

Canada's Maritime Sign Language

by

Judith Yoel

A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

of

The University of Manitoba

in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Linguistics

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Canada's Maritime Sign Language

By

Judith Yoel

A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of

Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree

Of

Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract: Canada's Maritime Sign Language (MSL)

This research undertakes the first comprehensive, academic study of Maritime Sign Language (MSL), a signed language used by elderly Deaf people in Canada's Maritime Provinces. Although the majority of Canada's Deaf population currently uses American Sign Language (ASL), some Deaf people continue to use MSL, which is thought to stem from British Sign Language (BSL). ASL is quickly encroaching on MSL and is now the dominant language for Deaf people in the provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. There are an estimated fewer than 100 MSL users (Jim McDermott, personal communication).

This research examines a signed language about which relatively little is known but which makes a significant contribution to the rich diversity, heritage and history of Canada's Deaf community. It examines the emergence, development and changes in MSL, focusing on language shift from MSL to ASL and the ensuing demise of MSL.

This study carries out an examination of the lexicon and discourse. The lexical analysis confirms that the roots of MSL lie in BSL. It also reveals the emergence of a nascent signed language, with a repertoire of unique MSL lexical items. A comparison of different lexicons also establishes that the MSL lexicon is related to contemporary ASL. Thus, what is uncovered is a signed language that originated in BSL, flourished and developed, but whose development was cut short by language contact and shift to ASL.

The discourse analysis reveals the increasingly significant and growing influence of ASL on MSL. MSL is examined in relation to language contact, identity and concepts of 'the self' and 'the other.' Subjects' narrative discourse reveals that

while structural diffusion has already occurred in MSL, limited use of MSL lexical items and ritualized language remain. In spite of its weak status, some MSL users maintain and assert a unique MSL identity, separate from others, to which they are loyal. This identity offers them a sense of security within a rapidly changing linguistic and cultural environment. This research confirms that MSL is moribund; it is beyond revival and survival. It will die out with its last remaining users.

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Canada's Maritime Sign Language

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Chapter One: An Introduction to Maritime Sign Language (MSL)

1. Introduction

The majority of Canada's Deaf population¹ uses American Sign Language (ASL) or Langue des Signes des Quebecoise (LSQ), but in Canada's four eastern provinces some elderly people use Maritime Sign Language (MSL). MSL is also referred to as Nova Scotia Sign Language (Grimes 2005) and Old Signs. Carbin (1996) suggests in his book *Deaf Heritage in Canada: A Distinctive, Diverse and Enduring Culture* that a regional dialect or perhaps a different signed language exists on Canada's east coast. Little research has been conducted into MSL. This research will shed light on its nature and status.

This research examines the lexicon and discourse of current MSL users, termed 'MSL users' by the local Deaf community, as well as the limited sources of information about MSL that are available. Most Deaf people in Nova Scotia use ASL. This research examines anecdotal reports that MSL is related to British Sign Language (BSL). It examines BSL borrowings,² BSL regional dialect and Old BSL signs in current MSL.

MSL is also examined for its relation to ASL. ASL and BSL are distinct signed languages which belong to two different signed language families. "British Sign Language and American Sign Language are not related historically, nor are they mutually intelligible" (Friedman 1977: 3). They have different roots. British Sign Language seems to have only a tenuous connection with Old French Sign Language, the signed language which most influenced ASL historically, notes Stokoe (1960).

¹ Deaf with a capital 'D' refers to those people who identify with Deaf culture and whose deafness is not restricted to an audiological state. This convention was first introduced by Woodward (1972) and is upheld by many signed language researchers.

² BSL is known for its great regional variation. The term BSL does not imply one uniform signed language. More recently BSL is becoming standardized.

This research uncovers what transpires when unrelated signed languages come into contact with one another. It also reveals that a unique signed language, with signs unrelated to BSL and ASL, emerged in the Maritime region. Analyses of subjects' narratives reveal where MSL is used in discourse, how it is used and how the different linguistic systems are combined. These analyses also shed light on the social context of present MSL use.

The remainder of this first chapter provides a brief historical overview of the Deaf community in Nova Scotia. The second chapter outlines the scholarly literature essential to understanding the changes occurring in MSL. It examines the concepts of language contact, language shift and language disappearance, as they have been studied, mainly in spoken languages, but as they relate to signed languages as well. The second chapter also reviews the signed language literature relevant to analyses of the lexicon and discourse. Previous research about language contact, identity, and concepts of 'the self' and 'the other' are reviewed. The third chapter outlines how this research is carried out. It looks at the theories behind the methods, the methods used, the subjects studied, the data collected and the analyses undertaken. Chapter Four presents the results of a lexical comparison. It compares the MSL lexicon to BSL and ASL and examines unrelated MSL signs. Furthermore, it looks at how MSL signs have moved away from BSL and toward ASL. The basis for comparing the lexicon is the Swadesh list (1950, 1955) and the Parkhurst and Parkhurst (2003b), two lists of lexical items used in previous research on signed languages. Four additional sources of an MSL lexicon are also examined. Chapter Five presents the results of the discourse analyses, illustrating ways in which language contact has affected MSL and its social network. This chapter examines the ways MSL users presently use both MSL and ASL. Chapter Six examines the ways in which MSL users assert a unique

individual identity and it examines their group identity as it is expressed through language. This chapter also provides support for an MSL ‘self’ that is distinct from ‘the other.’ The final chapter, Chapter Seven, discusses the results of the lexical and discourse analyses. It supports that MSL is a unique and distinct regional language, but one that is disappearing. It situates MSL within signed language use in Canada. This research illustrates that MSL has undergone and continues to undergo linguistic processes of innovation, contact, standardization and shift. The conclusion of this research connects patterns of current MSL language use to the language change that has led to the inevitable disappearance of MSL. The final chapter also discusses the implications for future signed language use in Nova Scotia.

1.1 Historical Background of MSL

Historically, it appears that there were two main routes through which Deaf people arrived on the east coast of Canada, the first through direct immigration from the United Kingdom, beginning in the late 1700s and continuing throughout the 1800s, and the second, through immigration from the eastern United States, beginning in the 1760s. A pamphlet published in London to attract Deaf people to Canada (Tait 1880) noted the “terrible poverty” in Britain and stated “I desire that a grant of land be made by her Majesty’s Government in Canada for the deaf and the dumb and their families, so that they may be afforded the opportunity of being healthy, bright, useful and happy without being dependent” (van Cleve and Crouch 2002:69). Deaf people who came from Great Britain brought BSL with them (Carbin 1996). Deaf people who came from the United States, mainly from the New England States, brought ASL with them or perhaps it was a signed language variety similar to BSL. There is evidence in the eastern United States of a two-handed manual alphabet similar to that used in BSL (Loew, Akamatsu and Lanaville 2000). Groce’s (1985) study of Martha’s Vineyard

focuses on the use of a local signed language assumed to have stemmed from a regional dialect of BSL (Old Kentish Sign Language). When Martha's Vineyard signs, elicited from elderly hearing residents in 1977 were presented to a British Deaf subject, he identified 40% of the signs as BSL cognates, while only 22% were determined to be shared with ASL (Bahan and Poole-Nash 1995). Bahan and Poole-Nash suggest that in certain United States regional variations, Old BSL signs serve as alternative signs.

One can assume that as the number of Deaf people in the Maritime region grew due to hereditary deafness (local records confirm families with several Deaf children) and consanguinity (intermarriage within small communities), uniform use of signed language emerged and evolved. The past Deaf population of Canada's east coast is difficult to piece together, even by way of records e.g., immigration, marriage, death, church and census records because they were either not recorded in a reliable and consistent manner, or because records have been destroyed or lost. In 1784, the first Canadian census inquired about deaf people, but since they were included in the same category as blind people, numbers remain unclear. Censuses administered in 1851, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931 and 1951 asked about deafness inconsistently, often combining Deaf people and blind people into a single category. For 30 years following the 1951 census, no questions about deafness were asked at all in the census. The Canadian Health and Disability Survey also failed to produce reliable results, for they too grouped deafness with other disabilities. Furthermore, they tended to disregard Deaf people who lived rurally, were not affiliated with formal educational facilities and Deaf organizations, and those who did not perceive their deafness as a 'disability' (Carbin 1996:477). Even today, a single, accurate and reliable statistic on Deaf Canadians is lacking (Padden and Humphries 1988). The

number of Deaf Canadians has been historically calculated based on approximations to American statistics (Roots 1999).

Specific information about what MSL looked like in the past is hampered by a lack of records and a lack of information, such as written descriptions of signs, drawings, fingerspelling charts, photographs, film and videos. Current knowledge of MSL is based almost entirely on Deaf people who have some recollection of MSL and those who still use some of it. Although individuals may have learned MSL at school or may have family members who used MSL, most Deaf people in Nova Scotia today use ASL exclusively. Some individuals use a combination of MSL and ASL. Thus, it is a challenge to attempt to understand what MSL use and its community of users may have been like in the past.

1.2 Sources of Information on MSL

In carrying out this research, MSL users were a rich source of data. They discussed MSL, their language use and they shared their personal histories and experiences. People connected to the Deaf community (e.g., family members and interpreters) were also interviewed. Additional sources of information about MSL were located in the Nova Scotia Public Archives, in public libraries, library archives and at the Nova Scotia Community College. Sources included school records e.g., Board of Directors minutes, annual school reports, school registers, financial statements and lesson plans, personal materials e.g., personal letters, a student composition book and a teacher's scrapbook, local newspaper articles e.g., from *The Halifax Daily Echo*, *The Evening Mail*, *The Halifax Chronicle* and *The Evening Times*, local publications e.g., a short book written and published by George Tait, founder of The Institution for Deaf Mutes (1856) (as it was then called) and a book commemorating the school's 100 year anniversary (1956), accounts of Deaf communities in eastern Canada as portrayed in

American publications for Deaf people e.g., *The Silent Worker*, minutes from the meetings of Deaf clubs, information obtained through local Deaf associations e.g., The Nova Scotia Cultural Society of the Deaf, The Halifax Association of the Deaf and The Society of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Nova Scotians, and the small body of published and unpublished research carried out by members of the Nova Scotia Deaf community e.g., a dictionary of MSL (Doull 1978) and an unpublished paper about MSL (Hannah 1994), a video, *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (Misener-Dunn and Fletcher-Falvey (1994) and the only formal research on MSL, to date, a report titled *The Survival of Maritime Sign Language*, published in *Papers from the 21st Annual Meeting of the Atlantic Provinces Linguistic Association* (Warner et al. 1998). Items from private collections were offered to the researcher by members of the local Deaf community; these served as a valuable source of materials. Of the memorabilia that does remain, there are no films or video tapes of MSL in use prior to 1994. When the School for the Deaf in Halifax closed in 1958, the school's contents were sold at a public auction. As a result, historical information relating to MSL is now scattered across the province and perhaps throughout the Maritimes and the rest of Canada.

1.2.1 Contact between the Atlantic Provinces and the United Kingdom

There was a strong educational connection between Canada's Atlantic provinces (reference to the Atlantic provinces includes Newfoundland and Labrador, whereas reference to the Maritime provinces does not)³ and the UK after the establishment of a school for Deaf people in Halifax, Nova Scotia (1856). Prior to this, between 1780 and 1856, records indicate that between 30 and 40 Deaf children from the Atlantic provinces were sent overseas to Scotland and England to attend Braidwood Schools for Deaf children (Carbin 1996:56). This number is high in comparison to the rest of

³ These two terms will be used as they are relevant to the situation discussed.

Canada, where Deaf pupils were more likely to attend American schools. In 1856, when the Institution for Deaf Mutes was opened in Halifax, Nova Scotia, it was the second school for Deaf people in Canada, following the founding of The MacKay Protestant School for the Deaf and Dumb, established in Montreal, Quebec in 1831. In 1913, the name of the school was changed to The Halifax School for the Deaf (This research uses that name). In 1884, Nova Scotia was the first province in Canada to “decree unconditional board and education for all her deaf pupils” (Carbin 1996:119). The school in Halifax, founded by George Tait⁴ a former pupil of the Donaldson and Braidwood Schools in Edinburgh, Scotland, maintained strong ties to Great Britain for almost a century.

Schools for Deaf pupils in the Atlantic Provinces were also established in New Brunswick, in 1873, 1882 and 1918, Prince Edward Island in 1866 and Newfoundland in 1877, but these schools were plagued with problems and were short-lived. The school in Halifax, however, remained open. It served as the centre of the Deaf community in the Atlantic provinces (Carbin 1996). All schools for Deaf pupils in the Atlantic provinces relied on headmasters, teachers, methods and materials imported directly from the UK. Headmasters of the school in Halifax came with previous experience from schools for Deaf pupils in Dublin (Ireland), Portadown and Belfast (Northern Ireland), and Birmingham and Margate (England). Headmasters frequently traveled back and forth between Canada and the UK. In 1939, when Cornelius van Allen became headmaster of the Halifax School for the Deaf, he broke a century-old tradition of headmasters that stemmed from the United Kingdom and Ireland. He was

⁴ According to Annual School Reports from the Institution for Deaf Mutes in Halifax, Tait was fired for mishandling of students and a drinking problem. As a result, he is often unrecognized as the school's founder. Official recognition is commonly awarded to his colleague William Gray. Gray had a better reputation and he had caught the attention of Reverend James Cochran (the man who helped Laurent Clerc establish Gallaudet School for the Deaf in the United States). Cochran helped Grey raise funds for the Halifax School.

the first headmaster educated in Canada. Teachers in the schools also stemmed from a variety of locations in England and Scotland; they used BSL and British educational methods. In 1877, teachers from Halifax traveled to London, England, to meet with British counterparts and be tested in teaching methods and signed language at the National College of Teachers of the Deaf in London (Howe 1880). “On several occasions...needful books and apparatus... [were] kindly donated by kindred institutions in the mother country, from Institutes for the Deaf and Dumb in Yorkshire, Glasgow, Birmingham, Exeter, Newcastle-on-the Tyne and The Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb in London” (*First Annual Report for the Institution for the Deaf and Dumb* 1857:17). Reports of educational materials received from England are also mentioned in *The 14th Annual School Report* (1871), *The 20th Annual School Report* (1877), and *Letters of William Bud Dixon* (1878). The Braidwood method of Deaf education, also known as the ‘Combined Method’ and ‘English Method’ (for its prevalence in England), was adopted in Halifax. The educational system used for Deaf pupils in Halifax was described as “the combined method, a system used by Thomas Braidwood in Scotland and England” (Howe 1880:41). This method, despite the name ‘combined,’ was said to have consisted mainly of signing. Annual school reports from the Halifax school confirm that articulation and speech were reserved “for a small number of pupils...who are semi-deaf” (*The 14th Annual School Report* 1871:17), and “Oral language and lip reading is regarded as an accomplishment for the minority, rather than the base of education for all (*The 20th Annual School Report* 1877:29). Headmaster of the Halifax school, James Fearon (1891-1918), wrote in a letter to the parents of a Deaf child “We still teach by the old method of talking with the hands. We do teach speech, but we do not prefer to teach exclusively one system. As the general course of instruction we follow what is known as the combined

method, which employs both a manual and oral means” (Letter written by James Fearon, Sept. 22, 1889).⁵

Anecdotal evidence suggests that in Nova Scotia a regional variety of signed language, derived from BSL, including a two-handed alphabet, was passed on from generation to generation of Deaf people in a peer-mediated manner. Signed language was the main means of communication among Deaf people. The local variety of language used may have been unintelligible with ASL. An incident describing a visit by George Bateman, headmaster of the Halifax School for the Deaf (1918-1939) to a school for the Deaf in Philadelphia (1919) implied that Bateman, who knew some BSL, having worked as a teacher and headmaster of the school for the Deaf in Margate, England and Dublin, Ireland for seven years, could not communicate with ASL users. Asked to tell American students about the Halifax explosion (1917), Bateman “not being familiar with the American Sign Language” told the American pupils about the Halifax explosion - the pupils injured in the blast, the damage done, the closure of the school and the cost of rebuilding the school - “while his speech was interpreted into ASL by Dr. Couter, a hearing employee of the host school” (*The Silent Worker* 1919: 69). Since Bateman's predecessor James Fearon, had introduced Oralist methods into the school, it is also likely Bateman's ability to sign was limited. Anecdotal accounts exist of British Deaf people who traveled to Atlantic Canada and encountered other Deaf people; to their surprise, they were able to communicate

⁵ Kyle and Woll (1985) confirm the use of the Braidwood method in the Canadian Maritimes. Similar accounts of its use appear in signed language research carried out in Australia and New Zealand (McKee and Kennedy 2000).

through common BSL signs and by fingerspelling the BSL two-handed manual alphabet.⁶

1.2.2 Contact between the Atlantic Provinces and the United States

Contact between the Atlantic Provinces and the United States came about through immigration, education and social interaction. Deaf people who came from the United States to Canada are documented in the arrival of Convenators, an American Christian religious sect persecuted for their beliefs in the United States, (1760s), United Empire Loyalists (1775), and Black Loyalists (1770s and 1780s) (Carbin 1996). Some Deaf people in Nova Scotia today are able to trace their heritage back to these groups. The school in Halifax maintained connections with Deaf schools in the United States, particularly those with similar educational methods and educational philosophies, such as the Clarke Institution for the Deaf and Dumb in Northampton, Massachusetts (Tait 1878), and schools for Deaf pupils in Indianapolis, Indiana and Connecticut, (*The 12th Annual School Report* 1869). In 1930, the first teacher from the United States, from Indiana, arrived at the Halifax School (*The 73rd Annual School Report* 1930). Early Deaf publications attest to ongoing patterns of Deaf east coast Canadian and Deaf east coast American social interaction. *The Silent Worker* (now the *Deaf American*), published from 1891-1929, was distributed in eastern Canada and regular features included columns titled “Eastern Canada”, “Canada” and “From Canada”. There were feature articles about Deaf people in the Atlantic provinces, as well as many shorter texts, primarily of a social nature e.g., announcements of births, deaths, illnesses, marriages, visits, awards, sports events, picnics, art exhibitions and gifts

⁶ Stokoe (1969) cautions that it is important to distinguish between ‘communication of signers’ and ‘mutual intelligibility’ of signed languages, as individuals who use different signed languages are often able to communicate with one another. This does not imply that their respective signed languages are necessarily understood by one another.

given and received. Local Bible reading club activities were covered in later Deaf publications (*The Silent Worker* 1891-1918). Numerous accounts of interaction also included accounts of weddings, the exchange of religious clergy and invitations for Deaf people in the Atlantic Provinces to visit Boston and Hartford (*The Silent Worker*, 1904:20, *The Silent Worker* 1907:14, *The Silent Worker* 1908:29, *The Silent Worker* 1917, *The 72nd Annual School Report* 1929:17). This pattern of interaction strongly suggests that people in eastern Canada were exposed to ASL and they experienced interaction with ASL users - long before the formal introduction of ASL instruction in Amherst, Nova Scotia at the Interprovincial School for the Deaf in the early 1970s.

1.2.3 A Deaf Collective in Atlantic Canada

Examining the composition of the Deaf population in eastern Canada, one may conclude that Deaf people formed a community. The notion of a Deaf community is problematic because, even more recently, researchers have been hard pressed to agree on the criteria that define a Deaf community (Turner 1994). Determining that this term, which did not exist at the time, is applicable to a past entity, for which there is limited evidence, is a challenge. Deaf people in Atlantic Canada, due to the rural nature of their lives (e.g., fishing and farming), often did not live or work in close proximity to one another. Due to physical isolation, social interaction may have been limited. It is unknown whether or not Deaf people had pride in their deafness or MSL. There is, however, evidence that Deaf people in Canada's eastern Provinces, while they may have been somewhat scattered, formed a collective based on their common origins, shared experiences, geographical commonality, similar education, similar way of life and use of MSL. Deaf people, although primarily rural experienced a trend toward an urban collective once they finished school and they continued to socialize

with one another. Characterized mainly by sociocultural and linguistic commonalities, MSL users formed a distinct group.

Residential schools for Deaf people played a particularly important role in a collective identity, socially and linguistically. They served as centers for education, communication, socialization, information, interaction and language. Most pupils spent the majority of the year at school, going home only for Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter and summer holidays; some students returned home only in the summer (Carbin 1996). Padden (1998) mentions that in the United States, residential schools were so important that they may have replaced the family unit as the main socializing agent. Of Canadian residential schools, Carbin (1996) says “When Deaf adults reflect on their past at such residential schools, they insist those were wonderful years. In spite of having to work hard and put up with restrictions, they felt that much of their success in adulthood could be traced back to the early childhood discipline, encouragement and interaction with their deaf peers and deaf adults, and their struggles and eventual success establishing their own identities in such a residential and academic environment” (Carbin 1996:407). A school report from the Halifax School states “It would be hard to find a happier family than at the School for the Deaf” (*The 67th Annual School Report* 1924:5). The school newsletter is referred to as “our little family paper” (*The 72nd Annual School Report* 1929:17). Upon the completion of a formal education, numerous Deaf clubs provided the continuation of the collective experience. Deaf clubs included: The Bible Reading Club for Deaf-Mutes (established in 1906, in St. John, New Brunswick), The St. John Deaf-Mute Association 1907 (St. John, New Brunswick), the Forrest Club (established in 1919 in Halifax, Nova Scotia), the City Club for the Deaf (established in 1924 in Moncton, New Brunswick) and the Loyalist Club of the Deaf (established in 1926 in Lancaster,

New Brunswick) (Carbin 1996). In addition, T.J. Boal (of the St. John Deaf Club, New Brunswick) founded the Association for Deaf-Mutes in 1904.⁷ The purpose of this organization was “the promotion of the moral, intellectual and spiritual interest of Deaf in the provinces” (*The Silent Worker* 1904:52). Deaf clubs and organizations, which involved face-to-face gatherings and peer interaction, played a significant role in perpetuating the use of MSL and its culture.

1.3 The Significance of MSL Research

Research into MSL is important for the many lessons it can teach us. As previously mentioned, relatively little research has been carried out into MSL (Petitto 1987, Carbin 1996, Warner *et al.* 1998). Little is known about this minority language. We know what happens to spoken languages that come into contact with one another; we are just beginning to discover what happens to signed languages in contact. MSL is an example of signed language currently experiencing language contact.

This examination of MSL also relates to relevant issues such as the intergenerational transmission of language and language attitudes. “Without transmission there can be no long-term [language] maintenance” (Nettle and Romaine 2000:177). Younger Deaf people in Nova Scotia have been educated differently than their elders. As a result, they may have different opinions about deafness and language use. These ideological and linguistic differences may account for disjointed generations of Deaf people. Day (2004) notes that generally in signed languages, breaks between generations make for large changes in the language. This is applicable to Nova Scotia, where some of the older generation remains loyal to MSL, while the younger generation has little knowledge about MSL and limited regard for the language due mainly to ignorance and a lack of exposure to MSL.

⁷ A year later (1905), the name was changed to the Maritime Deaf-Mute Association.

MSL survived for a century, despite the hegemony of other signed languages, due primarily to strong historical, cultural, social, linguistic, economic and educational factors. It thrived, developed and was functional, suggesting that certain factors and their combination may contribute to keeping a language intact and alive. But MSL has undergone a shift to ASL due to its encroachment and its status as a more dominant language. "It seems that ASL is becoming the dominant language of the Deaf Maritimers" (Warner *et al.* 1998:170). This study examines the factors behind the process of shift. These include a combination of linguistic and social factors. Nettle and Romaine (2000) compare language loss to the death of a miner's canary - it serves as a reliable indicator of the less visible stress in the environment. This research examines the reforms implemented over the past few decades and their role in the demise of MSL. Faced with eventual, imminent loss, MSL is in a moribund state, meaning that it is beyond revival and survival. Observing the effects of this change can be beneficial for the outcome of MSL and the implications may be applied to other Deaf minorities and signed languages. Language loss is almost always part of a wider process of displacement. Being made aware of the components of the process allows us to examine past behaviour and to evaluate and adjust present behaviour, as well make predictions and plan for future linguistic vitality.

This examination of MSL is pressing. Current MSL use is marginal and is expected only to further deteriorate. The largest pool of MSL users is located in Nova Scotia; some users remain in New Brunswick, but there are almost none left in Prince Edward Island or Newfoundland and Labrador. Anecdotal evidence from a member of the Newfoundland and Labrador Deaf community suggested to the researcher that three MSL users remain in that province. Today one is hard pressed to locate a core group of MSL users who occupy a central role in its use and maintenance. Instead

there seem to be a few individuals scattered about, who still use the language to some extent and a few more with an interest in MSL. Demographics are not on the side of MSL. MSL users are aging and dwindling rapidly in number. By acknowledging and documenting MSL as it is presently used, and by learning as much as possible about its past, this research makes a significant contribution to the rich diversity of Canada's Deaf history, community, culture and language.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2. Introduction

This chapter presents a review of scholarly literature as it relates to the main trends in MSL. It is divided into two main sections. The first section presents three interrelated sociolinguistic phenomena essential to an understanding of what is occurring in MSL: 1) language contact, 2) language shift and 3) language disappearance. Each is introduced in relation to spoken languages, where most of the research has been conducted, and then to the smaller body of research carried out on signed languages. Language contact results in language shift, and as shift occurs there may be, in turn, language disappearance. The second section of this chapter reviews the literature as it relates to the two specific areas of this study: 1) the lexical analysis and 2) the discourse analysis. The section of the lexical analysis focuses on and reviews the lexical analyses of different signs. The discourse analysis introduces the type of discourse in this research, narratives, and examines how language contact, identity and ‘the self’ and ‘the other’ have been and can be applied to discourse.

2.1 Language Contact

Contact linguistics is a relatively new field of study within sociolinguistics. It formally emerged at an inaugural conference in Brussels in June of 1979, called the First World Congress of Language Contact and Conflict (Winford 2003). Previous work, particularly on sociological and psychological aspects of language, contributed significantly to the field of contact linguistics and included research conducted by Weinreich (1953) and Fishman (1964, 1966). Contact linguistics focuses both on the individual language user and the language itself. “From a speaker-centered point of view, the question to ask is how individuals and groups of speakers react when they get in touch with other groups and their languages” (Coulmas 2005:147). Linguistic

behaviours are examined. For example, if the groups in contact are of different status and size, often it is the smaller, minority group that will suffer language loss (Coulmas 2005). Language contact occurs in a variety of manners such as between regions, countries and ethnic and religious groups. In situations of contact and conflict, one of the languages is often affected negatively and its users suffer language shift or loss.

Winford (2003) outlines a long history of language contact situations dating back to the 14th century. He summarizes trends in contact linguistics, such as attempts to build 'linguistic family trees' in the 19th century" (Whitney 1881, Schuchardt 1884, Muller 1875 and Meillet 1921 as cited in Winford 2003), and sources that discuss language contact such as studies of immigrant language (Braun 1937 cited in Winford 2003) and studies of language maintenance and shift conducted in the 20th century (Herzog 1941, Reed 1948, Pap 1949 cited in Winford 2003, Fishman 1964, 1965, and Gal 1979). Essential, additional sources of language contact include Weinreich's *Languages in Contact* (1953), a study of Norwegian in the United States, Clyne's research on language contact and the use of German in Australia (1967, 1972, 1982, 1987) and Thomsan and Kaufman's (1988) research on language contact. In addition, there are three volumes of an interdisciplinary series devoted to language contact (Mufwane 2001, Clyne 2003 and Heine and Kuteva 2005). Most of the research conducted to date is in spoken languages. Less research on language contact in signed languages has been carried out, as noted by Lucas.

Relatively little work has been conducted on signed languages in contact. Work on language contact in Deaf communities has focused almost exclusively on the outcomes of contact between spoken majority language and signed languages. This has been valuable, as it has helped to point out the parallels and differences between language contact outcomes in exclusively spoken language communities and communities that involve both a spoken and a signed language. The outcome of contact between language with different modalities, signed and spoken, has pushed us to re-examine basic concepts such as

bilingualism, codeswitching and code-mixing. Such studies have helped us to understand unique signed language phenomena such as fingerspelling and initialization. What has always been lacking is data-based research on the outcomes of contact between natural languages (Lucas 2007: ix).

It is the norm that English influences ASL (e.g., initialized signs and fingerspelled words) (Lucas and Valli 1992). There is relatively little evidence of influence in the other direction. The few examples that do exist are likely to be explained by a sense of social solidarity. This behaviour acknowledges a shared language code. For example, Bishop and Hicks (2005) examined CODA (Children of Deaf Adults) speech and written text and noted a similar pattern that certain patterns of ASL are sometimes carried over in communication with other CODAs, ASL features such as non-English verb inflections, ASL grammatical structures, literal translations of idioms, adjective/noun reversals and the absence of overt subjects. This is not evidence of one language influencing another, rather a limited social phenomenon between individuals who share something in common.

Lucas and Valli (1992) suggest that signed languages may influence each other in a variety of ways. Users may experience interference from another language and they may import borrowed lexical items and form lexical blends. Where regions with different signed languages are adjacent to one another, such as Ontario (ASL) and Quebec (LSQ) in Canada, language contact may occur (Miller 2001a, 2001b).⁸

Anecdotal evidence suggests that language contact in signed languages occurs when users of one signed language come into contact with those of another and they adapt their language in order to communicate. Deaf people with different signed languages experience difficulty in understanding one another (Battison and Jordan

⁸ Researchers have also noted how artificially-contrived languages for Deaf people can influence natural signed languages. Van Herrewghe and Vermeerbergen (2004) noted that signs have been borrowed from Signed Dutch into Flemish Sign Language (VGT); Johnston and Schembri (1997) noted the same from Signed English into Auslan.

1976). “From the personal reports of travelers and immigrants alike, we know that sign languages are not understood by signers who are not familiar with them - certainly not as easily understood as some stories would have us believe” (Battison and Jordan 1976:64). Research supports that different signed languages are not comprehensible simply because they share a modality. For example, in 1880, Ute Indians who used signed language were brought to Gallaudet College for experiments in communication with ASL users. Despite the fact that the subjects resided in the same country and both used signed languages, many signs were unintelligible to one another.⁹

Deaf people employ strategies, some of which are not available to speakers, to enhance cross-cultural communication. They use foreigner talk, large, slow and repetitious signing, use of gesture, agreed-upon international signs and the fingerspelling of familiar words from spoken language. Cross-cultural conversations are often limited to superficial topics like travel, food, school, jobs, family and entertainment, as opposed to “weighty or deep topics” such as politics, religion and philosophy (Battison and Jordan 1976:51) The visual manual modality offers additional alternative options such as iconicity,¹⁰ the use of space, directional gestures (Casey 2003), classifiers (Schembri 2003) and grammaticalized linguistic features like eyebrow raising (Janzen and Shaffer 2002). While researchers of signed languages acknowledge common and shared features in a visual manual modality, similarities

⁹ Subjects’ short narratives to one another in this experiment revealed more comprehension than lexical items did. But it may have been the nature of the narrative that increased success. The scenario about hunting and gathering food facilitated the use of gesture and mime (Battison and Jordan 1976:58).

¹⁰ Iconic means that “the form of the symbol is an icon or picture of some aspect of the thing or activity it symbolizes” (Lucas, Bayley and Valli 2001:5). Pizzuto and Volterra (2000) confirm that iconicity permits Deaf people to communicate with more ease than hearing people. “Visual iconicity” says Quinto-Pozos, “is so prevalent in signed language its role in cross-linguistic communication should be carefully examined” (Quinto-Pozos 2007:15).

alone do not imply that all Deaf people are able to communicate with one another (Quinto-Pozos 2007).

Formal research into language contact in signed languages is a relatively new field, but recent evidence suggests that language contact between signed languages is widespread. Signed languages can and do influence one another. In Israeli Sign Language, approximately one third of the lexicon can be traced back to historical contact with German Sign Language (Meir 2008). New Zealand Sign Language has recently been influenced by Maori culture (Locker McKee, McKee, Smiler and Pointon 2002). And in places where indigenous signed languages are used, like in Thailand, these inevitably come into contact with other signed languages. Native signed languages are influenced by nationally-adopted and foreign signed languages (Woodward 1993, Nonaka 2004).

Where signed languages come into conflict with one another, the more dominant one frequently emerges as the more prevalent. Such was the case in Martha's Vineyard, where ASL prevailed over the local signed language (Groce 1985). In some cases, the less dominant signed language gains elevated status. For example, in Iceland, despite cultural, political, and historical ties with Danish Sign Language, Icelandic Sign Language exhibits evidence of having diverged into an autonomous language that reflects the unique identity of its users (Aldersson and McEntee-Atalianis 2007). Within Canada too, there are different signed languages such as LSQ, Inuit Sign Language, (also called Circumpolar Sign Language¹¹) and MSL. There are also different regional dialects (e.g., Pacific, Prairie and Central, and

¹¹ Inuit Sign Language, found in Iqaluit, Pangnirtung and Rankin Inlet, may differ from ASL. Because many Deaf people from Canada's northern regions have traditionally been educated elsewhere in the country, ASL is also used. There is also a tradition of ASL social workers and interpreters coming into the area. This implies that there is language contact. The nature and use of Inuit Sign Language and the degree of language contact has yet to be determined. Research is presently underway (MacDougall 1991, Minogue 2008).

Atlantic) whose influence on one another, as the result of language contact, is evident in *The Canadian Sign Language Dictionary* (Dolby and Bailey 2002). Machabee (1995) examines the outcome of contact between French and LSQ and reveals the influence of ASL on LSQ, particularly in relation to initialized signs.

In additional research on language contact in signed languages, Antoons and Boonon (2002) note contact between the users of signed language in Holland and Flemish Sign Language in Belgium. Puson and Siloterio (2006) examine language contact in Filipino Sign Language. They note that Filipino Sign Language is a mixture of indigenous Filipino regional signs from within the Philippines, ASL borrowings, the result of the presence of American Peace Corps volunteers (1974-1989), phonological and semantic variants of ASL signs, and manually coded signs from English (e.g., lexicalized fingerspelling). They state that “The Filipino Deaf community has always struggled with the dominating influence of ASL” (Puson and Siloterio 2006:4). Sasaki (2007) compares the lexicons of Japanese Sign Language and Taiwan Sign Language, a comparison made possible by historical contact. In a situation with similarities to MSL, Ann, Smith and Yu (2007) illustrate how through language contact, one signed language variety is replacing another in Taiwan. Language contact is the main factor behind the short-lived use and continued disappearance of Mainland China Sign Language (MCSL). MCSL, once used in a specific school, is being replaced by Taiwan Sign Language (TSL) because when the school closed its pupils became immersed in a predominantly TSL environment. Initially, they maintained contact with one another, becoming bilingual (in MCSL and TSL), but gradually TSL began to replace MCSL, to the extent that is now difficult to locate MCSL users. In Jamaica, local signed languages have been influenced by ASL, the result of American Mennonite missionaries involved in the Deaf educational

system (Cumberbatch 2008). A Turkish village on the Syrian border, where Mardin Sign Language has traditionally been used, is experiencing change caused by language contact, as its Deaf residents move back and forth between the village and urban centers bringing new signs with them (Dikyuva and Dilsiz 2008). Delgado (2008) notes the influence of LSM (*Lenguaje de Senos Mexicano*) on the indigenous signed language of a small Mayan village. Quinto-Pozos (2008) examined language contact between ASL and LSM in Texas and concluded that contact between signed languages can exhibit characteristics similar to those observed in contact between spoken languages. In addition, he observed “unique features of signed-language contact due to the ability to produce elements from a signed language and spoken language simultaneously” (Quinto-Pozos 2008:161).

Social factors play a major role in signed language contact. “The goal of contact linguistics is to uncover the various factors, both linguistic and socio-cultural that contribute to the linguistic consequences of contact between speakers of different language varieties” (Winford 2003:11). Social forces are unique to each setting and they can be numerous and varied. They can include colonization, in-migration, out-migration, politics and educational policies, not to mention issues such as power, prestige and the status of ethnic or religious minorities. Research has begun to recognize the importance of social influences on signed language contact. Al-Fityani and Padden (2006) examine the signed languages of the Arab Middle East noting a high rate of commonality among those signed languages where there is social and cultural contact e.g., between Jordan and Palestine, and less where there is limited social and cultural contact e.g., between Jordan and Kuwait. Yoel (2002) examines Russian Sign Language (RSL) as used by Deaf immigrants to Israel. She yields evidence of the lexical attrition of RSL due primarily to the influence of socio-cultural

and sociolinguistic factors that make Israeli Sign Language (ISL) a necessity, even at the expense of RSL. Hoyer (2007) examines the emerging enrichment and development of Albanian Sign Language. Its development is in part due to language contact and the influences of other signed languages (International Signs and Finnish Sign Language).

The eventual outcome of ongoing contact between different signed languages is change. Although without contact, signed languages also undergo natural processes of change. They evolve just as spoken languages do. Language contact is typical of all Deaf communities because signed languages are located within dominant spoken language environments. Contact can result in the creation of new dialects, mergers of different dialects, language shift or language loss. Hoyer (2007) observed that the end of the strict Communist regime in Albania brought about an increase in the amount and frequency of contact with other Deaf communities and what was formerly a signed language based mainly on fingerspelling has begun to develop into a signed language with many new signs stemming from other signed languages (Hoyer 2007). Leeson (2005), in her account of how political change within the European Union has influenced signed languages, notes the influence of BSL and the influence of manually coded English or Signed English on Irish Sign Language. She also examines the increasing influence of ASL on signed languages in Europe. In Africa, French Sign Language (LSF) and spoken French have influenced Malinese Sign Language, also called LaSiMa, ASL, and it is not unusual to see ASL signs accompanied by French mouthing (Nyst and van Kampen 2008).¹² In Mauritian Sign Language, also used in Africa, the ASL fingerspelling system is used by Deaf people to spell words

¹² Davis (1989) suggests that some mouthings are in fact code-mixing because they involve the mixture of two different linguistic systems.

not in English, but in Mauritian, Mauritian Creole, French, Hindi, Urdu and Tamil (Fuseillier-Sousa and Gebert 2008).

Although contact linguistics has traditionally examined spoken languages, anecdotal evidence and the results of recent signed language research reveal evidence of language contact. When different signed languages come into contact with one another, due to geographical proximity or face-to-face contact, they undergo changes. Language change is an essential step in the process of language shift. As a language is shifted away from, it may eventually also disappear.

2.1.1 Diglossia

When languages are in contact with one another, one option is that they can co-exist, with “each being allotted a range of different functions” (Coulmas 2005:233) and status. Stokoe (1969) discusses a continuum that exists between the varieties of Signed English and ASL, applying the term diglossia, a term originally introduced by Ferguson (1959) in his study of Standard High (H) German (*Schriftdeutsch* or written German) and Low (L) language (Swiss German). Diglossia, a situation where one language receives elevated status and use (the High or H language) and the other lower status and use (the Low or L language), has been well documented for spoken languages (e.g., Frisian and Dutch in Holland, Occitan and French in France and Navajo and English in the United States) (Hudson 2002). The present study acknowledges that potentially a diglossic situation can exist for two different signed languages.

Diglossia in signed languages, like spoken languages, has social origins. Used in relation to signed language, it frequently refers to English as the H language variety and ASL as the L language variety, with English carrying higher prestige. Marcowicz (1972) says that “outsiders” have made Deaf people feel that the H variety is more

acceptable and more educated, thus implying that the L variety “is no language at all, has no grammar, [and] is [little] but a collection of gestures...suggestive of...ideas” (Marcowicz 1972:32). Ironically, it is the H variety of signed language that includes additional, contrived lexical and grammatical items (Marcowicz 1972). Hall (1989) provides evidence of Deaf people who feel that signing according to the word order of English in ASL is “better language” (Hall 1989:90). Johnston and Schembri (2007) confirm that spoken language inevitably has higher status than signed language because it is associated with the dominant and more powerful hearing culture. Van Herreweghe and Vermeerbergen (2004) note that prior to the 1980s Flemish Sign Language (VGT, *Vlaamse Gebarentaal*) was relegated to the playground and had low status, while Signed Dutch (from spoken Dutch) held higher status. Potentially, there can be a situation in which one signed language functions as the H variety and another as the L variety. Perhaps from what follows it might be suggested that in the Atlantic region ASL serves as the H variety and MSL serves as the L variety. Hudson (2002) reminds those interested that diglossia is a rare and remarkable phenomenon, one not yet fully understood, yet observed worldwide. Its application to signed languages and to MSL specifically is certainly worth investigating.

2.2 Language Shift

Language shift is one possible outcome of language contact. Also referred to as ‘language drift’, ‘replacement’ and ‘displacement’ (Aitchinson 1991), language shift is defined as “when populations adopt a new language or variety into their repertoire, whether or not at the same time they also give up a language variety that they previously used” (Fishman 1972b:107). This definition is a development of Fishman's initial proposal (1964) that language shift is the ongoing psychological, social and cultural processes that occur when populations with different languages are in contact

with one another and adopt features of the other language. Crystal (2000:17) defines language shift as “the conventional term for the gradual or sudden move from the use of one language to another (either by an individual or a group).” The most commonly observed pattern of language shift is the increase of one language at the expense of another. Inevitably, the language with the higher social position and value wins out. Shift can occur among, but is not limited to, immigrant populations, subcommunities and minority language populations. Shift often affects communities in which there are additional social divisions e.g., urban/rural or wealthy/poor; it can be mutual or one-sided (Winford 2003). Shift can also occur between dialects, when one speech community shifts toward the dialect of another. Languages sometimes even become intertwined, e.g., Anglo-Romani, the language spoken by Roma groups in the British Isles, the grammatical framework comes from English, while most of the lexicon stems from Romani and Calo, a combination of Spanish and Romani (Winford 2003).

Language shift reveals a wealth of information about linguistic and sociolinguistic behaviours such as the introduction of innovative forms, competition between linguistic forms, reconstructive processes and people's changing attitudes (Coulmas 2005). A typical situation of language shift is as follows: in the initial stages the speakers borrow from a different language; they then codeswitch between two different languages; there is change toward the newer language; this change spreads from person to person through face-to-face contact and social networks. Since people wish to be like others and the new language has status, they modify their language further toward the new language. As the new language assumes a more dominant position, the older one is devalued. As speakers choose to use the new language, the older language eventually falls into disuse.

No two language shift situations are identical. Rates of shift vary. Shift can be rapid and dramatic, thus termed “catastrophic” and “radical” (Crystal 2000:23).

Radical shift often occurs where native ethnicity is weak and external pressure to shift is intense (Crystal 2000), as in the “Russification of Soviet-controlled populations” (Fishman 1972b:107). Language shift can also be a relatively slow process extending across generations, during which time there are periods of stability and regression. In describing a slow process of language shift, Aitchinson (1991) says it is “a change [that] tends to sneak quietly into a language, like a seed, which enters the soil and germinates unseen; at some point, it sprouts through the surface” (Aitchison 1991:60). Language shift can stem from pressure, which goes relatively unnoticed - until it reaches a critical level (Aitchison 1991).

Shift can be the result of weaknesses and imbalances language users experience within their language communities. These make the users vulnerable to change. Change is based on the choices individuals make, not on the structure of languages. Aitchison (1991) observes that “change and shift can not take effect unless the language and the users are ‘ready’ for change.... Changes take advantage of inherent tendencies which reside in the physical and mental make-up of human beings” (Aitchison 1991:161). Similarly, Crystal (2000:112) notes that “The decision to abandon one’s own language always derives from a change in the self-esteem of the speech community”. In studies of language shift in Africa Brenzinger, Heine and Somner (1996) observed that language shift often came about as the result of community members deciding to adapt their language in order to meet changing social and cultural needs.

Language shift is inseparable from social factors. In the ground-breaking study of shift conducted by Gal (1979) in Oberwart, Austria, she discovered that native

speakers of Hungarian shifted to German mainly for economic benefit and to gain social mobility. As individuals' social networks changed, so did their language use and their sense of identity. Similarly, Fishman's studies of Jewish and Italian immigrants in the United States (1966, 1972a), and Clyne's studies of German immigrants in Australia (1967, 1972, 1982) support the notion that "People outside of the [main] group want, consciously or subconsciously to belong, so they shift, [thus, making] the spread of language change essentially a social phenomenon, which reflects the changing social situations" (Aitchison 1991:74-75). Language shift almost inevitably offers people who shift benefits such as social acceptance, higher social status, occupational advancement, educational advancement, increased political power and access to the media (Crystal 2000).

Johnston (2003) claims that the process of language shift in signed languages is similar to that of spoken languages. When signed language varieties come into contact and one is perceived to be of higher status and a more standard variety, "users of the standard variety consider dialects or nonstandard varieties to be incorrect....People who seek power and influence will often adapt features of the preferred variety in their own speech" (Johnston 2003: 432-433). However, most of the evidence for language shift in signed languages presently falls within other areas of signed language research e.g., gender-related use of language, language disappearance, language contact and language standardization, where shift appears in combination with or as a byproduct of these. There is evidence for signed language shift in the research of LeMaster and Dwyer (1991) and LeMaster (2003), who studied signed language used in Dublin, Ireland, where as the result of gender-segregated schools, males and females used different signed language varieties. Their research focuses on the reduction in use of the female variety. It implies a shift toward

the male variety.¹³ Ann, Smith and Yu's (2007) examination of the disappearance of MCSL provides evidence of shift away from MCSL and toward TSL. In Hoyer's (2007) account of Albanian Sign Language, she notes that males who socialized more frequently in urban settings tended to shift to a newer variety of signed language; in contrast, females, particularly those in rural locations, did not. In both cases, signers shifted toward the more dominant language. In Great Britain, regional varieties of signed language are undergoing a process of shift from extensive regional lexical variation toward a more standardized BSL promoted largely by the media and the publication of BSL dictionaries (Frances Elton, personal communication 11 July 2006).

Fishman (2001) introduces a notion of a 'reversal of language shift,' where in rare cases language shift reverse direction and returns in the direction of the weaker, minority language. This is usually triggered by strong loyalty to a language and a return to one's roots. This is evident among the Navajo, the Welsh,¹⁴ and the Finnish-speaking minority in Northern Norway (Lane 2006).¹⁵ Perhaps the strongest example of a reversal of shift is Irish or Gaelic. Southern Ireland consciously reinstated the language within their struggle for an independent Irish Republic. In Northern Ireland, the failure to achieve independence from Britain and the British ban on the Irish language until the early 1990s added political incentive to renew the Irish language (McWilliams 2005).¹⁶ Such instances of language revitalization are relatively rare. In

¹³ The findings of Leeson and Grehan (2002) differ from those of LeMaster and Dwyer (1991). Leeson and Grehan (2002) state that both older and younger women (aged 20-50) who were educated in the Catholic girl's school still recognize and use female signs. In fact, they state, there is "an increased degree of consciousness with respect to the preservation of these signs" (Leeson and Grehan 2002:54).

¹⁴ Recent censuses show a growth in the use of the Welsh language among certain age groups (Crystal 2000)

¹⁵ In this minority community people, age 25 years and younger, who are no longer bilingual are beginning to use Finnish expressions because they regard the use of Finnish as 'cool' (Lane 2006).

¹⁶ Magan (2007) claims that the number of self-reported Irish speakers in the Republic of Ireland is often overestimated. Nevertheless, there is evidence of shift to a non-dominant language. There are adult Irish classes and language immersion summer camps. There is a whole new generation of

most cases, languages are being shifted away from, not revitalized, and they are disappearing. No studies were located on signed languages undergoing revitalization. Nevertheless there is evidence that new signed languages are not emerging. Research is presently being conducted on emerging signed languages in Albania (Hoyer 2007), an emerging signed language among the Al-Sayyid Bedouin tribe in Israel (Sandler 2008) and Deaf children in Nicaragua (Polich 2000, Senghas, Kita and Ozyurek 2004).

As the result of language contact, individuals and language communities may choose to shift from one language to another. The most common pattern observed is a move from a weaker language to a stronger one, often in order to better one's position, economically and socially. The result is assimilation into the mainstream.

2.3 Language Disappearance

Languages that communities shift away from may eventually disappear. Referred to within sociolinguistic theory by a variety of terms such as 'language decay', 'language death', 'demise', 'loss' and 'degeneration', as well as 'endangered', 'threatened' and 'obsolescing languages', the common thread is that the language is in danger of ceasing to exist or has already ceased to exist (Crystal 2000). Crystal defines language disappearance as "a situation where a person or a group of people is no longer able to use a language previously spoken" (Crystal 2000:17). In 1963, researchers of Dyirbal, an Australian Aboriginal language, indicated that as a result of

Gaelscoilenanna (all-Irish schools) that are known for their high quality of education which attract pupils from all ranks of society. There are over 30 such schools in Dublin alone (McWilliams 2005). In 1996 TG4, an Irish television channel was launched. Irish is recognized in business and marketing. There is a present trend of giving children Irish names (McWilliams 2005). Young Irish children speak a "new and modern urban dialect... These children were reared on Irish versions of Sponge Bob Square Pants and Scooby-Doo on TG4. They [have] invented Irish words for X-Box, and hip-hop, for Jackass and blog. They [are] fluent in Irish text-speak and [have] moulded the ancient pronunciations and syntax in accordance with the latest styles of Buffy-speak and Londonstani slang" (Magan 2007:12, 13). In his book *The Pope's Children*, McWilliams (2005) attributes a revival of Irish to a combination of factors; the spread of Irish culture (e.g., *Riverdance*), politics (e.g., cease-fires in Northern Ireland), and the influence of media (e.g., the TG4 television station).

contact with and shift toward English, there were just over 100 Dyirbal speakers left (Dixon 1972). Almost two decades later, six remaining Dyirbal speakers were located and all were over age of 63 (Schmidt 1985). When nobody speaks a language anymore it has died. Many languages like Ubykh, Catawba Sioux, Wappo, Manx and Eyak have already disappeared (Nettle and Romaine 2000). Rhydwen (1998: 25) notes that as with shift the “loss of language is not the loss of a concept, an abstraction, but rather is what happens when a people change their behaviour and stop transmitting their language intergenerationally. It is immediately connected with people”. Connell (2002) speaks of “language contraction,” which leads to language death, the situation in which people exhibit a “lack of performance” and relax their sociolinguistic norms (Connell 2002:167).

Language disappearance is a relatively new area of sociolinguistic research. The first linguistic conferences concerned with disappearing or endangered languages were held in the 1990s.¹⁷ They were led by research conducted prior to the 1990s, on Dyirbal (Dixon 1972, Schmidt 1985), Breton (Dressler 1991) and Scottish Gaelic (Dorian 1981). Language disappearance has become an issue of growing concern and it is currently an extensively studied field of linguistics. Crystal, author of *Language Death* (2000) stresses that mankind should be very concerned about languages disappearing because languages express ethnic identity, are repositories of history, contribute to the sum of human knowledge, are interesting in themselves, and they contribute to diversity (Crystal 2000). Crystal notes that the significance of preserving oral languages in particular, whose sophisticated linguistic techniques, non-verbal

¹⁷ They included the Endangered Languages Symposium 1991, The 15th Annual Congress of Linguistics 1992, the International Conference on Maintenance and Loss of Minority Languages 1992, the 17th Annual Boston University Conference on Language Development 1992, the 13th Annual Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences 1993, the 48th International Congress of Americanists 1994, LSA (Linguistics Society of America) Meeting 1995 and the Linguistic Rights 1995 Conference (Crystal 2000).

communicative effects, dialects and patterns of dynamic interaction can not be expressed in transcription. We should also be particularly concerned about signed languages, like MSL, that are rarely recorded, have a scarcity of historical records, have no orthography and where valuable aspects of the language and culture are beyond reconstruction and may have already have been lost.

There is no single model of language disappearance. There are a variety of different models, where the types of disappearing languages are defined differently from researcher to researcher. The three examples below, as proposed by Wurum (1998), Kincade (1991) and Krauss (1992), exemplify different classifications for disappearing languages. Kincade (1991) does not acknowledge languages that have already become extinct, and while all three of the proposed models have ‘endangered’ categories, only Wurum (1998) differentiates between those that are ‘potentially’ endangered and those that are ‘seriously’ endangered. Moreover, terms such as ‘moribund’ and ‘endangered’ lack clear, agreed-upon definitions.

<u>Wurum</u>	<u>Kincade</u>	<u>Krauss</u>
(1998:192)	(1991:160-163)	(1992:4)
1. Potentially endangered languages	1. Viable languages	1. Safe languages
2. Endangered languages	2. Viable but small languages	2. Moribund languages
3. Seriously endangered languages	3. Endangered languages	3. Endangered languages
4. Moribund languages	4. Nearly extinct languages	
5. Extinct languages		

Despite the varying classification, the commonalities of disappearing languages are that they are often socially and economically disadvantaged and users are pressured by users of other languages. Disappearing languages experience a breakdown in transmission. With few good speakers left, the remaining speakers age, and eventually there is a serious demise in language use.

Reasons as to why languages disappear are inevitably intertwined with a number of complex variables, often which stem from political factors such as colonialism and assimilation, from economic factors like globalization, and from social factors such as the closure of educational facilities. "Economics may be the single strongest force influencing the fate of endangered languages" (Grenoble and Whaley 1998:52). The impact of psychological factors, for example loss of identity and linguistic insecurity are also significant, as are socio-cultural factors such as the deculturalization of language and language standardization (Aitchison 1991). The effects of language policies and planning which influence language contact are also significant.

Aitchison (1991:198) introduces two main processes of language loss, in violently-expressed terms: 1) language suicide and 2) language murder. She notes that in most cases language disappearance is the result of a combination of these two processes. She says in language suicide, the languages in contact are often similar to one another and users gradually import an increasing number of forms and constructions from one language to the other "until the old one is not longer identifiable as a separate language....In reality [it is] an extreme form of borrowing", [where] the language concerned seems to commit suicide. It slowly demolishes itself by bringing in more and more forms from the [more] prestigious language, until it destroys its own identity" (Aitchison 1991:198). In language murder, a dominant

language gradually suppresses and ousts the subsidiary one” (Aitchison 1991:204). A sociolinguistic perspective supports that it is the speakers of languages who act. As speakers undergo changes, they choose to alter their patterns of language behaviour and use. Use is what keeps languages alive. Sometimes “People object to speaking a language which they no longer regard as pure, thus speeding up the process [of loss]” (Nettle and Romaine 2000:55). Once speakers let a language fall into disuse it slowly, but inevitably, heads toward extinction.

Dialects can also be at risk. Less linguistic research focuses on dialects, but like languages, they can become moribund and disappear (Trudgill 1986). Crystal (2000:38) declares “Dialect death *is* language death, albeit on a more localized scale”. He adds that dialects are “just as complex as languages in their....grammar, vocabulary and other features” (Crystal 2000:55). He states that dialects which are “off the beaten track are especially important” (Crystal 2000:55); for their isolation may mean that they have developed unique linguistic features unseen elsewhere. Some researchers propose that endangered dialects should receive the same consideration extended to endangered languages because dialects are significant expressions of ethnicity, culture, heritage, history, human knowledge and diversity (Crystal 2000).

Relatively little research has been carried out to date on disappearing signed languages. However, there is an increasing awareness that signed languages can and do disappear (Johnston 2004). Groce’s (1985) study of Martha’s Vineyard in the United States focuses on a now-extinct signed language assumed to have stemmed from a specific region of England. Johnston and Schembri (2007), for example, have deposited their corpus from their study of Auslan with the Endangered Languages Documentation Program at the University of London. The previously mentioned

study conducted by Ann, Smith and Yu (2007) illustrates how MCSL, without a community to support its use, is disappearing. MCSL users told the researchers “You'd better ask me now and get this on videotape. I don't use MCSL every day. I just remember it especially if I ever see a Mainland China sign. But if you wait much longer...it will be completely gone” (Ann, Smith and Yu 2007:250). Their evidence reveals that with no intergenerational transmission, limited contact between users and increased TSL contact – “All of the signers who knew MCSL nearly thirty years ago are certainly TSL dominant now” (Ann, Smith and Yu 2007: 255), and MCSL is headed for disappearance. It has also been suggested that a signed language, only fairly recent in its discovery, Al-Sayyid Sign Language, is already faced with potential disappearance due to contact with Israeli Sign Language (ISL) (Sandler, Meir, Padden, and Aronoff 2005, Sandler, 2008). Likewise, a minority signed language dialect, used in Israel by Algerian Jews, of which there are an estimated 600 signs unlike ISL, is declining in use and in danger of disappearing (Lanesman 2008). Additional disappearing minority signed languages and signed language dialects are revealed in the research of Woodward (2000, 2003) and Nonaka (2004, 2008) in Thailand, LeMaster and Dwyer (1991) in Dublin, Ireland, in Finland (Hoyer 2002, 2008a), in Turkey (Dikyuva and Dilsiz 2008), in Jamaica (Cumberbatch 2008) and in Mexico (Delgado 2008). Anecdotal reports indicate that there are additional minority signed languages and signed language dialects that are disappearing, but have yet to be formally studied, such as in a unique Jewish dialect of BSL used London, England (Day 2004).

Language disappearance is frequently one result of a language which has come into contact with another language, experienced conflict, and undergone shift away from the one language and toward another. When people choose not to use

languages, they disappear. This occurs at varying rates and in different stages.

Inevitably social factors are part of this process. Much research has been conducted and continues to be conducted on disappearing spoken languages and dialects. Much less has been and is being conducted on disappearing signed languages. The very nature of signed languages enhances the urgency with which research must be conducted.

2.4 Literature Review of Research Methods: Lexical Analysis

In examining the extent to which signed languages have come into contact and influenced one another, one must first establish whether the signed languages in question are related to one another (historically) and if so, determine the extent to which they are related. The most common way to do this, in spoken and signed languages alike, is to examine the lexicon. An examination of the lexicon, in such studies, attempts to determine where signs stem from, the degree of their relation, which features are commonly shared, and the role that sociocultural factors may have had. In the past, researchers have focused almost entirely on the lexicon to determine whether or not signed languages are 'related.' Vashita, Woodward and De Santis (1985) examined the lexicons of signed languages used in India. Bickford (1991) and Stark-Smith (1986) compared the lexicons of LSM and ASL. Woodward examined the lexicons of signed language in Costa Rica (1991), India, Pakistan and Nepal (1993) and Asia (Hong Kong, Shanghai and Thailand) (Woodward 1993, 2000 and 2003). Nonaka (2004, 2008) too, examined signed language varieties in use in Thailand. Osugi, Supalla and Webb (1998) compared the lexicons of the signed languages used in Japan, Thailand and Costa Rica. McKee and Kennedy (2000) compared the lexicons of ASL, BSL, Auslan and New Zealand Sign Language. In the largest lexical comparison to date Guerra Currie *et al.* (2002) examined four signed

languages, French Sign Language, Spanish Sign Language, ASL and LSM. Parkhurst and Parkhurst (2003a, 2003b) compared the lexicons of unrelated European sign languages in Spain, Northern Ireland, Finland and Bulgaria. Al-Fityani and Padden (2006) conducted a lexical comparison of the signed languages used in different Arab countries in the Middle East and the Gulf States. Davis (2007) compared the signed language lexicons used by North American native people, Plains Indian Sign Language (PISL) to early twentieth century ASL. Sasaki (2007) examined lexical commonalities between Japanese Sign Language and Taiwan Sign Language. These studies and their findings are evidence that the lexicon is a valuable source in examining the lexicons of signed language.

Most signed language research has been conducted on ASL. Researchers have examined lexical variation in ASL from a historical point of view. Foundational work on historical changes was carried out by Frishberg (1975) and research from a comparative perspective was conducted by Klima and Bellugi (1979). The connection of ASL to Old French Sign Language (OFSL) has been a repeated topic of research. Woodward (1976a, 1976b, 1978a), and Woodward, Erting and Oliver (1976) examined the relation of present-day ASL to Old French Sign Language and present-day French Sign Language.

Signed language lexicons have also been studied for their relation to a variety of sociolinguistic factors, such as gender (LeMaster and Dwyer 1991, Leeson and Grehan 2002), socioeconomic status (Shapiro 1993), educational class (Faurot, Dellinger, Eatough and Parkhurst 1999) and race, ethnicity and culture (e.g., Deaf Native Americans (Davis and Supalla 1991), Deaf Native Americans (Dively 2000), Deaf Hispanics (Page 1993), Deaf African Americans (Lewis, Palmer and Williams 1995, Aramburo 1989) and Deaf Asians in Britain (Chamba, Ahmad, Darr and Jones

1998)). Deaf members of Finland's Swedish-speaking population (Hoyer 2002, 2008), Deaf Americans of Mexican heritage (Quinto-Pozos 2002, 2007, 2008), Deaf Maori New Zealanders (Locker, McKee, McKee, Smiler and Pointon 2007) and Deaf Icelanders (Aldersson and McEntee-Atalianis 2007) have also been the subjects of research. Through signed language lexicons researchers have examined the role of religion (Bickford 1991, Faurot, Dellinger, Eatough and Parkhurst 1999), identity (Groce 1985, Dively 2000, Yoel 2002), status within the Deaf community (Croneburg 1965, Kannapell 1989, Woodward 1989) and sexual orientation (Rudner and Butowsky 1981, Silverman Kleinfield and Warner 1996) on signed languages. For instance, Rudner and Butowsky (1981) reveal in their examination of the gay Deaf community a number of lexical items are used only by members of this community and which “are unfamiliar to heterosexual Deaf people” (Rudner and Butowsky 1981: 47). Dively (2000) reveals that Deaf Native Americans maintain “a fierce tie” to their Native heritage, community, culture, tradition and customs, and have “a need to interact with Native Deaf people as much as possible along with their interaction with non-Native Deaf people” (Dively 2000:26). Such studies are significant not only because minority Deaf groups possess a wealth of unique lexical items, but also because their lexicons can shed light on the nature of linguistic variation, the effects of language contact and the role of identity in Deaf communities.

2.4.1 Lexicostatistics and the Swadesh List

One way to examine signed languages in contact, having established how they are or are not related to one another, is to compare them. The most common way to carry out lexical comparisons of signed languages is through comparisons of lists of lexical items or by lexicostatistics (originally referred to as glottochronological techniques) (Gudshinsky 1964). The latter method was originally devised not to compare lexicons

but to determine the period of time from which a language separated from another genetically-related language. More recently, however, this method has been adapted and used to compare the degree of relation between languages. Based on comparisons of genetic and historical relations, inferences about the relationships or sub-relationships between language varieties are made. While some researchers use this as a measure - "Lexicostatistics is a technique that allows us to determine the degree of relationship between two languages, simply by comparing the (core or basic) vocabularies and determining the degree of similarity between them" (Crowley 1992:168), others express doubt about its application and validity. The most commonly-used source of lexical items is a Swadesh List (Swadesh 1950, 1954, 1955). Lehmann, who classified 959 Australian language varieties, says that while a Swadesh list was originally used for spoken languages, it is particularly useful for examining unwritten, under-described languages and those in which limited amounts of data are available (Lehmann 1992). Swadesh lists are generally still in current use, although their use is almost always combined with additional methods. One and two hundred-item Swadesh lists (1955) have been adapted to examine language relatedness in signed languages by Woodward (1978a).¹⁸ They have been used in studies to examine signed language lexicons in Costa Rica (Woodward 1991), India, Pakistan and Nepal (Woodward 1993), Thailand (Woodward 2000), Mexico (Stark Smith 1986, Bickford 1991), Eastern Europe (Bickford 2005), Taiwan Sign Language (Sasaki 2007) and Iceland (Aldersson and McEntee-Atalianis 2007).

There exists criticism of Swadesh lists. For example, Swadesh lists assume that a degree of relatedness between languages can be determined according to certain

¹⁸ Sasaki (2007) notes that while Swadesh lists based on the theory developed in lexicostatistics are still used for signed languages, in his adaptation of the list for signed languages, Woodward says he examines 'possible cognates', but he does not define what possible cognates are. Nor does he include phonological explanations of the signs or his coding method (Sasaki 2007:129).

assumptions, such as: lexicons have core vocabularies, these core vocabularies are similar from culture to culture, core vocabularies change, and that they change at a certain rate. Others criticize the items on the lists (i.e. louse), many of which are not universal or relevant to all cultures, as can be implied. Woll (1984) says that Swadesh lists have proven to be inaccurate in the lexical research of urban populations and signed languages. McKee and Kennedy (2000), although they use the list for their analysis of Auslan, NZSL and BSL, acknowledge that the Swadesh list can be controversial. Aldersson and McEntee-Atalianis (2007:157) say

If two signs shared two parameters in common but differed in the third, they were classified as 'similar'. However, classification of similarity could be more sensitively measured. Signs may, for example, be placed on a continuum of similarity. For example, there may be gradation of similarity with some signs seemingly being realized as more similar than others with regard to the change in parameter....to a more notable contrast. Measurement of such variation is not however straightforward and further research is needed to refine this type of analysis....lexical studies of sign languages are still very much in their infancy and although analytical frameworks for signed language comparisons are available, there is still a need to further develop and refine methodological frameworks and analytical tools.

For signed languages, it has been observed that Swadesh lists contain a number of items that are "highly motivated semantically; i.e. it is easily pictured on the hands" (Bickford 1991:3), ultimately causing a possible overestimation of similar signs. Generally Swadesh lists are still in use, but not without reservation and, as previously noted, they are used in combination with additional comparative methods.

The criteria originally outlined (by Gudshinsky in 1956) have been adapted and applied to spoken and signed languages. These criteria state that if less than 12% of the lexical items from the core vocabulary are identical or similar, then they are different languages. If between 12% and 35% are identical or similar, then the languages are members of the same parent language family, but they are not the same language. A language family is "a group of genetically related languages, one that

shares a linguistic kinship by virtue of having developed from a common earlier ancestor” (Davis 2007:94). In other words, the two come from the same base.¹⁹ If between 36% and 81% of items are identical or similar, they are separate languages which belong to the same ‘parent family.’ And if over 81% of the lexical items are the same or similar, the two are dialects of the same language (Gudshinsky 1956).²⁰

2.4.2 Parkhurst and Parkhurst List

This study carries out a lexical comparison using two different lists of lexical items, the previously-mentioned 100-item Swadesh List, adapted by Woodward for signed languages (1978a) as well as a 30-item Parkhurst and Parkhurst list (2003a), proposed specifically for signed languages. In 2003, Parkhurst and Parkhurst (2003a) devised a list of signs, for the specific purpose of making a conscious effort to avoid iconic representations. Their model proposes slightly different thresholds than the Swadesh list²¹ (See Table 1). A significant difference is that Parkhurst and Parkhurst state that percentages alone are inconclusive evidence for the categorization of similar or related languages; they stress the need for larger sets of data and they stress that comparisons must be accompanied by additional research. The Parkhurst and Parkhurst model has been applied to the comparison of four unrelated European signed languages (used in Spain, Finland, Bulgaria and Northern Ireland) and an examination of the five dialects of Spanish Sign Language used in Madrid, La Coruna, Granada, Valencia and Barcelona (Parkhurst and Parkhurst 2007). Table 1 outlines the criteria for the Swadesh List, as it was adapted for use with signed languages, and for the Parkhurst and Parkhurst List.

¹⁹ The term ‘stock’ in relation to language families was introduced by Nichols (1992) to describe links between languages. The term is controversial because this relation can be difficult to prove (Nettle and Romaine 2000).

²⁰ These numbers and percentages, as with the method itself, have also been criticized.

²¹ The researcher acknowledges that their different system of thresholds presents a problem in attempting to draw conclusions about the lexicon.

Table 1: Swadesh and Parkhurst and Parkhurst Lists

Swadesh List (1955) (adopted by Woodward 1978a)	Swadesh List	Parkhurst and Parkhurst List (Parkhurst and Parkhurst 2003a)	Parkhurst and Parkhurst List
Cognate percentage in core vocabulary	Level of sub-Grouping	Cognate percentage in core vocabulary	Level of sub-Grouping
Under 12%	Separate languages*	0-40%	Separate languages*
12% - 35%	Members of the same parent language family*	41% - 60%	Likely to be separate languages in the same language family*
36% - 81%	Separate languages which belong to the same parent family*	61%-70%	Likely to be different languages*
Over 81%	Dialects of the same language	71-80%	Likely to be the same language
		Over 81%	The same language

* The terminology stated here is proposed by Parkhurst and Parkhurst (2003).

Lexical comparisons, regardless of the method used, must proceed with caution. Researchers suggest that relations between languages cannot be derived from lexical studies alone (Dixon 1972). In signed languages, such a comparison is particularly problematic. Woll (1987) suggests that a subset of lexical items in signed languages such as high frequency concepts offers only a partial view of the language. Moreover, it can be misrepresentative because it tends to over-represent similarity.²² It has been suggested that shortcomings associated with lists of lexical items can skew results. McKee and Kennedy observe that in their examination of BSL, Auslan and New Zealand Sign Language, Swadesh lists revealed a rate of commonality of 80%, but when randomly-selected dictionary signs were added, the rate of similarity fell to 64% (McKee and Kennedy 2000:54). They suggest that additional factors (e.g., seemingly-universal classifiers and human cognitive metaphors) should also be considered.

While on the one hand, it is suggested that the visual-manual modality of signed languages may result in an overestimation of similarity based on the commonalities across signed languages, Woll, on the other hand, suggests that lexical lists “might under-represent similarities between different signed languages” (Woll 1987:14). She notes that “the American and British signs for WALK are quite different, but British signers would certainly use a sign resembling the American sign in certain contexts” (Woll 1987:14). This complicates a comparison because if a sign can vary from context to context, and it can, one can not be sure that the sign requested is the only sign used. Additional signs may be unrepresented. Signs believed to be borrowed may not be volunteered in response to a questions like ‘How

²² Sasaki (2007) notes that while Woll is critical of Woodward’s adapted Swadesh lists and draws up her own 257-item list (Woll 1987:81), many of the items she proposes appear in the Swadesh list, and a complete list of the lexical items she proposes does not appear in her research.

do you sign X?', but nonetheless, are commonly used in discourse. Johnston and Schembri (2007) attest to a number of ASL signs in use by signers of Auslan and Woll attests to ASL signs used by BSL users (Bencie Woll, personal communication, 5 Sept. 2008).

In addition, variation may be associated with factors other than contexts, idiolect, personal choice or the identity of the addressee. In conclusion, judgment about differences and similarities in signed languages is a complex issue. By disregarding signs that are obviously iconic and by not looking at certain types of signs, such as classifiers, important information about signed languages may be unaccounted for. No one list or its method can be considered a reliable and suitable source on its own. No list can uncover those lexical items already lost to history.

2.5 Literature Review of Research Methods: Discourse Analysis

A lexical analysis examines the inventory of signs available to the user, but as previously mentioned the lexicon is subject to variation. Thus, a lexical analysis on its own is inadequate. This thesis combines a lexical analysis with a discourse analysis, an examination of how signed language is used in subjects' narratives. The combination of these two methods offers a more complete picture of how MSL is used.

In the context of this research, discourse refers to language used in context (Tannen 1982). The discourse analysis examines these components of language as they relate to the context of discourse and to human affairs. Discourse takes a variety of forms. An analysis of discourse may focus on the individual's style of speech or group dynamics. Since discourse is socially and culturally organized, its analysis reveals valuable linguistic information about the individual and her group, and about patterns of interaction, social behaviour and cultural affiliation.

Wilbur and Petitto (1983), signed language researchers, state that techniques used in conversational analyses of spoken languages are structured in a way that can be applied successfully to signed languages. There is a growing body of research on discourse analyses in signed languages, mainly in ASL (Roy 1989, Zimmer 1989, Winston 1991, 1995, Gee 1993, Metzger 1993, 1994, Bahan and Supalla 1995, Liddell and Metzger 1998), but also in other signed languages like LSM (Quinto-Pozos 2002) and the signed language of Bali, Indonesia (Branson, Miller and Marsaja 2001). These studies reveal that many of the features commonly observed in discourse (e.g., ellipsis, substitution, discourse markers, reiteration, synonyms and collocations) occur in signed languages (Metzger and Bahan 2001). This examination of discourse, its forms, structure, meanings and functions, connects the language to the language user and to her linguistic and sociolinguistic environment.

2.5.1 Narratives

The discourse analysis examines language from subjects' narratives. Narratives are a part of the casual and unplanned conversation usually reserved for family or close friends. Narratives have been used in past research to gain access to insight into signed language use and Deaf people's perspectives (Higgins 1980, Becker 1983, Preston 1994). In this research, subjects spoke about topics of their choice. These were recorded and then analyzed by the researcher for linguistic features and patterns of cultural context. Narratives were chosen because the researcher wished to observe 'natural speech.' In narratives "the phonological production of signs and speech is less careful [and there is] significant assimilation and reduction [and] the choice of words includes slang, fillers, [and fewer of the features seen] in more formal situations" (Johnston and Schembri 2007:255). The structure of narratives is fairly regular, with set, linear parameters, such as establishing a specific location and time

and dividing the content into sections with each section contributing to the larger picture. Narratives focus around a complicating action which is usually drawn to a close by the speaker (Schiffrin 1994). In addition, personal narratives are “intersubjectively guided” (Schiffrin 1994:307) and are often strongly connected to one's identity and surroundings. Narratives also often contextualize the surrounding socio-cultural framework. In the present study, narratives are used to examine subjects' near-natural discourse.

2.5.2 Social Networks, Semantic Domains and Shift

Common behaviours among MSL users were repeatedly observed and extracted to form the base of the discourse analysis. These behaviours include: 1) the use of MSL with certain semantic domains or areas of discourse, and 2) evidence of shift from MSL to ASL. While it is assumed that MSL was once used mainly within a social network, language contact has brought about connections between members of different social networks. There is increased contact between MSL and ASL users. As result of language contact between MSL and ASL users, MSL users use MSL differently than they did in the past.

Social networks (Milroy and Milroy 1980) are a significant factor in language shift. Social networks are “groups of people who because of shared residence, work or interest regularly communicate with one another” (Coulmas 2005: 234). This group shares common behaviors, linguistic practices, norms, and rules for communicative conduct. This does not imply a uniform variety of speech, although generally, there is “a locus in which speakers agree on the social meanings and evaluations of the variants used” (Milroy and Milroy 1997:51). Each network is unique. Networks are characterized by their density, multiplexity and openness. Density refers to how well people know one another and how many contexts they share. In a dense network,

members may be neighbors, colleagues and they may socialize together. Multiplexity refers to the degree with which members interact with one another in more than a single capacity (Milroy and Milroy 1989). Open and closed refer to the ease with which people move in and out of these networks and the extent to which they interact with those outside of their own social network. Researchers have examined a variety of social networks in attempts to identify what makes language use in different groups unique. Generally, it has been concluded that the weaker the social network is, the more susceptible it is to language change and the stronger it is the more resistant it is to change.

Evidence of linguistic variants and examples of language shift, as they appear in subjects' narratives, are isolated and examined. For example, hybrid signs, single signs that combine elements from both MSL and ASL, and mixed MSL/ASL compounds are analyzed. It is also apparent that where no change takes place this can also be significant. For example, within certain semantic domains, some MSL forms are 'entrenched' in the speakers' lexicon. MSL signs frequently appear within certain domains such as: 1) kinship terms, 2) school-related vocabulary, 3) religious concepts, 4) expressions of personal opinion and a location-based identity, and 5) ritualized language. In these areas MSL lexical items often remain in use, despite the prevalence of ASL forms elsewhere in discourse.

2.5.3 Identity

The language one uses expresses who she is, what group(s) she is affiliated with and what her group's linguistic and cultural norms are. Language creates and identifies a common identity, 'a self'. It contributes to the construction of one's social identity. In Labov's study of Martha's Vineyard (1972), language was the primary indicator of identity. Native islanders modified and exaggerated existing speech patterns to

distinguish themselves from the island's temporary residents. Anthropological, social and sociolinguistic studies carried out in the American Deaf community indicate that important elements of American Deaf culture are directly related to signed language use. They include the value placed on signing skill and frequent social interaction through signing (Padden and Humphries 1988).²³ Carbin says of signed language use in Canada, "One of the most - if not the *most* - important features of any culture is its language" (Carbin 1996: xvii).

Signed language research has established a connection between signed language and Deaf group identity, but it remains difficult to speak of group identity in relation to Deaf people because there are so many different types of Deaf groups. There are indigenous groups like Deaf Mayans (Johnson 1991), remotely-located Deaf groups like those found in Providence and Grand Cayman Islands (Washbough 1986), non-industrial Deaf groups such as Martha's Vineyard (Groce 1985), large, industrial and advanced Deaf groups like North American Deaf populations, as well as much smaller Deaf groups, like Israel's relatively small Deaf population. Furthermore, Deaf groups can identify with more than one of these categories. For example, Israel's Deaf Al-Sayyid Bedouins are members of a remotely-located, indigenous group, but they are also live within a larger advanced, industrial society. Faurot, Dellinger, Eatough and Parkhurst (1999) examined LSM in relation to ASL. They concluded that LSM users not only use a distinct language, but possess a social identity all their own. Likewise, Aldersson and McEntee-Atalianis (2007) examined

²³ There is no single notion of a Deaf community. Turner (1994) notes the present circular nature of definitions of Deaf community, namely that Deaf communities have Deaf culture, while Deaf culture is a defining characteristic of the community – but a culture is not a community, and a community is not a culture. Likewise, there is also no single definition of Deaf culture, rather what emerges is "not one Deaf culture, but many" (Stokoe 1994:268). While Deaf communities and Deaf cultures vary from region to region, there are common core aspects, of which language use is the critical factor. Other important aspects include demographics, political and the social aspects of Deaf life (Turner 1994).

Icelandic Sign Language, and discovered the “burgeoning identity of Icelandic Sign Language as a distinct language used by a small but nonetheless close-knit and somewhat political community of Deaf Icelanders has led to a certain degree of divergence and therefore language variation and change” (Aldersson and McEntee-Atalianis 2007:1). They conclude that “Users of Icelandic Sign Language have a unique identity and form a separate community [from users of Danish Sign Language]” (Aldersson and McEntee-Atalianis 2007:3).

Within almost all larger Deaf communities, smaller subcommunities²⁴ are found, many of which may have a separate identity from the mainstream and may use a different signed language. Language use contributes significantly to their definition as a distinct group. Minority Deaf populations may often maintain their own linguistic traditions, histories, experiences, norms, folklore and values. Turner says, “Nothing is more profound to us as human beings who want to know ourselves and be respected for who we are as our identities” (Turner 1994:103). Deaf subcommunities are often unrecognized and not validated (Page 1993). The goal of the group is to “provide for the maintenance of the group’s identity and integrity through time” (Rutherford 1988:136). Ann, Smith and Yu (2007: 249) share an account of a Deaf person who adopted Taiwan Sign Language (TSL) and whose Mainland China Sign Language (MCSL) fell into disuse. He states “I’m happy when I see a sign from Mainland China. I still remember them [the signs] passively, and if I see them I understand them....I’ve remembered them for almost forty years now. I feel a strong connection with those signs because I learned them first”. In South Africa, Deaf people who used different signed language dialects with researchers insisted that their signs be

²⁴ Sub in subcommunities carries no negative connotations. This term refers to aspects or a combination of aspects such as region, language and occupation that render a community distinct.

recorded as different from those of other groups, even where researchers were unable to observe significant differences. "Deaf informants were anxious to assert their individual group identities and were apparently reluctant to identify with the signs used by other deaf individuals" (Penn and Reagan 1990:320). Page (1993) notes that membership in the American Hispanic Deaf subcommunity is not "identified by overt characteristics, such as skin color and shape of facial features, but by their communicative behaviors and practices" like family ties (Page 1993:187).

~~Padden and Humphries (1988: 121)~~ note that "The culture of Deaf people has endured, despite indirect and tenuous lines of transmission and despite generations of changing social conditions." However, they add "it would seem that [Deaf] minorities do not fare as well." In other words, minority Deaf groups within what is already a minority Deaf community are vulnerable. Often, as a result of internal and external factors, Deaf minority groups undergo changes which alter not only their reality, but their identity and their language. Forced into conflicts of choice, their attitudes about themselves change. Their language changes and speakers may chose to assimilate. If they do, their language may eventually disappear. Carbin (1996) says specifically of signed language use in Canada, "If the language is devalued, suppressed or taken away, the person's identity is threatened or diminished" (Carbin 1996:317).

2.5.4 'The Self' and 'The Other'

It is in an individual's interest to preserve and assert her identity. In doing so, one puts oneself or one's group in the center, as 'the self' and views all others as different, as 'the other.' 'The self' is an 'I' and 'the other' is a 'them'. Our understanding of a self-other relationship has its roots in the fields of sociology and psychology. 'The self' is "is the process by which individuals identify themselves as being different from

others or belonging to a different group, or are identified as different by others, or both, identify themselves and are identified as different by others” (Isajiw 1974:115).

Tajfel and Turner (1986) propose that ethnocentrism exists in language. In their Social Identity Theory (1986), they posit that in any environment with more than one group, an in-group and an out-group are created. First, people realize they are in a certain group or social category; then they perceive the positive and negative values of others in the same group and finally, they compare their own group’s social identity to that of the others outside their group. It is this comparison that gives rise to feelings and manifestations of superiority and inferiority. Relatively little research has been conducted into concepts of ‘the self’ and ‘the other’ among signed language users. Most often only ‘the self’ or ‘the other’ is examined.

In general, research on Deaf communities supports a notion of identities for Deaf communities e.g., Deaf Caucasian Americans and Deaf African Americans (Woodward 1976a, Aramburo 1989, Lucas, Bayley, Rose and Wulf 2002, Lewis, Palmer and Williams 1995), and Deaf Caucasian Americans and Deaf Hispanic Americans (Page 1993). A different identity is frequently connected to a different use of language. For example, Lewis, Palmer and Williams (1995) observed alternation between African American ASL and standard ASL. Woodward (1976a) and Aramburo (1989) observed different lexical forms used by African American signers. Linguistic features such as mouth movements (Lewis, Palmer and Williams 1995) and metalinguistic features such as kinesics posture and rhythm (Lucas, Reed, Bayley and Wulf 2002) also differed between Deaf Caucasian Americans and Deaf African Americans.

One of the modern theories about ‘the self’ - the complex and dynamic system of beliefs which an individual holds true about himself or herself - is that the

maintenance and enhancement of the perceived 'self' is the motive behind all behaviour (Purkey 1997). Inherent in identity is a sense of individuals' solidarity, "how much experience they have shared, how many social characteristics they share i.e., religion, age, region of origin, race, occupation and interests, and how far they are prepared to share intimacies and other factors" (Hudson 1980:122). 'The self' is dynamic. It develops and changes.

Where there is a 'self', there must also be an 'other'. 'The other' is generally a group of people who are different, often those with whom 'the self' has limited or no interaction. Different groups can have similar or different experiences and possess different codes for language and behaviour. 'The self' and 'the other' can complement one another or come into conflict (Goffman 1967). 'The self' serves as the basis for comparison to 'the other'. Individuals situate themselves in specific environments and examine and assess the roles of 'the self', extensions of 'the self' (those who are similar) and 'the other,' those from whom they are different (Hudson 1980).

Definitions are formulated in terms of who one is as well as who one is not. When 'the self' and 'the other' have different status, values and goals, the different groups are often accompanied by social divisions and sometimes there is stereotyping.

Language, culture and behavioural norms are grounded in interaction. They stand in a reflexive relationship with one another. The self-other relationship is created out of these mutually constitutive relationships and from this discourse is created (Schiffrin, Tannen and Hamilton 2001). Thus, language contextualizes 'the self' and 'the other.' Applications of 'the self' and 'the other' to spoken language are abundant. For example, in Labov's previously-mentioned study of Martha's Vineyard (1972) "a small group of fisherman began to exaggerate a tendency already existent in their speech. They did this in order to establish themselves [and preserve 'the self'] as

an independent social group with superior status to the despised summer visitors [‘the other’]. A number of other islanders regarded this group as one which epitomized old virtue and desirable values and subconsciously imitated the way its members talked” (Aitchinson 1991:51). In many ways Deaf people are an ‘other,’ an outgroup in mainstream society (Ladd 2003), but Deafness can also be harmonizing. It is what hearing people, the majority, are not (Gras i Ferrer 2002). Deaf people also hold opinions about other Deaf people, particularly about Deaf minority groups.

Within signed language research, there is limited documentation of ‘the self’ and ‘the other,’ but the distinction does exist. It is evident in terminology. For instance, Navajo Deaf people in Arizona refer to ASL as “Anglo signing”, “the Anglo way” and “English Sign Language”. Their own variety is known as “the Navajo way” and “Indian Sign”, and the communication system used by one extended family is called “our signs” and “family sign” (Davis and Supalla 1991: 98). In New Zealand, where solidarity between Caucasian Deaf people and the indigenous Deaf Maoris is increasing, Deaf Maoris may assert their unique identity by superimposing a Maori mouth pattern on an existing New Zealand Sign Language sign, to create a semantic loan. For example, they may sign ‘ocean’ but mouth *moana* (the Maori word) (Locker, McKee, McKee, Smiler and Pointon 2007:51). Similar patterns of mouthing have been observed among Swiss-German signers (Boyes Braem 2001) and Swedish-Finnish signers (Hoyer 2002), among those people who want to assert their identity as being different from other Deaf people. Furthermore, Hall (1991) observed that nuances of behaviours in American Deaf clubs revealed that what people said and did in relation to themselves and their own group (‘the self’) was different from what they said and did in relation to ‘the other’ group; this behaviour defined and maintained in-group and out-group status in the Deaf club.

Through an examination of the MSL lexicon and the issues of identity and ‘the self’ and ‘the other’ as they come to light in the narratives of MSL users’ discourse, a picture of current MSL use emerges. What is apparent is that MSL is different from ASL, but it is becoming more like ASL.

2.6 Conclusion

This present study examines the main trends that have affected MSL. It examines changes to MSL that have come about as the result of language contact. It examines present language use of MSL in Nova Scotia and focuses on the process of language shift from MSL to ASL that is well underway. It recognizes that as a result of this shift toward ASL, it is likely that MSL will disappear.

Chapter Three: Research Methods

3. Purpose of this work

This research carries out the first empirical examination of the MSL lexicon and discourse, investigating BSL as a parent language of MSL and its influence on MSL. Historical and comparative linguistic techniques applied to the lexicon reveal the different ways in the past that BSL influenced MSL. An examination of the increasing contact between ASL and MSL makes up a significant part of this research, the main premise being that language contact plays a significant role in current MSL use, in the lexicon and the discourse of MSL as it is presently used by Deaf Nova Scotians and as it is similar to ASL. This chapter outlines the methodologies used in the study as they pertain to the subjects, the procedure, data collection, signed language consultants and the data analysis.

3.1 Subjects

This study takes a sample of five elderly Deaf people to be representative of users of the general MSL community. This sample stems from Halifax and the surrounding area, once the hub of MSL use. Subjects were carefully selected and recruited by the researcher, mainly for their competency in MSL, with the help of members of the Nova Scotia Deaf community. Respected members of the local Deaf community with extensive knowledge of the community's membership contacted individuals and requested their participation outlining the importance of this research. All research subjects are Deaf people born in the province of Nova Scotia, Canada. Most were born in rural areas of the province, including an island off the coast of mainland Nova Scotia. None of them have ever resided outside of Nova Scotia. There are four

females and one male, who range in age from 54 to 71.²⁵ The subjects' age is significant as it represents a given stage in Maritime Deaf history. All participants, when asked their first language, answered MSL. All were born deaf or became deaf before the age of four; all learned signed language from peers when they began attending the residential School for the Deaf in Halifax between the ages of five and seven. They share similar educational experiences at a residential school, where oral methods were the norm and English was the main language of instruction. MSL, the main language used amongst pupils, was tolerated, but rarely entered the classroom. All subjects also share similar backgrounds and personal histories. They all have British heritage. Their occupations include seamstress, farmer and housewife. They all identify themselves as members of the Deaf community and confirmed that they are socially active in the Deaf community. Some attend Deaf clubs and activities within the local Deaf community. All said that they interact with other MSL users on a regular basis. Two of the subjects have or had Deaf family members; one has Deaf cousins and another had a Deaf grandmother. All of the participants in this study are also exposed to ASL. They all reported participating in activities attended by ASL users and they are exposed to ASL interpretation on television. Four of the five sometimes or regularly attend church services in ASL.

3.2 General Procedure

This research was conducted in compliance with the Tri-Council Guidelines on Research with Humans, approved by the University of Manitoba Ethics Committee.

²⁵ The youngest subject in this study, age 54, is somewhat different in comparison to the rest, having experienced a transition from one school to another in her education, from the Halifax School for the Deaf (in Halifax) to the Interprovincial School in Amherst, Nova Scotia. Subsequently, she also experienced a change in educational methods, namely the formal introduction of ASL, (although the medium of classroom instruction at that time was actually more similar to Signed English than ASL) (Carbin 1996). This subject is also married to the oldest subject in this study, age 71, who was educated entirely at the Halifax school and who has never received any formal ASL instruction.

Prior to taping, personal history questionnaires were administered to all of the participants (see Appendix 2). All subjects were videotaped. Because preserving anonymity would be difficult, they all consented to the sharing and publication of results and videos. Participants carried out the linguistic tasks of producing signed lexical lists and narratives to a familiar member of the local Deaf community who knows MSL. Since subjects being recorded are affected by the Observer's Paradox, the effect of the observer on the subject, the researcher attempted to ensure the subjects were as comfortable as possible. For example, the person the subjects signed to was familiar to all of the subjects and sessions were recorded in the subjects' homes, where one might also expect the setting to contribute to natural and causal discourse. The researcher was presented as a friend of a friend in order to make the subjects less aware that a researcher was focused on their language use. All participants were aware that the researcher is studying MSL, but they were not told any specifics about the research. They were also not told to specifically use MSL, but it is assumed that they attempted to use MSL while being recorded.

Additional interviews and information-gathering sessions e.g., meetings and email exchanges were conducted with members of the Nova Scotia Deaf community and those who are affiliated with the Nova Scotia Deaf community. This group included both Deaf and hearing people. It included a Deaf social worker, who was able to shed light on the nature of the MSL community and a hearing MSL interpreter, who is a the child of MSL users and could attest to what current MSL use looks like. She is the only MSL interpreter in the province. A member of the MSL Deaf community, who is also active in religious activities for Deaf people and Deaf literacy programs, was able to provide additional information about the MSL community. The researcher met with two Deaf people, who have come from outside of the Maritimes

and for whom ASL is their first language. These ASL users and others described ASL use in Nova Scotia and answered enquiries about MSL and ASL use in Nova Scotia.

The lexical investigation is conducted through an examination and comparison of lists of specific lexical items. It includes a 100-item Swadesh List (Swadesh 1955), adapted by Woodward (1978a) for signed languages and a 30-item Parkhurst and Parkhurst List (Parkhurst and Parkhurst 2003a Parkhurst and Parkhurst 2003b) (see Appendix 5). Also considered in the lexical analysis is an examination and comparison of the MSL lexicon as cited in four additional sources, *The Canadian Sign Language Dictionary* (Dolby and Bailey 2002), a dictionary of MSL (Doull 1978), the film *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (Misener-Dunn and Fletcher-Falvey 1994), and a list of MSL lexical items voluntarily provided by one of the research subjects in this study.

The discourse analysis is conducted through an examination of subjects' casual narratives. Their discourse is examined primarily for MSL signs, the number of MSL signs, the frequency with which they occur, the patterns of their MSL use, and the types and forms of MSL signs used. Language interference is noted. The researcher also notes where signers make adjustments, seemingly as accommodation, to their signing. Subjects' discourse is examined for its relation to the social, cultural and linguistic norms of behaviour. Discourse is specifically examined for any indication of where or how subjects reveal an MSL identity or express that they are like or unlike other Deaf people in Nova Scotia. These factors situate the individuals' linguistic behaviour within a local context, Nova Scotia's Deaf community, and within a larger context, how signed language is used in Canada and among Deaf minority groups.

3.3 Data Collection

The data consist of questionnaires completed by the participants and over seven hours of videotaped recordings, comprised of lexical list tests and subjects' narratives. The questionnaires provide important demographic information, such as the subjects' age at the onset of their deafness, the age at which they acquired signed language and their past and present language use. These questionnaires reveal the social networks to which the subjects belong, their patterns of personal contact and group involvement.

Each subject was video-taped by the researcher with a single camera, focused on the subject alone. Sessions were casual, semi-structured and averaged two hours in length. All subjects chatted spontaneously, with the exception of two married subjects, who sometimes chatted interactively with one another. Discourse covered a range of topics, such as childhood memories, school memories, travels, health, children and grandchildren. There was no intervention by the researcher; there was some intervention by the addressee, who when a topic expired helped the subject introduce a new one by asking a question.

The lexical list task was performed by two subjects, who signed requested items consecutively from a 100-item Swadesh List and a 30-item Parkhurst and Parkhurst List (see Appendices 4 and 5).²⁶ The written English form of the word was presented and subjects were requested to sign what was written. They did not view the list of signs prior to the task, nor were they aided in the recall or production of items. The goal of this task was to gather evidence of MSL such which items are unique to MSL and which are similar to BSL or ASL.²⁷ In addition, one subject volunteered her

²⁶ Initially there were more subjects in this study and it was thought that all subjects would sign the lists of lexical items, but subjects declined, were reluctant to participate or participated in the discourse, but were unwilling to sign the lists.

²⁷ In past research (Yoel 2002) pictures were used to prompt signs, but in some cases, the sign produced depicted the picture and did not represent the citation form, so the researcher decided that the written word would be most effective in eliciting the sign.

own list of MSL lexical items. Upon learning of the researcher's impending visit, she wrote out a 110- item list. At the end of her discourse session, she proceeded to sign the items she listed. There was no interruption, modification or correction of the forms she produced. Her list makes a significant contribution to this research and serves as one of the four additional sources of an MSL lexicon that is examined. This list includes examples of MSL not observed elsewhere.²⁸ Her list also sheds light on how MSL use is changing.

All sessions were videotaped. Video recorded data was transferred to DVDs. This data was viewed by the researcher and MSL and ASL consultants in its original form, using slow-motion and play back functions where necessary. The data were transcribed by a university-educated Deaf person, who knows both MSL and ASL and writes well in English. All MSL signs were identified and marked as such, as were signs that are a mixture of MSL and ASL. Many of the MSL signs and mixed form signs required further explanation. These were later reviewed and discussed in face-to-face sessions with the various consultants.

From the general transcriptions, five specific narratives, a sample for each subject, were randomly chosen by the researcher. The narratives varied in length and content. In some cases, the content of the narratives was on similar themes such as memories from the Halifax School for the Deaf. The written transcriptions of the

²⁸ Additional data, recorded by Doull (1994-2000) for a study of MSL which was not completed, was offered to the researcher, but not used. The researcher decided to focus on the data collected in Nova Scotia in 2005. The purpose of Doull's research is to document and preserve samples of MSL across the Maritime provinces. The researcher viewed some of these recordings and determined that they were often conducted in a manner that allowed little opportunity for MSL narratives (e.g., Subjects were interviewed by various people in a series of numerous, short answer-type questions and their replies were often cut off mid-utterance). In July 2006, the researcher viewed some of this data with the two BSL consultants, Roger Beeson and Frances Elton. It was determined and confirmed that the use of MSL was not significantly different from the data collected in this study. They noted that not unlike the present study, the discourse consisted of a great deal of signing in ASL, with the insertion of MSL lexical items. In addition, a one hour session, recorded in 1994, with one of the same subjects filmed for this study (2006) has been given to the researcher by Elizabeth Doull.

video-recorded narratives were reviewed, adjusted where necessary and verified to be accurate interpretations of the video tapes by two signed language consultants from Nova Scotia, Elizabeth Doull and Debbie Johnson-Powell. Their qualifications appear below in the section on the MSL and ASL consultants. No accuracy rating was taken. These individuals were chosen because they were willing to do this and because they are among the best qualified people in the province of Nova Scotia for this type of work. In addition to a number of face-to-face sessions, the content of the transcriptions was checked through additional correspondence.

3.4 Consultants

3.4.1 The MSL and ASL Consultants

Analyses were carried out by the researcher, who is not a member of the Deaf community, and therefore cooperation and consultation with signed language contacts was necessary. One Nova Scotian, who has a long, ongoing interest in MSL and has conducted research into MSL, naturally emerged during the process as the primary consultant. She led the researcher to the other two consultants and enabled her access to members of the local Deaf community and the subjects in this study. The main consultants included: an MSL consultant, an ASL consultant and an MSL/English-ASL/English interpreter. The primary consultant, American-born Elizabeth Doull, is Deaf. Her first language is ASL. As a child, she attended Clarke School for the Deaf in Northampton, Massachusetts, and a private girls' school in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She also studied at Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. She is a social worker with extensive experience as a field worker in Nova Scotia's Deaf community. She has worked in the Nova Scotia Deaf community in various capacities since the 1970s. She is presently the Director of The Society of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Nova Scotians (SDHHNS) and the Treasurer of The Nova Scotia Cultural Society for the

Deaf. She has conducted research on MSL, which includes an dictionary (1978), an project documenting the use of MSL in the Atlantic provinces funded by the Canadian Cultural Society for the Deaf (1994), and a report on Maritime Sign Language (Warner *et al.* 1998), titled “The Survival of Maritime Sign Language,” published in *Papers from the 21st Annual Meeting of the Atlantic Provinces Linguistic Association, Volume 21*.

The MSL consultant in this study is Betty MacDonald. She is Deaf and MSL is her first language. She attended the School for the Deaf in Halifax. She is an instructor at the Nova Scotia Community College Interpretation Program, where she teaches a course called Maritime Regional Signs. She is also a community worker at SDHHNS and a tutor and coordinator at Deaf Literacy Nova Scotia.

The third consultant in Nova Scotia is Debbie Johnson-Powell. She is the hearing daughter of Deaf MSL users. Her only sibling is also Deaf. She has grown up in Nova Scotia, in Halifax and in Amherst. She has worked as an MSL/ASL/English interpreter in Nova Scotia for her entire adult life. She is the only MSL interpreter in the province and continues to work in this field. Although hearing, she considers herself a member of the Deaf community and says that the Deaf community also considers her a member of the Deaf community. These three MSL and ASL consultants played a significant part in the analysis of the data, often leading the researcher to information she was unaware of or would not have been otherwise able to access.

3.4.2 The BSL Consultants

Since this research examines how MSL may have stemmed from BSL, and the researcher knows no BSL, it was necessary to work with collaboratively BSL consultants. A BSL/English interpreter was located over the Internet and he led the

researcher to a colleague, who also served as the other BSL consultant. The researcher worked with these two native BSL signed language users in face-to-face sessions over a number of consecutive days and corresponded with them as well. Roger Beeson is a qualified BSL interpreter. He is the hearing son of Deaf parents who used BSL. His professional area of expertise in interpreting is health issues. He is a former teacher of Deaf children. He has served as the regional and national chair of the British Association of Signed Language Interpreters (ASLI) and is the former editor of the ASLI newsletter. He presently works as an interpreter and a consultant for services for Deaf people in Britain.

Frances Elton, the other BSL consultant, is a Deaf native BSL user. She is a lecturer of Signed Language and Deaf Studies at City University in London England and a researcher at the Deaf Studies, Cognition and Language Research Center (DCAL) also in London. In addition, she develops courses for Deaf professionals. She has a particular interest in BSL regional dialects. She has contributed to the curriculum of the Deaf Studies Program at the University of Durham and she served on the editorial board of *The BSL/English Dictionary* (Brien 1992).

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Data Analysis: The Lexicon

A comparative method was used for both the 100-item Swadesh List and the 30-item Parkhurst and Parkhurst List. Written English words were presented to the subjects who were requested to produce corresponding single signs in MSL. Each word was presented for approximately 10-12 seconds. The original order of the lists was retained. This process went smoothly. Subjects produced a sign for each word. There were some minor mishaps. For example, a subject misinterpreted KILL in the Swadesh list and articulated HILL instead, and another subject was distracted at one

point so did not produce a sign for CAT. When the researcher realized this, in an effort to retain 100 items, she immediately (perhaps in error) added two additional items, randomly selected from the end of the 200-item Swadesh List (1955). The items, WORK and SISTER, were presented to signers at the end of the original list. Signs, such as those with more than a single meaning, which later proved to be problematic in the analysis, were not disregarded. They were retained and the difficulties associated with the sign were discussed.

MSL signs were initially categorized by the researcher along with the signed language consultants into groups based on their similarity or dissimilarity to BSL and ASL. The phonological parameters of hand configuration, location, movement and palm orientation, of the signs were compared. Other differences, such as whether the sign was one-handed or two-handed, were also noted. Comparisons were carried out based on the judgments of the researcher, native language consultants and reference to signed language/English dictionaries (Brien 1992, Dolby and Bailey 2002). In general, signs that differed by a single different parameter were considered similar, and signs which differed along more than a single parameter were considered different. This idea of similarity and difference is adopted from McKee and Kennedy's study of Auslan, New Zealand Sign Language and BSL (2000), which considers three out four similar parameters an indication of similarity.²⁹ Other researchers have utilized different criteria. For example, Guerra Currie *et al.* (2002), Aldersson and McEntee-Atalianis (2007) and Al-Fityani and Padden (2006) investigated only three main phonological parameters in their studies of Spanish, Icelandic Signed languages and Arab Regional Signed Languages (ARSL): hand

²⁹ Signs that are different on the basis of more than a single parameter may still be similar, in which case the sign is discussed in further detail.

configuration (HC), path of movement and place of articulation. They included orientation within HC. In their research two out of three shared parameters indicated similarity.

Not all MSL signs were produced in the same manner. Different people produced variant signs of a single concept and sometimes the same person produced a sign a little differently each time. Minor differences like force, speed, the tightness of the hand or the length of movement often did not affect the meaning of the sign. Other signs were articulated with significant differences, such as a different hand configuration or a different location. Occasionally, subjects strayed from the requested procedure and did something like sign the same thing twice, once in ASL and once in MSL or vice versa.

Generally, MSL signs can be divided into three main categories:

- 1) MSL signs are identical in MSL, ASL and BSL, or in MSL and BSL, or in MSL and ASL.
- 2) MSL signs are 'similar', but not identical to BSL or ASL.
- 3) those signs that are different and show no evidence of being related to BSL or ASL.

Within these three main categories the following observations were noted:

- 1) The MSL sign is identical to the sign currently used in standard BSL.
- 2) The MSL sign is related to an Old BSL sign. It is no longer currently used in BSL.
- 3) The MSL sign shows evidence of being borrowed from a BSL regional dialect such as northeast England, Scotland or Northern Ireland. In some

cases, the region could be pinpointed. In other MSL signs, the exact regional location for BSL was not identified.³⁰

4) The MSL sign is similar to BSL as it used today. The only difference between MSL and currently-used BSL is a single phonological parameter, the movement, palm orientation, location, number of hands used, point of contact with a body part or contact on the non-dominant hand.

5) The MSL sign is semantically related to the BSL sign. In other words, the sign is identical in MSL and BSL, but the meaning is not. Historical information often confirmed this.

6) The MSL sign is evidence of an older form of ASL, no longer in use.

7) The MSL sign combines elements from different signed language systems. For example, an MSL sign can utilize pinky extension as it appears in BSL, to express negativity, but that specific MSL sign is not seen in BSL; nor is it similar to a regional dialect of BSL or an Old BSL sign. Therefore, it combines features of BSL with MSL.

8) The MSL sign is unlike signs in BSL and ASL.

This type of lexical comparison is necessary to confirm that the lexicon of MSL is related to lexicons of BSL and to account for where signs have been borrowed from ASL.

³⁰ Researchers fail to agree on how many different varieties of BSL exist. Estimates often range between 15 and 30, most of which originated in residential schools for Deaf pupils (Day 2004). Historically, British Deaf people were often isolated and signed language use was limited to a local area. "When spontaneous changes arose in one dialect of BSL no one outside the dialect area knew about it" (Sutton-Spence and Woll 1999:29). BSL signs can vary from region to region and according to semantic domains. There are different numeral systems in different areas, and different variants for colours and days of the week. BSL has recently seen increased uniformity, due to an increase in language contact, media exposure and the publication of signed language dictionaries. Frances Elton, a BSL consultant in this study has conducted research on BSL dialects. Her past work and particular interest in this area often allowed her to identify signs which resembled Old BSL signs and regional dialects, but she was not always able to recall exactly where the signs had originated or where she had seen them.

3.5.2 Data Analysis: Discourse

The discourse analysis examines the distribution of MSL signs and how they are used within the local MSL Deaf community in Nova Scotia and determines what current MSL use looks like. This study does not assume that MSL users all use language in the same way. It assumes that individuals who use different language varieties also have the ability to employ different linguistic systems in appropriate circumstances. In general, this study assumes that evidence of MSL remains in discourse, and that its use is spontaneous and natural, even though there may also be substantial use of ASL among what are presently termed 'MSL users'. Moreover, the discourse is examined within a social context, allowing the researcher to observe the relation of the language to the surrounding society. Thus, the discourse analysis takes geographical, historical, political, social, and cultural factors into consideration.

Contact-induced linguistic behaviour is not random. The discourse analysis aims to identify, characterize and account for the underpinnings of MSL as it is currently used in Nova Scotia. This research examines the effects of language contact on the individual language user. Excerpts in the form of subjects' narratives are examined for form, function and meaning, as well as for reoccurring patterns.

Discourse analyses examine the type of language used within an MSL social network and the relation of MSL users to other regional social networks, namely ASL users. It examines those domains of language that experience language interference and those that do not. This research examines MSL for signs of language shift that has occurred and is occurring.

The idea that narratives are a means by which people situate themselves in society and build an identity is central to the discourse analysis of spoken languages (Schiffrin 1994) and signed languages (Johnston and Schembri 2007). For example,

Ann, Smith and Yu (2007) asked users of MCSL to tell stories about their school experiences in hope that their memories would trigger use of MCSL and contribute to a larger picture of MCSL use. This study analyzes segments of participants' narratives for important linguistic, social and cultural information. Their discourse sheds light, not only on how they use MSL, but also on how they perceive themselves as MSL users and how they perceive the status of MSL users. Attention is paid to the perception of differences and similarities between MSL users and non-MSL users. The discourse analysis of MSL reveals how people use language to assert their identity and how aspects of a shared identity, like their common traditions, history, education and experiences contribute to the formation of a group identity. Carbin (1996) notes that "Throughout history Deaf Canadians have exhibited intense feelings for their sign language and have made concentrated efforts to keep it in their education and daily lives" (Carbin 1996:317). The discourse analysis reveals that MSL users also share feelings for their language.

The aforementioned five video-recorded narratives and their written transcriptions were examined and reexamined by the researcher on numerous, separate occasions. Reoccurring linguistic behaviours were noted and recorded. A list of common features, such as hybrid MSL/ASL signs, was drawn up. The purposes of the behaviours were proposed. For example use of MSL signs may be an attempt to assert an MSL identity. Detailed linguistic features were noted. The number of MSL signs a speaker used in his or her narratives was recorded. Furthermore, MSL signs were examined for specific information, such as to which semantic domain they belonged and whether they had personal or emotional relevance for the speaker. The researcher noted the frequency with which individuals used MSL signs. For

instance, a speaker could use an MSL sign in one utterance and then, in the same narrative, express the same concept via an ASL sign or with a hybrid MSL/ASL signs. The nature of MSL signs were examined, such as whether they could be considered conversational fillers. MSL signs were also examined for variants. The signs were compared to those observed in additional discourse, to the lexical lists and ASL and BSL dictionaries. Observations made by the researcher were discussed with and verified by the BSL, MSL and ASL consultants. The BSL consultants were more involved in the lexical analysis than the discourse analysis, although they did view the MSL narratives and contribute information. Some narratives proved more useful than others in observing where and how MSL is currently used and these narratives receive more attention in the analysis. Generally, narratives produced by certain subjects or those on certain topics, like school memories, tended to be more useful. For example, one narrative, an account of a daughter who did not like to wear dresses, who preferred to choose her own clothes, and whose sons now like to choose their own clothes, did not reveal any language behaviour that was not observed elsewhere. Moreover, the narrative could not be related to the speaker's identity or her connection to the MSL community.

The method of extracting narratives from a larger body of speech allows one to come close to seeing how MSL is used in natural situations. Natural situations are critical to an examination of MSL because how signs are used in natural situations and how they appear in the conscious production of individual and isolated lists of items can show very different portrayals of language use.

3.6 Conclusion

The combination of two examined areas in this research, the lexicon and discourse contributes to an overall picture of present-day MSL. The subjects presented MSL as

it is presently used and the questionnaires and interviews provided additional necessary information. By videotaping the subjects, the data could be viewed repeatedly and analyzed accurately. The consultants contributed information otherwise unavailable to the researcher. The methods provided sufficient material for an analysis to be conducted.

Chapter Four: A Lexical Analysis

4. Introduction, A Lexical Analysis

Chapter Four consists of a lexical analysis. A one-hundred item Swadesh list and a 30-item Parkhurst and Parkhurst list are examined for their relation to BSL and to the extent to which there has been borrowing from ASL. First, those signs that are shared by MSL, BSL and ASL are noted. Then, the focus shifts to the historical relation between BSL and MSL still evident in many MSL signs. Those signs which are currently shared by BSL and MSL, as well as those that are similar (similarity is based on shared phonological parameters) are examined, as are those which indicate a semantic relation, a sign articulated in the same manner but with slightly different meanings in MSL and BSL. Those MSL signs which are neither like BSL nor ASL are also examined. Lastly, the ways in which elements of ASL have been incorporated into MSL are examined.

MSL, although not the same language as BSL or ASL, is similar to ASL and BSL. In order to confirm these findings, four additional sources of an MSL lexicon are examined. These sources include: 75 MSL signs from *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Dolby and Bailey 2002), 110 MSL signs volunteered by a research subject in this study, 260 MSL signs as they appear in a dictionary of MSL (Doull 1978) and 39 MSL signs discussed in the video *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (Misener-Dunn and Fletcher-Falvey 1994). While some of the MSL signs from these sources appear in the two lists, additional signs and their variants are also revealed. Of particular significance are those previously unmentioned signs which further reveal the combination of elements from MSL and ASL. These offer a glimpse into a gradual, transitional process of lexical shift from BSL-related signs, to MSL signs and in turn to currently used MSL signs that are influenced by ASL.

4.1 Swadesh List: Identical Signs in MSL, ASL and BSL

The following section divides the 100 items examined via the Swadesh list into the following categories: a) those that are identical in MSL, BSL and ASL, b) those that are identical in MSL and ASL (borrowed) and c) those that are identical in MSL and BSL (historically related).³¹ MSL signs that are identical to BSL are further divided into: signs that stem from Old BSL, regional dialects of BSL, signs that are similar to BSL (they differ only along a single phonological parameter such as hand configuration or point of contact), and those that appear to be semantically related to BSL. Those which were perhaps once like BSL but have evolved and differ along more than a single phonological parameter are also addressed, as are unique MSL signs.

In the 100-item Swadesh list (See Appendix 4), 25 signs are identically formed in all three languages (See Table 2). These items include DOG (BSL), where one variant (used only in a southwest region of England) is shared with ASL and MSL, and SIT and TREE, which have been borrowed from ASL into BSL. Some of these signs include an element which, generally, people may perceive as representative of the concept or an aspect of the concept. For example, the sign FEATHER portrays the movement a falling feather would take as it drifts downward and from side to side. This element of iconicity may have caused the subjects to produce more than a single sign for the same item. The researcher's subjective judgment determines that this may be the case for a number of signs which are identical in ASL, BSL and MSL, such as HUNT, BIRD, CHILD, FEATHER, HEAVY, NARROW, SHARP, SHORT and SMOOTH.

³¹ McKee and Kennedy (2000) added another category which they called 'other'; it included items where the point of contact was different, a different number of hands were used and items where there was variation in regard to the presence of a based hand.

Table 2: Swadesh List: Identical Signs in MSL, ASL and BSL

1. ALL	10. GREASE**	19. SMOOTH
2. ANIMAL	11. HEAVY	20. SNAKE
3. BIRD	12. HILL***	21. THIN**
4. BLACK	13. HUNT	22. THIN**
5. CHILD	14. MAN	23. TREE
6. DAY	15. NARROW	24. WIDE
7. DOG*	16. SIT	25. WITH
8. FEATHER	17. SHARP	
9. FISH	18. SHORT	

* BSL regional dialect: southwest

** Different variants were presented by subjects. These are both shared in ASL and BSL.

***KILL was requested, but HILL was produced by a subject. The researcher decided since this is assumed to be a reading error to include this item.

4.1.1 Swadesh List: Identical Signs in MSL and ASL

An additional 22 lexical items are identical in MSL and ASL (See Table 3). Of these, three were fingerspelled using a one-handed ASL manual alphabet, #S-T-A-R, #S-E-A and #S-U-N, and one was a lexicalized fingerspelling e.g., #B-G, (bug) (Battison 1978). Although these MSL signs are clearly connected to ASL, subjects, potentially, could have chosen to fingerspell or initialize any range and number of signs.³²

³² Irish Sign Language and some Catholic schools in the UK, in Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow (Brien 1992), those which came into contact with Irish Sign Language or had Irish teachers, used a one-handed alphabet. As a result some BSL signs, particularly those in the Catholic dialect, are initialized according to a one-handed manual alphabet (Day 2004).

Table 3: Swadesh List: Identical Signs in MSL and ASL

1. BECAUSE	12. NEW
2. BUG*	13. STAR*
3. DANCE	14. WATER
4. DIRTY	15. MOON
5. DRY	16. RIVER
6. DUST*	17. ROPE
7. EARTH**	18. SEA*
8. GREEN	19. SNOW***
9. IF	20. SUN*
10. LEAF	21. WHITE
11. MOUNTAIN	22. WIND

* involved fingerspelling (ASL manual alphabet)

** EARTH proved problematic. As mentioned in Chapter Three, problematic signs were retained. It became clear as the lists were signed, that subjects were unsure as to whether they were to sign the planet or the ground or soil. Thus, subjects sometimes presented more than one lexical item.

*** This sign in MSL is considered Old ASL. Lucas, Bayley and Valli (2001:19) note that “an older form of SNOW in ASL consists of WHITE followed by wiggling fingers representing falling snow”, as seen in MSL. It is also represented by compounds of WHITE^FALL, WHITE^SUBSTANCE^FALL or SUBSTANCE^FALL (Lucas, Bayley, Rose and Wulf 2001). It is now common in ASL to observe the second component only – FALL, which fits with the general tendency to reduce compound forms.³³

Some of the items (e.g., DUST, ROPE and RIVER) while categorized as identical in MSL and ASL are problematic for they can be represented in different ways. For example, DUST (MSL) was articulated by different signs, first, by seemingly running a forefinger along a dusty surface and secondly, by portraying dust particles in the air. Aldersson and McEntee-Atalianis’ (2007) study of Icelandic and Danish signed languages revealed an additional sign for DUST, not observed in this study, which consisted of first tapping an object followed by the portrayal of flying

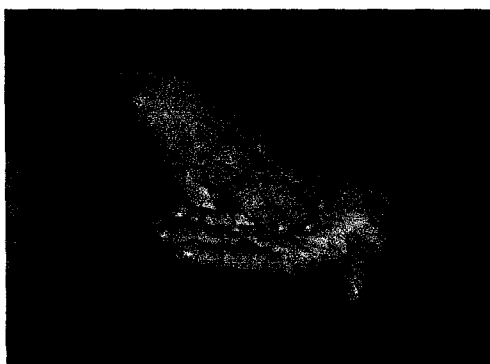
³³ Additional signs for SNOW appear in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Dolby and Bailey 2002), where “BENT EXTENDED B’ hands are positioned with palms toward the body and fingertips on either side of the upper chest are simultaneously rotated forward from the wrists so that the fingers point forward and spread to form ‘5’ hands with the palms facing down. The hands are then lowered delicately with the fingers fluttering. Also, the first part of this sign may be deleted so that the sign begins with a ‘5’ hand stage” (Dolby and Bailey 2002: 670).

dust particles (Aldersson and McEntee-Atalianis 2007:19). The question is whether these are citation forms or gestures shared by different cultures.

4.1.2 Swadesh List: Identical Signs in MSL and BSL

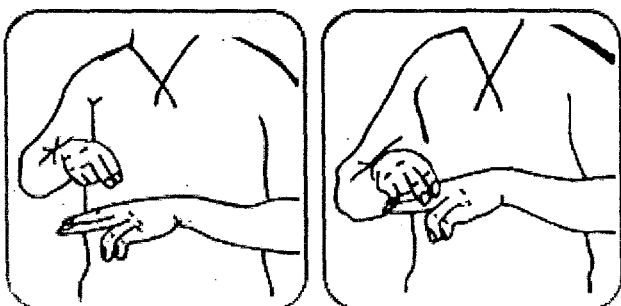
In addition to the items that are identical in BSL, ASL and MSL, twenty-one of the MSL signs are identical to those currently used in BSL, regional dialects included. (See Table 4). These include signs that are initialized, where the articulation illustrates a correlation between the handshape and the corresponding letter in the two-handed BSL manual alphabet. Examples include MOTHER (MSL), (See Figure 1) articulated with the letter M (index, middle and ring fingers extended) making contact on the open palm (face up) of the non-dominant hand in front of the body; the fingers tap the palm twice.

Figure 1: MOTHER (MSL)



FATHER (BSL) (See Figure 2), also used in MSL, is formed with the letter F, BSL manual alphabet, (extended index and middle fingers) on both hands pointing away from the body; palm orientation is downward. The two fingers of the dominant hand tap the back of the fingers of the non-dominant hand twice. MSL and ASL consultants confirmed that MOTHER and FATHER are familiar to most ASL users in Nova Scotia, despite the fact that the two-handed alphabet is no longer in use in the Maritimes. Many other MSL signs, which originally stemmed from BSL, are not still in use; nor are they familiar to ASL users in the region.

Figure 2: FATHER (MSL)



4.1.3 Swadesh List: MSL and BSL, Pinky and Thumb Extension

Within the category of whole borrowings from BSL to MSL are those that share the phonological features of thumb and pinky extension (PE), which represent positive and negative aspects respectively.³⁴ Woll (1987) notes that these features, typical of BSL, are rarely seen in European signed languages, with the exception of Irish Sign Language, “which of course, exists in close proximity to BSL and although believed to be historically unrelated has borrowed signs to a great extent” (Woll 1987:17). The type of thumb and pinky extension seen in BSL is also evident in signed languages related to BSL, such as Auslan and MSL. In BSL, PE, which indicates negativity, appears in BAD (See Figure 3), FIGHT (See Figure 4), CRITICIZE, TABOO, WICKED and AWFUL (Brien 1992:513). In Auslan, it appears in BAD, FIGHT, SUSPICION, SWEAR, WRONG, and GUILT (Johnston and Schembri 1999:121). In MSL, PE appears in BAD, WORSE and FIGHT. In FIGHT, two extended pinkies repeatedly make intense contact with one another.

³⁴ BAD (BSL) expressed through pinky extension in BSL dates back to Bulwer in 1644 (cited in Tait 1878).

Figure 3: BAD (MSL)



Figure 4a: FIGHT (MSL)

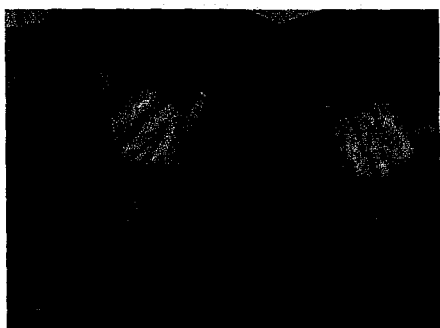


Figure 4b: FIGHT (MSL)



Signs with thumb extension, which indicate something positive, in BSL, Auslan and MSL include GOOD (See Figure 5) and REALLY-GOOD (See Figure 6). ASL does not share a 'PE- bad' and 'thumbs up- good' association (Brennan 1990), but Lakoff

and Johnson (1980) observe that in spoken language verticality gives rise to metaphor. This does apply to ASL. Taub (2001) suggests that the use of metaphors in ASL is two-tiered. First, there is a connection between the abstract and concrete meaning and then, there is a connection between the concrete image of the sign and its representation (e.g., HC, movement, location). Wilbur (1987) proposes that in ASL the notion of happiness is often demonstrated in signs with an upward movement. Perrin Wilcox (2000) confirms that “the metaphorical mapping of ‘upness’- or more specifically, an orientational metaphor **GOOD IS UP** – occurs in signs such as HAPPY, RICH, IMPROVE, POSITIVE, SUCCESS, INVENT, WIN, EXCITE, PROMOTION, SMILE as well as many others” (Perrin Wilcox 2000:97). In ASL, bad is often portrayed by downward movement, downward orientation or an unmarked sign (Perrin Wilcox 2000). Likewise, Machabee (1995) notes in LSQ that some initialized signs are metaphorically represented with the positive expressed in an upward direction and the negative expressed in a downward direction.

Figure 5: GOOD (MSL)

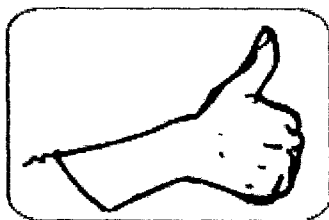


Figure 6: VERY-GOOD (MSL)



Although ASL does not share the specific articulatory representation of pinky and thumb extension with BSL and MSL, notions of goodness and badness do operate metaphorically. Both pinky and thumb extension in ASL have been studied, by Hoopes (1998), and Battison, Marcowicz and Woodward (1975) respectively. Hoopes describes the use and constraints of PE in ASL and suggests it plays a role in prosodic structure. In Battison, Marcowicz and Woodward's (1975) examination of thumb extension, they focus on the constraints of thumb extension, such as whether or not it occurs with a twisting motion and whether or not thumb extension is articulated on the face.

The connection between BSL and MSL is strengthened by the examples of identical items in BSL and MSL (See Table 4). This list also reveals evidence of Old BSL retained in MSL, but no longer in use in Britain (e.g., WET), including regional dialects of Old BSL (e.g., WARM, and YEAR). Further evidence of a connection lies in the fact that the lexical items which occur BSL and MSL also appear in McKee and Kennedy's (2000) comparison of New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) and Auslan to BSL. The signs currently used in NZSL and Auslan, (with two exceptions, VOMIT (MSL) and SISTER (MSL)), are also confirmed to stem from BSL. The assumption is that BSL users moved to both Australia and to Atlantic Canada, taking BSL signs with them.

Table 4: Swadesh List: Identical Signs in MSL and BSL

1. BAD**	12. WET***
2. FATHER*	13. WHAT
3. FULL	14. WHEN
4. GOOD **	15. WHERE
5. HUSBAND*†	16. WIFE
6. ICE	17. PIG
7. MOTHER*	18. SISTER***
8. NAME	19. WARM***
9. RED	20. YEAR***
10. CORRECT	21. WHO***
11. VOMIT***	

* sign is initialized according to the BSL manual alphabet

** sign involves pinky or thumb extension

*** Old BSL signs which are also regional dialects of BSL

(Regional dialects: WHO: northeast England, WARM: southwest England, YEAR: Scotland, SISTER: region not pinpointed by the BSL consultants, VOMIT: region not pinpointed by the BSL consultants)

*† Some were signed more than once and they were different. In BSL, HUSBAND and WIFE are ‘homonyms’ - articulated with both hands held in front of the body with the fingers pointing away from the body and the palms down (Sutton-Spence 2001). The thumb and index finger of the dominant hand touch the left ring finger at its base on the non-dominant hand. These two signs are disambiguated by the mouth patterns of the spoken words ‘husband’ and ‘wife’ in English (Sutton-Spence 2001). This is also true for MSL. In addition, there is another variant of HUSBAND (MSL), which probably stems from the ASL sign for MARRY and MARRIAGE (ASL). It consists of both hands held in front of the body; one hand is held palm up, fingers facing right and the other hand is held palm down, fingers facing left. These [C] HCs are interlocked. It is a possibility that MSL has borrowed from ASL for the purpose of disambiguating otherwise ambiguous signs.

4.1.4 Swadesh List: Similar Signs

In previous studies of related signed languages, HC has proven to be a common phonological source of variation. In a study conducted by Woll, she examined Old BSL as it appeared in various fundraising booklets. She concluded that 216 signs, out of a total 445, were different from present-day BSL. Of these, present-day signs experienced a change in one or more of the following: HC, location, movement or non-manual features. Of 216, 79 signs underwent a change in HC. The remainder changed in location, movement or non-manual features (Bencie Woll, personal

communication, 5 September 2008). Likewise, McKee and Kennedy (2000) found that in a comparison of Auslan, NZSL and BSL, where differences appeared, HC was the most commonly changed feature. In this study of MSL, changes in HC and changes in location account equally for the majority of changes.

In the MSL representations of WORK, EGG, FLOWER, SING, TAIL, AFRAID, DANCE, SHOW-OFF, TATTLE-TALE, YESTERDAY and THIRSTY, the difference between BSL and MSL is accounted for only by a different HC. All additional features (location, path of movement and orientation) remain the same. For example, WORK (BSL) is articulated with two [B] HCs “held with the palms facing towards the signer and the fingers pointing away from the signer [the palms face the signer at an angle and the finger tips also veer off at an angle away from the signer]...the right hand is held above the left hand, the side of the right hand taps the side of the left hand twice” (Brien 1992:675).³⁵ In MSL, WORK is articulated with a [5] HC instead of a [B] HC, but is otherwise the same. In other words, in MSL the fingers and thumb are spread out, while in BSL they are not. (MSL also has a sign WORK formed with two Spread [C] HCs). EGG (MSL) is articulated with a [V] HC, but in BSL, in the southwest region of England, EGG is articulated with a [U] HC (Frances Elton, personal communication, 10 July 2006). In *The Dictionary of British Sign Language / English* (Brien 1992) there are two different signs for egg, one with a [U] HC and the other with an [X] HC, although in the former, the HC is the same but the path of movement is different.

Other examples of signs that are similar but not identical in MSL and BSL showed evidence of change in a parameter other than HC, that is, in movement, palm orientation, location or the number of hands used. In addition, there were differences

³⁵ In the case of a left-handed signer, the typically dominant hand (right) and non-dominant hand (left) are often reversed.

in the point of contact. The point of contact refers to contact with a body part or contact on the non-dominant hand. While exact reasons for changes in the point of contact are not known, by examining previous research, one can speculate what may have occurred. Woll (1987) notes that there seem to be two major tendencies in BSL as it has evolved. These are also generally applicable to MSL. One is a loss of contact on the body. The other is a move towards neutral space. PERHAPS (BSL) once made contact with the forehead and GIVE (BSL) made contact with the chest, but neither makes contact now in BSL (Woll 1987). LAUGH (MSL) differs from BSL only in that it makes contact with the body, whereas in BSL it does not. Quite possibly, LAUGH (MSL) (See Figure 7) retains a point of contact that has been lost in BSL. LAUGH (BSL) is articulated on one hand with the thumb and index finger extended from an otherwise closed fist. The palm faces the signer. The fingers point towards the top of the signer's head and face. The corners of the mouth turn up. The signer's hand approaches the chin but does not actually make contact (Brien 1992). The hands move slightly from side to side. In MSL, the sign is the same, with the exception of contact made on the signer's chin. Woll (1987) says that the move away from the face was commonly the result of a spreading Oralist philosophy. As mouthing words became a necessity, hands could not be there to interfere. (In BSL, LAUGH can also be articulated with an index and pinky finger).

Figure 7: LAUGH (MSL)



Signs also change as to the number of hands used. For example, FINE (MSL) remains a two-handed sign (two Extended [A] HCs, palms facing the signer, which move upwards and towards the signer's shoulders simultaneously), whereas in current BSL use, a one-handed sign is more common.

An analysis of the Swadesh list reveals MSL signs that are similar, but not identical to BSL signs (See Table 5). In ASL, since differences exist along more than a single parameter, 'technically,' they are not considered 'similar.'³⁶ Evidence suggests that changes in MSL may lag behind those made in BSL due a number of factors such as physical distance, decreased contact and a lack of face-to-face interaction. It is impossible to pinpoint exactly why, how or when MSL differed or became different from BSL. It would be reasonable to assume that MSL evolved as contact with BSL users decreased and it changed further as contact with ASL users increased. Woodward, Erting and Oliver (1976) studied change among ASL users and connected changes and a lack of changes to specific factors such as race (Southern

³⁶ This analysis is conducted through a comparative lexicostatistical analysis as previously used by other researchers of signed languages who examined four phonological parameters (e.g., McKee and Kennedy and their study of Auslan, New Zealand Sign Language and BSL (2000)). The researcher acknowledges that fuzzy lines exist. A sign, for example, may differ along more than a single parameter, yet still appear to be relatively similar. Difference along more than one parameter does not entirely eliminate any similarity.

American Black and Caucasian signers), geographic region and age (older people showed less evidence of change).

Table 5: Swadesh List: MSL Signs that are similar to BSL

Sign (MSL)	Difference from BSL
1. RAIN	first part of the compound movement
2. BLOOD*	point of contact**
3. EGG	HC
4. FLOWER	HC
5. LAUGH	point of contact**
5. SING	HC
6. TAIL	HC
7. WORK	HC

HC = Hand Configuration

* regional dialect of BSL (BLOOD region not pinpointed by the BSL consultants)

**Point of contact can refer to contact with a body part or the non-dominant hand. In both of these MSL signs contact occurs on or near the chin.

There may also be semantic similarity between MSL and BSL, where articulations of signs are identical, but the meanings are not the same. All languages, spoken and signed alike, evolve naturally and undergo change. These may examples of changes in signed language. Of 445 Old BSL signs examined by Woll (1987), 20 (4.3%) had taken on “a different translation” within a period of time ranging from 1880-1904 to 1987 (Woll 1987:20). For instance, CHEAT (Old BSL) is now DECEIVE (BSL), and what was HOSPITAL (Old BSL) is now NURSE (BSL).³⁷ MISTAKE (Old BSL) has become STUPID (BSL), SUBSTITUTE (Old BSL) is now EXCHANGE (BSL) and ABUSE (Old BSL) is now BLAME (BSL) (Woll 1987:20,

³⁷ Woll (1987) notes this sign has remained remarkably similar to HOSPITAL (ASL) - its representation, no doubt, a reference to arm bands bearing red crosses once worn by medical staff.

Bencie Woll, personal communication, 5 Sept. 2008). The MSL signs outlined in Table 6 may also have always had slightly different meanings in Canada. Iconic, cognitive and metaphorical processes may have lead to their articulation in the same manner. For example, a worm and caterpillar are both small insects which have a slithering movement, and thus, WORM in BSL is the same as CATERPILLAR in MSL. A louse and a flea are both tiny insects that jump, and thus LOUSE in BSL is FLEA in MSL. Some of the differences stated through different interpretations may not, in fact, be differences at all e.g., LOOK-FOR (MSL) and SEARCH-FOR (BSL). For others plausible explanations may exist e.g., LIVE (MSL) (or DWELL / INHABIT) (See Figures 8a and 8b) and CONTENTS/WHAT'S-INSIDE (BSL). In an abstract sense, you live within another entity – in a house, a town, a region or a country; thus, there is a connection.

Figure 8a: CONTENTS (BSL)

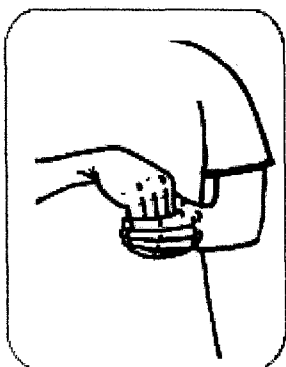


Figure 8b: LIVE (MSL)

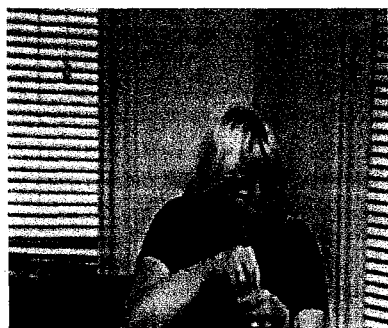


Table 6: Swadesh List: MSL signs that may be semantically related to BSL

MSL Sign	BSL Sign
1. MEAT	KNIFE
2. LOOK-FOR	SEARCH-FOR
3. WORM	CATERPILLAR
4. YEAR	ANNUAL
5. LOUSE	FLEA
6. LIVE	CONTENTS/WHAT'S-INSIDE
7. STONE***	SOMETHING-HARD***

*** regional dialect (SOMETHING-HARD Scotland)

4.1.5 Swadesh List: Different Signs

Of the 100-item Swadesh list, 16 lexical items (16%) were found to be different from both BSL and ASL (See Table 7). In other words, differences appeared along more than a single phonological parameter. For some of these, logical processes of development can be hypothesized. For others, explanations remain within the framework of speculation. For example, YELLOW (BSL) is a two-handed sign, with the initialization of the letter Y from the BSL manual alphabet (See Figure 9). Both hands are held in front of the body; “the right index finger is held above the left [non-dominant] hand and the right hand makes a movement towards the signer, so that the

tip of the right index finger brushes the base of the left thumb; the movement is repeated” (Brien 1992:283) (See Figure 10). In YELLOW (MSL) the non-dominant hand is the same as BSL but the dominant hand has the pinky and the thumb extended forming a [Y] HC as used in the one-handed ASL manual alphabet (See Figure 11) and it is the pinky that makes contact with base of the thumb of the tip of the thumb. This differs in HC and point of contact. One can assume that the [Y] HC, originally initialized from the BSL manual alphabet was further modified in order to initialize the sign, this time from the ASL manual alphabet. In the process of change the pinky made contact with the thumb tip, not its base. Perhaps this change in contact can be explained by Klima and Bellugi’s observation that “When an initializing HC is substituted into an existing sign, the contacting region must be appropriate to the newly designated handshape; this sometimes results in a change in the contacting region or orientation” (Klima and Bellugi 1979:65).

Figure 9: The letter Y, BSL Manual Alphabet

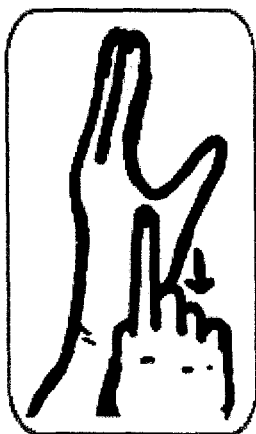


Figure 10: YELLOW, (BSL)



Figure 11: The letter Y, ASL Manual Alphabet



Figure 12: YELLOW (MSL)



*In Figure 10 the index finger makes contact with the base of the thumb. In some variants the pinky is extended; in others it is not. In Figure 12, the index finger makes contact with the tip of the thumb. The pinky is extended.

Another example of a partially initialized sign seen in MSL that appears to stem from BSL, but whose use is not observed in BSL, is NOT-GOOD, reduced to #N-GOOD (MSL) to describe something negative. The initial part of this two-handed sign is formed using the letter N from the two-handed BSL manual alphabet. Extended, straight index and middle fingers tap the upright palm of the non-dominant hand and are followed by GOOD, (thumbs up), which can be either one-handed or two-handed. While ASL has a similar lexical item meaning 'not good,' it is formed quite differently, using only the one-handed ASL alphabet to form #N-G. Battison (1978) notes that this has strayed far from its roots and as used by younger ASL users today, it resembles #T-L - the result of assimilated handshapes. Battison (1978) also notes an earlier form of this used in the United States; it, too, differs from MSL. He traces it back to two signers from Deaf families in the 1940s, while other informants attest to its use in the 1950s and 60s at Gallaudet College. In the 1950s the first students from the Maritimes began to attend Gallaudet College (Carbin 1996). It is possible that these students saw this sign, used it and brought it home to the Maritimes. In an additional representation of NOT-GOOD, the N and G are identical to those letters in the BSL manual alphabet, the latter made with one fist placed directly over top of the other, palms facing the signer. (A single signer also informed Battison of an additional variant where the N assimilates to a fist. Battison states that "This assimilation is quite natural (and predictable), since in similar sign compounds, [in ASL] the active hand frequently changes as the result of anticipatory assimilation (e.g., REMEMBER and HUSBAND)" (Battison 1978:90). He notes that most Americans had no idea that originally the sign stemmed from British Sign Language,

while BSL users would surely recognize use of their own manual alphabet. However, BSL users say there is no such sign (Brien 1992:113). It is also possible that this was simply coined using BSL fingerspelling; it caught on and is used, but has no actual BSL origin. In attempting to describe the sign's confusing origins, Battison says it could also be that signers have invented "false etymologies" (Battison 1978:139).

Many colours in ASL are initialized e.g., blue, green, yellow, purple and pink. This is a more common practice in ASL than BSL. MSL colours can be divided into distinct groups: 1) initialized signs borrowed from ASL, e.g., BLUE; 2) non-initialized signs borrowed from ASL e.g., BLACK and WHITE; 3) signs borrowed from BSL e.g., RED; 4) signs that are the same as Auslan, but not BSL e.g., BROWN (Johnston and Schembri 2007:68), and are thus perhaps evidence of borrowing from Old BSL or a regional dialect of BSL, 5) initialized signs, adopted from two-handed BSL manual alphabet, but not used in BSL e.g., PURPLE; 6) signs that combine the initialization from both two-handed BSL and one-handed ASL manual alphabets e.g., YELLOW; 7) MSL signs which have no obvious connection to ASL or BSL e.g., PINK (PINK differs from BSL along more than a single parameter, but the handshape and location are the same as a regional dialect of BSL). A number of MSL signs, outlined in Table 7, are unlike BSL and unlike ASL.

Table 7: Swadesh List: MSL signs that are different from both BSL and ASL

1. COUNT	9. LIVE
2. DIE	10. NOT
3. DULL/BORING	11. OLD
4. FIRE	12. OTHER
5. GRASS	13. PERSON
6. GREASE	14. WOOD
7. HOW	15. WOMAN
8. LIE	16. YELLOW

Outlined in the table below (Table 8) is the MSL sign WOOD (See Figure 13). This is compared to WOOD in BSL and ASL. This serves as an example of an MSL sign which is articulated differently in MSL than it is in BSL and ASL. While all three share a cognitive perception of how wood is used and what may be done to wood, the HCs, directions of movement, points of contact and palm orientations are quite clearly different from one another. This example attests to the unique nature of some MSL signs.

Table 8: Swadesh List, WOOD (BSL, ASL and MSL)

Signed language	Two-handed sign	Location	Movement	HC	Palm orientation
BSL*	✓	neutral space	The right hand twists up at the wrist, so that the thumb tip brushes the left palm; the movement is repeated (Brien 1992:201).	dom. hand: [A] HC non-dom. hand: [5] HC	The left palm faces right, (if the fingers were opened, they would point away from the signer) (Brien 1992:201). The right palm faces down; the fingers point away from signer.
ASL	✓	neutral space	Both hands move back and forth in sawing motion (Dolby and Bailey 2002:829).	dom. hand: Extended [B] HC non-dom. hand: standard base hand or Extended [B] HC	The right palm faces left. The left palm faces down.
MSL**	✓	neutral space	The dom. hand is purposefully and repeatedly inserted between the ring and pinky fingers of the non-dom. hand. (Doull 1978)	dom. hand: Extended [B] non-dom. hand: [5] HC	The palm of the left hand faces the body (at an angle); the fingers point right. The palm of the right hand faces down; the fingers point left.

dom. hand = dominant

non-dom. hand = non-dominant hand

* This is the more common BSL sign. An additional regional variation WOOD (BSL) that is identical to ASL (and unlike the MSL sign) is also used (Brien 1992).

** WOOD (MSL), with a different representation, was observed in a subject's narrative. It consisted of an Extended [B] (right hand) performing a sawing motion

(similar to ASL) as it made contact on an extended pinky (a [I] HC), with the palm of the left hand facing the signer.

Figure 13: WOOD (MSL)



Table 9: Percentages of Swadesh List signs that are Identical and Similar to ASL and BSL*

Signed Language	Signed Language	Rate of Similarity
MSL	BSL	60%
MSL	ASL	45%
BSL	ASL	25%

* Similarity includes semantically related signs, where the articulation is identical, but the meaning was different. It does not include signs that are different along more than a single phonological parameter. (As previously noted this does not necessarily cancel out any notion of similarity).

Table 10: Swadesh List† a Summary of Results

	MSL-BSL	MSL-ASL	ASL-BSL
Identical	46%	45%	25%
Similar	14%	-----	-----
Different	40%	55%	75%

One must keep in mind that the Swadesh list comprises of frequently-used lexical items and this, as previously noted, may play a role in the overestimation of similarity.

BSL and ASL clearly share certain common linguistic features. As previously mentioned, some signs from ASL have been borrowed into BSL (e.g., SIT and TREE), but the total of rate of similarity, 25%, is not comprised entirely of such borrowings. The degree of commonality between ASL and MSL is 45%. MSL has borrowed from ASL. A comparison of MSL to BSL reveals a 60% rate of similarity. MSL appears to be related to BSL.³⁸ Generally, current use of MSL is likely to be more similar to ASL than BSL and it appears to be continuing to move closer to ASL and further away from BSL.³⁹

This section conducts a lexical comparison of signs in a 100-item Swadesh. The following section carries out an additional lexical comparison, using a 30-item Parkhurst and Parkhurst List.

4.2 Parkhurst and Parkhurst List: Identical Signs in MSL, ASL and BSL

³⁸ Some researchers suggest that it is not impossible for a signed language to be related to more than a single signed language or signed language family. For example, Woodward's (2000) results of his examination of Hai Phong Sign Language in Viet Nam, state

It [Hai Phong Sign Language] appears to belong to two separate sign language families, one being the signed languages used in Viet Nam (Ha Noi Sign Language, Ho Chi Minh Sign Language and Hai Phong Sign Language), which retains many of the original Southeast Asian signs and the other the LSF/ASL sign language family, which was a strong influence by way of language contact (e.g., mainly through the introduction of ASL into the educational system), resulting in borrowing and a high rate of cognates. In Hai Phong Sign Language signs are articulated and accepted in both and either the two existing varieties (Woodward 2000: 46)

Woodward's findings are supported by the findings of other studies, where the more recent introduction of a different signed language has influenced the use of the indigenous signed language and caused significant changes. This is also the case, for example, in Filipino Sign Language, where ASL has had a significant influence (Puson and Siloterio 2006), and Malinese Sign Language (LaSiMa), where French Sign Language and American Sign Language have both been influential (Nyst and van Kampen 2008). According to the findings of O'Rourke (1978), Lane (1993) and Tennant and Brown (1998) using a Swadesh list, Johnston and Schembri (2007:69) say "Figures suggest that ASL and Auslan could be considered varieties from the same language family." Their degree of similarity ranged from 38 to 44%. These findings from signed languages are analogous to findings for spoken languages (See Chapter Two). In MSL, the older, once-used version of the language clearly stemmed from BSL, while newer, more commonly-used MSL signs are either uniquely MSL or they stem from the influence of ASL on MSL.

³⁹ It is possible that MSL is moving in the direction of becoming a dialect of ASL.

The following section examines the 30-item Parkhurst and Parkhurst list in the same way the Swadesh list was examined, signs that are identical in MSL, BSL and ASL, signs that are identical in MSL and ASL, and signs that are identical in MSL and BSL. MSL items related to BSL are further examined for their similarities in form and meaning. Also examined are those MSL signs that are dissimilar to ASL and BSL.⁴⁰ A summary concludes this section.

Of the 30-item Parkhurst list (See Appendix 5), only two lexical items are identical in ASL, BSL and MSL, THANKS and STORY (see Table 11). STORY, while not one of the three more common signs found in current BSL use (Brien 1992), is the one that is associated with Catholic Deaf schools in Britain. A researcher of BSL dialects says it is quite possible that this sign was borrowed from Irish Sign Language into ASL or vice versa as these two languages had historical contact (Frances Elton, personal communication 10 July 2006). Eleven items are identical in MSL and ASL e.g., BLUE, JANUARY, MONDAY and others (see Table 12). Three MSL signs are identical to BSL as it is currently used, POOR, ALMOST and WEEK. Three additional MSL signs seem to stem from regional dialects of BSL, COUSIN, SWEET and FALSE. A single item, BEGIN, is derived from Old BSL (see Table 13). In MSL, BEGIN is articulated with the hands held in front of the body; the non-dominant hand forms a [B] HC with the palm facing left and the fingers pointing away from the signer. On the dominant hand only the middle finger is extended. The middle finger makes contact with the centre of the palm and twists from the wrist (See Figure 14a). This is not observable in the illustration. BEGIN (MSL) has also been modified so the index finger makes contact with the palm instead of the middle finger

⁴⁰ Dissimilarity is based on differences in more than a single phonological parameter, but once again, it is acknowledged that this does not entirely rule out the possibility that there may still be some similarity.

(See Figure 14b). This modification is assumed to be the result of a general move away from signs formed with an extended middle finger. In current BSL, BEGIN has also been modified and is articulated with the dominant hand in an [A] HC (thumb extended); the hand moves down and away from the signer so that the right knuckles brush across the left palm (Brien 1992:205). Scottish Sign Language and signers in UK Catholic Deaf communities, until recently, continue to use an extended middle finger HC (Deuchar 1984, Brennan 1990). The HC with an extended middle finger is becoming less common because of its association with rude gesture; its use in ASL is marginal.

Figure 14a: BEGIN (MSL)

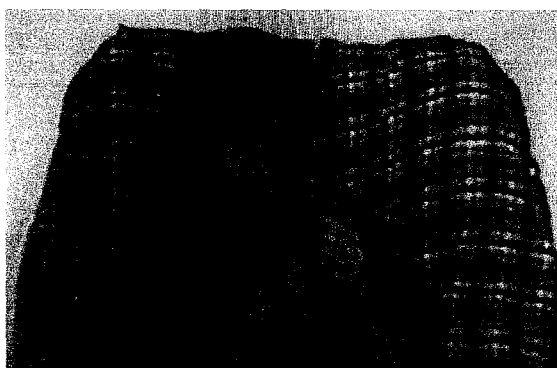


Figure 14b: BEGIN (MSL)



Table 11: Parkhurst and Parkhurst List: Identical Signs in MSL, ASL and BSL

1. THANKS
2. STORY*

* regional dialect (STORY Irish Sign Language and Catholic schools in Britain)

Table 12: Parkhurst and Parkhurst List: Identical Signs in MSL and ASL

1. BLUE	7. FREE
2. JANUARY	8. NEED
3. MONDAY	9. YOUNG
4. PLAY	10. MONTH
5. PEACE	11. ALWAYS
6. CITY	

Table 13: Parkhurst and Parkhurst List: Identical Signs in MSL and BSL

1. POOR*	5. SWEET***
2. ALMOST	6. FALSE***
3. WEEK**	7. BEGIN****
4. COUSIN***	

* A signer provided POOR: 1) POOR – not wealthy and 2) POOR-THING – in reference to a person. The former is identical in MSL and BSL, while the latter, POOR-THING (MSL) appears to be semantically related to BSL. Both are considered bringing the total number of lexical items in the Parkhurst and Parkhurst list to 31 instead of 30. ⁴¹

** WEEK is identical to BSL and it is used productively in the same way, meaning it can be modified numerically (by the number of fingers extended and incorporated into the sign) to indicate ONE-WEEK, TWO-WEEKS, up to NINE-WEEKS.

*** regional dialect (COUSIN Newcastle, SWEET northeast England, FALSE northeast England and the Midlands, BEGIN Newcastle and Liverpool)

**** Old BSL (as well as a regional dialect)

4.2.1 Parkhurst and Parkhurst List: Similar Signs

The Parkhurst and Parkhurst list reveals three MSL signs that are similar, but not identical to BSL (See Table 14). For example, ASK (MSL) and ASK (BSL) differ in palm orientation. In MSL the palm faces down; in BSL it faces away from the signer toward the addressee. A BSL consultant noted that the MSL palm orientation is

⁴¹ Production of POOR-THING appeared every time POOR was requested, prior to POOR being articulated. It was this that prompted the researcher, perhaps in error, to add this item.

unusual. But ASK (MSL) was consistently articulated palm down, in discourse as well. Since it is a directional or agreeing verb, meaning that its location varies depending on the subject as does its final position, depending on the object or goal, its representation also varied. AFRAID (MSL) also differs from BSL along a single parameter, HC. In MSL the sign takes a [5] HC, unlike BSL, where the HC is a Clawed [5]. Otherwise, both make contact on the chest and the signer moves the shoulders back with an eyes-wide-open facial expression.

Table 14: Parkhurst and Parkhurst List: MSL Signs that are similar to BSL

Sign (MSL)	Difference from BSL
1. ASK	Palm orientation
2. AFRAID	HC
3. PAPER*	HC

* Additional variants of PAPER (BSL) articulated with a [1] HC are used (Brien 1992:211, Frances Elton, personal communication 10 July 2006).

As observed in the Swadesh list, similarity by way of semantic relatedness connects some MSL and BSL signs. This applies to three items from the Parkhurst and Parkhurst list (See Table 15). The first, BEAUTIFUL/PRETTY (MSL), is articulated with an index finger making contact in the cheek; it is accompanied by a slight head tilt and the corners of the mouth turn up. One BSL consultant said, “This could almost be understood [in BSL] as ‘looks good’, but not ‘beautiful’ or ‘pretty’” (Frances Elton, personal communication 11 July 2006). The same consultant acknowledged that this may also be used in Scottish Sign Language for LOVELY. (There seems to be no difference between BEAUTIFUL/PRETTY and LOVELY). In certain circumstances of course these would be synonymous. In the aforementioned variant of POOR-THING (MSL), which emerged when POOR was requested (see

Table 13), two [5] HCs are held in neutral space, palms down; the hands bounce up and down twice. The assumption that someone who is ‘a poor thing’ is in need of the Lord’s blessing connects MSL and BSL. In BSL this sign is interpreted as BLESS-HIM/HER or BLESS-YOU. Lastly what is HATE (MSL) is DISAPPROVAL (BSL). HATE (MSL) is signed with the pinky finger extended (See Figure 15a). This is not unusual since MSL, like BSL, often uses pinky extension to denote a negative association. In other words, there is an emotional and evaluative relationship between the handshape and its referent, visible in the signer’s non-manual markers (See Figure 15b).

Figure 15a: HATE, pinky extension (MSL)

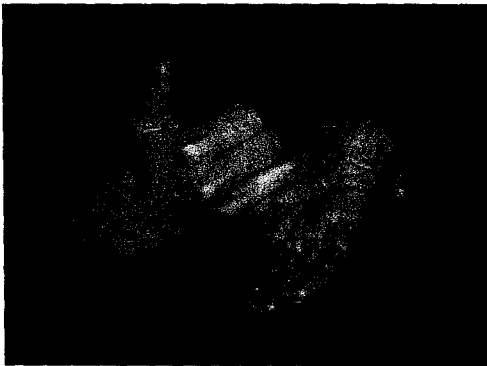
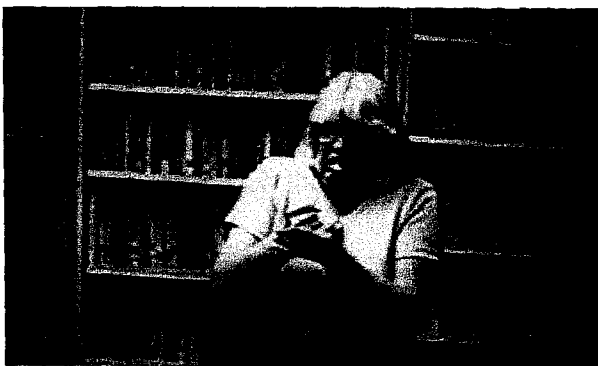


Figure 15b: HATE (MSL)



But HATE (BSL) does not have pinky extension. It is signed with “a [5] HC held towards the signer. The hand makes a firm upward movement, brushing the chest and then twists way for the signer from the wrist so that the palm faces down and the fingers point away from the signer before making a firm movement down and at the same time, away from the signer” (Brien 1992:561). Woll (1987) mentions that there appears to be a tendency in BSL toward changes in handshapes that incorporate a meaningful form into a sign. For example, the [I] HC from BAD has been incorporated into the BSL signs REJECT, DISGUST, FIGHT and LAST. MSL has done the same. It is also possible that HATE (MSL) with pinky extension may have once been BSL sign in use (Old BSL) or a regional sign, but no evidence of this was found.

Table 15: Parkhurst and Parkhurst List: MSL signs that may be semantically related to BSL

Sign (MSL)	Sign (BSL)
1. BEAUTIFUL/PRETTY	LOVELY*
2. POOR-THING	BLESS-HIM/HER, BLESS-YOU
3. HATE	DISAPPROVAL

*regional dialect (LOVELY northeast England and Newcastle)

4.2.2 Parkhurst and Parkhurst List: Different Signs

In the Parkhurst and Parkhurst list, five lexical items (16.1%) were found to be different in MSL from BSL and ASL (See Table 16). FAMILY (MSL), for example, is different from both BSL and ASL; however it is identical to the sign used in Auslan. There are reports of additional similarities between MSL and Auslan (Johnston and Schembri 2007).⁴² It is not used in Britain. (Adam Schembri, personal

⁴² Tessa Padden (2006) of the UK states in communication with Adam Schembri that the Auslan sign for FAMILY is ‘not a main or natural sign in BSL.’

communication 8 June 2006). The sign FAMILY (MSL) is a two-handed initialized sign, initialized according to the two-handed manual BSL alphabet letter F.⁴³ Two [U] HCs move in a semi-circle from chest height in front of the signer, where they meet with the palms facing the signer. The front of the index and middle fingers on the right hand make contact with the back of the index and middle fingers on the left hand. The similarity between MSL and Auslan, despite great physical distance and a lack of contact, suggests that this variant of FAMILY may once have been used in Old BSL; the sign may also have stemmed from an unidentifiable regional dialect of Old BSL; it may also have been borrowed from Auslan into MSL,⁴⁴ or its use may simply be coincidental. This similarity may also suggest an influence from ASL, where other initialized signs for groups are characterized by a common HC and location (e.g., FAMILY, GROUP and CLASS (ASL)).

Table 16: Parkhurst and Parkhurst List: MSL signs that are different from both BSL and ASL

- | | |
|------------|----------|
| 1. FAMILY* | 4. NEVER |
| 2. COLOUR | 5. TRUE |
| 3. UGLY | |

*identical in MSL and Auslan.

Another different sign is NEVER (MSL), articulated with a single hand in neutral space, an [I] HC and the palm facing left. The movement is a semi-circle

⁴³ Adam Schembri (personal communication, 10 June 2006) suggests that there are fewer examples of initialized signs in BSL due in part to the use of a two-handed manual alphabet. Initialized signs are also often affected by Deaf people's political sensitivity to the influence of English on signed language. This does not explain why some MSL signs are initialized and the same signs in BSL are not. MSL signs such as FAMILY, PURPLE, PINK and #N-GOOD (NOT-GOOD) are initialized according to a BSL two-handed manual alphabet, but they are not initialized in BSL in the UK. Moreover, some of these signs (e.g., PINK and PURPLE) are not only initialized in ASL but they serve as examples of "frequent and well-entrenched foreign [English] vocabulary in ASL initialized signs" (Padden 1989: 45) – yet in MSL, it is the BSL initialization, not the ASL initialization that is used.

⁴⁴ The researcher found no evidence of contact between users of MSL and Auslan, but this does not mean it did not occur.

formed above the chest followed by a sharp downward drop. The form resembles a question mark drawn in the air (without the dot underneath). It is accompanied by a furrowed brow and a down-turned mouth. This differs from NEVER (BSL), where a non-dominant hand, a [B] HC, palm down, is met by the dominant hand and an [A] HC, where the right knuckles brush the left knuckles in an outward movement (Brien 1992). This MSL sign differs from ASL in HC. In MSL, there is pinky extension. In ASL, NEVER is articulated with a [B] HC (or an Extended [B] HC). But MSL, like ASL, utilizes the same signing space, neutral space ranging from the signers face to chest, and a similar path of movement, a gentle curve. When it is emphatic, the ASL sign NEVER is like the question-mark shape of the MSL sign. Perhaps the MSL sign is best explained by the incorporation of a meaningful handshape, pinky extension, into the sign. But there are also MSL signs for which such explanations can not be logically posited. One such example from the Parkhurst and Parkhurst list is COLOUR, exemplified below in Table 17. This comparison of COLOUR is one example of many unique MSL signs.

Table 17: Parkhurst and Parkhurst List, COLOUR (BSL, ASL and MSL)

Sign language variety	One-handed or two-handed sign	Location	Movement	HC	Palm orientation
BSL (variant #1)	One	neutral space, chest height	The hand moves in an anti-clockwise circle in the vertical plane parallel to the signer's body	[5]	palm faces away from signer, fingers point up
BSL (variant #2)	Two	neutral space, chest height	The hands make alternate circles. The left hand moves clockwise, the right anti-clockwise	Clawed [5]	both palms face away from the signer (If the hands were open the fingers would point up)
ASL	One	The fingers make contact with the lips or the chin	The fingers flutter back and forth.	[5]	palm faces the signer
MSL	Two	neutral space, chest height	The extended index and middle fingers are rubbed along the palm of the non-dom. hand	dom. hand: [U] non-dom. hand: standard base hand (palm up)	dom. hand: palm down, non-dom. hand: palm up, the fingers on both hands point away from the signer

dom. hand = dominant hand

non-dom. hand = non-dominant hand

Table 18: Percentages of Parkhurst and Parkhurst List that are Identical and Similar to ASL and BSL*

Signed Language	Signed Language	Rate of Similarity
MSL	ASL	35.5%
MSL	BSL	48.4%
BSL	ASL	6.5%

* Similarity includes semantically related signs, where the articulation was identical, but the meaning different. It does not include signs that are different along more than a single phonological parameter.

Table 19: Parkhurst and Parkhurst List, a Summary of Results

	MSL-ASL	MSL-BSL**	ASL-BSL
Identical	35.5%	29%	6.5%
Similar*	----	19.4%	—
Different	64.5%	51.6%	93.5%

** Since POOR and POOR-THING were both presented, both were considered.

If one were to take these results at face value, it would appear that that ASL and BSL are two separate languages. They have a low rate of similarity, 6.5%. The relation between MSL and BSL is historically based. This relation, it appears, may also have changed significantly and may still be changing as MSL moves away from its BSL origins and toward increased usage of ASL. One might also argue that the results according to the Parkhurst and Parkhurst list (2003a) under-represent the present connection between MSL and ASL. Perhaps this is due to certain factors such

as the small sample of lexical items or the previously-mentioned exclusion of iconic items.

Results for the Swadesh list suggest that MSL is related to BSL and that it has also borrowed heavily from ASL. In the Parkhurst and Parkhurst list (2003a), this is somewhat less obvious.

This involved picture of linguistic relations reveals a situation of language contact which may be difficult, if not impossible, to completely untangle. It is also likely that one cannot untangle the issue of lexical similarity from additional factors, such as historical factors and a variety of internal and external factors.

Table 20: A Lexical Comparison: A Summary

	Swad. List	P. and P. List	Swad. List	P. and P. List	Combined ave. (for both lists)	Combined ave. (for both lists)
	ASL & MSL	ASL & MSL	BSL & MSL	BSL & MSL*	ASL & MSL	BSL & MSL*
% of Identical signs	45%	35.5%	46%	29.0%	40.2%	37.5%
% of identical & similar signs	45%	35.5%	60%	48.4%	40.2%	54.2%

Swad. List – Swadesh list

P. and P. – Parkhurst and Parkhurst list

* A total of 31 MSL signs instead of the original 30 were examined (POOR-THING was added since it was included with POOR by every one of the subjects, before POOR was presented).

4.3 A Lexical Comparison: Conclusions

A comparison of MSL lexical items to BSL and ASL as generated by a 100-item Swadesh List and a 30-item Parkhurst and Parkhurst lists leads to the following conclusions:

First, BSL and ASL are unrelated signed languages. This notion, previously and commonly attested to within the field of signed language research is supported. (Iconically-represented items were omitted at the discretion of the researcher, as was done in previous, similar research comparing signed languages).

Secondly, it appears that MSL is not the same language as ASL or the same language as BSL, and it does not (currently, although this may not have been the case in the past) seem to be a dialect of BSL.⁴⁵ Such comparisons have been carried out in other signed languages. For example, Woodward (1976a) compared ASL and French Sign Language (FSL) (and Old LSF) with evidence for the latter provided by an FSL dictionary (Oleron 1974) and concluded that FSL and ASL were unrelated. He said, "It is quite possible that FSL was creolized with existing ASL signing varieties at the time of contact in 1816....[Language change occurs] extremely rapidly in Creoles as compared with other languages" (Woodward 1976a:10). The researcher supports that this preliminary suggestion be followed by further analyses.

Thirdly, generally, a lexical comparison reveals that MSL signs appear to be more similar to BSL than ASL, but when one focuses only on those signs which are identical, the rate of similarity between MSL signs and ASL is the almost same or higher than that of BSL. This observation brings to light two main issues. The first is

⁴⁵ The discourse analysis suggests that MSL may be moving in the direction of becoming a dialect of ASL.

that MSL appears to share a historical past with BSL.⁴⁶ But MSL's connection with BSL has weakened and a number of signs have undergone modification or changed in meaning. The second issue (in this third point), and a significant one, is that certain MSL signs appear to have moved toward ASL. ASL borrowings continue to encroach on both BSL and MSL signs. Many signs presently used by MSL users are borrowed in their entirety from ASL.

Fourth, results of the lexical comparison seem to indicate that MSL is 'related' to BSL. It is also similar to ASL, even though ASL and BSL are unrelated to one another. MSL is related historically to MSL and it is similar to ASL as the result of language contact.⁴⁷ Other researchers have specifically examined the influence of ASL on other signed languages (Woodward 1993, Puson and Siloterio 2006).

Further examination of the data illustrates that MSL lexical items not only stem from both BSL, but that use can often be categorized according to semantic domain. For instance, MSL signs that are more likely to bear a relation to BSL

⁴⁶ Evidence of signs whose origins are attributed to another signed language has been observed in studies of other signed languages. For example, Sasaki (2007) found evidence in Taiwan Sign Language (TSL) of signs similar to forms used sixty years ago in Japanese Sign Language, but no longer in use in Japan.

⁴⁷ Previous research has established that language lexicons can be derived from more than a single origin. Ito and Mester (1995) examined Japanese Sign Language vocabulary as it is related to separate origins, "native Yamoto, mimetic, Sino-Japanese and European [sources]" (Padden 1998:49). Sasaki (2007) cites the different origins of Taiwan Signs which include signs borrowed from Japanese Sign Language, during the Japanese occupations of Taiwan (1895 -1945), and signs borrowed from Mainland China Sign Language, which entered Taiwan via students, refugees and teachers.

include kinship terms e.g., COUSIN, FATHER, HUSBAND, MOTHER, WIFE, SISTER, and CHILD⁴⁸ Other domains where signs are similar include 'wh' words (e.g., WHAT, WHEN WHERE and WHO), temporal terms (e.g., WEEK, YEAR and DAY) and descriptive adjectives (e.g., POOR, SWEET, WARM, BAD, GOOD, FULL, CORRECT and AFRAID). MSL domains where the ASL form of signs are more likely to be the norm include the days of the week (e.g., MONDAY) and months of the year (e.g., JANUARY). However, this connection is inconsistent. While there is some evidence to support a relation between languages and their use in certain semantic domains, it is difficult to separate this from the impact of historical, social, cultural and linguistic factors.

Finally, seemingly MSL developed, at one time, as a separate signed language under the influence of another signed language and a host of unique cultural and social circumstances. Approximately half of the MSL lexical items examined were different than BSL and ASL signs. Descriptions in the literature of signed languages attest to how signed languages have emerged, developed, evolved and often also disappeared. Examples include Providence Island Sign Language (Washbough 1980), Martha's Vineyard (Old Kentish) Sign Language (Groce, 1985), Al-Sayyid Sign Language (Sandler, Meir, Padden, and Aronoff 2005, Kisch 2000, 2007) and others. Although previously undocumented, MSL is presumably no different from others in this respect.

⁴⁸ Hoyer (2000) examined kinship terms in the minority signed language used by Deaf people in Finland (FinSSL) and signed language used by the majority of Deaf people in Finland (FinSL). One of her main findings was the signed languages were often similar to the spoken language in the surrounding community (Swedish and Finnish, two genetically unrelated languages) and they showed evidence of loan translations which reflected the source (spoken) language and its arrangement of kin classes. Hoyer concluded that "the constant contact of FinSL with both other signed languages (mainly FinSL, but also Swedish signed language) and spoken languages (mainly Swedish but also, to a certain extent, Finnish) result in an intertwined language contact phenomenon [and]...kinship terminology is an example of that" (Hoyer 2008).

4.4 Additional Sources of MSL Lexicon

The purpose of examining additional sources of an MSL lexicon is to confirm that the conclusions derived from the comparison of a limited number of items, (131 items from the Swadesh and Parkhurst and Parkhurst lists) remain true for a larger number of MSL lexical items, 484 lexical items from four different sources. Additional sources of MSL lexicon are examined in the same manner, for their relation to OLD BSL, regional dialects of BSL, phonologically similar items, semantically related items and identical signs and their connection to ASL borrowings. The four additional sources are:

- 1) *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Dolby and Bailey 2002). In this dictionary 75 signs are marked 'Atlantic region' to indicate dialect.
- 2) 110 MSL signs, voluntarily provided by a subject in this study
- 3) an MSL Dictionary (Doull 1978), which includes 260 MSL signs
- 4) the film *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (Misener-Dunn and Fletcher-Falvey 1994), where 39 MSL signs are discussed.

A brief explanation of each source is provided. Unlike the previous lists, the lexical items are not culled from among a list of frequent or specifically non-iconic signs. All are mentioned because they are typical of MSL and because they differ from ASL. However, evidence of ASL-like features incorporated into otherwise non-ASL signs is also observed.

In the two lexical lists and the four additional sources of MSL lexicon examined some MSL signs appeared repeatedly. For example, BAD (MSL) was found in four different sources, the Swadesh list, *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL*, the MSL Dictionary and the sign was discussed in the film *Maritime Deaf Heritage*. This counted as one sign. BOY (MSL) appeared in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL*,

the MSL Dictionary and it was discussed in the film *Maritime Deaf Heritage*. It counted as just one item in the total number examined. FATHER, SISTER, ENGLAND, CHRISTMAS, COUNT, HATE and POOR, to cite a few examples, also appeared in three different sources, while AGE, SCOTLAND, TIRED, COLOUR, EGG, MEAT, FIND and START or BEGIN appeared in two sources. In other words, each new source did not necessarily reveal a wider or broader MSL vocabulary. Sources were also not necessarily in agreement with one another. Some sources presented one form, while another source presented a different form altogether.

In the following section the additional four sources of MSL lexical items are examined. Unlike the Swadesh and Parkhurst and Parkhurst lists, there is no comparison between MSL and ASL - unless the signs are obviously similar, which means they were borrowed. The account of each source begins with a brief description of the source, including its drawbacks. This is followed by an examination of MSL lexical items which are like those currently used in BSL or those used in the past (Old BSL and regional dialects)⁴⁹. The number and percentage of these signs are accounted for in each source. A summary concludes this section and compares these additional four sources to the previously examined Swadesh and Parkhurst and Parkhurst lists.

4.4.1 Additional Sources of MSL Lexicon: *The Canadian Dictionary of*

ASL

“The Canadian Dictionary of ASL was designed for users of ASL and for students learning ASL. Containing over 8,700 ASL signs, based on American Sign Language,...[it] is the only [dictionary] to contain Canadian terms and regional variants throughout” (Dolby and Bailey 2002:xxiii). The purpose of the dictionary is

⁴⁹ BSL is becoming increasingly standardized (Frances Elton, personal communication, 10 June 2009)

to “codify a basic vocabulary of sign language use in Canada, providing the first comparative material to place against American texts in linguistics and cultural studies.... [It is] to help ensure that people learning signed language learn the language which is generally used and best understood by the Deaf community in Canada” (Canadian Cultural Society for the Deaf Newsletter 1983:2).

In using this dictionary as a source of lexical information, a dictionary that has received multiple awards, one must also consider criticisms of signed language dictionaries in general. Dictionaries may exclude colloquial and regional forms of signed language. They often encourage the standardization of language. Standardization is defined as “the suppression of optional variability in a language” (Milroy and Milroy 1997:6), which can be further broken down into stages of selection, diffusion, maintenance, codification and eventually the prescription of a standard form of language (Milroy and Milroy 1997).⁵⁰ Dictionaries may encourage a one-sign to one-word correlation. Johnston (2003) says

The prime motivation of the sponsors and authors of signed language dictionaries has been, and continues to be the standardization of the language of Deaf communities.... The members of local Deaf communities have often encouraged dictionary makers in their quest for standardization, even if the input of the groups in each community actively undermined consensus and seriously comprised the final product and its acceptance in the wider Deaf community
(Johnston 2003: 431,432)

It must be noted that dictionaries alone do not standardize languages – people do. The process of signed language standardization is also influenced by a number of additional complex and interacting factors such as the role of the language in

⁵⁰ In Irish Sign Language, a committee was established to vote on dictionary entries (the same process was used in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL*). In deciding whether the typically female signs or the typically male signs used in Dublin were to be included more male were chosen than female signs (LeMaster and Dwyer 1991). Female signs, which in turn then get less exposure, may be perceived as incorrect and there is a chance they may become stigmatized and their use may even limit one in terms of gaining upward mobility in the Deaf community. Female signs may be avoided and male’s signs are then adopted for a wider range of uses and increasingly accepted. Moreover, it has been suggested that female signs are in eventual jeopardy of disappearing (LeMaster and Dwyer 1991). While LeMaster and Dwyer (1991) suggest this is the case for Irish Sign Language, Grehan (2008) disagrees and reports that the female’s version of Irish Sign Language is still in use by women.

educational instruction, the recognized value of the language variety by the local Deaf community, and patterns of intergenerational language use.

Regarding the representation of the ‘Atlantic region’ in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL*, the following problems should be noted:

1) The number of regional signs represented for the Atlantic region⁵¹ to indicate the regional dialect in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL*, as compared to estimates compiled from other sources and individuals in the MSL Deaf community is relatively small. (Betty MacDonald, Debbie Powell-Johnston and Elizabeth Doull, personal communication, 20 October 2006). Only 75 items are presented. In other words, many MSL signs known are not included in this dictionary. MSL users attested to the fact that this dictionary underrepresents their language. A regional committee was established to decide which regional signs would be included in the dictionary. A member of the dictionary’s Atlantic committee related to the researcher that a representative from Newfoundland declared many of the Atlantic regional variations still used in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick unacceptable. This prevented them from being passed on for further consideration and ultimately led to their exclusion from the dictionary.

2) There is some inconsistency regarding the representation of MSL signs in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL*. For example, a sign FIGHT, a Maritime sign, formed with “Vertical ‘I’ hands, palms facing the body, are tapped briskly against one another at least twice so that the little fingers meet with each movement” (Dolby and Bailey 2002:244), is described as a ‘Prairie’

⁵¹ The term Atlantic covers the provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador. MSL is rarely used in Newfoundland.

regional sign. In addition, a sign FIREFIGHTER ‘A vertical right ‘F’ hand [or Contracted [B] HC], palm facing left is tapped a couple of times against the middle of the forehead” (Dolby and Bailey 2002:249) stems from FIRE (MSL), the same HC held in neutral space. FIREFIGHTER is included while the sign FIRE is not. MSL users confirmed that both these signs are still used in the region.

3) In many cases, MSL variation is unrepresented. Five signs for HOSPITAL (MSL), Atlantic region, are represented in the dictionary, but many other signs with multiple representations (e.g., SUNDAY (MSL) and EGG (MSL)) are not. In some instances, as exemplified through NAME (MSL) below, the different variants that exist make an important contribution to understanding how MSL developed and how MSL moving toward ASL. The changes signs undergo can shed light on language contact and its effects. (See example of NAME below).

One might wonder why a dictionary of ASL would be expected to include MSL signs. One reason is because the dictionary, in its aims says, [It “reflects [Canada’s] “multicultural society” (Bailey and Dolby 2002: xi). In addition, the editors state that “The study of regional differences in Canada [in signed language] was undertaken and the results have been incorporated in this *Dictionary*” (Bailey and Dolby 2002: xi). A conscious decision has been made to represent signed language as it is used across Canada. Furthermore, the data in this research illustrate that MSL signs are used by ASL users within what is otherwise (Canadian) ASL usage. Many MSL signs have incorporated features of ASL into their articulation so that where one begins to separate MSL from ASL can be a difficult and challenging task. Moreover, while it

may not be a goal of the dictionary to represent change or shift in signed language in Canada or parts of Canada, by representing MSL signs, this too can be accomplished. Lastly, as this research implies, MSL appears to be on its way to becoming a dialect of Canadian ASL use.

The following is an example of how signed language is undergoing change. NAME (MSL) a noun, was originally borrowed into MSL from BSL; the BSL sign was and sometimes is still used. Elements of ASL were then incorporated into the sign, resulting in a unique MSL form, also still in use. The ASL sign, in its entirety, was also borrowed and is used presently in Nova Scotia. Among younger Deaf people the ASL sign is replacing the use of the other two representations. Although all three are currently in use, the one a signer chooses to articulate is inseparable from factors such as identity, his/her age and the identity of the addressee. Only NAME (ASL) appears in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Dolby and Bailey 2002). By excluding the first two variants, the historical connection of MSL to BSL is not evident; nor is the unique MSL sign evident.

NAME (MSL) was produced by a subject in the study, but it is not represented in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (See Figure 16). “One [U] HC is held with the palm facing down (If the fingers were opened, the palm would point to the left); the hand is held with the tips of the extended fingers touching the side of the forehead. The hand moves away from the signer while twisting at the wrist, so that the palm faces away from the signer” (Brien 1992:391). This sign is borrowed from BSL.

Figure 16: NAME, variant 1 (MSL)



In NAME, a sign not represented in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Dolby and Bailey 2002, one [U] HC is held with the palm facing down (If the fingers were opened, the palm would point to the left); the hand is held with the tips of the extended fingers touching the side of the forehead. The hand moves down to make contact with a [U] HC on the non-dominant hand. Contact is made with inside of the middle finger hitting the outside edge of index finger once. This sign is unique to MSL. NAME, variant 3, is the same sign in ASL (See Figure 17), where “U’ hands are held horizontally with the left palm facing right but angled slightly toward the body while right palm faces leftward at a slight angle toward the body. Right hand is positioned above the left at right angles to it. Right midfinger is then tapped twice for a noun (once for a verb) on the left forefinger” (Dolby and Bailey 2002:441).⁵²

⁵² The under-representation and the exclusion of MSL signs in this dictionary may potentially contribute to the standardization process of ASL in Nova Scotia. Deaf people in Nova Scotia who use signs that are different than those signs used elsewhere in Canada may feel upon not seeing their sign represented that it is incorrect or that they should change and adopt the more commonly-produced sign.

Figure 17: NAME (ASL)



Analyses of the signs marked for Atlantic region in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Dolby and Bailey 2002) revealed a pattern similar to that observed in the Swadesh List and Parkhurst and Parkhurst list (See Appendix 4 and Appendix 5). Sixteen of the 75 signs were identical to current BSL use (e.g., ALIVE, BROTHER, DELICIOUS, DIAMOND, HIDE, SLY, WINDOW and others). Of these, two were regional dialects of BSL (e.g., AGE – BSL as it is used in Northern Ireland and LEARN – “a less common form”, region unidentified (Frances Elton, personal communication 11 July 2006)). Two signs were similar in BSL and MSL, with differences along a single phonological parameter, WRONG, having undergone a downward shift in BSL, but not MSL, and BRIDGE, which differed from BSL in the direction of movement. In BRIDGE (BSL), two [V] HCs, palms down, in contact at fingertips, come apart in a downward slope, whereas in MSL, the opposite movement occurs – two [V] HCs, palms down, draw together in an upward slope and make contact at the fingertips.⁵³ A single item was thought to be semantically related to

⁵³ EGG (Atlantic Region) as it appears in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Dolby and Bailey 2002) is identical to BSL. In the Atlantic region (and BSL), “Horizontal left ‘S’ hand is held in a fixed position with palm facing rightward/backward. Extended fingertips of right ‘BENT EXTENDED U’ hand, palm down, are brushed backward, rightward a couple of times against the top of the left hand” (Dolby and Bailey 2002: 201)). However, the subjects produced similar, not identical, signs for EGG. These differed according to the HC and were articulated with a [V] HC, not a [U] HC.

BSL - SLEEP (MSL) is DEEP-SLEEP (BSL). Two additional MSL signs, GRANDMOTHER and GRANDFATHER are a combination of ASL and BSL, respectively, consisting of OLD (ASL) + MOTHER or FATHER (initialized). In conclusion, of the 75 signs represented in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Dolby and Bailey 2002), 22 (29.3%) were identical or similar to BSL. A number of these appeared in the Swadesh and Parkhurst lists as well e.g., EARLY, COLOUR, PINK, PIG, RADIO and BROWN. The authors confirm “There is variation most notably in the Atlantic Provinces where a British influence is evident” (Dolby and Bailey 2002: xi). Many signs, 53 out of 75 signs (70.7%) were not similar to BSL. Of these, some were items for which the BSL consultants stated, ‘There is no equivalent concept in BSL’. (Roger Beeson and Frances Elton, personal communication, 10 July 2006). Such local or cultural peculiarities representing specific cultural contexts include DOWNTOWN, DOUGHNUT, HALLOWEEN, THANKSGIVING, NATIVE INDIAN and CRACKER). Other unique MSL items fit into the semantic domains which typically experience variant forms in signed languages (Lucas, Bayley and Valli 2001). These include holidays e.g., CHRISTMAS, HALLOWEEN and BIRTHDAY, colours e.g., COLOUR and PINK, and school-related terms e.g., SCHOOL and TEST. Many items marked for Atlantic region in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Dolby and Bailey 2002) e.g., DANGEROUS, CHEWING-GUM, HANDSOME, HOSPITAL, GRANDMOTHER, GRANDFATHER, MEAT, HURT, MORNING and others, are represented by different signs in other regions of Canada. For example, there was one sign for the Atlantic region, another for Ontario and another for the Pacific region. Some were shared by different regions. As previously mentioned, FIGHT is similar in the Atlantic and Prairie regions and one sign for HOSPITAL used in the Atlantic region is also used in the Prairie and Pacific regions

(Dolby and Bailey 2002). The Atlantic/ Prairie combination is no doubt the result of a historical connection to BSL.⁵⁴

4.4.2 Additional Sources of MSL Lexicon: Signs Volunteered by a

Subject

Upon visiting one of the subjects of this study at home, the researcher discovered that she had voluntarily compiled a 110-item list of MSL signs. (See Appendix 7). Many of these MSL signs appeared in other sources. Upon completion of the research subject's discourse, she signed the list. The person to whom she signed her narrative, an MSL user, fingerspelled each item which she then signed. On three occasions, the signer confirmed what the written form was prior to signing.

Only one of the 110 items was identical in ASL, BSL and MSL (POLICE). Twenty-two (20%) were identical in BSL and MSL (e.g., APPLE, POOR, HURT, BREAD, SIGN, SCOTLAND and others). Six MSL signs (5%) were attributed to Old BSL. These included BROKE-UP, "an old-fashioned form" (Frances Elton personal communication 11 July 2006), ONION, a London sign rarely observed today, and TRAM/TROLLEY, a sign once used in Bournemouth, but no longer seen today). Ten MSL signs (9%) showed evidence of BSL regional dialect - FARM (Scotland), ENGLAND (Northern Ireland) and ELEVEN and TWELVE (northeast England), TRAM/TROLLEY (Bournemouth), SUPPER (southwest England), I-HAVE-SEEN (southwest England), and CRUEL and GLASS (the regional dialect was not pinpointed by the consultants). GLASS (MSL) appears in *The Dictionary of British*

⁵⁴ In 1884, a Deaf British missionary, Jane Elizabeth Groom, brought groups of Deaf people first to Winnipeg and then to Woseley, Manitoba (it was then a part of Manitoba; today it is Woseley, Saskatchewan) to settle farms, and escape a cycle of chronic unemployment and poverty in Britain. The Deaf immigrants used BSL and a two-handed manual alphabet until they assimilated into the local Deaf surroundings (Carbin 1996:237). As a result, some of the signs sometimes still seen in the Prairie region (e.g., EARLY and FIGHT) stem from BSL and are identical to the BSL-like forms still used in Nova Scotia.

Sign Language/English (Brien 1992). An additional ten MSL items (9%) exhibit a semantic relationship to BSL. Examples of semantically-related pairs, (some of which may be the same) include: YOURS (MSL) and IT-IS-YOURS (BSL), APRIL FOOLS (MSL) and SUCKER (BSL), as well as the previously observed examples of MEAT (MSL) and KNIFE (BSL), and WRONG (MSL) and MISTAKE (BSL). In some instances, a semantic relation, if it exists at all is remote, as in WEAK (MSL) and RUBBISH (BSL, Newcastle dialect) and PLENTY (MSL) and FINISHED (BSL). In other instances, not only is there a semantic relationship but there is an undeniably iconic one. For example PROTESTANT (MSL) and BISHOP (BSL) are articulated by identical signs. Both are representative of the attire typically worn by religious leaders, but the meanings in BSL and MSL are different.

Modifications made to MSL signs were evident. The sign TEACHER (MSL), for example, is a compound. (Additional signs for TEACHER (MSL) were also observed in this study). The origin of the first component, contact on the head, is the area conventionally associated with thought. This component has been lost in current BSL use, but in MSL, TEACHER retains contact on the head. Bencie Woll notes that in BSL the first component of a compound is often shortened, or the hold of the sign is lost (Bencie Woll, personal communication 5 September 2008).⁵⁵ The second component is shared by both MSL and BSL: “[1] HCs are held side by side, palms facing each other and the hands make two short movements down and apart from the mouth away from the signer” (Brien 1992:295). The dropping of one component of a compound is consistent with the findings of Woodward (1976b) for ASL compounds and Day (2004) and Woll (personal communication, 5 September 2008) for BSL

⁵⁵ Bencie Woll notes that compounds in signed languages and spoken languages are not necessarily similar. In spoken languages, the second unit is usually the head of the compound,; in BSL the second unit is not the head. It does not determine the sense of the compound. The exception to this is BSL compounds that are fingerspelled, where this is the case (Bencie Woll, personal communication 5 September 2008).

compounds. Compounds are often reduced, assimilated or elements are dropped. Woodward (1976b) discussed changes from FSL (French Sign Language) to ASL and observed that signs may drop the first element (as in SNOW (ASL)) or the second (COFFEE (ASL)). Day (2004) draws similar conclusions for BSL. "ENVY used to have two parts, but the second part, bringing the active hand up to the chest, has now been dropped, and only the first part, the curved forefinger against the mouth, has been kept" (Day 2004:4). Bencie Woll (personal communication, 5 September 2008) states that often it is the first sign that is dropped e.g., GIVE (BSL), or the repetition of the second sign is lost. In an assimilated sign, the base hand of the second sign may be present during the articulation of the first, or the location of the first signs may be assimilated to the location of the second with a smooth transition between the two e.g., BETTER (BSL). The MSL compound BELIEVE (MSL) is articulated by combining THINK (BSL) with TRUE (MSL). In Auslan, BELIEVE remains a compounded combination of THINK (BSL) and HOLD (BSL) (Johnston and Schembri 1999). In BSL, this sign has changed from a combination of THINK (BSL) and TRUE (BSL) to just TRUE but the sign begins in neutral space (Day 2004). *The BSL Dictionary* (Brien 1992:318) presents sign for BELIEVE (BSL) which retains THINK. Additionally, DON'T-BELIEVE (MSL) is initiated at the forehead, while in BSL the initial point of contact has shifted down to the chin in anticipation of a reduced BELIEVE. In MEMORIZE (MSL), the first part of this compound is identical to THINK (BSL), but where one might expect it to be followed by KEEP (BSL), as in BSL, instead it is followed by KEEP (MSL).

Eight of the MSL signs (7%) are similar to BSL, differing only along a single phonological parameter e.g., PUNISH and SHOW-OFF. The parameter most frequently modified, in four of the eight signs, is hand configuration. Of the

remainder, two signs differed in movement, one in location, and one in the number of hands used.

In some cases, despite having written the list, the signer exhibited evidence of ‘rusty signing’ or an inability to readily retrieve a lexical item. For example, after signing NOT-POLITE, the subject apparently intended to follow it with the similar, less common regional sign MANNERS-ABSENT (MSL); however instead of signing ‘absent’, she signed NOT-AFRAID producing *MANNERS-NOT-AFRAID. She did not correct this or seem to be aware of her mistake. Likewise, the addressee fingerspelled B-E-L-I-E-V-E, but the signer produced DOUBT (MSL and BSL). (In BSL, MSL and ASL the sign DOUBT can also be used to indicate ‘disbelief’. For example, ‘I doubt she will show up’ can be signed as: PRO.1 DISBELIEVE Pro. 3 SHOW UP or even PRO.1 DISBELIEVE Pro. 3 NOT SHOW UP” (Fischer and Gough 1980:171). ‘Doubt’ was followed by the correct form DON’T-BELIEVE. The signer also added lexical items which may be interpreted as a strategy to aid recall or prompt access to an item or serve as self-confirmation of the correct sign (Yoel 2002). The requested form BROKE-UP appeared as BOYFRIEND BROKE-UP. Likewise, WINDOW preceded GLASS, MOVIE followed SHOW, and HELMET followed FIRE-FIGHTER. In each case, only one of these items (GLASS, MOVIE and FIRE-FIGHTER) was requested.

APPLE was presented twice, first as a classifier then followed by the citation form. The influence of ASL was evident and some signs (e.g., STUBBORN and MORE) were articulated only in ASL. Whether or not the signer was aware of this is unclear. In others (e.g., HURRY and CHAMPIONSHIP) the MSL form followed presentation of the ASL form. It is unclear whether this is evidence for ASL interference, a strategy aimed at recalling the MSL form, or an intention on the part of

the signer to stress the difference between the two signed languages. In conclusion, 56 of the 110 MSL signs (50.9%) were related to BSL. Perhaps the most interesting observation is the relatively high percentage of unique MSL signs - almost half - 54 out of 110 (49.1%) that are unique MSL forms. Signs of this type include: COUNT, SHOES, DOLL, CRY, FAINT, FRIEND and others. In FRIEND (MSL), “Horizontal ‘ONE’ hands, palms down, are held with the right forefinger pointing forward/left and left forefinger pointing forward/rightward, and are alternately moved up and down so that the extended forefingers strike down against each other” (Dolby and Bailey 2002:268) (See Figure 18). Positive non-manual markers are essential (See Figure 18b). In FRIEND (ASL), “ Left ‘CROOKED ONE’ hand is held palm-up with forefingers pointing rightward/forward while right ‘CROOKED ONE’ hand is held palm-down with forefinger laid across left forefinger at right angles to it. The wrists then rotate so that the handed reverse position” (Dolby and Bailey 2002:268).

Figure 18a: FRIEND (MSL)

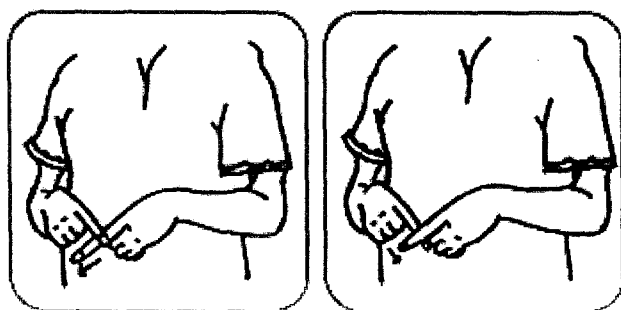


Figure 18b: FRIEND (MSL)



4.4.3 Additional Sources of MSL Lexicon: MSL Dictionary

In 1978, a Deaf person from Nova Scotia, Elizabeth Doull, received a grant from the Canadian Federal Government to compile a dictionary of MSL signs. Although this dictionary remains incomplete, it is a most valuable source of MSL signs as they were and are sometimes still used in the Maritimes. The dictionary is comprised of 260 still black and white still photographs of a single native male Deaf signer. The man is from a small town in Nova Scotia. MSL is his first language. He interacts with Deaf friends and family members on a daily basis, some of whom are MSL users. He attended the School for the Deaf in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he used MSL. In the last years of his education, he transferred to the Interprovincial School in Amherst, Nova Scotia, where he was also exposed to ASL. He is considered by MSL-using Deaf community members to be a “strong MSL user” (Debbie Johnston-Powell, 25 October 2006). At the time this dictionary was compiled, he was in his mid 20s, which places him among youngest of MSL signers. Today he is in his mid 50s.

This rich resource still lacks a finished structure, e.g., a title, an index and subtitles. It is divided into sections according to topics. The topics include: kinship, occupations, ‘wh’ words and pronouns, temporal expressions, holidays, descriptive adjectives, quantifiers, colours, verbs, religion, food, animals, names of countries and cities, vehicles, nouns, expressions and numbers (See Appendix 8). A black and white photo represents each sign; in some cases multiple photos appear for a sign. Non-manual markers are often unclear. Such non-manual markers e.g., a gradual exhalation of air, a tilted head and knitted or furrowed brows, must accompany certain MSL signs. For example, in TOMORROW (MSL), the signer’s head often nods slightly away from the address and in YESTERDAY (MSL) it often nods slightly towards the addressee. Non-manual markers, such as eye gaze, can be difficult to

capture in photographs, not to mention difficult for the signer to articulate in isolation without a specific context e.g., eye gaze can signify intensity or indicate affirmation depending on the context. Certain, essential information such as the path of movement and the number of repetitions are also not available in such still photos.

In this dictionary, an English interpretation appears under each picture. Brien and Turner (1994) note “...the use of glosses as a prime means of identification is highly likely to obscure not only the full meaning of a sign but our understanding of how sign languages work. For example, there is an MSL sign, also seen in BSL, which consists of a single hand, in an open, relaxed [5] HC, extended into neutral space, palm down, fingers pointing away from the signer, where the fingers wiggle up and down. This existential sign indicates the presence of a person or object. It is interpreted as “there; over there” by Doull (1978), while a Deaf native BSL signer interpreted it as “It exists” (Frances Elton personal communication 11 July 2006).⁵⁶ Thus, it can potentially be difficult to capture the relation of MSL to BSL. The information typically seen in signed language dictionaries, e.g., grammatical information, parts of speech, special features such as directional verbs, or other glosses identified with a sign, has not yet been included. There is also often no indication of the direction or pattern of the sign’s movement. For the most part, in order to understand from the photos how the signs are articulated, one might have to possess some knowledge of signed language or have seen some MSL.

Evidence of this lies in the examples of kinship terms. For example, a limited number of MSL signs are represented (e.g., COUSIN, MOTHER, FATHER, BROTHER, SISTER, HUSBAND and WIFE); COUSIN and RELATIVE appear under a single photograph and signs such as UNCLE, AUNT, SON, DAUGHTER are

⁵⁶ Brennan (1992:34) notes “It is virtually impossible to provide an appropriate glossing of the signs tentatively glossed as ‘be’ and ‘exist’ or ‘there’. This sign, very common in Scotland, is less common in the rest of the UK (Day 2004).

not available thus, their relation to BSL and ASL, based on this source, cannot be examined. It is sometimes difficult to observe similarities, dissimilarities and patterns. In ASL the gender of kinship terms is marked at specific locations on the head, (e.g., male on the upper half of head, and female on the lower half). Some kinship terms in MSL are not gender-specific, and some are disambiguated by mouthing (e.g., AUNT and UNCLE (MSL)) or context (e.g., UNCLE B-I-L-L or AUNT J-A-N-E). This may be difficult to observe. In the example of UNCLE/AUNT (MSL), repeated movement within the sign is not evident (See Figure 19a and 19b).

Figure 19a: UNCLE/AUNT (MSL)

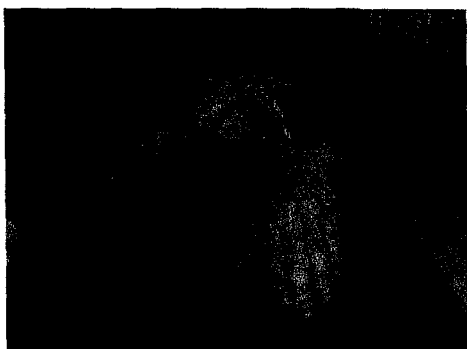


Figure 19b: UNCLE/AUNT (MSL)



A large number of signs exist for certain concepts in ASL (Fischer and Gough 1980). “There seem to be as many different signs for ‘Christmas’ and ‘birthday’ as there are residential schools” (Fischer and Gough 1980: 159). In this dictionary,

different MSL signs appear for signs for HALLOWEEN, SALVATION ARMY, SCOTLAND, BIRTHDAY and CHRISTMAS; no explanations are offered.

In this dictionary and in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (signs marked for Atlantic region) are often synonymous, but the interpretation into English is slightly different e.g., SUITCASE (MSL dictionary) and LUGGAGE (*The Canadian Dictionary of ASL*), MANNERS-NONE (MSL dictionary) and MANNERS-ABSENT (*The Canadian Dictionary of ASL*) and BOY (MSL dictionary) and LAD (*The Canadian Dictionary of ASL*). Some of the MSL signs presented in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Dolby and Bailey 2002) do not appear in the MSL dictionary e.g., LOCK, SPY, TRUST and TAXI and vice versa e.g., COUSIN, LAWYER, WORST, SAFE and HATE (Doull 1978).

Of the 260 MSL signs presented in this dictionary, 60 (23%) are identical to BSL. Many of these have more than a single sign e.g., DOCTOR, SCOTLAND, HAVE, SCHOOL, PHYSICAL EXAMINATION, HURT and ALL-GONE, of which only one is identical to BSL. Many of the items from the Swadesh and Parkhurst and Parkhurst lists also appear in this dictionary. Signs that are similar to BSL can be categorized into groups based on semantic domains e.g., pronouns e.g., MY, YOURS, 'wh' words e.g., WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, kinship terms e.g., MOTHER, FATHER, BROTHER and temporal terms e.g., FUTURE-SOON, ONE-YEAR and TWO-YEARS-AGO. Other items share previously-noted phonological features with BSL e.g., pinky extension - BAD and thumb extension - GOOD. Thirty-four of the 260 dictionary citation forms (13%) show evidence of a variety of BSL regional dialects, of evidence of Irish Sign Language e.g., HOW-OLD, of Northern Ireland Sign

Language (which is similar to BSL) e.g., DON'T-WANT and ENGLAND,⁵⁷ and Scottish Sign Language e.g., HARD, START and numbers like SIX, ELEVEN and TWELVE.⁵⁸ Signs associated with the north of England e.g., WORSE and MEMORIZE, as well as the south e.g., SUPPER and EXAMINATION were also identified. Some signs, although recognized as being typical of a specific region, could not be pinpointed e.g., A-WHILE-AGO, MURDER, and ROCK (Frances Elton personal communication 11 July 2006). There was also evidence of Old BSL e.g., DEAF, WARM and DOOR. For example, one consultant (Frances Elton, personal communication 10 July 2006) noted that sign DOOR (MSL) has fallen into disuse in Britain.

This dictionary includes MSL signs that are semantically-related to BSL. Nineteen signs (7.3%) identically formed in MSL and BSL have slightly different meanings. What is RUIN in MSL is REJECT in BSL, TIRED in MSL is ILL in BSL and TEASE in MSL is JOKE in BSL. The relation of MSL to BSL is confirmed by similar, semantically-related terms in Auslan, which also originally stems from BSL. What is HATE in MSL is DISAPPROVE in BSL and BLAME in Auslan and STORE in MSL is TRADE in BSL and similar, (but not the same as SHOP in Auslan (Johnston and Schembri 1999)). An explanation for the same articulations with

⁵⁷ Northern Ireland Sign Language (NISL), used mainly in Belfast, is often described as a dialect of American Sign Language (ASL) and British Sign Language (BSL) mixed together; it is not to be confused with Irish Sign Language (which is also used in Northern Ireland along with BSL) and is said to be a different signed language. BSL is said to have been brought to Ireland in 1816. The historical connection of NISL to ASL can be traced back to a Deaf individual, Francis Maginn, who returned from Gallaudet College and introduced ASL into a Northern Ireland school, the Ulster Institution for the Deaf and Dumb (also known as the Old Lisburn Road School); an American head teacher, Thomas Tillinghist, was also appointed. Furthermore, in the Republic of Ireland, different signed languages, each with different origins, were used in boys' and girls' schools in Dublin. Differences between NISL and BSL remain; for example, the use of a [R] HC is common to Northern Ireland, but is rarely used in Britain (Grimes 2005).

⁵⁸ A BSL consultant said "There are so many regional dialects [in BSL] of numbers that almost anything you do can pass for a regional dialect, although those [MSL numbers] appear to be Scottish in origin" (Frances Elton, personal communication 11 July 2006)).

different meanings can be hypothesized. STUCK (MSL) could be either the cause or the outcome of FRUSTRATED (BSL). Signs may have taken on more specific or broader definitions. FOREMAN (MSL) is BOSS (BSL); in Scottish Sign Language this sign refers to anyone in a senior position. In MSL, FINE is applicable to the weather, whereas in BSL use of this sign does not extend to weather. Likewise, TOO-MUCH (MSL) is applicable to a variety of contexts, but in BSL it is used only in relation to price, 'costs-too-much' or 'is-too-expensive'. Additional examples include: SLEEP (MSL) and SLEEP-DEEPLY (BSL) and HORSE (MSL) and TO-DRIVE-A-HORSE (BSL). Although the sign HORSE is different in BSL and MSL, a similar process of deriving a noun from a verb is evident. Even more remote connections can be assumed such as BETTER (MSL) and AT-LAST or FINALLY (BSL), where even though the signs are the same, the non-manual markers are different. In BETTER (MSL), the lips are pursed and upturned, while in AT-LAST (BSL) and FINALLY (BSL) the lips puff out as in 'bah'.

MSL signs are generally less specific than BSL signs. They have a wider context of reference. This is commonly observed in the emergence of new dialects. New dialects are characteristically less complex and contain fewer marked or minority linguistic features than the dialects from which the lexical items originally stemmed (Trudgill 1974, 1986, 2006). Semantically related signs may have an iconic element as well, as seen in MURDER/KILL (MSL) and STAB (BSL), articulated by making a stabbing movement and FALL-IN-LOVE (MSL) and ATTRACTED-TO-SOMETHING (BSL), articulated over the signer's heart. MSL signs may combine a semantic relation with a specific regional dialect e.g., as previously illustrated in SAUCY/NAUGHTY (MSL) and RUDE (BSL) - only in Newcastle. The MSL Dictionary provides evidence of 14 signs (5.3%) whose representation in MSL and

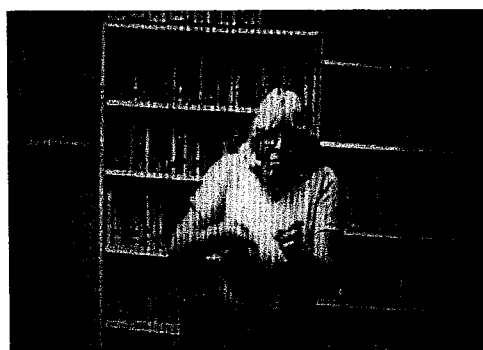
BSL is similar, but there is a difference along a single phonological parameter. The most commonly observed differences are in location (6 out of 14 are different) and hand configuration (5 out of 14 are different). Modifications to MSL signs were also made in movement, palm orientation and the point of contact. A variety of explanations can account for these processes. They include historical changes (e.g., WRONG (BSL)) moved down as Oralism became the norm.⁵⁹ Modifications may be the result of phonological assimilation. DON'T-BELIEVE is still initiated at the forehead in MSL, while in BSL the point of initiation has moved down in the chin in anticipation of BELIEVE, and they may due to social factors. BEGIN, FOOL/ DECEIVE-SOMEONE and LAZY are still articulated with an extended middle finger in BSL, but in MSL, due to the perception of this HC as rude, the HC has been replaced by a [1] HC. However, in some MSL signs, particularly those with negative connotations, like UNEMPLOYED, MAD and IDLE, the extended middle finger remains. LAZY (MSL) is sometimes signed with an extended middle finger and sometimes with an extended index finger; this exemplifies the process of transition underway.

Further evidence that the signs in MSL stem from Old BSL comes from a comparison to Auslan. "In a recent paper, Woll, Sutton-Spence and Elton (2001) suggested that Auslan retains a significant number of older BSL signs that are no longer in use in the British Deaf community" (Johnston and Schembri 2007:60). This observation is applicable to MSL as well. The similarity between MSL and Auslan, despite the great physical distance and lack of evidence of contact, suggests BSL (including Old BSL and regional dialects) were in use. Similarity sheds light on the use and development of BSL in different locations. Johnston and Schembri (2007) list

⁵⁹ Oralism reached the Atlantic Provinces with some delay, as it did in other geographically isolated locales (Ladd 2003). Oralism, both an ideology and a pedagogical approach, came into fashion in Ontario as early as 1860, some 45 years earlier than it did in the Maritimes.

15 signs that are identical in form and meaning, in Auslan and MSL based on a comparison between Auslan and *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Dolby and Bailey 2002) (Johnston and Schembri 2007:68), a source previously noted for its under-representation of MSL. These include ALIVE, ANNUAL, ASK, BAD, BEFORE, BOY, BREAD, BROTHER, BROWN, EASY, FATHER, GOOD, MOTHER, SLEEP and TRAIN (See Figure 20).

Figure 20: TRAIN (MSL and Auslan)



An additional comparison carried out by the researcher, using Doull's dictionary of MSL (1978) and the *Auslan Sign Bank* (Johnston 2004b) reveals 28 additional shared signs between MSL and Auslan. These include: ALMOST, ASK, BEST, BICYCLE, BROTHER, CHOKE, COLOUR, DEAF, DOCTOR, FIND, FIX, HUNGRY, LAUGH, MY, NOT-YET, PREGNANT, PUNISH, RUDE, SCHOOL, SIGN, SUNDAY (one variant), TERRIBLE, WANT, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WIFE and WORST. Furthermore, there are many signs that are similar in Auslan and MSL. These include signs that differ only in HC (e.g., STRICT, TOMORROW and BROWN (one variant), those that differ only in movement (e.g., LEARN, NUN, PLEASE, SISTER and BIRTHDAY (one variant)), signs that differ only in the number of hands used (one or two), but are otherwise the same (e.g.,

EXAMINATION, HOW-MANY, NOT-YET TIRED, INVITE, FALL-IN-LOVE and TOO-MUCH), as well as signs where one component of a two-item compound is shared (e.g., TRUST(Auslan)) as well as signs which seem to be semantically-related based on similar meanings (e.g., PRESCRIPTION-DRUGS (MSL) and MEDICINE (Auslan)).

Also observed in this dictionary is the influence of ASL on MSL. For example, one way is to modify a sign is to initialize it by altering the HC according to the representation in the manual alphabet of the letter in the English word. The aforementioned example of YELLOW (MSL) illustrates this (See section 4.5.1). Some MSL signs like COLLEGE and SAILOR are similar to BSL, with one exception, the HC of the sign has been modified to include initialization from a one-handed ASL manual alphabet, and this modification is not shared in the BSL sign. COLLEGE (BSL), for example, is formed with the signer's two index fingers moving away from the side of the signer's head, (the side of the hand makes contact with the head), and towards each other while twisting at the wrists so that the palms face towards the signer; the movement ends with the side of the hands touching (Brien 1992:293). In MSL the sign is the same, except that the HC is a [C] HC as seen in the ASL manual alphabet. Presumably the BSL sign bears an iconic relation to caps worn by college students. In Nova Scotia students never wore such caps and graduation caps are of an entirely different square, not round, shape. The sign seems to have been borrowed from one language (BSL) and initialized from another (ASL manual alphabet). In a similar example, the BSL sign for SAILOR "involves both hands held side by side, in [B] HCs, in front of the left side of the waist. The fingertips touch the waist and then move to the right before touching the right side of the waist" (Brien 1992:719). In MSL, the sign is similar, but in the place of [B] HCs are two [S] HCs –

ASL handshapes. Oddly, in ASL, in SAILOR, the signer uses [B] HCs. In SAILOR, “**CONTRACTED B** hands, placed palm toward the body are placed side by side just below the right side of the waist, and are simultaneously moved across to the left side. (Signs vary)” (Dolby and Bailey 2002: 604). In COLLEGE and SAILOR existing hand configurations may permit modification with relative ease, because as Battison (1978:57) suggests “symmetrical signs ... are less complex in both articulatory and perceptual terms”, (however with YELLOW (MSL), this was not the case).

Also evident in this dictionary is the combination of BSL and ASL signs into a single sign like the previously discussed example of NAME (MSL); other examples include SCHOOL SISTER and SUNDAY in MSL. One BSL sign SCHOOL involves a one-handed [B] HC, held with the palm facing towards the signer and the fingers pointing up. The hand makes two short movements from side to side in front of the mouth. In a slightly different MSL sign instead of the fingers pointing up, they point slightly to one side, usually to the left. In yet another MSL sign, the hand moves once in front of the mouth and then the signer lowers the dominant hand to meet the non-dominant one, held in a standard base hand position in neutral space, and the two palms make contact, the latter movement like the ASL sign. In SCHOOL (ASL) “the right ‘**EXTENDED B**’, palm down, fingers pointing forward and slightly to the left, is brought down twice on the upturned palm of the ‘**EXTENDED B**’ hand whose fingers point forward and slightly to the right” (Dolby and Bailey 2002:614). Additional movement, seen in ASL, is lacking in MSL, where one palm only comes to rest on the other.⁶⁰ This sign combines different languages and undergoes reduction. Although this form is represented in this dictionary (Doull 1978), only the

⁶⁰ This sign could be interpreted as a compound where the first element stems from BSL and the second from ASL.

sign common to BSL and MSL appears in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* under 'Atlantic region' (Dolby and Bailey 2002:614). SISTER (MSL) is formed with one hand making contact with the nose. The HC is a Closed [A], from which the index finger flicks out twice under the signer's eye. In another sign, it begins in the same manner, but the finger flicks out only once and the hand is brought down toward the non-dominant hand, where both index fingers meet. The former element is a reduction of a BSL regional dialect (the specific region is undetermined) in combination with elements from the ASL sign. SUNDAY, too, combines BSL with ASL form - always in that order to produce an MSL sign.

This mixing of different languages could potentially lengthen a sign, particularly if the signs are articulated in a sequential manner. But some reduction or blending usually occurs. "When two signs are first combined, as the compound takes shape, we might expect a fully articulated phrase. Then, over time, phonological reduction begins to take place. Further, there is often a discourse effect as the item reduces, it is often the case that multiple forms co-exist, so that you get the less reduced form in formal situations and the more reduced form in less formal situations" (Terry Janzen, personal communication, 28 November 2008). In some cases, one sign, the formal or the informal one, may become entrenched in use and regarded as the 'correct' or the more commonly-used sign.⁶¹

Many of the signs in this dictionary appear to be unrelated to BSL; nor can their origins be traced to ASL. One hundred and thirty-three (51.2%) of the 260 MSL signs presented are neither BSL nor ASL. (The remaining 48.8% (127 out of 260) can be directly or remotely connected to BSL (See Appendix 8)). In this dictionary many

⁶¹ The MSL user who posed for the photos in this dictionary (Doull 1978) may have perceived this to be a formal situation, for which more formal signs were demonstrated.

of the MSL signs that are unrelated to BSL and ASL can be divided into semantic categories, such as holidays e.g., HALLOWEEN and CHRISTMAS, religious terms e.g., CATHOLIC, PROTESTANT, SALVATION-ARMY and CHURCH, professions e.g., PRINTER, DETECTIVE, NURSE, and LAWYER, food e.g., COOKIES, MOLASSES and PORRIDGE and school-related terms e.g., SCHOOL-CLOSED-FOR-SUMMER, and TEST. Where borrowed terms were previously seen in MSL, this dictionary presents additional signs, in kinship terms e.g., COUSIN, DAUGHTER, temporal terms e.g., MANY-YEARS, and numbers e.g., ONE-HUNDRED. It becomes evident that for certain concepts, MSL may have numerous signs, one is often distinctly and uniquely MSL, unrelated to BSL or to ASL.

4.4.4 Additional Sources of MSL Lexicon: *Maritime Deaf Heritage*

In 1994, The Canadian Cultural Society for the Deaf sponsored a video titled *Maritime Deaf Heritage*. The purpose was to produce a video that “will foster pride among the Deaf community for their history and an appreciation for Deaf culture” (Misener-Dunn and Fletcher-Falvey 1994). It was co-authored by two Deaf people, Diane Fletcher-Falvey, a native ASL signer originally from Ontario, who lives in Nova Scotia and Kym Misener-Dunn, a Deaf person from Nova Scotia, who studied at the Interprovincial School for the Deaf in Amherst, Nova Scotia. Volunteers from the revived Nova Scotia Cultural Society of the Deaf (1994) helped with the film. It explores two main areas of Nova Scotia’s Deaf community and culture. Part of the film deals with MSL and part of it with Deaf artists and their art. It presents a portrait

of two locally-born Deaf artists, Forrest Nickerson and Christy McKinnon.⁶² A locally written account of the film describes it as discussing “a regional version of British Sign Language that thrived in the late 1800s and early 1900s” (MacDonald 1994: 1). The original intention was that there be a simultaneous translation into English, but due to a lack of funding this did not materialize. The film is in signed language only, mainly ASL.

The narrators, (also the editors), discuss a variety of topics such as the School for the Deaf in Halifax and Maritime Sign Language with one another and with elderly Deaf Nova Scotians. The narrators and participants discuss, demonstrate and compare MSL and ASL signs and share short narratives. Topics include the founding of The Halifax School for the Deaf in 1876 and the Halifax explosion in 1917. While some participants talk amongst themselves, most are interviewed by the narrators.

The narrators’ knowledge of MSL, they note, is typical of the younger Deaf generation in Nova Scotia, “who know no more than a handful of its signs” (MacDonald 1994: 1). As non-native users, they took a “crash course” in MSL prior to making the film (MacDonald 1994:1). The narrators of the film are known to its participants from interaction within the Deaf community and they know the narrators are ASL users. Communication is mainly in ASL. The narrators declare that that “it’s [MSL] all but been replaced by American Sign Language...it’s [MSL] starting to fade out” (Misener-Dunn and Fletcher-Falvey 1994). As MSL fades out and ASL takes over, there is an implication that its aging users may suffer language attrition. MSL users are interviewed for the fact that they are MSL users, but they sign mainly in

⁶² Both Nickerson and McKinnon are well-known in the Canadian Deaf community. Nickerson, in addition to being an artist was actively involved in the Canadian Cultural Society for the Deaf. “He has been referred to as the Father of Deaf culture [in Canada]” (MacDonald 1994:1). McKinnon, born in Cape Breton and educated at the Halifax School for the Deaf, became an artist and illustrator. Her work took her to Boston and New York. She published a children’s book about her experiences as a Deaf child, called *The Silent Observer* (1993) (MacDonald 1994).

ASL. The narrators state “MSL is still signed among the school’s former students, now well into their 70s and 80s” (Misener-Dunn and Fletcher-Falvey 1994). Despite the advanced age of the participants in this video, it remains to be seen just how much MSL the subjects know and use; relatively little MSL is produced in the video. Relatively few MSL lexical items (less than one might expect considering the advanced age of the participants) appear, even in the natural discourse of the nine participants.

A total of 39 MSL signs are specifically discussed and demonstrated by the participants and the narrators (See Appendix 9). With the exception of a single lexical item, INNOCENT/DIDN’T-DO-IT (MSL), all of them appear in previously discussed sources. They all also fit into the categories of: 1) identical to BSL e.g., GOOD, FATHER, FIZZY-DRINK/POP⁶³, 2) regional dialects of BSL e.g., ENGLAND, as used Northern Ireland and Catholic schools in England, AGE, Northern Ireland, and SHOES, as used in Newcastle⁶⁴, 3) items with a semantic relation to BSL e.g., MOVIES in MSL is the mirror image of PICTURES in BSL and TOO-BAD in MSL is UNFORTUNATELY in BSL. Twenty-seven of the 39 signs (69.2%) are related to BSL, whereas others are unique to MSL and related to neither BSL nor ASL e.g., DOWNTOWN, CHRISTMAS. GO-TO-BED, TIRED. One item, ICE CREAM, was similar to ASL. In this list there was no additional evidence of the influence of ASL on specific signs e.g., through initialization or through a

⁶³ The sign FIZZY-DRINK/POP has undergone regional change in BSL not experienced in MSL. The same sign is now a curse in the southwest of England.

⁶⁴ Frances Elton notes that the isolation of Newcastle led to it having a very distinctive dialect of BSL (Frances Elton, personal communication 10 July 2006).

combination of signs, and 4) twelve of the 39 lexical items (30.7%) examined were not related to either BSL or ASL.⁶⁵

One might expect that since the data were collected twelve years earlier and the participants were quite elderly that an analysis of the discourse could reveal less evidence of an ASL influence and more use of MSL signs, or perhaps MSL signs that are similar or identical to BSL. The MSL signs previously encountered in this research (e.g., HAVE, CHANGE, IT-EXISTS, FIND, TOMORROW, PARTY), also appeared in the narratives in the video. Only one sign not previously observed, LAUNDRY, which is the same as BSL, was observed. BSL consultants viewed the narratives in the video and confirmed that the participants used mainly ASL (Roger Beeson and Frances Elton, personal communication 11 July 2006). This may be explained, in part, by the participants' interaction with the narrators, people they know and recognize as ASL users and their intended audience – ASL users.

4.4.5 Additional Sources of MSL Lexicon: A Summary

Table 23 below charts the results of a comparison between the different sources of MSL lexical items. Generally, identical signs in MSL and BSL signs averaged just over 20%.⁶⁶ The two exceptions to this (48.8% and 46% respectively) appear in the film *Maritime Deaf Heritage*, where a relatively small number (only 39) of MSL signs are discussed and the Swadesh List (43%), where, as previously noted, frequently-used items can potentially generate an overestimation of similarity. The MSL signs that show evidence of having derived from BSL (from Old BSL or regional dialects of BSL, those that have a semantic relation to BSL or are

⁶⁵ No in-depth analysis of the 1994 narratives was conducted by the narrators of the film or the researcher in this study. This video was used mainly as a source of lexical items. The discourse analysis in this study focuses on how MSL is currently used and all of the analyzed data were collected by the researcher (from 2006 to date).

⁶⁶ Similar results were proposed by Woodward (in 1976a) for the relation between ASL and French Sign Language, where 26.5% of the signs were similar (Battison and Jordan 1976:56).

phonologically similar to BSL), when added to the number of identical signs, raises the rate of similarity. In the sources, where only MSL signs were examined, a subject's list (2006), Doull's dictionary (1978) and the film *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (Misener-Dunn and Fletcher-Falvey 1994), the rate of similarity is 30.9%, 25.7%, and 20.5% respectively. Where ASL signs are also introduced (in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (2002)), the rate of similarity drops to 8%. In conclusion, the rates of similarity between MSL and BSL, as examined in four additional sources of an MSL lexicon, range from 29.3% (*The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (2002)) to 69.2% (the video *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (1994)).

Table 21: Summary of the Results from the Additional Sources of MSL Lexicon

Source	Sign is identical to BSL	Sign is similar to BSL	Sign is neither BSL nor ASL
1. <i>The Canadian Dictionary of ASL</i>	16 / 75 21.3%	6 / 75 8%	53 / 75 70.7%
2. Items volunteered by subject	22 / 110 20%	34 / 110 30.9%	54 / 110 49.1%
3. <i>MSL Dictionary Doull (1978)</i>	60 / 260 23%	67 / 260 25.8%	133 / 260 51.2%
4. <i>Maritime Deaf Heritage</i>	19 / 39 48.7%	8 / 39 20.5%	12 / 39 30.8%
5. Swadesh List*	46 / 100 46%	14 / 100 14%	16 / 100 16%
6. Parkhurst and Parkhurst List*	9 / 31 29.0%	6 / 31 19.4%	5 / 31 16.1%

The Swadesh List and Parkhurst and Parkhurst results are included here for comparison. Not included are those lexical items that are identical or similar to ASL. In the additional sources these were usually not noted, unless obvious.

An examination of four additional sources of MSL confirms that MSL has a historical relation to BSL. The number of MSL signs that stem from regional dialects of BSL indicate that MSL was influenced by BSL, a finding which fits with historical information about the Deaf community in the Maritimes, patterns of immigration and the region's educational ties to various British institutions. The results of the additional sources are consistent with what was previously observed in the data collection.

4.5 Results of the Lexical Analysis

It is difficult to attest to changes that have occurred in MSL over a period of time since all of the lexical data were collected in 2005, and as previously mentioned. There is minimal documentation of MSL prior to this. The lexical analysis reveals evidence that MSL has roots in BSL. This is observed in Old BSL signs, regional dialects of BSL, semantically-similar signs and MSL's retention of similarities with Auslan. There is also evidence of a unique MSL lexicon. Furthermore, there is evidence of borrowings from ASL to MSL. Many ASL signs have been borrowed directly, in their entirety, into MSL. To complicate matters further, there has always been contact between Deaf people on Canada's east coast and their counterparts on America's east coast. It is difficult to account for when and how this occurred. Lexical borrowing from ASL to MSL has always been one way to add new signs to the language. Doull suggests that the effects of language contact accelerated in the 1970s (Elizabeth Doull, personal contact, 10 October 2004). This fits with historical evidence of major changes that took place during this decade, namely the relocation of the school for Deaf children, the formal introduction of ASL instruction into the school and the introduction of Signed English. Evidence of a shift in the lexicon is limited to what appears to be a shrinking MSL lexicon, a preference for ASL

fingerspelling and initialization, hybrid signs that combine MSL and ASL, in that order, the borrowing of ASL signs into MSL, and the sentiments of elderly people in the Nova Scotian Deaf community, MSL users, who attest to this general direction of change.

Generally, it is noticeable that the oldest source in this study, Doull (1978), consists of 260 MSL signs whereas, the most recent sources, Dolby and Bailey (2002) and a list of signs provided by a subject in this study (2006) present fewer MSL signs, 75 and 110 respectively, half as many or less. While this may not be strong evidence, what is stronger is that many of the signs once recorded (Doull 1978) are no longer in use. Many of the MSL signs (e.g., GIRL, BRAVE, EXAMINE, HOW-MANY, WHO, SISTER, ADDRESS and others) presented do not appear in more recent sources (including the video *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (1994)).

Fingerspelling in the Maritimes once utilized a two-handed BSL manual alphabet. Today only a one-handed ASL manual alphabet is in use. All of the subjects in this study, when asked specifically about the BSL alphabet, confirmed that they had learned and used it. They were able to produce it, but all accompanied its production with comments as to how long it has been since they had used or seen it, or how much effort it required to present. One subject said that she had to stop and think about the letters, whereas she did not have to do so with the ASL manual alphabet. In the lexical analysis all of the fingerspelled signs were spelled out in the ASL manual alphabet, including lexicalized signs. There was no BSL fingerspelling. The only evidence of a BSL manual alphabet appeared in initialized signs. Moreover, there was evidence in the data of signs that had been modified to take on initialization from the ASL manual alphabet.

It was observed that where signs may potentially be confusing (e.g., HUSBAND and WIFE), an ASL sign has been adopted to further disambiguate the source of confusion. When MSL signs were presented with variants, one was often the ASL sign. When requested to produce a single MSL sign, subjects sometimes signed both MSL and ASL (or vice versa). Signs also integrated elements of MSL (often shared by BSL) and those from ASL into a single sign. In all of these, elements (e.g., HC, location, movement, orientation, point of contact or number of hands) of MSL are followed sequentially by elements of ASL, not vice versa.⁶⁷ The three different variants of NAME presented in this chapter trace the evolution from a BSL sign, to a unique MSL sign - a combination of BSL and ASL, to its present representation, the ASL sign. Similar patterns appear in other signs.

In examining semantic domains of the lexicon, it appears that within certain domains MSL users may have a tendency to use certain ASL signs (e.g., collectives and the days of the week). Even within domains where MSL signs are typically used some ASL signs consistently appear. For example, WHAT, WHEN and WHERE are commonly articulated in MSL, but WHY consistently appears in ASL. Similar exceptions are found in the use of colours and kinship terms.⁶⁸ The evidence of a shift from MSL to ASL lexicon is scant, but it is beyond speculation; it is supported by the data. The process of shift within the lexicon becomes clearer when MSL is examined for its use in discourse. The lexical analysis also reveals information about the identity of MSL users. When asked to present individual signs, they provided MSL

⁶⁷ The exception to this is the compound GRANDFATHER, produced OLD (ASL) + FATHER (MSL). It may be that this order is an attempt to retain the head word of the compound in an English-like pattern).

⁶⁸ In the lexical analysis of kinship terms WIFE, BROTHER, SISTER, COUSIN, MOTHER and FATHER were articulated in MSL, while in the discourse, some of these signs (e.g., FATHER) were articulated in ASL. Moreover, as previously mentioned, signs for new technological inventions (e.g., FAX, MOBILE-PHONE and SATILITE-DISH), none of which were included in the examined lists or the additional sources of sources, have all entered the lexicon of the Maritimes in an ASL form only, despite the existence of a different sign in BSL.

signs, despite a tendency in conversation to often opt for ASL signs. This illustrates the importance of MSL. These MSL users value their language and their identity as members of the MSL community.

Although sociolinguists (Labov 1972, Trudgill 1986, 2006) support the notion that dialects are not inferior to one another, the belief still often prevails, particularly within small communities or subcommunities that a single standard language is superior to its alternatives. This in turn leads users of the dialect to suffer a loss of pride, prestige, self-esteem, self-confidence and ultimately, users lose language skills. The language suffers a loss of status and use declines. There is evidence in previous research of the strong position of ASL in the Deaf world (Puson and Siloterio 2006, Leeson 2005). In the conclusions of the lexical analysis, which illustrates an emerging and gradual shift in the MSL lexicon away from its BSL roots and towards ASL, it become evident that Maritimers too are affected by the strength and influence of ASL.

4.5.1 Results of the Lexical Analysis and Sociolinguistic Theory

The lexical analysis supports the findings of previous research on language shift, specifically with reference to the structure of the shifting community and its social construction. In previous research (Thomason and Kaufman 1988) it was observed that in order for lexical shift and ensuing structural diffusion to occur, there must be not only substantial language contact but certain criteria that affect the social of the community. The research of Dorian (1989) and Fishman (2001) supports the idea that certain social factors can promote shift. Among these are: the community setting, demographics, the populations in contact, the codes and patterns of social interaction, including the history and length of contact, the ideologies that govern linguistic situations, individuals' choices and behaviour, power relations between different groups and the degree of group stability.

MSL users comprise a weak community. They are a minority within a minority, scattered across three provinces and mainly located rurally; they are an aging population that is declining in number. They are also increasingly immobile, isolated from not only one another, but subsequent generations of Deaf people. This has a substantial impact on users' patterns of language use.

There is less opportunity today for MSL use; there are fewer group meetings. With decreased intergenerational contact the intergenerational transmission of MSL decreases as well. Not only do MSL users have little power or presence, their status is further weakened by those community members who have adopted ASL, left the province and by those former MSL users who have returned to Nova Scotia as ASL users. As a group they lack linguistic vitality. They lack security in their status as MSL users. In the past, important aspects of their lives like education and language use were decided upon for them. MSL users experienced and continue to experience sociopsychological pressure to conform, namely to adopt ASL. This pressure causes them to use ASL. In doing so, they do not use MSL and do not pass it on. When they die, MSL will die with them. They lack the strength, power and numbers to promote MSL. As is often the case with minority groups, "sometimes the shifting group is eventually absorbed into the TL [target language] community" (Winford 2003:15). As MSL continues to undergo modification it is predicted that its lexical items will become more similar to ASL, and there will be a further demise in the use of MSL signs.

Language contact settings have successfully yielded new contact languages (pidgins, Creoles and mixed languages like Quecha and Michif (Winford 2003)), and although, by definition, MSL is none of the above, the lexical analysis suggests that it

is a separate signed language.⁶⁹ The lexical analysis shows evidence of lexical restructuring, as well as evidence of lexical innovation. But the lexical analysis also uncovers that this language is short-lived. It is in the process of moving away from an MSL lexicon, with its BSL origins, toward the lexicon of the dominant, majority and more prestigious language, ASL. Lexical shift is underway. In combination with the aforementioned circumstances, ASL provides an attractive alternative, offering advantages like socioeconomic opportunity and social advancement that MSL does not. The findings of this lexical analysis contribute to expand upon and exemplify what is known for patterns of language contact and language shift in spoken languages, namely that minority languages converge toward majority languages.

In spoken languages, there is evidence that existing weaknesses within community members' language use can be exploited and that they gradually move in the direction of the more socially-accepted language, the one with more prestige (Labov 1972, Trudgill 1972, 1986, Milroy and Milroy 1985). Signed languages can be affected similarly by language contact, as revealed in Quinto-Pozos' (2002) research into ASL and LSM, Hoyer's (2007) examination of Albanian Sign Language, which "is characterized in large part by language contact" (Hoyer, 2007:226) and LeMaster and Dwyer's (1991) examination of language contact in the different dialects of Irish Sign Language.

Most relevant, however, is the previously mentioned research of Ann, Smith and Yu (2007). This examination of MSL use in Canada is similar in many ways to the situation they studied, the use of Mainland China Sign Language (MCSL) in Taiwan. Both MSL and MCSL are minority signed languages used by

⁶⁹ The results for a lexicostatistical analysis yield these results but are slightly different from one another due to two different systems of classification.

subcommunities. Both were limited geographically to a certain region and to certain schools. In both cases, although there is relatively little information available about the language that was used, there is evidence of a unique linguistic situation and evidence of a different signed language. Both users of both MCSL and MSL reported language contact while maintaining an emotional attachment to their L1. In both cases, once the school closed, users of signed language adopted the dominant signed language in the surrounding community, which came at the expense of their former language. Over a period of time, as language users pass away, both of these signed language communities, with an estimated one hundred users or less, will inevitably fall into disuse.

4.5.2 Conclusions

This chapter illustrates through an examination of MSL lexicon, Swadesh list, Parkhurst and Parkhurst list and four additional sources, the process by which MSL is shifting away from its BSL roots and toward ASL due to various external and internal forces. This research concludes that MSL is connected, through history and language contact, to both BSL and ASL. It is assumed that at some point in time Deaf Maritimers used only MSL (and English) and that MSL was perhaps a dialect of BSL. Over time and through contact with ASL, MSL users became bilingual in MSL and ASL and MSL was a unique form of signed language. This being the case, they would have been able to codeswitch between these two different types of signs with relative ease. No evidence of balanced bilinguals, those who are equally comfortable in MSL and ASL, currently exists. Only a limited number of MSL signs, as observed in this chapter, remain. Then, as the number of ASL signs used increased, the number of MSL signs used decreased. ASL use became more prevalent. One must also consider the possibility that although MSL signs may have once been the norm, current MSL

users, the research participants in this study, may have never acquired a full range of MSL functions. Some MSL signs are recorded, but no longer in use. It may be that language shift from MSL to ASL was underway when the research participants acquired their first signed language (MSL) and that they may have only partially acquired MSL.

Chapter Five: MSL Retention and Shift in Subjects' Narratives

5. Introduction, MSL Retention and Shift in Subjects' Narratives

The preceding examination of MSL reveals its present weak status and evidence that a process of language shift is underway. The following chapter analyzes MSL users' discourse and looks specifically at where language shift has occurred and where it has not. Excerpts from research subjects' narratives, where they talk about themselves and their life experiences, were randomly chosen, extracted, transcribed, viewed repeatedly and analyzed for patterns of language behaviour. The data was analyzed by the researcher in cooperation with ASL, MSL and BSL research consultants. The analysis focuses on where evidence of language shift from MSL to ASL is visible. It considers that non-measurable social and personal factors e.g., an individual's limited knowledge of MSL, language attrition, lexical variation and significant changes that have occurred within the MSL community may have also had an impact on MSL language users. Present day MSL communication patterns consist of a great deal of ASL and limited use of MSL. ASL is clearly the more dominant and prestigious language. The structure of discourse, the grammar and syntax, approximate that of ASL. Evidence of MSL use remains observable mainly in the lexicon.

This chapter examines the MSL social network, proposing that language contact has affected this social network. It examines where MSL use is maintained, namely in specific semantic domains. These include: 1) kinship terms, 2) school-related vocabulary, including religion, 3) the expression of personal opinion and a location-based identity and 5) ritualized language, including repetition and use of synonyms. This chapter also examines how language shift is evident through subjects' use of hybrid signs. It shows the current state of the relationship between the three

different languages observed in the lexical analysis – BSL, MSL and ASL. In revealing where MSL signs are presently used and for what purposes, the extent to which language shift has occurred and is occurring comes to light.

5.1 Language Shift: Social Networks

MSL users form a small social network which provides them with a setting where they can share and express their language, experiences and cultural norms. This social network was presumably once denser, meaning that contact was more frequent and contacts were closer and more closed. In other words, there was less interaction with others from outside this network.⁷⁰ These people have interacted together for most of their lives, first in school, and then in Deaf clubs, Deaf organizations, activities, community events and church services. They know one another intimately. Over time, others have entered into their social network.⁷¹

The present MSL social network in Nova Scotia is weakening. Some members have relocated outside of the province and others have died. Remaining members are aging, declining in number, increasingly less mobile, and, as a result, are less involved in the Deaf community. Consequently, traditionally-held Deaf club gatherings and annual activities are declining in number and frequency. At these infrequent meetings such as meetings of the [Annapolis] Valley Deaf Club and an annual event at someone's house, where women make Christmas decorations, there is some, but limited opportunity to interact with other MSL users.

Milroy and Milroy (1985) note that often there is also a point at which people begin to bridge more than a single social network and when this happens, language

⁷⁰ It is quite likely that there is more than a single MSL network. This research focuses on the MSL community in Nova Scotia, but there is also an MSL community in New Brunswick. Both are comprised of Deaf people who attended the residential School for the Deaf in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

⁷¹ Others include Deaf people originally from outside the Maritimes, ASL users who have married MSL users and CODAs (Children Of Deaf Adults), such as the interpreter interviewed in this research.

changes. MSL users interact frequently with ASL users. While in the long run, this contributes to a destabilization of the MSL social network and the language, it does not imply that individuals can be held personally responsible for processes of linguistic change; nor does it imply that their changing behaviour is negative; rather language change a natural outcome of language contact and change. MSL users serve as links between different social networks and these links play a significant role in linguistic diffusion. For instance, one research subject, age 71, is a native MSL user who attended the Halifax School for the Deaf. He is considered a 'strong MSL' user and has never been formally taught ASL (Elizabeth Doull, personal communication 20 October 2006). He is married to a Deaf woman, another research subject, age 54, who attended both the Halifax School for the Deaf and The Interprovincial School for the Deaf in Amherst. In the former setting, she studied via oral methods and used MSL outside of the classroom, while in the latter setting, ASL and Signed English entered her classroom and she used ASL outside of the classroom. This woman is active in the Deaf community and maintains close ties to both MSL and ASL users. She bridges two social networks, the MSL and ASL networks. Her husband, however, is a member mainly of the MSL social network.⁷²

Deaf MSL users, even those who are located rurally and lead insular lives, can not avoid contact with ASL. ASL appears on television programs that are interpreted and is used by local Deaf social services, organizations and translators. Now that ASL is the norm in the Maritime region, a single MSL interpreter remains in Nova Scotia. One can assume that as members of the MSL social network interacted with others

⁷² The husband's discourse indicated that while his social network is mainly an MSL one, he has knowledge of ASL and a sense of the appropriateness of use of both signed languages. He began his narrative using ASL, perhaps thinking the situation was a formal one, since it included a researcher from outside the Deaf community and this warranted ASL, and his wife interrupted him and reminded him to use MSL.

outside of their immediate circle of contacts, they picked up signs and integrated and adopted elements of ASL into their MSL usage. They then shared these signs with others, who in turn adopted them and passed them on. This study assumes that linguistic shift of the type outlined in the discourse analysis is largely the result of increased exposure to ASL and the value of ASL in the community.

The analysis carried out in this research examines MSL discourse for evidence of language shift and for evidence of places where language shift does not occur. The majority of subjects' discourse consists of ASL that has MSL lexical items inserted into it. Although subjects were told that the researcher was examining MSL, and one can assume they made an effort to produce MSL, there is less MSL than ASL. Their language represents a fairly late stage of language shift. It seems that subjects are incapable of using only MSL; even where MSL signs exist, ASL signs are frequently used. A sign articulated in one signed language did not ensure that the next time it would appear in the same form. The analysis procedure involved examining the subjects' casual narratives, noting the number of MSL signs, where MSL signs did and did not occur, and patterns of MSL use. Although there was some alternating between the two languages generally use of ASL dominated. There were, however, more MSL forms used toward the end of the two hour recorded sessions than at the beginning, and the number of self-corrections from ASL to MSL increased (these may have been an attempt to accommodate the researcher).

It is assumed that accommodation also occurs among MSL users and ASL - that is speakers alter their speech to enhance communication. Accommodation is generally the alteration in the speech of individuals who use one dialect or language when they come into contact with users of another type of speech. As people interact they pick up on aspects of each others' speech and imitate one another, incorporating

different features into their own speech. Giles *et al.* (1987) note that speakers may also alter linguistic behaviour in order to evoke the listener's social approval, to increase communicative efficiency, or to maintain a positive social identity.

Accommodation is often the result of contact or pressure to conform. It is inevitably also related to fashion, prestige and one's social and economic status (Winford 2003).

Normally, speakers adjust language from a non-standard to a standard variety, although a speaker can also diverge in order to disassociate from a certain group or to show loyalty toward another group.

5.2 Language Shift: MSL Retention in Semantic Domains

Language shift can occur or fail to occur within certain semantic domains. Fishman defines a domain as a "sociological construct abstracted from topics of communication, relationships between communicators and locales of communication, in accord with the institutions of society and spheres of a speech community" (Fishman 1972a: 442). Clyne's (1992) definition provides examples of domains, "a contextualize[d] sphere of communication e.g., home, work, school, religion, leisure or friendship, community, etc." (Clyne 1992:308). The following section presents examples of subjects' use of MSL signs in particular semantic domains, as observed in the discourse, despite a general trend of widespread ASL use. In other words, this section focuses on the retention of MSL lexical items.

Other researchers have previously noted that language loss correlates with semantic domains. In signed language, Hoyer (2008a) observed that in Finland, where Swedish-Finnish Sign Language is undergoing a process of language shift to Swedish Sign Language, the number of semantic domains in which Swedish-Finnish Sign Language is still used is decreasing. Some areas, however, appear to be more stable than others. For example, while Hoyer (2008a) notes that Swedish-Finnish Sign

Language was maintained in the area of personal and informal interaction, it was also retained in the domain of “parliamental issues”, seemingly for reasons of being ‘politically correct’ and remaining within the law.⁷³ The notion of retention within a domestic domain is also supported for spoken languages by Dressler (1991) who postulates that disappearing languages usually remain mainly in the form of casual and intimate routine interactions.

The discourse analysis of MSL reveals that within certain semantic domains there is somewhat less shift from MSL to ASL, at least as far as lexical items are concerned. In the areas of kinship terms, school-related vocabulary, religious concepts, the expression of personal opinion and the use of ritualized language, more MSL signs are observed than in other domains of discourse (e.g., discussing health issues).

5.2.1 MSL Retention in Semantic Domains: Kinship Terms

Schmidt notes that Dyirbal, a dying, Australian Aboriginal language, “is spoken in informal situations between people sharing close personal ties” (Schmidt 1985:217). Similarly, Dorian (1981) notes the role and use of another minority language, Scottish Gaelic, mainly in home life. Clyne (1992) supports this trend and states “The home domain is often the last that survives in a minority language” (Clyne 1992:308). MSL terms have been retained, to some degree, in reference to close relatives and those with whom one shares close and personal ties. Kinship terms fall within the realm of an informal and home-oriented lexicon.

In examining Dyirbal, Schmidt (1985, 1990) discovered that younger speakers, whose language use has been significantly influenced by English, can still

⁷³ The Finnish constitution officially recognized Swedish-Finnish Sign Language in 1995 (Hoyer 2008a). In spoken languages, Grinevald Craig (1997) notes a trend to the contrary that language loss often occurs at the level of higher functions, namely language used in the public arena, in sociopolitical and religious traditions. It remains in informal speech.

provide kinship terms, but only the most basic ones. For MSL there is similar evidence. MSL signs for immediate family members are used; MSL signs for extended family members are less common. Nettle and Romaine remarked in relation to Schmidt's research on Dyirbal that, "Now most younger speakers can give names only for more basic kinship relations such as brother, wife and husband." In addition, "some of the traditional terms have widened their meaning" (Nettle and Romaine 2000:54). For example, 'uncle' is used to refer to a variety of male relatives. Similar behaviour was observed by Nettle and Romaine (2000) among native Alaskans experiencing language loss. As a result of language contact, their subjects suffered "the loss of traditional kinship term[s]...for tribal structure" (Nettle and Romaine 2000:55).

In MSL generally, primary kinship terms, those individuals to whom subjects assumingly have the strongest emotional attachment, remain intact, whereas non-primary kinship terms, terms for more distant relatives, have shifted to ASL. Some of the MSL forms are firmly embedded in the lexical repertoire of MSL users, like 'mother' and 'father,' are also recognizable to ASL users in Nova Scotia. The five subjects in the study use MSL signs for: MOTHER, FATHER, PARENTS (MOTHER^ FATHER), BROTHER, SISTER and DAUGHTER (the first four of which are the same in BSL). Use of UNCLE (MSL) was also observed. These signs appeared in combination with the fingerspelling of names, carried out according to the ASL manual, one-handed alphabet e.g., "POSS. 1 DAUGHTER (MSL) T-A-M-M-Y" and "UNCLE (MSL) B-I-L-L". In the video *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (1994), an MSL user discussing language shift says

You know MOTHER and FATHER in MSL were changed to ASL and I think that is how it [the change from MSL to ASL] all started. Once the people left school and were out in the community, so it was like we used to say it [MSL] was old-fashioned. You know some of us still use it [MSL], like for example,

BROTHER (MSL) and SISTER (MSL) and AUNT (MSL) and UNCLE (MSL).⁷⁴

(Misener-Dunn and Fletcher-Falvey 1994)

The evidence from the discourse of MSL users in (1) - (5) indicates that MSL kinship terms for nuclear family members are still actively used.⁷⁵

(1) POSS. 1 **SISTER (MSL)** AND Pro. 1 **FIGHT(MSL)**+++++++

‘My sister and I (continuously) fight (in fun).’

(2) YES SAME+++ FAMILY (MSL) SAME FAMILY (MSL) SAME **SISTER (MSL) BROTHER (MSL)** SEE-MY-POINT?

‘Yes, [life at school] was like a family, and it was like [living with] sisters and brothers. You know what I mean?’

(3) POSS. 1 **BROTHER (MSL)** OVER-THERE FAR GERMANY (MSL) SOLDIERS DIE (MSL) GETTING-WORSE (MSL)

‘My brother was [at war] far away in Germany. Soldiers died and it got worse (quickly).’

(4) **DAUGHTER (MSL)** DO-YOU-MIND ASK (ASL) DO-YOU-MIND?

(stronger emphasis) **HELP (MSL) DAUGHTER (MSL)**

CHAIN-SAW++

Perspective shift: **DAUGHTER (MSL) DO-YOU-MIND?**

Perspective shift: S-U-R-E FINE

(pause) (rubbing hands together)

⁷⁴ Although the researcher observed UNCLE (MSL) in discourse, consultants confirmed that the ASL sign is more common in Nova Scotia.

⁷⁵ In the video *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (1994), a number of MSL users interviewed also used MOTHER, SISTER, BROTHER and PARENTS in MSL. In some instances ASL forms were signed, although MSL was more common.

‘I asked my daughter if she minded helping me. [We needed a] chain saw. "Do you mind?" I asked. She said "Sure, fine."’

- (5) POSS. 1 **MOTHER (MSL)+** (head shake, blank face, frown) **SIGN** (head shake, blank face, frown, shrug) **WRITE-BACK-AND-FORTH**

‘My mother didn’t know sign language. She didn’t know any sign. [There was] no communication. We wrote back and forth.’

Despite the fact that BSL and ASL are members of two different families, kinship terms in MSL may be related to BSL, ASL, to both, or to neither. Some MSL kinship terms are gender-neutral (Warner *et al.* 1998). Many BSL terms are also gender-neutral (e.g., AUNT/UNCLE). In ASL, male gender is generally indicated by a sign located on the upper half of the head, the forehead, while female gender is generally indicated by its location on the bottom half of the head, usually the lower cheek and chin.⁷⁶ Warner *et al.* (1994) say, “There is no determined system for marking female and male gender in MSL” (Warner *et al.* 1994:174). The video *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (1994) specifically discusses this dissimilarity between MSL and ASL stating that gender is determined by the context of the conversation and the addressee’s knowledge.

Table 23 presents signs for kinship as they can be used in the Maritimes. Not all signs presented in Table 23 were observed in the discourse. Sometimes users articulate an ASL sign and sometimes they articulate an MSL sign. The MSL sign can

⁷⁶ There are a great number of ASL signs produced on the forehead and on the chin that have nothing to do with male and female (e.g., forehead – THINK and BLACK), and chin (e.g., GREEDY and BREAKFAST), as well as signs which express gender by location, but which are non-human, such as HEN and ROOSTER (Frishberg and Gough 1973). The ASL pattern of predictable pairs with similar HC, orientation and movement, but different locations to indicate gender, (e.g., WOMAN and MAN, MOTHER and FATHER, GRANDMOTHER and GRANDFATHER, GIRL and BOY and AUNT and UNCLE) does not apply to MSL. Woodward (1978b) notes that Old ASL and some dialects of modern ASL have a single term for COUSIN. Many of the ASL signs used for kin (Frishberg and Gough 1973:122) are also initialized (e.g., AUNT, UNCLE, NEPHEW, NIECE, COUSIN (female) and COUSIN (male), unlike MSL.

be similar to BSL e.g., SISTER, identical to BSL e.g., FATHER and MOTHER, or a combination of both MSL and ASL (not represented in this chart). For example, in SISTER (MSL), the sign originates on the signer's nose, like MSL, but ends at a location on the hand, like ASL. One MSL sign HUSBAND (MSL) is like the BSL sign, which is identical to WIFE (BSL). Only mouthing disambiguates these signs. Another MSL sign for HUSBAND is identical to MARRY (ASL).

Table 22: Kinship Terms in ASL, BSL and MSL

Gender	Gender-related Sign	ASL location	MSL location	Same sign in BSL and MSL
Male	BOY***	forehead	chin	Yes
Male	FATHER	forehead	hands (fingers)	Yes
Male	SON	forehead + hands	chest	No
Male	BROTHER	forehead + hands	hands	Yes
Male	UNCLE	forehead	wrist*	No
Male	COUSIN	forehead	wrist*	No
Male	HUSBAND**	forehead + hands	hands	No
Female	GIRL***	cheek	cheek	Yes
Female	MOTHER	chin	hands (fingers)	Yes
Female	DAUGHTER	cheek + hands	chest	No
Female	SISTER	chin + hands	nose	Yes (regional dialect)
Female	AUNT	cheek	wrist*	No
Female	COUSIN	cheek	wrist*	No
Female	WIFE**	cheek + hands	hands (fingers)	Yes

(adapted from Warner *et al.* 1998).

* There is no indication of gender in these signs.

** In BSL, HUSBAND, WIFE, WEDDING and SPOUSE are the same – holding both hands in front of the body with the tips of the right index finger and thumb touching the base of the left ring finger (the inside edge of the fourth finger, where one would wear a wedding ring). In MSL, this is WIFE. HUSBAND (MSL) is identical to MARRY (ASL), where two Extended [C] HCs grasp each other palm to palm.

*** BOY and GIRL are not kinship terms but were included in this list since in the data they were sometimes used by subjects to refer to son and daughter.

This research presents evidence of a shift process from MSL to ASL for kinship terms. Even the oldest research subject in this study, who may be most connected to MSL, refers to his father, an immediate family member, using ASL.

- (6) Perspective shift: NOT SAME POSS. 1 (fragment) **FATHER** PAY NEVER
(MSL) SAME-WAY

‘My father never would have paid me the same way! [for such work]’

The video *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (1994) supports that ASL signs may also be used to refer to kin, illustrating that over a decade ago, ASL signs were in use. Signs used for kin in ASL included COUSINS and FATHER. In the latter, an elderly MSL user shares his personal account of the Halifax explosion in 1917. He tells of how the school was closed and he had to return to his rural hometown. In mentioning his father he uses ASL.

In general, MSL was used to refer to members of one’s nuclear family. MSL was used for MOTHER, FATHER, PARENTS, SISTER and DAUGHTER, while ASL appeared more often in reference to extended family members such as GRANDMOTHER, COUSINS, NEPHEW and GRANDSON. There were exceptions to this general pattern, and FATHER and HUSBAND appeared in ASL and UNCLE appeared in MSL.

It has been previously noted that signers may differentiate between nuclear and extended family members. Machabee (1995) notes that in LSQ, extended family members are referred to by use of a single pattern, Class I Initialized Signs, which consist of simultaneously combining an initialized handshape and an internal side-to-side movement. This occurs in cousin (C- *cousin*), nephew and niece (N – *nevue*), uncle (O – *oncle*), aunt (T – *tante*) and relatives (P – *parente*) (Machabee 1995). In Argentine Sign Language, Massone and Johnson (1997) note that signs for extended

family members do not vary according to gender whereas signs for immediate family members (e.g., father, mother, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, grandson and granddaughter) do. They suggest that this may stem from the fact that Deaf individuals tend to associate the most with immediate family members, while distant relatives may be largely unknown or of limited interest.

In conclusion, MSL users tend to retain MSL signs to refer to immediate family members. It is common for MSL users to refer to extended family members using ASL.

5.2.2 MSL Retention in Semantic Domains: School-related Terminology

The role of the residential school in Halifax was very important. For some Deaf people, it may have served as a social substitute for the traditional nuclear family. Upon completing school, patterns of communication tended to be of a horizontal nature - that is older people often maintained contact with peers rather than establishing new contacts among younger Deaf people. As a result of this type of communication, school-related terminology also tends to remain in its original MSL form.

The important role of residential schools among Deaf communities is well documented in literature about Deaf people's experiences. Ladd (2003), who interviewed British Deaf people about their residential school experiences mentions that "Several informants used the image of the 'family' to describe their school situation, most memorably, 'a family of brothers and sisters' moving onwards and upwards" (Ladd 2003:299). Similar observations have been made about American schools. This is applicable to Nova Scotia as well. Residential schools were the core of MSL users' Deaf experience. They played a crucial role in the establishment of one's identity. Home life for Deaf children was often very different than that of

hearing children. Deaf children spent the majority of the year at school, often far from home. They returned home only for longer holidays, and when they did, communication with family members may have been strained, as most Deaf children had hearing parents and siblings who did not know signed language; only a few Deaf pupils had had Deaf relatives.⁷⁷

Residential schools also lie behind the establishment of norms of linguistic behaviour. Many MSL signs are connected to specific aspects of pupils' residential school life e.g., HOUSEPARENT (MSL), GO-TO-BED (MSL), and P-U-B-L-I-C DUCK (MSL) for Halifax Public Gardens, where pupils regularly went on outings.

Despite the fact that the Halifax School for the Deaf, after 1889, employed an Oralist philosophy, pupils used MSL outside of the classrooms in all aspects of their lives.⁷⁸ Examples of MSL school-related signs appear below in (7)-(11).

(7) MOVE-TO-NEXT-LESSON (MSL)

Flat [O] (fragment) S-K-S SEW (over an Open [F] HC)

M-E-N-D SEW++ M-E-N-D

'I moved on to the next lesson and learned how to darn socks, how to mend and sew.'

(8) Pro. 1 (self-correction) POSS. 1 TEACHER (MSL) HATE (MSL) STRICT (MSL) WORK++ Pro. 1

'I hated my teacher; she was strict and made me work and work.'

⁷⁷ Two of the five research subjects had Deaf relatives, a grandmother, and cousins.

⁷⁸ Once Deaf pupils were relocated to the Interprovincial School in Amherst they were formally introduced to ASL. In the late 1960s they received instruction in ASL and artificial communication systems based on English entered the classroom (Carbin 1996). Consequently, their exposure to MSL and its use declined significantly. Moreover, in Amherst many pupils no longer boarded at the school. As day pupils, they lacked the opportunity to experience the aspects of Deaf life that the former residential school system offered.

- (9) TIRED (MSL) **SCHOOL (MSL)** WARM (MSL) SWEAT FATIGUE (MSL)
GO-TO-BED (MSL)

‘I was tired. The school was warm and I was exhausted and hot so I went to bed.’

- (10) #OK Pro. 1 FINISH **SCHOOL (MSL)+ FINISH**

GO (MSL) HOME

ONE-YEAR BABY

LOOK-AFTER BABY LOOK-AFTER++++ UNTIL ONE YEAR (pause)

‘I finished school and went home. A year [later] I had a baby and I looked after the baby until she was a year old.’

- (11) **SCHOOL (MSL)+ GOOD (MSL) FOOD++**

SCHOOL (MSL) FOOD GOOD (MSL) REALLY-GOOD (MSL) (two hands)

‘The food at school was good. The food at school was really good.’

MSL school-related lexical items observed the subjects’ discourse include:

LESSON, TEACHER, STRICT, SCHOOL, LEARN, LEARN-A-LOT,

LANGUAGE, GO-TO-BED, WORK (in reference to work done at school), and

ENGLISH. Additional sources of an MSL lexicon reveal additional unobserved

lexical items like TESTS/EXAMINATIONS, SCHOOL-HOLIDAY, SUMMER-

HOLIDAY and SCHOOL-CLOSING-FOR-THE-SUMMER (Doull 1978).

5.2.3 MSL Retention in Semantic Domains: Religion

Religion was an important part of a Deaf residential school experience in Nova Scotia. Religious services were conducted on a daily basis.⁷⁹ In addition, the school held special religious services for holidays, pupils attended local church services and the school regularly hosted religious guests.⁸⁰ Carbin (1996:265) notes

Religion and religious institutions have played integral roles in the development of the Deaf community in Canada for the past two centuries. The clergy was often one of the driving forces behind the movements to educate Deaf children and achieve social reform on behalf of Deaf people. Clergymen were also some of the staunchest supporters of sign language and helped to keep it alive in schools during the days of rampant oral methods (a practical move on their part, as oralism was virtually useless in large gatherings such as religious services).

Regional Deaf Bible Clubs were established and many Deaf people continued to attend local church services interpreted into signed language.⁸¹

Religious signs in MSL are often unlike ASL and BSL.⁸² MSL religious terminology that differs from BSL and ASL includes religious holidays (e.g., EASTER and CHRISTMAS), general terminology with religious content (e.g., CHURCH and FUNERAL) and specific religious terms (e.g., CATHOLIC, CONFESSION, PROTESTANT, PROTESTANT-ASSEMBLY and SALVATION-ARMY). As previously mentioned in Chapter Four, there is a possible connection between some religious terms in MSL and BSL (for example, the same sign that is PROTESTANT in MSL is BISHOP in BSL). Similarity may also be the result of

⁷⁹ In the Halifax School for the Deaf, pupils were divided into Catholic and Protestant groups and each attended daily religious services (Carbin 1996).

⁸⁰ One member of the clergy, Reverend James Light, from New England, made regular visits to the school for a period extending over 30 years (Carbin 1996).

⁸¹ Four of the five subjects in this study attended church services for the Deaf, although one admitted he had not been for quite some time. Another subject is actively involved in the organization of Roman Catholic Deaf Services.

⁸² Johnston and Schembri (2007) also note that in Auslan, different religious groups have various signs for religious concepts (e.g., BAPTISM, CATHOLIC and PROTESTANT) and these often differ from BSL. "Frequently religious signing is heavily influenced by individual religious leaders and there appears to be little uniformity in signs in use between different congregations" (Johnston and Schembri 2007:49).

iconicity or gesture; for example, signs may refer to how religious rituals are performed. References to visits to local churches, church services and religious instruction appeared frequently in subjects' narratives, particularly as they recalled their school-day memories of long, cold walks to the church and the boring services, which were rarely interpreted into signed language, and during which Deaf pupils were forbidden to sign to one another.⁸³ MSL signs for religious terms appear in (12) and (13).

(12) **AND EVERY-SUNDAY (fragment) SUNDAY (MSL) FINISH**

CHURCH (MSL) FINISH

CHURCH (MSL) PROTESTANT (MSL) CHURCH (MSL) FINISH EAT

'And every Sunday [after] church, a Protestant church, we ate.'

(13) **WALK CHURCH (fragment)**

CHURCH (MSL) (prolonged hold)

[Addressee, aware of the long distance from the school to the church, asks if they ever had transportation].

NOTHING RIDE NONE! NONE!

'We walked to church. We got no rides, none whatsoever!'

On the one hand, there are unique MSL signs; on the other, some signs have been influenced by ASL. The sign SUNDAY (MSL) is the same as the BSL sign. An MSL variant combines the initial prayer-like handshape of BSL with elements from the ASL sign. In MSL (and BSL), two [B] HCs, fingertips point up; the palms face each other. Where this sign is combined with ASL, the form previously outlined is

⁸³ There were periods of time during which religious services were translated into signed language. There is also reference, at one point in time, to a separating curtain hung in the church so that hearing people would not be distracted by the signing of Deaf people.

followed by a separation of the palms, which face away from the signer, as they do in ASL. The second element of the ASL sign (movement of the hands) is eliminated so there is no further movement in the MSL. CHURCH (MSL) also has a variant which combines elements from MSL with ASL. This sign initiates at a position near the shoulders, (like BSL), but ends with a [C] HC held over a non-dominant hand, like ASL. Further evidence of MSL combined with ASL appears in the video *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (1994), where an elderly subject, sharing his personal memory of the Halifax explosion says at the moment the explosion occurred the pupils were praying in religious instruction. His use of CHURCH is the hybrid MSL/ASL sign, illustrating that in 1994, elderly MSL users were also using signs which combined MSL with ASL.⁸⁴

5.2.4 MSL Retention in Semantic Domains: Personal Connections

Berko Gleason (1993) suggests that emotionally-laden terms may be less susceptible to language loss. There is some evidence from the subjects' narratives to support that when speakers wish to express a strong personal opinion or speak of a location-based identity, they express this in MSL even when much of their discourse is ASL. They may also use the ASL form of the same sign. This is supported below in (14)-(19).

- (14) Perspective shift: NOT SAME POSS. 1 (fragment) FATHER PAY NEVER
(MSL) SAME-WAY

'My father never would have paid me in the same way [for such work]!'

- (15) Pro. 1 NEVER (MSL) DRINK-ALCOHOL – NEVER (MSL) DRINK-
ALCOHOL!

'I never, never drink alcohol!'

⁸⁴ Researchers Faurot, Dellinger, Eatough and Parkhurst (1999) found evidence of ASL signs for religion in the signing of LSM users, but these findings are largely connected to their specific setting (Mexico), where language contact was the result of ASL using missionaries with a specific religious agenda. This is not the case in the Maritimes.

(16) (points at signer) A-S-L **WRONG (MSL)** (points at signer)
WANT (MSL) ++ SIGN LANGUAGE (MSL) WANT (MSL)
'That's ASL. It's not right. [They - (the addressee and the researcher)] want
MSL.'

(17) DELICIOUS (MSL) FOOD++ DELICIOUS (MSL) TOO-MUCH+++ (MSL)
WRONG
'It was delicious food, but it was too much [too fatty] and it was wrong [or
'unhealthy' to eat so much fatty food].'

(18) Pro. 1 GO **HALIFAX GO** (fragment) **HALIFAX FOR COURSE**
HALIFAX (MSL)++++ FOR COURSE SEWING MORE SEWING MORE
SEWING
'I went to Halifax for a course, to Halifax to take another course in sewing.'

(19) Pro. 2 (strong emphasis) **DON'T-KNOW**
HALIFAX HALIFAX (MSL) SCHOOL SCHOOL (MSL) GOOD (MSL)
SCHOOL (MSL) GOOD (MSL) FUN
'You don't know about... don't know about [the] Halifax [School]! The
Halifax School [for the Deaf] was good. It was fun!'

NEVER (MSL) is articulated with a sharp and tense one-handed [I] HC, in other words there is pinky extension thrust into neutral space. (The movement is a semi-circle started in front of the chest and followed by a sharp downward drop. The shape of the sign resembles a question mark with no dot underneath. The sign is accompanied by a furrowed brow and a down-turned mouth. The sign comes to an abrupt stop). **WRONG (MSL)** is articulated with an Open [5] HC held over the signer's mouth, in which the fingers wiggle. **HALIFAX (MSL)** is articulated with two

open [5] HCs held in front of the body, palms down, fingers pointing away from the signer. The hands make slight downward movement. (It is identical to HERE in BSL). HALIFAX (ASL), ‘the new sign’ as it is called locally, is a one-handed sign, where a Flat [O] HC, palm down, fingers pointing to the left, opens up slightly as it moves from one side to the other (right to left) in front of the signer’s chin.⁸⁵ Both signs also appear in the video *Maritime Deaf Heritage*, illustrating that the different signs were also in use at the same time in 1994.⁸⁶

5.2.5 MSL Retention in Semantic Domains: The Numeral System

Numeral systems often remain deeply embedded in individuals’ memories. Long after mastering an additional language, it is not unusual for a person to revert to their first language to count and carry out mathematical equations. In signed languages different numeral systems can exist simultaneously. McKee and Kennedy (2005) observed different use of cardinal numbers in New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) between older and younger generations. The former system, influenced by Oralism, was not used by the younger generation. When signed languages come into contact, people may either retain the numeral system they first mastered, they may suffer interference from other systems, thus mixing the two, or they may choose to adopt and use the newer system. The theory of interference (Freed 1982) posits that users who have knowledge of different languages suffer from one language interfering with the other. One is usually used more than the other and one may be modified in favour of the other. While not erased entirely from one’s memory, one language may become more difficult to access, retrieve and produce and thus, it is less evident in discourse. The data for MSL presents evidence of MSL users who have retained the MSL numerals

⁸⁵ In (19) SCHOOL also appears first in ASL and then in MSL. This example can be related back to the previous category of retention of school-related terminology (See 5.2.2).

⁸⁶ It is possible that the choice of one form of HALIFAX over the other may be related not only to the speaker’s identity, but also to the identity of the addressee.

system in spite of the language shift process that is underway and in spite of the fact that the ASL numeral system is more commonly used today. Individuals also use MSL number signs in some places and ASL number signs in other places.

In order to understand how retention has occurred, one must first have an understanding of the differences between the numeral systems in MSL and ASL. The numeral system of MSL is similar, but not identical, to what was used in some regions of Britain. In 1992, Brien, editor of the *Dictionary of British Sign Language/English* says “Nobody has yet worked out exactly how many ways are used by the various groups of signers to express numbers” (Brien 1992:830). Generally, there is still thought to be a north/south divide (Frances Elton, personal communication 11 July 2006), but the use of numbers in BSL has become and is generally continuing to become standardized. Number signs in MSL are similar to those once used in a northeastern dialect of BSL (Miles 1984). But the numbers commonly used in the north of Britain (Brien 1992: 824-827) are articulated facing the signer, while in MSL the numbers are articulated with palm orientation away from the signer. There are additional minor differences, such as in 16 (BSL), the pinky is extended and straight; in MSL, it is extended and bent. Some numbers like four and ten are completely different, (Frances Elton, who specializes in regional dialects of BSL, suggests that MSL numbers are also similar to Scottish Sign Language) (Frances Elton, personal communication 11 July 2006).

Table 24 compares how numbers one to ten are articulated in MSL and ASL and marks the differences in bold. These differences are also incorporated into the articulation of larger numbers. It is not difficult to see how these differences can be confusing. What is 8 in MSL is 9 in ASL, and what is 11 in MSL is 10 in ASL. The number 9 as it appears in MSL does not exist in ASL, but its reverse image does exist,

for 4. Numbers from 12-15 are formed in one manner in MSL, while numbers 11-15 are formed in a different manner in ASL. In ASL, 16-19 are combinations of 10 plus the difference e.g., 16 is 10 + 6, and 17 is 10 + 7, whereas in MSL, these numbers are not determined by the equivalent of their parts, rather by a combination of the degree of openness and bent digits. For example, number 16 (MSL) comprises of an Open [A] HC. The pinky finger extends upwards above the rest of the knuckles, but is bent; in 6 (MSL), the only difference is that the pinky is straight, not bent. Larger numbers, such as 100, are also different in MSL and ASL.

Table 23: A Comparison of Numbers 1 to 10 in ASL and MSL

Number	ASL - Handshape	ASL – palm orientation	MSL – handshape	MSL – palm orientation
1 – one	first finger extended 1 [HC]	facing signer	first finger extended 1 [HC]	facing addressee
2 – two	first two fingers extended	facing signer	first two fingers extended	facing addressee
3 – three	thumb and first two fingers extended	facing signer	thumb and first two fingers extended	facing addressee
4 – four	four fingers extended	facing signer	thumb and first three fingers extended	facing addressee
5 – five	all fingers and thumb extended 5 [HC]	facing signer	all fingers and thumb extended 5 [HC]	facing addressee
6 – six	thumb and pinky finger meet across palm, remainder of fingers extended	facing addressee	pinky finger only extended [I] HC	facing addressee
7 – seven	thumb and ring finger meet across palm, remainder of fingers extended	facing addressee	pinky and ring fingers only extended (thumb meets index and middle finger)	facing addressee
8 – eight	thumb and middle finger meet across palm, remainder of fingers extended	facing addressee	thumb and index finger meet, remainder of fingers extended	facing addressee
9 – nine	thumb and index finger meet across palm, remainder of fingers extended	facing addressee	all four fingers extended	facing addressee

10 – ten

**closed fist,
thumb
extended
upward
Extended [A]
HC**

facing
addressee

**closed fist,
thumb not
extended
Closed [A]
HC**

facing
addressee

In the video *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (1994), an MSL user says “We have had people come from other areas to the school [in Amherst], just for an example, the numbers that were used... they started getting us to change the language and they said these are the numbers that you should use, going from MSL to ASL, and I think it all started changing.” In spite of this, the data illustrates that the MSL numeral system has been retained in certain areas, such as to refer to one’s age, as illustrated in (20), (21) and (22) below.

(20) Pro. 1 AGE (MSL) 7 (MSL).

‘I was seven years old.’

(21) AGE (MSL) 8 (MSL) COUGH WANT MEDICINE (MSL)

‘I want medicine for an eight-year-old with a cough.’

(22) SAME Pro. 1 AGE (MSL) 64 (MSL), 66 (MSL) (shakes head) 67 (MSL)
AGE (MSL),

‘He’s the same age as I am – 64, 66, [no]- 67 year old.’

(The subject is 64 years old. Initially, she thinks the man she is talking about is her age. Perhaps because his wife is her age, then she remembers he is older).

In (23) the speaker presents ordinal numbers e.g., first and second and in doing so uses an MSL numeral system, not an ASL one. But, since numbers for one and two are identical in ASL and MSL, all that identifies this as MSL is the use of YEAR (MSL), articulated like the BSL sign, where the tips of the index fingers on the left and right hand make contact with one another upon completion of a circular motion, and the combination of the number with the sign for YEAR (MSL). Perhaps it is due the subject’s reference to her school days and her subsequent description of her

sewing lessons within the previously mentioned domain of school-related terminology that prompts the production of an MSL form for YEAR. Evidence of an MSL numeral system in use is evident in the data.

(23) **FIRST-YEAR (MSL) SECOND-YEAR (MSL) Pro. 1 DRESS SEW SKIRT
SEW**

‘The first year, I sewed a dress; the second year, I sewed a skirt.’

5.2.6 MSL Retention in Semantic Domains: Ritualized Language

Language is passed on from generation to generation, and with each generation, over time and use, it changes. Languages are involved in ongoing processes of change.

Hopper (1998) describes language as a temporal phenomenon. Speakers express themselves using a specific accent or dialect. Through routine repetition language is adjusted, restructured and becomes ritualized. Hopper terms this an emergent grammar (EG), “a set of sedimented conventions that have been routinized out of the more frequently occurring ways of saying things” (Hopper 1998; 163). Haiman (1994) refers to it as “ritualized language,” as that which acquires meaning, becomes a sign and can be transferred through signals. Ritualized language is always connected to culture, but it is not necessarily limited to mainstream culture.

Ritualized language resembles “ordinary language,” but what makes it distinct is the important role played by repetition (Haiman 1994:28). The repetition of language leads, in turn, to it taking on additional characteristics such as a certain intonation (DuBois 1986), a “stylization of form” and a division into codified chunks (Haiman, 1994:28). For example, as conversational fillers like ‘too-bad’ are ritualized,

they acquire a playful or sarcastic tone and additional characteristics like a sing-song manner and lengthening (Haiman 1994). Repetition may take various forms, lexical, idiomatic, morphological, or grammatical (Hopper 1998). Whatever the form, it is of significance, for it is what shapes language. Out of repetition ritual is born (Haiman 1994). Speakers may use language ritualized by repetition to establish common ground or as a means by which to intentionally deviate from the linguistic norms of the immediate speech community (Hopper 1998). Important information lies in the strings, sequences and segments of language that have become fixed.

Ritualized language may be retained in situations of language contact (Weltens 1989). Researchers have noted that the speech of a social network can be marked by fixed forms such as idiomatic phrases and context-bound expressions (Sapir 1921, Bernstein 1971). Gumperz (1989) states that exclusive interaction with individuals of a similar background may lead to the use of context-bound presuppositions in communication. The data reveal instances where language is used the purpose of expressing 'we are alike' or 'we share commonalities'. A psycholinguistic function of ritualized language, as presented by Hopper (1998), is to promote an individual's self or to connect or disconnect her from others or from a group.

MSL signers typically greet one another with a HOW-ARE-YOU? sign. This is articulated with an Open [B] HC in neutral space that wavers back and forth in neutral space, twisting at the wrist from side to side a few times, accompanied by raised eyebrows and a slightly tilted head. This conventional greeting is habitual, polite and common within the MSL social network. This convention remains intact, in

spite of widespread ASL elsewhere in language use.⁸⁷ Additional examples of ritualized MSL that is intact include OH-DEAR (MSL), TOO-BAD (MSL) and DONE or ALL-DONE (MSL), as illustrated below in (24), (25) and (26).

(24) BOY CL.: WALKING-ALONG DEAF

TRAIN CL.:HITS-HIM

OH-DEAR

‘The boy was walking along; he was Deaf. A train came and hit him – oh dear!’

(25) Poss. 1 (MSL) BICYCLE (MSL) HAVE **TOO-BAD+**

‘I have a bicycle – so there!’

(26) CHAIN-SAW (line up lumber) **DONE (MSL)**....

S-N STORE-AWAY FOR WINTER

GET-IT-ALL-DONE (MSL) PILE- UP DONE (MSL)

‘I brought the chain saw [and cut the wood and stored it]. Done.’

....Son, we need to store it [the wood] away for the winter. We should get it all [stored] and piled up. Done.’

OH-DEAR (MSL) is articulated with both hands extended in front of the signer. Fists are closed, with the palms facing sideways; only the pinkies are extended. The extended pinky lies almost flat. The hands bounce (See Figure 21). The intensity of the bounce varies depending on the signer's feelings. In most cases the signer's head is tilted slightly to one side. The same sign can also be interpreted to mean “how-terrible!”

⁸⁷ HOW-ARE-YOU? belongs to a larger group of MSL signs where the hand wavers back from side to side to express an element of doubt or uncertainty. ASL signs also share this feature. Although this feature may also have originally been borrowed from BSL, many MSL signs that waver back and forth e.g., HOW'S-THE-WEATHER? are different from BSL and ASL.

Figure 21: OH-DEAR (MSL)



TOO-BAD (MSL) shares the same HC, but the movement is faster, sharper and tenser. The sign ends with an abrupt, prolonged hold and the pinkies and straight and extend upward. This sign can also be used and interpreted as “So there”, “I’ve-got-one-and-you-don’t” and “na-nana-nana”, as used by young children to taunt one another and as “ha-ha”, an expression of amusement.

The sign DONE (MSL)⁸⁸ is used to indicate something that has come to an end or happened in the past. DONE (MSL), not found in BSL, is articulated with two hands held in an [B] HC, palm up, fingers pointing slightly to the side. The dominant hand, a Closed [A] HC, palm down slams down definitively making contact with the open palm of the non-dominant hand. The signer’s brow lowers, lips turn down, often with the lower lip protruding slightly. The sign for GET-IT-ALL-DONE (MSL) is formed with both hands held in [A] HCs, palms facing the signer and the folded fingers of one hand facing left and the other hand facing right. The dominant hand,

⁸⁸ There are two variants of this sign, one where the dominant hand, an Extended [B] HC, makes contact with the open palm of the non-dominant hand and continues to move down the length of the palm, from the base of the palm to the fingertips, (the fingers of the dominant hand point to the side), and the other where a [5] HC is held with the palm facing the signer, fingertips pointing upward and slightly to the side. The active hand grasps the aforementioned hand on the outside of the wrist and pulls the wrist away from the signer, closing the hand in the process. The latter variants, although recorded by Doull (1978), did not appear in the data.

held at chin height, slams down and makes contact at the base of the thumb of the non-dominant hand while the brows simultaneously lower and the lips turn down. The lower lip protrudes slightly. These signs are motivated by a metaphorical commonality, a tense, quick and definitive action. The use of these forms is no doubt to some extent habitual, but they also fulfill the purpose of revealing the speaker's identity.

5.3 Language Shift: Repetition

The goal of every speaker is to produce coherent discourse. "Cohesion in discourse refers to those features of the lexicon and grammar that link different parts of the text together. Cohesive devices make it possible for the addressee to keep track of who is being referred to and what is being described in a text, and they work to unify a text into a coherent whole" (Johnston and Schembri 2007:270). This analysis examines the linguistic behaviour of MSL users, regarding their use of lexical repetition and its contribution to cohesion. This analysis also sets subjects' reiteration within a sociocultural context.

Conversational repetition is employed by monolingual and bilingual speakers, in spoken languages and signed languages alike. People repeat themselves to highlight a point to clarify content, emphasize a message, set the tone, lead the conversation, or to add to the overall cohesiveness of the discourse (Gumperz 1982). Repetition is a functional element of discourse. "The ways of saying things are handed to us by our personal and institutional biographies as they were handed to those from whom we heard them" (Hopper 1998:172). Use of repetition is inseparable from an individual's history, experience and personality. But it is subject to "the vagaries of memory, stress, appropriateness and changes of topic and reinforcement or absence of reinforcement from interlocutors" (Hopper 1998:161).

In (27) and (28), the speakers use reiteration to assert their MSL identity.

(27) **NAME (MSL)++ E-D-I-T-H**

BEFORE (MSL) W-A-R-R-E-N

FINISH SCHOOL (MSL) DONE (MSL) SCHOOL (MSL) FINISH

MEET Poss. 1 (ASL) HUSBAND (pause)

Pro. 1 MARRY (MSL)

Pro. 1 BOTH WEDDING (MSL)

‘My name is Edith. Before [my marriage], [my surname was] Warren. After completing school I met my husband and we got married.’

(28) (Perspective shift) **Pro. 2 REJECT (MSL) Pro. 1**

WHAT (MSL) MEAN Pro. 2 REJECT (MSL) Pro. 1

YES++

BUT Pro. 2 DON’T-KNOW ABOUT (fragment)

Pro. 2 (strong emphasis) DON’T-KNOW HALIFAX (current sign)

HALIFAX (MSL) SCHOOL SCHOOL (MSL) GOOD (MSL)

SCHOOL (MSL) GOOD (MSL) FUN

GOOD (MSL)

Pro. 1 TALK-BACK-AND-FORTH BUT....

‘I said, “You reject me?! What do you mean? You reject me? Yes? You don’t know about... you don’t know about Halifax! The Halifax School [for the Deaf] was good. The school was good fun! I talked back and forth, but.... [conversation dwindles off].’

In (27) the subject presents MSL forms (e.g., NAME and BEFORE) followed by fingerspelling in ASL. In addition, she frames MSL signs within ASL signs e.g., **FINISH SCHOOL (MSL) FINISH (MSL) SCHOOL (MSL) FINISH**, but she also inserts an MSL equivalent **DONE (MSL)**. The conventions of Deaf greetings commonly used by Deaf people e.g., fingerspelling one's name in full for clarification, mentioning one's last name prior to marriage, mentioning one's school and spouse, all indicate affiliations and status within the MSL Deaf community.

In (28), not only does the narrator use repetition to assert her MSL identity, she uses MSL to emphasize it. The speaker encounters ASL users. When they overtly express indifference toward MSL and MSL users, she is hurt. She wants to relate to them what they are missing out on - a connection with Deaf elders, a Deaf community, a Deaf culture, the residential/Deaf school experience and MSL itself.

(29) (Perspective shift) **SAME Poss. 1 GROUP PEOPLE++**

GOOD++ Poss. 1 NAME Pro. 2 NAME

(Perspective shift) (no reaction, blank look on face)

(Perspective shift) Pro. 2 (plural) **WHAT (MSL) GO (MSL) SCHOOL**

DEAF SCHOOL (MSL)+

(Perspective shift) (shake head) **N-O++++ ENTER-SPREAD** (incorrect sign for 'mainstream') **SCHOOL ENTER-SPREAD+ SPREAD**

ENTER++ SCHOOL++ ENTER (One girl tries to sign 'mainstream' correctly) **SCHOOL**

(Perspective shift) Oh **ENTER SCHOOL MAINSTREAM SCHOOL**

'I said 'We're the same [Deaf] - good - let's exchange names'. They responded with blank looks. I asked them what school they went to – a Deaf

school. 'No,' they said, 'we're mainstreamed [incorrectly signed].' I replied 'Oh, it's a mainstreamed school'.

In the speaker's narrative, before she gets emotional, NAME (ASL) appears twice and SCHOOL (ASL) appears eight times. Initially, she uses ASL in order to accommodate her addressees, but once they disappoint her, she shows them who she is - an MSL user - by using MSL. Three additional conversational devices contribute to her emphatic stand: 1) an accusative and aggressive tone, characterized by her short and sharp movements, 2) use of rhetorical questions, which she hopes will cause her addressees to reconsider their point of view and 3) use of perspective shift to portray the conversational participants. Perspective shift allows the narrator to slip in and out of the different roles by exchanging utterances, and a combination of shifting her body position, changing her facial expression, and shifting her eye gaze (Rayman 2001). She is able to portray additional information by her use of language e.g., the height and distance of signs can portray information about the status of a person or when an event occurred in time. She juxtaposes the two sides and her physical reference to the different sides serves to highlight their differences and distance. In the narrative, the speaker also makes an internal shift from 'the-MSL-user-who-is-willing-to-befriend-and-accommodate-your-use-of-ASL' to 'the-MSL-user-who-offended-by-your-opinion-is-no-longer-willing-to-accommodate-you-by-using-ASL-and-will-use-MSL.'

Additionally, (30) (31) and (32) illustrate how repetition is connected to identity. They illustrate speakers' willingness of accommodate ASL users and a shift toward ASL. Initially, the speaker follows the presentation of an MSL sign with the

ASL sign, for clarification. Then, once the MSL sign is clear to the addressee, he drops the ASL assuming the addressee can now follow in MSL.⁸⁹

(30) Poss. 1 GRANDFATHER (ASL)^#S-N BOY (ASL) (fragment) BOY (MSL)

6 (MSL) AGE (MSL) AGE YEAR CL:WALK-TOWARD-Pro. 1

CHAIN-SAW+

‘My grandson, a 6 year-old came over to me and saw the chain saw.’

(31) Perspective shift: (nods adamantly) GIVE-IN DOLLAR Pro. 2-GIVE- Pro. 1

THANK YOU

6, 8, 6 (MSL) AGE (MSL) AGE

‘Come on’, he said, ‘give me money. Thanks. [This is a] 6 year old...8...6 year old!’

(32) LATER-ON (MSL) ASK-Pro.1 (MSL) **6 (MSL) AGE (MSL) BOY (MSL)**

WANT GO SHOP (MSL) ICE-CREAM

‘Later he, the six year old, asked me if I wanted go to the store and get ice cream.’

In (31) and (32) the speaker describes his grandson as a six year old boy using ‘6 (MSL) AGE (MSL)’. The signs for 6 and AGE are different in MSL and ASL; 6 (MSL) is articulated with the palm facing the addressee and only the pinky extended upward. AGE (MSL) is articulated with a Bent [B] HC, palm down, fingers pointing away from the signer, brushing under the chin a few times away from the signer’s body. The overall purpose of this story is to show a generation gap, different ages and different attitudes. These main ideas are expressed in MSL. AGE is also reiterated in

⁸⁹ All of these examples are from the same passage of discourse, but additional intervening discourse has been omitted in order to focus on how language use changes.

ASL. (It is also plausible that the repetition is caused by the narrator's uncertainty about the boy's age. He moves back and forth between 6 and 8, finally deciding on 6). By the end of his narrative, MSL alone suffices.

Repetition offers a glimpse into areas, where despite MSL being retained, the process of shift is underway. MSL forms are repeated and additional conversational devices, such as tone, rhetorical questions, perspective shift and using lexical items according to conventions of signed language use, are added, in combination with repetition, to provide a stage for MSL users' unique identity.

5.3.1 MSL Retention: Repetition, Lexical Items from One Semantic

Domain and Identity

Another type of repetition is the use of words from a single semantic domain. Word choice offers a glimpse of how MSL speakers use MSL to assert their identity.

Johnston and Schembri (2007) present an Auslan narrative about a school carpentry class. They illustrate how words from a single semantic domain "add to the cohesion of the text" and "assist[ing] the addressees to make sense of the overall meaning" (Johnston and Schembri 2007:277). Likewise, MSL users present a cohesive narrative unit and in doing so, speakers negotiate, manipulate and alternate between two different lexical systems choosing words to portray a unique MSL identity.

In the data, a speaker describes a fight. She introduces the sign FIGHT three times in succession, each time in a different form.⁹⁰ There is a connection between the signer's hands and the conflict expressed. Calbris (1990) refers to the relation between the two hands as a metaphor, where the interaction of the hands in space stands for different types of interaction between people. Clashing hands indicate conflict; placing one hand higher than the other indicates differential status. Perrin-

⁹⁰ Repetition, as previously noted, also serves an aspectual function indicating continuity and intensity.

Wilcox states that spatial relations also represent social relations (Perrin-Wilcox 2002). McNeill (1992) perceives the hands as iconic since they serve as vehicles to express an image. Brennan (2005) combines these two interpretations and concludes “Indeed metaphorical signs exhibit what might be called a ‘dual vehicle’, a combination of iconicity and metaphor” (Brennan 2005:367).

(33) **FIGHT (MSL) CLASH INSULT**

FIGHT (Flat [O] HC) FIGHT (Flat [O] HC moves to an Open [5] HC)

FIGHT ++(MSL)

(indication to right side) Pro. 2 B-R-L TEMPER

INSULT Pro. 1 (strong intensity)

TEMPER

...Pro. 1 FIGHT (MSL) INSULT+++ SPITE + INSULT++ SPITE+

TORMENT (MSL) Pro. 1 A-B-U-S-E HIT Pro. 1

Pro. 1 W-A-S HIT+ SPITE

PERSON HOUSEPARENT FROM HOLLAND START (fragment)

STRAP (with intensity) STRAP Pro. 1

Pro. 1 SCARED FROM (indication to right side) GIRL (MSL) Pro. 2

(indication to left side) Pro. 2 STRAP SCARED FROM (indication to right

side) (still on right side) GIRL Pro. 2 SPITE Pro. 1 INSULT

GIRL (MSL) BAD

‘They would always fight with one another and insult each other. They really fought. The one girl, Beryl had a bad temper. She insulted me. She had a temper.’.... ‘She regularly fought and insulted [others]. She was spiteful. She tormented, abused and hit me. I was hit out of spite. A houseparent from Holland strapped me [for my involvement in the incident]. I was scared of this

girl. The other girl was also scared of her. She was spiteful and she insulted me. She was a bad girl.’

In the first sign in (33), the narrator articulates two Flat [O] HCs that make intense contact with one another at the fingertips. This non-citation form is an example of an opposition metaphor.⁹¹ It is followed by the articulation of another non-citation form, two Flat [O] HCs side by side;⁹² the fingers are suddenly and intensely extended outward and upward to form Open [5] HCs.⁹³ Lastly, she presents the MSL sign FIGHT in which two hands, each with an [I] HC held side by side, with palms facing the signer bring the sides of the pinky fingers into sharp and repeated contact. This MSL sign, (identical to BSL), is also used in Newfoundland and sometimes in the Prairie provinces (Dolby and Bailey 2002). The latter location is the result of historical contact with BSL. It is not the sign for FIGHT typically used in ASL.⁹⁴ Her last form of FIGHT (MSL) also exhibits pinky extension (PE), thus inherent in its articulation is a sense of negativity. By articulating her main point in MSL, the speaker retains her MSL identity. She repeats words; INSULT is repeated eight times; SPITE is repeated six times; HIT is repeated twice and STRAP is repeated three times. The signs are from the single semantic domain of conflict, but from two different linguistic systems, FIGHT and TORMENT (MSL) and INSULT, SPITE and

⁹¹ Evident in BSL, Brennan (1992) describes this as when “the notions of opposition and conflict are represented by the opposition of the two hands. The intensity of the opposition is then further emphasized by alternating and/or repeated movement” (cited in Brien 1992:171) and of course by contact.

⁹² In ASL this sign is glossed as CLASH.

⁹³ Brennan (1992) terms this an explosive element or an “emission metaphor” (cited in Brien 1992:68). Movement of this type is observed in BSL signs, such as VOLCANO (BSL) and SCALD (BSL).

⁹⁴ “The.... clashing of the hands forms a highly productive metaphor in BSL....In fact, this metaphorical relationship is so strong that very few signs relating to conflict do not exploit it in some way” (Brennan 1992, cited in Brien 1992:43). Other examples with clashing hands include QUARREL (BSL) and CRITICIZE (BSL). The speaker uses “visual encoding” to encode real word information (Brennan 2003:363).Clashing hands to signify conflict are also observed in ASL.

SCARED (ASL), allow the speaker to express her MSL identity. Her main ideas, FIGHT and TORMENT, are articulated in MSL. ASL forms, INSULT, SPITE, HIT, and STRAP, perhaps SCARED too, describes what others do to her.

The speaker says, ‘This is who I am. This is my past experience. This is what I endured.’ Her sensitivity and emotion are inseparable from her use of MSL. Her repeated references to herself (Pro.1), six times, place her at the centre and bring her vulnerability to the focus. She portrays herself as a passive victim of unfair treatment. Within a wider social context, this speaker constructs a picture of what residential school life was like for her. While she may expect that Deaf people her own age are familiar with such incidents, such experiences are not a part of the present-day reality for ASL users in Nova Scotia, all of whom are mainstreamed and have not experienced residential schools. Through her use of repetition and the presentation of lexical items from a semantic domain she asserts and shares an MSL identity.

In an additional example of a subject’s narrative in (34) the repetition of items from a single semantic area are also used to assert a unique MSL identity, while simultaneously providing evidence of a language shift process from MSL to ASL. The speaker describes sewing lessons at school.

- (34) Pro. 1 **LEARN (MSL) WEAVING (MSL)++ LEARN (MSL) SEWING**
(pause)
LEARN (MSL) S-O-C-K-S SEW (fragment) CL.: cross (two hands) SEW
(gestures darning action) CL.: cross (two hands)+ (gestures darning
action)
(gestures circle on elbow) H-O-L-E (gestures circle)
REALLY-GOOD (MSL) (two hands)
Pro. 1 **LEARN (MSL) LOT (MSL) LOT (ASL) LEARN (MSL) LOT**

‘I learned how to weave, sew and darn socks. I darned holes and was really good [at sewing]. I learned a lot.’

Her lexicon stems from sewing and things related to sewing, e.g. LEARN, LEARN-A-LOT, SEWING, WEAVING, DARNING. She repeats SEWING/SEW twice and uses a classifier twice to indicate the action of darning (CL.: Crossed hands), which she further reinforces with a darning gesture, twice as well. Twice more she gestures to indicate a hole in the elbow of a sleeve; in addition to this, she fingerspells H-O-L-E. Thus, ‘darning’ is repeated four times and ‘hole’ three times. The narrator uses MSL signs e.g., LEARN, WEAVING, GOOD and A-LOT, as well as ASL signs e.g., S-O-C-K-S and LOT. Signs that appear in MSL are sometimes followed by the repetition of the same form in ASL e.g., Pro. 1 LEARN (MSL) LOT (MSL) LOT (ASL) and citation forms are reinforced by classifiers and the use of gesture.

Through language use, information about the identity of the speaker and important linguistic information emerge. The speaker reveals her past experiences, including the past value of an occupational education.⁹⁵ Her past experiences are closely tied to her identity as an MSL user. Linguistically, there is evidence of the way in which MSL users negotiate language, using the repetition of lexical items from a single semantic domain, often in different languages, to form a cohesive unit of discourse. This builds a story and an identity. Other excerpts of the subjects’ narratives, for example, where they discussed different topics like a broken arm and

⁹⁵ Traditionally in the past, in schools for Deaf pupils, girls learned to sew and cook, and boys learned trades like carpentry and printing. This was intended to serve as a basis from which Deaf people could earn a living. Present day aspirations of higher education and white collar jobs were rare. This is a tradition that has disappeared.

hip, there was less use of MSL and less repetition of items from a single semantic domain.

5.4 Language Shift: Hybrid Signs

This analysis of narratives revealed hybrid signs like FRIEND and NAME. For each there is an MSL form, an ASL form, and a hybrid MSL/ASL form. All three forms are currently being used, although individual signers may favour one form over another and circumstances may determine one is more suitable than another. There are two types of hybrid signs. In the first, MSL users combine elements of MSL and ASL into a single sign e.g., ICE, GREASE, RAIN and FRIEND. In other words, the sign combines elements of BSL with elements of ASL in sequence to produce one short and fluid sign. In the second type, hybrid compounds, users combine an MSL and an ASL sign to form a compound form e.g., BOY (MSL) + FRIEND (ASL) is BOY^FRIEND.

In (35) and (36), the speaker uses FRIEND (MSL), a sign which combines both elements from MSL and ASL, in that order. In FRIEND (MSL), “Horizontal ‘ONE’ hands, palms down, are held with the right forefinger pointing forward/left and left forefinger pointing forward/rightward, and are alternately moved up and down so that the extended forefingers strike down against each other” (Dolby and Bailey 2002:268). In FRIEND (ASL), “Left ‘CROOKED ONE’ hand is held palm-up with forefingers pointing rightward/forward while right ‘CROOKED ONE’ hand is held palm-down with forefinger laid across left forefinger at right angles to it. The wrists then rotate so that the hands reverse position” (Dolby and Bailey 2002:268). In the hybrid form of FRIEND (MSL, one variant), [1] HCs on both hands make contact with each other once. First, the extended right index finger makes contact on the knuckle of the left index finger, palm-down. Then the left wrist rotates so that the left

hand is palm-up and the right index finger then makes contact on the same index finger, palm up. The crooked feature of the index finger in ASL is lost in the hybrid form.

- (35) **FRIEND** (fragment) **FRIEND** (MSL) LOTS (MSL)+
FRIEND (MSL)+++ GOOD **FRIEND** (MSL) GOOD
SEE? SAME HOME SEE?

‘I had a lot of friends. It was just like home.’

- (36) Pro.1 POSS. 1 LIKE HAVE POSS. 1 DEAF DEAF (MSL) **FRIEND** (MSL)
DEAF (MSL) **FRIEND** (hybrid) **FRIEND** (MSL)+
GREAT LIKE HOME

‘I like my Deaf friends. [Life with] Deaf friends was like home to me.’

The fact that three signs **FRIEND** are used, one that stems from BSL and is identical in MSL, another that is identical to ASL, and one that combines elements of the previous two, provides evidence for language shift. The use of signs is changing.

The three signs for **NAME** previously mentioned (see Chapter Four) support the hypothesis that a shift away from MSL and toward ASL is underway. In (37) the form of ‘name’ used is identical to BSL; in (38), the form of ‘name’ used is identical to ASL, and in (39) and (40), the sign for ‘name’ combines elements of the previous two.

- (37) POSS. 1 **NAME** (MSL) R-U-T-H

‘My name is Ruth’

- (38) **DAUGHTER** (MSL) T-A-M-M-Y **NAME** PHONE (gestures talking)
LIKE WANT ...

‘My daughter, her name is Tammy, called. “I would like...want...”’.

(39) DAUGHTER (MSL) BRING TRAILER

POSS. 1 (fragment) COUSIN C-O-U-I (fragment)* NAME (hybrid) J-A-S-O-N TRAILER S-P-O-R-T

‘My daughter and [her] cousin Jason brought a sports trailer.’

* The fragment is misspelled at which point the signer abandons it.

(40) ONE GIRL (MSL) BAD (ASL)

SAME NAME (hybrid)

Pro.1 TELL-STORY

‘There was a bad girl named...I’m going to tell you a story’

“Some MSL signers have modified the sign for ‘name’ [MSL]. The MSL sign touches the ‘N’ from the manual alphabet on the temple [or right side of the forehead] and then moves the ‘N’ away from the temple [like the BSL sign]. The modified MSL/ASL sign touches ‘n’ on the temple and then moves it down, placing it on a left-handed ‘n’, like the ASL sign for ‘name’” (Elizabeth Doull, personal communication 21 January 2007).⁹⁶ The twist of the wrist, away from the signer (also seen in BSL) has been lost and sometimes, the sign is lowered from its original position at the side of the forehead to the signer’s temple. In the hybrid sign, there is a single tap only. Similar patterns of language shift also seem to be in operation for MSL signs such as SUNDAY, SCHOOL and SISTER.

Aitchinson (1991) maintains that a turnover in vocabulary and continual changes in the meanings of words are reflective of social changes. This is true for MSL. In Nova Scotia social factors, such as mobility, status and modernity, are

⁹⁶ In this case the reference to the letter ‘n’ illustrates the influence of English on signs and the tendency with which signs can become initialized, with relative ease, when circumstances allow so, as is the case here.

directly related to the use of signed language. Older and newer signs co-exist, but ASL is being propelled into a more common use and a prestigious position, mainly due to its widespread use in the rest of Canada.

Compounding is a productive way to express concepts. Different signed languages have many forms that are the result of combining two existing signs into a compound e.g., BRUISE (BLUE^SPOT) (ASL), BELIEVE (THINK^ TRUE) (BSL) (Brien 1992), and VOLUNTEER (HEART^GIVE) (Israeli Sign Language). Three different types of compounds were observed in the subjects' narratives: MSL^MSL compounds, MSL^ASL compounds and ASL^ASL compounds. An example of each is presented below in (41) to (43).

The existence of these different signs in use at the same time attests to the transition MSL is undergoing. MSL^MSL compounds were the least common and ASL^ASL compounds were the most common. Compounds which consisted of MSL and ASL appeared in the order of MSL^ASL, e.g., T (MSL)^FABRIC (ASL) for TEA-TOWEL. This provides further support for language shift and its direction from MSL to ASL.

- (41) YES+++ MOTHER (MSL)^FATHER (MSL) FOOD GOOD (MSL)
TOO-MUCH++ F-A-T
EAT FOOD DELICIOUS (MSL)

'Yes, my parent's food was good, too fatty [but I] ate delicious food'.

- (42) FRIEND (ASL) FRIEND (MSL) BOY (MSL)^FRIEND WELL
FOOL AROUND+++

'My friend, [my] boyfriend and I fooled around [during oral English lessons].

- (43) ICE (MSL)-SKATING+ BLUE ^NOSE +++

ICE (MSL)-SKATING BLUE ^NOSE Pro. 1 SEW++ COSTUME-DRESS

'I sewed Blue Nose ice skating costumes. I sewed short skirts.'⁹⁷

5.5 Conclusion: MSL Retention and Shift in Subjects' Narratives

An examination of MSL signs as they appeared in subjects' narratives reveals that MSL is experiencing shift toward ASL. Among MSL users there is widespread use of ASL. The few MSL signs that are retained usually appear as lexical items within specific semantic domains. The relationship between BSL and MSL, quite noticeable in the lexical analysis, is much less evident and weaker in the narratives. Hybrid signs and hybrid compounds that combine MSL and ASL support this. Language shift is unique to the setting in which it occurs. In MSL the process of shift is observable. Language shift is the result of numerous factors and their combination, factors such as like a weakened MSL social network, strengthened ties between different social networks, and language contact between MSL and ASL users.

⁹⁷ Activities and shows were held annually in Nova Scotia to raise funds for the tour of the Bluenose, a schooner that traveled nationally and internationally to represent Nova Scotia and its seafaring traditions. It was also a tradition for the girls' sewing class at the School for the Deaf in Halifax to sew the ice skating costumes.

Chapter Six: Identity and ‘The Self’ and ‘the Other’

6. Introduction

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section examines individual MSL identity and group MSL identity as portrayed in subjects’ discourse. The second section examines ‘the self’ and ‘the other’, how MSL users perceive themselves to be a separate group, distinct from other Deaf people in the region, as portrayed through subjects’ discourse. It examines the division of the Deaf population in Nova Scotia by language and culture. ASL users make up a strong majority, while MSL users make up a smaller, weaker subcommunity. Most members of the latter are also affiliated with the former. Chapter Six identifies those characteristics that emerge in the subjects’ narratives as those typical of MSL users that determine that they are a separate group.

6.1 MSL Identity

There is little doubt that MSL users form a separate entity within the Nova Scotian Deaf community and that their uniqueness is based on their language, culture, and their sense of identity. Everyone has multiple identities. Each person’s identity spans different realms. Maritimers are often proud of their heritage and loyal to the region. Despite the small size of the population, 1.9 million, and their diversity, Maritimers share a cultural identity (Maritime Regional Report 2004). The same can be said of Deaf people in the Maritimes.⁹⁸

The terms ‘Deaf culture’ and ‘Deaf identity’ lack a single, agreed-upon definition. There are differences in the identity and culture of Deaf Maritimers and other Deaf Canadians. At one time, this community used a different signed language. They are presently, unofficially, divided by language, into MSL and ASL users.⁹⁹

⁹⁸ Since it has been established that Deaf people in Newfoundland do not use MSL, the term Maritime as opposed to Atlantic is used.

⁹⁹ This is true for New Brunswick as well.

Each of these subcommunities has its own history, norms and identity. Rutherford (1988) states that by virtue of having an identity based in a separate language variety and culture they form a separate group. Thus, MSL users form a separate group. Their identity has been shaped by their residential school experiences, an oralist education and their use of MSL, but most importantly, by the fact that members of this group perceive themselves to belong to a separate group.

Because the MSL Deaf community is undergoing change and because MSL users often have frequent contact with ASL users, it is difficult to determine the boundaries between these two communities. Furthermore, there is variation within the MSL group. There are 80 year olds, who were educated solely in Halifax, used only MSL and who have never received any formal instruction in ASL (Elizabeth Doull, personal communication 10 March 2007) (although today, they use ASL), and there are 56 year old MSL users who studied at the schools in Halifax and Amherst, and who, as a result, used and learned both MSL and ASL.

ASL has become the dominant language for Deaf people in the region. Some people retain varying amounts of MSL owing to factors such as the amount of ongoing contact they have with other MSL users. Currently, there is no indication that there are Deaf people in Nova Scotia who use only MSL. No evidence of balanced bilinguals was uncovered; that is, individuals who can switch back and forth fluently between MSL and ASL. There is no indication of Deaf people under the age of 50 who know more than a handful of commonly-used MSL signs.

The Maritime Deaf community meets the criteria of a Deaf community, as outlined by researchers. Cokely and Baker (1980) state that: 1) audiological/hearing loss, 2) political affiliation with the Deaf community, 3) linguistic mastery of signed

language, and 4) social participation in the events of a Deaf community, are necessary for membership in a Deaf community. MSL users meet these criteria. In Nova Scotia, language is the key marker of identity. MSL users learned MSL from their peers and in an educational setting. Each generation has adopted the language and adapted it according to their needs. The language has changed with each generation.

The main features that group members share in common are their age, which is connected to their shared educational background, their use of MSL signs, and common patterns of socialization. These are the three features outlined by Padden and Markowicz (1976) and Markowicz and Woodward (1975) as the significant factors in a self-identification process of Deaf community members. MSL language use, even the relatively little that remains of it, is representative of a specific generation.

MSL users grew up together in the Halifax residential school and upon completing school they often maintained social ties, establishing patterns of socialization e.g., participation in annual events and Deaf clubs. They often married other Deaf people. MSL was their main means of communication with other Deaf people. When the school in Halifax closed and the new school in Amherst was opened in 1961, change was set into motion. Most MSL users did not relocate to Amherst and therefore were not exposed to increased interaction with ASL users and ASL instruction.¹⁰⁰ The result was generational distance. The younger generation shifted to ASL, but the older generation did not, at least not initially. As this research indicates, MSL users had always been influenced by language contact with ASL users. With the increase in the presence of ASL users, MSL were eventually influenced by the use of ASL. Shift to ASL ensued. Language continues to bond MSL users together, even

¹⁰⁰ As previously mentioned, one subject in this study did move to Amherst and learn ASL, but she is married to an older MSL user.

though this language use consists of a great deal of ASL with a limited amount of MSL inserted.

6.1.1 MSL Group Identity

This section examines those characteristics and behaviours that lie behind the weak group identity of MSL users. In a study conducted by Page (1993) to determine whether there exists a separate perception of identity for Deaf Hispanics in United States she noted linguistic and behavioural characteristics specific to this ethnic group. For instance, her five Deaf subjects had what she calls a high incidence of self-description e.g., they talked a lot about themselves, and they spoke repeatedly of their ability to communicate in different systems e.g., Spanish, English, ASL, lipreading, speaking, etc. They exhibited high self-esteem and repeatedly spoke of their roles as Deaf community leaders. Likewise, they shared their future goals and spoke of their strong ties to family members. Strong ties to family members distinguish Deaf Hispanics from the larger American Deaf community (Page 1993). MSL users are both similar and different from those Page (1993) studied. They too exhibited a high incidence of self-description and talked about MSL. But Page's subjects expressed high self-esteem and MSL users express low self-esteem. They mention the failure of MSL users to function as community leaders and the lack of MSL mentors available for Deaf people.¹⁰¹ Unlike Deaf Hispanic people, they rarely spoke of future goals, perhaps due to their advanced age and relatively weak socioeconomic status, although short-term goals were shared e.g., a wedding, an anniversary party and family visits. Strong ties to family members were also not expressed.

¹⁰¹ There are few MSL role models. Individuals who once served as community role models (e.g., Christy McKinnon and Forrest Nickerson) moved out of the Maritimes, lived most of their lives elsewhere and adopted ASL.

The physical distance that came with the relocation of the school for Deaf pupils was significant because it created a physical and generational division between Deaf people; those who attended school after the move had no access to a post-secondary school Deaf community and vice versa. With a loss of generational contact came a lack of access to MSL, a loss of Deaf role models and a lack of information about Deaf history and culture. MSL was also not transmitted. Perceptions about MSL, even by those who had used MSL, became increasingly negative. Used by an elderly population, who had no further education and who were rurally-located, negative perceptions grew. In the video *Maritime Deaf Heritage*, a Deaf person who attended both the school in Halifax and Amherst states, “Once people left school and were out in the community, so it was like we used to say it [MSL] was old-fashioned” (Fletcher-Falvey and Misener-Dunn 1994). It seemed that MSL had little to offer in comparison to ASL, which offered exposure to signed language in the media, interaction with other Deaf people in Canada and the United States, increased prospects for employment and the opportunity for higher education. As the influence of ASL increased and the numbers and presence of MSL users decreased, the negative associations of MSL intensified. The quote below, made by a narrator of the video *Maritime Deaf Heritage*, reveals the linguistic insecurity associated with a single MSL sign. Born and raised in Nova Scotia and Deaf from birth, this ASL user articulates the common MSL sign, DOWNTOWN. When questioned by an ASL user about this sign, she doubts herself and her Deaf environment.

When I went to Vancouver for a Deaf conference - competing for Deaf Canada [perhaps Miss Deaf Canada]- there was a group of us sitting in a restaurant and I had asked a girl about going downtown. And the girl asked ‘What’s that sign?’ I said DOWNTOWN, but she didn’t understand what I was saying. I thought maybe I was incorrect in signing, so I fingerspelled D-O-W-N-T-O-W-N, and she showed me the sign that they use. I was sort of puzzled by the sign they use. I was a little embarrassed, and I thought that

maybe because of isolation and being in Nova Scotia that my language was incorrect. I was very confused

(Misener-Dunn and Fletcher-Falvey 1994)

Generally, MSL users exemplify that when society perceives Deaf people in negative terms, negative perceptions can extend to one's perception of 'self'.

6.1.2 MSL Identity and Language Contact

Long before the formal introduction of ASL in Nova Scotia, MSL and ASL users were in contact with one another. Early MSL shows evidence of the influence of ASL. Yet MSL survived and even thrived, until some point in the 1970s when the status of MSL was affected by drastic social changes, including the relocation of the school for Deaf children, changes in educational policy and an influx of Deaf people from outside of the province. Additional changes like the generational division of the community and the return of Deaf students who had attended Gallaudet University also played a role. When these factors combined with a general lack of awareness about the value of MSL, MSL users' low levels of language pride and self-esteem, the process of shift away from MSL hastened. Fewer MSL users stood their ground, maintained pride in MSL and retained its use.

In similar circumstances, Ann, Smith and Yu (2007) describe how their research subjects, users of Mainland China Sign Language (MCSL), a minority signed language, "lost MCSL when they learned Taiwan Sign Language (TSL); for them it was a matter of usefulness of the language. Most of those they met signed TSL. It was obviously better to have fluency in that language, but if most of the people they met had been MCSL signers, they would have signed MCSL" (Ann, Smith and Yu 2007:249).

The formal introduction of ASL instruction into the Interprovincial School in Amherst has been criticized by some MSL users. Hannah (1994:1) says "I am sure

that ASL stole our language, and as such blended it [MSL with ASL] into one language.” Some MSL users perceived the introduction and intervention of people from outside the province as unnatural. Moreover, this instruction occurred for the first time at a location that was remote.

Many MSL users shifted to ASL quite willingly. There was little realization that ASL could potentially threaten MSL. They did not foresee the introduction of ASL at the expense of MSL. Ironically, the introduction of ASL originally came at the initiative of Deaf people, students and parents, who were dissatisfied with the lack of signed language used in school and the low level of education; they requested that ASL be introduced. Deaf people were unaware that MSL was a viable alternative. Younger Deaf people did not consider that they could learn from elder Deaf community members in Halifax.

Users of ASL and Signed English came into Nova Scotia. In his book *Deaf Heritage in Canada: a Distinctive, Diverse and Enduring Culture*, Carbin (1996) suggests that what was taught was in fact not ‘pure’ ASL, rather a form of what is known as the simultaneous use of (English) speech and sign.

...artificially contrived, English-based sign systems that developed in the 1960s and 1970s and found their way into the Canadian classrooms in the place of ASL. These manually coded English (MCE) systems were intended to help deaf students learn to read and write in English.So, despite the fact that a form of manual communication was being used in the educational setting, the primary language of *instruction* continued to be English.

(Carbin 1996:323).

It is likely that Deaf people did not realize that this communication system was an alternative to what they requested. As an oral education had previously been the norm, they had little experience with signed language in the classroom. Taylor (1992) suggests that Deaf people are often more malleable to the external forces because they are sometimes unaware of viable alternatives. This seems to be the case in Nova

Scotia. While Signed English was often used in school, ASL made a strong appearance locally. Eventually ASL was also introduced in the school and its use became the norm for the Deaf community.

6.1.3 MSL Language Loyalty

In spite of strong ASL influences, some MSL users may have maintained a positive attitude toward MSL. Some MSL users today still exhibit language loyalty. It remains to be determined whether this attitude was always present and there were always advocates of MSL, or whether open support for MSL is a more recent phenomenon, one that is the result of changing attitudes. Perhaps people today are more open about expressing their opinions. They are more willing to express their opinions because there is an increased tolerance for diversity. Perhaps they have just begun to realize the seriousness of the disappearance of MSL.¹⁰² A combination of these factors may bring about expressions of loyalty. Additional factors, such as an increased awareness of deafness and signed language, increased support for the rights of Deaf people, and more independence and control for Deaf people in education and in society, may also play a role in a positive attitude toward MSL. It has been observed in other signed languages that even a language that has little value or recognition can still be respected by its users. Gras i Ferrer (2002) observed that “[Deaf] people in Spain still doubt the value [of Spanish Sign Language] as a real language, [but] they feel a strong sense of loyalty toward it” (Gras i Ferrer 2002: 229).

In the video, *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (1994) language loyalty toward MSL comes to light. Elderly people who were never formally introduced to ASL said

¹⁰² In other Deaf communities, it has been suggested that changes in attitude lie behind an increase in language loyalty. For example, van Herreweghe and Vermmerbergen (2004) note that users of Flemish Sign Language (VGT), a disappearing signed language, are now proud of their language, but were not ten years ago.

I use MSL, but when I meet other Deaf people, they've all changed and use ASL. So I talk to this gentleman next to me, he is a very strong MSL user. They're old signs. But I still use them – still using them. Old signs... (*Sign not clear*). I don't know how to sign the new signs. I use the old signs. New signs...to heck with the new signs; I don't like the new signs. People from Ontario, the United States, Ontario, Toronto – yuck! I don't like the old signs – I mean I don't like using the new signs. I'll never change. You want me to change? I'll lose it. I'll be confused”

(Misener-Dunn and Fletcher-Falvey 1994).

A Deaf Nova Scotian, who began her education in Halifax but completed it in Amherst, also expresses language loyalty. She says,

The teachers at the School for the Deaf in Halifax did not sign. They were oral. And later we had, you know, an instructor who knew ASL, and I started learning ASL from him - the instructor. But I can't just forget about MSL. I continue to use it.... When people go there [to Amherst], when I come here [to Halifax], it's like the old MSL, and we really like it. We chat [with one another].

(Misener-Dunn and Fletcher-Falvey 1994).

Hannah (1994:1) supports this and states “MSL is at the heart of the Deaf community.”

Despite positive regard for MSL, relatively few MSL users remain. MSL users confirmed this.

Interviewee #2: The older Deaf still use MSL. Even some of our older friends from the school in Halifax, when they live in isolated areas, people still use MSL. They don't use ASL. They don't socialize with Deaf people too often and when they do, they still use MSL. And more and more you'll see videos and other information and all the signs are done in ASL, but some of them still use MSL - so far - at this point, they're still using MSL. Interviewee #3: There's still a few [MSL users] around, who live outside the area [outside Halifax], [out] in the country. There's still some MSL [used].

(Fletcher-Falvey and Misener-Dunn 1994).

Language attitudes may have a negative influence on language loyalty. Deaf people in Nova Scotia are a minority; signed language is a minority language and MSL is the non-standard language of a minority within a minority. It is unrecognized, officially or otherwise, and has never been acknowledged in a formal sense (Carbin 1996:329). It is, in this way, invalidated. Furthermore, it is largely inaccessible.

Through informal Internet contacts with Deaf people in Nova Scotia, ASL users in Nova Scotia told the researcher that accounts of MSL use were over-exaggerated and that what people call MSL is nothing more than a regional dialect of ASL. They inferred that MSL is of little value.

6.1.4 New Language Loyalty

As the Maritime economy improved, Deaf people, who were once forced out of the area in search of employment, began to return. Exposed to a group and language different from their own, they developed new a loyalty toward ASL. Often Deaf people, particularly those people who attended Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. (USA), returned in the capacity of ASL role models and mentors. Croneberg (1965) notes the following in American Deaf communities, “People in professional jobs who are financially prosperous, like graduates of Gallaudet College, tend to seek each other out and form a group. Frequently they use certain signs that are considered superior to the signs locally used for the same thing” (Croneberg 1965:318).

The impact of Gallaudet graduates as instigators of change in BSL is also mentioned by Woll, Sutton-Spence and Elton (2001). This pattern is applicable to Nova Scotia. “I have heard comments, when younger people go to Gallaudet, and they come back, they say, ‘You guys are using the old stuff. This is the way it is now’” (Debbie Johnson-Powell, personal communication 18 Oct. 2005). By choosing another language variety over their own, former MSL users show disregard for their local language and heritage. “Motivation can sway an entire community toward or away from its native language in favor of the majority language” (Grenoble and Whaley 1998:53).

6.1.5 Attitudes toward MSL

A key factor that may contribute to local Deaf people's unwillingness to identify with MSL is its lack of status and prestige. It is not unusual for one signed language to carry more prestige than another. For example, in Dublin, Ireland, where as previously mentioned, there is female's signed language and male's, women attest to the fact that the men's signs are "nicer," "more aesthetically pleasing" and "superior" (LeMaster and Dwyer 1991:320, 321).¹⁰³ MSL users may have felt that by opposing use of ASL, they were fighting a losing battle. A deep rift existed within the Deaf community and they may not have wanted to cause further trouble. Perhaps MSL users perceived the process of language standardization as natural.

The present MSL using community lacks the strength in numbers necessary to support MSL. Those who sometimes expressed disapproval of ASL also use a great deal of ASL. Elderly Deaf people in Nova Scotia grew up at a time when Deaf people were even more oppressed than they are now, and they often harboured feelings of shame about being deaf. A former student at the School for the Deaf in Halifax school recalls "a certain prejudice against the Deaf in Halifax." He remembers being taunted as "dummies" by passersby when playing in the schoolyard (Carbin 1996:121). The park now located where the Halifax School for the Deaf once stood (from 1879 to 1961), on Gottingen Street in Halifax, is still sometimes referred to by local people as 'dummy field'.

Society's stigmas can influence Deaf people's sense of personal security.

Roots (1999) shares an account of how a Deaf student's dream at the Interprovincial

¹⁰³ As male's signs are more prestigious, women use male's signs in male company. Men, however, rarely use female's signs. A man who chooses to do so is said to have "a lot of female hormones", "is ridiculed" or "regarded with disdain" (LeMaster and Dwyer 1991:320, 321). LeMaster and Dwyer (1991) also state that as a result of this, female's signs are disappearing. Leeson and Greehan (2002), however, do not entirely agree with this prognosis and they feel that female's signs, while limited to groups of women, are still very much in use.

School in Amherst was suppressed. The student complained that her dream of becoming an astronomer was mocked by teachers at the school, who refused to assist her because Deaf people have no need for astronomy. It was customary for decisions about Deaf people to be made by hearing people. At the Interprovincial School pupils were guided, often reluctantly, toward vocational trades, mainly because a vocational track had been added to the school at great expense (Roots 1999), even though at the time, further education for Deaf people was a feasible option.¹⁰⁴

MSL users' lack of self-confidence and linguistic insecurity may be deeply rooted because, home, normally a refuge, for many Deaf people, was not. Deaf youngsters often had family members who did not know signed language and thus, they felt alienated. Moreover, they spent most of the year away from home in a residential school setting.

There is evidence of this lack of self-confidence and linguistic insecurity in the subjects' narratives. Memories sometimes brought up negative connotations such as an unfair class competition, badly behaved pupils, participation in routine events like parades, ceremonies and church services, with little consideration for hardship like bad weather, long distances and an inability to understand what was going on. Those signs used to express negativity and emotion-inciting events are, almost always, MSL signs.

The short passage in (1) reveals the speakers' identification with the MSL Deaf community. Within minutes she reveals personal details of her life. While the addressee, the person to whom she is signing, is a familiar acquaintance, the

¹⁰⁴ The situation of MSL is similar to that of minority signed languages elsewhere, such as in the Cayman Islands. Deaf people from the Cayman Islands were educated in Jamaica, but the indigenous Cayman Islands Sign Language is different from Jamaican Sign Language. Cayman Island signs are disappearing in favour of Jamaican Sign Language. A lack of recognition of Cayman Islands Sign Language and low prestige are major factors behind its disappearance (Washbough 1981).

researcher, a friend of a friend, is not. The speaker talks about having had a child out of wedlock in the 1950s, a time when this was met with social disapproval. The signs she uses to reveal the significant personal details of her life such as not being married, her daughter, looking after the baby and getting married are all MSL, not ASL, signs.

(1) POSS. 1 (fragment)

ONE TWO REALLY TWO+ BUT **Pro. 1 (MSL) NOT-MARRY (MSL)+**

FINISH (ASL)

NOW **MARRY (MSL) HAVE (ASL) ONE GIRL (MSL)++++**

NOW GIRL **GIRL (MSL)++ TEACH (MSL)++ ENGLISH (ASL)**

ENGLISH (MSL)++ FAR+ ENGLAND (MSL)*

'[I have] one, no really two [daughters]. But I had one when I was not married. After I married, I had one girl [a daughter]. She is now teaching English, far away.'

(* The subject intended to sign English but signed England instead. This was confirmed by the subject).

By activating MSL signs, whether consciously or unconsciously, the speaker shares associations, assumptions and presuppositions that are related to her identity. There is a submessage and it is: 'These experiences are part of who I am. They are a part of my MSL identity, and since I am a member of the MSL community, I choose to express myself using MSL signs'.

Further evidence of linguistic insecurity is evident in MSL users' attitudes toward MSL, namely their concern for its declining use, on one hand, but a denial of its inevitable disappearance on the other. When the researcher asked a number of MSL users about the future of MSL there was some denial of its eventual disappearance. Hannah said (1994:1) that MSL was starting to "fade out." The use of ASL, not MSL, in the video *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (1994) supports this. But in the

same video MSL users said, “Really, there’s probably about five or six [MSL users left in Halifax],”¹⁰⁵ “There’s still a few [MSL users] around” and “There’s still some MSL.” Despite their protests that MSL users are alive and using MSL, no language has a remote chance of survival with ‘five or six’, ‘a few’ or even ‘some’ users, even less of a chance if those users are elderly, isolated and using a different language on a daily basis.

In the video *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (1994) two people were asked ‘Do you think it [MSL] will continue to be used?’ They answered “Yes” and expressed hope that the video *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (1994), where ASL-using residents of Nova Scotia interview elderly MSL users in ASL, and focus on a limited number of remaining MSL signs, would contribute to the preservation of the language.

Interviewee: Well, it’s sad, but maybe some day, it [MSL] will disappear so to speak, because the majority of the older Deaf people are passing away and the numbers are dwindling, but fortunately, but what you’ve been doing – I mean this video, hopefully will have [generate] some concern, some interest – maybe... it will help preserve MSL

(Fletcher-Falvey and Misener-Dunn 1994).

The attitude expressed, while often positive in its outlook, is unrealistic in linguistic terms. Such hopeful attitudes belong to a few individuals who have an emotional attachment to MSL and who realize its value.

In order for any language to survive it must have a certain mass of users, a number and concentration of speakers that exceeds, by far, the estimated number of approximately 100 MSL users in Canada (Jim McDermott, personal communication 18 October 2005). Crystal (2000:12), an expert of endangered languages and author of *Language Death*, says that “the presumption is that any language which has a very small number of speakers is bound to be in trouble...so, notwithstanding the

¹⁰⁵ In 2005 Debbie Johnston-Powell estimated the number to be the same, 5 or 6.

exceptions, most people would accept that that a language spoken by less than 100 is in a very dangerous situation.” Additional necessary conditions for linguistic survival, such as individuals’ linguistic capability, intergenerational transmission, financial support, educational support for the language, positive representation in the media and general public awareness are also not presently being met in Nova Scotia. It is highly unlikely that they will be met in the future. Perhaps there is not enough of MSL left to preserve.

At the time of the data for this research was collected (2005), concerns about the future of MSL were still being voiced. MSL users said “There is a concern that it [MSL] is dying out that it seems to be like, you know, like it needs to be preserved. There is that concern, and... and sadness along with that. I think that a lot of the community wish there was some preservation of the language. They don’t want to see it die so to speak” (Debbie Johnson-Powell 18 Oct. 2004). Yet, when asked directly if MSL might die out, most members of the MSL community replied that they did not think it would. One person said “That’s a good question.... I don’t think so. I think.... and I would hope that we could, you know, do something that it would survive. People start getting their....start doing something about it” (Debbie Johnson-Powell 18 October 2005).

As previously mentioned, ties between members of the MSL community extend far back into time. Members of the Deaf community in Nova Scotia share intimate knowledge of one another. In spite of this, the MSL subject in (2) introduces herself according to Deaf convention, stating her name and then spelling out her surname, her surname prior to marriage.¹⁰⁶ She presents the name that identifies her,

¹⁰⁶ Padden (1998) notes that Deaf adults often add the city they were born and where they went to school. This subject does not say what school she attended - all members of this social network all attended the same school. She gives no indication of the surname she presently uses and has for the past 40 years (The subject is not separated or divorced and mention of her husband follows shortly).

and possibly other Deaf family members, to former classmates in the Deaf community. The signs through which she expresses identity, her name, surname, finishing school and getting married are all MSL signs, for all of which there are alternative and commonly and currently-used ASL alternatives. The signs that do not pertain to her identity directly, e.g., her husband, appear in ASL.

(2) **NAME (MSL)++ E-D-I-T-H**

BEFORE (MSL) W-A-R-R-E-N

FINISH SCHOOL (MSL) FINISH (MSL) SCHOOL (MSL) FINISH

MEET POSS. 1 HUSBAND *pause*

Pro. 1 MARRY (MSL)

‘My name is Edith. Before my marriage, it was Warren. After completing school I met my husband and I got married.’

6.1.6 The MSL Social Network

An MSL social network is made up of individuals and their group, the people with whom they identify, associate and socialize. They share behaviours, routines, norms and conventions, but they are not insular. Some members have links to other social networks and these connections, mainly those with ASL users, have not been without a significant influence on the MSL social network. The MSL social network is dynamic; it is constantly undergoing change.

Research has investigated the connection between social networks and language (Milroy and Milroy 1997). Crystal says, “The network of social relations within a community can most efficiently be understood by examining the rules governing the style of language use, the selection of vocabulary and the choice of

manner of discourse” (Crystal 2000:50). This is applicable to Deaf communities and subcommunities as well.

MSL users’ sense of group identity is evident in their language use.

Individuals presented events as if they were present even when they were not. In other words, they presented an experience of their social network, and not an individual experience. For example, a subject discusses how ASL instruction was introduced at the Interprovincial School in Amherst, how the students were seated in a semi-circle with the instructor located in the centre, but the speaker was not present, nor did she ever receive any formal instruction in ASL. In the video *Maritime Deaf Heritage*, when the interviewer asks, “Where do you think MSL originated from?” the interviewee replies in the first person.

I remember a teacher who was on a boat, who came across from Boston and arrived in Halifax and decided to stay here as a tailor. He saw some Deaf children and started teaching Deaf children to write and started teaching language. (Fletcher-Falvey and Misener-Dunn 1994).

She relates a collective Deaf history of Nova Scotia and not her personal memories of an incident which occurred 138 years earlier.

The MSL community is also characterized by its use of MSL lexical items embedded in otherwise ASL discourse and the attitude of group members toward MSL. MSL is important to them. MSL language and culture have a circular relationship – their language is related to their culture, and their culture to their language. Shared histories and experiences connect MSL users. For example, all MSL users share a residential school experience, one that no longer exists. They all experienced a prohibition of signing in school, an Oralist education, religious education and vocational training. Social network members also share in the creation and preservation of community experiences including Deaf clubs and annual community events and activities. Younger ASL users have not experienced these,

with the exception perhaps of Deaf community experiences, which, particularly the participation in Deaf clubs, have declined significantly for MSL and ASL users alike.

In language contact situations, attitudes toward languages and groups have proven to be significant.¹⁰⁷ The use of MSL was not encouraged or promoted by educational authorities, yet its main setting was a school. Deaf pupils used MSL to communicate with one another. It was their first language and their main means of communication, yet, even immediate family members rarely learned MSL. In school, Deaf people learned to read, write and speak in English. A 1956, newspaper article published in the *Halifax Mail Star* describes the education of Deaf Nova Scotians,

“Oralist methods are employed in 14 out the 16 classes at the Halifax School for the Deaf.... He [the pupil] must learn to move his own lips, tongue and throat to breathe as the teacher does so that the proper sounds come out, and in many classes the children wear special powerful hearing aids, fitted over both ears to take advantage of any slight hearing they may have” (Casey 1956:13).

The message unconsciously relayed is that MSL – ASL and signed language in general - was unworthy of use and recognition. Many MSL users did retain MSL, but a relatively small group were able to continue to do so. Perhaps MSL offered them a sense of security in a changing environment.

Page’s (1993) examination of Deaf Hispanics in the United States determined that certain characteristics in her subject’s discourse could be perceived as indicators of group identity.¹⁰⁸ These characteristics were: 1) positive experiences at a residential school, 2) positive descriptions of interaction with family and 3) positive accounts of childhood activities and opportunities (Page 1993). Of these, only the first and the last, positive experiences at a residential school and positive accounts of childhood

¹⁰⁷ This is confirmed by research conducted in Canada (mainly on the use of French in Ontario) by Beniak, Mougeon and Valois (1984), Mougeon and Beniak (1987) and Poplack, Sankoff and Miller (1988).

¹⁰⁸ Her aim in examining Deaf Hispanics in the United States was to reveal evidence of ethnicity.

activities and opportunities are applicable to the MSL social network. The nature of the different groups produces different results. The speakers' experiences at the School for the Deaf in Halifax figured as a central and reoccurring theme in their narratives. Accounts of school memories are often positive, although negative experiences are also shared.¹⁰⁹ One subject recalls a black and white movie she saw about a Deaf girl in England who went to school and learned how to speak. She recalls fondly how the movie inspired her to want to go to school. Research subjects related numerous tales of the fun they had at school, particularly of mischievous activities they were involved in, such as how boys showed up in the girls' dormitory. In (3) and (4) subjects state how much they learned at school.

- (3) **Pro. 1 LEARN (MSL)+ SCHOOL (fragment) LOT (MSL)+ ENGLISH ENGLISH (MSL)+++ LANGUAGE (MSL)+**

'I learned quite a lot at school, lots of English and language.'

- (4) **Pro. 1 LEARN (MSL) WEAVING (MSL)++ LEARN (MSL) SEWING**

(pause)

LEARN (MSL) S-O-C-K-S SEW (fragment) CL.: cross (two hands) SEW

(gestures darning action) CL.: cross (two hands)+ (gestures darning action)

(gestures circle on elbow) **H-O-L-E** (gestures circle)

REALLY-GOOD (MSL) (two hands)

Pro. 1 LEARN (MSL) LOT (MSL) LOT LEARN (MSL) LOT

'I learned how to weave, sew and darn socks. I darned holes and was really good [at sewing]. I learned a lot.'

¹⁰⁹ The research subjects generally shared fond memories of school. One research subject shared may negative memories.

Annual school reports from the Halifax School for the Deaf make repeated reference to the ‘family-like atmosphere’ at the school. They document the rich variety of activities pupils were involved in such as Christmas and Easter celebrations, movies, games, shadow plays, and story-telling sessions. There were regular visitors and guest speakers; (5) is one subject’s reference to this family-like atmosphere.

(5) Pro. 1 CHILD GROW-UP ME (fragment) **HAPPY+++ SCHOOL (MSL)**

SCHOOL YES

YES SAME+++ FAMILY SAME FAMILY SAME SISTER (MSL)

BROTHER (MSL)

SEE-MY-POINT?

SCHOOL (fragment) SCHOOL (MSL)+ REALLY-GOOD (one hand)

(MSL) REALLY-GOOD (two hands) (MSL)

FRIEND (fragment) FRIEND (MSL) LOTS (MSL)+ FRIEND (MSL)+++

GOOD FRIEND (MSL) SEE? SAME HOME SEE?

Pro. 1 POSS. 1 LIKE HAVE POSS. 1 DEAF DEAF (MSL) FRIENDS

(MSL)

DEAF (MSL) FRIEND (hybrid) FRIEND (MSL)+ GREAT LIKE HOME

‘I grew up and I was happy at school. [Life there] was like a family and it was like [living with] sisters and brothers. You know what I mean? I had a really good time! I had a lot of friends. It was just like home. I like my Deaf friends. [Being with my] Deaf friends was like [being at] home to me.’

The subjects’ narratives supported the important role of the residential school. The researcher’s visit to one of the subject’s homes revealed a very large portrait of a

former headmaster at the Halifax School for the Deaf. The portrait, which had once
was hung in the large hall of the school on Gottigen Street in Halifax, now filled
almost an entire wall in their mobile home. It was purchased at the public auction held
when the Halifax school closed.

Page's (1993) conclusions of explicitly-stated, favourable accounts of family did
not figure prominently among MSL users. Considering what was previously
mentioned about family relationships, one would not expect it to. Page suggests that
the concept of *familisimo* ('familiasm' or 'superfamily') is characteristic of and
specific to Hispanic Deaf culture (Page 1993: 207). It separates them from the
American Deaf community. MSL users were more likely to indicate a sense of
alienation from immediate family members. In (6) the speaker, the same speaker in
(5), contrasts her fond memories of school to less favourable ones of life at home,
where life was lonely due to a lack of communication.

- (6) Pro. 1 AWAY HOME REALLY-DIFFERENT LONELY++
POSS. 1 MOTHER (MSL)+ (head shake, blank face, frown) SIGN
(head shake, blank face, frown, shrug) WRITE-BACK-AND-FORTH
'I went home. It was really different [at home] – lonely. My mother didn't
know signed language. She didn't know any sign. No communication. We
wrote back and forth.'

Subjects also related some of the harsh conditions they endured at school, such
as long walks to church and being outside, ice skating and walking to the Botanical
Gardens, in cold and rainy weather. Evidence of this is presented in (7).

- (7) EVERY-SUNDAY (fragment) SUNDAY (MSL) FINISH
CHURCH (MSL) FINISH CHURCH (MSL)

PROTESTANT (MSL) CHURCH (MSL) FINISH EAT

GIRL (MSL) CL: **line up and walk, a long way P-U-B-L-I-C DUCK**

WALK (MSL)

WALK NO-MATTER VERY-COLD RAIN (MSL) NO-MATTER

‘Every Sunday we walked to church, the Protestant church. After church we ate. And then the girls lined up and walked a long way to the Public Gardens [in downtown Halifax]. We’d walk no matter what, even if it was very cold or raining.’

Subjects also spoke of being harassed by other pupils, of being unjustly punished, and of ill-behaved classmates who stole their clothes and candy. One subject talked about a very strict sewing teacher, another about an unfair houseparent and another about a class competition, where a dishonest class cheated and won and the honest class lost. Negativity extended to activities where there was no consideration for subjects’ deafness, as seen in (8).

(8) **BUT ALL LIPREADING++++**

EARPHONE gestures (putting on earphones and plugging them in)

EARPHONE SPEECH+++++++ (mimes listening and speaking)

EXHAUSTED BORED

‘[In school, in speech lessons,] it was all lipreading. We had to put on earphones and [try to] listen and speak. It was exhausting and boring.’

Ongoing connections to friends from school and to members of the Deaf community remain important for MSL users. When speakers mentioned someone from their social network, they frequently added a current update or situated that

person within the present community. In (9) a subject is discussing feuding classmates at school. She introduces a character in her narrative and then she goes off topic and discusses who she married and she speaks of her husband's present deteriorating health. Even more significant is that this narrative, an account of an argument, ends with the statement that many years later this rude classmate apologized to the narrator for her bad behaviour. In this case, the subject not only gains personal closure, but in spite of her complaints about other MSL users, ultimately, she portrays the members of her social network in a positive light, as a people who are concerned about and committed to one another.

(9) FRIEND GOOD (MSL)

OTHER-GIRL MARRY H-E-N-R-I MIND thumbs down

A-L-Z-M NOW

D-I-S-E-A-S-E A-L-Z-H-E-I-M-E-R

SAME Pro. 1 AGE (MSL) 64, 66 (shakes head) 67 (MSL) AGE (MSL),

(runs her hand over her head from front to back) HALF FRENCH

H-E-N-R-I LAST L-E-B-L-A-N-C

Pro. 2 GOOD (MSL) #C-B

.... **GIRL (MSL) BAD**

(indication to the right side) **GIRL SORRY+**

'She was a good friend. The other girl, she married Henri... His mind is gone.

He has Alzheimer's now. He's the same age as I am – 64, 66, [no]- 67

year old. He's still got a full head of hair. He's half French [Acadian], [His

name is] Henri LeBlanc. She was a good friend, the one from Cape Breton.

.... She was a bad girl. [Later] she [said she] was sorry.'

Language is a strong connection for MSL users. In the data, one research subject mentions her upcoming 40th wedding anniversary party. She says that although some Deaf Maritimers have moved to Ontario, she looks forward to seeing them at her party, but what she looks most forward to seeing is lots of MSL. The role of Deaf elders in a community is not to be underestimated. Ramsey and Ruiz Bedolla (2006) noted that Deaf children in Mexico benefit from interaction with older, more experienced signers who serve as language models and can expose them to Deaf cultural values. Similar observations have been made for Deaf communities elsewhere. MSL users respected their Deaf elders. A subject in this study recalls that when she was at the School for the Deaf in Halifax, once a month, members of the Halifax Association for the Deaf (HAD) came to the school for a meeting. She often ran into them and they chatted. She recalls these conversations fondly. Many years later, after she had finished school, she attended a meeting and was surprised that some of the members remembered her. The present, younger generation of Deaf people in Nova Scotia has little or no contact with Deaf elders. They are unaware of MSL, and its culture; they are unaware of its value.

In this research the subjects' shared experiences contribute to a sense of a group identity. Despite the significant changes in their surroundings, they continue to be bound together by their language and their past experiences. This bond perpetuates, to some extent, their ongoing use of MSL signs and their perception of MSL as a distinct language. It provides them with a unique and distinct individual and group identity.

6. 2 'The Self' and 'the Other'

Analyses of the data reveal how language is used to set this group apart. Analyses also reveal how language use is used to maintain connections to others who are similar.

The MSL users studied in this research constantly bridge different social networks and negotiate their mixed identity. A unique MSL identity is central to their narratives. Reoccurring themes in their discourse include an expression of disapproval of those who have shifted away from MSL and disapproval of those who are uninterested in MSL. Previous examples show that MSL users have been influenced by ASL users and that the functional viability of MSL is reduced. The analyses in this section reveal that in spite of this, individuals can and do retain and maintain an MSL identity.

One method to express one's identity is to establish polarized entities of 'self' and 'other'. Gumperz (1982) notes the tendency for majority and minority languages to be associated with "we" and "they" codes and "in-groups" and "out-groups" (Gumperz 1982:66). Most Deaf people in the Maritimes today perceive MSL users as forming the out-group while ASL users form the in-group. The out-group has marginal status.

Access to a Deaf community with its language, status, traditions and values system is the means by which a Deaf person affirms her identity. Ladd (2003) states that access to Deaf traditions is an important step in establishing a Deaf "historical self", 'a self' which is the origin of "literally life-confirming experiences" (Ladd 2003: 315). The youngest people in the community actively using MSL signs are in their 50s. They struggle to use MSL against the strong presence of ASL. Younger Deaf people in Nova Scotia today know little about a residential school experience, an oral education, religious education or active participation in Deaf clubs. Current Deaf culture has changed drastically.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Frishberg (1988) notes that new traditions and stories may come out of the more recent experiences of Deaf adults who are mainstreamed; she notes how these conditions differ from the past experience of an isolated Deaf group in a residential school.

6. 2. 1 ‘The Self’ and ‘the Other’: Older MSL Users and Younger ASL Users

Different cultural views between MSL users and ASL users come to light in (10).

The speaker relates encountering Deaf youngsters in a mall in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. In her narrative, there are two identities – hers, the ‘self’ and theirs, ‘the other’. These two different identities reflect the divisions in the local Deaf community.

(10) #OK RECENT++ Pro. 1 GO SHOPPING (fragment)

SHOPPING (MSL)++

Pro. 1 SHOP++++ LOOK-AROUND SPOT-SOMEONE-SIGNING

APPROACH Pro. 2 (plural) HELLO

(Perspective shift) (they look signer up and down)

(Perspective shift) SAME MY GROUP PEOPLE++

GOOD++ POSS. 1 (MSL) NAME Pro. 2 NAME

(Perspective shift) (no reaction; blank look on face)

(Perspective shift) Pro. 2 (plural) WHAT (MSL) GO (MSL) SCHOOL

DEAF SCHOOL (MSL)+

(Perspective shift) Shake head N-O++++ ENTER-SPREAD (incorrect sign for mainstream) SCHOOL ENTER-SPREAD+ SPREAD

ENTER++ SCHOOL++ ENTER (One girl tries to sign mainstream correctly) SCHOOL

(Character shift back) Oh ENTER SCHOOL MAINSTREAM SCHOOL

Pro. 2 SCHOOL (fragment) Pro. 2 (plural) MEET++ OLD PERSONS++

(Perspective shift) (head shake) N-O+ Pro. 1 NOT BOTHER THEM

Poss. 1 (ASL) BETTER POSS. 1

BETTER +++++

(Perspective shift back to narrator) Pro. 2 REJECT (MSL) Pro. 1

WHAT (MSL) MEAN Pro. 2 REJECT (MSL) Pro. 1

YES++

BUT Pro. 2 DON'T-KNOW ABOUT (fragment)

Pro. 2 (strong emphasis) DON'T-KNOW HALIFAX

HALIFAX (MSL) SCHOOL SCHOOL (MSL) GOOD (MSL)

SCHOOL (MSL) GOOD (MSL) FUN

GOOD (MSL)

Pro. 1 TALK-BACK-AND-FORTH BUT....

'Recently I went shopping. I was shopping and I looked around and spotted people signing. I approached them and said 'hello'. They looked me up and down. I said 'We're the same – good.' I asked them what school they went to – a Deaf school? 'No' they said, 'We're mainstreamed [incorrectly signed].'
I replied 'Oh, mainstreamed...Do you meet older [Deaf] people? They said 'No, we don't bother with them. Mine [signed language/generation/language?] is better'. I said, "Do you reject me?! What do you mean? Do you reject me? You don't know about... don't know about The Halifax School [for the Deaf] was good. It was fun!' I talked back and forth, but.... (conversation dwindles off).

A significant component of this conflict-ridden social encounter is the narrator's use of perspective shift. Perspective shift is "A well-described referencing strategy in ASL is that signers locate referents in their articulation space, and then physically shift their body toward that location. When this takes place, the perspective of that referent is enacted and first-person pronouns can be used to signal the third-

person referent” (Janzen 2004:149). In other words, the speaker plays different roles in the conversation. She shifts her shoulders slightly from side to side, according to the party she represents, and moves her eye gaze moves up and down, down slightly for the youngsters and up for herself. As she moves from role to role, the narrator presents two contrasting points of view, as she perceives them.

Eye gaze plays additional functions. For example, when ‘the other’, the youths, look her over up and down, the narrator’s eye movements suggest hesitation and disapproval. Despite introductions, the other party members remain nameless and their replies to some of the narrator’s questions are not forthcoming. This is connected to the narrator’s representation of ‘the other’. They represent a collective ‘other’, a group of people who stand in opposition to her centralized ‘self’. They represent a different perspective.

Conflict builds as the differences between the two sides emerge. Initially, the narrator is friendly. She creates an amiable atmosphere by approaching strangers. They, however, are somewhat less enthusiastic. They do respond to her greeting. They look her up and down. Although their response may not be unusual for younger people approached by unfamiliar elders in a public place, this is clearly not the reaction the speaker expects of other Deaf people, regardless of their age. At first, she chooses to see and express their commonalities. They are bound together by their deafness, use of signed language, and Deaf culture. She is quick to point out that they are “[the] SAME.” The respondents, however, do not perceive this. The narrator continues employing conventions common to Deaf greetings such as exchanging names and schools, a means of indicating one’s Deaf background. She initiates the conversation. When she asks them if they attend a Deaf school, they merely shake their heads to indicate that they do not. They fingerspell ‘N-O.’ Their signed language

skills are lacking, they are not willing to use signed language, or this is another examples of the narrator's point of view as expressed through language. Through weak signed language skills, real or otherwise, their unwillingness to cooperate comes to light. The differences between the two parties are emphasized. When the youngsters tell her that they are mainstreamed, they do not produce the correct sign for MAINSTREAM. This is used by the speaker to portray the youngster's weak signing skills or their indifference. The narrator, aware that there are no longer any residential schools anywhere in the Maritime Provinces, asks them if they attend a Deaf school. Perhaps she thinks they are from Newfoundland, Quebec, Ontario or elsewhere in Canada, where there are still schools for Deaf people. It is also quite likely that her questions are simply an attempt to initiate friendly conversation. She pursues with additional questions such as "Do you meet older [Deaf] people?", also, no doubt aware that one of the effects of the closure of residential schools has been a substantial decrease the amount of intergenerational contact. By asking this question, she infers that meeting older Deaf people is a good thing. She feels that she has something to contribute to an encounter with younger Deaf people. For example, perhaps she can enlighten them about past experiences in the School for the Deaf and about the experiences of older Deaf in the community. Their reply is the turning point of the discourse, because not only do they reply 'NO' repeatedly and shake their heads, further negation, but they boldly declare 'We don't bother with them [old people]' and 'Mine is better.' 'Better' is reinforced by the narrator's repetition. There is no clear indication, in this reconstructed conversation, of what exactly MINE is – my language, ASL, my school or my generation - but the context and the narrator's subsequent claims about the quality of her school show that she interprets 'MINE' as 'my school'. The narrator's effort to connect to and identify with the Deaf youngsters

has failed. She is painfully aware of the fact that these Deaf youngsters have little interest in her and her past experiences and they want little to do with her.

It is at this point that the narrator clearly takes offense. She begins to assert and promote her MSL self, her group, MSL users, their values and their language. This contact has brought about a loss of face she does not willingly accept. She attempts to defend herself. She feels compelled to assert her MSL identity and defend other MSL users. She does this by using MSL. Her language shows a sudden reduction in the amount of accommodation toward the ASL users. There is an increase in her use of MSL from this point onward. Her questions move from those of a general nature e.g., 'What are your names?' and 'Where do you go to school?' to direct questions of a personal nature e.g., 'Are you rejecting me?' Her signs become emphatic; she asks 'WHAT?!' and states 'HUH!' A typically one-handed sign, 'DON'T-KNOW' becomes two-handed; her facial expressions become more expressive, and her stare intense. She declares 'YES!' and she poses rhetorical questions such as 'What do you mean?' Her questions require and receive no answers. The speaker loses her train of thought and is forced to abandon her utterance e.g., 'about...' She uses strong language such as 'YOU', emphasized by tense, sharp movement, and 'DON'T-KNOW'. She repeats important points two and three times – that the Halifax residential school was a good school and that it was fun - should this have failed to be understood from her statement of how good it was. She speaks in a quickly-articulated succession of statements, with no indication of interruptions, replies or reactions from her addressees. She cuts short their only contribution of 'Well...'. The previously inquisitive question-followed-by-answer structure of the conversation is replaced by a now-I-am-going-to-tell-you-like monologue. She changes her strategy from one of her asking questions to one of her telling her

addressees what she thinks they should know. What began as a dialogue, with the perspective shift moving between characters, ends with the narrator stating '*I*' talked back and forth, not '*we*' talked back and forth'.

More significantly, the story ends inconclusively on the word 'but,' the implication being that although the parties may have continued to make small talk, they failed to connect and to communicate. By this point, the interaction was essentially over. This narrative, with its clear division into an MSL 'self' and 'an other', as related by a member of the minority out-group, brings to light the differences between these two Deaf generations and these two communities in Nova Scotia. This meeting dwindles to an unsatisfactory end. The manner in which it ends reflects the distance between the in-group and the out-group and the two different generations.

The separation of the 'self' and 'other' is evident in the subject's use of language. The use of the different forms, MSL and ASL, in the previous narrative passage is clearly related to who the addressees are, their identity and attitude, and the topic of discussion, although, the whole narrative is, of course, the speaker's subjective version of what transpired. The original content of this conversation, the forms of signs, as well the behaviour of the participants is replicated through her eyes. Her identity is the fundamental element in the reenactment of this interaction. When the conflict heightens she becomes defensive and her MSL identity comes to the forefront through her use of MSL signs.

The narrator's first utterance is entirely in ASL, despite the fact that equivalent MSL signs are still in use e.g., signs for 'people', 'good' and 'name'. The narrator chooses to accommodate her addressees. When she asks the youngsters what school they attend, she also uses ASL, despite that fact that signs for 'school' and 'Deaf', as

noted in Chapter five, mostly frequently appear among MSL users in MSL, not ASL. There is some mixing of linguistic systems e.g., 'what' and 'go'. It can be concluded that initially the narrator chooses ASL, hoping to establish a connection with the ASL users; when she fails, she reverts to MSL even using it in places she might otherwise not use it anymore.

Despite a willingness to accommodate the addressees, the speaker also wants to assert who she is. Following the initial introduction of SCHOOL in ASL, she then signs SCHOOL in MSL and repeats this. She reveals herself as an MSL user. Use of ASL ensures and enhances comprehension and communication - up until the turning point - the point at which the subject is hurt. When this occurs, her use of MSL increases significantly. Until this point she has used only a few MSL signs e.g., 'what', 'go' and 'school'. This number quickly more than doubles to ten MSL signs e.g., 'reject', used three times, 'good', used three times, 'school', used twice, 'what', and 'Halifax'.¹¹¹ As previously noted in Chapter Five, the nature of the MSL signs in the latter part of the discourse are of a personal nature and they relate to the signer's personal experiences and opinions e.g., 'reject', 'Halifax', 'good' and 'school'.¹¹²

6. 2. 2 'The Self' and 'the Other': MSL Users Who Have Become ASL Users

Further evidence of 'the self' and 'the other' appears in another narrative provided by the same speaker. In (11) she relates how ASL was formally introduced into the region's educational system. ASL was taught to Deaf students at the Interprovincial School for the Deaf, in Amherst, in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Due to previous,

¹¹¹ As previously mentioned, HALIFAX has both 'old' and 'new' signs, as they are referred to locally, the former used by MSL users and the latter mainly by ASL users and people from outside of Nova Scotia.

¹¹² There is also some evidence of interference of ASL in MSL. Interference works in both directions. The subjects naturally converse in a mixture of ASL and MSL, but for the purpose of this study, they were informed that the researcher was looking specifically at MSL and it is assumed that the speakers made an effort to use MSL.

ongoing language contact, the influence of ASL on MSL was felt long before the start of this formal instruction. But Deaf people, of the narrator's age, age 60 and over, never received formal instruction in ASL (Elizabeth Doull, personal communication 10 March 2007); most of them, however, do know ASL signs from previous language contact and from what they have since adapted in the process of language shift. They have picked up ASL from face-to-face interaction with ASL. There has also been increased exposure to ASL via interpretation on television, interpreters in the field and signed church services.

(11) #OK IN SCHOOL TIME **OVER-THERE**

M-S-L Pro. 1 LOVE

BUT M-A-R-V...(pause) M-A-R-V-E-N S-P-E-N-C-E-R

Pro. 2 COME THERE SCHOOL TEACH

TEACH-IN-A-SEMI-CIRCLE

INFLUENCE START

WRONG TEACH (MSL) NO++++

DISGUSTED+++

CHANGE ++++ A-S-L

BUT S-P-E-N-C-E-R FORGET OLD PEOPLE EVERYWHERE

BUT Pro.1 LOOK-AFTER Pro. 1

KEEP MSL YES++

**OTHER THERE+ OLD PEOPLE THERE++ (points in various
different directions)**

**Pro. 1 (fragment) THINK OLD PEOPLE THINK SHRINK TWO
(fragment)**

HALF DIE DIE (MSL) SOME DIE DIE (MSL)++

‘Ok, in school, one time, over there [in Amherst] ...I love MSL. But Marven Spencer [Spence] came to the school [in Amherst] and taught [ASL]; he taught it in a semi-circle. That’s where the influence of ASL started. It was wrong of him to teach ASL. No! I was disgusted by this. There were a lot of ASL changes. But Spence forgot old people everywhere. But I have looked after myself and kept my MSL- yes, I have. There are old people out there and there and there [MSL users]. [They are out there]. I think they are shrinking in number. Half of them have died... Some of them have died’. Marven Spencer represents the other. [His correct surname is Spence].

Born in Nova Scotia in 1933, Marven LeRoy Spence was educated at the Halifax School for the Deaf from 1944 until 1948, after he became deaf at age nine. He attended a public high school in Springhill, Nova Scotia (Carbin 1996:130). Despite the narrator’s disapproval of Spence’s teaching of ASL, he was “a respected leader in the [Nova Scotia] Deaf community” (Carbin 1996:130) and he is described as “a man of towering intellect and one possessing an unusual degree of leadership ability” (Interprovincial School for the Deaf 1969). He was the first Nova Scotian to graduate from Gallaudet University in 1956; he received a Bachelor of Science (Carbin 1996:36). He returned to work at the School for the Deaf in Halifax as a mathematics, science and social studies teacher from 1956 until the school’s closure in 1961 (Carbin 1996:125). He was one of only thirteen Deaf teachers to be employed at the school. He completed a Bachelor of Education in Nova Scotia in 1967 (Carbin 1996: 131), and became an assistant superintendent of the Interprovincial School for the Deaf in Amherst. He was “the first deaf person in 20th century Canada to hold a senior management position in a school” from 1963 until his death in 1968 (Carbin

1996: 503). Spence was posthumously awarded a Life Membership in the Eastern Canada Association of the Deaf at its 25th Biennial Convention in Moncton, New Brunswick in 1969 (July 24-26) (Carbin 1996:131) and he is recognized in the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf Hall of Fame “for his significant contribution to the Canadian Deaf community” (Carbin 1996:229).

Despite his respected status in the Deaf community, the speaker criticizes Spence. She feels he betrayed his MSL roots; this upsets her. Once an MSL user, at Gallaudet University, Spence learned and used ASL. Upon returning to the Maritimes, he shifted his loyalty and encouraged others to use ASL. He formally taught ASL at the Interprovincial School. The narrator’s professed love for MSL is contrasted with her disapproval of Spence. She and Spence share similar roots, but they chose different paths. The narrator has remained in Nova Scotia and maintained loyalty toward MSL and the MSL community, whereas Spence did not. Therefore, Spence represents ‘the other’. He represents Deaf people who have left the province, some of whom have since returned, and those Deaf people who have chosen ASL over MSL. There is an underlying implication that he and others like him have little concern for MSL, its users and their future.

The narrator situates the incident she describes in time and place by using the signs TIME and OVER-THERE (MSL), a distant location. The school is located on the Bay of Fundy and the speaker is located rurally, just outside of Halifax. This distance signifies more than just a physical distance; it also represents the distance between the two different Deaf communities, ASL users and MSL users. The subject begins to introduce the Interprovincial School for the Deaf, but adds an aside – a declaration of how much she loves MSL. In other words, she establishes ‘her self’,

her identity and her opinion prior to the introduction 'the other', who is represented through the naming of Marven Spence.

The narrator's opinion is expressed explicitly in her utterance 'Spence[r] forgot about older people everywhere.' When the narrator adds that they [MSL users] are still out there, she points emphatically in all directions - 'there,' 'there' and 'there'. She implies 'He forgot about me too'. The narrator contrasts what 'the other,' Spence has done to what she has done when she says 'But, I have looked after myself and 'I' have retained, 'kept' my MSL'. The speaker mentions the shrinking number of MSL signers, providing an additional reason for why MSL should be preserved, because it is in danger of disappearing. In this narrative, 'the self' and 'the other' form two distinct groups. 'The self' is 'the other' – the speaker, the narrator, an MSL user and others like me, while 'the other' is Spence and those like him who chose ASL over MSL.

The division between 'the self and other' comes to light in speaker's use of language. She uses an MSL sign to describe the location of the Interprovincial School (in Amherst) – OVER-THERE (MSL), also 'far away', indicated by an extended arm. She introduces the school from her perspective, from Halifax and through the eyes of an MSL user. The sign for SCHOOL (the one in Amherst), however, is consistently articulated in ASL because it is 'the other'. In the same speaker's discourse elsewhere, SCHOOL appears in MSL form because it is connected to her MSL identity. The only other time this speaker consistently uses SCHOOL (ASL) is in her attempt to accommodate Deaf youngsters she encounters in a mall (see (10)).

Inherent in the 'other' school and ASL are elements foreign to the speaker, such as different teaching methods and non-residential living arrangements. In Amherst, Deaf pupils originally resided at the school, but for financial reasons, this

arrangement came to an end. Younger pupils were often billeted with local families and older ones lived together in group homes. Some families with Deaf children relocated to Amherst and their children became day students at the school. From the speaker's point of view, the school in Amherst and ASL represent 'the other'. When the speaker signs TEACH, the first time, another sign that in her repertoire is usually in MSL, it too takes an ASL form because it is connected to 'the other'. As the discourse, the narrator slips back into MSL signs for school-related concepts, seemingly because these terms are deeply entrenched in her identity.

The division between 'the self and other' is also emphasized by the narrator's drawing of geographical and time-related boundaries in utterances such as 'this is where it happened' and 'this is when the influence of ASL began'. Of course, in reality, the time and location of where and when ASL began to influence MSL cannot be pinpointed. Although the incident she describes was significant, it was not single-handedly responsible for the introduction of ASL in Nova Scotia, nor was it single-handedly behind the demise of MSL. As previously established, contact with ASL users goes back much further in time.

The speaker refers to the specific manner in which ASL was taught, with the pupils sitting in a semi-circle facing the teacher, yet there is no reference to her source of this information or evidentiality e.g., 'I assume' or 'I heard' is presented. Her presentation of this incident in first person gives her the credibility to assert an opinion contrary to what most people believe. Her choice of language is strong. 'No', she says, 'He was wrong to teach [it - ASL], I was 'disgusted' by this, and 'There was change - ASL'. She repeats NO four times, DISGUSTED three times and CHANGE four times; she presents a slow and deliberately emphasized fingerspelling of just what she disapproves of 'A-S-L'. Ironically, in spite of her professed retention

of MSL, she does what she berates Spence for doing – she uses ASL. The narrator uses ASL for PEOPLE (twice) and THINK, OTHER, DIE, the last of which she self-corrects to MSL - all signs where MSL variants exist. Perhaps her use of ASL is habitual, the result of language interference, or a manifestations of her insecurity as a minority, out-group member, particularly one who is criticizing a respected member of the majority in-group. Her insecurity comes to light in her use of language where she says ‘I ‘think’ the old people are shrinking in number’- surely, as a member of that group, she knows this to be a demographic fact.

6. 2. 3 ‘The Self’ and ‘the Other’: MSL Users and Non-signers

Previous examples separate different people, (10) separates ‘the self’ from a whole generation of ASL users and (11) separates ‘the self’ from an ‘other’, an individual. In (12), the speaker separates ‘the self’ and another MSL user, a hearing person, from ‘the other,’ non-MSL users. In other words, status as Deaf or hearing is irrelevant. In (12) the narrator portrays ‘the other’ through the use of ASL. An MSL user relates how he and his daughter ordered wood, which they proceeded to chop and store, with help from her son, the narrator’s grandson, and her cousin, the narrator’s nephew.¹¹³ The speaker’s daughter knows MSL. Her mother is also a native MSL user. Thus, she is a part of a collective ‘self’. This ‘self’ opposes ‘the other’. They include the speaker’s grandson and father (Another person, a nephew, is also briefly presented and discussed).

(12) Signer 1: DAUGHTER (MSL) Poss. 1 T-A-M-M-Y NAME

PHONE (gestures talking)

Signer 2: LIKE WANT

I would like... want...

¹¹³ Excerpts from this narrative also appear elsewhere.

(Other participant interferes)

(points at signer) A-S-L NOT-RIGHT (MSL) (points at signer)

WANT (MSL) ++ SIGN LANGUAGE WANT (MSL)

Signer 1: N-E... NEED 4 C-O-R-D WOOD (MSL)

ONE MOMENT BRING TRUCK

Perspective shift: BRING STORE-AWAY PAY 1 C-O-R-D (mouths 'How much?')

Perspective shift: 50-DOLLARS

Perspective shift: FINAL TOTAL 200-DOLLAR GIVE FINISHED

(pause)

DAUGHTER (MSL) DO-YOU-MIND ASK DO-YOU-MIND? (stronger emphasis) HELP (MSL) DAUGHTER (MSL)

CHAIN-SAW++

Perspective shift: DAUGHTER (MSL) DO-YOU-MIND?

Perspective shift: S-U-R-E FINE

(pause) rubbing hands together

BRING CHAIN-SAW

Poss. 1 GRANDFATHER^#S-N BOY (fragment) BOY (MSL) 6 (MSL)

AGE (MSL) AGE CL: WALK-TOWARD-Pro. 1

CHAIN-SAW+

Perspective shift: (look up) Pro. 2 FIVE-DOLLAR GIVE-Pro. 1

Perspective shift: (mouth open, puzzled look) FOR FIVE-DOLLAR?

Perspective shift: WORK (ASL) WORK (MSL) (runs hand along forehead - sweat-on-forehead) MUCH WORK (MSL) MUCH (briefly runs hand along forehead)

Perspective shift: (looks down) shake head – Nah

Perspective shift: (nods adamantly) GIVE-IN DOLLAR Pro. 2-GIVE- Pro.1

THANK-YOU

6, 8, 6 (MSL) AGE (MSL) AGE

Perspective shift: NOT SAME Poss. 1 (fragment) FATHER PAY

NEVER (MSL) SAME-WAY

CHAIN-SAW (*lines up wood*) DONE

DAUGHTER (MSL) BRING TRAILER

COUSIN C-O-U-I (fragment) NAME (hybrid) J-A-S-O-N

TRAILER S-P-O-R-T SAW EXPLAIN-HOW (gestures pulling the cord on
the chain saw) MACHINE POWER

BRING LOG HELP (MSL)

HELP C-O-N-N-E-R DO-YOU-MIND? **HELP (MSL) MOTHER (MSL)**

Pro. 1 STORE-AWAY WOOD++

S-N STORE-AWAY FOR WINTER

GET-IT-ALL-DONE (MSL) PILE- UP DONE (MSL)

LATER-ON (MSL) ASK-Pro.1 (MSL) 6 (MSL) AGE (MSL) BOY (MSL)

WANT GO SHOP (MSL) ICE-CREAM

Perspective shift: (looks down) WILLING GIVE-IN GET-IN-CAR DRIVE

+++

Perspective shift: (looks up, taps shoulder) REMEMBER Pro. 2-GIVE-Pro. 1

FIVE-DOLLAR

Perspective shift: (looks down, puzzled look) Poss. 1 MONEY B-A-K

(fragment) Pro. 1-GIVE-Pro. 2 (gestures taking money out of pocket) GIVE

BOY (MSL)

Perspective shift: (looks up) TELL-Pro. 2 Pro. 1 WORK (MSL) (gestures
sweat on forehead) WANT (MSL) (pause) NEED

Perspective shift: Pro. 1-GIVE-Pro. 2

Perspective shift: Pro. 1-GIVE-Pro. 2

SHOP BROWSE FINALLY CHOOSE SPECIFIC ICE-CREAM DELICIOUS
(MSL) PAY CL: SCOOP ON CONE

DRIVE (smile) HAPPY LICK-ICE-CREAM

GIVE FIVE DOLLAR (shrug) OH-WELL

HAPPY DRIVE **ARRIVE-HOME (MSL)**

‘Signer 1: My daughter, named Tammy, phoned and said...

Signer 2: That's ASL. It's not right. [They, the researcher and addressee] want
MSL, signed language.

Signer 1: ‘I need 4 cords of wood’. They replied ‘Just a moment ’ and said to
bring a truck. I brought one to take the wood from the store and asked how
much it cost. They said \$50 [per cord]. I paid \$200 in total. I asked my
daughter if she minded helping me. [We needed a] chain saw. She said sure -
fine. I brought the chain saw and cut the wood. My grandson, a 6 year- old
came over to me and saw the chain saw. He asked ‘Will you give me \$5 [to
help you?]' I was quite surprised. ‘Five dollars?’ I asked. ‘It’s a lot of hard
work,’ he said. ‘No’ I replied. ‘Come on’, he said, ‘give me money. Thanks.’
[This is a] 6 year old...8...6 year old! My father never would have paid me
the same way [for such work]! I finished cutting the wood. My daughter and
[her] cousin Jason brought a sports trailer and I explained how I’d cut the
wood and I asked them to help bring the logs and stack them. I asked my
grandson, Conner, ‘Do you mind helping your mother and I store away the

wood? Son, we need to store it away for the winter. We should get it all done'. We piled up it all up. Later he, the six year old, asked me if I wanted go to the store and get ice cream. I said 'ok' and got in the car and drove, and on the way there, he said 'Remember you said you were going to give me \$5?' 'Of my money?' I thought. 'You told me if I worked hard... I'd like it; I need it', he said. I gave it to him. We got to the store, looked over the ice cream and chose a delicious flavour, had a scoop on a cone and drove home happily eating the ice cream. It cost me \$5 but I was happy when I got home'.

The speaker's daughter, Tammy, is introduced immediately, by name. The sign DAUGHTER (MSL) and its subsequent appearance four times establishes her MSL identity. The narrator even 'speaks' for her as she phones in an order for the wood. In comparison, the identity of her son (the narrator's grandson) is gradual. The boy is introduced about a third of the way through the narrative as 'my grandson' and 'a boy' in ASL signs (BOY is also self-corrected to MSL). He is also referred to twice as 'a six-year-old boy'; even when 'boy' appears in MSL it is followed by the articulation of 'year,' in reference to his age, in ASL. (The third time his age is mentioned, the sign 'year' is dropped). The narrator's choice and use of ASL establishes the grandson as an 'other.' Only half way through the discourse is the grandson's name, Conner, presented, in spite of the fact that he is a main character of this story.

The narrator's daughter is an extension of his 'self'. As the eldest child of two Deaf native MSL users, she knows and uses MSL. She cooperates with the narrator from the beginning. She would have phoned to order the wood. She agrees to help, not hesitating for a moment, with replies of 'sure' and 'fine' to her father's request for

physically demanding labour – in contrast to the grandson’s reluctance to help. HELP is articulated in MSL. The manner in which the narrator rubs his hands together illustrates the enthusiasm and positive attitude with which these two people approach the task at hand. This is contrasted to the grandson’s unenthusiastic manner. The narrator’s reference to his daughter mainly in MSL indicates that she supports him and they work together as a team. Whether referred to as DAUGHTER (MSL) or as MOTHER (MSL) [of the boy], she is referred to by an MSL sign. She shares an MSL identity with her father despite their differences (He is Deaf; she is hearing); they have shared codes of language and behaviour.

The daughter plays a pivotal role. While her identity is similar to that of the narrator’s, she also serves as a point of reference and comparison for ‘the other’. The boy, in contrast to ‘the self,’ the narrator and the daughter, is uncooperative. He makes his presence felt only through his curiosity about the chain saw. His offer to help is accompanied by a demand for payment, an arrangement unacceptable to the narrator. Although the boy attempts to justify this with ‘It is hard work’, the narrator can not help but compare his grandson’s generation to his own father’s generation. In mentioning his father, the speaker shares his perception of how intergenerational behaviour has changed. He states that his father, also portrayed through an ASL sign, never would have paid him for such work. References to the identity of his grandson and his father made using ASL further reinforce the existence of generational differences. This is further aided by the narrator’s perspective. His presentation of this story is tied to who he is and to his point of view. His opinion and actions are presented through MSL signs (e.g., NEVER, GET-IT-ALL-DONE, LATER-ON and ARRIVE HOME. At the end of the narrative, the speaker gives in, makes concessions to changing ways and pays his grandson the money he has requested.

The form of the sign used, MSL or ASL, is related to the narrator's portrayal of 'the self' and 'the other'. The presentation of kinship terms e.g. GRANDFATHER^{#S-N}, BOY, FATHER and COUSIN in ASL, where alternative forms in MSL exist and are frequently used is unusual. It has been previously established (See Chapter 5) that when speaking of kin, particularly immediate family, MSL users use MSL signs. These examples show a 'the self' that often takes an MSL form and an 'other' that takes ASL.

Mixed forms are also used. When the speaker's daughter is introduced, he uses DAUGHTER (MSL). The nephew, who has a marginal role, is introduced in ASL as the cousin of his daughter. The ASL, not the MSL, sign is used and it is reinforced by fingerspelling, up until the point at which 'cousin' is misspelled, and the fingerspelling is abandoned. In introducing his nephew's name, the narrator uses the hybrid form of NAME unique to the Maritimes, which begins with the location and movement of MSL, but ends with the location and movement of its ASL equivalent. The narrator's daughter, and to some extent her cousin, are an extension of his 'self' because they know some MSL (the daughter knows much more) and they are all in the same position. They are willing to work together. However, when the speaker introduces his grandson, he uses ASL. He is not like them. He thinks differently and is unwilling to work with them.

The speaker's narrative places 'the self' at the centre. He aligns his daughter with himself and then his nephew too when he cooperates. As the distance to the referent increases, so does the speaker's use of MSL. He moves from MSL, his daughter, to half MSL and half ASL, his nephew, to ASL, his grandson and his father, who know little MSL, but are also not ASL users. His use of MSL and ASL represents the different ways the different generations communicate, think and behave

as well as the narrator's connection to these people. He, his daughter and nephew are alike; his grandson and his father are unlike them. In this case, the inclusion of people-like-me with 'the self' is not defined by their deafness or hearing, but by individuals' willingness to align themselves with the narrator.

6. 2. 4 'The Self' and 'the Other': An Expression of Values

In the final example of 'the self' and 'the other' in (13), the speaker moves back and forth between MSL and ASL to separate 'the self' from 'the other'. There is no direct comparison of MSL to ASL users or MSL users to non-MSL users. All of the characters in this narrative are MSL users. The narrator's use of language is expressive of her values. What is good is described using MSL and what is bad is described using ASL. The narrator shares an unpleasant memory from the Halifax School for the Deaf. She speaks about two girls in her class who continually fought with one another.¹¹⁴ One was a friend; the other was not. The latter often picked on the narrator, and in this case, the narrator was dragged into the two girls' argument. As a result, the narrator was unjustly punished. Eventually, the unfriendly girl apologized.

(13) DAILY SCHOOL CLASS C-L-A-S-S

ONE GIRL (MSL) BAD

SAME NAME (MSL and ASL) (fragment)

Pro. 1 TELL-STORY

OTHER (MSL) GIRL (MSL) GOOD (MSL) #C-B (situated on left side)

(situated on right side) GIRL OTHER FROM #N-N-G (self-correction)

#N-G BAD

¹¹⁴ Excerpts from this narrative appear elsewhere in this research.

FIGHT (MSL) CLASH INSULT

FIGHT (Flat [O] HC) FIGHT (Flat [O] HC moves to an Open [5] HC)

FIGHT ++(MSL)

(indication to right side) Pro. 2 B-R-L TEMPER

INSULT Pro. 1 (strong intensity) TEMPER

D-O (fragment)

(indication to right side) Pro. 2 GIRL (MSL) BAD

(pause)

Pro. 1 FIGHT (MSL) INSULT+++ SPITE + INSULT++ SPITE+

TORMENT (MSL) Pro. 1 A-B-U-S-E HIT Pro. 1

Pro. 1 W-A-S HIT+ SPITE

PERSON HOUSEPARENT FROM HOLLAND START (fragment)

Pro. 1 SCARED FROM (indication to right side) GIRL (MSL) Pro. 2

(indication to left side) Pro. 2

STRAP SCARED FROM (indication to right side)

(still on right side) GIRL Pro. 2 SPITE Pro. 1 INSULT

GIRL (MSL) BAD

(indication to the right side) GIRL SORRY+

(indication to the left side) GIRL+ FROM # C-B GOOD (MSL) (two hands)

NAME (hybrid form) D-O-R-I-S GOOD (MSL) (two hands)

FRIEND GOOD (MSL)

‘At school in class there was a bad girl named... I’m going to tell you a story.

There was another girl who was good from Cape Breton. The other girl, the

bad girl was from New Glasgow. They would always fight with one another

and insult each other. They really fought. The one girl, Beryl had a bad temper. She insulted me. She had a temper. Do... (fragment)... She was bad. She regularly fought and insulted [others]. She was spiteful. She tormented, abused and hit me. I was hit out of spite. A houseparent from Holland strapped me [for my involvement in the incident]. I was scared of this girl. The other girl was also scared of her. She was spiteful and she insulted me. She was a bad girl. [Later] she [said she] was sorry. [However], the good girl from Cape Breton, named Doris, was a really good friend, a good friend [of mine].'

The narrator promptly establishes two contrasting positions through spatial location. One girl is situated on the right and the other on the left. Once these spatial referents have been established, pronominal signs are directed toward these loci. Here they have the additional function of distinguishing 'the self' from 'the other'. The narrator, who identifies with one side and not the other, reinforces the loci with the introduction of different home towns, Cape Breton on one side and New Glasgow on the other. The polarity of the girls' character and behaviour, one good, the other bad stand in contrast to one another. This is expressed linguistically through BAD (ASL) and GOOD (MSL).

In this narrative, GIRL (ASL) followed by BAD (ASL) is reduced to GIRL (ASL) and the character's identity remains clear. Only one of the two girls is bad. The speaker's indication to the right side, followed by GIRL (ASL) SORRY+ is also clear, for the context has already determined that only the bad girl owes the narrator an apology. In summary, the narrator's account of a girl who got her into trouble begins as GIRL (MSL) BAD (ASL) but is changed to GIRL (ASL).

The narrator's inconsistent use of GIRL may be due to ASL interference. She begins describing the good girl as GIRL (MSL) GOOD (MSL), but by the end of the discourse, the 'good girl' has also become GIRL (ASL); nevertheless, there is still no confusing her with the 'bad girl'. She remains 'good,' identified by her location on the signer's left and her positive behaviour. When the 'good girl' becomes GIRL (ASL), the narrator emphasizes her 'goodness' with a two handed sign, VERY-GOOD (MSL). Once it has been clearly established by use of MSL and ASL who each girl is and how they differ, there is a gradual increased use of ASL. This supports that both MSL and ASL are in use. When GIRL (MSL) is introduced by name, the signer articulates a hybrid form of NAME (MSL and ASL). She also uses a combination of MSL/ASL hybrid signs in "FRIEND (ASL) GOOD (MSL)". Throughout the speaker's narrative, GOOD appears only in MSL – good is MSL, and she feels that MSL is good. Once again, both MSL and ASL are used and the narrator switches back and forth.

This story is related emotionally some forty years after the event transpired, indicating that the aggressor's behaviour had a significant impact on the narrator. This situation, where one person disregards the feelings of another, parallels the situation of MSL Deaf community in Nova Scotia today, where ASL users disregard the feelings of MSL users. Just as one character in the story, Beryl, has more power, one language, ASL has more power. The narrator, a passive victim of unfair treatment, parallels the manner that MSL has passively become victim to the encroachment of ASL. Both of these situations share a central theme of unrest and division.

6. 3 Conclusion: Identity and ‘The Self’ and ‘the Other’

Through a look at MSL users’ discourse, it is evident that some MSL users possess a unique identity, based on their language and culture. They possess this in spite of the fact that MSL is hardly in use today. They possess this in spite of the fact that ASL use has encroached significantly upon MSL to the extent that little MSL use remains.

An MSL identity provides MSL users with a sense of security within a dynamically changing Deaf community. In addition to an individual MSL identity, some MSL signers possess a sense of group identity. In other words, they perceive themselves to be members of a distinct group. Faced with increased, intense ASL language contact, a shrinking presence in the community and less of a presence of MSL, this subcommunity is in danger of disappearing. As their social network of MSL is opens up to surrounding influences, it is likely MSL will suffer further loss.

It is observed through the research subjects’ discourse that at the centre of the identity of MSL users is a strong sense of ‘self,’ one visible through their use of language. This ‘self’ defines who they are. When confronted with conflict, MSL users may assert this ‘self,’ particularly when the conflict situation includes ‘the other,’ people who are unlike them. In the narratives of MSL users individuals asserted an MSL identity, and often contrasted this identity or ‘self’ to that of ‘the other’.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Discussion

7. Introduction of the Conclusions and Discussion

This chapter relates MSL to BSL and ASL and summarizes how processes of linguistic change, language contact and language shift have affected MSL as they can be determined by current MSL use. This chapter also summarizes the social and psychological factors that have affected MSL. It accounts for differences between MSL as it exists in accounts of signs in various dictionaries and as it exists in the use of those who know MSL. The present status of MSL in Nova Scotia is reviewed and predictions about the future of MSL are proposed. The inevitable disappearance of Maritime Sign Language is discussed. Finally, the significance of this research is revisited and some implications for the future are discussed.

7.1 MSL and BSL

In its earliest stages MSL descended from BSL and from other signed languages in the United Kingdom. Some MSL signs are still identical in form and meaning to standard, modern BSL. There is evidence of borrowing from BSL, including regionally-specific signs from a variety of regional dialects e.g., London (e.g., ONION), Newcastle (e.g., LOVELY), the northeast region of Britain (e.g., SWEET), Wales (e.g., EVERYWHERE), Scotland (e.g., SHOPPING) and Northern Ireland (e.g., HOW-OLD)). Some signs have remained unchanged (e.g., FATHER and MOTHER), while others, no longer in use in the United Kingdom, remain intact in MSL (e.g., ONION (MSL)). Some signs have modified and undergone standardization in BSL (e.g., LAUGH and WRONG), but not in MSL. Others signs, it seems, have been only modified in MSL (e.g., HATE). The connection that this research establishes between BSL and MSL is significant because until now it existed

only at the level of people's impressions, opinions and in anecdotal evidence. Never in the past has this connection been formally researched.

7.1.1 MSL and Other Signed Languages Related to BSL

In comparing MSL to other signed languages that are historically and linguistically connected to BSL (e.g., Auslan and New Zealand Sign Language), although a detailed comparison has yet to be carried out, similarities have been uncovered. Johnston and Schembri (2007:68) list 15 signs in Auslan and MSL that are the same,¹¹⁵ based on a comparison between Auslan and *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Dolby and Bailey 2002). The present research uncovers an additional, previously undocumented 40 similar and identical signs, many of which do not appear in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Dolby and Bailey 2002).¹¹⁶ Woll, Sutton-Spence and Elton (2001) suggested that Auslan retains a significant number of older BSL signs that are no longer in use in the British Deaf community. The same can be said for MSL.

7.2 Language Change and Contact

7.2.1 The Rise of a New Language

It seems that between the time that BSL arrived in Nova Scotia with immigrants from the United Kingdom, in the late 1700s and up until at least the mid 1900s, MSL was on its way to becoming a new signed language distinct from BSL. It is likely that it had autonomy as the language used by Deaf people in Atlantic Canada. It was their main means of communication. MSL users developed into a collective based on their language use and shared experiences. Significant evidence of this comes to light in Chapter Four, the lexical analysis, where it was shown that a large number of MSL

¹¹⁵ Examples include ALIVE, ANNUAL, ASK, BAD, BEFORE, BOY, BREAD, BROTHER, BROWN, EASY, FATHER, GOOD, MOTHER, SLEEP and TRAIN (See Appendix 10 for a complete list) (Johnston and Schembri 2007:68).

¹¹⁶ Additional signs that are identical in MSL and Auslan include ALMOST, ASK, BICYCLE, CHOKE, COLOUR, DEAF, DOCTOR, FIND, HUNGRY, LAUGH, NOT-YET, MY, PREGNANT, PUNISH, RUDE, WHAT, WHERE and WORST) (See Appendix 10 for a complete list).

lexical signs are neither related to nor descended from BSL or ASL. Signs such as COUNT, BORING, WOOD, COLOUR and UGLY are unique to MSL and are used only by Deaf people in the Atlantic or Maritime region of Canada. These signs are unfamiliar to people in the rest of Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States. MSL signs were coined using the same methods that other visual spatial language users coin new signs, by using gesture, visually-motivated vocabulary, classifiers and metaphor. Variation also developed, as in all languages, in MSL and there are often variant signs for the same or similar concepts. This existence of numerous MSL signs does not imply that all of these signs are currently used. Many MSL signs as revealed by this research, exist, are recognized by MSL users, but are no longer in use in their discourse.

The Canadian Dictionary of ASL (Dolby and Bailey 2002) includes 75 signs labeled 'Atlantic' for regional variation. Estimates of MSL signs, by those who know and use them are higher and range from 200 to 500 (Elizabeth Doull, Betty MacDonald, Debbie Johnson-Powell, personal communication, 21 October 2005). A limited amount of research to date has examined and compared signed language use in the different regions of Canada, particularly on how the signed language use on the east coast differs from that in the rest of Canada.

7.2.2 Contact with ASL

MSL always had, due to its geographical location, some contact with ASL. But, in the latter half of the 1900s, during the time MSL was on its way to becoming a distinct language, significant changes occurred in the environment, changes which increased and accelerated patterns of language contact and consequently shift and decline followed. This contact was further enhanced in the 1960s and 1970s, as anecdotal reports imply, when there was an influx of ASL users into the region and

new educational policies, which encouraged and supported ASL, were implemented. The result of this intensified language contact is that the balance shifted away from the further development of MSL toward the adoption of ASL. This shift toward ASL may be seen exemplified in the number of hybrid MSL/ASL forms observed in the data. Signs like NAME, SUNDAY and SISTER combine features from both MSL and ASL into a single sign. MSL/ASL compounds are also evidence of this process.

7.2.3 The Impact of Language Contact on Compound Signs

A certain direction of change, from MSL toward ASL, is particularly evident in compounds, namely hybrid compounds, signs that combine MSL and ASL into a single sign. Compounds observed in the data include three types. The first type combines MSL[^]MSL (also BSL[^]BSL) e.g., MOTHER [^]FATHER for PARENTS. The second type combines BSL[^]MSL e.g., THINK (BSL)[^]TRUE (MSL) for BELIEVE (MSL), and THINK (BSL)[^]KEEP (MSL) for MEMORIZE (MSL). In both cases, the first component of the compound is identical in BSL and MSL, but the second component is unique to MSL. The third type combined MSL[^]ASL e.g., BOY (MSL)[^]FRIEND (ASL) for BOYFRIEND. BOY is MSL (and BSL), but the form of FRIEND was the ASL sign, not the MSL sign. ASL[^]ASL compounds were also observed. MSL compounds adhere to what has been observed for compound forms in previous signed language research. For example, compounds are smooth; they are similar in duration to other non-compound signs; the second unit of the compound is stressed, and in the articulation of a compound there is some reduction of the individual signs it is comprised of. This examination of compound signs is significant because it illustrates what happens to compound forms in a process of shift.

7.2.4 The Effects of Language Contact on MSL

Language contact is strongly connected to the current marginal status of MSL. MSL users are often members of an 'out-group' in the context of the Nova Scotia Deaf community. ASL users make up the 'in-group' in Nova Scotia. There is some evidence of diglossia in Nova Scotia. Interviews with MSL users revealed that some people consider ASL to be the H (High) language and MSL the L (Low) language. As a result, MSL users are sometimes reluctant to use MSL outside their social network. There is some resistance among ASL users to accept MSL, not because they fail to acknowledge its existence, but because the language is stigmatized as out-dated and being of little use. MSL use is limited mainly to the small informal gatherings of now elderly MSL users. In spite of its weaker status, this research reveals that some MSL users are emotionally attached and loyal to MSL. They feel strongly about their language and culture, despite the circumstances that surround them.

The current state of MSL is that it is still in flux. Much of the language has disappeared having undergone structural diffusion. Few, if any, syntactic structures distinguish MSL from ASL; vocabulary, on the other hand, persists. In features of MSL like the syntax, there appears to be little, if any, evidence of MSL. However, some lexical diversity still exists. MSL signs are used in specific semantic domains and in ritualized language. There is evidence that the number of MSL signs that MSL users know and use in discourse is decreasing.

7.2.5 Language Contact and Identity

The MSL speakers in this research have a personal identity connected to MSL, the language. They share a group identity with other MSL users and they form an MSL social network. But as patterns of language are changing, so are their attitudes about their identity.

This research illustrates that attitudes about language can and do change. For MSL users, change came about in a gradual and non-threatening way. Language contact created language conflict. MSL users felt pressure to conform linguistically. They moved from away their non-dominant, minority language, MSL, toward the dominant majority language, ASL. This move had negative effects for MSL.

7.3 Language Shift

In the scholarly literature about signed languages, there are similar accounts of signed languages that have emerged and subsequently disappeared. Each situation is unique, but the commonalities suggest that when existing signed language users experience significant language contact, they may suffer language conflict. When confronted with conflict users often make choices about language use that result in language shift. They may adopt dominant signs into their language and increasingly use the dominant language at the expense of their native language. If the process of language shift is extensive, one signed language will eventually disappear at the expense of the other. This process has been discussed for signed languages that have completely disappeared, like Martha's Vineyard Sign Language (Groce 1985), and in those that are presently undergoing shift and whose existence is threatened, like the indigenous signed languages of Thailand (Woodward 1996) and Al-Sayyid Bedouin Sign Language in the Negev Desert in Israel (Sandler 2008). This present research places MSL on this list.

In Nova Scotia, some MSL users consciously chose to adopt ASL; for others it was a gradual and naturally occurring process. They simply began to use signed language as others around them used it. As users changed, their language was reinforced and standardized. Increased exposure through television and interpretation in ASL and increased face-to-face interaction with ASL users played a role. ASL was

not perceived to be a culturally-intrusive or a linguistically-intrusive threat. It was adopted mainly for the many benefits its use offered Deaf people. But in the process, MSL was unintentionally devalued. Today MSL stands little chance against ASL, particularly in light of the current dominance of ASL in the region and in the rest of Canada.

7.3.1 Language Shift: Social Factors

The combination of social factors and the economy was the major force in the decline of MSL. Nova Scotia is one of Canada's poorest regions. Efforts to revive the local economy have been largely unsuccessful. As a result, residents of Nova Scotia have frequently left the province in search of work elsewhere. MSL users too, are scattered across other Canadian provinces and the United States.

From the historical beginnings of the School for the Deaf in Halifax, economically-based decisions have significantly affected the MSL community. For example, a significant reform occurred in 1958, when the province of Newfoundland failed to make a financial commitment to the Halifax School for the Deaf. School authorities, pressured by an acute shortage of space and a lack of funds, transferred its 60 Deaf pupils from Newfoundland to Montreal. (From 1948-1958, the Halifax school reserved a minimum of 20 places, each year, for pupils from Newfoundland) (Carbin 1996). In Montreal, these pupils were exposed to ASL and LSQ. They remained in Quebec until 1961, when a new school was built in Nova Scotia (Carbin 1996). When 66 (the original 60 Deaf pupils from Newfoundland had increased to 71) returned to Nova Scotia in 1961 (the remaining 5 pupils stayed in Montreal), they ridiculed MSL users' use of signs and in turn they were reluctant to use MSL (Carbin 1996:66, Elizabeth Doull, personal communication 21 January 2004).

The relocation of the Halifax School for the Deaf in 1961, from downtown Halifax to a rural Amherst, on the Bay of Fundy, was a financially-motivated decision, an attempt to provide jobs in a rural area, at a critical time, following the Springfield Mine Disaster (MacDonald 1962: 2N). In this move, Deaf staff who were MSL users, retired or chose not to relocate. Major changes were also the result of modifications to ideology and pedagogy. The relocation of the school brought an end to an era. For example, the last issue *The School News* appeared. It had been published for 104 years, from 1857-1961 (Carbin 1996:298). The Deaf community was divided according to age and geographic location. There was no intergenerational contact between Deaf people, and therefore, no transmission of MSL language or culture. Deaf students had little exposure to MSL and MSL users. They were exposed mainly to Signed English and ASL. There was no intention on the part of government officials or educational authorities to cause harm to MSL or MSL users. They were simply unaware of MSL and how social changes would affect MSL. They did not predict that these changes and decisions could destabilize and fracture the Deaf community and pit one language against another. Table 25 summarizes the historical and social factors that contributed to the demise of MSL.

Table 24: A Summary of Historical Factors that Contributed to the Demise of MSL

Years	Economically- based decisions	Ways in which access to MSL was limited	How motivation to use MSL was reduced or acknowledged
1948-1957	<p>Only 20 pupils per year from Newfoundland are assured a place in the Halifax school. Some Deaf Newfoundlanders do not attend school at all; others attend school in Montreal. Pupils sometimes move between schools from year to year as decided on by the schools.</p>	<p>MSL users come into contact with ASL and LSQ. In Quebec, they have little exposure to MSL. Oral methods dominate. In the Halifax School 14 out of 16 classes receive an oral education. The first Deaf student from Nova Scotia graduates from Gallaudet College and returns to teach in the Halifax School for the Deaf.</p>	<p>In Montreal, pupils who use signed language, including MSL, are punished. Pupils who use MSL in Montreal are ridiculed by users of other languages. Pupils who return from Montreal to Halifax ridicule MSL users. MSL users are made to feel their language variety is inferior.</p>
1958-1960	<p>Due to overcrowded conditions, all 60 pupils from Newfoundland are moved from Halifax to Montreal.</p>	<p>Deaf children from Newfoundland are exposed to ASL and LSQ.</p>	<p>In Montreal, use of signed language is banned in school. Newfoundlanders using MSL are ridiculed.</p>
1961-1964	<p>The School for the Deaf in Halifax closes. The Interprovincial School is opened in Amherst, Nova Scotia and undergoes major ideological and structural modifications. Some pupils from Newfoundland move back to Amherst; some remain in Montreal.</p>	<p>All but one of the Deaf teachers from Halifax retire. Many Deaf staff members do not relocate. The local Deaf school newspaper ceases publication. The Deaf community is stratified geographically and by age.</p>	<p>Deaf youngsters have almost no exposure to MSL. Use of ASL and Signed English increases. MSL use is restricted mainly to Halifax. As contact with ASL users increases, ASL signs begin to replace MSL signs.</p>

		<p>Older Deaf people remain in Halifax. Younger Deaf people are in located in Amherst. There is a lack of contact between the generations. Formal ASL instruction and Signed English are introduced in Amherst. The number of Deaf people (ASL users) coming into Nova Scotia increases. Deaf MSL users leave the province in search of employment.</p>	
1965	The School for the Deaf In St. John's, Newfoundland is opened.	All Deaf pupils from Newfoundland move from Amherst to St. Johns, where ASL is used.*	Deaf people from Newfoundland are physically, linguistically and culturally cut off from MSL and the MSL community.
1971	Non-Deaf populations are admitted to the Interprovincial School.	Use of signed language decreases.	
1972	Deaf Francophones are admitted to the Interprovincial School.	Use of Signed French is also introduced.	
1976	Schools for Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Blind people are combined into one at the Interprovincial School.		Many of the pupils at the Interprovincial School are not Deaf (some pupils are blind and have other mental and physical handicaps). The status of signed language weakens.
1966-1987	The residential branch of the Interprovincial School in Amherst	Deaf pupils are allocated to host families or group homes. The number of	The lack of a residential school in Nova Scotia has negative affects on peer language

	is dissolved.	Deaf people leaving the Maritimes increases. The number of MSL users in Halifax decreases.	transmission, language use and on the construction of a local Deaf collective and identity. ASL becomes increasingly dominant.
1988		Use of ASL is officially recognized by the province of Nova Scotia.	Four out of six provincial Deaf Clubs close. Social events held and attended by MSL users decrease in number. The status of MSL weakens.
1989		Students at the Interprovincial School in Amherst strike, protesting the low level of education and poor conditions at school. They demand teachers who know ASL.	MSL users age. They become increasingly immobile and disconnected from the activities of the Deaf community. MSL users have limited contact with other MSL users.
1991		Both younger and older members of the Deaf community protest the lack of social services for Deaf people, particularly in Cape Breton.	This joint protest is perhaps the last public, cooperative effort between MSL and ASL users. ASL and MSL users have limited contact with one another. Technological innovations increase exposure to ASL.
1994			Misener-Dunn and Fletcher-Falvey make the video <i>Maritime Deaf Heritage</i> . The film celebrates the history and culture of Deaf Nova Scotians. The film makers acknowledge that MSL is used by older people and that it is disappearing. The Canadian Cultural Society for the Deaf provides a grant for MSL

			users to be recorded.
1995	The Interprovincial School in Amherst closes.	The last school for Deaf people in the Maritime Provinces closes. 17 Deaf pupils transfer to schools for the Deaf pupils located outside of the Maritimes. The remainder of Deaf children are scattered across three provinces in mainstreamed education.	Deaf youngsters have limited interaction with Deaf peers. Deaf youngsters have almost no contact with Deaf adults. Deaf youngsters have no exposure to MSL and MSL users; many Deaf youngsters are unaware that MSL exists. Most mainstreamed pupils have only limited exposure to ASL as it is used by Deaf people.
1998			The first formal research on MSL titled 'The Survival of Maritime Sign Language' is published.

* Although ASL is used in Newfoundland, there is also a regional dialect of signed language, sometimes called "Newfoundland Sign Language". Some of these signs are similar to MSL; others are not.

What is of particular interest is that MSL users' perception of social changes and their effects and the effects of the changes uncovered in this research may differ from one another. In other words, the group's understanding of their situation may differ from their situation in reality. For example, this research documents ongoing and prolonged contact between MSL and ASL, historical contact between the Atlantic Provinces and the United States that dates back centuries that influenced the use of signed language. Yet, some MSL users (e.g., Hannah 1994 and subjects in Misener-Dunn and Fletcher-Falvey's video (1994)) express the idea that the involvement of ASL users in the region is a relatively recent phenomenon.

The situation is clearly one of a Deaf collective that is struggling for survival as the result of major social upheaval. Yet, MSL users speak about MSL as if it is still very much alive. They call themselves 'MSL users', yet it is not possible to say that for these individuals MSL is a fully distinct language. They speak of other MSL users and their MSL use, even when most of what they sign is ASL. Signing sessions recorded for this research were rich in ASL signs self-corrected into MSL, no doubt largely for the benefit of the researcher who had specifically stated that she was looking at MSL.

Resources about MSL are limited. What little that does exist is often unpublished (Hannah 1994). In the video *Maritime Deaf Heritage* conversations are conducted in ASL, by ASL-using narrators, one of whom is not originally from Nova Scotia (Misener-Dunn and Fletcher-Falvey 1994). Only 39 MSL signs are specifically demonstrated and discussed. In the previously mentioned dictionary, *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Dolby and Bailey 2002), 75 MSL signs are presented. For example, *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Dolby and Bailey 2002) provides two

signs for BIRTHDAY for the Atlantic region, one that is more common in Newfoundland and another used elsewhere in the Maritimes. While these are similar to one another, neither is the variant of BIRTHDAY (MSL) that appeared in the data in this research or Doull's (1978) dictionary of MSL. These omissions are significant. These signs support and document language shift in process. They also illustrate that some of the historical links between signs have already been lost, despite users' perceptions that MSL is alive. Further loss of MSL is inevitable.

7.3.2 Language Shift: Psychological Factors

The attitudes of MSL users toward their language and their culture are interesting, but not surprising. The MSL users selected for this research exhibited strong feelings of language loyalty. Some of them expressed disapproval of those who were not loyal to their MSL past, yet they exhibited limited use of MSL and their language use showed evidence of shift toward ASL. Subjects exhibited a strong MSL identity, an identity separate from that of other Deaf Maritimers. They both consciously and unconsciously separated themselves from others, yet most MSL users in Nova Scotia interact with ASL users on a regular basis and they also consider themselves to be connected to the larger Deaf community, which includes ASL users.

While this research supports that an MSL identity exists and that it is based on numerous commonalities such as age and shared past experiences, two issues which emerged through an expression of identity stand out as being problematic. The first is that MSL may not acknowledge that MSL is in danger of disappearance. MSL users interviewed in 1994 (in *Maritime Deaf Heritage*) and in this study, in 2005, repeatedly asserted that there are still people in Nova Scotia using MSL. Certainly, there are people in Nova Scotia using some MSL signs. But no evidence was uncovered of MSL usage other than that of speakers inserting MSL lexical items

and ritualized language into what is otherwise ASL discourse. Additional data, videotapes of elderly MSL users from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and PEI, made by Elizabeth Doull (in 1994), analyzed with the aid of BSL consultants, also failed to locate MSL use that consisted of anything substantially different than what was observed in this research. MSL users recorded in 1994 also used mainly ASL, embedding MSL lexical items within what was otherwise ASL discourse. No bilingual subjects, those with an ability to function in MSL and ASL and codeswitch between two languages, were located, despite efforts to locate and work with 'strong' MSL users.

The other problematic aspect involves the preservation of MSL. MSL users interviewed for *Maritime Deaf Heritage* (1994) and for this study, in 2005, implied, that it may be possible to preserve MSL - if only people are willing to make the effort. MSL users were reluctant to admit that MSL is beyond the point of preservation or revival. From a linguistic point of view, the future of MSL is clear. MSL users will continue to experience the effects of unyielding pressure from ASL. MSL users will die out and MSL will disappear.

7.3.3 Language Shift: The MSL Lexicon and MSL Discourse

An examination and comparison of the MSL lexicon to BSL and ASL reveals that MSL originally had roots in BSL. MSL in Nova Scotia thrived and a new signed language began to emerge. But as the result of language contact with ASL, the development of MSL was cut short and language shift from MSL to ASL ensued. Currently-used hybrid MSL/ASL signs and compounds provide evidence of language shift. Different types of MSL signs are documented in an examination of the lexicon, those that can be traced back to BSL, those that are unique to MSL and those that

combine MSL and ASL. Many concepts are portrayed by MSL users using ASL signs, for which there are no existing MSL equivalents or variants in use.

The analysis of subjects' narratives revealed that many of the MSL signs elicited in the examination of the lexicon did not appear in the discourse, with the exception of some lexical items from certain semantic domains and some use of ritualized language. MSL discourse comprised largely of ASL and this indicates that language shift from MSL to ASL is well underway. However, MSL users did reveal evidence of a unique individual and group MSL identity and there was evidence that they still perceive the MSL community to be different and distinct from other Deaf people in the area.

7.4 The Relationship between Dialects and Distinct Languages

This study of MSL provides valuable information about what happens in situations of language contact, specifically, what happens in the lexicon and the discourse.

Linguistic features have influenced one another, resulting in a merging of forms and a subsequent process of language shift. As individuals further alter their language patterns, language will continue to change. What was once considered MSL, a separate language, is identifiable today as little more than a collection of lexical items. One would be hard pressed, even today, to claim that the research subjects in this study are using only MSL. They are, however, still integrating some features of a disappearing language into their signing. MSL is on its way, within the next twenty years or less, to declining further so that it may become little more than a dialect of ASL. This dialect will likely be characteristic of Nova Scotia. It may be that "bidialectalism," where there is an "ability to communicate effectively with people of other dialects, despite some substantial differences" (Bickford 1991:14) will exist

between Nova Scotians and Deaf people elsewhere in Canada. Perhaps this has already happened.

7.5 Language Death

As MSL users age and die what remains of MSL will likely disappear except, perhaps, for those signs that will remain in the local dialect. Crystal (2000) outlines three broad stages of language loss: In the first stage, there is pressure to use another language variety, a more dominant one, ASL, in this case. That pressure takes different forms, social, political and economic. It can be “top down” e.g., educational reforms or “bottom up” e.g., peer group pressure and fashionable trends (Crystal 2000:78). This pressure has already been applied to MSL users. The second stage comprises of “a period of emerging bilingualism” (Crystal 2000:78), with users becoming increasingly proficient in the newer language variety. MSL users have passed this stage too. Among current MSL users there is no evidence of bilingualism, much less the existence of balanced bilinguals. In the third stage, language users begin to identify with the dominant language variety. The discourse analyses particularly reveal this is partially true for the research subjects. On the one hand, they are ASL users and they associate with ASL users. For some people the production of MSL signs requires a conscious effort to recall and articulate them. Their use of MSL signs is limited in their discourse and restricted in situations of interaction. On the other hand, they express an emotional attachment to MSL and are loyal toward MSL.

Although Fishman (2001) notes that a reversal of language shift can occur under certain circumstances, all evidence suggests that MSL is beyond revitalization. The obstacles for a reversal of shift are numerous and insurmountable. Such a process would entail the reinstatement of structural elements of the language (e.g., a numeral system and a two-handed manual alphabet) which are beyond the knowledge of many

current MSL users. Revival of MSL would call for unrealistic actions, such as amassing a critical number of users and a generation of new users. Present users are largely beyond childbearing years and their children may or may not have any MSL loyalty. Few strong users are still alive. Moreover, revitalization would require a major change in attitude and modifications to the social identity of Deaf people in the Maritimes. For many among the current generation of MSL users, confidence in MSL and a sense of linguistic self-worth never existed. Language is inseparable from culture, and MSL culture has changed irreversibly. There are no longer any residential schools, few Deaf clubs remain, and the nature of socialization within the Deaf community has changed drastically (e.g., technological advancement has paved the way for increased non-face-to-face interaction). Support for MSL would necessitate monetary, cultural and political aid, all of which are unlikely to be forthcoming, mainly due to a poor economy and limited resources. The trajectory for MSL is clearly beyond the control of a single person, community, province, organization or group, however good their intentions may be. Realistically, one can expect further convergence toward ASL, with little interruption or intervention.

7.6 Significance of this Research

MSL receives little mention in scholarly literature about signed language. The following statements are all that could be located. Stokoe (1983:86) refers to the once-used two-handed manual alphabet. He says “Canadian Deaf persons who know or knew of others educated in Nova Scotia with British two-handed fingerspelling and signs are now past middle age.” Johnston and Schembri (2007) note the lexical similarities between MSL and Aulsan, saying “Lexical similarities [between BSL and ASL] remain in only a few regional varieties of ASL, especially that used in Atlantic or maritime provinces of Canada” (Johnston and Schembri 2007:68). They list 15

signs that are the same in MSL and Auslan (See Appendix). Padden and Humphries (1988) in an account of where signed language relations lie say “Nova Scotia has a community of Deaf people whose sign language is related to BSL, but not to ASL” (1988:3). Lastly, Ethnologue (Grimes 2005), a source of world languages, says that Maritime Sign Language, for which no estimate of the population is available, is now remembered only by older Deaf people. It is based on British Sign Language and nearly extinct. This research formally acknowledges what was informally and anecdotally implied for years that a distinct language known as MSL existed. It situates MSL on a map of minority signed languages, more significantly as a minority signed language that has undergone and continues to undergo language shift and one that is heading toward inevitable disappearance.

Johnston and Schembri (2007:69) acknowledge that while ASL is used in the United States and Canada, there are known historical links to BSL as well, such as that of Martha's Vineyard and the Maritimes, but they note “the impact of these contact phenomena has not been the focus of any published research”.

This research makes a significant contribution to the relatively new field of language contact within signed languages. It documents what has occurred in MSL, in the lexicon and discourse, as a result of language contact. The changes to MSL indicate not only a process of language shift, but one that will lead to eventual language disappearance.

This research examines the MSL lexicon and discourse as it is used today and determines how it is (and is not) related to BSL and how it has been effected by language contact with ASL. It documents that MSL, once a developing signed language, was interrupted by language contact. It suggests that MSL is a distinct signed language, one related to both BSL and ASL, but that it is a dialect of neither.

The discourse analysis reveals that the process of language shift away from MSL toward ASL is well underway. Furthermore, this research confirms the significant role of social and psychological factors in processes of language shift and language disappearance. Perhaps one of the most important findings that has come to light is the sense of urgency with which further research into MSL must be conducted. It is of utmost importance to continue to interview and record MSL users, so that people in the future, Deaf and hearing people alike, can be made aware of the unique nature of MSL language and culture.

Although little effort has been made to improve the status of MSL, some interest, most of it relatively recent, has been expressed. A mandatory component of the Nova Scotia Community College interpreter program is a course in Maritime Signs. The purpose of the course, Maritime Signs, is not to teach MSL. Taught by a native MSL signer, this course aims at exposing future interpreters to signs they may encounter in the field. While the likelihood of encountering MSL signs is decreasing, some MSL signs remain entrenched even among ASL users in Nova Scotia. In 1978, a grant from Canadian Federal Government was allotted to Elizabeth Doull to compile a dictionary of MSL signs. What exists is a valuable resource that was used in this research. A 1994 video, *Maritime Deaf Heritage*, was funded by a grant from the Canadian Cultural Society for the Deaf. In 1998, an additional grant from the Canadian Association of the Deaf (CAD) was provided to conduct a study of MSL in the Atlantic provinces. Research data consisting mainly of interviews with MSL users in three provinces has been collected and stored on DVDs. No analyses of the data have been conducted and funding for this project has expired.

This current research, the first in-depth study of MSL, acknowledges the significance of early research on MSL and encourages that it be pursued. Resources

about MSL, such as archived materials from the Halifax School for the Deaf (e.g., Annual School Progress Reports, student composition books and detailed accounts, expenditures and budgets), sources about activities in the Nova Scotian Deaf community (e.g., records from Deaf Clubs, records of attendance and activities) and the signs in *The Canadian ASL Dictionary* (Dolby and Bailey 2002) reveal some of what we know about MSL users and their language. Research into MSL, conducted with those MSL users who remain and the data that exists, is urgent.

7.7 Implications for the Future

This research is not without limitations. This research focuses on a small group of people, all of whom have identities as 'MSL users' and by doing so identify themselves. Subjects were intentionally chosen for their apparent and ascribed proficiency in MSL - for fear of otherwise not finding evidence of MSL. This sample of the population does not represent typical signed language use in Nova Scotia. This research does not examine ASL users in the region or former MSL users who have adopted ASL.

Furthermore, the number of subjects in this study is small. Additional subjects were located and agreed to participate, but at some point in the process, they reconsidered and declined. Filming research subjects may have intimidated potential subjects. For those who did agree to participate, video recordings created an unnatural situation. The subjects in this study, to a large extent, are also the same people who are aware the value of MSL, and they are interested in its preservation, likewise the consultants, who served as sources of information and who are interested in the preservation of MSL. They are the same people who are involved in many other aspects of the Deaf community e.g., literacy, field work and interpreter training. Only one side, those interested in MSL, is presented here. There may be older people in the

Deaf community who are indifferent toward MSL. Frequent consultation and collaboration with a number of MSL, ASL and BSL consultants was necessary. Consultants had immense and invaluable knowledge, but they did not always agree with one another.

Despite the limitations, the findings of this study have uncovered important information. But, they have only scratched the surface of the many facets of MSL. There are many aspects of language in this research that have only briefly been mentioned, like MSL compounds and facial expressions, both of which require further examination. Numerous additional issues beg to be examined, such as patterns of natural interaction between ASL and MSL users. The accuracy of this study could be strengthened in numerous ways, such as by examining a larger number of subjects, conducting more in-depth and personalized interviews with MSL users and carrying out comparisons among the different age groups and generations in Nova Scotia's Deaf community. In conducting further research it might also be of interest to locate the small number of individual elderly and isolated users of MSL said to still reside in Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island and their use of MSL and the effects that language contact and isolation have had on their linguistic behaviour and sense of identity. It would be interesting to compare MSL users in Nova Scotia to MSL users in New Brunswick. One can only wonder how their inclusion would contribute to this portrayal of MSL. It would be of interest to examine the many former MSL users who now reside outside of the Maritimes, in other Canadian provinces and in the United States, to see the effects of language contact, as well as how it may have influenced attitudes about language and the individual's emotional attachment to MSL. Since MSL is a moribund language, it is necessary to replicate this study in five years and again ten years, to see if the hypothesis that MSL is disappearing is confirmed. It is

necessary that we observe and document the manner in which the disappearance of MSL occurs.

Even in light of the large amount of work that remains to be carried out, this examination of MSL contributes to research on signed languages, offering a glimpse of how one signed language appeared, developed, was affected by language contact, underwent language shift and is now in the process of disappearing. This study contributes to our knowledge in general of how linguistic terms like 'minority languages' and 'language disappearance' are applicable to a signed language. Researchers of endangered languages generally agree that the loss of any language is a tragic event. Crystal (2000) says that language loss, even when not viewed by its users as a loss, is nothing short of devastating. Valuable information about MSL has already been lost. Despite this pessimistic view of the future, there is immeasurable knowledge and value encapsulated in what remains of MSL. Much stands to be gained through further examination of MSL. The data of this research contribute to understanding who Deaf people in the Maritimes were, who they are today and how they fit into larger contexts of national and international Deaf communities. We gain knowledge about the lives of Deaf people in this specific region, the distinctiveness of their community, culture and language. Further academic research is encouraged; for the valuable contribution it makes to language and to additional fields, such as the welfare, education and treatment of Deaf minorities.

The findings of this study extend beyond language to an appreciation of variation and diversity which should be respected and acted upon. Initiatives, actions and activities to share MSL through a stronger and more focused perspective are a much needed and welcome contribution to Deaf and hearing communities in the Atlantic region and the rest of Canada. For example, Deaf youngsters could benefit

from face-to-face meetings with MSL users, where they could learn about their past experiences, culture and language. What can be shared must be shared now. A generation from now it will be gone. In addition, it would be of value to centralize the historical resources about MSL that are presently scattered between different provinces in public archives, academic institutions, public libraries and various private collections. A centralized archive of material on and about MSL would enable people, Deaf and hearing people alike, to access and learn about the rich history, language and culture of Deaf people in Atlantic Canada.

MSL offers a rare opportunity to study a range of issues about a minority community, a minority language, a minority signed language and its culture, language contact, the role of social and psychological factors in language contact, language shift, and about endangered languages and a disappearing signed language.

Maritime Sign Language has struggled unrecognized for decades against marginalization and indifference. Its loss is now inevitable. But before then, we must learn what we can from those who remain and from what we can preserve. Nancy Dorian, a researcher of disappearing languages says “ Having waited too long before undertaking to rally support for threatened languages, we may find ourselves eulogizing extinct languages whose living uniqueness we had hoped instead to celebrate” (Dorian 1989:21). We can still and must still celebrate MSL.

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Diego: Academic Press, 252-272.

Appendix 1 - Conventions for Sign Notation

ANIMAL	The English gloss of the sign appears in capital letters.
FIND-OUT	A single sign consisting of more than one word is indicated with a hyphen.
U-N-C-L-E	A sign that is fingerspelled appears as capital letters separated by hyphens.
WHITE^FALL=SNOW	The components of a compounds and joined and the meaning follows an equal sign.
POSS. 1	A possessive pronoun, (POSS. 1 – my or mine, POSS. 2 – your or yours, POSS. 3 – his, her, hers or its.
Pro. 1	A personal pronoun, Pro. 1 – I or me, Pro. 2 – you, Pro. 3 – he, him, she, her or it.
FIGHT++	A plus sign indicates the number of times a sign is repeated.
CL.HITS-HIM	CL. refers to a classifier, a visual depiction of an action.
PHONE (gestures talking)	actions and facial expressions that accompany signs are indicated in brackets following the sign.
[I] HC	Letter names and numbers in square brackets refer to hand configuration (HC) of the signer, according to the ASL manual alphabet.

Appendix 2 - Questionnaire for Research Subjects

Please help by filling in this questionnaire about your background and language use.

The information provided in the answers to these questions will be used by the researcher. Your confidentiality is assured. If you have any questions about the content below, please ask.

1. What is your name? _____
2. What is your age? _____
3. Sex Male () Female ()
4. Where were you born? _____
5. Were you born deaf? Yes () No ()
6. (If applicable) At what age did you become deaf? _____
7. At what age did you first learn sign language? _____
8. What is your marital status?
married () widowed () divorced/separated () single ()
9. Is your spouse deaf? _____
10. (If applicable) How many children do you have? Are they deaf or hearing?
deaf children ____ hearing children ____
11. How many immediate family members who are or were deaf do you have?
grandmother ____ mother ____ brothers ____
grandfather ____ father ____ sisters ____
12. How many extended family members to you have who are or were deaf?
uncles ____ cousins ____
aunt ____ other ____
13. What was the name of the elementary school you attended? _____

14. Where was your elementary school? _____

15. What type of elementary school did you attend?

-a school for deaf children _____

-a school for hearing children _____

-a mixed school _____ (deaf and hearing together)

-a residential school _____

-a day school _____

-other (please explain) _____

16. What was the name of the high school you attended? _____

17. Where was your high school located? _____

18. What type of high school did you attend?

-a school for Deaf children _____

-a school for hearing children _____

-a mixed school _____ (deaf and hearing together)

-a residential school _____

-a day school _____

-other (please explain) _____

19. How many years did you attend this school?

-one _____

-two _____

-three _____

-four _____

-more than four _____ (State the number) _____

20. What were the languages of instruction in school? (Check all of the appropriate answers)

-English _____

-ASL _____

-MSL _____

-oral methods _____

- other (please explain) _____

21. What language was used most of the time among the pupils (when not in classes)

-English _____

-ASL _____

-MSL _____

-other (please explain) _____

22. In school did you use a one-handed or two-handed fingerspelling alphabet?

-one-handed (ASL) _____

-two-handed (BSL) _____

-two-handed _____ (for use with Deaf-blind students)

23. Have you maintained contact with some of your school friends?

Yes () No ()

24. How many friends do you remain in contact with? _____

25. How often are you in touch with these friends?

-very often _____

-often _____

-sometimes _____

-rarely _____

26. Did you continue your education after high school?

Yes () No ()

(If applicable) Type of education _____

Number of years _____

27. Are you involved in deaf community activities on a regular basis?

Yes () No ()

28. How often do you meet with deaf friends or Deaf community members?

-very often _____

-often _____

-sometimes _____

-rarely _____

29. Outline the nature of your involvement in the deaf community (Check all of the appropriate answers)

-I meet socially with other Deaf people. ()

-I attend annual events for the Deaf community. ()

- I receive information about the Deaf community. ()

-I watch signed language on television. ()

-I attend church services for Deaf people. ()

-I attend a deaf club ()

(If applicable) What club do you attend? _____

Where is this Club? _____

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions.

(The Questionnaire was accompanied by a Confidentiality Waiver and a consent form, as required by the Tri-Council Guidelines for Ethical conduct with Human Subjects).

Appendix 3 - Sample Consent Form

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information that is not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and understand the accompanying information.

This study looks at signed language as it is used on the East coast of Canada. You will be asked to sign about topics of your choice and suggested topics for approximately two hours collected in two one hour sittings. You will be compensated to the sum of \$25 for your time and participation. In each session you will sign to a Deaf person. Your signing sessions will be videotaped. You may have the video recording device turned off for all or any portion of the session and this does not waive your right as a participant. The videotapes will be reviewed by the researcher of this project, a signed language interpreter and the people to whom you sign. The results of this study will be made available to you by the researcher. Please indicate below whether you are interested in receiving a copy of the results of this study.

Yes () No ()

My address is: _____

The data recorded in the session will remain in possession of the researcher and will be accessible only to the researcher, an interpreter and the sign language consultants accompanying the researcher in each session. With your consent, results will be shared with the Nova Scotia Community College Interpretation Program and

the Atlantic Provinces Linguistic Association. In the written results of this study, you will not be referred to by your real name. With your consent, video clips may be shown at conferences and public presentations of the results, and in the form of still images. No image will be shown without your consent.

I allow the researcher to show my image for portions of the video, at conference, public presentations, or in print, in the research results.

Yes () No ()

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and you agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsor or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time and/or refrain from answering questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice of consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarifications of new information throughout your participation from:

Researcher: Judith Yoel

Email: judithyo@yahoo.com

Telephone: (902) 832-4738

Researcher's supervisor: Dr. Terry Janzen

Email: janzent@umanitoba.ca

Telephone: (204) 474-7081

This research has been approved by the Joint-Faculty Research Ethics board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact any one of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at (204_ 474-7122 or email:

margret_bowman@umanitoba.ca

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Participant's signature

Date

Researcher's signature

Date

Appendix 4 - Results of Woodward's Modified Swadesh Vocabulary List for

Sign Languages

(Items are presented in the order they were shown to subjects, as presented by Woodward (1991).

Bold items are identical or similar in MSL and BSL

Italics items are identical or similar in MSL and ASL

Underlined items are identical or similar in MSL, BSL and ASL

1. <u>all</u>	27. <i>green</i>	53. <u>play</u>	78. <u>wet</u>
2. <u>animal</u>	28. <u>heavy</u>	54. <i>rain</i>	79. what
3. bad	29. <i>how</i>	55. red	80. when
4. <i>because</i>	30. <u>hunt</u>	56. correct	81. where
5. <u>bird</u>	31. husband	57. <i>river</i>	82. <i>white</i>
6. <u>black</u>	32. ice	58. <i>rope</i>	83. who
7. blood	33. <i>if</i>	59. <u>salt</u>	84. <u>wide</u>
8. <u>child</u>	34. <i>kill**</i>	60. <i>sea</i>	85. wife
9. <u>count</u>	35. laugh	61. look-for	86. <i>wind</i>
10. <u>day</u>	36. <i>leaf</i>	62. <u>short</u>	87. <u>with</u>
11. <u>die</u>	37. <u>lie</u>	63. sing	88. <i>woman</i>
12. <i>dirty</i>	38. live	64. <u>sit</u>	89. <i>wood</i>
13. <u>dog</u>	39. <u>long</u>	65. <u>smooth</u>	90. worm
14. <i>dry</i>	40. louse	66. <u>snake</u>	91. year
15. <i>dull</i>	41. <u>man</u>	67. <i>snow</i>	92. <i>yellow</i>
16. <i>dust</i>	42. meat	68. <u>stand</u>	93. <u>sharp</u>
17. <i>earth</i>	43. mother	69. <i>star</i>	94. <i>bug</i>
18. egg	44. <i>mountain</i>	70. stone	95. full
19. father	45. name	71. <i>sun</i>	96. <i>cat**</i>
20. <u>feather</u>	46. <u>narrow</u>	72. tail	97. <i>moon</i>
21. <i>fire</i>	47. <i>new</i>	73. <u>thin</u>	98. brother
22. <u>fish</u>	48. <i>night</i>	74. <u>tree</u>	99. <i>dance</i>
23. flower	49. <i>not</i>	75. vomit	100. pig
24. good	50. <i>old</i>	76. <i>warm</i>	101. sister***
25. <i>grass</i>	51. <i>other</i>	77. <i>water</i>	102. work***
26. grease	52. <i>person</i>	78. wet	(103. thin)*

* Two different variations of THIN were presented, both of which are the same in BSL and MSL.

** These signs were requested, but not signed

*** These 3 signs were added to replace the two signs that were not articulated. The signs were chosen from Woodward's 200-item Swadesh list (1996).

Woodward, James, 1996. Modern Standard Thai Sign Language, Its Influence from ASL and its Relationship to Original Thai Sign Varieties, *Sign Language Studies* 92:227-252.

Appendix 5 - Results of Parkhurst and Parkhurst's 30-Item List of Non-Iconic Lexical Items

Bold items are identical or similar in MSL and BSL

Italics items are identical or similar in MSL and ASL

Underlined items are identical or similar in MSL, BSL and ASL

1. family	17. <i>play</i>	
2. ask	18. beautiful	
3. cousin	19. ugly	
4. <i>city</i>	20. <i>need</i>	
5. <i>paper</i>	21. almost	
6. <u>thanks</u>	22. week	
7. <u>story</u>	23. <i>month</i>	
8. poor	24. afraid	
9. poor-thing	25. never	
10. <i>peace</i>	26. <i>always</i>	
11. sweet	27. hate	
12. <i>young</i>	28. <i>free</i>	
13. colour	29. true	
14. <i>blue</i>	30. false	
15. <i>January</i>	31. begin	
16. <i>Monday</i>		

*To this list one item was added – POOR (as in POOR-THING).

Parkhurst, D. and Parkhurst, S., 2003a. Lexical Comparisons of Sign Languages and the Effects of Iconicity, In A. Bickford (ed.) *Working Papers of the Summer Institute of Linguistics*, University of North Dakota, Vol. 47, Summer Institute of Linguistics International.

Appendix 6 - Results for Signs Marked for 'Atlantic Region' in the Canadian Sign Language Dictionary (Dolby and Bailey 2002)

Bold items are identical or similar in MSL and BSL

1. about	26. colour	51. lock
2. after	27. cookie	52. more
3. afternoon	28. copy	53. morning
4. age	29. court	54. mother
5. alive	30. cracker	55. newspaper
6. annoyed	31. dangerous	56. odd
7. annual	32. daughter	57. pig
8. antique	33. delicious	58. pink
9. apple	34. diamond	59. probe
10. arrive	35. downtown	60. promise
11. automatic	36. doughnut	61. radio
12. bad	37. early	62. ready
13. baggage	38. egg	63. rich
14. before	39. engaged	64. school
15. bicycle	40. firefighter	65. sleep
16. birthday	41. friend	66. sly
17. brave	42. grandfather	67. spy
18. bridge	43. grandmother	68. taxi
19. brother	44. Halloween	69. test
20. brown	45. handsome	70. train
21. boy	46. hide	71. trust
22. carpenter	47. hospital	72. wait
23. cheat	48. hurt	73. window
24. cheque	49. inspect	74. wrong
25. Christmas	50. learn	75. quick

Dolby, Kathy, Bailey, Carole Sue, 2002. *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL*, Calgary, Alberta: University of Alberta Press.

Appendix 7 - Results for a list of MSL Signs as Volunteered by a Subject (2005)

Bold items are identical or similar in MSL and BSL

1. absent	38. fool	75. Protestant
2. accident	39. football	76. punish
3. all-gone	40. friend	77. rabbit
4. alright	41. glass	78. rich
5. apple (#1)	42. hate	79. sailor
6. apple (#2)*	43. hurt	80. Santa Claus
7. April-Fools	44. hurry (ASL)**	81. school
8. awful	45. hurry (#1)	82. school-closed
9. a-while-ago	46. hurry-up (#2)	83. Scotland
10. believe	47. I-have-seen	84. sex
11. bread	48. lost	85. shoes
12. bridge	49. lie **	86. show
13. broke-up	50. manners-absent	87. show-movie
14. brown	51. many (ASL)**	88. show-off
15. champion	52. many	89. sign
16. championship (ASL)**	53. meat	90. sly***
17. championship	54. mine (ASL)**	91. soccer
18. cheat	55. mine	92. soon
19. college	56. more (ASL)**	93. strong
20. count	57. more	94. stubborn(ASL)**
21. crazy	58. movie	95. stubborn
22. cruel	59. Native (Indian)	96. supper
23. cry	60. naughty	97. tattle-tale
24. did-not-see	61. newspaper	98. teacher
25. divorce	62. next-day	99. thief
26. doctor	63. nobody	100. tomorrow
27. doll	64. noisy	101. tram/trolley
28. done	65. no-signing	102. weak
29. don't-believe	66. not-polite	103. what
30. don't-care	67. not-yet	104. what-for
31. don't-feel-like-it	68. none-of-your-business	105. when
32. drink	69. nurse	106. where
33. England	70. one-week	107. wood
34. faint	71. onion	108. wrong
35. farm	72. plenty	109. yellow
36. find	73. police	110. yesterday
37. firefighter	74. poor	111. yours

* 110 signs were volunteered, yet 111 are listed here. The sign for apple has been disregarded as it appears as a classifier – a portrayal of how an apple is eaten and not the citation form. This is confirmed by Doull (1978).

** When presenting these signs, the signer also presented six signs in ASL. Since she said *all* the signs she presented were MSL signs, it is unclear whether she thought that the ASL sign was a variant of the MSL sign or whether she did this intentionally in order to emphasize the differences between two.

** Lie was not presented as the same sign provided by a different signer who signed the Swadesh list.

** Sly, as produced by this signer., is different from the same sign marked for Atlantic region in *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Dolby and Bailey 2002).

Appendix 8 - MSL Dictionary (Doull 1978)

Bold items are identical or similar in MSL and BSL

Items appear below as they are presented in this MSL dictionary. They appear to be group into categories (e.g., kin, occupations, etc.)

1. cousin/relative	84. smart	167. Salvation-Army*
2. girl	85. deaf	168. church*
3. boy	86. nervous	169. funeral
4. sister	87. tired	170. Protestant-assembly
5. brother	88. laugh	171. confession
6. mother	89. brave	172. potato
7. father	90. pretty/beautiful	173. candy
8. daughter	91. delicious	174. molasses
9. husband	92. lazy	175. porridge
10. wife	93. weak	176. cookies
11. engagement	94. saucy	177. turkey
12. doctor	95. patient	178. supper
13. teacher	96. hurt*	179. onion
14. fireman	97. strict	180. meat
15. lawyer	98. rude/cheeky	181. apple
16. board director	99. ashamed	182. horse
17. president	100. pity*	183. mouse
18. boss/important person	101. selfish	184. pig
19. foreman	102. fool	185. fox
20. nun	103. stuck*	186. donkey
21. college*	104. poor-thing*	187. beaver
22. detective	105. dangerous	188. rabbit
23. Indian (Native)	106. special	189. address
24. printer	107. trouble	190. Canada
25. sweetheart	108. dead/die	191. England
26. what	109. more	192. France
27. when	110. much-more	193. Holland
28. where	111. too-much	194. Scotland*
29. who	112. long	195. Spain
30. how-many	113. early*	196. Ottawa
31. what-happened	114. almost	197. Moncton
32. how-old	115. half	198. Fredericton
33. mine/my	116. please	199. Yarmouth
34. you/your/s, their/s	117. colour	200. Halifax
35. tomorrow	118. brown	201. downtown
36. morning	119. yellow	202. bridge
37. night	120. purple	203. bicycle
38. afternoon*	121. count	204. driving
39. yesterday	122. fix/repair	205. train
40. next-week	123. examine	206 wrestling

41. many-years	124. learn	207. football
42. one-year / next year	125. have*	208. door
43. two-years-ago	126. hide	209. conference
44. a-while-ago	127. sell	210. suitcase
45. sometimes	128. wait	211. prescription-drugs
46. future/soon	29. who	212. soda pop
47. recent	130. arrive	213. government
48. before/sequence	131. sign	214. school*
49. summer	132. choke	215. hospital*
50. holiday	133. work*	216. store
51. Easter	134. talk	217. wood
52. Halloween*	135. work*	218. rubber
53. Christmas*	136. start	219. electricity
54. Sunday	137. ask*	220. anything-hard (e.g., steel, metal)
55. birthday	138. invite	221. telephone
56. good	139. hope	222. picture
57. bad	140. name*	223. cheque
58. alright	141. fall-in-love	224. welfare
59. tired	142. break-up/divorce	225. application
60. best	143. pregnant	226. appointment
61. worse	144. memorize	227. test
62. better	145. lose	228. examination*
63. fine-(weather)	146. find	229. physical-examination
64. safe	147. sleep	230. not-yet
65. worst	148. trust	231. not-seen
66. spoiled/pampered	149. want	232. in-case
67. hate	150. hurry-up	233. over-there
68. damaged/ruined	151. believe	234. that-serves-you-right
69. terrible/gross/oh-dear	152. don't-want	235. go-away
70. embarrassed	153. fight	236. completed/accomplished
71. wrong	154. murder	237. get-it-done-with
72. odd	155. don't-believe*	238. school-closed-for-summer
73. old-fashioned	156. fired-from-work*	239. don't-care
74. stranger	157. make-fun/ tease	240. it-happened-so-fast
75. fast	158. lie	241. no-manners
76. warm	159. scold	242. nobody-here
77. lucky*	160. refuse	243-259. numbers 1 -16
78. rich	161. punish	260. one-hundred
79. private	162. cheat	
80. easy	163. all-gone*	
81. hard	164. go-to-bed	
82. poor	165. Catholic	

83. hungry	166. Protestant	
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*These signs had more than one variation.

Appendix 9 - Maritime Deaf Heritage (Misener-Dunn and Fletcher-Falvey 1994).

Bold items are identical or similar in MSL and BSL

Items appear in the order they are presented in the film.

1. downtown	21. England
2. numbers	22. over-there
3. mother	23. go-to-bed
4. father	24. good
5. brother	25. bad
6. sister	26. too-bad
7. aunt	27. fight
8. uncle	28. school
9. want	29. hungry
10. don't-want	30. have-not-seen-it
11. hospital	31. am-innocent/didn't-do-it
12. movies	32. girl
13. candy	33. boy
14. pop	34. age
15. weak	35. tired
16. shoes	36. ice cream
17. lazy	37. cousins
18. fighting	38. grew-up
19. Christmas	39. fast/quickly
20. Canada	

Doull, Elizabeth, 1978. *Maritime Sign Language* unpublished manuscript, The Canadian Cultural Society for the Deaf.

Appendix 10 - Signs that are Identical or Similar in Auslan and MSL (Johnston and Schembri 2007: 68).

Items that are in bold are identical in MSL and Auslan.

Items that are not in bold are similar.

1. alive	12. good
2. annual	13. mother
3. ask	14. sleep
4. bad	15. train
5. before	16. age
6. boy	17. apple
7. bread	18. more
8. brother	19. sister
9. brown	20. sure
10. easy	21. not-yet
11. father	

Doull, Elizabeth, 1978. *Maritime Sign Language* unpublished manuscript, The Canadian Cultural Society for the Deaf.

Appendix 11: Signs that are Identical or Similar in Auslan and MSL
(based on a comparison to Doull (1978)).

Items in bold are identical in MSL and Auslan

Items not in bold are similar.

1. almost	27. tomorrow
2. best	28. learn
3. bicycle	29. nun
4. choke	30. please
5. colour	31. better
6. deaf	32. birthday
7. doctor	33. examination
8. find	34. how-many
9. fox	35. tired
10. hungry	36. invite
11. laugh	37. fall-in-love
12. my	38. too-much
13. pregnant	39. trust
14. punish	40. application
15. rude	
16. school	
17. sign	
18. Sunday	
19. terrible	
20. want	
21. what	
22. when	
23. where	
24. wife	
25. worst	
26. strict	

Auslan Sign Bank (Johnston 2004b)