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Performing Deafness: Symbolic Power as Embodied by Deaf and Hearing Preschoolers

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Symbolic competence, "the ability to actively manipulate and shape one's environment on multiple scales of time and space" (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008, p. 667), offers researchers and educators the ability to understand how learners position themselves. This positioning involves a vying for semiotic resources as a means to question established constructs and re-signify or reframe them (Kramsch, 2011). Theorizations of symbolic competence have thus far given limited attention to the multimodal dimensions of intercultural communication in action, that is, during the process of positioning. In this study, I utilize the operating principles of symbolic competence (positioning, historicity, reframing, and transgressions) to explore the embodied uses of symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1982) in multimodal interactions between deaf and hearing preschoolers. Specifically, this project asks: What understandings are we offered through an analysis of symbolic power in the multimodal dimensions (the visual, auditory, tactile, and spatial) of intercultural communication? What might this teach us about how symbolic power is distributed not just through the various languages of interaction, but also through the *bodies* in interaction? This fine-grained analysis, which is part of a larger ethnographic study, finds that deaf and hearing participants draw upon multimodal forms of communication to both question and play with the cultural constructs of 'hearingness' and 'deafness.' It is also through what is *not* spoken or signed—that is, silence, face-work, and body positions— that the focal L2 learners position themselves in a struggle over symbolic power. This research aims to expand the theorization of symbolic competence to include a focus on the meaning-making that takes place through the embodied dimensions of language. An embodied approach could be particularly useful in research that draws attention to multimodality and the various ways in which language learners make meaning, positioning self and other in the process.

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INTRODUCTION: "I CAN'T HEAR YOU. YOU NEED TO SIGN"

To begin the discussion of the embodied uses of symbolic power, I would like to share a classroom vignette from a preschool for deaf students. The data presented is from ethnographic field notes taken while observing preschoolers in the unstructured playtime period before the morning circle. This vignette highlights an embodied display of symbolic competence, or a "play of linguistic codes" that shapes the "very context in which the language is learned and used" (Kramsch &Whiteside, 2008, p. 664).

> The hearing non-signing educational specialist walks over and approaches the five-year-old deaf preschooler, Lance, who is sitting on the carpeted floor playing with large

building blocks. Lance, who has cochlear implants (CIs)[1] in both ears, uses both sign language and spoken English. The specialist attempts to make small talk in spoken English, and Lance immediately responds to the observer's slow and exaggerated enunciation.

Classroom Observer (in a loud voice, enunciating each syllable slowly): Hi there! How are you? What are you playing with?

Student (looking at the observer and speaking English with the same slow, loud enunciation as the observer): I can't hear you! You need to sign.

The student continues to look up at the classroom observer, waiting for a sign. Awkward silence fills the space between their gazes. The observer, pausing for a moment, offers a weak smile while giving a nod and then walks away. The preschooler shifts his gaze downward towards his blocks and returns to playing.

Having observed Lance for months, I knew that Lance understood a great deal of English when using his cochlear implants. With his focused eye contact and immediate response in spoken English, it was even clearer that Lance had understood the observer's attempt at conversation. Nevertheless, Lance ignored the request. He made a deliberate choice to align himself with deafness ("I can't hear you!"), most likely in an effort to avoid conversation or interaction with yet another classroom observer or specialist. In a strategic appropriation of the interlocutor's overly enunciated speech, Lance positioned the non-signer as the "hearing outsider" and suggested that signs represented the only possible mode of communication. Seemingly flustered by the failed communication attempt (despite the fact that Lance had understood the question directed at him), the observer walked away. Lance, in a demand to use sign language, effectively reframed the interaction in a way that produced a 'destabilizing effect' (Kramsch, 2016, pp. 518–519) on his frustrated interlocutor.

The acquisition of spoken English and entry into mainstream K–12 schooling constitute the primary educational goals for the deaf preschoolers in the focal classroom of this study. In this learning environment, the use of signs is, for the most part, viewed as a bridge to spoken English, the institutionally privileged mode of communication. Yet, in this example, "being deaf" is an act of resistance to the communicative game of "English small talk." An act of speech that puts an end to continued spoken communication becomes an alignment with deafness. On the surface, the strategy appears straightforward. Lance, like most kids, would likely rather enjoy playtime with his friends instead of being observed or assessed. However, the face-work (Goffman, 1974), or the communicative strategies that Lance employs to maintain a positive view of his deaf identity, is complex. He demonstrates a

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[1] A cochlear implant (CI) is an electronic device that is surgically implanted on the back of a deaf person's head. It consists of a removable external portion on the head itself and internal portion under the skin. Rather than restoring sound through the ear or amplifying sound to the ear as a hearing aid does, the CI offers a representation of sound by stimulating the auditory nerve to the brain through signals, which the brain learns to recognize as sound. It contains a microphone, a speech processor, a transmitter, and an electrode array. It typically takes one to two years for the brain to "train" itself to pick up the signals and recognize them. Since 2012, it is estimated that 324,200 people worldwide and 58,000 adults and 38,000 children in the United States have received cochlear implants, and this number is increasing every year (The Food and Drug Administration, 2012). From the perspective of the Deaf community, the use of CIs as a "cure" to deafness has been widely viewed as an unethical surgical procedure and a threat to the existence of the Deaf people and sign languages.

sharp awareness of the affordances of his two languages (English and American Sign Language (ASL)) and embodied modes (listening, speaking, or remaining silent) of meaning making. In a reflexive display, Lance reverses the modal hierarchy that typically privileges hearingness in this educational context, if only for a moment.

Lance also communicates sarcasm through his appropriation of the tonal and stylistic features—characteristic of "hearing talk"—of the observer's speech. In these embodied dimensions of speech, the utterance is not produced in isolation. As Kramsch (2016) reminds us, "Symbolic power does not operate in linear ways but in often highly indirect ways through self-reflection and irony" (p. 518). At the moment of the observer's exaggerated spoken utterance ("Hi there, how are you?..."), perhaps a history of similar overly-enunciated and loud "hearing utterances" floods Lance's thoughts, motivating him to reframe his interlocutor's response in a sarcastic manner. [2] The silent and persistent upward gaze of the preschooler further distances the observer from the comfort of speech. It is important to consider how the demonstration of symbolic competence in this interaction finds an extension in the embodied uses of intercultural communication.

What can we make of this classroom anecdote in which, through the intentional deployment of semiotic resources, this youngster is able to strategically move between hearingness and deafness, reframing the context to momentarily privilege the latter? Similar observations throughout my ethnographic research led me to ask the following questions:

- What is also "said" through the embodied modes of communication: silence, gesture, body position, and gaze?
- What insights are offered by an analysis of symbolic power in the multimodal dimensions (the visual, auditory, tactile, and spatial) of intercultural communication? What might this teach us about how symbolic power is distributed not just through the languages of interaction, but also through the bodies in interaction?
- What does an analysis of multilingualism (various languages) and embodied multimodality (various sensory modes of communication) teach us about the distribution of power in the process of positioning? What understanding do we gain not just for deaf learners, but for all learners?

The embodied dimensions are an integral part of the linguistic practices of the deaf and hearing participants in my overarching study; participants draw on a complex range of semiotic resources included pointing, eye gaze, facial expression, and bodily stance as acts of identities. Deaf studies researchers note that institutional, societal, and cultural norms have privileged the auditory/speech experience in research on language, culture, and identity (Baynton, 2008; Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996; Padden & Humphries, 2005). Further, norms continue to foster notions of 'culture' that are void of physical and sensory depth, and systematically exclude visual, spatial, and modal dimensions of making meaning, which we know to be critical to communication and development. Spoken languages are also embodied in and interwoven with physical, spatial, emotive, and psychological processes that

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[2] While observing this interaction, I was flooded with memories of the hearing utterance. As a hearing child of d/Deaf parents, I recalled how these "hearing utterances" (loud, overly enunciated spoken language directed towards d/Deaf people) were commonplace for my parents in public interactions. I wrote in my field notes how watching the interaction reminded me of my experience supporting my parents in ASL-English interpretation while mitigating stereotypes exacerbated by what we called the "hearing voice."

shape our sense of self. This study seeks to draw attention to nonverbal elements of language production, which continue to remain at the periphery of research on language learning and identity.

In order to better understand the embodied uses of symbolic power in intercultural communication, I examine the multimodal dimensions of an interaction between a deaf student, a hearing student, a researcher, and hearing teachers. In this fine-grained analysis, which is part of a larger ethnographic study, I specifically investigate the embodied uses of symbolic power that can be observed in a display of symbolic competence. Symbolic power, the ability to manipulate signifiers in order to reframe an interaction (Kramsch, 2016), builds on Bourdieu's (1982) notion that power is not simply something that one "has" over another. In Bourdieu's view, as a "power of constructing a reality" (p. 166), symbolic power necessitates the participation of all, deriving its legitimacy both from those who wield it and those who submit to it. I argue that symbolic competence offers us the analytic tools to understand how the embodied dimensions of communication play a role in a struggle over symbolic meanings and the positioning of self and other.

Before offering a multimodal analysis, I explore the previous literature on the symbolic dimensions of intercultural communication. In the next section, I review Kramsch and Whiteside's (2008) original conceptualization of symbolic competence and discuss more recent applications. I also draw attention to multimodal studies of the language practices of young deaf children. Through the literature review, I hope to demonstrate how symbolic competence offers new perspectives on the study of young deaf and hearing children and how a multimodal approach can expand a theorization of symbolic competence. I then provide background on the current approaches to language learning for the deaf in an attempt to illuminate the complex and diverse linguistic terrain of deaf learners. Overall, this paper represents an effort to link an understanding of the embodied modes of symbolic competence displayed in interactions of young deaf and hearing learners with broader discussions of intercultural competence.

SYMBOLIC DIMENSIONS OF THE INTERCULTURAL

At present, a focus on the role of emotion dominates embodied analyses of language learning in multilingual research. That is, more recently, FL and SLA researchers have paid greater attention to the affective and emotional aspects of language learning (see, for example, Block, 2014; Dewaele, 2010; Kramsch, 2009; Pavlenko, 2005)—in short, to the embodied and mediated dimensions of intercultural communication. Renewed interest in embodied modes of meaning-making has complicated prevalent assumptions that "paralinguistic features" (i.e., features *external* to speech) of communication are solely acts of semantic reinforcement. Research on the affect and positionality of the multilingual subject provides a starting point for analyses of competence that further account for embodied dimensions of learning.

One critique, however, of the recent attention to embodied dimensions of language learning concerns the continued privileging of the speech mode in communication. Very little attention has been given to learner populations with differing abilities. Multilinguals are conventionally defined as *speakers* of multiple languages. Studies have focused on individuals with proficiencies in multiple spoken languages, and analyses are framed through the speaker-hearer model. Language choice and code-switching are mostly understood as

decisions for speech production. In this body of research, it is often difficult to identify the intersections of modal choices (sign, speech, gesture, sensation) and emotions, feelings, and memories. The deaf participants in my larger study, some of whom have language delays resulting from barriers to first language access, often learn how to draw on semiotic resources that go beyond verbal production. What's more, some of them come from homes where multiple languages are spoken. This research project, in its effort to highlight embodied dimensions of communication among deaf and hearing participants, draws attention to the essentialized status of the able-bodied English language learner and broadens our conceptualization of communication.

In adopting a broader societal lens, we observe increasingly complex migratory flows at a global scale and the dissolving of rigid national, cultural and linguistic boundaries—whether physical or imagined. We are reminded that a multitude of possibilities for meaning making are not solely contained within one culture, border, or language. Kramsch and Whiteside (2008) pointed out that research in multilingual settings was dominated by a focus on communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) sustained by shared cultural and linguistic understandings. As they noted, language use is often underpinned by *unshared* cultural understandings of speakers displaying various language proficiencies. Although intercultural communication studies pushed for an understanding of such unshared meanings, they still remain wrapped up in essentialized notions of culture. Byram's (2000) definition of intercultural competence as the ability to "see relationships between different cultures—both internal and external to a society—and to mediate, that is, interpret each in terms of the other, either for themselves or for other people' (p. 10) called for a critical reflection on unshared understandings but remained embedded in the structural framework of cultural and societal boundaries.

Various authors pushed for more attention to the symbolic dimensions of intercultural communication, for a kind of "semiotic awareness" (van Lier, 2004) arising in an unbounded, unfinalized, and unpredictable space (Blommaert, 2005; Rampton, 1995). In their initial conceptualization of symbolic competence, Kramsch and Whiteside (2008) emphasized the need to further consider the mediated, embodied, and performative ways we make meaning. Symbolic competence, thus, is the ability of learners to "actively manipulate and shape one's environment on multiple scales of time and space" (p. 667) and to question, re-signify, or reframe established constructs (Kramsch, 2011).

Kramsch and Whiteside discuss four intertwined ways whereby symbolic competence operates: subject positioning, historicity, performativity, and reframing:

1. Subject positioning: In an attempt at symbolic power, speakers strategically take up different subject positions through a deliberate choice of semiotic resources. Unlike Canale and Swain's (1980) *strategic competence*—the ability of an individual to compensate when communication breaks down—, competence here is distributed through the symbolic positions that different speakers take up. Strategic competence resides in the individual, while symbolic competence is distributed in-between individuals. Kramsch (2009) describes subject positioning as the "the way in which the subject presents and represents itself discursively, psychologically, socially, and culturally through the use of symbolic systems" (p. 20). This post-structuralist, discursive view of identity as "socially conditioned semiotic work" and as "semiotic potential" (Blommaert, 2005, p. 207) illuminates how we draw on symbolic and

semiotic resources to position ourselves in and through language. According to this perspective, individuals can be seen as constantly forming, reforming, and performing identity.

2. Historicity: According to Butler (1997), each utterance contains the "historicity of convention that exceeds and enables the moment of its enunciation" (p. 33). In other words, cultural memories embedded in a speaker's language, gestures, and body positions are "sedimented representations" remembered by individuals and operate over various timescales. The speaker has the capacity to "perform and construct various historicities in dialogue with others" (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008, p. 665).

3. Performativity: The authors define performativity as the "capacity to perform and create alternative realities" (p. 666), harkening back to Austin's (1962) notion that we do things with words. With a performative view of language comes the capacity to play with linguistic codes and shift the "balance of symbolic power" (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008, p. 666).

4. Framing: Symbolic competence is recognized as the ability to reframe or "manipulate conventional categories and societal norms of truthfulness, legitimacy, seriousness, originality—and to reframe human thought and action" (p. 677). This capacity is not only the ability to re-signify and re-trancontexualize but also to "play with the tension between text and context" (Kramsch, 2011, p. 359).

Recent understandings of symbolic competence retain its defining features: the reframing of context, repositioning of self, and manipulation of linguistic codes. Symbolic power, in recent applications, is constituted in both global and local contexts, extending outside the language-learning context and into everyday conversations. Research on symbolic power has recently focused on conversational inequality in intercultural communication. Extending Bourdieu's emphasis on the role of institutions, Hua and Kramsch explain that symbolic power "is more than just a psychological form of imposition exerted by a social or political institution on individuals. It is the name of a relational game that every social actor has to play for fear of stigmatization or exclusion" (p. 379). Returning to my opening anecdote, Lance played this relational game in an attempt to align himself with deafness. He positioned his interlocutor as an outsider, excluding him from his deaf world. Symbolic power here requires the participation of both participants and reverses the institutionally imposed hierarchy of hearingness and deafness.

Despite recent attention to symbolic competence across contexts, there is still very little research examining symbolic competence among young language learners. One exception is Bernstein's (2016) study, which analyzes strategic misunderstandings as an act of symbolic power in intercultural communication in a preschool context. Bernstein provides a detailed examination of one "misunderstanding" between English learners and English speakers from a larger data set. She questions the idea of intercultural misunderstandings as miscommunication and suggests that strategic misunderstandings and (mis)interpretations can be acts of symbolic distinction for the three- and four-years-olds in her study. Symbolic competence is understood as a strategic vying for power, an effort to secure inclusion in peer activities. In both Bernstein's data and my own, we see the unique ability of young learners to strategically involve "pretend space" in the symbolic game.

Vinall's (2016) notion of transgression adds a layer to symbolic competence that has proven useful in my own analysis. Vinall explores how teaching symbolic competence

facilitates learners' critical reflection. She stresses three features of symbolic competence in language learning contexts: relationality, transgression, and potentiality. Symbolic competence, Vinall states, emphasizes a reflexive awareness in learners that is necessary to cross "borders between linguistic codes and cultural meanings, the self and others, various timescales and historical contexts, and power structures" (p. 5). Vinall highlights the movement more explicitly as a transgression of boundaries as learners break down dichotomies in a struggle over semiotic resources. Symbolic competence here is recognized as the movement or transgression across symbolic spaces through the shifting of linguistic codes.

There is a great deal of research on embodied modes of communication. In bilingual studies, attention has been given to the relationship between gesture and language acquisition: gesture as a communication strategy, gesture as a medium or reflection of language development, and gesture in relation to the semantic content of learners' L1 and L2 (see, for instance, Church, Ayman-Nolly, & Mahootian, 2004; Gullberg, 2006; McCafferty, 2002; Nicholadis, Mayberry, & Genesee, 1999; Stam, 2008; Yoshioka & Kellerman, 2006). Goldin-Meadow's (2003) work with deaf and hearing children in learning contexts has offered unparalleled insights into the relationship between gesture and cognitive and linguistic development. Goldin-Meadow focuses on how gesture relates to thought processes in the gesture/speech "mismatch." However, the social and individual dimensions behind a "mismatch" are not fully explored. Often, the focus in gesture/ASL studies is quantitative or experimental; missing from this picture is a more socially, culturally, and physically contextualized view of the deaf child in a hearing world. Further, fairly absent in the research on deaf children is a naturalistic, ethnographic, and holistic exploration of the deaf child in his/her sociocultural context (Blackburn, 2000; Hilton, Jones, Harmon, & Cropper, 2013). I would argue that even more absent from this body of research is a focus on deaf children who use CIs at home or in educational settings.

The multimodal deaf-hearing interactions documented by my research lead me to ask where and how modal transgressions may contribute to the recognition of language learners' symbolic competence. More broadly, where do the shared or unshared understandings of the speaking/listening, able-bodied individual fit in when thinking about the transgression of linguistic codes, or, in the case presented here, modes? In using symbolic competence as an analytic lens on the multimodal interactions (in this case: signs, gestures, and body positions) between deaf and hearing participants (with varying levels of English and signing proficiencies) at a preschool, my aim is twofold. My first objective is to expand the theorization of symbolic competence to include a focus on the meaning-making that takes place through the embodied dimensions of language. Kramsch and Whiteside (2008) carefully attend to embodied cultural memories as significant to the operation of symbolic competence, but the various modes, and the shifts between them, are often overlooked as a potential means to transgress boundaries.

Drawing on Bourdieu's view of positioning as a negotiation of symbolic power, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) assert that "[l]anguages may not only be 'markers of identity' but also sites of resistance, empowerment, solidarity or discrimination" (p. 4). An understanding of symbolic competence as an act of positioning aimed at exercising a symbolic edge must also examine the transgression of embodied modes. I seek to expand on our understanding of competence by giving more consideration to the full "saturation of context," by contextualizing the utterance so that meaning is derived from both language and non-language (e.g., silence and the position of the body in space) (Hanks, 1995; see also Merleau-

Ponty, 1964). Symbolic competence, with its strong focus on semiotic potentials, offers untapped possibilities for insight into our emerging understandings of multimodality in meaning-making. My second objective in this paper is to call attention to the under examined narrative of the L2 deaf learner and to point out what we can learn from a close examination of modality viewed through the lens of symbolic competence and across language learning contexts.

The d/DEAF [3] CONTEXT: A MISSING SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING NARRATIVE

In the heat of the debate around cochlear implants and auditory deafness versus cultural Deafness, the very notion that deaf children are learning a second language, English, gets lost. Around 95% percent of deaf children are born into hearing families (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004), a fact that prompts hearing families and educators to reflect on issues of communication, culture, and identity in new ways. The cultural, political, educational, and sensorial landscape of deaf people in the United States is, at present, undergoing many significant changes that further diversify what it means to be deaf and Deaf. Technological advances, improved surgical procedures, and a growing breadth of literature on the educational outcomes of deaf learners have lead to an increase in the use of CIs for deaf infants and children (Mitchiner & Sass-Lehrer, 2011, p. 72). As a result, there has also been an increased focus in medicine and education on spoken/oral approaches to the linguistic development of deaf children (Nussbaum & Scott, 2011).

With federal and state policies in the United States driving intervention and inclusion efforts for students with disabilities in education, from 2009-2010 57% of deaf students were mainstreamed into general educational settings with hearing students (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2011). More than half of the 37,828 deaf and hard-of-hearing students surveyed reported being educated in speech-only settings (Gallaudet Research Institute, 2011). Given the varying cognitive, physical, communicative, and social needs of deaf children, the educational and linguistic outcomes are diverse but generally indicate severe disadvantages for deaf children (Leigh, 2008; Nussbaum & Scott, 2011; Pisoni et al., 2008).

Educational institutions often play non-negligible role in shaping a deaf language learner's identity as measured against the idealized "native" and able-bodied speaker of English. This framing frequently leads hearing parents to believe that if their child attains competence in *spoken* English, he/she will achieve the "norm"; this, in turn, reinforces dichotomies such as "native"/"non-native" speaker and dis/able-bodied learner. Our consideration of a unimodal, phonocentric bias expands on what SLA theorists describe as a monolingual, moncultural bias. Canagarajah (1999) explains this monolingual bias as follows:

> A debilitating monolingual/mono-cultural bias has revealed itself in the insistence on 'standard' English as the norm, the refusal to grant an active role to the students' first language in the learning and acquisition of English . . . All such assumptions ignore the creative processes of linguistic mediation, interaction, and fusion that take place in social life. (p. 3)

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[3] d/D is used by Leigh (2009) as an identity label that refers the simultaneous experience of the audiological condition of being deaf (little d) and Deafness as a cultural concept (big D).

I find Canagarajah's discussion of the context of second language learning for hearing students applicable to deaf children, who face a similar (although much more understudied and under-recognized) kind of monolingual/mono-cultural/unimodal bias in language learning. This bias may be preventing us from fully considering the visual and sensory dimensions integral to their communicative practices. In the context of deaf education in the United States, the majority of deaf students are mainstreamed and pushed into English-only contexts instead of bilingual programs that recognize and incorporate a fully visual language, ASL. For the most part, the monolingual bias reproduces the values and practices of the hearing-dominant rather than placing emphasis on what it means to be bilingual or bimodal and how we can use various linguistic resources and cultural perspectives to enrich a classroom. Educational institutions promote socially constructed static representations of learners and are quick to categorize them without recognizing their diverse backgrounds and experiences (Harklau, 2000). The silent category that goes unquestioned is that of the speaking/hearing subject, a subject used to define the communicative norms in our first or second languages.

Language socialization researchers have examined the ways we are socialized to and through language, or, how sociocultural knowledge is conveyed and reproduced through language-mediated interactions, routines, and processes (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). The language socialization of deaf children born into hearing families challenges the dominant, yet implicit, phonocentric or "hearing world" angle on language socialization theory. In many cases, young deaf children in hearing families do not have full auditory access to the spoken language practices of the home and school context. This situation contrasts with that of spoken bilingual or multilingual contexts, where the mode of communication—speech— is shared and accessible for hearing individuals. When early access to a visual language is complicated by educational and medical discourses in addition to family practices that may or may not include signing, deaf children cannot fully participate in the language-mediated activities of the hearing *or* deaf worlds (Erting & Kuntze, 2008).

In framings of language, identity, and culture, some theorists in Deaf studies see the traditional cultural model of Deafness as constraining cultural experience and are thus calling for more attention to the embodied dimensions of practice (Baynton, 1996, 2008; Valente, Bahan, & Bauman, 2011). In his article "Beyond culture: Deaf studies and the deaf body," Baynton (2008) argues that while the concept of Deaf culture has been integral to the development of Deaf studies, it "increasingly appears inadequate in itself as an explanation of the Deaf community and the experiences of Deaf people" (p. 293). He calls for a "new configuration of abilities" that takes into account how deaf visual bodies, across broader contexts of culture, shape cultural practice (p. 294). This focus on embodiment is particularly important in the larger context of my research.

"Language" in the research context of this paper is not neatly boxed up as illustrating either a spoken or signed medium. Participants in this study are not necessarily proficient in English or ASL, the two main recognized languages underpinning the communicative practices. Choice of language and mode (sign, speech, gesture, silence, etc.) is unpredictable, often tension-filled, and affectively driven. While the linguistic, educational, and social avenues to explore d/Deafness are vast, this study constitutes just a sliver of work seeking to contribute to our understanding of the language experiences of deaf children, a narrative that has been all too neglected in the broader context of second language learning in the United States and in the unimodally biased literature on bi/multilingualism. The context of my research, in which hearing and deaf individuals draw on a variety of semiotic resources

including sign and speech to make sense of their world, provides a unique window into multimodal communication.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology

The multimodal analysis that follows is part of a one-year ethnographic, critical discourse analysis of day-to-day multimodal interactions among four- to six-year-old deaf and hard-of-hearing children and their parents, teachers, and hearing peers. The study is situated at a California preschool, The Eagle Crest Early Intervention Center[4] (ECEIC). Zentella's (1997) "anthropolitical" linguistic approach, a socially and politically conscious ethnographic positioning, provides a framework that helps make visible my researcher stance. My own identity, as a child of two d/Deaf parents, has played a role in translating the social reality of my participants. The sensory, visual, and physical ways students, parents, and teachers communicated felt familiar given my own language experiences growing up with d/Deaf parents.

After volunteering at the school for two years as a teacher's aide, I chose to study the preschool classroom for deaf and hard-of-hearing students at ECEIC because it represented a rich context to observe multimodal interactions between deaf and hearing participants. My larger multi-scalar participant-observation/interview study includes two components to understand the role that modality plays in communication and the relationship between language, learning, and identity processes: 1) classroom data of hearing and deaf students and 2) interviews with hearing mothers and participation in the parent sign class. With interactions in both of these contexts came frequent uses of embodied modes aimed at (re)positioning oneself in an attempt to shift the balance of power between participants.

In the larger longitudinal project, I relied on field notes and observational data (video) to identify, describe, and contextualize instances of multimodal use and mode blending (sign, speech, or sensory modes blended into an utterance) in different interactions.[5] Norris's (2004) multimodal framework includes a thorough analysis of gesture, bodily spatial orientation, gaze, and facial and bodily expression in group interactions. This framework is crucial in guiding my analysis. Norris's framework aims to capture the "modal density," or complexity of multiple modes, in interaction. This approach was useful as I wanted to find out how and what language/modality indexes at the individual and social level. Drawing on the tools of discourse analysis, in particular "indexicality" (Ochs, 1996), I coded for modal shifts (changes in body stances and modality, i.e., sign vs. spoken English) as acts of social positioning. For my larger project, I examined 20 hours of classroom data broken into 65 extended clips on iMovie coded through the iMovie comment function. The original clips ranged in length and averaged between 5-15 minutes each. On average, there were 5-7 students present in most focal events, one head teacher, two teacher's aides, and myself. In

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[4] Eagle Crest Early Intervention Center (ECEIC) is a pseudonym for the California-based educational site.

[5] I am interested in the use of what I call "mode blending," using sign, speech, and sensory modes in combination, making it slightly different from both co-speech gesture (simultaneous usage of gesture and speech, McNeil, 1992) and code-blends (simultaneous usage of ASL sign and speech, Petitto et al., 2001); mode blending includes both co-speech gestures and code-blends. The concept of mode blending is most applicable in the context of my research, which is multilingual and multimodal.

about 50% of the clips, there was at least one "hearing role model"[6] student present. In a preliminary analysis, I coded a range of themes that related to my research questions on linguistic, social, and individual dimensions. After examining repetitive patterns in field notes and video, I chose 47 well-coded multimodal interactions, edited down the selected interactions to between 30 seconds and 3 minutes, and roughly transcribed these key interactions. The last step in the larger research process was to provide a detailed multimodal transcription of the interactions chosen for analysis with consideration of gesture, sign, speech, and spatial positioning.

With my multimodal focus in mind, it was necessary to develop a framework that included a visual representation of the data. Thus, I adopted a "mix-modal" (sign, speech, and other embodied dimensions) approach to transcription. Specifically, I used glosses or frame grabs for specific sign sequences representing patterns of multimodal communication, accompanied by further orthographic translation/transcription. One disadvantage of providing glosses or orthographic transcription, however, is that the presentation of the orthographic data becomes an interpretation in itself; it is a bimodal code represented in a unimodal English code.

By far, one of the most difficult tasks I faced in this study was the question of how to present my data in a way that maintains equal weight to various modes: speech, visual, and sensory. Ochs (1979) highlights some of the cultural bias in transcription conventions and argues that conventional linguistic and sociological models ignore or minimize non-verbal considerations in adult-speech behavior. Yet, in Ochs's framework, non-verbal features are considered as co-occurring with spoken language but not as the central mode through which meaning may be conveyed (as Norris argues in her multimodal framework). The bottom line is that orthographic bias is difficult to escape in any conventional transcriptions.[7]

In contrast to many other transcription frameworks, I transcribed spoken and signed utterances as well as other embodied modes of communication. In the first column of the transcription, I indicate the addresser, the participant who is producing the sign, speech, or gesture. If two participants speak or sign at the same time, the participants' names are indicated in the same box. The second column indicates transcribed verbal and sign utterances marked by their parallel positions. Regular cased words indicate speech while capitalized letters are glosses of signed utterances. Speech is preceded by a "V" (for "voice") and signed utterances are preceded by an "S" ("sign"). When the voiced and signed utterances are simultaneously produced, they are aligned, one on top of the other, in the transcription. In the third column, I indicate the presence of other embodied utterances of communication, including gesture, gaze, movement, pointing, and sensory modes. In this column, I included both the addresser and addressee's modal uses and reactions. The third column offers a description of the co-gestural or co-modal occurrences other than speech and sign. The reader should use the transcription in tandem with the annotated video grabs, which visually illuminate important modal occurrences.

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[6] Label used by the school to refer to hearing student visitors in the classroom for the deaf preschoolers.

[7] There are a number of approaches to transcription outside the orthographic tradition, but they do not necessarily lend themselves well to the data of my project. Transcription conventions for ASL data such as the Movement-Hold Model (Liddell & Johnson, 1989) and the Berkeley Transcription System (BTS) (Slobin et al., 2001), which examine signed languages at the phonetic and morphological level, are not particularly useful for linguistic analysis that is heavily contextualized for an audience of educators. In addition, both systems centralize ASL as the linguistic code. In my data, there was no one central code of language production; rather, the code is mixed.

Research Site

The ECEIC, which employs a speech and sign-based approach to language development, is an early intervention preschool for deaf children. The ECEIC also includes a "typically developing" preschool for hearing students. Located across the courtyard from the preschool for the deaf, the hearing preschool is promoted as a "[b]ilingual, inclusive community preschool" (ECEIC website). Each week, a student from the hearing classroom is chosen to join the deaf classroom and to serve as a "hearing role model," providing a model of spoken English for deaf peers and gaining exposure to sign language in exchange.

The classrooms and play areas—characterized by high ceilings and windows, whitewashed walls that open up visual space, acoustically modified classrooms with acoustic-tiled walls and floors that absorb noise—are customized to enhance students' sensory experience. The lofty ceiling space and high windows invite natural light, enhancing the visual space on which deaf students heavily rely. The preschool room had a one-way observation window, accompanied by intercoms, which offers parents, funders, policymakers, and health officials the ability to observe classroom activity.

The stated philosophy of ECEIC is to "maximize communication potential" (ECEIC website). The preschool for the deaf and hard-of-hearing employees uses the "Total Communication" (TC) approach to language development. In theory, the approach encourages the use of all means of communication with deaf people including ASL, spoken and written English, fingerspelling, drawing, and mime. TC is viewed as the dominant philosophy in the education of deaf children, particularly for students mainstreamed into public schools. Nevertheless, Deaf educators have regarded the TC approach with much criticism since it is considered a variation on the oral method. Since the 1970s, various forms of sign-supported English, categorized under TC, have emerged with the goal of employing both oral and English manual approaches that best accommodate the needs of individual students. The school's TC approach has encouraged the use of Signing Exact English (SEE-sign), one of the most commonly used manually coded English systems in the United States today.[8]

Overview of the Focal Participants: Irene, Andrew, and Teacher Julie

Irene spent half her day in the preschool classroom for the deaf students and the other half in the classroom for hearing students. In the deaf classroom, she often took the lead in activities and group communication while acting like a big sister to the other deaf students in the classroom. After many years adjusting to her CIs, which she once referred to as "part of

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[8] SEE-sign is a communicative strategy of simultaneously employing a visual system of signs and producing speech. It is intended to ultimately facilitate English language development as signs are "dropped" when a child becomes more dependent on speech. The widespread criticism of this approach (Andrews, Leigh, & Weiner, 2004; Lane, Hoffmeister, & Bahan, 1996; c.f. Walker & Tomblin, 2014 for recent pushback on this criticism) maintains that SEE-sign is an artificial sign system that attempts to "change the 'delivery system' (from voice to hands) of a language that is not accessible to Deaf children (spoken English) and is not suited to the visual manual mode of transmission" (Lane et al., 1996, p. 272). Lane et al. (1996) also explain that TC's inadequate use of each medium results in confusion, preventing students from reaching full competence in either language and marginalizing deaf students in a mainstream setting with instructors who are often not fluent in ASL. Despite these criticisms, TC approaches and manually coded sign systems remain dominant, as they, in theory, attempt to facilitate the acquisition of spoken English.

my body," she began to drop her signs and rely heavily on speech for communication. She would sign when prompted by teachers or when communicating with deaf students who mostly used signs. Despite not necessarily using signs all the time, she still played the role of "expert signer" in the class for deaf students, and she seemed to enjoy this role. Across my data, I found multiple instances of Irene "correcting" the signs of her peers, especially her hearing peers. In the preschool classroom for the hearing students across the courtyard, Irene's speech skills were below the level of her hearing peers of the same age. On a few occasions, when she became frustrated with verbal communication in the hearing classroom, she asked to come back to the deaf classroom, expressing a sense of relief once she arrived. Despite some struggles adjusting to the hearing classroom and her role as the only deaf student in the class, she generally appeared very outgoing and positive. From my observations during the integrated playtime, she'd bounce around happily with students from both classrooms.

Andrew, a seven-year-old visiting "hearing role model" and son of the head teacher, appeared sporadically, but often, throughout the data collected. As the son of the head teacher, Julie, he once attended the deaf classroom full-time for an entire year. Julie had a master's degree in Deaf Education and was fluent in ASL. Julie used ASL and English with Andrew during his first few years of life. Between his bilingual upbringing and experience in the ECEIC classroom when he was younger, Andrew was well equipped to communicate through both signs and speech. On occasions when he was not in school or during the long summer break, teacher Julie would bring him to her classroom. On such days, he would participate fully in the classroom activities. As an energetic and a bit mischievous seven-year-old, he was the oldest in the group and often volunteered to be in charge of different classroom activities.

A MULTIMODAL INTERACTION UNDER ANALYSIS

I provide a detailed multimodal analysis of an interaction between Irene and Andrew at snack time. Viewing the interaction through various embodied dimensions alongside the teachers' peripheral participation, I examine the students' use of various semiotic and spatial resources. Because of the level of detail of the analysis, I include only one ethnographic vignette in this paper. Following the data overview and analysis, I use symbolic competence as a lens to understand meaning-making in multimodal interactions.

I begin by offering a brief synopsis of the focal videotaped interaction. Students and three teachers (the head teacher and two teacher's aides, including me) were sitting around a table eating cupcakes and cream cheese when Irene attempted to get Andrew's attention by using her voice and pointing toward him. Andrew responded by ignoring her comment and turning his back to her. Teacher Julie and I intervened by suggesting communicative approaches. Teachers, monitoring the conversation, co-facilitated the exchange, sometimes prompting the use of students' bodily resources (in this case signs, speech, face-work, and body posture) as well as their own. I leave out the tangential interactions that took place at the snack table related to the eating of the cupcakes as they did not influence the main interaction under focus between Irene and Andrew. It is important to note, however, that the continued engaged gaze of the bystanders likely propelled participants' positionings.

The interaction also needs to be situated in both the activities of the day and the roles played by each student in the classroom. On three separate occasions on this day (during the morning circle time, snack time, and closing circle time), I recorded Irene trying to reach out

to Andrew to communicate. In every case, Andrew gave Irene a bit of a cold shoulder in response or did not respond at all. In these interactions, Irene positioned herself as his equal peer in trying to get close to and communicate with Andrew, the visiting hearing student to the classroom. Andrew, on the other hand, asserted himself as the older and more mature student, not interested in Irene's pleas for conversation and interaction. The interaction under analysis is preceded by a number of attempts at direct address from Irene aimed at getting Andrew's attention by calling out his name ("Hey Andrew!") while pointing at him. In this culminating interaction, Irene desperately tried to communicate using speech, yet Andrew deliberately chose to "play deaf," not responding and using sign when communicating with teacher Julie.

Table 1

Social positioning via use of semiotic resources: Transcript (1:29)

Addresser	Speech/SIGN	Accompanying embodied utterances of addresser and addressee
1 Teacher Julie	V: A what on it?	Teacher Julie responds to Irene's comment that something is on Andrew's face. Andrew's back is turned toward Irene across the table. Jennifer is sitting next to Irene following her attempts to get Andrew's attention.
2 Student Irene	V: He's got that thing on it.	Irene pointing toward Andrew (Figure 1.1). Teacher Julie shifts her gaze to Andrew's face.
3 Teacher Julie	V: On his face? S: FACE	Teacher Julie looks at Andrew's face and signs "face" (Figure 1.2).
4 Student Irene	V: Uh	Gestures with affirmative head nod.
5 Teacher Julie	V: Some (.2) <u>Cream cheese?</u> S: CREAM CHEESE	Andrew looks toward teacher Julie as she signs cream cheese (Figure 1.3).
6 Student Irene	V: Some cream cheese on yourself. S: CREAM CHEESE	Irene loosely signs cream cheese with one hand while holding the cup cake in the other (Figure 1.4). She ends her sign by pointing toward Andrew. Andrew turns to face Irene during her sign "Cream cheese" (Figure 1.5).
7 Student Irene	V: That's not very nice she's saying.	Andrew smirks at Irene and turns his back toward her again. Irene comments and looks down (Figure 1.6).
8 Teacher Julie	V: Can you sit around please? (.5)	Andrew turns back around after the request (Figure 1.7).

	S: SIT AROUND V: And join the group? S: [JOIN GROUP]	
9 Student Irene	V: [You don't] say that when you're <u>sad.</u>	With "sad," she raises her two hands up and down (Figure 1.8).
10 Teacher Julie	V: What do you want him to say? S: WHAT WANT SAY V: What <u>should</u> he say? S: WHAT SHOULD SAY	Teacher Julie looks toward Irene. Andrew's back is toward Irene.
11 Student Irene	V: He shouldn't be mad at me.	She lowers her voice and looks down slightly.
12 Teacher Julie	V: I don't think he's mad. S: DONT THINK MAD V: I think he's teasing S: TEASING	Teacher Julie signs "don't think mad" (Figure 1.9) while looking at Irene.
13 Student Irene	V: Mmmnnnnn	Irene groans looking down at the cupcake she is eating. Her facial expression become tense, her eyebrows furl.
14 Jennifer	V: He's being funny S: FUNNY	Irene looks to Jennifer. Andrew turns around (Figure 1.10).
15 Student Andrew		After Jennifer's comment, Andrew puts his fist on his hips, arms bent. He stares at Irene.
16 Student Irene	V: You're being funny!	Andrew shifts his hips and continues to look at Irene. Then, he looks away, turns back again. Irene looks to Jennifer.
17 Jennifer	V: It's okay. S: MAKE A FACE?	Jennifer suggests to Irene that she make a face using only sign.
18 Student Irene	V: yeah!	In low voice, puts cupcake down.
19 Student Irene	V: Andrew!	Andrew looks back around.
		Both Irene and Andrew stare at each other, moving their heads closer and closer together across the table (Figure 1.11). The teacher observers laugh quietly while looking on.
20 Teacher Julie	V: Good idea, Jennifer. S: GOOD IDEA JENNIFER	Teacher Julie looks toward Jennifer. The other students draw their gazes

		toward the "staring match" (Figure 1.12).
21 Student Irene	V: <u>Gra:::!</u>	Irene and Andrew continue to rub foreheads and Irene screams for 4 seconds.
22 Jennifer	V: That was loud Irene! S: LOUD IRENE	Jennifer turns away from Irene. The other students are closely looking on.
23 Teacher Julie	V: Okay, not at the table… Sh:::	Andrew continues to stare while Irene backs off
24		Student Irene outstretches her arm and gently puts her fist on Andrew's forehead (Figure 1.13).
25 Jennifer	S: CAREFUL	Irene looks toward Jennifer.
26 Teacher Julie	V: hey hey hey hey so you guys are getting to:::o physical S: PHYSICAL	She breaks apart Andrew and Irene by leaning up off of her chair and placing her hand in between them (Figure 1.14).
27 Teacher Julie 28 Student Andrew 29 Student Irene	[Please don't do that] S: [CUPCAKE FINISH] S: [I PUT MY FACE RIGHT THERE]	Teacher Julie stares sternly and directly at Andrew while doing a "no" head shake. Andrew signs and then stands up to leave (Figure 1.15). Irene jokes and laughs about putting her face forward.

Frame grabs to accompany transcript

Figure 1.1: Irene tries to draw Andrew's attention to a spot of cream cheese on his face. Irene, while pointing to the "spot," states, "He's got that thing on it!" Andrew pretends he doesn't hear and turns his back to Irene.

Figure 1.2: Teacher Julie clarifies Irene's statement: "You mean on his face?" In this frame, teacher Julie is signing "face" while Irene looks on.

Figure 1.3: Teacher Julie continues to further clarify Irene's statement, offering the bimodal utterance (sign and speech): "Some cream cheese?" Teacher Julie signs "cheese" in this clip.

Figure 1.4: With the vocabulary cued by the teacher, Irene continues, "Some cream cheese on yourself," while holding her hand out extended, doing the rough sign of "cheese" with one hand and holding a cupcake in the other. Andrew begins to turn toward Irene.

Figure 1.5: Andrew turns around and makes eye contact with Irene. Irene continues to point towards Andrew.

Figure 1.6: Andrew turns his back on Irene again. In response, Irene calls out frustrated, "That's not very nice she's saying."

Figure 1.7: Teacher Julie asks Andrew to turn around. In this frame, Julie is signing "around" with one hand and holding her cupcake in the other.

Figure 1.8: Irene exclaims in frustration, "You don't say that when you are sad" while bring her hands up and down rapidly. Andrew turns around again.

Figure 1.9: Catching the attention of both students, teacher Julie responds to Irene's statement: "He's just teasing. He's not mad." In this frame, teacher Julie signs "mad."

Figure 1.10: Jennifer signs "Make a face?" (line 17) using signs and without speech. In this frame grab, Jennifer signs "make." Andrew is unable to access this exchange.

Figure 1.11: After Irene tells Andrew "You're just being funny!" he responds with a staring face to match her funny face.

Figure 1.12: Irene and Andrew continue their stare-off. Teachers and students begin to pay more attention to Andrew and Irene as they spread to the middle of the table.

Figure 1.13: Irene gives Andrew a playful touch on the forehead with her fist.

Figure 1.14: Andrew responds to Irene's playful "soft punch" with a similar one.

Figure 1.15: Irene looks toward Jennifer with laughter after the interaction closes. Andrew remains silent and turns to teacher Julie, signing (without speech) in ASL-driven grammar "Cupcake finish," and excuses himself from the table. At the same time, teacher Julie scolds him for getting too physical.

Analysis

The interaction begins when Irene changes her attention-grabbing tactic from a direct address ("Hey Andrew!") to a declaration as she to tries to alert Andrew to a spot of cream cheese on his face. At this point, Andrew's back is fully faced toward Irene, which, in a classroom of deaf students that depend on the visual space, is a very deliberate way, discouraged by teachers, to cut off communication. Irene has trouble articulating the vocabulary she needs to tell Andrew about the cream cheese spot, and teacher Julie assists in giving her the lexical items through signed speech, a common strategy for building spoken English vocabulary in the TC classroom.

At first, Irene uses only speech, with some bimodal production (sign and speech), to identify and align with Andrew, the older, hearing visiting student. Andrew, however, rejects Irene's alignment, seeing himself perhaps as more mature than the other students in the classroom. While each student attempts to gain a symbolic edge in the hearing and deaf spaces of the interaction, Irene and Andrew draw on bodily communicative strategies. Close attention to posture, gaze, and facial expressions offers greater insight into the interaction.

Andrew continues to keep his back to Irene, driving her into much frustration: "That's not very nice she's saying" (line 7). The pronoun "she" in this case refers to teacher Julie. Irene's statement forces teacher Julie to do something about the situation, prompting her to speak on behalf of the child. Teacher Julie never actually states "That's not very nice" in this exchange; rather Irene imposes the position of discipliner onto teacher Julie through her statement. Teacher Julie turns directly to Andrew with the firm spoken and signed bimodal utterance "Join the group" (line 8). When Andrew turns his back to Irene once again, she becomes visibly frustrated and throws her arms up and down ("You don't say that when you're sad!"). Following this motion, she looks downward glumly ("He shouldn't be mad at me," line 11).

Teacher Julie attempts to turn around the interaction by explaining that Andrew was not mad; he was, rather, just teasing. I follow teacher Julie's lead to interpret Andrew's actions as humorous, explaining to Irene, "He's just being funny" (line 14) and, then, signing (without speech) the suggestion "Make a face?" (line 17). In making the choice to not using speech alongside sign (bimodal production is expected of teachers), I take advantage of the visual space and the way in which Andrew is positioning himself with his back to Irene. The silence Andrew feels at the moment of the non-verbal exchange between Irene and me sparks his curiosity and leads him to do a face-forward body shift. Irene receives credit for initiating her humorous attention-getting tactic, as Andrew is unaware of my facilitation. In using only signs, I assist in keeping Irene's humorous tactic "undercover" from Andrew. I also assist in Irene's reconfiguring of the distribution of power between the two students. Irene has found a way into the positioning game with Andrew. Irene then agrees to change her tone from sad to humorous once she begins a stare down with Andrew. They face each other, forehead to forehead, leaning in from opposite sides of the table. Their furled eyebrows and scrunched faces, with hands on hips as they mimic each other, is a tactic of coming on "eye to eye" physically. With the "stare down" humor they level the playing field, and, in that moment, identifying oneself as a speaker or signer doesn't hold relevance.

When the children appear to get too physical, teacher Julie then intervenes and pulls Andrew back. Andrew, the hearing student who still has not spoken or signed any words in the entire one and a half minute exchange, finally produces an utterance. He turns to his mother (teacher Julie) and signs "Cupcake finish" (line 28) with no speech. In this reply, he

uses grammar characteristic of ASL (the absence of an article, the absence of being verb, and topic-comment word order instead of SVO). This contrasts with Andrew's typical behavior in the classroom, where he uses spoken English with his mother and mixes modes with other students for the most part. As Andrew signs "cupcake finished," teacher Julie shifts roles again from teacher to mother and switches modes from sign to speech, stating verbally in her lower-tone motherly voice, "Please don't do that" (line 27). The previous warning to her son was a bimodal utterance ("Can you sit around and join the group?" line 8), but this last sharp motherly warning was produced in speech only. Andrew, on the other hand, even after all of Irene's pleas, continues to "play deaf," using his body to disrupt the visual space. Further, he makes only a few signs to purposefully alienate himself from his own hearingness, thus making it more difficult for Irene to identity with him. Andrew makes a contradictory choice of semiotic resources to reinforce his hearingness and leaves little room for Irene or his mom to "talk" to him. Irene, however, appears pleased with the humorous and playful turn in the interaction.

DISCUSSION: THROUGH THE LENS OF SYMBOLIC COMPETENCE

This student-driven interaction illustrates Irene and Andrew's acute awareness of the physical and cultural constructs of hearingness and deafness. Both young students make deliberate semiotic choices in an effort to shift the balance of symbolic power. Irene associates her modal choices with being deaf or being hearing. For these kids, being deaf or hearing in these contexts is associated with a certain cultural belonging. "Culture" for the youngsters is understood through one's presence in the hearing or deaf classroom. In this interaction, Irene uses spoken English to align herself with Andrew and appears proud of her recent successful experiences in the "hearing classroom culture." Throughout the day of the focal interaction, she tried three times to demonstrate her spoken English progress and her membership in the hearing classroom. On the other hand, when she chooses to use a signed mode of communication with her deaf and hearing peers, she asserts a different power struggle as she positions herself as an expert signer. The historicity of the modal utterances extends outside of the focal interaction, into the larger educational context, into students' homes and life outside of school. Through constant reminders such as "Use your voice!" deaf students understand the privileged mode of communication. Questioning and transgressing these categories, as Lance did in the opening anecdote, becomes a kind of "linguistic survival" (Butler, 1997).

   We see here the formulation of repeated positionings via a particular modality and the deliberate choice made by Irene (a deaf student) and Andrew (a hearing student) to perform hearingness or deafness. Hearingness and deafness are understood by participants both as cultural and physical constructs, ideologically saturated with notions of normalcy. When one "graduates" from the deaf classroom to the hearing classroom, as Irene does, there's a sense of moving closer to the idealized able-bodied English speaker. Through transgressions across cultural constructs, participants understand their identity as a "hearing kid/deaf kid," "mature kid/younger kid" or as belonging/not belonging to the deaf class/"typically developing" classroom. Subtly guiding participants' sense of self are notions about the idealized "hearing role model" that visits them each week. Through transgressions across the physical constructs, students demonstrate an awareness of the semiotic potential of their body in space. When speech fails, Irene uses expressive faces and touch to connect with Andrew. With each deliberate bodily choice to participate in visual, tactile, and auditory

spaces, Irene and Andrew attempt to reframe the balance of symbolic power, establishing themselves as having an equal or upper edge in the classroom.

Irene and Andrew appear cognizant of the heteroglossic (Bakhtin, 1981) tension surrounding hearingness, using the tension-filled space to position self and other in the student hierarchy of the classroom. Irene latches on to speech in an effort to project herself as the mature, hearing kid, while Andrew pretends not to hear in order to maintain his hearing status in the conversation. He has the privileged choice to pretend not to hear (even though he does). At first, he physically disrupts the visual norms of the deaf space, but later he makes the decision to use ASL-driven grammar with his mother in front of his peers as a display of competence in sign. These changes in mode signal a shift in how participants view themselves and how others view them at a particular moment in the interaction. As Norris (2004) notes, non-linguistic cues play an important and equal role in interaction, not one that is subordinate to spoken language. When Jennifer and Irene transition from using bimodal production (spoken/signed) to facial/gestural modes, the rich modal density, or the "intensity or complexity of modes" (p.150), demonstrates their sharp awareness of the interactional resources (beyond the spoken medium) available for making meaning.

Other participants legitimize certain moves in this symbolic game but not others. The symbolic power at play is not only negotiated by Irene and Andrew, but it is also co-negotiated by bystanders, specifically teachers Jennifer and Julie. The teachers trigger the physicality of play when Jennifer and Julie suggest a humorous interpretation of the event. Despite how Irene and Andrew attempt to position themselves through speech, sign, and silence, the physical play (touching of and light reciprocal punches to the foreheads) make for a moment with more equal footing.

Through this discussion, I have used some of the operating principles of symbolic competence (positioning, historicity, reframing, and transgressions) to recognize learners' symbolic competence in one multimodal interaction. Symbolic competence offers an analytic lens to expand on what we mean by semiotic choices in meaning making. A deeper consideration of modality in the negotiation of meaning also offers symbolic competence something new. When we consider the body and modalities as resources for making meaning, we tap into a fuller understanding of how we communicate. As Goodwin (2006) reminds us, the utterance is "multi-partied" and "multimodal," and the very participant framework is embodied. A consideration of all modes—the sensory, bodily positioning, sign, gesture and speech—as contributing to the *co-construction of* utterances makes sense when we think about competence as distributed through the symbolic spaces the different speakers occupy.

The two students draw upon modal choices and transgressions not solely for communicative purposes, but, rather, to position self and other. This kind of positioning takes place across my data and with both deaf and hearing students. I specifically chose to highlight an interaction between a deaf and a hearing child because it is important to emphasize both the deaf *and* hearing students' use of all resources (irrespective of their signing or speech abilities) to assert symbolic meaning outside the context of the conversational exchange. Despite Andrew's status as the "hearing role model," supposedly positioned to provide his deaf peers with idealized language, the modal shifts that arise in his interaction with Irene ironically re-signify his hearing status.

In the series of events that take place on the day of the focal interaction, Irene latches onto Andrew, the "hearing role model," as a projection and anticipation of her future self, a

leader and a strong verbal communicator. The CI devices that Irene uses are intended to help her hear, but "hearing" isn't symbolically useful for Irene in this interaction. Temporally, participants move across the constructs of hearingness and deafness in strategic ways that blend and blur their boundaries. Each modal choice becomes an attempt to gain an edge in positioning self and other(s) in roles recognized both within and outside the classroom (e.g., student, teacher, Deaf ally, mother, son). Meaning is negotiated in this shared space, through linguistic choices as well as bodily positions and silent modes.

While the constructs of deafness and hearingness are considered to be at odds with one other ideologically, the students' and teachers' uses of different linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1982), or semiotic choices, demonstrate the fluidity in the constructs; they are contextually defined in and through discourse itself. Andrew and Irene display a sensory knowledge of the hearing body and deaf body; they understand how their choice of mode (e.g., speech, silence, sign) intersects with how they shape a sense of self at a given moment in their interaction. Andrew's ability to "play deaf" only strengthens his position as hearing and forces Irene, the deaf student, to draw on non-auditory resources to communicate. The use of semiotic resources highlights the unpredictability and contradiction of interaction, with participants "crossing" (Rampton, 1995) the traditional boundaries of constructs to socially position self or other in strategic ways.

Ultimately, it is through humorous bodily gesture (funny faces and stances) that Irene captures the attention of her hearing peer. Yet, seconds later, he reclaims his status by ironically displaying only signs, in ASL-driven grammar, to his mother in order to further avoid producing any speech. Andrew's semiotic move is akin to a strategy of condescension (Bourdieu, 1982). By negating a power differential in using sign, he reinforces his status as the more privileged "hearing kid" in the classroom. Meanwhile, in turning to Jennifer in a joking manner in the last video frame, Irene displays satisfaction at having found a way to get his attention without resorting to speech tactics. Both students end the conversation thinking they have "won" in the positioning battle.

CONCLUSION

Despite the strong "English" ideology that plays into the educational practices of deaf children, students and teachers are seen to consistently rely on spatial, sensory, and sign modes to communicate, and they sometimes subvert the dominant ideologies framed by the English speaking/hearing individual. Symbolic competence offers a semiotic angle to both recognize and understand modal transgressions as meaning-making practices—not only in deaf-hearing interactions, but in any interactions. This framework, I believe, will be particularly useful in research that considers the emerging notion of multimodality and the variety of ways language learners make meaning.

The analysis in this paper highlights two gaps in the literature: the under-theorization of communicative practices of deaf learners and the under-theorization of the embodied dimensions of language, which have the potential to inform and complexify our understanding of learner identity. The exploration of the process whereby language learners strategically draw upon the multimodality of interaction to position themselves in a particular time and space, of how they "recognize and transgress the multiple borders" (Vinall, 2016) in making meaning, has implications for the application of symbolic competence across contexts of language learning.

This research sheds light on the complexities of the essentialized status of the multilingual

speaker. Specifically, it encourages us to broaden our conceptualization of communication and forces us to think about the multimodal language user. Further, when we speak of the "experiences" of participants in research, it is vital that we understand experience as fundamentally embodied. A speech-based and auditory-based bias runs deep in frameworks that analyze language, culture, learning, and identity. Why is that? At the root of the bias, in all of these areas of study, is, perhaps, the bias in how we interpret "experience." Johnson (1987) reminds us that "'Experience,' then, is to be understood in a very rich, broad sense as including basic perceptual, motor-program, emotional, historical, social, and linguistic dimensions . . . experience involves everything that makes us human—our bodily, social, linguistic and intellectual being in complex interactions that make up our understanding of our world" (p. xvi). What should interest applied linguists today is the simultaneity of multiple channels of communication and multiple modalities for the expression and construction of meaning in interaction. With attention to the symbolic in interaction we may gain insight into students' repertoires of meaning-making practices, involving not only words, but also gestures, body movements, facial expressions, and positions in space.

Transcription conventions

(.1) (.5)	length of pause in seconds or fractions of seconds (0.1= 1/10 second 0.5= 1/2 second)
<u>Now</u>	underlining marks added stress
=	latching of one turn of talk to another
so::	lengthening of a vowel or sign
[ ]	overlap of words
	rising or falling intonation of the word following the dash
Capital case	capital letters following the notation "S:" marks "sign"
Regular case	regular case word(s) indicate spoken language following the notation "V": "verbal"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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