The Discourse and Politeness Functions

of HEY and WELL in American Sign Language

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The signs that are commonly glossed as HEY and WELL in the literature often appear in American Sign Language (ASL) conversations. The sign HEY is generally understood to function as an attention-getter in order to open a conversation (Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1980), and WELL is commonly used when hesitating, as when one is unsure about what one is saying or when hedging on a response (Hoza, 2007). Therefore, HEY commonly appears at the beginning of a conversation or at the beginning of new utterances, and WELL commonly appears in questions and in responses to questions and requests, especially when turning someone down (i.e., rejections; Hoza, 2007; Roush, 2007).

These two signs share two major features. First, they both appear to have originated from naturally occurring gestures that have been incorporated into ASL, and thus are often glossed as "HEY" and "WELL," in which the quotation marks indicate that these are gestures (Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1980). The HEY sign is a reduced form of a natural gesture that involves waving one's hand up and down (palm-down) to get someone's attention (although this sign can be modulated in different ways in ASL), and the WELL sign looks much like a natural gesture meaning "Well, what can I say?" or "Beats me," in which both open hands appear palm-up to the sides of the body. (See figures 3.1 and 3.2.) In this chapter, we will see that these signs have particular discourse and politeness functions in ASL that go beyond the functions of these gestures.

Second, both HEY and WELL do not convey content as do signs such as HOUSE or MOTHER, which clearly have informational value. Grammatically speaking, words in a language are either function words or content words (or both). Function words are composed of a finite set number of vocabulary items, which are not productive (i.e., function words do

FIGURE 3.1. *HEY: hand waves up and down slightly*

not tend to change much over time) and, in English, include such lexical categories as determiners (such as *a*, *an*, and *the*), prepositions (*at*, *with*, and *between*), and conjunctions (*and*, *but*, and *although*). In ASL, a particular determiner sign (a pointing sign often glossed as DET or INDEX) is an example of a function word that functions as a definite determiner (Neidle, Kegl, MacLaughlin, Bahan, & Lee, 2000; Zimmer & Patschke, 2000), much like *the* in English, but ASL more often makes use of internal morphological changes to a sign to convey functions, as in the case

FIGURE 3.2. *WELL: hands move outward slightly*

of aspect (e.g., continuous action vs. repeated action), which is conveyed by changes in the movement of the sign (circular movement vs. repeated movement; Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1980; Klima & Bellugi, 1979; Valli, Lucas, & Mulrooney, 2005). HEY and WELL are not function words in the grammatical sense, in that they do not show relationships between syntactic components. However, these signs do serve specific functions at the discourse level and, thus, can be labeled *discourse markers.* Like function words, many discourse markers (such as *well* and *hey*) do not have semantic value in and of themselves.

Compare HEY and WELL with the sign NOW in ASL, which is both a content word with the semantic value of "at the present time" and a discourse marker that can be used to introduce topics or to signal shifts to subtopics within a lecture (Roy, 1989). Although HEY and WELL are not content words like NOW, they are nonetheless lexical items, or vocabulary items, in ASL (and not just gestures).

In this chapter, we explore the functions of these two signs in terms of their organizational/textual functions at the discourse level, and their functions in terms of politeness concerns. Politeness occurs at the level of social meaning: what speakers communicate about their relationship and the social context by the words/signs they use; this level of communication is also called the *metamessage* (Tannen, 1986). Before reviewing how these signs have been described in the literature, we will first discuss the limitations of glossing.

A FEW WORDS ON GLOSSING

Glossing is the use of written words in one language to represent the words (or signs) of another language. Glosses such as HOUSE and MOTHER, which involve selecting English words to represent ASL signs, are not problematic overall, in that most ASL signers who read these glosses would think of the most common signs for these concepts. However, whereas there is likely one sign that most ASL signers would agree on for HOUSE, there are actually two common signs that can be used for MOTHER: one (MOTHER$_1$) involves using the 5-handshape and tapping the chin twice with the thumb, and the other (MOTHER$_2$) also involves the 5-handshape, but instead of tapping the chin, the thumb rests on the chin and the fingers wiggle slightly. As with any two words in a language, these two signs—MOTHER$_1$ and MOTHER$_2$—differ slightly in their meaning,

which in this case seems to be primarily a difference in register, with MOTHER₁ being more casual and used in common discourse, much like *mamá* in Spanish, and MOTHER₂ being more formal, much like *madre* in Spanish. In short, glosses don't always capture such distinctions.

Additionally, glosses can actually express skewed or incorrect meaning because they typically use the primary sense of a word (as with HOUSE or MOTHER) and do not capture other semantic values of a sign (see Colonomos, 2007). Take, for example, the signs FINISH and VOMIT. The first sign, FINISH, not only functions as a verb, which is its primary sense (e.g., FINISH HOMEWORK, I), it also pairs with verbs to function like a past participle to convey completed action (WORK FINISH), and is used as a conjunction or discourse marker to convey a sequential relationship, much like *then* or *and then* in English (I WORK ALL-DAY, FINISH; DRIVE-TO STORE, BUY FOOD, FINISH; PICK-UP DAUGHTER, FINISH; ARRIVE HOME). (See the Appendix for glossing conventions used in this chapter.) The primary sense of the second sign, VOMIT, is "to throw up" and is generally signed with the accompanying *th* nonmanual modifier (adverbial marker), which involves positioning the tongue between the teeth (meaning "out of one's control" in this instance). However, this sign can also mean "to detest" and typically indicates the object of the disdain by the direction in which the sign is produced. When this sign is used with this secondary meaning, it can occur with a wider range of nonmanual modifiers to convey the degree to which the signer detests something or someone (but it most commonly occurs with *th* for this meaning as well).

Furthermore, signs may convey culturally rich realities that cannot be adequately captured by glosses. Cokely (2001) reports on the findings of a study that clearly indicates that the denotation and connotation of such signs as DEAF and HEARING in ASL vary greatly from the denotation and connotation of the words *deaf* and *hearing* in English. The study involved asking random nonsigning English speakers on the streets of Boston for definitions of various words commonly associated with signs (other words include, e.g., *ASL*, *Gallaudet*, *hard of hearing*, and *mainstreaming*). He reports that the assumed meaning of each word or sign differs greatly for each group and is far from equivalent. In fact, many English speakers had no idea what these words actually meant, or they reported a connotation (overall positive or negative association) that was the opposite of that of the associated sign. These results indicate that interpreters need to be aware of culturally rich realities and consider such differences in meaning

in their interpretations. For our purposes, we see that although glossing provides a way for people to write down signs in ASL, glosses are quite limited in their ability to capture the true meanings and culturally rich realities of signs.

The reason that we use the glosses HEY and WELL in this chapter is because these glosses capture the primary functions of each of these signs and will be familiar to readers who know ASL. However, it is clear that we need to be aware that the glosses can be misleading as they only begin to capture the discourse and politeness functions of these signs, just as glosses do not capture the semantic range expressed by a particular sign.

Some authors have used similar glosses for these two signs, for example, Baker-Shenk and Cokely (1980) use "HEY" and "WELL," and Hoza (2007) uses "WELL." However, other authors have chosen to describe the phonological production of these signs—for example, Hoza (2007) uses the gloss "HANDWAVE" for HEY; Roush (2007) uses 5HPU (5-HAND, PALM UP) for WELL; and Winston and Monikowski (2003) use OPEN HANDS for WELL—or to label the specific function they are investigating, for example, Conlin, Hagstrom, and Neidle (2003) use *part:indef* ("indefinite particle") for WELL. We will use the simple, straightforward glosses HEY and WELL for ease of reading and will forgo the other types of glossing available.

The basic functions of HEY and WELL resemble in some respects those of the English words *hey* and *well*; however, HEY and WELL—as distinct lexical items in ASL—have their own set of functions. In this chapter, we will elaborate on these functions by reviewing the literature on these signs, as well as by comparing these signs to words such as *hey* and *well* in English, to other words in English, and to linguistic features of language more generally.

HEY IN ASL

The sign HEY has been noted for its attention-getting function and has been labeled a *conversational opener* (Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1980), as in HEY, WHAT'S-UP /whq [Hey, what's been going on?] and HEY, SORRY LATE, I [(Addressee's name), sorry I'm late]. The word *hey* in English also serves this attention-getting function (McTear, 1979; Zwicky, 1974), as in "Hey, John, I wanted to talk to you" and "Hey, what are you doing?"

HEY tends to also be used more often during moments in interaction when there are potential threats to face and, thus, HEY serves politeness functions as well (Hoza, 2007).

The Discourse Functions of HEY in ASL

The sign HEY has a few different discourse functions in addition to serving an attention-getting role. To explore these functions, we review what has been reported about its functions and, in addition, we compare the functions of this sign with those of *hey*, vocatives (e.g., calling someone by name), and *oh* in English, as these serve some similar functions in terms of discourse and politeness concerns.

The word *hey* in English has been described as having two main functions. In addition to the function of getting someone's attention, it can function as an interjection to express surprise or to serve as a warning, as in "Hey, what are you doing here?" or "Hey! Cut it out!" (see, e.g., Hickey, 1991).

The description of the sign HEY in ASL has focused on its attention-getting function (Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1980), and this function is the one that is most commonly recognized. However, HEY, like *hey*, may also function to express surprise or warning (Hoza, 2007, who uses the gloss "HANDWAVE" for HEY), for example, "HANDWAVE," I KNOW-THAT/pg BAD TIME ASK-YOU, 'rub hands'/pg [(Oh), (name), I know that it's a bad time to be asking, but, well . . .] and "HANDWAVE"/pg. REALLY SORRY/tight lips INFORM-YOU/pg [(Oh), (name), I'm really sorry to tell you this] (p. 155).

The primary function of a vocative is to get someone's attention, so we will compare the functions of HEY to those of vocatives. A vocative can be defined as the use of a noun phrase to refer to the addressee(s) (e.g., proper names, job titles [e.g., *waiter*], forms of endearment [*honey, sweetie*], or formal address [*sir, ma'am*]); a vocative is structurally separate from the sentence it precedes or follows (Leech, 1999; Zwicky, 1974). Rather than using a noun phrase in ASL (e.g., someone's name sign) to get someone's attention, a signer often uses the sign HEY for this purpose; crucially, eye contact is established at these times (Bahan, 2009; Baker, 1977; Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1980; Hoza, 2007). Name signs (names in ASL) are only used to refer to others in third person and not to address someone in second person.

HEY functions in some ways as a vocative, although it is not a noun phrase and does not, in fact, name the addressee. Leech (1999) identifies three pragmatic functions of a vocative: (1) to summon someone's atten-

tion, (2) to identify the addressee (e.g., among more than one possible addressee), and (3) to establish or maintain a social relationship between the speaker and addressee(s), which is conveyed by the specific vocative selected (p. 108). This last function is reflected in the word or phrase selected by the speaker. Compare, for example, the use of *dude*, *sir*, *lazy bones*, *Uncle Paul*, or *Judith* to refer to an addressee; each of these communicates something about the social relationship between the speaker and addressee. We discuss the social relationship aspect of HEY when we review its politeness functions in the next section.

Vocatives are also sometimes preceded by *hey*. For example, Leech (1999) includes the following examples in which *hey* appears before the vocative: "Hey Ben, do you remember a hole puncher coming in I ordered?" (p. 108) and "Hey, Mike, grab your dominoes!" (p. 110). Because ASL does not use naming as a way to summon someone's attention, we will look at how HEY in ASL compares with the features of both vocatives and *hey* in English.

The primary functions of vocatives—as attention-getting, identifying an addressee, and maintaining a social relationship—differ somewhat from the functions of HEY in ASL. Clearly, HEY serves the attention-getting, or conversational opener, function. In fact, almost all of the instances of this sign that appear in the 27 dialogues presented by Baker-Shenk and Cokely (1980) convey this function, as in the following example (note that 'co' is an abbreviation for 'conversational opener'): "HEY"/CO, ONE-WEEK-PAST/t, AWFUL HAPPEN (p. 324) [(Addressee's name), something terrible happened last week]. The function of identifying the addressee is accomplished by this sign as well, but rather than the addressee being identified by name, the HEY sign is directed at the addressee, and eye contact is established with the addressee, clearly signaling who is being addressed. This use of eye contact is an important feature of this attention-getting function, and the use of HEY with the accompanying eye contact is used to summon an individual addressee as well as multiple addressees. In addition, it is clear to the addressee or addressees who is being addressed, even in a group of people (Bahan, 2009). There is also a two-handed version of HEY in ASL that can be used to indicate multiple addressees (e.g., to get a particular group's attention). It has been reported that English speakers also use a gaze direction toward the addressee when using a vocative (see, e.g., McTear, 1979).

Hoza (2007) states that naming in English and HEY ("HANDWAVE") in ASL share similar functions. They are both used to get a person's attention

and show a connection between the speaker and addressee, which serves as a politeness function, and they both can serve as a discourse marker to introduce a new topic. Hoza further states that for both naming in English (using an addressee's name as a vocative) and HEY in ASL, "the second and third usages were intended by the speakers, because the role plays [in his study] involved making the requests in the middle of a conversation" (p. 100). Specifically, the examples Hoza reviews all occur mid-conversation, in that the ASL signers are already talking about another topic when the HEY sign is used. In fact, half of these mid-conversation requests begin with the sign HEY. The high incidence of HEY to switch topics mid-conversation provides strong evidence that HEY functions not only as a conversational opener and attention-getter, but also to introduce or to switch topics.

A review of the 27 dialogues in ASL presented in Baker-Shenk and Cokely (1980) reveals that HEY occurs 13 times, and 12 of these 13 instances occur before the first utterance in the dialogue and function as conversational openers. The one exception occurs in the middle of a dialogue in which the discussion about a statue at Gallaudet University is winding down and a signer says, "HEY" GALLAUDET INDEX-rt/t, MANY+ CHANGE+, "WOW," CAN'T BELIEVE/neg" (p. 170) [(Addressee's name), I can't believe all the changes at Gallaudet]. The signer makes use of the sign HEY to shift the discussion to a broader discussion of changes at Gallaudet University. This one instance provides additional evidence that HEY can occur other than at the beginning of a conversation or to get a person's attention: It can also be used to signal a change in topic. Fraser (1988, 1996, 2009) reports a similar function for *hey* in English; he states that *hey* can signal a refocusing on a part of the topic at hand.

The sign HEY also shares a feature with the word *oh* in English. Fraser (1988, 2009) states that *oh* can function as an attention marker (before an orientation marker like "I almost forgot") as in "Oh, I almost forgot . . ." (Fraser, 2009, p. 896). Hoza (2007) reports that the sign HEY can also convey warning or surprise, especially when it co-occurs with specific nonmanual markers, and that a mouthed expression of *ah* or *oh* sometimes co-occurs with HEY. Thus, there are two ways in which HEY functions in some ways like *oh* and *hey* in English discourse other than as an attention-getter: (1) as an interjection of surprise and (2) as a discourse marker to indicate a change in topic.

HEY serves several discourse functions in ASL. It can be used to summon someone's attention and to serve as a conversational opener; it can

function as an interjection to express surprise or to serve as a warning; it shares some features with vocatives, but also differs in some respects; and it can be used to switch topics within discourse.

The Politeness Functions of HEY in ASL

Speakers usually attempt to avoid putting people on the spot or otherwise making others feel uncomfortable, and to avoid embarrassing themselves as well. One way in which speakers do so is by altering the linguistic form of their utterances in some way. Compare, for example, these two rejections in ASL: <u>NO, CAN'T GO-TO, I/neg</u> [No, I can't go], which is an outright rejection (without redressive action), and WISH GO-TO, BUT HAVE-A-CONFLICT. HAVE-TO GO-TO TO-SEE DOCTOR. <u>NEXT TIME/q</u> [I wish I could (go), but I have a conflict at that time; I've got a doctor's appointment. Maybe next time?], which is an indirect way of turning someone down (see Hoza, 2007, for further discussion). The form such rejections take has less to do with relative clarity and directness of the message, and more to do with social appropriateness and saving face, which is the nature of linguistic politeness.

Linguistic politeness involves saving or maintaining face for the speaker and/or the addressee (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Scollon & Scollon, 2001). Face is "the positive social value [or image] a person effectively claims for himself . . . by making a good showing for himself (or his group)" (Goffman, 1967, p. 5). Attempts to save face can be accomplished by flattering someone (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 2005; Sifianou & Antonopoulou, 2005), for example, NEW HAIRCUT AGREE-WITH-YOU. BEAUTIFUL! [That new haircut really works for you. It's beautiful!] or by downplaying threats to face (Brown & Levinson, 1987), for example, I-INTERRUPT-YOU SORRY. IMPORTANT TELL-YOU. [So sorry to interrupt, but I have something important to tell you].

Face-flattering acts reduce a face-threat by enhancing face, and they are commonly used as strategies to enhance *involvement* (Tannen, 1986; Scollon & Scollon, 2001), which has also been termed *positive politeness* (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Mitigating face-threatening acts avoid embarrassment or avoid making someone look bad and are commonly used as strategies to mitigate threats to *independence* (Tannen, 1986; Scollon & Scollon, 2001), or *negative politeness* (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

The functions of HEY—to get someone's attention, to bring up a new topic, and to express surprise or warning—all have the potential to threaten someone's face-needs if not handled appropriately. Depending on the

situation, such functions can be considered either an act of camaraderie or an interruption. If HEY is being used to bring up a related topic among friends, it enhances the relationship and participants' face-needs, and contributes to a sense of involvement; but if HEY is used to interrupt someone in the middle of an important discussion, it can threaten the relationship and the participants' face-needs, and can threaten someone's independence.

The sign HEY in ASL can function to express surprise or warning like *oh* in English; however, unlike *oh*, the relative degree of surprise or warning can be expressed by using an accompanying nonmanual marker (NMM) with the sign HEY (Hoza, 2007). NMMs are linguistic markers that are generally used to convey adjectival and adverbial information, for example, when *mm* (puckering of the lips) or *intense* (a bearing of the teeth) co-occur with DRIVE (DRIVE/mm or DRIVE/intense), the *mm* NMM conveys the concept of "as usual" and the *intense* NMM in this instance conveys the concept of "with a great degree of tension" (see, e.g., Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1980; Bridges & Metzger, 1996, in which *intense* appears as *IS*). Some NMMs can also serve politeness functions by mitigating face-threats (Hoza, 2007, 2008; Roush, 2007). These NMMs can mitigate a wide range of face-threats when they co-occur with HEY. Five such NMMs have been identified in the literature. Three of these were originally identified by Roush (2007), and all five—these three NMMs as well as two additional NMMs—have been further explored by Hoza (2007, 2008).

The *polite pucker* (pp) NMM mitigates small threats to face and is used when cooperation is assumed (Hoza, 2007, 2008; Roush, 2008). When it co-occurs with HEY, it assumes involvement and communicates that the threat to face is minor. See figure 3.3 for an illustration of HEY/pp. The *tight lips* marker mitigates moderate threats to face, is the most common politeness marker, and is used to mitigate threats to both involvement and independence (Hoza, 2007, 2008). See figure 3.4 (HEY/tight lips).

Two other NMMs mitigate more severe threats to face. *Politeness grimace* (pg) mitigates significant threats to face (Hoza, 2007, 2008; Roush, 2007) and *polite grimace-frown* (pg-frown) mitigates severe threats to face (Hoza, 2007, 2008). See figures 3.5 and 3.6 for illustrations of HEY/pg and HEY/pg-frown.

The other NMM, *body teeter* (bt), which is the only one of these five markers that involves a movement of the body rather than a manipulation

FIGURE 3.3. _HEY/polite pucker_

FIGURE 3.4. _HEY/tight lips_

FIGURE 3.5. *HEY/polite grimace*

FIGURE 3.6. *HEY/polite grimace-frown*

of the mouth and lips, does not co-occur with HEY in ASL. Hoza (2007) also notes that *body teeter* does not co-occur with the sign DON'T-MIND, although it can co-occur with WELL, which is further discussed below.

Unlike HEY in ASL, *hey* in English occurs almost exclusively in casual situations. For example, compare "Hey, dude" with "Hey, Mr. President," and compare "Pardon me, dude" with "Pardon me, Mr. President." *Hey* does not seem to show the necessary deference to mitigate face in more formal situations. Thus, neither "Hey, Mr. President" nor "Pardon me, dude" seems to be appropriate. In contrast, HEY in ASL is used in a greater range of registers, but the accompanying NMM (e.g., *tight lips* or *polite grimace*) indicate the amount of deference. Additional research is needed to determine the degree to which the modulation and size of the sign may also signal the degree of deference. This is one way in which the sign HEY differs significantly from the English word *hey*.

The sign HEY occurs in a range of registers and can inherently threaten one's independence or enhance one's involvement. HEY is often further mitigated by the co-occurrence of NMMs (i.e., *polite pucker, tight lips, polite grimace,* and *polite grimace-frown*), which can mitigate a wide range of threats to face.

WELL IN ASL

The sign WELL serves several discourse functions in ASL interactions. It can function as a pause, an indicator of a shift in discourse, a device to maintain coherence, and a turn-taking regulator. In addition, WELL plays a major role in the mitigation of face-threats, which we review below.

The Discourse Functions of WELL in ASL

Several functions for the sign WELL have been reported in the literature. WELL has been described as functioning as a hedge, a filled pause, and an indefinite particle, as well as to signal a footing shift, to serve a coherence function, and to serve as a turn-taking regulator. In addition, WELL plays a special function in politeness as well, which we review in the next section.

Winston and Monikowski (2003) describe one function of WELL (which they gloss as OPEN HANDS) as a *filled pause* (which Fraser [1988, 1996, 1999] also states is a function of the English word *well*). Winston

and Monikowski state that a filled pause in ASL is characterized by the holding of a sign through a pause and can be used to indicate a boundary between segments of discourse. This type of filled pause typically "occurs at the end of a segment, topic, or important idea. It focuses attention on the idea or topic that has just ended and is a cue to the importance of that segment or idea in the overall meaning of the text" (p. 192).

Locker McKee (1992) identifies another function that WELL can serve when it occurs at boundaries between segments of discourse, which is to indicate shifts in footing (speaker orientation). For example, WELL is used when a speaker expresses a personal reaction to reported speech (WELL, . . .) and, thereby, "signals a return to his own 'voice' as principal speaker" (p. 119), that is, the signer uses WELL when shifting footing from reporting what someone else said to what the speaker is saying.

Conlin, Hagstrom, and Neidle (2003) identify another function of the WELL sign (which they gloss as *part:indef* for "indefinite particle") as a focus particle at the level of syntax. They report that this sign functions to widen the domain of reference, much like *any* in English (citing Kadmon & Landman, 1993), as in their example, SOMETHING/ONE BOAT (2h) part:indef SINK CAPE COD [A boat (or something) sank (off) Cape Cod] (p. 20).

They state that this sign is sometimes confused with the wh-sign usually glossed as "WHAT," but the sign "WHAT" "involves a side-to-side movement of the hands, while the indefinite particle [WELL] involves a single outward movement" (p. 13). "WHAT" is illustrated in figure 3.7.

This distinction between WELL and "WHAT" is important because the two signs are similar in their production, but serve much different functions. In addition, both signs frequently occur in ASL. A study by Morford and MacFarlane (2003) reports that WELL appears 14th on their list of the 37 most frequently used signs in ASL, and "WHAT" (combined with two other variants of WHAT) appears 30th on the list. Clearly WELL and "WHAT" are commonly used in ASL. In fact, beginning-level ASL students would recognize most of the signs on the list, which is composed mostly of pronouns, common nouns, verbs, and conjunctions.

Conlin, Hagstrom, and Neidle (2003) also mention a discourse function of this sign that supports what has been reported elsewhere for both *well* (e.g., Schiffrin, 1987) and WELL (Hoza, 2007; Roush, 2007). They state that this sign not only functions as an indefinite particle at the syntactic level, it is also used in discourse "where the uncertainty expressed relates to the discourse context, rather than to some specific element present in

FIGURE 3.7. <u>WHAT</u>/*whq*: *hands move side-to-side slightly*

the sentence itself" (Conlin et al., 2003, p. 11), and that they "believe that most (if not all) occurrences of the discourse particle WELL actually involve this same particle of indefiniteness" (p. 11). In other words, this sense of indefiniteness expressed by WELL can be conveyed at either the level of syntax or the level of discourse, with slightly different effects.

Schiffrin (1987) reports that a primary function of *well* in English is to maintain coherence in discourse, that is, to provide cohesiveness, logic, and overall sense of the discourse. *Well* is used especially when that coherence is threatened by non-compliance. *Well* is used in an attempt "to accomplish coherence despite a temporary inability to contribute to the satisfaction of that need in a way fully consonant with the coherence options provided through the prior discourse" (p. 126) and "non-compliance with a request is more likely to be marked with *well* than is compliance" (p. 114).

Question-answer sequences provide clear examples of this coherence function. *Well* is used more often when the response diverges from the options provided by, or implied by, the question. The purpose of a wh-word question, for example, is to elicit specific information, and Schiffrin (1987) reports that *well* appears in a higher percentage of responses to wh-q questions when the information is not given in the answer, than

in responses in which the requested information is provided (56 percent and 14 percent, respectively). In a response to a yes/no question, Schiffrin (1985) finds that *well* is used over three-fourths of the time when the answer does not include a straightforward confirmation (e.g., *yes*) or negation (*no*) (28 out of 37 instances). To clarify, Schiffrin gives examples of some question-answer sequences to illustrate her point, such as "Are you from Philadelphia?" "Well I grew up uh out in the suburbs . . ." (p. 645). In these instances, the speaker is clearly aiming to maintain coherence.

Hoza (2007) discusses a similar function for WELL in ASL and reports that WELL, which he labels a hedge, occurs three times as often in difficult rejections (48 instances) as in easy rejections (16 instances). Although Hoza's focus is on the politeness function of WELL, which he states is used in the linguistic data to save face, the examples he gives indicate attempts to maintain coherence; WELL is used more often when the signer is not complying with the request. Consider, for example, the following response to a supervisor's request to call a prospective consumer (which this employee is not able to do): <u>"WELL"</u>/pg-frown, <u>MY STAFF</u>/t, #ALL "<u>FULL</u>"(2-hands)/puff cheeks . . . [Well, you know, my staff is already overloaded . . .] (p. 171). In this case, we see that WELL is used when the signer is (a) not complying with the request, and is attempting to save face, and (b) trying to maintain coherence, that is, provide a suitable response to the request.

Roush (2007) proposes a typology for WELL (which he labels 5HPU [5-HAND, PALM UP]), and, of the six types proposed, two clearly convey discourse functions. Roush reports that the first type, 5HPU(1), is used to convey, "I'm done. Go ahead" or "The floor is yours," and the second type, 5HPU(2), conveys that the speaker should "Keep talking" (p. 127). Although Roush's focus is on the politeness functions of this sign, these two types clearly indicate that this sign can serve two distinct discourse functions. The discourse function of the first type, 5HPU(1), is to signal turn-taking (the completion of a turn and offering a turn), and the discourse function of the second type, 5HPU(2), is to explicitly signal for the speaker to continue to talk.

Hoza (2007) and Roush (2007) have noted that WELL can be produced with one or two hands (but is generally produced with two hands), and the movement of the sign can sometimes be toward the addressee (rather than to the sides of the signer). However, there has been little investigation into these variants of WELL. It seems that the one-handed version with the forward movement is used more often for these discourse functions:

FIGURE 3.8. _WELL (one-hand, movement forward)/browraise_

either to offer a turn or to signal that the speaker should continue. See figure 3.8 for an illustration of WELL (one-hand, movement forward).

Roush provides no examples of 5HPU(1) in his examples and only one example of 5HPU(2). In this one instance, the signer has just been told that someone else has a truck that he may be able to borrow, and the signer responds, "5HPU(2)" [Oh yeah?] (p. 140). The signer in this instance uses the one-handed version that includes a forward movement, which signals to the addressee that the addressee should "continue," that is, should tell him more about this truck.

Hoza (2007) also notes this variant of the WELL sign and glosses it as "WELL"(movement forward). He states that the sign can be produced either with both hands or a single hand, and that it moves "forward toward the addressee and has the added meaning of a suggestion. In fact, it looks like a reduced form of the ASL sign SUGGEST" (p. 177). One example from Hoza (2007) is the following: YOU HAVE OTHER PEOPLE COVER ME, _"WELL"/tight lips(one-hand, nondominant hand, move forward) /_q [Perhaps someone could cover for me, or something?] (p. 206). This use of WELL(movement forward) in this example, which appears here as a tag question, is to prompt a response (a type of turn) from the addressee. Roush (2007) has also noted that 5HPU (produced with either one hand

or two hands) is semantically and phonologically related to signs such as CONVERSE, SUGGEST, BRING-UP-TOPIC, and INTRODUCE (p. 127).

Conlin, Hagstrom, and Neidle (2003) have an example of WELL (one-hand, movement forward) occurring after "WHAT" at the end of a question. They also have examples of WELL (one-hand) without the forward movement (as opposed to the standard WELL sign produced with two hands) occurring initially in a statement, and co-occurring with WHO in a wh-question and with SOMEONE/THING in a statement. When WELL (one-hand) co-occurs with WHO and SOMEONE/THING, it is produced with the nondominant hand. Additional research into the functions of these variants could further clarify how they differ from the standard (two-handed) sign WELL.

The WELL sign serves many functions in ASL discourse. It functions as a hedge, a filled pause, and an indefinite particle, as well as an indicator of a footing shift, a coherence device, and a turn-taking regulator. Some of these functions have been reported for *well* in English, for example, serving as a filled pause and a coherence device; and some of them have not been reported for *well*, for example, serving as an indefinite particle, an offer for a turn, or a signal that the speaker is to continue talking.

The Politeness Functions of WELL in ASL

WELL can be used to save face by signaling an attempt to either maintain cooperation or avoid imposition (Hoza, 2007, 2008; Roush, 2007). These politeness functions seem to stem from the functions of WELL in discourse: to provide coherence, to indicate reluctance or to hedge, and to serve as an indefinite particle.

For example, Roush states that WELL (5HPU) is not being used as an indefinite particle in the contexts (dialogues) he investigates. In these contexts, "it seems more likely (given the context and the explanatory power of politeness dynamics) that the speaker is certain about the propositional content but is using 5HPU as a politeness marker. What may be uncertain to the speaker in these instances is how the interlocutor will accept the face-threatening act" (p.127). He reports that this sign clusters around instances in which there are threats to face.

Two of the six types of 5HPU (WELL) listed in Roush's typology serve mainly discourse functions, as mentioned above. The other four types, however, mostly serve to mitigate threats to face. Three of these seem to primarily mitigate threats to involvement (camaraderie) and the other one primarily mitigates threats to independence.

The three types that primarily mitigate threats to involvement are 5HPU(3), which conveys, "What can I say?" or "Well . . ."; 5HPU(5), which conveys, "What do you think?" or "How does this sit with you?"; and 5HPU(6), which conveys, "I accept" or "I agree" (p. 127). Each of these communicates the following functions, respectively: an inability to cooperate (5HPU[3]), an offer to cooperate or negotiate (5HPU[5]), and acceptance of an offer or a comment made by another person (5HPU[6]). This last type—5HPU(6)—frequently occurs with the signs FINE and #OK in Roush's examples, which highlights its agreement and cooperation functions.

The remaining type, 5HPU(4), seems to function only to mitigate threats to independence, in that this sign conveys, "I don't mean to impose" or "I know this is a lot to ask" (p. 127). This sign is used to downplay acts that may impose on the addressee.

The degree to which one saves face for each of these types is conveyed by the NMM that co-occurs with WELL (Hoza, 2007, 2008; Roush, 2007), as was discussed above for HEY. In particular, when WELL is accompanied by the polite pucker (pp), it conveys the meaning, "I can't comply (and I know it's not a big deal)" because polite pucker conveys assumed cooperation and little threat to face (Hoza, 2007, 2008; Roush, 2007). See figure 3.9. When WELL is accompanied by tight lips, it conveys a moderate threat to face and means, "I wish I could, but I can't this time" (Hoza, 2007, 2008; figure 3.10).

When polite grimace (pg) co-occurs with WELL, it signals a significant threat to face and means, "Sorry, I'm stuck here; I wish I could, but I just can't" (Hoza, 2007, 2008; Roush, 2007). See figure 3.11. When polite grimace-frown (pg-frown) co-occurs with WELL, the threat to face is severe and means, "I'm so terribly sorry, but there's no way I can comply with your request" (Hoza, 2007, 2008; figure 3.12).

The other NMM, *body teeter* (bt), involves "side to side head movement or shifting of weight between one foot and the other" (Roush, 2007, p. 128). The body teeter serves an intensifier function and, therefore, most often mitigates extreme threats to involvement and independence (Hoza, 2007). It does so in one of two ways: "First, when the marker co-occurs with other NMMs, it serves to intensify those NMMs. Second, when *bt* appears without an accompanying NMM, it functions to question the possibility of compliance with a request or to question the possibility of an option working out" (Hoza, 2007, pp. 172, 173). See figure 3.13 for _WELL/polite pucker, body teeter_ and figure 3.14 for _WELL/polite grimace, body teeter_.

FIGURE 3.9. _WELL_/polite pucker

FIGURE 3.10. _WELL_/tight lips
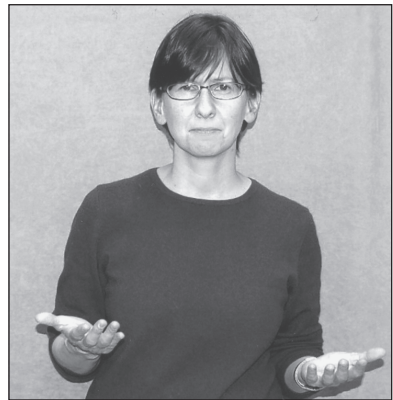

FIGURE 3.11. _WELL_/polite grimace

WELL often functions as a politeness marker and can mitigate threats to both involvement and independence. As with HEY, NMMs that co-occur with WELL provide a wide range of possible mitigation—from small to extreme.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The signs we have glossed as HEY and WELL share primary discourse functions with *hey* and *well*, respectively, but they also have some distinctive functions. HEY functions primarily as an attention-getter and conversational opener, and WELL functions primarily to express hesitation and to hedge. At the same time, both signs serve additional functions. HEY also functions to switch topics (like *hey* in English) or to express surprise or warning (much like *oh* in English), and shares many features with vocatives. WELL can be used as a hedge, a filled pause, and an indefinite particle, as well as to signal a footing shift and to serve a coherence function.

HEY and WELL also play key roles in politeness concerns. There is an increased use of HEY and WELL when someone's face is being threatened. A potential face-threat is inherent in the use of HEY, especially when it is used to interrupt someone because an interruption can threaten a speaker's independence. Conversely, HEY can be used to express involvement and enhance face when the interaction is characterized by camaraderie. The sign WELL does not have an inherent mitigating function when it is used as a straightforward pause marker, although this function allows WELL to mark boundaries between sections of discourse. However, when WELL functions to express reluctance, it plays a key role in politeness concerns by both mitigating threats to independence, as when hesitating when making a request (which can threaten independence), and enhancing involvement, when making a rejection (which can threaten involvement). NMMs that co-occur with HEY and WELL signal the degree to which the signer is mitigating a face-threat.

There are several implications of the functions reviewed in this chapter. First, educators, students of ASL, researchers, and others who use ASL glosses need to be careful in their selection of glosses and to realize the superficiality of glosses and the inherent skewing of meaning that is present in glossing. Second, semantics and functions of ASL signs need to be investigated in their own terms as distinct lexical items of the language, similar to what has been done here. Third, it is likely that many of the

meanings and functions of signs do not appear in current ASL dictionaries (whether online, on video, or in print), so dictionary users (especially learners of ASL) need to be cognizant of this fact when they look up signs.

There is a need for additional research into the discourse and politeness functions of other signs in ASL (as well as signs in other signed languages). This may be especially important for signs that do not appear in dictionaries because they do not have a convenient gloss, for example, as well as for signs that appear to have multiple meanings or functions.

It is likely that native users of ASL and those who have acquired the language to near-native fluency have intuitions about the meanings and functions of such signs. However, those who are learning ASL, or are late-learners of the language, would genuinely benefit from this type of investigation, and could better appreciate the complexity of the language if they were exposed to a richer sense of both meaning and function. Consider, for example, the multiple uses of FINISH and VOMIT as lexical items in ASL, as well as the multiple discourse and politeness functions of HEY and WELL, which have been the focus of this chapter. In sum, an investigation of lexical items (and other features of ASL such as NMMs) should not only focus on semantics, but also discourse functions and politeness functions.

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APPENDIX: GLOSSING CONVENTIONS

Example(s)	Explanation
WELL, HEY, HOUSE	an English word appearing in small caps represents a single sign in ASL
ALL-DAY, DRIVE-TO, PICK-UP	hyphenated words represent a single sign
#ALL	lexicalized fingerspelling
INDEX-rt	INDEX is a "pointing" sign that is used as a pronoun, determiner, or adverb of location in ASL; the direction in which the sign is directed as abbreviated as rt (right), lf (left), or ctr (center)
"WOW," "FULL"	quotation marks indicate a naturally occurring gesture
WELL(one-hand)	the one-handed version of the sign is used, rather than the standard two-handed version
"FULL"(2-hands)	the two-handed version of the sign is used, rather than the standard one-handed version
BEAUTIFUL!	an exclamation point after a sign indicates that the sign is being stressed by the signer
MANY+, CHANGE+ 'rub hands'	the symbol, +, indicates that a sign is repeated comments appearing in single quotes indicate an action or some other description of the context
(Addressee's name), (Oh)	information that appears in parentheses in the translation is of a generic nature and is given to clarify the meaning, as there is no direct equivalent meaning

Nonmanual grammatical marker	Explanation
q	yes/no question
whq	wh-word question
t	topicalization
neg	negation

Nonmanual marker (NMM)	Explanation
th, puff cheeks, mm, intense	adverbial modifiers in ASL
pp, tight lips, pg, pg-frown, bt	specific NMMs that are associated with the mitigation of threats to face in ASL

Scope of marking (Underlining) Example	Explanation
"HEY" GALLAUDET INDEX-rt/t, MANY+ CHANGE+, "WOW", CAN'T BELIEVE/neg." [Example source: Baker-Shenk & Cokely, 1980.]	The underlined portion of the utterance indicates the scope (or spread) of the nonmanual grammatical marker or NMM. In the example here, the 't' marking co-occurs with GALLAUDET INDEX-rt and the 'neg' marking co-occurs with CAN'T BELIEVE.
YOU HAVE OTHER PEOPLE COVER ME, *"WELL"(1-hand, nondominant hand, move forward)/tight lips/q* [Example source: Hoza, 2007.]	The portions that are both italicized and underlined indicate that BOTH a primary and a secondary marking co-occur with these signs. In the example here, the tight lips NMM and the 'q' marking both co-occur with *"WELL"(1-hand, nondominant hand, move forward)*, but 'q' alone co-occurs with YOU HAVE OTHER PEOPLE COVER ME.