CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

TOWARD A CROWDSOURCED MODEL
FOR ASL TRANSLATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE’S WORKS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Interdisciplinary Studies

By

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Dedication and Acknowledgement

Tír gan teanga, tír gan anam.
A land without language is a land without a soul.
St. Jerome, patron saint of translators

I’d like to dedicate this to my father, whose idealism and gregariousness are remembered. The stories of people he touched are reminders of how much he has touched my own life. I am grateful for these stories, and wish to give back, and hopefully touch other lives.

I’d like to thank my mother, who has been and continues to be my biggest advocate. She is one of my personal heroes. Though I am on the higher end with our height difference, on the inside, she towers over me.

I’d like to thank my friend, Robert Augustus, for the many conversations (until sunrise) that we had about myriad topics and why and how ASL should be preserved for all time. He certainly took a step in the right direction with his creation of si5s, and I hope to have as deep an impact as he with this project. Veditz would be proud of us, I think.

I’d like to thank Linda Bove and Freda Norman for sparking a fire in me. They saved my life—my ASL, rather. I certainly tested their patience as they endured many challenges from me as they challenged me in translation work during rehearsals at Deaf West Theatre. They infected me with a sense of perfectionism in getting the translations just so, and somehow, this divine dissatisfaction has remained with me ever since. I am indebted to them, and sincerely hope it was all worth it.

I’d like to thank my thesis committee members for their good humor as I played whack-a-mole with the entire process. This has not been a straightforward journey, and their patience is deeply appreciated.

And last, and most certainly not least, I’d like to thank my wife and partner, Tia, for her steadfast support through the trials and tribulations of grad school. Now that she is knee-deep in the middle herself, she has gained much empathy for my situation. It is returned.
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Glossary of Terms

American Sign Language—the language used by people who identify with the American Deaf Culture and many members of the Deaf community in Canada.

American Deaf Culture—the culture of approximately 200,000-500,000 Deaf people in the U.S. and Canada who use ASL.¹

Deaf Theatre—the type of theatre, as defined by Miles and Fant, usually following these basic criteria: the performers are Deaf or deeply aware of Deaf issues, the content of the show incorporates the Deaf worldview or cultural orientation, and the language used is ASL.²

Sign Language Theatre—the type of theatre, as defined by Miles and Fant, usually following these basic criteria: the performers are Deaf and/or hearing, the content of the show not necessarily include the Deaf worldview or cultural orientation, and the language used is a signed language (whether ASL or Signed English).

Dramatic Text—more commonly referred to as the script, and refers to all written elements that are read in a script including stage directions, character names, written dialogue, etc.

Theatrical Text—the dramatic text rendered within the parameters of the theatrical space, enabling a performance. This refers to the physicalized script through the staging, scenery, lighting, music, and performance of the actors.

¹ Based on Mitchell et al. 328
² Mitchell et al. concludes that from the widely varying methods and approaches to documenting the Deaf population and ASL in the United States, Schein and Delk Jr. (1974) is considered the “ultimate source for data-based estimates of the number of people who use ASL in the U.S.” (321). Mitchell warns that this study was a national study of deafness in the U.S. population and not of ASL use in the general population, and the two should not be conflated due to varying language use and methods.
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Three orientations toward language diversity (Reagan 609)

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Abstract

TOWARD A CROWDSOURCED MODEL
FOR ASL TRANSLATIONS OF SHAKESPEARE’S WORKS

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Most theatre incorporating American Sign Language (ASL) uses written source texts based in English, requiring a translation process. These translations are often a result of collaborations that may involve any combination of actors, interpreters, sign coaches, and/or Sign Masters. The translation process must contend with the time and resource constraints that limit the pursuit of an ideal translation, and the complexities of directorial/creative decisions and staging that influence the end-translation. There are few surviving records of these translations, usually found in archived videos of performances, or written notes or glosses in English, and they are difficult to obtain. To date, there have been only a handful of major efforts at translating Shakespeare’s works, and only one (Amaryllis Theatre’s *Twelfth Night*) has made its translation readily accessible via a DVD of the performance. This thesis attempts to address the problem of lack of translation material by proposing an internet-based crowdsourcing model to create and allow for a multiplicity of and successive generations of ASL translations of Shakespeare’s plays to exist.
Foreword

In the beginning of my career as an actor at Deaf West Theatre, I fell in love with the rehearsal process, especially the translation efforts, so much that it has become my favorite part of rehearsals. I dutifully followed the advice of my more seasoned peers and documented my translations as best as I could in my script, using techniques such as printing single-sided scripts which allowed me to write the translation glosses on the opposite blank page, or reprinting the script in double-space and writing my translation notes between the lines. When my work was complete, and the show was curtailed, I saved these scripts and notes. Some time later, when revisiting these notes, I recognized and was able to remember many of my translations. However, I had difficulty replicating in ASL much of what I had written down. I often had to rely on my own personal muscle memory and imagination to remember how I signed my lines. I even ended up retranslating some, for better or worse. And then I got to thinking: what if someone else wanted to learn these very same lines in ASL and I wasn’t around to assist? This thesis is borne of that thought, and I offer it to the world.
Chapter 1: Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Shakespeare’s works have been translated into dozens of languages. People the world over have held Shakespeare in high regard, especially as the exemplar of what is possible with the English language. Deaf people all over the world share this regard for Shakespeare, especially here in America, where there have been a number of theatrical productions staged or interpreted in American Sign Language (ASL). Even with these efforts, there are very few surviving ASL-translated texts of Shakespeare, save for videorecordings of theatrical performances and written glosses and notes. Because ASL lacks a standard written form, English glosses are used as a substitute to “write” the ASL into a more permanent form. While using written gloss systems may be beneficial for documenting ASL, there is no commonly held standard for them, and they and any accompanying notes are highly personalized and unless very specific and precise in detail, often fail to convey sufficiently the ASL text from one person to another (Valli et al. 24). Recent video technology now enables fast, cheap, and accurate recording of ASL, and so video has become the medium of choice for documenting ASL translation.

Glosses and notes still serve a useful function as they can be conveniently written directly onto a script. Should a theatre production wish to obtain copies of previously-worked translations, they may face legal and physical restrictions with proprietary rights and access to materials. Many of these recordings are not accessible to the general public and must be viewed (often in-house) with the permission of the respective institutions they

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3 Glosses function as a notation system where sign language concepts and linguistic features are recorded in linear fashion using written language. In this case, we are referring to English glosses of ASL.
originated from. In short, it can be an exercise in frustration for a company to try and find any texts of Shakespeare to “read” in ASL, and much more so for the average ASL user interested in experiencing Shakespeare in their own language.

The distinction between translation and performance (paralleling the distinctions between dramatic texts and theatrical texts) has not yet been addressed in ASL translation studies in the theatre. Because ASL requires the use of the body and lacks a static “written” form, it is difficult to delineate performance from text. Attempting to define ASL literature using standard definitions forces a “reconsideration of every standard definition of literature, author, writing, and reading” (Novak 23). It is possible to invert that relationship, stating instead that ASL literatures can influence the tradition of literature and language (Nelson 128). Video recordings of signed utterances may be viewed as either performance or written text or both, so when translating these utterances, one must consider whether to make a distinction between the content of the utterance and the performance. This decision is important because in the event of a “fixed” text of a video translation, a more fluent performance of ASL would mean a better translation of the English into ASL (Aebischer, Esche, and Wheale 5). One way to create this distinction is to use the definitions of dramatic texts and theatrical texts; whereas the dramatic text is the written text to be performed, the theatrical text is the dramatic text as performed, including staging and technical elements happening onstage. Using this parallel, the English-to-ASL translation process works to create the ASL dramatic text from the English dramatic text. The performance of this translated ASL text may or may

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4 For a short list of currently available materials on ASL productions of Shakespeare, see this discussion thread on shaksper.net: http://shaksper.net/archive/2006/237-march/24236-asl-productions-of-shakespeare

5 For further clarification of these definitions, see the Glossary of Terms on pg. vi.
not be consistent with each performance, as this body of signed dramatic text can be and is influenced by the happenings on stage (the theatrical text). One could view recordings of signed or interpreted Shakespearean performances as translatable or translated texts outright, but because these utterances are performed as part of the theatrical text onstage and are subject to a number of influences onstage, they cannot be official dramatic ASL-translated Shakespearean texts. It is far easier to adhere to the traditional distinctions between dramatic and theatrical texts when beginning the process of developing separate dramatic texts of ASL translation outside of performance.

To initiate this process, it would be feasible to work with what translation work has already been done and is available. Videorecordings of ASL performances are the best available data of any translation work, and can provide a good starting point for the building of the corpus. The most significant collaboration to date (Amaryllis’ *Twelfth Night*) has also made their project available to the public on DVD. This video is not of a translated dramatic text, but a staged performance culminating from an ASL translation effort by a team of experts and actors, effectively rendering it a recording of a theatrical text. This project also has a website (www.aslshakespeare.org) which contains excerpts of translated and performed texts, as well as explanations of aspects of the translation process. Further study of the site reveals that the entire process took over a year and had multiple translators working together to parse and research the original text (which was edited for length before the translation began) for meaning to inform any renderings into ASL.

It is clear that the *Twelfth Night* project, utilizing the best-practice model for translation devised to date, required an enormous amount of time and resources in order
to translate Shakespeare’s English into ASL. These high costs present a barrier for future translation efforts especially considering there are still 37 other plays to work on.⁶ A further challenge to translation using the current model is securing a qualified, dedicated team and providing sufficient time and resources to complete the work. The translation process usually is begun only when a theater decides to stage a production using an English dramatic text and people are available for work, but it does seem foolish to wait for this perfect confluence of events to occur before translation begins.⁷ Though the costs involved are considerable, there is no reason why translation of dramatic texts cannot exist independently of being commissioned by theatres. The current model is not adequate to meet current and future demand for translation work, for it is left in the hands of too few, and is too dependent on decision-making by production companies. The questions then become: how can the current ASL translation model be improved upon to facilitate translation of Shakespeare’s works, how can a greater number of people outside the parameters of this model be involved, and how can this process exist independently of the theatre production decision-making process?

This is where the open source concept comes in. Open source historically relates to computer programming, where previously, software programming code was closed to people outside the company. With the introduction of open source programming, the original source code for certain software programs became freely available and open to modification by any interested persons who possessed technical proficiency in programming. The open source model in the past was thought of as egalitarian and

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⁶ Via the Folger Shakespeare Library website (www.folger.edu), which states that there are 39 known plays, but one (Cardenio) is missing, bringing the total to 38.
⁷ I term this the text-to-performance translation model, where the end goal of creating a signed text for performance sets the parameters for the translation.
democratic; people who were interested in the software could add improvements. In practice, this usually required a high level of programming skill, proving to be a barrier for many (Rogers). Users who were not skilled in programming had little input in the improvement process, and because of this, there often were gaps between the producers and users of a program. Rogers adds that the current rise of open source collaboration platforms such as GitHub and SourceForge has closed these rifts by decentralizing the process. Users could now work alongside programmers to suggest and guide improvements, allowing for more seamless integration of the software functions and mutual satisfaction of all interested parties.

Since the late 1980s, the translation profession has seen the most dynamic changes in translating digital content, especially with the rise of globalization. The concept driving most of this work is translating for localization, which involves adaptations of products to a specific linguistic and cultural locale, and while translation is at its core, it equally involves associated engineering and managerial tasks such as devising new processes for manufacturing or marketing of a product (Garcia). ASL adaptations of English language plays have been the standard art format of choice for theatres using sign language, where they have “localized” the English text into ASL, sometimes using digital video technology. The increasing digitization of Shakespeare, and the market for localization of Shakespeare’s texts, illustrates the need for an online resource utilizing ASL in connection with Shakespeare. This leads to the not-yet-realized vision of what I believe is the next level in ASL translation: an open source internet-based project where anybody can input his or her own translations of Shakespeare’s works, and those seeking a translated body of work can pick and choose from among
these translations, making the translations their own. Legal concepts surrounding
ownership must be explored,\(^8\) as there is debate regarding whether original authors or
translators of literary works are the owners of these translated works. There are thousands
of videos of songs rendered in ASL on the Internet, attesting to the enthusiasm behind
making music accessible to deaf people. People of varying levels of skill in ASL make
these videos, and most are simply amateurs who enjoy creating these translated songs.
The popularity of this art form is more about showcasing one’s abilities in ASL, a
language that has seen an explosive increase in the number of people learning it in recent
years (Furman 25). The open source collaboration platform model could conceivably
prove to be a good fit for ASL translations of Shakespeare by bringing together
enthusiasts and students of ASL and Shakespeare the world over. This model could also
apply to ASL translations of other plays, songs, and other genres and forms of literature,
where users can compare and improve on each others’ work.

Imagine, then, a hub of activity that is generating a multiplicity of line-by-line
translations of all of Shakespeare’s plays. Users each have an individual account that
personalizes all their work, allowing for ownership of content while at the same time,
allowing for sharing with others. Ideally, enough translations would be generated so that
users could pick and choose preferred versions on a line-by-line basis, or even submit
their own comments or improvements. Any coordination costs involved in managing a
project to completion are transferred onto “content curators” who would select the best
material, and perhaps enter into dialogue with others on what constitutes the best

\(^8\) Title 17 of the United States Code covers Copyright Law. Section 106(2) specifically
states that creators of original material have exclusive right to authorize translations,
which are considered derivative works as defined under Title 17.
translation. Eventually, multiple generations of translation may create an entirely new canon of ASL literature. The technology currently exists to make this happen.

This is evidence of a changing paradigm in the way we create things, as pointed out by Rogers on how GitHub “is doing to open source what the internet did to the publishing industry: It’s creating a culture gap between the previous, big-project generation of open source and a newer, more amateurized generation of open source today.” I aim to do the same for ASL translation of Shakespeare’s plays, to democratize the process and create a new amateur class of translators and collaborators. The purpose of this thesis is to provide the justification for the creation of this website through research and argumentation, with some planning and envisioning, so that vision can meet reality.
Chapter 2: History and Background

We must look to the past to understand why the ASL-using theatre community does not currently have a more robust translation system for translating Shakespeare, especially in light of his popularity with other languages and cultures. Current and future technologies offer much promise to facilitate and empower the process of individuals becoming involved with English-to-ASL translation. This thesis explores past and current processes, then examines current and future technologies and considers their potential applications and implications when incorporated into the proposed new model of ASL translation.

Background and History of the Deaf Community and American Sign Language

Apart from the phenomenon that was Martha’s Vineyard’s robust deaf community, the documented early history of the deaf community in America is tied with efforts to educate them. Two methods of instruction were generally followed: the oral method or the manual method. The manual method, or “manualism,” coded spoken language into a manual alphabet and vocabulary of signs corresponding to particular spoken or written words. In academic institutions today where second languages are taught, ASL is categorized among other foreign languages, a notion resting on the fact that English is the norm in America, and all other languages as foreign. Modern ASL is a derivative hybrid or creole of the Old French Sign Language (LSF) brought over and used at the first manualist school in America with other indigenous sign language.

9 Originally a manual code for spoken language, ASL has developed into a full-fledged language, with its own distinct grammar and social and regional variation.
systems, notably the Old American Sign Language found on Martha’s Vineyard (Groce 71). This school brought deaf people together in one place; prior to this, they were isolated and may have used their own home signs to communicate with others, if any signs at all. This original system developed at the American Asylum for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut spread as other manualist schools followed what was considered the “state of the art” in Deaf education at the time (77). While plentiful variations existed, teachers who were graduates of the Hartford institution later went on to work at these other schools, which had the effect of standardizing the development of ASL in America.

This system of signs essentially functioned as a manual code for spoken and written language to be understood by those who lacked the capacity for speech or hearing, and was not considered to be language in its own right. The goal for the use of this manual method was not only for communicative and social purposes, but was a means to the “noble” goal of mainstreaming deaf people into the society they had been excluded from (Baynton 157). This meant that the intended ultimate result of the manual method was facility in the English language, whether written or spoken, and deaf peoples’ expression and participation in society through English. The method was not to be an end in itself. Many pro-manualist educators who were concerned for the religious welfare of deaf people reasoned that because speech was beyond the facility of most deaf people, and because the manual method could sufficiently convey all of human thought and would allow them to receive the word of God, it was worthy to invest time in

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10 Martha’s Vineyard had a high incidence of deafness among their population, likely due to genetics, and most people on the island were able to sign. See Rutherford (1992).
11 The American Asylum for the Deaf was founded in 1817 by Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, a hearing minister, and Laurent Clerc, a deaf teacher from the Institut National de Jeunes Sourds de Paris in France.
educating them in manualism as opposed to training them in speech (Baynton 39). This rationale made it a priority to teach deaf pupils through their natural inclinations towards the visual-manual orientation, which included sign languages, or the “manual method” as was the vernacular of the day. Socrates in his dialogue with Cratylus proposed that if humans did not have the faculty of speech they might gesture or use signs to signify meaning as deaf people of the time did (Marschark and Spencer 9). Despite commonsensical deductions about deaf students’ ability to attain speech, several hearing educators continued to function as if the deficiencies lay with sign language and the deaf students themselves, for lacking a true language (Lane, The Mask of Benevolence 47). Lane points to evidence of this in the dominance of English asserted in the creation of sign systems that completely ignored signed languages’ own grammar (111).

Although Gallaudet and his son, Edward Miner, championed the manual method of communication for instruction of deaf pupils, the intent was still rooted in a paternalistic attitude that it was their duty to educate deaf students to participate in greater society (Branson and Miller 13). The normative bias of greater society manifests in language attitudes where written and spoken languages are seen as superior. Branson and Miller state that these prevalent attitudes are rooted in Aristotle’s evaluation of speech as the vehicle from which language is produced (10). This meant that sign languages the world over, lacking a written form, have been and are still historically viewed on a lesser plane than spoken ones. To compound the problem, traditional definitions of literature relegate ASL to a lower status, “proven” because of ASL’s lack of cultural transmission via written forms. ASL’s cultural production does follow an “oral tradition” as traditionally defined, which is quite ironic because the speech and oral apparatus factor
very little into sign languages (Peters 18). The successful transmission of ASL requires
the body, and there is expectation of an interaction with others. Either the definition of
“oral tradition” needs to be reworked, or we can follow a new term that Benjamin Bahan
proposes, a “face-to-face” tradition, when referring to the medium, or possibly any oral
tradition (22).

Ideologies about humanity’s place in the world also came into play. It has been
long argued that to possess intelligence, one must have language, which required
possession of a tongue, for speech. Aristotle reasoned that this is what separated humans
from the animals, and allowed for the expression of reason. Naturally, the body became
the site of the conflict between the higher mind and baser animal self, according to the
Cartesian duality encapsulated by the mind-matter problem. We receive repeated
messages reinforcing this privileging of the mind over the body in exhortations to control
ourselves in public, and if we “just put our minds to it,” we can accomplish anything.
One could easily conflate sign languages and their seemingly grotesque gesticulations to
the animal self’s expressions because of this duality, further reinforcing sign language’s
relative lower language status. Even Deaf people embodied these values as shame and hid
or reduced their signing to reflect greater society’s disdain for this wild gesticulation,
until it became a political act of culture and pride to display bodies in sign (Peters 91).
This was indicative of the belief that deaf people not in possession of language were less
than animals, which at least possessed “natural instinct.” Those deaf pupils who managed
to acquire language through instruction in sign languages were seen as noble, but not
quite complete without the faculty of speech (Bauman 243). The dominant ideological
apparatus is so strong that educators of Deaf students would reinforce these attitudes overlooking ASL as a language while equating “language” with English (Jankowski 15).

Even language constructions retained this normative bias: the root of the word “language” is *lingua*—the Latin word for tongue. For ASL, the tongue serves a secondary purpose; it is not privileged in the same way as it is in spoken language culture, for it is an essential part of the speech mechanism. The privilege accorded to speech over sign was and still is pervasive in society, and thus contributed to a lesser view of sign languages. The normative bias towards speech was so strong, that even Edward Miner Gallaudet, the first president of the National College for the Deaf and Dumb (currently Gallaudet University), reluctantly incorporated a combined approach of speech and sign for his pupils at the budding institution (Baynton 26). He likely did this in an attempt to minimize danger to enrollment, coupled with recognition that the ability to speak carried social currency in greater society, and thus to exclude it was at the school’s own peril, while at the same time, the method preserved sign language for those who could not fully participate in society.

Sign languages did not only need to contend with paternalistic attitudes, but active campaigns stemming to prevent its growth and flourishing throughout the deaf community and society at large. Negative attitudes towards sign languages were manifested and reinforced where individuals and groups actively campaigned and fought to suppress and destroy them. The most notable and familiar within the Deaf community is the travesty that was the Second International Congress on Education of the Deaf held in Milan in 1880. This conference represented a watershed moment in history where a small minority of oral method proponents gained legitimacy in the eyes of society and
thus affected policy, which dramatically increased the number of schools using the oral method, and drastically reduced the numbers using sign. Despite objections from a tiny minority present at the conference (which was not attended by a number of manualists, as they were deliberately excluded), the oral method won at this conference (Winefield 35). The oralists gained much mileage out of the resolutions passed at the conference and the large number of educational policies shaped by this have reinforced negative perceptions of sign languages, disenfranchised once respected deaf members and educators of the community, and led to the loss of employment of many deaf teachers. Prior to this conference, 41 percent of teachers for the Deaf were Deaf themselves. This number dropped to 15 in 1920 (Baynton 60). Sign languages would suffer for several decades between the Milan Conference of 1880 and linguistic research in the 1960s. Even pupils at schools where the manual method was taught were exhorted not to display their signs publicly, and the “oral successes” were placed front and center to demonstrate success to any potential patrons or visitors to these schools, in an effort to bolster image and possibly increase funding (Rems-Smario). Alexander Graham Bell, a proponent of the oral method and of eugenics (a bio-social philosophy that sought to “improve” the human race through selective genetics), published a study that warned against deaf intermarriage, which led to repressive actions, including sterilizations and other

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12 Edward Miner Gallaudet, then the president of the National College for the Deaf and Dumb, stated that the conference was a “stacked deck” in favor of oralism, noting that more than half the delegates were Italian. The Italians for years had been trying to establish oralism as the only way to teach deaf children. Also, there was only one deaf delegate in attendance at this congress, James Denison, an American. See Lane’s When the Mind Hears pp. 376-414 for a detailed account of the rise and victory of the oral method of education for deaf children.
preventive measures to ensure that deaf people did not have opportunity for social contact (Lane, *The Mask of Benevolence* 215).

The fact is, despite every possible attempt to quash sign languages, they have proven resilient, flourishing in the underground: at deaf socials, in the deaf clubs, in the dorms and hallways of deaf schools, and wherever deaf people congregated. The National Association of the Deaf (NAD), formed shortly before the 1880 conference in Milan (in response to the growing power of efforts of people such as Alexander Graham Bell in pushing the oralist agenda), even undertook and funded efforts to “preserve our beautiful sign language” through the use of film. The NAD saw the rise of the oralist agenda as a fearful trend, a kind of linguistic genocide, and took action to document ASL through this film project (Rutherford 36). Both hearing and Deaf people who were masters of sign language at the time were recorded reciting poetry, lectures, and stories in order to demonstrate the power and complexity of sign language and preserve it for future generations of deaf people (Schuchman 232). Literary societies, deaf clubs and socials, and dorm rooms and hallways were also places where ASL and Deaf culture was cultivated and transmitted. The National Theatre of the Deaf (NTD), founded in 1967, did much to promote positive images of Deaf people and ASL in the mainstream, despite protests from the pro-oralist (and anti-ASL) Alexander Graham Bell Association, Inc. (Baldwin 21).

The Deaf community in America, peopled by individuals with varying degrees of mastery of English, has traditionally been bilingual. This bilingualism exists out of necessity since individuals within the Deaf community are situated within the dominant American culture, which uses English to communicate (Rutherford 33). Educators of deaf
pupils, both hearing and deaf alike have recognized that a strong command of English offers linguistic and social capital through which individuals can navigate through American society. From this recognition, members of Deaf culture have been educated to read and write in the dominant culture’s language, privileging that over their own cultural and linguistic capital in the name of social mobility (Yosso 70). What is true of deaf education is that regardless of technique, method, philosophy, or language of instruction with deaf students, instruction in English has always been valued, which may have led to tacitly reinforced attitudes from within. Sign language served a social and communicative function as a means to the end of facility in English. It is surprising that translation has not been factored into the standard curricula where bilingualism is promoted, such as at Gallaudet University.

The opening of the deaf schools allowed for many deaf people, otherwise isolated, to congregate in one central place. Whatever the intent behind the use of manualism as a method for instruction of deaf pupils, the spread of this mode of communication naturally meant those using it daily developed facility using it as a communicative tool for both social and educational interaction. The daily contact that came with the opening of educational institutions for the deaf allowed for the growth and transformation of what was once a manual code for the dominant culture’s language into a full-fledged language. The intersection of ASL and English provided space for the rise of bilinguals and their role as cultural and linguistic mediators. Even while sign languages and Deaf culture grew in complexity and ability, this fact remained, entrenched even within the Deaf community that valued ASL: spoken and written languages were to be privileged over signed ones, because deaf people needed to participate in society.
Linguistic studies of ASL certainly lent a helping hand to increasing the acceptance and legitimacy of ASL in the mainstream. William C. Stokoe, Jr., an English professor at Gallaudet College, investigated why students signed differently with one another than with him, leading to his first published paper (*Sign Language Structure*) in 1960, and dictionary that documented phonological features of 700-plus signs in 1965 (Sacks 77). Stokoe’s work sparked a linguistics research movement, helped by the creation of the Linguistics Research Laboratory at Gallaudet College in 1970, the first of its kind in the world. He also founded and edited the journal, *Sign Language Studies*, beginning in 1972. The research generated from the lab and publications had the effect of reinforcing what certain pockets of people in the Deaf community had believed (though many within the community did not): ASL was a bona-fide language worthy of serious study. This scholarly focus on ASL mostly served to legitimize it in the eyes of science, and there has been much study attempting to define the boundaries where ASL differs from English.

While there has been much debate about the validity of ASL in academic circles, in spite of the backing of years of linguistic research, the language is still “subject to serious misunderstandings and misrepresentations among nonlinguists” (Reagan 606). Following the period from the initial “discoveries” of ASL as a language and linguistic and cultural studies in the 1960s and 1970s, acceptance of and pride in ASL and Deaf culture exploded in the 1970s and 1980s, which also saw an unprecedented period of experimentation in ASL literatures, hastened by the introduction and availability of cheaper videorecording technology (Krentz 52). Even though this explosion in showcasing ASL’s feats of linguistic expression, including interpretations of English
texts, there did not necessarily correspond a parallel increase in translation skill within the Deaf community, save for the rise of a professional class of interpreters, with the establishment of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf and several laws that laid out provisions for sign language access.\footnote{Notably Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990.}

Several accessibility laws led to a greater ability of Deaf individuals to participate in society, whether through captioning or ASL interpretation, and the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf was established in 1964, taking on the role of providing certification and professional standards. With this increased access also came increased awareness and demand for more access. This wave of demand saw increased placement of interpreters in educational, legal, cultural, and social settings. In the theatre, now-empowered deaf theatergoers requested access to shows via captioning or interpreters. As each specialized environment saw increased demand, so did the specialized skills of certain sets of interpreters who found themselves repeatedly working in certain contexts. For the theatre, this growth of a professional class of people involved with the translation of dramatic texts was hastened by the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which, by codifying into law that no “individual may be discriminated against on the basis of disability,” made it possible for Deaf theatergoers to request access to mainstream theatrical productions via the use of ASL interpreters or captioning technology (Snyder 1). The ideal of total inclusion, access and participation of Deaf people in mainstream society championed by early educators of the deaf was now possible. A beneficial consequence of the increased visibility of ASL interpreters was that ASL was allowed to occupy a more visible place in society, and not remain hidden.
On the heels of ASL’s rise and acceptance in both the Deaf community and mainstream community through language, art, and culture comes a new paradigm. This new perspective that promotes the cultural and linguistic capital of Deaf people and ASL is rapidly gaining traction. Coined by Deaf British performance artist Aaron Williamson, and pushed by Dirksen Bauman and Joseph Murray, the idea is called “Deaf Gain,” a proactive framework that puts Deafness at the center of a cultural capital system, seeing benefit where the “loss” of hearing is considered a detriment in the dominant cultural capital system (3). This framework posits that being born deaf is another way of seeing the world. As diversity is good for the ecosystem, ensuring the continuation of the Deaf perspective has benefits. With the recognition in the scientific community via published studies pointing out the benefits of bilingualism, the Deaf community is finally vindicated in their efforts to preserve ASL, in spite of efforts to suppress it. One study shows that infants exposed to two languages have a comparable language development curve to those exposed to one, but may be more flexible learners, especially in discerning and navigating potential conflicts between two language structures (Kovács and Mehler 612). Along with the increased focus on the benefits of bilingualism are perspectives that promote the benefits of multiculturalism, not just for Deaf but hearing people as well (Jankowski 171). This Deaf gain perspective may be seen where the benefits of ASL are not limited to the communicative needs of Deaf people; for example, in the teaching of ASL to hearing babies to improve their language acquisition. If Deaf people did not exist, then one may make the deduction that sign languages may not exist, and therefore, there is something beneficial about the Deaf experience both on the personal and societal level.
Deaf Artistic Forms Emerge

The beginnings of Deaf cultural transmission and literary forms of ASL may have rested with the translation of written and spoken English into sign language. In the American deaf community, bilingual individuals who found appreciation for English literary forms wanted to share them with those less skilled in English (Peters 6). In addition, Deaf monolinguals asked Deaf and hearing bilinguals to help them make sense of the larger culture (Stone ix). This place of mediation between cultures and languages may have been the site for the beginnings of Deaf and ASL literatures, as inspiration to create these forms may have been drawn from exposure to English literature. In the deaf schools, literary-themed events were hosted; a new outlet for these expressive forms began, and these performative acts began to explore different ways to render the written material into sign for appreciative audiences. Deaf clubs and gatherings were also sites for where the performance of signed literary forms and literary play in ASL occurred, and skill in delivery of the language was praised over content (Peters 53).

Deaf clubs became vibrant, flourishing sources of this theatrical and literary focus on ASL, the Deaf community, and the Deaf experience (Cohen 69). Deaf theatre artists who worked within these clubs often had their own aesthetic requirements pertaining to performance, adapted but slightly adjusted from the well-developed aesthetics and critical structures of many hearing theatres elsewhere. Important aesthetic considerations for Deaf theatre are that the lighting, costuming and background allow or enhance visibility of signs, that the plot and dialogue are recognizable, and that the signs are used in novel ways (Andrews 178). There is no clearly-defined Deaf theatrical aesthetic, though there have been attempts with the creation of the De’VIA framework for the visual arts (Durr...
47). This focus on novelty and skill with ASL was no barrier in the creation of original material, but facility in ASL does not always fulfill skill sets needed when working on actual translation. With the disappearance of most of these clubs in America, there is a lack of sustained development and continuity of deaf theatrical forms outside of the theatre outlets currently producing works involving deaf artists. The Deaf aesthetic still is not clearly defined and is strengthened by a continual inquiry into what it constitutes.

Currently, live performances, film, and video are the preferred mediums for Deaf and ASL artists seeking to showcase their work. Beginning with introduction of cheaper and more portable forms of video recording technology in the 1970s and 1980s, today the ease of access and distribution via the internet, and ubiquitous small, cheap video recording devices, has encouraged rapid growth of interest in and production of ASL and its artistic forms. The camera, in effect, has done for ASL what the printing press did for written literatures (Krentz 52). There has also been an increase in the number of theatrical/film/and TV acting opportunities for Deaf people (Schuchman 237). The popularity of *Switched at Birth*, a television show, attests that ASL and deaf themes are culturally relevant topics.¹⁴

However popular ASL and Deaf cultural topics are in the mainstream, the audience appeal of these mainstream shows is different from those of Deaf-centered shows. One must ask: who is the intended audience? Most mainstream shows aim for the broadest appeal among diverse audiences, and are not necessarily beholden to the needs and values of the inner core of Deaf people. This distinction is seen in the two types of

¹⁴ *Switched at Birth* is a show on ABC Family, which earned 4.9 million viewers in its debut on June 6, 2011, and is known for a recent, bold move by airing a mostly-ASL episode (“Uprising”) that originally aired last March 4, 2013.
theatre involving deaf people as originally outlined by Miles and Fant,\(^ {15}\) complicated by Berson to include the performance’s intended audience (43).\(^ {16}\)

Before the founding of the NTD in 1967, theatre was alive and well at the deaf schools, clubs, and socials. Until that time, Deaf actors, with the exception of a few players in the silent movie era (most notably Granville Moore), were not visible in the mainstream. This type of performance was more focused on community-related issues, and was not done for outsiders. In recent decades, though, there has been a gradual introduction of deaf actors and themes to mainstream American culture. The NTD did much to promote deaf performers and performance, but the intent is on entertaining and educating hearing audiences about deafness and deaf people (Baldwin 23). Because the majority of hearing audiences is not knowledgeable about deaf people, this attempt to gain acceptance of sign language and deaf performers via sign language theatre is the primary reason for doing theatre with deaf individuals in the United States (Cohen 69). While it affords deaf actors opportunities for employment and assertion of their language and viability as a community and some commercial success, does not afford them new opportunities for their own brands of theatrical art. This model typically adapts mainstream classical works, adding the display of sign language or the use of deafness as a plot device or novelty, does not give much room for the Deaf-centered inside performance. *My Third Eye* is a notable exception in the history of the NTD to introduce a more Deaf-centered inside work to mainstream audiences, though the work was limited

\(^ {15}\) Dorothy May Squire Miles and Lou J. Fant initiated scholarship on Deaf theatre by making the distinction between two different types of theatre done with deaf performers: sign language theatre and Deaf theatre. See glossary for definitions.

\(^ {16}\) Hearing audiences could be invited to witness “inside” Deaf performances by adding an English language element such as voice interpreters or captioning, rendering the performance an “outside” one.
in scope and was created as a response to the societal position of Deaf people at that time. Furthermore, successful marketing of these shows mandates that these performances be “accessible,” and there is a real danger that the voice can manipulate or change the story (Haggerty 64).

For sign language theatre, there is often the pressure to cater to the large numbers of hearing attendees. An added layer of complexity for audience appeal is introduced where hearing elements (sound and speech) are incorporated into sign language theatre. The audience appeal is revealed in the rationale for introducing these hearing elements. If the production in question promotes inclusion of these hearing elements simply for the accessibility by hearing audiences, while privileging Deaf themes and ASL, the audience appeal for Deaf audiences may be retained; hearing audiences may or may not find appeal in an outside Deaf performance. If the elements of speech and sound are introduced because the audience is composed of more hearing people than Deaf, this may introduce the risk of privileging sound over sight and speech over sign, and the audience appeal for Deaf people may be diminished (in an outside sign language performance).

Except at deaf schools, most theatre at NTD has been done with inclusion of hearing audiences in mind. Even at Gallaudet University, the world’s only four-year liberal arts university for the Deaf in the world, there have been “readers” who spoke the signed dialogue along with the actors in select performances. Deaf audience appeal has been lost in the midst of all this concern for appealing to hearing audiences because of the simple fact that the number of hearing people generally exceeds the number of Deaf people in terms of audience composition. Marketing and commercial forces involved threaten to override or deprioritize any concerns pertaining to the Deaf aesthetic.
Generally, for hearing audiences, artistry and visual imagery of sign language is a priority, where for Deaf audiences, clarity of translation and the communicative function of ASL is of more importance (Bangs 758). However, there is no real agreement on what constitutes a true Deaf-central aesthetic; whether it is visual appeal, or language and cultural appeal that constitutes the highest priority. The Deaf end of the theatrical spectrum outlined by Fant and Miles involving Deaf artists may be viewed through the framework of separatist theatre, and a brief exploration of the history of Deaf theatre using this lens may provide some insight into the process of creating an aesthetic that is distinctly Deaf. A survey of productions through history may shed light on what elements surrounding the use of Deaf actors and themes have and have not yet been defined, and may inform or be informed by translation processes as Deaf actors continue to draw inspiration from English-based sources. And as long as English-based sources are the norm for most productions involving Deaf actors, there remains a need for translation to render the dramatic text into ASL.

The Deaf Community and ASL Translation

Historically, translation has been domain of bilinguals and interpreters in the Deaf community. The preliminary norm of translation occurred as a social practice in the Deaf community, where bilinguals translated for Deaf monolinguals, and these bilinguals did not necessarily have to be physically deaf, but had to be a part of the Deaf community, both as a member of the culture and identifying as such (Stone ix). Deaf bilinguals supported Deaf monolinguals by translating letters and correspondence, the news, retelling stories, and more. While educational policy has ensured that almost every Deaf
person in America has had exposure to and does use English to some extent, there needs to be a distinction between Deaf bilinguals and Deaf monolinguals. Bilinguals in the American Deaf community can be English-dominant, or ASL-dominant, or balanced in that their skill and use of both languages are close to equal, but these categorizations are simpler than the complexity that is the Deaf experience (Stone 28). Deaf monolinguals become “bilingual” as a result of having to interact with the English-speaking world, whether through the media or educational settings. Historically, Deaf monolinguals have relied on their hearing children, who filled the role of bilingual communication between their parents and the world at large. These children, who often assumed a Deaf identity, were the original participants at the start of the ASL interpreting profession. However, the recent growth of interest in ASL as a language and interpreting as a profession has created a large number of hearing bilinguals that have not originated from the Deaf community.

ASL interpretation nowadays is generally done by hearing people trained to convey spoken languages into ASL, and is usually an immediate process. Where, in the past, the majority of interpreters were heavily involved in the Deaf community, either as close friends or family members, the average interpreter today does not live as close to the Deaf center. This separation of professional interpreters from the community has meant that not every interpreter that is trained is immersed into or well-versed in the Deaf culture, leading to the loss of power and choice of Deaf consumers of these services (Stone 33). The problem is compounded when most interpreting placements are dictated by the mainstream from those lacking a Deaf center or behaving counter to the idea of being an ally of the Deaf (99). Hearing interpreters or translators fluent with sign
languages would typically focus on the spoken language prosody and be informed by this, and choose to listen to this in rendering their translations. With the recognition that training is needed for Deaf translator/interpreters (T/Is), they are now coming into the picture as professionals trained in rephrasing the target language constructions in more culturally appropriate ways than hearing people can. Propagation of the Deaf translation norm as a requirement would do very well to prevent the loss of personal, community, and linguistic power.

Stone has shown that a Deaf translation norm does indeed exist within the Deaf community in England (172). Interpreter training programs (ITPs), typically focused on mainstream models of translation and interpretation, train interpreters to work in a way that may not be understood by Deaf monolinguals. The lack of exposure to Deaf monolinguals may stem from the physical fact that most ITPs are situated at colleges and universities, where an excellent command of English is required for successful navigation. Stone refers to Deaf monolinguals as the “pragmatic other” in the Deaf translation norm—the constructed audience or whom the sign language text is intended for (Stone ix). Lexical choices do not vary greatly between hearing and Deaf T/Is—it is in the prosody that the marked differences lie (168), which allows for greater cohesion of message. Stone seems to advocate for a Deaf reinterpretation of hearing interpreters’ work, because the constructed or target audience for many projects that require interpretation is the Deaf monolingual, who are in need of access via this interpretation more than the Deaf bilingual, who may seek other means to access information. Translation work made for the constructed audience establishes a Deaf norm for translation, whereas the hearing norm follows hearing rules and conventions, generally.
Theatre translation, where the text can be recorded, preserved, and distributed, is then an excellent starting place where a Deaf translation norm can appear, strengthen, and propagate here in America, as it has in England.

The passage of laws such as the ADA and the high number of people graduating from training programs has created opportunities for interpreters to specialize in a particular field, whether educational interpreting or theatrical interpreting. Demand by Deaf patrons for access to mainstream theatre has created a specialized class of interpreters who are involved with the translation of dramatic texts, a niche currently dominated by hearing people. The reason for this is that in theatre verbal dialogue essentially is spoken and immediate and has affect that may change from performance to performance; deaf people are unable to access certain components of the theatrical text that are sound-oriented. This had become the default, where expectations are that a hearing person will take the role of an interpreter in the theatre, though more recently Deaf people have taken on interpreting roles alongside hearing people for live productions. There has been no published analysis of this scenario with ASL theatre interpreting where the immediacy and controlled unpredictability of the action onstage with the unfolding theatrical text may influence interpretation. The question must be asked: are these elements necessary for a successful interpretation? Might the Deaf translation norm find a place in the theatre and take root?

Even with the interest and available access to mainstream theater that the Deaf community enjoyed, what the ADA did not do was legislate an understanding of the needs of the ASL-using community. Theatres could provide the bare minimum of access required without any consideration for the quality of service or the implications of
providing little more than the minimum, essentially not guaranteeing equality of experience (Snyder 2). Given the combining factors of the low incidence of Deaf-run theatrical productions, and the passage of the ADA mandating interpreter access to mainstream theatre performances, these interpreted shows are the most prevalent product involving ASL translation in the theatre. Therefore, it is imperative that a Deaf-centered approach is built, where the audience can then make individual requests for access from a collectivist center, and the access-providers can respond more effectively to clearly defined requirements.

Where interpretation as an immediate delivery of the spoken lines in ASL requires the ability to perceive speech, one cannot ignore the fact that translation of a written text does not require this. The preparation work for both hearing and Deaf interpreters is the same—the script must be analyzed for the best choices in translation. So, why are there not more Deaf people involved with translating dramatic texts into ASL, allowing them to take much of burden of the work that hearing interpreters must do to prepare for a successful interpretation of a show? As more Deaf translator/interpreters (T/Is) are trained, there needs to be more conversation on making distinctions between whether a text should be interpreted or translated. Where the interpretation of a text depends heavily on the effect or delivery via sound-based cues, hearing interpreters may be best suited, but where there are written texts, Deaf T/Is can take on these tasks quite well. The influence of English structure on translation is also apparent in Stone’s findings: Deaf T/Is would work with prepared English transcript texts demonstrating capacity to skillfully render English scripts into BSL through teleprompters without the influence of sound (xii). This is a task that Deaf T/Is are able to focus on and excel at, expanding the
repertoire of what Deaf people are able to do within the theatre community’s consciousness, leading to the creation of more jobs and opportunities to support the self-determination of the sign language community. Following the example of the British Deaf translation norm, it is quite possible that an American Deaf translation norm may yet come to the fore, and this may help interpreters become more effective in their delivery of interpretation in the theatre.

The Current Best Practice Model of ASL Translation in Theatre

Currently, translation of English dramatic texts into ASL requires some sort of analysis of the English text, whether superficial or intensive. Before this process can begin, a committed individual or team must be assembled. This team can be comprised of a single translator or an actor interested in an English script, but more often than not will have at least one person who “verifies” that the translation passes muster. The official title of the role can be described as ASL Master, Sign Master, ASL Coach, Director of Artistic Sign Language (DASL), among others; this paper will use ASL Master to identify this role. The current “best practice” model involves at least one translator (usually an actor) and one ASL Master and is defined from this point forward as the current model for ASL translation in theatre.

Once the team is in place, the process can begin. Robert DeMayo of the ASLShakespeare.com website states that the translation process is threefold: “First, we started with figuring out Shakespeare’s text, his language. Then we would translate Shakespeare’s text into English meanings. Then we would think about the English and translate into ASL.” So before any translation begins, the team must parse the original
text, deconstructing, in this case, the Shakespearean language in order to find meaning through the language and subtext. This meaning and subtext becomes the basis for the ASL translation and may be documented by the team either through notes (essentially an initial translation into contemporary written English) or immediately rendered into ASL, which becomes a draft translation. This translation can be refined either at that same time or worked on at a later time until an agreed-upon version is locked down and passed onto the performers. The final ASL translation is documented either by written English glosses or notes, or recorded on video.

The first and foremost engine driving the translation process to performance is the ASL Master, and therefore I will put my focus there. The function of this role is of utmost importance because ASL, using the body and face, requires an outside perspective for effective feedback; one cannot look at one’s own body and face with the objectivity that one is afforded with writing or speech. The ASL Master could be a dedicated individual who oversees the entire translation process, but there are other manifestations that could take the place of this individual. The ASL Master could be someone who has not yet read the play, but simply passes judgment on the understandability of the signed text as produced. Feedback from invited individuals or test audiences surveying the ASL at a dress rehearsal could fulfill the function the ASL Master. Or the ASL Master could be someone heavily invested in research and translation, and demands a certain standard of excellence. There is no current standard system of quality control for ASL Masters, and theatres place trust in reputable individuals to ensure the translations pass muster with Deaf audiences.
Actors will almost always be a part of this process for the reason that it is most efficient to divide up translation responsibilities among the cast. The actors experiment with ASL forms based on their understanding of the text, and are asked to translate lines on their own time and bring their ideas to the table. The ASL Master then works with them to further refine their translations. Interestingly enough, actors may make an initial sign choice, and then change this sign choice depending on whatever character discoveries are made as they grow into the role. Sometimes translation is left to actors alone without the benefit of oversight that ASL Masters can provide (Snyder 11). The role of the ASL Master can be circumvented through an actor video recording their own translation work and then viewing it after, but the danger exists of being too “close” to the work, and the translator’s objectivity may be compromised.

The benefit of actors' involvement in the process includes ownership of the translated forms. Some actors prefer to develop the character first before going ahead with translation, since the character may make different sign choices than the actor personally would. Or, the process can be reiterative, starting with an initial translation that evolves as the actor makes new discoveries in character during rehearsals. The assumption is that each newer translation is an improvement over the older translation, but it stands to reason that even discarded older translations may inform yet newer ones. For example, in productions where sign and speech are interlaced, the Deaf actor may sometimes need to change his translation to the circumstance. These changes are usually

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17 An example can be found in Monique Holt, who was invited by director Michael Khan to play Cordelia in *King Lear* at the Washington Shakespeare Company in Washington, DC. Monique was hired because of her background in both acting and translation work. It is not clear if there was ASL translation oversight for this production, and Holt herself may have acknowledged the need for such and taken necessary steps to cover this. This may not be typical of other lesser-empowered Deaf performers.
done to suit the needs of the voice actor that shadows the Deaf actor, whether the purpose is to “fill in” blank auditory spaces with more sign, or trimming signs to fit the cadence of the spoken word. This can impose unnecessary and sometimes frustrating constraints on ASL and those involved, tainting the translation process.

There are complexities in the translation process that must be considered, because they very well may have an impact. Often, the discoveries made by actors in their exploration of character before or during rehearsals may affect the previously agreed-upon translation. Actors may feel that certain sign choices are not appropriate to character motivational choices and may interchange signs, potentially affecting the meaning of the previously worked translation. An evaluation may need to be done (by the ASL Master) to see if the new change fits in the overall translation scheme as a change in one actor's translation may affect other translations within the play. This intricate interrelationship between translation, actor, and text requires close attention to detail; a production benefits immensely from oversight by an ASL Master.

Current practice for all ASL translations is that they have been created with the theatrical text or end product of the show in mind. This translation-as-theatrical-text approach means that there is no existing dramatic ASL text of Shakespeare, save for written glosses, imperfect methods using the English language to record ASL. Videotexts exist, and can be argued to be dramatic texts, but current definitions of dramatic text and theatrical text are problematic for ASL, because it is difficult to separate ASL as a performed text from a written one. The act of an utterance in sign language requires the body to be seen, much like writing, but because it has an immediacy that would seemingly link it with speech, it seems more a performative act (Nelson 125). One could
argue that the body is required to write, therefore writing is a performative act, as well, but the performance leaves behind a text that exists independently of the body, whereas in speech or sign, there is only the ephemeral moment of the performative act. One must then think that a similar argument could be made for videorecorded ASL performances as with writing, except that with writing, there is no visible trace of the body in the written text, there is only implication that a body or bodies made it.18 Perhaps the new forms of ASL writing that have been and are being developed (i.e. si5s) can free ASL from these shackles. However, because these writing systems have not yet gained traction in the community, video, therefore, is the currently acceptable way of “writing” a dramatic text in ASL, using the body as performed text, and the video as the medium through which we “read” the translation.

Ideally, the translation process begins before rehearsals and continues until the translation is complete. Since most translation works are initiated as a result of the commissioning of a work to be produced, translators therefore are already faced with a time limit. This is what I would call the text-to-performance model, and it is the most common model used by theatres incorporating ASL into their productions. It is because of this that actors are asked to read the script before rehearsals begin and then bring their own versions to the table. This translation work usually occurs concurrently with rehearsals, but may be initiated beforehand.

Through this text-to-performance model, the ASL Master in the final stages of the translation period will watch previews the staging to see if the translations are “readable” from the audience. For the sake of expediency, some translations have been decided on

18 Creation of an animation of ASL poses challenges to this idea: Is the animated body using ASL considered writing or performance?
without a full review, meaning that there may be opportunities for a better retranslation beyond the initial translation period. Sometimes the translation process continues beyond the rehearsal period as the company works and becomes more comfortable with the sign translation during the production run, where further discoveries in message efficacy or character or motivational choices will warrant edits to the translated body of work. There’s no guarantee that an ASL Master will be available beyond the opening of a show to approve any changes to or prevent corruption of original meaning by actors’ onstage experiments with the translation. With spoken language theatre, the stage manager is able to follow the director’s prescribed vision of a play and give notes, including divergences made by actors from the script. This is not always possible with productions involving ASL, since there are very few stage managers who are fluent in ASL, nor is there an ASL script for the stage manager to refer to, and they must rely on memory of the visual patterns produced by the actors signing to notice any discrepancies.

Different people will have different opinions as to what a good translation may be. ASL Masters may find themselves having to readjust their personal goals as translators in order to align with the goals of a production. If the commissioned work is for certain audiences, the translator must work accordingly. In the case of interpreted shows, the goals for translation may only be to tackle certain difficult sections for clarification, with the interpreter taking up most of the translation processing tasks. The goals of one production may vastly differ from another using the same source work, and thus may require a different set of translations. This further justifies the necessity of the solution I propose, which will function as a repository for multiple translations.
In productions where the decision-makers are hearing and unfamiliar with Deaf culture and ASL, the ASL Master has an additional responsibility to protect Deaf individuals and their language. The language and associated values are encoded into the performance as in American Sign Language, where “discourse is intimately connected to the presence of a signer – an individual body within a specific cultural, ideological and linguistic community” (Aebischer, Esche, and Wheale 6). In Novak’s production the signing actors and the space surrounding them became both text and context (6). Appropriate representations of Deaf individuals and ASL are of utmost importance if the production is to have legitimacy in the eyes of the Deaf and ASL-using community, and this can be accomplished by using Deaf performers. The silence of critical Deaf voices in the mainstream means that there is a tacit agreement that mainstream portrayals of the deaf experience are accurate. For example, there was little evidence of public outrage when Jane Wyman won an Oscar for her portrayal of a deaf woman in the heavily paternalistic “Johnny Belinda.” Political actions and protests came later, when ASL and Deaf cultural pride was bolstered by the linguistically- and culturally-positive research begun in the 1960s. The job is far from over, since there has yet to be a mainstream publicly viewed theatrical production from a truly Deaf center since NTD’s My Third Eye was shown on television in 1971.

Current Issues in ASL Translation in Theatre

The current best practice model has its strengths, and a few of its weaknesses have already been mentioned. There are several factors, both internal and external to actual translation, that are among the biggest influences on the quality and effectiveness
of translation. Among the major factors are the makeup of the team, intended audience, the amount of time, finances, and resources given to the effort, and whether the translation process is done simultaneously with the production or independent of it. I have divided these issues into six categories: translation-, production-, resource-, audience-, attitudinal-, and technological-based factors.

Translation-based factors influencing the translation process are largely controllable. The makeup of the translation team can make or break a translation effort. The language proficiency of the translator in both ASL and English must be considered, as well as ability to render and verify translation. Translation of certain pieces may require some research, and the effort poured into this will be reflected in the overall quality of the script. The time period and region in which the English text is based may influence sign choices or creation. There is very little documentation of ASL from the 1970s and earlier, which means that decisions must be made whether to synthesize ASL or use modern versions, with or without a certain affect, much as hearing actors use regional and period accents. Clearer distinction needs to be made between translation and performance on part of the actor, where the actor’s character and sign choices are layered into the translation. Once translation is done, there needs to be agreement throughout the translated script—for example, namesigns must be the same throughout, or if a concept is introduced at the earlier part of the script, and is a recurring theme throughout, this needs to be made apparent in the translation, as well. Sometimes, genre considerations come into play—does the translation incorporate elements found in the original text? Is it clear that an ASL text is being performed as a song, a poem, or as prose? This can be addressed with interaction and collaboration between the ASL Master and the director.
Even the very nature of the English language presents challenges for ASL translation, where spoken word play such as double entendres, puns, or certain metaphors fail to translate into ASL (Cohen 73). On top of all this, one must consider the primary driving force behind the translation. Joseph Che Suh, a translation professor at the University of Buea in Cameroon, says that the wishes of the entity commissioning the translation do have an influence on the translation operation (56). Applying this to ASL translation means that the ASL Master must act as mediator between the decision makers and the cultural incorporation into the translation.

Production-based factors influencing the translation are usually at the behest of the director. The director helms the creative team, which includes all the different departments that directly influence the theatrical text. Costuming, stage design, blocking, lighting, visual elements, music and other aural elements are all under the decision-making power of the director. Casting is also a factor when the actors’ language fluency and acting ability affect translation; delivery of the lines is sometimes better served by tweaking translation as opposed to working with the actor’s own internal processes. One example is where an actor’s lack of language fluency in ASL requires that the translator simplify the signing, while retaining as much of the original construct of the ASL translation as possible. This is very common in productions where hearing actors new to ASL are learning to sign, or they are requested by the director to speak and sign simultaneously, which has a detrimental effect on ASL production.\footnote{ASL requires the use of morphological and phonological signifiers on the face, hands, and body, and the act of speaking is disruptive to the successful production of these in ASL (Valli et al. 558).} This phenomenon occurs frequently in theatrical productions that simultaneously incorporate ASL and

\footnote{ASL requires the use of morphological and phonological signifiers on the face, hands, and body, and the act of speaking is disruptive to the successful production of these in ASL (Valli et al. 558).}
spoken English, where the tensions between ASL and English, sight and sound, are fraught with conflict and power imbalances. Other creative choices can cause outside interference with the translation process by other production personnel. Costuming and props may interfere with delivery of signs, or may cause a need to revise sign choices. Stage design may also affect signing choices, especially with placement of locative signs indicating direction of references.\textsuperscript{20} There is some overlap of creative duties in building the theatrical text, creating tension between the ASL Master-translator, actor-translator, and director. The translator may take on some command of the actor’s acting process by prescribing certain sign choices, or the actor may choose their own delivery or affect. Also, the director has influence over the process by prescribing certain theatrical textual actions that the actor is to follow. The tension between ASL Master and actor must be maintained, but sometimes the ASL Master must intermediate on behalf of the actor with the director, especially if the director is unfamiliar with ASL and Deaf culture. For example, a director may like or dictate a particular sign choice for an actor, which interferes with the work of the ASL Master, since they must now consider the entire text in relation to the director-prescribed signs. A director may also influence or prescribe actor motivations and, which may then affect sign choices.\textsuperscript{21} The tension between the ASL Master and the director of the production must also be addressed. The ASL Master in effect goes beyond the role of translator and becomes a sort of dramaturge for the ASL and Deaf cultural aspects of the production. The power and influence of the ASL Master

\textsuperscript{20} The director must consider where the locations of objects, persons, and places referenced in the dramatic text are, and build them into the theatrical text. The director and/or ASL Master is then responsible for making sure any signed utterances that use pronominal references indicating these spaces agree with the theatrical text settings.

\textsuperscript{21} Some sign variants may be more reflective of a specific ethnic or social background. Thus each separate choice of sign variant affects audience perception of the character.
needs to be negotiated with the director; defining the place where the translation is initiated will define what norm will be integrated into the final product.

Resource-based factors are usually producer-dictated and generally include financial, material, and time allotments. The number and quality of people involved in the translation process may be subject to payment considerations, and because the process is time and energy intensive, it is rare to find volunteers to work for little or no compensation. Time allocations are a big factor affecting quality of translation. Playwrights have had the benefit of packing in countless hours of painstaking work into their plays, and the written and spoken language is densely packed with meaning. With the short timeframe allowed for translation, ASL translations only begin to convey this same level of meaning, and then are locked into a pattern of mediocrity that pervades the entire work because there is simply not enough time to unpack and rebuild the ASL work.

Considering that most translation work is done concurrently with rehearsals, there is a limited amount of time within or outside of the rehearsal time for translation work; actors are tasked with double duty during rehearsals, where they must create and memorize translations as well as work on staging and acting. Interpreters may be able to view a show to inform their translations by understanding the theatrical text before they are slated to interpret a show, but this is not always possible, and can affect the quality of interpretation. There may be other material concerns where the ability to record or document translations is limited. Currently, the model calls for English glosses of ASL or video clips of translated work. Newer methods of documentation, including written ASL systems such as si5s, hold new promise for this area of concern. There may be legal issues surrounding the recording of translated text because the actors’ union considers
these to be performances, and thus forbids recording of this translated text. It falls to an ASL Master to record him or herself signing the very same text for the actor to have a reference with which to work. This process is not effective within the text-to-performance model, because the actor is not the one producing the signs, and cannot claim creative ownership of the material. They may feel as if they are automatons, simply following the dictates of an ASL Master instead of organically producing the signs on their own.

Audience-based factors influencing a translation include considerations such as the intended audience and accessibility concerns. The reasons and motivations for decisions made with the translation may be influenced by the translator’s (or director’s, or producer’s) expectations of the target audience, and require an adaptive response by the translator (Suh 56). One must adjust a translation based on the target audience, for example, if the audience is a certain age group of children, the signing must reflect the appropriate level of language skill. If solicited, feedback from the audience can alter translation, and areas that are not clear may be cleaned up. Regional variations in ASL can also be a factor in influencing translation or interpretation. Accessibility concerns include whether the composition of the audience is hearing or Deaf. If there are deaf members of the audience that are not familiar with sign, they may require other accessibility tools such as captioning or audio enhancement. Accessibility for an audience could mean that either a mainstream spoken language production is providing interpreters or captions for deaf members or a signed production is providing voicers for hearing members. Miles and Fant’s labeling of Deaf vs. sign language theatre needs to be further clarified, starting with a robust Deaf theatre center where definitions and a distinctly Deaf
aesthetic can be developed, before other definitions regarding the Deaf and hearing elements can be clarified. In this gray area, it is easy to encounter inflexible limitations or dictates of the spoken word, which will affect the signed translations. This is more often the case than the NTD or DWT claims for their synthesized simultaneous spoken word and sign language theatre, where both deaf and hearing audiences are equal. This is an audience appeal issue, where the appeal of hearing audiences (which more often than not comprise the majority of audiences where sign language is used) is privileged over that of Deaf audiences. In the case where the majority of audience members are Deaf; “some argue that visual aspect of the performance is most important, while others argue that choice of language and culture contributes most significantly to Deaf audience appeal” (Linza iii). To add to the complexity, interpreted shows often are attended by deaf audience members with varying degrees of ASL skills, which is why Gebron prescribes an approach that mixes English and ASL forms to broaden the accessibility and appeal of translation (3).

Attitudinal-based factors mostly pertain to linguistic and cultural bias favoring the aural over the visual. As ASL and Deaf culture are products of an oppressed minority, the privileging of English over ASL occurs more often than not in sites where the two intermingle. Attitudinal-based factors may be present in any and all levels of the production and translation process. These attitudes may be manifestations of linguistic discrimination or audism, where sound and speech are privileged over visual and sign. When incorporating a vocal element with a signed production, the signed language often takes a subordinate role to the spoken language, oftentimes having to adjust and readjust its own borders and boundaries since the original script often is crafted to maximize use
of the spoken word. Due to time and resource constraints, often there is not as much invested in the ASL as there was to speech in the original script. Attitudes reflecting a view of ASL as subordinate to English may appear where a hearing director will favor certain signs because of their iconic nature, functioning as a “sign post” for the corresponding spoken word. It also manifests in marketing of these shows where the leading theatres of the Deaf exhort that both hearing and Deaf can enjoy the show equally, and you can “see and hear every word” with these “sculptures in the air” (Baldwin 101). While these words seem to be appropriately focused on the visual elements, the framework that leads to these decisions is not Deaf-centric, and shows a slanted bias favoring the aural modality over the visual, for the selection of the visual follows the aural in order to maximize appeal for hearing audiences. Misunderstandings about the nature of ASL have also arisen with the Actor's Equity Association (AEA), as evidenced in the 2009 production of *Pippin* at the Mark Taper Forum; AEA viewed videorecorded ASL translation “notes” as performances which needed to be protected from misuse.  

The only way around this was to have the ASL Masters sign these translations and post them to a website for actors to practice from, as discussed above.  

This misconception of translation as “performance” as opposed to “writing” by the union illustrates the need for further clarity and exploration of the processes involved in translating into signed languages an auditory-based or written language.

Technological concerns factor into a translation due to the availability, capability, and limitations of current and future technologies. Fortunately, one can imagine future technologies to enable greater freedom and ability, and the ability to imagine these

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23 See resource-based factors section above.
technologies also has the effect of shining a light on the areas where improvement is needed. Currently, translation notes are recorded via English glosses of ASL signs, or on brief video clips. English glosses, while convenient in that they can be written directly onto a script, are limited in the sense that they are highly subjective and there is no agreed-upon standard for their use. This means that a person reading the gloss of another may misunderstand or render the signs in a different fashion than was originally intended. Attempts to create a standardized written form of ASL, such as the Stokoe notation system or Sutton SignWriting system, never caught on in the Deaf community. The more recent si5s shows great promise with its potential for use in daily writing. Written ASL will almost certainly replace glossing should its use become common. Until that time, there currently exists no better medium for recording signed languages than video. Video technology has become fast, cheap, portable, and of considerable quality with integration on mobile communication devices. There are a few ASL dictionaries, but these are usually searchable via English text or keywords. A viable ASL-to-English dictionary does not yet exist, which attests to current technological limitations due to lack of attention to signed languages. The promise of si5s is that it can be integrated with Google searches to harness the power of image searching, which will lead to the eventual capability of video search. Until this exists, it may be easier to develop current technological capabilities using Unicode and text to work with written forms of ASL. This lack of attention to signed languages also is evident in the fact that video editing...
technology hasn’t reached the level of language-friendliness that word processors do for the written word. There are also a few ASL corpora, mostly in the form of dictionaries, linguistic corpora, or specialized vocabularies, but there exists none for theatre, or for Shakespearean ASL translation. The benefits of developing a corpus for Shakespearean terms are quite clear, and will immensely further the goal of translating all of his plays.

Questions of “ownership” of the translated work arise: ultimately, who does it belong to? This question could be answered using the same delineation between dramatic text and theatrical text, except where, in the eyes of the law, translations are considered derivative works of the original, and therefore belong to the author of the original. If the work can be owned by a translating entity, then who retains the rights: the actor(s), ASL Master(s), or the production company that commissioned the work? This is a gray area that has not yet been explored, for often in ASL translation for theatre, it is a collaborative process involving mainly the actors and ASL Masters. If an actor comes up with the bulk of sign interpretation, and the ASL master simply rubberstamps the work, does it still belong to the actor, or does the ASL master somehow take credit for and ownership of the translation by giving it their stamp of approval? Or does it somehow belong to the theatre that commissioned the work and is paying the actor and ASL Master for their work? The questions surrounding ownership of the translated body of work is further complicated by the fact that translated or adapted plays are typically performed on

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25 Two of the most notable corpora are: 1) the ASL Linguistic Research Project (ASLLRP) hosted by Boston University (http://www.bu.edu/asllrp/), which seeks to build a translation memory for machine translation and with collaboration from computer scientists, an eventual sign input interface, and 2) the ASL-STEM forum at the University of Washington, (http://aslstem.cs.washington.edu/info/about) which, similar to the project I propose, allows users to contribute their own signs for terms found in the STEM fields. 26 Per Title 17 of the United States Code covering Copyright Law. Section 106(2) specifies this contingency.
a one-time basis, and upon completion of the run, the translated body thus must sit, unused. Permission to access, review, or research these previously worked translations may be requested, and may be granted unless theaters or persons that have engaged in and invested in the translation process are reluctant to part with or share their work. This would mean that any production seeking previous translations of a text must begin again at square one, which is a waste of time and energy, considering the urgency surrounding the creation of ASL corpora.

A conversation with actor Elena Blue, who has worked in many productions for NTD, brought to light the interesting circumstance between the bilingual actor and the original and translated scripts. Elena said that she felt that character must be discovered before translation can occur. This means that there could, in theory, be as many translations as there are interpretations of character, and suggests that translation of a script may very well be a personal process tied to an actor’s understanding of the script, as opposed to the literary work of a person who focuses only on the text and subtext in the writing. Does this mean that a “definitive” ASL translation made by a literary translator may limit a bilingual actor’s acting and signing choices based on their understanding of the original English script? How much flexibility does the actor have to re-interpret the ASL translation? What if the actor feels there a better sign choice that more faithfully renders into the target language the intention of the original text? All these questions support the case for the solution that I propose, since it will allow for multiple variations and interpretations of a script, and will allow people to choose their own favored variations.
My experience working on translation with Troy Kotsur, a longtime veteran of NTD and DWT and an ASL-dominant Deaf bilingual, has sparked many of the ideas that I have about ASL translation in theatre. My approach with Troy was to allow him free reign with his initial experimentations, then I would then work with him to distill further refined translations based on information derived from the source text. Many discoveries in translating were made through this trial and error process, where sometimes a sign would be discarded only to find use in a different section of the play. Even mistakes or mistranslations still had their use, and I had no way to document and categorize them all. Once the final translation was set in place (although by no means was it final in my mind, only “good enough” to present to an audience at the looming opening date), I found myself wanting to continue to improve the translation, but this would have interfered with the acting choices of the individual characters concerned, affecting the overall show. I had to respect the director’s imperative that this product was his in terms of the theatrical text, and not my work in translation. Another benefit of having a central place to document translation would be to provide a “script” for actors to adhere to. I often found that when I revisited a show, some translations agreed upon at the beginning of the run were markedly different later in the run. There are both positive and negative implications here. One positive being that further refining of the translation meant that the actor finally was able to “own” these translations in the correct sense of the original meaning and intent, or added meaning through character choices. But unless actors continually revisit the original English text alongside the ASL, there is the risk of corruption of the original meaning and subtext as ASL revisions are done for ASL’s own sake, ignoring the English at their peril.
ASL translations in sign language theatre using simultaneous speech and sign are often beholden to the pacing of the spoken English. Also, sometimes there are disparate meanings, which ASL needs more time to explicate. Other times ASL will be much more concise in conveying the dialogue, so that it needs to be stretched out. Whatever the case or circumstance with ASL translation, speech remains privileged over sign.

The influence of speech is seen even when the voice is situated offstage. Perhaps the productions at Gallaudet and deaf clubs that provided hearing audience members access via speech and sound were themselves not hearing-centric. The access provided by the voicers may have followed the pacing and cadence of performed ASL resolutely, but it is not clear whether the voicers were skilled at ASL and thus were able to render faithfully the actors’ performances, or if their readings were separate performances with some mediation between themselves and the theatrical text unfolding onstage. Basically, the voicers would have to adjust themselves depending on the performance onstage, which was privileged over the roles of the voicers. But if there were any concern about appealing to hearing audiences, there may have been some sort of dialogue between the voicers and the actors onstage that could have impacted the activity onstage. This is where the creep of hearing elements threatens the integrity of ASL translation. The fact remains that the ASL translation with issues caused by introduction of the spoken word into the process, because naturally, most theatres using performances with ASL make attempts to be inclusive of and accessible to people who do not sign. ASL translations must also reconcile the original intent of a dramatic text, to be read and then performed via the spoken word, with the fact that the modality and aesthetics of speech vastly differ from that of the visual and bodily. Finally, the inclusion of a vocal element puts into the
consciousness of the production the idea that hearing people will watch this show and will also pass judgment based on what they hear, not just what they see. These subtle distinctions have either been overlooked or accepted as necessary for theatrical productions to continue at the expense of ASL. The master does pay the bills.

Deaf bilinguals and hearing people born into Deaf families constitute the original soldiers at the front of the Deaf resistance to hearing American culture. The increase in ASL interpreter training programs has created a huge influx of hearing people with varying skill levels in ASL, but who lack Deaf cultural exposure. The increased demand for ASL interpreters has led to a shortage of qualified, certified interpreters, while interpreters who accept work beyond their means are pushing to lower the professional and linguistic hurdles needed to obtain and retain certification (Livengood). The field is also changing with the influx of a growing number of Deaf interpreters and translators, perhaps a combined response to the Deaf empowerment in recent decades and growing recognition that many of these new interpreters don’t quite have the cultural and linguistic knowledge or expertise that Deaf interpreters can offer.

Both deaf artists and deaf audiences who continue to participate in or observe work that diminishes, constrains, or contradicts their own self-definitions experience some level of dissatisfaction. This discontent is further compounded by the fact that many deaf artists who want to create change are in a double bind of being grateful for the few opportunities to work, and do not wish to challenge the status quo for fear of losing future opportunities. Therefore, there exists no visible coordinated effort by American Deaf artists to taken control of efforts to counteract or re-invent these forms, much less proactively create new work. These issues, and the many other factors addressed in this
chapter, imply an artistic crisis for Deaf artists: where can they turn to for historical context, support, and inspiration? Where will the new ideas and theatre forms that will spark discussion and serve the needs of Deaf artists and their community come from? Will Deaf performing artists continue take a back seat in defining their role in American performing arts? Is there a way to create a theatre or theatres that will prove to be artistically fulfilling, whether or not commercially viable? Is this an audience appeal issue, or is it simply that there has not yet been a critical mass of artistic ventures in the realm of Deaf and ASL arts, a lack of a Deaf artistic center? The introduction of the Deaf Gain framework may yet launch a new class of artists that creates work that is proactively as opposed to negatively resistant to the pressure of the normative bias by greater society by generating a new normative bias.

One way to resist is to attempt to free ASL from the hegemony of the English language and phonocentrism.27 More opportunities for the Deaf-centric norm to evolve will appear as more productions that are done from an ASL-centric approach without concerning themselves with access for those unfamiliar with the language. The Deaf community has watched as their art forms have largely existed on the periphery of the hearing world; efforts to include both ASL and English, such as DWT has done, are seen as too “hearing” by Deaf individuals. By taking a Deaf-centric approach, hearing people may still see the Deaf community as existing on the periphery of society, but if Deaf arts are coming from a more authentic place, the hearing society may yet find commonality, respect, and recognition in the other. ASL language rights have always been at the heart of it, especially with the imposition of the oralist philosophy and mainstreaming as the

27 Phonocentrism is the belief that speech and sounds are superior to written language. This attitude manifests in views towards sign languages, as well.
only way for deaf people to exist in society. It makes sense too, in America, where English is privileged, to appropriate Shakespeare for one’s own ends. In appropriating Shakespeare through translation, the resulting text proves that ASL is able to match the work of the most famous paragon of the English language. The translation of Shakespeare into ASL can be viewed as a form of cultural and linguistic resistance, “proving” the efficacy of ASL as a bona fide language. Using the Deaf community’s native language also presents an opportunity to codify Deaf cultural values and meaning into these Shakespearean texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language-as-a-Problem</th>
<th>Language-as-a-Right</th>
<th>Language-as-a-Resource</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Where language differences are seen as determinants of social, economic, and educational disadvantage. This orientation leads to a devaluation of minority languages and their communities and favors the dominant language group.</td>
<td>A reaction against the language-as-a-problem approach, this orientation construes the expression in one’s community language as a natural, human, moral, and legal right. The conflict with the predominant (language-as-a-problem) orientation is often played out in court.</td>
<td>This orientation sees language differences, including languages, language varieties, and their corresponding communities, as a resource that is conceptualized both intrinsically and extrinsically.</td>
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Figure 1: Three orientations toward language diversity. (Reagan 609)

In the interest of language diversity, while working a translation, one might be tempted to follow faithfully the intent, meaning, and cultural values of the original script. Reagan outlines the case for a change in orientation where previously ASL was seen as a necessity for those incapable of speech (language-as-a-problem, as indicated above), but the pursuit of a high-level translation of Shakespeare’s works can shift this negative perspective in a positive way (Reagan 610). Bauman puts forth the speculative question “what if we had not only identified ourselves as the speaking animal but also as the signing animal? How has the absence of sign shaped our ideas, categories, thinking, experience, and being?” (Bauman, Audism 246). In this light, it actually becomes
imperative that we attempt to codify Deaf cultural experiences into the translated text in order to render it relevant, if not in society’s eyes, at least our own. In fact, the experience of being either or both physically and culturally Deaf will inform a character’s performance through motivation and choices, and therefore it is nearly impossible to avoid transmission of Deaf cultural values when rendering a translation (Andrews 223). If we make the Deaf body using ASL the nexus of Shakespeare, Deaf culture, and ASL, this is, in effect a way of appropriating Shakespeare, occupying it so that the Deaf center can be encoded into the work, “remaking Shakespeare” in the Deaf image (Aebischer, Esche, and Wheale 7). This newly-formed text can exist as a piece of resistance in contrast to a faithfully rendered ASL translation of Shakespeare, while following values found in the original. Thus, it becomes imperative that translation work is done in order to strengthen ASL’s position and challenge the hearing ethnocentric cultural and linguistic hegemony over Deaf culture and ASL by placing them on truly equal footing through translation work. There are also opportunities to challenge audism and phonocentrism through deconstruction of Shakespeare by reading him through a “Deaf lens” (Bauman, Audism 2004); the translations produced may reveal clues as to how we have incubated or resisted these beliefs within ourselves. This work, made visible, will add legitimacy to ASL in the eyes of many who still see sign languages as merely mime, gesture, or simplified manual codes for spoken language (Andrews 227), or the Deaf experience as merely that of an audiological lack. This challenge to English’s dominance in the interest of preserving and promoting linguistic diversity may yet find its standard-bearer in those who fight for ASL’s continued existence and growth.
The Value of Translating Shakespeare

There is no argument or debate that Shakespeare’s contributions to modern English language, literature, and theatre are enormously valuable. There are few who have not heard of Shakespeare or his famous characters, attesting to his wide influence and renown, and skill in weaving stories that illuminate the human experience. The debate, rather, is how Shakespeare continues to be relevant, important, and applicable to today’s world. His work has been analyzed using many newer theories of theatre and literature, attesting to his longevity and adaptability within multiple frameworks within literary and theatrical criticism. Shakespeare’s work has both historical and aesthetic value. He has managed to survive and influence over four centuries of literature and theatre, and remains a treasured centerpiece of English heritage. Four centuries after he wrote his plays, he continues to enthral, entertain, and intrigue audiences throughout the world, proving his friend and rival Ben Johnson right: “He was not of an age, but for all time.”

There is tremendous scholarship on the appreciation for Shakespeare as literature and as theatre. Shakespearean’s literary feats include the coining and popularization of several turns of phrase in the English language, many of which are still being used today. He also is known for his wit, irony, puns, and other sleights of word. For many, the language presents a barrier to the appreciation or understanding of Shakespeare. Often, understanding and appreciation is not achieved until they see a well-acted performance. The value of Shakespeare for English literary and theatrical study has been established, and there is clearly no question that people the world over see the value in Shakespeare,
now read in over 80 languages. There are even contemporary English translations for today’s younger audiences.

For all the countless times his work has been picked apart, there are still new discoveries being made. Many users of ASL have heard of Shakespeare or at least one of his works, a result of Deaf people’s appreciation for the English language, and Shakespeare’s insight into human nature. However, there have been very few studies examining the mysteries and wonders of Shakespeare through a Deaf cultural or critical lens or through the use of ASL. We must think on translating artistic works into other languages, where the obvious goal is to transfer meaning from one language into another. Because these are artistic works, we must also consider the artist’s aesthetic and subtextual choices, and do our best to convey these from the source language to the target language. To further the complexity there are cultural references and allusions built into the source text that must be conveyed successfully into the target language. This is even more complex when the original piece is an historical one, for the cultural references of that time may vastly differ from the current time. One of the biggest challenges in translating between ASL and English is the fact that the two languages use different modalities: English has a written and spoken form, and ASL has only a “spoken” form (unless videorecordings can be considered to be “written” texts). How to bring something that is so richly audio-centric into a completely different modality? A visual language does have its advantages, and in many ways surpasses that of the aural.

What does it mean to translate the Elizabethan English of Shakespeare into modern ASL? When you focus on meaning, and yet end up changing the words, you end up changing meaning itself—so is it okay to modernize and then translate, or do you try
to translate into an older version of the new language? If you do modernize, are you going to try and equal the skill and mastery of the original poet and poetry? When signing in ASL, does one choose modern ASL or does one go with an older form? Since there is very little documentation of older forms of ASL, signed languages used in period pieces are constructed languages, perhaps pieced together from the clues left behind by others.

No matter the difficulty, there is still value in the attempt to bring Shakespeare into another language and culture. Shakespeare has much to offer to the Deaf community if rendered into ASL from a Deaf-centric perspective. This is only possible with a nuanced translation effort. Even if the effort to translate is imperfect, there is still value in the attempt to bring Shakespeare to the Deaf community. While there are still difficulties in getting Deaf students to independently analyze poetry, there is value in engaging English structures via ASL (Arenson and Kretschmer 116).

Where there is value in appropriating Shakespeare for the extension of the Deaf Gain framework, there is the obvious benefit of gaining social and cultural capital through his work. Seeing Shakespeare’s text performed can lend understanding to the written text, and this is especially applicable with Deaf students of English. Being bilingual, they have everything to gain from an ASL rendition of the text, and translation into ASL will further their understanding of the English version. Every new translation evokes the value of Shakespeare, and his work remains relevant today, even though the world has changed much in the past 400 years.

There have been many annotated versions of his plays (Arden, Folger, etc.), and there are many books of analysis and criticism. These print forms are not the focus of this work; however, electronic versions of Shakespeare have bloomed in recent years, with
the explosive growth in the capabilities of the Internet. There have already been early versions of crowdsourced efforts to annotate Shakespearean texts, and there are also apps that promise to help conquer one’s fear of Shakespeare (No Fear Shakespeare, etc.). Social media is also used to disseminate his works, and serve as points for interaction with the text in the cybersphere.

**Shakespeare in ASL**

To date, there have been only two major efforts at high-level ASL translations of Shakespeare's works (ASLShakespeare.org, Amaryllis Theatre—*Twelfth Night*; Gallaudet University Theatre Arts Department—*Hamlet*), both of which were year-long processes culminating in a staged performance. There was one adaptation of *Hamlet* at Gallaudet in the past, but this was more English-based in sign choices (as opposed to ASL), and was a severely shortened version. There was another *Twelfth Night* production with Lou Fant in 1985, but there is no record or recording of this performance, and it is therefore lost. The most ambitious among these is the Amaryllis production of *Twelfth Night*. This project used a shortened version of the script, and thus is not a complete translation. The team was originally comprised of four people: two deaf (Robert DeMayo and Adrian Blue), and two hearing (Catherine Rush and director Peter

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28 *Open Shakespeare*, found at: http://openliterature.net/ (currently offline for upgrades as of 4/27/13). This website uses a shared annotation system to illuminate certain passages and words in the original text.

29 *The Tempest for iPad*, developed by Bryn Mawr College’s Katherine Rowe and University of Notre Dame’s Elliott Visconsi. This app provides a central meeting place for scholars, readers, and enthusiasts alike to share resources and notes on this Shakespearean text.

30 *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (dir. George Detmold) was performed by the Gallaudet College Dramatic Club in 1951. Only one surviving film remains.
Novak). Their first step was to edit the original script, shortening it; then research the play, the characters, and the story for meaning; and finally convert it to modern ASL. This process took over a year. After this process was completed, the core team was joined by Deaf performers who stated a performance produced by the Amaryllis Theater in Philadelphia. This effort culminated in a video of the full play, now available for purchase on DVD (via ASLShakespeare.org).

Several scholarly articles have outlined the challenges involved in translating theatrical works from one language to another, but few have tackled the issues involved with ASL translation of these texts. There is a growing body of research on ASL language development, ASL interpretation, and ASL linguistics, as well as Deaf Studies, but the research on Deaf or ASL theatrical forms has been sporadic. This is both a problem and an opportunity—the fact that so little scholarship exists means that the field is ripe for study. With study comes the chance to shape the future of Deaf and ASL arts.

ASL literature and theatre could fall under the genre of popular theatre, for it is a community-building activity that lacks a higher aesthetic, where elaborate, skillful displays of ASL is the craft by which one’s performance is judged. But this standard applies only when the delivery of the ASL makes the content more clear, and isn’t done for its own sake. An example of this is in the challenge of making the performance of a translated text “readable” to an audience. In attempting to keep with Shakespeare's highly skillful use of English, performers may choose translations that are highly elaborate ASL renditions of the original text. All of this effort is for naught if the performed text goes completely over the heads of the audience. Novak's vision of the work for *Twelfth Night* was not intended to be for Deaf readers, but rather was to create a body of performance
work that was accessible to both hearing and Deaf audiences (Snyder 99). My viewing of the DVD was fraught with difficulties, and further investigation will reveal whether these difficulties stem from translation issues or actor delivery of the translation.
Chapter 3: Proposed Solution to the Problem

Reiteration of Statement of Problem

With a sparse history of very few Shakespeare plays being staged in ASL, it is clear that the need exists for a more productive and robust translation system, but it is not clear how to best address this. It is not difficult to add improvements to the current model of doing ASL translation using existing technology. For example, video recording can take the place of written notes or glosses to document ASL; this technology is now becoming easier to use, where formerly glossing was the more readily available and efficient method.

What becomes of the translation once the performance run is complete? Sometimes video copies are made of a performance for archival purposes, but it is not known whether these performed translations diverge from the translation done prior to performance. These recordings are of the performers’ immediate choices within that performance, and will document if an actor errs in their performance or goes off script (though this is not always apparent). Unless journal or script notes, videorecordings, or glosses have been retained, there is no real way to differentiate performance from translation in these videos. These are usually not readily accessible to the public due to proprietary issues, nor are they usually stored in a central place. With currently existing technology we can provide the means to store these translations so that they can be referred to or improved upon. Where there are corpora of ASL translations for linguistic and computer science research (especially with regards to sign lookup capability in ASL dictionaries), building a science terminology, and for the storage of ASL literatures, the
idea of a central corpus of theatrical translations in ASL has not been attempted before. This corpus functions as a dramatic vocabulary, where a translated “script” can draw from this to draft the theatrical text or performance. I propose that the step of building the site be taken, and a further step undertaken of not leaving ASL translation to the experts alone, but to anyone interested in contributing, opening this to the research community.

The model I propose is basically an open source internet-based corpus of ASL translations of Shakespeare that allows for crowdsourcing and curating of content to occur. The corpus will be open to input, and anybody who logs in is able to contribute their own translations. Users of the site will also be able to choose translated segments that they like (curation process), or can comment (via text or video) on previous translation submissions, or even submit their own version. Ideally, a critical mass of contributed translations would be achieved where it becomes feasible to incorporate the work into a theatrical production.

The goals for this translation engine are multiple and varied. The first and primary goal is to create a body of signed work that will allow for both performance-based and readable versions of Shakespeare's works, to start with. I hope to devise a system that will serve as a model for ASL translations of other literatures, such as classical works of English literature, poetry, and song translations. Once created, the initial version of the website will be studied, and the feedback generated applied through a reiterative process to continually improve upon and optimize the engine.

This idea is not new: Rusalyn Andrews predicted that as video technology improved, a viable recordkeeping system could be created to store ASL scripts, criticisms, and other works (229). Andrews was correct that the increased abilities to
record and share work would essentially liberate Deaf theatres: there would be no reduplication of efforts. Since as much can be learned from failures as successes, each successive effort would never be considered a failure; preexisting works would provide a foundation for future work (230). Snyder mentions her work with the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind where interdisciplinary sharing allowed students to interact with the Shakespearean text before watching an interpreted performance (144). This can easily be accomplished with assistance from the website I propose, which attempts to actualize Andrews’ and Snyder's desire to create a centralized interdisciplinary discourse that centralizes the work that will “benefit not only the fields of interpreting and performance, but also is useful as a pedagogical tool for both Deaf and hearing students of classical texts” (36). The existence of this open-sourced project will create a "meeting place" or intersection where scholars and experts from different disciplines can interact and share their knowledge, creating a networking hub from which future working relationships or collaborations may arise. For example, a scholar of Elizabethan theatre who may have extensive knowledge of appropriate gestures used during the period may work with an ASL linguist who has familiarity with historical sign languages, allowing for the creation of a historically accurate approximation. These interpretations can be utilized in different ways for future performance and textual analysis, providing a resource for interpreters, performers, and scholars of theatre and literature alike.

*Theoretical Underpinnings and Frameworks*

The traditional normative goal for creating equivalence in translations was to hold the source text as the ideal from which the target language must not deviate. However,
this attitude has shifted in recent years from textual transfer to allowing the target text to be a site of cultural mediation and interchange with the original (Suh 52). The intent behind translating a dramatic work influences the resulting translation. This can be seen in the original decision to assemble a team of ASL experts to adapt dramatic works for Deaf audiences. It might be assumed that the script is constructed for the Deaf audience alone, but outside factors influence this translation, such as the inclusion of the vocal element in the theatrical text. This influence on the ASL translation is disturbing since those who benefit from the vocal text do not necessarily benefit from the ASL text beyond the visual appeal, leaving those dependent on ASL in the lurch. The ASL Master’s role as cultural mediator becomes of utmost importance in these moments in this text-to-performance approach, and it would be valuable to separate the intent of producers to put on a show for the greatest number of people from the intent of translators to create a work that honors both the original and target languages.

There is a traditional view of the translator as an “expert.” This creates an unnecessary limitation, for even translations that miss the mark can, by their very existence, still contribute to a more robust translation. This can happen both by serving as raw material for a future translation, or by informing a discussion on the merits and flaws of the translation in order to illuminate a better translation. There have been repeated experiences in ASL theatre where actors’ misunderstanding of the meanings and subtext of the source text have led to these discoveries, whether accidental or not. The domain of English-to-ASL translation need not be solely that of bilinguals. Material can be created by ASL monolinguals, then clarified and verified with the assistance of bilinguals.
This paper supposes that translations can be done in a democratic and collaborative fashion, open to anyone who is interested. This study follows the biological theory that more diversity leads to more productivity and a stable ecosystem (Bauman and Murray 4), and applies it to ASL translation. Multiple translations can inform others, where even a bad translation may have the germ of a good translation within it. People can contribute in small ways to a greater overall effort, and this concept is exemplified in the crowdsourcing model. This model is a goal-oriented people-driven method to outsource labor by harnessing the latent talents of the crowd (Howe). It often takes advantage of the nature of the Internet to procure requests for information, bits of code, or other resources, and can be amplified through the use of social media. For example, when the 2010 Haiti earthquake struck, there was an emergency response system set up, but responders had to rely on ground-level communications to reach victims. Fortunately, telecommunications via mobile text were still operating, so a crowdsourcing platform was set up to augment the emergency response system where victims could text information to a single text number, which fed into a website. Volunteers from across the globe who were familiar with Haiti’s neighborhoods, dialects, and streets were able to pick apart all of the texts through the website to better enable emergency responders to effectively distribute and allocate resources (Munro 2). If this concept can be used to save lives, it certainly can be applied to translation work.

Translations will continue to be reactive to the original language as long as speech continues to inhabit a place in the final theatrical production. The reason for this is that what are judged to be the best ASL translations of the original script, linguistically-speaking, will often inhabit a different timeframe than the spoken word, either taking less
or more time than speech. This disjointed time-relation between the two languages requires adjustment by one or the other, but has historically required the ASL to be adapted to suit the needs of hearing audiences. This model, which has been used to produce shows that have been financial and critical successes, will continue to be used, while the newer proposed model enables the Deaf translation norm to take effect and shape translations that will be truer to ASL and the Deaf community that uses it. These newer, improved translations can still be incorporated into productions where speech is used, but the goal is to release ASL from the time constraints that favor speech. The aforementioned issues with documentation of ASL translation processes and the lack of a body upon which to build successive generations of translations indicates an imperative that must be fulfilled to increase the strength of multiple disciplines with ASL and Shakespeare studies at the hub. It is my hope that this thesis sufficiently serves as a proposal for the creation of a website that will house all user generated translations, allowing for multiple generations of definitive bodies of work through crowdsourcing and curation techniques, and will inspire a business proposal for the building of this website.

*Current Trends, Current State of Research*

Currently, there is very little scholarship on ASL translation for the theatre, much less on ASL translation of Shakespeare. With the exception of the publications by Peter Novak (who directed the translation and production of *Twelfth Night* from 1999 to 2002), all are theses or dissertations. The last major effort to translate Shakespeare was at Gallaudet University beginning from the Fall of 2011 through Spring 2013, for the
production of Hamlet staged at Elstad Auditorium. It had been nearly a half century since Hamlet had been performed at Gallaudet, under the direction of the Dramatic Club.

A quick internet search on Google for videos using the keywords “ASL Shakespeare” returns a number of attempts to render certain monologues or synopses of Shakespeare’s works into ASL. Videos that include English text in the description of the video will show up in a search, but one is left wondering if there are more out there that are not appropriately labeled. For those videos with English text, added keywords may narrow down the search and increase the odds of finding appropriate material. Could one begin to reconstruct a successive translation of one play through a series of searches? Once again, the problem of availability and ease in finding translations of Shakespeare for study rears its ugly head.

With the new culture of collaboration and sharing growing at a rapid pace through the power of the Internet, this website is an idea whose time has come. The current procedural structures where ASL translations are commissioned by producing theatres need not be the sole impetus for creating translations of Shakespeare. The passion for spreading ideas to multiple-language communities (as seen with the multiple-language translations of TED Talks),31 can be harnessed to benefit ASL through this project.

There are several ASL corpora available currently. Many are for linguistic and computer science research, to document variation and begin developing a visual recognition system, which current English-ASL dictionaries are lacking. The goal of

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31 TED Talks, through the TED Open Translation Project, translates video subtitles into multiple languages by two-person volunteer translation teams (one translator and one reviewer) using high-quality English transcripts as a starting point. This is similar to the ASL model where a translator and an ASL Master work in tandem to ensure a quality translation.
many of these corpora is to enhance research into sign lookup capabilities for these future
dictionaries, most likely treated as a video processing task. Because the technology does
not yet exist, every single sign language dictionary in existence is tied to the written
English text to identify signs to be indexed, save for a few awkwardly cumbersome
examples, such as Handspeak’s ASL-English dictionary,\textsuperscript{32} which requires knowledge of
ASL phonology for successful operation. Other ASL corpora exist for STEM
terminology-building, such as the ASL-STEM Forum at the University of Washington,
recently featured in a New York Times article (Quenqua). This corpus relies on input
from various ASL users, most from within the science community.

\textit{Significance, Benefits, and Impact}

The political, social, and scholarly significance and implications of this project
are far-reaching. While this paper lays the foundation and justification for the project, the
majority of the impact will occur after the actual creation and implementation of the
proposed resource. The website may make ASL translation for the theatre more efficient
and effective in the longer run. The biggest justification for this claim is the aspect of the
website that functions as a translation corpus that can be shared across distance and time,
as well as the democratic openness to allowing translation from others who are
supposedly not “experts” or “authorities.”

Performance notes and translations from previous productions can be stored on
this site, as well as many raw, initial translation attempts that otherwise would be lost or

\textsuperscript{32} Found at: http://www.handspeak.com/word/asl-eng.php. This dictionary relies on three
phonological inputs: handshape, movement, and location to retrieve a sign and its
associated English meanings.
discarded in the quest for the translation that best suits the needs of the production.

Access to archival footage of a performance may offer clues about the theatrical text, in addition to the actual dialogue in ASL. This translation is a performed translation, and may be different than the translation decided upon in rehearsals. It also documents an actor’s motivational and subtextual choices, which may affect delivery of the translation: individual signs may be different and there may even be corruption of original meaning. Written notes and/or glosses in a script might provide clues as to how an actor translated his or her lines, but not every actor is meticulous in his or her notetaking. Some may even forego putting notes down, feeling confident that they will remember their translations. Besides, glosses are unreliable, because they are in written English and do not convey ASL accurately without going into minute detail. Instead, with the website, this repository of variation will have the benefit of offering multiple specific translations, and may have the added benefit of empowering ASL users who previously were excluded from the domain of translation, and may yet prove disruptive to current processes of ASL translation in theatre. In addition, the website will free up performers’ time and energy to focus on constructing the theatrical text without the burden of having to develop a dramatic text as well.

Beneficiaries of the site go beyond the theatre, crossing over into literature, the study of ASL, English, linguistics, interpreting, and Deaf Studies, among many others. The resulting ASL corpus could prove useful to those studying variations of ASL: Because the work begins now, it can, in effect, provide a historical documentation of current forms of ASL, keeping it intact for future generations. Much like the films that the NAD underwrote in the early part of the 20th century, these translations may document
language change over time for future studies (Supalla 287). The ability to store these translations also solves the problem of access to and ability to improve previously-worked versions of English scripts. Time, money, and considerable energy will be saved if this process were used as a central place to create and share, instead of building a new translation from scratch every time a show is produced. With the ability to store all these various forms also comes the ability to select the most appropriate sequence of translations to utilize in a production. This is the most obvious benefit of the curation process, that one can select the best among all of the translation submissions that fits the needs and goals of the production. It is not known if there are other crowdsourced sign language translations of Shakespeare, so this project may, in effect, become the first of its kind, and may inspire the adoption of other language versions, both signed and spoken.

There are many potential users of this site beyond translators and other theatre creatives, such as enthusiasts, scholars, professionals, and researchers of theatre, ASL, and Shakespeare. While the focus of the potential benefit targets theatre practitioners or companies who will incorporate the translations into their productions, others may directly use the material from the website or draw from it in other ways through study or derivative works.

| Fall 2002, 2006, and 2009 Language Course Enrollments (Languages in Descending Order of 2009 Totals) |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| Spanish            | 746,267       | 822,985      | 10.3          | 864,986       | 5.1            |
| French             | 201,979       | 206,426      | 2.2           | 216,419       | 4.8            |
| German             | 91,100        | 94,264       | 3.5           | 96,349        | 2.2            |
| ASL                | 60,781        | 78,829       | 29.7          | 91,763        | 16.4           |

Figure 2: MLA Study on Language Enrollments (Top Four Most Popular). (Furman 19)
Students of ASL, Deaf Studies and interpreting training programs may find this site of interest as well. The MLA began reporting ASL enrollment in colleges in 1990, showing an increase of 432% between 1998 and 2002 (Furman 25), making ASL one of the top 15 languages studied in the U.S. The most recent MLA survey in 2009 found that ASL is the fourth most popular language studied in post-secondary settings, reporting a total of 91,763 students enrolled in ASL courses that year, with the numbers increasing at a steady pace from previous years (19). Although the data analysis says that this is due to increased report-backs from institutions, it is noteworthy that ASL now has become one of the fifteen languages institutions explicitly seek information on. While naming ASL probably increased reporting, we also note that of the 522 institutions teaching ASL in 2002, 187 were new programs. This body of students represents the potential for a sizeable group of interested participants that may find this material of use, whether for educational, scientific, or entertainment purposes. Some of these students will go on to train and work as ASL interpreters or educators of Deaf children, and may find this website of interest, especially those that have a desire to work in theatrical settings.

There are currently over 16,000 members of the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) (“Member Center Overview”). It stands to reason that many of these interpreters may find themselves working on theatrical interpreting, or dramatic and literary translation. This website can be marketed to them as a way to increase the number of interpreters available to work in performing arts settings, or as a resource to compare worked examples. Interpreters will be able to see from respected members of the Deaf community who are also members of the site which examples constitute a successful ASL translation. There is danger that hearing interpreters will take jobs that
may very well go to capable Deaf T/Is (Stone 99). This collaboration can easily go back and forth between experts and enthusiasts, where the approach can be a bottom-up approach as opposed to a top-down one. By this I mean that non-expert translations can inspire by expert ones. Since most translation work will be segmented, it falls to the experts who are able to take a whole-text approach to curate and edit select passages in the quest to produce a cohesive text. The interaction between contributors and the experts operating from a Deaf translation norm will contribute to its spread, and may have an impact on the ASL interpreting industry.

The ability to see multiple translations of a single text will aid in their pursuit of mastery of ASL by providing multiple viewpoints for discussion and reflection. Linguists will find plenty of material to study, especially when using the site as a corpus, where they will be able to apply different branches of linguistic study from the phonological, morphological, syntactical, and semantic frameworks. Shakespearean scholars may find the link between the Bard's English and ASL to be of interest and potentially illuminating as they seek to further understand the material. It has been said that ASL has a way of illuminating spoken English text through visual means, which helps both Deaf and hearing audiences “understand” the text better. The semiotic relationship between sign language and the written text can be explored to further enrich the study of Shakespeare, continuing the work of Novak and Snyder with their initial forays into Elizabethan gesture and ASL (Snyder 32).

English and ASL literature teachers will be able to create and tie in lesson material directly or indirectly to the site. These materials can be individually produced or crowdsourced and the site used as a home for a national curriculum tying Shakespeare
and ASL together. And perhaps, most importantly among non-theatre beneficiaries, the entire ASL-using community will benefit from the increased linguistic robustness of ASL via the material generated, adding more cultural and linguistic wealth to their community's collective wealth, while bolstering efforts to improve English literacy through ASL literacy. The enabled focus on ASL literacy, aided by the study of English literature through ASL can increase appreciation for both sign languages and the original writing (Frishberg 57).

Theatres choosing to work with the material may also benefit from the crowdsourcing concept, engaging audiences and getting them invested in “building” the show. Contributors may also be helping to foster a sense of community among themselves and other artists and collaborators. If theatres were to encounter a problem area that needed crowdsourcing, they could tap their audience base for suggestions. Theatres can use this community input for audience development, encouraging a feeling of investment in the theatres, strengthening and ensuring the future of ASL and Deaf theatre. This can take on a new form of social reading, where ASL and English can intermingle, and shared commentaries can be created through the use of social media.

The creation of this website will centralize the translation process, so that a collective of companies that are interested in the use of ASL in theatre can share their efforts. While much of the work will need to be initiated, the preservation of these initial translations in a central location will reduce costs associated with the translation process. Interested parties will no longer need to ask individual theatres for permission to view the show reel, where the quality of the video may be questionable.
There is immense benefit in how performance, theater, and literary studies might be enriched by engaging with ASL literatures. Aside from what has been described above, even parties that don't know ASL and are looking for newer, fresher takes on old material may find this of interest and benefit to them. They may find that the physical nature of ASL illuminates certain elements of Shakespeare for them, though there is the danger that this might reinforce the reductionist logic that ASL is a physicalized form of English. To those more familiar with ASL’s linguistic features and history, this translated body of work serves to further reinforce the relatively new concept that ASL is indeed a true language, and not just a manual version of English. Having multiple ASL translations of Shakespeare’s work will go a long way towards “legitimizing” ASL in the eyes of mainstream society, and will create linguistic and cultural capital that the Deaf community can call their own.

International sign languages could make use of this resource to create their own versions, using “authoritative” ASL versions. How an “authoritative” version will be produced is not yet known, but the possibility of multiple “authoritative” versions exists with the ability to curate a collection of translations into one thread. International sign language scholars could expand on the work that ASL scholars and translators do with Shakespeare. Gallaudet University was the beginning point of the rapid expansion of linguistic and cultural research on ASL and the American Deaf community, which has since inspired growth in scholarship on other sign languages and Deaf cultures. They may then use these retranslated signed versions derived from the ASL to increase the legitimacy and robustness of their own languages.
Inspiration for Proposed New Model for Translating Shakespeare

A survey was done of various Internet-based efforts to translate or crowdsourced translations of Shakespeare into different languages. This project is a mashup of several different websites and apps that were found to possess elements that fit the overall vision of crowdsourced ASL translation corpus of Shakespeare’s works. These sites are:

1) OpenSourceShakespeare.org: This site contains a comprehensive searchable database of all of Shakespeare’s plays and sonnets using the 1864 Globe Edition of his complete works. Users may search for specific text words, or characters. This site includes a concordance, which could be applied to ASL: for example, word-specific equivalences could be created in ASL to help inform translations. The same word may appear in several plays, and mean either the same or different things, and tying an ASL concordance with the English may help the translation process across different plays. The most valuable component of the website is the database functionality, allowing for a search of text across plays, and isolation of text by character, making the data structures found on the site worth emulating.

2) OpenLiterature.net: This site allows users to add comments directly onto the text via shareable “tags,” which assist in the comprehension of the text. These annotations are meant to be a shared base of knowledge by scholars, dilettantes, and complete novices, through which the text can be more easily understood. The spirit of openness also parallels my intent to make the ASL translation available to all. The annotation concept can be applied to the site, or an application programming interface (API) could be created to allow for information-sharing between these sites.
3) **PlayShakespeare.com**: This website is an international community that requires users to login. It contains a forum and other community resources, and offers many ideas that could potentially be applied to the envisioned website to build a community of invested users.

4) **ASLShakespeare.org**: This site is educational in nature, explaining the process of ASL translation that resulted in the final ASL performance of *Twelfth Night*. This site offers many ideas for tutorials that can guide users through the process and what is expected (or rather, hoped for) from them in using and contributing to the proposed site.

5) **ShakespeareinTranslation.com**: This site is a cross-language platform of translations that can be experienced side by side. This may inform plans for an expansion of the original ASL translation engine into international sign languages, centralizing all languages, making access to different versions much more convenient.

6) **YearofShakespeare.com**: A collection of commentary and scholarship on one year’s worth of intercultural performance of Shakespeare in the UK. This is the body of work that I hope the translation engine will inspire.

7) **The Tempest for iPad**: This app has the abilities found in OpenLiterature.net, on a mobile platform, taking it a step further by enabling social reading, annotation, and sharing on the go. Many ideas can be culled from this app, or perhaps an API can be developed to work in conjunction with the processes found in the app.

8) **YouTube.com**: This site has mastered video compression, allowing for storage of millions of videos for a fraction of the storage cost. The site also maintains commenting and rating systems tied to the original video, where comments can be made
either via text or video, which fits perfectly with the bilingual nature of the proposed website.

9) GitHub: This site features the ability to “fork” a project from the original source, allowing for the creation of a completely separate unit. This can apply where differing translation approaches will necessitate different avenues of exploration. Th

The project will be a “mash-up” of these sites, with the added ability for internal tracking of user activity for both data collection and security purposes.

Structure for Proposed Crowdsourced Model for Translating Shakespeare into ASL

Because the website is functionally a bilingual environment, it makes sense to make most of it accessible via both ASL and English. Instructions for proper use of the website can be shown, using examples found elsewhere depicting a democratized, safe environment where collaboration, critique, and encouragement are essential for success. Before a potential user can begin utilizing the site, an account is required, where a user may offer identifying markers such as personal name, educational or professional background, and interest in Shakespeare, among others. These will help personalize the avatar that the user will be utilizing to navigate the site. Everything the user does will be tied to his or her account, including the creation of videos, any comments, and voting activities, and will be made public to other registered users. Internal data will be collected on individual user behavior that includes the previous information, flagging and service requests, as well what material they viewed, so as to create an “electronic trail” in case of plagiarism or appropriation of other user-generated content for use beyond the scope of
the website. Each user will have the ability to comment on and rate other videos, and add annotations to appropriate sections.

Each user must abide by a comprehensive terms of use agreement that will dictate the rules of decorum and productivity on the site, as well as offering protection for both the user and others who generate original translation material. Users can submit translations as their own work, and through the terms of use agreement release the website from any liability for any legal dispute that arises from the posting of their work on the site. Material submitted will be governed by an international Creative Commons license: modifications to the work are allowed as long as others share alike, and the material is not allowed to be for commercial use.33 This would be on the individual level, but language can be inserted into the agreement to allow the operators of the site to license the material to any commercial interests for a fee and recognition of the work done by the members of the community. The goal is to find a copyright mechanism that allows flexibility where users are concerned, and allows them to feel that they are contributing to part of a greater effort without being exploited. The Creative Commons licensing approach is pragmatic because the work created from the website will almost certainly lead to interest in producing potentially profitable commercial enterprises, and effort must be made to protect this work, most likely through a licensing structure. There needs to be more exploration as to how to protect the intellectual work done by contributors, to be sure that it isn’t exploited. If someone were to take the material and profit from it, the Creative Commons license should provide reasonable protection as is,

33 See works cited: “Creative Commons Legal Code: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported”
but legal counsel should be consulted and retained to clarify the details on how to best protect this material.

The site will use the Moby Shakespeare edition that is public domain, based on the 1864 Globe Edition of Shakespeare’s complete works. The reason for this is because the work, being public domain, can be shared without any legal repercussions. The text is not perfect, for the Moby version uses a slightly more modernized English, which may not sit well with scholars. Any shortcomings found in the Moby version can be compensated for via the annotation and commenting systems that will be in place. An additional benefit, as Open Source Shakespeare points out, the text is easy to manipulate in digital form. Perhaps one day an improved version will become part of the public domain and can be uploaded to the site as a parallel text.

The site will be viewable on a page-by-page basis on different levels: the entire play, one complete act, one complete scene, or by character turn. Each character turn will have its own dedicated page where translations can be submitted. This is most feasible because breaking down a translation line by line does not afford the opportunity for a smooth transitioning of one translation to another by curator selection. Translating entire character dialogue turns also enables better cohesion of translation, since the grammatical structures of ASL and English are different. There may be challenges with tying in a translated corpus of individual terms: Shakespeare often uses a single term through multiple texts, and they may mean different things in different contexts; and not all words are interchangeable with one specific sign. Translation of individual terms can be annotations, much like those found in the Arden or Folger editions of Shakespeare’s work. Comments and annotations will exist within each of these dedicated pages, as well.
Comments and annotations may even make references to external links and images to justify one’s own translation or to assist others in creating their own. This commenting or annotation system can be created via an API with YouTube or another video/text posting and commenting system. The website design must pay particular attention to the UI, as to make it as easy for users to access a particular play, act, scene, line, or even keyword within the Shakespearean canon. It must also be easy to add, comment on, or improve translation videos. Videos can be sorted by date of creation, by voter ranking, by user, and other metrics to ensure a smooth search operation. Individual pages, comments, and translation contributions will be shareable via social media, increasing the potential for contributors to have their work seen and commented on. Should a particular section prove difficult, users can request a crowdsourced effort either internally on the site or by recruiting potential others through social media.

Videos can be created either through a web streaming video recording application or through uploaded content generated by the user at their personal locations. Ideally, users will be able to edit their work onsite, but if this proves too expensive, the ability for the user to delete his or her own video will be allowed. In the interests of preserving the maximum amount of variation in translation, should a user want to delete a video, it will be flagged for deletion, with a dialogue box where the user explains their rationale for the deletion. Once flagged, the video in question will be hidden from view of the public until a moderator can determine whether it is worth salvaging, or can be discarded entirely. If the video is determined to be salvageable, the user will be contacted by a moderator and asked to reconsider the deletion request, or at least allow an equivalent version to be posted by one of the moderators or their affiliates. Users can flag videos generated by
others for deletion, and the same rule will apply, where the original creator of the flagged video will be contacted to confirm deletion, unless the moderator determines the content is worth saving. Once original videos are posted, they can be commented on either through text or video responses.

Once a sizeable body of translations is created, the ability to curate a selection of favored translations will come into play. Users will be able to see which translation contributions are “most popular,” received the “most likes,” or “most dislikes,” and be able to follow other users to see their creations, votes, or official selections. Users will be able to vote up or down videos to their liking or otherwise. Each user will have the ability to do this once per contribution, to keep things fair and balanced. Users can view translations multiple times, and these translations can be tested for “readability” depending on the intended audience. Videos can be selected for the official translation track as determined by that one particular user, and a chain of selections may yield a “complete” translation of an entire play. Seeing the difference between a popular posting and an expert’s favorite posting may mean the difference between an understood translation and a misunderstood one, for sometimes the experts fail to see through the popular eye. Curating will make intensive and deep analytics possible, where the selections of translations by usernames of "higher credibility" can be matched or contrasted against the popular vote to find translations of several kinds: including the highest level of commitment to the original work; the highest artistic caliber; and the highest readability or appeal to popular audiences, among others. Material created in translations deemed unworthy may shed some light or inspire other, more accurate, translations of the work. Ideally, a growing body of translations will peak with maximum
input achieved, and then taper off as higher quality translations are created, with the
voting process bringing the better translations to the top of the ladder, where they will be
more closely scrutinized for future improvements. The process may continue until the
moderators of this site or other experts create a “definitive” translation.

There will need to be a moderating mechanism to ensure that the terms of use are
followed. Deletion requests will need to be enabled, comments moderated, and flagged
issues dealt with. A log can be generated that the moderator(s) can access, and a task list
can be created parallel to these events. The moderator(s) will retain the right to suspend
questionable or objectionable material and content, and suspend or terminate user
accounts in the event of questionable or objectionable activity. Who will serve as the
moderators is contingent on a number of factors, most of all funding. If there is funding,
there can be a dedicated moderator who will fulfill the duties of the job, otherwise,
certain trusted member(s) may assume certain administrative responsibilities. This will
need to be sorted out with whomever the website belongs to, which is another question
that must be addressed. Ideally, the website would exist as the program of a stand-alone
non-profit organization dedicated to the mission of the website, free from the influence of
any other agendas. This is probably not possible, due to funding issues. The next best
place would be under the umbrella of the Folger Shakespeare Library (www.folger.edu),
a leading authority on Shakespeare and his works. A partnership could be forged with a
stand-alone nonprofit organization and the Folger, or the program could exist entirely
under the Folger’s care. The Folger’s renown and clout may help the site build credibility
and funding, as well as provide resources, legal and copyright protections, and insulate
the website against inappropriate use. If the Creative Commons avenue is not pursued,
and translations become the property of the website, then the website could offer licensing to interested theatre companies to use the translation, with proceeds going to the Folger, minus upkeep costs for the website.

To save costs, perhaps API protocol development should be explored to integrate tasks as opposed to creating an entirely new website from scratch. For example, an API can be created that offers integration with YouTube, making it very easy to post videos and keep storage costs low on the main site. Also, third-party web-tracking software can be used to track user behavior. In the future, an API could be developed to allow for multiple platform software-to-software interaction, enabling the corpus to be accessed via integration with analytical software used in sign language linguistics.34 Another API possibility might be integration with other ASL corpora or databases.

There must be a decision made whether to open the network to the public, where anyone can register, or if this site should be by invitation only to a select few. The open network concept would have obvious advantages of allowing the source and target language translation process to be visible to the public, as well as collecting translation from a large population. Perhaps with the open network, there are tiers of users with varying levels of access, though this may threaten the democratic nature of the site. An open network means an increased chance of theft of translation, though the login and tracking features are designed to monitor this, especially when seeing any unusual activity. Another shortcoming of an open network would be a greater number of lower-quality translations, which could be offset by implementing a moderator system that would police the translations, removing redundancies. Closed networks have obvious

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34 One example is ELAN, a computer application used by linguistics to create complex annotations on video and audio resources.
advantages. The output of translation work might be of higher quality if the producers of these translations feel that their work would be respected or elevated in the presence of others of a similar caliber or background. It is speculated that the creation of this website might undermine the professional class of translators, but newer theories and technologies in translation may necessitate that translators adapt with the times. Machine translations of sign languages are far below the standards needed for an affected, socially-meaningful translation, requiring a different sort of effort from translations, taking roles that are more suited for oversight (Pym 4). This role of oversight by expert translators can certainly be applied in relation to the imperfect translations generated by non-professional translators. It is in this capacity that expert translators can still find an essential role. It must also be addressed that many in the Deaf community may not exactly be enthusiastic about this project. Because of the wariness from the community due to the long history of exploitation (by the hearing-speech industrial complex) and appropriation (by those using ASL for their own ends and profit), steps must be taken to protect this creative material. Perhaps a closed network might offer some protection from piracy, exploitation, and cultural or linguistic appropriation.

*Actual Implementation of the Model*

Snyder mentions the challenge of documentation in ASL; as newer forms and newer technologies are on the rise, these become the preferred means of connection for Deaf people (137). Later, there may be challenges to the traditional form of research, where publications are normally written/typed, and then published in static form. This project may inspire newer technologies that facilitate the video production and editing
process, especially for ASL users (iv). The most positive potential outcome would be the creation of a vibrant community of individuals from various backgrounds that contribute to the creation of ASL translations of Shakespeare's works. This community might then continue to collaborate on future projects, either on their own or through commission by outside parties. A body of data will be generated from the activities on the site via activity logs, bolstering scholarly studies across multiple disciplines. This project has the potential to have a lasting impact on how ASL translation for theatre is done, with the rise of a new translation norm. It is hoped that from this scholarly study, a platform utilizing action research and collaborative research will be created. Data collection is certainly a priority, and the site enables the collection of metadata surrounding translation activity, both on the overall site and on the individual level.

Before the design aspect can move forward, the legal aspect of this website must be researched for any specific conflicts with Creative Commons, particularly with the creation and intended function of the website, and issues surrounding intellectual property rights of the created content on the site, including retention of rights to the material and the licensing thereof. The ultimate home of the website must be considered, and what entity will be responsible for channeling the resources to make it possible. Some avenues to consider are the creation of a nonprofit corporation that will be responsible for the website and its content, and perhaps fiscal sponsorships or partnerships with other organizations may be struck to maximize both financial and intellectual resources for the site. Other avenues may mean relinquishing control of the website to other companies or institutions, but this may compromise the integrity of the original vision of the site. Once these questions are answered, the website can be created,
and the ongoing iterative process of improving the website through user feedback can begin.

Challenges and Barriers to Success

The biggest costs to this project will be the financial and time costs involved in the planning and creation of the site. Because this is a scholarly endeavor, the initial effort in planning and research is justified, but the real costs will be in the design, creation, and ongoing maintenance of the website, as websites are expensive. There also needs to be a commitment from the moderators and promoters of the site to market the concept through outreach and the use of social networks. Once material is created on the site, steps must be taken to protect against abuses, particularly piracy by those with less than noble intentions to profit from the hard work of others. Legal costs may be incurred in going after them, and may balloon beyond sustainable means.

Not everybody has Internet access, so this means that a certain subset of the population is excluded from participating. Because the site is video intensive, an appropriate level of bandwidth is necessary for video uploads, transfers, etc. Compatibility issues with different technological and software platforms must be considered and resolved during the design phase. In the spirit of collaboration and sharing, perhaps the code for the website can be open sourced, as well.

Aside from the initial problem of needing to translate a dramatic text into a usable body of ASL, there is the challenge of finding actors or ASL Masters who are equally skilled in both ASL and English to lead these efforts. In creating content, non-experts might be scared off by the challenges of translating Shakespeare, whose English is
beyond the unaided grasp of many of us. There is a long history of shame associated with the struggle to teach Deaf people English, which has left a stain on Deaf history: the placement of English on a pedestal reflects both reverence and loathing. One study of sign language theatre states that members of the ASL-using community have compared these attempts to teach English with the colonizing of other nations by imperialistic ones (Weir 23). This project can become a learning tool in which pride in ASL can become a defining feature, as the focus of criticism isn’t one’s ability to produce the English language. This critical focus will instead split into two areas: the ability to parse the Shakespearean English for meaning that can be extrapolated into ASL, and how skillfully the original English meaning is rendered into ASL. Because of the collaborative nature of this site, and the ability to add annotations to the text, it is reasonable to assume the possibility exists for a Deaf monolingual to navigate the English text more easily with the aid of ASL annotations. This means that fluency in English isn’t a requisite for successful use of this resource.

The fact that this is a digital technology means that the accompanying risks of working with digital content apply. Data may be lost, and programs may crash. A heavy reliance on the Internet to drive the collaborative engine may prove to be a problem if the Internet crashes or has trouble operating. Data storage may become an issue if a glut of submitted videos appears. Considering there are only 38 plays to translate, careful planning and estimates of storage needs can be done to proactively address these potential risks.
Chapter 4: Conclusions and Recommendations

When this project is created, the data will tell the tale of how the American Deaf community responds to Shakespeare in ASL. Translations will be generated, because interest is high. The website, once established, hopefully will become, in retrospect, an artifact of our Deaf artistic history which will leave one wondering why we didn’t do things this way before. It is my sincere hope that this project leads to increased ASL and English literacy, and more opportunities to create theatre that uses ASL. This paper, along with further findings, can be extrapolated into a business proposal seeking grant opportunities to make this vision a reality.

Because the technology does not yet exist to make videos of ASL searchable without tagging keywords, in the interim, written forms of ASL may be incorporated into the site. Robert Augustus of si5s is working on creating a Unicode protocol that allows one to use an alphanumeric keyboard to input ASL, which will go a long way towards making ASL more workable for machine translation.

An interesting situation exists for those Deaf playwrights that dream of scripts originally conceived in ASL. The fact that ASL lacks a written form means that, interestingly enough, a Deaf script must be rendered into English. This means a double translation process for those scripts where the originally-conceived ASL has not been documented through easily-understood methods, and must be translated into English, and then back-translated into ASL again. Using si5s, the engine driving the proposed model can be slightly modified to produce original ASL scripts through crowdsourcing si5s text.
As current technology goes, video editing is somewhat easy, but it is still a time-consuming process. Perhaps this model/website could, in being used for the creation of original scripts in ASL, inspire new software features that would make the creation and editing of ASL scripts much easier. Our word processing programs make it ever so easy to manipulate the written word—video editing technology has not yet reached the same level of ability to manipulate recorded signs.

Through this model, there is the opportunity to create a series of authoritative annotated versions of Shakespeare in ASL, much like the Arden Shakespeare or Folger Shakespeare series. These versions can easily be made via curating material onsite, and then publishing either a DVD or maintaining the translation on the website with multiple versions created, each with their own merits. This model can also be applied to create a specialized theatre vocabulary in ASL, as well as song translations, book translations, poetry, film scripts, and pretty much every genre of English literature there ever was. It’s time.


Appendix: Thesis Defense PowerPoint Slides

Toward a Crowdsourced Model for ASL Translations of Shakespeare’s Works

Tyrone Giordano

Basic Definitions
- ASL
- Deaf Culture
- Deaf Theatre
- Sign Language Theatre
- Dramatic Text
- Theatrical Text
- Crowdsourcing

Original Research Question
- Is there a way to improve the current translation process, and apply this to Shakespeare?
  - Grounded in my personal experience at Deaf West Theatre since 2001 and my personal desire to "read" Shakespeare in ASL.

Preliminary Literature Review
- What research has already been done on ASL translation for Shakespeare?
  - Aaron Woi, Sign Language Theatre (SLT as an art form)
  - Peter Novak, Twelfth Night (working on ASL equivalence of Shakespeare)
  - Lindsey Snyder, Seeing the Air Thus (documenting ASL, benefits of Shakespeare in ASL)
  - Julie Gebron, Signs the Speech (Interpreting)
Defining the Problem

- Current Model of Translation
  - Text-to-performance model
  - (English dramatic text → ASL theatrical text)
  - Dramatic text translation (standard model)
  - Limited number of participants
- Lack of central storage of translation
  - Limited access to ASL text
  - Cannot successively improve translation
  - Cannot critically analyze text

Refining the Question

- How can current technology and human processes be applied to maximize effectiveness and participation in ASL translation of Shakespeare?

Methodology

- Almost entirely secondary exploration
  - Historical/background support
  - Current community/professional practices
  - Current and future technologies
- Much personal experience is put into this
  - My own work as an artist/translator
  - Personal conversations with others

Possible Significant Benefits and Impact of this Project

- Academic Research/Study
  - Multiple cross-disciplinary intersections
- Deaf Arts/Literatures/Theatre
- Shakespeare Studies
- Interpreter Training/Quality
- Deaf/ASL Education
- ASL Linguistics
- International Deaf/Sign Communities
- Deaf Community Cultural Wealth
- Technological Development
- Language Attitudes
Language Attitudes/Orientations

- Language as a Problem
- Language as a Right
- Language as a Resource

A reaction against the language-as-a-problem approach; the orientation concerns the expression in one’s community language as a natural, human, equal, and fulfilling act. Language-as-a-resource orientation is often played out in court.

Rise in ASL Course Enrollment at U.S. Colleges/Universities

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.602</td>
<td>4.304</td>
<td>11.420</td>
<td>60.781</td>
<td>78.829</td>
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Rise in ASL Course Enrollment at U.S. Colleges/Universities

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<th>2006</th>
<th>2009</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>746.267</td>
<td>822.985</td>
<td>864.986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>202.979</td>
<td>296.426</td>
<td>236.499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>91.300</td>
<td>94.264</td>
<td>96.349</td>
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<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>60.701</td>
<td>70.829</td>
<td>93.763</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Problem of Documenting ASL

- Written forms of ASL
  - Glossas
  - Notation Systems
  - Sign Writing Systems

- Film and Video
  - Technological Improvements/Limitations
    - Editing of the video text
    - Channels of distribution

- Is ASL “written” or “performed”?
Here is a helpful example for ASL Glossing

**ASL Gloss, cont'd.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>y/n</th>
<th>DEAF YOU?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___</td>
<td>Are you Deaf?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rhq</th>
<th>HUNGRY, WHY? EAT LUNCH NOT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___</td>
<td>I'm hungry because I didn't eat lunch.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>cond</th>
<th>aff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>___</td>
<td>IF IT RAINS TODAY, THE GAME WILL BE CANCELLED</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each sentence is written on a different line.

http://www.deafhug.com/ml/glossing/view/What-is-Ultimate-ASL-Glossing

http://www.alexanderlukas.com/sign-language-buy-2.png

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**Sutton SignWriting**

**Sutton SignWriting, cont'd.**

![Sutton SignWriting Image](http://www.deafhug.com/ml/glossing/view/What-is-Ultimate-ASL-Glossing)

![Sutton SignWriting, cont'd. Image](http://www.alexanderlukas.com/sign-language-buy-2.png)
The ASLShakes Engine

- **SPINE**: English Text (div. by Play/Act/Scene/Line)
  - Time: Each character dialogue turn
  - Subtrees:
    - Specific words (consonance)
- **User Interface**
  - Individual profiles (for tracking)
  - Navigate through trees
    - Contribute translations
    - Add video comments/responses
    - Add annotations
      - Text, graphics, voice

Examples of Desirable Website Elements

(website survey pp.71-73 in thesis)

A Business Plan

- Preliminary Design Process
  - Individual feedback/focus groups
  - Brainstorming/Needs Assessments
  - Proof of Concept Models
- Where shall the ASLShakes engine live?
- Funding
- Iterative Building Process
Challenges

- Resistance/acceptance of ASL
- Skill/interest/number of participants
- Costs of website construction/maintenance
- Reliance on technology (it can fail)
- Legal issues
- Current technology

Conclusion

- Desire and need
- Common sense
- Regardless of general interest, must be built

Works Cited