

Introduction

When I think about the concept of sociolinguistics in Deaf communities, I consistently see an image of a powerful explosion: all over the world, as self-awareness and self-empowerment grow in Deaf communities, issues in all areas of sociolinguistics are emerging. The occurrence and distribution of sign languages throughout the world, their interaction with spoken languages, and the accompanying language choices users make; language policy and planning in education, in interpreting, and in the media; the teaching of sign languages as second languages; linguistic and sociolinguistic variation within sign languages; the structure of sign language discourse; language attitudes in Deaf communities—these are some of the sociolinguistic issues that are demanding attention. And valuable research attention is being paid to all of these issues by researchers both deaf and hearing in many different countries.

One goal of this series is to provide, in one yearly volume, an ongoing forum for current data-based research on the various aspects of sociolinguistics in Deaf communities. Another goal is for the research in each volume to be of a truly international nature, representative of the world's Deaf communities. Some volumes will focus on one single topic, whereas others such as this first one will contain papers on a variety of topics. I am assisted in the selection of the papers by an editorial board that is also of an international nature.

In this first volume, the selection of papers shows the variety and range of sociolinguistics issues currently facing Deaf communities: the nature of sociolinguistic variation within ASL, fingerspelling in LSQ (*Langue des Signes Québécoise*), the acquisition of fingerspelling in ASL, language use by a Navajo family with deaf children, language policy, classroom practice and multiculturalism in deaf education, aspects of ASL discourse and of the discourse of sign language used by Deaf Filipinos, and the nature and role of rhetorical language in Deaf social movements.

It is my hope that this volume and the ones to follow it will help us gain a clear understanding of the richness and complexity of sociolinguistics in Deaf communities.

I am grateful to the contributors and to the members of the advisory board for their hard work in getting this volume together and in getting

the series started. I also gratefully acknowledge Ivey Pittle Wallace, Managing Editor of Gallaudet University Press, whose patience, humor, and sheer hard work have made this series possible.

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