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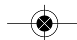


KRISTIN SNODDON

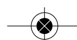
Technology as a Learning Tool for ASL Literacy

THIS ARTICLE explores how learning technology was incorporated as part of a study at the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf, Milton, Ontario, Canada (hereafter referred to as the "E. C. Drury study"), which is part of Early and Cummins's (2002) cross-Canada project, From Literacy to Multiliteracies: Designing Learning Environments for Knowledge Generation within the New Economy.[1] This project was founded on two main objectives (Cummins 2005):

1. To explore ways of bringing students' cultural and linguistic knowledge into the classroom as a foundation for overall literacy development;
2. To explore how technology can enhance students' engagement with traditional literacy (reading and writing skills) and also promote students' expertise in "21st-century literacy skills."

Central to these objectives are conceptions of literacy and technology that build on the knowledge and abilities of bilingual students. In the E. C. Drury study, which focused on the production of ASL identity texts by elementary students in grades two, three, and five (approximately seven to ten years of age), the Ontario provincial schools for Deaf students' ASL curriculum for first-language learners served as the basis for the format and objectives of the project activities in participating classrooms.[2] In keeping with the objectives of the ASL curriculum, the use of technology was given a central role in supporting students' ASL literacy engagement and ASL literacy skills.

In the following sections I discuss the concept of ASL literacy and its relationship to the ASL curriculum and learning technology. I then



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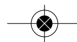
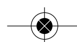


explore the theoretical basis for the multiliteracies project, outline the methodology of my study, and discuss how technology was applied in the classroom. Finally, I summarize some conclusions that arise from the findings.

ASL Literacy and Technology

Like the concept of literacy in general, ASL literacy has been a contested term (Czubek 2006). As Gee (2008) argues, "any view of literacy is inherently political, in the sense of involving relations of power among people" (31). Claims that the term *literacy* should be reserved for languages that involve reading and writing of printed texts often go hand in hand with unsubstantiated assertions that print literacy alone "leads to logical, analytical, critical and rational thinking, general and abstract uses of language, skeptical and questioning attitudes" (ibid., 50) and other so-called higher-order thinking skills. Such a definition of literacy can serve to uphold and mask relations of power that reproduce and maintain systemic inequities since "Literacy pedagogy . . . has been a carefully restricted project—restricted to formalized, monolingual, monocultural, and rule-governed forms of language" (New London Group 1996, 60), which all students are unable to access on an equal basis. This definition also serves to mask how literacy is a socially constructed and socially situated process: It is not reasonable to locate literacy "at the level of an individual as something that primarily concerns the individual's mental abilities" (Gee 2008, 42) or to view literacy as something that can be assessed in terms of how much someone has of it. Rather, Gee argues, "Literacy practices are almost always fully integrated with, interwoven into, constituted part of, the very texture of wider practices that involve talk, interaction, values, and beliefs" (ibid., 45). With respect to the need for a broad, sociocultural understanding of ASL literacy, it is equally true that ASL texts and the various ways of reading them are the collective social and historical invention of Deaf, ASL-using people. As in the general case of literacy practices set out by Gee (ibid., 48), Deaf learners of ASL also learn to interpret texts in ways that reflect the reading conventions of the Deaf community and its social settings. Thus, ASL literacy is a social practice that must be acquired through social and



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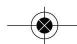
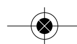


cultural participation. This definition of ASL literacy as a social practice was operationalized in the E. C. Drury study.

Both the concept of ASL literacy and the reading of various ASL texts underpin the Ontario provincial schools' ASL curriculum. Since 1998, an ASL curriculum team of Deaf teachers at the three bilingual, ASL-English provincial schools for Deaf students has developed and field-tested a language arts curriculum for ASL (Small and Mason, 2008). In the ASL curriculum, ASL linguistic structure is studied in addition to ASL literature, ASL texts, and ASL media arts and technology (ibid.). The four strands of this curriculum reveal how knowledge of language structure is integrated with literacy and how ASL literacy is aligned with acquisition of "the cultural value of ASL literary works and literary works in general" (ibid., 138). In other words, the ASL curriculum's concept of ASL literacy takes a view of language learning that moves beyond functional literacy or language skills to encompass cultural, as well as critical, literacy. These are the three levels of ASL literacy outlined by Small and Cripps (2004). In Small and Cripps's definition, functional ASL literacy may be viewed as ASL decoding and production skills, while cultural literacy may be defined as understanding and appreciating the cultural significance of ASL literature (among other aspects of ASL culture). Critical literacy may be viewed as the ability to analyze, critique, and respond to the values inherent in ASL literature and other kinds of texts from the perspective of an ASL user (ibid.). This multifaceted view of literacy postulates an ASL Discourse rather than simply (varying degrees of) knowledge of ASL. In Gee's (2008) words, "Discourses are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing, that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities (or 'types of people') by specific groups" (3). In the small-d sense, discourses are simply discursive systems or "connected stretches of language that make sense" to people who use that language, while "'discourse' is part of 'Discourse'" which "is always more than just language" (ibid., 154).

Viewing the construct of literacy in terms of Discourses, Gee (ibid.) elaborates a distinction between primary and secondary Discourses. In Deaf students, this distinction has not always been made clear due to a primary Discourse's link to an accessible first language



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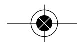
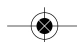


and socialization. A primary Discourse is acquired "within whatever constitutes [human beings'] primary socializing unit early in life . . . Our primary Discourse gives us our initial and often enduring sense of self and sets the foundations of our culturally specific vernacular language (our 'everyday language'), the language in which we speak and act as 'everyday' (non-specialized) people, and our culturally specific vernacular identity" (ibid., 156). Deaf adults from outside a child's family unit have often played a central role in transmitting an ASL Discourse since most Deaf children lack full and effective access to social interaction until they encounter an ASL environment (Lane, Hoffmeister, and Bahan 1996). In such an environment, Deaf children enjoy full communication and a change in status from outcast or deviant to participating members of a rich culture with its own heritage, shared meanings, experiences, and values (ibid.). However, academic study of ASL, such as is facilitated by the ASL curriculum, results in ASL's positioning as a secondary Discourse, for which a Deaf student's primary ASL Discourse forms the basis, just as a primary Discourse always does for the acquisition of secondary Discourses. Gee (2008) states that secondary Discourses are acquired "later in life . . . within a more 'public sphere' than our initial socializing group . . . They are acquired within institutions that are part and parcel of wider communities" (157), such as schools. Gee (ibid.) defines literacy as mastery of a secondary Discourse. Since there are many secondary Discourses and all individuals possess a range of some (but not other) secondary Discourses, literacy is always plural and involves a range of text and technologies including, but not limited to, print.

The central role that technology plays in the creation and reading of ASL literature and texts highlights the ways in which it supports academic language learning of ASL as a secondary Discourse. Such learning includes the comprehension of "linguistically and conceptually demanding texts" and students' ability "to use the language in an accurate and coherent way" in their own productions (Cummins 2001, 66). As Cummins (2004) notes, information and communication technologies constitute a major part of what are known as twenty-first-century literacy skills in a knowledge-based society. Technological interventions also hold promise for enhancing students' literacy engagement by increasing their interest in learning activities. In the following section I



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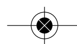
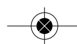


show how Cummins's (2001) framework of academic expertise underlies the multiliteracies project and its use of learning technology.

The Multiliteracies Project

The concept of multiliteracies was first introduced by the New London Group (1996), which sought to define a new approach to literacy pedagogy that takes into account the cultural and linguistic diversity that is part of schools and society, as well as the range of information and multimedia technologies that create new text forms and new ways of communicating. Minority-language students' development of identity texts is a central part of the multiliteracies project. These creative works demonstrate students' first-language proficiency in addition to their English literacy skills in order to activate prior knowledge, cognitive engagement, and identity investment, which are the basis of academic language learning (Cummins 2001). Students from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds invest their identities in the production of these texts, which can take a variety of forms, including written, oral, musical, or dramatic (Cummins 2004). Identity texts by students from other classrooms participating in Early and Cummins's project have involved working with resource people, including family members and older students literate in the students' first languages, who can assist with translation (ibid.). These texts are then shared with various audiences—other students and teachers, family members, the media—so that students can see their identities affirmed and supported by a positive reception of their work (ibid.). The use of technology for writing and/or scanning students' stories and illustrations and publishing them on the project's website, www.multiliteracies.ca, facilitates the production of the identity texts and broadens their potential audience (ibid.).

In the E. C. Drury study, technology took on a unique role in the form of video technology for recording students' identity texts in various stages of development, classroom discussions, and stories told by visitors from the Deaf community. Across the grade levels in the ASL curriculum, students are expected to acquire skills in video recording and editing and in various aspects of production such as selecting an appropriate backdrop for an ASL presenter. The support technology



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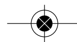


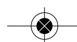
provided for the creation of students' ASL literature is also an indication of technology's role in fostering academic expertise. Not only are the Deaf students' prior knowledge and identities as ASL users supported by the process of creating video or digital ASL texts, but students are also cognitively engaged and actively involved in the learning process. Video technology for enhancing ASL literacy was also present in other forms at E. C. Drury, such as daily announcements made by administrators, teachers, and students on the video monitors of the school's public address system.

In the following section I outline the methodology used in my study and describe the study participants.

Methodology

I participated in this project as a research assistant for the multiliteracies project in conjunction with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. In the months preceding data collection, several planning meetings were attended by project team members, representatives from the Canadian Cultural Society of the Deaf (who acted as consultants), a Deaf filmmaker, and a principal and teachers at the E. C. Drury junior school. For three days before the start of the project, the filmmaker and I visited the classrooms of the participating grades (two, three, and five) with our own video cameras but without filming the students so they could become accustomed to our presence.

At the time, the grade two teacher had already received training in the ASL curriculum and was a member of the ASL curriculum team. The other two teachers of grades three and five were teamed with the elementary school's lead teacher of the ASL curriculum for support. Each teacher had a class of six students. Two ASL storytellers, William and Victor,[3] were invited to make separate visits to the classrooms. An important feature of the E. C. Drury project was the involvement of visitors from the Deaf community as resource people. When inviting ASL storytellers to their classrooms, the teachers chose Deaf adults who could expose students to classic Ontario ASL—the dialect of ASL used by students at the former Ontario School for the Deaf (OSD) in Belleville.[4]



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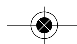


Over a three-week period, observations were made of individual classrooms and recorded via video camera and field notes. During the first week, the ASL storytellers visited each classroom. Their visits were recorded on the school's cameras and reviewed on monitors by teachers and students on the following days. During the second week, students created identity texts and shared them with the rest of their class; the videos of the students' stories were then reviewed and edited. The final versions of these identity texts were then presented to the class.

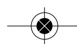
A central question guiding my study related to the ways in which this project sought to encourage the expression of Deaf students' linguistic and cultural identities and how the participating students responded to the learning environment the project created. I also sought to discover how this project could serve as a model for other classrooms so that what we learned at E. C. Drury might facilitate the construction of identity texts by other Deaf students. Finally, I investigated the ways in which the Deaf students' development of identity texts might promote collaborative critical inquiry into the social realities that affect their lives and how these realities may be transformed through action (as described in Cummins 2001). The use of technology as a key component of this project also served to highlight technology's support of ASL literacy. As much as possible, I recorded the dynamic of each classroom, the effects of the ASL storytellers' visits and the content of their stories, student and teacher conversations, and the process of developing individual identity texts.

The next section describes several factors that influenced the students' development of their identity texts and highlighted technology's role in the learning process.

Summary and Results

Impact of ASL Storytellers

The classroom visits with Deaf adult storytellers and the subsequent review of these visits on video served to engage the students' interest and involvement. The storytellers' visits also contributed to the students' learning of ASL and their knowledge of the world and stimulated discussion of issues related to ASL, Deaf culture, and the students' linguis-



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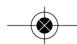
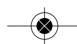


tic identities. A main theme raised by the storytellers was name signs (or ASL names), which Deaf students traditionally receive when they arrive at residential schools and encounter an ASL Discourse (Lane, Hoffmeister, and Bahan 1996).

During the storytellers' visits and the subsequent teacher-guided discussions, the students' attention was drawn to their own name signs and to some differences between the giving of name signs in classic Ontario ASL at OSD and the way they are given today. For example, during his initial visit William introduced himself by explaining his name sign, which uses a clawed V handshape in an arc across his chin.[5] As he told the students, this name sign was given to him because he is STRONG and part of the STRONG group at OSD.[6] Students in the STRONG group were typically given name signs that used the clawed V handshape. Victor had a name sign given to him at OSD that uses the U handshape in the crook of the nondominant arm. Neither storyteller's name sign employs a handshape related to their written names. As such, both of these name signs seem to embody particular categories identified by Hemingway (2007) in his study of classic Ontario ASL name signs.

Arbitrary name signs, which have no meaning other than their representation of the first fingerspelled letter of an individual's written first and/or last name, have been identified as the predominant name sign category among users of classic Ontario ASL (ibid.; Supalla 1992). The prevalence of arbitrary name signs in Classic Ontario ASL is evidence of this dialect's conformity with historical ASL naming conventions identified by Supalla (1990, 1992). However, Hemingway (2007) subdivides the category of classic Ontario ASL arbitrary name signs into relative, arbitrary name signs (following an individual's written first or last name); nonrelative, arbitrary name signs (following an alphabetical handshape that is unrelated to the individual's written name); or unique, arbitrary name signs (following an ASL handshape that is not included in the fingerspelled alphabet). William's mention of what appears to be the use of unique, arbitrary name signs that involve a particular handshape for all of the members of a certain group of students at OSD is a line of research not yet explored (J. Hemingway, personal communication, April 4, 2005). The recording of the storytellers' narratives on video served to create ASL texts that document and pre-



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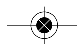
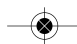


serve this information for future study. Additionally, the creation of video ASL texts that were reviewed during class sessions following the storytellers' visits shows technology's role in stimulating discussion and inquiry.

In addition to providing a glimpse into distinct classic Ontario ASL naming conventions, William also shared information with the students about some of the rules for giving name signs, as when he remarked that a name sign is given according to how you are identified by other people on a daily basis. He explained that during his youth, name signs were given in the residence halls since ASL was forbidden in the classrooms at OSD. Name signs and their categories were based on individual students' traits as identified by other students. For the generation represented by the two ASL storytellers, an individual's ASL and English names were less related than they are for students today. Previously, an individual's ASL name took precedence when making introductions. William observed that today Deaf people first provide their fingerspelled name when introducing themselves and then give their ASL name.

William asked each class of students to share information about themselves and their name signs, thereby reflecting the interactive process of ASL storytelling. The students were asked about their name signs and family background. In several instances, students with Deaf family members related the name signs of their parents, siblings, grandparents, and other relatives. However, many of the students were not aware of why or how they had received their own name signs. Since several students were given name signs by their Deaf parents, they were asked to interview them about how they had chosen the name signs. None of the students mentioned having received their name sign at school or in residence (most of the participants were day students). In addition, almost all of the students' name signs were based on the first fingerspelled letter of their English names. These discussions regarding ASL names promoted the students' awareness of their linguistic identities as members of the ASL community and of the history and significance of name signs as a central part of an ASL Discourse.

Other topics explored in the storytellers' narratives included life in residence at OSD and sports. According to Lane, Hoffmeister, and Bahan (1996), sports have traditionally formed an important part of a Deaf



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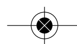
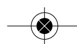


student's identity and of ASL Discourse. William shared old photographs of himself and his school teams and told stories of his past exploits as a Deaf athlete and football player. The effect of his stories on the students was noticeable since, when they began creating their ASL identity texts, many students also told stories about their involvement in sports. In addition, William's and Victor's stories about the rules and regulations at OSD provided a glimpse into the world of a previous generation that the students might not otherwise have known about. For example, William described the corporal punishment meted out by residence supervisors, who in the post–World War II years were often retired army members placed in government jobs provided by the provincial schools. Victor described the daily menu in the school cafeteria and the Saturday allowances given to students, which they used to go to the movies or buy candy.

The storytellers also drew the students' attention to language issues: William emphasized the difference between the present classroom environment at E. C. Drury and the one he grew up in, where sign language was forbidden except in the residence halls and during mealtimes. He told the students that things are much better today. In the future, students will need to fight to keep ASL alive for the next generation. Victor described his refugee family's escape from war-torn Latvia to Canada, where they encountered a host of language issues since his parents did not speak English and could not help Victor, who was learning English at school. In addition to these biographical insights into the Deaf lives of William and Victor, the students learned classic Ontario ASL vocabulary from the storytellers' narratives. When reviewing the visits on video, the teachers drew the students' attention to vocabulary items such as old signs for school dormitories and hockey positions. Students also learned classic Ontario ASL signs for SCHOOL, TEACHER, BATHROOM, and so on. In this way, the storytellers' visits provided a unique opportunity for the students to witness an older dialect of their language in use.

Students' Identity Investment

Technology's role in fostering ASL literacy was apparent in the students' development of their own ASL identity texts. This involved making multiple drafts, which were recorded and reviewed on video.



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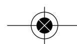
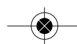


For the grade five students, identity text development became a more sophisticated exercise than it was for the younger students. Initially, the grade five students all tried to copy William's bold tone in their stories about ice skating and hockey. Guided by their teacher, however, they were invited to compare different stories and then exercise their skills in literary criticism. As the students first watched a new story told by their teacher and then reviewed it on video, they were asked what needed to be improved and what details were missing from his narrative. The grade five teacher then retold his story and incorporated the students' suggestions, and the students remarked that his revised story was much more comprehensible. In this way, the students were inspired to create more individual identity texts and to provide each other with suggestions for improving their subsequent drafts. This episode highlighted the ASL curriculum's expectations for grade five students to be familiar with the ASL storytelling process and to be able to produce and retell ASL texts in a variety of forms supported by technology. Additionally, with their own identity texts the students produced ASL stories that incorporated an introduction, an event description, a closing statement, and rich details.

The grade three students also adopted William's bold attitude in their stories about sports. In their telling of their own sports stories, some differences between the generations became apparent. For the adult storytellers, sports indeed served as the bonding force that Lane, Hoffmeister, and Bahan (1996) have described and were played at the residential schools with other Deaf students. In discussions with their teachers, the grade three students all mentioned sports when asked what they had in common with the storytellers. However, in their own stories, the students talked about playing on teams with hearing children outside of school. These stories reveal a secure sense of the students' identities as Deaf athletes among hearing peers. Even though William's sense of confidence in his ability as a Deaf athlete inspired the students when creating their own stories, the reality of school budget cuts and the consequent lack of extracurricular activities inadvertently highlighted some differences between present-day opportunities to play on Deaf sports teams and those during William's years at school.

The grade two students narrated their personal histories of going to school and learning the name signs of their teachers and classmates.



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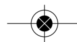
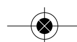


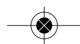
In contrast to the group discussion and instruction in the other classes, the grade two teacher individually guided her students through the storytelling process by reviewing the students' first drafts on video and encouraging them to provide more details about their experiences. Most of the grade two stories followed the same format, with the exception of those by two students who come from hearing families. One of these students described her experience of immigrating to Canada from Sri Lanka, and the other student narrated his experience of attending a mainstream school with no access to ASL. Among all of the others, this story stands out as a powerful image of a student articulating his experience of disempowerment. This expressly documented self-reflection and self-analysis by a younger student demonstrates this project's success in promoting identity awareness and investment. It also points to the powerful ways in which technology-supported methods of critical inquiry can connect with Deaf students' analyses of social realities.

Teacher's Guidance of Project

The guidance provided by individual teachers strongly influenced the processes and outcomes of the E. C. Drury project. The teachers took responsibility for the project's basis and design and selected the ASL storytellers who were invited to visit each class. The teachers also guided class discussions following each video review of the storytellers' visits. One main theme they explored was the students' shared identity with the visiting ASL storytellers. For example, following her class's review of William's visit, the grade two teacher asked her students why William had asked so many questions about them. She remarked that William was curious about who the students were and wanted to feel a sense of connection and shared identity with them. Similarly, the grade five teacher discussed the concept of a shared identity with his students. During a discussion, this teacher asked his students to identify the source of the connection they felt to the storytellers and their experiences. The students answered that they felt a connection because they are Deaf. In this way, the teachers facilitated discussion of the positive reality of the Deaf community as a rich culture and a linguistic group.

When reviewing the storytellers' visits on video, the teachers also explained classic Ontario ASL vocabulary and clarified the meaning of



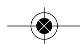


some of the storytellers' comments. For example, following William's visit, the grade two teacher asked her class what William had meant when he told them they must fight to keep ASL alive. Did he mean physical fighting? The teacher then explained the concept of negotiating and advocating for improvements to bilingual education, for the use of ASL in school, and for the hiring of Deaf teachers. Through these technology-facilitated discussions, the teachers promoted collaborative critical inquiry into the students' and the storytellers' experiences and social realities. The teachers encouraged the students to compare and contrast their own experiences with those of the storytellers and highlighted differences in school, residence life, and society then and now.

Discussion

Cummins (2004) highlights features of the multiliteracies project that extend to the bilingual student participants in the E. C. Drury study. A key feature is the view of students' first-language knowledge as an educationally significant resource. In a classroom context with support for ASL, students' attitudes toward their own use of ASL and their identities as Deaf ASL users are positively affected. The use of technology in the E. C. Drury study also corresponds with technology's role in other participating classrooms in the multiliteracies project. As with other students' creation of additional kinds of identity texts, ASL technology at E. C. Drury increased the potential audience for the storytellers' and the students' ASL identity texts and reinforced ASL literacy practices such as drafting and editing stories (ibid.). Unfortunately, due to time constraints the E. C. Drury study did not investigate the sharing of students' ASL texts with audiences outside of the participating classrooms. Because of concerns about protecting students' identities, their ASL stories are not directly featured on the project's website, but these stories have been shown to numerous audiences during conference presentations. Such initiatives as ASL identity texts serve to validate and normalize ASL literacy and linguistic diversity and can result in more effective practices and policies that involve the use of technology in school (ibid.).

The E. C. Drury project provided several examples of Deaf students



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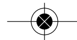
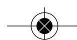


creating ASL identity texts in the context of a rich first-language and -culture environment. The conditions created by this project—the presence of older Deaf adult storytellers in the classroom, teacher-facilitated discussions of Deaf culture and language identity, and teachers' guidance of students through the ASL storytelling process—fostered students' identity investment and cognitive engagement in their own stories. These conditions also reveal the benefits of technology as a learning tool for ASL literacy. The students' enthusiasm for and interest in the storytellers are reminders to educators that ASL-fluent Deaf adults can be an invaluable resource in the classroom. Not only can they serve as first-language models and share their life experiences and histories with students, but they can also inspire the production of students' own ASL literature. In this way, this project should promote the utilization of the Deaf community—typically excluded from the classroom—as an educational resource and a vehicle for cultural transmission.

The students' creation of ASL identity texts revealed the students to be confident, articulate storytellers. In addition to demonstrating high levels of ASL literacy through the ASL storytelling process, in their stories, and during teacher-facilitated discussions, these students demonstrated that they are capable of discerning and analyzing past and present inequities in their social environment. This project can serve as a model for other classrooms of Deaf students and promote technology as a learning tool for literacy through the development of ASL or bilingual ASL/English identity texts and through the collaborative critical inquiry that is fostered when Deaf students are encouraged to express their unique experiences and identities.

Conclusion

According to Cummins (2004), government investment in educational technology has been motivated in part by the goal of improving learning outcomes for all students, including those from traditionally marginalized backgrounds. Both access to appropriate learning technology at home and school and the use of technology to foster collaborative critical inquiry are keys to successful learning outcomes (ibid.). However, economically and socially marginalized students have often



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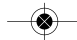

lacked access to technological resources that result in improved educational outcomes (ibid.).

Deaf students are no different from other groups of minority-language students: Owing to often inappropriate categorization and lack of accommodation by the school system, Deaf students are at high risk of educational failure. Systematic bias is reflected in the fact that the language and the culture of the Deaf community are not routinely included in the standard curriculum for Deaf students. The E. C. Drury study has highlighted several ways in which some of this systematic bias can be successfully addressed by incorporating a powerful combination of technological innovation, identity promotion, and identity investment into bilingual and bicultural education for Deaf students.

Notes

1. This article was presented at a panel on STS and Deaf studies at Ways of Knowing, the annual meeting of the Society for the Social Studies of Science (4S), Montreal, Canada (October 11–13, 2007).

2. This article follows the convention established by Cripps (2000): "It is common for authors to use 'Deaf' with a capital 'D' when discussing individuals who are members of the Deaf community and consider themselves to be culturally Deaf; while 'deaf ' with a lowercase 'd' describes an audiological state of being. I have decided not to make this distinction and use capital 'D' in every use of the word Deaf. This is not to place a particular identity on particular individuals. Rather, it is to indicate that Deaf culture is the birthright of every Deaf individual by virtue of their having been born Deaf or having become Deaf in childhood, whether or not they have been exposed to Deaf culture."

3. Pseudonyms are used for all of the participants.

4. The Ontario Institution for the Education and Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb opened in Belleville in 1870. It was renamed the Ontario School for the Deaf in 1913 and the Sir James Whitney School for the Hearing Handicapped in 1974 and is now known as the Sir James Whitney School for the Deaf (Carbin 1996). When the Ontario School for the Deaf in Milton (now the Ernest C. Drury School for the Deaf) opened in 1963, students from southwestern Ontario were transferred there from the school in Belleville (ibid.). This dispersal of the Ontario Deaf students is one of the factors underlying the gradual loss of the classic Ontario ASL dialect and its conventions (Hemingway 2007).

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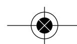

5. The ASL handshapes identified in this article follow the terminology and descriptions employed by *The Canadian Dictionary of ASL* (Bailey and Dolby 2002).

6. I have followed the convention of identifying English glosses of ASL words with small capital letters.

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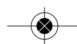

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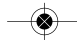

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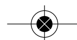

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