■ *Erika Hoffmann-Dilloway*
OBERLIN COLLEGE

Metasemiotic Regimentation in the Standardization of Nepali Sign Language

Both the linguistic forms attended to and the ways in which they are linked to the social vary within and across language standardization projects. In addition, it cannot be assumed that people will notice the same indexical connections between linguistic forms and social structures or rationalize them in the same ways. An analysis of the project to standardize Nepali Sign Language highlights the fact that it is therefore necessary to account for the processes by which standardization projects attempt to reduce variation not only in the formal properties of language but also in the wider semiotic interpretations of those forms. [Nepal, d/Deaf, standardization, language ideologies, semiotic indeterminacy]

THIS IS A WEB-ENHANCED ARTICLE (HTTP://LINGUISTICANTHROPOLOGY.ORG/JOURNAL/WEB-ENHANCED-ARTICLES/)

One Friday afternoon in May 2005, several leaders of the Kathmandu Association for the Deaf[1] called for a large gathering of its members. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the etymology of a group of lexical items included in the standard Nepali Sign Language (NSL) dictionary. Why, for example, did the sign FRIDAY[2] take the form of the right hand held next to the face, thumb touching the cheek, with fingers outstretched and wiggling? The answers proposed to such questions were based less on the historical emergence of any given sign (which is often unknowable) than on readings of the semiotic motivations of the sign forms most salient to each participant. As the saliency of any of the iconic and indexical features identifiable in each sign varied among participants according to their social and personal histories, these discussions sometimes led to disagreements. Indeed, multiple interpretations offered of the semiotic motivations for the form of the sign FRIDAY, as we will see later in this article, are particularly revealing of the manner in which signers' interdiscursive experiences inform their readings of sign forms, and the social significance of the potential validation of one such reading over another.

The ultimate purpose of this meeting was to serve as a forum in which leaders of the Kathmandu Association of the Deaf could work to standardize such semiotic linkages by reinforcing the officially sanctioned reading of the signs' etymologies. Such efforts extend beyond etymology to the broader social indexicality of signs and are not unique to Deaf social networks; while ideologies of standard language in all contexts mediate between linguistic form and social structures (Woolard 1998a:3) both the linguistic forms that will be considered relevant and the manner in which they will be linked to the social can vary within and across institutional contexts.

Figure 1
**FRIDAY (शुक्रबार) as it appears in the Nepali Sign Language Dictionary and written using
Sutton SignWriting—see the Appendix for a Key**.

Though standard languages derive a great deal of their power from their social indexicality, it cannot be assumed that actors will notice the same kinds of indexical connections between linguistic forms and social structures or rationalize them in the same ways. This article argues that it is therefore necessary to attend to the explicit and implicit (inter)discursive processes by which language standardization projects work to reduce variation not only in the formal properties of language but also in the wider semiotic interpretations of those forms. Below I explore the manner in which such "metasemiotic regimentation" (Parmentier 1993; Silverstein 1993) is attempted through the analysis of an interinstitutional project to standardize Nepali Sign Language.

Since the establishment of the first Nepali school for the d/Deaf in 1966, Nepali Sign Language (NSL) has been emerging from the communicative practice of d/Deaf Nepalis brought together in an increasing number of social institutions for the d/Deaf. Since the late 1980s, leaders of these institutions have worked to standardize the language through the production of sign language dictionaries. NSL does not have a widely used written form; its dictionaries are limited to pictorial representations of individual lexical items that are linked in dictionaries to glosses in Nepali, the national language of Nepal.[3] As I have argued elsewhere, while lacking a written form does not preclude a standardization project, it can affect its formal and ideological thrusts (Hoffmann 2008). In particular, the fact that there is no ready means to represent and objectify the grammatical forms of NSL signing practices in print encourages an exclusive focus on lexical items (which are easier to represent pictorially) in standardizing efforts.[4]

In turn, this narrow formal focus constrains the manner in which the standardization project affects NSL linguistic practice more broadly, by allowing different d/Deaf institutions to promote grammatically distinct forms of signing while still adhering to the same overarching standardization project. These different forms of signing both reflect and promote distinct ideologies about the nature of NSL and d/Deafness more generally, which also coexist within a single standardization project. On the one hand, teachers in the d/Deaf schools frame NSL as the Nepali language in another modality and accordingly perform the standard lexical items in a way that follows the syntactic and morphological patterns found in spoken Nepali. On the other hand, the Deaf associations promote an understanding of NSL as a distinct language and association teachers sign to their Deaf students in a manner that is grammatically distinct from spoken Nepali (Hoffmann 2008).

This article has three goals. The first is to trace the manner in which the grammatical forms of signing practice vary across d/Deaf institutions in Kathmandu, the

capital of Nepal, through a close analysis of classroom interactions in the d/Deaf schools and associations. Second, I will analyze the (inter)discursive processes by which these formal properties are linked to different ideological positions within each institution. I note that there is a difference in the degree to which the d/Deaf schools and associations make these positions explicit; while in both contexts the presentation of the standard lexical items are linked to Nepali nationalism through very explicit metasemiotic commentary, both the grammatical differences in each institution's signing practice and the ways in which they are linked to the institutions' potentially conflicting positions toward NSL remain relatively covert. By remaining under the radar, this formal and ideological variation is able to coexist with little comment within a single standardization project.[5]

Finally, I will address the fact those Nepalis who entered the d/Deaf schools as children and have subsequently become active members of the Deaf associations have been exposed to a wide range of signing forms and ways of ideologizing the nature of NSL. Graduates of the d/Deaf schools typically use spatial grammatical constructions when conversing with Deaf peers in the associations, while they switch to Nepali-influenced signing when addressing hearing people. As this code-switching occurs even in classroom contexts where Deaf adults teach NSL to hearing teacher candidates for the d/Deaf school, this practice perpetuates the institutional differences in grammatical form. At the same time, through the actions of these graduates, the grammatical and ideological variation within the standardization project can come to bear on its explicit, and interinstitutionally shared goals. In particular, graduates of the schools often become leaders in the Deaf associations, in a position to notice and promote semiotic interpretations of the standard sign forms that multivalently index both the school's and associations' means of relating NSL to the broader Nepali national context.

The data through which these topics are explored are drawn from a language and social group that is underrepresented in the linguistic anthropological literature. At the same time this research contributes to the discipline's understanding of language ideologies more broadly by highlighting the multiplicity of linguistic forms, ideological perspectives, and ways of creating and reinforcing linkages between the two in a given social context. In exploring these processes I emphasize the multifunctionality of language while adopting Judith Irvine and Susan Gal's (Irvine and Gal 2000) semiotic orientation in analyzing the manner in which language ideologies link the formal and the social. They note that, "speakers (and hearers) often notice, rationalize, and justify linguistic indices, thereby creating linguistic ideologies that purport to explain the source and meaning of the linguistic differences" (Irvine and Gal 2000:37). However, while Irvine and Gal were most concerned with the effects of such ideologies, including the manner in which they contribute to language change and their consequences for both politics and scholarship, in this article I focus on how such ideologies themselves can be products of and subject to standardization projects.

Standardization and Ideological Multiplicity

Recent years have seen a great diversity of work attending to the manner in which language ideologies mediate between linguistic forms and social structures (e.g., Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998), and a wide range of definitions of the term *language ideologies*, each highlighting different emphases of the concept's application. In this article, I move away from definitions, such as that proposed by Alan Rumsey (1990),[6] which imply that ideologies of language within a given social group can be treated as homogeneous. Rather, I primarily adopt Kathryn Woolard's framing of the term as, "representations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world" (Woolard 1998a:3), as this definition accommodates the multiplicity of ideological positions in any context and

allows for the fact that these representations can be more or less subject to conscious awareness.

I will apply this focus to my discussion of ideologies of standard language. The historical process of standardization involves the selection of a particular language variety, its codification, the elaboration of its use across sociolinguistic domains, and public acceptance of its claim to "correctness" (Haugen 1996). However, while the ultimate goal of this process is purportedly the reduction of variation in linguistic practice, the actual reduction of such variation (which may or may not be actually realized) is less important than the ideological positions that motivate the process and provide frameworks for the interpretation of its results (Milroy and Milroy 1999).

I use the plural here because while the literature often refers to a "standard language ideology," the ideological positions that motivate and sustain standardization projects vary. For example, James and Lesley Milroy identify differences between both the formal and ideological thrusts of attempts to standardize English in the United States and Britain. They argue that while Standard English in the United States is centered on lexical and morphosyntactic structures associated with an imagined mainstream, nonethnic middle class and works to obscure class-based distinctions, Standard English in the United Kingdom is based more on phonological features associated with a highly educated aristocracy and erases ethnic differentiation (Milroy and Milroy 1999). James Milroy also notes that in addition to ideological and formal variation across standardization projects, there can be varying positions within such projects concerning whether a given form is or is not standard (Milroy 2000). In this article I follow the Milroys in attending to the relationship between variation in the level of form upon which standardizing efforts are focused and ideological variation within the project to standardize NSL.

Historical Background

As Leila Monaghan has noted, any attempt to understand sign languages and Deaf social networks must take into account the national and international historical contexts in which they emerge (Monaghan 2003). Indeed, some historical grounding is necessary to understand the different ideological thrusts in this standardization project because, though the d/Deaf schools and associations differ in some aspects of their framing of the nature of NSL, both institutions are influenced in important ways by the manner in which the Nepali state construes the relationship between languages and social groups.

While Nepalis are highly diverse in ethnic, religious, and linguistic terms, the leaders of the country have always been Hindu.[7] Prithvi Narayan Shah, the Hindu leader of the Kingdom of Gorkha, unified Nepal in 1816. In 1846, Jang Bahadur Rana overthrew the Shah rulers in the Kot Massacre and declared himself Prime Minister, maintaining the Shah line as powerless figureheads. In 1854, in order to fully incorporate his varied subjects into the Hindu cosmology favored by the ruling class, Jang Bahadur created a document called the Muluki Ain (or Chief Law). Enumerating and ranking Nepal's social groups in terms of their relative purity by Hindu standards, this legislation was an attempt to both codify and reify the various, relatively fluid, practices concerning caste and ethnic group relationships extant in Nepal (Guneratne 1998). In creating this legislation, Rana was responding to Nepal's precarious geo-political position (between Tibet/China to the north and British India to the south) by projecting the notion that the Nepali nation state mapped onto a culturally unified and discrete population, the defining symbols of which were drawn from the culture of the dominant Hindu groups, the Brahmins and Chetris (Burghart 1984).

After India gained independence from Britain in 1947, expatriate Nepalis living in India worked with the Indian Congress party to oppose the Rana rule. This

Nepali nationalistic project focused on reinstating the Shah king, King Tribhuvan, who they hoped would preside over a democratic Nepali state. In 1950 the King escaped from the Ranas by fleeing to India; and soon thereafter, with the support of the Indian state, the Ranas were overthrown and the Shah line reinstated. King Tribhuvan did not hold elections for a constituent assembly, as had been promised, though his successor, King Mahendra, did so in 1959. However, fearing that his role would become ceremonial, in 1960 Mahendra arrested the Congress and set up a system of direct rule.

While the Muluki Ain's use of caste as a governmentally sanctioned method of structuring social relations was banned by the government in 1963, the state continued to locate its authority in Hindu cultural symbols, including the continued framing of the Shah kings as incarnations of the Hindu god Vishnu. The state also drew on a Hindu cultural framework in defining its notions of citizenship, attempting to unite its polity by encouraging all citizens to adopt upper-caste Hindu practices. The emerging educational system was a focal point for these efforts, as all classes were taught in Nepali, the official language (spoken primarily in the Hindu middle-hill region of the country), and promoted Hindu cultural perspectives (Skinner and Holland 1996).

The government banned political parties and denied human rights until 1990 when the Jana Andolan (People's Movement), a mass uprising in Kathmandu, was successful in forcing then King Birendra to institute constitutional reforms and allow the formation of a multiparty parliament. However, much of the promise of this movement was unrealized, as the political parties proved largely corrupt. While there was some revision of the cultural framing of the Nepali nation state at this time, this too was limited. For example, after the People's Movement a new constitution was drafted which changed the definition of Nepal as "an independent, indivisible and sovereign monarchical Hindu Kingdom" to "a multi-ethnic, multilingual, democratic, independent, indivisible, sovereign Hindu and Constitutional Monarchical Kingdom" (Ellingson 1991). While this definition was more expansive, legally Nepal remained a Hindu state.

However, with the restoration of multiparty democracy came increased political mobilization on the part of many of the country's ethnic groups, who protested the manner in which the state's framing of Nepali nationalism was grounded in high-caste Hindu symbols and practices. Among their particular goals were the reframing of Nepal as secular and the promotion of languages other than Nepali and Sanskrit in schools. In fact, one of the primary means by which such groups define themselves is through the claim of a "mother tongue" other than Nepali. As a result, language is implicated in both the government's attempts to Hinduize (or Sanskritize) the Nepali population and attempts to resist this process. As we will see below, this history has informed both the d/Deaf school's and associations' ideological positions concerning the nature of NSL.

d/Deaf Institutions

Standardization projects are always mediated through institutions of social control, such as schools, courts, and religious institutions, as these are given the authority to set and exemplify linguistic norms. The project to standardize NSL involves various institutions of different scales, including the local schools, the Nepali state, international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and local and extranational Deaf associations. As Susan Gal notes, the concept of language ideologies provides a framework for considering "links, contestations, and contradictions" in how such disparate institutions enact understandings of "cultural principles about the relation of language to social life" (Gal 1998:319). Understanding the mediating role of such institutions is especially important in considering the standardization of sign languages, as institutions such as schools and associations are the primary sites of Deaf social (re)production.

Deaf culture has been described as a "recruitment" or "convert" culture (Bechter 2008; Wrigley 1996) because most Deaf children are born to hearing parents and must encounter both other Deaf people and sign language later in life. The situation in Nepal bears this out: most Nepali Deaf signers first encounter other Deaf persons and sign language sometime in midchildhood or even postadolescence when they enter Deaf institutions. The sustained social interaction with other Deaf people available in these institutions allows not only the emergence of Deafness as a social category but is generally the locus for the emergence of sign languages themselves. Many sign languages have had their genesis from the intensive signed communication of Deaf children in schooling contexts, whether this practice is encouraged or suppressed by teachers and staff (Kegl, Senghas, and Coppola 1999). These institutions are also generally the primary sites of efforts to intervene in the formal properties of the emerging signing practice—whether by hearing educators or by Deaf leaders.

While other scholars have focused on such institutions as key sites in which ideological battles over the nature of sign languages have been fought, with particular focus on the debate between oralists (who attempt to teach d/Deaf children to read lips and speak) and manualists (who encourage the use of a natural or artificial sign language) (e.g., Monaghan et al. 2003), less frequently have such studies examined the ways in which these different ideological positions can vary within and across the different institutional contexts that Deaf people may move through during their lifetimes.

In Kathmandu, the two most important d/Deaf social institutions—the school for the d/Deaf and the Deaf associations—have been the primary sites for the emergence of NSL (both as signing practice and as a standardizing language) and Deaf social life. However, each type of institution occupies a different position in regard to both the Nepali state and various extranational interests. Nepal's Deaf associations, venues for both Deaf social interaction and activism, receive support from and share an ideological position with inter- and extranational Deaf organizations that promote a view of the Deaf as a linguistic minority rather than a disabled population (Hoffmann 2008). Run by Deaf leaders, the Nepali Deaf associations promote the idea that NSL is a separate language, the "mother tongue" of the country's Deaf population. This representation of the language suggests that Deaf Nepalis are analogous to other Nepali indigenous groups currently struggling for their linguistic rights in the face of the political power accorded to spoken Nepali. Accordingly, the grammatical constructions taught in association-run classes employ a spatial grammar that differs greatly from Nepali.

The schools, primarily run by and staffed with hearing Nepalis,[8] adhere to a medical construction of the condition, seeing Deafness as a physical disability that they attempt to cure socially through providing access to the dominant (spoken and written) language of the hearing population (Hoffmann 2008). This perspective is tied to broad international trends in d/Deaf education, which stress the acquisition of the dominant spoken language as the primary goal for d/Deaf students and underpins the school's pedagogical approach of performing the standard signs in the same word order and following the same morphological patterns as the spoken and written Nepali language. This practice is also motivated by the structural conditions imposed by Nepal's government, which favors the use of Nepali as the national language; to obtain governmental support the d/Deaf schools are invested in promoting the idea that NSL is the same language as Nepali, simply expressed in a different modality (much as written Nepali is considered to be the spoken language in a different modality).

Variation in Signing Practice Across Institutional Contexts

As noted above, while the schools and associations promote the same standard lexical items in their classes, the morphological and syntactical aspects of signing practice in

these institutions differ. Below I analyze and compare the grammatical differences in signing practices within two primary d/Deaf institutions in Nepal, the Kathmandu Association of the Deaf administered Swedish Sewing Project and the Naxal School for the Deaf. The transcripts in this article are drawn from a corpus of approximately forty videotaped hours of natural signing within Nepali d/Deaf schools, associations, and homes recorded between October 2004 and May 2005. My acquisition and interpretation of these data were grounded in long-term participant observation in Nepali d/Deaf social networks during a series of visits in 1997, 1999, 2002, 2004–2005, and 2006, through which I have become a competent signer of a range of styles of NSL and a speaker of Nepali.

Signing Practice in Deaf Association Classroom Instruction

Each *Baisak* (the first month of the Nepali year) a new group of adolescent Deaf girls recruited primarily from rural areas comes to live in the Kathmandu Association of the Deaf administered Swedish Sewing Project. These girls, who generally have not been exposed to other Deaf people or to signing, live together for one year to study both NSL and sewing skills. The following transcript is from a sign language class that took place during the girls' first month of training.

Transcript 1

An English gloss of NSL appears in capital letters, followed by an English translation. When a classifier is used in the transcript it is marked with a CL preceded by an initial that marks the number or letter shape (in the Devanagari fingerspelling alphabet) the classifier most resembles. See this issue's online supplement for a Sutton SignWriting version of this transcript.

NSL:

> 1. JHANKRI.
> Jhankri.
> 2. VILLAGE YOU-PLURAL SICK MEDICAL-DOCTOR, MEDICINE ISN'T.
> In the village when you are sick, there are no doctors or medicine.
> 3. JHANKRI GCL:EXORCISES-YOU, GCL:EXORCISES-ME.
> The jhankri exorcises you, like this.
> 4. YOU-PLURAL UNDERSTAND?
> Do you understand?
> 5. SEEN? SEEN YOU-PLURAL?
> You've seen this?
> 6. 1CL:BANGS-ON-DRUM, 5CL:WEARS-FEATHERED-HEADRESS.
> He bangs on a drum and wears a feathered headdress.
> 7. UNDERSTAND?
> Do you understand?
> 8. SAME.
> It's the same.

In this excerpt, the Deaf instructor is teaching her students the standard sign JHANKRI (shaman/healer). In so doing, her signing employs a variety of grammatical forms that are not generally controlled by the teachers in the d/Deaf schools. These include her use of agreeing verbs, spatial reference points, classifiers, and role shifting. Agreeing verbs use spatial reference points to "agree" with one or more noun arguments. Where the morphology of the verb includes a device such as a classifier hand shape, the word order of the sentence will be relatively free. Classifiers, postulated to be universal to Deaf sign languages, are a "formally distinct subsystem dedicated solely to the schematic structural representation of objects moving or located with respect to each other in space" (Talmy 2003:16). While these forms are

frequently mistaken as mimetic, there are morphological and syntactic constraints on their use and combinations that vary from sign language to sign language (Emmorey 2002:74).

In transcript 1, the teacher employs several handling and instrument classifiers (those that describe how an object might be held or used) along with whole entity stative-descriptive classifiers (those that describe the shape of an object) in defining the term *JHANKRI*. In line 6, the teacher uses a handling classifier to indicate a jhankri's characteristic banging on a drum and stative-descriptive classifiers to further describe a jhankri's headdress. Line 3 contains an example of role shifting. The teacher, in performing the action of an exorcism, in turn takes on the roles of the acting jhankri and the subject of the exorcism, marking this shift with agreeing verbs and body shifting. The motion of the verb agrees semantically with the shifting locations of the actor and patient, while the verb's hand shape is a handling classifier representing the stick a jhankri uses to fling water on a client as part of a healing ritual. The fact that this signing draws on syntactic and morphological structures that differ from those employed by spoken Nepali implicitly bolsters the association's claim that NSL is a distinct language.

Signing Practice in d/Deaf School Classroom Instruction

The standard lexical items employed in the schools are the same as those taught in Deaf associations, with the exception of some technical terms used in upper-level science and class courses. However, the grammatical information conveyed in the form of instruction tends strongly towards Nepali[9] structural patterns, including signing in Subject-Object-Verb word order and modifying signs with postfixes rather than employing spatial grammatical constructions. Most of the teachers in the schools are hearing Nepalis, who simultaneously speak and sign while running their classrooms. This simultaneous production of codes in two different mediums is made possible by the fact that the teachers' signs cleave closely to the structure of spoken Nepali. However, as the example below demonstrates, these codes do not map onto one another perfectly. While the simultaneous production of the codes supports the school's ideological position that NSL is Nepali in another medium, points of divergence between channels suggest an additional layer within the school's framing of the relationship between Nepali and NSL.[10] That is, when the channels diverge the signed channel typically contains less nuanced information; this may be taken to suggest that NSL is an impoverished version of spoken Nepali. As we will see, this position is not entirely at odds with the school's pedagogical program.

In the late eighties/early nineties, the Naxal School for the Deaf switched from a strictly oralist method to the Total Communication approach, in which signed communication is encouraged.[11] Just what the nature of communication in that modality should be, however, has been a matter of debate in the d/Deaf educational systems worldwide that employ this pedagogical system. In Nepal, as in many other countries, the signed communication promoted in Total Communication classrooms is not based on the signing practice of Deaf adults but on the dominant spoken language of the larger community, to facilitate the acquisition of literacy in said language. This practice has a long history: the Abbé Charles-Michel de l'Épée, a pioneer in d/Deaf education and often referred to as the "Father of the Deaf," added French grammar to his students' signed lexical items, calling this "methodical signing" (Monaghan 2003:3). While these kinds of hybrids are widely embraced by educators and hearing parents of d/Deaf children, many linguists and Deaf signers question the viability of such codes (e.g., Nover 1995; Ramsey 1989).

These codes typically involve the performance of signs in the same syntactical order as the dominant spoken language in the area. In addition, the lexical items themselves are sometimes constructed to cleave as closely as possible to the target spoken language's morphology. For example, in Seeing Essential English (SEE1) a

code frequently used in U.S. deaf education, the sign for butterfly would be a compound of the individual signs BUTTER and FLY, while the American Sign Language (ASL) equivalent iconically resembles the insect referent. Many proponents of ASL consider the SEE1 approach, in which the primary object of semiotic relationship is the spoken language and not the referent, seriously flawed. However, this is precisely the desired semiotic relationship for educators who view the signed channel as a bridge to the target spoken/written language.

Total Communication was implemented in Nepal by the principal of Kathmandu's Naxal School for the Deaf, who frequently visits the United States in order to remain up to date on new approaches in d/Deaf education. However, this policy is grounded not only in the school's contacts with international d/Deaf educational pedagogy, but also in Nepali governmental policies for education. When the schools were founded, in order to qualify their students to take the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exam, it was necessary to claim that Nepali was the primary medium of instruction. The SLC, which is roughly equivalent to a high school diploma in the United States, is an important acquisition for d/Deaf graduates seeking gainful employment. Since the 1990 People's Movement, the constitutional stance toward language in education has changed. Though Nepali is still considered the "language of the nation," all "mother tongues" have also been considered national languages and may be used in schools. However, despite this official change, schools still primarily educate their students in Nepali (and alternatively, English). David Gellner reports, for example, that he knows of only one school in the Kathmandu Valley in which the primary language of education is Newari (or Nepal Bhasa), the mother tongue of the Valley's large Newari population (Gellner 2005). This environment encourages the schools to continue to frame NSL as Nepali in another modality.

This practice can be seen in the utterances transcribed below, an excerpt from a class 2 lesson at the Naxal School for the Deaf in Kathmandu. The written channel, at this grade level, primarily consists of a few key lexical items written on the blackboard, around which the lesson is based. The signed and oral communication is produced simultaneously; but, though the two modes largely map onto one another, this lamination is not perfect.

Transcript 2

English translation (In translating the teacher's utterances, when the spoken and signed channels differ I have translated the spoken. I have done so because the teacher has better control of this channel, and therefore it may better reflect the information she intends to communicate):

1. Teacher: (pointing to a picture of a cow) Do you all have this in your house?
2. Student: Yes.
3. Teacher: You have this in the house? No.
4. Teacher: City houses don't have a place for cows.
5. Student: Village.
6. Teacher: The village, yes. In the village each person's house has a cow.
7. Teacher: What does the cow give to us?
8. Student: Grass.
9. Teacher: Grass from the cow?
10. Student: Milk.
11. Teacher: Bravo!

Transcription: An English gloss of the signed channel appears in capitals, while the spoken Nepali channel is in italics. A blank space within an utterance indicates that the channel was not used. See this issue's online supplement for a Sutton SignWriting version of this transcript.

Teacher's spoken channel	Teacher's signed channel	Students' channel (all signed)
	(Indicating a picture of a cow)	
1. *Yo timiharu ko ghar maa chaa?*	1. THIS YOU-PLURAL PLURAL POSESSIVE HOUSE IN IS THIS?	
		2. YES
3. *Chha, ghar maa? Chhaina.*	3. YOU-ALL HOUSE THIS ISN'T.	
4. *Sahar ko ghar maa gai basne tau chhaina.*	4. CITY HOUSE IN MILK COW LIVE PLACE ISN'T.	
		5. VILLAGE
6. *Gau ho. Gau, gau aphno aphno ghar maa gai chha.*	6. VILLAGE GO, OWN OWN HOUSE COW IS.	
7. *Yo gai le haami, haami laai ke dinchha?*	7. IS THIS WE- WE TO WHAT GIVE THIS?	
		8. GRASS
9. *Gai le ghas ho?*		
		10. MILK
11. *Shabaash!*	THANK-YOU[12] YES.	

In line 2 of the transcript, the teacher signs "YOU-ALL PL." In this instance, by adding the plural postfix, the teacher is following spoken Nepali morphology, in which the pluralization of the pronoun takes the form of the postfix *haru*. In the signed channel however, the use of PL is redundant, as the form of the pronoun (sweeping the index finger across the front of the signing space rather than pointing to one location) has already encoded the pluralization. This kind of redundancy is characteristic of codes of signed communication that are based on a spoken language model and highlights the fact that the hearing teachers promote signing that follows spoken Nepali structures over the visual grammar possible in the signed channel (the potential of which they might be unaware).

At the same time, the pronoun used in the spoken Nepali channel, "*timi*", encodes social information about the relationship between the speaker and the addressee(s). Nepali has a fairly elaborated system of five different honorific pronouns, with which verb endings usually agree (though there are dialects of Nepali that do not inflect verb endings in this way). The teacher's use of *timi*, the familiar form of "you," is culturally appropriate in this context. If the children were producing spoken Nepali, they would asymmetrically return *tapaain*, the respectful form of "you," when addressing the teacher. NSL does not formally encode these differences in pronouns, though it is possible (if rare in actual signing practice) to encode two levels of respect/familiarity in verb endings. Hence, the linguistic and social information conveyed in the two channels differs and once again the teacher's signed output contains less information than the spoken.

Finally, in line 6 of the transcript, the teacher asks the students what the cow gives us, searching for the answer MILK. The formal properties of her question vary in the two channels, leading several students to misunderstand her question. The Nepali channel includes the grammatical marker *le*, an ergative construction that indicates the agent of an action (i.e., *gaai le*; "by the cow"). The spoken sentence also includes the postfix *laai*, which indicates to whom or to what an action was performed (*haami-laai*; "to us"). In the spoken Nepali channel it is quite clear that it's being asked what the cow gives to us, rather than the other way around.

In the teacher's signed channel this is much less clear. While she includes the sign TO, which represents the postfix *laai*, lexical items representing these kind of spoken grammatical markers are not generally introduced to children at this grade level. More typically, in signing practice that takes advantage of spatial grammatical possibilities (which most students use among themselves[13]), COW and WE would be set

up in signing space and then the sign TO-GIVE would move from the agent to the patient. As mentioned above, sign language linguists label this kind of construction an agreeing verb, in that movement through signing space marks the verb's arguments (Padden 1983). Hence, as the teacher performs the sign GIVE moving from her chest out, it is unsurprising that the first answer ventured to her question is "GRASS," as the student read this sign as suggesting that the item was given from the teacher to the cow. After responding critically to this response, the teacher is very pleased and congratulatory when one of the students, grasping the significance of the Nepali language morphology answers, "MILK." This example illustrates that while differences in the spatial orientation of a sign's movement function as minimal pairs in some styles of signing, it does not in the Nepali influenced signing controlled by the hearing teachers. Furthermore, it illustrates that instruction in school classes reinforces a reading of the signs that, relying on postfixes as grammatical markers, treats Nepali-based structures as correct and the spatial relationships that are used in other signing contexts as incorrect.

Linking Linguistic Form and Social Structure

d/Deaf institutions are a site not only for the production of language ideologies but sometimes also of their metasemiotic explication. This is because standard forms have power not only through their promotion as the favored means by which reference is to be accomplished but as a result of both their social indexicality and the ways in which they can be seen as iconic of the social groups that use them. However, as Webb Keane notes, the "social power of indexicals would seem to demand some further account of their social regimentation or at least coherence across discrete moments of intuition. For indexicality to function socially, the index as such must be made apparent, and it must be furnished with instructions" (Keane 2003:419). This work is necessary because, as Peircean semiotics makes clear, there is an unending chain of possible semiotic relationships between signs, objects, and interpretants (Peirce 1931). Therefore, as Judith Irvine suggests, it is important "not to assume that the 'likeness' of iconicity is apparent, even in the absence of any directions . . . iconicity without such directions—similarity without a guiding principle for detecting it—is unconstrained. There is no limit to what a discourse could be said to be like. Instead we have to pick out the likeness that we deem to be relevant, within some discursive practice and some historical moment" (Irvine 2005:74). Below I examine how the potentially "infinite reach" of semiotic possibility is narrowed within the context of d/Deaf institutions in Nepal (Bauman 2005:146).

Implicit Interdiscursivity

As mentioned above, this standardization project only focuses on reducing formal variation at the level of the lexicon. In both the schools and the associations, teachers do not explicitly direct students' attention to aspects of signing other than the lexical. At the same time, there are no explicit metasemiotic discourses concerning the ways in which these grammatical structures should be read as iconic of, or indexically linked to, distinct ideological positions about the nature of NSL. Rather, teachers in the schools communicate that NSL is Nepali in another modality primarily through the manner in which spoken and signed communication are presented in an overlapping fashion, as one code in two simultaneous channels; there is little metalinguistic discussion of this practice or its potential social significance.

For students to notice points of lamination and/or disconnect between modalities, they must be able to access both channels of communication. This requires some facility with lip-reading which, while no longer the primary means of instruction in the schools, still has a role in Total Communication (though lipreading does not permit complete access to the oral channel). While both codes may not be accessible

to students in the lower grades, for older students the simultaneous presentation of spoken, signed, and eventually written language can reinforce the school's dominant ideology that NSL is Nepali, while gaps in this lamination point to their differences which, in the teachers' style of signing, usually indicate that the signed channel is relatively impoverished.[14] By the same token, it is necessary to have some familiarity with the structure of spoken Nepali to be able to compare the differences between its grammar and the spatial grammatical constructions used in the Deaf associations, upon which claims that NSL is a distinct language are based.

This fact points to the role of interdiscursivity in reducing the indeterminacy of semiosis. As Asif Agha notes, "anyone who effectively engages in a given discursive encounter has participated in others before it and thus brings to the current encounter a biographically specific discursive history that, in many respects, shapes the individual's socialized ability to use and construe utterances (as well as footings, stances, identities, and relationships mediated by utterances) within the current encounter" (Agha 2005:1). In this way, a person's particular educational history and experiences with different codes come to bear on the ways that they use and interpret signs.

Explicit Entextualization

Though the associations and schools differ in their ideological positions concerning the nature of NSL in relation to spoken Nepali, both institutions work through very explicit metasemiotic commentary to frame the standardized lexical items in a way that can ground them in nationalist sentiment.[15] This effort reflects the necessity of maintaining governmental support for the activities of the d/Deaf institutions. While the d/Deaf schools must be accredited within the Nepali state governed school system, drawing on nationalistic symbols can make less threatening (and hence more successful) the Deaf associations' efforts to be recognized by the state as a distinct linguistic and cultural group. The use of such symbols also works to distinguish NSL and Nepali Deaf culture within the broad international Deaf networks from which each institution also draws support. But, as the links between the standard forms of NSL and Nepali nationalism are not inherent, various kinds of discursive "instructions" are needed to ensure that these connections are noticed and reinforced.

For example, the standard sign MOTHER takes the form of a crooked finger at the side of the nose. This is often read as an iconic image of a nose ring, which in turn can be indexically linked to the social group primarily associated with that particular style of jewelry: upper-caste Hindu. However, Deaf students who come from a variety of social backgrounds (including Buddhist or low-caste) may, and often do, interpret the social significance of the standard signs differently. A good portion of the population of Deaf signers in Nepal come from social groups, such as the Newaris or Sherpas, in which women do not (indeed, in some cases must not) wear nose rings. Someone growing up in such a social group need not automatically read that particular connection in the standardized sign MOTHER. Instead, without direction such a student may assume that the sign simply points to the nose and take this as arbitrary, or may furnish his or her own idiosyncratic or culturally informed indexical explanation for this association. For example, Irene Taylor reports that a Deaf Sherpa from the Solo Khumbu region, who studied in a d/Deaf school before the sign language posters had been produced, thought nothing of referring to his mother with the standard sign that could be read as connoting "Hindu-ness." However, this caused affront to the family who felt he was becoming "Hinduized" and less Sherpa (Taylor 1997).

To make such links more salient, Mr. Pratigya Shakya, a Deaf Nepali artist, has created a series of NSL posters that visually highlight particular kinds of semiotic connections between the sign forms and their referents. In so doing, his representation of the sign MOTHER elaborates only one possible reading of the potential iconic and indexical features that might be locatable in the sign. It shows a Hindu mother,

Figure 2
MOTHER (आमा / माता) as it appears in the Nepali Sign Language Dictionary and written using Sutton SignWriting—see the Appendix for a Key.

identified by her dress (bright red shirt rather than the maroon associated with rural Buddhist groups—a nonlinguistic sign that may be widely accessible to the Deaf), both performing and embodying the sign. The elaboration of this association in the poster, through the depiction of the mother's clothing, is one of the ways that schools and associations attempt to direct attention to this particular indexical link.

Interinstitutional Experience

As a result of the fact that efforts to reduce variation in both the formal properties of NSL and broader semiotic interpretation of those forms are restricted to the level of the lexicon, the formal and ideological variation across institutional contexts can coexist within a single standardization project. However, it is important to account for the fact that Deaf Nepalis move across these institutional contexts. I have identified two primary ways in which this affects the standardization project. First, those students who graduate from the d/Deaf schools and subsequently enter the Deaf social life in the associations are often able to control a wide range of forms—including written Nepali, signing in Nepali grammatical order, and NSL that takes advantage of spatial grammar. Such graduates often code-switch between these styles of signing when addressing hearing or Deaf interlocutors. In association classes that include both hearing and Deaf students, the Deaf instructors typically code-switch between signing that is relatively more or less influenced by spoken Nepali grammar in addressing different interlocutors.

For example, in a 2004 class that I observed, the instructor asked a hearing participant for his name, signing "YOU-POSSESIVE NAME WHAT IS?" This construction mapped perfectly onto the corresponding sentence in spoken Nepali, "*Tapaai-ko naam ke ho*?" He then asked the same question of a Deaf participant. In doing so, he used only one sign, "NAME." Nonmanual grammatical markers marked the addressee (through eye gaze) and the fact he was asking a question (through brow furrow and head tilt). This kind of code-switching may have far-reaching consequences. In particular, as such former graduates often train new hearing teachers for the d/Deaf schools in NSL, this practice reinforces the different signing styles associated with each institution.

Second, school graduates, who have also been exposed to different ideological positions concerning NSL, often become members of the institutional bodies that create standard signs and promote particular readings of their semiotic motivations. Through their actions, the covert ideological and grammatical variation in the inter-

institutional project to standardize NSL can come to bear on the selection of stand-ard lexical items and the processes by which the "metasemiotic regimentation" (Parmentier 1993:360) of their social indexicality and iconization (Irvine and Gal 2000) is attempted. Even when participants share this kind of background however, the semiotic processes by which the linguistic and social are linked can be subject to debate. I now return to the etymology workshop I mentioned at the beginning of this article, as it illustrates the manner in which members of the Deaf associations draw on their inter-institutional interdiscursive experience in efforts to make particular rep-resentations of the language "stick" (Gal 1998:329).

The aforementioned workshop was convened because leaders in the Deaf associa-tions decided that it was important to gauge participants' interpretations of the semiotic motivations of the formal properties of the standardized signs. When more than one such interpretation was offered, the leaders declared one correct. However, there were some significant exceptions to this outcome. For example, at one point during the Friday seminar, the teacher leading the discussion asked, "FRIDAY WHAT?" meaning, "What is the motivation for the sign for Friday?" Several people volunteered suggestions, and these were initially rejected out of hand. Then the teacher supplied the correct answer as the institution saw it: that the sign for Friday is motivated by an iconic similarity to another sign, CALL. This, he explained, is because it is on Fridays that the greatest number of students comes to socialize with Deaf friends.

Indeed, Friday afternoons are always the busiest days at the Deaf associations in Kathmandu. Throughout the week, those members who are unemployed spend their days in the association, chatting and participating in sign language lessons, playing carom or board games, and helping with association projects (such making as banners or buttons for upcoming celebrations or Deaf pride marches). Those who are employed by the Deaf associations are also daily fixtures, making tea, preparing for teaching stints in remote villages, and/or planning and working on future and ongoing projects. Those Deaf who are elsewhere employed, who live on the outskirts of the Valley, or who are still enrolled in the d/Deaf schools, however, are not able to socialize at the associations every day. But on Friday afternoons, when many are able to leave work early, almost every member is there. On such days, all the seats that ring the main social rooms are filled, and people stand chatting in the middle of the room, or spill out into the courtyard, stand by the busy street, and fill the surrounding tea shops.
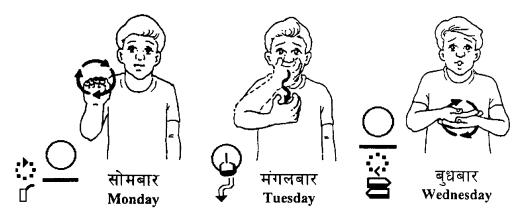
The association between the signs FRIDAY and CALL therefore highlights a central feature of Deaf life in Kathmandu, the social significance of Fridays, the day of the week when most Deaf cultural activities take place. However, before the leader of the workshop could transition to a different sign, another member spoke up, saying that he thought the sign FRIDAY was motivated by the sign for the god Krishna, an iconic image of the flute the god is often portrayed as playing. While all other suggestions had been routinely rejected, at this the teacher paused, admitted that he hadn't heard that interpretation, and finally agreed to count both as correct.

Why was this interpretation validated along with that initially promoted by the session leader? In large part, I argue, because of its ideological resonance. Not only does its invocation of a Hindu god align the sign with nationalist sentiment, but it also draws on an analogue with spoken Nepali, in the following fashion: According to Hindu astrology a particular deity is associated with each day of the week. Many of the Nepali language names for days of the week, including *Sombaar* (Monday), *Mangalbaar* (Tuesday), *Budhabaar* (Wednesday), *Shukrabaar* (Friday), and *Shanibaar* (Sunday) are made up of the name of a deity followed by *baar* (day).

The standard NSL signs for these days of the week can be linked to these Nepali words through varying, and sometimes quite complicated, semiotic processes. For example, the sign MONDAY relates to the word *Sombaar* through its use of intializa-tion: the handshape for the sign is that used in the Devanagari script based finger-spelling system to represent the first letter in the written Nepali word. The sign

Figures 3 and 4
CALL (बोलाउनु) and KRISHNA (कृष्ण) as they appear in the Nepali Sign Language Dictionary and written using Sutton SignWriting—see the Appendix for a Key.

Figures 5 and 6 and 7
MONDAY (सोमबार) TUESDAY (मंगलबार) and WEDNESDAY (बुधबार) as they appear in the Nepali Sign Language Dictionary and written using Sutton SignWriting—see the Appendix for a Key.

TUESDAY was designed to resemble an elephant's trunk and in so doing to invoke Ganesh, a Hindu god with an elephant's head. This is because, though the word *Mangal* in *Mangalbaar* refers to a different god, Ganesh is often referred to as "*Mangal Murti*" or the auspicious deity. In this case, the relationship of form of the sign to Ganesh is mediated by the iconic similarity of two spoken Nepali words. The sign for Wednesday, or *Budhabaar*, is similar—the Nepali word refers to the god *Budhavaar*, who has nothing in particular to do with the Buddha. However, the NSL sign takes the form of cupped hands in a Buddhist meditation pose. This is likely because of the similarity of the sounds and spellings of the two Nepali words.

Like the other Nepali words mentioned above, the word for Friday, *Shukrabaar*, is derived from the name of a Hindu god: *Shukra*, a teacher of the *asuras* (or antigods). Otherwise there is no direct connection between *Shukra* and Krishna. However, the member's suggestion in the transcript above is based on an iconic relationship between the standard signs FRIDAY and KRISHNA. The handshape and movement of the signs are the same, the forms of the signs differing only in orientation and location. Hence, in this case the argument that the sign FRIDAY might be derived from the sign KRISHNA is backed by two kinds of iconic relationships: internal iconic

similarity between the two signs on the one hand, and diagrammic iconicity with the general Nepali pattern of linking days of the week with Hindu gods on the other.

I suggest that the leader of the workshop accepted this alternate motivation for the sign FRIDAY because it not only resonated with attempts by leaders of the Deaf associations to highlight semiotic links between the NSL signs and Nepali nationalism but also recalled attempts within the d/Deaf school to link NSL to the spoken Nepali language. These associations were only available to both the individual who offered them and workshop's leader because each had encountered Deaf social networks while young enough to enter the d/Deaf school, where they were exposed to Nepali, Nepali influenced signing, and the school's ideological position concerning the relationship between these codes. Subsequently having entered the Deaf associations, where leaders of the standardization project work frame NSL as a distinct language while still highlighting connections between standard forms and nationalist sentiment, they are well positioned to notice bivalent interpretations of the semiotic motivations for the standard forms that accommodate the coexistence of the different ideological positions adopted by each institution. Thus, while Kathryn Woolard has demonstrated through her discussion of bivalency that particular linguistic forms need not be attributed to a single code, but can participate simultaneously in different linguistic and cultural systems (Woolard 1998b), this case shows that particular interpretations of these forms' motivations can simultaneously participate in different ideological frameworks. In this respect, just as the project to standardize NSL accommodates a range of formal variation at levels beyond the lexicon, efforts to standardize the wider semiotic interpretations of those lexical forms similarly accommodate the coexistence of the distinct ideological positions adopted by each institution.

Conclusion

In this article I outlined the manner in which several, potentially mutually exclusive, ideological positions coexist within a single standardization project, through a consideration of how the formal and ideological aspects of this project interact within and across institutional contexts. As Michael Silverstein has argued, the formal properties of some aspects of language make them more available to conscious awareness and therefore more subject to metalinguistic and metasemiotic commentary such as that involved in standardization projects (Silverstein 1981). In particular, he suggests that segmentable features such as words are most available to speakers' awareness. In addition, it is a common (and related) ideological position toward languages to view them as no more than a collection of words, a perspective that can also encourage a focus on lexical items in some standardizing projects, such as that described above. It is perhaps unsurprising therefore, that while the institutional ideological positions that could potentially conflict are grounded in the grammatical features of the language that have been less subject to conscious manipulation and standardization processes, the more explicit ideological positions towards NSL that are shared across institutional contexts are grounded in the semiotic interpretation of the standardized lexical items.

Standardization projects vary, from one another and internally, in both the levels of linguistic form to which they attend and the ways in which they work to link those forms to social structures. While Irvine and Gal have identified the important semiotic processes by which these ideological links are made (Irvine and Gal 2000), in this article I have argued that, given that individuals can make and rationalize such semiotic connections in a potentially infinite number of ways, any definition of language standardization must include the (inter)discursive processes by which such projects attempt to reduce variation not only in the formal properties of language but also in the wider semiotic interpretations of these forms. At the same time, because most people participate in a range of institutional contexts in their life histories, they can therefore be exposed to a variety of potentially conflicting, competing, or coexisting ways of linking the linguistic and the social. The means by which actors, in

a wide range of linguistic and social contexts, negotiate and reconcile these differ-
ences deserve careful exploration. As this article's final example suggests, such inter-
discursive experience can result in individuals' awareness of, and ability to
manipulate, different ideological positions towards a language. This ability can be a
key to the social authority that can be derived from the ability to create and reinforce
particular metasemiotic discourses.

Notes

   1. In this article I follow the widespread convention of writing the word deaf (lowercase) to
indicate the inability to hear and Deaf (with a capital D) to indicate identification as a member
of a signing community. In cases in which I refer to a group or situation in which both models
of d/Deafness are prominent, I use mixed case (d/Deaf). While this convention for writing the
terms is not common in Nepal, the social distinctions it indexes are important in this context.
   2. English glosses of NSL signs appear in throughout the article in capital letters.
   3. The fact that sign languages are generally unwritten (and have sometimes even been
considered unwritable) is not a necessary condition but the result of pervasive ideologies about
the nature of writing and of language more broadly (Hoffmann 2008).
   4. I do not suggest however, that other levels of linguistic form cannot be subject to
metalinguistic awareness without literacy (see Collins and Blot 2003 for examples).
   5. Though there have been disagreements between and within the different institutions
involved in the project to standardize NSL, I refer to this as a single project because of the great
efforts put forth by all involved to make it so. The schools and associations work hard to ensure
that they use the same standard lexicon because of a strong belief shared by these institutions
that diversity in signing practice is detrimental to the unification and education of the d/Deaf.
The one exception has been the development of some technical science and math terms used in
upper grades, constructed by the teachers in the school and codified in the only non-Deaf
association sanctioned dictionary.
   6. "Shared bodies of commonsense notions of the nature of language in the world" (Rumsey
1990:346).
   7. I do not wish to imply that the term *Hindu* refers to a monolithic religious practice or
social identity.
   8. There is at least one notable exception to this general rule. The Sirjana School for the Deaf
in Pokhara is administered by the Gandaki Association for the Deaf and staffed largely with
Deaf teachers.
   9. An Indo-European language, Nepali is closely related to Hindi and Pahari, primarily
written using the Devanagari script. Like other Indo-European languages, it is agglutinative. It
is also inflectional. It is a head-final language with a subject-object-verb (SOV) word order in
which words are typically modified with postpositions rather than prepositions. While many
mutually intelligible varieties of Nepali exist throughout the country, the variety of Nepali that
appears in printed educational materials is derived primarily from the speech of the Brahman
and Chetri social groups in Central Nepal (Acharya 1991:6).
   10. In considering the fact that many Deaf individuals in Nepal are exposed to a variety of
ways of signing, some of which are highly influenced by spoken and written Nepali, in this
article I diverge from linguistic descriptions of sign languages that take pains to emphasize
their independence from the spoken languages with which they are in contact. This position
has often been taken by researchers attempting to stress the fact that sign languages are
complete linguistic systems, in the face of widely held ideologies that have considered sign
languages generally to be manual forms of spoken languages. However, by restricting their

studies to the linguistic output of Deaf individuals exposed to sign language from birth by Deaf parents, such descriptions fail to represent the largest portion of Deaf signers, most of whom are born to hearing parents and often undergo a long period of time during which they are exposed to spoken language influenced signing (or full-blown oralism) in schools (Lucas and Valli 1989).

As a result, the signing of many Deaf individuals is influenced by contact with spoken and written languages, including the mouthing of words, fingerspelling, and the ability to switch between signing in spoken language word order and signing that employs visual grammatical constructions. Ignoring this variation can lead to the erasure of the existence of these different forms of signing, as they may all be referred to in practice and in the literature by a single label. It is equally problematic to erase these distinctions as it is to assert an overly strict linguistic boundary that precludes contact between signed and spoken languages. Therefore, in this article I have attempted to produce a more fine-grained consideration of the linguistic variation encompassed within the term Nepali Sign Language, in order to avoid simplifying this complex sociolinguistic context.

11. See Lowenbraum, Appelman, and Callahan (1980) for a description of the Total Communication philosophy.

12. The teacher may have intended to sign CONGRATULATIONS rather than THANK-YOU. These signs are similar in form.

13. As Samuel Supalla has observed elsewhere, Deaf children in the Naxal school whose teachers use only Nepali influenced signing, use spatial grammatical constructions among themselves. That is, they are able to access the spatial grammatical potential in the signs to which they are exposed, even without prior exposure to this kind of signing practice. Further research is required to explain this interesting phenomenon (Supalla 1990).

14. This can be compared to the manner in which the differences between written and spoken language are frequently interpreted to mean that written is a superior channel of communication (and is typically the version of the language considered the most standard), though they are considered instances of the same language.

15. This does not preclude Deaf association sanctioned images of Nepali Deaf life that represent the social diversity of Deaf Nepalis.

References

Acharya, Jayaraj
  1991 A Descriptive Grammar of Nepali and an Analyzed Corpus. Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press.
Agha, Asif
  2005 Semiosis Across Encounters. Journal of Linguistic Anthropology 15(1):1–15.
Bauman, Richard
  2005 Commentary: Indirect Indexicality, Identity, Performance: Dialogic Observations. Journal of Linguistic Anthropology 15(1):145–150.
Bechter, Frank
  2008 The Deaf Convert Culture and its Lessons for Deaf Theory. *In* Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking. H-Dirkson Bauman ed. Pp. 60–82. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
Burghart, Richard
  1984 The Formation of the Concept of the Nation-State in Nepal. Journal of Asian Studies 44(1):101–125.
Ellingson, Ter
  1991 The Nepal Constitution of 1990: Preliminary Considerations. Himalayan Research Bulletin 11:1–3.
Emmorey, Karen
  2002 Language, Cognition, and the Brain: Insights from Sign Language Research. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
Gal, Susan
  1998 Multiplicity and Contention Among Language Ideologies: A Commentary. *In* Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory. Bambi Schieffelin, Kathryn Woolard, and Paul Kroskrity, eds. Pp. 317–331. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Gellner, David
  2005 Ethnic Rights and Politics in Nepal. Himalayan Journal of Sociology and Anthropology 2L:1–17.

Guneratne, Arjun
    1998 Modernization, the State, and the Construction of a Tharu Identity in Nepal. The Journal
        of Asian Studies 57(3):749–773.
Haugen, Einar
    1996 Dialect, Language, Nation. American Anthropologist 68(4):922–935.
Hoffmann, Erika
    2008 Standardization Beyond Form: Ideologies, Institutions, and the Semiotics of Nepali Sign
        Language. Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, The University of Michigan.
Irvine, Judith
    2005 Knots and Tears in the Interdiscursive Fabric: A Commentary. Journal of Linguistic
        Anthropology 15(1):72–80.
Irvine, Judith and Susan Gal
    2000 Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation. *In* Regimes of Language: Ideologies,
        Polities, and Identities. Paul Kroskrity, ed. Pp. 35–84. Santa Fe, NM: School of American
        Research Press.
Keane, Webb
    2003 Semiotics and the Social Analysis of Material Things. Language and Communication
        23(3–4):409–425.
Kegl, Judith, Ann Senghas, and Marie Coppola
    1999 Creation Through Contact: Sign Language Emergence and Sign Language Change in
        Nicaragua. *In* Comparative Grammatical Change: The Intersection of Language Acquisi-
        tion, Creole Genesis, and Diachronic Syntax. Michel DeGraff, ed. Pp. 179–237. Cambridge,
        MA: MIT.
Lowenbraum, Sheila, Karen Appelman, and Judith Callahan
    1980 Teaching the Hearing Impaired through Total Communication. Columbus, OH: Charles
        E. Merrill.
Lucas, Ceil and Clayon Valli
    1989 Language Contact in the American Deaf Community. *In* The Sociolinguistics of the Deaf
        Community. Ceil Lucas, ed. Pp. 11–40. Washington D.C.: Gallaudet University Press.
Milroy, James and Lesley Milroy
    1999 Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English. London: Routledge.
Milroy, James
    2000 Language Ideologies and the Consequences of Standardization. Journal of Sociolinguis-
        tics 5(4):530–550.
Monaghan, Leila
    2003 A World's Eye View: Deaf Cultures in Global Perspective. *In* Many Ways to Be Deaf:
        International Variation in Deaf Communities. Leila Monaghan, Constanze Schmaling,
        Karen Nakamura, and Graham Turner, eds. Pp. 1–24. Washington D.C.: Gallaudet Uni-
        versity Press.
Monaghan, Leila, Constanze Schmaling, Karen Nakamura, and Graham Turner
    2003 Many Ways to Be Deaf: International Variation in Deaf Communities. Washington D.C.:
        Gallaudet University Press.
Nover, Steve
    1995 Politics and Language: American Sign Language and English in Deaf Education. *In*
        Sociolinguistics in Deaf Communities Volume 1. Ceil Lucas, ed. Pp. 109–163. Washington
        D.C.: Gallaudet University Press.
Padden, Carole
    1983 Interaction of Morphology and Syntax in American Sign Language. Ph.D. dissertation.
        Department of Linguistics, University of California, San Diego.
Parmentier, Richard
    1993 The Semiotic Regimentation of Social Life. Semiotica 95:357–395.
Peirce, Charles Saunders
    1931 Collected Papers. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Ramsey, Claire
    1989 Language Planning in Deaf Education. *In* the Sociolinguistics of the Deaf Community.
        Ceil Lucas, ed. Pp. 123–146. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
Rumsey, Alan
    1990 Wording, Meaning, and Linguistic Ideology. American Anthropologist 91(2):346–
        361.
Schieffelin, Bambi, Kathryn Woolard, and Paul Kroskrity
    1998 Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Silverstein, Michael
    1981 The Limits of Awareness. Sociolinguistics Working Paper No. 84. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
    1993 Metapragmatic Discourse and Metapragmatic Function. *In* Reflexive Language: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics. John Lucy, ed. Pp. 33–58. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
Skinner, Debra and Dorothy Holland
    1996 Schools and the Cultural Production of the Educated Person in a Nepalese Hill Community. *In* The Cultural Production of the Educated Person. Bradley Levinson, Douglas Foley, and Dorothy Holland, eds. Pp. 273–300. Albany: State University of New York Press.
Talmy, Leonard
    2003 The Representation of Spatial Structure in Spoken and Signed Language. *In* Perspectives on Classifier Constructions. Karen Emmorey, ed. Pp. 169–196. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
Taylor, Irene
    1997 Buddhas in Disguise: Deaf People in Nepal. San Diego, CA: Dawnsign Press.
Woolard, Kathryn
    1998a Language Ideology as a Field of Inquiry. *In* Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory. Bambi Schieffelin, Kathryn Woolard, and Paul Kroskrity, eds. Pp. 3–47. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
    1998b Simultaneity and Bivalency and Strategies in Bilingualism. Journal of Linguistic Anthropology 8(1):3–29.
Wrigley, Owen
    1996 The Politics of Deafness. Gallaudet University Press: Washington D.C.

Appendix: Sutton SignWriting Key

Below I provide the basic information needed to read the Sutton SignWriting representations of the Nepali Sign Language signs in this article. A more detailed key accompanies the full transcripts found on this issue's online supplement. For a complete guide to reading and writing Sutton SignWriting, please visit: http://www.signwriting.org/lessons/lessonsw/lessonsweb.html

1. **Viewpoint**: The signs in this article are written from the receptive standpoint.
2. **Color coding**: Dark coloring indicates the back of the hand, while light coloring indicates the palm.

The back of the hand faces the viewer.

The palm of the hand faces the viewer.

The side of the hand faces the viewer.

3. **Vertical and horizontal planes**: When the lines indicating the fingers connect directly to the hand (as above), this indicates that the hand is viewed from the vertical plane. When there is a gap between the fingers and the body of the hand (as below) the hand is viewed from the horizontal plane.
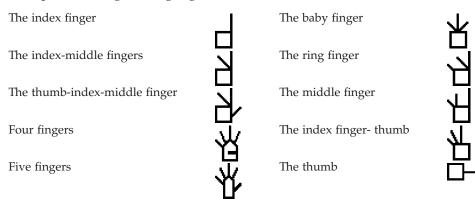
The back of the hand as seen from above.
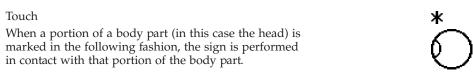
The palm of the hand as seen from above.

The side of the hand as seen from above.

4. **Handshape**: There are 10 basic handshapes, from which any position the hand might take can be derived. For a full inventory of currently used handshapes (derived from a wide range of sign languages) please see: http://www.signwriting.org/lessons/lessonsw/025%20Hands.html

The index finger

The index-middle fingers

The thumb-index-middle finger

Four fingers

Five fingers

The baby finger

The ring finger
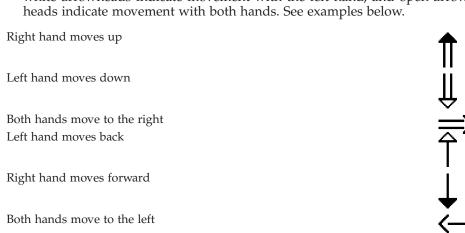
The middle finger

The index finger- thumb

The thumb

5. **Contact**: When hands come into contact with one another or another part of the body, the nature of this contact is marked in the following way:

Touch
When a portion of a body part (in this case the head) is marked in the following fashion, the sign is performed in contact with that portion of the body part.

6. **Finger movement**: Movements of the fingers are marked in the following way:

Middle finger joint closes
Middle finger joint opens
Knuckle joint closes
Knuckle joint opens

7. **Straight movement**: Arrows with a double stem indicate movement on a vertical plane while arrows with a single stem indicate movement on a horizontal plane. Black arrowheads indicate movement by the right hand, white arrowheads indicate movement with the left hand, and open arrowheads indicate movement with both hands. See examples below.

Right hand moves up

Left hand moves down

Both hands move to the right
Left hand moves back

Right hand moves forward

Both hands move to the left

8. **Curved movement**: The principles listed above apply.

9. **Circular movement**:

Right hand circles to the left

Right hand circles forward

Oberlin College
King 305
10 North Professor Street
Oberlin, OH 44074
Erika.hoffmann@oberlin.edu
Ehoffmanndilloway@gmail.com