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“I am Deaf, not illiterate”:

A hearing teacher’s ideological journey into the literacy practices of children who are deaf.

Doctoral dissertation

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ABSTRACT

The research presented here explores the ideological transformation on literacy I, as hearing literacy teacher of children who are deaf, had to undertake in order to create a space within the classroom for my students to bring in and develop literacy practices better suited to meet their literacy needs. In carrying out the task I set out to do, I decided to adapt the position of the teacher as researcher and to bring the theoretical tools of the New Literacy Studies (NLS), particularly the conceptual tools of "big D" Discourses and multimodality, into the classroom to inform my work as a teacher. As a teacher research, the participants of the study include the 4 students I taught literacy during the three years I worked within the clasrsoom, and myself. The data collected for this study were participant-observations, a teacher-research journal, formal and informal interview with parents and students, photographs, and students' literacy work and other artifacts.

The main findings of this study illuminate how the ideological journey I underwent in order to recognize and base my literacy instruction on the literacy practices students brought to the classroom depended simultaneously on altering the Discourses I enacted as a literacy teacher and on learning to expand my understanding of what counts as literacy. In order for that to happen, however, I had to make every effort to develop the critical mindset of the teacher researcher and learn to use the tools of the NLS to tune into moments found within the classroom that were somewhat puzzling or filled with tension. In other words, the research findings suggest that I was unable to act upon my educational practices before I learned to critically examine and deconstruct the historical and cultural forces mediating my actions within the classroom.

Being a teacher research, the research findings presented on the following pages do not only illuminate the struggle one teacher experienced in transforming her ideological understanding on literacy and the obstacles she had to overcome in so doing, but bring evidence to the important role research can have in teachers' professional lives if they are given the *trust*, the *support* and the *tools* they need to grapple with complex reality of the classroom.

ÁGRIP

Þetta rannsóknarverkefni fjallar um þá hugmyndafræðilegu breytingu sem ég, sem heyrandi íslenskukennari heyrnarlausra barna, þurfti að ganga í gegnum til að skapa rými innan kennslustofunnar fyrir nemendur til að þróa eigin lestrar- og ritunarauðlindir. Til að takast á við þetta verkefni gerði ég tvennt. Í fyrsta lagi tók ég stöðu kennararannsakanda til að rýna í eigið starf. Í öðru lagi tók ég fræðikenningar New Literacy Studies (NLS) með inn í kennslustofuna til að skilja og takast á við þann veruleika sem mætti mér í daglegu starfi. Þar studdist ég mest við hugmyndnar um "big D" Discourses (Orðræður með stóru O) og multimodality. Þátttakendurnir í þessari rannsókn eru auk mín þeir fjórir nemendur sem ég kenndi á árunum 2006-2009. Rannsóknargögnin eru þátttökuathuganir, rannsóknardagbók, formleg og óformleg viðtöl við foreldra og nemendur, ljósmyndir, og verkefni nemenda.

Helstu niðurstöður þessarar rannsóknar varpa ljósi á hvernig ég þurfti bæði að breyta þeim Orðræðum sem voru að verki í mér í hlutverki íslenskukennarans og víkka skilning minn á læsi til þess að byggja mína kennslu á þeim lestrar-og ritunarauðlindum sem nemendur komu með inn í kennlustofuna. Til að þessar breytingar gætu átt sér stað þurfti ég þroska með mér hið gagnrýna hugarfar kennararannsakandans og læra að beita fræðikenningum NLS til að rýna í augnablik innan kennslustofunnar sem einkenndust annað hvort af einhvers konar togstreitu eða vöktu með mér undrun á einn eða annan hátt. Með öðrum orðum, rannsóknarniðurstöður mínar gefa til kynna að ég gat ekki breytt kennsluháttum mínum að neinu ráðu fyrr en ég lærði að skoða og vinna á þeim sögu- og menningarlegu kröftum sem höfðu áhrif á athafnir mínar innan kennslustofunnar.

Sem kennararannsókn þá varpa niðurstöðurnar ekki eingöngu ljósi á baráttu eins kennara í að breyta hugmyndafræðilegum skilningi sínum á læsi og þeim hindrunum sem hann þarf að ganga í gegnum til að geta byggt kennslu sína á reynsluheimi nemenda, heldur renna þær stoðum undir það mikilvæga hlutverk sem rannsóknir geta haft á fagvitund kennara ef þeim er sýnt *traust, stuðningur* og *leiðir* til að nota þau fræði sem þeir þurfa til að takast á við þann flókna veruleika sem er að finna innan kennslustofunnar.

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so do I have ears or what?
(Melkorka,[2] 10th grade)

Melkorka's poem, which takes the concept of deafness beyond the invisible lack of the sense of hearing to the physical and, hence, visible lack of ears,[3] illuminates how conflicting Discourses[4] on deafness and literacy, the clinical and sociocultural perspectives, have coalesced to shape the educational institutions of the field (Brueggemann, 1999, 2004; Jankowski, 1997; Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1984, 1992). In particular, these perspectives have shaped teacher and student interactions within the classroom as well as students' perceptions of who they are within this setting.

I had not been in the field long when I began to experience these contrasting ideological forces around me as conflicts within myself. These conflicting forces emerged, for instance, in the mismatch that I experienced between the literacy practices that I reinforced on a daily basis and the ways in which my deaf students learned literacy. Throughout my first year, I had difficulties grappling with the contradictions in my practice that I encountered. Thus, by the end of the school year, I decided to leave the classroom to find ways to address this dissonance. In the search for an answer, I found myself in the middle of the ideological

[1] In Icelandic, tjaa is an interjection signaling doubt.
[2] Students' names are pseudonyms.
[3] I discuss the conflicting Discourses on deafness, evident in this poem, in Chapter 3.3.
[4] In my work I use Gee's (1996) notion of "big D" Discourses. In Chapter 2.6 I discuss "big D" Discourses in more depth.

battle that has long characterized the field of deaf education, whereby the two competing Discourses mentioned above have co-existed, intersected, and tried to eradicate each other (Ladd, 2003). It was within this context that the focus of this research began to take shape. Specifically, this study illuminates my struggle as a hearing literacy teacher to understand and to go beyond the ideological forces at play in my work in a way that allows me to identify and to build on the linguistic and cultural resources that students who are deaf bring into the classroom.

This chapter is divided into five main sections. In the first section, I discuss my entrance into the field of deaf education, the conflicts that I experienced in terms of literacy instruction during my first year of teaching, and how my understanding of what counts as literacy learning began to shift as I tried to work through these conflicts. In the second section, I state the problem of the study, followed by the research questions to be engaged with. In the third section, I describe broadly the historical context of deaf education, narrowing it down to how the conflicting ideologies noted above have come to shape the educational institutions for children who are deaf in Iceland. In the fourth section, I describe the setting of this study in particular. In the fifth section, I provide an overview of the dissertation.

1.1 Entering the Teaching Profession

I was 27 when I completed my teaching certificate as a literacy educator and accepted my first teaching position at Sumarhúsaskóli,[5] a school for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. There I was to teach all subject matters to four children, all profoundly deaf. Their grade levels ranged from fifth to seventh grade. I remember feeling a little worried about my decision to teach this student population. I had not received any training in teaching Icelandic to children who are deaf, as no such training was available in Iceland. In addition, I did not know anything about the Deaf community before taking a year of Sign Language Studies as an undergraduate at the University of Iceland. I accepted the job at Sumarhúsaskóli more out of curiosity than as the result of a well-informed decision. I wanted to get to know this community better, and I saw this teaching position as an excellent opportunity to combine my knowledge of Sign Language with my training as a literacy educator.

Despite my enthusiasm for this new job, once I began to prepare for the subject matter that I was to teach, I began to wonder how I was going to use Sign Language to lead my

[5] The school‘s name is a pseudonym.

students through the more specialized language of the learning material to be covered, such as biology and geography. I tried to convince myself that, when the time came, I would be able to communicate these different subject matters to my students, but I began to realize that the job I had taken on was going to be more challenging than I had anticipated. At that time, however, literacy instruction was not one of my main concerns because a bilingual reading method, developed especially for children who are deaf, was already in use in the school.[6] I familiarized myself with this reading method and planned to use it during reading instruction.

Upon entering the school site, my colleagues told me that my students' parents were concerned about their children's academic achievement, particularly in regard to the acquisition of the Icelandic language. For this reason, I decided to inform the parents that I would be focusing on the language so as to alleviate their concern. In my first meeting with parents and students, I told them about my academic background in Icelandic grammar and literature and that my goal was to emphasize literacy instruction during the academic year. The parents seemed pleased and talked about how hard they thought that their children needed to work to become successful literacy learners, perhaps even twice as hard as hearing children, because the only way for children who are deaf to develop awareness of the spoken language is through its written form. The parents brought up a few specific examples of difficulties that they thought that their children were having with the Icelandic language, including figurative language, idioms, and declensions. They felt that their children would benefit from an explicit emphasis on these areas. Further, the parents emphasized that their children's academic success relied on their being able to read and write. I assured the parents that I understood their concerns and that I was hoping for a productive collaboration between home and school. I was unaware at the time of the extent of the challenges that I was about to encounter within the classroom in terms of literacy instruction as well as how, through my instructional practice, I could inflict my taken-for-granted ideas, in this case, my viewpoints as a hearing person, on my students.

1.1.1 Literacy Instruction: Puzzling Moments

Since I had decided to use a reading method already in place at the school, I was aware that students would know my expectations in regard to reading instruction. All of my students, except the one who was absent the first week of school, had gone through the first step of that reading method. That is, they had watched a signed version of a story to become familiar with

[6] This reading method was originally developed in Manilla School in Sweden. See Mahshie (1995), Educating Deaf Children Bilingually.

the content to be read, and were just beginning to read it as group. Through this first encounter with students' reading, however, I came to realize that students' reading abilities differed greatly. Consequently, it might become complicated to progress through the reading material as a group. This meant that I would have to hold back students who were more advanced readers and push the less advanced students through the material at a pace that would be detrimental to their development as readers. A few days into the semester, when my fourth student returned to school, I was reminded that things do not always go as planned. When I asked him to watch the signed version of the book that we were reading, he refused to do so, telling me that he did not want to know how the story ended before he began reading it. Based on his facial expression and the failure of my initial attempts to convince him about the importance of viewing the story first, I knew that no explanation from me would change his mind. The other students agreed with him. They thought viewing the story before reading it took away the enjoyment of watching the plot unfold. I understood their viewpoint, but from what little information I had about their reading fluency, I felt that only one of the four would be able to comprehend the reading without first viewing its content. Thus, my great plan of continuing to use the established reading method had to be discarded during the second week of school. At that moment, I was forced to come up with a new plan for how to teach literacy to students who are deaf.

I began to ask the other teachers about their literacy instruction methods. Most were using, in one way or another, either the reading method described above or having students read in a round-robin fashion, in which students would sign themselves through the text, with one sign for each word. Learning that my colleagues were not doing much different from what I was doing, I began searching the library and the Internet for information about deafness and literacy. I soon found out, however, that very little has been written about the literacy instruction of Icelandic children who are deaf, and with my limited English language capabilities, I did not know exactly what English linguistic terms to use to guide me through the English-language literature on deafness and literacy. Thus, in the meantime, I simply constructed my literacy block in a way that I knew from my childhood.

Because the way I used the reading method described above allowed little flexibility for assisting students individually, I made my literacy block more individualized. I began the school day with literacy lessons in which students could work on their writing assignments or do handwriting exercises while I walked around the classroom and asked each student to read to me. Although the assignments that I handed out kept students occupied during this time, these assignments were not the ones that truly required students' engagement. Students would

work independently on their writing, and when I came around to each student, each would sign his or her reading material to me by decoding all the words within it, with one sign for each word. Although students were often able to decode their reading material with great fluency, I noticed that it was more difficult for them to retell what they had read. Therefore, it was difficult to determine what students really understood from the reading material and where they were struggling.

As a literacy teacher, I was concerned with adapting my instructional practices to my students' literacy needs. When I noticed students' difficulties in drawing meaning from the reading material, I tried to put myself in their shoes by reflecting upon the different functions of the Icelandic language, comparing and contrasting these functions with those of Icelandic Sign Language, to determine whether I was making any sense from what I considered to be their perspective. For example, while driving through the city, I found myself signing *Ég-er-að-fara-að-sofa* (I am going to sleep), an exact signing of a sentence that one of my students had come across in his reading earlier that day. This sentence does not make any sense translated into Sign Language, that is, how can I be going somewhere at the same time that I am going to sleep? In translating this to Sign Language, I would say, *Ég-bráðum-sofa* [I-soon-sleep]. These kinds of reflections were aimed at uncovering the underlying structure of the Icelandic language and at discovering patterns that would help me understand how I could instruct my students to decode the written form of the Icelandic language.

Throughout the school year, many incidents raised questions about how to go about teaching students who are deaf to read and write. The incident below is representative of those that made me feel that my instructional practices were not enhancing students' literacy learning.

All my students were busy working on their writing. Jonni was writing about his soccer match last weekend. As I stood and observed my students working, I noticed that Jonni had raised his hand and wanted me to come over to him. 'How do you spell keppni (contest)?' he signs to me. From experience, I knew that if I began spelling words for him, he would lose his writing tempo and become dependent on my assistance, wanting me to spell every word for him. So, I decided to encourage him to write the word on his own. 'You have written about this topic so often, you should know how to write this word,' I told him. He looked at me, obviously trying to recall the spelling of the word, and I kept encouraging him. 'Try to guess the first letter' I signed to him. As I waited for him, I was unconsciously sounding the beginning sound [k^h] in my head. After some consideration he responded with the letter 's.'

My first response to this incident was a slight feeling of discomfort, and I tried to fix the situation by giving Jonni the first letter of the word *keppni,* the fingerspelled K. I did not realize how irrelevant my question had been until I heard Jonni's answer. At the end of the school day, I was left to wonder how I could have assisted Jonni in this task without relying on auditory clues.

Memories of incidents like the one described above left me wondering what had occurred and how to react to it. In an attempt to respond to what was happening in my classroom, I tried several different literacy methods during my first year of teaching. By the end of the first year, I still had so many questions regarding reading and writing instruction of children who are deaf that I felt that I could not continue teaching without finding the "right" reading and writing methods to implement within my instructional practices.

1.1.2 Literacy Instruction: Shifting Understandings

In my search for how to teach literacy to children who are deaf, I came to enroll as a doctoral student in the literacy area of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. There, as I delved increasingly further into discussions of different ideas about literacy, my search for "the" answer, the methods that would grant me success in teaching children who are deaf how to read and write, took an unexpected direction. Instead of finding myself among people who were discussing how to apply various literacy methods, I found myself in the middle of theoretical conversations addressing controversial issues surrounding literacy and literacy education. These discussions originated in a common concern, the low literacy achievement of minority student populations in the United States, where the idea of literacy that was implemented in schools was considered too narrow to accommodate the multiple literacies that students brought to the classroom. Through these discussions, I came to recognize that different perspectives on literacy exist.

I describe these perspectives in Chapter 2 as the autonomous model of literacy (the school-based notion of literacy) and the ideological model of literacy (the sociocultural notion of literacy). In the autonomous model of literacy, students are viewed as acquiring literacy, defined narrowly as reading and writing, by mastering specific sets of skills that can then be transferred to other settings (Street, 1984). In contrast, the ideological model of literacy contextualizes literacy within individuals' social and cultural experiences (Gee, 2000; Street, 1984, 2001a). This ideological understanding of literacy declares that it is not a neutral thing, transferable from one setting to another; rather, it varies from one context to the next. In other

words, there are many literacies or multiliteracies (Gee, 2008). Thus, literacy education should encompass the skills needed to explore the multiple literacies that students bring to the classroom.

Within my course work, I could sense the expectations to participate in the discussion about literacy, to articulate my beliefs about what literacy education should be about. Consequently, my question of how to go about teaching children who are deaf to read and write was put on hold while I considered more fundamental questions regarding literacy and literacy education. This process shifted my focus from how existing methods of literacy instruction could be of use to examining my assumptions about literacy. As I was forced to grapple with the notion of literacy education as part of the intellectual work of the graduate school classroom, I realized that I had no readily-available answers about what literacy was to me. Thus, I decided to revisit my first year of teaching to explore whether I could find any clear evidence of my ideas about what literacy *is* embedded in the way I had acted as a literacy teacher, particularly in the instructional practices that I had reinforced. Through writing about my first year experiences, I recreated critical events that occurred during my first year of teaching and examined them through the different models of literacy discussed above. Gradually, it became evident to me that, during my first year of teaching, I thought that people became fluent literacy users by mastering specific sets of skills, which were taught in school through specific methods, and reinforced within the homes of students when their parents helped them with their homework.

My understanding of literacy, as it emerged through my exploration, troubled me. As I began to trace my beliefs and assumptions about literacy through the literacy events that took place during my first year of teaching, I knew that I could not codify my understanding as, "Okay, here it is. This is how I think of literacy. Now I can go on with my search for the literacy method that I need to support my students' literacy learning and bring it back to Iceland with me." Rather, what I had discovered through my exploration *changed something within me*. I was left wondering whether the challenges that I had experienced in literacy instruction during my classroom teaching were more closely related to the ways in which I *thought* about literacy rather than which *methods* I was using.

The more I read into the literature on sociocultural perspectives on literacy, and the more I reflected upon the teaching experiences that I had gained during my first year of teaching, the more convinced I became that my beliefs about literacy education were the main source of the challenges that I had encountered. That is, the "solution" to literacy instruction is not methodological but rather present in the interaction between the methods, the teacher,

and the students within a specific environment. Therefore, teaching is about paying attention to the living moment and noticing what is present within the classroom. Consequently, I decided to go back into the classroom, as a teacher-researcher, to systematically collect data that would allow me to identify, understand, and base my literacy instruction on the literacy practices that students brought into the classroom. Additionally, my graduate coursework gave me a new perspective for looking at and grappling with the reality of the classroom, namely, New Literacy Studies, which I discuss in Chapter 2.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Literacy achievement among students who are deaf continues to be one of the greatest concerns within the field of deaf education. Reports on literacy achievement consistently reveal that, on average, high school graduates with hearing impairment read at no better than a third- to fourth-grade level (Gallaudet Research Institute, 1996; Marschark et al., 2009). Only three percent of deaf high school graduates read at the same level as does the average hearing high school graduate. Further, over thirty percent of deaf students are functionally illiterate upon graduation (Marschark, Lang, & Albertini, 2002). Despite the existence of an academic knowledge base on literacy learning among students who are deaf, interventions have not been effective for improving literacy achievement among this student population (Schirmer, 2001).

Much current research argues that this lack of literacy improvement among students who are deaf is a result of the research framework, which has been heavily influenced by a clinical perspective, that has been dominant within the field (Lane, 1988, 1992; Padden & Ramsey, 1993; P. Paul & Jackson, 1993). The objective for conducting research from a clinical perspective is to remedy the "deficiencies" of "disabled" individuals or those who differ from the standards and norms in achievement. For the past two decades, a movement of researchers and educators, in which I include myself, has pointed out that, if students who are deaf are to become successful literacy learners, an alternative research paradigm, one that highlights the social and cultural aspects of literacy, is needed (Brueggemann, 1999, 2004; Lane, 1992; P. Paul & Jackson, 1993; Ramsey, 2004). That is, instead of focusing only on the skills that children who are deaf *need* to acquire to be able to read and write, researchers, working from cultural and sociocultural perspectives, try to uncover the various literacy practices that students who are deaf bring into educational settings (Andrews & Gonzales, 1991; Livingston, 1991; Williams, 1994) and to examine how students utilize these practices

to gain access to school-based literacy learning (Bagga-Gupta, 2000, 2002; Mayer, 1999; Mayer, Akamatsu, & Stewart, 2002; Ramsey, 1997; Ramsey & Padden, 1998; Tompkins, 2004; Wilcox, 2004). This research suggests that a greater understanding of the function and meaning of literacy in students' lives allows teachers to implement literacy activities that better support the school-based literacy learning of this student population (Engen & Engen, 2004). In Chapter 2, I discuss in more depth how these different Discourses have coalesced to shape the institutional milieu of the field of deaf education. To consider the ways in which the conflicting research paradigms discussed above influence the work of individual teachers working within educational setting of children who are deaf, I will narrow the discussion of the current debate between these different research paradigms to the concrete work of the teacher within the classroom.

1.2.1 Research Questions

The research questions derive from the debate noted above and from my alignment with the sociocultural movement, arguing that, if students who are deaf are to become successful literacy learners, we need a greater understanding of the literacy practices that students bring into the classroom and how to base instruction on these. This research, however, in an effort to understand what this really means for teachers working with students who are deaf, scales this argument down to the local context of the classroom. Brueggemann (1999) points out how the literacy education of children who are deaf has been measured by standards developed from hearing norms. This has resulted in teachers' concentrating on codifying and reconstructing learning material for students who are deaf, preplanning the language to be taught. All this is done to make acquisition of the skills needed to know the spoken language easier for this student population. These actions, however, have not proven effective. Livingston (1997) argues that, while there are differences between deaf and hearing students, these differences have been emphasized at the expense of the similarities between the two groups.

Just like hearing children, children who are deaf need education that emphasizes meaningful communication (Brueggemann, 1999; Livingston, 1997). Thus, if children who are deaf are to become successful literacy learners, their educational goals need to be organized and operationalized in a way that includes them in meaningful learning processes (Bagga-Gupta, 2002; Humphries, 2004; Ramsey, 1997). Teachers' responsibility for altering the educational emphasis, Erting (1992) suggests, is "to meet deaf children where they are and

where they will always be—in a visual world—and to bring to them ways of understanding our world, which takes hearing and speaking so much for granted" (p. 102). This kind of work, Erting (1992) points out, requires teachers of this student population, particularly hearing teachers, to strive to change their perception of students who are deaf as needing to be "fixed" by altering their expectations of who they are as teachers. Instead of relying on a recipe for "repairing" the difficulties of children who are deaf with the acquisition of school-based language, teachers need to develop new instructional approaches that recognize this student population as a whole, competent learners who need a visual learning environment to thrive.

Inherent in Erting's (1992) suggestion is that, if we are to enhance the literacy learning of children who are deaf, literacy teachers of this student population need to undergo an ideological transformation in regard to the literacy instruction of this particular group of students. In changing one's perceptions about children who are deaf to that of literacy learners, teachers need to explore their own assumptions and how their social, cultural, and political background, along with other external factors found within the school setting, influence how they, as professionals, view and shape their expectations for their students. However, this may be easier said than done. Because it is in the hands of the teachers to alter their perceptions of children who are deaf to those of literacy learners, the purpose of this research is to examine and document how one hearing literacy teacher went about understanding the relationship between her literacy instruction and deaf students' literacy learning from *within*. This insider perspective will allow the researcher to illustrate the process through which teachers need to go as they attempt to alter their instructional practices to create space in the classroom for their students to bring in and develop literacy practices better suited to their needs. In this regard, three questions will guide this study:

1. How do I as a hearing literacy teacher understand the literacy practices that students who are deaf bring into the classroom?

2. How do I as a hearing literacy teacher of students who are deaf draw on these literacy practices?

3. What has this process of studying my own teaching helped me to learn about my literacy teaching and how may it be useful to other teachers in similar situations?

The first two questions are vital because, for teachers to base their instructional practices on students' literacy practices, they first need to conceptualize what these practices look like and how they can be used as resources. The third question synthesizes and extends the other two, as it requires the researcher to look beyond the process of examining her

literacy instruction to explore what effects the process of studying her own practice has had on her professional development.

1.3 Situating the Study

This study is situated among the ideological forces that have coalesced to shape the institutional milieu of the field of deaf education (Brueggemann, 1999, 2004; Jankowski, 1997; Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1984, 1992). In this section, I briefly discuss the emergence of the educational Discourses that have influenced the historical development of deaf education, then narrow the focus to deaf education in Iceland.

1.3.1 Historical International Context of Deaf Education

Although formal schools for the deaf were not established until the end of the eighteenth century, the first attempts to educate deaf children took place in the sixteenth century (Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1984; Moores, Cerney, & Garcia, 1990). The first deaf children to receive formal instruction were the children of the nobility, and this was the first time that an emphasis was placed on teaching speech through any available means. These attempts mark the beginning of a crucial Discourse within deaf education emphasizing that deaf people's status as human beings depended upon education and being able to talk (Ladd, 2003). This Discourse has been associated with the clinical movement noted above.

Even though emphasis on spoken language emerged in the sixteenth century, Sign Language was still a significant component of deaf education and was almost exclusively the medium of education in schools for the deaf from the Enlightenment until the nineteenth century. What is most relevant is that, early on, the debate about deaf education began to center on ways of communicating (Jankowski, 1997).

From its beginning, the establishment of schools for the deaf has been influenced by the conflict between the clinical and sociocultural Discourses. Several factors quickly emerged, however, that gave the clinical movement dominion over educational institutions of the deaf. The most critical event marginalizing the sociocultural Discourse on deafness was a meeting in Milan in 1880. Deaf professionals in deaf education were excluded from participating in the meeting and thus had no opportunity to protest when an oral method of communication, one that became to be known as "the method," was established in the classrooms of the deaf (Lane, 1992; Lou, 1988). Sign Language was forbidden in the classroom, as it was thought to interfere with deaf people's acquisition of the spoken

language. Consequently, as the educational priority became the mastery of grammar and the understanding of spoken language, deaf teachers were excluded from the classroom (Brueggemann, 1999; Humphries, 2004; Lane, 1992).

The clinical movement's strong emphasis on having deaf individuals learn to speak had several ramifications. First, with Sign Language and deaf teachers eliminated from the classroom, the cultural knowledge based on many centuries of problem-solving strategies utilized by people who could not hear themselves was excluded from these students' educational context (Ladd, 2003; Ramsey, 2004). Instead, the instruction focused solely on developing the oral method of instruction. This inhibited further development of the culturally relevant strategies that deaf individuals needed to meet increasing educational demands.

Second, according to this view, teaching deaf students to speak called for more than just impeding the development of a deaf-centered educational system; it required the implementation of systematic strategies to incapacitate Deaf communities, with their knowledge of how to exist as a proud deaf person (Ladd, 2003). Because Sign Language and the collective lives of deaf individuals were perceived as the greatest hindrances to acquiring spoken language, advocates of the clinical movement deemed it absolutely necessary to isolate deaf individuals from their deaf peers. As a result, at the turn of the twentieth century, schools for the deaf, where sign language and deaf culture had been cultivated and preserved, began to close down, and deaf children were mainstreamed into the public schools (Ladd, 2003; Lane, 1992).

The clinical Discourse became embedded within the deaf educational system for almost a century and appeared successful in repressing sociocultural Discourses of deafness. In the late twentieth century, however, the sociocultural Discourse began to materialize again, shortly after Stokoe (1960) provided evidence of Sign Language being a real language (Ladd, 2003). The sociocultural Discourse emerged, for instance, in bilingual-bicultural educational models for this student population in which Sign Language is the language of instruction (Bagga-Gupta, 2000, 2002; Mashie, 1995). While I discuss these conflicting Discourses in more depth in Chapter 2.6.1, I touch on them here because they have important implications for the field of deaf education in Iceland.

1.3.2 Deaf Education in Iceland

The first evidence of educational opportunities for children who are deaf in Iceland was in 1867, when Páll Pálsson, a priest and a member of the Icelandic legislative assembly, took on

the responsibility of educating children who were deaf in his home (Guðmundsdóttir & Egilsson, 1989). Páll had full hearing, but he had been a student at the Kongelige Dowstumme Institue in Copenhagen because he had gone through a period in his early adult life when he did not use spoken language. Notably, he brought to Iceland the Danish technique of finger-signing.

At the same time that Páll hosted and taught children who were deaf in his home, he was an active spokesman in the Icelandic legislative assembly, where compulsory education for children who were deaf was signed into law in 1872. This legislation mandated formal education between the ages of 10 and 14 (Spanó, Sigurðsson, Bjarnadóttir, Júlíusdóttir, & Sigurjónsdóttir, 2009), which, in turn, prompted the establishment of the first special school for children who were deaf in Iceland. This was also the first special educational opportunity provided for a small, specially defined group of students (Guttormsson, Rastrick, & Garðarsdóttir, 2008). During the time that deaf education was in the hands of Páll,[7] the educational aim was for students to understand written language and to be able to make themselves understood in writing, with no emphasis on teaching children to speak (Stefánsdóttir, 2009).

In 1922, new legislation concerning the education of children who are deaf was approved (Spanó, Sigurðsson, Bjarnadóttir, Júlíusdóttir, & Sigurjónsdóttir, 2009). These laws were in use until 1962. This legislation contained two dramatic changes: children who were deaf were to be educated in Iceland only, and compulsory education was extended from four to nine years. Since many of the children lived far away from the school, this meant that the children were now sent away from home at the age of eight until they graduated from school at age seventeen. This same year, the first evidence of the oral method of communication, which came to be known as "the method," appeared in Iceland in the classrooms of the deaf. It arrived in Iceland with Margrét Bjarnadóttir Rasmus, then a principal of the school for the deaf, who had gone to Fredericia in Denmark and learned Dr. Forchammer's mund-hånd system, which was used to support the use of spoken language and lip reading (Stefánsdóttir, 2009).

In 1962, a new law concerning schools for the deaf was approved (Spanó, Sigurðsson, Bjarnadóttir, Júlíusdóttir, & Sigurjónsdóttir, 2009). During these years, deaf education was undergoing major changes. Most radical among these were an increased emphasis on the use of spoken language and the forbidding of Sign Language within schools for the deaf. In the

[7] Icelanders always refer to each other by first name.

preparation period of this law, Brandur Jónsson, then a headmaster of the school for the deaf, was an active spokesman of the importance of children who are deaf to begin their education earlier than mandated by the 1922 legislation. This was because children between the ages of 2 and 6 were most able to learn new languages, and when children had some hearing ability, it was important to begin to train that hearing as soon as possible (Spanó, Sigurðsson, Bjarnadóttir, Júlíusdóttir, & Sigurjónsdóttir, 2009). Hence, in 1962, the compulsory education period for children who were deaf was extended from nine to twelve years; they were to be sent to school from age four to seventeen.

The oral method of education dominated the educational system until 1980, when the first indication of the use of Sign Language within deaf education emerged in the implementation of the total communication method (Stefánsdóttir, 2009). In 1968, however, the Zonta group, an interest group for the deaf and hard of hearing in Reykjavík, wrote a letter to the minister of education in Iceland to point out that, in the other Scandinavian countries, children who were deaf and hard of hearing were being transferred into the public schools, where they would receive support and training from a speech therapist, and to suggest that Iceland also should follow this model (Spanó, Sigurðsson, Bjarnadóttir, Júlíusdóttir, & Sigurjónsdóttir, 2009). This suggestion was met with great resistance from many professionals working with the deaf. In a letter to the Ministry of Education, the headmaster of the school for the deaf, Brandur Jónsson, argued that this goal would be difficult to achieve because, in Iceland, very few teachers were trained to teach the deaf, and if these students were to be spread around the public school system, it would be impossible to give them the support that they needed (Spanó, Sigurðsson, Bjarnadóttir, Júlíusdóttir, & Sigurjónsdóttir, 2009). He further argued that ”mainstreaming” deaf children could cause greater social isolation, as these children had limited possibilities for communicating with their hearing peers.

In the 1990s, many reforms occurred in the educational system, in general, and in the field of deaf education, in particular. Most significantly, in 1990, legislation concerning special education that stated unequivocally that all children should have the right to attend their neighborhood school was passed (Kjartansson et al., 2008). This fed into further ideas about mainstreaming children who are deaf.

Gunnar Salvarsson, then a headmaster of the deaf school who had advocated for a bilingual curriculum that recognized Sign Language as the first language of children who are deaf, spoke strongly against the new law, declaring that it did not suit the educational needs of children who are deaf. His rationale was that the school for the deaf was much more than just

an educational institution. Because many deaf children are born to hearing families, the school for the deaf is also where their cultural heritage is cultivated (Salvarsson, 1994). Salvarsson (1994) argued that, if children who are deaf are mainstreamed, their cultural and linguistic heritage would be lost. While strong emphasis was placed on the importance of deaf students' linguistic and cultural heritage within the school of the deaf at the time, the only courses that the school offered on Icelandic Sign Language was for beginners, and it emphasized teaching individual signs for common words rather than teaching Sign Language as a language with its own grammatical system and as capable of communicating abstract thought (Stefánsdóttir, 2009).

In fall 1996, Berglind Stefánsdóttir became the first deaf principal at the school for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. In this position, she drew attention to how former ideas about bilingual education were not well founded. Specifically, some professionals and educators thought that it meant to talk and sign at the same time, while others thought that it meant speaking each language in turn. The ideas that Berglind had about educating children who are deaf aligned with bilingual-bicultural ideas of educating this student population (Stefánsdóttir, 2005). Her objective was to promote a rich social environment in which the Icelandic Sign Language would be the language of instruction and Icelandic the written form that students were to learn. In 1999, the first curriculum defining the Icelandic Sign Language as the native language of individuals who are deaf and written Icelandic as their second language was released. That same year, a public school in Reykjavík, Árdagsskóli,[8] took the first step toward mainstreaming when it began to use part of the classrooms of the special school for the deaf and hard-of-hearing, Sumarhúsaskóli, for their hearing students in the youngest grade levels. Three years later, in 2002, Sumarhúsaskóli was formally closed, and all of its operations were combined with the public schools, Árdagsskóli, in which this study was conducted.

As evident in the discussion above, a lot of reforms were taking place within deaf education in Iceland prior to my entrance into the field as a teacher-researcher. For one, Berglind was attempting to promote the social environment needed to reinforce her ideas about bilingual education for children who are deaf. At the same time, the small school for children who are deaf, which usually served around twenty students per year, was being merged with a public school in Reykjavík that serves between five hundred and fifty to six hundred students per year, where the students who were deaf were mainstreamed, as much as

[8] The name of the public school is a pseudonym.

possible, into the general classrooms. When I entered the school setting, I could sense, through the discussion taking place, that there was still a lot of unresolved tension surrounding what to make of the bilingual-bicultural ideas that Berglind proposed and how to implement them into practice within the public school.

1.4 The Context of the School/Research Setting

Árdagsskóli is a public school in Reykjavík serving approximately five hundred and fifty students. Since 2002, Árdagsskóli has housed the district's elementary program for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. The program offers classes for students from first through tenth grade who need additional educational support due to hearing impairment or deafness, ranging from moderately severe to profound deafness. Árdagsskóli is a bilingual school in which the policy is that equal emphasis should be placed on Icelandic and on Icelandic Sign Language. By the end of tenth grade, the students in the program should be bilingual in Icelandic and Icelandic Sign Language. Nevertheless, the faculty is still striving to implement this policy.

At the time of the study, 22 students were enrolled in the program. Many of them lived outside of the neighborhood and rode to school in buses or vans provided by the school district. Some students' families had moved to the city to make it possible for their children to attend the program. At the time of the study, the program had access to three classrooms for their students. In addition to the self-contained classes, school policy dictated that all students in the program should be mainstreamed as much as possible. It was up to teachers and administrators to determine to what extent each student would be mainstreamed into general educational classes. It is important to note that the interaction described throughout this study take place through the Icelandic Sign Language.

1.4.1 Teachers and Students

At the time of the study, the faculty of the program consisted of three teachers who were deaf, two hearing teachers, one hearing special educator, one hearing consultant (who had the responsibility of informing the mainstream teachers about deaf students' educational needs and of being available to teachers in other public schools who had deaf or hard-of-hearing students), three interpreters, one deaf instructional assistant, two hearing instructional assistants, and a deaf assistant principal. In addition to the faculty working with students who

are deaf and hard-of-hearing in particular, several general classroom teachers received mainstreamed students into their classrooms.

1.4.2 Study Participants

As an Icelandic language instructor at the upper secondary level, conducting teacher research on my own practice, I carried out this study in a self-contained classroom that was used mainly for the program's upper secondary level students. At the time of the study, four students at these grade levels were enrolled in the program. Because I was a teacher-researcher, the participants of this study ultimately become the students whom I taught. Thus, once I had bonded with the students and their parents, I sought students' and their families' permission to include students as participants. The four students whom I taught and their parents agreed to participate in this study. Each of the four participants is described below.

Viktoría. When I first met Viktoría, she was in eighth grade. Viktoría was born profoundly deaf to hearing parents. From the beginning, I noticed her forceful demeanor; she seems to be a natural-born leader. She has a strong command of Sign Language. In the beginning, I sometimes had to ask her to sign more slowly so that I could understand her better, which was frustrating for her. When it comes to Icelandic, she has a strong desire to learn, particularly how to write "correct Icelandic," but she often seems overwhelmed when trying to read and write.

Melkorka. When I first met Melkorka, she also was in eighth grade. She was born hearing to hearing parents but lost her hearing in her second year due to meningitis. She has moderate to severe hearing loss and is able to rely on the spoken language resources available to her and lip reading when communicating with hearing people. When Melkorka was allowed more control over her learning processes within the classroom, her love for reading and writing began to emerge.

Stefán. When I first met Stefán, he was in ninth grade. Stefán was born deaf to hearing parents but has some deaf relatives. My first perception of him was that he is an easy going guy who "goes with the flow." Once Stefán began to select his own reading material his word recognition exceeded my expectation. However, he appeared to have difficulty in drawing meaning from the words decoded. In regard to writing, he is pragmatic and finds it difficult to write from his imagination.

Þórður: When I first met Þórður, he was in ninth grade. Þórður was born profoundly deaf to hearing parents. Þórður is the student who perplexed me the most during my stay at the school. He appears self-sufficient, but he seems to struggle the most of my students when

it comes to reading and writing. In reading, he frequently confuses similar words and has a difficult time comprehending his texts. In regard to writing, he told me that he does not know how to write Icelandic, and he uses various techniques to avoid writing. However, he seemed to like stories and was always carrying books with him, mostly cartoon books, but also handbooks of various sorts, including books about magic, and he showed great talent as a mime.

1.5 Overview of the Dissertation

In Chapter 2, "Developing the Theoretical Tools of the New Literacy Studies," I discuss the theoretical framework of the NLS in general, focusing, in particular, on how I use the conceptual construction of multimodality and "big D" Discourses, along with the sociocultural body of research on literacy education of children who are deaf, to build the foundation of this research.

In Chapter 3, "Becoming a teacher researcher," I focus on the journey that I had to take to increase my sensitivity and attunement to the power dimension present within my research setting. This discussion is particularly important because it reveals how I came to enact the qualities of the teacher-researcher that enabled me to recognize and base my instruction on students' literacy resources. Having discussed how I developed my epistemological stance as a teacher-researcher, I move to a discussion of the design of the study.

In Chapter 4, I look at how I came to recognize and use the tensions emerging within the classroom to inquire into the institutional Discourses shaping the educational practices of my school setting, including my own, and the social roles that these Discourses created for my students and me to fill.

In Chapter 5, I divide the focus between three complexly interrelated main themes. First, I focus on the modifications that I made in writing instruction and how these influenced a construction of a sociocultural Discourse on learning that, in return, affected the social roles that my students and I enacted within the classroom. Then, I draw attention to the delicate nature of students' agency within the learning process and the importance of students' opportunities to act as agents within the instructional site in negotiating their identities as literacy learners. Finally, I describe the influence of individual agency within the classroom, drawing attention to how it increased students' use of material and representational resources in the process of composing a written text.

In Chapter 6, I revisit the main findings of the study, providing recommendations for practicing teachers and suggestions for future research in the field of deaf education.

2. DEVELOPING THE THEORETICAL TOOLS OF THE NEW LITERACY STUDIES

Viktoría was just a tiny little girl . . . and they were showing 'Bugsy Malone' in the theatre. I was going to take Bára (a pseudonym), my older daughter, to see it. This was a musical, you know, so it did not even occur to me to take Viktoria along. She was just supposed to stay at home. She was rather young then. I cannot remember if she was four years old, somewhere around there. And she came with us to pick up the tickets. This was when you had to go pick up the tickets before the show, and then she saw posters from the show, and she said, 'I am going to come with you.' And I said, 'No, you are not coming with us.' She laughed at the memory. 'It is only Bára and I who are going; this is a musical, you see.' And then she said, 'And why can I not come with you to that?' . . . and then I thought, 'Why should she not be able to come along . . . of course, she could come along . . . (laughing), and I mean, she was so little then that I could have her sit on my lap, so I did not need an additional ticket, and I just took her along. I think she was the one who enjoyed the show the most. And now she always comes with us, and we try to go at least once a year to see one of these shows that everybody can enjoy, and she has a lot of fun. This is all without an interpreter. Sometimes I interpret the storyline. I just sit beside her and interpret. And sometimes she tells me to stop interpreting; she is just going to watch the show. And then she might ask, 'What is he saying now?' And at other times it just annoys her to have someone interpreting. She just wants to enjoy the show, especially when there is a great light show. Maybe it is just something with theater. You somehow think you need an interpreter. (Interview, October 22 2007)

2.1 Introduction

On a stormy night in October 2007, I interviewed Viktoría's mother. The purpose of the interview was to learn more about Viktoría and the literacy practices occurring in their household. The interaction between Viktoría and her mother, as cited above, draws attention to how the perspectives of individuals are grounded in their social and cultural experiences. Viktoría's response to her mother's statement, "No, you are not coming with us . . . this is a musical, you see," with the question, "And why can I not come with you to that?" provides evidence of how opposing perspectives on deafness, as seen in the literature on literacy education of children who are deaf, can unconsciously co-exist within individuals. That is, while this interaction illuminates that Viktoría's mother sees deafness as meaning that her daughter will not enjoy activities that rely on auditory ability, it is evident that Viktoría sees

deafness differently and that musicals can be experienced through multiple senses. It is only when these opposing perspectives emerge simultaneously that people have an opportunity to confront them and to decide whether to accept or ignore the existence of an opposing perspective.

In the case of Viktoría's mother, we can observe how she recognizes and re-negotiates her perspective on deafness to account for her daughter's understanding of that phenomenon as well as the effect that this renegotiation has on Viktoría's access to participation in social events. Further, it is interesting to note that, even though Viktoría was only about four years old, the shift was dependent on her agency. That is, her life might have been different in a small, but yet substantial, way had she not spoken up and demanded to be included.

The transformation that I, as a hearing teacher, needed to undergo to understand the literacy practices that students bring into the classroom is similar to the one experienced by Viktoría's mother. Bringing that process to explicit awareness is impossible, however, without understanding how the sociocultural context shapes that process.

2.2 Theoretical Constructs

In this chapter, I examine the theoretical constructs employed within this study. This examination is divided into four main sections. In the first section, I briefly discuss how I came to recognize and position myself in relation to the conflicting perspectives found in the fields of literacy education, in general, and literacy education of children who are deaf, in particular. In the second section, I discuss the foundation of the theoretical framework of the New Literacy Studies, briefly introducing the theoretical concepts that will be employed in this study. Then I examine each concept in more depth, including its significance for the field of literacy education for children who are deaf. In the third section, I examine the theoretical concept of multimodality and its relevance to the field of literacy education for children who are deaf. In the fourth section, I examine the theoretical construct of "big D" Discourses in relation to the Discourses found within the field of deaf education, in general, and literacy learning of children who are deaf, in particular.

2.3 Entering the Field of Literacy Education for Children who are Deaf

"Literacy education is not for the timid" (Gee, 2008, p. 65).

Gee's (2008) statement that "literacy education is not for the timid" reflects a very different idea of literacy than the one that I had brought into the teaching profession. When I entered

the classroom, I thought of literacy as the ability to read, write, speak, and listen. In my mind, people became fluent literacy users by mastering specific sets of skills, and as a literacy teacher, it was my responsibility to help students acquire those skills. However, embedded in Gee's statement is that literacy is much more than being able to acquire and apply a set of skills to decode a text under study.

In the process of becoming literate, individuals bring meaning to and fill the written word with their understanding of the world, which, in return, affects their comprehension of the text being read. In this sense, literacy is always and everywhere bound up with a perspective on interpretation that is grounded in an individual's social and cultural position. In this way, literacy is about power (Gee, 1996; Street, 2001b) and is always a contested political process whereby one worldview and literacy practices try to overshadow and marginalize others (Street, 2001b). This perspective has important implications for the literacy learning of children who belong to language minority groups, including children who are deaf. As members of language minority group, students' literacy practices and worldviews tend to get marginalized within the context of the classroom, with the consequence that these practices are made unavailable to students in the process of learning to read and write. Thus, right from the very beginning, these students are put at a disadvantage in literacy learning in school settings.

The sociocultural movements within literacy education, in general, as well as the literacy education of children who are deaf, in particular, claim that literacy understood narrowly works to exclude the local literacy practices that students bring to the classroom. These movements advocate for a stronger recognition of the attitudes, values, norms, and beliefs embedded in the literacy practices implemented into the classroom and how these need to be renegotiated on the basis of students' lived experiences.

As a researcher of literacy education of children who are deaf, I position myself within these movements of researchers conducting research from a sociocultural standpoint. In the remainder of this chapter, I describe how I use the theoretical standpoint of "New Literacy Studies" (NLS), along with a sociocultural body of research on literacy education of children who are deaf, to build the foundation of this research. In this study, I look at deaf and hearing cultures as distinct cultural frames of reference to uncover the ways in which these cultures have operated as significant factors in these students' literacy learning.

2.4 The New Literacy Studies

The theoretical framework of the NLS (Gee, 1996; Kress, 2003, 2005b; New London Group, 1996; Street, 1984, 1995) provides a lens for identifying, understanding, and discussing the literacy practices that students who are deaf bring into the classroom. NLS reflects a "social turn" in literacy research, a shift in focus from studying individuals in isolation to exploring their social and cultural contexts and interactions (Gee, 2000). The term "literacy" tends to be associated with school-based notion of literacy. That is, students are viewed as acquiring literacy, defined narrowly as reading and writing, by mastering specific sets of skills that then can be transferred to other settings. This idea of literacy is also referred to as the autonomous model of literacy (Street, 1984). Brueggemann's (1999) work in deconstructing how deafness has been rhetorically constructed in our educational system sheds light on how the existing model of literacy education for children who are deaf is an autonomous one. According to Brueggemann (1999), deafness has been constructed as a "problem" within the educational system based on Quintilian's (1963) concept of the "good man speaking well." This emphasis on spoken language has resulted in an a focus on training, maintaining, containing, and restraining the person who does not speak well (Brueggemann, 1999), including those who are deaf.

Researchers working from the perspective of NLS have expanded on the traditional definition of literacy. Rather than defining literacy exclusively as a set of neutral or technical skills, NLS researchers contextualize literacy within individuals' social and cultural experiences (Gee, 2000; Street, 1984, 2001a). This understanding of literacy is referred to as the "ideological" model of literacy and is considered more culturally and contextually sensitive (Street, 2001b). This ideological understanding of literacy declares that it is not a neutral thing, transferrable from one setting to another; rather, it varies from one context to another and from one group to the next. In other words, there are many literacies or multiliteracies (Gee, 2008). Thus, literacy education should encompass the skills needed to explore the multiple literacies that students bring to the classroom.

While NLS emphasizes that the term literacy has been used too narrowly and needs to be broadened, Street (1984, 2001a) has questioned why school-based literacy has come to be seen as the defining form of reading and writing, when so many other types of literacies exist. This "pedagogization" of literacy marginalizes many other forms of literacies (Street & Street, 1991) and thus limits the instructional practices available to teachers. Literacy practices constitute what people do with literacy and how they make sense of it (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). While the school-based notion of literacy neglects to account for the multiple meaning

that literacy can have in people's lives, it also excludes people from engaging with literacy practices that seem meaningful to them. To counteract this trend, NLS researchers and teachers emphasize the importance of understanding the situatedness of literacy practices in which students are already engaged before planning literacy programs and interventions for a group.

The emergence of the ideological model of literacy within the field of deaf education is reflected in some specific literacy practices that researchers, using a sociocultural perspective, have revealed as important to literacy learning of children who are deaf. These include Sign Language fluency and students' ability to make use of Sign Language-based literacy practices in the process of engaging in literacy activities (Mashie, 1995; Prinz & Strong, 1998; Ramsey & Padden, 1998); the strategies of fingerspelling, whereby words are spelled on the hand using a Sign Language Alphabet; initialized signs, which include a handshape corresponding to a fingerspelled letter of the Sign Language alphabet and which signals the first letter of the written word; and chaining, a technique used for linking a sign to a written word or a fingerspelled version of that sign (Humphries & MacDougall, 2000; Padden & Ramsey, 1998) as well as reading strategies whereby students aim to seek meaning from the text instead of attempting to match every written word with a corresponding sign (Padden & Ramsey, 1998).

Kress (2005b) draws attention to how Sign Language can be described as a multimodal system. That is, individual who are deaf combine different meaning-making systems such as "facial expressions; disposition of the mouth and eyes; movements and dispositions of the arms; of the fingers; the general attitude and disposition of the upper part of the body…as to produce a single, if complex, integrated and differentiated text-message" (Kress, 2005b, p. 186). By looking at the ways in which individuals who are deaf integrate and draw on sociocultural resources to make meaning different from the ones hearing individuals make use of suggests that if we are to understand the literacy practices students who are deaf utilize in the process of becoming literate we must look at literacy as multimodal (Kress, 2005b; Kress & Jewitt, 2003).

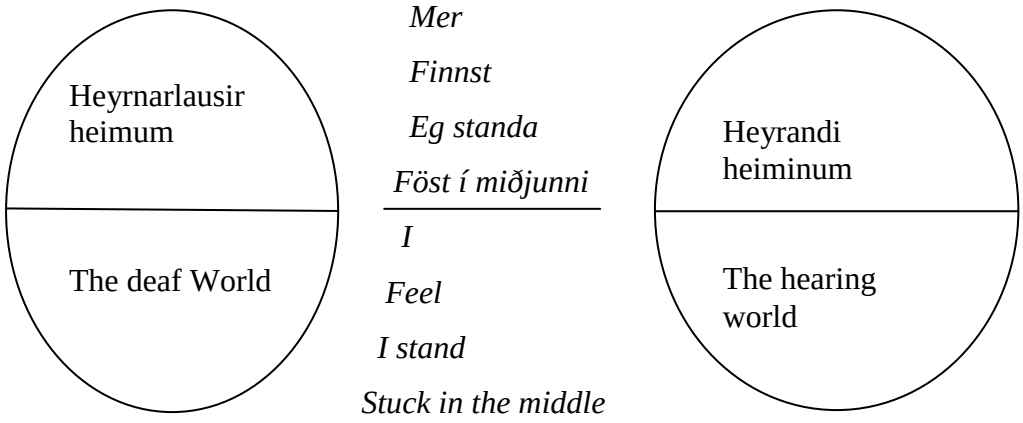
By emphasizing the literacy practices of the Deaf community, I am by no means suggesting that the concept of multiliteracies should be used to create yet another set of literacy skills to be used within the deaf culture. That would provide too simplistic an idea of what literacy is. The ideological perspective on literacy, provided by NLS, is that literacy is about power (Gee, 1996) and is therefore always a contested process whereby one worldview tries to overshadow and marginalize others (Street, 2001b). In addressing the particular

literacy practices of the deaf community, I am pointing out that the deaf culture, just like any other culture, has the power to create and develop specific strategies and culturally designed innovations that will further contribute to deaf people's literacy learning. Thus, the literacy practices found within the deaf culture should inform, but not determine, our instructional practices within the educational setting for children who are deaf.

In this study, I use two theoretical constructs from NLS—multimodality and "big D" Discourses—to explore the multilayered process that I, as a hearing teacher of children who are deaf, have had to undergo. In this process, I have had to (a) identify assumptions embedded in my instructional practices and worldviews about what it means to be a successful literacy learner; (b) understand how these assumptions influence my literacy practices and how I perceive children who are deaf as literacy learners; (c) begin to deconstruct pathological assumptions and to construct positive perceptions of children who are deaf as literacy learners; and (d) explore how my reconstruction of children who are deaf as literacy learners allows me to create a space within the classroom for students' cultural and linguistic resources. Below, I define these constructs and explain how these will inform my work.

2.5 Multimodality

In composing their texts, students would often surf the Internet to find words or ideas that they were trying to communicate in their writing. On one occasion, Melkorka was trying to put into words the feeling of living between two worlds, the hearing one and the deaf one. So that she would not forget the idea, she wrote her first draft just as the bell rang to signal the end of class (Student's notebook, April 21, 2008).



On May 7, 2008 Melkorka wrote the first full draft of her essay, in the form of poetry, on the computer. Below is half of the first stanza of this poem.

augun mina opnast,	*mine eyes open,*
timn stöðvar,	*tim stops,*
tíminn flyti sér ratt samt rosalega hægt að	*the time hurries up still tremendously slow*
maður sér	*that one sees*
glansandi og mreiðaur	*shining and mred*
feit,mjó,stór,lítið,barn,gömul,unglingar	*fat,thin,big,small,baby,old,teenagers*
ég sé	*I see*
allt að hreyfast nema hjá mér	*everything to moving except with me*
bíll,hjól,hlaupahjól,hlaupandi,labbandi,	*car,bicycle,scooter,running,walking,*
sitjandi,standandi	*sitting,standing*

When she showed it to me, I read the entire poem, which I found to be full of meaning and movement.[9]

"What is it that you are trying to say here?" I asked her, pointing to the stanza above. "I open my eyes," she explains. "Everything is moving very slowly but also very fast. I see everything in full speed around me but then . . . It is like time has stopped for me, but I see how life continues . . . you know." She put her hand in front of her face, palms inward, fingers pointing towards each other. Then she slowly pulled them in opposite directions, like she was ripping her face apart. I watched her, not sure of what she was trying to tell me. She saw this in my face.

"See here." She navigates to YouTube on the Internet. Once there, she searches for a word that, unfortunately, I did not record in my research journal. It brings up a video of a woman with myriad colors moving around her like auras.

"I open my eyes and time stands still for me," she said, "but everything is moving so fast." We discussed this and edited Melkorka's work together to better capture the meaning

[9] In translating the poem from Icelandic to English, it is challenging to preserve all the grammatical nuances. Thus, the English translation provided here is meant only to give a better idea of how the meaning of the poem was transformed through our communication and not to shed light on the grammatical nuances.

that she was trying to express in her poem and to transform the written resources already available to her into a more standardized version of written Icelandic.

augun mín opnast	*my eyes open*
tíminn stendur kyrr	*the time stands still*
en æðir samt áfram	*but still rushes forward*
eins og fellibylur	*like an hurricane*
ég sé	*I see*
hluti og fólk	*things and people*
eins og árur á hreyfingu	*like auras in motion*
allt á hreyfingu nema ég	*everything in motion except me*

In this section, I discuss the perspective provided by multimodality when examining the literacy learning of children who are deaf within the instructional site. In the vignette above, I illustrated how one of my students, Melkorka, draws on and integrates multiple modes in the process of composing a coherent text. Before elaborating on this vignette to explore the ideas from multimodal semiotic theory that are particularly relevant to this research, I briefly touch on the body of research related to deaf education and the current pedagogical discussion occurring within the field, which form the foundation for this research project.

Before moving to discussing multimodality, it is important to note that, since the late 1980s, many educational programs for the deaf have adopted a bilingual-bicultural approach in which Sign Language and the culture of children who are deaf serve as the foundation for literacy instruction. This educational emphasis is a result of the long and difficult battle that deaf people and their advocates have fought for the recognition of the value of Sign Language for people who are deaf (Jankowski, 1997; Ladd, 2003; Lou, 1988). Additionally, an increasing understanding of the bilingual discourse strategies developed by the Deaf community to connect their literacy practices to deaf students' school-based literacy learning has had an impact on the development of these bilingual-bicultural educational models (Padden & Ramsey, 1993, 1998; Ramsey & Padden, 1998). Despite the hope that the application of bilingual-bicultural models in the field of deaf education would raise the literacy achievement of this student population, there is no research evidence for such a change (Evan, 2004; Mayer & Akamatsu, 2003).

Recently, there has been intense discussion about the possible reasons for the inadequacy of this educational approach for addressing the educational needs of children who are deaf (Bagga-Gupta, 2000, 2002; Evan, 2004; Mayer, 2009; Mayer & Akamatsu, 1999; Mayer, et al., 2002; Mayer & Wells, 1996). Some researchers argue that the theory underlying the bilingual-bicultural model, i.e. the linguistic interdependence theory, does not apply to the special needs of students who are deaf (Mayer & Akamatsu, 1999; Mayer & Wells, 1996). There are others, however, who have studied the everyday literacy practices utilized in bilingual educational settings and believe that there is a need for further study of such practices before claiming any failure of these educational models (Bagga-Gupta, 2000, 2002). Indeed, research using alternative approaches for examining the dialogic nature of literacy learning of this student population has emerged (Mayer, et al., 2002; Mayer, Akamatsu, & Stewart, 2003; Singleton & Morgan, 2006). In this regard, Brueggemann (1999) insists that we need to gain a greater understanding of what happens when students are allowed to be in charge of their own reading and writing processes. She believes that individuals who are deaf might begin to "have some power over and in their own literacy lives" if allowed this opportunity (p. 75).

While these pedagogical discussions provide the foundation upon which this study rests, and influence the educational setting in which this study is situated, it is beyond the scope of this research to explore them in detail. Rather, the aim of this study is to examine what another theoretical framework, NLS, can contribute to our understanding of the literacy learning of children who are deaf. The bringing together of the current bilingual-bicultural model of children who are deaf and the theoretical framework of NLS to construct a more coherent approach to literacy instruction of children who are deaf will have to wait for future study. In the remainder of this section, I explore the conceptual construction of multimodality and how it allows us to expand our understanding of the different material and representational resources that children who are deaf bring to the learning of their second language.

The recent growth in the use of technology has increased people's awareness of the multiple modes that go into representation and communication. This growth also has drawn attention to the inadequacy of current theories of meaning and communication in accounting for what literacy is and does (Kress, 2003, 2005a). The Multiliteracies notion of NLS highlights the need to move beyond theories of language, which mainly offer explanations of the linguistic mode, to theories of semiotics, which have the potential to describe the interrelations between different modes of representation and communication (Kress, 2003).

NLS researchers have identified six different modes or designs in the meaning-making process (New London Group, 1996). These are the linguistic, spatial, gestural, audio, and visual modes, as well as the mode of multimodality which brings together the interaction between the other five modes (New London Group, 1996).

In applying the lens of multimodal semiotic theory to my instructional site, I focus on the different material and representational resources or signs that individuals use to interpret and represent meaning. The concepts underlying such a theory, and of great importance here, are *meaning* and *sign*. A sign is a juxtaposition of meaning and form. That is, signs are material resources upon which individuals draw to make meaning. Meaning in and of itself can never exist outside of the sign as an independent object. If communication is to have meaning, that is, the potential of being understood and interpreted, then it "must have its existence in the material of actual, real signs" (Vološinov, 1973, p. 28). Although, in signs, meanings take material form, they do not depend upon the form of the sign for their meaning. Rather, the form is a signifier that has the potential of becoming a sign when individuals bring meaning to it. Melkorka's attempt to communicate the meaning of auras, in the vignette above, is an example of how meaning does not reside in the material resources around us, waiting for us to discover to communicate our intentions. Rather, in the process of communication, individuals bring meaning to the resources available, which have the potential of becoming signs for the meaning that individuals intend to convey.

In Melkorka's case, her words, "everything is moving very slowly but also very fast," and the video clip that she found on YouTube had the potential to become signs for the idea that she was trying to communicate. Because her attempt at that particular moment was to communicate her idea in a written language, in her search for a written signifier that could capture her meaning, she brought her intended meaning to those two signifiers (the words and the video clip). As this example illuminates, signs derive their meanings through constant negotiation in the process of interaction within a specific context. As contexts vary, the sign found within any sign system, including spoken, signed, and written language, as well as images, can take on various meanings (Kress, 2005a; Vološinov, 1973). Thus, signs are always and everywhere the work of ideologies. That is, they reflect a particular viewpoint that, in turn, encourages indivudal to read them in a certain way.

Expanding one's theory of literacy learning to include the multiple meaning-making modes that literacy learners bring to the instructional site involves finding ways to understand "how meanings are made as signs in distinct ways in specific modes" and how we understand and describe "the integration of such meaning across modes, into coherent wholes, into texts"

(Kress, 2003, p. 37). The challenges that Kress highlights here crystallize in Melkorka‘s composition process, as described above. Within that process, we observed how Melkorka was trying to explain the feeling of being stuck between two cultures, the hearing and the Deaf.

The figure with the circles representing the two worlds in which Melkorka lives, with the words, “I am stuck in between,” placed in between them, provides evidence that Melkorka may have been visualizing this feeling before the words actually reached her consciousness. Further, she expressed her intended meaning through the material resources most suited to her intentions at that given moment and by using the representational modes that could best carry her message. Throughout the composition process, Melkorka navigated between multiple modes while making and reshaping her meaning. The whole composition process bears witness to how the material and representational resources Melkorka brought to the writing of her poem were transformed within the instructional site to better convey her intended meaning.

We have seen how Melkorka draws upon different sign systems in the composition process. NLS researchers introduced the notion of design as a key concept to account for this intensified “complexity and interrelation” of various modes in the meaning-making process, that is, the linguistic, audio, spatial, gestural, and visual modes, as well as the mode of multimodality, which brings together the interactions between the other five modes (New London Group, 1996). The concept of design speaks to individuals’ acts of making decisions about which of the material resources available to them best symbolize their intentions and which representational modes are best suited for deploying those intentions. Questions related to designing include, “What can stand for what I mean? And how can it be most successfully communicated?” In the course of designing, the designer is constantly transforming existing resources, as shown in Melkorka‘s composition process. In this way, the notion of design does more than describe the form, structure, or meaning being made. It brings together and accounts for both the meaningful structure of the design and the interests of the designer, the human agency involved in the meaning-making process (Cope & Kalantzis, 2005; Kress, 2005a; New London Group, 1996). This double nature of design starts off with a very different view of language learning and meaning making than what is commonly held (Cope & Kalantzis, 2005; Kress, 1997, 2005a). Instead of thinking of language as a stable system of components and rules to be acquired, design focuses on change and transformation. In this view, individuals cannot been seen simply as users of language. Rather, motivated by their interests, they have to be seen as “remakers, transformers, of sets of representational

resources" (Kress, 2005a, p. 160). This strong emphasis on individual agency in the meaning-making process forms an alternative understanding of what literacy education should be about. Instead of thinking about the various sign systems, such as language, reading, and writing, as existing in the abstract, waiting for students to acquire and apply them in the right way, the instructional site should be a place where students who are deaf can access and develop their multiple modes for interpreting and making meaning in the process of learning to read and write in their second language.

In this study, I use the conceptual construction of multimodality, as described above, to explore the various modes of meaning upon which children who are deaf draw in gaining command over their second language, in this case, the written form of Icelandic, and how I, as a teacher, can either support or limit their use of these resources through my instructional practices. However, to understand how, in my position as a teacher, I can either afford or hinder students' use of the resources that they bring into the classroom, I need to examine how underlying institutional forces shape my work. In the following sections, I examine how the theoretical construct of "big D" Discourses in relation to an increased awareness of the Discourses found within the field of deaf education, in general, and literacy learning of children who are deaf, in particular, provides an important tool to examine how institutional forces provide or limit students' opportunities to bring in and base their learning on the multiple modes of meaning that they bring into the instructional site.

2.6 "Big D" Discourses

Gee's (1996) notion of "Discourses," with a capital D, was extremely important in beginning to problematize the school-based notion of literacy. Gee (2005) differentiates between "little d" discourses and "big D" Discourses, stating that, while the former deal with language in use, the latter encompass a wide range of representation resources that individuals use to display particular socially situated identities, such as gestures, behavior, and clothing. "Big D" Discourses, also referred to as cultural models, figured worlds, or lifeworlds (Cope & Kalantzis, 2005; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Strauss & Quinn, 1997), are theories that we unconsciously embody and enact that allow us to get on with our daily lives without excessive preplanning (Gee, 2003, 2005). "Big D" Discourses are composed of "various ways of talking, listening . . . acting, interacting, believing, valuing, and using tools and objects, in particular social settings at specific times" (Gee, 1996, p. 128) that allow us "to display and recognize a particular social identity" (Gee, 1996, p. 128). The kinds of

Discourses that people embody, display, and recognize depend on their experiences. People can embody and display multiple Discourses or identities, even conflicting ones, without being aware of it.

Discourses emerging from prior experiences necessarily shape what we consider to be "normal" or "typical" in regard to a given situation. In the opening vignette of this chapter, for instance, we see how Viktoría and her mother embody different Discourses about what is normal in terms of the situation of a deaf individual going to see a musical. The mother unconsciously thinks that, because deaf individuals cannot hear, they probable cannot enjoy this type of entertainment, while Viktoría thinks that they can. As this incident indicates, there is nothing right or wrong in this situation. In the same way, Discourses are never "true" or "false." Rather, Discourses are always ideologically-laden, reflecting a particular viewpoint that, in return, encourages individuals to construct specific kinds of situated meaning, that is, to read context in a certain way (Gee, 2004a). This nature of Discourses is extremely important because, as Gee (2005) emphasizes, at the same time that Discourses allow us to infer what we consider to be "normal" or "typical" in any given situation, they also include us in the exclusion of Discourses that are in conflict with our own (Gee, 2005), as might have happened in Viktoría's case if she had not spoken up and demanded to be included. This exclusion of different Discourses can be harmful, as it can lead to the implementation of considerations and actions that are unjust, dismissive, or disparaging in regard to other people (Gee, 2005).

People do not think overtly about the Discourse by which they are guided unless they come into conflict with Discourses that interpret situations differently from their own, as seen in the case of Viktoría and her mother regarding deaf individuals going to see a musical. This collision of different Discourses can be experienced as a slight feeling of discomfort or tension that individuals can either choose to ignore or to reflect upon. It is only through overt reflection, however, that people are able to bring the Discourses by which they live to their conscious awareness.

The tension that emerges when people encounter different Discourses, if critically reflected upon, can provide opportunities to understand the values and dispositions implicit in the Discourses that guide one's action as well as a greater understanding of the Discourses that are in conflict with one's own. In the case of Viktoría's mother, we see how her reflection originates in Viktoría's question, "And why can I not come with you to that?" which Viktoría poses in response to her mother's stating that she is not supposed to go with them to see the

musical “Bugsy Malone.” This question raises doubts in Viktoría’s mother’s mind, and as we already know, she ends up bringing her daughter to the show.

Through the experience of watching “Bugsy Malone” with her daughter, Viktoría’s mother discovers that Viktoría was probably the one who enjoyed the show the most. That is, by overtly reflecting upon and renegotiating the Discourses in regard to deafness, by which she lives, Viktoría’s mother not only became more aware of the disposition intrinsic in her Discourse about deafness but also learned more about the disposition behind the one that Viktoría embodies. Consequently, she came to know Viktoría through the perspective that Viktoría embodies about herself as a deaf individual.

In the same way that each individual holds specific Discourses, so do institutions such as schools. Institutional Discourses get established through repetition of “valid” practices and situations. In return, institutions “create forces that ensure the repetition and ritualization of the situation that sustain them” (Gee, 2005, p. 102). Consequently, the Discourses made available to teachers during their training and tenure with the school institution are limited to those that are recognizable within those specific situations of training and teaching. These Discourses materialize in dispositions, learning materials, routines, and rituals, as well as in the cultural, historical, political, and economic forces, present within the educational setting. The danger that teachers confront when they take up “accepted” practices is losing sight of the specificity and localness of those practices and beginning to think of them as common, abstract, and even universal (Gee, 2005). As a result, when teachers encounter practices not validated by the existing Discourses, they do not know what to make of them and often dismiss them without consideration.

Gee’s (2005) notion of “big D” Discourses links together literacy instruction, identity, and the sociocultural context of the school. As such, “big D” Discourses becomes a useful construct for identifying the Discourses emerging within my classroom and how these affect instructional practices. These include both the Discourses that I hold as an individual, and as a member of the school institution, about literacy instruction of students who are deaf, as well as the Discourses that my students bring into the classroom about who they are as literacy learners and the literacy instruction that they expect to receive in school. Additionally, because “big D” Discourses closely relate to identities, they become an important tool in exploring the roles available to students within the instructional space and how these suggest certain types of identities for students to take on. In section 2.6.2, I further develop the discussion of the connection between “big D” Discourses, identities, and the instructional space, with a focus on the different kinds of identities available to students within the process

of learning. Before turning to that discussion, however, I further illuminate how conflicting Discourses have shaped the field of deaf education, consequently, influencing the ways in which teachers act within those particular settings.

2.6.1 Conflicting Discourses in Deaf Education.

The conflicting perspectives, clinical and sociocultural, highlighted in the current debate about different research paradigms, particularly which one is better suited to enhancing the literacy learning of children who are deaf, are not new in the field of deaf education. As a matter of fact, these contradictory Discourses have coexisted and influenced people's understanding of deafness long before the establishment of deaf education.[10] Therefore, it may be easier said than done for teachers to make the shift from the clinical to the sociocultural perspective in their practice as they try to account for and base their instruction on students' cultural and linguistic resources. This becomes particularly true in the light of Gee's (1996) discussion of the nature of the Discourses by which we live. That is, under normal circumstances, we do not recognize the multiple Discourses that we embody and enact, whether in our personal or professional lives. Therefore, as teachers of children who are deaf, we cannot truly scrutinize the Discourses by which we live within the educational setting, without the vantage point of Discourses that vary from our own. In this section, I highlight the two conflicting Discourses, clinical and sociocultural, that have most influenced people's understanding of deafness. Bringing these two Discourses to an explicit awareness will further help to understand and to reveal the Discourses that have come to shape the literacy practices utilized within the educational setting of this research, including my own.

The sociocultural Discourse on deafness developed from the awareness that, as long as deaf people could cultivate their "collective life" (Ladd, 2003), that is, come together as a group, they were capable of expressing their minds just like anyone else. Clinical Discourse, in contrast, was developed by those who were aware only of the isolated deaf individual, who, without the opportunity for intellectual communication through a comprehensible interaction with social peers, appeared to be ill-functioning in society (Ladd, 2003). This lack of awareness encouraged the creation of a Discourse on deaf people as persons suffering from lack or having an impairment. Throughout history, these opposing perspectives have been

[10] These perspectives have had different names throughout history. Ladd (2003) talks about these as positive and negative perspectives on deafness. Although the terms " clinical" and " sociocultural" may not have existed early on, I use them here for the sake of consistency in my discussion of the different discoureses that have come to shape our understanding of deafness and, in retrospect, the purpose of the field of deaf education.

mediated by different social languages (different ways of using language), and a number of examples show how each has attempted to eradicate the other (Ladd, 2003).

The coexistence and intersection of the conflicting Discourses described above, one addressing the importance of deaf people's collective life for their intellectual growth and the other emphasizing that the deaf individual needed to be fixed to be fully functional within modern society, had a tremendous impact on the establishment and development of educational Discourse for this student population from the late nineteenth century to the present day. Although advocates of deaf education emphasized the linguistic element as the humanizing factor, arguing that a society of deaf people needed to be created to make it possible for deaf people to educate themselves through their own language, these advocates also found that utilizing a Discourse that dehumanized uneducated deaf people, to some extent, was important as a means to gain recognition and financial support for establishing and maintaining an educational system for the deaf (Ladd, 2003). Thus, in bringing together conflicting Discourses, advocates for establishing an educational system for the deaf laid a foundation for a clinical Discourse that holds that deaf people, within these educational settings, need to be fixed (Ladd, 2003).

Although the clinical Discourse became embedded within the deaf educational system for almost a century (Chapter 1.3.1.) and appeared successful in repressing sociocultural Discourses of deafness, these Discourses began to materialize again in late twentieth century, shortly after Stokoe (1960) provided evidence of Sign Language being a real language. The sociocultural Discourse emerged in the words of those who argue that hearing people have constructed people who are deaf as deficient, which served as the foundation to the unsuccessful attempt to impose their familiar hearing world upon deaf people (Lane, 1992). Instead of putting forth this misleading image of deafness, the supporters of the sociocultural perspective emphasize that, if children who are deaf are to become successful literacy learners, it is vital to reestablish the cultural and linguistic knowledge of deaf people in educational settings for the deaf.

These conflicting Discourses of deafness continue to co-exist and influence people's understanding of deafness. In turn, individuals have unconsciously internalized their perceptions of what it means to be deaf, as we have seen in Viktoría's mother's presumption that deaf people cannot attend musicals. Thus, the ways in which a literacy teacher of children who are deaf and his or her students interact is predetermined by the various Discourses that they enact within the educational setting, which, in turn, influence the nature of literacy practices that are being taught and reinforced. Hence, a good starting point for me as a literacy

teacher who is to understand the challenges that children who are deaf experience in terms of literacy learning is to look at how the various Discourses within deaf education have come to shape my understanding of what it means to be deaf.

2.6.2 "Big D" Discourses, Deafness, Literacy Learning and Identities.

"Do you want to edit your story about María now or do you want to begin a new story?" I asked Viktoría as soon as I walked into the classroom. Before giving her time to answer, I told her that I had noticed a few things in the story that I knew she could do better, including correcting at least seven misspelled words that I knew that she had been working on. We also had been working on how to represent dialogue in a story, and I wanted her to look at this as well to make sure that she was formatting it consistently. As I told her what I wanted her to do, I could see her stiffen.

"I am not in the mood to do this," she informed me.

"Here is the story we printed out yesterday. Look through it and edit it," I told her. She took the draft that I handed to her and brought it to her seat. She signed herself through the text. After she finished, she turned to me.

"In Sign Language this all works. I think it is better to use Sign Language. I am bad in Icelandic. I just want to use Sign Language. I don't know anything in Icelandic." She pounded this into me just like I had pounded my orders into her. Her reaction came as a big surprise to me. Lately, I had been noticing subtle but very real changes in her writing, which indicated that she was making progress. I told her this as I wondered how I could intervene in her writing process and nurture her developing identity as a writer, without breaking her down (Research Journal, November 29, 2007).

Throughout my stay within the instructional site, I was constantly reminded that, as my students were learning their second language, Icelandic, they were not only learning how to read and write in that language, they also were developing their identities as literacy learners, and my instructional practices would play an important role in how they came to perceive themselves as such. In the vignette above, I draw attention to my challenging role of negotiating the multiple Discourses emerging within the context of my classroom as I attempt to provide a safe space for my students to negotiate their identities as literacy learners. Before discussing this in greater detail, I examine the relationship between learning and identity and how institutional Discourses shape that process.

In looking at how dominant Discourses found within the context of literacy instruction of children who are deaf affect students' construction of their identities as literacy learners, Lave and Wegner's (1991) concept of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) is useful. The central idea of LPP is that learning is a situated activity in which learners are guided toward a full mastery of knowledge and skills of particular sociocultural communities' practices through participation with someone more knowledgeable in these practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This participation involves both the process of taking part in an activity and the interactive relationship with others reflected in that process (Wenger, 2008). Understanding learning in terms of participation leads to the conclusion that it is not enough to evaluate learning based on whether external knowledge has been internalized, a practice commonly utilized within schools. Rather, student learning needs to be understood as increasing students' capabilities to participate and negotiate their place in the generative social processes involved in the sociocultural practices of a particular learning community (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

This understanding of learning as increasing immersion within the sociocultural practices of a particular learning community involves students' construction of associated identities. That is, within the process of learning certain social practices, students are simultaneously developing identities as more mature members of that particular community. Thus, identity development is always integral and negotiated in the process of learning. This discussion of social practices, learning, and identity leads back to the earlier discussion of "big D" Discourses. The understanding and enactment of the social practices of any community depends heavily on the Discourses underlying those practices. It is through the lenses of specific Discourses that social practices gain their meanings, and individuals engaged in these practices can be recognized as displaying a certain kind of identity. Further, because members of a community are in the process of negotiating the meanings of that community's social practices, they are simultaneously involved in constructing a notion of who they are as members of that learning community and in transforming the underlying Discourse to account for the meanings being developed.

The notion of learning as participation in social practices becomes problematic for several reasons within the institutional setting of a school. First, the knowledge and skills emphasized within the instructional setting have been removed from the social practices that gave them their meaning in the first place. Second, within institutions such as schools, underlying dominant Discourses are shaped and reified into concrete educational practices and social positions. This means that the institutional Discourses reinforce educational

practices that seem meaningful from the institution's perspective but neglect to account for the naturally evolving and transformative nature of the social practices as they emerge within their community of practice. Consequently, instead of teachers and students being able to negotiate their identities in the process of learning, the reified social positions already in place for the participants call on the enactment of certain types of identities (Gee, 2001).

The complex nature of institutional Discourses and how they create social positions with their associated social practices for teacher and students to take on, crystallizes in the interaction between Viktoría and me in the opening vignette. In the social position of the teacher, one is expected to tell students what they need to do. In the same way, one may expect one in the social position of the student to be told what he or she needs to do. This is exactly what is seen in the vignette. However, what is not visible in it is that, at the time of the incident, I had worked hard to reconstruct this notion of the teacher-student relationship. In my work, I had strived to create a space where students had agency over their own working processes and where my role was to intervene into their learning processes when needed. The fact that I enacted the teacher whom I was trying to reconstruct in my work bears witness to the enormous power of the institutional Discourse against which I was consciously working. That is, when least expected, its invisible forces pulled me right back into the social position that I was trying to recreate, a social position that had, long before I had entered the teaching profession, shaped my understanding of the roles and responsibilities that individuals in the roles of the teacher and the student "should" enact.

As teachers enter the institutional setting of school, the institutional Discourses forces them into the social positions awaiting them within the setting and are expected to take up the "accepted" educational practices and routines that sustain the positions that I illustrated above. Consequently, the identities available to students during instructional time depend on how teachers negotiate these existing social positions with regard to their students, that is, how they talk and interact with students during instructional time (Mojo & Dillon, 2006). Teachers' negotiation of the social positions available to them can range from their taking a position in classrooms whereby they can negotiate their identities dynamically, along with their students, to adopting the prescribed practices and positioning students in ways that determine the kind of identities that are available to them in the learning process (Hall, Johnson, Juzwik, Wortham, & Mosley, 2010), which students can either accept or resist.

McCarthey and Mojo (2002) claim that one of the ways in which literacy practices shape students' identities is seen in how "readers and writers come to understand themselves in particular ways as a result of a literate engagement" (p. 229). In the vignette above,

Viktoría brought different semiotic systems and associated identities to the process of learning to write in her second language, that is, the sign systems of written Icelandic and of Icelandic Sign Language. I intervened into Viktoría's writing process with my perspective of the Icelandic language. In this example, I intended to scaffold her writing in two ways: first, by giving her a choice of which writing to work on and, second, by pointing out writing skills that I knew that she had been working on.

My first intention failed right from the beginning. Instead of waiting for Viktoría to tell me what she wanted to work on, I told her in a very direct manner that she should finish editing her story. What becomes interesting in relation to my second intention is that, in working on advancing her writing, Viktoría is not only negotiating her literacy identity in relation to the social practices in which she is involved; additionally, her learning of Icelandic is mediated through the cultural identities that she brings to the activity. That is, Viktoría's sentences "in Sign Language this all works. I think it is better to use Sign Language. I am bad in Icelandic. I just want to use Sign Language. I don't know anything in Icelandic," bring evidence that through the process of learning the written form of Icelandic, Viktoría is engaged in constant negotiation between the multiple identities that she brings to the educational setting. This shows how the role of the literacy teacher of children who are deaf is not only to scaffold the learning of their second language but also to do so in a manner that provides students with a social context that encourages exploration, engagement, and development of the multiple identities on which their learning is based.

Because Gee's (2008) notion of "big D" Discourses encompasses a wide range of the representational resources of which individuals make use to identify themselves as certain kinds of people within specific contexts, it is an important means of understanding how deafness, literacy learning, and identity development converge within the instructional site and became shaped and renegotiated within the process of learning. The notion of "big D" Discourses is useful for examining how ideological forces underlying instructional practices implemented into the literacy instruction of children who are deaf provide or limit the opportunities available to students for constructing their identities as readers and writers.

2.7 Concluding Thoughts

In this chapter, I have developed the theoretical lenses that I will apply to my instructional site to understand the process that I need to undergo to account for the multiple representational resources that students who are deaf bring to their learning of their second language, written

Icelandic. Adapting a sociocultural perspective on literacy instruction has its consequences in teachers' work. Instead of emphasizing the learning of discrete skills in the process of becoming literate, teachers need to become researchers within their instructional settings and seek out ways to understand the multiple literacies that students bring into the classroom. In the next chapter, I will discuss how I came to construct my stance as a hearing teacher-researcher within the classroom of children who are deaf.

3. BECOMING A TEACHER-RESEARCHER

I entered the teaching profession in fall 2000 as a teacher of children who are deaf. Upon entering the profession, literacy instruction was not one of my main concerns, particularly because my new school already had a bilingual reading approach in place that I planned to use. I spent some time getting familiar with that approach and deciding on books for my students to read. Then I was set to go . . . or so I thought. I had not been in the classroom long when I realized that literacy instruction was going to be my major concern this academic year. Indeed, it became so challenging that, at the end of the school year, I felt that I had no other choice than to leave the classroom to find some way to address my challenges. This experience within the classroom, however, taught me valuable lessons. I learned that, for practicing professionals, there can be a significant gap between receiving advice and implementing it within their practice. Therefore, I was determined that, when I found the solutions to my struggles, I would return to the classroom to see for myself how what I had learned could be successfully implemented in practice.

As I became more familiar with the notion of multiliteracies, discussed in Chapter 2, the focus of my research began to take shape. It became evident that the answers to my questions were not to be found in any pre-planned methods that could be installed seamlessly in the classroom. Rather, intrinsic in the perspective of the NLS is the position of the teacher as a researcher (Cazden, 2000; New London Group, 1996). That is, if I wanted to support my students' literacy learning, I needed to look beyond my taken-for-granted assumptions about literacy to identify and account for the various literacy resources that students brought to the setting. I realized that, to find solutions to the challenges that I had once experienced, I needed to return to the classroom as a teacher-researcher to learn to see what was not visible to me because of my cultural background.

This idea appealed to me. From what I had read in graduate school, it was a research approach that could have the greatest potential impact on the development of the theories and practices that would guide my work as a teacher because such an approach inherently demands active involvement in examining the relationship between teaching and research (Kemmis, 2001). However, as I read more about teacher research and delved into the writings of other teacher-researchers, I came to realize that its aims and nature differed widely. The diverse origins of the works that I read made it difficult for me to explain teacher research to myself and to others, except by simply saying that it is about the teacher's examining systematically his or her own work (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Although this definition

appeared to describe my work as a teacher-researcher, I felt that it never really captured the idea of what such research involves.

Before entering my research setting, the classroom, I prepared myself as best I could. I took methodological courses, including one on teacher research, and I continued to read about teacher research as a methodology and to read the actual research accounts of teacher-researchers. Many of the readings with which I engaged described such research in ways resembling Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988) circular model of the sequencing steps of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, and re-planning. Everyone who discussed these procedures, however, seemed to agree that these steps did not occur in a linear way. When I entered the classroom as a teacher-researcher, I felt that I had little to hold on to. I had my research questions, which I hoped would guide my vision once I was in the classroom, and I had the vague idea that, in my search for students' literacy practices, I would somehow traverse the steps outlined above.

Originally, I was going to stay within the classroom for a year to collect my data. However, as time passed, I realized that I needed more time to understand the task that I had set out to accomplish. Consequently, I ended up working in the classroom as a teacher-researcher for three years. Throughout, I struggled with the question, "What is teacher research?" It was not until I left the classroom to write my dissertation that I was able to put words to this phenomenon, which had helped me to examine and reveal the complexity of classroom life at a deeper level than I had ever dared to imagine. Based on my experience working as a teacher-researcher, I began to wonder what teacher research is to *me*. I read, and I reflected upon my experience with teacher research. A question that a former committee member had posed in relation to my preliminary exam kept coming back to me: "Have you thought about how your status as a hearing person affects your research process?" This was important, and I began to write about it. However, while I wrote, I wondered whether this should be what my methodological chapter focuses on. How did writing about my status as a hearing person address the question of what teacher research is?

In the midst of grappling with the question, "What is teacher research?" I reread the article *Choice and Quality in Action Research*, by Peter Reason (2006). In this article, Reason discusses four characteristics of teacher research. First, teacher research is concerned with addressing *worthwhile practical purposes*. Second, teacher research encompasses *many ways of knowing*. Third, teacher research is a *participative and democratic* process that seeks to do research *with*, *for*, and *by* people, to redress the balance of power in knowledge creation. Fourth, teacher research is an *emergent process* that evolves over time as communities of

inquiry develop within communities of practice. Bringing all of these characteristics together, Reason stated that teacher research is "an *emergent process* of engagement with *worthwhile practice purposes*, through *many ways of knowing*, in *participative and democratic* relationship" (p. 189). This definition of teacher research brought to my attention that my struggle to understand this phenomenon was grounded in the fact that I was developing a perspective on teacher research that went far beyond methodological issues. I believed that teacher research was not only about moving through the steps of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and then re-planning in an ethical way; rather, the understanding of teacher research with which I was wrestling during my time within the research setting matches Reason and Bradbury's (2001) definition of teacher research as a:

> participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes . . . It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual person and their communities (p. 1).

This understanding of teacher research moved my attention away from focusing on what I was doing as a teacher-researcher toward examining the underlying aim inherent in my work. Through extensive reflection, I came to recognize the democratic vision guiding my work as a teacher and a researcher, one in which individuals unite in the co-creation of knowledge. The notion of knowledge to which I refer differs in many ways from the form of propositional knowledge emphasized in schools. This type of knowledge originates in the relationship between the teacher and his or her students and develops through evolving discursive participation (Reason, 2006) within a communication space (Wicks & Reason, 2009) that encourages the exchange of perspectives. In this way, knowledge is both socially constructed and driven by power. That is, those who belong to groups in power have a greater opportunity to have an input into and ownership over the knowledge being constructed.

Thus, if the aim of action research is to "help promote the empowerment of people . . . toward their democratic participation and voice in society" (Rahman, 2003, p. 16), we need to attend to the creation of a democratic, participative communication space and reveal how power circumscribes and informs our understandings of ourselves and others as well as operates to privilege one perspective over another in the creation of knowledge. In other words, we need to attend critically to the power relations found within the classroom setting in which we work (Zeichner, 1994) and understand how they affect participants' opportunities to participate in the creation of knowledge. Consequently, along my aim to reveal the literacy

resources students who are deaf bring into the classroom, I have had to examine how power intersects with and influences the process of my study.

In the first half of this chapter, I discuss how I increased my sensitivity and attunement to the power dimensions present within my research setting. This discussion is important because it reveals how I came to enact the qualities of the teacher-researcher that, in this research, have helped me as a teacher through the process of recognizing and basing my instructional attempts on students' literacy practices. This discussion is divided into three main sections. In the first section, I discuss how I brought together the roles of the teacher and the researcher in such a way that one began to inform the other. In the second section, I draw attention to how, through experiences in the classroom, I was forced to confront and re-negotiate my standpoint as a hearing researcher. In the third section, I discuss the issue of representation. Then, in the second half of the chapter, I describe the design of the study. This discussion is divided into two main sections: data collection procedures and data analysis which includes discussion about the units of analysis.

3.1 Constructing a Stance as a Teacher-Researcher

While many teacher-researchers claim that the act of conducting research is an integrated part of teaching (Michalove, 1993; Wilson, 1995) and that being engaged in teacher research makes teachers more in touch with the reality of their work (Bissex, 1996), others argue that a tension between the two roles will always be present to some extent (Baumann, 1996; Wong, 1995a, 1995b). In reading about teacher research and reflective practice, I began to imagine the "teacher" and "researcher" as "two aspects of the single role in which teaching constitutes a form of research and research constitutes a form of teaching" (Elliott, 1991, p. 64). In reality, however, negotiating this dual role became much more challenging than I had expected. In this section, I discuss how I brought together the roles of the teacher and the researcher in such a way that one was able to inform the other. In the vignette below, I draw attention to the thoughts and feelings that I began to sense within myself as I confronted the fact that I was moving into the classroom as a teacher-researcher.

I have been preparing for this moment for several years. Now, within the school setting, preparing to meet my students next week, I sense this little anxiety in my stomach. I can hear the multitude of phrases that have become part of my everyday language during my stay at University of Wisconsin-Madison echo in my head: 'teacher research,' 'teacher researcher,' 'authentic learning material,' 'autonomous model of literacy,' 'ideological

model of literacy.' I wonder how I am going to apply these to my new setting. How am I going to communicate to my colleagues what I intend to do? At this point, as I am preparing to meet my intended participants, I am encountering a number of ethical issues and research dilemmas that I had not anticipated, questions such as: How am I going to negotiate my place as a teacher and teacher researcher in this new environment? How am I going to talk to my new colleagues about my work in a way meaningful enough to get their feedback on what I am doing? Is it possible, while being new to the profession, new to the school environment, and in the beginning stages of becoming a teacher-researcher, to carry out the research plan I am bringing to the setting at the same time as forming a working relationship with students and their parents? And, most importantly, how am I going to explain to my students what I want to do with them, how I want to learn more about the way they learn the written form of the Icelandic language? When is the right time to tell students and their parents that I intend to conduct this research?

Zeni (2001) posits that, due to the differing nature of the researchers' relationship with and responsibility to their participants, the ethical dilemmas that teacher-researchers encounter in the process of conducting research fundamentally differ from the ones faced by outside researchers. I was aware of this upon entering the classroom. However, as the vignette above indicates, I had not really conceptualized what that meant in practice. I was making a transition from the university setting, where I had been deeply engaged in discussing and shaping my research project, to the educational setting of the school, where I was to conduct the research. Once in the school setting, I realized that now it was time to enact all the qualities characterizing a competent teacher and a researcher and that this was much easier said than done.

The first dilemmas arose in communicating to my colleagues my intent to research my own practice. I was not a total stranger in this new setting; I had worked with some of the people during my first year of teaching. Some of them knew that I had left the school after my first year of teaching to study literacy instruction of children who are deaf. When I returned, they asked me what I had learned. I told them what I had been doing and how I intended to conduct a study of my own practice for my dissertation. I further told them about this idea of teachers studying their own work, thinking that some of them would be interested enough to consider initiating their own teacher research projects. The initial response was "uh, how interesting." What minimal interest there was soon dissolved.

It seemed that the very act of raising the topic worked to silence my colleagues. Several times, I heard someone say "research?" in a tone that indicated that they were

thinking about the idea, but then this was followed by an attitude that conveyed, "I don't have the time to do it. My responsibility is to teach." This response disappointed me. Did they not understand what I was saying? Here we were given a tool not only to raise our own concerns about education but one that also encouraged and honored our insight in examining the complexity of the very same concern. Wasn't that exactly what we teachers needed to make educational research relevant to the local situation of our work? Wasn't that what we needed to become empowered by the research we read? Why weren't my colleagues thrilled over the idea of examining their own work?

I soon grew to feel that my colleagues perceived me as putting myself on a high horse by claiming to be doing research. I do not blame my colleagues for not being enthusiastic about the idea of conducting teacher research. There I stood, a newcomer to this setting and an inexperienced teacher who was doing this research for my dissertation, implying that my way of approaching literacy instruction might be better than theirs. At the time, I did not recognize the paradox in this situation but I realized that it was not getting me anywhere to try to convince my colleagues of the importance of conducting teacher research. What I needed to be doing at that moment, before I could speak with any confidence about the importance of teacher research, was to foreground and negotiate my developing identity as a teacher in collaboration with my colleagues. Therefore, I withdrew my work as a teacher-researcher from the mainstream discussion.

It was not easy having no one around with whom to consult on a regular basis during my first months within the field. In January 2007, I attempted to break out of this isolation. I set out to find people outside my school setting who were engaged in some type of teacher research. In my search, I found two professors at the University of Education in Iceland who had conducted a self study as a part of their doctoral studies several years ago. Through frequent discussions with them about my work, I began to develop a greater sense of myself as a teacher-researcher.

The second dilemma arose when I met my students. Prior to entering the classroom, I intended to invite my students to become co-researchers on the research project. I had planned to inform both students and their families about my research agenda and to have them sign a written consent form early on in the research process (see appendices A and B). As the first day of class approached, I began to wrestle with the question of how I should inform my students about my research and the right time to do so. Although I felt that I should be open about my intent to study my own practice in relation to my students' literacy learning, it did

not feel ethically right to impose my research focus upon students and their families while I was trying to establish and develop a rapport with them as a teacher.

In my position as a newcomer, I felt that a kind of inappropriate authority attached to the consent form I kept in one of my folders. At that time, I came across Mohr's (2001) work, *Drafting Ethical Guidelines for Teacher Research in Schools,* in which she emphasized that "teacher-researchers are teachers first" (p. 9), and even as they seek understanding and knowledge, they must also nurture the well-being of their students and colleagues. Because my main responsibility within the classroom was students' well-being and learning, and my research was meant to help me to do that better, I deliberately waited to tell students and their families about my research in any depth until I had formed a relationship with them as a teacher whom they could trust.

The last conflict that I address in this section was how I brought together the role of the teacher and the researcher to inquire into the living moments found within the classroom. Early on, I began to note in my research journal that I felt that I had to teach for the sake of teaching and not let the idea of conducting research take over my work before I had established myself as a teacher (Research Journal, September 12, 2006). As this excerpt from an e-mail that I wrote to my academic advisor on October 23, 2006, reflects, my concerns about these conflicting roles grew in scope as the year progressed.

Teaching and researching is moving slowly forward. My group of teenagers is very challenging, to say the least. For the past couple of months, I have tried really hard to gain access into students' classroom lives and literacy learning as their teacher, but it is going more slowly than I expected. As I try to understand how to approach my instruction in order to find an entry point into students' literacy resources, I struggle with my teacher/researcher identity. I wonder whether I can hold both at the same time, or if I have to develop a stronger teacher identity before I can add on, or begin to develop the researcher's identity. Further, I wonder if the researcher's identity takes my focus off what should be my main concern, that is, students' learning, or if it will in the long run help me understand their learning and the complex nature of the classroom in more depth. I keep telling myself that being a teacher-researcher will help me gain a greater perspective on what is going on in the classroom. As you can hear, I am really skeptical of my work right now, not knowing what direction to take. I am convinced that the path is somewhere out there, I just haven't found it yet. (Gísladóttir, e-mail, October 23, 2006)

This quote illustrates that I felt torn between the developing identities of the teacher and the researcher and that I was having a difficult time bringing the two together in a way

that would allow them to inform each other. I felt that my focus on conducting research compromised my teaching responsibilities rather than contributing to them. These concerns do not sound very different from the ones that my colleagues had intimated when I tried to sell them on the idea of conducting teacher research. While I was trying to stay alive as a teacher, the idea that I should also be doing research sounded absurd. From what I had read, I knew that it was supposed to help me gain a perspective on the complexity of the classroom life. However, in the midst of various chaotic and challenging teaching experiences, I felt that I had no time or energy to think about conducting research.

Contributing to this feeling was the fact that, in my journal entries, instead of seeing my students' literacy practices emerge, the pages began to fill up with descriptions of the great resistance that I was meeting from students. These conflicts began slowly and, contrary to my hopes that they would somehow smooth out, evolved to become bigger and bigger. My concern about having to conduct the research while attempting to get students to focus on what I was trying to teach them slipped away as I watched the hours, days, weeks, and months pass by, and I felt that I had hardly begun to teach.

It seemed to me that the students would not give me the opportunity to tell them about the plans for the day, listen to my instructions, or accept my guidance. Many lessons ended the same way: the students deliberately ignored me, physically turning away from my attempts to gain their attention. I could not believe what was happening. There I stood right in front of them, using all the rules of the Deaf culture that I knew to gain their attention just so that I could lead them into the literacy activity of the day. And what did they do? They did not look my way, not even for a second. I was invisible. Some days I wondered why I had even bothered to get out of bed.

As these conflicts grew in frequency and scope, I began to question what I was trying to do in the classroom; my intention had been both to teach and to study my own practice. I asked myself several questions. Was it possible for me, a new teacher whose primary responsibility was her students' learning, to develop the dual identities of teacher and researcher and carry out a research plan that had been developed as a response to the difficulties that I had faced in the classroom five years earlier? Was it possible that this research idea was occupying time that I should have been spending on preparing literacy lessons for my students? Finally, was the idea of *looking* into students' cultural background to find and use the resources that they were bringing into the classroom—was this too idealistic for my first year of teaching?

These questions about my responsibilities as a teacher and their potential conflicts with my intentions as a researcher kept hammering at me, but I continued to record and reflect upon these experiences, trying to figure out what was happening in my classroom. I wondered why all these conflicts with students were occurring and why students were blocking off our channel of communication. I was forced to critically examine what Zeni (2001) has described as the hidden dilemma built into all research, namely, the dilemma of how one's identity as a researcher affects every dimension of the research. This made me think that perhaps students' resistance was not against me personally but rather against the role of "teacher" and the teaching practices that I enacted within the classroom.

I now recognize this realization as a turning point in my development as a teacher-researcher. I came to recognize that, as a teacher-researcher, I needed to tune into complex moments such as the conflicts that I was having with students, and from there, I needed to deconstruct the historical and cultural forces giving rise to tensed incidents such as those that I have briefly discussed here. Consequently, I decided to explore students' resistance in relation to my dominant position as a hearing literacy teacher. In the next section, I discuss how I came to recognize my standpoint as a hearing teacher-researcher by critically attuning to and reflecting upon my experiences within the classroom.

3.2 Constructing a Stance as a Hearing Researcher

> "[C]onfronting the world from moment to moment is also confronting the self" (Gergen & Gergen, 2000).

"Are you deaf?" It was Stefán who raised this question right after I introduced myself. "No, I am hearing," I responded, a little surprised, but pleased with this question. Had he really thought that I was deaf? Wasn't that a little sign of acceptance? This was just one of those little moments that come and go before one can blink an eye. At the time, I did not pay much attention to it. It was not until many months later, when I came back to it to examine the implications of my standpoint as a hearing researcher, that this question, which seemed to be lying there so sweetly and innocently among all the other words in my field notes, grabbed my attention. What had Stefán been asking me about? Was I deaf? Although initially these words seemed to me to indicate some degree of acceptance, it later occurred to me that they might have quite the opposite connotation. If I am not deaf, but hearing, who am I then in the

eyes of Stefán? How does Stefán position me based on my hearing status? How do my other students who are deaf position me based on my status as a hearing person?

In this section, I first examine the linguistic and cultural position into which the majority of students who are deaf are born. Then, I discuss how I came to recognize my standpoint as a hearing teacher-researcher and how it transformed the whole research process. Given the context of this research project, this discussion is of great importance. The different standpoints found within this research setting, the hearing standpoint and the deaf one, represent the power dimension present within this research process, as we have seen in the previous chapter. Learning how to "exercise power and position legitimately in the service of participative relationship" (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 10) requires the recognition that each role within the research setting has a particular standpoint, grounded in an historical, social, political, and economic context (Ladson-Billings, 2004), which then influences the findings of the research and how those research findings are interpreted (Applemann, 2003; Greene & Abt-Perkins, 2003; Peshkin, 2000).

3.2.1 Understanding Students' Frames of Reference

In this section, I examine the unique linguistic and cultural position into which many children who are deaf are born. The aim of this discussion is to provide a foundation that allows us to understand in more depth what students who are deaf might find themselves up against once in the classroom. To begin, I draw attention to Stefán's awareness of the linguistic and cultural position that he occupies as a deaf individual. Then I discuss how this standpoint has been addressed through the literature.

We had invited our families to join us on an afternoon in November to celebrate Icelandic Language Day. Students were preparing to share their writings. My colleague and I intended to welcome everybody at the beginning of this event, using sign language and spoken language at the same time—she was going to sign while I spoke. After observing us practicing our introduction, Stefán made an interesting remark. He said; 'You,' pointing to my colleague, 'you are going to be talking to my grandma. But you,' pointing at me, 'you are going to be talking to all the others.' (Research Journal, November 14, 2007)

It was true that Stefán's grandma would be the only deaf adult attending our celebration. And it was not as if Stefán had just discovered that. There was something else about his remark that brought to my attention his awareness of the unique linguistic and cultural positions into which people who are deaf are born. In preparing for this celebration,

we had discussed in depth whether we needed an interpreter for the adults who were not completely fluent in Sign Language, so that they could better understand students' stories. We came to the conclusion that we did not need one. We agreed that, for the most part, this was supposed to be an authentic language experience in which Sign Language would be the dominant language. If people were unable to comprehend the stories, we would direct them to a written version placed on a table in the library where the celebration was to be held.

This was not the only time that I encountered questions of whether an interpreter was needed. For one of the school's festivals, my students decided to stage a short comedy, which would be one of many. Although the students used a few signs to communicate within the act, such as "good evening," "we have a broken car," it was based mostly on pantomime. We did not even consider using an interpreter. A few days prior to the show, a teacher approached me and asked whether we needed an interpreter for our skit; I told him that one would not be necessary. After the show, I overheard a teacher in the teacher's lounge say that hearing children had the same right as deaf children to have an interpreter to interpret between the two languages to facilitate communication and comprehension. Although this is true to some extent, this statement ignores the power dimension of who has access to the other's language. While hearing children *do* have access to the visual language of the Deaf community, deaf children *do not* have access to the spoken language of the hearing community. While deaf children rely on interpreters for access to a spoken language inaccessible to them, hearing children do not have to rely upon interpreters to the same extent for access to visual language. They can, given the opportunity, fully engage in the visual language of the Deaf community.

The complex relationship between the visual language of the Deaf community and the spoken language of the hearing community and how these interact and influence deaf people's learning of literacy from acquisition and throughout their life time has received an enormous amount of attention within the field of deaf education. This is expected, as children's language acquisition is crucial for literacy learning later in life. Under *normal* circumstances, from the moment of birth, an individual's literacy awareness is developed through language and according to its function in the environment. Children acquire language through exposure to family and friends. Their literacy consciousness expands as they observe how close family members use language, and they begin to construct an understanding of its purposes, functions, and the processes involved in reading, writing, and thinking.

In hearing families, children observe and overhear conversations and discussions that are not directed at them. Information gathered this way helps them learn the mores, values, and behaviors that the family and the culture consider desirable or undesirable. Children of

deaf parents are also able to observe and oversee such interactions, especially if they have deaf relatives. Like hearing children, children who are deaf, through their exposure to Sign Language, begin to develop an understanding of the mores, values, and behaviors that their deaf family members and the Deaf culture consider desirable or undesirable. Further, children who are deaf begin to interpret elements of the visual world that do not exist in the hearing world, such as a flashing doorbell signifying the arrival of new people (Marschark, et al., 2002). This early literacy acquisition of culturally relevant practices found within children's culture, whether they are hearing or deaf, results in a strong literacy foundation that facilitates and supports children's reading and writing acquisition as they begin to receive formal reading and writing instruction at school.

Most children build literacy alertness by observing the function of the language in their environment. However, this is not always the case for children who are born deaf. Only 10% of deaf children are born to deaf parents and become exposed to fully developed Sign Language from birth. The other 90% are born to hearing parents, who do not share the communication mode of their deaf child. As a result, young deaf children of hearing parents lack access to a competent language model for Sign Language and for spoken language (Marschark et al., 2002). Further, they have limited opportunities to engage in meaningful interaction until the parents and the child have developed a shared language and communication system (Lederberg & Mobley, 1990). For this reason, upon entering kindergarten at age five, many deaf children are still in the process of acquiring the fundamental language base that signifies and internalizes early childhood interaction, a base that their hearing peers already have developed (Kampfe & Turecheck, 1987).

This delayed language acquisition experienced by most children who are deaf is one of the obstacles that deaf children face in learning to read and write. However, many of the obstacles that deaf people encounter in life are based on hearing people's extrapolations of what it means to be deaf (Lane, 1992). Lane posits that these obstacles could readily be removed if hearing people only came to know the Deaf community and their capabilities. Later, I examine this point in relation to the researcher's responsibility of representing, in their research, the literacy learning of children who are deaf.

While there may be many ways to approach the unique language situation experienced by the majority of children who are deaf, it is impossible to deny the oppressive history of deaf education whereby hearing professionals, including psychologists, audiologists, and educators, have consciously or unconsciously tried to impose their worldviews upon deaf students (Brueggemann, 1999; Humphries, 2004; Lane, 1992, 1997). When these impositions

have been unsuccessful, these professionals have tended to assign negative characteristics, the "psychology of the deaf," to deaf individuals (Lane, 1988). This has had severe implications for the educational opportunities available to individuals who are deaf, as discussed in the previous chapter.

This history, however, does not mean that hearing professionals are incapable of working with or conducting research involving individuals who are deaf. It is equally important for those who are in a position of power or those who belong to a privileged group to engage in inquiry processes that allow them to "learn more about how to exercise power and position legitimately in the service of participative relationship" (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 10). Being aware of the oppressive history of deaf education is important because it allows us to see students' resistance to various instructional attempts in a different light. That is, students' resistance is not necessarily a protest against an individual teacher; rather, it can sometimes be understood as students' unconscious attempts to protect their ways of being (Gee, 2008).

The history of deaf education has shaped the focus of this study in significant ways. In trying to understand the challenges that students who are deaf encounter in terms of literacy learning, I have set out to explore the relationship between my literacy instruction and students' literacy learning. In this way, I situate the problem within the interactional space of teachers and students instead of locating it within individual students. As I see students' challenges with literacy as situated within the instructional site and embedded in the historically constructed power-laden relationship between the hearing and Deaf cultures I deliberately chose the position of teacher-researcher to confront and alter these power dynamics. I take this position as I recognize that it is much easier to tell someone she needs to alter the power dimension found within her classroom in order for students to become successful literacy learners than actually having to go through that change. The position of the teacher-researcher alone, however, will not give me the insight I need into the power dimensions found within the classroom or justify the outcome of this study in any way. Without critical attention to the intention of the research and the power relationships found within classrooms, the knowledge and practices constructed through teacher research can be harmful to students (Kincheloe, 2003; Zeichner, 1994).

In this section, I have illustrated, through concrete experiences within the school setting and the literature of deaf education, how I came to recognize students' positions as deaf individuals. In the next section, I examine how I came to recognize my standpoint as a *hearing* teacher-researcher and its impact on the research process.

3.2.2 Understanding the Teacher-Researcher's Frame of Reference

One of the greatest challenges intrinsic to teacher research is recognizing and seeing beyond one's taken-for-granted perspectives. It may not even be realistic to expect that a teacher, in the moment, should be capable of recognizing that moment for anything other than what it is. The nearness and subjectivity of the experience make it difficult to analyze. Further, one might argue that this is why we need professional researchers who can record, describe, and interpret what is happening from a detached and objective standpoint. It is probable true that, to some extent, individuals are inevitably blinded by their perspectives. However, they can still develop "their attention so they can look at themselves—their ways of being, their intuitions and imaginings, their beliefs and actions—critically" (Heron & Reason, 2001). In the literature, this process has been called increasing one's "critical subjectivity" (Heron & Reason, 2001; Marshall & Reason, 2007; Reason & Torbert, 2001), and the quality of teacher research may be judged on the researcher's awareness of the frames of reference that he or she is employing and how these infuse the research process as a whole (Kincheloe, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Marshall & Reason, 2007). In this section, I present how I came to recognize my standpoint as a hearing researcher.

In the previous chapter, I discussed how different Discourses on literacy instruction, in general, and deafness, in particular, have influenced and shaped the field of deaf education. In the midst of this discussion emerges the problematic notion of the hearing professionals who have, unwittingly in some cases, enacted Discourses that have sustained an image of deaf people as suffering from impairment (Lane, 1992). Before re-entering the field of deaf education, my research setting, I reflected upon my privileged position as a member of the dominant hearing group and its possible impact on the research that I was about to conduct with participants who are deaf. Through reflection and reading the existing literature, I became more aware of several things. First, I came to recognize that, within this particular research setting, I *do* hold a position of power that has its benefits and limitations. Second, I came to realize that my understanding of what successful literacy practices for students who are deaf ought to look like can only come through my own mental constructions of how students who are deaf successfully relate to the literacy learning taking place in schools. Third, I came to see that my membership in the hearing culture could provide an important means of identifying "literacy events" that could work as entry points for examining the literacy practices students who are deaf bring to the classroom. I discuss literacy events in

more depth in section 3.4.2. With these initial understandings of my position as a hearing teacher-researcher, I entered the research setting.

As promising as my initial reflection looked on a piece of paper, it was not until I experienced the reality of the classroom that I could really begin to confront, negotiate, and redefine my position as a hearing researcher. The incidents shared in this section are a representative sample of those that occurred during the period when students' resistance dominated the instructional time within the classroom. As already noted, these moments inevitably planted doubt in me, as an inexperienced teacher, of my capabilities. To be honest, I would have preferred to pretend that these moments did not happen, but this was not an option. Not only did I have to accept my responsibility as a teacher of returning to school each day, but I also had to accept that the intensity of these experiences was such that they were not easily ignored or repressed, as will become evident. At the time, there was nothing for me to do other than to return to the classroom, try my best, and record these experiences in the hope that that would help me make sense of what was happening. In the vignette below, I draw attention to how Viktoría forced me, through her actions, to confront the image of the teacher whom I embodied and enacted within the context of the classroom.

Things are not going as I had planned. On a regular basis, I am experiencing difficulty in gaining students' attention to explain the assignments they are to complete in class. Furthermore, they seem to ignore all my attempts to communicate with them. As a matter of fact, they will just carry on with their conversations like I am not there. I notice how they sometimes talk about my techniques for getting their attention and my Sign Language ability. On September 27, 2006, Viktoría came up to write the answers to one of our assignments on a transparency lying on the overhead projector. I took her seat. Once at the front of the class, Viktoría literally took my teaching position. She took on my teaching persona and began to repeat phrases that I had been using within the classroom: 'I have not used Sign Language for a while so I need you to help me recall it,' 'now focus,' 'you are misbehaving,' 'this is messy,' 'don't do this,' 'you can just leave,' 'I will inform your parents if you do not behave,' 'I will get Angelina [the assistant principal],' 'what does this word mean?' She also used 'okay' in the end of each of her sentences. Although I did not enjoy Viktoría's parody of me, she performed it quite well and they all seemed to be studying. Therefore, I decided that I would not intervene. Instead I sat back and observed her performance (Research Journal, September 27, 2006).

Viktoría's portrayal of me hurt my feelings and left me in a state of confusion over what was happening within our classroom. Sadly, I recognized all the phrases that she had

used. My initial response was to wonder how students saw me as their literacy teacher, who intended to teach them a dominant language, without even having a full command over their "native" language. I wondered how, if Viktoría's portrayal of me was how my students really saw me, I was going to get students to work with me to examine the literacy practices that they brought to the classroom setting.

Later, I used this incident to examine the literacy teacher whom I embodied. I could see, through the vantage point of Viktoría's performance, that my students did not perceive me as the teacher I had set out to become. Instead of negotiating learning with her students, this teacher was standing there using phrases such as "now focus," "don't do this," "you can just leave," "I will inform your parents if you do not behave," and "I will get Angelina" to gain the authority that she needed to get students to complete teacher oriented assignments.

How could this have happened? Where was the critical researcher whom I had set out to be, not only to raise questions in relation to these kinds of situations but to change them as well? In fact, the researcher in me was being awakened at the time of these experiences. As a researcher, I was writing these painful experiences in my research journal, trying to assign meaning to what I saw happening, while trying to analyze and act within the living moment. I, as a researcher, struggled just like I did as a teacher. At that moment, the researcher in me was no more aware than the teacher of how my own perspectives of what counts as educational practice were limiting my vision of what was happening nor what it took to see beyond these perspectives. Consequently, I had no alternative but to stay within the moment, trying to understand it through all my senses. In the following two entries, I describe a silent and verbal confrontation with Melkorka that played a significant role in helping me to confront and construct my stance as a hearing researcher.

Melkorka is acting provocatively. She appears negligent, just sits there and does not work on anything. Is she challenging me? In class yesterday, when she was supposed to be finding and writing down information about the Icelandic author Guðrún Helgadóttir, she did nothing but draw something in her notebook. Her table was full of books and slowly she began to push them over the edge of the table, one at a time. The whole time she stared at me to gauge my reaction. I tried to ignore it. I just do not know how to handle her. Is she trying to get even with me? Earlier that morning I had spoken firmly to her when she began to complain just for the sake of complaining. I asked her politely to stop this whining, that she was just acting like an old grumble lady. That hurt her feelings, and she threatened to walk out of the room but did not make any attempt to do so (Research Journal, September 17, 2007).

Putting this incident into writing was not easy. Making it public has been even more challenging. However, the lesson learned from it has been invaluable. Hearing students complain about having to do the same thing over and over again really frustrated me. I frequently wondered in my research journal why, instead of just completing their assignments and moving on, students would spend lesson after lesson arguing about having to do the same thing over and over again.

Unconsciously, I tried to suppress this talk by moving on with the exercises that we had to get through. The incident with Melkorka demonstrates the persistence of my students in their attempts to make me listen to them. When I tried to overlook Melkorka's "pointless complaints" by comparing her to an "old grumble lady," she changed techniques in her attempt to get through to me. However, the only thing that I saw at that moment was a disobedient teenager who was making my teaching unnecessarily difficult. A few days later I had another encounter with Melkorka that was difficult to ignore.

Students have not been working during instructional time. Therefore, I bring in a self-assessment form for my students to assess their work ethics. Melkorka asks if she can continue writing her story. I tell her to complete the self-assessment. The students do not give me an opportunity to explain the instructions written on the form. Melkorka stares at the form on her table, claiming that she is paying attention. She completes the first part of the assessment. I am about to explain the instructions for the last part of it when she says, obviously offended, 'I am deaf, not illiterate' (Research Journal, October 23, 2006).

Melkorka's verbal confrontation, "I am deaf, not illiterate," surprised me. Her powerful words and the look on her face immediately grabbed my attention. What was she implying? Was there something about the teacher whom I embodied and enacted that made her feel this way? Was it possible that the way that I approached my literacy instruction was creating and sustaining the very same deficit image of children who are deaf as literacy learners that dominates the literature on literacy education and that I set out to deconstruct? This confrontation brought home the notion of the hearing professional as portrayed in the literature.

By reflecting upon students' resistance to my instructional attempts, I was able to catch glimpses of myself as the hearing professional discussed in the literature. My disappointment over that discovery made me realize that, despite my initial reflection on my standpoint as a hearing person, I had not taken the initiative to explore what it meant once I was in the classroom. These experiences helped me recognize that, despite our best intentions, we need to learn to pay attention to the implication of our differences within any situation.

The final vignette in this section draws further attention to how I came to recognize the implications of my standpoint as a hearing teacher researcher.

On October 4th, 2006, I approached the assistant principal, Angelina, who is deaf, to explain how things were going. I described how my students were not giving me an opportunity to teach and I felt like I had not accomplished anything during the six weeks we had been in school. She offered to come in once a week and read aloud to students from a script of an Icelandic play called "Viðtalið" (The Interview), which reflects an interaction between the hearing and the Deaf world. As I observed Angelina reading to my students, I began to experience them differently as readers. The text was displayed on an overhead projector so students could follow along. Angelina often assigned different parts to students to read. Sometimes they would jump in voluntarily and ask if they could read the next word, sentence, or whole paragraph. It was amazing to see them approach the task of reading the play, and their vocabulary was beyond my expectations. One incident in particular brought to my attention my status as a hearing person. Stefán misread a word and Angelina burst out in laughter. His literal interpretation of the word had been correct, but in the context of the play it had a different meaning. She explained how common this kind of misunderstanding was for people who are deaf and gave them some additional examples. They laughed together. I wondered what would have happened if I had laughed out loud like that. Would my students have perceived me as laughing with them or at them?

After confessing my concerns to Angelina, I wrote in my research journal how relieved I was to have told someone about these experiences. I further wrote, "I am hearing. I need access into the Deaf world. I will not get students to cooperate with me until I get them to trust me" (Research Journal, October 4, 2006). At this moment, I thought of Angelina as providing the access that I needed into the Deaf community. I thought that, if I could only show my students that I had her support for what I was doing, they would ultimately come to understand that everything that I was doing as a teacher was in their best interests.

Through observing students read with Angelina and their laughing over a misread word, I came to realize that, although I had read about and reflected upon my status as a hearing person before entering the classroom, I had not believed that my status would make such a difference once in the classroom. Further, I had not realized that I would need to struggle to understand how my status affected my presence within the classroom. My observations of Angelina and my students caused my hearing status to become visible to me as a social and cultural construction. This moment of recognition was not, in itself, painful; rather, it simply confirmed that intrinsic in my position as a hearing teacher are certain

limitations in regard to what I can say and do. I also recognized that the affordances and restrictions of my standpoint have a tremendous impact on the research process and its outcome, whether or not I choose to address them in my role as a researcher.

In this section, by making transparent the process that I have undergone, I have illustrated how I came to confront and create a stance as a hearing researcher. In the following section, I focus on how, in becoming a researcher, it is not enough to recognize who you are in relation to your participants. It is equally important to critically examine how you present the research findings and the participants of your study. Thus, I now turn to the discussion of representation as it emerged in the process of this research.

3.3 Some Considerations about Representation

In this chapter, I have sought to illustrate how I came to recognize the different standpoints of my students and me and how these influence my findings. In this section, I discuss my responsibility as a researcher in representing children who are deaf as literacy learners. In the vignette below, I illustrate how I came to recognize this responsibility through the process of writing.

In spring 2009 Viktoría and Melkorka graduated from our school. I knew this was the right time for me to leave the research field to write up my dissertation. Shortly after I formally sat down with the intention of presenting my findings, I began to notice a slight feeling of discomfort as I wrote. 'Not again,' I thought to myself, mindful of how I had had to live with 'little' feelings like this throughout the research process, tracking their barely noticeable shifts for quite a long time before I could begin to express them in a way that made sense within the context of my work. 'If I am ever going to be able to finish this project I need to continue writing for the sake of writing.' Consequently, I tried to suppress this feeling of discomfort. Then, on a cold winter morning in February 2010, as I sat in my office, staring out the window, thinking about how I should continue with my writing, this feeling reemerged, seemingly from out of nowhere. However, this time it did not emerge as a slight feeling of discomfort, but as a multitude of questions. How am I representing my students through my writing? Why is it that I feel I can never address the issue of literacy learning of children who are deaf without drawing attention to their low literacy achievement? Why do I have to draw attention to their 'limitations' when it comes to literacy learning instead of putting the whole focus on what it is that they are actually doing? Was it possible that through my writing I

would, contrary to my intentions, preserve the same portrayal of students who are deaf I was trying to deconstruct in my work as a teacher researcher?

Upon entering the research field, I set out to identify and deconstruct the deficit images of children who are deaf, which I might unconsciously hold as a member of the hearing society. This was an essential step in the process of reconstructing the image of this student population on the basis of the literacy practices that these students already access. As a teacher, I felt that I had made some progress in that direction through my stay within the field, as I show in the following chapters. As I began to examine the reasons underlying the discomfort that I felt during the writing process, I came to realize that, despite my good work as a teacher, as I wrote, I was still trapped by the powerful deficit images of students who are deaf as literacy learners as portrayed in the literature on deaf education.

In his book *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language,* Vološinov (1973) discusses how experiences come into being through the reciprocal relationship between the experience and its expression. To understand the dilemma of representation in which I found myself while writing, it is necessary to look more closely at the intersubjective relationship between experience and its expression.

> From the very start experience is set toward fully actualized outward expression and, from the very start, tends in that direction. The expression of an experience may be realized or it may be held back, inhibited. In the latter case, the experience is inhibited expression (we shall not go into the extremely complex problem of the causes and conditions of inhibition). Realized expression, in its turn, exerts a powerful, reverse influence on experience: it begins to tie inner life together, giving it more definite and lasting expression. (Vološinov, 1973, p. 90)

Vološinov explains how the experience takes root and receives its differentiation and full-fledged expression through a reciprocal relationship between the experience and its articulation. As seen above, this is not a straightforward process. In the process of becoming, the response to an experience can range from being inhibited in one way or another to reaching a fully developed form. The wide range of forms the reciprocal relationship between the experience and its expression can take on draws attention to the ideological and sociological battles that need to be fought in order for the expression of the experience to gain broad recognition. This is particularly true in the case of experiences with disorganized social orientations, those that are momentary, and those that are characteristic of only a small group of people. In these cases, the position of the experience "lies on the borders of the normal and the pathological" (Vološinov, 1973, p. 92) and has little chance of receiving full-fledged

expression. As we have seen, this has been the fate of the deaf experience. Throughout history, the deaf experience has been articulated and represented through hearing people's extrapolation of what it means to be deaf (Lane, 1992).

In tenth grade, Melkorka wrote a play about the experiences of Emilia, a deaf girl, who repeatedly finds herself in situations where she is rejected because of her deafness. In this play, Melkorka brings up issues that I relate to Vološinov's discussion of the reciprocal relationship between experience and its expression. Further, it draws attention to the researcher's responsibilities and dilemmas as related to representing her research participants and the findings of her research. Below, I share a small section of this play, in which Emilia, through the process of writing poems, is trying to make sense of the experience of feeling rejected. She writes:

I am who I am
I am alone
All alone in the world
Even though everybody is around me
I am alone

Emilia stops writing, thinking that this poem is not good enough. Then she continues.

I have a body
I have a face
I have arms
I have legs
I have fingers
I have toes
I have eyes
I have a mouth
I have ears . . . or tjaa
I do have ears
but I do not hear
so do I have ears or what?

Although Melkorka does not say it in her own words, Emilia's inner conflicts in these poems symbolize the ideological battle currently taking place within the field of deaf education. In her attempt to make sense of the feeling of isolation described in the first poem, we see how Melkorka has Emilia use her own senses to compare herself to the people whom she sees around her. What is significant is not so much that Emilia draws attention to the fact that she cannot hear but rather how that fact makes her doubt whether she has ears at all. That Emilia is stretching deafness beyond the invisible lack of the sense of hearing to the physical and visible lack of ears indicates that, in the process of coming to understand deafness, Emilia has begun to conform to the dominant hearing representation of what it means to be deaf that, in return, is affecting how she perceives herself (Hauser, O'Hearn, McKee, Steider, & Thew, 2010; Lane, 1992; P. V. Paul & Moores, 2010).

Throughout the history of deaf education, deaf individuals have been excluded from inquiring into Deaf lives and Deaf experiences (Breivik, 2005; Brueggemann, 1999; Moores, 2010). Consequently, while deaf individuals have not been given the same opportunity as hearing people to develop an understanding of what it means to be deaf through the reciprocal relationship of what it feels like and their own articulation of it (Humphries, 2008; Vološinov, 1973), they have been and still are, as Emilia's doubts indicate, forced to conform to hearing representations of what it means to be deaf (Lane, 1992). In essence, by rejecting the deaf experience as a full expression, deaf individuals have been denied access to the power needed to create knowledge about individuals who are deaf that is beneficial to their ways of being in the world (Moores, 2010) and that helps them develop a positive image of who they are as deaf individuals. In his work *The Mask of Benevolence,* Lane (1992) posits that it is not at all useful to extrapolate the experiences of deaf people based on the experiences of hearing people. As a matter of fact, basing deaf individuals' education upon this understanding can be harmful for students' development of self-esteem and misleading in determining the educational emphasis within deaf education.

> The extrapolative error is an error twice over: True representations of the members of another culture cannot be had without a change in frame of reference, which requires, at least, understanding and empathy. It is naïve to imagine otherwise, and it is self-defeating. There will be no successful relations between hearing and deaf people, no successful education of deaf children, until the extrapolative error is set aside. (Lane, 1992, p. 12)

Grounding this dual error of extrapolation in Vološinov's discussion of experience, we can see how it first emerges in the construction of deafness as a deficit. This construction, in

turn, creates the foundation for the second error to emerge: while individuals who are deaf continue to encounter deficit images based on hearing representations of what it means to be deaf, they ultimately conform to these representations at the expense of developing their awareness of what it means to be deaf.

The risks we run by creating deficit images based on hearing extrapolations of what it means to be deaf are enormous. First, we run the risk that educators working with this student population will subscribe to these images and join the clinical movement, which sets out to "fix" the problem without attempting to understand the perspective their students bring into the classroom. Second, hearing-based representations created by "well-intentioned" researchers who see themselves as trying to "fix" the problem are the ones whom deaf individuals encounter as they try to make sense of their deaf experiences. These are the expressions that begin to tie the deaf individual's inner life together. In return, they inhibit the deaf experience and deaf knowledge to emerge and to gain a more definite and lasting expression. In the attempt to respond to the deficit hearing representations of deaf individuals, the notion of deaf epistemology provides an important foundation:

> Deaf epistemology should be the lens through which auditory learners seek to expand their understanding of visual learners, in order, ultimately, to enhance learning and strive to create environments that value visual beings as much as auditory beings – environments that, in other words, embrace Deafhood and deafness as much as they embrace hearinghood and hearingness. (Hauser, et al., 2010)

The notion of Deaf epistemology draws attention away from hearing assumptions about what it means to be deaf to the deaf way of knowing and being in the word. If we want to understand how to enhance the literacy learning of children who are deaf, we need to set out to understand this way of being in the world. This idea has important implications for the responsibility for representation of researchers in the field of deaf education. To address these here, it is useful to focus on the discussion of representation as related to the construction of race. In the introductory chapter to their book *Making Race Visible: Literacy Research for Cultural Understanding*, Greene and Abt-Perkins (2003) assert that, if we want our work to make a difference in the field of education, we need to commit ourselves to making race visible in the process of our work. As professionals we need to "interrogate our sense of privilege in the research we conduct, the power we wield as we create . . . categories to describe students . . . and present what we find" (p. 3).

In the same way that researchers working across racial lines need to attend to how the construction of race influences their work, I believe that we, as hearing researchers of deaf

children's literacy learning, need to engage critically with the questions of how audism or hearing oppression is present in the design, interpretation, and framing of our research. This is not an easy task because, as human beings, our work is always limited to our current understanding and the representational means that we have to express that knowledge. As hearing professionals, to some extent, our understanding will always be restricted to our hearing perspectives. Nevertheless, we must continue to pursue research, along with a willingness to open our research process up to scrutiny, so that we may be able to gain an understanding of how, from a position of power, we can learn to "exercise power and position legitimately in the service of participate relationship" (Reason & Bradbury, 2001, p. 10). In this regard, we need to carefully monitor our writing to avoid representing or constructing our research participants in ways that may do more harm than good.

In my writing, I strive to open up the research process by describing how I came to know what I know through progressing in a very dynamic way through different ways of knowing (Heron & Reason, 2001; Marshall & Reason, 2007; Reason & Torbert, 2001). These different ways of knowing can be roughly grouped into four stages. The first stage is experiential knowing, in which I encounter the experiences that I have shared herein. The second stage is presentational knowing, represented in how I have tried to capture firsthand experiences through the process of narration. The third stage is propositional knowledge, which I have used to bring different perspectives to the experiences recounted as a means to develop a greater understanding of what was happening at these moments. The fourth stage is practical knowing, which is evident in my attempts to draw on the knowledge that I have gained from going through these stages of knowing in my practical decisions. In writing in this way, I invite you to intervene into my process, explore the choices that I have made to come to the conclusions presented in this research, and based on that, judge for yourself the value and transferability of my findings.

3.4 Research Design

In the discussion above, I have illustrated how I developed my identity as a teacher-researcher within this particular research project. Now, I turn the discussion to the overall design of this study. In so doing, I describe the data collection procedures and the process of data analysis, including the units of analysis.

3.4.1 Data Collection Procedures

In investigating the process that a hearing teacher needs to undergo to create a space that allows students to draw from and build on the linguistic and cultural knowledge that they bring into the classroom, I have constructed stories of my own teaching and of my students' literacy-related interactions with their families as well as literacy stories exchanged between students within the classroom. Through these stories, I have generated rich descriptions that allowed exploration from different perspectives of the literacy practices that students brought into the classroom through the process of "cross-checking hunches that develop from a variety of data sources, counting, looking for patterns and anomalies, and developing themes" (Graue & Walsh, 1998). Originally, I was going to stay within the classroom for a year to collect the data I needed to elicit the intended stories. However, as time passed, I realized that I needed more time to understand the task that I had set out to accomplish. Consequently, the data collection procedures extended over three years, from August 2006 to May 2009. Data collection included participant-observation, a teacher-research journal, formal/informal parents' and students' interviews, photographs, and students' literacy work/artifacts.

Data collection also involved recursive inquiry into my classroom setting, more particularly, into observable literacy events taking place during literacy instructional time. I focused on collecting data on my instructional practices, interactions between my students and myself, students' interactions among themselves, and the literacy practices that students used to approach their learning. The first year of data collection helped me to see the nature of the literacy practices present within my classroom and how I needed to better understand how to create a space within the instructional site which foregrounds the literacy practices that my students brought to the setting. During the second year, I returned to the classroom with a greater understanding of the modifications that I needed to make in the classroom if I were to succeed in my attempt to allow my students to deploy and develop their literacy practices to their fullest potential. In the third year, I recorded selected literacy events, specifically the ones that could help me shed greater light on the literacy practices that students brought to and utilized within the classroom setting.

As a classroom teacher, the nature of my participant-observation shifted from time to time, depending on the work that we were producing in the classroom. Most of the time, I was a full participant in the various literacy activities found within the classroom. Throughout, I took notes on what happened and used these to guide my memory and documentation of what had taken place once I found the time to sit down to write in my teacher journal. Generally,

that would happen within 2 to 6 hours of my observation. Although I was the teacher, there were multiple occasions when I could sit back, observe my students as they worked on their projects, and record the field notes as events were occurring.

In my teacher research journal, I wrote about the aim of my literacy instruction in general, paying closer attention to literacy activities that seemed filled with tension. Further, I used every opportunity to observe and write notes about students' behavior and interaction during school-based literacy learning, noting questions about students' use of literacy strategies or literacy behavior to bring up later, either with individual students or during informal classroom discussion. Finally, I included in my teacher journal stories of what happened within the classroom, stories students told about what they were learning, and stories that parents told me about students' literacy learning. I then used these journal notes to generate a more comprehensive account of students' literacy learning within the classroom and to understand how I came to alter my teaching practices in relation to what I learned about students' literacy practices.

As a complement to my teacher research journaling, I used photographs to help me "freeze" specific literacy events or moments during literacy instruction that I thought were important to revisit and to reflect upon to gain a better understanding of students' literacy learning. Additionally, I collected and examined students' literacy work/artifacts to understand the process and progress of students' literacy learning. Throughout my fieldwork, I raised questions in response to the data that I collected about what was happening within my classroom and the development of my students as literacy learners as well as mine as a literacy instructor. Throughout, I asked myself how the experiences that I was gaining within the classroom could guide my work with students.

3.4.2 Data Analysis

Like all human activities, school-based literacy learning is culturally mediated. The way that schools and classrooms are physically set up and how literacy activities are organized and implemented are affected by historical tradition, the educational philosophy of the school, and the way that teachers interpret these. Additionally, there are, in place, some specific cultural expectations regarding how teachers organize their time, space, and activities (Gudmundsdóttir, 2001). The aim of the analysis process for this research was twofold. First, I sought to identify and describe significant literacy events that could provide insight into how the organization and implementation of my literacy instruction was influenced by external

factors rooted in hearing-based models of how to teach literacy. Second, I aimed to identify and describe literacy events that showed how I, as a hearing teacher, in cooperation with my deaf students, could change my literacy instruction away from dependence on literacy models based on the literacy needs of hearing children to a model derived from the literacy practices that my students were bringing into the classroom.

Because the aim of the analysis was to understand and describe changes in literacy instruction delivered to children who are deaf based on the researcher's and the participants' experience and understanding of what practices are better suited to meet the literacy needs of this student population, narrative analysis and the stories (or narratives) constructed from my teaching experiences become a central focus. The term narrative refers to "events that have already occurred outside of themselves" (Carter, 1993) and consists of characters, settings, events, plot, tension, end point, narrator, context, tone, and silence, all arranged in a temporal sequence implying both causality and significance (Carter, 1993; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Because the narrative structure provides a framework in which situations, conflicts or hindrances, motives, and causality can be placed in the attempt to make them memorable, comprehensible, and shareable (Carter, 1993), crafting a narrative text is always a "hermeneutic interpretation" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2004; Gudmundsdóttir, 2001) that functions on two levels (Gudmundsdóttir, 2001). The first level consists of carefully selecting events out of a complex situation and shaping them to fit into the narrative structure. The second level consists of the narrator's taking the selected events and creating a narrative that provides the reader with a new understanding of the bigger issues underlying the particular series of events. By choosing specific events out of a complex situation, the events have already been imbued with meaning, which is then attributed to the event itself by the narrative under formation. The meaning already at hand in the generation process will inform the analytic process.

Through the analytic process, I read and reread the field notes, students' work samples, and transcripts from interviews as well as looked at the photographs. Through this process, I began to "narratively code" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) my data, naming characters, place, scene, plot, tension, end point, narrator, context, and tone present in literacy events that looked puzzling to me. My goal was to identify patterns, themes, or narrative threads within and across different data resources that could make visible the process that I had to undergo to create a space within the context of my classroom for my students to bring in and develop literacy practices better suited to the task of acquiring the written language of

the broader society. Based on this, I developed vignettes, units of analysis, that held significance in terms of answering the questions of this study: How does one hearing teacher understand the literacy practices that students who are deaf bring into the classroom? How does one hearing literacy teacher of students who are deaf draw on these literacy practices? What has this process of studying my own teaching helped me to learn about my literacy teaching? In so doing, I applied the theoretical construction of "big D" Discourses and multimodality, as described in the previous chapter, to examine the ways in which institutional forces at work in the classroom either foster or marginalize students' literacy practices within the instructional site.

In forming the vignettes, I employed the conceptual constructions of literacy events and literacy practices (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Heath, 1983; Street, 1995, 2000, 2001b). The constructs of literacy events and literacy practices intertwine and create an observable unit. Although these two constructs help to create a unit, they differ in substantial ways. Literacy events are observable activities in which literacy is involved. They usually center on written texts or talk around text. The incident in Chapter 2, where we see Melkorka in the process of composing a poem about the experience of living between two worlds, the hearing one and the deaf one, represents a classic example of a literacy event. Instead of me looking only at the final project of her work, the poem, my observation captures the whole observable aspect of the activity. In the first part of that literacy event, we see Melkorka expressing her experience of being stuck between the two words in her notebook.

Several days later, she moves to the computer, where she writes down the first draft of the entire poem and then shows it to me. Through our discussion and with the help of some additional resources, we manage to clarify the meaning of the poem and to edit it such that it better captures the essence of Melkorka's message. The observable unit, the literacy event, draws attention to the ideological aspect of literacy events, the literacy practices, which is the underlying conventions that people internalize and bring to the literacy event to give it meaning and to make it work (Street, 1995, 2000, 2001b). While literacy events enable participants, both researchers and practitioners, to focus on a specific situation and determine what is taking place, literacy practices are seen as "the general cultural ways of utilizing written language which people draw upon in their lives" (Barton & Hamilton, 2000). That is, literacy practices center on what it is that people do with literacy and how they make sense of it. In this way, literacy practices are not an observable unit of the behavior under exploration but rather involve the values, attitudes, feelings and social relationships running through the event (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Street, 1995).

In the incident with Melkorka presented above, we see how Melkorka looks at writing as a space for her to express her inner feelings and, in so doing, seek assistance to help her clarify her own meaning. Further, we see how the underlying structure of the instructional space welcomes Melkorka's experiences and takes her effort to express them in a written language as an evaluable foundation for Melkorka´s learning of her second language, Icelandic. Thus, the values, attitudes, and feelings toward literacy underlying the social relationship that we observe within this literacy event are what create and attach meaning to the events in the first place. If literacy is thought of as "a set of social practices" (Barton & Hamilton, 2000) that individuals use to make meaning of literacy events, then literacy events are good starting points from which to explore the underlying conventions and assumptions that make literacy events work.

By employing the conceptual construction of literacy events and literacy practices, I attempt to examine the ways in which power runs through the multiple literacy practices that elaborate the observable literacy events apparent during literacy instruction and that affect students' opportunities to negotiate their own identities as literacy learners. In putting the focus on the power dynamics underlying social interaction over a literacy event and the role of participants in making it work, we come to understand how knowledge creation within the classroom is a dynamic process of negotiation, with the ever-present danger of more dominant literacy practices and Discourses governing the less-dominant ones. Consequently, the teacher's responsibility can be seen as understanding and transforming one's own assumptions about teaching and learning to better encompass the Discourses that students bring to the classroom. In so doing, we can transform the institutional Discourse and literacy practices present in the school system and the "social contexts that surround us and constrain us" (LaBosky, 2004, p. 821), from the inside-out, with the goal of including the multiple Discourses that students bring with them to the school setting. This is the focus of this study.

Finally, I need to say a word about translation. As already noted, the language of communication in this study is the Icelandic Sign Language. Being immersed in an instructional context where Sign Language is the dominant language, I was given the privilege to experience the beauty and the power of the language. On multiple occasions I noted in my journal the powerful presence of my students when they took the floor and shared their work. These moments filled me with pride and admiration of the cultural and linguistic resources students brought to the classroom that is hard to convey in writing. However, the rhythm, syntax and grammar of the Icelandic Sign Language differ greatly from both Icelandic and English. Consequently, word for word translation from the Icelandic Sign

Language to either Icelandic or English results in awkward, stiffed language which does not really capture the nuance and the witticism of the interaction taking place. Consequently, in working with the incidents described throughout this study, I decided to focus on the meaning inherent in the interaction taking place and freely rather than literally translate these from the Icelandic Sign Language to English. In this chapter I have discussed the process of creating my standpoint as a hearing teacher-researcher and have described the design of this study. In the next chapter, I move to presenting the findings of this study.

4. BECOMING A NEW LITERACY TEACHER: LEARNING TO LISTEN

Transitioning from the university to the school classroom was tricky. As a graduate student, I had been immersed in academic discussions about literacy education. Throughout my coursework, I was constantly renegotiating and refining my beliefs about education, my identity as a teacher, and my ideas about the literacy practices, skills, and knowledge needed for my students to be successful literacy learners. At that time, I focused on how I, as a hearing literacy teacher of children who are deaf, could look beyond my perspectives to base my literacy instruction on the literacy practices that students brought to the classroom. It was not until I was in the classroom, however, that I came to experience, first hand, that putting these ideas or beliefs into practice would involve a difficult negotiation with the educational Discourses of my research setting. Although I was using NLS to guide my work, my focus on recognizing students' literacy practices within the classroom, as these emerged, limited my understanding of how the work that I had set out to do meant taking control over and redesigning the instructional site in a way that supported students' use of their own literacy practices. This lack of awareness engendered tensions at multiple levels.

In this chapter, I discuss my initial attempt to position myself in relation to the vision that I brought to the instructional site and to the educational Discourses shaping the school setting. I also discuss how the lessons that I learned from pushing myself to understand, from different perspectives, the contradictions in my own practice enabled me to have a deeper understanding of the complexities of classroom life (Brookline Teacher Researcher Seminar, 2004; Elbow, 1986). This discussion is divided into three main sections. In the first section, I discuss how I came to recognize the "big D" Discourses that shape the educational practices of my school setting, as well as my own educational practices. In the second section, I draw attention to how I came to recognize the institutional Discourse on reading that shapes my educational practices, which came about by reflecting upon firsthand experiences within the classroom. In the third section, I discuss how I came to recognize the institutional Discourse on writing that shapes my educational practices, which also came about by reflecting upon firsthand experiences within the classroom.

4.1 Recognizing Conflicting Educational Discourses: Learning Moments

I am sitting in my classroom in Árdagsskóli, my new instructional setting. The room is big and bright and filled with the objects and materials that one would expect to find in a typical

classroom, such as desks, chairs, computers, round tables for students' group work, shelves, a television set, etc. I am struck by the bare walls all around me. The shelves are overloaded with old assignments and textbooks from previous teachers. There are few authentic books or novels for students to read.

I can still hear the discussion from the teachers' lounge echoing in my head. Teachers were talking about exercise books and grammar and spelling instruction. When I look at the teaching plan for Icelandic that my students' hearing classmates will receive, I cannot help but notice how it has already been determined what spelling rules and grammar exercises are to be covered and when. I sense the resistance rising within me. I do not want to focus on the different aspects of the Icelandic language in isolation. However, I am unsure whether there are certain expectations for how one goes about literacy instruction within the school setting or whether I have the flexibility to take the paths I wish. I am not going to worry about this today because I do not feel that I can decide on my instructional plan before I meet and talk to students about their interests (Research Journal, August 15, 2006).

When I entered the classroom, I had intended to implement sociocultural theories of literacy into practice. What I forgot to take into account is that educational settings do not exist in the abstract, waiting for teachers to bring in and implement their instructional practices. In the journal entry above, I draw attention to how institutional Discourses on how to educate children already exist within each school and shape the educational practices utilized within these settings. These Discourses manifest themselves in the available learning material, in students' independent educational plans (IPEs), in grade level standards and curricula for different subject matters, in methods for evaluating "knowledge," and in how participants within this particular setting talk about different subject matters.

The educational Discourse that I encountered upon entering the school setting became noticable in the formal layout and organization of the educational space signaling the teacher's authority, the instructional books that I encountered within the classroom, which overwhelmingly emphasized practicing grammar and spelling skills in isolation, the teaching plan that had a list of the grammar and spelling exercises to be completed and novels to be read, and the ways in which teachers talked about literacy instruction. The Discourse that I encountered when I entered the classroom was familiar to me from my own experience as a student, student-teacher and a teacher. Apparently, the model was similar to Freire's (1970) "banking" model of teaching, whereby the main responsibility of the teacher is to regulate and deposit appropriate information into students' minds. In contrast, the vision that I brought to the setting was grounded in a Discourse that placed learning within students' social and

cultural experiences. The difference between the existing institutional Discourse and the new ideas that I brought to the setting filled me with doubt about whether I would manage to do the task that I set out to do. I was still determined to implement my plan, but despite my intention of meeting my students before I decided on the learning material that I would use, I began to plan the school year ahead, pinpointing when on the timetable I would teach different aspects of the Icelandic language (literature, writing, spelling and grammar), and organizing students' texts accordingly.

Although I wanted to immerse myself in the new environment and become a member of the teacher community, as the school year progressed, I strongly resisted adopting the pervasive ideology underlying literacy education at my new school setting, which did not seem to align with the ideas that I brought home to Iceland from my graduate studies abroad. To support further development of these ideas, I was longing for a dialogue with teachers who thought similarly about literacy and literacy education, but I was having difficulty initiating these kinds of discussions with my colleagues. The entry below highlights my inner debate over whether I should give in and embrace the "banking" model of education most noticeable within the school setting or try to teach against the grain (Cochran-Smith, 1991). This kind of thought bears witness to the power of the institutional Discourse. That is, if a teacher's instructional ideas are in opposition to the dominant institutional Discourse of her setting, it may be only a matter of time before her resistance wears down and she assimilates that Discourse.

I brought some ideas back home from my graduate studies that I want to implement in my classroom. However, I sense that these are ideas that are not being carried out here, and the Discourse behind these ideas seems to be in conflict with the one dominant within this setting. My classroom as it is today does not present the opportunity to display books in different places. The teaching material, or most of it, consists of books specially published for instruction in Icelandic and are very "schoolish" . . . These days, I am trying to create the learning environment I want to work within. I am trying to get a shelf where I can display authentic books and other interesting reading material that can possibly motivate students to read. In my opinion, the material available focuses too much on different aspects of the language. Students have one book for grammar, another one for spelling, a third one for writing, and a fourth for literature. Of course, teachers do put the parts together somewhat. However, I find that the books currently used do not facilitate that process for teachers, and they make it difficult for teachers to base their instruction on individual strengths when everybody has to use the same learning material . . . Should I adapt to this image? It would

probably be easier than trying to create something new within the school—I'm not even sure what that would look like. Despite my angst, I do believe that more teachers than I am aware of having an emphasis similar to mine. I just do not know how to initiate these discussions without silencing my colleagues. I must continue on this path and see how things develop in a few weeks (Research Journal, September 17, 2006).

Although I was unable to put my finger on it, something did not seem right during those first months of school. In my research journal, I kept talking about these "schoolish" books and how they limited my opportunities to base my instruction on students' strengths. I repeatedly wrote about how I wanted to replace these books with authentic books, such as different types of novels for students to read, as if that would make a difference. What I did not realize is that the discussions during my course work in graduate school back in the United States took place within a sociocultural Discourse that gave specific meaning to these studies. That is, through these discussions, we were constantly engaged in the process of transforming our theoretical ideas of why and how schools need to be places where students can introduce their understandings of the world and negotiate their identities as literacy learners. One theme of these discussions was how authentic books or school material are a part of a Discourse that either supported or limited students' opportunities to negotiate their identities as literacy learners in the process of becoming literate.

What I did not realize is that this discussion of the importance of authentic books in students' construction of their identities as literacy learners constituted only one dimension of the sociocultural Discourse in which I had been immersed during graduate school. Consequently, when I transported these ideas away from the social practices that imbued them with meaning in graduate school to a Discourse that used textbooks that reinforced the idea of literacy learning as mastery of specific spelling and grammar skills, these ideas seemed to dissolve right in front of me. While still having to develop the educational practices supporting my vision, I tried to respond to these challenges by focusing on what had seemed prominent (the authentic books) in the discussions in which I had participated during graduate school. It is interesting to note that, in my speculation about whether I should just adopt the dominant Discourse of the school, rather than staying on the path that I was taking, it did not occur to me that at that moment I was trapped in the same Discourse that I was trying to avoid. Looking back at that version of myself, I see a picture of a teacher circulating within a school setting, a specific Discourse of what counts as teaching and learning, trying to find an entry point into students' backgrounds and experiences without realizing that she has already immersed herself in a Discourse that does not allow students many opportunities to negotiate

who they are as literacy learners or speak with their own voices, as I will demonstrate in the sections below.

It was not until several months later, after reading my research journal and reflecting upon the experiences found there, through the lens of "big D" Discourses, that I came to understand how I had become an active participant in an institutional Discourse that, by reinforcing specific literacy practices, imposed a particular kind of identity upon students as literacy learners. If it had not been for the vision that I brought to the setting and for my students, who played a significant role in pushing me to go on with my investigation and to refine my instructional practices, I think that, against my intentions, I might have bought into the Discourse already in place within my setting. My students were not the kind of student whom I used to be, that is, a student who accepted the status quo of the school system without much resistance and who played the role expected of her. My students did not share my hearing background, and luckily for me, they used many tactics to resist being assimilated into a system that did not allow them to bring in and build upon their strengths and their ways of approaching the written form of the Icelandic language. In the following section, I explain how I came to understand the institutional Discourses on reading that shape my educational setting by reflecting upon the firsthand experiences occurring within the classroom.

4.2 Confronting the Institutional Discourse on Reading: Learning Moments

Students were supposed to answer questions about a story that my hearing colleague had read to them. Stefán made no attempt to work and was interrupting other students. I tried to get him working by sitting down in front of him and explaining the first question of the assignment. When he just stared at me, I started to explain the answer to him. He got very frustrated and wanted me to point directly to the answer in the text. This was impossible, as he was supposed to draw conclusions from what had happened in the story. I looked at him, told him firmly that he had to answer the first question and then continue answering the other ones. He showed no reaction, and just repeatedly claimed that he did not understand me. Finally, I told him that if he did not at least begin answering the question he would have to stay behind during recess. He got angry and pointed out that the other students were not working either. I told him that now we were only concerned about him. He got very upset. We were like steel against steel (Research Journal, August 29, 2006).

Guided by my sociocultural ideas of literacy, I thought that I would have students read novels and other interesting reading material that could potentially allow them the opportunity

to reflect upon who they are and negotiate their identities as readers. I wanted to immerse them in reading and discussions about their readings. However, once within the school setting, I discovered that the expectations for my students‘ hearing classmates were that they would read one pre-determined modern novel and one of the Icelandic Sagas. In additon, students were to pick three books to read at home and write a book report to return to the teacher. Although this practice was in opposition to the ideas of reading I brought to the setting, there was nothing unusual about it. As a matter of fact, this was the same practice I had experienced as a student within the school system. Before I knew what was happening, I felt forced to take up literacy practices that seemed acceptable within this institution. It felt like I would be betraying my students if I did not give them material comparable to what their hearing classmates were reading. Consequently, I found myself choosing simplified versions of some of the texts that were to be read by my students‘ hearing classmates. I think nothing would have prevented me from totally immersing myself in enacting this Discourse had it not been for encounters like the one above. These caused conflicts between me and my students which ultimately produced conflicts within myself. These conflicts, in return, kept reminding me about the vision I had set out to implement in the classroom.

The institutional Discourse shaping the literacy practices within the school emerges on multiple levels in this incident with Stefán. The observable event describes a conflict in an interaction between Stefán and me during a literacy block. On the surface, this interaction takes place over a worksheet he was supposed to complete in relation to a story my hearing colleague had just read to students. But there is more to the literacy event than the conflict in our interaction over the worksheet. To begin with, the fact that I had determined the story to be read reflects the social position forced upon us by the institutional Discourse. That is, within the school setting, I was using the authority of my position as a teacher to determine students’ reading material and take up literacy practices that ensured they were grappling with its content the way I expected them to do. In so doing, I was not only negotiating my position as a teacher within the institutional Discourse; I was further determining the position available to Stefán as a student. That is, in utilizing teacher-directed instruction – most apparent in the fact that Stefán was supposed to be completing a worksheet I had created for him, and my firm instruction that he was to answer the first question before he could proceed with the other questions – I was sending the message that in order for him to be recognized as a successful student he needed to complete the task I set in place for him. In this way I gave Stefán little flexibility to negotiate his identity as a reader. In fact, the social position I enacted not only shaped the social position Stefán was able to enact, but it also determined the types of reader

identities available to him in the learning process. That is, if he successfully managed to complete the task, he could consider himself as a successful reader. If he failed to finish the task, he would be identified as an unsuccessful reader. Although in a limited way this does represent a range of options for Stefán's reader identity, it always depends upon how well he completes the teacher's tasks. There do not seem to be many alternative ways of negotiating an identity for oneself as a successful reader.

Looking at this incident through the lens of multimodality, the various forces underlying the institutional Discourse given rise to this activity begin to emerge. First, to make sure the students comprehended the content of the story selected for them, a hearing colleague of mine signed the story to students. This was a short story, a famous Icelandic folktale *Bakkabræður bera sólskin í húfum sínum* which is, in short, about three brothers building a house. When they complete the house they discover much to their dismay that they forgot to put windows in it, and the remainder of the story evolved around their attempts to carry sunlight into the house to light it up. In the process of reading the story aloud, we were translating it between different semiotic systems, from written Icelandic to the Icelandic Sign Language. In so doing, I thought we were better preparing students to answer the list of questions they were to complete. Despite all the scaffolding put in place for students to complete their assignments, Stefán did not seem to be able to focus on his work. As his teacher I was concerned over this "disruptive" behavior, so I intervened. There is nothing unusual about that. However, examining the interaction at a deeper level, I began to reveal assumptions about literacy that I had not noticed initially, and how these either expanded or limited students' access to literacy resources as they worked on their literacy tasks. Instead of approaching Stefán by asking him about the content of the story, my initial response to end his interruption was to place myself in front of him and read the first question of the assignment. In thinking about this reaction of mine, its underlying connotation implies that I assumed that Stefán's disruptive behavior was due to the fact that he had either not read the questions or he had not *understood* them. Stefán's stare at me in response to reading the first question has multiple possible interpretations as well. It may be interpreted as a confirmation that he had not read or understood the content of the question and he still did not understand what he was being asked to do. It may also indicate that although he understood the question, he had not comprehended the story told in Sign Language. Finally, my actions may have been offensive to him, and he may have been trying to communicate this to me with his stare. Whatever the underlying reason, my reaction indicates that in my mind he had either not understood the question or had not comprehended the story as told in Sign Language. In a

very direct manner, Stefán asked me to point to the answer in the text, which I was unable to do since he was supposed to draw conclusions from what had happened in the story. This request – to locate exactly where in the text an answer was to be found – was one that I encountered often during my first year of teaching. In explicitly reflecting upon Stefán's request, I came to realize how this type of request had worked in the past to reinforce the image of deaf students as the low literacy learners so frequently encountered in the body of literature about deafness and literacy. To me it indicated my students' inability to draw conclusions from the reading materials presented to them. In looking at this request through the lens of multimodality, however, the complex task students who are deaf are confronted with in learning to read in Icelandic began to emerge. That is, in learning to read such students proceed on different levels. First, they need to imbue the written word with meaning. Then, they need to take all the meaning they have imposed on the written words and translate it into Sign Language. Consequently, requests like Stefán's may indicate that although Stefán has been presented with two versions of the story – written and Signed – when an assignment required him to use a sign system still unfamiliar to him – written Icelandic – he is still dependent on being able to identify the written resources in the text in order to transfer his understanding from Sign Language to written Icelandic. In interpreting Stefán's behavior as disruptive without examining the underlying reasons for it, I was not only denying him constructive guidance and resources in translating his understanding between different semiotic systems. Rather, through the repetition of incidents like this one, Stefán could eventually be deprived of the opportunity to become a successful reader. In the following vignette I draw further attention to the troubling nature of the teacher-directed instruction intrinsic in the incident with Stefán.

Literature lesson. I began the lesson by asking students what we had done last time. They looked at me with blank faces. I asked whether they remember how the sons of Njáll had been called "dung-beards" and Njáll "the beardless" – little reaction. I went to the next chapter – Kinnhestur – What does that word mean? Students looked at me without trying to guess what the word meant...I asked again if they had understood it. No answer. Finally, Viktoría said irritably that they did not understand that word. I began to explain the literal meaning of it, that kinn meant chin and hestur horse. In combination this word meant slap in the face (showed the sign). I was going to explain the text further when Viktoría got very angry and began to accuse me of rushing through the book without giving them an opportunity to finish their assignments. She further complained that every time we went through the text I kept pointing to some specific words asking; "what does this or that

mean?" She was very upset and told me that I was always interrupting them with explanations (Research Journal, October 17 2006).

As in the incident with Stefán, my social position was apparent in my authority to lead students through the reading material we were to cover that academic year, which in turn created a social position for my students as the beneficiaries of what I had to present. The incident above was filled with tension. It was not only the internal tension I experienced of getting students through these books. The tension is also evident in Viktoría's complaints that "I never give them the opportunity to finish their assignment." From my perspective, this was simply not true. As a matter of fact, I had given students lesson after lesson to work on their assignments. However, most of them ended the same way as the one with Stefán. Students began to "goof off" and I was left fighting for their attention in order to get them to finish their task. However, examining the underlying nature of these conflicts, and taking into consideration Viktoría's complaint that I was always pointing to some specific words asking for their meaning, I began to realize that I was very concerned about students grasping the "right" information from the text and understanding "key" words in order to be able to comprehend content. I began to wonder about Viktoría's frustration with having to answer *my* questions about a text or vocabulary. Could it be that despite my intention of implementing sociocultual theories of literacy into practice I had lapsed into teaching reading as mastery of specific skills or content and in so doing I had overlooked the need to create a space for students to develop their identities as readers? Were students simply asking for some time to wrestle their own meaning from texts? Looking at this teacher-directed instruction through the lens of multimodality, it becomes evident that these educational practices do not create a space that encourages students to bring in and base their learning on literacy practices grounded in their social and cultural experience. Quite the contrary. It is evident in both incidents presented above that, while students are required to work on the teacher's terms, both by reading the assigned texts and answering the questions the teacher has deemed important, students are always working within territories that are not theirs. That is, by bringing in and implenting teacher-directed instructional practices, the teacher runs the risk of marginalizing students' literacy practices within the context of the classroom. Consequently, the teacher fails to create a space where students can grapple with the text on their own terms and negotiate their identities as readers in relation to the meaning they are able to place in and wrest from the text. In the final example in this section, I draw attention to how, in responding to students' reading challenges, teachers may run the risk of creating an even more restrictive learning environment, one that may have severe implications for students' ability to

understand who they are as readers. In this incident I focus on Þórður. As the reader may recall, Þórður was a mystery to me when it came to literacy learning. From my observation I noticed that reading was something that really challenged him. However, he showed a great interest in books and regularly carried books around with him during recess and lunch.

I walk in and tell students it is time for reading. It takes them a while to get their books. Þórður is the first one to stand up. I remind the others that they need to get their books as well. Melkorka tells me that she has to wait until Þórður has gotten his from the drawer so she can get hers. After a while students begin to read. Þórður reads in the book Einn í óbyggðum, a reading book I picked for him. He signs through the text, asks me about a word and we read through two pages together. I notice that he is unsure about many words in the book and how to draw the words together into a coherent meaning. I further notice that the other students are observing him. He has come to the word peysa (sweater), signs pulsa (hot dog), corrects himself and signs peysa (sweater) again. Viktoría tells the other students about his mistake. After he completes the chapter I give him an exercise book that goes along with his reading material. He refuses to work on the assignments in this book. He clasps his hands and looks at me pleadingly like he is really asking me not to make him work in this book. Stefán makes a remark about the choice I made, wondering why Þórður has to have an exercise book when the other students do not have one. I take the book away, thinking that I will give it to him another time (Research Journal, February 8th, 2007).

This incident took place shortly after I changed my reading instruction to align with the vision I brought to the classroom. Students had selected their books to read and were given time for independent reading. However, as this incident illuminates, Þórður did not get the same options as the other students. Because he seemed to struggle the most when it came to reading, I had carefully selected a book for him with a relatively easy text structure and an exercise book to go along with it. The other students clearly sensed the special structure that I was creating for Þórður; Stefán's questions indicate that he found this situation odd. Þórður's clasping hands and the look on his face when he asked me not to carry on with this exercise bear witness to his discomfort. As I reflected upon all the implicit messages this incident was sending me, I began to wonder about the kind of social structure I was creating within the classroom. How did the structure I was imposing upon Þórður made him appear in the eyes of his classmates? How did this affect his self-esteem as a reader, and consequently his learning to read? Was I supporting his literacy learning with my actions, or could it be that I was creating boundaries that limited his learning? Reflecting upon this incident through the means of "big D" Discourses, it becomes evident that although I was in the process of changing my

educational practices to align with the student-centered vision I brought to the classroom, the institutional teacher-centered Discourse was still mediating my actions and beliefs. When I encountered a student who really struggled to learn to read my initial response was to create a stricter structure around his learning, reducing the text to be read into simple sentences, rather than giving him the increased flexibiltiy and control over his learning that might allow him to draw from a wider variety of resources.

In this section I have tried to provide insight into the conflicts I encountered in terms of reading instruction during my first months within the field, and how I struggled to make sense of experiences like those shared in this section. Before I discuss how I eventually responded by creating a space where students could introduce literacy practices from outside the classroom that would allow them to grapple with their literacy learning on their own terms, I now turn the focus to examine how the institutional Discourse on writing influenced the instructional practices I reinforced within the instructional space.

4.3 Confronting the Institutional Discourse on Writing: Learning Moments

I sit in the classroom observing students doing one of the grammar exercises I have assigned to them. Þórður is busy doing his assignment. I have began to notice that he feels most comfortable when he gets a "fill in the blank" assignment where he can figure out what is expected of him without having to understand the meaning of the language. He turns to Viktoría and signs, "it's easy." I look at Viktoría. She is leaning on the table. I can see by her face and body language that she is not engaged with the grammar assignment. At the end of the lesson, she turns to me and signs, "this is boring. I want to learn to write correct Icelandic...this does not help me do that" (Journal, November 9th, 2007).

Upon entering the classroom, I intended to capture and develop students' voices and written language through creative writing, including spelling and grammar. I wanted to learn when and how to intervene in their work in order to support their learning of their second language, Icelandic. Things did not go as planned. Once I entered the setting I discovered that, rather than emphasizing creative writing and writing instruction, the multiple threads constituting the institutional Discourse within the setting – curriculum requirements, available learning material, and instructional emphasis emerging in teachers' discussions – highlighted predetermined spelling lessons and grammar exercises. Unconsciously, all these brought back to me an image of what it means to be a student of literacy which in return came to affect my intention of having students learn to write by writing in class. In planning the school year

ahead I looked through the available grammar and spelling material and unconsciously these, particularly grammar, came to have much more weight than creative writing.

In preparing for spelling instruction, this little feeling that I would be betraying my students or that they would fall "even further behind" if they were not on the same track as their hearing classmates began to emerge. Consequently, I decided that my students would use the same spelling book as their hearing classmates were to get. To the extent that I could, I tried to align the exercises I wanted my students to complete to the ones required of my students' hearing classmates. However, once in the classroom it did not take long to realize that emphasizing specific spelling rules and having students write up spelling exercises neither allowed me to hear students' voices nor gave me an oppotunity to identify and understand the multiple resources students drew upon in the process of spelling. I quickly decided to put the spelling book aside and try to figure out a better way to understand and address students' spelling.

The same was true with grammar. Although I understand the role of grammar in learning a language, the exercise books did not help me understand what kind of challenges my students were up against when it came to learning grammar; nor did they help to connect the grammar being taught to students' learning of the language in a meaningful way, as Viktoría's statement "this is boring. I want to learn to write correct sentences ...this does not help me do that" in the incident above illuminates. Throughout my first months of teaching, I received implict and explict messages that studying grammar in isolation was not helping students learn Icelandic. This was evident in statements and questions such as "I don't know how to write correct Icelandic," "can you write the story for me if I sign it to you," "year after year we have been learning what this word and that word means, now I just want to know how to write correct sentences." These responses evoked questions regarding what I was doing within the classroom, why I was emphasizing grammar at the expense of creative writing. I struggled. While I knew that I was not going in the right direction by reinforcing the completion of grammar exercises in isolation, I did not know how to do things differently. Consequently, and in opposition with my inner beliefs, I proceeded with reinforcing the same practices that I knew would not allow me to advance the literacy learning of my students as I had hoped. In reflecting upon the strange dilemma I found myself in through the means of "big D" Discourses, I came to realize that the educational Discourse I embodied and enacted in that particular moment had created a social position for me as a teacher so strong that I could only think of myself as teaching if I acted in certain way. Thus, I was unable to envision how to do things differently. Furthermore, I had not had many opportunity in my graduate

classes to create a vision of alternative ways of *doing* grammar like I had done in terms of reading that could lead me to an alternative way of *teaching* grammar. Consequently, the multiple forces going into and giving the institutional Discourse meaning worked as to lock me within a Discourse that understood grammar instruction in terms of completing assignments in isolation. My position within this Discourse placed me in a role of authority within the instructional site which I did not know how to reject, and caused me to take up educational practices that reinforced the enactment of that social position, meaning that I prevented students' literacy practices from emerging within the site. Consequently, except for statements implying that we were not on the right track, there was no way for students to provide evidence of how they were basing their learning of Icelandic on their literacy practices that could be used to further guide us out of the trap in which the Discourse I enacted placed us. In addition, students used various techniques to resist grammar instruction that did not seem meaningful to them in ways similar to those described in relation to reading instruction.

As lost as I felt in terms of grammar instruction, occasionally there were moments that gave me glimpses of how things in my class could function differently if I managed to create the structure in which that kind of instruction could take place. The incident below decribes one of these moments. It took place within the last 10 minutes of a literacy lesson where students had finished their assignments and had some free time.

Viktoría asks me to help her write "correct Icelandic" on her blog page. She writes:

Hæ *Hi*

Ég er Skóli *I am school*

She turns to me and asks whether she is supposed to write skólinn and adds the definite article[11] for masculine nouns[12] –nn to the word skóli.

Ég er Skólinn *I am the school*

Before answering I wonder if I should correct everything she has written. She had already explained her frustration with writing and how she wanted to learn to write correct Icelandic. Therefore, I decide to delve into this text with her, correct her writing, making sure I explain

[11] In Icelandic the definite article is a clitic (which is attached to the end of a word), not a separate word as in English. The definite article is different for each gender; masculine, feminine, and neuter and it declines in number; singular and plural, and in case; nominative, accusative, dative and genitive (Einarsdóttir, Theodórsdóttir, Garðarsdóttir, & Þorvaldsdóttir, 2001) .

[12] In Icelandic every noun has its grammatical gender; masculine, feminine, and neuter. Every noun, then, declines in its gender, in number; singular and plural, and in case; nominative, accusative, dative and genitive (Einarsdóttir, et al., 2001).

at the same time why she should write according to my instruction. So, I type the following sentence on the computer and tell her that in this case she should write

Ég er í skólanum I am in the school

I explain that we need to use the propostion ***í*** *before skólanum, and that the proposition decides the form of the word school in this sentence. Viktoría continues to write:*

Ég er að læra. I am studying.

Before saying anything she changes ***læra*** *to* ***lærum*** *and asks me if this could be the right way to write it or if she should say* ***læranum*** *instead. I tell her that the first way she wrote it was the right one: Læra is a verb*[13] *and when the infinitive particle* ***að*** *is in front of the verb it most often ends with an* ***–a****. Viktoria continues:*

Ég læra miki I study muc

"Is it supposed to be like that?" She points to the verb ***læra****. She does not wait for an answer but changes the verb* ***læra*** *to* ***lærum****. "Or maybe like this?"*

After considering whether I should really correct each and every word, I tell her that ***læra*** *is a verb, and verbs like* ***læra****, which end with an –a, often get an –i ending when they stand with the personal pronoun "I." "That is why this should be* ***ég læri****."*

"How do I write 'much'?" she asks, and writes ***mikin****. She erases it before I can answer, tries to skip the* ***–k-****, and adds it in again.*

"You are doing very well," I tell her," but this word is written ***mikið****."*

"Why?" she asks me.

"Why," I repeat. Through my mind goes the question: "why is ***mikið*** *written* ***mikið****?" Quickly, I compare it with* ***mikinn/mikill/mikil****. In this moment I am not quite sure. I tell her that this is a hard question that I need to think through. Then she asks whether it is always written this way or whether the verb does influence the way it is written. She continues to write:*

Mér finnst

She erases ***mér****, replaces it with* ***mig****, and asks if it is supposed to be like this.*

"It is supposed to be like you had it in the beginning," I tell her. Viktoría makes the change, then writes,

Minn, mína, ég, mig, mér, mig

[13] Verbs in Icelandic "conjugate in three persons: 1st person *I*, 2nd person *you*, and 3rd person *he, she, it*; and two numbers: singular and plural; and two tenses: present and past." Furthermore, "verbs are always associated with particular cases and they always assign the same case" (Einarsdóttir, et al., 2001, p. 119).

Then she asks, "what does all this mean and when am I supposed to use what?"

Wow, so many questions! I begin to separate the possesive pronoun ***minn, mína*** *from the different forms of the personal pronoun I* ***ég, mig, mér, mig****. I feel like I need to give examples, so I write*

Minn (Hesturinn minn)

Mín – mína (taskan mín)

Þetta er taskan mín

Þú ert með töskuna mína

Before I can explain this, Viktoria goes to the blog page, finds a picture of her sisters and points to the possesive pronoun ***mínar****. "Why is this mínar? I asked my sister and she didn't know. She just told me it's supposed to be like this," she signs. I tell her that when we know a language we often do not know why things are the way they are. However, when we are learning Icelandic, it can help our learning to understand why things are the way they are. Before I actually get into explaining the word* ***mínar****, Viktoria continues, "But what about"*

Þau

Þær

Við

Okkur

Þú-þín

She writes the personal pronouns on the screen. I add the declension for each word.

Þau-þau-þeim-þeirra

Þær-þær-þeim-þeirra

Við-okkur-okkur- okkar

Þú-þig-þér-þín

The bell rings; the class is over. I ask Viktoria to save this and tell her we will get back to it. I cannot stop thinking about all the questions Viktoria has about the Icelandic language. All these words, all these meanings! How do we bring all of this purposefully together? That is, how do we learn to use the langauge to say what we want to say? How am I to weave writing, grammar and spelling instruction together in a meaningful way that will help my students learn the written form of Icelandic? (Research Journal, November 2nd, 2006)

This short encounter with Viktoría over her writing not only shows the challenges Viktoíra encounters in terms of learning Icelandic, but more importantly illuminates how, when she is engaged in activities that are meaningful to her, Viktoría can direct the teacher as

to how she can assist in advancing Viktoría‘s learning of written Icelandic. Below, I apply the lenses of “big D” Discourse and multimodality to this incident in order to examine the surroundings that gave rise to this occurrence and the material and representational resources providing the foundation for Viktoría‘s learning of Icelandic.

First, the Discourse underlying this occurence, along with the social positions it creates for me and Viktoría to fulfill, emerged at the moment I gave students free time at the end of the lesson. In doing so, I stepped out of the authoritative position I felt forced to enact during grammar instruction and took on a more informal position, namely that of an observer. This modification, in turn, influenced the social position set in place for Viktoría. That is, she was no longer expected to act out the role of the dutiful student. Rather, she was expected to become an agent within the instructional site – to take on the responsibility of determining both what content to focus on and the instructional path needed to advance her learning. Motivated by her desire to update her blog, Viktoría brought in and drew upon the material and representational resources available to her. As she was attempting to communicate her message in written Icelandic, she wrote the Icelandic words on her blog page that could potentially convey her meaning. In the first sentence we see how she wrote the words ég (I), er (to be), skóli (school) to indicate that she is in school, and then turned to me and asked whether she should add the definite article –nn to the word skóli. This question gives great insight into Viktoría‘s learning of Icelandic. Even as it shows how Viktoría is able to recall the words she needs to communicate her intended meaning in writing, it also indicates that she knows that the words alone are not enough. Through her encounters with Icelandic, Viktoría has learned that Icelandic is a declension language, and she needs to increase her awareness of how word endings, including the definite article, are used to signify more specific meanings of the word and its relationship with other words. She is aware that this is what she is struggling to learn. Consequently, by asking whether to add the definitive article behind the noun “school,” Viktoría provided me with invaluable evidence of which parts of the Icelandic language seemed challenging. However, there are more components to this incident. In raising the question, Viktoría invited me to step into the social position of “teacher” and take up instructional practices geared toward the components of the Icelandic language that she has identified as important in advancing her written Icelandic. That is, she invited me to facilitate her learning of the Icelandic language. As revealed through the incident, this initial question, grounded in a context that was meaningful to Viktoría, only served as an entry point to all the questions Viktoría had about the Icelandic language. As Viktoría led me from one question to another, she contextualized her challenges with learning

Icelandic in the writing process. In so doing, Viktoría gave me access as a teacher to examine the nature of the challenges she was encountering in the process of learning Icelandic through her perspective as a deaf student. This insight into Viktoría‘s literacy resources and her challenges in communicating her meaning through writing allowed me to respond in a more nuanced way to Viktoría‘s developing written resources than the grammar exercises I had been assigning could ever do. This incident left me wondering how I as a teacher could bring writing, spelling and grammar together in a way that would allow my students to advance their learning of the Icelandic language.

At the same time as I struggled with making grammar lessons meaningful to students‘ learning of Icelandic, I still thought of writing as the best forum to gain access to students‘ experiences and the literacy practices they brought to the classroom. Consequently, alongside the authoriative grammar instruction I was emphasizing, I made some initial attempts to carry out lessons that gave students an opportunity to write. It should not come as a surprise that, just as with the other aspects of Icelandic, implementing creative writing in the classroom did not happen as expected. Although I recognized the importance of writing upon entering the classroom, I had not really conceptualized my role as a writing teacher beyond distributing or suggesting writing assignments for students to complete. Much to my dismay, students often seemed disengaged, using various techniques to avoid being involved. In the following vignette I draw attention to one of my initial attempts to teach creative writing. This vignette illuminates the Discourses underlying my practices and how these may have affected my students‘ learning of written Icelandic. This incident takes place early in the school year. We had two literacy classes during this day and I had decided before entering the classroom that we would use both these classes to plan and write a story as a group.

It was the first class of the day, 8:10-8:50. I began the session with a brainstorming activity for a cooperative story. Students brainstormed many ideas to write about and decided that Melkorka would do the actual act of writing down the story…Last class of the day, 14:10-14:50. I walked into the classroom ready to proceed from where we had left in the morning. I gave Melkorka a blank sheet of paper to write on. She put it aside like she had never accepted the role of writing down the story and began to draw a picture on the back of her hand. Stefán laughed, and did not look at me. I tried to get him to make eye contact but he ignored my attempts. Þórður just sat there and observed what was happening. Viktoría was the only one who wanted to work, but because of the difficulties I was experiencing with the other students, I found it hard to go ahead with the work. In the end it was Viktoría who composed most of the story and I wrote it down (Research Journal, August 25, 2006).

My entrance into the activity in this incident shows how I once again stepped into the role of the authorative teacher who brings in a fully developed idea of what she wants her students to do. Although students are encouraged to bring their ideas to the story, they are not really involved in determining the nature of the project. In other words, the structure of the assignments expects students to enact a particular kind of student – the one who accepts and follows the teacher's instruction. At first, it seemed like the students were going to accept this role. They followed my instructions by brainstorming a list of ideas to include in the story, and decided who was going to do the actual work of writing the story.

By the end of the first session of this lesson, I was quite pleased with what we had accomplished. It is not until the second session that I began to encounter resistance. Melkorka physically rejected the role she had previously accepted by putting the paper aside and drawing on her hand. As with so many of the incidents during my first months within the classroom, I could easily have explained Melkorka's action as one of those moments where students are simply tired and disengaged. Although this may have played a part in Melkorka's behavior, that interpretation alone is too simplistic to explain the reality teachers face once in the classoom. In writing down these experiences in the form of field notes, reading them, and cross-checking themes that arise, I have come to understand my practice in a substantially different way. Melkorka resisted instructional practices which seemed to impose a particular role of literacy learner upon her in various ways, and in this case she *decisively* laid down the paper and wrote on her hand. By analyzing this incident in relation to the multiple conflict taking place surrounding literacy instruction, it became clear that Melkorka was resisting some authority-loaded forces intrinsic in my instructional practices of which I was unaware. As we see in the incident, Stefán followed her lead. However, the way he laughed and ignored my attempts to communicate with him indicate that he felt unsure in the position he took on in the battle Melkorka was waging, and he did not know whether to stick to that position or accept the role I had set in place for him. Viktoría, on the other hand, accepted my authority and found her agency within the structure I provided by determining the content and the sequence of the story. Although the incident bears witness to the different ways students responded to the learning opportunity available within the structure of the writing assignment highlighted above, Melkorka's resistance in particular, seen through the lens of "big D" Discourse, reveals the dominant nature of the Discourse I embodied and enacted in that particular moment. The Discourse emerged in my control over the assignment students were to complete, in this case composing a story as a group, and the restricted nature of the choices I put in place for students to negotiate that assignment. In reflecting upon this incident and

others like it, I began to wonder how I could structure these creative writing lessons to give my students more ownership over the writing process, including choices about the nature of the project they decided to take on.

Although I experienced many incidents like the one described above – incidents filled with hidden implications about how I needed to alter my writing instruction – other events revealed this same message in more obvious ways. The incident below is one of these moments.

That's it!!! Why can't students just pay attention to what we are doing, go and get their books and be ready to learn? I wanted to walk out. I know that I am responsible for them, though, so I cannot walk out. I had walked into the classroom ready to explain how students could use a writer's notebook to record and keep track of their ideas for writing. Viktoría was sitting in her seat with a little notebook in front of her – looking at Melkorka. Stefán was sitting in his seat with a little notebook in front of him – looking at Melkorka. Þórður was sitting in his seat, his desk covered by textbooks, no little notebook apparent – looking at Melkorka. Melkorka was sitting in her seat, her desk covered with textbooks, no little notebook in front of her. She was erasing something she had written on the table. Everything was silent. I decided I could not walk out, I was just going to enjoy this silent moment and not try to hammer something into my students heads since they were not even paying attention – enjoy the peaceful moment. I watched Melorka erase. The students sat and watched Melkorka erase. Melkorka began to feel the attention she was getting, looked up at us, looked back down at the table, looked up again, stood up to get her notebook. Stefán got his notebook. They all sat quietly, looked straight forward. I sat silently and looked them in the eyes. "We are ready," said Viktoría. Nobody attempted to do anything. I took a few seconds to look at them. Finally I took a deep breath and told them it was freewriting. They should just write. Viktoría and Melkorka began to write immediately. Þórður asked what they were to do. Stefán asked if it was freewriting. They both took a few minutes to think. Þórður began to write, slowly but steadily. It took Stefán a while to begin. After 10 minutes of writing he began to feel uncomfortable about the situation, and asked why we were doing this. Viktoría asked how to spell dáin (dead). Melkorka asked how to write hugmynd (idea). Viktoría asked how to write bílslys (car accident) and after a little while how to write langt í burtu (far away). Þórður asked how to write læra (study). I started to spell it for him. When I had spelled L-Æ- Þórður seemed to remember the word and wrote it down...There they sat focused on their writing. All of a sudden Melkorka looked at me and signed: "Do you know what? I would like to learn how to write correct sentences. Year after year I have been

learning what this word and that word means. Now I would like to write correct sentences." (Research Journal, September 21st, 2006)

This incident is in many ways similar to the one where I had given students free time to work towards the end of one of our literacy lessons and we saw Viktoría choosing to update her blog. The difference between this incident and that one, though, is that I had not so much given students a free time to work. Rather, I had become so overwhelmed with the constant conflicts that I was having with students that instead of following through the instructional plan I brought to the setting I decided to let students write. Throughout the school year I witnessed various instances similar to the one above. That is, every time I whitdrew from the role of the authoritative teacher and gave students some time to work on their own assigments they took the opportunity and used it to its potential. In the incident above, students worked on their writing and asked questions that helped them put together the meaning they wanted to communicate. In so doing, they invited me to step into their learning process as a facilitator. I used the time between students' questions to observe what they were doing as they wrote. Being able to observe students so engaged in their work gave me time to wonder about what I was seeing. I wrote questions and notes to myself in my journal: "What do students write about when they get the time and opportunity to do so? How do they work when they compose a text in Icelandic? What are the literacy resources students who are deaf draw from when allowed the time and space to do so within the classroom? What challenges do students encounter in translating their stories from the modality of Sign Language to that of written Icelandic?" (Research Journal, September 21st, 2006). In the same way, I began to wonder why I had become so reliant on using grammar and exercise books as the foundation for students' learning. These assigments required students to complete their work without too much engagement. Did it ever occur to Melkorka that all the grammar instruction and vocabulary lessons she has received throughout her schooling could actually help her write "correct sentences"? Moments like this, where students were given the opportunity to step forward and fill the instructional space with their experiences and understanding of the world and communicate these into written Icelandic, seemed to provide much more valuable information about the literacy practices students brought to the setting and the challenges they were encountering in learning their second language than more teacher directed instruction could ever provide. As I came to learn more about students' strengths and challenges in terms of learning Icelandic through these moments, I began to wonder how I could alter my literacy instruction to better support students' literacy learning.

4.4 Concluding thoughts

In this chapter, I have tried to shed light on how the Discourses present within my school setting, along with the Discourses I embodied and enacted as a literacy teacher of children who are deaf, were in opposition to the vision of literacy teaching and learning I brought to the setting. Because these teacher-directed Discourses dominated the instructional space, little space was available for students to bring in and utilize their own literacy practices in learning their second language, written Icelandic. Instead of accepting the social position created by the institutional Discourse I enacted, students resisted being socialized into a Discourse that did not recognize their literacy practices as valuable for their learning of their second language. As already discussed, students‘ resistance took on various forms, and did not make my life as a teacher an easy one. However, by reflecting actively on students‘ resistance I came to recognize that as long as the Discourse I embodied and enacted continued to dominate the instructional site, I would not get the opportunity to identify and understand the literacy practices students already utilized. Thus, coming to understand the Discourses underlying the literacy practices reinforced within the classroom, and how these either supported or limited students' ability to draw upon the literacy practices they brought to the setting, was a crucial step in understanding and basing my instructional practices on students' literacy practices. As I came to understand how the literacy practices I utilized and reinforced within the classroom marginalized students‘ literacy practices, I was able to alter my instructional practices more systematically in accordance to the pedagogical beliefs I brought to the setting. In the following chapter, I discuss the modifications I made in terms of writing instruction in particular in response to reflecting on the experiences discussed in this section, and how these modifications provided me with opportunities to understand and base my instructional practices on the literacy practices students brought to the classroom.

5. BECOMING A NEW LITERACY TEACHER: WRITING AS A KEY TO READING FOR STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAF

Reading is a real challenge for her [Viktoría] . . . writing seems somehow more . . . I mean even if it is not spelled correctly or the Icelandic isn't quite right, it seems to come easier to her . . . she feels more confident about it than reading . . . I think she finds reading to be very challenging, and she needs to put a lot of effort into it, at times so much that she doesn't feel like doing it or simply gives up on the task . . . but with writing . . . she loves to tell stories, and she does that a lot. When she was younger, and we were traveling in the car, she could spend hours telling stories to her sisters. Sometimes she even put her younger sister to sleep by telling her stories. Just the other night, her sister came out of her room saying 'Wow, she tells such fun stories' . . . and then she sometimes writes these stories down, and sometimes they are so long, many pages . . . yeah, she seems . . . I mean when other people go to bed and read their books, she brings her notebook to write . . . that's very often how it is; she writes before she falls asleep (Interview, October 22, 2007).

In this interview, conducted on a stormy night in October 2007, Victoría's mother provided her perspectives on Viktoría's relationship with reading and writing. Viktoría had shared similar experiences with me during informal conversations in school. While she talked about how challenging reading was for her, she also told me how she had always liked writing and had written a lot. She talked about how, during family trips, she had written stories in her notebook while the rest of her family listened to music. "Sometimes when I read these stories now, I cannot make sense of what I was writing," Viktoría informs me with laughter in her eyes. When I asked her why, she told me that her "Icelandic" had changed too much. Viktoría's conflicting feelings about reading and writing and the radical changes she talks about in her use of language highlights the important role that writing can play in facilitating deaf students' access to learning to read their second language, Icelandic.

Meaning and sign are the concepts underlying the multimodal semiotic theory of NLS, and they are vital in examining Viktoría's conflicting experiences with reading and writing, as well as the role writing can play in determining deaf students' access to learning to read in their second language. As discussed in chapter two, sign is a combination of meaning and form. That is, signs are material resources individuals draw upon to make meaning. Meaning in and of itself can never exist as an independent object outside of sign. Although meanings take material form in signs, they do not depend upon the form of the sign for their meaning. Rather, the form is a signifier that has the potential of becoming a sign when individuals bring

meaning to it. In this way meaning, whether in reading or writing, is the effect of semiotic work (Kress, 2003).

In order to examine Viktoria's conflicting experiences with reading and writing through the lens of multimodality it is important to expand the discussion above to address in particular how a semiotic theory deals with reading and writing and their interrelation. In reading, the semiotic work emerges "as *interpretation* in the inwardly made sign" (Kress, 2003, p. 37). That is, as individuals read they are not just decoding words. Rather, in the process of reading individuals make new signs from the signs they have received as signifiers. In other words, they fill the words read with content based on both prior experiences with the words and the contexts in which they emerge, which in return allows the reader to interpret the text (Gee, 2004b, 2005; Kress, 2003). In writing, on the other hand, the semiotic work emerges "as *articulation* in the outwardly made sign" (Kress, 2003, p. 37). That is, in the process of writing writers use signifiers that have the potential of representing the meaning the maker of the sign intends to communicate.

In thinking about reading and writing in terms of sign making, the link between the two becomes evident in the ways in which inward and outward production of signs depend upon each other for the evolving creation of signs. For this reason, reading as an inward production of signs does not occur all by itself. The inward production of signs always exists in response to the outwardly produced sign. In the same way, writing as an outwardly produced sign cannot be created out of nothing. The production of an outwardly made sign relies on an individual's access to and ability to draw upon the signs he or she has already produced inwardly. In this way, Viktoría's conflicting experiences with reading and writing may be seen as resulting from the fact that in writing *her* stories Viktoría is able to draw on and integrate her inwardly produced signs, her multimodal 'reading' of the world, into the written signifiers most apt to carry the message she wants to communicate at that particular moment. In contrast, Viktoría's challenges when it comes to reading suggest that her reading material is too removed or disconnected from her inwardly produced signs, so that she struggles to give it the meaning required to make references to what the text is talking about. In saying that Viktoría's challenges with reading result from her inability to fill the text with meaning, I realize that I am stating the obvious. This is what research on deaf students' reading achievement continuously reveals (Marschark, et al., 2009) and is concerned about. What this fact brings evidence to, however, is that instead of considering Viktoría's reading challenges as 'reading problem' to be resolved through research on reading, we need to examine the ways in which deaf students' reading challenges are not only about reading, but

may be closely related to the ways in which students' opportunities to develop their voices as writers are nurtured within the process of becoming literate.

The role of writing in facilitating deaf students' access to learning to read in their second language is twofold. First, in expressing their understanding of the world as experiences through multiple modes in writing, students engage in an operation of shifting their understanding across modes (Kress, 2003). That is, they have to determine which aspects of their experiences to foreground, and must search for written signifiers that can carry that meaning. Students' initial writing of their experiences – the outwardly produced signs – then not only "allow us to make inferences about the shape and the characteristics of the inwardly produced signs that preceded them" (Kress, 2003, p. 145) – that is, to access the world through the deaf perspective – but provide us with the foundation we need to transform students' written language. As Viktoría's statement about the change in her Icelandic writing implies, through the process of writing, students constantly transform their understanding of the written language, reconstructing and expanding the written signifiers available in their attempt to communicate the meaning they wish to do (Cope & Kalantzis, 2005). In this way, the process of writing provides students with the space they need to experiment with the written word, to fill it with their own meaning. This, I argue, can serve as the key to bringing meaning to the words students then encounter as readers.

I placed great emphasis on intertwining reading and writing in my literacy block in an attempt to demonstrate how writing could be used as a resource for reading, and vice versa. To show how writing can play an important role in facilitating deaf students' access to reading, I center my discussion on the changes I made in terms of literacy instruction on writing and how these increased students' opportunities to act as agents within the instructional site. The discussion is divided into three main sections. In the first section, I discuss the initial steps in creating a writing space that encouraged students to bring in and write about their experiences and understanding of the world. In so doing, I focus on the sociocultural Discourse being constructed and how it influenced how I acted as a teacher within that context, as well as my understanding of what constitutes teaching and learning within that particular setting. In the second section, I draw attention to the delicate nature of students' agency within the learning process, as well as how having or not having this agency can have strong implications for students' opportunities to negotiate their identities as literacy learners. In the third section, I further highlight the influence of individual agency within the classroom, drawing attention to the material and representational resources available to

students in the composition process when they are given the opportunity to act as agents in the writing process.

5.1 Creating a Communicative Space for Writing

In one of the first writing sessions with Melkorka in fall 2007, I asked whether she wanted to sit down and discuss possible writing projects. She seemed pleased with the idea, and as we talked, she told me how she would like to write many short stories based on her experiences. In our discussion, she shared with me some incidents from her own life that she would like to include in her stories. At the end of class, as we were wrapping up our discussion, she looked at me with a light in her eyes, stating, "I am going to be so proud when I finish this!" Excited by Melkorka's inspiration, I went through my data from the previous year and found a rough draft of several stories that Melkorka had written toward the end of 8th grade. The next day, I brought them to class and gave them to her. She read through them and smiled. "Here are the stories that I was going to write," she told me. "I have finished all of them." I smiled back at her. "I am not so sure about that," I told her. "Now the real work is just about to begin."

Guided by the notion of the writer‘s workshop, in which students pre-write, draft, peer review, edit, and share their work (Atwell, 1998), I tried to withdraw from the authority position that the institutional Discourse with which I had aligned myself upon entering the classroom had created for me and, instead, invited students to fill the instructional site with their voices, ideas, and experiences. I dedicated three lessons per week to free writing, for which one lesson was devoted for students to share their work and to receive feedback on it at different stages in the writing process.

Giving students' ownership over their writing in this way was the first step in trusting students to lead me into their writing process, thus enabling me to examine the material and representational resources from which they were drawing when putting their thoughts into written language. These lessons provided students the freedom to choose their own writing topics; time to explore their ideas, experiences, feelings, and identities; and space to wrestle with and question the conventions of the Icelandic language.

Although I was excited about seeing students' texts emerge within the context of the classroom, I cannot deny the feeling of anxiety that these changes brought about. In the back of my mind, I was going through the list of the instructional components that I was "supposed" to address and the material that "needed" to be covered during the academic year. What if the writers' workshop did not provide me with the opportunities to address these?

Further, I worried about students' commitment to their writing. What if they did not take on the responsibility that I expected them to? What if they just "goofed off" and spent the whole instructional time doing nothing of importance? The most difficult part of this, however, was to withdraw from the authoritative role that I had taken on upon entering the classroom and to venture into the unknown. What if my decision led us down the wrong path? Would it mean that I had failed my students?

My students did not appear to share my concern. They seemed to welcome this opportunity, as highlighted by Melkorka's statement: "I am going to be so proud when I finish this!" I did not have to wait long before I began to observe some significant changes in students' attitudes toward writing. Instead of waiting for me to tell them what to do, as soon as I entered the classroom, they began to ask whether it was time for writing. Often, they would already have their writing tools on the tables or be at the computer ready to begin working on their writing. Students took charge of their writing, and the instructional space began to fill up with their questions. These questions ranged from simply asking for the words that they needed, such as how to write *hringja* (call), *lánaðar* (borrowed), *draugar* (ghost), or *rafmagnsinnstung*a (electric outlet), to asking for assurance that they were spelling words such as *miðvikudagur* (Wednesday) or *hissa* (surprised) correctly. In the latter case, students would sign the word, spell it the way they thought it was spelled, and ask me whether it was correct.

In the beginning, students' questions were usually directed toward me rather than toward the other students, and I saw it as my responsibility to respond to their questions. However, once I began to notice how students observed each other's questions and wondered about each other's possible answers, I consciously began to point out to them how they could be resources to each other, as the following incident illustrates.

On September 14, 2007, Stefán and Viktoría were sitting at their tables working on their stories. All of a sudden Stefán looked at me.

"Stríða (tease)," he signed. "How do I spell it?" Viktoría caught his question and began to spell (more to herself than to Stefán) "S-T-R-." She stopped and thought about it. I noticed her attempt.

"Yes, that's right." I encouraged her. "How would you continue with this word?"

"S-T-R-Í-Ð-A," she fingerspelled to me, correctly.

Stefán had not noticed her answer and asked again. I directed his question to Viktoría, who spelled the word back to him. He wrote it down and continued with his writing.

On another occasion, Viktoría and Stefán were sitting by the computers working on their stories (Research Journal, January 17, 2008). At one point, Viktoría stopped writing and looked at me. Her face filled with frustration.

"I am always writing this word but I cannot get it right!" She signed, "move" (flytja), and spelled "F-L-Y-T-A."

Stefán noticed her remarks and spelling attempts, and I saw him making the sign for -J-.

"Yes." I look at him. "That's right, -J- is missing. How would you write the word?"

"F-L-Y-T-J-A," he spelled.

"That's right," I repeated. "Show Viktoría." He got her attention and spelled the word to her.

"Thanks," Viktoría responded, and they went back to writing.

At first, I was unsure what to make of these initial changes occurring in the classroom. When students' questions and discussions began to emerge, I felt that something remarkable was happening. However, when I wrote down these experiences in my research journal and read them through, I was not sure about their significance. There I was in the classroom, giving students written signifiers that could possibly capture the meaning of the sign that they wanted to communicate in their writing or assuring them that they were correctly spelling the written signifier that they had chosen to carry their meaning from Sign Language to written Icelandic. In addition, I was pointing out to students how they could become valuable resources for each other.

To tell the truth, it did not feel as if I was doing a lot of teaching. What I did not recognize at this moment was how these mundane interactions over students' writing were filtered with assumptions and beliefs about literacy instruction essential to the formation of a sociocultural Discourse that centered on students' practices within the context of the classroom. In the Discourse that was under construction, the instructional site was no longer a place where the teacher had the authority to determine the content to be covered or the nature of the assignments to be completed or to relegate meaningful literacy activities to skill and drill exercises and other remedial activities. Instead, the instructional site became a space—a learning community—where students' literacy and language learning were based on the cultural and linguistic resources that they brought to the classroom.

That I had doubts about whether the experiences I was having and writing about in my research journal constituted real teaching shows that a part of me was still trapped by the institutional Discourse with which I had aligned myself upon entering the classroom, the one

that valued propositional knowledge of the mastering of predetermined skills in the process of becoming literate. When students' questions began to emerge within the classroom, I sensed that I could not evaluate their learning effort based on a predetermined scale ranging from right to wrong, as the institutional Discourse dictated that I should do. Obviously, that Discourse had reified my notion of who I was as a teacher because, once trying to leave it, I did not know my role within the classroom. When writing in my research journal, I often wondered whether what I was doing could actually be considered "teaching."

In contrast with the institutional Discourse that I was in the process of deconstructing, the sociocultural Discourse that I was trying to assume as a teacher did not place me in a position to judge students' efforts on a scale of right or wrong. Rather, the sociocultural Discourse mediating and shaping our interaction originated in the idea of the individual as a meaningful communicator. As such, the educational context is that of "meaning making in a social and cultural environment, together with an attempt to understand what principles children themselves use in their representation of the world" (Kress, 1997, p. 8). From this point of view, I was not meant to evaluate students' writing effort in terms of its rightness or wrongness. Rather, I needed to learn to see the meaning inherent in the interaction taking place in front of me. From this perspective, I began to see students' questions as more than a request for a written signifier that could capture the meaning of the sign that they wanted to communicate in their writing. In posing their questions, students were providing me with the first evidence of the multimodal nature of literacy. That is, in communicating the meaning that they wanted to express, students brought their intended meaning, the inwardly produced sign, to the sign made on the hand, the outwardly produced sign, that could capture that meaning. Further, the ways in which students asked for reassurance about whether they were writing words correctly, by bringing the meaning they wanted to communicate to the individual sign and from there to the fingerspelled version of a written resource they had already encountered as a possible signifier for carrying that meaning, guided me toward the material and representational resources upon which students drew in the meaning-making process and how these resources could be used to facilitate their access to literacy and language learning.

In the same way, my responses to students' questions began to take on a new appearance. Instead of being merely answers, I began to see the intrinsic message that my responses were conveying to students. By responding to students' needs as they were transcribing their experiences of the world, I was providing reassurance that this is what this space was all about. Thus, for two reasons, the mundane interactions presented above were

invaluable in beginning to negotiate the social positions that the new educational Discourse set in place for us. First, through our interaction, we were learning more about each other and the social positions that we held. Second, these encounters enabled us to strengthen our notion of what this newly created space was about, which, in turn, would guide us to further construct it in a way that accounted for the needs of individuals as well as the needs of the group in learning literacy and their second language. In the following section, I discuss the delicate nature of human agency intrinsic in the sociocultural Discourse that the students and I were constructing and how the way in which we managed to negotiate it through our daily interactions could have profound implications for students' learning.

5.2 Agency and Identities in Students' Learning

Stefán frequently encountered difficulty in finding topics to write about. During the brainstorming process, I often sat down with him, encouraging him to recall memories or events that could serve as the basis for his writings. Although I intended to help him come up with ideas, my "help" sometimes became a hindrance to him. In this section, I proceed by sharing two incidents taking place in my second year of teaching where Stefán and I collaboratively try to come with an idea for him to write about. These incidents simultaneously illuminate the importance of students having agency over and within their learning processes in order to enact an identity as a writer and the complex role teachers confront in making and negotiating a space that preserves this agency.

November 26, 2007, was one of those days when Stefán and I successfully managed to come up with an idea that Stefán then wrote about. For some reason, Stefán was the only student present that day. He sat in his seat, staring into space. It seemed that he did not have an idea about what to write. As we looked at each other, I remembered an idea that I had for him two days earlier. Based on his previous writing in class about a stormy night when the electricity went off in his house, his independent reading of Teitur Tímaflakkari by Sigrún Eldjárn, a story of a boy who was kidnapped and sent into the future, and Margt býr í myrkrinu by Þorgrímur Þráinsson, a ghost story that a deaf colleague signed aloud to the group, I suggested that he write a ghost story.

"Good idea," he responded. Then he stood up to get the book with a list of Icelandic names, which I had checked out from the library and placed in the classroom, so that he could find a name for his main character. Unfortunately, I had just returned the book, as it was overdue.

"You can go to the library to get that book again," I told him.

"No, that's okay," he responded and picked up some novels to look for a name.

"This book only has names for girls," he told me after skimming through several pages. He placed the book in the shelf and sat down by his table. After a moment he told me, "I'm going to call my main character A-D-D-I."

"Really?" I asked him. "Just like my husband."

"Really," he signed back, obviously finding the coincidence amusing. "Did you know that Andrés önd (Donald Duck) was called A-D-D-I when he was little?"

"No, I did not know that," I replied.

"Neither did I," he told me. "I was just reading Donald Duck the other day when I saw that." He decided to call his main character Andrés (Donald). He wrote:

Andrés vakanði eina óveðursnótt. Hann settis upp, stóð á fætur ganga að glugga og horfa út. Allt í einu . . .	*Donald woke up on a stormy night. He sat up, stood up walk to window and look out. All of a sudden . ..*

At this point, Stefán stopped writing, went to one of his former stories where he had been writing about a tornado, identified the word tornado, and then continued with his story.

. . . hvirfilbylur. Andrés líður Blóðið frýs í æðum hans. Andrés öskra Mamma! Mamma! Koma og sagði hvað? Andrés sagði sjá út? Mamma sagði komdu niður! Út allt inn kjallari hleri þarf opna fara inn og Loki. Andrés og mamma bíða lengi og Andrés sjá draugur afi.	*. . . tornado. Donald feels the blood freeze in his veins. Donald scream Mother! Mother! Come and said what? Donald said See out! Mother said Come down! Out all in basement hatch need open go in and Close. Donald and mother wait a long time, and Donald see ghost grandfather.*

This was as far as Stefán got that day. By December 6, Stefán had finished his story, typed it into the computer, and shared it with the group. The other incident took place on February 29, 2008. Once again, Stefán was trying to come up with a new topic to write about. One of the techniques that I had observed him using in this process was to write a word on the top of the page and to use it as a title for his story. As I walked over to him that morning, I

noticed that he had written the word Tungl (Moon) on the top of the page and had drawn a little picture of a half moon next to it. I signed the word "moon" as I pointed to it.

"What is this story going to be about?" I asked him. He shrugged his shoulders. We both thought about it. Within a moment, I broke the silence. "Do you want to write about people traveling to the moon?" He nodded, seeming to think that the idea was good. Then he began to write.

Maður heitir Arnar, Hann á 3 vinur heitur Korkur, Pétur, Þór. Þeir allt áhuga tungl. Þeir ælta fara í tungl með geimskutlu. Maður er stjórna heiti Jón.	*A man called Arnar, He has 3 friends named Korkur, Pétur, Þór. They are all interested moon. They are going to the moon in a spaceship. Man is controlling name Jón.*

As I observed Stefán working on this writing, I noticed that he was having difficulty developing the story. The text above was as far as he got that day. The next day, Stefán sat with his notebook in front of him and did not seem to know how to continue the story. I walked over and took a seat beside him.

"How are you going to proceed with this story?" I asked. He shrugged his shoulders. After a short while, I asked him again.

"He is not doing what he is supposed to be doing," he told me, pointing to Þórður, who is sitting in front of one of the computers.

"Don't worry about Þórður," I told him. "How are you going to proceed with your story?" No matter how much I tried to get him to focus on his story, he kept pointing to Þórður and saying that he was not doing what he was supposed to be doing. Finally, I stood up and pulled the portable green board between Stefán and Þórður so Stefán was no longer able to see Þórður. As I turned back to Stefán, he stood up angrily and walked out of the classroom. We had had a conflict like this before, so I decided to let him go and give him some space. I let a few minutes pass before I walked out to check on him. I found him sitting in the corner, just outside of the classroom. He saw me out of the corner of his eye and turned his head away from me. I placed myself in front of him, waving my hand in his field of vision, signaling that I wanted his attention. He ignored me. I waited and then waved again. And waited. A few seconds passed before he looked at me.

"I am not scolding you," I explained. "I see that you are having difficulties deciding what will happen next in your story. I know that you can write, but it seems to be more

difficult for you to develop your ideas. I am just trying to help you by asking you to explain the story to me because if you know how you are going to proceed, it becomes easier for you to write it. But if you have no idea what this story should be about, then you can just put it away and begin a new one." I paused.

"Come back into the classroom, please," I asked him.

"Okay," he replied. He stood up and walked in. He went back to his table and turned to a new page in his notebook.

"What are you going to write about?" I asked him.

He thought about it. "A dragon," he replied. Then he wrote: D-R-E . . .

"How does the word end?" he asked me. I looked at the notebook, fingerspelling through what he had written: D-R-E . . .

"Good," I told him, and then I added " . . . K-I." He wrote it down, looked at it, and then wrote "dragon" next to it in English.

"Is this the same word?" he asked me, pointing to the English and Icelandic versions of the word.

"Yes," I told him. He appeared calm now and was on his way to the world of his newly created dragon.

Once I opened up the classroom to students' voices and experiences, I began to notice more frequently the motivations underlying students' writing, namely the importance of students' agency within the writing process (Cope & Kalantzis, 2005; Kress, 2005a; New London Group, 1996). Even as the incidents above illustrate the importance of Stefán's agency to his opportunities for learning and to the negotiation of his identity as a writer, they also further highlight the challenging role of my negotiating the multiple Discourses emerging within the context of my classroom as I attempt to provide a safe space for my students and the resources they needed to negotiate their identities as literacy learners.

In many ways, the two incidents are similar. There we were, Stefán and I, trying to come up with a topic for Stefán to write about. In both cases, there was something that compelled me to suggest a topic to Stefán, which, in both cases, he decided to take on. In the first incident, it was our shared history within the classroom that made me think of an idea for him to write about. I knew, from the books that he had read and the writing projects that he had undertaken, that he had been exposed to the descriptive language that characterizes ghost stories. Therefore, if he had not already internalized the written resources he needed to write a ghost story, i.e., converted the words that he had read to inwardly made signs, he should know

where he could identify the language resources that he might need to capture the meaning that he wanted to communicate in his writing.

As the incident shows, once Stefán had an idea of what he could write about, his actions in the writing process indicate the agency that he was able to take on in that specific situation. He proceeded by finding a name for his character. Stefán's interest in names had emerged in relation to finding names for the characters in his stories. In response, we had already gone to the library and borrowed a book with Icelandic names, *Nafnabókin mín*, to keep in the classroom as a writing resource, which Stefan consulted often. When he could not find that particular book, he moved to other books as a resource for finding names. Although that search was unsuccessful, the name that he came up with, Andrés, arose from one of his prior readings. Then, he moved into the process of writing.

In looking for a written signifier to carry the meaning of tornado, Stefán moved independently to one of his prior stories to find the word for which he was looking. Two things about how Stefan explored his written language resources to capture meaning grabbed my attention. First, having read Stefán's independent reading book *Teitur Tímaflakkari,* one cannot help but notice the resemblance between the opening of that story and the opening of Stefán's ghost story. This indicates Stefán's ability to draw upon ideas and language resources that he has encountered through his reading to inform the construction of his own narrative. Second, in his use of the sentence, "Donald feels the blood freeze in his veins," one sees descriptive writing.

In preparing for the read-aloud of the teen story, *Margt býr í myrkrinu,* my colleague and I had noticed the descriptive language that the author used to portray fear, and we had decided to draw students' attention to that aspect of the story, in particular, pointing out how students should use descriptive language in describing their characters' feelings, instead of just stating them. The sentence above is the first piece of evidence that Stefán was grappling with the Icelandic idioms and descriptive language that we were emphasizing, turning them into available material resources to represent his understanding of the feeling of fear.

In all, the social context of this situation and the language resources available to Stefán during the composition of his story supported his agency within the writing process in a way that allowed him to take more risks with his use of language than otherwise might have been possible without this foundation. Thus, throughout the entire process, Stefán was able, given sufficient resources and the agency over the writing process, to explore and enact an identity of a writer.

The second incident, in contrast, did not provide Stefán with the same opportunities to act as an agent within the instructional site. It began like the first one. There we were, Stefán and I, trying to come up with a writing topic. Observing him writing the word *tungl* (moon), along with the little drawing of a half moon that he made next to it, I asked him whether he wanted to write about people traveling to the moon. This was just an idea that emerged in response to Stefán's stimuli, an idea that I could easily have kept to myself. As a matter of fact, I had no evidence that Stefán had an interest in this topic or that he had inwardly produced signs out of or had an access to the material resources that he needed to develop this story. Nevertheless, Stefán accepted my idea, although not as enthusiastically as the ghost story idea, and began by naming his characters. After that, I noted that he was having difficulty further developing his idea.

It was not until the next day, however, when I sat down beside Stefán to ask how he was going to proceed with the story, that I came to experience firsthand how easily my agency, when intervening in students' learning processes to further enhance their learning of Icelandic, could turn into something that inhibited their learning. In my haste to come up with a writing topic in relation to Stefán's visual stimuli, I unthinkingly imposed a storyline upon Stefán. As is already evident, this act of imposition placed considerable restrictions on Stefán's ability to act as an agent within the writing process and to negotiate his identity as a writer.

Stefán's reaction to my questions about how he was going to proceed with the story indicates that the power dimension that had characterized our interaction during the first months of school was always present (see Chapter 4). Instead of being able to confront me, the authority figure, the hearing teacher, with the issue, telling me that he did not know how to continue his story, Stefán used other techniques to avoid the task that I had imposed upon him. To begin with, Stefán repeatedly tried to deflect my attention away from him and toward Þórður. When I physically blocked his view of Þórður, Stefán's next avoidant action was to remove himself from the situation. Although this action made me uneasy, I knew from working with Stefán that he might need a few minutes to think about what had happened. These few minutes also gave me the time to think about what had happened and how I could react to the situation. My response of reassuring Stefán that it was all right for him to abandon the story that he was working on and to begin another one implied that, although I was not exactly sure of the underlying reason for Stefán's behavior, I knew that it was related to the topic that I had suggested to him.

It was only later, after reflecting upon what appeared to be Stefán's lack of confidence, that I came to see how Stefán's lack of interest in and material resources to conceptualize and communicate a story about an astronaut deprived him of the opportunity to act as an agent within the writing process. Thus, limiting his opportunities to develop his identity as a writer. Even more striking is that I needed to step into Stefán's writing process and release him from the burden that I had unthinkingly imposed upon him so that he could re-enter the classroom as an agent.

That I needed to intervene this way demonstrates the profound implications of being in an educational system that reinforces specific educational practices, regardless of the diverse backgrounds of students. Without an opportunity to practice their agency within the learning process, students are also denied the opportunity to learn to name and negotiate the conflicts that they experience between who they are and the educational practices being reinforced. As a result, students feel helpless, not knowing how to work successfully through situations that make them feel uncomfortable, as we witnessed in the later incident with Stefán.

Comparing and contrasting the incidents above highlights the significant role that agency plays in the ever-evolving process of shaping and renegotiating students' identities as literacy learners. Thus, as teachers supporting deaf students' learning of their second language, we need to ensure that our instructional practices take into account and maintain the most valuable resources for students' learning, namely their agency within the learning process. In the following section, I further illustrate the ways in which individual agency emerged within the context of the classroom. Then I examine in depth the various modes of meaning-making that one of my students, Melkorka, draws upon in communicating her meaning in a written poem. In this section, I highlight the importance of expanding our theory of literacy learning of children who are deaf to include the multiple modes of communication that this student population brings to the classroom and how these modes can be used to facilitate deaf students' access to their second language.

5.3 Acting as Agents

All of the students were busy working on their writings. Viktoría and Melkorka were working on the computers. Melkorka had just called me over to talk through an idea that she was trying to develop. As we discussed her work, I noticed Viktoría standing up from her computer and walking to the green board. A few seconds later, she signaled that she wanted

my attention. When I looked at her, she asked me to come over and look at what she had written on the green board. A moment later, I walked over to her to see that she had written different forms of the verb "to say" on the board.

Segist

„hvað segirðu gott"

Segir

Sagði

„áður eða var"

"When does one use 'what'?" she asked me, pointing to the green board. "This is so complicated. I asked my mom when to use 'what' and she told me that it is all based on some feeling. I got so mad!" (Research Journal, January 14, 2008).

Students' agency was an ever-evolving force that took on various forms within the space of writing. It appeared most noticeably in students' increased responsibility in identifying and verbalizing grammatical components of the Icelandic language that were confusing to them, as Viktoría did in the incident presented above. Students' initiative in verbalizing their challenges gave me additional opportunities to examine the nature of the challenges that my students were encountering, through their perspectives as deaf students, in the process of learning Icelandic. In so doing, I was able to account for their challenges in a more nuanced way than the grammar exercises that I had been assigning could ever do. Just as the modifications that I made to my writing instruction increased students' opportunities to identify and articulate components of the Icelandic language that were confusing to them, it provided me with more opportunities to intervene in students' learning processes by addressing, in a more direct way, the aspects of the Icelandic language that I knew that students were either working on or ready to begin learning, as the incident below illustrates.

Viktoría and Melkorka were both working on their writings. Viktoría was writing about her family. When I walked around I see her write, Ég á tveir[14] *systur (I have two sisters), I made eye contact with her and pointed to the word tveir.*

"We just learned about the different genders of the numerals 1, 2, 3, and 4," I reminded her. "Can you recall the rule for these words?"

"I know, I remember," she told me. "This is right."

"Is it?" I asked her. "You need to look at the word following the numeral 2, the word systur (sisters), to determine the gender of the numeral. What gender is that?"

[14] In Icelandic, the words for the numerals 1-4 have different forms by gender—masculine, feminine and neuter—and each of these genders has four declensions.

"It is feminine, and that is why it is right to say it like this," she replied, and pointed to the word tveir in her text.

"I am not sure that's right," I told her. "What are the three forms for the numeral two? Bring your grammar book here and look it up. Just keep the book here, and then you can use it if you need information like this."

"No, I'm not going to keep my grammar book here. That's stupid," signed Viktoría, and she began to spell the word with her fingers: "T-V-Ö (the neutral form), T-V-E-I-R (the masculine form)." She pointed to her third finger, thought for a moment, spelled "T-," and stopped. Melkorka joined the conversation. They considered it together, and Viktoría spelled again, " T-V-Ö, T-V-E-I-R." Melkorka kept going: "T-Æ-V." She stopped, began again: "T-V-Æ-R," and looked at me. I confirmed her answer. She spelled it to Viktoría, who changed it accordingly in her writing and continued with her work (Research Journal, January 29, 2007).

Reflecting upon this and similar incidents, it became evident that, although students were aware of the existence of different grammatical rules, they were having difficulty applying them to their writing. Consequently, students' creative writing not only provided a meaningful context for addressing grammatical aspects of the Icelandic language but also further served to increase students' awareness of how they could use additional resources, such as grammar books, Web-based declension programs like the one found on the homepage of Árnastofun (arnastofnun.is), other books, and dictionaries, to enhance their writing.

As is evident in Viktoría's comment "No, I am not going to keep my grammar book here. That's stupid," students did not always recognize the usefulness of these additional resources. The social context surrounding the writing block seems much more important to them. They preferred to use each other as resources during the writing process, frequently intervening into each other's work as we see Melkorka doing in the incident above. Further, they often sought my assistance in the process of getting their ideas into words.

In the following incident, I examined Melkorka's writing process. In so doing and given the agency that Melkorka has over her writing process, I draw attention to the ways in which Melkorka drew upon and integrated multiple modes in the process of making and reshaping her meaning into a coherent text.

It was January 9, 2008. Viktoría went to the computer to work on her writing. Melkorka sat at her table, wondering what to do. I asked her whether she wanted to continue writing poems like she had just been doing, or whether she wanted to go back to writing short stories.

"Poems," she answered. She went to her drawer, found her notebook, looked through the pages, brought it back to her table, and sat down. I observed her opening the book and beginning to write. She stopped, obviously thinking. Then she turned to me.

"How do you write . . . ?" and she breathed in and blew out.

I repeated the question, "How do you write . . . ?" and then I breathed in and blew out. I wrote ***andardráttur*** *(breath) on the green board and asked her whether this was the word for which she was looking. She thought about it, then replied, "No, I mean what is it that I am doing? She breathed in again and blew out. I wrote two options on the green board:*

1) ***Ég dreg djúpt andann*** *(I take a deep breath)*

2) ***Ég anda að mér*** *(I breathe in)*

Melkorka looked at the board, thought for a moment, went back to writing, stopped, stared into the air as if she was thinking of what should come next. I wrote in my journal, looked at her, and wondered whether I should intervene, but I remembered reading about the importance of giving students quiet time to think. I decided to continue writing in my journal. In a moment, she looked back into her notebook and then looked at me.

"Can you help me put this on the computer?" she asked.

"I can do that when you have finished writing," I responded. I walked over to her and read through her writing. I described the picture that came to mind upon reading her words and asked her how she was going to continue. In her writing, she was expressing her feelings after one of her conflicts with her father over her "messy" room, asking herself why she always does what she does.

"Which is what?" I asked her.

"Nothing," she answered.

"Try to write that," I told her. I went back to my seat and wrote in my journal while she was thinking.

The next day, Melkorka called me over from where I was working with Viktoría. I asked her to wait a moment while I finished discussing Viktoría's writing with her. When I got to Melkorka, I found that she had written the first draft of her poem on the computer.

"hvernig veit ég hvort maður þykir vænt um þá!"	*"How do I know if one cares for them!"*[15]
Ég loka auganum og dreg djúpt andann	*I close the eye and take a deep breath*
Ég horfi á auganum hans pabba minn	*I look at my father's eye*
Ég sé, ég finn að honum þykir	*I see, I feel that he cares*
vænt um mér en hann er gefsta upp á mér	*for me but he is given up on me*
tár felltu niður um kinnar á mér	*tears fell down my cheek*
Hann fór út um herbergi ég fór að liggja	*He left out of the room I went to lay*
Í rúminu og fann vegg hreyfast	*In bed and felt wall move*
Ég fattaði að hann fór út.	*I take in that he left out*

"Okay, would you like me to look through it?" I asked her.

"Yes," she answered. I sat down in front of the computer and began to discuss her choice of words.

"How did the wall move?" I asked her. She explained it to me.

"How did you look in your dad's eyes?" I asked, making a proform[16] *for eyes and how she looked remorsefully into her father's eyes.*

"No." She shook her head and illustrated with the proforms how she met her father's eyes.

"How did you cry? Did the tears flow down your cheeks or did they creep down your cheeks?" I asked her. She explained it to me.

"And how were your father's eyes?" I asked her.

"What do you mean?" she asked me, trying to understand what I was asking.

"For example, did you see anger, sorrow, or kindness in them?"

She answered. We discussed different words and word choice, and I edited some of the grammar, declensions, and verb tenses. At this point, I decided that Melkorka might benefit from discussing words and seeing how to write the nouns in the proper form. Together, we edited and expanded on Melkorka's first draft of the poem. Through our discussion, the poem took on a different shape, as this final version illustrates:

[15] In translating the poem from Icelandic to English, it is challenging to preserve all the grammatical nuances. Thus, the English translation provided here is meant only to give a better idea of how the meaning of the poem was transformed through our communication and not to shed light on the grammatical nuances.

[16] Proforms are classificatory handshapes that act like anaphoric pronouns in Sign Languages (Sutton-Spence & Woll, 1998).

"Hvernig veit maður þegar manni þykir vænt um einhvern"

Ég loka augunum – dreg djúpt andann
mæti augnaráði pabba
ég sé, ég finn að honum þykir vænt um mig
en hann er að gefast upp á mér
tár læðast niður kinnar mínar
hann rýkur út úr herberginu
skellir hurðinni
ég leggst upp í rúm
get ekki haldið aftur af tárunum
þau flæða niður
eins og úrhellisrigning
veggurinn titrar
og ég veit að hann er farinn út
ég get ekki hætt að hugsa um
þessi góðlegu grænbláu augu
hjarta mitt öskrar af sársauka
af hverju geri ég aldrei neitt?

Af hverju get ég ekki, bara einu sinni, gert eitthvað fyrir pabba?
Af hverju get ég ekki sýnt honum hvað mér þykir vænt um hann?

ég veit ég get það
en ég geri það ekki
Af hverju?

Melkorka

"How do you know when you care about someone?"

I close my eyes – take a deep breath
meet my father's eyes
I see, I feel he cares for me
but he is about to give up on me
tears creep down my cheeks
he rushes out of the room
slams the door
I lay down in bed
cannot hold back the tears
they flow down
like a heavy shower
the walls vibrate
and I know that he has gone out
I cannot stop thinking about
those kind turquoise eyes
my heart screams with pain
why do I never do anything?

Why can't I, just once, do something for my dad?
Why can't I, just once, show him how much I care for him?

I know I can
but I will not do it
Why?

Melkorka

This vignette bears witness to how my assumptions and beliefs about what literacy instruction should be about had transformed significantly. I no longer saw it as my responsibility to get students "through" the learning material that "needed" to be covered.

Rather, my role was to help students to get their meaning into written words, and in so doing, guide them toward resources that could help them grow as writers. Applying the lens of multimodality to this incident enabled me to examine the ways in which Melkorka's agency in the writing process allowed her to draw on and integrate different modes as she composed her poem, which, in turn, facilitated her access to the written resources that she needed to communicate her intended meaning in written Icelandic.

Before discussing the incident, it is important to note that writing played a big role in Melkorka's life. She frequently talked about how she used writing to express and work through her feelings. When I asked her whether she would be willing to share these writings with me and the other students, she smiled and told me she could not. Her writings were scattered throughout her room; she would just write notes here and there and then throw them away. It was evident that the texts that Melkorka worked on in the classroom involved various issues that she had to deal with as a teenager who was deaf. She chose different genres to write about these experiences, most often short stories and poems. Reading through the incident recounted above, as well as Melkorka's poem, it becomes evident that having the opportunity to write from her experiences provides Melkorka with valuable resources to grapple with and expand her understanding of the Icelandic language.

In reading through the first draft of Melkorka's poem, it also becomes evident that having lived through the moment described in the poem allowed Melkorka to rely on her interpretation of the situation in writing about the incident. She recalled the situation as experienced through all her senses and expressed it through the material resources most apt to represent the meaning of her poem in writing at that particular moment. The poem itself is very descriptive, allowing us to imagine Melkorka in her room with her father. In the first two lines, "I close my eyes – take a deep breath / Meet my father's eyes," Melkorka sets the tone for the poem, allowing the reader to experience how the situation was filled with tension. As we discussed her first draft of her poem, she further vivified this intensified imagery by going back and forth between her observation of the situation and the emotions that it evokes within her. By relying on her memory, and by using all her means to recall and communicate this moment in writing, Melkorka allows us to experience this situation from her perspective.

There was only one instance in the composition process when Melkorka did not have a written signifier to express the meaning that she wanted to communicate, that is, how to write that she had taken a deep breath. In her search for that written signifier, we saw how she turned to me and followed up on her question, "How do you write . . . ?" through the gesture of breathing in and blowing out. In so doing, she invited me to intervene into her writing

process by providing the written signifiers that I might use to communicate that particular gesture in Icelandic. The first thing that came to mind, when I observed Melkorka's gestures, was the word *andardráttur* (breath), which I wrote on the green board.

What becomes interesting in examining this exchange between Melkorka and me is that, although Melkorka did not know the written signifier for the meaning that she was trying to communicate, she was able to draw upon her understanding of the Icelandic language to evaluate whether the words that I gave have the potential to capture her meaning. In Icelandic, the most common ending for strong masculine nouns is the *–ur* ending' thus the ending *–ur* in the word *andardráttur* signals that this is a strong masculine noun. Melkorka's response, "No, I mean what is it that I am doing?" revealed her awareness that the signifier that I gave her, the noun, did not suffice for the movement that she was trying to communicate to me. Consequently, she repeated her question. I responded with two slightly different sentences that captured the movement for which she was asking. Without a word, she seemed to evaluate the two options that I wrote on the green board and picked the one that she thought captured better the meaning that she was trying to communicate.

In her composing of the poem, Melkorka did more than search for written signifiers that could capture her meaning. Rather, the whole editing process bore witness to how Melkorka used the writing process to seek out assistance that had the potential of transforming the written resources that she brought to the writing of her poem to a more standardized way of expressing her experience. Early on in the writing process, we saw how Melkorka looked at me to ask whether I would help her put her poem on the computer afterwards. Through our collaborative work, Melkorka frequently sought my assistance in fitting her language into more standardized forms of Icelandic. In looking at Melkorka's writing, it becomes apparent that she has developed quite a strong feeling for Icelandic sentence structure. Additionally, her writing indicates that she has developed a strong awareness of how different word endings indicate different declensions of nouns and verb tenses, although she is still having difficulty knowing when to apply which one.

Although students' writing increased my awareness of the grammatical aspects of the Icelandic language with which students struggled, and I sought opportunities to help students further increase their awareness of these aspects, correcting students' grammar was not the main purpose of helping them make their language grammatically standard. When I read through students' work, as Melkorka was asking me to do, my instructional aim was always to help students fill their writing with more detailed meaning. After reading through her poem, I asked Melkorka to give me additional information that would help me to flesh out the

image that I had in my head. Although the communication over Melkorka's poem, in the incident above, was primarily in Icelandic Sign Language, there were times when, to express her intended meaning, Melkorka had to access material resources, such as images and video clips on the Internet, to communicate to me what she was trying to verbalize. Sometimes she even acted out the whole scenario that she was trying to communicate. In this way, the multiple encounters that I had with Melkorka over her writing provided us with opportunities to transform the written resources already available to her to better capture the meaning that she was trying to communicate, as the second draft of Melkorka's poem illustrates.

5.4 Concluding Thoughts

This chapter provided an insight into how the changes made within the instructional site influenced the construction of a sociocultural Discourse which embraced the importance of agency and identity within the learning process. In the next and the final chapter I bring together what I have learnt from studying my own practice and examine ways in which it may become helpful for teachers in similar situations.

6. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

"Stories create the lives we live, and when we listen closely, they teach us about our lives"

(Capps & Ochs, 1995, p. 19)

The purpose of this dissertation was to document the process one hearing literacy teacher underwent in order to create a space within the classroom for her students to bring in and develop literacy practices better suited to meet their literacy needs. In this chapter, I engage with the third question of this study by discussing what I have learned about my literacy teaching through this process of studying it, and how my experience may be useful to other teachers in similar situations, the field of literacy education in general, and the literacy learning of children who are deaf in particular. In so doing, I revisit the first two research questions of this project, and trace the ways in which I came to answer them:

1. How does one hearing literacy teacher understand the literacy practices students who are deaf bring to the classroom?

2. How does one hearing literacy teacher of students who are deaf draw on these literacy practices?

In preparing to enter the classroom to answer these questions I did two things. First, I decided that upon re-entering the classroom – my research site – I would adopt the position of the teacher as researcher, taking an inquiry stance on practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). As teacher research, this study relied on participant-observation, a teacher-research journal, formal and informal interviews with parents and students, photographs, and other artifacts, including students' literacy work. Second, I adopted the theoretical tools of the New Literacy Studies (NLS), particularly the conceptual tools of "big D" Discourses and multimodality, to inform my work as a teacher. These were valuable because the theoretical framework of the NLS has expanded the idea of literacy from mastering predetermined skills to situating literacy in individuals' sociocultural setting. The position of the teacher researcher, along with the theoretical framework of the NLS, provided the combination I needed to *intentionally* expand my ideological understanding of what counts as literacy to encompass the literacy practices students who are deaf bring into the classroom. Findings from this study illuminate that, although I was motivated to interrogate and alter my instructional practices to account for the literacy practices students who are deaf bring into the classroom, developing the habit of mind needed to interrogate the cultural forces at work in the classroom was complex and

difficult. Below, I address my research questions and illuminate the challenges I had overcome in the process of transforming my literacy instruction.

Research Question 1: How does one hearing literacy teacher understand the literacy practices students who are deaf bring into the classroom?

Answering this question depended on my ability to put sociocultural theories of literacy into practice. Findings from this study, however, show that the greatest challenge encountered in that process was *altering the educational Discourse I enacted in order to make it possible to implement my sociocultural understanding of literacy within the classroom*. My inability to inspect this educational Discourse was evident in my astonishment of how, instead of seeing students' literacy practices emerge on the pages of my teacher-research journal, my notebook began to fill up with tense descriptions of the difficulties I was experiencing in implementing my instructional ideas, students' lack of motivation, students' disrespectful behavior, and constant communication conflicts. In this way, neither my intentions of implementing sociocultural theories into my teaching practice nor my negative teaching experiences provided me with the incentive I needed to confront the educational Discourse I was enacting within the educational setting. I was so focused on *how* to get students to complete the learning activities I set in place for them, and *how* to deal with these conflicting situations that I forgot to question why I was doing what I was doing, who decided what I was to do within the classroom, and whose interests it was serving.

It was not until Melkorka confronted me by saying "I am deaf, not illiterate" that I was forced to reflect critically on the educational Discourse I was enacting. The power of Melkorka's words and the look on her face pushed me to make new connections between the NLS and the body of sociocultural research on the literacy education of children who are deaf that I brought to the classroom. Through extensive reflection on Melkorka's words I began to experience a change in my understanding of the theoretical work I was reading. These were no longer theories to be supported or opposed. Rather, from that moment on, my academic reading described the reality found within *my* classroom. In other words, *this incident forced me to confront how I, in my practice, was unconsciously enacting the role of the oppressive hearing teacher, and which in turn forced my students to take on the role of the oppressed deaf student*. This was a critical moment in my study. I came to realize that being aware of the oppressive history of deaf education is not enough to make the ideological changes needed to alter this reality. Additionally, I realized that bringing one set of theoretical perspectives to the classroom to help me see students' literacy practices *emerge* within the context of the

classroom would not get me very far with the task I had set out to do. If I were to be successful in changing my literacy instruction, I needed to learn to *use the tools I brought with me into the setting* (the critical mindset of the teacher-researcher and the NLS framework) to tune into complex moments like the conflicts I was having with students, and deconstruct the historical and cultural forces that gave rise to these incidents.

As I re-examined the ongoing conflicts with students through this altered understanding of what was happening within the classroom, the facial expressions students used to express their disdain for what I expected of them, the words students used to react to the instructional practices I reinforced within the classroom, and the ways in which students used the space within the classroom to express their discontent, as well as students' overall lack of motivation, began to take on a new meaning. Students' behavior became a sign of *resistance*, as they were trying to protect their ways of being within the teacher-centered, task-oriented classroom.

Through the perspective of the NLS, I began to trace the ways in which my beliefs and assumptions about literacy, as they emerged through my educational practices within the classroom, were situated and mediated through the multiple modes of making meaning – the institutional Discourse – present within the educational setting. In this way, I began to recognize how the material resources constituting the institutional notion of literacy – including the instructional materials available, the teaching plan handed out at the beginning of the school year, the organization of the classroom, and the ways in which literacy instruction was talked about within the setting – were not simply objective resources set in place for teachers to use. Rather, the material resources awaiting me were part of the insititutional Discourse, and immediately began to meditate my actions and the ways in which I should think about literacy and literacy education within that particular setting, making it even more difficult to enact the literacy ideas and sociocultural practices I was beginning to develop.

As I came to recognize how my educational practices were mediated through an institutional Discourse reflecting the very notion of literacy I wanted to avoid disseminating, I began to understand how the institutional Discourse I enacted reinforced educational practices that marginalized students' literacy practices within the context of the classroom. Consequently, if I wanted to avoid emphasizing literacy as the acquisition of a predetermined skill, and instead enable students to negotiate their identities as readers and writers by drawing on the social and cultural resources they brought to the setting, I needed to do more than modify my ideas about literacy and literacy education; I needed to pay attention to the

material resources mediating my actions within the classroom. Hence, *this study suggests that a crucial step in the process of understanding students' literacy practices within the classroom is to examine the ways in which the "big D" Discourses shaping the educational setting foster or hinder students' ability to draw upon their literacy practices.*

Research Question 2: How does one hearing literacy teacher of students who are deaf draw on the literacy practices students bring to the classroom?

In order to answer my second question it was necessary to develop, negotiate and sustain a learning community that would preserve students' agency in developing their identities as readers and writers. Although I thought of reading and writing as inseparable processes and placed a great emphasis on intertwining them in my practice, in answering this question I decided to narrow my focus to writing. I found that having students write in the classroom gave me more insight into the vital role writing could play in enabling deaf students to learn to read their second language, Icelandic. Further, it raised the question of the extent to which deaf students' "reading challenges" were determined by whether they were simultaneously provided opportunities to develop their voices as writers.

Guided by the notion of the writer's workshop, in which students pre-write, draft, peer review, edit, and share their work, I began to design an educational environment that could foster the educational practices needed to allow me to implement my sociocultural view of literacy. When the instructional site had developed into a space where students got multiple opportunities to learn Icelandic through their meaningful writings, the vital role of students' agency within the learning process became apparent.

As I came to recognize students' agency within the learning process as a motivational force for their learning, my greatest challenge on a daily basis was negotiating a space within the instructional site that preserved that agency. The complexity of this delicate task is evident in the two incidents when Stefán and I collaboratively tried to come up with something for him to write about (chapter 5). Although in both cases I ended up intervening in Stefán's brainstorming processes and suggesting a topic that he accepted, the outcomes were quite different. In the first incident, our shared history within the classroom prompted me to suggest that Stefán write a ghost story. As Stefán had already been exposed to experiences and language resources relevant to this genre of stories, these resources fostered Stefán's agency in writing this story, which in turn allowed him to enact the identity of a writer within the writing process. In the second incident, my idea of writing about people traveling to the moon was evoked by the word *tungl* (moon) and a little drawing of a half moon in his notebook.

Although Stefán initially accepted the idea, he quickly began to encounter difficulties in developing his story. When I tried to help, he attempted to deflect my attention away from him; when that did not work, he physically removed himself from the situation. As I reflected upon this incident, I came to understand how Stefán‘s lack of both interest in and material resources for conceptualizing and communicating a story about an astronaut in writing deprived him of the opportunity to act as an agent, and enact an identity as a writer within the writing process. *The lesson I learned from reflecting on this conflict was that, as teachers facilitating deaf students‘ learning of their second language, we need to ensure that our instructional practices support the most valuable resource for students‘ learning: their agency within the learning process*.

As instruction became more meaningful, I began to notice how students‘ learning of written Icelandic *was not limited to the linguistic mode,* or being able to translate Icelandic Sign Language into written Icelandic. Rather, their increased sense of agency within the learning process enabled students to draw on multiple modes of meaning-making in their search for written signifiers that could convey the meaning they wanted to express in writing.

The *first* evidence of students‘ multiple modes of communicating meaning through writing emerged in their vocabulary and spelling questions. Consider the example of Stefán asking for a written signifier that could represent the Sign[17] *stríða* (tease) and Viktoría’s attempt to fingerspell the word *flytja* (move), that, according to her, she was always writing but could not get right (Chapter 5). Students‘ questions illuminate the ways in which students integrated different modes to work through the meaning they wanted to express in writing. First, questions about vocabulary demonstrate how students used Signs such as *stríða* (tease) and *flytja* (move) as material resources in their search for written signifiers that could capture their intended meaning. Second, in asking for reassurance that they were writing words correctly, students would Sign the word they were to express in writing, then fingerspell it the way they thought it was spelled and ask me whether it was correct. In examining how multiple modes for making meaning are integrated, Viktoría‘s attempt to write the word flytja (move) is an instructive example. Viktoría proceeds by bringing the meaning she wants to communicate in writing, the idea of moving, to the Sign that captures it. From the Sign, Viktoría then attempts to recall the written signifier F-L-Y-T-J-A through fingerspelling and by drawing on the inwardly made sign she has produced in response to her prior encounter with a written signifier, an outwardly made sign, signifying that meaning. In this way,

[17] Here, Sign with a capital ‘S’ represents Icelandic Sign Language.

students‘ vocabulary and spelling questions provide glimpses into how they draw on and integrate different modes to communicate the meaning they want to express in writing.

As students felt humanized, they continued to access more and more resources within the writing process to communicate the meanings they wanted to express. Melkorka, in her search for a written signifier that could capture her intended meaning, brought her intended meaning of “auras” to the words “everything is moving very slowly but also very fast” and a video clip that she found on YouTube (Chapter 2). In the same way, when Melkorka did not have a written signifier to communicate her experience of taking a deep breath, she brought her intended meaning to the material and representational resources or signifiers that had the potential of becoming signs for that meaning – in this case, her gesture of breathing in and blowing out, following the question “how do you write...?” In this way, students often conversed about the ideas they were trying to articulate in their writing, used various physical objects found within the classroom to represent their meanings in a search for useful written signifiers, drew pictures representing the words they were trying to convey or the setting where their stories were to take place, and sometimes even acted out the whole scenario they wanted to write.

In time the fundamental task confronting individual students within the writing process changed from “how do I say what I mean?” – which seems to perceive the act of writing as a solitary effort – to “what can stand for what I mean and how can I use the resources available to find a written signifier that will capture that meaning?” The latter question shifts the focus to writing as a mediated activity that occurs within a sociocultural context. This shift draws attention to the vital role writing could play in providing deaf students the opportunities they need to access written Icelandic. When students were able to communicate their intended meaning through multiple material and representational resources, the written signifiers that emerged were already imbued with *their* meaning. Thus, *instead of pressing words on students and forcing them to use words in our ways, the literacy instruction of children who are deaf needs to give primacy to students‘ ways of being and acting in the world and provide them with opportunities to be immersed in the written language through the resources already available to them*. In this way, we allow students to build a bridge from these resources to the written language, which in turn can facilitate students‘ understanding of these same written signifiers once they begin to encounter them while reading.

6.1 Methodological Reflections

In this study I have told my story of examining the process I as a hearing literacy teacher of children who are deaf underwent in order to create a space within the classroom for my students to bring in and develop literacy practices better suited to meet their literacy needs. In so doing, I constructed rich descriptions of the particularities of my educational setting and literacy-related interactions taking place within it, which I examined through the perspective of the NLS.

While the value of teacher research lies precisely in describing the particulars of specific incidents within one educational setting (Eisner, 1991; Moss et al., 2009; O'Connor, 2004), it is not transferable to other situations except through the reader‘s imagination. That is, through the rich decriptions of the situation under exploration, the reader is *invited* into the complex reality teachers confront in making or negotiating decisions about students‘ learning.

In an attempt to grapple with the challenges I confronted in terms of literacy instruction of children who are deaf, I read research conducted by other teacher researchers (Ballenger, 1999; Brookline Teacher Researcher Seminar, 2004; Gallas, 1994, 1998, 2003; Paley, 1997, 2004; Starr, 1993). From reading the rich descriptions found in these teacher researchers‘ work, I was not only able to envision the classrooms and realities they confronted on a daily basis, but to further imagine how I as a literacy teacher could use their work to undertake similiar research within my own classroom, grappling with the reality I confronted as a teacher on a daily basis. Furthermore, the awareness that other teachers had carried out research similiar to mine, and that their research had allowed them to improve their situations, gave me the courage I needed to carry on with my research project even when I struggled most. Thus, while some may argue that teacher research is constrained by its focus on particular settings, I see its particularities as providing the foundation teachers need to envision the actions they need to take to examine and grapple with the complexities of their educational practices.

The driving force behind my research was to better understand the lifeworlds of my students who are deaf, and to learn what I needed to do as a teacher in order to nurture their ways of being within the classroom. O‘Conner (2004) makes this point in discussing the value of teacher research. That is, while academic researchers are inclined to satisfy their academic interests, teacher researchers are more concerned with examining their interactions with students within the instructional space (O‘Connor, 2004). This happens, I believe, because in contrast with academic researchers, teachers enter the classroom every day to work with students from various backgrounds. Thus, teacher research provides invaluable insight into

what it is that teachers grapple with on a daily basis – and these issues, I argue, is what the field of education should consider in more depth.

While the process of exploring my educational practices empowered me as a teacher to carry out the work I was doing within the classroom, my position as a teacher researcher placed certain constraints on me, as I was acting in the midst of the complex classroom situation. This reality of my work did not give me the same opportunities that a non-teacher researcher would have to delve into interesting issues arising within the classroom setting. This became most evident in the fact that while I was able to create a space within the classroom that allowed me to experience and base my instruction on students‘ literacy practices, I was unable at that time to expand my work to include an in-depth exploration of the multimodal nature of the literacy practices students brought to the classroom. Thus, I see cooperation between teacher researchers and academic researchers in the field of deaf education as essential if we are to explore in more depth phenomena relevant to enhancing the literacy learning of students who are deaf.

6.2 What Teacher Research and the NLS Offers to the Field of Literacy Education of Children who are Deaf

In this research I have recounted the challenges I faced in my inquiry into the ideological forces shaping my educational setting. This was a messy undertaking, but the incidents described here bear witness to how my beliefs about literacy instruction were transformed through the practice of reflecting upon my teaching experiences through the theoretical construct of the NLS. I no longer saw my role as transferring the skills students "needed" to master in order to be able to read and write. Rather, I came to perceive literacy as *relational*, existing in the space between my students and me, evolving as we communicated over their work to capture the meanings they wished to communicate. I began to notice literacy practices that I had not had access to because of my narrow understanding of what literacy was. Having gone through the process of examining the ideological forces underlying my educational practices, and how these either foster or hinder students‘ oppportunities for drawing on the literacy practices they bring to the classroom, I now feel able to provide some recommendations for teachers faced with similiar challenges, and discuss needs for further research within the field of deaf education.

As a teacher researcher undergoing a process of ideological inquiry, I came to experience firsthand the challenges inherent in scrutinizing the Discourses at work within the educational setting (Gee, 1996, 2005, 2008). My struggle to alter the Discourse I lived by

within the school setting is particularly interesting in the light of school reforms taking place, in which teachers are being told what they need to do to improve their practices. I had entered the classroom in order to challenge these Discourses, and I experienced intense conflicts with students during my first months of fieldwork. As already evident, this was not enough to alter my educational practices. It was not until I learned to use the critical mind of the teacher-researcher and the tools of the NLS to tune into tension-filled moments that I became able to act upon and change my situation. Having gone through this process, I argue that if we want to see change within educational settings teachers need to be given the *trust* and the *tools* they need in order to grapple with the complex reality of the classroom. Instead of telling teachers what they need to do and what methods they should use to do it, educational reforms need to empower teachers to inquire into their practices and to help them figure out how they can be improved. Teacher research and educational theories can be important tools for literacy teachers of children who are deaf to do that.

I have come to see teacher research, along with the concept of "big D" Discourses, as providing an important tool for literacy teachers of children who are deaf who want to alter the ideological forces influencing their educational practices. As I inquired into and reflected upon my educational practices through the lens of "big D" Discourses, I came to understand how my beliefs about literacy and the literacy education of children who are deaf were mediated through the sociocultural context of my educational setting. Consequently, I have come to believe that we need to examine the ways in which the Discourses we enact within the classroom foster or hinder students' opportunites to draw on the literacy practices they bring into the classroom during instructional time. In so doing, teacher-researchers play an important role. *By documenting our first hand experiences within the classroom, we include information about who we are, what we believe, how we feel, what we value, and how we see the world, even if it is not our intention at the time, which we can then interrogate in order to account for different ways of understanding and being in the world*. Without developing an inquiry stance on practice, I would argue, teachers are more or less at the mercy of thinking about teaching and learning in ways provided by the culture. For this reason, anyone involved in teaching literacy should begin telling their teaching stories, and through these try to figure out who they are as teachers by interrogating the cultural forces at work in their practice. Only by knowing ourselves as teachers can we continue to re-negotiate the educational Discourses framing our teaching in ways that allow us to better support our students' literacy learning.

Even as I strove to understand the ideological forces influencing my educational practices as a hearing literacy teacher of students who are deaf, I was simultaneously

employing the concept of multimodality to further expand my understanding of what counts as literacy. Through the practice of documenting and reflecting upon literacy events in which students were engaged in the process of writing about their experiences and aspirations through the means of multimodality, I began to expand the ways in which *I* thought of literacy. In this way, my understanding of literacy progressed from viewing literacy solely in terms of the linguistic mode, or the words individudal students were able to express on a blank page or the meanings they could derive from text read, *to perceiving it as a reciprocal production of the individual's inwardly and outwardly produced signs in relation to his or her multimodal way of interpreting and representing the world*. This altered understanding of what counts as literacy allowed me to base my literacy instruction on literacy practices that might have otherwise been marginalized within the context of the classroom. However, I do not think this new understanding would have emerged if I had not been developing myself as a teacher researcher at the same time. In my case, developing an inquiry stance on practice and a multimodal understanding of literacy went hand-in-hand. *Consequently, I have come to see teacher research, along with the conceptual construct of multimodality, as providing an important tool for teachers who are in the process of expanding their understanding of literacy to account for the multiple literacies students bring to the classroom*.

The findings of this study illuminate how the ideological journey I underwent, from a clinical to a more sociocultural perspective on literacy education, depended on recognizing and altering the Discourses I enacted as a literacy teacher and on learning to expand my understanding of what counts as literacy. I posit that the challenges I experienced throughout the process can shed new light on the body of literature indicating the failure of bilingual-bicultural educational models to improve the literacy achievement of students who are deaf (Baumann, 1996; Evan, 2004; Mayer, 2009; Mayer & Akamatsu, 1999; Mayer, et al., 2002). That is, if we are to enhance the literacy learning of children who are deaf, we need to engage more critically with the questions of how ideological forces that reinforce deficit hearing representations of deaf individuals as literacy learners and narrow understandings of what counts as literacy are present within the educational settings in which we work, as well as in the design, interpretation, and framing of the research we conduct.

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APPENDIX A: PARENTS' CONCENT LETTER IN ENGLISH AND ICELANDIC

Dear Parents.

I am writing to you to inform you that along with being your child's literacy teacher throughout this school year I will also be conducting a teacher research project as a part of my doctoral studies at the University of Wisconsin Madison. The aim of the research project is to explore the relationship between hearing teachers' literacy instruction and deaf students' literacy learning, and define how teachers need to alter their instructional practices to create space in the classroom for their deaf students to bring in and develop literacy practices better suited to meet their literacy needs.

There are minimal risks involved as a participant in this research project. It is extremely important to me that student identity be kept strictly confidential. Pseudonyms will be used to refer to students and the name and the location of the school your son/daughter attends will also be kept in utmost confidence. However, I am aware that due to the small number of deaf and hard of hearing students in Iceland, your child may be identified in my writings if one wishes to discover who they are. This study is to focus on the specific practices students bring into the classroom, and therefore it focuses on what your child *can* do. Your child and you may like the opportunity to explore the literacy resources you child brings into the classroom with me as your child participates in this research project. Furthermore, it is the hope that this research project may benefit future deaf and hard of hearing students as it may bring along greater understanding of what teachers of students who are deaf need to do in order to accommodate for the literacy needs of this student population.

In order to explore the literacy practices your child brings into the classroom and how I as his/her literacy teacher can accommodate for these, I will be writing down my own teaching experience of being your child's classroom teacher and the learning experiences I observe your child having in my classroom. Additionally, I will take photographs, do video recordings, and collect students' literacy artifacts/assignments in order to gain a better understanding of students' use of specific literacy practice as they approach their school based literacy learning. Finally, I will conduct few short interviews with your child and have him/her fill out a literacy survey over the school in order to explore his/her experiences and interests, attitude towards literacy learning, the literacy resources available to him/her both inside and outside of the school setting, and students' use of literacy practices as they deal with school-based literacy learning. These interview questions/survey is a part of my

assessment strategies so I will collect these weather your child decides to participate in the research project or not. I also may want to conduct an interview with you about your child and the literacy resources in his/her life if needed in order to get a different perspective on your child as a literacy learner. Furthermore, I might ask you to fill out an observation sheet over the school year in order to gain a better perspective of the literacy activities your child is involved in outside of school. The information gained from the interviews/observation sheet may be used to better describe the literacy resources the child draws from out of school. The interview may take anywhere from one to three hours. I will approach you about this if needed. Interviews will be recorded and transcribed and kept in a locked cabinet for 7 years, and only the researchers will listen to them or view the transcripts.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Wisconsin-Madison Education Research IRB at 001-608-262-9710. Furthermore, you may ask questions about this research at any time. You may also wish for your child to withdraw from participation in this research at any time. If you have questions about the research after you hear about the study, you should contact me Karen Rut Gísladóttir at 552-5080 or the principal investigator Professor Mary Louise Gomez at 001-608-263-4633.

Your child's participation is completely voluntary. ***If you decide to have your child not participate or to withdraw from participation, there will be no effect or negative consequences to your child.***

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, have had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research, and voluntarily consent for your child to participate. You will receive a copy for your records.

Sincerely,

Karen Rut Gísladóttir
Ph.D. Student
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Mary Louise Gomez
Professor, Literacy Studies and Teacher Education
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
University of Wisconsin-Madison

_____ Signature _____Date

_____ Signature _____Date

__I AGREE to be interviewed on audiotape for this project.

__I DO NOT AGREE to be interviewed on audiotape for this project.

_____ Signature

_____ Signature

__I GIVE permission for my child to me interviewd for this project.

__I DO NOT GIVE permission for my child to be interviewed for this project.

_____ Signature

_____ Signature

__I AGREE my words can be directly quoted from data collected in this project.

__I DO NOT AGREE my words can be directly quoted from data collected in this project.

_____ Signature

_____ Signature

__I AGREE my child' words can be directly quoted from data collected in this project.

__I DO NOT AGREE my child's words can be directly quoted from data collected in this project.

_____ Signature

_____ Signature

Kæru foreldrar.

Samhliða kennslu í vetur mun ég safna gögnum fyrir doktorsverkefni mitt við University of Wisconsin-Madion. Rannsóknin mín felst í að rannsaka samband milli kennsluaðferða heyrandi íslenskukennara og íslenskunáms heyrnarlausra- og heyrnarskertra nemenda. Rannsóknin miðar að því að kanna hvernig heyrandi kennari fer að því að breyta kennsluaðferðum sínum og hugmyndafræði um íslenskukennslu heyrnarlausra til að skapa það umhvefi sem heyrnarlausir nemendur þurfa til að nota og þróa námsaðferðir sem henta betur námsþörfum þeirra.

Það er lítil áhætta fólgin í þátttöku nemenda í þessari rannsókn. Ég mun eftir fremsta megni leyna því hverjir þátttakendur rannsóknarinnar eru. Allir þátttakendur fá dulnefni, sem og skólinn sem börnin eru í. Eins og þér/ykkur er þó ljóst þá eru ekki margir skólar á Íslandi sem sérhæfa sig í kennslu heyrnarlausa- og heyrnarskerta. Vegna þess hversu fáir heyrnarlausir- og heyrnarskertir nemendur eru á Íslandi þá er sá möguleiki alltaf fyrir hendi að hægt sé að komast að því hverjir tóku þátt í rannsókninni.

Ég tel það ekki fela í sér neina áhættu fyrir barnið þitt ef einhver áttar sig á því um hvern ræðir þar sem markmið rannsóknarinnar er að varpa ljósi á hvernig barnið þitt ber sig að við að læra íslensku og þróa námaðferðir sem hentar því vel til íslenskunáms. Þátttaka í þessari rannsókn er einstakt tækifæri fyrir ykkur og barnið ykkar til að átta ykkur betur á þeim aðferðum sem hentar þeim til að læra íslensku. Ennfremur er það von mín að þessi rannsókn leiði af sér meiri skilning á námsaðferðum sem henta heyrnarlausum og heyrnarskertum nemendum og hvernig kennarar þessara barna geta aðlagað kennsluhætti sína að þeirra þörfum.

Til að rannsóknin verði sem árangursríkust þá mun ég halda dagbók þar sem ég skrifa niður kennslureynslu mína og námsreynslu barnsins þíns eins og hún blasir við mér þegar ég fylgist og vinn með barninu þínu dags daglega. Einnig mun ég taka myndir og videoupptökur af nemendum við vinnu sína sem og ljósrita ritunarverkefni nemenda þar sem þessi gögn geta gefið mikilvægar upplýsingar um hvaða aðferðir barnið þitt notar til að læra íslensku. Enn fremur mun ég taka nokkur stutt viðtöl við barnið þitt sem og láta þau fylla út viðhorfskönnun yfir skólaárið. Þetta geri ég til að fá betri innsýn inn í námsreynslu nemenda og áhugamál, viðhorf til lestrar- og ritunarnáms, og hvernig nemendur takast á við vandamál tendum ritun og lestri sem á vegi þeirra verða. Þessi viðtöl/viðhorfskannanir eru hluti af námsmati mínu þannig að nemendur munu þurfa að svara þeim hvort sem þau eru þátttakendur í rannsókninni eða ekki. Á einhverju stigi rannsóknarinnar gæti ég einnig leitað eftir aðstoð ykkur og beðið

ykkur um að fylla út spurningarlista og taka þátt í viðtali um barnið ykkar og íslenskunámið til þess að skilja betur hvernig heyrnarlaus börn læra íslensku utan skólaumhverfisins. Viðtalið gæti tekið frá einum og upp í þrjá tíma. Öll viðtöl verða geymd á öruggum staði 7 ár þar sem einungis þeim sem að rannsókninni koma geta skoðað innihald þeirra.

Ef þú hefur einhverjar spurningar varðandi rétt þinn sem þátttakandi rannsóknarinnar, þá hafðu samband við Wisconsin Háskólann í Madison, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, í síma 001-608-262-9710. Ég hvet þig til að spyrja spurninga um rannsóknina ef það er eitthvað sem þig langar til að vita. Þú getur ennfremur óskað eftir að hætta þátttöku í rannsókninni á hvaða tímapunkti sem er. Ef þú hefur einhverjar spurningar um þessa rannsókn þá settu þig í samband við mig, Karenu Rut Gísladóttir í síma 552-5080, eða umsjónarmann rannsóknarinnar Mary Lousie Gomez í síma 001-608-263-4633.

Þú ræður hvort barnið þitt tekur þátt í rannsókninni eða ekki. ***Ef þú ákveður að láta barnið þitt ekki taka þátt eða að hætta þátttöku á einhverjum tímapunkti þá mun það ekki hafa nein áhrif á nám barnsins þíns né samskipti okkar***.

Undirskrift þín gefur til kynna að þú/þið hafið ákveðið að taka þátt í rannsókninni eftir að hafa kynnt þér/ykkur innihald þessa bréfs og haft tækifæri til að spyrja út í rannsóknina. Ég mun láta þig/ykkur fá afrit að þessu bréfi.

Með fyrirfram þökk fyrir þátttöku ykkar,

Karen Rut Gísladóttir

Karen Rut Gísladóttir
Doktorsnemi
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Mary Louise Gomez
Prófessor í Literacy Studies and Teacher Education
Department of Curriculum and Instruction
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Samþykki foreldra

_____ Undirskrift _____Dagsetning

_____ Undirskrift _____Dagsetning

__Ég SAMÞYKKI að tekin séu upp viðtal/töl við mig í tengslum við þessa rannsókn.
__ Ég SAMÞYKKI EKKI að tekin séu upp viðtal/töl við mig í tengslum við þessa rannsókn.

_____ Undirskrift

_____ Undirskrift

__Ég SAMÞYKKI að tekin verði viðtal/töl við barnið mitt í tengslum við þessa rannsókn.
__ Ég SAMÞYKKI EKKI að tekin séu upp viðtal/töl við barnið mitt í tengslum við þessa rannsókn.

_____ Undirskrift

_____ Undirskrift

__Ég SAMÞYKKI að hægt verði að vitna beint til þess sem ég segi í viðtölum við mig.
__Ég SAMÞYKKI EKKI að hægt verði að vitna beint til þess sem ég segi í viðtölum við mig.

_____ Undirskrift

_____ Undirskrift

__Ég SAMÞYKKI að hægt verði að vitna beint til þess sem barnið mitt segir í viðtölum við það.

__Ég SAMÞYKKI EKKI að hægt verði að vitna beint til þess sem barnið mitt segir í viðtölum við það.

_____ Undirskrift

_____ Undirskrift

APPENDIX B: CHILD'S ASSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

Karen Rut Gísladóttir
Netfang: karenrut@hlidaskoli.is

Mary Louise Gomez
E-mail: mlgomez@wisc.edu

Dear student

I would like to invite you to take part in a research project. I am interested in understanding how children who are deaf go about learning literacy and how teachers can support that learning in their classrooms. Although your parents have already given me the permission for you to participate in the research, you are still free to make your own choice.

For this project you will be seeing me do the same thing as I do everyday as your teacher; I will be taking some notes about your learning within the classroom, asking you some interview questions about the way you read and write, having you fill out a survey about your literacy activities, taking photographs, doing some videorecordings, and photocopying your literacy work for my recordkeeping.

If you agree to be part of this research, I will use the things I have collected about your learning to write about your literacy learning for my doctoral thesis and/or for publications in academic journals for educators.

There are minimal risks involved as a participant in this research project. All of the things I collect for this research project will be kept totally confidential. No one will ever see your work samples or my notes about you except the people who help with the research. Your name is not going to appear on your work samples, just a pseudonyms that I will give you for the purpose of the research. When I write about you I will change your name and the name of the school to protect your identity. This study is to focus on the ways that you learn literacy and will discuss what you do during literacy blocks and how approach literacy learning.

You are free to say no to this project, or to stop at any time. f you decide to stop participating in the research project nothing bad will happen to you, and I will still be your teacher.

If you have any questions about this research project, don't hesitate to speak up, now or at anytime. I'll always answer you questions.

Thank you!

I, _____, WOULD LIKE to be in this research project.
(print name here)

_____
Signature

I, _____, WOULD NOT LIKE to be in this research project.
(print name here)

_____
Signature

Karen Rut Gísladóttir
Netfang: karenrut@hlidaskoli.is

Mary Louise Gomez
E-mail: mlgomez@wisc.edu

Kæri nemandi.

Mig langar að bjóða þér að taka þátt í rannsókn í vetur. Ég hef áhuga á að skilja hvernig heyrnarlausir nemendur læra að lesa og skrifa íslensku og hvernig kennarar geta stutt íslenskunám þeirra. Þótt foreldrar ykkar hafa nú þegar veitt ykkur leyfi til að taka þátt í rannsókninni, þá er þér frjálst að ákveða sjálf/ur hvort þú viljir taka þátt eða ekki.

Fyrir þetta rannsóknarverkefni munt þú sjá mig gera sömu hluti og ég geri á hverjum degi sem kennarinn þinn. Ég mun skrifa hjá mér minnispunta um hvernig þú lærir, spyrja þig nokkurra spurninga um hvaða aðferðir þú notar bæði við lestur og ritun, biðja þig um að fylla út spurningarlista, taka myndir innan kennslustofunnar, taka videoupptökur og ljósrita vinnu vinnu þína, þ.e. sögur sem þú skrifar, teikningar sem þú gerir og halda skrá um þá texta sem þú lest.

Ef þú samþykkir að taka þátt í rannsókinni þá mun ég nota þær upplýsingar sem ég hef safnað um þig sem námsmann til að skrifa doktorsverkefni og greinar í blöð fyrir kennara um það hvernig þú ferð að því að læra að lesa og skrifa á íslensku

Það er lítil áhætta sem fylgir þáttöku í þessari rannsókn. Allt sem safna fyrir þessa rannsókn verður geymt á öruggum stað. Enginn fær að sjá þessi gögn nema það fólk sem er að hjálpa mér við rannsóknina. Nafnið þitt mun ekki birtast á gögnum þín. Ég mun gefa þér dulnefni og skrifa um þig undir dulnefni. Til að passa upp á að enginn viti nákvæmlega hver þú ert þá mun ég alltaf nota dulnefni þitt þegar ég skrifa um þig og breyta nafni skólans. Þessi rannsókn er einungis um það hvernig þú lærir að lesa og skrifa, og mun lýsa því sem gerist í íslenskutímum og við hvaða tækifæri þú notar íslenskuna.

Þú mátt neita því að taka þátt í rannsóknninnir, eða hætta þátttöku á hvaða tímapunkti sem er. Það mun ekkert hræðilegt koma fyrir þig þótt þú ákveðir að hætta þátttöku. Ég mun halda áfram að kenna þér eins og áður.

Ef þú hefur einhverjar spurningar um þessa rannsókn, núna eða einhvern tímann seinna, þá skaltu ekki hika við að spyrja mig.

Ég, _____, VIL taka þátt í þessari rannsókn.

(skrifaðu nafnið þitt hér)

_____

Undirskrift

Ég, _____, VIL EKKI taka þátt í þessari rannsókn.

(skrifaðu nafnið þitt hér)

_____

Undirskrift