced deaf education for themselves, (the pitfalls and the successes) thereby giving them an advantage over parents who have no previous experience of deaf education or deafness. It is this fact that makes the experiences of deaf children of hearing parents markedly different from the experiences of deaf children of Deaf parents:

When considering the needs of deaf babies of deaf parents, their needs in the context of social and emotional, physical, cognitive and linguistic development are no different from those of a hearing child. The needs of deaf children will be naturally met within the context of 'good parenting' and 'natural family life' in a home where the significant factor is that of the deaf child and their parents share a common language: the sign language of their community. (Knight and Swanwick, 1999, p.41).

This is why the 'careers' of the deaf children in my sample differs from the 'careers' of deaf children of Deaf adults and hearing children of hearing adults.

5.2 The Career of the Deaf Child

Goffman, (1967) in his book 'Asylums', gives an account of the 'career' of the mental health patient. In this text, career does not only refer to the progression certain professionals experience within the world of work, but also a lifestyle which places a person beyond the norm. According to Goffman:

The psychiatric view of a person becomes significant only so far as this view alters his social fate, an alteration which seems to become fundamental in our society when and only when, the person is put through the process of hospitalisation. (Goffman, 1967, p.120).

Goffman goes on to add that for this reason the negative label of mental illness only applies to those who have been admitted into a hospital. He adds further that there are a number of people with mental health problems who have avoided hospitalisation and because of this, have not been labelled as having mental health issues. The same goes for those who have been incarcerated in prison for a crime. There are a number of people in society who are involved in nefarious activities but because they have not been caught, charged or imprisoned, they avoid the label of 'the criminal'. There are a few educational settings within the UK such as Mary Hare (a grammar school for deaf students) which do not impose a 'career' as is experienced by deaf students in different establishments. It is a School which adheres to and promotes the tenets of Oralism. Being a grammar school, the students are selected on the basis of academic merit and the ability to thrive in a non-signing environment. Its last OFSTED Report states the following:

Pupils' attainment when they are at the end of compulsory schooling is well above the national average in mathematics, art and religious education. It is above the national average in English, science...Sixty eight per cent of pupils gained five or more passes at A*-C compared with the national average of 46.3%. (OFSTED Report, 1999).

Being able to communicate effectively in English and achieving high GCSE grades mean that these students are able to integrate effectively into the hearing world. It is for these reasons that the students are able to avoid the label and career of the Deaf person.

Goffman’s idea of career is explained in three stages: the pre-patient stage; the in-patient stage’ and the post-patient stage. In adapting this theory to my own research, the pre-patient phase will relate to the deaf child’s experience before the advent of formal education; and the in-patient phase will relate to the experiences of the child within formal education. The post-patient phase relates to deaf people after they have left formal education and entered into the world of work. As my thesis focuses on the experience of deaf people within education, it will not address the post-patient phase in this chapter.

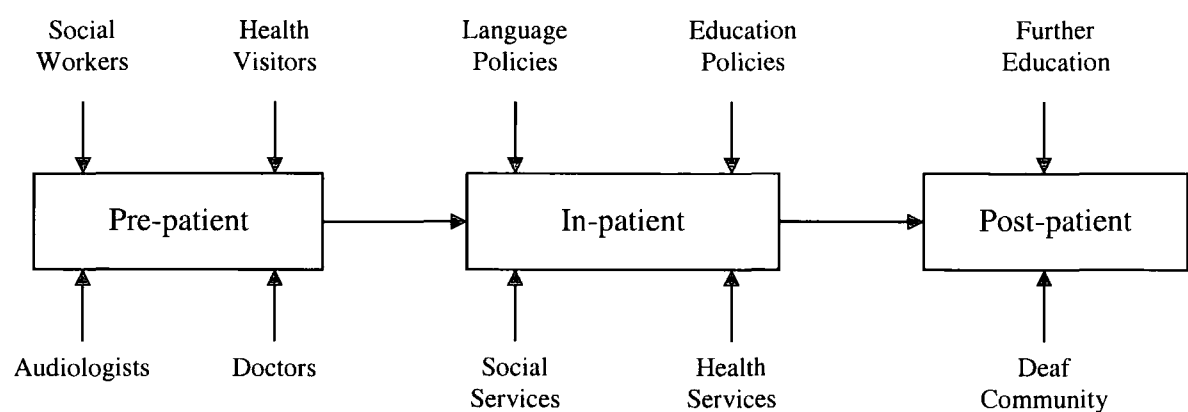


Figure 5.1 The Process of Deaf Education

5.3 The Pre-Patient Phase

The career of a deaf child starts at the diagnosis of deafness at an early age. Densham (1985) highlights the fact that apart from fairly crude auditory checks done when a child is six weeks of age, children are not really tested again until they are between seven and nine months of age. This test is called the Distraction Test Auditory. Tests are usually done earlier where there is a history of deafness in the family. None of the 26 students in my sample had a history of deafness within their families. It should be noted here that through the Universal Neonatal Hearing Screening (UNHS) there are plans to start

screening children at birth. Hind et al (2000) state that within a short period of time the Distraction Test will be phased out in favour of neonatal screening. This they claim will ensure that appropriate resources are given to both the hearing impaired child and parents. With access to support and resources it is believed that such children will not lag behind their hearing peers in terms of language and cognitive development

Once this diagnosis has been made Densham (1995) asserts that the career of the deaf child begins:

The stage at which a child is diagnosed as having a hearing problem is extremely important. The sooner hearing aids can be fitted, the sooner the infant may begin to develop the concept of speech sounds (Densham, 1995, p.48).

This is similar to what Goffman observed amongst those with mental health problems – the sooner they were treated in hospital by way of drugs or surgical interventions, the sooner they thought they could return to the ‘normal’ existence of mainstream society. The hearing aid appears to be a symbol suggesting a person’s willingness to be integrated back into mainstream society¹³. It also highlights the admittance of deafness as a deficiency (in auditory terms) and a submission to technology as a means of reversing such a deficiency. Like mental illness patients in ‘asylums’ deaf children have also been viewed as tragic individuals. Dolnick (1993) states that in 1773, Samuel Johnson visited a school for deaf children in Scotland; being so taken aback by their predicament he proclaimed that deafness was ‘one of the most desperate of human calamities’. This is what the deaf child is socialized into believing from a very young age.

Densham (1995) makes an important observation about the ‘tragedy’ associated with deafness and disability:

Once a diagnosis has been made, parents need time and support in coming to terms psychologically with the hearing loss. Through the process of grieving

¹³ The deaf students I observed were constantly reminded to wear their hearing aids especially during lessons. During recess times they all took them off. The severe and profoundly deaf students stated that the hearing aids were uncomfortable to wear and they felt that it provided no obvious benefit for them.

they are able to reassess and reconstruct their beliefs and fantasies about the child and capabilities that child (Densham, 1995, p.49).

Moses (1985) adds that if this realignment of dreams and fantasies does not take place then that child will be viewed as a failure in the eyes of the parents and it is this spectre of failure that will be the basis of communication with such a child. It is this idea of failure that appears to have been sustained in mainstream schools. The Head Teacher of School A stated that the students were made to feel that they were failures within their mainstream settings. Being labelled 'troublesome' and judged as having an inability to do well academically reinforces this idea. One of the students (School B) gave an account a particular episode he had in school:

One day during a maths lesson people started throwing things at me, like paper and the pens. Because the people throwing at me were behind me I could not see them. I was getting angry and my classmate just started laughing at me. Dan then threw something at me that really hurt so I got out of my desk and threw it back at him. The teacher saw me do this and sent me out of the class. I had to serve a detention during the lunch break. The teacher said that I was always getting into trouble. He did not believe me when I tried to explain that it was not my fault. When I got home my parents did not believe me either. I always found it difficult to explain myself...They probably could not understand me anyway.

The positive view encouraged by their present school, however, brought about a re-assessment of this label that they had hitherto accepted. The same student stated that in his present school things were much better:

In my school everyone is nice to each other. Sometimes during the lunch break the teachers will talk to us and ask us if things are okay. This never happened at my old school. The only time I was spoken to was when I had done something naughty.

It needs to be highlighted however, that equating the notion of deafness to failure is most likely to be an issue amongst hearing parents of deaf children. Knight and Swanwick (1999) in contrast, state that Deaf parents of deaf children would most likely employ a mode of communication which is suitable, and in turn would not adversely affect the cognitive and emotional development of the child. This occurs because they have a more positive assessment of deafness within the family:

The uninterrupted parenting pattern, which occurs between deaf parents and their deaf child, is often offered as the reason why deaf children of deaf parents appear in general to have better developed linguistic skills and to achieve higher academic standards than those deaf children of hearing parents. (Knight and Swanwick, 1991, p.38).

As I have highlighted in previous chapters, the 26 children in my sample were born into families where every other member was hearing. It is therefore very likely that their formative years were fraught with difficulties

It should be added here that the focus of my research did not include the views and perspectives of all the parents of the deaf children in my sample. I can however confirm that my three and a half years experience as a social worker for deaf children lends credence to the views highlighted above.

Beazley and Moore (1995) acknowledge that the diagnosis of a deaf/disabled child is a factor in the career path of such a child, but they also stress that the different professionals encourage this career path:

We argue that deaf children are disabled by oppressive social and educational practices, by professionals who disempower both them and their families, and by any individual or group who, or which, is intolerant of difference and refuse to celebrate diversity. (Beazley and Moore, 1995, p.2).

Arguably, the difference between the parents of a deaf/disabled child and the parents with a child who presents has having no additional needs, is the amount of power the latter has over the career paths of their children. A child who is born without any



'special needs' is unlikely to face the number of professionals a child with disabilities does. According to Schlesinger (1985), in relation to the above, power is a philosophical concept related to the sense of having the competence, aptitude and prospect to influence and shape the environment, and that powerlessness is the absence of this quality. As these professionals (for example, doctors, audiologists and teachers) are likely to know more about deafness than the parents, the parents may defer to them when it comes to choosing the right 'paths' for their children.

My argument is that it is the label of deaf, disabled or special needs which sets the deaf child on his or her career, rather than their parents who are themselves subject to the hegemony of the professionals. Within Goffman's asylums, the transition from pre-patient to in-patient is dependent on the medical professionals undertaking the assessment. Within education, the transition from a mainstream setting to a special school is dependent on the professionals responsible for attaching the label 'special educational needs' on the deaf child. The pre-patient phase regarding the children in my sample could be said to last from the time they were diagnosed as having a hearing impairment up until the time they attended mainstream schools. Within this phase it is the power of the professional which is most apparent. As the 'experts' all specialist knowledge about deafness and education is located within them. Such expertise, however, does not mean that they are able to suggest the right choices regarding each individual child's education and communication. I have previously mentioned that a number of professionals involved in deaf education are to be found in opposite ends of the manual/oral spectrum and therefore may not be perceived as being totally objective in their advice to parents regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the different educational approaches available. In fact Knight and Swanwick (1999) admit that:

It is acknowledged that the whole area of method of communication and educational choices in the education of deaf children has long been a matter of controversy and debate...This gives us a better understanding of the current situation where many teachers and professionals hold strong and opposing opinions about the aims of developing communication and education. (Knight and Swanwick, 1999, p.115).

Beazley and Moore, in support of this statement add that:

Decisions about mode of communication have direct implications for the choice of school subsequently available to deaf children and their families, and we feel it is absolutely critical for professionals to ensure the distance they claim from ideological bias is not illusory. (Beazley and Moore, 1995, p.66).

McCracken is more forthright in her views whereby she directly accuses some professionals of underhand practices:

Additionally teachers may, inappropriately bring strongly held views to bear on families either by failing to explain all the available options or by placing particular stress on one option to the detriment of others. (McCracken, 2001, p.122).

Of the 25 students who were 'advised' or compelled to attend mainstream schools, all had to be re-assessed and placed within a special setting. This shows a failure of the professionals and policies involved in placing the deaf students in mainstream settings in the first place. This once again highlights the failure of policies which emphasise the blanket provision in education for all students. Just as the Milan Conference emphasised the superiority of spoken languages over sign languages so do educational policies such as those advocated by the Warnock Report, support mainstream schools to the detriment of special schools.

Literature on special education often equates 'special' with segregation. 'Segregated' conjures up images of inferior education or even metaphors relating to the 'separate but equal' philosophy of the apartheid era in South Africa and the Southern States of the United States of America. Proponents of the social model of disability such as Oliver (1991) are clearly against segregation of disabled students from mainstream education. He relates such a policy as an abuse of power:

The lessons of history through the segregation of black people in the United States and current struggles to end segregation in South Africa has shown this to be so. To write as if segregation in schools or public transport systems or from

public spaces or inter-personal interactions in our own society is somehow different, is to de-politicise the whole issue. (Oliver 1991, p.46).

Oliver, in a more recent statement further commented that:

I will argue that the special education system has functioned to exclude disabled people not just from the education process but from mainstream social life. (1996, p.81).

The issue of mainstream and segregated education evokes very strong responses amongst academics such as Oliver (1996) and Finklestein (1990) involved in the Disabled Movement and groups involved in issues relating to disability. The literature suggest that there is overwhelming support for inclusive education. However, as I have previously highlighted in the first chapter, a number of commentators on deaf education such as Lane (1984) and Booth (1988) do not regard Deaf people as disabled, and therefore do not share the views of certain commentators who encourage the inclusion of disabled people and deaf children in mainstream education. Accepting the role of a disabled person in society and accepting that deaf children should be integrated within mainstream education is tantamount to denying that there is a unique Deaf culture and language. The main reason for this view being taken is that special schools for deaf children act as conduits to membership of the wider deaf community. The insistence that deaf children be integrated within mainstream education is therefore seen as discriminatory in relation this. This is ironic given the proponents of mainstream education see segregated education as a form of discrimination. In support of the latter point of view, Lynas argues:

According to the 'normalization' paradigm of integration, a deaf child who could talk would be more acceptable than one who could communicate only by means of sign language. One might suggest that the more normal the speech, the more acceptable the hearing impaired child would become. (Lynas, 1986, p.63).

Beazley and Moore in opposition to this view assert that:

The dimensions of discrimination in this state of affairs would be strongly resisted if we were talking about the exclusion of children who are prospective members of any other linguistic minority group. Fear of, and prejudice against, sign language is openly perpetuated, however, through its common, though erroneous, association with segregated schooling. (Beazley and Moore, p.68).

The present government in the UK appears to be moving away from blanket provision especially with regard to secondary education. They have arrived at a realisation that the needs and abilities of students are diverse, and that their needs should be catered for in specialist settings. This has led to the setting up of specialist academies which do not promote a general syllabus but have a particular expertise in relation to particular subjects such as sports, music, the sciences, languages etc. However, the difference between deaf schools and specialist academies is that there has been a growth in the latter but schools for the deaf around the country continue to be closed. This closure of schools for deaf children was legitimised by Warnock Report:

This move to include deaf children in mainstream school, wherever possible has led to many special schools for deaf children closing. This has meant that the remaining schools have tended to specialise, addressing for example, the needs of deaf children who have difficulties in addition to their deafness. (Knight and Swanwick, 1999, p.122-123).

I have drawn attention to the fact that deafness as a social construction and how it is mainly viewed in the hearing world as a tragedy or a medical condition that needs treatment, or both. As a consequence deaf people are encouraged to follow a distinct career path. Parents, due to the fact that they have little or no knowledge of deafness often defer to medical and educational professionals, which in turn lead to learned helplessness and to possibly wrong choices being made in their children's education. Lang (2003) draws attention to the role of deaf parents:

It is through research on the biographical and autobiographical writings about successful deaf men and women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that we begin to see an evolution of the roles of deaf parent, from advocates of new

schooling opportunities to a direct involvement in the cognitive and linguistic development of their children during infancy and childhood (Lang, 2003, p.15).

It must be emphasised that my research did not directly include parents; I therefore have no real empirical evidence to put forward with regard the high or low levels of involvement of parents in relation to their children's education. I can reveal, however, that in my role as a social worker, I observed that the majority of parents who attended annual reviews were passive and uncritical of the professionals involved. In the prospectus of School B, however, parental involvement is actively encouraged:

We enjoy and encourage the presence of parents in the school. We believe that they know their children better than anyone and we seek to involve them as partners in their children's education.

Laudable as this statement may seem, one should always be aware of the dynamics of power within roles and relationships. Due to the fact that knowledge is power and the specialist knowledge relating to deafness appears to be in the hands of the professionals, it would appear that major decisions regarding the education of deaf children are taken by the professionals and communicated to their parents. The parents play what appears to be a passive. A mother of one of the students admitted how difficult she found communicating with professionals:

When I attend my son's yearly reviews all the professionals say good things about him but to be honest I don't understand half the things they are on about. When it comes to asking about what I think and what I want for my son, I just say that I agree with everything that has been said. I don't want to look stupid.

The career of the deaf child appears to heavily influenced by their parents' passivity as well as the power of the professionals in educational settings. During my interviews it became very apparent that apart from the parent of one child (the mother), none of the children's parents were competent signers. All the students came from two parent families but within these families none of the fathers could sign. All the mothers had some degree of signing skills (only one of them was fluent) and had attended signing

classes to improve their ability to communicate with their children. Erting, in her own research reached the same conclusion:

All in all, deaf individuals face a complex linguistic and social situation. This is complicated further for most deaf children and their families because approximately 91% of all deaf children have hearing parents...It is usually the mother alone, however who learns the signs... (Erting, 1994, p.25-6).

The reason why it is usually the mother who learns to sign may be due to the fact that they are more often than not, the primary caregivers and therefore more responsive to the needs of the child. This explanation is in line with attachment theory as developed by Bowlby, (1953) and Rutter (1986). The view that the mother is the person who knows the child's needs the best is also supported by Knight and Swanwick:

In addition it is often the mother who, because she is often the primary carer, becomes the most effective communicator their child has and the person who can most easily understand and be understood by their child. This can have an enormous effect on the nature of her relationship with her child. (Knight and Swanwick, 1999, p.45).

Beazley and Moore also highlight this situation but blame the professionals for the non-inclusion of fathers in the lives of their children:

...involvement of fathers would appear to be considered an irrelevance when diagnosis of a child's hearing impairment is given. If fathers are rendered invisible by professionals they are quickly impoverished through lack of first-hand experience and accounts (Beazley and Moore, p.16-17).

The scope of my research did not allow me to ask fathers the reasons why they had very little involvement in the lives of their children. One father who I knew in my professional capacity as a social worker for deaf children did admit that he found it hard to relate to his son when the doctor informed him that his son's deafness was not reversible:

I thought that my son would be like me and work on the oil rigs; because he's deaf he'll never be able to work on the rigs. He is going to be a cripple all his life.

An indication of his denial of his son's deafness was the fact that that he tried to keep his son in a mainstream school for as long as possible. It was only when the child's Statement of Special Educational Needs recommended that a school for deaf children where sign language was encouraged was his best option, did he finally relent. He never did learn to sign, and appeared to lose interest in his son's progress altogether.

Part of my remit as a social worker included attending the pupil's annual education reviews. My experience was that only the mothers ever attended.

In my interviews with the students it was apparent that communication between them and their fathers was at best very limited. When I asked how interaction took place between them, these were some of their responses:

'He will ask my mother to translate it for me into sign language'

'He points and shouts'

'He writes things down and I write things down also'

'He knows a few signs:' hello', 'what', 'where', 'when' and 'how', but apart from that my mother translates for him'

Erting believes that this makes for strained relationships:

Estrangement between parent and child begins to develop as frustration increases...The resulting confusion anger and despair add more problems to an already difficult, out-of-tune relationship between parent and deaf child. (Erting, 1994, p.29).

There was no indication from them that they found their relationship with their fathers strained: they appeared to accept the situation at home as the normal way of life. A longitudinal study on the impact of gender on socialisation and identity within the family would have been laudable but the remit of my thesis did not allow me to address these issues. One of the deaf students I interviewed did highlight the impact of a father on the career of his daughter. In School B a Bangladeshi girl, reported that that her father would only allow her to complete her secondary school education but then she 'would have to go back home (Bangladesh) and look for a husband'. This was confirmed by her year tutor:

Throughout...tenure in school, her parent's showed very little interest in her progress. Being a deaf Muslim girl with an additional physical disability her parents did not see the point of extensive education for her. The most important thing for them was for her to get married on leaving school.

There were three males of south-east Asian origin in my study. None of them reported that they would go back 'home' for the purpose of marriage. Rather, after finishing their secondary school education they would go on to a college of further education. The situation of the Bangladeshi girl could have been due to the importance of culture and religion within her family and their social-economic standing within society (they were poorly educated according to British standards). They only spoke Urdu and could not communicate effectively in English or British Sign Language. It is difficult to conclude without further evidence, what the main reasons were, for her parents' wish to marry their daughter off as soon as she finished school.

The typical career of the deaf child of hearing parents may be detailed as follows. S/he is linguistically and cognitively disadvantaged at birth due to the consequences of his/her apparent hearing loss. This however is not really detected until the child is about nine months old. The child's language acquisition is not assisted by the fact that usually no one in the family is able to sign, leading to frustration within the family. The medical professionals give the child the label 'disabled' which sets the child on a particular career. This career path could be altered if the child's education and language needs were assessed according to the child's need rather than education policy and political ideology. In my sample, 25 students were assessed by professionals as being

able to cope in mainstream settings. Failure, disruption, poor socialisation and underdeveloped interpersonal skills together with the fact that the students were not competent in written and spoken languages made their time in mainstream settings untenable. It should be highlighted that part of their school programme differentiated them from the rest of the school population. They were 'disapplied' from standard exams and their lessons were often disrupted by visits to the speech therapist, the ENT department and the clinic for new batteries for their hearing aids. In other words, these students were not considered 'normal' even though the educational programme attempted to make them so. It was their failure to become normal that led to another educational assessment that they should attend a special school. Galloway et al (1994), in discussing the difficulties of 'special needs' in mainstream schools stated that teachers were often exasperated by the non- progress and wanted them moved on to different facilities:

Mainstream teachers demanded action on behalf of children who were at best failing to learn, and at worst disrupting other pupils. (Galloway et al, 1994, p.5).

In the case of my sample, these demands were met. The children were given another assessment in relation to their special educational needs advised to continue their education in a special school. Goffman's analogy of the asylum appears to be an apt one. In the book 'One flew over the cuckoo's nest', Kesey (1975) describes the main character in the book as someone who wanted to escape from the asylum he had been incarcerated in. The main character disobeys all the rules that he thinks are unjust in the hope of trying to make the life of the patients/inmates more bearable. His escape is more psychological rather than physical. The deaf children I interviewed all gave accounts of what life was like for them within the institution of mainstream education. Due to the fact that they were unable to conform to an education system which favours hearing children over deaf children, some of them decided to be disruptive in class. To them it was an 'escape' from the rigours of tedious lessons. One of the students in School C commented thus:

I did not like my school; it was a waste of time. The only lesson I enjoyed was P.E. In class, the teacher never really bothered with me. She would explain something to the

class without ever checking if I heard or understood what she was saying. After a while I stopped listening and refused to do my work. I remember one time when I was sent to the head teacher almost every week because I started shouting and throwing my books away in anger. I wanted to learn things but not in that school.

Another student from School B decided to be disruptive but for a particular reason:

Before I came to this school I had met another deaf person at a summer play scheme for deaf children. She told me that because she did not like her previous school her parents decided to move her to a deaf school. Before that happened she said that she was rude to her teachers and the other students. She refused to do any work and was always fighting and arguing in class. When I heard her story I decided to do some of the things she had done. I didn't get into fights but I did refuse to do my work. Afterwards, the school had a meeting with my parents and it was decided that I should move to another school- this time s school for deaf people. It worked!!

Using Goffman's analogy, I see the special school as the equivalent to the in-patient phase. The in-patient phase is the next step in their career.

5.4 The In-Patient Phase

In strict Goffman-esque terms, the in-patient phase can arguably be viewed in a negative light as this equates to incarceration in a mental hospital or prison. Up until very recently schools for deaf children were mainly residential and the children stayed within this environment during term time and returned home during school holidays. Andrews et al (2004) assert that positive experiences can be associated with residential schools:

Additional advantages are that residential schools provide in-depth socialization with children creating their own family of friends that last for life. They learn to be comfortable with their deafness...Deaf children who attend residential schools tend to be better adjusted and more emotionally mature. (Andrew et al, 2004).

There are also disadvantages associated with residential schools for deaf children:

In one sense, residential schools are artificial environments, not a true reflection of the real world. As a result school children are said to have missed out on the various life experiences to which most children are exposed, including the opportunity to socialize with their hearing peers. This has encouraged the perception that residential schools are the most restrictive place to which a state or public school district could choose to send a child with special needs. (Andrews et al, 2004).

As previously mentioned, educational policy is now geared towards inclusion/ mainstreaming and as a consequence the majority of residential schools have closed down. The inclusive policy has not, however stopped with the closure of residential schools. The arguments used to close residential schools are being now used to close special day schools. McCracken (2001) agrees that deaf children will benefit from an inclusive education but highlights the level of support that will be needed:

Location of a child within a mainstream setting is simple. Ensuring effective inclusion with curricular access at an appropriate level, with peers both in class and in the playground, and ensuring a growing sense of identity and personal responsibility for the individual child is, however, a complex and demanding task. (McCracken, 2001, p.124).

McCracken (2001), however, highlights the fact that inclusive education is not as clear cut as it might seem:

Families of deaf children and professionals are faced with a polemic situation. Does inclusion mean the local neighbourhood or the school where a child is linguistically, cognitively, and socially supported, which may be the school for the deaf? (McCracken, 2001, p.125).

It could be argued that the deaf children in my sample were not fully supported within mainstream settings. Their experiences within the deaf schools, however, turned out to

be a positive experience for them all. The students resented their experiences in mainstream settings as follows:

I didn't like my old school because I couldn't hear or understand what the teachers were saying and so I just stayed at the back of the class refusing to do my work.

I left my old school because the teachers said I was thick.

Before I couldn't answer questions or ask questions because no one understood me. Afterwards I just started misbehaving.

I was the only person who used sign language so I couldn't understand the teachers.

I was very naughty in class; I had to see the Head teacher many times because of this.

The subjects were too hard, I couldn't understand them and so I didn't bother to pay any attention in class.

These are problems most deaf people face in mainstream settings and Lang (2003) suggests that:

Approaching this problem of teaching language effectively has also been complicated by the inclusive movement. In most public schools, teachers lack adequate training in such areas as reading and cognition and even in the general pedagogical practices that may be more effective with deaf learners. (Lang, 2003, p.17).

He also states that:

In the modern era, normalisation efforts in various countries have particularly emphasised the integration of deaf students with hearing peers in schools. In

most instances, deaf students have been placed in inclusive environments without adequate teacher education. (Lang, 2003, p.18).

A major finding from my interviews was that the students internalised the difficulties they faced in school and therefore blamed themselves:

My mother said that the reason I had to leave my old school was because the teachers couldn't cope with my behaviour. I never used to pay attention in class. Sometimes I used to pull funny faces in class to make my friend laugh when the teacher wasn't looking. I'm not as naughty as I used to be because this school is better...

I had to leave my old school because found it difficult to do my work, I think that I had to leave because I was thick...Things are much better now because I have really improved...I can read properly now.

What was also apparent was that the teachers were not able to involve their students in their teaching process. Simply defined, to teach means to 'enable/cause a person to do, by instruction and training' (The Oxford Pocket). Dictionary). This suggests an almost one-sided relationship in the power dynamics between teacher and student. It also fixes the teacher/student relationship in the realms of giver/receiver or active/passive. In relation to student learning this is called the deficiency model. Entwistle (1998) in explaining this model states that:

There is a tendency to use a deficiency model of student behaviour, in which the blame for inadequate academic performance is attributed entirely to the student (Entwistle, 1998, p.13).

Schon (1983) also agrees with this view and adds that:

An artful teacher sees a child's difficulty in learning to read not as a defect in the child but as a defect in his own instruction. So he must find a way of explaining what is bothering the pupil...He must be ready to invent new methods and endeavour to develop in himself the ability of discovering them (p.66).

Education is not solely about academic attainments; its purpose is also to facilitate appropriate personal development, which is the basis for socialisation and the forging of identities. This is only possible if the children are allowed to participate in the process of education. Erting believes that for deaf children to thrive in any particular setting they must feel a sense of community and selfhood, i.e. a sense of belonging, and this can only be achieved through interacting with others. Cohen (1974) explains the idea of selfhood further:

Selfhood is precarious and can be maintained only through continuous interaction in society. (cited in Erting, 1994, p.55).

The interactions experienced by the deaf children in my sample were usually negative, for example reprimands for being 'naughty'. It was apparent that there was very little insight with regards to their developmental needs. Erting (1994) also highlights the importance of understanding the deaf person's needs and rightly stresses that the way deaf people are treated by others contributes to shaping their self image and self esteem.

Marschark et al (2002) point out the folly that underpins mainstream education provision for deaf children is that teachers and educators assume the cognitive development of deaf children is exactly the same as that of hearing students. This could be evidenced in my samples' GCSE exam results highlighted in chapter two.

None of the students interviewed reported that they had formed strong friendships or were sorry to leave their old schools. What was very apparent was the isolation they felt whilst in those settings and the sense of liberation and acceptance they felt in their new schools. What a number of them found to be the most pleasing aspect was the acceptance of their use of sign language. Beazley and Moore (1995), in reference to mainstream settings are of the opinion that:

Inclusion is an important determinant here, however, because we have seen before, segregation and exclusion has over the years bred ignorance and hostility. (Beazley and Moore, 1995, p.126).

One of the Head Teachers gave three reasons why the deaf students had begun to flourish in the new settings:

Firstly there is the increasing awareness of the ability of deaf children. Hitherto there was low expectation from them...

The second catalyst has been the further development of sign communication skills. Previously they had been encouraged to use sign language in school but not to sit English language based exams. Now we have persuaded various examination bodies to allow their papers to be translated into BSL....

Thirdly, is the students themselves, before they had the belief that because they were deaf they were not able to sit exams and succeed but now they do feel that they are good enough to sit these exams...

These three points are confirmed in the view of a student from School A:

I know now that being deaf is not really a problem. My head of year told me that there are many colleges that take deaf people. He also gave me the names of three colleges for deaf people where sign language is used- just like in my school. When I leave here I will go to Derby or Doncaster College or the one in London and train to be a chef. I like cooking. I went to have a look at Doncaster College last I was told that it has a good mechanics course. I might choose to do that instead.

It would appear that the in-patient phase helps deaf children regain their self-esteem and the idea of a collective identity. This is unlike the experiences occurring in the pre-patient phase where the deaf children are perceived to be different from a very early age and therefore treated as such. The labels that the dominant discourse ascribe to them in the pre-patient face may be akin to stigmatisation, for example, the label of being 'hearing impaired',

Goffman sees stigma as a dual process. Firstly, the deaf person within the hearing world would try and take on the identity of the people around him. Secondly, the deaf

person is aware of the difference between himself/herself and the others around and therefore learns to live with this difference:

Through socialisation he learns and incorporates the standpoint of the normal person, so he acquires the identity of and beliefs of wider society...while in the other phase he learns that he possess the stigma and the consequences of having it. (Goffman, 1973, p.113).

What was apparent in their new settings was that to be deaf was the norm: it was the hearing teachers and staff who had not mastered sign language effectively enough who were considered as being different. Stigma was therefore not an issue for them within these surroundings and neither was difference. This is not to say that, due to the fact that they all had varying degrees of hearing loss and had experienced mainstream education they now constituted a homogenous group. However, their responses to some of my questions made it apparent that they had all experienced similar difficulties. The responses to the question: Why did you not like your old school?

Sometimes when the teachers were talking they would face the blackboard or look away from me. I found it difficult to follow what the teachers were saying...

When the teacher asks a question and someone else answers, because the person is not facing me, I don't know what has been said...

When I switch my hearing aid on, I can hear some of the things my friends say but it is usually about music or some joke they heard... but I can't really participate in the discussion because I don't know what they are talking about...

Within their various schools it was apparent that they revelled in the confidence they experienced as a consequence of their new identity. These surroundings however were not impenetrable barriers from the outside world. All the qualified teachers were hearing while the deaf members of staff took on the role of tutors and teaching assistance. The students also had to attend lessons and sit exams that were designed for hearing people. This put them at a marked disadvantage.

It needs to be highlighted that the in-patient phase is a period when people are prepared for socialization within mainstream society. It could be compared with the UK's community care policy, where mental health patients who were previously institutionalised within large hospital and asylums are encouraged to live within the mainstream community. Although the schools for deaf children afforded more conducive environments for their students, the main aim of their policies was to re-integrate deaf students back into the hearing world. The main tool of integration is the ability to communicate to some degree with hearing people. School A's brochure states that:

Great emphasis is placed on the provision of a satisfying and successful communication environment which will facilitate the acquisition of language.

School B's Curriculum Statement reads thus:

We want each child to develop their understanding and use of English to the best level possible in order to allow them to move more confidently in a hearing world and give them full access to the curriculum

School C's mission statement states that:

We want them to be able to play as full a part in both hearing and deaf communities...

These statements from the schools were confirmed by the students. When asked about the mode of language used within their schools, these were the typical responses:

We use sign language a lot but when we use it the teachers encourage us to use our voices as much as possible.

We sign and speak at the same time.

When I use my voice in public people can't understand me, they stare at me, they think that something is wrong with me. I feel embarrassed trying to speak sometimes.

It could be argued that these schools are working in the best interest of these children by insisting on developing their competence in English; it may also be seen as a form of control. Densham (1995) for instance suggests that:

Although educators may believe that they are working in the best interests of deaf children, it would seem that the issues involved are strongly linked to power and control, with the majority group over a minority group...(Densham, 1995, p.107).

This power and control according to Goffman (1973) comes in the form of the majority society's definition of what is normal and acceptable. What is then considered to be beyond the norm may therefore be considered as deviant. With the label of 'deviant' comes stigmatisation. It could thus be argued that these schools are working in order to prevent these labels being attached to their students. Ladd (2003) sees the interaction/integration of deaf people within the hearing world in terms of exchange theory. The more deaf people accept the values and the norms of the hearing world, the more power they will be accorded. This power may be in the form of employment and admission into the institutions geared towards hearing people.

In order to develop Goffman's theme further, it would be appropriate to discuss different discourses that relate to education. Statutory education for young people in general could be simply defined as a formal preparation for adulthood. There is an extra dimension to special education for it is also a preparation for life in the 'normal world'. What the discourse relating to deafness has taught us is that there is no agreement as to the form this preparation should take.

MacLure believes that:

A discourse-orientated educational research would attend to a multiplicity of meanings and attach (and divide) the people, spaces, objects, and furniture that

comprise its focus...and to the passion and the politics that are inevitably woven into those meanings. (MacLure 2003, p.12).

The dominant discourse relating to deaf education suggests that if deaf children are exposed to the benefits of modern technology during the pre-patient phase, such a child would be able to access sound and speech and would therefore be able to access mainstream education more readily. The discourse that emanates from the Deaf community focuses more on the identity and the community available to the deaf child as a potential member of the Deaf community. For this reason, the acquisition of sign language and the positive contribution of Deaf people are often stressed. Regarding the in-patient phase, the discourse favouring mainstreaming and inclusion advocates inclusion in hearing society segregation while the Deaf community stresses the importance of school environments which facilitate the language development and identity of the Deaf Community

An obvious question which emanates from all this is: Which of these two opposing views is 'right'? MacLure puts it in a different way:

Such binary oppositions are one of the key ways in which meaning and knowledge are produced, carved up and carved out. (MacLure 2003, p.10).

Deridda (1998) calls this 'logocentrism' – the belief that a certain discourse or perspective alone has the right answer:

Some core principle or concept is established as the superior term – the first, last, deepest, universal, central, purest or most fundamental of all ... (Derrida 1998, p.93).

Deaf children (and children in general) are therefore shaped by the prevailing discourses but powerless to influence them or oppose them directly.

Davis et al (2004) draw attention to the debate between mainstream (inclusive) and special (special) education. According to them, there is a fundamental flaw:

Many disabled children are put under pressure in educational settings to demonstrate that they are different (in order to justify special education) and yet normal (in order to obtain social acceptance). The mistreatment of disabled children in educational settings relates as much to the unreflexive imposition of discourses of difference and normality as to the financial restrictions experienced in schools. (Davis et al 2003, p.205-6).

They do go on to highlight the views of a number of young people with disabilities (including deaf people). The essence/core of their argument is that these young people have a greater sense of fellowship and community when they are together with people like themselves. In this setting, they claim that they did not feel different or feel the urge to conform to the wishes and the whims of mainstream society. However:

The difficulty with their position is that it reinforces their own isolation from mainstream experience. In the short term this may have its benefits but in the long term, on leaving school, they will be confronted with the same conditions once again. (Davis et al 2003, p.205).

Regardless of the views of Davis et al, the main benefit to emerge from this dialogue is that deaf (and disabled) students are now being given the opportunity to air their views regardless of the main discourses that govern their lives. McCracken points to the need to be very careful in assuming that the views expressed by these groups of students are representative of the majority.

In my sample, 23 out of the 26 students gave similar responses regarding their experiences of education. Those who had transferred from mainstream settings to special schools commented on the isolation they felt whilst in their former schools. Three students however gave different responses.

Kate's story: I am deaf but I can hear people when I switch on my hearing aids and when they speak clearly. Before I came to this school I went to a normal secondary school. Although I found some of the lessons difficult I stayed in the school until I was 13 years old (Year 3). The teachers said that being deaf was

the reason I couldn't pass my exams. During a meeting they said that a school that uses sign language would be the best for me even though I did not use sign language at the time. When I came to this school I felt very lonely because I could not communicate with most of the other students. I have now learnt how to sign and enjoy being in the school because I have made friends. When I do leave from here I would like to go to college but one for hearing people.

John's story: I've been in this school all my life, the nursery school, the primary school and now the secondary school. I feel bored and wish I could go to another school and meet other students and teachers. I can't wait to finish school and go to college where I could do other things and meet other people.

Craig's story: In my old school we used to do different subjects like French and music, here we only do IT, maths, English and cooking. I wish we did other things because I don't like the subjects I'm doing.

According to Kate, she was very settled in her previous school but felt forced to leave. John was bored and unmotivated after being on the same premises for most of his life. Craig on the other hand felt impeded by the restrictions of the syllabus. These issues were recorded in their interviews with me but they felt that they had not been given the opportunity to air their views hitherto. They all got invitations to attend their annual educational reviews but felt powerless to say anything that would change their current situation. They felt that they lacked the status to make their views known:

We want to hear voices of young people, influencing and shaping local services; contributing to their local communities; feeling heard; feeling valued; being treated as responsible citizens. (Children and Young People's Unit, 2000, p.20).

Christensen (1994) in advocating that the views of young people be considered adds:

What may be challenged are those traditional perspectives (in which)... children have little or no influence over their own social representation... This focus leaves more or less own right less unaddressed the child as a person in their own

right, to be understood through his or her perceptions and actions in the social and cultural world (Christensen, 1994, p.4).

The fact that children in general are relatively powerless is arguably a fact of modern society. This position of powerless can be addressed by giving children the right to participate in issues that directly affect them. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children (UNCRC) supports this notion as does legislation in the UK. The Children Act 1989 states that in all issues that affect the child their wishes and feelings should be ascertained. What is apparent from the three statements above is that the students felt that they were not given an active part to play in the decisions that affected them. This in part could be due to the physical limitations of the schools themselves. A student (School c) sums up this section rather well:

So far I have attended three annual reviews. My social worker said that it is good for me to attend because it will give me a chance to talk about my progress in school and about things that have not gone right. Although I attend these meetings with my interpreter I still do not understand what they are talking about most of the time. At the end of the meeting they ask me if I have anything to add. I always say 'no'. At the end of the meeting my social worker usually says 'that went well didn't it?'

These children are invited to participate in matters that affect them but what is really needed is an avenue for active participation

5.5 Conclusion

The complexities involved in the process of deaf education could be seen to start at the diagnosis of the deaf child. Due to the fact that programmes of intervention, be they audiological or educational, are greatly influenced by professionals, the 'benefits' of their choices are not realised until the child begins school. Unfortunately for the children in my sample, choices were made for them, arguably, not on the basis of need, but on the basis of policy. The outcomes of these choices resulted in disrupted school patterns and general unhappiness within mainstream schools. This chapter, however, is not about the relative advantages of special education over inclusive education; it is

about making sure that deaf children are placed in schools which meet all their essential needs. What this chapter has shown is that children do not fit neatly into policy decisions or discourses which influence or reinforce their 'career'. What this chapter has highlighted, is the fact that if children are consulted or allowed to express their views, their careers will be much less problematic. As Powers et al (1998) assert:

Pupils have a say in their own support programmes. They can negotiate the amount of support they receive and up to a point the subjects they omit from the curriculum in order to receive support- they can have "support" as one of the curriculum options. Support teachers by class teachers rely heavily on the comments and feedback offered by the pupil, and pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning needs from as early as possible (Powers et al, 1998, p.91).

Chapter 6

Discourse and Identity: Looking Forward

6.1 Introduction

The main purpose of the last chapter was to highlight the complexities involved in deaf education. By highlighting the 'career' of the deaf children I was able to show that variables such as the degree of hearing loss and whether the child is the only deaf member of the family invariably determines what path in the process of education the child will take. In this chapter I intend to focus on the issue of identity amongst deaf students. This chapter argues that the Deaf community is going through a process of re-assessment. British Sign Language is the most potent symbol of the Deaf community for it distinguishes it from other communities. It is safe to assume that the process of socialisation into the Deaf community for young people has historically been through the deaf schools. As residential schools for the deaf are an increasing rarity, deaf students today are not afforded the same opportunities of being inducted into the Deaf community. As mentioned in previous chapters, the importance of these institutions cannot be over-emphasised due to the fact that hearing families of deaf children are not considered appropriate role models¹⁴ because of their hearing status. It has been further argued, however, that education policies and methods have combined to deny deaf children access into the Deaf community. The closure of residential schools and the mainstreaming of deaf children have resulted in the exclusion of deaf children from the Deaf community. Furthermore the oral/aural method of teaching, which does not encourage the use of any form of sign language, has been met with resistance by members of the Deaf Community (Lane 1994, Ladd 2003). Total Communication,

¹⁴ Role models here mean people who are able to introduce deaf children to various aspects of deaf culture and identity. Families who have no knowledge of the cultural aspects of deafness will not be able to effectively do this.

(hereafter, TC) as I have explained in previous chapters, is geared towards the acquisition of speech. Like the oral/aural methods, certain members of the Deaf community view Total communication as a method of getting deaf children to speak rather than sign. The focus of the mainstream discourse has mainly been the preparation of deaf children for living in the hearing community, hence its emphasis on the acquisition of speech/English language skills. The opposing discourse, it could be argued, has focused more on the issues of identity, culture, and the acquisition of BSL.

Due to the fact that recent education policies regarding deaf education have focused more on mainstreaming, the acquisition of speech rather than sign language has taken precedence. This has resulted in a paradigmatic shift in the way deaf students see themselves. In two of the schools I sampled, the secondary department only had two Deaf members within the teaching staff. Children are spending more time within the hearing world even though the school is meant to be the primary socialising environment into the deaf community. Due to the fact that deaf children today are able to adapt more readily into both the Deaf and hearing communities, some older people within the Deaf community are asking whether these children are truly 'Deaf'. The schools the deaf children attend bears very little resemblance to the deaf schools and the Deaf clubs are seeing fewer young people attending them (LeMaster, 2003). Once again, this highlights the main emphasis of my first and second chapter, that is, deafness is a social construction. The point this chapter makes is that deaf children are no longer the passive recipients of the various discourses. Although they are affected by these discourses and policies, they are now creating their own ideas of identity, culture and language. In other words the competing discourses have enabled deaf children to create their own discourse.

Despite this, the plight of deaf children within education remains unchanged. Deaf children are still leaving school barely literate. Paul (2003) highlights the fact that there is a large body of empirical research that has shown that deaf and hard of hearing people have poor literary skills in comparison with their hearing peers. The second part of this chapter will therefore be a critique of the main methods of teaching used within deaf education i.e. the Oral/Aural methods and TC. Recently, a number of educators (Callaway, 2000; Metzger, 2000) have stated that the oral/aural methods and TC have not resulted in the academic advancement of deaf people and have claimed that sign

bilingualism is the best way to teach deaf children. The purpose of this method they claim is two-fold, firstly, it will improve the academic attainments of deaf students greatly (for students will have a proper grounding in both English and BSL), and secondly, it will ensure that deaf children are exposed to Deaf culture and therefore assume/maintain a Deaf identity.

6.2 Redefining Deafness

In chapter two, the idea of deafness as a social construction opened up various arguments regarding the meaning of deafness and the role it plays in the lives of individuals. Arguments have centred on whether deafness should be seen as a disability or as a group of people who belong to a distinct cultural group. My argument has been that definitions, like discourses are fluid; people do not easily fit into the categories/pigeon-holes the various discourses have ascribed to them. Ladd (2003) and Lane (1984) argue that deaf children should be afforded the right to be educated in sign language and amongst Deaf people for this is the way such students become socialised into the Deaf community. A symbol of being a member of the Deaf community is the use of sign language. Sign language as a symbol of membership of the Deaf community alone is however, an over-simplification of the complexities involved. As the Deaf community is not necessarily geographical in nature, it therefore does not really exist as a physical entity. As it is the case with 'borderless' countries, people may come and go as they please. This is not the case with the Deaf community, the boundary that defines it is its language. Cohen (1985) stresses the importance of belonging to such a community, he argues that:

The boundary represents the mask presented by the community to the outside world; it is the community's public face. But the conceptualisation and symbolisation of the boundary from within is much more complex (Cohen, 1985, p.74).

To a lay person therefore, it might be easy to simply assume that British Sign Language is the most potent symbol of the deaf community for within this medium of communication is located the identity of Deaf people. Their communication and

interaction is perceived as being different from other communities that use speech and because of this, sign language assumes an added significance. Cohen however, takes this view of the differentiation between communities further and adds that:

By definition, the boundary marks the beginning and end of the community. But why make such marking necessary? The simple answer is that the boundary encapsulates the identity of the community and, like the identity of an individual, is called into being by the exigencies of social interaction. Boundaries are marked because communities interact in some way or other with entities from which they are, or wish to be distinguished (Cohen,1985,p.12).

This is why the issue of sign language is so important to deaf people in relation to its acquisition from a very early age and its use in deaf education. A number of deaf adults were educated in special schools where sign language was the medium of communications. More often than not they attended residential schools with other deaf children and had Deaf members of staff they could relate to. This was their primary socialisation into the Deaf community. This is a view supported by Knight and Swanwick (1999):

Some argue that it is the network of residential schools for the Deaf that have enabled deaf culture to survive and to be passed down through generations...It is argued that this environment also enables young people to develop a strong sense of identity and belief in themselves, thus equipping them to function effectively in the deaf and hearing communities (Knight and Swanwick, 1999, p.85).

Knight and Swanwick also add that the relatively recent move towards the mainstreaming of deaf children has all but destroyed the platform that was once used as a step into the deaf community. These residential schools no longer exist and since the 1980's a number of non-residential deaf schools have been closed.

Lane et al (1986) argue that the mainstream discourses do not really appreciate the importance of having residential schools for the deaf as a primary locus. Given the

geographical spread of deaf people within any particular country and the fact that these children are unlikely to have deaf parents or deaf role models, residential schools are imperative for the continuing survival of deaf communities:

Unlike other cultures, deaf culture is not associated with a single place...rather, it is a culture based on relationships among people for whom a number of places and associations may provide a common ground (Lane et al, 1986 p.5).

This scenario, therefore, highlights a problem that the Deaf discourses do not really address. Deaf children today, are very different from Deaf adults who had the opportunity of being socialised into the Deaf community via the education system. In reality, deaf schools of today do not afford the students the same choice or opportunity of interacting with deaf adults. Andrews et al (2004) explain this point rather well:

Historically, the community of deaf people expanded as graduates of residential schools for the deaf entered its ranks. That is changing. Today, increasing numbers of deaf children are being educated in the public schools, more often with hearing peers. Many will not form social networks with deaf people until a much later age, if at all (Andrews et al, 2004, p.247-248).

They go on to say that this is bound to have an effect on their psychosocial development and also on their identity as Deaf people. It is therefore not surprising that this recent development has changed the face of the Deaf community.

Deaf children today will, therefore, have different notions of Deaf identity and culture compared to older Deaf People. A student in response to my question about identity stated:

When I am in school I am 'deaf' because all my friends are deaf. When I am at home I behave like a hearing person because everyone is hearing. We watch television together; the only difference is that I have the subtitles on. I play football with my brother and my friends who are all hearing. I don't have a problem mixing with them

I have previously mentioned being brought up in the hearing world poses difficulties for deaf children especially in relation to the acquisition of sign language and the acceptance of a Deaf identity. The people who write the deaf discourses are from a different era to the students I studied and, therefore, may be imposing structures on the younger generation that are no longer relevant. Ladd (2003) for instance lays down the immutable importance of the acquisition of BSL for the survival of the Deaf community and also a Deaf identity. LeMaster (2003) in her study of the Irish Deaf community found marked differences in the use of sign language and the meaning of Deaf identity:

The community's more senior members signed without lip movements and would be more likely to use ISL¹⁵ with hearing people. In contrast, during the 1980's, the younger members of the community often spoke or, at least used English lip movements with their signing and were more likely to use English-influenced signing with hearing people (LeMaster, 2003, p.154).

This mirrors the experiences of the students I interviewed- they all used Sign Supported English when communicating with me. LeMaster also highlights the tensions between the older and younger Deaf people. The older Deaf people saw themselves as more politically and culturally Deaf than the younger generation because of the purity of sign language used¹⁶. The older people rejected the ease with which the younger generation moved between both the Deaf and hearing worlds. This attitude by the older members of the Deaf community to the younger members is encapsulated in the words of one of the students from School A:

About a month ago I went to the deaf club that I usually go to. I was telling a friend that I was going to a disco after I left the club. The secretary of the Deaf club saw me and started telling me off. He said that I should be here with other Deaf people. He said that no matter how hard I tried I would always be Deaf. He said that even though I had a mobile phone and had hearing friends it did not make me hearing. He was trying to say that I wasn't proud to be Deaf...He said that real Deaf people stick together.

¹⁵ Irish Sign Language

¹⁶ LeMaster does not qualify what she means by 'younger' 'and older'

LeMaster (2003) is however, not interested in who the true representatives of the deaf community are, instead, she gives reasons for why there are two different perspectives regarding Deaf identity. Her reasons are similar to mine, that is, the change/difference in the way deaf children are educated have brought about a fundamental shift in the way these children see themselves in relation to the wider society. Deaf communities like others have to continually adapt to the changing dynamics within them. Change will always bring about a reaction because it challenges the status quo. Andrews et al add that:

The deaf community is also a microcosm of the larger hearing community. It has factions that do not always coexist in full harmony or that exhibit bigotry...In coming to terms with the fact that we are a diverse society, we can turn to models of deaf people who reject such behaviour, and who strive for common causes that bring deaf people together (Andrews et al, p.237).

LeMaster's contention is that the differences in notions of identity between the older and younger people in Ireland or Britain stems from education policies that specified or promoted special education over mainstreaming and vice versa. I add that the generational differences between deaf people in relation to the issues of culture and identity are not the result of education policies alone. I concur that the older generation, by their early introduction into the Deaf community and thus British Sign Language, has not had the induction into the hearing world that the students in schools today have had. The consequence of this is that the older generation are able to use British Sign Language more readily, because having Deaf role models in residential schools has made the acquisition of the language possible regardless of whether or not they had hearing parents. What also needs to be added is that during their formative years, the older generation were not exposed to the array of gadgets and technology that deaf people have today.

As I mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, I was not able to assume any form of identity for the deaf students I interviewed. When I asked the students of their status they replied that they were deaf. I did not ascertain whether they saw themselves as having a hearing impairment or whether they equated deafness to being a member of a distinct community. I wanted them to form their own opinion of themselves rather than

have me influence their decision. I did, however, ask them to elaborate how they saw themselves and the aspirations they had for the future. Here are some of their typical responses:

I was born deaf. I like my school because everybody can understand me and I don't feel different. When I am at home or with my friends we both have to make an effort to understand each other. Sometimes I feel that I miss out on things because I cannot hear. My hearing friends do things like going to the cinema or going to parties where they play music and dance. I never used to go to these places with them but now I do...When I leave school I would like to go to Newcastle College and do a course like joinery or a computer course

I know that I am deaf. I have deaf friends in school but they live very far from me. Most of my friends live in my area. Although they are not deaf we are still friends. They understand what I say when I speak and they too have learnt a few signs which I have taught them. Although I don't understand everything they say, we do things together. Things like playing football and basketball. We also talk about programmes like Eastenders and Big Brother...When I leave school I might go to Doncaster College for the Deaf and do a course in Business or IT

In the evenings I usually play with my (hearing) friends in the street. The school used to arrange trips to the Deaf club but because the driver has left we don't go there anymore. My friends can't sign very well and sometimes they don't understand what I am saying so now we usually text each other, it is much easier...I want to go to college when I finish school; maybe a college in Derby or Doncaster because many deaf people go there. I'm not sure what I would like to study, maybe something to do with computers or train to become a chef.

My deduction is thus. The deaf students see themselves as having a hearing loss which has precipitated the use of sign language. They are however able to make themselves understood to non-signers by modifying their language and using other means of communication such as speech and the written word. Andrews et al attribute this

flexibility amongst deaf children to technological advances and other means of socialising:

Additional factors include the fact that the ways in which deaf people socialise has moved beyond the traditional structure of Deaf clubs. These clubs appear to be on the decline due to home captioning, email and other technologies... They tend to engage in different type of socialising that is not necessarily Deaf club based (Andrews et al, p.248).

Although young deaf people have more opportunities of integrating more into the hearing world, it should be noted that their idea of community with other d/Deaf people is still an important factor in their lives, even after they have left school. Even though they may have less formal and informal ties with Deaf clubs, they are still reliant on the same kind of support that these social units can offer. In my sample, a number of students still sought the same kind of support that they were offered in schools even after they had left the schools. Using Goffman's analogy of the patient, I term the period in which deaf students leave school for colleges, the 'post-patient phase

6.3 The Post-Patient Phase

Although deaf students are integrating more into the hearing world, my research has found this to be more on a social level. Academically, the deaf school leavers in my sample still preferred to be in an environment with other deaf people (see table below). As I have previously mentioned, School C has a 16 plus unit which is a remedial class aimed at easing the transition from secondary school to college. One of the members of staff informed me that a number of their students would not be able to cope adequately without the additional support of the unit. She went on to explain that within the school, the students are used to very high levels of support in the form of communication and one-to-one tuition. She added further, that even though mainstream colleges do offer additional support for students who are deemed to have 'special needs', the level of support is nowhere near the support offered in special schools. It could be argued that these students have become institutionalized. Simply defined, a

feature of education is the preparation of children for adulthood and independence. Deaf students in special schools are rarely given the opportunity to travel home by themselves because they are often provided with taxis to take them home. Furthermore, the students are used to very small classes and one-to-one tuition which in a way may breed dependency. It could also be argued that the colleges potentially mirror their experience of mainstream secondary school settings. Communication becomes a factor again because of the ratio between those who can sign and those who cannot. The change from secondary school to college is therefore a big one and invariably a lag develops. Units like the School C's attempt to address this lag. Not only do such units offer remedial support, it is also an extension of the d/Deaf community which offers the students the opportunity to relate to people who are more like themselves, this sense of community is not present in mainstream colleges.

When asked about their plans on leaving school, fifteen of them said that they had gained admission into one of the colleges for deaf people. Nine of the students had wanted to attend these colleges but opted for mainstream settings (with the proviso that additional academic support would be offered) because the colleges for the deaf were not in close enough proximity to where they lived.

Table 6.1
The Post-Patient Phase

Colleges for the Deaf	M' Colleges (support)	M/stream College	A' Levels	Employment	Other
15	9	0	0	1	1

The figures in isolation could tell us a lot about the students in my sample. Of the 26 students in my sample, all but two gained admission into colleges of further education. Of the two that did not go to college, one had gained employment straight after leaving school and the other one went to Bangladesh to live. Looking at the quantitative data alone, the following could be deduced: (a) the students are a highly motivated group of individuals who aspire for more skills and qualifications (b) the system of education is

based more on vocational skills than academic subjects (c) deaf school leavers might find mainstream education too tasking without additional support.

The data (both quantitative and qualitative) I collected suggests that (C) is the most likely reason why deaf students on the whole opted for settings which mirrored their secondary schools. When I asked one of the head teachers why deaf students 'migrated' towards these institutions his response was:

Although this group is a very academically able group, experience has taught us that on leaving school they may still need some additional support. These students have been used to a high level of support whilst in school and therefore find it difficult to cope in situations where such support is not afforded.

The Head of Year (School C) stated that:

Generally speaking, we have seen that deaf school leavers are not adequately prepared to attend colleges without further support. This is why we have the 16 plus unit. Our students who have left school to attend college come back to school during certain evenings of the week for extra tuition. This is in the form of remedial classes for those who want to sit for further GCSEs or basic skills classes for those doing college courses.

The Head of Year (School B) said that.

Those who are not able to attend colleges for the deaf due to distance and finance will attend the local college. The college has a special unit for those who have special educational needs. Due to its proximity with our school, the teachers in college are used to having a number of deaf people on campus.

Although schools for the deaf may help students to form a sense of community and an identity, this usually comes at a price. Due to the fact that they are not exposed to the realities of life in the hearing world, their ability to adapt to college life afterwards is somewhat impaired. In explaining the benefits of mainstream education, Densham points to the fact that:

By mixing with hearing people they will assimilate the language, values and culture of hearing people so that they will eventually become fully integrated members of the wider normal-hearing society. Without mainstreaming, they remain isolated and segregated, and are deprived of a normal environment (Densham, 1995, p.75).

There are positives associated with special education but the realities of living in a hearing world must be addressed. The in-patient phase although offers support to the students but it does not adequately prepare them for life in the hearing world. This could be seen in their poor academic attainments and the fact that some of the students still needed the support of their old school to help them through the transition from the deaf world to the hearing world.

So far two things can be deduced from the students I interviewed, firstly, that special education afforded them an opportunity to form a sense of identity regarding their status as deaf people. Secondly, the mode of education and communication they were exposed to has allowed them to interact with both the Deaf and hearing communities; however, regarding the latter, the interaction is more likely to be on a social level. Deaf students still leave school without the language skills needed for study at a higher level or employment.

6.4 Communication Methods within deaf Education

As I have mentioned in the previous chapters, all the schools I used claimed that TC was the method they used in instructing deaf children. The flexibility in the students' communication, therefore, is largely the result of the mode of education they have been encouraged in. Although this method has been instrumental in helping them express themselves, looking at their raw GCSE scores alone would suggest that it is not the most effective tool in promoting high academic attainment. My postulation may seem overly simplistic but the various discourses do claim that, in theory there should be very little difference between the academic attainments of both hearing and deaf students. Moores (2001) claims that:

The fact of the matter is that achievement results amongst deaf children do vary. Deaf students can attain good to exceptional academic achievement. It is not unrealistic to expect that deaf children's academic achievement should match that of their hearing peers. This expectation, however, demands effective curriculum planning for classes with deaf children which are in line with the general curriculum (cited in Andrews et al 2004, p.111).

Research by Quigley & Paul (1986) does not show parity between the academic attainments and reading ability of deaf and hearing school leavers. Commenting on two research findings, they found that 18- 19 year old deaf adults had a reading age no better than that of 9 or 10 year old.

Due to statements like this a number of authors have deemed the philosophy of TC a failure because of the underlying poor academic results. Gregory (1992), in assessing the merits of TC states that:

While there have been some local successes, it is still clear that that many deaf children are still not reaching their full potential (cited in Beveridge and Reddiford, 1992, p.110).

In Chapter two, I mentioned the fact that the history relating to deaf education has been a constant battle for supremacy amongst competing discourses regarding the best methods of educating deaf children. In the following section I shall discuss the three main models, namely, oralism, TC and sign bilingualism.

6.5 Oralism

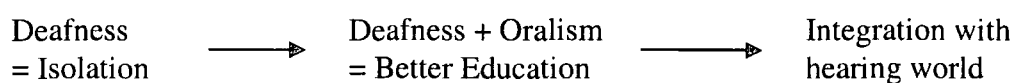


Figure 6.1 The Goal of Oralism

Simply defined Oralism is the employment of the teaching methods used in mainstream education. Oralists hold the underlying belief that no matter what degree of deafness a person has, s/he will still have some level of residual hearing if the latest technology (i.e. digital hearing aids, microphones and acoustically designed classrooms) are exploited. This is accorded significance because for years the Deaf community have rejected Oralism as a method for educating deaf people (Lane 1984; Kumsang & Moore 1994)). It is a method whereby deaf children are taught via oral/aural methods, the primary aim being the acquisition of spoken language(s). Proponents of this method suggest that sign language should be discouraged in schools because manual communication cannot coexist with speech. In other words, there is a prevalent belief that the use of sign language would inhibit the acquisition of speech (Nix 1981; Watson 1998). Oralism focuses very little on the cultural aspects of deafness, such as the need for a Deaf identity and language. Gregory (1992) in response to this adds that:

One of the social consequences of oral approaches for the development of identity is that Deaf people themselves have been excluded from the education of deaf children, with obvious consequences for the development of their Deaf identity (Gregory, 1992, p.109).

Oralists however claim that the goal of their method is purely educational. Lynas (1994) in support of this statement says that:

Learning to read and write, of course is a major educational goal and oralists believe that for the deaf child, as for children with normal hearing, oracy should form the basis of literacy. When a deaf child can read then the activity of reading itself can further expand vocabulary and reinforce linguistic structures (Lynas, 1994p.11).

Deafness is seen as a barrier to the hearing world and it is believed that every attempt should be made to bring these barriers down. As I mentioned in Chapter two, Ladd (2003) likens the methods used by oralists to colonialism. He says that they strip the Deaf community of their culture, community and language in order to make Deaf

people hearing. Ladd, emphasising his argument, says that Oralism is all about normalising the deaf child to accept the values of the hearing world and assimilating him/her into a world to which s/he does not belong. Andrews et al (2004) equates this method to the medical model of disability, they add that:

Within the medical model, the sociological implication is that the deaf person needs to accommodate to the larger hearing society in the interest of better social relationships with hearing peers. This requires changing the nature of the hearing loss by altering or minimizing it through the use of speech lessons, auditory training, and technology assistance such as listening devices (Andrews et al, 2004, p.203).

The table (6.1) shows that one deaf student had secured employment on leaving school. He was employed as a joiner after he had impressed fellow workers with his work ethic and skills whilst on placement. I asked his foreman why he got the job over the other deaf students who were also on placement with him. His response was thus:

They were all good workers but he was able to communicate better with the other workers. For health and safety reasons it is better to have someone who you can talk to and understand. The others couldn't talk like him.

In the previous chapter I mentioned the fact that a head teacher commented that the group of students who were about to sit for their GCSEs were a very able group, '*they were all mainly oral*'. The student in question had spent eight years in a mainstream school before transferring to a special school. This highlights the importance of verbal communication for deaf people. Oralism may be able to improve a deaf person's speech, but it does not really transpire that a person's academic ability will improve because of it. In this respect educators have criticised Oralism for failing on two counts, firstly, the academic attainments of these students, when juxtaposed with their hearing counterparts, are very low (Conrad 1979, Ladd 1981, Reid 1991). Secondly, many deaf children after many years of Oralism still cannot produce decipherable speech, which, in a sense, defeats the object of full integration into the hearing world. With regards to the first point, Conrad (1979) in his seminal paper concluded that:

Oral education leaves too many deaf children close to illiterate. The inability of so many children to acquire a facility for oral manipulation of words has been a neglected area of pedagogic discussion. It may nonetheless be a surprise that, degree of hearing loss over a wide range has so small reflection in reading ability... We do not know how to teach deaf, or even partially-hearing children to read (Conrad, 1979, p.175).

A major difficulty with Oralism is the fact that for it to work effectively, near perfect conditions are needed such as the latest audiological equipment, hours of speech therapy and a strict regime of structured communication at home.

Some deaf children do thrive under this method. It should be stressed, however, that other variables such as the age of onset of deafness, socio-economic status of parents, degree of deafness and access to the latest technology will affect the effectiveness of this method. Ogden and Lipsett (1982) in support of Oralism add that via this method:

Children do learn to comprehend the speech of hearing people and other deaf oralists. They use a combination of speech reading and high level guess work based on familiarity with the language. And young children do learn to speak with varying degrees of intelligibility... The only limit on the many successes to communication with anyone... is their proficiency in the language itself. A good oral programme is also a strong language programme (Ogden and Lipsett, p.92).

Anderson (1993) on the other hand stresses the fact that for a majority of deaf children, Oralism is not the answer:

Yet oralism has failed to help the great majority of deaf learners- a fact that becomes obvious when one considers lack of fluency and the comprehension in the reading of English texts that most hearing impaired people experience (Anderson, 1993, p.29).

My student sample highlighted the fact that 25 students attended oral programmes within mainstream settings, demonstrating that it does not work as a general policy for all deaf children. In fact since the 1970's it has become increasingly apparent that

teaching certain deaf children without sign language support is futile (Lane et al 1996). Children who have a pre-lingual and/or profound hearing loss will find it very difficult to thrive in mainstream/oral programmes. In response to the failure of oral programmes there was a move to introduce sign language back into deaf education (Conrad). The use of sign language to support oral programmes is what is commonly known as Total Communication.

6.6 Total Communication

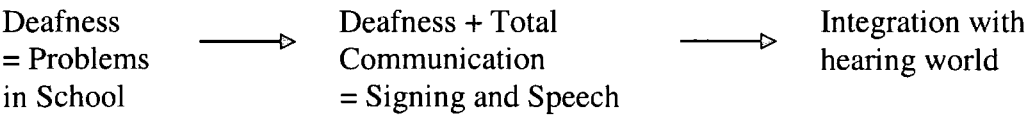


Figure 6.2 The Goal of Total Communication

Total Communication has been referred to briefly, in previous chapters. TC involves the use of all modes of communication, be it British Sign Language, Sign Supported English, speech, the use of audiological aids etc. Garretson (1976) sees TC as:
..a philosophy incorporating appropriate aural, manual and oral modes of communication in order to ensure effective communication with and among hearing impaired persons (Garretson, 1976, p.91).

The main aim of TC is for children to develop both their signing and speech skills in order to make education and the wider community more accessible to them. It should be stressed, however, that the goal of TC, like oralism is essentially to communicate in English. Gregory et al (1997) opines that:

Whilst Total Communication is presented as a philosophy encompassing the full range of communication- gestures, sign, finger spelling, writing and so on- in practice it is often more usually interpreted as a method of communication in which signs are used in conjunction with English (Gregory et al, p.21).

Anderson (1993) takes a more critical view because TC does not actively encourage the acquisition and use of BSL. She states that:

The philosophy behind this education policy is attractive on the surface: schools must prepare their clients for entrance into hearing societies by making those clients as hearing-like as possible. That is why, in many institutions using a supplemental manual language to facilitate oral communication, manual language is likely to be one of the signed versions of English rather than American Sign Language (Anderson, 1993, p.27).

The Deaf discourse's main criticism of TC communication is the fact that BSL, which is the natural language of the Deaf community is subsumed under other forms of sign language such as SSE. Brennan (1987) in support of the use of BSL within schools expresses it is a language in its own right with its own unique syntax and structure. SSE is, therefore, seen as an artificial language based on the English structure. Although TC has enabled deaf children to access sign language to some degree, as well as express themselves in ways which were not possible within oralism, it is still widely criticised. Research undertaken by Quigley & Kretschmer (1992); Newton (1985); and Allen (1996) all point to the fact that deaf children still performed markedly lower in academic attainments when compared with their hearing peers¹⁷ and even with some deaf children participating in oral programmes. Paul (1988) also carried out research in this area and concluded that:

Since the 1970's, most deaf students had been educated in Total Communication programmes in which some form of signing and speech is used simultaneously for communication and structural purposes...most students are still functionally illiterate upon graduation from high school (Paul, 1988, p.87).

It would be wrong to suggest that TC has been a total failure. It could be credited for re-introducing languages in the education of deaf children. Lynas (1994), an oralist, in support of TC states that:

¹⁷ My research also arrived at the same conclusion. Please see table in chapter 4

The introduction of Total Communication has been successful in persuading many former oralists to become more flexible in their attitude towards sign and prepared to acknowledge that the oral-oral approach does not meet the needs of at least some deaf children (Lynas, 1994, p. 59).

Watson et al (1999) stress the fact that TC is more of a philosophy rather than a strict method and is therefore often open to interpretation. The strength of TC, according to her, lies in the fact that various styles can be attempted within it. She states, for example, the fact that some schools are using BSL rather than SSE:

In practice there is frequently a move toward the use of BSL. This may come from the pupil, who shows a preference for the use of sign. Alternatively, it may come from the teacher who gradually introduces more features of BSL into the signing. This may be a deliberate policy decision, based either on a recognition of the limitations of Total Communication, or on a decision to move toward a bilingual policy for political or education reasons (Watson et al, 1999, p.104).

Watson et al (1999) add that though this may enhance communication between pupil and teacher, its overall effect on literacy and the development of English are not that apparent.

Even though TC has its benefits, current thinking within deaf education has now shifted to Sign Bilingualism. Those in favour of this method in deaf education advocate the use of BSL as the primary vehicle for instruction in the classroom. It is based on the premise that the mastery of one's native/mother tongue or first language will facilitate the acquisition of a second language (Paul & Quigley 1994). This, the authors say will bring about an improvement in the academic attainments of deaf children.

6.7 Sign Bilingualism

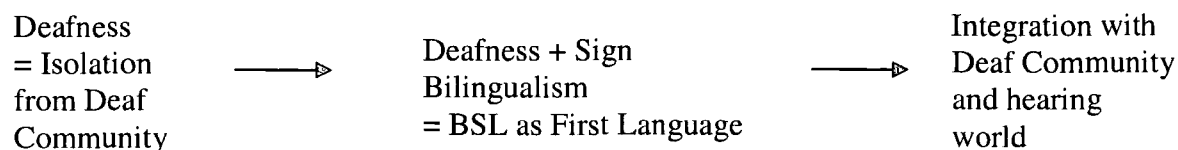


Figure 6.3 The Goal of Bilingualism

A simple interpretation of what it is to be a bilingual person is someone who has the ability to communicate effectively in two languages. Unfortunately, bilingualism is one of those terms that cannot be effectively described by simple definitions, more so, Sign Bilingualism. Swanwick (2001) however suggests the definition given by Pickersgill and Gregory (1998):

This is an approach to the education of deaf children in which the language of the deaf community (BSL) and the language of the hearing community (English) are used...The outcome of a sign bilingual education should be that each child attains levels of competence and proficiency in BSL and English sufficient for the needs as a child and as an adult. The process through which this is achieved should be the planned use of BSL and English before and throughout schooling (Pickersgill and Gregory, 1998, p.3, cited in Swanwick, 2001, p.64).

Competence and effectiveness of language use have always been important issues when considering whether a person is bilingual or not. There are diverse views as to what bilingualism (or a bilingual person) is. Skutnabb-Kangas (1981) uses terms such as completely bilingual (first language (L1) competence in two languages). This is sometimes possible if a person has two mother tongues. This is a view supported by Lambert (1972); nearly bilingual (competence in a second language (L2) is almost as good as L1); doubly semi-lingual (equally competent in two languages but not to the degree of L1 competence). This view relates to balance theory as proposed by Macnamara (1966). It asserts that a person only has a fixed amount of language learning ability which, must either be split among two or more languages or devoted entirely to one. If split among two or more languages then the competence level of each

will be depleted. A number of proponents of the oral/aural method such as Lewis (1986) and Beard (1987) used this argument to justify the teaching of deaf children through one language only- English.

Although there are various opinions as to what bilingualism is, many of the definitions do make reference to the presence of a mother / native tongue, L1, for example, Bloomfield (1935) defines bilingualism as 'the native-like control of two language'. Titone (1972) defines it as:

...the individual's capacity to speak a second language while following the concepts and structures of that language rather than paraphrasing his or her mother tongue (Titone, 1972, p.11).

The point being made here is the important role the mother tongue plays in acquiring a second language. Skutnabb-Kangas (1994) states that, since bilingualism has to be defined so then must mother tongue. Literally speaking a mother tongue is *the language a child speaks first*. Supporters of sign bilingualism state that since BSL is the natural language (mother tongue) of Deaf people in Britain, then it is only reasonable that deaf children should be taught through the same medium in schools (Lane 1992; Mashie 1995; Pickersgill 1997). They add further that it is only after competence has been achieved in L1 (BSL) that L2 (English) should be approached. Lynas agrees in principle to this view but stresses that:

A verbal language such as English, should be taught only when the first language, sign language, has become established in the developing deaf child (Lynas, 1994, p. 60)

It should be noted here that, according to the proponents of Sign Bilingualism, the main objective of acquiring L2 is not in its spoken form but in its written form. It is suggested that the development of competence in BSL will aid in the acquisition of written English skills. According to Mayer and Akamatsu (1999) the key theoretical underpinning for most bilingual models of deaf education is Cummins's (1989, 1991) linguistic interdependence model. This model presents an argument for the existence of a common proficiency underlying all languages. The ensuing argument within deaf

education is that deaf children, who have a solid L1 foundation in a native sign language, can use this language to buttress their learning of the majority language in its written form. This, according to the proponents of Sign Bilingualism can be done without exposure to the majority language through either speech or a sign system such as SSE and SE (Signed English).

Cummins (1984) carried out extensive research on bilingualism (although not necessarily Sign Bilingualism) in America and Canada. He noted that there was a vast improvement in the academic attainments of children from ethnic minorities who were educated in L1 as opposed to L2. Cummins further added that:

We can predict that students instructed through a minority language for all or part of the school day will perform in majority language academic skills as well or better than equivalent students instructed entirely through majority language (Cummins, 1988, p.150).

From what has been written so far, it appears that the option of Sign Bilingualism is the method that deaf children will gain the most benefit from. It claims to develop a level of competence in two languages and give deaf children a cultural and linguistic base in which to work from. The terms 'culture' and 'cultural' are often used in conjunction with bilingualism. Brien (1981) defines culture/cultural as a distinctive way of life, which includes shared ideas, beliefs, habits and customs often held together by a common language. In the next section I will discuss the feasibility of Sign Bilingualism for deaf children and also challenge some of its assumptions. Above all, the next section will take to task, the assumption that BSL is the mother tongue for deaf children and so should therefore be used as the primary tool of instruction. It will also analyse the supposition that Cummins' interdependence theory is applicable to Sign Bilingualism.

6.8 Is BSL the 'Mother Tongue'/First Language of Deaf Children?

'Basically, ASL is the native language of the deaf child in the US' (Lane et al 1996, p.293).

As mentioned in the previous section, a mother tongue is defined as the language first learned by a child. According to Skutnabb-Kangas (1994) a mother tongue has four important elements attached to it namely: Origin (the language one learns first); Identification (the language one identifies with); Competence (the language one can use most effectively), and Function (the language one uses the most).

6.8.1 Origin: Sign bilingualists claim that BSL is the mother tongue of the deaf community and so deaf children ought to be educated through that medium. It is often said that 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents, of the remaining 10% only 3% have two deaf parents while 7% has one parent who is deaf (Quigley & Paul 1986; Powers et al 1998). What this means is that there are a vast number of deaf children who are not exposed to BSL from birth because their parents have had no knowledge of the language. Furthermore, most deaf children are first of all placed in mainstream schools. The main emphasis of these schools is to teach the child via the medium of English. It is only when such a child is assessed as not being able to thrive in such a setting that a special school for deaf children is sought. Even then, it is often within a TC environment where other sign systems other than BSL are acquired. The point being raised here is that BSL is not often the language a deaf child learns first and so it would be difficult to claim that it is the child's mother tongue. If this were the case then the claim that deaf children should be taught through the medium of BSL does not appear to hold linguistic credibility. These facts are mirrored in my sample in which none of the children had deaf parents or siblings. They were all brought up (with varying successes) in English.

6.8.2 Identification: Skutnabb-Kangas is able to side step the issue of origin by stating that because many deaf people do not meet this criteria, they can still claim a mother tongue if it is the language they identify with. As BSL is the most potent and visual symbol of the Deaf community in Britain, many people choose to align

themselves with it and so it becomes their mother tongue. Lane et al (1996) claims that:

ASL is also a medium of social interaction with the DEAF-WORLD. This is surely one reason for its power as a symbol of identity... That encounter not only provides a basis for identifying with the member of the culture^s... It also enables full and easy communication for the first time (Lane et al, 1996, p.69).

It could be argued, however, that just because a language gives a person a sense of identity and thus a 'mother tongue' it does not necessarily mean that it is the language in which one communicates most effectively. This being the case one could ask whether such a language is a person's first language and hence the most effective choice in a bilingual educational setting. In the first section of this chapter, I highlighted the fact that the whole issue of language, culture and identity is being interpreted differently by the younger generation of deaf people. They may see themselves as Deaf but choose to communicate via alternative means to BSL. This is due to extenuating environmental factors such as their relative closeness and easy access to the hearing world.

6.8.3 Competence: Sign bilingualism is a reaction to the inadequacies and failures brought on by oralism and TC. Cummins (1984) in support of bilingual education states that:

Whatever the reasons for incorporating ASL into the instructional programme offered, hearing-impaired children are essentially the same as in the case of minority groups experiencing school failure ... (Cummins, 1988, p.214)

From this statement one can deduce that the inclusion of bilingual programmes in the education of deaf children should help address the failures of the other models. The argument being put forward here is that previous models (Oralism and TC) have been criticised for using inappropriate modes of language in the education of deaf children,

which in many cases has led to their poor academic attainments. However, proponents of Sign Bilingualism such as Pickersgill (1991) and Lane (1984) are saying that all deaf children should be taught via BSL. The issue being avoided here is the fact that all deaf children may not be competent enough in BSL. The question to be asked here is, if one person's mother tongue is a language in which s/he is not competent (or the most competent) in, should it still be used as the backbone of a sign bilingualism programme? This highlights current issues in general bilingual programmes, as Andrews et al point out:

But there is also the disadvantage of the bilingual child learning neither of the languages very well. This is the plight of many hearing immigrant children who have impoverished first languages and struggle to learn English as a second language in school (Andrews et al, 2004, p153).

Cummins (2000) defines such children as being semi-lingual, however, Cummins uses this term as a description for people who are weak in both languages

6.8.4 Function: Regardless of origin and competence it could be said that sign language is the language many deaf people choose to communicate via. According to Skutnabb-Kangas' criteria, on the basis of function, BSL could still be claimed to be the mother tongue. Once again my argument is that just because a person chooses to use one language above others; it does not necessarily mean that it is most effective one. A child could previously have attended an oral school and then moved on to a deaf school. Due to the fact that most pupils sign in deaf schools, an oral child might have to adapt. The criteria I used for seeking for my sample was that the children had to use a sign language as their first or preferred means of communication. What I did discover however, was that three of the children used sign language whilst in school but communicated in English at home. They effectively code switch, which according to them was an automatic process. In school their preferred form of communication is sign language and at home, English. Both sign language and speech are therefore their preferred means of communication.

6.9 The Acquisition of a Mother Tongue

Harris et al (1987) in their research observed that deaf children of deaf adult's acquired BSL as easily as a similar hearing child would acquire speech. Mashie (1995) reported that on average, deaf children (of deaf parents) on bilingual programmes in Sweden and Denmark have comparable levels of academic attainments as their hearing counterparts. Collins (1988) and Pickersgill (1997) acknowledge the fact that the acquisition of BSL as the mother tongue can be difficult for a number of deaf children, especially deaf children of hearing parents. To counter this difficulty they advocate that Deaf role models should be used in the homes of such children (such as is done in Sweden). O'Rourke (1990) in support of the Swedish model adds that:

... as soon as a child is identified as being deaf, the hearing parents are paired with a deaf couple, who act as role models for the child- sort of foster parents. The deaf children continue to live with their own parents, while at the same time learning a lot from their deaf foster parents (O'Rourke p. 12).

Teaching the parent and child BSL in their own home may sound like a good idea in theory, but after close examination, it is clearly not. Middleton (1992) says that parents of deaf children are already disempowered by the plethora of professionals coming into the home namely: the social worker, health visitor, audiologist, speech therapist and the peripatetic teacher for the deaf. All of these professionals have different point of views on how to best bring up a deaf child. Having deaf adults around all the time may just make matters worse. Lynas (1994) points out some other difficulties. She states that there is no evidence to suggest that deaf adults, who can sign fluently, will either be able to teach sign language to hearing people, or be suitable people to work with young children. She also points out that there may not be enough Deaf people willing to be employed in the homes of deaf children. The acquisition of L 1 is of paramount importance especially where literacy is concerned. Cummins' interdependency theory supports the idea that fluency in L1 will aid literacy in L2, this view, however, is not without it problems.

6.10 The Development of Literacy

Mayer and Akamatsu (1999) in a critique of Cummins interdependence theory state that proponents of Sign Bilingualism believe that a firm grounding in BSL as a first language will help in the acquisition of the majority (second) language. Mayer and Wells (1996) challenge this taken for granted assumption; they claim that this theory does not necessarily apply to Sign Bilingualism. They agree with the main tenets of his theory but they also state that Cummins does not make a claim for wholesale transfer of all skills across all languages. They insist that there is no evidence of a correlation between oral ability in L1 and the subsequent ability to read and write in L2.

... But as native sign languages do not have widely accepted written forms, deaf students cannot acquire these skills in their first language to transfer to the written form of a spoken second language (Mayer and Wells, 1996, p.2).

They are not asserting that the acquisition of BSL is of no use; in fact, they support the notion that learning a native sign language can develop the cognitive potential that supports broad conceptual and cognitive transfers across languages. What they are saying is that BSL is not a language that directly mediates the development of text-based literacy in the language spoken by the majority.

The main focus of sign bilingual programmes is the development of signing skills in the first language and literacy skills in the second language. Although this is now the claim, it has not always been the case. Moores (1992) contends that the aim of bilingual programmes is to expose deaf children to two languages. She asserts, however, that there is no firm empirical evidence that the model of offering BSL first and English (via the written word) second is the optimum way of making education accessible to the average deaf child. She is of the opinion that due to the lack of emphasis on verbal language as a means of education, there is a subsequent lack of emphasis on spoken language in the deaf child's linguistic development. Although a supporter of the use of

native sign languages in education, Moores (1992) in her assessment of sign bilingualism says:

Frankly, I found it difficult to understand how any programme could advertise itself as bilingual- bicultural if it does not allow English in person to person communication. It seemed to me that efforts to repress English in the programmes were punitive and excessive (Moores, 1992, p.307).

She adds that in many ways the rhetoric of bilingualism and biculturalism is just a euphemism for one language (BSL) and one culture (Deaf culture).

Mayer and Akamatsu (2003) make a very important point:

Despite the comparisons often made between hearing and deaf second language learners, there are fundamental differences that arise from the paths to L2 literacy described earlier. Without access to the auditory-oral channel, deaf learners are deprived of support that of the support that hearing learners of the written mode of a second language receive from their growing mastery of its spoken form. And deaf learners do not have text-based literary skills in L1 to transfer to the written mode of L2. Thus there are issues unique to the situation of the deaf learner that must be taken into account when adopting either a structure or a whole-language approach. (Mayer and Akamatsu, 2003, p. 141).

Although a goal of Sign Bilingualism is to develop competence in a second language it is expected to be in its written form. Kress (1982), in addition to the above opines that learning to read and write is not a straightforward task. In his observation of hearing children he noticed how easy it was for them to learn how to talk. He also noticed how difficult it was for these children to learn how to write. He stresses that some children never learn to write at all, and many fall short of full proficiency in the task of writing. The reason for this, he claims, is because writing is not just speech written down. Proponents of Sign Bilingualism use this argument to support their own claims. Mashie (1995) states that because spoken and written language differs, deaf children can bypass the spoken form of written language and still learn to read and write. What Mashie is

not saying here, however, is whether a deaf person's grasp of a language in its written form will be favourably comparable to that of a hearing person's. Graves (1983) believes that there will be marked differences between the two because of the ways in which each of them process information. He says that when writing, children will first sound out the letters (saying words before writing them) and later, will often reread what they have written using the same process. Anderson (1993) supports this view and adds that because deaf children do not possess a fully functioning sensory system that allows them to map out sounds and transform them into words, they experience difficulty in learning to read, and later, to write. She does add though, that while there is no indication that early exposure to sign language eliminates all the reading difficulties of deaf individuals it does provide them with a linguistically normal environment, a native sign language, and an opportunity to approach English as second language.

The general point being made so far is not to suggest that Sign Bilingualism in deaf education is a failure or unworkable, what is being stressed here is that due to its relative newness, further research and scrutiny is needed. It cannot be easily assumed that one can adapt theories from mainstream bilingual setting and simply apply them in sign bilingual settings. Ewoldt (1996), quoting Mashie , writes that 'true change won't occur until we work towards a theoretical model that capitalises on what we know about language/child development' (Mashie, p.8).

6.11 The Way Forward

So far in this section of the chapter I have highlighted the relative strengths and weaknesses of all the main communication methods used in deaf education. To say, therefore that Sign Bilingualism is right or wrong would contribute very little to an already prolonged debate and would pander to the fallacious notion that there is only one ideal way to educate deaf children. Weber (1994) on reflection of the whole deaf education debate said that 'a sad and unavoidable truth of modern education is that many new ideas are suffocated by the excesses of its own weight' (p.20).

Rebecca Tadman (an employee of the Royal National Institute for the Deaf) in suggesting a way forward said in her organisation's magazine (One in Seven- Issue 15, Feb/Mar 2000):

I think that the education system for deaf children is pretty poor. There are all sorts of arguments about which communication method is best for teaching children - why don't they have big schools offering a choice of each communication method (p.18).

A number of the students I interviewed may disagree with the notion that their education is pretty poor. Accepting that their experiences within mainstream education were not positive, however, their experiences within special schools have been very positive. They also liked the fact that the deaf schools were much smaller. A student from School B comments:

One thing about the deaf school is that it is much smaller. Teachers have more time to talk to you and teach you properly. The teachers at my old school were always too busy to teach me properly or talk to me in ways I could understand

I do take on board Rebecca's point re: schools that cater for all deaf students' needs. All things being equal, this would be a perfect solution, however certain factors prevent this. Firstly, profoundly deaf children form a low incidence but high cost group (1:2000 of the total population). Secondly the Deaf community in Britain is not a geographical entity- deaf people are too thinly spread throughout the country to warrant such large institutions. Due to this fact LEAs are not able to fund large deaf schools offering every conceivable communication option- this would be economically unworkable.

Rather than having large schools or dogmatic and narrow-minded communication policies what is needed is awareness by professionals that one communication method is not the panacea for all deaf children. Lynas (1994) supports this view by adding that no single approach will be suitable for all deaf children. Some children will need the oral- aural approach (for example post-lingually deaf children, or deaf children who are able to benefit from auditory aids). Some deaf children may benefit from TC approaches especially deaf children of hearing parents who have previously not experienced any

form of signed communication. Regarding bilingual programmes, deaf children of deaf parents may find that this mode of education suits them the most.

This point of view will not be welcomed by some sectors of the Deaf community because of their insistence that every deaf child should sign. Clive Mason a prominent member of the Deaf community said at the 3rd National British Deaf Association Conference that denying deaf children the access to BSL was tantamount to child abuse. The report states that:

Clive Mason was angry at the plight of deaf children in households where parents refused to sign. This, he said was child abuse ... He felt that deaf children should be removed from homes where parents abused children in this way. (British Deaf News, 1990, p.6)

This is the kind of dogmatic view that does not do deaf education any justice. Some deaf children choose to use speech while some choose to sign or even use both languages. It appears that Mason was unaware of the article by Kyle and Woll (1985):

Not all deaf people wish to be associated with the deaf population and many of them choose to work and socialise with hearing people ... 29% of profoundly deaf people (in our study) rarely go to the deaf social club ... (p.7, P.11).

6.12 Conclusion

Finding the right communication method/policy for each individual deaf child will be very difficult to come by. There have been a lot of debates on the relative benefits of certain methods over others; this is the role of discourse. The complexities involved in finding the right methods are best summed up by Morton et al (2002):

These are challenging areas to work on, and we have not found the answers to all our communication problems. However, we do have a significant amount of feedback from visitors to the school that endorses

our view that our communication policy and practices are clear, and we see many individual examples that reinforce this (Morton et al 2000, p.52).

Rather than hold to firm to a certain view, communication policies in schools need to be open to scrutiny and constructive feedback. It is the adaptability of such a system that may be able to meet the changing demands of deaf education.

Davies (1994) also believes in the adaptability of communication policies, he adds that:

There is no quick fix...I think it is possible to work toward a rhetorical model shaped, not by the restrictions of the current system, but by envisioning a system that will someday be truly responsive to the needs of deaf and hard of hearing children. It looks overwhelming, but deciding to start and naming some preliminary goals is half the battle (Davies, 1994, p.28).

A start could be doing away with named policies such as Oralism, TC and Sign Bilingualism, and let the methods suit the child and not the other way round.

Brien et al (2004) suggest something similar. They acknowledge that the competing discourses have done little to move the language debate within deaf education forward:

There is an urgent need to move beyond this division and focus on how the linguistic potential of each deaf child can be maximised. A language approach (as opposed to a disability/hearing-impaired approach) would have as its starting point the need to ensure that each deaf child acquires a language (either spoken or signed) at the same age as hearing children, and develops her/his use of that language (s) in line with the linguistic development of hearing children. (p.22-23).

They suggest a linguistic model of deafness has the potential to be adaptable enough to meet the needs of all D/deaf people:

It is recommended that current provision be re-organised on the basis of linguistic access. All D/deaf should be able to participate in and contribute to

British society through their preferred language(s), which may vary in the different settings or situations. However provision needs to reflect the fact that Deaf people (whose preferred language is a sign language), and deaf people whose preferred language is a spoken language, may have different requirements in relation to their use of, and access to languages and forms of languages (Brien et al, 2004, p.22).

A linguistic model of deaf education may therefore be the way forward. The deaf children in my sample may have been trying to articulate what Brien et al (2004) have said, that is, they are more flexible and adaptable with regards to languages than the competing discourses acknowledge:

When I am at school I am deaf because all my friends are deaf and use sign.

When I am at home I talk because all my family are hearing and can't sign very well. Signing in school is not a problem for me neither is talking with my hearing friends at home...

Chapter 7

Conclusion

What are the model literacy teaching methods that work? How will the deaf community change in future?...These questions and more will encourage ongoing debate and highlight areas that warrant further study. We invite you, the reader, to join us in this ongoing endeavour to expand our understanding in these areas (Andrews et al, 2004, p.254).

7.1 Introduction

My thesis has shown that the process of education for a deaf child is a complex one. It has highlighted the fact that deaf children are first and foremost a construction of the competing discourses which are constantly contesting the notion of what it really means to be deaf. The medical discourses, it could be argued, define the deaf child according to the severity of his/her hearing loss and subsequently the appropriateness of medical intervention to 'cure' the hearing loss. The educational discourses, influenced by policy and law have the power to define a child, which invariably influences what type of education the child receives. The Deaf discourses on the other hand attempt to classify the deaf child, not as a person with a hearing impairment, but as a member of a unique linguistic and cultural group. As I mentioned in chapter two, discourse is never neutral for with it comes the power to label and therefore intervene in the processes of people's lives. Although discourse is never neutral, it could be argued that it is always 'right'. The Education Acts of the 1980s and 1990s have been geared towards the standardization of education. The national curriculum was introduced to ensure that all students had access to the same subjects, which in a sense has been interpreted as equal

access to education. Education policy has also seen a shift from grammar schools to comprehensive schools; and from special schools to mainstream schools. The competing discourses within deaf education have, however, not really agreed as to what the purpose of education is for deaf children. To understand what the purpose of deaf education is one has to understand what the purpose of general education is first.

Hollins believes that:

Education is a process of shaping society a generation hence. Whether the shape is chosen is a question of moral philosophy, whose other name is political theory (Hollins, 1971, p.153)

Here Hollins believes that education itself is not neutral, it is a tool used to shape people into a mould that is relevant to society. This view is supported by Feinberg who states that the purpose of education is to provide:

...those forms of instruction primarily intended to further social participation as a member of the public through the development of interpretive understanding of normative skills. This form of instruction is often called general education. It is that component of education that prepares students for a common life regardless of the nature of vocation...General education, as education for participation in the public, ideally implies a community of equals, active partners engaged in a process of self-formation (Feinburg, 1983, p.229).

Here lie the difficulties between the competing discourses. Mainstream discourses argue that for deaf people to take an active role in society, their education should be such that it gives them the skills that will enable them to participate in society. These skills include the ability to communicate with hearing people and the qualifications which will enable them to gain employment. Special education and the communication in sign language (primarily), they argue does not give them these skills. The Deaf discourses on the other hand stress that before deaf children can become active members of society, they first need to be grounded in their own language (BSL) and have a sense of belonging to their own community.

Andrews et al (2004) sum up these two perspectives rather well:

Education involves the transmission of academic information and culturally tinged values deemed important by society. For deaf children, education must also reinforce basic language acquisition to a greater extent than it does for hearing children. Educators have a monumental task. They have to take into account the diversity in all children, including individual learning styles, when deciding what and how to teach. (Andrews et al, 2004, p.110)

The main point to be stressed here is that teaching methods have to be adapted to the children's learning styles. Standardising teaching methods will not work within deaf education due to the fact that the variables which impinge on deaf children present different outcomes for each child. Andrews et al (2004) sum this point up concisely:

In educating deaf children, a number of approaches have been developed to counteract long-standing academic achievement problems. This complicates decisions on how best to educate children, since no one approach provides the final answer (Andrews et al, 2004, p.110).

In theory, this seems to be a logical and effective approach; however, discourse is never neutral and therefore might not necessarily be logical. What Andrews et al fail to mention, however, is the role of children in their educational process. This point is emphasised by Cutler and Frost who state that...

Most schools, for most of the time, along with the society of which they are part, have systematically underestimated the ability of young people to be involved in decisions and have clung to power where it might have been better shared (Cutler and Frost, 2001, p.48).

Deaf children need to know that their needs are being met. The deaf children in my study clearly stated that they were unhappy at their former schools, but nothing was done until their placements within these schools became untenable. They were not, and neither were the parents actively involved in the process of their own education.

Fielding (2001) states that there is a common finding with effective school research which shows that there are substantial gains in effectiveness when students have an active role in their own learning. There, however, lies a tension between involving children and their parents in the whole process and doing what teachers think is right for the students. Moores (2001) highlights the fact that a majority of deaf children enter education with a language deficit, usually caused by the fact that they are deaf and their parents are not. It therefore becomes the primary responsibility of the school to make up this lag by using whatever teaching methods the relevant discourses dictate. The goal of formal education, it would appear, is to ensure that the deaf children leave school able enough to fit into general society. Children and their parents might feel that they wish to be taught in a particular way, but teachers who have the power of their status and policy to back them up might think differently. A way of involving all the relevant parties would therefore have to be sought.

7.2 The Story So Far

In all my chapters, I have shown clearly that despite the claims of the competing discourses, deaf children still leave school poorly educated. Here I take a narrow view of education and therefore what I am really saying is that deaf children leave school with relatively poor academic attainments. None of the deaf children in my sample, for example attained five GCSEs at grade 'C'. Although the competing discourses do not arrive at a consensus regarding the best way to teach children, what they all do agree on is that the issue of language is problematic. The mainstream discourses accept the fact that a number of deaf children enter school with a language deficit and leave school with an average reading age of a ten year old (Conrad, 1979; Anderson, 1993). The Deaf discourses believe that the only way the language deficit can be breached is by allowing deaf children to become competent in their natural language, BSL. Having competence in their 'mother tongue' can serve as a platform for acquiring another language, namely English.

The main purpose of my thesis was not to discuss the relative merits of the Deaf and mainstream discourses; it was to locate the deaf children within these discourses, and by doing so, examine the process of education from their point of view. As mentioned in

the methodology chapter, the best way to hear what the deaf children are saying is to narrate their experiences. These deaf children have a story to tell. Their stories start with their struggle to be heard within the family and then in school. To understand their past and present experiences, I felt that the use of narrative analysis would be an appropriate method to use. Daiute and Lightfoot claim that:

Narrative discourse organises life- social relations, interpretation of the past, and plans for the future. The way people tell stories influences how they perceive remember and prepare for future events. This meaning of discourse applies to all forms of human communication and symbolization- verbal and nonverbal alike (Daiute and Lightfoot, 2004, p.xi).

Rather than narrative analysis being the mainstay of my methodology, it became an additional tool. I realised that to base my research on the narratives of my sample I needed much more video footage in different kinds of settings. Observing them in school alone meant that my time was severely restricted. Schools are bound by a strict and somewhat inflexible timetable in which I tried to accommodate. Recording the children's behaviour at home would have given my research an added dimension but I felt that this would be too intrusive. Furthermore, using video cameras in the children's homes would have been very difficult to coordinate. Even though the students attended the same schools, a number of them (especially those in Schools A and B) did not live in close proximity to the school or to each other). Perhaps, if all the children were in residential settings I would have been able to spend more time with them, gain a better understanding of their experiences and therefore include much more of a narrative in the thesis. I also mentioned in the methodology chapter that having only intermediate level signing skills would have made the analysis of the student's narratives quite difficult. To counter this, I could have used the services of a sign language interpreter/transcriber, but this would have had resource implications. By observing them and talking to the various members of staff, however, I have been able to consider the views of the deaf children.

Throughout my thesis I have shown that discourse informs a lot of what is now included in education policies and invariably the process of deaf education. I have noted, however, that in no section of my thesis have I written an in-depth account of how past

and current policies have impinged on the process of deaf education. I have briefly mentioned the Warnock Report and The Education Reform Act (1988) but not necessarily explicitly highlighted their importance. Carr and Hartnett assert that:

With the educational reforms of the 1980s and 1990s now largely implemented, and with the mechanisms and procedures that allow the state to control virtually all aspects of the education system now established, it has become increasingly difficult to sustain the belief that educational policy should be formed by through public dialogue and collective debate (Carr and Hartnett, 1997, p.2).

Arguably it is the relatively inflexible nature and blanket application of these policies that have meant that deaf education is still not meeting the needs of a number of students. Arguably it is due to the nature of education policies that have meant that the perspectives of the deaf discourses and the views of deaf children have yet to make a significant impact on policy. Carr and Hartnett, claim further that:

Indeed, one of the sure signs of the 1990s is the way in which any informed or enlightened educational thinking is derided as mere theorizing and dismissed as utopian pie in the sky that flies in the face of ordinary commonsense (Carr and Hartnett, 1997, p.3).

The introduction of 'the market' within education has meant that good schools are the schools most parents want their children to attend. The 'market' therefore sounds the death knell for failing whom no one wants to attend. Government rhetoric informs us that failing schools should either be taken over by private enterprises or closed down altogether. In the case of schools for the deaf, they are not being closed down because the market dictates that this should happen but the policy which dictates that deaf children should be mainstreamed renders such schools superfluous. A section highlighting these points in a more explicit way would have given my arguments a stronger platform.

7.3 Further Research Needed

7.3.1 Involvement of Parents: Parents and their involvement in the socialization, language development and primary education of their (deaf) children is of utmost importance. It is safe to assume that parents who have had very little knowledge about deafness know very little about deafness at the time their child is born. Due to this factor, it appears that the relevant professionals who work with deaf children exert a huge amount of influence over the 'careers' of the children in relation to the parents. Harris (2000) states that:

Family involvement and support are influential factors in the educational experience of the hearing-impaired child. The development of the home-school relationship is important in optimising sources of support in the home and enhancing the learning of the children, parents and schools alike (Harris, 2000, p.12).

Although I believe this to be true, my research did not include the views of parents on a wider scale. The experiences of the deaf children are intertwined with the experiences and thought processes of their parents. In my thesis, I do highlight the fact that whether the parents can sign or not is an important variable. Notwithstanding, this is not the only variable associated with parents and the family at large. More research is needed into the views of parents regarding the education of their children and how these views affect the 'careers' of their children. As parents become more knowledgeable about deafness, so their power and influence increases or as Harris (2000) puts it:

It is easier for parents to take on board information in their home environment than in clinical settings. Parents have got a little bit more power and status on their home ground, and they don't feel as manipulated as they might by a hospital-type system of a system that operates away from the home (Harris, 2000, p.18).

7.3.2 Inclusion: My thesis has, to a large extent focused on the experiences of deaf students within mainstream settings and special schools. The discourses favouring the former will point to the relative academic achievements in these settings and the

discourses favouring the latter can always point to the socio-cultural development of the students within these settings. The discourses, however, need not be diametrically opposed to each other. It is possible for both modes of education to co-exist:

McCracken (2001) says:

To be more than integration, a concept of inclusion must encompass social, linguistic, emotional, and cultural inclusion...Ensuring effective inclusion with curricular access at an appropriate level, with peers both in class and in the playground, and ensuring a growing sense of identity and personal responsibility for the individual deaf child is, however, a demanding task (McCracken, 2001, p.124).

A demanding task, it may be, but it does not mean that it is an impossible task. The debates regarding the best ways to teach deaf children have been continuing for about 300 years. It is time the various discourses see avenues for cooperation in each other's perspectives. Not to do so would mean that the same age-old debate will continue for many years to come.

7.4 Policy Recommendations

Carr and Hartnett in deriding some of the education policies of the New Right do admit that it brought about a paradigmatic shift in way education was managed:

...making the market the allocating mechanism for resources; curtailing the power of professionals and providers; reducing the significance of social democracy; and, through choice, variety and differentiation, allowing some parents to have more influence over their children's education (Carr and Hartnett, 1997, p.152).

Whether the present government's policies are akin to the policies of the New Right is open to debate, what cannot be denied, however, is that within education today, the concept of choice and parent involvement is still very much part of the rhetoric. The choice of schools should not just be the privilege of the rich and the knowledgeable but to every stakeholder who has a vested interest in education. If parents are given the

appropriate information about the pros and cons of different methods of teaching deaf children, they may be able to make informed choices. This is based on the proviso that the information given does not support one discourse over the other. Stewart believes that this is essential if deaf education is to work:

Teachers are purveyors of professional knowledge. They are responsible for providing parents and others with an objective interpretation of the literature relating to the field...The teacher may be performing a moral injustice by either intentionally withholding information about the possible downside in each of these cases or being ignorant about the benefits of alternative options (Stewart, 2001, p.172).

The policy makers need to create a mechanism whereby the views and perspectives of deaf children and their parents are listened and acted on. In chapter five I highlighted some of the experiences of deaf students which ranged from isolation to frustration. I also recorded the comments of a parent who said that the professionals never engaged with her at a level in which she could easily understand. The dynamics of power within professional-parent relationships need to be at a level whereby both sets of people can inform practice.

The complexities involved in deaf education suggest that small changes within the process may result in major effects. This could be the employment of appropriately qualified d/Deaf members of staff within mainstream settings. This would ensure that whilst the deaf children have access to a full and inclusive curriculum, their cultural and linguistic needs are not being forsaken.

7.5 Conclusion

The problem with deaf education is largely due to the discourses influencing it. As discourse is never neutral, the ideological claims and counter claims are often fought on a ground that does not really recognise the subject matter. In other words, within deaf education certain views and perspectives have held sway to the detriment of the educational well being of the deaf child who is the central issue. Discourse therefore needs to become neutral in order that a common ground is found. Without a common

ground in which all deaf children can benefit, the problems associated with communication choices, type of placements/educational settings, and whether a deaf child should wear a hearing aid or not, will always persist. The education of deaf children should therefore focus on two main issues, the first being that the deaf child is able to maximise his/her potential; and second, that whatever school the child attends, it must have cultural and linguistic relevance to him/her.

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Appendix A

Initial letter to the schools

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a research student from Durham University (School of Education) whose field of interest is: Deaf Studies. I am initially writing to schools for deaf children all over England to explain my research interest.

My intention is write a doctoral thesis on the experiences of deaf children within mainstream and/or special schools. The responses I get from individual schools will depend on the size and make up of my cohort.

This is an initial letter to ask if your school would like to be involved in my project. I am aware that all adults who intend to work or have contact with children are subject to Criminal Record Bureau checks. I have worked in a professional capacity with deaf children before and I am willing to have my relevant details taken and checked.

Should your school decide to participate in the research, or if you have any questions or concerns please contact me by telephone at extension 8387, or email: ricardo.estee-wale@durham.ac.uk. Alternatively you could contact the School of Education, University of Durham directly or my supervisor, Professor Bill Williamson:

I would be grateful if you could contact me by regarding your willingness to participate or not.

I do believe that this research project can make a valuable contribution to the current debates within deaf education. I hope to hear from you shortly.

Yours Sincerely

Ricardo Estee-Wale

Appendix B

Second letter to the schools

Dear Mr...

Thank you very much for your positive response regarding my intention to include your school in my research. Now that I have a better idea of the sample I would like use for my research I would like to enquire whether the children in your school fit the criteria I shall be using.

It is my intention that the sample consists of children in year 11 who are deaf and use sign language as a first or preferred means of communication. It is also important that the schools they attend use a sign language as part of its teaching methods, for instance, within a Total Communication setting.

As I plan to interview a wide range of children I would be grateful if you could tell me whether your school has a significant gender and ethnic mix. Although not crucial to my research it will otherwise give my research added richness.

If you could contact me regarding my request, I shall send out the relevant letters to the parents regarding authorisation to interview their children.

Thank you once again for your cooperation.

Yours Sincerely

Ricardo Estee-Wale

Appendix C

1st Interview with deaf students

What is your name?

How old are you?

What year are you in?

How old were you when you became deaf?

Do you know your level of hearing loss? (prompt with options of moderate, severely and profound if student does not understand question).

Are there other family members who are deaf?

How many members in your family can communicate with you in a sign language?

Apart from you who has the best signing skills in your family?

Do you have friends outside school?

How do you communicate with your hearing friends?

What do you do when you leave school?

Tell me about your former school?

Did you have any friends in your old school?

What age were you when you left your old school?

Is there anything you would like to add?

2nd Interview with the deaf students

Can you remember what you told me about your former school?

What were your former classmates like? Could they communicate with you properly?

What was your relationship like with the school staff especially your teacher?

Tell me how you were taught in your former school?

How many people could sign?

Did you have extra support to help you with your school work?

Tell me why you had to change schools

If you had the choice would you like to have stayed in that school?

What you think you learnt from the school?

Tell me what you think the differences are between your former and present school

Which of the two schools do you prefer?

Are you taught different subjects at your present school?

What subjects do you do presently?

How many GCSEs are you going to sit?

Who helped you to choose the subjects?

Are you hopeful of passing your exams?

What do you hope to do when you leave school?

Is there anything you would like to add?

3rd Interview with the deaf students

Has anything important happened to you since we last met?

How were your exam results?

Is it what you were expecting?

Tell me about your plans for the immediate future

How do you feel about leaving school and going into a big college or workplace?

What are you going to study?

Tell me about how you decided to go to a particular college

Do you go to Deaf clubs or socialise with deaf people outside school?

What do you feel about being deaf?

Tell me your experience of being a deaf teenager?

Tell me about your relationships with older Deaf people and hearing people of your own age

Tell me the best thing about being deaf

Tell me the worst thing about being deaf

Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix D

Interview with head teachers

Describe the typical student who would come to your school

Why do you have such a large number of students who were first in mainstream education?

Explain the school's communication policy and the reasons for it?

What are your views on the oral/aural methods?

In your opinion what are the advantages of a deaf child coming to your school?

What are the main difficulties deaf children face in education today?

Do the students' language skills improve once they are in a Deaf environment?

What do you see as being the issues regarding Deaf identity?

Explain to me the 'journey' of a typical deaf child

What does the future hold for a child in a hearing world?

In what ways are the families encouraged to take an interest in the education of their children?

Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix E

Interview with the heads of year

Describe the typical deaf child in your year

Were there noticeable behavioural problems when the students first arrived?

What is your assessment of their academic ability?

Why does the school have a restricted syllabus?

How many subjects will a typical student cover at your school?

Who advises them on the subjects to do?

Will they be sitting for GCSEs?

Who decides what type of exams the students sit for?

What do the students normally do on leaving school?

Who helps the students decide which option to take?

Is there anything you would like to add?

