

**Finnish and Irish Sign Languages:  
An egalitarian analysis of language  
policies and their effects.**

John Bosco Conama, M.Litt (TCD), BA.

The thesis is submitted to University College Dublin for the degree of PhD in the  
College of Human Sciences.

January 2010.

Equality Studies Centre, School of Social Justice

Head of School: John Baker

Supervisor: Professor Kathleen Lynch.

## **Acknowledgement**

I would like to thank a number of people who have encouraged me to write this thesis; foremost, I must thank my wife, Audrey, for her patience, support and forbearance whilst I have spent years working on it and had her listening to me and discussing the issues arisen in this research with me.

I would like to acknowledge the huge debt I owe to Professor Kathleen Lynch. I have learnt much under her supervision and she provided advice, critique, guidance, insights and inspirations. I also would like to thank the staff, students and researchers at the Equality Studies Centre, in particular the roundtable sessions down the years. The staff and students at the Centre for Deaf Studies, Trinity College Dublin should be mentioned here as they provided invaluable support.

More importantly, the thesis would not be possible without the cooperation and willingness of interviewees and agencies in both countries, Finland and Ireland. I am also indebted to the Deaf-led organisations in both countries: Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD) and the Irish Deaf Society (IDS) as they provided necessary materials and support for this work. Ms. Kaisa Alanne proved a very valuable contact in Finland and through her; I was able to contact key stakeholders there. Regular contact and discussion with academics in the Deaf Studies field proved very beneficial.

My apologies if I have inadvertently omitted anyone to whom acknowledgement is due. To all the above individuals, and to several colleagues whose names I cannot continue listing and who have assisted one way or another, especially in challenging me with alternative views, I feel very much indebted.

The thesis was made possible by the scholarship scheme under the National Disability Authority and the career break granted by the Office of the Revenue Commissioners. The Disability Support Service in UCD ensured the provision of Irish Sign Language / English interpreters at the roundtable sessions, meetings and courses. Indeed, these support enabled me to complete this research.

John Bosco Conama  
September 2009

## ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to advance academic understanding of what equality of condition (Baker, *et al*, 2004) would mean for Deaf people in relation to the recognition of signed language in both education and access to information in particular. It set out to test the hypothesis that the social model of disability is necessary but not sufficient for realising equality of condition for Deaf people because it does not take sufficient account of the importance of either culture or language to Deaf people. Deaf communities identify the status of their signed languages as the indicators of their social standings therefore egalitarian measures must be intertwined with the status of signed languages (Lane *et al* 1996, Ladd, 2003, Batterbury *et al*, 2007, Bauman, 2008, Emery 2009)

To achieve its goals, a comparative study of signed language policies and practices in both Finland and Ireland was undertaken, two countries that are seen to be more advanced (Finland) and less advanced (Ireland) in terms of the equality of condition for Deaf people. The goal was to establish if Finland had actually moved towards equality of condition by comparison with Ireland with respect to the education and public information access of Deaf people.

The research process involved the compilation of a range of data including the analysis of: (a) the general political, social and economic contexts of both countries, (b) the wider legislative contexts affecting languages in both countries, (c) the specific language policy contexts of both countries, (d) short study visits to Finland and similar visits to institutions in Ireland and (e) interview data from 29 people (14 Irish people and 15 Finnish people, of which 3 Irish and 7 of Finnish respondents are Deaf).

The study concludes that in terms of language policy on sign languages, at least on paper, Finland appears to be more advanced than Ireland. However, on the ground, the attitudes and responses to the language policy measures were very similar. Underlying assumptions that signed languages are a compensatory tool often influences the attitudes and responses. Hence, the signed languages in Finland and Ireland are subjected to economic considerations (availability of resources) and political prioritisation (depending on goodwill) rather than legislative enforcement. As a consequence, those Deaf people who regard signed languages as their first language; do not enjoy the level of equality experienced by the majority society.

This study proposes that a Deafhood framework should be applied to guide the language policy orientation in order to achieve the equality of condition for the Irish Deaf community. The concept of Deafhood was first termed by Ladd (2003) though its practices and norms are used for decades.

# Prologue

## Positioning myself in the thesis

This prologue outlines the background information which locates me in the thesis and it also includes the language issues arising from translating from Irish Sign Language to written English.

I come from a farming family in West Roscommon and, as there was no history of deafness in my family, my deafness was a mystery to my parents. Following the audiological test process in St. Mary's, of which I do not have any memory, I was referred to a school for Deaf boys in Beechpark in South Dublin at almost four years old. Interestingly, I learned much later from my aunt that during this process, she and my mother were advised not to learn or pass on sign language to me. My aunt recalled how bewildered they were at this advice but given the conservative cultural norms in the late 1960s, the general tendency was not to question the professional wisdom. As result of this advice, my family never learned, nor were they encouraged to learn, sign language.

Despite this, I do recall on many occasions that my siblings and I developed home-based signs but they were limited to superficial conversation. These signs were sufficient for a very young boy but became insufficient in later years when we became older. As a consequence, my family members and I struggled to understand each other and communication ended frequently in frustration on both sides; I felt the most of burnt. We resorted to writing as a resort for vital communication or specific instructions. On a number of occasions, my father seemed to ignore the conventional wisdom and asked me to teach him a few signs. However, I refused as I was indoctrinated for years that signing was inferior. Of course, in hindsight, I wondered how wise he was or how desperate he was to communicate.

Within this context, I arrived at the school with no functional language apart from unintelligible home-based signs. This school, run by the Daughters of the Cross nuns, was strictly oralist<sup>1</sup> and any use of signing would be met with harsh physical punishment<sup>2</sup>. Despite the fears of being punished, and the absence of role models played by Deaf signing adults, we developed our own signing system in some kind of underground activities. On reminiscence, we realised that despite our innocent years and years of immersing ourselves in the oral education, the signing was basically sophisticated to name our worldviews and often done in discrete ways. On the positive side, this school facilitated the cluster of young peer Deaf boys with whom I developed solidarity and relationships. As part of this development, I began to develop a strong affinity for signed language and Deaf community.

---

<sup>1</sup> Oralist refers to an adjective which describes an institution or a person who champions the oralist philosophy that forbids the use of signing.

<sup>2</sup> The author is disappointed but not surprised to see the continual denial by the religious order in question regarding the punishments when this issue was investigated by the Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse (Ryan Report, 2009 chapter 16, 557-560 <http://www.childabusecommission.com/rpt/pdfs/CICA-VOL2-16.PDF>).

As Wrigley (1996) observes, this clustering of young Deaf children into a single location had brought unforeseen and completely unintended consequences – an increased hostility to oralism while championing signed languages. Ladd (2003) describes such incidents as one of ‘1,001 victories’.

At ten years of age, I was transferred to a different school for Deaf boys in North Dublin. This school, St. Joseph’s, was oralist but was less strict than the former school. It was run by the Christian Brothers. The less strict attitude towards signed language in that school was sometimes said to be reflective of the working class nature of the Brothers; they were seen to be less focused on middle class ambitions, at least for Deaf boys, and this involved oralism (Crean 1997). However, for many boys, some of whom are friends of mine, the experience at St. Joseph’s was horrendous as they have testified in the Ryan Report (2009). Out of respect for them, and while not wishing to trivialise their experiences, my experience there was not as difficult as theirs although it was a period of continued frustration. Education there tended to be patronising and involved a lot of spoon-feeding. The fact that the school was classified as a National (primary) school reflected a widespread view in society that Deaf children only needed primary education (although the school did Leaving Certificate subjects). No real free thinking or motivation for further learning or debate was encouraged. I suppose it was the norm for other schools across the country but when one is told constantly that we were destined for bottle washing as a career, it can be demoralising and oppressive.

Additionally, I experienced and witnessed how policies, perceived or actual, can degrade signed languages despite obvious evidence that signed languages were widely used by the boys there. Since I was not accomplished in lip-reading and my residual hearing level was not sufficient to hear, I witnessed how petty policies on the basis of ability to read lips and residual hearings shaped the expectations of boys, even heightened their artificial sense of superiority. For example, boys with perceived ability to read lips and talk properly were often selected to show how they were taught in front of potential parents<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, these boys were placed in higher echelons of internal streaming when it came to the organisation of the school. In my case, we, in a group of profoundly deaf boys were placed in ‘Group 4’<sup>4</sup> while the partially deaf boys were placed in other groups. I recall on one occasion that when it was questioned as to why we were grouped in a particular way, the answer was that it was based on academic ability. Ironically, we in Group 4 came out on top academically.

Due to the continual frustration and struggle to locate my identity during my late teenage years, I left the school without finishing the Leaving Certificate. For the first few years after leaving school, I worked in several areas ranging from coal delivery, building labouring to factory assembly worker in Galway and Roscommon. During that period, I was actively involved in the local Deaf community and national youth affairs. An invitation by the Irish Deaf Society to represent them at a youth camp for young Deaf activists in Belgium definitely opened my eyes; other Deaf Europeans were more confident and talked about their aspirations that I would never dream of before then.

---

<sup>3</sup> This is an exact replica what the organisers of Milan conference in 1880 did to convince the audience.

<sup>4</sup> Funny enough, Group 4 was actually the name of a security company that was high prolific in early 1980s by the advertisements and fleets of vans driving around. It gave us a sense of pride for being associated with the namesake!

At the same time, my mother pleaded with me to return to education and try Leaving Certificate. I went through an adult education process and it was a massive rude awakening for me. Teachers in the adult education programme told me that my level of English was appalling despite being told for years at St. Joseph's that my English was sufficient. This was the first realisation of how language policies and expectations can shape individuals. After completing the Leaving Certificate I subsequently passed the civil service entrance examination and entered the civil service.

While I was in the Revenue Commissioners, I took the advantage of availing of the Refund the Fees scheme which refunded the fees for academic or training courses once one successfully passed the courses. Through this, I completed the BA degree in social policy and economics. At that time, the experience of doing the degree was not something I could have recommended to any Deaf person. Interpretation was not always available and note taking techniques were rudimentary. During that time, I wrote a letter to the Dean of Undergraduates asking if it is possible to be assessed in my own language and the answer was, unsurprisingly, a refusal. I did not battle on and instead took a focus on my studies. From there, I successfully completed my masters' degree on social policy in Trinity College Dublin.

Throughout my adult life, I was and am still actively involved in shaping or resisting language policies that affect the status of Irish Sign Language (ISL). I was actively involved in the campaign for having ISL officially recognised and ensuring language policies, ranging from local to the national institutional level, are inclusive.

Irish language policies, notably their failure to grant full recognition to ISL and its related culture, has shaped me as an individual. Spoken and signed languages operate out of different levels of respect and recognition. Throughout my life, even so to this day, signed languages are always regarded as a poor relation to spoken languages. For me, language policies, regardless of their form, were always a source of inequality for Deaf communities. Consequently I was interested in understanding how inequalities affect Deaf people and how they can be addressed.

Language wise, Irish Sign Language is my first and foremost language and written English is my second language. Readers are advised to note that I did not have an adequate process of language acquisition that established a base for learning subsequent languages. My language acquisition was somewhat a late or delayed one but the completion of this thesis can be regarded as one of '1,001' victories as described by Ladd (2003).

Thus, diverse linguistic styles and approaches used in this thesis are bound to be noticeable throughout the thesis. They may be a result of my 'hybrid' approach; it is evident that ISL influences my style of writing. For example, some statements may be regarded as too blunt by readers. But often they are based on a literal translation from ISL which is a more direct language than English. They are reflections or descriptions as seen from a Deaf perspective. Direct communication is a

common feature of signed languages<sup>5</sup> because signed languages are based on a visual modality<sup>6</sup>. Readers should take this into account.

---

<sup>5</sup>The English language contains many euphemisms and signed languages are noticeably less prolific in this regard.

<sup>6</sup>While, cultural differences between spoken and signed languages can lead to misunderstanding and developing misconceptions, there is debate on this subject.. Goss (2003) outlines the different perspectives on the bluntness of signed languages as seen by non-signers. Metzger and Bahan cited a study that disproved the bluntness of Deaf culture (Metzger and Bahan, 2001: 112). Roush (2007) also challenges the common belief that Deaf cultures are blunt and direct.

# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgement</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>Prologue</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Introduction to the research</b> .....	<b>12</b>
1.1 Introduction.....	12
1.2 Aims of this research.....	12
1.3 Definitions.....	13
1.3.1 Equality of Condition.....	13
1.3.2 Sign / signed languages.....	14
1.3.3 Compensatory tool.....	14
1.3.4 Deaf community and the Deaf.....	14
1.3.5 Deafhood.....	15
1.3.6 Assimilation.....	16
1.3.7 Integration.....	16
1.3.8 Perspectives / Models / Ideologies.....	16
1.4 Signed languages as central to Deaf communities.....	17
1.5 Definition of language policy.....	19
1.6 Language policy as a contemporary issue in the Irish context.....	20
1.7 Finland and Ireland – Findings on the status of signed languages.....	22
1.7.1 Methodological Issues- Language Questions.....	23
1.7.2 Contribution of the Study.....	23
1.8 Structure of the research.....	24
<b>Chapter 2</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Perspectives on Deafness</b> .....	<b>27</b>
2.1 Introduction.....	27
2.2 Medical perspectives on deafness.....	28
2.2.1 Origins of the medical perspective:.....	29
2.3 Social perspectives on deafness.....	31
2.3.1 Origins of the social model:.....	32
2.4 Shortcomings of the social model of disability to cover the experiences of the Deaf community. ...	34
2.5 Cultural-linguistic perspective - Deafhood;.....	37
2.6 Dissonances between Deafhood and the social perspective on deafness:.....	41
2.7 Disagreements by other commentators.....	45
2.7.1 The contradictory political location of Deaf people.....	48
2.7.2 Isolation of Deaf community – limiting opportunities:.....	49
2.7.3 Costs of being Deaf – burden on society?.....	50
2.8 Relationship between Deaf movements and disability movements.....	50
2.9 Concluding remarks.....	52
<b>Chapter 3</b> .....	<b>55</b>
<b>Practical implications of the dominant perspectives on deafness</b> .....	<b>55</b>
3.1 Introduction;.....	55
3.2 Views on Sign Languages.....	56
3.3 Specific Services for Deaf people.....	60
3.3.1 Audism:.....	61
3.3.2 Paternalism.....	63
3.3.3 Normalisation.....	65
3.4 Families of Deaf children.....	66
3.5 Deaf individual.....	70
3.5.1 Intelligence / Cognitive ability:.....	70



3.5.2	Sense of identity, self-esteem and levels of expectations: .....	72
3.5.3	Social / culture issues; .....	74
3.6	Conclusion.....	76
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Situating the social position of Deaf communities in the equality framework</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>80</b>
4.1	Introduction .....	80
4.2	Equality framework.....	81
4.3	Economic context.....	83
4.3.1	Employment .....	84
4.3.2	International experiences .....	85
4.4	Cultural context .....	86
4.5	Political situation .....	90
4.5.1	Participation in the formal political system: .....	90
4.5.2	Governmental committees .....	92
4.5.3	Service provisions .....	93
4.6	Affective contexts .....	95
4.6.1	Education .....	97
4.6.2	Deaf communities.....	98
4.7	Discussion .....	99
4.8	Applying the framework .....	100
4.9	Linking with Deafhood to the equality of condition .....	103
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>Research design and methodology</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>104</b>
5.1	Introduction .....	104
5.2	Overall aims and methods .....	104
5.3	Some ethical issues affecting this research.....	106
5.3.1	Emancipatory context .....	106
5.3.2	Peer research .....	109
5.3.3	Comparative analyst's role.....	111
5.3.4	Using more than one language in research .....	111
5.4	Approach of research .....	112
5.4.1	Evaluation approach: using Grin's model of preparing questions.....	112
5.4.2	Comparative approach.....	115
5.4.3	Qualitative approach.....	116
5.5	Methods of investigation .....	117
5.5.1	Short study visits to Finland.....	117
5.5.2	Internet Research.....	119
5.5.3	Dialogue with key stakeholder organisations.....	120
5.6	Selection and Profile of interviewees.....	120
5.7	Translation and transcription issues.....	122
5.8	Coding the transcripts and identifying the themes .....	125
5.9	The focus on education and access to information .....	125
5.10	Selection of data for analysis:.....	126
5.11	Reflexive discussion .....	126
5.12	Summary .....	128
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>133</b>
<b><i>"Is it the same or different over there?"</i></b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>An initial comparison between Finland and Ireland</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>133</b>
6.1	Introduction: .....	133
6.2	Contextualisation .....	133
6.3	Political Situation;.....	134
6.3.1	Finland.....	135
6.3.2	Ireland.....	138
6.3.3	Commentary.....	141
6.4	Economic situation.....	142

6.4.1	Finland .....	142
6.4.2	Ireland .....	144
6.4.3	Commentary .....	145
6.5	Social structures .....	146
6.5.1	Finland .....	146
6.5.2	Ireland .....	148
6.5.3	Commentary .....	151
6.6	General equality issues .....	152
6.6.1	Finland .....	152
6.6.2	Ireland .....	155
6.6.3	Commentary .....	158
6.7	Conclusion: .....	158
<b>Chapter 7 .....</b>		<b>160</b>
<b>'Is it correct that their sign language is officially recognised?' .....</b>		<b>160</b>
<b>Status of sign languages in each country .....</b>		<b>160</b>
7.1	Introduction .....	160
7.2	Language policy .....	161
7.2.1	Ruiz's taxonomy of language policy orientations .....	162
7.3	Linguistic profile .....	165
7.3.1	Finland .....	165
7.3.2	Ireland .....	168
<b>Chapter 8 .....</b>		<b>175</b>
<b>Language education policies for Deaf children - Policies .....</b>		<b>175</b>
8.1	Introduction .....	175
8.2	Language Education Policy (LEP) .....	175
8.3	LEP for the schools for the Deaf: a general commentary .....	178
8.4	A conclusion to language education policy section: .....	181
8.5	LEP in the Finnish schools for the Deaf: background information .....	182
8.5.1	Interviews with the Finnish participants .....	184
8.6	LEP in the Irish schools for the Deaf: background information .....	189
8.6.1	Interviewees with Irish participants .....	194
8.7	Concluding remarks: .....	199
<b>Chapter 9 .....</b>		<b>201</b>
<b>Language education policies for Deaf children: .....</b>		<b>201</b>
<b>Practices in Finland and Ireland .....</b>		<b>201</b>
9.1	Introduction .....	201
9.2	Aligning perspectives with practical examples .....	202
9.3	Background information on Finnish LEP .....	203
9.4	Interviews with the Finnish participants .....	206
9.4.1	Educational placement .....	206
9.4.2	Nature of teacher education courses .....	209
9.4.3	Teachers' Fluency in Finnish Sign Language: .....	211
9.4.4	Involvement of the Deaf community .....	212
9.5	LEP in the Irish schools for the Deaf: background information .....	214
9.6	Interviewees with Irish participants .....	216
9.6.1	Educational placement .....	216
9.6.2	Educating Teachers of the Deaf .....	218
9.6.3	Fluency of teachers .....	221
9.6.4	Involvement of the Deaf community .....	223
9.7	Concluding remarks: .....	224
<b>Chapter 10 .....</b>		<b>227</b>
<b>Language policy and access to public information .....</b>		<b>227</b>
10.1	Introduction .....	227
10.2	Citizenship .....	228
10.3	Linking citizenship with language policy .....	230

10.4	Language policy and its relationship to information provisions .....	232
10.5	Differing perspectives on access to information for Deaf people .....	234
10.6	Findings from Finland .....	237
10.6.1	Interviews with the Finnish respondents .....	239
10.7	Irish situation .....	246
10.7.1	Commentary from Irish interviewees .....	249
10.8	Concluding remarks .....	254
<b>Chapter 11</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>257</b>
<b>Concluding commentary and implications</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>257</b>
11.1	Introduction .....	257
11.2	Three differing ‘perspectives’ on deafness: .....	259
11.3	Deafhood, Equality and Language Policy .....	266
11.4	Process of research .....	269
11.5	Comparative research - Findings .....	269
11.5.1	Status of sign languages – Explicit and Implicit Language Policies .....	270
11.5.2	Linguistic rights for the Deaf communities in Finland and Ireland .....	271
11.5.3	Language policies in education for Deaf children .....	273
11.5.4	Access to information .....	276
11.5.5	Testing the Hypothesis .....	277
11.6	Policy Implications .....	278
11.6.1	Deaf Studies and other studies .....	278
11.6.2	The Policy Implications of Deafhood for Language policies and Sign Languages .....	281
11.6.3	Implications of a Deafhood Perspective for Education Policy .....	282
11.6.4	Access to information .....	283
11.7	Concluding remarks .....	284
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>286</b>
<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>Appendix 2</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>335</b>
<b>Appendix 3</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>337</b>
<b>Appendix 4</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>339</b>
<b>Appendix 5</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>340</b>

## List of Tables

Table 4.1: types of approaches to deal with issues under levels of equality .....	102
Table 5.1: Profiles of interviewees .....	122
Table 5.2: Selected Timeline of Research Process .....	131
Table 6.1: Initial comparison between .....	146
Table 7. 1: The Relationship between Language Policy .....	164
Orientations and Perspectives on Deafness .....	164
Table 8.1 : Key questions for Deaf Education arising from Shohamy’s questions (2006) .....	183
Table 8.2: Deaf children being implanted and their educational placement: .....	193
Table 8.3: Figures from Beaumont Hospital against the national census 2006 .....	193
Table 9.1: key questions for Deaf Education arising from Shohamy’s questions (2006) (part 2) .....	204
Table 10. 1: Language policy in access to information depending on the perspectives on deafness and Deafhood .....	236
Table 11.1: The relationship between levels of equality with the perspectives on deafness and language policy orientations .....	266

# Chapter 1

## Introduction to the research

### *1.1 Introduction*

The chapter begins with an outline of the aims of this research and an analysis of key terms before moving on to discussing signed languages as the cornerstone of Deaf communities. Such is the importance of signed languages to the Deaf communities, it is also necessary to discuss the definition of language policy. The section on language explores widely held assumptions and beliefs as to how language policies operate and their effects on societies. This discussion leads to the exploration of the national language policy context focusing on where Irish Sign Language (ISL) is situated. A list of findings is presented and briefly discussed. Towards the end of the chapter, the structure of this research is outlined.

### *1.2 Aims of this research*

The aim of this study was to advance academic understanding of what equality of condition (Baker, Lynch, Cantillon and Walsh 2004) would mean for Deaf people in relation to the recognition of signed language in both education and access to information in particular. It set out to test the hypothesis that the social model of disability is necessary but not sufficient for realising equality of condition for Deaf people because it does not take sufficient account of the importance of either culture or language to Deaf people. To achieve its goals, a comparative study of signed language policies and practices in both Finland and Ireland<sup>7</sup> was undertaken, two countries that are seen to be more advanced (Finland) and less advanced (Ireland) in terms of the equality of condition for Deaf people. One of the goals was to establish if Finland had actually moved towards equality of condition by comparison with Ireland with respect to the education and information access of Deaf people. The study also set out to advance egalitarian thinking, particularly the work of equality studies, from the perspective of Deafhood.

For many Deaf communities including the Irish Deaf community, the status of signed languages is intricately linked to their socio-economic status in wider society (see World Federation of the Deaf

---

<sup>7</sup> Throughout this paper the Republic of Ireland is referred to as Ireland. This does not include the six counties that comprise Northern Ireland.

(WFD), <http://www.wfdeaf.org>; European Union of the Deaf (EUD), <http://www.eudeaf.org>, Irish Deaf Society (IDS), <http://www.deaf.ie>). Current policies affecting the status of signed languages vary from one country to another country. Some countries manage to achieve higher legal status for their indigenous sign language<sup>8</sup> and other countries do not accord any status to their indigenous sign languages. However, the bestowal of higher legal status alone does not necessarily bring substantive equality to the Deaf communities (World Federation of the Deaf 2009, Timmermans 2005). Many commentators, chiefly from the Deaf Studies perspective, point out that the granting of legal status to signed languages often fails due to the language policy orientation adopted. They suggest that even more advanced countries are informed by the social model of deafness which does not take full account of the unique linguistic and cultural experiences of Deaf people as its primary focus is on compensation for ‘impairment’ (Lane *et al* 1996, Ladd 2003, Lane 2005, Batterbury *et al* 2007, Bauman 2008, Emery 2009).

This study proposes that a Deafhood framework should be applied to guide the language policy orientation in order to achieve the equality of condition for the Irish Deaf community. The concept of Deafhood was first termed by Ladd (2003) though its practices and norms are used for decades.

### 1.3 Definitions

There are a number of key terms used throughout the text that I will define here:

#### 1.3.1 Equality of Condition

Equality of condition is defined by Baker *et al.*, (2004: 33-46) as being about eliminating major inequalities altogether, or at the very least massively reducing the scale of inequality. It recognises that inequalities are rooted in social structures and institutional practices, and that these structures must change if there is to be substantive equality. While liberal egalitarians lay a lot of emphasis on individual changes and present equality of opportunity as an egalitarian ideal, the equality of condition perspective holds that it is not possible to have real equality of opportunity without equality of condition. There is a need to radically alter inegalitarian social, political, cultural (including linguistic), legal and economic institutions if Deaf people are to have equality in society. This thesis focuses on identifying what an equality of condition perspective can achieve for the status of signed languages. It shows how the equality of condition model would demand recognition and respect for sign language users.

---

<sup>8</sup> Hands On, the television programme, reports that 45 countries worldwide have bestowed legal status on their indigenous sign languages (<http://www.rte.ie/tv/handson/>).

### *1.3.2 Sign / signed languages*

Languages are generally equated with what is spoken or written. In colloquial terms, people often refer to languages in terms of ‘spoken and/or written languages’. Sign is not included in the presumed list of language attributes. There is an implicit assumption that when a language is signed that it is a compensatory tool. Sign Languages are not compensatory tools however as they are the indigenous languages of Deaf people. Since it is commonly known that behind every culture, there is an aligned language<sup>9</sup>, I feel it is important to raise the status of Sign Languages and the profile of Deaf culture. There is more discussion on this issue in chapter 3 (section 3.2).

Throughout the text the terms Sign Languages is used in the analysis of findings to refer to the languages of Deaf people, sometimes prefixed with the name of the culture where the language originates. For example, Irish Sign Language (ISL) refers to a signed language widely used in the island of Ireland, Finnish Sign Language refers to signed language in Finland (FinnSL), British Sign Language (BSL) refers to signed language developed in Britain and Northern Ireland.

### *1.3.3 Compensatory tool*

Signed language is widely and popularly perceived as the property of deaf people by the general public. There is a widely held view that signed languages are used as a communication tool in order to ‘compensate’ the loss of ability to hear or speak. This assumption is ignorant of the fact that signed languages more than adequately meet the criteria determining a human language and a co-existing culture. The implications of seeing Signed languages as a compensatory tool are very significant. For example, in education policy terms, Deaf children were often sent to remedial classes where signing is the sole method of communication only as a last resort, that is if it is believed that they could not benefit from lip reading or speech training. Additionally, with regard to information dissemination services, a request to have information translated into signed languages are often met with incredulity. Excuses for refusing such requests are often justified by suggesting that Deaf people can read the written languages. Viewing signed language as a compensatory tool rather than an actual language not only has implications for sign language usage it also has implications for the status of Deaf people and Deaf communities.

### *1.3.4 Deaf community and the Deaf*

In this study, I use the term ‘Deaf community’ quite frequently. There are several different groups within the community as deaf people vary by gender, ethnic background, disability, age, sexuality

---

<sup>9</sup> A word of caution here, not every language has its aligned culture. For example, computer programming has its own specific language but does not necessarily have a culture; however, every indigenous culture has a language.

and other attributes. The Deaf community also includes many hearing people such as the hearing children of Deaf parents. The cornerstone of the Deaf community is the signed language – Irish Sign Language for the Irish group and Finnish Sign Language for the Finnish group. Signed language forms a basis for intra-fraternisation and solidarity.

This Deaf community does not necessarily include those who are deafened in later age or hard of hearing, even some people who are born deaf or become deaf early. There is no deliberate intention to exclude them since they often do not want to be associated with the Deaf communities but one can find hard of hearing or deaf people who do not hold value signed languages as their primary tool of communication. They often feel adequately covered by spoken languages. It is beyond the scope of this study to investigate this issue in depth though it has to be said that signed languages can be beneficial for anyone hearing or deaf provided they acquire functional fluency.

In this study the ‘Deaf’ (with a capital D) refers to persons who consider themselves members of a linguistic–cultural minority community who are deaf. The lower case noun ‘deaf’ is used to describe the audiological state of loss of hearing<sup>10</sup>. Several scholars in Deaf Studies apply these practices although they recognise the fluidity and inherent complexities involved when discussing individuals and groups simultaneously. They tend to use the notation ‘D/deaf’ in their studies<sup>11</sup>. The fluidity and inherent complexities in identifying oneself in society are often shaped or influenced by the societal expectations or norms.

### 1.3.5 *Deafhood*

Paddy Ladd (2003) first coined this term – *Deafhood* - in order to describe the existence of Deaf people and their experience of being Deaf. Ladd describes Deafhood as a process of becoming: he argues that Deafhood is not a ‘static’ medical condition but the process reflecting the experiences of individual and collective struggles by Deaf people themselves to explain and name their existences. He recognises that each Deaf individual has its own unique experience of becoming Deaf and struggling to be Deaf but the enduring and binding tenets behind this process is to champion the

---

<sup>10</sup> It was recommended by Woodward (1972) in order to raise the profile of Deaf communities and their indigenous sign languages otherwise would be lost in the generic term: ‘deaf’.

<sup>11</sup> Interestingly, Napier (2002) discusses the reverse notation ‘H/hearing to describe her experience of being a hearing of Deaf adults and being an outsider in the Hearing society. She suggests when discussing the issues in Deaf Studies that the lower case hearing should be attributed to those hearing people who are more aligned with signed languages and their cultures. She states: “As someone who grew up in the Deaf community and who now works as a sign language interpreter, trainer, and researcher, I resist being labeled as a Hearing person along with the Hearing majority. In the same way that deaf people are not regarded as being fully Deaf, I do not regard myself as being fully Hearing. I have suggested this convention in many classes I have taught and discussed the idea with Deaf friends and colleagues, and many have responded positively to the concept” (Napier 2002: 145).

existence of signed languages (Ladd 2003: 3-4). Deafhood is chosen in this thesis as the ideal solution to resolve the status of signed languages and realise equality of condition for Deaf people. A more detailed discussion on this term can be found in section 2.7 of the following chapter.

### *1.3.6 Assimilation*

Assimilation refers to the social process of absorbing one minority cultural group into the dominant culture. Depending on the dominant culture's level of tolerance for minority cultures, the process can range from the gradual adjustments to the dominant culture to violent suppression. There are various means of assimilating to the majority or dominant cultures. Members of minority cultures may integrate into the majority culture voluntarily or violently. For example, members of minority cultures identify the necessity of associating with the majority cultures in order to survive or partake in the majority society. Language is an example here. People tend to learn English with a belief to better their career prospects and increase their ability to partake in the majority society. The process can be done within a generation or over several generations. While the process of assimilation may be regarded by many as the rational option, the survival of minority cultures or languages is constantly a theme in the politics of assimilation.

### *1.3.7 Integration*

Integration refers to the process of incorporating a minority group into a society. While it can be similar to assimilation<sup>12</sup>, the difference is that assimilation acknowledges the existence of cultures but regards them inferior to the dominant culture. Integration involves having mutual respect for the cultures of both groups. However, under the guise of integration, practices of including Deaf people, such as mainstreaming and normalisation had not been positive although such practices are often well meaning and well intentional. Further discussion on this issue occurs in the second chapter.

### *1.3.8 Perspectives / Models / Ideologies*

Throughout the text, the words: perspectives, models and ideologies are used interchangeably. The reason for this is because all models involve a particular perspective and make particular ideological assumptions. While the terms are not synonymous, they are closely inter-related. Also, in the research literature, the concepts of models and perspectives are often used interchangeably particularly when referring to the various models in Disability Studies. Three major models are identified in terms of treating Deaf people and they are medical, social and Deafhood. Each perspective has a dissimilar philosophical outlook on deafness in relation to attitudes, the nature of treatments and approaches of dealing with deafness, especially towards people with hearing loss.

---

<sup>12</sup>



#### 1.4 Signed languages as central to Deaf communities

For Deaf communities worldwide, their indigenous signed languages and their cultures are the mainstay of their communities (Lane 2005, Ladd 2003). It would be a huge mistake to treat signed languages as an entity that can be replaced or substituted by spoken languages. Signed languages are often the source of innate experiences and they develop a sense of belonging for many Deaf people (Padden & Humphries 1988, Ladd 2003, Batterbury *et al* 2007). Deaf people can acquire spoken languages through artificial or rehabilitative means. However, spoken languages are not the native or first<sup>15</sup> languages of Deaf people and they cannot attain the same proficiency in them as they would through signed language as is exemplified by several investigations of Deaf communities (Jones & Pullen 1987, Kyle & Allsop 1997, European Union of the Deaf 2001, Conama & Grehan 2001, Conroy 2006)<sup>16</sup>. Hence, signed languages are often the only natural means for most Deaf people to express their views articulately. A Dutch governmental committee on the recognition of Dutch Sign Language stated that signed languages as the only languages that can be *naturally* acquired by Deaf people (Baker 2000), and that Deaf children should be provided with sufficient exposure to this language<sup>17</sup> (Jokinen 2000).

Signed languages are languages in their own right, on a par with spoken languages (Meier *et al* 2002). However, signed languages should not be regarded solely as a communication medium. Rubio-Marin (2003) states that languages' intimate relationships with cultures are widely recognised, hence languages are means of communication, but are not culturally neutral. He also points out that several linguistic minorities have sought protection of their indigenous languages to protect or preserve their cultures from assimilation (Rubio-Marin 2003: 57). This is also true for the Deaf communities (Ladd 2003).

---

<sup>15</sup> The distinction between the terms 'native language' and 'first language' has originated from the field of language acquisition. Native language users are those individuals whose parents' language is sign language, while those who are first language users are born to parents who do not sign. In the latter case, sign language is acquired when the individual arrives at the school for the Deaf. This distinction will become more apparent as this research progresses.

<sup>16</sup> These investigations made a recurring theme that Deaf respondents preferred to recount their experiences or responses in sign languages because they felt that they articulate it in that way much better than through spoken or written languages.

<sup>17</sup> It is widely recognised that 90% or more of Deaf children are born to hearing parents. Furthermore, it is quite common that these parents do not have sign language skills, thus reducing the level of exposure that their children may have to sign language as the natural method of acquiring language. It has also been reported that parents are often advised against using sign language with their children (more discussion of this topic may be found in later chapters).

However, in historical terms, the destiny of signed languages is never a happy one and they are subjected to eradication, degradation, or dismissal (see Lane 1984, Fischer and Lane 1993<sup>18</sup>). The Milan Congress of 1880 is often regarded as a landmark event in the Deaf heritage as it approved a series of resolutions banishing signed languages from the classrooms in the schools for the Deaf. This congress was by no means an isolated incident, however; it was part of a long process of degrading the status of signed languages. (Lane 1993, Fischer and Lane 1993)

Therefore, for many Deaf communities, the attempt to remove or degrade the status of signed languages is a political issue. For Branson and Miller (1997), little or no access to signed languages could be regarded as preventing one from reaching full humanity. For Jokinen (2000), this is a serious human right issue. Hence, these views can be exemplified by the resolution passed at the congress of the World Federation of the Deaf which calls on each of its' national association members to ensure their signed languages receive national recognition. The resolution was passed in Tokyo in 1991 (Skutnabb-Kangas 1994: 408-411). The European Union of the Deaf was behind two resolutions in the European Parliament calling on member states to implement the official recognition of indigenous sign languages in 1988 and 1998. As a result, several countries have recognised the status of indigenous sign languages constitutionally and Finland is one of them. Other countries adopt a legislative approach and Sweden is the best example in this regard. It has given legislative recognition to Swedish Sign Language in the education legislation (Krausanker 2000, Timmermans 2005, World Federation of the Deaf 2009).

Though some countries managed to get signed languages recognised in their respective legislatures, the efficiency and effectiveness of having signed languages recognised vary from one country to the next (Krausanker 2000, Timmermans 2005). The benefits of having signed languages legally recognised are often undermined for Deaf people by the failure of countries to place signed languages on a par with spoken languages. The current president of the World Federation of the Deaf, Markku Jokinen reminded the meeting of the United Nations Forum on Minorities in December 2008:

Deaf people face exactly the same problems that have been discussed today and yesterday during this forum, as hearing linguistic and cultural minorities. Themes mentioned in the draft recommendations on minorities and the right to education applies

---

<sup>18</sup> This publication is a wide collection of articles and they are from several countries - the most common theme is the oppression of sign languages.

to us also. Sign language users' linguistic rights which entail the right to use their own language are not carried out and in fact sign language users suffer linguistic genocide every day (Markku Jokinen, President of the World Federation of the Deaf, website: <http://www.wfdeaf.org> accessed January 2009).

Jokinen's reminder implies that outsiders do not see indigenous sign languages as languages in their own right like spoken languages. Therefore, the exclusion, whether intentionally or unintentionally, has a number of consequences. One of them is the exclusion of signed languages from the aegis of formal language policies at any level ranging from the local to the international. Instead, signed languages are often dealt with under the aegis of disability policies or procedures. In effect, signed languages are often not regarded as equal to the national or other spoken minority languages.

### *1.5 Definition of language policy*

Though many commentators agree it is impossible to theorise about language policy in general, this section proposes to set the parameters of language policy for this research. There is a common fallacy that policies are synonymous with written rules or regulations; therefore, language policies are often regarded in the similar line: they are assumed to exist only if written down. However, policies can exist by omission or by existing implicitly if not explicitly. Hill (2005) describes the additional myths:

- The belief that a policy is based on a given decision
- No action or status quo implies that there is no policy
- Policies are only related to decisions rather than actions

Hill (2005) notes that there is a widespread tendency to believe that there is no policy in operation if there is no action involved. For example, if the status quo situation continues, and issues are not formally recognised for policy purposes, it is assumed that there must be no policy at all. He points out that continuing the status quo situation, or deciding no action is required to deal with issues, is the important part of the power dynamics behind the policy process; it is policy-by-default. Another myth is the belief that to have policies, they must be based solely on decisions rather than actions. However, as Hill (2005) points out actions can be taken without policy decisions. There are, for example no policies stating that Deaf people or people from outside of Ireland cannot become primary teachers in Ireland; however, the practice of requiring people to be proficient in the Irish language (Gaeilge) means that there is a policy by default. Other commentators such as Lukes, (1974) and Dahl (1971) support this view. They point out that policies can be shaped beyond written

rules or regulations and they can be shaped by several factors such as a decision-making network and power relationships.

Given the complexity of defining ‘policy’, it is further complicated when it is applied to language. The concept of language policy is often popularly perceived as limited to the policymakers deciding or reinforcing which language(s) are to be used. This fails to recognise that there are a number of factors besides the policymakers influencing the directions of language policies. Policies can be identified through explicit statements (clauses on the constitutions or legislations), implicit statements (the right to stand before the courts equally and the right to be heard etc), dominant ideologies (the more people think alike, the dominant view becomes ‘truth’<sup>19</sup>) and finally, personal preferences (accents, agreed rules on elocution etc., popular attitudes towards languages) (Spolsky 2004).

These assumptions were obvious in this researcher’s dealing with respondents in this study and this researcher had to resort to defining what language policies mean. Given this experience, it is clear that language policies are taken for granted or do not have sufficient attention from the public. Perhaps, it may be due to the dominant monolingual nature of society we live in. As a consequence, many respondents appeared to have difficulties in accepting the concept of language policy, never mind extending such policies to deal with signed languages.

### *1.6 Language policy as a contemporary issue in the Irish context*

In the Irish context, language policy is historically intertwined with the revival and survival of the Irish language (O’Laoire 2007). The focus on the Irish language remains so despite a recent influx of other languages and their continued usage in this country (for example, see Royal Irish Academy 2006<sup>20</sup>, O’Brien 2006). This arrival of people with voiced languages has shaped the language policy

---

<sup>19</sup> This can be exemplified by the following two cases. The first case is that the French language was thought to be recognised legally in France for centuries but in fact, the legislative recognition took place in the 1990s. This is so despite the fact that for centuries, the French populace and even academic scholars discussed the French language as if it was already legally recognised (Schiffman 2006: 117). Another case is slightly different and English is the dominant language in the United States, though it is not constitutionally recognised but given the dominance of English, it can be argued that English is the *de facto* official language. Entry to education and career development depends on the competence of English as prevalent throughout the US society, which is tacitly approved by the majority there.

<sup>20</sup> The Royal Irish Academy (RIA) organised a conference to address the national language policy and issued a number of recommendations to have it extended to other immigrant languages (Royal Irish Academy 2006).

to some extent, but recent evidence is that the Irish language retains a centrality in terms of language policy<sup>21</sup>.

In historical terms, while the national language policy was often regarded as synonymous with the policies dealing with the Irish language, there are several ‘unwritten’ but significant policies of reinforcing the English language as the dominant one. For instance, for generations, schoolchildren aimed to achieve a higher grade in English for career development purposes. Almost all of communication in the social and public services are given through English, religious services are conducted in English and media is provided in English. Recently, immigrants were advised to learn English in order to integrate into the Irish society permanently<sup>22</sup>. Yet, these examples were not problematised and are not seen as policy issues and outcomes. There remains a widespread societal perception that ‘national language policy’ is the province of the Irish language.

In this context, it is inevitable that Irish Sign Language (ISL) is excluded from this province of language policy though there are several implicit factors that shape the status of ISL. For many decades, language policies in the schools for the Deaf were left to those who controlled the schools and there was no input from the Department of Education or the Deaf community (Griffey 1994). Due to the emergence of disability awareness during the 1980s and 1990s, the policies dealing with ISL took a different direction and ISL policies were administered under the disability procedures. Despite the efforts of Deaf-led organisations, such as the Irish Deaf Society, to have ISL administered under language policy rather than disability procedures, the response was not encouraging (Irish Deaf Society 2005).

Given the unenthusiastic response to the campaign to have ISL legally recognised<sup>23</sup>, it is essential to understand why the government response was negative. Though such responses were quite similar in several countries, some countries such as Sweden and Finland did move to have their indigenous sign languages recognised and properly resourced (Timmermans 2005). My own experience as a

---

<sup>21</sup> To date, the government enacted the Official Languages Act 2003 and resourced the implementation of this Act. Though many state agencies created translated information for many linguistic minorities, they are limited to basic information or guidance.

<sup>22</sup> Conor Lenihan TD, Minister for Integration suggested that immigrants must pass English tests to avail of permanent residency in Ireland (Irish Independent, September 12, 2007).

<sup>23</sup> It is noteworthy that ISL is officially recognised in Northern Ireland alongside the British Sign Language (BSL). The official recognition was made through a government communiqué rather than a specific legislation (Symington and Carberry 2006). It is beyond this study as to what this official recognition means exactly though it is frequently claimed that ISL is officially recognised or acknowledged.

Deaf activist, and the findings from this study, suggest that while there were considerable gains from the emerging recognition of the social model of disability, the focus on it has obscured the development of a clear vision for having ISL legally recognised and administered under the separate domain of language policy. This experience is also similar in other countries (Lane *et al* 1996, Ladd 2003, Batterbury *et al* 2007, Bauman 2008, Emery 2009).

### *1.7 Finland and Ireland – Findings on the status of signed languages*

Finland is seen as a model country in Europe in terms of language policy regarding signed languages, as there is a relatively high status accorded to signed language in its constitution. This study suggests however that this does not mean that Deaf people in Finland have significantly better access to education and information services in FinnSL than in Ireland. While resources made available to support FinnSL are quantitatively superior to the Irish case (in terms of numbers of qualified interpreters on the ground, the voucher system to grant free interpretation for Deaf people, etc.), both countries retain the similar attitudinal orientation towards signed languages. Signed languages are recognised as a compensatory tool rather than being seen as languages in their own right.

Access to public information is not readily given in signed languages in both countries and the common response is that Deaf people can read the national or dominant languages themselves instead. Apart from the literacy issues, it effectively forces Deaf people to read public information in the second language mode and removes their right to receive information in native or first language. Requests for sign interpretation in these contexts are often questioned or treated as the personal responsibility of Deaf people.

When one compares the Irish situation to the Finnish situation, it has to be recognised that specific contexts within each country lead to definite lines of implementation. For instance, it is clear from the data in this study that the medical model has more salience in determining language policy in the education for Deaf children in both countries. This is because the medical and related professions control the definition of educational needs for Deaf children. References to signed languages' services are not offered. Medical professionals and especially those who are involved in the cochlear implantations discourage this use of signing; mainstreaming is actively encouraged.

Overall, in the general contexts in both countries on the basis of data analysis, it appears that the social model of deafness prevails throughout the societies in that, deafness is seen as an impairment for which compensation should be made.

### *1.7.1 Methodological Issues- Language Questions*

This research deals with the language issue and it involved conducting the data analysis in five different languages (Irish Sign Language, English, Finnish, Finnish Sign Language and international signs). It raises a number of epistemological and ontological issues since all languages must be translated to English to satisfy the doctorate regulations set by the university. Moreover, signed languages are different from spoken languages in one respect – the use of modality, so literal translation is almost impossible. Therefore, the translation process itself runs a risk of losing the value of meaning and information. However, this research adopts a theory of pragmatism<sup>24</sup> in translating. This aims to minimise the loss of value in meaning and information. The loss of value in the translation process is not only a major issue for this researcher but to date, research on Deaf studies are dominantly text-based. Therefore, access to information arising from research is located outside the Deaf communities and it adds on additional barriers to those who have to comprehend them in the second language mode. This brings on significant issues in terms of power relationships between the majority society and the linguistic minority.

### *1.7.2 Contribution of the Study*

This research makes a number of contributions to our knowledge about language policy orientations and equality.

- The study refines language policy orientation from the Deafhood perspective
- It shows how signed languages are viewed under the social model of disability largely as a compensatory tool rather than languages in their own right
- Equality of condition is possible for Deaf people if all language policies are refined from the Deafhood perspective

This research focused on the responses and experiences of respondents in both countries and appraised them against a backdrop of national language policies. As language policies from the

---

<sup>24</sup> This is further described in the methodology chapter.

Deafhood perspectives are few in hard evidence, hence Deafhood thinking and ideas are largely confined to literature. Having said that, it has to be stated that neither countries have expressed that they operate or implement a social model of deafness as a core policy to deal with Sign Language users. It is also envisaged that a video of the summary of this study is to be made so it would be accessible for those signers of Irish Sign Language.

### *1.8 Structure of the research*

This research is divided into two parts: the first part reviews the differing perspectives on deafness and their ideological implications, while the second part focuses on data collection and analysis. The second part also outlines alignments between the perspectives of deafness, levels of equality and language policy orientations.

Following on from the introduction given in this chapter, Chapter 2 focuses on the three general perspectives on deafness and their origins, namely the medical, social and Deafhood models. These perspectives are collated from a literature review and analysis. In developing this discussion, it is necessary to recognise the degree to which perspectives differ, and how dissimilar they are. In light of this, Chapter 3 examines the implications of these perspectives and the influence that they have upon the daily lives of Deaf people. More importantly, it examines the extent to which these perspectives have shaped language policies, either intentionally or unintentionally. Chapter 4 provides an analysis of the perspectives on deafness employing the equality framework that has been developed at the Equality Studies Centre at UCD (Baker *et al.* 2004). This analysis then provides a general framework that is used when examining the language policy orientations that arise from the case studies in this research.

Chapter 5 outlines the research design and methodologies applied in this research. The design has been influenced by qualitative, emancipatory and peer research principles. As I may be regarded as a researcher who is an ‘insider’, Barnes (1992) argues that the qualitative approach represents the best possible way of capturing and understanding the perspectives on disability issues in an in-depth manner. Oliver (1992) urges the adoption of the emancipatory research paradigm as a way of recognising the power dynamics behind the research process and of ensuring that these dynamics are appropriately handled. The comparative approach that is employed here is informed by the contextualisation framework (Hantrais 1999), which recognises the complexities and complications that arise from researching cross-national issues. This approach recognises the vast differences that



may exist in each countries' economic, social, political and historical developments and provides an avenue to overcome potential issues or objects in one country that may not have an obvious equivalent in another.

The questions used when interviewing the respondents were prepared using Grin's evaluative framework for analysing language policies (2003). This framework provided a useful tool for preparing questions; however, it was not used for analysing responses as it lacked explanatory power in egalitarian terms. The analysis of the responses given was adjudged in light of the aligned frameworks of equality levels, language policy orientations and perspectives on deafness. During the course of this research I made three trips to Finland and visited several institutions there. I interviewed fifteen people (seven of whom were Deaf) in Finland, and some fourteen individuals in Ireland (three of whom were Deaf). The chapter also outlines and discusses a number of issues that arose during the course of this research including those of a methodological, epistemological and ontological nature.

Prior to entering into a discussion of each case study, it was deemed necessary to provide general background information relating to each country's policy context. Chapter 6 presents basic comparative data on each of the two countries in this study, Finland and Ireland. It covers general areas of importance such as economics, political structure, society, history and equality. These represent areas that are influential in shaping policies within each country. Such information provides a basic understanding of how each country operates and is of vital importance before commencing a discussion of language policies. Chapter 7 provides a comparative analysis of national language policies and their effects on signed languages, giving a further backdrop that is necessary to understand the case studies that were undertaken.

The two chapters (chapters 8 & 9) that follow focus on language education policy. Chapter 8 examines language education policy within the policy process. This encompasses the current status of signed languages in relation to Deaf children within the education system of each country and deals with current policies, philosophical perspectives and early intervention schemes. These issues are dealt with separately as they focus on the preschool years and how that shapes language education policies as the child progresses. The responses given during the interviews are considered in light of the current policies in place in each of the countries examined. Chapter 9 focuses on practical issues such as educational placement, the nature of teacher education, and fluency in signed

language amongst teachers. Finally, the extent of the involvement of Deaf communities in the education of Deaf children are considered. The areas outlined represent vital components that should be considered when operating language education policies for Deaf children.

Chapter 10 concentrates on the case study of access to information in terms of language policy, with the focus chiefly on the accessibility of public information for Deaf people. This area is then analysed with reference to the concept of citizenship rights. Chapter 11 concludes by summarising the research and its findings. The findings provide a basis for steps to be taken to develop an optimal language policy orientation so as to ensure the achievement of equality of condition for the Irish Deaf community.

# Chapter 2

## Perspectives on Deafness

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to identify a principal perspective on deafness and set it as a standard for the entire study. By perspectives<sup>25</sup>, I mean a general philosophical outlook on deafness such as attitudes, the nature of treatments and approaches of dealing with deafness, especially towards people with hearing loss. However, there are a number of different perspectives on deafness which are dissimilar; thus, it is important to clarify our conceptual framework of deafness from the outset. These perspectives on deafness cannot simply be explained by studying models of disability because these models tend to be universalistic and fail to recognise structural and cultural differences between many forms of disability (Corker 1998; Davis 2002; Ladd 2003; Lane 2005).

It is also important to have our perspective on deafness clarified from the beginning because deafness has become a subject for many discourses, and a medical discourse has become dominant through time. The dominance of one perspective over others leads people to question which perspective is the most appropriate. For many, the dominance of the medical perspective reflects the fact that:

It is the non-deaf world which has created deafness as a subject of discourse (Gregory and Hartley 1991: 5)

Ladd (2003) describes how the discursive system based on medical perspectives was developed over the centuries and remains a dominant hegemonic one over other alternative discourses. Ladd (2003) states that those who wish to research with Deaf people should be aware that the dominant medical model would hinder the research with several conceptual problems. It is, therefore, necessary to explore the various models of deafness before selecting one model as a standard for this study. Each

---

<sup>25</sup> The concept of ‘perspectives’, is used here to incorporate the various models or paradigms that inform thinking and policy on deafness. It also refers broadly to the ideologies and ideological assumptions, including values, (which often reflect the vested interests of the proponents of a given viewpoint) underpinning such models. Consequently the term ideology or perspective are used often interchangeably throughout the text to refer to those who share a similar philosophical outlook.

model will be examined in its component parts, origins, and implications for society. Prior to the conclusion, the choice of model will be explained briefly.

This chapter will begin with the introduction of each perspective, its origins and development over time. Having completed this, there will be a critical discussion on dissonances between the perspectives on deafness. A number of commentators have expressed concerns or doubts on these perceived dissonances. Once this discussion is completed, references to a number of practical and specific issues will be discussed. Before concluding this chapter, the relationship between the Deaf communities and the disability movement is discussed from a critical perspective. This includes why one model, namely Deafhood, is the chosen theme for this study.

## 2.2 *Medical perspectives on deafness*

The medical perspectives on deafness can be described terminologically as the *medical model*. However, it is not an attempt to sweep all differing approaches that have any link with medicine into the singular category. This categorisation is an attempt to generalise the perspectives on deafness, and the categorisation is an effort to create a part of the theoretical framework for this study. The medical model views deafness in individualistic, pathological and deficiency-related terms.

The individualisation of deafness can be best exemplified by Black's medical dictionary. This dictionary is regarded as a reputable reference. Black's Medical Dictionary explains deafness as a personal attribute and the need to detect it at an early stage to avoid future inconveniences (Macpherson 2002: 157). The individualistic part of this model has two central ideas according to Ladd (2003) namely that:

Each born Deaf person is a helpless isolated hearing-impaired individual, with no intrinsic relationship with any other Deaf person, past or present, no group allegiances or history (Ladd 2003: 163).

Ladd (2003) continues to describe how this individualistic perspective purports the necessity of using assistive technology to restore Deaf individuals to society while they are denied access to other Deaf adults and sign language. This individualistic model has considerably influenced the problems around deafness at the personal level of an individual and the implications will be discussed in a later chapter.

Some psychological analysis of Deaf people is also closely aligned to the medical model. Some psychologists have claimed that many Deaf individuals have unique personality traits. In a body of literature, they portray Deaf people as socially isolated, intellectually weak, behaviourally impulsive and emotionally immature (Lane 1988, in Gregory and Hartley 1991: 74-76). Such traits described above were employed to differentiate them from the majority. In these literatures, there was little or no reference to the existence of Deaf communities, their sign languages and their related cultural activities (Lane, Hoffmesiter & Bahan 1996: 318). Other psychologists seriously challenged such perspectives (Ridgeway 1998, Harvey 2003).

As for the deficiency-related terms: i.e. ‘deaf and dumb’, ‘hearing impaired’, ‘severe hearing losses’, and other similar categorisations of deafness, such terms persist within the medical world and beyond. The terms are regarded as inappropriate or even offensive to many Deaf people because such terms originate in previous centuries, and cause problems for Deaf individuals. The essentialist view of deafness means that their needs are not addressed (Gannon 1980, Corker 1998:10).

### *2.2.1 Origins of the medical perspective:*

It is difficult to pinpoint the genesis of medical perspectives on deafness because historically from the beginning there have been negative views on disability, which include deafness. Two commentators agree that the current medical views originated at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century although there were sporadic attempts to cure deafness in the preceding centuries (Lane 1984, Branson & Miller 2002). According to Ladd (2003) such medical perspectives were developed on the back of colonialism, a product of science, which led to the development of the Industrial Revolution. Ladd (2003) cites the descriptive examples in Lane (1993) where successive physicians in a Paris school in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century attempted endlessly to cure Deaf children. Their attempts too frequently ended in despair. Branson and Miller (2002) describe a certain powerful character, de Gerando, in this Paris school who began to apply the clinical gaze of Deaf children in the Foucauldian sense. They point out how pathologising this was for Deaf people. This was due to the prominence of this Paris school as the agency where several European and North American philanthropists often sought advice<sup>26</sup>. Branson and Miller quoting Seguillion (1996), state that this influence became weakened after 1968.

---

<sup>26</sup> Ree (2000) mentions that among various visiting delegations to this Paris school, one was from Ireland.

Additionally, the social ideas, that emerged, attempted to reform societies. These had implications for Deaf people including social Darwinism and evolutionism, which gained currency during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. One of the consequences of Darwinism was that, such entities led to the emergence of eugenics, which reinforced the medical perspectives with devastating effects on Deaf people (Branson & Miller 2002). The promoter of eugenics, which affected Deaf people, Alexander Graham Bell (noted for inventing the telephone) saw '*deafness as a pathology that threatened the normal majority*' (Branson & Miller 2002:152). Among the measures he advocated were the prohibition of marriage between Deaf adults and closing down the schools for the Deaf (Lane 1993, Ladd 2003).

Branson and Miller (2002) describe how the development of the medicalisation of deafness was reinforced by professionalism within the medical profession. Assistive technology, such as hearing aids became available throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century and it also considerably medicalised the concept of deafness further. Griffey (1994) refers to the rapid rehabilitative services developed after the Second World War; these considerably expanded the assistive technology to restore 'hearing' in many countries including Ireland. According to Ladd (2003) some of the consequences of such assistive technology were the creation of systematic categorisation of hearing loss levels<sup>27</sup>. As a consequence, the positive, personal and communal attributes of Deaf individuals were not recognised.

The application of rehabilitative and related welfare services for deaf people necessitated organisation and planning; hence, the application required a discursive system championing the medical perspectives on deafness to gain legitimacy. The legitimating role was often adopted by agencies acting on behalf of the state. The legitimatisation of discourses that gradually classified deafness led to the re-categorising of deafness within disability (Ladd 2003, Branson & Miller 2002). Defining deafness as a disability was not confined to medical arenas as it was reinforced in education and welfare services (Ladd 2003).

---

<sup>27</sup> Before the emergence of technical equipment in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was not possible to categorise the differing levels of hearing loss. The emergence of such equipment enabled those to categorise the hearing loss levels of individuals. One of the consequences was that the hearing loss levels were used to justify measures to deal with Deaf individuals. For example, total segregation within the schools for the Deaf was maintained to ensure partially deaf and profoundly deaf children to have little or no social interaction. The idea behind the segregation was to encourage partially deaf children to avail of their residual hearing, to improve their oral training and to protect them from the exposure of signing (Griffey 1994). One of the effects was that partially deaf children were led to believe that they were superior to profoundly deaf children in terms of intellectual and social development.

The medically informed model validates the need for a range of interventions – surgical or audiological to restore hearing and the ability to speak. This needs to be done so that Deaf people are fully integrated into society. The following characteristics of this model are likely to be:

- Focus on curative or rehabilitative solutions to deafness – they would consider society and the environment unproblematic in terms of providing solutions to deafness
- Deafness is a disability which needs treatment with hearing aids, speech therapy, cochlear implants, special education, etc.
- View deafness individually – not collectively. Support integrated socialisation into the hearing world.

This model may seem unproblematic and acceptable for the vast majority of people with *acquired* hearing loss. In this regard, deaf persons such as people deafened in late age are more orientated to the hearing world and are more likely to base their identity and status within that world. They have already acquired a spoken language, and the majority of people who are deafened in later life or become hard of hearing have already established their standing in the hearing world. Being deprived of hearing is seen as a danger to their status and identity because spoken language (e.g. talking and listening) is a prerequisite for participation in the hearing world. Therefore, medical assistance is seen as necessary (Higgins 1980, Ladd 1992, Padden and Humberies 1988, Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan 1996, Parasnis 1998, Lane 2002, Ladd 2003, Lane 2005).

The impact of the medicalised model on the lives of Deaf individuals and their families will be given in the next chapter.

### 2.3 *Social perspectives on deafness*

Social perspectives on deafness are really a part of a more comprehensive and far-reaching social model of disability. It seeks to distinguish and distance itself from the medical model. Padden (1998) describes the medical perspectives on deafness from this social perspective as “*predicated in repair and replacement, it sees the past as littered with failure and ignorance*”. For her, the medical model is littered with a long litany of failed attempts to cure deafness and attempts might be given in good faith but in ignorance. Her view is widely shared by many commentators (Higgins 1980, Ladd 1992, Padden and Humberies 1988, Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan 1996, Parasnis 1998, Lane 2002, Ladd 2003, Lane 2005).

For the terminological reasons, the social perspectives on deafness should be regarded as a *social model*. Oliver (1996) defines disability as:

...all the things that impose restrictions on disabled people; ranging from individual prejudice to institutional discrimination, from inaccessible public buildings to unusable transport systems, from segregated education to excluding work arrangements, and so on (Oliver 1996: 33).

The social model in contrast to the medical model sees deaf people viewing their disability as a difference - acknowledging their deafness as impairment. However, the social model of disability does not present disability itself as a reason for oppression. Proponents of this social model see lack of access to the majority society as the most important theme. While the social model presupposes several kinds of solutions, be it attitudinal or physical for deaf people, technological advances are often mooted as the solutions though they are not inherent in the social model. This reinterpretation of the social model by the majority society (including some deaf people) proposes that deaf individuals require technological advances to access the majority society, such as the text telephone, the amplified telephone, vibrating alarm clocks and subtitles on television programmes. The particular principle of this social model is to compensate for deafness by means of technological advances. Therefore, the aim is to integrate and assimilate deaf people into the world of the majority (Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan 1996, Parasnis 1998, Lane 2002, Ladd 2003)

Thus, there is an onus on society to remove such barriers and focus is placed on dealing with disabled people as a group who are discriminated against. This is in contrast to the individual or medical models of disability, which focus on an individual's experience of impairment. They do this by trying to lessen the impact of impairment in the seeking of medical interventions.

### 2.3.1 *Origins of the social model:*

The social model of disability originated in Britain and was first defined by UPIAS (*Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation*), an organisation formed to campaign for societal rights for disabled people. The UPIAS was set up by disabled people expressing dissatisfaction with the dominant medical perspective on disability. It provided and produced a distinction between disability and impairment (Oliver 1990, Barnes 1997). Its definition of the social model can be found in Oliver (1996):



It is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society (Oliver 1996: 22)

This statement by the UPIAS makes a key distinction between impairment and disability. It states that *'impairment'* refers to *'lacking all of or part of a limb, or having a defective limb, organism or mechanism of the body'* while *'disability'* refers to social organisation which fails to *'take little or no account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities'*. This key distinction makes a fundamental break from the medical model which states that disability is a direct consequence of personal impairment while ignoring the existence of socially manufactured barriers (Oliver 1990, 1996).

Oliver developed a further social model of disability in order to explain why disability was linked to oppression and exploitation (Oliver 1983, 1990 & 1996). Finkelstein tried to explain this as a direct result of the development of western industrial society. He recounted a materialistic history based on three phases, in an approach very similar to the Hegelian approach used by Marx. The first phase was the feudal era where disabled people were not excluded because industry was of a 'cottage'-style, agrarian nature. This era was followed by the Industrial Revolution, which had excluded disabled people from working in factories and pits because of their inability to participate in such working conditions. The third phase was a liberating era via the use of advanced technology because it enabled disabled people to participate in society (Finkelstein 1980).

Barnes (1997) criticises this three-phased account as over-simplistic, although he does acknowledge it as an aid to understanding the area. His criticism centres on the assumption that technological advances are liberating. He points out that certain technological advances can be disempowering, and that professional vested interests have control over technological apparatus to continue the dependency culture by disabled people.

Oliver produces a further evaluation of disability where he states his belief that the rise of capitalism coupled with institutionalisation since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century has led to the development of an individualistic model of disability (Oliver 1990). In order to retain this perspective, its proponents have gained 'ideological hegemony' ever since, and Oliver (1990) believes that this explains why the medical model of disability has translated into common sense and everyday assumptions and beliefs (Barnes 1997).

In response to the idea that this oppression only has its roots in the Enlightenment period, Barnes (1997) was able to trace much of today's negative attitudes towards disabled people back to different eras in history. He used several examples such as infanticide of apparently disabled infants in Greco-Roman times and Christianity's paternalistic, charitable tendencies towards disabled people. Attitudes towards disabled people are, therefore, deeply historically rooted.

In order to show the links between the concept of disability and oppression, Abberley (1987) states that the social, financial, environmental and psychological disadvantages of impaired people were manufactured by perceptions that cater for the needs of the majority. Failing to take into account the needs of people with a disability in overall planning, such as public transport, access to buildings etc. means not just that impaired people are disadvantaged but they are oppressed as well.

The social model of disability gained popularity during the 1980s and 1990s where organisations of disabled people began to rely on the model as a basis for their campaigns for societal rights. However, in recent times, the social model has been under severe scrutiny, because some commentators have criticised its proponents for undervaluing the difficulties caused by impairments (Shakespeare 2002).

To apply this disability perspective to the field of deafness, it is clear that proponents of this model would recognise one's own impairments, but do not view them as a factor of oppression. They would actively support de-institutionalisation of education and social services, and they believe in assimilation and integration. By default, the access to the majority society is the primary aim. The reinterpretation of the social model by the majority society implies that Deaf people would require technological advances to access to society and these technological advances are seen as a compensation for deafness. Under this perspective, it is assumed that there is no further viable alternative to take account of the cultural and linguistic nature of Deaf communities.

#### *2.4 Shortcomings of the social model of disability to cover the experiences of the Deaf community.*

It is clear that the social model of disability is born out of the experiences of being oppressed, ignored and exploited by the majority. Many commentators including Oliver, Barnes and Finkelstein develop this social model of disability to counter the medicalised thinking that impairment and

disability are eternally intertwined. Moreover, this medicalised thinking encourage the majority's fears of known mortality and the unknown and these heighten their sense of tragedy and pity in those disabled people. French and Swain (2004) challenge the dominant implication arising from this sense of tragedy and pity for disabled people. They also state that the consequence of this implication is that disabled people lead unhappy lives and have not any positive experiences in life. Deaf people have countered this type of attitude and wished to challenge this dominant implication. However, the social model does not help us to understand the linguistic and cultural nature of the Deaf community; it is not sufficient for comprehending the actual experiences of Deaf people (Lane 1993: 20). Deaf communities find some parts of the social model anathema to their experiences and aspirations. Integrated education and the lack of emphasis on linguistic rights are the examples of how the social model does not fit with Deaf people's experiences. So it is necessary to create a specific model of deafness in order to comprehend the issues arising from deafness.

This is not to say that all deaf people are not comfortable with this social model, as many of them would find it as the ideal model. Therefore, it is important to point out that not all deaf people embrace the linguistic and cultural nature of the Deaf community; they would opt for assimilative approaches. While the implementation of solutions to deal with policies for deaf people on that basis may work for some deaf people, it does exclude a significant group, for example, Deaf people who embrace the signed languages and participate actively in the Deaf communities.

A literature review of British-based key social model theorists (Bynoe Oliver & Barnes 1991; Barnes 1991, Barnes & Mercer 1999 & 2003, Finklestein 2001, Oliver 1996 & 2003, Shakespeare 2006, Swain & French 2004, Morris 2003, 2005) demonstrates their minimalist attention to the significance of indigenous sign languages, their related Deaf culture and a number of anathemas experienced by Deaf people regarding the disability movement's overriding principle of integrating into the wider society. While the social model theorists do adopt a radical view that the society must address the disability experienced by disabled people on account of their impairment, Deaf communities prefer to be treated equal but different and recognised as a linguistic minority (Lane *et al.* 1996, Corker 1998, Ladd 2003, Batterbury *et al.* 2007, Bauman 2008, and Emery 2009). Though many of the social model theorists mentioned above are aware that Deaf communities tend to dissociate themselves from the disability movement as evident in their writings (Mercer 2002: 235, Barnes & Mercer 2003: 45 for instance) but they did not address these issues significantly.

The disability movement's overriding principle of integrating into the wider society and be treated equally as fellow citizens retains some underlying assumptions that signed languages are the compensatory tools. The following key theorists can testify to these assumptions. For example, Oliver<sup>28</sup> (2004:29) suggests that the social model backs the claim for linguistic recognition by the British Deaf community just because the majority society could not 'speak' British Sign Language.

The social theorists did not address the central anathema that Deaf people prefer detached education for Deaf children to ensure that they acquire Deaf culture and fluency in indigenous sign languages and have them as a basis for the well-being and sense of belonging which is crucial for subsequent communal solidarity and fraternisation. Discounting the cultural and communal value of indigenous sign languages by viewing them as a compensatory tool and have it regarded as a necessity for access to mainstream communication, this can be exemplified by the article of Thomas and Hewitt (2004: 161-168)<sup>29</sup>.

Moreover, the integration into the wider society and being equal is essentially based on the principle of individualism, which is valued highly in the Western world and Deaf communities easily view this principle as the anathema (Ladd 2003:167). However, the social model theorists did not deal with this anathema sufficiently as they view the civil rights as the ultimate solution such as equal and full inclusion in society with the total transformation of society as an aspirational aim (Shakespeare 2002:13). The limitations of availing of civil rights can be illustrated in the next chapter.

Many commentators express uneasiness with the idea of this social model when applied to the Deaf community, as there are a number of dissonances between this model and the actual experiences of Deaf people. Paransis (1998) describes an example of the writers in the 1980s that were initially comfortable with the social model of deafness. However, Paransis detects and discusses the shift from this social model to the cultural model especially during the 1990s. The shift towards the cultural model is rationalised by Ladd:

In the contemporary manifestation of this belief within the social model and what I term the liberal intelligentsia, this means that the only construction that they can comprehend is that of enabling that individual Deaf person to access majority society. However, as we shall go on to see, this approach not only misses the whole *raison d'être* of Deaf societies, but has inevitably damaged them as a consequence (Ladd 2003: 167)

---

<sup>28</sup> Mike Oliver is one of the most prolific supporters of the social model and in fact, he was the first who used the term, the social model of disability.

<sup>29</sup> This article can be found in the book 'Disabling barriers, enabling environments' edited by John Swain, Colin Barnes, Sally French, Carol Thomas (2004; London. Sage).

The first obvious discordance between the disability perspective and that of the Deaf community is that Deaf people are far quicker to state their deafness as a character trait or render it insignificant in their outlook than members of the disability community are. The second difference centres on the Deaf community's claim for linguistic minority status, given the linguistic acceptance of signed language as a language in its own right. More importantly, through this affinity for signed language, Deaf people prioritise fraternising with other Deaf people and encourage a type of endogamy among Deaf people<sup>30</sup>. These fraternisations of Deaf people are rarely found similarly in other disability groups. The best example is the Deaflympics, which caters for international sport competitions for Deaf people, and it has resisted successfully against the attempts by the International Olympic Committee to be incorporated into the Paralympics in spite of tempting offers of lucrative sponsorships (Eickman 2006).

Another aspect includes divergent views in the area of mainstreaming for education, with the Deaf community being very reluctant to accept this approach. The disability movement is in favour of mainstream education where disabled children are taught alongside the ordinary children while the Deaf communities retain affinity for the segregated<sup>31</sup> schooling where they can be taught through the medium of sign language. These dissonances and related issues will be further explored below.

### 2.5 *Cultural-linguistic perspective - Deafhood;*

The third 'model' views deafness through sign language and its related culture, as a natural human variation, and regards deafness as defining Deaf people's very being, rather than viewing it as an impairing trait (Lane, Hoffmeister and Behan 1997, Lane 2002, Ladd 2003). The Deaf community itself is a very strong proponent of this model. Deaf (note the capital D) refers to persons who see themselves as culturally Deaf who generally use sign language. They base their identity on shared experiences, common linguistic characteristics<sup>32</sup> and a shared set of collective beliefs and values. Their perception of personal identity bears little or no connection to the hearing world. Hence, they see themselves as a socio-linguistic minority in this sense. Members of a Deaf community may not all be necessarily deaf themselves; they can also be hearing children of Deaf adults. This group of

---

<sup>30</sup> The current rate is approximately 80% though there are many Deaf people marrying or partnering hearing people but the hearing spouses' ability to sign and their involvement in the Deaf communities are often positively encouraged.

<sup>31</sup> The word – segregated - can be a misnomer because it carries negative connections and should not be used to describe these Deaf schools – in fact – the equivalent meaning is never used to describe the schooling for the Deaf within the Deaf communities.

<sup>32</sup> Linguistic characteristics refer to the strong affinity and preferences for sign languages over spoken languages. The fluency, style, presentation and approach of narration in signing are highly valued and these characteristics are often used to embody the ideal personality.

people is commonly known as the Deaf community (Lane, Hoffmeister and Bahan 1996, Parasnis 1998, Lane 2002, Ladd 2003).

The cultural-linguistic perspective has been developed as a model since the 1970s. Ladd (1993) notes however, that the formation of culturally and linguistically-inspired National Union of the Deaf in Britain during the early 1970s was made in the context where there was a strong movement towards the establishment of a social model. The Irish Deaf Society owes its origins to the circumstances where a support group was found in 1980 to exploit the United Nations' designated international year of disabled to highlight its grievances (Irish Deaf Society 2006). Given the events of history, the cultural-linguistic perspective found itself closely aligned therefore with the social model, especially after strong public endorsement of the social model from the 1980s onwards. Over the years, however, proponents of the cultural and linguistic model seemed to be on the margins of the social model. A move away from the social model gradually developed.

The analysis of literature on Deaf Studies reveals several references to the existence of Deaf communities, signed languages and Deaf culture (Higgins 1980, Padden & Humphries 1988, Gregory & Hartley 1991, Erting 1994). However, for some reason<sup>33</sup>, this perspective was implicitly situated within the social model for a while even though there was a growing amount of dissonance between the two positions (Ladd 1988, Padden & Humphries 1988, Gregory & Hartley 1991).

Several international conferences and events such as the 'Deaf Way' in Gallaudet University (Erting 1994), and World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) congresses were held over recent decades. These events addressed the status of signed languages and cultural issues; such matters were *not* discussed within the social model (Erting 1994). In the Irish context, publications dating back to the 1980s and 1990s, published by the Deaf-led organisations<sup>34</sup> show that there was no reference to or major discussion about how the social model could enhance the status of the Irish Deaf community (Matthews 1996, Crean 1997).

The most significant sign of shifting away from the social model and locating the cultural-linguistic model outside the social model is the treatment of signed languages. The analysis of treatment of research literature on signed languages shows a noticeable movement towards a position where

---

<sup>33</sup> This is beyond the ability of this thesis to investigate but this would be an interesting proposal for further research.

<sup>34</sup> The community magazines, Irish Deaf Journal (Irish Deaf Society) and Contact (Dublin Deaf Association) are the examples here. Other conference proceedings by these organisations are also more examples here

signed languages are celebrated instead of being tolerated ((Higgins 1980, Padden & Humphries 1988, Ladd 1988, Padden & Humphries 1988, Gregory & Hartley 1991, Erting 1994, Lane Hoffmeister and Bahan 1996, Parasnis 1998, Lane 2002, Ladd 2003). The shift appears to be gradual and mirrors the policy shifts adopted by Deaf-led organisations. The European Union of the Deaf managed to persuade the European Union to adopt a resolution calling on members states to recognise their respective signed languages, twice in 1988 and again in 1998 (Leeson 2001). The World Federation of the Deaf adopted a motion in 1991 requesting its national association members to develop a strategy to have their signed languages recognised nationally (Skutnabb-Kangas 1994: 408-411). The way was opened for the Deafhood model to emerge, one in which signed languages were not defined simply as different languages, but rather as a core part of Deaf culture. They were there to be celebrated, nurtured and supported.

The best response to resisting the binary classification of deafness as a disability is to engage with Ladd's model of Deafhood (2003). The term *Deafhood* is created as a terminological measure of counter-narration in the discursive system. This term, *Deafhood* takes account of a long historical narration of Deaf people themselves over centuries which were not recorded and were undocumented from the written history.

Ladd describes *Deafhood* as a process of *becoming*:

...Deafhood is not, however, a 'static' medical condition like 'deafness'. Instead, it represents a process – the struggle by each Deaf child, Deaf family and Deaf adult to explain to themselves and each other as a community, and enacting those explanations rather than writing books about them. Deaf people engaged in a daily praxis, a continuing internal and external dialogue. This dialogue not only acknowledges that existence as a Deaf person is actually a process of becoming and maintaining 'Deaf', but also reflects different interpretations of Deafhood, of what being a Deaf person in a Deaf community might mean' (Ladd 2003: 3)

Ladd (2003) went on to describe the concept of Deafhood in philosophical terms and he claims that sign languages are capable of philosophising. Hence it is important to recognise that Deaf people, who use sign languages primarily, contribute to human knowledge. Drawing upon his research of rich heritage of sign languages used by Deaf communities dating back to the sixteenth century, and the discourses developed from these communities, Ladd identifies the seven philosophical tenets. They are:

- Deaf communities possess the gift of languages so special so they can be used to say things that speech cannot
- These languages are even more special because they can be adapted to cross international boundaries when spoken languages fail
- Consequently, Deaf people model in potential the ability to become the first truly global citizens, and thus serve as a model for the rest of society
- Deaf people were intentionally created on earth to manifest these qualities, and the value of their existence should not be called into question
- Hearing people unable to use them are effectively ‘sign-impaired citizens
- These languages were offered as a gift to hearing people, that if they joined Deaf people and learned them, the quality of their lives would be improved
- The banqueters<sup>35</sup> were well aware that the majority of Deaf people had not yet had the opportunity to attend Deaf education and experience sign language socialisation but they plead themselves to continue to fight to ensure that all Deaf people had the ‘right’ to these experiences (Ladd 2003: 111).

Ladd (2003) said most of the tenets were lost or covertly expressed after the advent of oralism<sup>36</sup>. However, he called for the revival of these philosophical tenets as a positive contribution to human societies. Ladd (2007) himself stresses that the concept of Deafhood is not aiming at creating an isolationist or absolutist position of Deaf communities. He wants Deaf communities to recognise how damaging Oralism was to their communities and how it dispersed these communities. He believes that Deafhood is a process that allows each Deaf person to examine their existence of being Deaf. Once they are strong enough in self respect and they can realise that promises of such communities can embrace Deaf people in all ways of life be they mainstreamed Deaf people, hearing people of Deaf children, or CODAs. Ladd seeks to identify the epistemology and ontology experienced by Deaf communities to validate the concept of Deafhood. He believes these issues are crucial to the concept of Deafhood and could enable Deaf communities to understand the origins of oppression and colonialism and their struggles to be freed from these practices.

After considering varied perspectives on being deaf and given my experience as a Deaf person since birth, I am inclined to prefer the Deafhood concept as it has embodied the general experiences of Deaf people who have a strong affinity for sign languages and their related cultures. Other perspectives – the social and medical, could not explain these experiences. They fail to take account of linguistic and cultural aspects, which are highly prized by Deaf people but are often

---

<sup>35</sup> These people are referred to Deaf men who regularly met in banquets in Paris during 1830s and their discussions are summarised in Ladd (2003).

<sup>36</sup> Oralism refers to the philosophy that sign languages impair the ability of the Deaf child to acquire spoken language; therefore, sign languages must not actively be encouraged or even tolerated. This will be explained further in the later chapter.



misunderstood by hearing people. It also fails to recognise that Deaf communities exist in every society. As for the social model differing from the medical model, it may bring a comfortable explanation for disabled people, including some deaf people but it fails to capture essential aspects within the Deaf communities.

## 2.6 *Dissonances between Deafhood and the social perspective on deafness:*

There are a number of dissonances between the social perspective of deafness and the Deafhood model (Ladd 2003: 166-169). While Ladd (2003) develops his idea of Deafhood, there are a number of commentaries that had expressed uneasiness with the application of the disability construction to the Deaf communities. The most prominent critic is Lane (2005) as he lists four reasons for rejecting the disability construction. A word of caution is necessary here since Lane did not define the nature of disability construction in terms of a medical or social model. Thus his criticism of disability construction can be interpreted as a critique of both the medical and social models of deafness. The following are a list of reasons which Lane offers to us to reject the disability construction:

1. Deaf people themselves believe they are not disabled
2. Disability construction brings needless risks to the Deaf child
3. It endangers the future of the Deaf World<sup>37</sup>
4. Disability construction brings bad solutions to real problems. (Lane 2005: 291).

Lane believes that there is no higher authority than the Deaf people themselves to define themselves and there is no reason for them to surrender this definition.

‘The Deaf World is not ambivalent; its members characteristically think it is a fine thing to be Deaf, and favor more of it. Unlike most expectant parents with disabilities, expectant Deaf parents characteristically hope to have children with whom they can share their language, culture, and unique experiences —that is, Deaf children’ (Lane 2002: 369).

Of course, this thinking baffles many outsiders and it could amount to an apparent denial of one’s own physical difference. Lane points out that many cultural groups celebrate their physical differences such as the tall and pale Finns and the pygmies of the Iturbi forests. Hence, there is no

---

<sup>37</sup> Lane favours this term although its definition is not significantly different from the term Deafhood. Lane tends to treat Deaf communities in terms of ethnicity. Therefore his distinction is differed from Ladd’s process of becoming Deaf. The differences are beyond this chapter’s analysis though Ladd’s stance is much favoured here.

reason why Deaf people should not follow this line of thinking. He also refers to the changing attitudes towards the gay population through the times, and how they successfully debunked the disability and psychiatric label (Lane 2005: 297-299).

To support this view, Deaf people worldwide have used capital 'D' referring to people who see themselves as culturally Deaf. Woodward first coined this concept in 1972 in an attempt to distinguish between those deaf people who do not wish to belong to the Deaf World and culturally Deaf people (Woodward 1972). This practice is adopted as almost every literature supports the existence of Deaf communities and their indigenous sign languages and related cultures. Lane (2005) also states that if one avoids the acceptance of the disability label then this should not be read as a deliberate attempt to avoid its related stigma.

Lane cites the examples of many children who had horrid experiences of being surgically operated on just because of their perceived physical difference<sup>38</sup>. When they became adults, they often condemned such practices. Cochlear implant surgery is a case in point. This surgery refers to the invasive operation where a device is implanted inside the child's head to enable her to hear more artificially<sup>39</sup>. This surgery is based on the whole premise that being deaf is disabled and the child should be afforded a chance to hear and be able to integrate into the 'wider' world (Lane 2005:299).

However, Lane (2005) is able to list a number of risks and dubious benefits arising from this kind of surgery. Therefore, there are many ethical questions. Such ethical dilemmas are often related to the importance of enabling the Deaf child to avail of opportunities offered by the 'wider' world. This view implies (in some cases, it is explicitly stated) that the Deaf community is too small and devoid of such opportunities.

Though parents have given their consent, Lane (2005) highlights the fact that parents are more likely to have similar cultural, linguistic and moral outlooks with the surgery team. Hence, consent is given in a very narrow sense. Lane (2005) has reported that the cochlear implant programmes have made tremendous efforts to stigmatise the use of sign language and it has tried to avoid referring to the Deaf community's existence and its related culture. Therefore, such efforts individualise and problematise the concept of deafness.

---

<sup>38</sup> Among examples; children were operated to correct ambiguous genitalia, height, their mental ability and even, sexuality (Lane 2005:299)

<sup>39</sup> More description, please read Lane 2005: 299.

The third part of the arguments which questions the disability label by Lane (2005) concerns the risks to the future well being of the DEAF-WORLD. Earlier risks date back to the nineteenth century and were exemplified by the eugenics-driven agenda. Alexander Graham Bell spearheaded a campaign regulating inter-marriage among Deaf people and promoting voluntary sterilisation among Deaf women in an effort to reduce the number of Deaf people<sup>40</sup> (Lane 2005: 302-305). Some such measures were subsequently legally enacted in a number of states in the US and as well as in some Nordic countries. The Nazis also continued the practice (Lane 2005, Ryan 2002, Biesold 1999).

Lane describes the current but subtler forms of eugenics that bring more risks to the continued existence of the DEAF-WORLD such as, genetic counselling and cochlear implant surgery. It is claimed by some Deaf activists that such measures aim to reduce the number of Deaf people<sup>41</sup>. Lane wonders if there were similar measures against other minority groups, would there be uproar in the society? He notes that there is legal protection for particular minority groups internationally and suggests it be extended to cover DEAF-WORLD. Perhaps more controversially, Lane proposes newborn Deaf children are to be regarded as culturally Deaf regardless of the status of their parents (Lane 2005:302-305). His proposal is based on evidence that many Deaf children grew up in a poor communicative environment along with their parents who were denied chances to learn sign language; within the medical model, no intervention has been made to redress such irregularity.

As for the fourth point here, Lane (2005:305) claims the disability construction brings inappropriate solutions to the perceived needs of the Deaf communities. He claims that if the Deaf people accept the disability label, it would distort or distract the way the general public understand their claim to being recognised as a linguistic minority. The disability model would favour mainstream education while the Deaf community is very reluctant to accept this approach (Padden & Humphries 1988, Corker 1998, Lane Hoffmeister & Bahan 1996, Lane 2002, 2005, Ladd 2003). As for the Irish situation, there are a number of documents and submissions made by Deaf-led organisations and Deaf individuals who adopt a similar view to Ladd and Lane. They want state policy to be flexible and take account of their views (Irish Deaf Society Annual Report 1998, 1999 & 2000).

---

<sup>40</sup> There is an irony in it as Bell implicitly recognised the existence of Deaf community while other similar proponents denied such existence.

<sup>41</sup> Lane mentioned this but on a recent controversy that led to the *Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008 in the UK*, some genetic counsellors had lent their support to the campaign by a Deaf-led group to remove 'deafness' from the proscribed list (Emery et al 2010).

The disability construction would channel more resources towards curative and rehabilitative services, which would in turn compound more difficulties and problems for the Deaf communities. The services are often regarded as attempts to integrate, or more likely assimilate, Deaf people into the wider majority society at a cost – the loss of value for their cultural and linguistic well being (Lane 2005; 305-307).

Another important difference between the social and the Deafhood model is that the latter values the interdependence between Deaf people within the Deaf community. Lane (2005) states:

‘Deaf persons cherish interdependence with other Deaf persons. Whereas persons with disabilities seek total integration into society at large, Deaf persons cherish their unique identity and seek integration that honors their distinct language and culture’ (Lane 2005: 306).

Ladd (2003: 26-74) lists a long range of interest-based organisations aimed at the Deaf community in Britain, and Lane (2005) points out the existence of Deaf-led political, sports, social and literacy organisations in the US. There are similar organisations in the Irish situation (Irish Deaf Society 2006, Irish Deaf.com<sup>42</sup>).

Another related difference is that Deaf people are readily available for the workforce. Recent research in the Irish situation found that 65 per cent of Deaf people make themselves available for the employment markets, and the rate corresponds similarly with the national rate for the whole population. However, for the disabled population in general, the rate drops to thirty-five per cent (Conroy 2006).

Oppression experienced by disabled people and Deaf people are different in substance. Equally, they adopt a different approach to counter such oppression. Attachment to services is also different between the two groups as Lane (2005) suggests:

Whereas persons with disabilities seek, above all, better medical care, rehabilitation services, and personal assistance services (e.g., help with personal hygiene, dressing, and eating); Deaf persons do not attach particular importance to any of these services. Whereas persons with disabilities seek independence, Deaf persons do not have any more concern with independent living than persons in general (Lane 2002: 369).

---

<sup>42</sup> The directory of Deaf organisations and events can be seen at its website: <http://www.irishdeaf.com/>

As for the existence of indigenous sign languages used by Deaf communities throughout the world, this can provide the *raison d'être* for the Deaf communities. Linguists since 1960s have recognised that indigenous sign languages are equal to the spoken language<sup>43</sup>. Given the elevation of the status of sign languages as equal to the spoken languages, this gives an impetus for Deaf communities to regard themselves as linguistic minority.

Ladd (2003) mentions that since receiving recognition from linguists and cultural researchers, every language must have its cultural element. Many commentators (Padden & Humphries 1988, Ladd 2003, Rosen 2004) have eloquently described the existence of Deaf culture arising from its link to indigenous sign languages.

After recognising the existence of indigenous sign languages and their related cultures, many Deaf communities change their political strategy. They switch from the social disability model to focus on positive personal abilities. The demand is that societies adjust themselves to accommodate diversity. Therefore, they demand equality and empowerment on that basis.

In contrast, the disability movement rarely discusses linguistic discrimination even though there are some social theorists attempting to raise such issues within the disability movement. However, it appears to have failed to gain a foothold (Corker 2000).

With regard to the existence of disability 'culture', there is a contrast with the claims by the Deaf communities. There are conflicting statements from disabled commentators. Peters (2000) in her response to Bragg suggested that disability culture does not exist when compared to Deaf culture. Peters insists that disability culture does exist. However, Shakespeare (quoted in Corker 1998:28) questions the wisdom of proclaiming the existence of disability culture, as it would derail the political strategy of disability movements to integrate disabled people into society fully. Although, the concept of 'culture' appeared in recent disability studies (Scott-Hill 2003), there is little agreement on how the term should be used among disabled people.

### 2.7 *Disagreements by other commentators.*

Other social theorists dispute some, if not all of Lane's four reasons for rejecting a social model perspective on the DEAF WORLD. For example, Corker (1998) suggests that the majority of deaf

---

<sup>43</sup> Spolsky & Chomsky had mentioned this part in their respective speeches when they were in Dublin during early 2005.

people are not committed in their self-definition and have expressed no great significance to adopting a Deaf identity. However, she includes a full spectrum of deaf people, from Deaf people to deafened people in her analysis and clearly the latter are hearing people who have become deaf. Commentators such as Lane and Ladd focus on a specific group – Deaf people who participate socially and culturally in the Deaf communities actively. Therefore, other deaf people who have not regarded themselves as members of these Deaf communities are not included in this specific group.

Johnston (2005) insists that there are false and unethical arguments for not labelling deafness as a disability. In his article, he proposes three questions: (a), is deafness a disability? (b) is it ethical to knowingly or intentionally have children who are deaf, and (c), is there an ethical use of genetic screening and/or reproductive technology to avoid deafness?

Johnston (2005) cites the survey carried out by the Centre for Deaf Studies in Bristol. Here, a slight majority of Deaf people view themselves as disabled in society. He also uses his personal experience when growing up as a hearing person within the extended Deaf family where he recognised that he had more advantages than his Deaf siblings. He concludes that the arguments for not labelling deafness as disability are false and unethical. He believes that it is not ethical to argue against such measures that are perceived as threats to the cohesion of Deaf communities in the interest of preserving Deaf communities at the expense of individuals (Johnston 2005). For example, cochlear implantation may benefit individuals but not as beneficial to the Deaf communities because the implantees may start to view their identities differently from the Deaf community and decide to leave the Deaf community and assimilate into the hearing world. Another example is the genetic counselling and genetic engineering may be sought by parents to reduce the likelihood of having deaf children. However, Johnston (2005) complicates his arguments further by saying it is possible for the Deaf communities to adopt a dual approach:

Denial of deafness as a disability, even if the stance is simply a political strategy, is quite unnecessary and distorts the meaning and intention of some of the scholars, activists, or social theorists who first drew our attention to the social and cultural dimension of deafness. In conclusion, and with the appropriate qualifications in place, I see nothing controversial or pernicious in understanding deafness as both a disability and an “ethnicity,” and thus insofar as deafness is a disability, it is to be avoided, if possible (Johnston 2005: 429).

Ladd (2003) and Lane (1984) used the examples of the existence of Deaf people (communities) in societies dating from classical times up to the present. This view is not shared by some commentators such as Davis (1995), quoted in Brueggemann (1999):

"As Davis (1995) tells us, "before the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the deaf were not constructed as a group"; furthermore, when the attention of philosophers and educators during the Enlightenment did turn to deafness, "one might conclude that deafness itself was not so much the central phenomenon as was education" (Brueggemann 1999: 32)

However, Davis fails to take account of the fact that sign languages existed before attempts were made to educate these Deaf children. The existence of sign languages and social gatherings of Deaf people in many classical and medieval societies apparently give more credence to the claim of the historical basis of Deafhood (Ladd 2003, Lane 1993).

As for the second reason for Lane's critique of disability construction, there appears to be a consensus among Deaf-led organisations about the dubious benefits arising from the cochlear implantation (Power 2005). It appears that the opposition to such implantation has been mitigated in recent times, especially in the face of certain majorities in societies who are fundamentally phonocentric and oppose the idea of a person functioning in society without availing of sounds.

There are ever-permanent concerns about the future well-being of Deaf communities and perceived threats from all sorts. The concerns were even expressed in the nineteenth century. Such concerns led to the politicisation of Deaf issues. National representative organisations of the Deaf were set up in many countries especially after the Milan congress in 1880 (Conama 2002).

Apart from those who are opposed to the cultural-linguistic 'perspective', there are a number of practical issues questioning the wisdom of preserving or strengthening the existence of Deaf communities. The most prevalent issues raised are:

- The contradictory political location of Deaf people
- Isolation of Deaf community – limiting opportunities etc. and its reaction
- Costs of being Deaf – burden on society?

### 2.7.1 *The contradictory political location of Deaf people*

Those who disagree with the ideas proposed by Deaf communities that they are in fact, cultural and linguistic groups, are quick to point out an apparently strange phenomenon adopted by many Deaf people<sup>44</sup>. It is generally known that many Deaf people, who have no qualms proclaiming their cultural existence, still apply for local or state support under disability terms. Balkany *et al.* (1996) points to those people who have not promoted their cultural/linguistic existence aggressively in order to avail of governmental support and finance. They likened this situation analogously to a situation where women conform to the masculine idea of what it means to be feminine in order to get governmental support. Lane (2002) actually urges Deaf people to disown the disability label in order to get credibility in society.

However, other commentators such as Padden & Humphries (1988), Corker (1998) and Bateman (1998) point out that given the historical inadequate education system and inferior status adopted by many Deaf people, political awareness and knowledge are limited to the elite. Such circumstances make Deaf people internalise the belief that they are disabled because they are encouraged to think this way by professionals and public discourse.

The opponents to the cultural-linguistic stance also fail to recognise the uniqueness of many Deaf professionals who choose to remain in the Deaf community and who are under tremendous pressure to conflict their roles (Redfern 1995). Given the historical experience of dealing with hearing professionals who as a general rule did not take active roles socially and politically within the Deaf communities, Deaf people tended to view professionals as outsiders. Such a similar attitude was extended to Deaf people who became professionals in their own right; therefore, they are under pressure to behave like hearing professionals but Redfern (1995) notices that many Deaf professionals tend to remain in the Deaf community. The decision to remain in the community can be seen as a tacit approval and as tantamount to the powers of attracting to the Deaf community.

Jones (2006) refers to the structures in the UK where the Deaf community is forced to accept its inferiority because the structures are dominated by bio-medical discourse, neo-classical economic discourse and the laws of structures. She claims that the neo-classical economic discourse '*positions actors within structures as rational, having a utility of purpose with a justifiable end of profit*' (ibid:

---

<sup>44</sup> This phenomenon does exist in Ireland as there was a debate among Irish Deaf people on the television programme in 2000 (Hands On 2002).



2006). Facilitating Deafhood by hiring an interpreter on a regular basis can be seen as a costly expense so it would be rational to opt for aids or adaptations.

It is clear that given the dominance of particular values and discourses, Deaf people are forced to have to identify themselves as disabled in order to qualify for resources. Given such circumstances, the Deaf communities are unable to offer realistic or an adequate alternative for those who want to renounce the disability label. Deaf people are caught in the ambiguous situation: to be a full active citizen in society they may need extra resources (e.g. interpreters), yet in the current socio-political climate the only way to get resources is to claim to be 'disabled'.

### 2.7.2 *Isolation of Deaf community – limiting opportunities:*

There is another issue that relates to the perceived isolation and smallness of the Deaf community. As a result of its size and isolation, the Deaf community is often seen as limiting opportunities and chances for those who wish to 'live'<sup>45</sup> in the community. Those who champion full integration or the assimilation of Deaf people into society, even at the expense of the preservation of future communal activities for Deaf people, often point out the perceived isolation of Deaf community. They claim the size and isolation reduces the scope of fulfilment in the lives of Deaf people (Balkany *et al.* 1996). In one instance, the Deaf community is even compared to the Jewish sect, the Haidism (Corker 1998). This thinking is also evident in the Irish situation (Mathews forthcoming).

However, the criticism fails to recognise that the Deaf community does not have any claim to geographical or territorial space as it exists within all kinds of societies. Moreover, the fact is that ninety percent or more of Deaf children are born to hearing persons. This invalidates the 'isolation' argument. Lane & Bahan (1998) point out that:

'Although ASL-speaking Americans do face communication barriers, they are certainly not "limited to the Deaf-ASL world"; most are bilingual and interact daily with hearing persons at work or in school, in commerce, in their community, in their families, and elsewhere. They use English when watching television; receiving telephone calls; reading newspapers, magazines, books, software and recipes; and dealing with financial matters. The stereotype that Deaf persons live in their own world is contradicted by sociologic and sociolinguistic findings and straightforward observation' (Lane & Bahan 1998: .311)

---

<sup>45</sup> The word has to be bracketed since there is no strict territorial sense of geographical space as implied by others.

Moreover, the size of the Deaf community does not seem to be a problem for outsiders who gain employment in several areas such as interpreters, teachers, counsellors and social workers. In that sense, the perceived size problem is treated as a solitary problem for the Deaf community to deal with.

### 2.7.3 *Costs of being Deaf – burden on society?*

Another argument suggests that Deaf people are a burden on society. Mohr et al (2000) estimates the loss of productivity per Deaf individual to society can run up to one million dollars in an average lifetime. They point out that many Deaf individuals have availed of the legislation, Americans with Disability Act to redress their grievances. Society is liable to fund and address such grievances. Balkany *et al.* (1996) suggests that:

To deny that deafness is a disability, Deaf leaders must also deny its cost to society (Balkany, *et al.* 1996: 751).

Both commentators imply that there is a ‘financial black hole’ and that expenditures on Deaf people are wasted. They fail to recognise the long-standing basic economic maxim that all expenditures must be equally balanced by the income. It means that someone in society would be beneficially better off at someone else’s expense. For example, in Mohr’s analysis (Mohr *et al.* 2000) they note that there are millions of dollars spent on education for the Deaf. But the analysis did not mention how many are salaried in the education system, and their contribution to society must be recognized as value return to the society. They would spend their salaries in the societies. Moreover, the majority of those salaried to educate the Deaf belong to the majority in society; so the ‘deafness’ industry provides employment opportunities for hearing people.

### 2.8 *Relationship between Deaf movements and disability movements*

The models of deafness and of disability are often conceptually and philosophically intertwined, sometimes if not without a certain tension (Scott-Hill 2003: 88). This tension might be down to the amorphous nature of identity. The Deaf community is not alone in this regard. With the boundaries of disability being porous, many minority groups that declare their independent identity, including African-American groups, find that association with disability to be irrelevant or they abhor it (Davis 2002: 36).

Disability movements have been criticised for creating a universal model of disability which covers every possible impairment, ignoring any innate cultural and structural differences between them (Davis 2002:37). On other hand, some point out that refusal to associate oneself with disability can be regarded as a fear of abnormality itself, a feature which is ironically part of liberal thought (Davis 2002:38).

Studies of emancipatory models of deafness and disability throw up considerable differences between them. Scott-Hill (2003) states that Deaf people tend to emphasise cultural and social injustices and inequalities, while disability studies primarily focus on the economic arena. Nevertheless, a number of writers urge that there is a way forward for both these models. Corker (1998) attempts to analyse why there is a division between Deaf communities and the disabled movement and has suggested an alternative framework. Recognising a number of significant differences between the two groups, Corker lists a number of commonalities between Deaf and disability movements, as follows:

- A history of cultural oppression in Western society, with specific reference to, for example, eugenics, institutionalisation and genocide;
- Theory being based on essentialist notions of deafness/disability, for example ‘one can only be Deaf or hearing’; ‘disability is located in the individual or in society’
- A distancing from the concept of impairment
- Difficulty in dealing with pluralism and individualism
- Self-definition in terms of social identity, social movement and community
- Strong beliefs in self-determination
- Recognition for linguistic minority construction of Deafness. (Corker 1998: 31).

Corker (1998) believes that despite considerable differences between the Deaf and disability movements, they can work together on common issues in order to present a unified front to champion such rights. However, Robinson and Adam issue a word of caution in this approach as it may be seen as ‘*conflating disability and Deafness*’ (Robinson & Adam 2003: 9). For some, there are some doubts that such conflation would happen. Although, Corker (1998) proposes a common ground for both groups to work together, she admits she is not satisfied with the idea of Deaf community as a linguistic minority for two reasons. It draws attention away from core issues of oppression and power relations, and the community would continue to function as the ‘*Other*’. She claims these reasons would absolve the society of its responsibility to Deaf people.

Scott-Hill doubts that Deaf people would be willing to engage in disabled people's recent universalistic brand of cultural politics, because Deaf culture, which is a crucial component of Deaf identity, has harnessed the support and fascination of the majority. This is sufficient to sustain Deaf people's political agenda (Scott-Hill 2003:101). However, Corker (1998) points out that the growing popularity of sign language classes has not sufficiently shifted the public attitude towards Deaf people.

For Scott-Hill (2003), the best scenario is:

‘...that disabled people's cultural campaigns work towards a form of cultural systematic integration, which recognised the rights of individual groups, whilst keeping in mind that deaf people are not born or made equal (Scott-Hill 2003:101)

Regardless of whatever the public fascination with the sign language and its related culture, Lane (1997) supports this stance by stating that Deaf people would support the aims of the disability movement fully. This would be so as long as the disability movement recognises the cultural-linguistic stance of Deaf people and as long as it does not attempt to subsume this stance under the social model of deafness. The social model of disability acknowledges the significance of impairment though it refuses to accept that it is a source of oppression. Yet the Deafhood model does not have the similar level of significance towards the levels of hearing loss. Therefore, those who champion the social model should recognise the significance of the Deafhood model for these Deaf communities who embrace sign languages and their related cultures.

## 2.9 *Concluding remarks*

This chapter has presented a number of contrasting ‘perspectives’ on deafness and has outlined its origins briefly. Each ‘perspective’ has been critically discussed, in particular with reference to the difference between social perspectives and Deafhood. To the layperson, the difference may be trivial and insignificant. However, to this researcher, after being conditioned in growing up Deaf and being actively involved in the Deaf community at local, national and international level, the differences are real and important. This is so because I have experience of being Deaf from birth and the experience can be shared by a countless number of Deaf people here and abroad. On that basis of experience, the medical model is easily recognised as an anathema to me as the Deaf person.

With regard to the social model, other writers such as Davis (1995), Corker (1998), Scott-Hill (2003)<sup>46</sup>, and Johnston (2005) have attempted to address the gaps between the disability movement and the Deaf communities in order to create a unified front. While their arguments are persuasive, and although it is not the intentions of the proponents of the integration of the Deaf and Disability movements, the fear among the Deaf communities is that this would inevitably lead to Deaf people being ‘assimilated’ into a majority, phonocentric culture.

I have described briefly how the cultural-linguistic perspective was developed first within the spirit of the social model before the concept of Deafhood was named. This gives an impression that Deafhood was an extension of the social model but in reality, given the historical and documentary evidence, the Deafhood concept, though not named, was a living one for many decades. In that sense, the Deafhood perspective has unique origins among Deaf people; the existence of the social model helped to bring it to the fore, to have it named in the public sphere. Having said that, I do not reject the social model in its entirety and must acknowledge the positive contributions it makes to the society. It does benefit Deaf *individuals* (for example by getting them access to services) but it has certain limitations. The social model fails to take account of the group-based activities, interests and injustices occurring to the Deaf communities. The social model gives little attention to signed languages as a cultural product deserving recognition in their own right. By not attending to the unique language of Deaf people, the social model reduces the collective sense of belonging to the Deaf community to a by-product of a disablement by society rather than seeing it as a core part of indigenous cultural practices that need to be celebrated.

I argue that the Deafhood model would bring more benefit and more equality to the Deaf communities, particularly to those who are culturally and linguistically Deaf; the elaborated argument for this is given in the fourth chapter. This is not to deny the usefulness of other perspectives for other people who may benefit from these perspectives. Having said that, I strongly believe that extending these perspectives to deal with the culturally and linguistically Deaf communities would be futile. This belief is to be corroborated by arguments for linking Deafhood with the equality of condition within the equality framework. These arguments can be seen in the fourth chapter. The Deafhood model would enable one to investigate orientations and differences in the application of language policies that affect Deaf communities.

---

<sup>46</sup> Scott-Hill and Corker was the same author and the author changed her name (Dr. Sarah Woodin, personal communication, November 14, 2008).

The next chapter will focus on the general implications of each 'perspective' on the Deaf individual, her immediate family, and the nature of social service provisions and policymaking. A number of implications can be clearly recognised from reading about different 'perspectives' on deafness. These implications are then identified and briefly discussed. Then, I will move on to the central point of this study. What are the implications of the status of indigenous sign languages in Ireland and Finland? Each implication will be critically discussed. There is a difficulty because the medical perspective has been dominant for many years and thus it is easy to document evidence from this view. Because the social perspective has emerged recently, its implications may not be researched on a similar scale but there should be sufficient evidence. As for the Deafhood, it has more disadvantages than the former perspectives because it is new. The evidence may be limited and not that easily collated.

# Chapter 3

## **Practical implications of the dominant perspectives on deafness**

### *3.1 Introduction;*

I have illustrated a number of differing perspectives on deafness and their origins in the previous chapter. This chapter now will explore how dominant philosophical and practical positions have implications for Deaf people – especially influencing the language policies aiming at Deaf people. A select approach is employed, as it is impossible to review all the practical implications of possible perspectives.

This chapter will attempt to provide examples, which will show the implications of employing the dominant hearing culture perspective on deafness for Deaf people. The examples are predominately reflected by medical thinking while some can be attributed to the social perspective. Since the Deafhood model is rarely allowed to function unhindered these days, the next chapter will focus on the possible implications of this model. This chapter will focus on the implications of using different models so that it is possible to strengthen and augment the focus on the respect and recognition for indigenous sign languages as the central tenet for personal and identity development of each Deaf individual. As a result, practical examples arising from the medical model and to some extent from the social model, dominate this chapter. The next chapter will focus on the possible implications arising from the Deafhood model.

The review will focus on the implications of different perspectives for the families of Deaf children and for Deaf individuals themselves. I will examine the implications of different perspectives for Deaf people's educational options and service provision. The implications of different perspectives for sign languages are also examined. The selection is arbitrary but systematic, as it attempts to illustrate how perspectives can influence every stage of life that Deaf people would find themselves in.

Although this selection appears to be sequential, it is important to begin the discussion on the implications of different models on sign languages and the specific social services for the Deaf. These discussions provide a context where the implications on families of Deaf children can be discussed because it is within the family that the perspectives take root or are internalised. The discussion also shows how practices and interpretations of deafness are difficult to change later in life if they have been endorsed by the family for a child. Each area will have its own brief descriptive narration and is supported by relevant literature. The Irish situation may be used as an example if there is evidence of a similar experience within an Irish context. This will show how language policies can be shaped by these practical implications with consequences for Deaf people.

### 3.2 *Views on Sign Languages*

The perspectives on deafness promoted across a range of spheres have had a negative impact on the status of sign languages. On a global scale, signed languages have been persecuted and misunderstood. Sign languages are often viewed as concrete and not abstract; they are seen as incapable of enabling reasoning or intellectual stimulation. Moreover, the status of sign languages is downgraded by a mistaken belief that there is a universal sign language, which can be understood by Deaf people everywhere.

Given this widespread belief, sign languages are consequently believed to be derived from spoken languages. Woll (2001) describes how the rise of linguistics as an academic discipline in the nineteenth century contributed to the belief that sign languages were derived from spoken languages. As a consequence, sign languages were not subjected to academic scrutiny and this belief lingered on for many decades. Barden, (1993) mentions that, in historical terms, the philosophy of languages had equated language with speech. Thus, the assumption that spoken language was necessary for the communication of ideas promoted negative attitudes towards sign languages.

Up to the 1960s, (and in the case of Ireland up to 1980s,) the status of sign languages was treated as inferior to spoken languages (Griffey 1967 (quoted in Conama 2002), St. Joseph's 1957: O'Dowd 1955). The status was challenged by the findings in a new breakthrough in the linguistic research by William Stokoe on American Sign Language (ASL) in the United States and Bernard Tervoort on Dutch Sign Language in the Netherlands. Both researches were conducted unknown to each other and they reached the same conclusion: signed languages are real languages in their own right.



It is interesting to note that when the findings from such research was announced to those who had access to such information, many Deaf academics in Gallaudet University were bitterly opposed to the idea that ASL was a language in its own right (Padden 2005). Some of them, in later years, admitted they were mistaken for opposing the idea in the first place and they believed it was down to their inferiority complex and fear of the unknown in the future (Padden 2005; 127)

The developments in the US did not escape the attention of Griffey in Ireland. She was the chief proponent of bringing oralism to this country. Conama (2002) writes:

Griffey (1967) showed that she had intimate knowledge of the significant breakthrough by American and Dutch linguists in the early 1960s regarding the status of indigenous sign language. However she dismisses the breakthrough as insignificant:

‘I have discussed this matter with linguists and they have assured me that there is evidence of modified linguistic structure in the sign system we use (Griffey 1967: 93).’

This statement was made at a conference in Manchester University in 1966. It is not known if there were other Irish delegates attending the conference, but it is certain that Irish delegates would have taken notice of this statement given the stagnant nature of signed languages in Ireland (Conama 2002: 51)

Another related belief was that sign language was some kind of compensatory tool for the loss of hearing. For instance, a report published in 1972 by an advisory committee under the Department of Education recommended that if a Deaf child failed to avail of the oral education, she was to be transferred to the class where sign language was the medium of instruction (Department of Education 1972).

After further investigation, sign languages as languages were recognised in their own right. This change in the status of signed languages led to tension in the power relations between Deaf and hearing people. Once the status of sign languages is assured, data from the decades of the 1960s and 1970s show, especially in the United States, that there were moves to raise the status of signed spoken languages as an attempt to stem the rising status of sign languages (Padden 2005, Kannapell 1993, Ladd 2003).

For those who are unfamiliar with signing through spoken language, there are considerable differences between indigenous and signed spoken languages. The indigenous sign languages have their own syntactical and grammatical structures; therefore, they can be used independently. This

fact was confirmed according to a well-known linguist, Noam Chomsky, when he gave his presentation in UCD:

“The structural properties of sign and spoken language appear to be remarkably similar”(Chomsky 2006)<sup>47</sup>.

The prominent Israeli linguist, Spolsky also reiterated this belief in Dublin Castle (Spolsky 2006)<sup>48</sup>.

Those who hold the view that sign languages are inferior to spoken languages insist that sign languages do not have grammatical structure. They argue that they require grammatical rules borrowed from spoken languages to make sense of signing. The belief was traced back to Abbe de l'Epee who founded the first public school for the deaf in Paris in 1760. He decided to impose French grammar rules on the already used sign language (Lane 1984). Due to this, the Dominican nuns decided to visit the school in Caen, France to gain knowledge of how to teach deaf children and they imported the knowledge to Ireland. Misunderstandings as to the nature of signed languages persist to this day both in and out of Ireland (Leeson 2001, Conama & McDonnell 2001, Le Masters 2006) Nevertheless, in the 1960s and 1970s, professionals internationally began to demand the use of Signed English. It has been argued that other developed signed systems, such as Total Communication and Cued Speech<sup>49</sup> had tacitly acknowledged the status of sign language. However, they saw it as a mediating tool, with the primary aim being to acquire spoken languages. Interestingly, the oralist movement opposed the rise of the signed system but for some commentators, the opposition was pointless. Glickman (1984, quoted in Kannapell 1993: 167) claimed that the rise of signed systems, after the status of sign languages was secured, was an attempt to stifle the power shift from hearing authorities to the Deaf communities. He comments:

Despite the bitter opposition between these two schools of thought, the interesting question is not how oralism and Total Communication differ, but how they are the same. Beyond the question of whether or not deaf children should be allowed to sign, the two approaches share a fear of exposing deaf children to the Deaf community and deaf cultural values. ...Both approaches share the belief that the most successful product of

---

<sup>47</sup> *Biolinguistic Explorations: design, development, evolution* by Noam Chomsky: Public Philosophy and Linguistics lecture hosted by UCD School of Philosophy, January 20, 2006.

<sup>48</sup> The keynote lecture was delivered by policy expert Professor Bernard Spolsky of Bar-Ilan University, Israel at the Royal Irish Academy's conference on '*Language Policy and Language Planning in Ireland*' on February 2nd, 2006, in Dublin Castle.

<sup>49</sup> Cued Speech is viewed by some as neither sign language nor manually coded language but it is an aid to speech communication (Leybert and Alegria 2003).

deaf education is the person most able to integrate fully into the hearing world (Glickman 1984, quoted in Kannapell 1993; 167).

The rise of signed methodical languages based on spoken language has led to a widespread confusion over the status of sign languages (for example, see Schnick 2003: 225-226). This is also evident in Ireland as a former Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern TD stated:

While I know Irish sign language is a vital part of communication and is used by probably a larger number than we imagine, I am not sure a constitutional provision would need to be made for it.... If I remember rightly from a visit to the Irish Deaf Society, several different forms of sign language are used'.<sup>50</sup>

The former Taoiseach is by no mean, alone in his understanding;<sup>51</sup>, then the Minister for Education, Noel Dempsey TD said '*....ISL, has formal recognition in the Education Act 1998*'<sup>52</sup>. In this Act, ISL is referred to as one of the support services section, which tacitly regards it as equivalent to speech therapy and assistive technology.

There is another related matter regarding the terminology of using sign language. Indigenous sign languages are often described as 'the sign language' instead of Irish Sign Language (ISL), British Sign Language (BSL) or American Sign Language (ASL) (for example, see World Federation of the Deaf, British Deaf Association and Irish Deaf Society) used by Deaf communities. The widespread belief that there is only one sign language in the world assumes that language is non-aligned and is non-cultural. Many linguists insist that behind every language is a related unique culture and indigenous sign languages are no exception. The use of the phrase 'Sign Language' in the singular is therefore, a dangerous practice. This practice is clearly evident in the work of scholars using both models, medical and social.

It is clear that in historical terms, sign languages were treated in two distinct ways. Those who negated the status of sign languages and wanted to banish them to the dustbins demonstrated the hallmarks of the medical model's thinking. Those who saw sign languages as a compensatory tool in recognition of the impairment in persons (deafness), their thinking would find many similarities and

---

<sup>50</sup> Dail Debates, 11 February 2003. In fact, he never visited IDS (Irish Deaf Society 2006).

<sup>51</sup> Minister for Justice, Law Reform & Equality Michael McDowell TD said '*Two forms of sign languages are commonly in use in this country*'.

<sup>52</sup> Dail Debates, 30 June 2004.

were more closely aligned with the social model on deafness. The implications of these views can be illustrated in the way families of Deaf children are treated professionally.

### 3.3 *Specific Services for Deaf people*

The perspectives on deafness that are adopted have considerable influence on the nature of service provisions for Deaf communities. Services tend to be provided from a charity perspective at one end of the continuum and from an equality perspective on the other end. A charitable organization tends to promote paternalism while an equality perspective can be seen as empowering users. As services that are equality oriented are few, mainly controlled and organized by Deaf people themselves, such as the Irish Deaf Society, the analysis will focus on dominant perspectives regarding service provision.

The charity model has evolved in recent years from charity-based voluntary services to professional services involving highly educated and highly paid professionals (Ladd 2003, Lane 2005). To date, however, those ‘serving’ the Deaf community<sup>53</sup> are generally professionals that are drawn from outside the Deaf community; given the educational history and literacy of Deaf people, it is rare for Deaf individuals to become professionals. When one considers that the training which hearing professionals receive is delivered from the medical perspective, paternalism is rampant in the service-providing areas. This is because the medical view of deafness is one that focuses on deafness as a pathology to be treated (Lane 1993, Ladd 2003).

Kurs and Bahan interestingly observe that the paternalistic perspective has largely influenced the arrangements whereby Deaf people are susceptible and easily defined within a receiver’s role (Kurs and Bahan 2001). For instance, predetermined arrangements can be shaped by parental expectations and attitudes. Kurs and Bahan describe a particular incident, where a mother gave in to her deaf son’s request for sweets in a shop though she already refused the request from the younger hearing brother moments earlier. The younger brother demanded an explanation for the differential treatment to which the mother retorted that, the older brother was deaf. Using the analogy experienced by Mannoni in Madagascar<sup>54</sup>, Kurs and Bahan (2001) claim such attitudes place Deaf children in the role of natural receivers. Therefore, they are predestined to be in the receiver role and become dependent on service provisions.

---

<sup>53</sup> The definition, please see section 1.8 in Chapter 1.

<sup>54</sup> Mannoni developed the concept of dependency complex after he experienced that natives became more dependent on him in colonial Madagascar after he administered a remedy to cure malaria on one native (Kurs & Bahan 2001; 278).

Having a professional service-delivery model also influences the directions services take. According to Wilding (1992 cited in Barnes *et al.* 1999), professionals can determine directions of services whatever the policy-makers priorities. Services can be deployed for professional convenience rather than in line with client need. Professional control over resources negates planning and management by Deaf people and it usurps the sphere of political decision-making.

Professionals cannot be fully objective as they have their own ideological and political views. They are likely to justify their own services by promoting their own views. This was exemplified by Mohr *et al* (2000) who state that Deaf people are a burden on society by calculating the economic costs of their participation in society. They suggest aggressive medical intervention at a young age in order to reduce the cost to society of providing supports for Deaf people. Another consequence is that Deaf clients can be reduced to the status of a passive object. Those who adopt the medical model tend to medicalise issues, which in turn, neutralise and depoliticalise issues that may have arisen out of the nature of serving. That would then make it difficult for Deaf clients to raise their objections or concerns because they have to use specific or high-level language to get their views across. Hence, in order to legitimise their services, a culture of silence is encouraged on many inconvenient issues. Deaf people learn not to complain in case the service is removed.

The professionalisation of service provisions for Deaf people by hearing people led to a number of orientations influencing the nature of service provisions, namely:

- Audism
- Paternalism
- Normalisation

### 3.3.1 *Audism:*

There is an ongoing debate within the Deaf communities, especially in the United States regarding the naming of their experiences in the world. The debates centre on the attempts by Deaf people to label the collectivist experiences of being oppressed or marginalised in the hearing world. Bauman (2004) reminds us that the term ‘audism’ is not new:

What audism refers to—the discrimination of Deaf people—is nothing new. The word to describe it, however, is (Bauman 2004).

The US Deaf academic, Tom Humphries (1975) first coined this term: 'audism'. He defined it as follows in 2001:

It is the bias and prejudice of hearing people against deaf people. It is the bias and prejudice of some deaf people against other deaf people. It is manifested in many ways. It appears in my own life in the form of people who continually judge deaf people's intelligence and success on the basis of their ability in the language of the hearing culture. It appears when the assumption is made that the deaf person's happiness depends on acquiring fluency in the language of the hearing culture. It appears when deaf people actively participate in the oppression of other deaf people by demanding of them the same set of standards, behavior, and values that they demand of hearing people. It appears in the class structure of the deaf culture when those at the top are those whose language is that of the hearing culture or closest to it. It appears when deaf people in positions of power keep that power by oppressing other deaf people (Humphries 2001).

After Humphries coined the term *audism*, the usage of this term remained dormant until the Boston psychologist; Harlan Lane revived its use 15 years later, in his book, '*The Mask of Benevolence*' by defining it further as:

...the corporate institution for dealing with deaf people, dealing with them by making statements about them, authorizing views of them, describing them, teaching about them, governing where they go to school and, in some cases, where they live; in short, audism is the hearing way of dominating, restructuring, and exercising authority over the deaf community. It includes such professional people as administrators of schools for deaf children and of training programs for deaf adults, interpreters, and some audiologists, speech therapists, otologists, psychologists, psychiatrists, librarians, researchers, social workers, and hearing aid specialists. (Lane 1992: 43)

The term, audism is increasingly catching on among Deaf communities, though not yet in regular dictionaries of the English language (Bauman 2004). Humphries originally applied *audism* to individual attitudes and practices, but Lane and others have broadened its scope to include institutional and group attitudes, practices, and oppressions of deaf persons.

Bauman (2004) develops the concept of audism to a different level as he describes the metaphysical side of audism. He argues that audism has deep structures; therefore, it has influenced the unconscious mind. He used the concept of '*phonocentric*' as first defined by a French philosopher, Jacques Derrida to denote the view of the world that only recognises a hearing way of knowing. .

Gertz (2008) suggests that one of the main implications arising from audism is the development of dysconscious audism. She draws upon the existing concept of dysconscious racism by King (cited in

Gertz 2008:219). This concept refers to King who was teaching her students and made them aware of racial issues, racial inequity and racial prejudice but yet, they were not sufficiently aware of their ethical inability to judge or analyse the underlying effects and influences from racial ideology. So King develops the concept of dysconscious racism to increase the level of awareness and knowledge. Gretz suggests a parallel similarity in audism. Arising from the responses from people in her research, Gertz lists the effects of dysconscious audism:

- Disempowers Deaf people from becoming liberated
- Disables Deaf people from expressing Deaf cultural pride
- Intimidates Deaf people and limits their promotion of Deaf perspective
- Hinders Deaf people from quality education
- Denies Deaf people full acceptance of ASL (American Sign Language)
- Weakens Deaf people's sense of identity (Gertz 2008: 230-231)

With regard to identifying audist behaviours among professionals in Ireland, it is quite obvious to see that the vast majority of professionals working with Deaf people are hearing themselves and most of them do not retain any affinity or fluency in indigenous sign languages. This can be supported by data collection in other chapters. This is an extreme example of the pervasiveness of the influence of the medical model.

### 3.3.2 *Paternalism*

According to Heywood, paternalism is an attitude or policy that demonstrates care or concerns for those unable to help themselves, as in the (supposed) relationship between a father and a child (Heywood 2002: 428). Weber identifies a number of features in paternalistic relationships: differential access to power and resources; an ideological dimension that justifies subordination; emphasis on the caring role of the paternalist; a tendency to become systematised and institutionalised; and a diffuse relationship, which covers all aspects of subordinates' lives, (Abercrombie and Hill 1976).

Lane (1992) writes about paternalistic traits of those service providers, especially in the United States. He identifies the attitudinal perspectives as follows:

Thus, the education, counselling, and institutionalisation of deaf children and adults may rest on no other solid foundation than a set of paternalistic stereotypes (Lane 1992: 39)

Lane identifies four evidential parts to support his claim:

1. Attitudes towards Deaf people are similar to the European colonist's attitudes towards African subordinates. (See Table 1 /2 in Lane 1992: 34-36): thus Deaf people are continually referred to or seen in a negative light.
2. Deaf people's own perspectives i.e. Deaf culture, Deaf communities, and sign languages, were and are still largely ignored or not permitted in schools for the Deaf. This is linked to social control as Lane stated the "*fundamental point here is that the hearing experts generally do not concede to deaf people a major say in the conduct of deaf affairs...*" (Lane 1992: 44)
3. Ethnocentrism (sometime known as the White Man's Burden Test) – paternalists feel it necessary to supplant the subordinates' languages, religions, institutions with their own versions. If they do not work to the paternalists' satisfaction, they place the source of the problem elsewhere – i.e. they blame deaf students themselves for their educational deficiencies.
4. *Many theorists maintain that the driving force in paternalistic relations is self-interest –in particular, the issue of money: The issue is structural and not primarily a matter of the motives of individuals* (Lane 1992:47). Lane estimates that billions of dollars are spent in the cost of providing services for Deaf people (i.e. psychological, counselling, education, interpretation services and many more).

Although, Lane refers to the situation in the United States, Ladd (2001, 2003) has a similar view of professionalisation in Britain. Paternalistic attitudes lead to massive welfare colonialism of services by hearing outsiders. Ladd (2003) describes the concept of welfare colonialism as the *professionalisation* of services. In this age, educational credentials are more important than an individual's life experience and informal know-how. This is also supported by Doug Alker's memoirs where he experienced paternalism in the extreme when he was the chief executive in the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID); his resistance to paternalism eventually ended in his controversial removal from the RNID (Alker 2000).

There is no reason to believe that the attitudes identified in Britain and the United States do not exist in the Irish situation. The main representative organisation of Deaf people in Ireland, the Irish Deaf Society had referred to the existence of paternalism in service provision within this country (Irish Deaf Society 2003). McDonnell (2003) refers to his analysis of deep structures in education for disabled children in Ireland and he mentions that the involvement of professionals in this service-delivery has been privileged over the views of service users. To him, it is a clear case of institutional paternalism.



Paternalism and audism can co-exist; however, there is a slight difference between the two. Audism seems to refer to overt attitudinal behaviour while paternalism can have a more subtle reference. Although the following quote was made in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by a hearing French physician, Meniere, this can be a typical comment by those who tend to be paternalistic:

The deaf believe they are our equals in all respects. We should be generous and not destroy that illusion. But whatever they believe, deafness is an infirmity and we should repair it whether the person who has it is disturbed by it or not” (cited in Lane 1984: 134).

### 3.3.3 Normalisation

Normalisation was one of the responses to criticisms of the institutionalisation of people with disabilities (Baldock *et al.* 2003)

“Originally developed in Scandinavia and extended in the United States through the work of Wolfensberger, normalisation aims to ensure that people with disabilities share the same lifestyles and choices as non-disabled people” (Baldock *et al.* 2003: 444).

By default, it extends to cover residential schools for the Deaf. Many commentators outside of the Deaf community regard the residential schools for the Deaf as a part of institutionalisation without realising they are cherished by the Deaf communities<sup>55</sup>.

The principles of normalisation are that people with disabilities should be integrated with the rest of society. They should use the same facilities, live in ordinary housing and take part in social and community life. It is argued that their participation should not be marked out as different and they should be allowed to progress through the life cycle with all the normal expectations.

Emerton (1998) illustrates the implications of the normalisation for Deaf people, by choosing education as an example of normalisation. He states:

---

<sup>55</sup> A research by McKinnon, Moran & Pederson (2004), using the attachment theory, reveal most Deaf Canadian adults retain fondness for their residential schools and view them as a source for their acquisition of Deaf culture which provides a backbone for their lives. This occurs in spite of the presence of physical and sexual abuses in these schools. The respondents in this research view such abuse were ‘as an expected and common experience at the hands of hearing people’ (McKinnon, Moran & Pederson 2004:383). Other researchers state the similar experience in the United States (Marschark, Lang & Albertini 2002: 141) and in South Africa (Reagan 1992, cited in Skutnabb-Kangas (2000).

The oral approach is historically an attempt to follow the conventional norms for communication in the larger society. Few deaf people have mastered it and many have failed. No matter how skilled an orally trained person is, the social danger is always that communication will break down. If the deaf individual is trying to pass for hearing in the larger society, he or she may be discredited or stigmatised. It is a common problem for many minorities trying to conceal ascribed traits (Emerton 1998: 141).

It is clear that a range of ‘perspectives’ have shaped and influenced the nature and directions of service provision aimed at the Deaf community. Since the services for Deaf people have been professionalised, the professionals are more likely to be employed from outside the Deaf community. Hearing professionals tend to bring ideological and conceptual outlooks that may be contrary to the Deaf community’s needs and beliefs. Such is the extent of hearing professionals’ in service provision involvement that they have significant implications on the language policies. Their presence could negate and depoliticise the need for positive language policies on sign languages.

### *3.4 Families of Deaf children*

The focus of this section is on the experiences of Deaf children in hearing families. More than ninety percent of Deaf children are born to hearing families, sometimes with no obvious hereditary tradition of deafness<sup>56</sup> (Lane Hoffmesiter & Bahan 1996, Gregory & Knight 1998). Gregory & Knight (1998) used the examples in Erting (1992) to describe the initial reactions of parents to the news that their child is deaf. It is very likely that such parents never met a Deaf person before. There can be a strong and varied reaction by parents who give birth to a Deaf child (Gregory & Knight 1998: 3). Many parents hope that their children will attain as high or a higher standard of living than the parents themselves. These hearing parents may fear this is not possible for their Deaf child (Lane, Hoffmesiter & Bahan 1996:30, Gregory & Knight 1998:4). The ‘deafness as deficit’ perspective would leave a lasting mark on parents’ minds (Gregory & Knight 1998:4). Mahshie (1995 cited in Gregory & Knight 1998) recognises that such upheavals suggest that families, and not the Deaf child, are in emotional turmoil. Some parents likened the impact of having a deaf child to a family bereavement (Gregory & Knight 1998).

Moreover, the identification of deafness in a child can be delayed until the child is three years old, although there are major improvements in the identification process recently in this regard, in some

---

<sup>56</sup>Although the calculations took place in the UK and the USA, on the basis of anecdotal evidence, there is no reason why a similar calculation should not be applied to this country.

countries<sup>57</sup>. Moore (1996 quoted in Gregory & Knight 1998) describes four stages which hearing families experience on the birth of a deaf child; the first period refers to when the child is identified as having deafness, the second relates to educational placement and the third deals with when the child reaches adolescence, bringing some tension in terms of identity. The final period focuses on the independence of a deaf child. Although these stages do not refer to the language policy development explicitly, it is quite important to recognise the influences there.

The crucial part of the first stage, as described above, is the recognition of the importance of language acquisition. For a vast majority of families with hearing children, language acquisition is taken for granted. In contrast, for deaf children with hearing parents, it can be problematic if not recognised or dealt with. Braden (1994) describes the typical situation:

Most deaf children are born into a world, which their parents, siblings, relatives and neighbours converse, argue, joke, and learn in the inaccessible medium of sound. Consequently, deaf children must make their way in the world with little exposure and limited mastery of language (Braden 1994: 1)

Failing to recognise the importance of language acquisition, and its consequences on the child's education and cognitive developments can be problematic (Byrne-Dunne 2005, Marschark 2002, Knight & Swanwick 1999). However, there are two schools of thought on this issue – one argues that language can be acquired through sound. Therefore, it is crucial to focus on restoration of sound or maximise the residual amount of hearing in the child. With this, the use of sign language should be actively discouraged. This is a clear example of the medical model. Others view the focus on sound as labour-intensive with little value of return. They believe that using sign language as early as possible is what is most desirable (Byrne-Dunne 2005:28). This thinking can be illustrative of the social model.

Given their lack of experience in dealing with deafness, hearing parents depend on outside sources for counsel and advice. They are sometimes unprepared for the effects of counsel. Gregory & Knight (1998) state that parents sometimes failed to recognise that counsel could be laden with ideological perspectives with far-reaching effects. Sometimes counsel can have negative implications and be highly emotional. In one study, mothers of Deaf children suffered a high level of stress if their

---

<sup>57</sup> There is a campaign to introduce the universal neo-natal hearing screening to this country and it would enable professionals to identify the level of hearing loss for newly born babies (NAD 2006; website <http://www.nadp.ie> accessed May 2007). However, its effectiveness has been doubted in one study (Puig, Muncio & Meda 2005)

children were perceived as lagging behind in the area of language development and were not given adequate support services (Pipp-Siegel Sedey & Yoshinaga-Itano 2002).

Gregory & Knight (1998) report that families have to choose which languages to use; this has unforeseen consequences for role modelling in the families. If the child is deemed to have residual hearing, the family is often advised to shun the use of sign language. On other hand, if the child is totally deaf, she or he is deemed to be suitable to have sign language as the medium of communication. The two practices have different consequences for language development. It is frequent that the mother adopts the principal role of communicating directly with the Deaf child where there is no alternative member in the family to live out such a role. This brings an extra burden on the mother, multiplying her role as a mother, communicator and intermediary. This also adds complications to the cognitive and linguist development of the child (Luterman and Ross 1991 quoted in Gregory & Knight 1998).

Byrne-Dunne (2005) cites the Swan's demographic research on the Deaf community in Ireland (1994)<sup>58</sup>. It points out that since 19% of the respondents had Deaf parents or siblings, 81% of Deaf children whose parents are hearing, would have no access to their native sign language. Hearing parents need to be counselled positively about the status of sign language for their children if they are to learn it and interact with their children.

In Ireland, counsel and advice on deafness is monopolised by the medical profession. Sometimes guidance is given by the visiting teachers' service for educational options (Department of Education n/d, NDA n/a, Ryan 2006). Given the fact that the teaching and medical professions are dominated by hearing people and the ethos of the medical model<sup>59</sup> it is likely that parents receive advice on curative and rehabilitative options, while maintaining silence on alternative options such as sign languages and the existence of Deaf communities (Lane, Hoffmeister & Bahan 1996). This is also the case in Ireland (Ryan 2006, Leeson forthcoming).

Feher-Prout (1996) stresses the importance for parents having full access to information that affects life choices for their Deaf children. She notes however, that most parents are more inclined to take

---

<sup>58</sup> Dr. Ethine Swan of UCD was commissioned by the Catholic Institute for the Deaf in 1994 to research the educational situation of Deaf people. More than 1000 people, including 350 plus Deaf adults, teachers for the deaf and parents of Deaf children partook in the survey. This research is often regarded as a representative one on the basis of the large number of participants (Swan 1994)

<sup>59</sup> The description of the medical model is given in the previous chapter.

on a curative and rehabilitative course of action as they are not fully aware of alternative routes. Hintermar & Albertini (2005) believe that medical professionals should adopt inclusive ethics to ensure parents are given adequate time to consider options in full, and to inform them of the consequences of choice.

However, even with the ideal circumstances of making all choices available for parents, Lane (2005) believes that parents would tend to opt for the medicalised option. Young (2006) agrees with this:

Parents' own accounts often refer to decisions made on the basis of what fits in with their value systems and their own personal sense of what is right, rather than any particular new knowledge about deafness or deaf children they may have acquired: (Young 2006: 8)

Young *et al* (2006) report that over the past thirty years, research has consistently shown that parents of Deaf children were not given the range of full information or made aware of alternative choices about language and communication options for their Deaf children. This led them to believe that information and choices were deliberately biased. Many parents only discovered by chance that there are alternative approaches to hearing and speaking orally that are much favoured by the Deaf communities. However, Lane Hoffmeister & Bahan (1996) point out that if parents chose not to have their child fitted with aids, they would be viewed as negligent. Parents would then feel guilty if they feel such 'opportunities' are denied to their children. Hence, some parents tend to prefer to avail of both approaches rather than choosing one of the binary approaches (Peters 2000).

As for the educational options, parents are forced to choose particular educational options at the early stage. Unlike the usual process of deciding which school to choose for your child, parents are told the 'medical model' is the best choice. This option would be opposite to the stance adopted by the Deaf community (Lane Hoffmesiter & Bahan 1996. Gregory & Knight 1998). Moreover, parents are not informed of the consequences of making initial decisions; these decisions influence subsequent directions for the Deaf child:

"Indeed White (1999) reports that while hearing parents struggle with communication and language choice issues [*for their Deaf child*], search for answers from professionals, and cope with their own grief reactions to the deafness, Deaf parents are already familiar with the Deaf experience, have social networks of support, and are familiar with educational and community resources for Deaf children. They usually do not have the prolonged mourning period that hearing parents experience, and are prepared to begin

communicating with their Deaf infant in sign language immediately” (Crowe 2003: 204)[*my insertion*]

Little is known about how Deaf children in hearing families fare in life if initiated early on into Deaf culture. However, for one commentator, being a Deaf child with other Deaf siblings of hearing parents, Graybill was grateful that his hearing parents allowed him to be Deaf. So they sent him to the residential school for the Deaf where he benefited from acquiring positive linguistic and identity development (in Paransis 1998)<sup>60</sup>. The effects on education for Deaf children can be explained later in this chapter.

Since the guidance given to parents of Deaf children is dominated by the medical thinking, those who believe in the social model made little influence on practices. This reflects not only the dominance of the medical model however, but also the powers of professionals. The implications of having a hegemonic medicalised view of deafness are that many deaf children are not encouraged or enabled to learn sign. There is a real lack of choice for Deaf children to use their native or natural sign language.

### 3.5 *Deaf individual*

For the sake of summarising the implications on the Deaf individual, two main areas are highlighted and critically analysed: these include psychological and social/cultural issues. These points are described separately but it is important to bear in mind that points can be complex and complicated since the Deaf individuals are part of their families.

#### 3.5.1 *Intelligence / Cognitive ability:*

Deaf people have traditionally not been viewed as having similar levels of intelligence as hearing people. The question often asked in the psychological field in relation to Deaf people is ‘Are they sufficiently intelligent or not?’ Moore (1982) traces this question back to the enthusiasm arising from the emergence of intelligence tests to determine the intelligence of humans. Early psychologists believed that Deaf children were inferior to their hearing children in terms of intelligence. The classical Greek thought on deafness and its relations to intelligence was negative. Aristotle claims that for one to have ability, one must use spoken and written language; it is an essential proof of

---

<sup>60</sup> I can relate to Graybill’s gratefulness to his parents. I am grateful forever for my late parents for making an impossible decision to send me to the residential school in Dublin even though my parents appeared to be in doubt about my gratefulness.

intelligence. He believed that a sufficient level of hearing is necessary for the development of intelligence because speech is instrumental in enabling us to learn (Braden 1994, 4-5; Bruggemann 1999, Winter 1996, Kin 2001).

Given the subsequent recognition and respect for Greek knowledge, scholars unquestionably accepted their views although, the French philosopher, Descartes was the first philosopher to make a distinction between language and reason. He observed the use of sign language by Deaf Parisians but it was not investigated further (Braden 1994: 4-5).

Braden (1994) also suggests that the failure to separate language and reason had lasting devastating effects on future generations of deaf people up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He points out that:

Religious, legal, and social perspectives of humanity have been shaped by the juxtaposition of language and intellect. Christianity embraced the dualistic separation of the mind from the body, and held that the exercise of faith was the ultimate act of the intellect. This means that salvation was the possible way for those who could reason, which was demonstrated solely by their ability to speak (Braden 1994: 2)

Another belief was that intelligence was an innate condition. This led to the development of myths that if one could not speak, one did not possess sufficient intelligence to participate in societies (Winter 1996, Bruggemann 1999, King 2001.)

There was a great interest in the theory that thought preceded language and as a consequence, Deaf children in the 19th century were the subjects of much discussion. There was a particular interest in Deaf children's thought processing before instruction. This is so because at that time, it was usual for the Deaf children to start schooling at the age of ten or later. So their understanding of the world was based on their own visual-spatial observations. Such an example is Harvey Peet. He was a researcher in the US who queried the presence of the value system and religious beliefs in their pre-instruction thoughts. He concluded that these children had no conception of God or death (Peet 1997, reprinted from 1855).

Such perceptions of deafness and lack of intelligence persisted up to the 20th century. Deaf people were an obvious target group for intelligence testing and many assumptions were made about deaf people and intelligence chiefly in the United States. Gallaudet University (1999) carried out a survey of intelligence tests and made a number of observations:

- The level of verbal intelligence depends on the method of administration of the test. It was clear that Deaf children would score similarly to hearing children if the test were given in sign language. The survey reports that Deaf children received instructions verbally, which were often incomprehensible to them. Once the instructions were signed properly to these children, the comparative scores were quite similar.
- The age of onset of hearing loss would distort the findings as some experienced spoken language acquisition.
- New entrants to residential schools scored lower than non-residential day entrants, but residential students increased their scores over time.
- Deaf children of Deaf parents or Deaf children of hearing parents with Deaf siblings would score higher given their immediate language and cultural acquisition in families; this early learning would not be possible for Deaf children of hearing parents (Busby 2001).

All recent surveys agree that early language acquisition is a crucial factor in developing intelligence. They create a sound foundation for further learning.

It is now generally accepted by researchers that any differences that do exist between deaf and hearing individuals on cognitive abilities are the result of environmental or task influences rather than being inherent in deafness (Quigley & Paul 1984).

As for the Irish situation, there is scant material available to ascertain attitudes to deafness among professionals but there is anecdotal evidence (St. Joseph's 1957, O'Dowd 1955).

### 3.5.2 *Sense of identity, self-esteem and levels of expectations:*

There is a suggestion that psychological perspectives follow philosophical perspectives. The stigmatising philosophical perspectives initiated by Greek classical thinkers were left unquestioned and subsequent psychological perspectives were strongly influenced by this line of thinking (Braden 1994: 4-5). The highly essentialist and pathologised perspectives of early philosophers can and did influence the beliefs of deaf persons; it lowered their expectations and self-esteem and their standing in societies. In this regard, Deaf people learned to see themselves as abnormal and tried to become like hearing people. They identified the ability to hear and speak as the ultimate target of being an average person<sup>61</sup>. As part of this process, sign languages are inevitably regarded as a badge of inferiority.

---

<sup>61</sup> This is similar to the Marxist concept of false consciousness.



Kvam, Loeb & Tambs's (2007) research into the state of mental health among Deaf people in Norway demonstrates the sense of vulnerability among many Deaf individuals. Deaf individuals tended to have more symptoms of anxiety and depression than the general population. They conclude that some such problems *may stem from childhood, or, for example, from different etiologies of deafness, socioeconomic issues, or different experiences related to stigma and discrimination* (Kvam, Loeb & Tambs 2006: 6).

A survey of Deaf people in the UK, where the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) was relayed in British Sign Language to Deaf people in Britain shows that while 15% of the general population suffered mental health illness, 38% of Deaf respondents had experience of mental health problems (Ridgeway 1998). Additionally, and more startlingly, 40% of Deaf respondents reported experiencing sexual abuse while 15% of the general population suffered similarly. Ridgeway points out that Deaf respondents used the narrow definition of sexual abuse limiting it to physical areas while the general population widened the definition. For instance, it included exposure to the pornographic materials (Ridgeway 1998). She suggests that:

Some factors that are predictive of psychological distress were identified. Among them are early language development, exposure to Deaf peers, the perception of deafness within the family, self-image and self-worth, social and educational isolation, and Deaf consciousness development (Ridgeway 1998: 14).

O'Rourke and Grewer warn against the risks of assessing Deaf people's mental health. She suggests that the assessment could be informed by questionable perspectives on deafness (O'Rourke & Grewer 2005; 672). In Britain, many community mental health teams recognise their lack of experience or knowledge in dealing with Deaf people with mental health problems (Thomas, Cromwell & Miller 2006). It is also reported that once specialist mental health services for the Deaf became available in three centres in Britain, the number of referrals has been steadily increasing over the years. These services include three qualified psychologists who are native users of British Sign Language and this further exemplifies the need for access to such services in sign language (Young *et al.* 2001). To the author's best knowledge, there is no similar service in Ireland although there is a group actively lobbying for such a centre<sup>62</sup>.

---

<sup>62</sup> The group referred to here is the Irish Society for Mental Health and Deafness and it is dominated by hearing professionals although there are one or two Deaf representatives.

Although there is a general acceptance of the links between a negative view of deafness and low self-esteem, these links remain inconsistent and technically fraught with methodological issues. A number of research studies carried out recently point to the consistent findings that there is widespread evidence of low self-esteem among Deaf people. Positive views of oneself are more likely to be found among Deaf people if they are fluent in signing, have adequate access to community, develop strong friendships, and are able to communicate effectively using signing with hearing members of their families. Limited or no access to the aforementioned resources is likely to bring psychological problems to those Deaf people (Woofle & Smith 2001, Crowe 2003, Luckner & Stewart 2003, Jambor & Elliot 2005, Nikolarazi & Hadjidakou 2006). What the evidence on mental health shows is that phonocentric language policies have indirect effects. They lead to negative attitudes towards sign languages.

### 3.5.3 *Social / culture issues;*

Research shows how important it is to have good peer relations and access to sign language for Deaf people. However, there is a difficulty in transmitting cultural norms. For most Deaf people to acquire or sample such norms, the transmission may come from peers rather than parents. For instance, ordinary parents can traditionally pass on languages and cultural norms to future generations but it could be different for Deaf children if their parents are hearing and not fluent in signing. Hence, it is really important for Deaf children to acquire or know the existence of Deaf cultural norms.

Nikolarazi & Hadjidakou (2006) recognise the growing number of Deaf children attending general mainstream schools. They claim they should have adequate access to:

... Deaf culture and Deaf role models through the establishment of bilingual programs, the employment of Deaf adults at schools, and the school's participation in the Deaf community's activities, which could encourage deaf persons to develop self-confidence with regard to both hearing and Deaf culture and construct a balanced identity (Nikolarazi & Hadjidakou 2006:490)

Professionals and family members cannot know the upper limits of any individual's potential. Yet they should rejoice and take care of individuals' strengths and capacities instead of dwelling on problems and failures (Luckner & Stewart 2003). Solidarity is a very important value in Deaf culture so outsiders could easily overlook the value of peer relations and access to sign language, as they would regard these resources as compensatory to hearing losses instead of solidarity-building

resources. This can be exemplified by the following quote by a hearing researcher, who conducted research on Deaf children:

‘The pupils with the more severe hearing losses tended to stick together, and this exclusiveness appeared to hinder the hearing pupils in initiating contact with their hearing impaired peers’ (Rooney 2004: 168)

In this same research, Rooney (2004) reports that the respondents had to make tremendous efforts to communicate with their hearing colleagues with a view to lasting friendship but to no avail (Rooney 2004: 167). This researcher failed to recognise the reasons for ‘this exclusiveness’ and its possible benefits for these Deaf respondents. It is noted that she used the hearing loss level to identify this group.

Such categorisation can be hazardous as the following researcher pointed out. Grushkin (2003) suggests the approach of isolating hard of hearing children from deaf children, based on the classification of hearing loss, can be harmful for the former group. He quotes Branson & Miller (1993) stating that: *psychological and physical isolation from the Deaf people teaches the hard of hearing to reject the Deaf community*. Being a hard of hearing adult who experienced mainstream education, Grushkin (2003) believes such isolation brings harmful effects. He claims that hard of hearing people can be part of a Deaf community and can benefit from bilingual/ bicultural education. This type of education will be explored later in the chapter. Graybill (1998: 226) supports Grushkin’s view, as he experienced the transition from a mainstream school to the residential school for the Deaf, which caused some upheavals in his attempts to be accepted by Deaf peers at the school. Since, he was moved from a ‘hearing’ school to the Deaf school; he was viewed as an outsider, not a Deaf person. Graybill used an analogy in one of the Aesop’s fables where bats and birds challenged each other whether bats were really birds or not. This was a basis to describe his experience of being labelled by Deaf communities and outsiders.

Those who miss out on the cultural and linguistic acquisitions of Deaf culture in their childhood often experience mixed feelings when they realise the existence of Deaf communities and their languages later in their lives. They often embark on a long process of discovery regarding self-identity and group identity. For some, it can be regarded as the ‘*coming home at last*’ experience whereby they find their place, after being frustrated and uncertain of their place in general. Others find it disappointing, as they would struggle to reach the necessary functional level of fluency in

signing to participate in the community fully. They may not belong in either the hearing or Deaf worlds.

Lane, Hoffmesiter & Bahan (1996) report that many Deaf people report their exhilaration after meeting Deaf people for the first time whether it is at work, school or a Deaf club. After a long isolated period of growing up without contacting Deaf people or the Deaf community, on the occasion of her belated introduction to the Deaf community, an Australian actress, Nelson (as reported in Dennis 2004) describes her discovery of self-identity and sign language in Australia as ‘*..amazing – like coming home*’. This experience is not unique as it has been similarly reported in the United States and Ireland<sup>63</sup> (Padden 2005: Irish Deaf Society 2004).

In their sociological study of Deaf people through ‘*transitional*’ stages from dependence to adulthood, Valentine and Skelton (2007) note that different perspectives emerge on the rate of success in transiting among hearing professionals and Deaf people. Hearing professionals tend to label those who want to remain in the Deaf communities and use sign language as failures; however, such people would be regarded as ‘successful’ by the Deaf community.

Having described the effects of imposing hearing culture norms on the Deaf individual, it is clear that there are a number of psychological issues to be addressed. It appears from literature and anecdotal evidence that hearing professionals take very little account of such issues. It is clear that language policies aiming at Deaf people do not take account of the social and cultural elements in Deaf culture.

### 3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the implications of using the medical model for Deaf children in policy terms. It also gave some (but limited) attention to the implications of the social model. The next chapter is to focus on the Deafhood model. In this context, the concluding remarks focus on these medical and social models.

---

<sup>63</sup> Michael Schwartz, a Deaf American lawyer gave a similar account in the forum on disability in the Aras an Uachtairin in June 2008. He signed about his experience of meeting other Deaf people and learning ASL for first time after spending a childhood without any access to sign language or peer relations. He felt ‘liberated’ in this regard. I attended this conference in a personal capacity.

This chapter has demonstrated how wide-ranging ideologies about sign languages can permeate the stages of life for Deaf people regardless of how positive or negative the implications are. It is quite difficult to find one stage of life where negative ‘perspectives’ on deafness have not impacted on Deaf people’s quality of life and life chances. Even personal issues, such as the choice of school, are influenced by ideologies on deafness. It is a political decision whether a subject is taught through signed or spoken language. Sign languages are either respected or they are misrecognised and ignored.

The evidence compiled for this chapter is chiefly from the United States, Northern Europe and Britain although efforts have been strenuously made to find data on the experiences of Deaf people in Irish situations. Given the lack of Deaf researchers in Ireland, and the lack of interest in Deafness among hearing researchers from a Deaf perspective, it is not surprising however, that there is little data in Ireland. However, given the similarity in the experiences of Deaf people in the US, Britain and other countries, there is no reason why Ireland should differ. Having read through literature, many issues have been familiar to me on a personal level and equally, there is an abundance of anecdotal evidence on the ground in Ireland to support the evidence from other countries.

Ladd (2003) highlights how there is a strong inclination to use sign language by Deaf people as the medium of passing on information, yet there is a reluctance to record situations or experiences in writing among Deaf people. Therefore, the experiences of Deaf people are rarely recorded in writing or in print form. On the other hand, professionals with years of experience in writing academic journals, have in effect, colonised the experiences of Deaf people, no matter how unintentionally.

This chapter demonstrates how families of Deaf children can be subjected to policies and practices that are ideologically driven without realising how deeply embedded these practices are in a particular history and philosophy of deafness. In turn, Deaf children are more likely to be subjected to the process that Lane et al call: the *professionally guided identity development for their child* (Lane, Hoffmeister & Bahan 1996: 34). Deaf children’s psychological and identity development are dominated by the more medicalised perspective, thus ignoring the obvious benefits of social/cultural elements.

Service provisions are often subjected less to academic scrutiny than areas like education (Ladd 2003). However, a closer examination of such provisions produces a clear picture of where

ideologies are at work. The medical perspective is most often adopted uncritically. It pathologises deafness and influences general societal attitudes and mass media narration about Deaf people. Developments and ‘advances’ in technology and biotechnology are clearly identified as invariably benefiting Deaf people. Finally, the perspectives on sign languages are deeply driven ideologically, the assumption being that signed languages are second-class languages, a view that is not shared by most Deaf people.

Based on the literature review, it is obvious that proponents of a medicalised model of deafness have not demonstrated any major change in their attitudes towards sign languages over time. It seems that such attitudinal outlooks can be of a lifelong habit. The medical model has changed very little since classical times; it has been reinforced in recent times with the advent of technology. Although it is beyond the scope of this research to identify factors and causes of these habits, this area would be worthy of research consideration.

The right to use sign language, and its related cultural norms, are the central issues for every Deaf person who wants to adopt a cultural-linguistic stance. Therefore, respect and recognition of indigenous sign languages are the paramount priority. It is not sufficient to afford such respect or recognition to anyone who demands it. Respect should be given as a right and positively promoted to make Deaf people’s presence felt in the public space. Therefore, it can reach such people who do not have the luxury of regular access to Deaf role models or people. For instance, Deaf children in mainstream education or hard of hearing people can be enabled to sample language and culture which may be suited to their identity development. The analysis shows that many Deaf people were and are still isolated from each other and deprived of a chance to have social contacts that would enrich their lives and enhance their sense of belonging.

Having demonstrated the impact of medicalised philosophical perspectives on policies on deafness, these issues will be addressed comprehensively from the Deafhood perspective. This chapter has shown how medicalised perspectives are perceived as negative by culturally and linguistically Deaf people. Yet, the professionals and experts behind these negative perspectives are given credence over the experiential view of Deaf people be it in service provisions, counselling and information dissemination. It is no coincidence that very few professionals are Deaf or possess an insider understanding of Deaf culture. This is not to say that there are hearing professionals not suitable for their jobs but there are a minority of them retaining affinity or functional fluency in sign languages.

Interface between the UCD equality framework and the Deafhood perspective is explored in the next chapter.

# Chapter 4

## **Situating the social position of Deaf communities in the equality framework**

### *4.1 Introduction*

I have clarified a number of perspectives on deafness and their implications in the previous chapters and I have explained why a particular model on deafness, *Deafhood* is chosen as the best possible solution for this thesis. Before analysing the language policies in education and the access to information in both countries (Ireland and Finland), it is essential to locate the situations of Deaf communities in societies in general within an equality framework. This will provide a necessary understanding of why Deaf communities seek cultural and linguistic equalities in societies.

An equality framework as devised by the Equality Studies Centre in the University College Dublin (Baker *et al.* 2004) will provide a background when this is described with the analysis of language policies. This framework will enable and enhance the strength of arguments with regard to the status of indigenous sign languages. I will also show its relevance regarding cultures with respect to the claims of Deaf communities to equality in society.

The chapter will begin with a brief introduction to the equality framework and will identify the approach of its application in order to evaluate the social position of Deaf communities, focusing especially on Ireland. An approach will be chosen and briefly explained. Then specific issues and inequalities experienced by Deaf communities will be discussed. To address these issues and inequalities, I argue that in order to reach the highest possible level of equality – equality of condition needs to be applied to the administration of language policies. The promotion of equality of condition in terms of language policies is the best way of making the Deafhood model<sup>64</sup> possible for Deaf communities or individuals to develop.

---

<sup>64</sup> The Deafhood model is explained in the previous chapter.



## 4.2 Equality framework

The conceptualisation of inequalities in this regard is attributed to the Equality Studies Centre in the University College Dublin (Baker *et al.* 2004). Within the equality framework there are four contexts where equality or inequality can be generated: the economic, socio-cultural, political and affective spheres. Economic inequalities arise in the sphere of economic relations and refer to the unequal distribution of material resources and inequality in their ownership and control. Socio-cultural inequalities arise in the socio-cultural sphere; they find expression in cultural domination, misrecognition and symbolic misrepresentation or non-representation. Inequalities in the political sphere can be represented by political exclusion, political marginalisation or political misrepresentation. The affective sphere challenges the idea that the individual is simply a rational and autonomous actor. Instead it identifies inequalities in the doing of love and carework and in the deprivation of emotional nurturing and the ability to develop intimate and solidarity-based human relations (Baker *et al.* 2004)

Baker *et al.* (2004) also identify five dimensions of equality each of which is related to the four contexts in different ways; these are respect and recognition, resources, working and learning, power and the affective dimension.

It is important to differentiate between the contexts and dimensions of equality. The contexts refer to the structural relations or sites of social practice where inequality or equality can be promoted. The dimensions refer to different egalitarian issues within the contexts. These impact on different groups in different ways. For example, the primary generative source of class inequality is in the economic sphere where capitalism produces major inequalities in wealth, income and in the ownership and control of goods and services. The major inequalities for Deaf people arise in the socio-cultural domain where their culture and language is not fully respected or recognised. However, even though an injustice may originate in one domain, it impacts on others; the lack of respect towards signed language means that Deaf people are often excluded from participation in politics and from many areas of employment. All dimensions of inequality are related (more discussion on these differentiation of dimensions, see chapter 2 of Baker *et al.* 2004). Baker, *et al.* (2004: 46) warn:

“It would be rash to insist that equalities in the different dimensions are compatible: egalitarians may well have to decide in particular cases how to balance off conflicting demands. But the tendency of the dimensions to reinforce each other shows that there is often no such conflict, and that progress in each dimension is likely to require progress in the others”

Baker *et al.* (2004) not only identify different dimensions and contexts of inequality, they also highlight different perspectives within egalitarian thinking. Egalitarian thinking varies from the minimalist Basic Equality perspective, to the more demanding Equality of Opportunity paradigm to the most demanding Equality of Condition model. Basically equality can be assessed along a spectrum, ranging from seeking weak equality to strong equality. Kwiotek (1999) describes this equality spectrum as a continuum of equality, which ranges from a weak sense of equality towards the ultimate equality. The spectrum will be used to locate possible solutions to the issues facing the Deaf communities.

The first component - basic equality – is really the cornerstone of all egalitarian principles. It is based on the assumption that human beings are ‘born equal’ (Heywood 2002). Examples of this would include prohibitions against inhuman actions such as degrading treatment, rape, torture, and other crimes against humanity. These principles are very powerful ones, but can be regarded as minimalist since they do not challenge widespread inequalities.

Liberal egalitarians go beyond this principle of basic equality and focus on equality of opportunity. They will often justify equality in terms of the individual (Baker *et al.* 2004). Equality of opportunity means that everyone has the same starting point or equal life chances. They may also justify social inequality, as they hold that talent and capacity for hard work are unequally distributed (Heywood 2002). Liberal egalitarians regard societal inequalities such as the unequal distribution of income, wealth, resources and power as inevitable and unavoidable, and they, therefore, hold that an approach regulating instead of eliminating inequalities is the best way forward (Baker *et al.* 2004). An example of regulation of inequalities would be the set up of a minimum acceptable level for everyone i.e. a minimum wage, a social benefit net to prevent individuals ‘falling through’, as well as the regulation of competition to ensure that everyone has a fair chance.

However, we can identify shortcomings within liberal egalitarianism. This level of equality would merely tolerate, instead of celebrate, diversity and accept a private / public distinction, leaving many inequalities within the private sphere untouched. The dominant culture can thus tolerate minority cultures, but not vice versa. Liberal egalitarianism is based on the assumption that inequalities are inevitable, and that our task is, therefore, to make them as fair as possible. Equality of condition goes beyond this. It aims to eliminate major inequalities. It recognises inequalities present in the roots of domination and oppression. Proponents of this point out that those inequalities are rooted in

changing and changeable social structures, so therefore, inequalities can be eliminated. This marks a difference from liberal egalitarianism, which believes that certain inequalities are inevitable (Baker *et al.* 2004).

While it is possible to analyse each context of equality (the economic, political, cultural and affective) in isolation, this does not mean that each example of inequality found in each context exists independently. In reality, all inequalities interact and are complicatedly interwoven. Although the economy is identified as the central context where almost all causes of all inequalities originate, for many social movements, inequalities are found in other contexts (Baker *et al.* 2004). For instance, gays and lesbians experience discrimination in cultural terms where societies impose heterosexual values and disregard alternative values (Giddens 1997). This in turn has financial, health and other implications. Having explained the equality framework briefly, let us turn to identify actual inequalities and specific issues in each context as experienced by Deaf communities.

#### 4.3 *Economic context*

Baker *et al.* (2006: 58) describes the economic context as:

“An absolutely central system for generating inequality is of course the economy, the system concerned with the production, distribution and exchanges of goods and services. As we think of it, the economic system refers not just to the set of institutions that operate in the market (what might be called ‘the formal economy’) but to the whole set of relationships, regulations, norms and values that govern the production, distribution, exchange and consumption of goods and service”.

Within this context, employment issues are paramount. The experience and fear of being unemployed is always the issue within the Deaf community<sup>65</sup> although it is common across society. Located within the capitalist society, the class structure unavoidably exists within the Deaf community. However, there is sufficient anecdotal evidence that the structure has not shielded those who belong to the upper classes as they have experienced downward social mobility and have experienced unemployment/underemployment more frequently than their hearing siblings (Elizabeth Jones personal communication, July 2009)<sup>66</sup>. There are a number of Deaf individuals employed in

---

<sup>65</sup> For the definition, please see section 1.3 in Chapter 1.

<sup>66</sup> Elizabeth Jones comes from a prominent legal family in South Dublin and she observes a similar pattern in other families.

the family business but there are anecdotal stories out there outlining how they are marginalised in these businesses (Vivian Mulloy personal communication, July 2009)<sup>67</sup>.

While there is a dearth of statistical evidence in the last decade in Ireland, however, there are four published pieces of research. Although they are piecemeal, they should be regarded as sufficient evidence. One of them was published in 1973 but the purpose of including this research is to show through the evidence that little had changed over the years. Two of them were published in the 1990s and one recently in 2001. The international experience is included for the purpose of gauging the Irish situation in the comparative context.

#### 4.3.1 *Employment*

The first survey mentioned is the 1973 social survey of Deaf people<sup>68</sup>. This is a survey, which was commissioned by the now disbanded state agency, the National Rehabilitation Board. Among the findings, it found that 23% of the respondents were unemployed and that most of those who had jobs were employed in low-paid menial jobs. One of the research reports that was published in 1994, the Swan research<sup>69</sup>, reports that 45% of the respondents were unemployed at the time of interview and 48% of the respondents got a job immediately after school. It is unfortunate that the survey did not state how the jobs were obtained and how well paid the jobs were (Swan 1994: 335 - 358).

In the Matthews study<sup>70</sup>, the first survey states that the rate of unemployment among Deaf respondents was running high at 32.3% (Matthews 1996: 47)<sup>71</sup>. Many of the respondents attributed their unemployment to a number of factors. They ranged from a lack of academic achievement to employers' lack of confidence in the abilities of Deaf workers (Matthews 1996: 48). The majority of those who responded and were employed were in low-paid and manual jobs (Matthews 1996: 50).

---

<sup>67</sup> Vivian Mulloy's family owns a long established family business which he continues to participate and he claimed that this area needed to be researched as he knows several examples off hand.

<sup>68</sup> The National Association of the Deaf supported this survey and the number of respondents involved was 100 Deaf people separating by age cohort.

<sup>69</sup> The Swan research refers to a research commissioned by the Catholic Institute for the Deaf and was carried out by a psychologist, Dr. Swan of UCD. The research was published in a low-key approach in 1994. This research was part of a review of the role by the Catholic Institute for the Deaf and involved more than 1,000 respondents including 350 plus Deaf people.

<sup>70</sup> The Matthews survey refers to the publication – *The Irish Deaf Community* vol. 1 by Patrick Matthews and published by ITE (Institiuid Teangeolaictha Eireann – The Linguistics Institute of Ireland). The number of Deaf respondents in this survey was 400 plus.

<sup>71</sup> The calculation was done after I omitted 'Retired, Student and Housewife (sic)' as they are deemed not to be part of the active labour force (See Matthews 1996: 48).

Flannelly (1996) agrees that the problem of unemployment and underemployment among those Deaf respondents, who had jobs, is significant. According to Flannelly, Deaf employees “*clung to these to maintain their employed status and also because of the fear of not being able to procure other employment*” (Flannelly 1997: 12). The experience of underemployment and thwarted ambition seems prevalent among our European counterparts (Jones and Pullen 1988) and in Australia (Punch, Hyde and Power 2007). Conama and Grehan (2001) also record similar experiences among Irish respondents. The current unemployment rate among Deaf people is four times the national average rate (Irish Deaf Society 2006)<sup>72</sup>.

#### 4.3.2 *International experiences*

This is not unique to Ireland as Harmer (1999) reports in the US. After extensive research, he found that when comparing it to the society in general, Deaf people are more likely to experience lower income and are three times more likely to be unemployed. They were two times more likely not to complete general education, and to be employed in the ever-declining ‘blue collar’ industry. This situation has negative implications on their general physical health. Their occupations tend to be under-insured and as a result are excluded from most health services. Harmer (1999) also reports that those Deaf people who belong to ethnic groups are at more serious disadvantage. Similar patterns have been reported in the UK (Ubido *et al.* 2002).

Some people have suggested that there is a strong correlation between earning levels and hearing loss: for example, the ‘*more deaf*’ you are, the less likely you are to be in high earning employment. Jones (2004) found that there is little or no evidence supporting this tendency although there is some evidence that Deaf people earn less money, this was largely down to the general lack of educational credentials, rather than deafness itself. However, it can be misleading to indicate that those in employment are the fortunate ones. Foster (1996) recounts a collective experience among Deaf respondents that showed that it could be a frustrating and a lonely existence if one is employed in:

...the monolingual, speaking and listening world of hearing English users when they enter the work force. Once again, they are cut off from much of the communication going on around them (Foster 1996: 125).

---

<sup>72</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 2, 65% of Deaf people are employed or make themselves available for working and it should not be confused with the unemployment rate.

Being cut off has its perils for those in employment, as they miss out on access to the organisational culture and informal network/rules at work. Such access is essential for acquiring knowledge and information to ensure the completion of a job or enhance promotional prospects (Foster 1996: Conama & Grehan 2001).

With regard to the US Deaf graduates, Schroedel and Geyer (2000) found that those who graduated from colleges in a 15-year timeframe, the majority experienced less earnings and unemployment when comparing themselves to the general levels of society. Moreover, the discontented experience of older Deaf people in employment has not escaped the attention of their younger counterparts. In the Israeli research, Weisel *et al.* (2005) reveals that lower aspirations were expressed by these young Deaf people and were even lower when it comes to female respondents. The effects of unemployment and underemployment can have its effects on individuals as they can bring out frustration and a sense of helplessness. Vernon (1999) reports that these factors can be regarded as contributory to the higher reported rate of violence committed by Deaf people in the US.

Although the most of the evidence present here is related to the US situation, Ireland appears to be similar although there is limited research. The work by Matthews (1996), Swan (1994), Conama & Grehan (2001) and the Irish Deaf Society research (2006) can vouch for the similar experiences.

There is overwhelming evidence in both the Irish and the international context that the Deaf communities do not fare well in the economic context when compared to the general society. The evidence shows that regardless of employment or unemployment, one is bound to experience some frustration and one can be demoralised.

#### 4.4 *Cultural context*

Baker *et al.* (2004) refers to the importance of this context as generating and reinforcing social structures that are based on the differences of appearances, values and preferences. Such negative examples are racism, disablism, religious oppression and homophobia, etc. Academics in the United States proposed to apply the term 'audism' to those collectivist experiences of Deaf communities

who are oppressed or marginalised by the majority of society. Bauman (2004) extended the concept of audism by applying Derrida's idea of *phonocentrism*<sup>73</sup>.

*Phonocentrism* refers to the perceived superiority of voice/sound over the written version. This is so because many philosophers have argued as to which version can be represented as a supreme truth. 'The inner voice' can be regarded as a pure truth, hence, any other versions such as writing are inferior; thus, signing can be regarded as more inferior. Derrida accuses several Western philosophical strands as being obsessed with the phonocentrism. Although, Derrida did not refer to signed languages, it provides Bauman with a basis to argue that audism is also influenced by phonocentrist attitudes.

It is widely acknowledged that Deaf communities rely on visual information<sup>74</sup> and sign languages in order to participate in societies, but the societies they live in are principally monolingual and phonocentric (Corker 1998: 14). A direct effect of this is the influence of dominant discourses. In order to participate or integrate into societies, everyone should be able to speak and hear. This discourse permeates the philosophical views of those who promote the integration of Deaf communities into societies through spoken languages, not signed languages (Ladd 2003).

Oralism<sup>75</sup> is the prime example of phonocentrism where signing was forbidden due to the fear that it would hinder the progress of Deaf children's speech skills (McDonnell & Saunders 1993, Crean 1996, Conama 2002). During the debate on education in the Dail, one TD acknowledged the situation by saying "*I remember when children were slapped if they used sign language. However, it is not good enough to leave the use of sign language to the discretion of individual teachers or school management*" (Shorthall 1998 in the Dail Debates)<sup>76</sup>. In some cases, sign languages were only

---

<sup>73</sup> The term is the noun derived from 'phonocentric' – "*The tendency to value speech above writing in linguistic analysis; esp. the view (arising from the work of Ferdinand de Saussure) that the spoken language is the immediate realization of meaning*" (Oxford English dictionary online)

<sup>74</sup> It has to be acknowledged that there are Deafblind members in the Deaf community and their access to information is quite different and the nature of access is heavily reliant on signed languages (for live communication) and Braille (for written language)

<sup>75</sup> Oralism refers to an educational philosophy, which forbade signing by children in schools at all times: using it would inhibit the ability to speak and hear. It existed for hundreds of years and was often supported by those outside the community. It can be related to the dominant perception of who should participate in societies.

<sup>76</sup> <http://www.oireachtas-debates.gov.ie/> (Dáil Éireann - Volume 490 - 23 April, 1998 Education (No. 2) Bill, 1997: Second Stage (Resumed)).

tolerated on the condition that they were a compensatory tool for children who were deemed to be unable to acquire speech skills (Department of Education 1972, Conama 2002).

Another example of oralism is in access to the media. Access to the media is identified as a crucial part of being able to make informed choices or decisions (Murdock 1994, Baker, *et al.* 2004). Unfortunately, almost all media and public information outlets utilise spoken languages, in voice or print media. The nature of transmission is heavily dominated by monoculturalism, and favours the phonocentric approach (Corker 1998). For example, subtitling of news / current affairs programmes is frequently given in the spoken language; sign interpretation is rarely provided for these programmes. An education curriculum has also been dominated by monoculturalism and phonocentrism.

Currently, there is no provision for a Deaf culture and Deaf heritage in State educational curricula for Deaf children. It has been pointed out that such provisions would provide a crucial stage for the development of one's identity and cultural development. There are many stories that detail Deaf adults' sense of cultural identity becoming confused by oral or mainstream education, while the Deaf adults are frustrated and are anxiously continuing their quest to establish some basis for identity (Lane, Hoffmeister & Bahan 1996, Ladd 2003)<sup>77</sup>.

Recognition of sign languages in education is often limited to symbolic acknowledgement, and in some cases, has no legal power of enforcement (see Timmersman 2005, Krausneker 2000). The Irish situation is no exception. Despite that, on a number of occasions, the Minister for Education and Science and the Department insisted that the status of ISL under the support services' section within the Education Act is an adequate legal recognition (Kavanagh 2004<sup>78</sup>, Dail Debates 2004<sup>79</sup>).

Those who favour oralism tend to favour the assimilative approach into the majority society. Those who favour this approach base their beliefs on the perceived necessity to avail of employment prospects and societal participation to the fullest possible extent (Berbrier 2004). However, the actual experience among the Deaf people is that the employment prospects and societal participation are

---

<sup>77</sup> Coincidentally, there is a subject on sign language within the Leaving Certificate Applied programme and in theory, it is available for everyone; however according to the 2003 statistics, only 49 pupils in four schools took up this subject and 38 of them were girls (Department of Education and Science 2003).

<sup>78</sup> Jim Kavanagh confirmed this at his presentation at the conference '*Encouraging Signs: Developing Deaf Studies in Ireland*', Dublin, September 10, 2004,. Mr. Kavanagh was the inspector for the schools for the Deaf.

<sup>79</sup> Dáil Éireann - Volume 588 - 30 June, 2004 Written Answers. – Irish Sign Language (<http://www.oireachtas-debates.gov.ie/>)



always limited given the phono-centrist orientation of societies (Foster 1996, Corker 1998, Conama & Grehan 2001, Irish Deaf Society 2004).

With regard to the giving of information on deafness, the situation is dominated by accusations that information dissemination was largely ideological and biased in favour of those who champion assimilative approaches. Hoffmeister (1996) carried out a content analysis of thirteen academic textbooks for courses on special education in the United States. There was no main reference to Deaf viewpoints on education. This leads him to assert that there is a systematic avoidance of including these alternative viewpoints. This is also experienced in Australia. There is a plea for service providers to disseminate unbiased information on deafness (Cornes & Wiltshire 1999). This is not unique to these countries as there are similar accusations in this country. In UCD, there was a postgraduate programme for training teachers for the deaf but the amount of learning / studying sign language was kept to the minimum while the larger proportion went to the medicalised aspects of deafness (Griffey 1994, UCD Education website – accessed December 2005: personal communication 2005<sup>80</sup>).

In addition, there are several attempts in the arena of terminology to reduce ISL to euphemisms and neutralise or belittle ISL. Those who are involved within or working for the Deaf community use the generic term ‘sign language’ widely. Thus sign language is meant to cover all types of signing used by Deaf people. This is evident in the reply of the Minister for Justice to the question in Dail Eireann (Dail Eireann 2004<sup>81</sup>). This leads to the common misconceptions that there is only one universal sign language and for that it is derived from spoken languages (McDonnell & Conama 2001). Thus, we see that ISL is already a victim of outside interventions and modifications by external factors. Consequently, sign language is seen as a compensatory tool or it is seen as derived from spoken languages and therefore, granted inferior status in the eyes of the wider society.

Any attempt to raise the profile of ISL is often met by accusations or fears that the specific term could influence the view of ISL as an exclusive language, thus leaving out other versions of sign languages. The clear example is the Education Act. The acknowledgement of ISL is qualified by acknowledging the ‘*other sign languages*’ (Education Act, Ireland 1998<sup>82</sup>). The Minister for

---

<sup>80</sup> This was communicated to me by Dee Byrne-Dunne M. Phil, (ISL teacher) – December 2005). Its current situation remained uncertain, as the course has not been run for a number of years.

<sup>81</sup> Dáil Debate Vol. 578 No. 5 Written Answers Wednesday, 28 January 2004

<sup>82</sup> Section 2 ‘support services’ (e) Education Act, 1998

Education and Science justified this qualification by saying it avoided the impression of exclusiveness (Dail Debates 1998<sup>83</sup>). This fails to recognise that ISL is not an exclusive one as it encompasses a spectrum from pure ISL to methodical signing as long as the signing is intelligible. Although the vast majority prefer ISL, methodical signing still persists in a number of places where external users use it as a habit and fail to realise the influences of spoken languages on signed languages.

From the analysis of ISL, we can see that Deaf people are not given equal respect and recognition culturally.

#### 4.5 *Political situation*

Baker *et al.* (2004: 59) describes this context:

“The political system is the set of relationships involved in making and enforcing collectively binding decisions. Power relations are at the centre of the political system, although collective decisions do not always arise from exercises of power (Mansbridge 1999). As with the economy, we can distinguish between the formal political system – the set of institutions involving in making binding, coercively enforced decisions embodied in law – and this wider conception of the political system under which every social institution has a political aspect.”

In the political context, it is not surprising that the Deaf community is severely marginalised in a number of ways. In this section, the focus is on the political relationship between the Deaf community and the wider society. The identification of the political strands within the Deaf community is beyond this analysis. There are three following specific examples of political marginalisation where inequalities can be identified:

- *Participation in the formal political system*
- *Governmental committees*
- *Service provisions*

##### 4.5.1 *Participation in the formal political system:*

The participation of the Irish Deaf community in the formal political system, at least in historical terms, can be described as virtually non-existent<sup>84</sup>. Although, political rights are not denied to Deaf

---

<sup>83</sup> Dáil Éireann - Volume 493 - 03 July, 1998 Education (No. 2) Bill, 1997: Report Stage.

<sup>84</sup> It must be said that there are a number of culturally Deaf persons being elected to the national parliaments or local governments in other countries but on a current anecdotal evidence basis, the number remains less than 20. Some of them were elected on the quota system while others were elected by popular vote.

people because universal suffrage is granted to all citizens in Ireland, the right to practice is a different matter. The party political system in Ireland encourages the homogeneity and common views which make it difficult for a member of a minority to empathise with large political parties (Conama 2002). This is an obvious barrier to the establishment of Deaf persons in the formal political system.

Access to information, via the media, is severely limited since radio is largely inaccessible. Therefore, there is an increasing dependence on subtitling provisions on television (Irish Deaf Society 2000). Moreover, not all political related programmes on television is entirely subtitled and to date, no programme is interpreted in Irish Sign Language and this further reduces the level of access (Irish Deaf Society 2000, 2001 & 2003, Conama 2002). Given the rate of literacy difficulties amongst the Deaf community, some forms of media, especially written and subtitled forms, increase the difficulties for Deaf people (Irish Deaf Society 2000, Matthews 1996; Conama 2002, European Union of the Deaf 1997)<sup>85</sup>.

It is argued that political participation in local political processes is also largely inaccessible because of dependence on interpreters and other linguistic difficulties (Conama 2002). Political literacy and awareness are prerequisites for involvement in politics. The US commentator, Bateman (1996) believes that Deaf people would find it difficult to acquire these skills due to their literacy issues while linguistic inaccessibility hinders their ability to develop political literacy and awareness. Deaf persons' lack of experience in the political process may be another reason they do not fulfil their political rights.

However, Emery (2006) disputes this view and suggests that Deaf communities, especially in Britain, had asserted their political views in the mainstream system. They began to demand official recognition of their language – British Sign Language, in public. For him, it is a mistake to assume that the British Deaf community does not have political activism or some form of political socialisation. He concludes that the British Deaf community are more effective in dealing with Deaf politics<sup>86</sup> as they bring benefits to the community rather than dealing with general political issues. Emery (2006) acknowledges that while there is some form of apathy and cynicism within the Deaf

---

<sup>85</sup> Interestingly, the survey carried out by Deaf Studies Trust in the University of Bristol (2007) discovered the comprehension of subtitled programmes among Deaf viewers is quite poor and only 30% (out of 70 viewers) understood some extracts from news programmes.

<sup>86</sup> Deaf politics can be regarded as a part of politics of identity – similar to the Black consciousness and feminism.

communities<sup>87</sup> towards the formal political system, the lack of interest in the mainstream politics is more down to the lack of interest or awareness among mainstream politicians of Deaf-related issues.

#### 4.5.2 Governmental committees

Historically, the Irish Deaf community collectively possesses weak political power in the formal sense. Though it has potential to form a powerful lobby group, especially the Irish Deaf Society, its potential is severely impeded<sup>88</sup>. This has considerable implications when there is a collective exclusion or meaningless tokenism of representation.

This token representation of the Deaf community can be identified through the composition of the governmental committees and their subsequent reports. In Ireland, it was very common to see the composition of committees set up to investigate the issues facing Deaf people: to comprise completely non-Deaf people. For example, the committee that published the 1972 Department of Education report shows this (Crean 1997, Matthews 1996). There were many instances where government departments chose to consult with non-Deaf people rather than Deaf representatives. This also happened in the UK (Ladd 2003: 69-72). The best example was the publication of *Towards an Independent Future* (1996) by the Department of Health where no serious consultation was undertaken with Deaf representative organisations (Conama 2002). This is an example of 'external exclusion'<sup>89</sup> as described by Young (2000, in Baker, *et al.* 2004).

The consultation with the Deaf community is notably better in recent times. An example of this is the consultative forum on access to broadcasting by the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland and the co-operative forum on health accessibility by the Combat Poverty Agency (Broadcasting Commission of Ireland 2004, Irish Deaf Society 2003, Combat Poverty Agency 2005). However, the involvement extends to consultation only. For other committees where community representation was present, the concept of *internal exclusion*<sup>90</sup> can apply here (Young 2002 in Baker *et al.* 2004). Recently, the second advisory committee on the education for Deaf and hard of hearing was disbanded by the Minister for Education and Science and the reason was recorded in Dail Eireann:

---

<sup>87</sup> A number of countries reported similar experiences – especially Norway, Canada and the US (Emery 2006: 33)

<sup>88</sup> Irish Deaf Society relies on external funds to function. Therefore, it is sensitive to the funders' attitude and perspectives. In recent times, it expanded its social advocacy service, which relies on state funds, thus taking a less radical approach in politics.

<sup>89</sup> External exclusion refers to 'certain individuals or groups are either absent from decision-making forums or are dominated by others' (Baker *et al.* 2004: 122).

<sup>90</sup> Internal exclusion refers to 'individuals or groups are nominally included, their participation may be rendered ineffective or meaningless' ((Baker, *et al.* 2004: 122)

From an early stage in the committee's deliberations, it became apparent that there were entrenched, divergent views among representatives of deaf and hearing persons and their families on approaches to the teaching of the deaf and hard of hearing and that there was little willingness to reach consensus (Dail Eireann Debates: <http://debates.oireachtas.ie/> accessed December 2005<sup>91</sup>).

The Minister did not refer to the composition of this committee, which had only four Deaf people out of seventeen people in all. Furthermore, service providers and departmental officials dominated the committee, whose interests apparently were to continue the *status quo* situations, hence, the difficulties in reaching the consensus or compromise (IDJ 2001). The Minister also was of the opinion that the usual procedure of producing majority/minority reports was not the feasible option (Dail Debates 2005<sup>92</sup>). Therefore, the opportunity was lost for the production of majority/minority reports that would reveal the positions of groups within the committee.

Additionally, Conama (2005) points to the willingness and expertise of Deaf people to act on governmental committees. Representatives of the Deaf community are in serious short supply and this seriously hinders its ability to represent itself assertively. Bateman (1996) argues that this is due to a lack of understanding of the political process coupled with the perceived isolation of the Deaf community in the wider society. This makes it less competitive and also makes it weaker. This has left many Deaf people feeling a sense of powerlessness, dependency, and complacency.

However, Crean (1997) claims that part of the problem is apathy in Ireland; they fail to recognise that the lack of participation may be down to linguistic inaccessibility as one has to be fluent in the spoken language to participate. And there is evidence that the Deaf community is active within the formal political system especially regarding issues that affect the community itself. An example is the street demonstrations in aid of calling ISL an officially recognised language by the Irish Deaf Society (Irish Deaf Society 2005).

#### 4.5.3 *Service provisions*

As Weber has noted, paternalism thrives when an asymmetrical balance of power exists between authorities and subordinates, and when the culture encouraging this is being institutionalised (Abercrombie & Hill 1976). To date, the attitude to Deaf people has been paternalistic so the sense

---

<sup>91</sup> Vol. 601 No. 2 Written Answers. - Special Educational Needs Tuesday, 26 April 2005

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

of powerlessness among Deaf people continues unless real empowerment takes place. There are two specific areas of service provisions where this is an issue, namely the education and social services.

In Irish schools, to date, only four teachers, out of more than a hundred are employed in the schools for the Deaf and in the mainstream classes where either Deaf children are, who are Deaf and ISL users (personal communication 2005).

Barriers exist in the entry requirement while effectively preclude Deaf people (Centre for Deaf Studies, submission 2001). Yet there is an increasing number of Special Needs Assistants employed in the mainstream schools and schools for the Deaf, who are Deaf and ISL users. Their supposed contractual roles are made complicated as they are asked to relay information in signing to Deaf pupils and in some instances, they are frequently asked to teach the children. In effect, they substitute the teachers who are unable to teach Deaf children in some instances and the substitution is constantly refused to be acknowledged by all, ranging from teachers to the Department (SNA submission 2001). As a result, they are unable to participate in the management of school organisation and curricula / methodology issues to any large extent.

In the social services, the health boards (now incorporated into the Health Service Executive) finance almost all specific social services for the Deaf community. The chief and almost exclusive beneficiary in terms of franchises is the National Association for Deaf People (NADP) (NADP 2004). The NADP<sup>93</sup> is historically rooted in the culture of paternalism (Crean 1997). At its board of directors, only two can be regarded as community members but it can be regarded as a form of tokenism since their presence hardly makes an impact on the directions of services (personal communication 2005). These situations in social services and education exemplify the '*internal exclusion*' as described by Young (2002 cited in Baker *et al.* 2004).

The historical evidence shows that there is no attempt to empower or involve Deaf representatives in meaningful consultations or with discussions regarding the issues facing Deaf people. However, it has to be pointed out that some Deaf people have been able to empower themselves by setting up a representative organisation, notably the Irish Deaf Society in 1981 (IDJ 1987). The impact of this recent empowerment has been limited to a certain degree and this may be due to institutionalised

---

<sup>93</sup> It has been renamed as DeafHear.ie (<http://www.deafhear.ie> - accessed September, 2008)

paternalism. It is clear that three specific examples are sufficient to demonstrate the extent of inequalities that the Deaf communities experience within the political arena.

#### 4.6 *Affective contexts*

The affective context contains solidarity, family relationships, care work and social relations and this context is seen as an important part in the achievement of equality (Baker *et al.* 2004). Egalitarian issues within this context are described in Baker *et al.* (2004:60):

Inequality in the affective domain takes two primary forms: when people have unequal access to meaningful loving and caring relationships, and when there is inequality in the distribution of the emotional and other work that produces and sustains such relationships. The types of people who are likely to be deprived of love and care (for example, children who are left without a primary carer due to war, famine, AIDS, displacement, etc.) are generally very different from those who experience affective inequality due to undertaking a disproportionate high level of care work (women compared to men).

Within this context, given the societal attitude towards deafness and the views on it as disablement, there are persistent attempts to make Deaf people conform to the accepted ideals (Davis 1995). There are historical and current societal attitudes towards Deaf people, which have a psychological impact on their well-being (Lane 1995, 2003). For thousands of years, languages were synonymous with speech; therefore, non-use of the spoken language by certain people implied something sub-human. If Deaf people could not use the spoken language, they were viewed as sub-human (Bauman 2004, Bahan 2005)<sup>94</sup>. Brenda Brueggemann (1999) describes perfectly this orientation:

Language is human; speech is language; therefore deaf people are inhuman and deafness is a problem.

Another implication is that intelligence is correlated to the levels of hearing loss: the belief was the more you are deaf, the less intelligent you were. This is the common rule permeating the previous and current services (Busby 2001). This assumption is now discredited as Quigley and Paul (1984) states:

It is now generally accepted by researchers that any difference that does exist between deaf and hearing individuals on cognitive abilities are the result of environmental or task influences rather than being inherent in deafness (Quigley & Paul 1984).

---

<sup>94</sup> Ben Bahan gave a lecture at the conference (Irish Deaf Society's fifth congress) – '*Is technological advances killing or enhancing Deaf culture*' in University College Cork, October 2005.

Ridgeway (1998) points out that the equation of spoken language with being human and intelligence with level of hearing has had severe psychological impact on Deaf individuals' own perspective of self and self-esteem. Self-esteem and self-worth can range from feeling stigmatised, to being normalised to searching for equality through respect and diversity.

Having a deaf child can be a traumatic experience and one in which parents could encounter an emotional crisis and *loss of confidence in their ability to know what is the best for their child* (Calderon & Greenberg 2003: 179). Naturally, they turn to professionals for support and guidance. Professionals are often hearing themselves and have little experience in, or affinity with, signed language or Deaf culture. They tend to give advice that is coloured by their conditioning to the majority world. As a result, many parents are advised not to learn sign language or seek access to the Deaf world (Lane 2004 1995, Ladd 2003, Mathews forthcoming). Calderon and Greenberg (2003) point out that these children are unusual for being a minority within their own families, yet many professionals and parents failed to recognise this unusual situation.

In order to raise any child, it is crucial to develop social and emotional competence. One should seek processes and outcomes such as good communication skills, the capacity to think independently, the ability to solve problems and understand feelings. One should also seek respect for diversity. To achieve this level of competence, it is absolutely essential that parents have communicative skills with their children. This suggests that many parents find it a struggle and feel a frustration in achieving an acceptable level of communication without the availability of signing. As a consequence of communication difficulties, the impact on the children's acculturation can be devastating. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that Deaf children or young persons tend to depend on families more than their hearing siblings beyond the school years (Marschank 2002, Calderon & Greenberg 2003)

Bat-Chava (2000, quoted in Calderon & Greenberg 2003) found that those Deaf people who *embraced values of both the hearing world and Deaf culture* are the more likely to achieve the highest level of self-esteem. This is so because they have been successful in getting professional and academic success while being able to seek societal changes for Deaf communities. Unfortunately, such evidence shows that many families have not utilised this approach as most of them opt for the monolingual approach. This also hinders socio-linguistic competence.



#### 4.6.1 Education

Traditional residential schools for Deaf schools have been replaced by mainstreaming in education. Mainstreaming now is the norm for the education of the Deaf children. The authorities and parents tend to overlook the social and psychological impacts on Deaf children in these situations. Unlike the traditional schools for the Deaf, mainstreaming takes a typical Deaf child and places him or her in a mainstream school. The child has to avail of the spoken language through artificial means, such as hearing aids and lip-reading, in order to be educated and be accepted. Access to sign language and peer solidarity was almost always non-existent. Support services such as the visiting teachers of the Deaf, resource teachers and special needs assistants are all available to the schools but they are often hearing people with no affinity to signed languages.

On the basis of averages, it is not unusual for the schools to have one single Deaf child or perhaps two (Rooney 2003: Foster 1996). The children become conscious of their difference quite quickly because they are Deaf. This is so particularly given the visual presence of the support services and strategies adopted by teachers to “include” them in classroom work. Without easy access to sign language and peer relationships, many Deaf children tend to resort to “*coping strategies*” to endure such an environment (Martin & Bat-Chava 2003). These coping strategies can range from the engagement in solitary activities (playing alone) to the discovery of ways to avoid seeking this special attention. So they can do this by picking up visual clues within conversations (Martin & Bat-Chava 2003).

Marschark, Lang & Albertini (2002) supports this view by pointing out several studies which reveal that Deaf children in mainstream settings suffer problems such as diminished self-identity, emotional insecurity and difficulty in making friends. Martin & Bat-Chava (2003) report from their study of such children in these kinds of environments. They found that Deaf children are more likely to be neglected rather than actively disliked by their hearing peers. This is the case because the norms of social interaction are so heavily compromised. Sometimes for example, hearing peers do not have the patience to try and understand Deaf children’s sometimes unintelligible speech. The central barrier to solving these problems is obviously of a linguistic and cultural nature.

Although Deaf children in mainstream schools may, on average, achieve good academic attainments compared to their counterparts in the traditional residential schools, these academic attainments do not offer adequate protection for their well-being. To achieve reasonable educational attainments, many Deaf children in mainstream settings are forced to avail of tutoring on a one-to-one basis

before or after school hours (Rooney 2003). This involves an extra burden on them. This is carried into their adult lives as is evidenced in the UK report by Brennan (2000):

“The members of the Deaf Ex-Mainstream Group (DEX) have written eloquently of the difficulties they experienced in early adulthood because of not knowing who they were” (Brennan 2000)

The group of ex-mainstream students in Ireland also mirrors this experience as they submitted a paper to the Department of Education’s advisory committee urging actions in this regard (Irish Deaf Society 2003).

Those who have been mainstreamed can find it difficult to be accepted as members of the Deaf community with these psychological issues and the ambiguity regarding their social identity. If one wishes to enrol, in an analogical sense, as a member of the Deaf community, fluency in sign language and acceptance of one’s own deafness are crucial characteristics. It could be a Herculean task to achieve and develop characteristics for those persons leaving mainstreaming education. This is so because they have never availed of community activities.

#### 4.6.2 *Deaf communities*

Within the traditional residential schools however, there is an unexpected, but welcome gift for the Deaf community: the opportunity for indigenous sign languages (and their use) to develop and flourish. This grouping of Deaf people was cultivated in later stages of life as Deaf people socialised, intermarried and worked together on a regular basis, thus expanding the base of the community. Ladd (2003) states that this clustering cemented the foundation of Deaf people's socio-political community network, and the common unifying theme was sign language. Wrigley (1996) sums it up:

It was certainly not planned by those who set up the institutions... (Wrigley 1996: 52)

Within the Deaf communities, the concept of institutionalisation is rarely used. The institutions are often referred to as ‘*residential schools*’ (see examples in Ladd 2003, Lane 1992, Lane Hoffmeister & Behan 1996, Matthews 1996, Crean 1997). Placing children in these residential schools often means separation of the child from their natural families which are difficult emotionally. Despite the obvious drawbacks of institutionalisation, the Deaf community maintains a very strong affinity with

these schools and many see them as the cradle of the community. Lane (1992) emphasises the importance of residential schools as sites for the transition of linguistic and cultural skills to the Deaf community. Marschark, Lang & Albertini (2002) points out:

Despite the difficulties experienced in such separations, most of those children eventually discovered a thriving culture where they felt at home. Residential schools provide deaf children with role models, fluently signing and socially competent peers, and environments in which they are on a level playing field with their classmates (Marschark, Lang & Albertini 2002: 141).

Due to the recent moves towards mainstreaming, the decline of traditional residential schools for the Deaf has had serious effects on the Deaf communities. Ladd (2003) points out that the poor educational attainments under the oralist system that are received by Deaf people have devastating effects on their adult lives. Many are left without a functional language. There is evidence that shows an appallingly low functional rate of literacy among Deaf adults after having availed of an oralist education. Where there is such slow progress, the language delay can be harmful to one's psychological and mental health. This led to disturbing and damaging effects on the cohesion of the Deaf community. Ladd (2003) points out the external effects of oralism:

“...but as a threat to the quality of Deaf collective life, simply put, if Deaf schools under oralism produced illiterate and emotionally crippled children (as was claimed at the time), then within one or two generations Deaf communities would not be able to maintain their organisations – the quality of leadership would have degenerated too far” (Ladd 2003: 125)

Evidence arising from these various sources show that the affective impact on the Deaf individuals originates in the low status attributed to indigenous sign languages. The negative attitudes, even with unintentional purposes, towards the sign languages can bring harmful effects on Deaf people's sense of self and self-esteem. This impacts on their self-worth and on their education, work and relationships.

#### 4.7 *Discussion*

The purpose of this chapter has been to locate the situational position of Deaf communities in Ireland. The evidence provided for this are chiefly from the United States and the UK since there is a dearth of statistical and empirical research on the Irish situation. However, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the experiences in Ireland are similar to those outside of it

The evidence from research and literature shows the serious disadvantaged position held by the Deaf communities in Ireland and other countries. The data presented alone show how both discrimination and disadvantages are largely due to negative perspectives on deafness. These negative perspectives are obviously influenced by historical, medical and religious factors.

It has to be pointed out that those who have promoted a traditional liberal view of equality of opportunity but were ambivalent about signing did try to ‘advance’ the societal position of Deaf individuals which is positive itself. However, it is clear that they fail to notice that their attempts can rebound negatively on Deaf individuals. They tend to attribute such failures to these Deaf individuals for not being willing to accept changes, rather than to the fact that they are asking Deaf people to adapt to a hearing world rather than seeking recognition for their language. Many well intentioned liberals have failed to recognise the importance of sign languages, their related culture and their centrality in the lives of Deaf people. They seemed to be content to downplay the status of indigenous sign languages and these very acts can be a source of great difficulty for them because they hinder their efforts to achieve the aims of the Deaf individuals they claim to support.

Those who adopt ambiguous attitudes towards the status of sign languages, (for instance accepting sign languages as ‘alternative’ language or compensatory tool), seem to fail to recognise the intractable problem in their attitudes as the core issue is lack of recognition of ISL and other signed languages. Similarly, there are those who accept the importance of sign languages but impose the rules of spoken languages on them, also fail to recognise the source of the problems.

The Deaf communities have consistently argued for the central importance of indigenous sign languages to enhance their well-being and for the future generations. Unfortunately the messages are often ignored or dismissed.

#### *4.8 Applying the framework*

When one applies the equality framework to the situational position of Deaf communities in societies, the picture can be very depressing and bleak. Although it is not the intention to leave the discussion there, it is pertinent to discuss what options are available in order to achieve this acceptable level of equality.

For the inequalities identified in these four contexts, one can apply the three-level equality schema to attempt to address these inequalities. One needs to narrow down which are the options to be assessed. Three specific areas are chosen for this assessment: education, access to media and the status of sign languages.

Basic equality does not recognise the effects of *audism* on the Deaf communities because there is no apparent deprivation of human rights. However, it would recognise inhumanity in promoting oralism in education, because it employs harsh techniques in discouraging Deaf children from signing. Basic equality principles could leave issues of phonocentrism and monolingualism untouched because it could be satisfied that inhumanity has not occurred. Access to media and information through the majority language might not be seen as problematic within the basic equality principle because it could prove that Deaf adults have access, once they possess reasonable fluency in the written language.

Liberal egalitarians would be satisfied with arrangements if they ensured that access to education and equal opportunity for all is provided. This would be so if they could do so without altering the structures behind education. In order to deal with cultural domination and symbolic misrepresentation, liberal egalitarians would tolerate alternative approaches to ensuring the media and information is accessible. For example, they would support a voluntary approach by having vital public information translated into sign language through video or CD-ROM. They could, but would cite economic costs as reasons not to expand on such ventures. Such provisions are always viewed as the responsibility of the community; therefore, the state can give small financial incentives to such provisions (Pillinger 2002).

Liberal egalitarians would be concerned with the educational attainments of children and would look at possible methods to improve these attainments. They would not consider the inaccessibility of the curriculum and its monolingual and phonocentric bias. They would support mainstream education for Deaf children insofar as teaching can be translated into sign language within that setting. For example, an interpreter could be brought into the classroom to translate what the teacher says.

Those who promote equality of condition would propose an overhaul of the education system, championing full participation of the Deaf community. Curricula would be overhauled and replaced with more egalitarian measures such as studies on Deaf culture, community and heritage. By being

exposed to these studies, Deaf children would be able to explore and understand their standing in society. Teachers would have to satisfy the fluency test in sign language before being allowed to teach Deaf children. Significant control of schools would have to be passed to the community.

As for access to media and information, communication formats would have to be varied and readily available. They could not be subject to economic factors. The domination of phonocentrism and monolingualism would have to be eliminated in favour of an inter-cultural approach. Information and media could be accessed through a person's own preferred language. This would ensure equal recognition and respect for every group and individual.

With regard to the recognition of sign languages in societies, those who favour basic equality would be content with a mere legal acknowledgement of one's right to use sign language. Liberal egalitarians would be satisfied with auxiliary provisions that would support sign language as a right and as a resource, but these provisions would be based on toleration and would be at the discretion of the official bureaucracy depending upon the availability of resources. In contrast, those promoting equality of condition would celebrate the existence of sign languages and their related cultures; they would eliminate barriers and obstacles to the active development, preservation and maintenance of sign languages. For convenience, the differentiation of equality can be outlined in the following table:

Table 4.1: types of approaches to deal with issues under levels of equality

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Basic equality</b>	<b>Liberal egalitarian</b>	<b>Equality of condition</b>
<b>Access to media</b>	Rights legally acknowledged but with no legal powers of enforcement.	Support for auxiliary provisions, i.e. some subtitling on TVs and a small percentage devoted to sign language ignoring effects of monolingualism and phonocentrism.	Fully inclusive access. All formats are readily available – elimination of domination of phonocentrism / monolingualism.
<b>Recognition of sign</b>	Rights basically acknowledged but	Recognising named sign languages in	Recognising / celebrating the

<b>languages</b>	with no legal powers of enforcement.  Must not supersede the aural languages.	legislation – provisions depend on goodwill and discretion of official bureaucracy (i.e. costs permitting).	existence of sign languages and related Deaf cultures – no ambivalence towards sign languages/cultures.
<b>Education</b>	Rights legally acknowledged but with no legal powers of enforcement.  Must not supersede the aural languages.  Curricula are delivered through aural languages.	Sign languages seen as compensatory - curricula modified – control still outside the community.	Sign languages celebrated and recognised as real languages – curricula overhauled to reflect the linguistic / cultural nature of the community.  Administration of the schools to be given to the Deaf community.

The economic context is obviously the one from which most inequalities arise. However, Deaf communities often stress that inequalities that affect the Deaf community originate from within the socio-cultural sphere. It is quite clear that equality has to be based on the recognition of sign languages, which provides a personal and community based identity for Deaf communities. This will provide a basis upon which an argument can be built that positive language policies are inherently crucial for the Deaf communities.

#### 4.9 *Linking with Deafhood to the equality of condition*

Having located the socio-economic status of Deaf communities and possible solutions to deal with the consequences of this status, it is easily recognisable that the equality of condition can be achievable through the Deafhood model. Other levels of equalities apart from the equality of condition are achievable but they will not reach the level as demanded by the Deafhood model. It is clear that positive language policies are a key element in achieving the outcomes desired under the Deafhood model.

# Chapter 5

## Research design and methodology

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter starts with the hypothesis of this research. In order to collect data, a variety of methodological techniques were employed. There are a number of issues surrounding these techniques and they are ethical, epistemological and translational. They are discussed and critically analysed. The research process timeline is given at the end of the chapter.

### 5.2 Overall aims and methods

The primary aim of the dissertation is:

- a) To compare the status of sign languages in Ireland and Finland and
- b) To discuss the implications of this recognition for the respective Deaf communities.

The comparative analysis is undertaken from an equality perspective. The specific aim is to compare the egalitarian implications of state language policies for the status of sign languages. To achieve these goals, the thesis:

- compared the Deaf communities in Finland and Ireland in terms of linguistic rights
- conducted two case studies on the implications of state language policies, for both the education of the Deaf and their access to information.

A further objective of this research was to ask whether the higher status for sign language bestowed by the state in Finland had brought about more egalitarian measures as sought by the Deaf community, compared with Ireland where there is less legal recognition of sign language. This study set out to test the hypothesis that the social model of disability is required but not sufficient for realising equality of condition for Deaf people because it does not take enough account of the significance of either culture or language to Deaf people. The goal was to ascertain if Finland had



actually moved towards equality of condition by comparison with Ireland with respect to the education and information access of Deaf people. The study also starts to advance egalitarian thinking, particularly the work of equality studies, from the perspective of Deafhood.

The Deaf community's aspirations towards equality have focused on the issue of linguistic recognition. At the present time, Deaf communities throughout the world are seeking or demanding equality for themselves within their countries. Equality in every area of life, in particular in the areas of education and language usage, is widely recognised as the primary goal of Deaf communities (World Federation of the Deaf 2003, European Union of the Deaf 1997).

To develop an understanding of how state language policy impacts on these egalitarian aspirations of the Deaf community, it is necessary to examine two particular areas:

- i) Linguistic rights in the arenas of education, and
- ii) Access to information.

This is done by following a conceptual framework proposed by the UCD's Equality Studies Centre (ESC) (Baker *et al.* 2004). It is being argued that the adoption of the Deafhood concept is the best possible way to achieve the equality of condition proposed by the ESC framework in terms of improving language policies towards sign languages in both countries.

Finland was chosen because of its reputation of advancing the status of Finnish Sign Language (FinnSL). The Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD) claims that Finland is the second country in the world which gave legal recognition to the users of sign language (FAD 2008)<sup>95</sup>. The FAD also sponsors the headquarters and staff of the World Federation of the Deaf in Helsinki (World Federation of the Deaf 2008). During my research for the purpose of M.Litt degree, I did a comparative analysis for one chapter in the thesis and asked a number of national associations of the Deaf in other countries for materials for comparison. The FAD responded and passed more than sufficient amount of information, which enabled me to research further<sup>96</sup>. Through that, I was able to

---

<sup>95</sup> Uganda was the first country that gave the legal recognition to the Ugandan Sign Language (Finnish Association of the Deaf; [http://www.kl-deaf.fi/en-GB/English/Sign\\_Language/](http://www.kl-deaf.fi/en-GB/English/Sign_Language/): - accessed October 2008)

<sup>96</sup> This resulted in an article on the same subject in a book '*Deaf Studies in Ireland: an introduction*' (edited by Patrick McDonnell, Coleford, UK, Douglas McLean Ltd, 2004)

establish regular contacts with the officials in the FAD. This stimulated my interest in this specific area.

I had conducted various pieces of research<sup>97</sup> on access to information and wrote several articles for community magazines<sup>98</sup> on the same subject. On several occasions, I gave presentations in relation to language policy and Irish Sign Language. The most recent one was at the seminar aiming at public services in September 2008 under the aegis of the Signing Week organised by the Irish Deaf Society. Having done research and presentations, the effects of language policy orientations by the state on Irish Sign Language have been my personal and academic pursuit.

The aims and objectives of this thesis have been completed by the comparative analysis of:

- a) general political, social and economic contexts of both countries
- b) wider legislative contexts affecting languages in both countries
- c) specific language policy contexts of both countries
- d) short study visits to Finland and similar visits to institutions in Ireland
- e) interview data from 29 people<sup>99</sup>

Having described the hypothesis in general, I would like to discuss some ethical issues arising from this hypothesis before outlining the methodology and approach to research.

### 5.3 *Some ethical issues affecting this research*

#### 5.3.1 *Emancipatory context*

Linguistic research aside, previous social research on the Deaf community has often ignored the cultural / linguistic perspectives of the community themselves<sup>100</sup> (Baker-Shenk and Kyle 1990, McDonnell 1996, Young & Ackerman 2001, Ladd 2003). Oliver (1992) states that the social relations of research production reflect asymmetrical power structures, and often lack understanding of the alternative perspectives held by the researched population. Conventional research based on

---

<sup>97</sup> ‘*Is there poverty in the Irish Deaf community?*’ (Co-authored with Carmel Grehan, 2001) ‘*Signing in signing out*’ (I coordinated this and it was written by Dr. Pauline Conroy, 2006), *Evaluation report of Sign Information MidWest* (Conama 2008)

<sup>98</sup> The magazines are Irish Deaf Journal (currently Irish Deaf News) and Insight.

<sup>99</sup> All interviewees are named with pseudonyms. The Finnish interviewees are named with common Finnish names and similarly, the common Irish names for Irish interviewees.

<sup>100</sup> In fairness, the Deafhood concept was not familiar at the time of these studies.

positivist and interpretative paradigms are prime examples of these asymmetrical power relations. This is evident in many studies on Deaf issues in Ireland (including James & O'Neill 1991, National Rehabilitation Board 1973, Swan 1994). The reasons given for undertaking such research often cite a wish to increase understanding and awareness of how Deaf people fare in social and economic life. However, in reality, any understanding generated by the research has nevertheless made no improvement to the lives of Deaf people, and has had little impact on social policy responses to their needs (Conama and Grehan 2001).

Oliver (1992) suggests that an *emancipatory* research paradigm challenges positivist and interpretative claims of objectivity and the researcher's political neutrality. This is similar to the approach adopted by feminist, anti-racist and anti-imperialist researchers aiming to empower various groups in society with perspectives derived from research studies (Stone and Priestly 1996). Oliver (1992) suggests that disability cannot be studied from a detached position, because disability itself is socially constructed. From this point of view, deafness, by annexe, is socially constructed too.

Hearing researchers in the past have demonstrated a significant lack of insight on their research subjects - Deaf people (Baker-Shenk and Kyle 1990). Jones and Pullen (1992) demonstrated how difficult it could be for hearing researchers to detect cultural significance in the general behaviour of Deaf people. Baker-Shenk and Kyle (1990) argue that the linguistic and cultural bias of hearing researchers can lead to the adoption of perspectives that would be regarded as contrary to those of the Deaf community and their beliefs. Young and Ackerman (2001) state that methodology, in this regard, can become a political issue; the presence of qualified hearing researchers can influence the value base, the research process, and the validity of responses and epistemology. This has serious implications and can mean that vital information can be missed out in the course of research.

The emancipatory research perspective can be regarded as a radical approach to the analysis of social policy. In adopting an emancipatory approach, the researcher has to be aware of the social relations of research production, where the asymmetrical social relationship between the researcher and the research population is reflected. This thesis endeavours to avoid this kind of exploitative relationship between researcher and research population (Lynch 1999).

Barnes (1992) urges researchers in similar situations to opt for qualitative research, using an emancipatory paradigm. Then researchers would be in a better position to empathise with the research population; this approach would help remove many misconceptions built up over the years.

Qualitative research has its origins in social anthropology, in which it is vital for the researcher to have mutual empathy with the research population. The qualitative approach, says Barnes (1992), suits small-scale research, and allows the researcher to develop in-depth understanding of the subjects of the research.

Stone and Priestly (1996) have developed a framework for their research on people with disabilities, within which they pledge to carry out emancipatory research to empower people with disabilities while rejecting a strongly objectivist and positivist approach. Their methodological approach is adopted here, but has been adjusted to reflect the cultural and linguistic perspective of the researcher and research population. The research utilises a linguistic and cultural model of the Deaf community, which acknowledges the existence of Irish Sign Language and its social culture, rather than a medicalised view of deafness.

The methodological framework to be used is based on the following set of principles:

- An acknowledgement that a claim of total objectivity in research is not achievable (Fine 1998).
- A willingness to conduct the research in such a way as to be of some benefit to the Deaf community.
- The ability to offer an ‘insider’ perspective on the experiences of discrimination and marginalisation by Deaf people in society.

It should be pointed out that emancipatory research perspectives on Deaf-related matters are not unique and in fact, the practice is widely used internationally. The practice is reflected in linguistic research recognising the role of indigenous Irish Sign Language within the Deaf community (Matthews 1996, McDonnell 1996, Leeson 1997, Burns 1998). Increased awareness and better knowledge of Irish Sign Language and its functions have paved the way for the emancipatory approach in social research.

### 5.3.2 Peer research

The 'insider' perspective can be regarded as a part of peer research<sup>101</sup>. Peer research has its advantages and disadvantages. Knowledge and awareness of issues is one obvious advantage. However, it is dangerous to assume that the community of peers is homogeneous and non-hierarchical. This assumption has certain pitfalls, which could render the research invalid: Deaf people like all communities are diverse in terms of age, sexuality, gender, social class and disability and a peer researcher may be an outsider within one or other of these communities.

Other similar research, such as that of Tang (2002), recognises how social attributes such as gender, age, ethnicity and academic level can influence the dynamics between the peer researcher and the research population. Despite how well intentioned the aims of the researcher are to empower the peer community, one has to recognise that the dynamics and relationship between researchers and researched tend to reinforce the power of the researcher.

Like many communities and peer groups that are heavily influenced by external social and economic structures, the Deaf communities in Finland and Ireland are inevitably heterogeneous and hierarchical. For these Deaf communities, the common unifying themes are sign language, and the innate experiences of being Deaf (Ladd 2003). These themes are, however, not sufficient to overcome the dangers of falling into the research pitfalls described above.

Although I am culturally, politically and socially immersed in the Deaf community and have acquired fluency in Irish Sign Language from an early age, this social conditioning is not sufficient to overcome the pitfalls of conducting the research. Ladd (2003) describes the Deaf community in the UK as *subaltern* (in Gramscian terms), owing to insufficient education and socio-economic inequalities, but he recognises that he himself, as an academic researcher, does not necessarily have entirely subaltern qualities. He lists nine important subaltern qualities<sup>102</sup> for acquiring an acceptable status within the Deaf community, qualities which place him in the '*subaltern-elite*' group (Ladd 2003: 279-281). To evaluate myself according to these nine qualities, I would safely be regarded as

---

<sup>101</sup> Peer research refers to the members of the targeted group to research on their members. This approach was a general response to the previously held idea that researchers were somewhat neutral and objective. Another important point here is that peer researchers may be able to elicit more information from the respondents that otherwise would not be known. This can be seen as an important addition to the knowledge.

<sup>102</sup> These qualities are in relation to the status within the British Deaf community and they are: use of BSL as the first language, the common experience of being resident at Deaf school, experience of oralism and its effect on self worth, experience of being Deaf in a hearing world, knowledge of Deaf networks, the effects of monolingualism, the extent of socialising within the Deaf community, the commitment of developing the Deaf community and the embracing of the 'Deaf' identity (Ladd 2003: 279-281).

possessing eight of these qualities<sup>103</sup> and thus would also be placed in the ‘*subaltern-elite*’ group. This evaluation is an ideal forewarning regarding the apparent pitfalls inherent in the research approach.

To date, Ladd’s approach of identifying himself in the research process has been a revelation for me. Given the historically low admission to third level of education among Deaf people, I have been requested frequently to explain how I coped within the hearing academia as a Deaf scholar or to explain how the academia works. This has some positives and drawbacks. The most obvious disadvantage is that I am currently active within the Deaf community, particularly in the arena of community activism. Hence it affected the relationship with the interviewees.

A number of hearing interviewees tended to be wary of my request for interviews after tacitly recognising my views on ISL<sup>104</sup>. There were two potential interviewees who declined to be interviewed. Though they did not give exact reasons, I had a reasonable belief that my known activism and views on ISL had some effects on this. On the other hand, Deaf interviewees found it somewhat ridiculous to explain phenomena or incidents to me, as they believed that I had sufficient knowledge or expertise. This compounded additional difficulties in sourcing available potential Deaf interviewees, especially in Ireland for this research. The situation in Finland is somewhat different and no major difficulty occurred.

Having stated the advantages and disadvantages, I found the whole thing reasonable and I have not experienced any major difficulties. Hearing interviewees were more assured when the rationale of the research and my adherence to research ethics were emphasised before the interviews. For Deaf interviewees in both countries, they believed that my completion of a PhD research would be seen as a success and beneficial to the Deaf community. Mentioning this, it is interesting to note that Deaf

---

<sup>103</sup> Since I consider myself to be bilingual (even multi-lingual in some sense as I have some competence in American Sign Language, British Sign Language and international signs in addition to Irish Sign Language and English), I have access to written English publications and can communicate with hearing people through note writing; therefore, I have never experienced the effects of monolingualism (at least when considering the written sphere). Ladd (2003: 280) defines the effects of monolingualism as being helpless in the world of monolingualism (no meaningful access to a dominant language). He considers an understanding of the effect of this hopelessness as a key quality.

<sup>104</sup> I have a very strong affinity for ISL and believe that this is a core identity indicator of being culturally Deaf. I have been active in prompting ISL as a language in the real sense instead of being a compensatory tool in several contexts be it political, educational and social. Therefore, I consider ISL as my first language.

academics in the hearing academic institutions in Britain have not always been supported by their peers (de Meulder 2008)<sup>105</sup>.

### 5.3.3 *Comparative analyst's role*

Since the inclusion of Finland and Ireland as the comparative units for this research, the process of comparative research has to be carefully conducted due to a number of vital factors described above. Part of the role of the researcher in this field is to realise the implications of her choice of methodology in her comparative analysis. Øyen (1990) describes four groups of comparative researchers. The first group are known as *purists*, who tend not to believe in the need for separate methodological discussions, and who liken such comparative work to other types of research. The next group, named the *ignorants*, are not sensitive to social contexts, including historical and cultural differences. *Totalists* are regarded as being aware of the relevant methodological and theoretical pitfalls, but also as failing to recognise the importance of equivalence and appropriateness of concepts in comparison. The final group, the *comparativists*, recognise the arguments put forward by the purists and totalists, but take the stand that comparative research is a distinctive subject itself.

May (2001) discussing the categories described by Øyen, states that these definitions, while idealised descriptions, are sufficient to warn the researcher to reflect and think through the issues and concepts arising from comparative research. I prefer to regard myself in the last category (a comparativist) as I had taken care in preparing an evaluative framework and its methodological approaches, which prepared questions for both different sets of interviewees.

### 5.3.4 *Using more than one language in research*

This research is of a qualitative nature involving more than five languages, namely, Irish Sign Language, English, Finnish Sign Language, Finnish and international signs. It is important to note that international sign is not regarded strictly as a language in its own right<sup>106</sup>. Since the language of

---

<sup>105</sup> The author, Maartje de Meulder describes the negative experiences by Deaf academics in Britain when they get socially active in the Deaf community. Others in some quarters see them as embracing 'hearing' culture and their positions are seen as adopting a pretentiousness attitude that is alien to the British Deaf community. It is interesting that such negative attitudes are not occurring in Ireland, at least according to my experience. de Meulder gave a paper – '*Giving back – Deaf professionals and the Deaf community*' at the fourth conference of Deaf Academics in Trinity College Dublin, June 25, 2008.

<sup>106</sup> International signs are more of abridged versions of indigenous / national sign languages and they rely more on facial / body expression, body acting and role-playing (Locker, McKee & Napier 2002; Rosenstock 2008). For instance, an Irish Sign Language user would rely on her own vocabulary of signs to support conversation to fill in gaps between body acting, gestures and role-playing. Her signs must mutually be understood otherwise they are unintelligible.

this research thesis has to be submitted in English<sup>107</sup>, translations between languages played a huge part in this research posing several epistemological dilemmas (see Baker-Shenk and Kyle 1990; Ladd 2003; Young and Ackerman 2004).

Temple and Young (2004) point out that there are hierarchies of language power; hence, English in this research is inevitably the most powerful language. Since this thesis is expected to be submitted in English, all translations must be done from all languages to English. Temple and Young (2004) suggests that this act alone situates the position of researchers in the hierarchy of language power. Therefore, it is important to recognise my position within this regard.

Additionally, it is important to recognise that translating interviews from aforementioned languages to English would raise methodological and epistemological issues. Temple and Young (2004) suggest that researchers must inform readers of how interviews are translated and scripted in detail to enhance the quality of research. Hence these issues are to be discussed in detail below.

#### 5.4 *Approach of research*

##### 5.4.1 *Evaluation approach: using Grin's model of preparing questions*

Grin (2003) developed an evaluation approach of language policy as he attempted to evaluate minority languages in Europe under the aegis of the Council of Europe's charter for minority and lesser-used languages. The evaluation is based on a policy analysis perspective, which he acknowledges contains a number of difficulties in evaluating. These limitations centre on the fact that the policy analysis perspective can only describe situations in part since language policies operate in very high complex and ever-fluid settings. So it is difficult to predict whether a potential policy may be better or worse than the existing policy (Grin 2003: 38-40). Despite its limitations, Grin's model can be useful for assessing language policies outside the Council of Europe charter.

In order to capture the effects of state policy on languages, Grin sets three conditions for evaluating a language policy on the national level: capacity, opportunity and desire. The capacity refers to the state's level of activity in increasing the competence and fluency in its population to cater for minority languages. Practical examples can be provided through the education system where

---

<sup>107</sup> It is interesting to note that there is no regulation reference to the language usage in the submission of theses to the University College Dublin.



languages can be taught and delivered. Opportunity is based on the state's ability to permit languages to be used in formal situations such as court deliberations, public administration and service delivery.

The final component, desire is related to the general public's viewpoint and attitudes to the minority languages and Grin believes the state has an ability to promote such languages in order to re-legitimise and re-vitalise them. Practical examples are the provision of television stations or programmes through minority languages. Another example can be observed by the endorsement of cultural activities such as festivals.

However, Grin acknowledges that three components depend on the state's ability to deliver such policies effectively as well as on the goodwill of political actors to ensure their success. The political sensitivity of meeting the public expenditure in delivering support to such cultural and linguistic activities can be a key factor here (Grin 2003: 43-48).

Given the simplicity of his evaluative framework of analysing language policies, I decided to adopt and modify his evaluative framework for asking key questions to the interviewees. This framework is extended to the first general questions regarding the current status of sign languages in the respective countries. It has to be stressed that this framework is only used for preparing questions and selecting stakeholders, not for supporting analysis.

The nature of questioning employed in the interview is mixed - journalistic and personal (see Dillon 1990)<sup>108</sup>. The conduct of interviewing as recommended by Denscombe (2003: 177-182) was duly noted and not all of the tactics were employed in all interviews.

Denscombe (2003) expects that the interviewer should be attentive, adept at using prompts, probes and checks: the interviewer should insure that everyone has a say in a group interview and should not be judgemental. All interviews were concluded satisfactorily and this indicated that I was attentive and was adept at prolonging or shortening the interviews as possible. Since a number of languages were involved, it was quite frequent that clarifications or offering examples were given to stimulate interviews. I did not have a group interview apart from two occasions where two persons made

---

<sup>108</sup> Dillon (1990) states that there are different forms of questioning ranging from classroom to interrogation. The different forms can be employed in a single interview depending on the nature of responses. The journalistic form of questioning refers to a ready set of questions aiming to get anticipated answers. This requires the interviewer to understand the reasons of asking these questions. The personal interviewing practice refers to elicit opinions, views, feelings and beliefs rather than getting standard answers.

themselves available for interview but the nature of these interviews resembled one-to-one interview because the dialogue in these interviews was almost kept to the nature of question and answer session.

Regarding being non-judgemental, since it is impossible to detach my identity, values and beliefs from research, they influenced the production and analysis of qualitative data; the ‘self’ is intertwined with the research process (Yousif 2007). However, even though I had my own values and beliefs, I was cautious not to display or impose those on others. Yet as I employed an Irish Sign Language/English interpreter in all the interviews with hearing people, my identity was already marked by the presence of an interpreter and I used Irish Sign Language as the primary language.

The set of questions were slightly different for the interviewees of each country because there is a difference in the legislative status of sign languages between two countries. Since the Finnish Sign Language is referred in the state constitution, this influences the nature of questions alone and most of Finnish interviewees gave responses under the impression that the Finnish Sign Language itself was constitutionally recognised<sup>109</sup>.

Spicker (1995) suggests that social researchers should pay more attention to methodology in research because he believes that too many researchers are far too concerned with the outcomes of their work. He thinks that careful consideration of methodology would stand the research work in good stead in the end. Grin’s evaluative framework provides an insight into how the language policies can be evaluated and critiqued. However, while his framework provides a full basis for preparing questions and selecting key stakeholders, it does not provide the basis for this analysis because the central hypothesis of this thesis is that the Deafhood model is the best framework for shaping positive language policies for Deaf people. Since there is no existing language policy operating on that basis of the Deafhood concept, at least, at the state level, it is not possible to evaluate and critique such a language policy on that basis. It remains an aspiration.

---

<sup>109</sup> Chapter 7 points out that the wording in the Finnish State constitution refers to the personal right to use Finnish Sign Language instead of having Finnish Sign Language recognised itself. The distinction is significant and is discussed in Chapter 7.

#### 5.4.2 *Comparative approach*

A comparative study remains an attractive option for us, offering an international dimension that certainly enhances our understanding of where Ireland stands in these matters in relation to other countries. May describes four different approaches to such comparative research: the *import-mirror* view, the *difference* view, the *theory-development* view and the *prediction* view (May 1997: 185-189)<sup>110</sup>. These approaches are not clearly distinguished from each other and a comparative exercise might apply to more than one approach (May 1997: 185). The first approach, the *import-mirror*, refers to those studies that use the findings of practices in another country and compares them against their own country, to see the basis of their own practices more clearly. This view might be useful for those who want to imitate or introduce practices originating in another country. Although the four approaches are not necessarily conducted separately, the import-mirror view was the best option to adopt for this research because the research question was to examine the possibilities of our current practices for the inequalities experienced by the Irish Deaf community. The difference view was also employed here as it enabled the research to pinpoint the differences between the experiences by Deaf communities in both countries. For example, how can FinnSL users avail of their constitutional rights and how can we learn from them? The differences can provide a basis for further analysis and discussion. The specific methods of operation within this approach can be seen below.

While comparative analysis has many attractive aspects, such as the collection of valuable knowledge and information from another country, there are a number of other aspects to the approach which the researcher must be aware of before conducting research. One is the importance within the approach of sensitivity to the socio-cultural context, and an awareness of the possible pitfalls involved in comparing what appear to be similarities. This relates to further issues in comparative analysis such as *appropriateness* and *equivalence*. The former refers to the importance of not assuming that issues or methods which are normally appropriate in the researcher's own culture are necessarily appropriate in another context. *Equivalence* relates to the non-uniform nature of validity of concepts and meanings, which may vary between cultures. A simple concept like 'family' for example, can imply different sets of meanings across cultures (May 2001: 200-219)<sup>111</sup>.

---

<sup>110</sup> *Import-mirror* view enables us to see the basis of our practices. *Difference* view refers to examination and explanation of similarities and differences between countries. *Theory-development* view is obviously self-explanatory and it refers to the actual experiences of countries in developing services or policies that can be used to develop theory. Finally, prediction view refers to the examination of potential possibilities for one's own country by examining similar experiences in other countries (May 1998: 185-189)

<sup>111</sup> For instance, the concept of family is different from one culture to another culture. It is understood that the Polish equivalence of 'family' includes uncles, aunts and cousins while the Irish concept tends to refer them to the 'extended

Finally, when discussing cross-national analysis clearly, the issue of language translation has to be dealt with. Aside from the actual process of translation from one language to another, one has to consider issues arising from neo-colonialism, such as ethnocentrism. There are also risks involved in interviewing people who express concepts, which might not have an equivalence in the researcher's language and which could lead to further ambiguity (May 2001: 200-219). I had encountered this situation on a number of occasions and had resolved the situation by employing prompts and probes to narrow the possible list of equivalences. However, it has to be remembered that Finland and Ireland are members of the European Union and have similar political, social and economic contexts; therefore, the risks were not that great.

To overcome the risk of further ambiguity, a concept of contextualisation is developed by Hantrais (1999). The approach is used to describe the background of each issue and choose variables within the state for comparison (Hantrais 1999; 93-108). This method was employed in this study and will be explained in depth at the beginning of chapter 6. Further discussion on obvious epistemological implications is given later in the chapter.

#### 5.4.3 *Qualitative approach*

This research adopted a wholly qualitative approach. Given the nature of the questions and the focus of research, it was necessary to interview stakeholders to complement the analysis of the literature review. This was aided by two short study visits to Finland and a further social visit. The choice of the qualitative approach arose from the exploratory nature of the study and its focus policy outcomes at the personal level. The qualitative approach was also ideal in dealing with an emerging research subject: it was possible to manage uncertainties within it (Denscombe 2003). The qualitative approach was a good choice too because legislative rights and policies afforded to the Deaf communities in both countries could be analysed using this method. Language policies in education and in access to information were also analysed. In order to capture the efficiency and effectiveness of these rights and policies, it was necessary to interview stakeholders intensively to obtain information and to establish how policies operated in practice.

---

family'. The Irish concept of family is based on the nuclear family idea while the Polish concept have some kind of clannish and multi-generational tendencies (see Wierzbicka 1997)

## 5.5 *Methods of investigation*

Apart from the academic literature review and my extensive knowledge of Irish Deaf community, it is obvious that there was a need to know more about Finland. There are a number of initiatives I have taken to increase the knowledge and information about it. I undertook two short study visits plus a social visit, Internet research and triangulation with the Finnish stakeholders was also undertaken. I checked my interpretations of events and comments with Finnish interviewees after interviews through email.

However, let us focus on the Irish context to gauge my knowledge first. Presently I lecture at the Centre for Deaf Studies in Trinity College Dublin and have done so for a number of years<sup>112</sup>. I am an active member of the Irish Deaf Society and was in several positions<sup>113</sup> in this organisation. I sat on several government-sponsored committees<sup>114</sup>. I chaired the accreditation process for interpreters and will chair another one in 2009<sup>115</sup>. I was often asked to advocate for Deaf people with several government agencies<sup>116</sup>. I wrote columns regularly for the community magazines<sup>117</sup>. I have a very good network of Deaf academics outside of this country and we email regularly. I coordinated the conference for this group in Trinity College Dublin in June 2008<sup>118</sup>. I went to the schools for the Deaf in my formative years. I have been actively involved in the Irish Deaf world by attending, participating and observing Deaf events in Dublin and all over Ireland. I also visit Deaf clubs regularly. I am a paid member of Tallaght Deaf club. I also participate in sports and am a member of sporting organisations organised by the Deaf community since I left school.

### 5.5.1 *Short study visits to Finland*

While I am well versed with the socio-economic situation of the Irish Deaf community, short study visits were deemed as necessary to obtain a tangible understanding of how the recognition of personal rights to use sign language can affect the Deaf community in Finland. These visits were availed of as opportunities to interview a number of stakeholders. Contacts were established via the

---

<sup>112</sup> I lecture on 'Perspectives on Deafness', 'Deaf People and the Media' and 'Deaf Education' and coordinate the placement scheme for students from 2002 to the present.

<sup>113</sup> I was a board member, then to honorary secretary and finally to the position of chair dating from 1992 to 2006.

<sup>114</sup> I was a board member of Comhairle (now known as Citizen Information Board) from 2002 to 2005. I was on the Department of Education and Science's advisory committee on education for the Deaf; 2001-2005. I was also a member of the Department of Justice's advisory committee on the employment of people with disabilities in the public service.

<sup>115</sup> The first one took place in 2006 under the aegis of Irish Sign Link and the second one will be in 2009 under the aegis of Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS).

<sup>116</sup> For example, I advocated (voluntarily) for Deaf people at the equality and employment tribunals.

<sup>117</sup> The magazines are Irish Deaf Journal (now Irish Deaf News) and Insight.

<sup>118</sup> This conference has a website: <http://www.da08.ie>

intermediary in the Finnish Association of the Deaf and a number of contacts were made directly. Direct contact details were obtained from the Finnish government websites.

I have been to Finland on three occasions between the years of 2005 and 2006 for the research purposes. Apart from the interviews with the stakeholders, the following is a list of places and institutions I have visited or participated in:

- The offices of the Finnish Association of the Deaf
- Helsinki Deaf Club (a social club for Deaf people)
- University of Helsinki (an interview with an academic and a brief tour of the department of special education)
- Humank University (a department within the university where Finnish Sign Language interpreters are being trained and had a brief tour of the university)
- Albert School for the Deaf, Helsinki
- The banquet for the 100th anniversary of the Finnish Association of the Deaf including a visit to the mayoral function hosted by the mayor of Helsinki
- Lutheran services for Deaf people in the Helsinki Cathedral
- The conference on Human Rights organised by the World Federation of the Deaf and Finnish Association of the Deaf. A majority of those 1,000 who attended, were Finnish Deaf people.
- A street parade highlighting the status of Finnish Sign Language from the city centre to the Finnish Parliament
- The offices of Prosign – the multimedia company and a brief tour of its facilities.
- YLE – the state television station and a brief tour of facilities where televised news in Finnish SL is situated.
- The offices of the Ministry for Education
- The offices of the National Board of Education, a subsidiary of the Ministry of Education
- The offices of the Ministry of Justice
- The offices of the Ministry of Social Affairs

Such participation enabled me to mingle and interact with several key groups such as members of the Finnish Deaf community, service providers and academics as well as government representatives. Through these social engagements, I was able to gain a good understanding of what they thought regarding the general status of Finnish Sign Language.

## 5.5.2 Internet Research

### 5.5.2.1 Finland

Work has been carried out in collating general information regarding Finnish society's socio-political, economic and legal contexts. The online academic and non-academic journals in the English language were available through UCD's online information system. These journals provided necessary information on the current political, social, economic and historical situation of Finland. There are other important sources:

The media outlets on the websites were frequently accessed and they are:

- YLE News in English (<http://www.yle.fi/news/>)

This website contains a list of summaries on events / incidents of what happened in Finland on a daily basis. YLE is the Finnish state broadcaster.

- YLE in Finnish Sign Language

YLE provides news in Finnish Sign Language daily on television and the daily bulletins are repeated and stored on the website (<http://areena.yle.fi/video/384149>).

- Helsinki newspapers in English

The main dominant newspaper in Finland is the *Helsingin Sanomat* and its website can be accessed in English (<http://www.hs.fi/english/>). This newspaper is described as 'politically unaffiliated' (Jyrkiäinen 2008). *The Helsinki Times* – the only English language newspaper published in Finland - has the website: (<http://www.helsinkitimes.fi/htimes/index.php>) and the first weekly issue was published in 2007.

Statistical information has been available in English through the Statistics Finland website ([http://www.stat.fi/index\\_en.html](http://www.stat.fi/index_en.html)). However, the English pages cover general statistical information. Specific statistical information in English can be obtained from the office through email contacts with its officials.

The Finnish legal texts translated in English are available on the official website FINLEX (<http://www.finlex.fi/en/>) and it is administered under the aegis of the Ministry of Justice. However, there is a disclaimer that the English translation was not official. If there were an uncertainty, email

contacts with the Finnish embassy in Dublin or key stakeholders in Finland were necessary for clarifications. The level of response has been excellent and courteous to date.

Finally, the government website provides a central reference website where one can avail of information within enormous number of fields ranging from politics to culture. This website address is <http://virtual.finland.fi/>. This enabled me to browse a number of miscellaneous websites.

#### **5.5.2.2 Ireland**

Since obtaining the degree on social policy and economics, I retain an keen interest in the current affairs in the Irish context. I am a regular reader of the Irish Times. I have kept myself abreast of myself by reading academic journals on these specific fields. I regularly watch current affairs programmes on the Irish TV. The statistical information was obtained chiefly from the Central Statistics Office (<http://www.cso.ie>). The Irish Statute Book contains all Irish laws and legislative instruments. It is easily accessible through this website: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie>. There is a main governmental portal service (<http://www.gov.ie>) where you can find a list of government departments and their agencies. I also regularly browse the Irish Deaf-led website (<http://www.deaf.ie>) and a general email discussion group to keep abreast of information within the Irish Deaf community.

#### **5.5.3 Dialogue with key stakeholder organisations**

There were occasional email dialogues with a number of key stakeholders in Finland and Ireland. The purposes for these dialogues were to describe or clarify issues and incidents that have arisen in my research. This triangulation approach had proven of some assistance. Contacts with organisations that were not originally involved in the selection of potential interviewees were contacted for their views. For example, teaching unions were contacted for comments on some issues arising from the research<sup>119</sup>.

#### **5.6 Selection and Profile of interviewees**

The core data collection were from interviews with the key stakeholders in both countries and they provided a nucleus of information necessary for this research. Since the research question focuses on

---

<sup>119</sup> Only one union, the Teachers' Union of Ireland responded to the queries regarding their stance on the status of Irish Sign Language and its application in the schools (see Appendix 4 for their responses to my queries) and their replies can be broadly similar to the societal attitudes towards deafness and sign languages.



the policy issues and the application of Grin's evaluative framework of language policies, the selection of stakeholders was limited to those who may have influenced or received the effects of policy-making. I decided to divide potential interviewees into three general categories and I aimed to maximise the generation of information from the interviewees.

The categories are academic, community and administration. The academic category refers to those in academia who have extensive knowledge of Deaf studies and they are likely to have recognised various perspectives in these areas. Through my personal network and knowledge, I was able to enlist three academics in Ireland and three in Finland. Unfortunately one Finnish academic declined to be interviewed though she passed on some useful materials and a bibliography of her works. The community refers to those who receive the effects of such policies on the ground and they tend to have critical views and experiences of effects from policies. Most of them are Deaf and are active members of their Deaf communities. I had enlisted seven in Finland and four in Ireland. The imbalance can be attributed to some reasons related to my own profile in Ireland. Since I am a very active participant in the Irish Deaf community with a known agenda of promoting the status of Irish Sign Language, the general reaction of being asked for an interview on the subject was treated with bemusement. Moreover, those who accepted to be interviewed, tended to respond to familiar questions '*well you know this yourself*' or '*you know what I mean*' without finishing off their points. There were occasions when some interviewees assumed that it was not necessary to spell out the phenomena or incidents in full given my 'tacit' knowledge. Basically, activists in the Irish Deaf community felt I knew the issues already.

The administration categories refers to the state agencies who were deemed to be frontline agents of implementing and administering the policies. They ranged from government ministries to quasi-governmental bodies who had decision-making powers regarding language policies in education and access to information. Seven agencies in Ireland responded affirmatively to the interview requests while six agencies in Finland did similarly. There was one decline in this category and it was in Ireland with no explanation given. All potential interviewees were contacted by mail or email with a written request for an interview<sup>120</sup>. Most of the interviews took place in their respective offices while two were carried out in University College Dublin. A timeframe of the research process is given at the bottom of this chapter.

---

<sup>120</sup> The sample letter can be seen in Appendix 2.

At the first stage, two respondents agreed to be interviewed as a pilot project. The purpose for these pilot interviews was to identify the appropriate length of questioning and the clarity of questions. The issues arising from this pilot project were identified and addressed. The questions were clarified further and the timing for these interviews were deemed as appropriate. The following table outlines the general variables in the profiles of interviewees.

Table 5:1: Profiles of interviewees

<b>Variable(s)</b>	<b>Finland</b>	<b>Ireland</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Of those who were females (Finnish in brackets)</b>	<b>Of those who were males (Finnish in brackets)</b>	<b>Of those who were Deaf (Finnish in brackets)</b>
Total no. of interviewees	15	14	29	18	11	10
Academic	2	3	5	2 (1)	3 (1)	0
Administration	6	7	13	7 (5)	6 (1)	2 (2)
Community	7	4	11	9 (6)	2 (1)	8 (5)
Deaf	7	3	10	8 (6)	2(1)	
No. of potential interviewees declined	1	1	2	2 (1)	0	0

It is clear from the table that the academic and administration categories were dominated by hearing interviewees. Though it is not possible to make an inference from these categories, it would be interesting to see further studies into these areas, especially those who implement and administer policies that affect their lives at least minimally. Another interesting point is the apparent feminised character of occupations that service the Deaf communities. It would not be unreasonable that this feminization of such occupations is similar to other occupations such as nursing and primary teaching. This would be an interesting topic for research.

### 5.7 *Translation and transcription issues*

The approach of interviewing differed from hearing to Deaf interviewees. The interviews with hearing respondents were tape-recorded and a qualified interpreter was employed to translate the live

interview. All Finnish, except one, were deemed as competent in spoken English. The taped interviews were transcribed by a secretarial assistant and no major difficulty was reported. Deaf respondents in both Finland and Ireland were interviewed by video and the filming was used to record their signing. However, translation and transcription from Irish Sign Language to written English took a considerable amount of time, as is evident from other research (Conama & Grehan 2001).

Since I do not have necessary fluency in the Finnish Sign Language, my interviews with the Finnish Deaf members were through international signs. Translating and transcribing from international signs to written English is a complex process and it would require a literal translation from international signs to ISL before it can be written down in English. This process required double amount of time that might be the standard for translating from ISL to written English.

Temple and Young (2004) remind us that indigenous sign languages including ISL and FinnSL, do not have a written form and if one translated them into written English, one has to take account of the possible implications from the differing modalities. Given the historical oppression of signed languages and the superior status of English, it would be relatively easy to make a simple mistake regarding the translation from signed languages to written languages. Due care to linguistic and cultural differences was very important (Temple and Young 2004).

Ladd (2003) points out that signed languages are fundamentally different from spoken languages as signed languages are topical and convey multi-layered meanings through facial expression, spatial location and visual orientation and movement. In other words, a minute long of signed narration would warrant a lengthy written comprehension. Ladd (2003) recognises the implications arising from these differing modalities and one of the implications is that the researcher would be forced to reduce the amount of direct quotations in the final draft. Another implication is that different language users construct themselves and others, and it would take a painstaking approach to translate them into a chosen language accurately (Temple and Young 2004: 167). Ladd had experienced many dilemmas in translating and transcribing from signed languages that were passionately, poetically, richly metaphorically constructed into a 'flat' English (Ladd 2003: 290). To ignore this, it would amount to a betrayal of the true representations expressed by the signers. This was also experienced frequently in this research but obviously with limited resources; editorial decisions had to be made here and the central focus was on a summary of the substance of the responses.

Given such dilemmas, a word of caution must be entered here. No translation is perfect nor is there any 'correct' process of translation (Temple 2002; Edwards 1998). Translation is often intertwined with the level of linguistic and cultural awareness of translators. Temple (2002) urges that translators are active producers so they must not be treated as neutral conveyors. Thus, the choice of words that may be deemed as the appropriate equivalent of the translated words is an obvious danger. Therefore, translation is not without risks of losing some meaning in order to minimise the likelihood of mistranslation; techniques such as back translation were recommended (Edwards 1998) and have been employed here.

Having explained the dilemmas and difficulties, Ladd (2003) estimates that the translation and transcription of signed languages into written languages take an hour per minute of signed data. While in my experience, this estimate is realistic with the time constraints imposed on this research, and the number of Irish and Finnish Deaf interviewees, the process was somewhat reduced to half an hour per minute of signed data for Irish Deaf interviewees and one hour per minute of signed data for Finnish Deaf interviewees.

All interviews were translated into written English. The total overall time process of translating and transcribing from the original signed data to written data was approximately in the region of seven hundred hours (20 hours per week for 35 weeks long). This timeframe did not permit a complete translation process. Stone (forthcoming) states that there is no agreed convention on this type of translation as each academic field (linguistics, social science, Deaf Studies) adopts its own unique approach of translation. He recommends that we apply the theory of pragmatics to such translations. According to this theory, each signed data had to be properly abstracted to ensure the integrity of substance and context. More importantly, this theory presupposes that the translated information can be clearly understood by the targeted audience. I agree with his recommendation because otherwise the process would be stretched beyond the researcher's time resources.

From time to time, clarifications were sought from the respondents especially those in Finland. It has to be remembered that all of them regarded English as their third or fourth language. Therefore, there was a likelihood of mispronunciation or elocutive mistakes in the transcripts. The email closure was necessary since it was beyond my ability to listen to the taped interviews again. Luckily, such requests were infrequent.

### 5.8 *Coding the transcripts and identifying the themes*

All of the written transcripts were typed into *.rtf* files and uploaded to the computer software Max QDA for analysing the responses. This software facilitates the storage, coding and retrieval of data. The first approach of coding was ‘flat coding’ to identify and describe the main areas of responses to the list of semi-structured questions. Then, each code is divided into the axial coding mode. The codes are ordered hierarchically into positive, neutral and negative responses. These coded responses provided a basis for analytic investigation. Such was the amount of responses analysed, careful selection of responses had to be made.

The most recurring themes came up in the responses from both countries and are identified as follows:

- Seeking linguistic equality and the right to use sign languages in access to service provisions and information
- The legal protection of sign languages and their effective enforcement
- Concerns surrounding the effects of cochlear implantation and mainstreaming on the quality of education for Deaf children
- Concerns over these above effects on the future well being of Deaf communities

The 29 interviews, the short study visits to Finland and the dialogues with the Irish and Finnish Deaf communities provided a reasonable understanding of the situations in both countries. Case studies into specific domains of how state language policies can affect the status of sign languages in both countries were also carried out. Additional general information was collected and analysed within the wider context that include interview responses and personal knowledge.

### 5.9 *The focus on education and access to information*

The specific contexts focused on were education and access to information because they were obvious sites of how language policies were operated and affected. Spolsky (2004) lists education as one of the obvious domains but he did not specify access to information as a domain. However, Edwards (2004) includes the access to media as an important domain. As for the specific domain - access to information appears not to be regarded as an important stand-alone domain in the mainstream literature though this domain remains a recurring theme in several domains identified by Spolsky and Edwards. Previous research on the Deaf communities in Ireland and other countries had

the domain of access to information as a dominant theme (Kyle & Allsop 1997, Conama & Grehan 2001, Valentine & Skelton 2003, Timmersman 2005, Emery 2006). The reason: education and access to information matters is that language policy is central to both. Numerous pieces of literature on Deaf Studies have identified both areas as the crucial areas for creating positive language policies towards sign languages and both domains have been a source of attrition among the Deaf communities for past decades (for example, see *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, *American Annals of the Deaf*, *Deaf Worlds*.). While these domains in the Irish context have been a subject of political strife and social discussion, they are rarely subjected to academic scrutiny (Conama 2005)

The main advantages of case studies into these domains are to gain insights that would not be available through other methods (Gerring 2007). They focus on relationships and processes between key stakeholders that are affected by language policies (Denscombe 2003). For instance, the top-down policies can affect matters on the ground and vice versa. The case studies also enables the researcher to avail of a variety of techniques to collect data and this flexibility is boosted by the availability of triangulation. These case studies into education and access to information can show the effects of policies on the ground experienced by the Deaf communities. It must be acknowledged however, that generalisations cannot be made from case studies due to a limited number of people being interviewed.

#### *5.10 Selection of data for analysis:*

With a large amount of data collected, editorial decisions had to be made regarding the selection of the inclusion and exclusion of information. This obviously raised some ethical difficulty. I had endeavoured to balance the responses among the different sectors of interviewees, and as well, to balance the inclusion of responses in terms of positivity, negativity and neutrality. To increase the better understanding, two chapters are devoted to giving a wider picture of language policies in education and access to information. They provide a comparative analysis of Finnish and Irish societies in general and they provide an emphasis on general language policies in both countries in particular.

#### *5.11 Reflexive discussion*

Finally, I would like to reflect on aspects of my data collection experiences in Finland and Ireland. In the course of this, I interviewed a number of Deaf and hearing informants. Here I focus on the

remarkable ease with which I carried out interviews with Deaf respondents, and also comment on some of the assumed universal Deaf cultural norms that are beginning to be challenged through my comparative work.

It was with extraordinary ease that I found I could transcend national borders and ethnic boundaries in order to conduct interviews with the Deaf respondents in Finland. All the interviews were conducted in international sign without the aid of an interpreter. After the interviews, I was often asked what my social plans were for the evening and on a number of occasions I was advised in this regard. On another occasion, I was invited to dinner in a private residence. I also visited the Deaf club where I was warmly received.

Along with the interviews, I had stimulating conversations with the Deaf interviewees who were eager to know more about my work or explain their own cultural norms to me. I feel that both these conversations on cultural differences and the understanding that is gained from these conversations helped to build trust and confidence between the interviewer and the Deaf interviewees. At no stage was I challenged to validate or defend the research or its methodological stance. By contrast, I have encountered a different experience with hearing interviewees who queried my reasons for this research and conversations were kept formal at all times. I believe that this difference occurred as the Deaf interviewees regarded me as one of their own. This was also similarly experienced in Ireland.

While in Finland, even though I observed commonalities in the cultural norms, I also noted differences between national Deaf cultural norms, such as the prudent time keeping by Deaf Finns. I found this astounding. The meeting at the Deaf club in Helsinki that I attended started and ended exactly on time. During the proceedings, I noticed there was a lot of regard for the speaker and that he was not to be disturbed - even though the natural light in the room was gradually fading. If a similar situation were to occur in Ireland, there would be a disturbance in order to get the lights on or to ensure that whoever is presenting is visible. There was also a strong gender difference e.g. Finnish Deaf women are more assertive and were able to ask questions or make critical comments, while the opposite was my experience in Ireland. This difference may be attributed to the fact that the majority of Irish Deaf women were educated in single sex education which Inglis (1998) and Lynch (1989) stated encouraged docility and compliance among most Irish women.

A further interesting observation occurred when the meeting ended. I expected long rounds of conversations and long farewells as these were supposed to be universal Deaf cultural norms but they did not occur at that meeting. In Finland, there was a sharp and short farewell as they were sensitised and conditioned by the weather. They were keen to get home before heavy snowfall or worsening conditions. This was not similarly experienced in Ireland where a long ‘farewell’ chat was prevalent.

When in Finland, I have learned that Deaf cultural norms such as a long farewell and prioritising the visibility of the presentation over regard for the presenter - which are popularly perceived as universal norms – are not so. When enquiring about the differences in national Deaf cultural norms, I was reminded that American Deaf culture had heavily influenced my Deaf cultural outlook. I realised that we in Ireland had not critiqued the Deaf culture in Ireland in-depth though there were a number of discussions but they were light-hearted and superficial. This was something new for me to think about and explore.

### 5.12 *Summary*

Having outlined the research design and methodology in general, the methods for data collection and analysis were adequate for this research. The methods were feasible and appropriate given the circumstances of the research which involved short study visits and dialogues with the Finnish and Irish contacts. Two initial chapters before the in-depth analysis of data collections give an essential understanding of the general pictures in both countries. Internet research and documentary analysis of legislation and policies provided valuable information. The concept of contextualisation<sup>121</sup> is employed here so risks of comparative mistakes are minimised as far as possible.

I believe the methods chosen for this research are sufficient for data collection and suitable for testing the hypothesis here. With the methods chosen and summarised, the research findings can be regarded as viable, representative and reliable though there were limitations which are explained below. I have outlined some discussion on selected ethical questions and have dealt with them sufficiently. There was no major ethical issue apart from the selection and inclusion of data. The editorial decisions were necessary to deal with these issues in order to have them as representative and reliable as possible. The decisions centred on the categorising responses into positive, neutral and negative responses and to ensure three distinct groups of interviewees covered (academic, community and administration).

---

<sup>121</sup> The concept is explained in detail in Chapter 6.



I have adopted an emancipatory and qualitative approach for the study which argues that adopting the Deafhood concept would produce positive languages policies for the status of sign languages. In order to understand the Irish situation, it was necessary to include Finland as a comparator because the language policies affecting the status of Irish Sign Language received little academic scrutiny to date but they have been addressed in Finland. It may be argued that there were some studies that may touch this subject indirectly but they have largely been undertaken by hearing people in Ireland. There were studies also that did not discuss Deaf issues under the aegis of language policy: the focus was on deafness as a disability. The employment of the Deafhood concept, at least to my knowledge, had not been used in any Irish study to date.

The qualitative approach permitted me to collect primary data from 29 people in both countries. The range of interviews reflects the general differing ways language policies affected Deaf people; they expressed inspirations and reservations. These interviewees were divided into three general group; academic, administrative and community and each group had expressed different views about the effects of language policies. Rich data was acquired that would not be available using a quantitative approach. The data collection and analysis also evolved from Internet research and documentary analysis of legislation and policies.

The number of interviewees chosen from specific fields as described above does not permit specific inferences from research findings and could not permit generalisations arising from the research findings. However, I argue with my timescale and resources available to me, this is the appropriate approach to testing hypothesis regarding Deafhood and equality.

Translation and transcription proved a cumbersome process since five languages are used in this research. This had a number of implications on the research in terms of epistemology and ontology. I have explained how these issues are dealt with to maintain the consistency and coherence of responses from the interviewees. Triangulation with the Finnish contacts has been availed of to ensure the reliability of information. Having done the research, there are limitations to be acknowledged. The most obvious issue here is the translation of responses and the hierarchy of languages with English as the superior language. This obviously raises the issue of authenticity and accuracy of the responses but the interviewees were contacted directly to clarify or add additional information. It has to be remembered that there is no 'correct' translation; therefore, there are risks of

losing some meanings in the original data. To counter these risks, I had to employ the theory of pragmatics and it has to be justified given the timescale and resources available for this research. To undertake a similar research, a careful consideration would be necessary regarding the costs of translation. More resources would be necessary to extend the translation process in order to get more accurate information.

Another limitation is my stance in this research process. Since I adopted a status of peer research, this status has its share of advantages and disadvantages. Exploring the concept of Deafhood in this research, enabled many Deaf people to outline what they hoped for from positive language policies; it enabled them to criticise the current policies. However there is a danger, because of my well-known stance on this subject that they may overstate their inspirations or criticisms. This is also a problem for hearing interviewees and they may be subtler or more reserved in their answers.

A comprehensive study from a Deafhood perspective would require a greater number of interviewees and a wider spread across the spectrum. Also this research focuses on individuals which can be described as the 'elite' among Deaf people because they are directly involved in Deaf policies. It would be necessary to involve people outside 'the elite' to provide different perspectives.

Table 5.2: Selected Timeline of Research Process

5.12.1.1.1 Year	Month	Tasks	Comments
2003	September –December	Started research	Literature review Attended research related courses
	January – December	Continued research	Literature review Attended research related courses
2005	January / February	Pilot interview	Had interviews on pilot basis to finalise the approach
	March	1st short study visit to Finland	Visited the school, universities, Deaf club. Interviewed Finnish Deaf persons
2006	September	Attended a conference and participated in social events in Helsinki	The Finnish Association of the Deaf celebrated its 100th anniversary of its establishment with a weekend programme.
	September	2nd short study visit	Interviewed state officials and Deaf persons. Visited YLE broadcast centre, offices of the Finnish Association of the Deaf
	October	Interviews	With Irish Deaf and hearing persons
	November	Interviews	With Irish Deaf and hearing persons
2007	January – June	Transcribing all interviews	All converted into . <i>fti</i> format.
	May	Took a career leave from work to focus on studies	I decided to take a career leave from the civil service to focus on studies full time.

	June –December	Starting using Max QDA	One-to-one basis training was provided before I started the process. Contacts with colleagues were made for assistance.
<i>2008 - 2009</i>	January – June	Writing up draft chapters	Draft chapters and have them proofread and edited from time to time.
	May	Career leave extended for another year	An extended leave was granted so I can focus on studies full time.
	June to September	Writing up draft chapters	
	September	Editing draft chapters	
	September	Submitted thesis to the examination office	

# Chapter 6

*“Is it the same or different over there?”*

## **An initial comparison between Finland and Ireland**

### *6.1 Introduction:*

This chapter focuses on an initial comparison between Finland and Ireland<sup>122</sup>. This comparison is not an extensive analysis but it attempts to give background information, which will introduce the reader to the situation in both countries. Additionally this chapter will allow for an understanding of the background factors which have influenced language policies, and the status of sign language in both countries. This comparison is mostly of a descriptive nature with a number of critical commentaries and with brief references to Deaf communities. In order to compare both countries, a contextualisation approach is employed and it is briefly described in the next section.

### *6.2 Contextualisation*

The concept of cross-national research has been with us for decades. Hantrais (1999) states that this kind of research took off after the Second World War and when US political scientists mostly dominated in the field. These US researchers have tended to make generalisations in relation to cross-national research arising from their US experiences. They have assumed that the US experience was universally applicable as they were using the concept of a nation or a country as the primary comparative unit. However, those who believed that social reality could only be explained in a specific cultural context have challenged this assertion. Contextualisation is an attempt to bridge these opposing views by recognising the importance of social reality but also accepting the importance of the nation as a unit (Hantrais 1999; 93-108).

---

<sup>122</sup>Throughout this paper the Republic of Ireland is referred to as Ireland. This does not include the six counties that comprise Northern Ireland.

It is also recognised that the nation is a concept that can be contested and can be seen as a loaded term. Therefore, it is important to select variables within the nations that will be used for analysis. Working from the suggested list of variables within the nations (Hantrais 1999:101-102), the variables that have been chosen and analysed for this chapter are: the political situation, the economic situation and the social structures. In addition, I have also added one further variable, that of equality issues. A note of caution has to be given as it was not possible to summarise all kinds of situations in both countries among these variables. For the sake of brevity, a number of important variables are reluctantly omitted<sup>123</sup>.

The total number of variables is carefully chosen because Hantrais (1999) recommends that ‘bounded variability’ exists. Some of the variables chosen are not infinite and as such are bound to have some limitations. The variables decided upon are chosen in order to understand the dynamics of, and the factors behind, language policies and the status of sign languages in both countries. This is a key step before policies can be analysed in an in-depth manner. The inclusion of the equality variable can be seen as giving an important perspective that increases awareness of the countries’ social attitudes towards minorities. The levels of equality here is not determined in accordance to the equality framework as set out in the fourth chapter. This is so because the issue of equality seems to be generalised and not specifically defined in both countries when it comes to legislation and governmental measures.

The chosen variables also reflect the experiences of this researcher in dealing with the interviewees. During the course of many interviews, interviewees tended to ask about both their counterparts and their own specific field in the other country. They often pointed to the social contexts in order to explain or to justify their responses. They seemed eager to know more about the other country, as the title for this chapter illustrates.

### 6.3 *Political Situation;*

This section focuses on a number of variables. The variables are the political system, national ideology and the nature of representation and power.

---

<sup>123</sup> For example, variables such as cultural environment and local government were reluctantly omitted.

### 6.3.1 Finland

#### 6.3.1.1 Political system

The political system in Finland is a mixed presidential / parliamentary system with executive powers divided between the president and the prime minister (see Economist Intelligence Unit, website: <http://www.eiu.com>)<sup>124</sup>. The presidential election takes place every six years. The Finnish parliament is a unicameral<sup>125</sup> parliament and has 200 seats, with a 4-year term. Finnish elections are based on the proportional representative system and apply the d'Hondt method<sup>126</sup> (Raunio & Tiilikainen 2003; 76). This method enables significant representation from various minority political groups.

Although the presidential role is largely ceremonial, as the head of state, the president maintains some influence over the conduct of foreign policy. Prior to joining the EU in 1995, which subsequently led to the implementation of policies originating from Brussels, there had been constitutional reforms. Among the reforms, the degree of involvement in foreign affairs by the president was reduced (Raunio & Tiilikainen 2003). The president still retains the power to refuse to sign law into force. Laine (2007) reports that, on average, presidential refusals to sign laws into effect run at a rate of one per year. In the event that the president refuses to sign a law, it may be rechecked by the government and then re-submitted and at that time, the president is obliged to sign that law (Laine 2007).

To date, no Deaf person has been elected to the parliament though– it is understood that a Finnish Deaf woman, Lena Wenman had been nominated on behalf of the Swedish People's Party but was not successful in the last general election in 2007 (Paivi Raino, email correspondence – March 2008).

#### 6.3.1.2 National ideology

The dominant political ideology in Finland is what is regarded by Raunio & Tiilikainen (2003), as state-centrism. They state that this ideology is due to the development of nationalist consciousness. This consciousness leads to the desire to guard the national identity and sovereignty. It also takes account of a perceived ever-present security threat from Russia. Two post-war treaties imposing obligations and restraints on the Soviet Union with respect to Finland have been major factors. Finland sided with the Nazis against the Soviets during the Second World War and the treaties were

---

<sup>124</sup> The country profile of Finland is available through UCD's library website.

<sup>125</sup> The unicameral parliament does not have the upper house (i.e. the Senate).

<sup>126</sup> Defined in Raunio (pp 76). The d'Hondt method is a complex formula that is based on the highest averages method for allocating seats in party-list proportional representation. The parliamentary seats are allocated to parties or individuals once the total votes are known.

nullified after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Datamonitor 2005<sup>127</sup>, Raunio and Tiilikainen 2003: 22).

The national consciousness is also reinforced by the dominant Lutheran religion<sup>128</sup>. The Lutheran and nationalistic ideologies have shaped Finnish politics and enhanced respect for a secular power that values national sovereignty (Tiilikainen 1998; 112). As a consequence, the question of joining NATO, a Western military alliance, was a thorny political issue. Finland adopted a very strict neutrality line in relation to military neutrality that even permeated beyond security policies (Raunio and Tiilikainen 2003: 22).

Finland strived for closer Nordic cooperation after 1945 and regarded it as a necessary counterweight to the Soviet influences (Bradley 1999: 177). The successful Nordic cooperation has brought considerable benefits to the Finnish state, especially for those with social democratic aspirations. Ilonimen<sup>129</sup> (1992, quoted in Bradley 1999: 178) states that the Finns never regarded Sweden as a foreign country and Finland has always acted as if it was a junior partner to Sweden but at the same time, has jealously guarded its national identity. He has also stated that apart from the political situation, Sweden has also provided social and economic models for the Finns to implement in order to address their social issues.

Ironically, the Finns always regard themselves as a minority, even when they are an ethnic majority. Historical forces have largely shaped this attitude as they have been under the control of the Swedes and Russia (Castells and Himanen 2002: 164). Finland often views itself as a borderland with Western values that are strongly axiomatic but that has Russia for a neighbour. Having Russia so near not only affects Finland's foreign policy but also affects the political conceptions there. The end of the Cold War enabled Finland to embrace integrationist policies, which eventually saw it become a member of the European Union in 1995 (Tiilikainen 1998; 111-112).

---

<sup>127</sup> Datamonitor's profile of Finland was obtained from the following subscribed website: (through UCD library system) <http://web.ebscohost.com.eproxy.ucd.ie/ehost/pdf?vid=4&hid=6&sid=82917a13-8bf3-49d0-ac41-750e517064be%40sessionmgr10>

<sup>128</sup> The Lutheran Church is regarded as a national religion but not a state religion. Its disestablishment took place in 1919 though the state still collects taxes to finance the church but citizens have a right to opt out (The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, website: <http://evl.fi/EVLen.nsf/> - accessed May, 2008)

<sup>129</sup> This comment was a part of Iloniemi's unpublished lecture in London (cited in Bradley 1999)



### **6.3.1.3** *Representation and power*

Stable coalitions are the norm in Finnish politics and a three-party coalition currently governs the country. The representation of political power in Finland is highly fragmented. Nine political parties currently share 200 parliamentary seats between them. None of them, historically and contemporarily, have exceeded 25% in terms of voting or seats in the parliament. Such political fragmentation reinforces the multi-party coalition as the necessary option and sharpens the pragmatic attitude (Raunio & Tiilikainen 2003, Karvonen 2007).

In historical terms, the following lines of division have dominated the political landscape:

“... the ideal of nationality, the language issue, the socialist versus non-socialist divide, representation of rural population, and the two-way division of the political left” (Karvonen 2007).

Due to the presence of strong communist and bourgeois parties, the dominant political party, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) has not been able to achieve a majority. The SDP is ideologically close to that of its Nordic counterparts. It has been in power almost constantly since the Finnish independence, with the exception of three occasions. As a result, the welfare model developed in Finland has diverged from other Nordic countries in many ways (Bradley 1999:179). The recent phenomenon in Finnish politics has been the rise of the environmentalist Green League, who first captured seats in 1987 and has served in government from 1995 to 2002 and again from 2007 onwards (Karvonen 2007).

The political attitude is strongly consensus-driven which values a pragmatic approach in reaching political decisions. As a consequence, extreme right wing politics is weak (Raunio & Tiilikainen 2003: 147-148). Although the extreme right wing political stance is weak in Finland, intolerance towards immigration is significant. Castells & Himanen (2002) cite a survey determining the Finnish attitude towards immigration that reveals a negative outlook and associates immigration with criminality and social disorder. Kestila (2006) states that despite concerns re: immigration, the small extreme right wing parties fail to capitalise on the intolerance. In 2006, immigration stood at 2% of the Finnish population (Statistics Finland 2007).

The strong representation of women in the Finnish political system is a well-known fact. Apart from the fact that universal suffrage was created in 1906, the first in Europe, Finland was the first country in the world to have women elected as president and prime minister during one election period (Karvonen 2007). The current government cabinet has twelve women ministers out of twenty while

they hold 42% of seats in parliament. Prior to the general election in March 2007, political parties agreed that half of the cabinet posts would be given to women (Karvonen 2007)<sup>130</sup>.

The fragmentation of power has considerably helped the lobby of the Finnish Association of the Deaf in having the rights of users of sign language constitutionally recognised. Many Finnish interviewees said the support for it came across the political spectrum – more in particular, the Swedish People’s Party<sup>131</sup>, the Communists and the Greens. One interviewee explained the usefulness of having the Swedish People’s Party as a political ally in this lobby.

The Swedish People’s Party supported our campaign very much because they understood our position and they can relate to our quest for linguistic and cultural identity and recognition for Finnish Sign Language (Nelma, interview September, 2006).

### 6.3.2 Ireland

#### 6.3.2.1 Political system

The formal political system in Ireland is a parliamentary system with executive powers vested exclusively in the government cabinet, which is headed by an Taoiseach. The sitting government, at any time within the five-year term, can call for an election. The nature of parliament is bicameral, with 166 seats in the lower house (Dail Eireann) and 60 seats in the upper house (Seanad Eireann). The members of the Dail are directly elected under a system of proportional representation. The members of the Seanad are elected on the basis of a series of special interest panels, in ‘*a particularly convoluted manner*’ (Gallagher 1999: 198)<sup>132</sup>. The terms for these members are exclusively tied to the duration of the sitting government. The President is a ceremonial head of state with very limited powers, which include consent to the dissolution of parliament and the ability to refer a bill to the Supreme Court to test its constitutionality (Gallagher 1999:83-84).

Ireland uses a proportional representative system and applies the single transferable vote method (Sinnott 1999). This method was first proposed by the British to ensure minority representation in local government, especially those with unionist tendencies. It was also endorsed twice by popular referendums (Sinnott 1999:101). This system has consequences as it actively encourages internal

---

<sup>130</sup> Twelve women are appointed to the current government cabinet (20 seats) (The Finnish Government website: <http://www.vn.fi/hallitus/jasenet/en.jsp> - accessed October 2008).

<sup>131</sup> The Swedish People’s Party is a political party representing the Swedish-speaking people and hold 9 seats and is frequently a coalition partner in the governments since the Second World War.

<sup>132</sup> The voter electoral rolls for the Seanad are limited to elected representatives of the Dail Eireann, local councils and university graduates. The seats are divided alongside the vocational groups (i.e. industrial, agricultural, education etc).

factionalism within parties and creates a sort of culture known as ‘clientism’ or ‘personalism’. This culture encourages elected representatives to act as ‘brokers’ between the civil service and constituents instead of being active in the parliament (Sinnott 1999:117-119). Personalism refers to the electorate’s preferences for candidates based on their personal characteristics rather than their political convictions (Coakley 1999; 53). Internal factionalism and clientism / personalism makes the ideological divide, i.e. left/right wing politics, ineffectual and the dominant parties are encouraged to use ‘catch-all’ approaches (O’Malley and Kerby 2004).

To date, no Deaf or hard of hearing person had been elected to the Dail Eireann or even been nominated for election or been considered for nomination (Kevin Stanley, personal communication 2008)

#### **6.3.2.2** *National ideology*

The Irish national ideology has been characterised as a mixed bag with strangely compatible values such as nationalism, conservatism and liberalism. Irish nationalism had been shaped by its relationship with the Catholic Church and its opposition to British rule, which has developed since the early nineteenth century. Although support for this nationalism faded in the late twentieth century, it has left several lasting legacies in the national ideology. It is interesting to note that Irish nationalism was intertwined with the Catholic Church rather than with a national language as has frequently happened in several other European countries (Coakley 1999).

Despite the opposition to British rule, colonial rule has indeed left many lasting legacies, which the Irish population was content to accept. They are the English language, the political system and several policies and institutions, including the civil service (Coogan 2003, Coakley 1999, Lee 1989). The British succeeded in overcoming the language issue through education policies but failed to assimilate most of the population in religious terms (Coakley 1999: 45). The failure to assimilate the population into the Protestant religion reinforced the position of the Catholic Church. Through the support of most of the Irish people, the church was able to consolidate its position in social services provision such as health care and education (Inglis 1999).

Through its position in Irish society, the Catholic Church was able to influence the consciousness of Irish people and, conservatism has been a clear consequence (Coakley 1999: 60-61). Ireland was a traditional society based on a poorly educated peasant economy up to the late 1960s. The majority of

Irish people were socialised at home and in school to be subservient and uncritical and this disposed them to accept policies as given. The Catholic Church gained influence in this context and successfully promulgated an ideology of limiting state involvement in service provision which holds to this day. In the 1990s low taxation and free enterprise were also successfully promoted albeit through State institutions and employer organisations. The electoral support for this ideology can be exemplified by the constant support for the two main political parties; Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. These parties are characterised by the 'catch all' populist political outlooks but with core conservative values. The aggregate support for both parties rarely gets below sixty percent (Coakley and Gallagher 1999)

### **6.3.2.3** *Representation and power*

Irish politics remains dominated by two majority political parties: Fianna Fail and Fine Gael. These are the same two parties that grew out of opposing sides in the Irish civil war (Mair 1999: 131). The ideological divide based on left/right was not prominent in Irish politics. The fragmentation of the working class vote, through the demonisation of socialism and communism by the Catholic Church, and persistent emigration, including massive emigration of agricultural labourers from the foundation of the state to the 1960s, meant there was a bleeding away of all those unskilled groups that would form a base for working class politics (Lee 1989). Even though there is a Labour Party, it has never commanded more than 12% of the vote since 1973, apart from one occasion in 1993 (Coakley 1999: 367). The two dominant parties are largely regarded as the centre-right ones in general terms. Mair (1999) claims that it is really difficult to categorise these parties in a European political context.

Coalition governments have been a regular feature in Irish politics since the 1970s although power is often not shared equally among the participating parties. Fianna Fail is the dominant party and is able to get control of most government departments. In particular, Fianna Fail often takes those influential departments such as finance and those departments which direct economic policies (Mair 1999:145-147).

Ireland has a poor record in relation to women representatives in the Irish parliament by Western standards. It is comparatively similar to sub-Saharan African countries in terms of female representation in parliament (Bacik 2008). After the last general election, women made up 13% of the total representatives in the Dail and Seanad (calculated from the National Women's Council website; <http://www.nwc.ie> - assessed October 2007). Historically, the percentage of women in the parliament

was low. White (2006) describes the situation as ‘puzzling’ as the single transferable vote system should increase the number of women as it has evidently done in other countries. More than half of the multi-seat constituencies did not return a woman representative. The way multi-seat constituencies work in Ireland under PR-STV makes it hard for women to be elected when men are sitting TDs. As a consequence, women have never held more than 5 out of 35 senior and junior ministerial posts (calculated from the National Women’s Council website; <http://www.nwc.ie> - assessed October 2007). Galligan (1999) states the future prognosis for increasing female representation in the parliament remains poor despite a number of measures addressing this issue by several political parties.

### 6.3.3 *Commentary*

Finland has been considered as the second least corrupt country in the world, which can be regarded as a strong accolade (Transparency International 2007- website <http://www.transparency.org> accessed October 2007, Datamonitor 2005). Ireland is reckoned as 17<sup>th</sup> in that regard<sup>133</sup>. This reflects the extent of how democracy functions in both countries. It is clear that democracy is taken seriously in Finland since they have a strong sense of local democracy and it is involved in service provisions.

Both national ideologies are shaped largely by external factors such as security concerns and the need to counter foreign influences. However, both countries seem content to adapt their former rulers’ norms. Both countries experienced the strong presence of nationalism but this has differed in the actual development as the Irish case was based on the link with the Catholic Church. While Lutheranism contributed significantly to the Finnish national identity, it was a complementary element to the Finnish language. Both countries share similar attitudes towards their own nationalities and regard them as exclusionary and unique to their nations.

Representation and power show a real contrast between the two countries. In Finnish politics, representation is highly fragmented along ideological lines and this ensures the dominant parties are kept in check. In the Irish case, politics is heavily shaped by conservatism and ‘catch-all’ populist approaches. The presence of women in the political system in Finland is also in sharp contrast to Ireland with Finland being far ahead.

---

<sup>133</sup> For the year of 2008, the position of Finland in this regard was dropped to 5<sup>th</sup> due to the revelations of financial scandals involving Finnish politicians in 2007. Ireland gained one place to 16<sup>th</sup> (Transparency International 2008)

Both countries have similar situations when it comes to the presence of Deaf people in the national governments. Though there are ministerial or equivalent appointments of Deaf people to quasi-autonomous government bodies, these appointments are often confined to agencies that are directly relevant to the Deaf communities, rather than general policy areas such as environment or employment.

#### *6.4 Economic situation*

The economic section begins with a description of the origins of the current situation and it then focuses briefly on the influences shaping the economy. The nature of employment is also described.

##### *6.4.1 Finland*

Finland has been economically transformed into a major high technology leader from its previous role as a paper producer, although paper mills still play an important part in the Finnish economy. It is claimed that the economic transformation was due to liberal reforms in finance, taxation and competition policy (Ornston 2006).

The Finnish economy is dominated by the services sector, which accounts for 66% while agriculture and manufacturing account for 6% and 28% respectively. Agriculture once dominated the economy, and this was the case until after the Second World War. Industrialisation did not take place on the scale that was seen in many other western societies during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thereafter, Finland was transformed virtually straight from the agriculture-driven economy to the modern service economy (Ojala 2006). Although the paper mills have played a significant role in the manufacturing sector, they have never overtaken either agriculture or services as the primary sector of the economy. Additionally, forestry has often provided supplemental income to farmers since the majority of the forests were privately owned (Ojala 2006). Interestingly, many of the current Finnish service companies, including Nokia, owe their origins to the forestry sector.

There is a popular image that Nokia, the high technology leader, dominates the Finnish economy as it accounts for 25% of Finnish exports. Given its dominance, there is a popular perception that Nokia can influence economic policies. This perception is challenged by Castells and Himanen (2002) as they demonstrate that the Finnish economy is not entirely dependent on Nokia. However, their assertion is contradicted by other commentators such as Pelkonen (2004) stating that the government

is becoming increasingly sensitised to comments by Nokia's executives in relation to national tax policy.

The economic depression in the early 1990s led to the restructuring of labour markets. Long-term unemployment rates, which have been historically low, became higher throughout the 1990s and peaked in 1995. It has not been satisfactorily dealt with since – even during the economic recovery in the late 1990s. It has become a permanent feature in the Finnish labour market. This market has been historically characterised by permanent full-time employment but during the economic recovery, atypical forms of employment such as temporary contract work, self-employment, home-working, and part-time work become a regular feature in the Finnish labour market (Oinonen 2004: 325-334).

Unemployment continues to be a consistent problem, but it has gradually decreased from 11.7% in 2001 to 8.5% in 2005. As of July 2007, it stands at 7% (Statistics Finland 2007 – website: <http://www.stat.fi/> - accessed October 2007)<sup>134</sup>. According to Hanhikoski (2008), the unemployment rate among Deaf people stands at 17% by the end of June 2007.<sup>135</sup> It is two and a half times more likely for a Deaf person to be unemployed when compared with her hearing counterpart.

Seventy-five percent of the workforce is unionised, and this represents the highest level in the world. There are 76 trade unions and three umbrella bodies, which negotiate collective bargaining agreements with employers and the state. The first agreement was created in 1969 and has become a permanent feature since. One of the trade unions however, has reported that some employers have indicated a preference to negotiate solely with individual trade unions (SAK-Finnish Trade Union Confederation – <http://www.sak.fi> - accessed October 2007).

The entry of the Baltic States into the EU, especially Estonia has had dramatic implications for the economy of Finland. While Estonia is but a ferry ride away, it offers a source of cheap labour and an alternative investment location from South Asia for Finnish firms who may have moved part or all of their production there. Conversely, the Finns have availed of cheap alcohol and fuel, which has forced price cuts back in Finland (Sundberg 2005; 1009).

---

<sup>134</sup> The Finnish unemployment rate had dropped to 5.6% (Statistics Finland).

<sup>135</sup> Börje Hanhikoski (2008) – a PowerPoint presentation sent by email via Paivi Raino of the Finnish Association of the Deaf – March 3, 2008

#### 6.4.2 *Ireland*

Since a decision was made to switch from protectionism to open up the economy in the late 1950s, Ireland has seen a long period of economic recovery and has been able to attract inward investment. Even as recently as the 1960s, the economy was dominated by agriculture and fishing as they accounted for 37 percent of all employment. The main emphasis for maintaining the economy was through agricultural exports to Britain.

However, O'Donnell (1998) has noted that the economic successes during 1960s and 1970s only attracted inward investment and did not address the issues for indigenous industry. Inward investment was primarily motivated by low taxation offers and was used to finance the relocation of some manufacturing production into Ireland. This period came to an end when the oil crises of the 1970s forced the governments of the day to raise taxation and borrow heavily to finance public spending. The consequences of these decisions were felt in the 1980s when emigration and unemployment reached astronomically high rates and the national debt significantly exceeded the gross national product (Fitzgerald 2000).

The Irish economic direction during the 1990s has been strongly influenced by neo-liberal perspectives exemplified by a declining role for the State in the provision of social protection and public services (Allen 2007). Ireland also began to avail of the EU's structural funds and the massive inward investment from the US in order to gain a foothold in the European open market. Neo-liberalist policies led to reduce taxes for employees and even more for employers and businesses (Allen 2007). It also led to a decline in the finance available for public services including health (See CSO website, Measuring Ireland's Progress 2006).

Although the national agreements by unions, employers and the government demanded some sacrifices from all sectors and contributed significantly to the economic recovery and sustainability, the shares of benefits have not been equally or fairly distributed to all sectors of society (Allen 2000, Rush 1999). The uneven redistribution of wealth has left Ireland the third most unequal society in the OECD after the US (DeBoeer-Ashworth 2004: 11)<sup>136</sup>

On the employment front, the situation has dramatically changed. This is exemplified by the increasing participation of women in the labour force. They now make up 42% of the workforce

---

<sup>136</sup> More brief comparative analysis in this regard between two countries: Finland and Ireland.



(calculated from CSO online – <http://www.cso.ie> - assessed October 2007). This changed dramatically from the 1950s where the constant presence of Catholicism, emigration and long-term unemployment had kept the employment rate of women low even by European standards (Allen 1999:10). Due to the liberalisation of labour markets and the relative reduction in state spending, atypical employment forms became commonplace however (Kennedy 2004: 78-94). The chief participants of these atypical employment positions are women (Doyle 1999: 124-125, Hardiman and Whelan 1998: 69: Kennedy 2004: 78-94, Kennedy 1999: 246-7, Tovey and Share 2000: 207-214).

The latest research report on the rate of unemployment and underemployment among Irish Deaf people was published in 2006. The rate stated in this report was set at 12%, three times the national rate for the general population (Conroy 2006: 35).

#### *6.4.3 Commentary*

Both countries have experienced economic transformation from an agrarian society to a ‘post-industrial’ society without availing of a long period of industrialisation. The comparative employment aspect shows significant differences as the Finnish workforce is highly unionised and the gender balance in the labour force has reached a near equal level at a much earlier time. Trade union figures on the CSO website show that only 32% of workers are unionised and 19% of part-time employees (CSO Quarterly National Household Survey 2007) However, there appears to have been some convergence between both countries as both have experienced an increasing number of atypical employment forms. There are also some concerns in Finland that neo-liberalist views may begin to take hold, as some employers prefer to break away from the social partnership process.

Both economies are also sensitised to national tax policies as they appear to be influenced by the competitiveness factor. Given the disproportionate attention to the health of the economy in both societies, it is likely that the competitiveness factor may become a dominant factor in shaping future tax policies.

As for the distribution of wealth, it appears that Finland has distributed national wealth further than Ireland. The following table shows the percentage of national wealth spent on three main social areas that benefit societies at large:

Table 6.1: Initial comparison between  
**Finnish and Irish expenditures on social services**

Country	Social protection	Education	Health	Percentage of GDP
Finland	26	6.4	7.4	40.3
Ireland (GDP)	16.5	4.4	7.2	28.1
Ireland (GNI) <sup>137</sup>	19.3	5.2	8.4	32.9

(CSO 2006: 40)

It is clear that in Finland redistribution of national wealth is better than in Ireland. The unemployment of Finnish Deaf people is higher than their Irish counterparts in real terms but they share a similar proportionate difference with the rest of the population. Deaf people in both countries are approximately three times more likely to be unemployed, when compared to their national counterparts.

## 6.5 *Social structures*

This section describes briefly the social transformation that shapes class structures. The family profile and welfare regimes are also covered.

### 6.5.1 *Finland*

#### 6.5.1.1 *Social transformation*

Finland has experienced economic and political transformations since the 19th century. The transformations have radically altered the country's social structure. In the first phase of this transformation, industrialisation expanded the economy and created more occupational groups. It forced the old bureaucratic and clerical elite to share power and prestige with these new groups (Alestalo & Uusitalo 1987). The political transformation includes universal suffrage in 1906 and the establishment of a democratic republic in 1917. The transformation enabled representative parties, especially those centred upon a social democratic perspective and an agrarian perspective to successfully contend for the highest public offices (Alestalo & Uusitalo 1987).

---

<sup>137</sup> Ireland's national wealth has to be assessed in two ways: percentages of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and GNI (Gross National Income) because of a high rate of profit repatriation by foreign owned firms based in Ireland availing of low taxation in this country (Allen 2000).

After World War II, the two processes of transformation hastened. Within just one generation, the manner in which Finns lived and earned their livelihood changed in an unprecedented way. A rural society changed into an urban society. Farmers, for centuries the most numerous class, ceded this position to white-collar workers; prosperity replaced basic living.

#### **6.5.1.2 Class structure**

Dutton (forthcoming) claims that there is very little research on the Finnish social stratification. Many contemporary commentators prefer to rely on this following view. Since the advent of consensual politics in the late 1960s and with continued economic prosperity, class divisions became less extreme. This situation has also been assisted by the Nordic-style welfare system, a more open education system and the rise of consumerism. Yet Alestalo & Uusitalo, (1988) was able to identify six classes, ranging from working class to upper class. These classes are largely shaped by their educational attainments and employment status. Although Alestalo & Uusitalo, (1988) states that the class difference was not visibly obvious, Dutton (forthcoming) states that the Finnish people tend to downplay the class structures within their society but when pressed about the reality of class differences in their society, they prefer to refer the differences in the linguistic terms i.e. the Swedish-speaking Finns and the Finnish-speaking Finns<sup>138</sup>.

Hayrinen-Alestalo (2006) claims that the rise of advanced technological power (i.e. Nokia), and the globalisation in the Finnish economy challenge the social structure profoundly. In order to be competitive globally, the technology sector demands more neo-liberalist policies, which emphasises individual choice, and shifts the perspective in relation to individuals from equal citizens to individual consumers. These policies introduce more conflict with the Nordic welfare system. She states however, that she has been reassured by recent surveys that most Finns appreciate and value the services created by the welfare system.

#### **6.5.1.3 Family profile**

The Finnish family profile has also changed greatly over these periods of rapid transformation. Finland has a remarkable record. There is frequent cohabitation and there is a low marriage rate.

---

<sup>138</sup> Dutton (forthcoming) claims that the Finnish people in general often view the Swedish speaking populace with some misgivings given their previous dominant positions in government and commerce. Dutton said it could be similarly compared to the historical social distance between the native Irish and the Anglo-Irish populaces (Dutton, personal communication, email, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008).

According to western standards, this situation is accompanied by high fertility rates. Finland's female participation in the labour force increased rapidly and already reached 44% of the workforce by 1960. Dual earning families became the norm by the 1970s. Sex education and family planning entered the national school curriculum in the 1970s; the contraceptive pill became available to all at no charge for a limited period to the first time users in 1972 (Rimplela *et al.* 1998; Oinonen 2004: 325-334). Abortion was permitted in limited circumstances in 1970 (Bradley 1999). Such measures liberated women and enabled them to reconcile their career development and their reproduction prospects and family life (Oinonen 2004: 325).

#### **6.5.1.4 Welfare Regime**

The state also actively supports the family by creating generous welfare measures in which mothers are given a first phase of 105 working days' maternity allowance. After that, a paid parental allowance for 158 working days can be paid either to a mother or father, totally 263 working days (which means a full year in a general sense). During maternity leave, fathers are also entitled to have 18 paid working days (Niemelä & Salminen 2003)<sup>139</sup>. These measures aim not only to facilitate women's employment but also to increase fertility (Bradley 1999, Oinonen 2004).

However, the economic depression in the early 1990s and the subsequent recovery have affected women's employment. Atypical employment forms, such as short-term contracts, temporary work, etc. has had a greater effect on women and young people than on men, resulting in the increased likelihood of unemployment for women. An additional factor is that budgetary cutbacks have affected the public services more than any other sector, and the public service is the primary sector in which women are employed.

### **6.5.2 Ireland**

#### **6.5.2.1 Social transformation**

Irish society has been transformed from a primarily agricultural society to the 'post-industrial' society without experiencing a long period of intensive industrialisation as is characterised in many Western societies (Layte & Whelan 2000: 95, Tovey & Share 2000:125).

---

<sup>139</sup> It appears that the measures remain in place (KELA – the social insurance institution in Finland – website: <http://www.kela.fi> - accessed March 2008).

Since the decision to open up the economy in 1958, the homogeneity and rigid social structures have begun to be challenged on all fronts. Emigrants on vacation were able to express their opinions and brought in ideas from abroad (Fitzgerald 2000: 29). Mass media, in particular television, also played a role in liberating the minds and hearts of the masses (Tovey and Share 2000: 376-377, Inglis 1998: 92). Secondary education was made free from 1967 and it enabled many families to aim higher than they would have expected previously (Garvin 1998: 152-154).

The troubles in the North during the 1970s sharpened the question on national identity. Irish people began to regard Northern Ireland as a separate state and felt closer to the British people in terms of a willingness to build up familial and business links (Mair 1999:50). Irish people also became more disposed towards the idea of uniting Ireland by consent and recognising unionist sensitivities (Keatinge and Laffan 1999: 327).

#### **6.5.2.2 Social structure**

Yet, despite dramatic changes since the 1950s, Irish society has often regarded itself as a classless one (Tovey & Shore 2000: 122). Class structure is often believed to be the British institution, which was gladly disposed of at the end of British rule in most of Ireland (Allen 2000: 1). In fact, many commentators present a reality that is contrary to this commonly held belief (see Allen, Tovey). Class structures are strongly influenced by status in wealth, educational attainment and employment. Although there were significant movements in terms of social mobility, especially of those from agricultural background to other classes, yet, Hardiman (1998) states that the distribution of wealth in Irish society is '*highly skewed*' and this assertion can be vindicated by a report published by the Bank of Ireland. In this report, the richest 5% of the population has 40% of the wealth. If housing is excluded from the calculation, the richest 1% has 34% of financial wealth (Bank of Ireland 2007: 12).

Immigration has become a permanent feature in the Irish life after decades of emigration (Immigrant Council of Ireland 2003: vii). With high rates of immigration to Ireland, the country has changed from a homogenous society towards a multicultural society. This immigration was triggered by labour shortages in construction and low-skilled jobs. As for access to high skilled jobs, these are restricted

by regulations on work permits. The naturalisation process has become even more difficult to secure for migrants who wish to remain in this country<sup>140</sup>.

Traditionally, a division existed between rural and urban areas in terms of regional development politics. This division however, has become more blurred in recent times with the majority of rural dwellers now working in non-agriculture areas and commuting to cities and towns to work (Tovey and Share 2000 343). The ratio of the rural/urban divide has gradually decreased in favour of urbanisation. The recent census shows that 61% of the population live in cities and towns but there are regional disparities as there are more rural dwellers than urban dwellers in Connacht and Ulster (CSO 2006 – website; <http://www.cso.ie> - accessed October 2007).

### **6.5.2.3 Family profile**

Traditionally, Irish families have tended to be large, patriarchal and closely knit (Tovey and Share 2000). The Irish family profile was largely influenced by the social teachings of the Catholic Church. Inglis (1998) argues that this influence was possible through the mother's devotion to the church so the church was able to impose its standards through her. Due to changes in society such as free secondary education, emigration, better career options and women's liberation, many women decided not to take on the church's preferred idea of motherhood in what Inglis (1998: 239) describes as '*get married, to get pregnant and to beget a large family*'. This decline of the Catholic conception of motherhood has had its impact. This is seen in the increasing rates in births outside marriage, increasing numbers of women availing of abortions, larger numbers opting for cohabitation and a greater degree of marriage breakdown especially from the 1980s onwards (Inglis 1998: 238-240)

The Irish family profile has been visibly diversified in recent times (Tovey and Share 2000: 206). For example, smaller families, single-parent families, voluntary childfree couples have become commonplace. This diversity has also been reflected by Irish social welfare policy: different forms of families, other than the traditional one have begun to avail of social benefits (Tovey and Share 2000: 203). Rush (2004: 110) however states that Irish social policy is based on the model of the male

---

<sup>140</sup> For example, the Supreme Court removed the automatic right to residence for non-national parents of Irish born children, and a referendum in 2004 removed the automatic right to citizenship for Irish born children of non-national parents (Ruhs 2005). It is likely that future immigration policies favouring those who have high skilled jobs and are perceived to have values compatible with the Irish culture will be introduced due to the above stated difficulties.

breadwinning family and has been modestly altered in order to reflect changes in the family profile. For example, paternity leave remains unpaid and limited (Kiely 1999:258).

#### 6.5.2.4 *Welfare regime*

The origins of the Irish welfare regime date back to the British rule in the early nineteenth century and the regime still retains distinctive features from this era (Burke 1997, 1999). Although there were several reforms and structural changes in the intervening years, the current regime retains the dominant philosophy from that era. Welfare tends to be residualist and is based on a need rather than on a right (Burke 1997, 1999).

#### 6.5.3 *Commentary*

Both countries have experienced similar periods of rapid social transformation but the timing and content have been quite different. Finland has experienced social transformation since the Second World War while Ireland has experienced this change in a much belated and gradual manner. Another difference is the degree of participation of women in the labour force. In contrast to the situation in Finland, Irish women have experienced low participation rates in the labour force for decades although their participation now is very comparable to that in Finland and is just above the EU average.

The class structures in both countries are comparably similar, with the top 1% of population in each country holding a disproportionate amount of wealth. The Finnish welfare system is more generous and advanced than its Irish counterpart. Finns have addressed the issues arising from uneven wealth distribution more effectively than their Irish counterpart. It is interesting to note that both countries are reluctant to discuss the effects of class differences on their societies and the level of research into these areas remain underdeveloped.

Esping-Andersen (1990) has described the three main types of welfare régime<sup>141</sup> in Europe and he generally regards the Irish welfare regime as a liberal one and the Finnish one as a social democratic

---

<sup>141</sup>There are three welfare regimes in Esping-Andersen's analysis. They are (a) *liberal* régimes which tend to be residualist, (b) *corporatist* régimes which are work-oriented and based on individual contribution and (c) *social democratic* régimes which favour universalist values. His analysis is based on two principles on decommodification and social stratification. Decommodification refers to the ability of a worker to withdraw from labour and survive on social benefits and social stratification considers if the regimes reinforce social structures i.e. class structure. Liberal regimes are reckoned as low in decommodification and high in social stratification. Corporatist regimes are reckoned as average on both while social democratic regimes are high in the first and low in the latter. (Esping –Andersen 1990).

one. Irish commentators such as Cousins (1997), O'Donnell (1999) and Peillon (2001) however, find it difficult to place Ireland within Esping-Andersen's typology of welfare regimes. The difficulties centre on the mixed welfare provisions and the extent of state involvement in these provisions. Additionally, the analysis ignores historical and national factors (Peillon 2001). It is also true that in the Finnish case as outlined by Hiilamo (2002), a number of different features exist between the Finnish and the Nordic welfare regimes. Timonen (2003: 4) also agrees with this view and states that the Finnish welfare regime resembles the Swedish one structurally but is slightly less extensive in many respects. Both Hiilamo (2002) and Timonen (2003) also claim that due to economic restructuring since 2000, Finland has moved away from the Nordic welfare model.

The family profile in Finland has witnessed changes since the Second World War while the Irish family experiences have undergone a gradual changing process. The Finnish case has seen the proactive role played by government in shaping the family profile. Abortion and contraception have been permitted legally for many years in Finland while Ireland only permitted divorce in 1996 and still prohibits abortion. The difference in family profiles in both countries can be attributed chiefly to the conservatism and Catholic ideology in Ireland.

## 6.6 *General equality issues*

Comparing equality between both countries is an essential background factor before understanding language policies. Discussions about equality issues here remain general and are not linked to the equality framework in the fourth chapter though one can draw inferences of how advanced equality is in each country. Finland is often regarded as a model for other countries that wish to pursue the equality agenda.

### 6.6.1 *Finland*

Although considerable progress and advances have been made in Finland, there are a number of equality issues that can be identified. For example, those individuals, who are conscientious objectors to compulsory military service, experience different treatment. They, much to their detriment, are forced to serve the community in an alternative manner which is of much longer duration than the time required of those who enter into military service and endure the hardships imposed on them. Eleven objectors were imprisoned for more than six months after demanding that the community



service timeframe be made equivalent to that of military service (Union of Conscientious Objectors – online -<http://www.aseistakieltajaliitto.fi> - accessed October 2007).

#### **6.6.1.1 Gender**

There has been a strong presence of gender equality in Finland for decades. The number of female parliament members and government ministers exemplifies this. Inequalities exist in many other aspects of life; for example, wage differences are still significant but are far better than many Western countries. Wage inequalities are highly gendered, affecting women in low paying service jobs most of all. A form of conservatism towards the role of women in society still lingers, despite considerable progress being made over the decades (Lewis 2005: 149).

The legislation, the Act on Equality between Women and Men<sup>142</sup> is in force since 1987 to police gender equality in Finland but there are two major limitations to this Act. The Act does not apply to religious practices / communities and the private sphere of families and persons. According to this website, the gender equality law<sup>143</sup> was to be updated to take account of EU laws and directives. It also reports that on average, 200 complaints were made to the Office of Ombudsman and 30% of complaints came from men (more information, see (Finnish Institute of Occupation Health <http://www.gender-equality.webinfo.lt/results/finland.htm> - accessed February 2010).

#### **6.6.1.2 Sexuality**

Finland is more culturally homogenous. With regard to diversity of lifestyles it is less permissive than the more 'permissive' countries of Sweden and Denmark (Bradley 1999: 180). Bradley (1999) states that the acceptance of civil unions between homosexual couples is lower than these aforementioned countries. Attitudes have been becoming increasingly more tolerant of homosexuality since it was decriminalised in 1971 (Bradley 1999:186). Same sex union registration has still not been implemented (Bradley 1999: 188). Bradley (1999) regards attitudes to sexual equality as being more conservative than in Sweden.

According to the Gay Times website (<http://www.gaytimes.co.uk> – accessed February 2010), Finland is very tolerant of homosexuality and had decriminalised the homosexual actions in 1998. It also equalised and extended the age of consent (16) to homosexuals. The homosexuals can join the army.

---

<sup>142</sup> The English translation is not available (see FINLEX, the official legal depository website: <http://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/>)

<sup>143</sup> Again, the English translation is not available.

They also can register their partnerships legally but their union rights are somewhat slightly shorter than married couples. The gay couples are allowed to adopt children in a recent parliamentary vote (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association 2010<sup>144</sup>). Despite the progress made in this country, conservative opposition to their progress remains strong (see the website: <http://www.globalgayz.com/country/Finland/view/FIN/gay-finland-news-and-reports> - accessed February, 2010).<sup>145</sup>

### **6.6.1.3 Disability;**

Discrimination-based on disability is forbidden under Section 5 of the national constitution. There are also specific laws dealing with this issue, especially the Equality Act 2004 and the Disability Act 2006 (Makkonen 2004: 1). Discrimination is also considered to be a crime and complaints can be reported to the police and an investigation can be requested (Makkonen 2004: 5). There is, however, a clause that states that employers and service providers should provide reasonable accommodation, but should take all related costs into account (Makkonen 2004: 5). This provides for potential loopholes as employers and service providers can plead inability to pay costs as an excuse for not hiring people, or not offering a service.

Despite extensive legal safeguards, in Finland, people with disabilities still experience discrimination on a daily basis and are still commonly viewed in stereotypical terms. For example, with the economic depression in the early 1990s, disabled people experienced a sharper rise in unemployment when compared to the national rate. Transportation and housing are also serious issues for disabled people as most of them are regarded as being inaccessible (Makkonen 2004: 1). Kalle Könkkölä, the Finnish disability activist, describes his frustrating experiences when dealing with public services, although he acknowledges there have been improvements in recent years (Tijokinen 2003).

### **6.6.1.4 Ethnic minorities;**

Finland has a number of ethnic minorities with some of them being indigenous, while others are immigrant. Apart from the Swedish-speaking minority, which accounts for 6% of the national population, there are national minorities such as Roma, Sami, Jewish, Tatar and traditional Russian.

---

<sup>144</sup> The information can be found at the website: ([http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/guide/country\\_by\\_country/finland/In-family-adoption-of-same-sex-couples-approved-by-Finnish-Parliament](http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/guide/country_by_country/finland/In-family-adoption-of-same-sex-couples-approved-by-Finnish-Parliament) - February 2010).

<sup>145</sup> Also see the newspaper article in the *Helsingin Sanomat* reporting how the Lutheran bishops opposed gender neutral marriages in Finland (<http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Lutheran+bishops+take+cautious+stance+on+same-sex+couples/1135252803945>)

Recently Russian<sup>146</sup>, Estonian and Somalian immigrants dominated the immigrant groups. Altogether with the Swedish-speaking minority, they make up almost 10% of the national population.

Just as in the case of disability, the constitution and associated laws forbid discrimination based on ethnic grounds, especially the Aliens Act of 1991. However, The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) stated in its annual inspection report of 2003 that intolerance against immigrants was significant and half of them surveyed experienced some kind of intolerance. The Commission also noted that the Aliens Act of 1991 was not properly implemented since it lacked clarity and coherence. The Finnish parliament was supposed to review it in the year of 2003 but the political consensus was not there to ensure the completion of review. The main issue in relation to the review was the proposed recommendation to have the procedures in applying for residence status shortened and less bureaucratic (International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, website: [http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewdocument.php?doc\\_id=1956](http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewdocument.php?doc_id=1956) – accessed February 2010).

According to Makkonen (2003), these minorities are reluctant to report discrimination to the police and less than an estimated 20% of racial crimes are actually reported to the police. Although racial extremism is rare, the government has implemented a number of measures to ensure good ethnic relations. The government set up an ombudsman's office to focus on minorities and its functions are to monitor situations and to provide information.

### 6.6.2 *Ireland*

In Ireland, equality is interpreted in a narrow liberal sense (Nic Ghiolla Phadraig (2007: 46) and is confined to equality of opportunity. There has been a general shift in attempts to achieve equality from modest redistributive approaches to the targeting of particular groups. This kind of thinking fits firmly in the liberal attitude to equality (ibid, 46). Employment equality and equality status laws, which prohibit discrimination on nine grounds, have been in place but they do not address the issues of equality adequately. For example, class was not one of nine grounds covered by these laws (Nic Ghiolla Phadraig 2007: 46). Doyle (1999) states that despite two decades of implementing equality measures, men and women still experience different treatment at work.

---

<sup>146</sup>As for the difference between traditional and recent Russian minorities, the former owes their origins to their ancestors' migration from the pre-communist Russia.

The recent recession in the Irish economy has been used as an excuse to reduce the costs of administering the equality infrastructure. The Minister of Justice drastically reduced the budgetary subventions (as much as 43%) for several statutory equality bodies forcing them to rationalise and reduce their services. This resulted several resignations including the Chief Executive Officer of the Equality Authority (Coulter 2009). The budget reductions were widely condemned by several equality groups and it prompted the formation of a group campaigning to restore the equality infrastructure (see, Equality & Rights Alliance, website: <http://www.eracampaign.org/home> - accessed February 2010). These recent actions exemplified the official line towards the equality issues.

#### **6.6.2.1 Gender**

There is some considerable progress toward gender equality. The government has set up a gender equality unit as part of the National Development Programme 1999-2006 and set a target for achieving gender equality (National Development Programme - website, <http://www.ndpgenderequality.ie> accessed October 2007). There are still however, many outstanding issues in relation to gender equality. For example, the report on the National Development Programme 1999-2006 acknowledged that there were wage differences for men and women and a disproportionately low representation of women in senior posts in the public service and private sector. (see CSO Report Women and Men in Ireland 2006 on their website) The National Women's Council points out that due to the continual lack of affordable accessible childcare in Ireland, this has led to increases in the barriers experienced by women in relation to education and employment (National Women's Council, <http://www.nwc.ie> - accessed October 2007). The National Development Programme's successor plan for 2007-2013 has set targets for achieving equality by supporting positive action measures (National Development Programme 2006: 268) and it remains to be seen if gender equality can be achieved.

#### **6.6.2.2 Sexuality**

The gay and lesbian population has experienced a considerable amount of discrimination and oppression in Ireland. Decriminalisation of homosexuality was only enacted in 1993 (Working Group on Domestic Partnership 2006: 20, Iredale 1999: 190<sup>147</sup>). There is widespread evidence of homophobia influenced by Catholicism and conservative attitudes towards masculinity and femininity (Nexus 1995). The gay community has gained momentum in seeking legal civil union for gay couples by the publication of an official report. The government has promised to have legislation in place to

---

<sup>147</sup> In Iredale's article, she stated the year, 1995.

recognise civil relationships of same sex couples. GLEN reports that eighty-four percent supported the concept of legal recognition in an opinion poll (GLEN 2006 – [www.glen.ie/marriage.html](http://www.glen.ie/marriage.html) - accessed October 2007), which gives some considerable hope to the gay and lesbian community.

### **6.6.2.3 Ethnic minorities;**

Attitudes toward minorities in Ireland can be generally divided into two historical eras. The first era was the traditional general attitudes towards Travellers and religious minorities such as Protestants and Jews. The attitudes towards these groups ranged from neutral to hostile and they were often associated with negative connotations and perceived as being anti-Irish or anti-Catholic (Fanning 2007). The negative attitudes to Travellers and religious minorities were relegated to the lower end of the political agenda when immigration occurred in the 1990s as asylum seekers and economic migrants began to arrive in the country (Immigrant Council of Ireland 2003). In 2004, the Irish government stated in its report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) that it viewed the Travellers as a separate indigenous group but not as an ethnic group despite the years of self-determination by the Travellers viewing themselves as an ethnic group. The denial by the Irish government effectively removes the anti-racism legal protections though there are prohibitions of discrimination in the equality laws on the ground of membership of the travelling community (McVeigh 2007).

Nowadays, immigrants make up more than 10 per cent of the national population and attitudes towards minorities have significantly changed (O’Connell and Winston 2006). These issues are now on the political agenda and the government has responded with anti-racism measures. However, with a recent constitutional referendum on citizenship issues, the majority of voters supported a proposal to tighten the eligibility for Irish citizenship, removing the automatic right to Irish citizenship for Irish-born immigrants (Brennock 2004) Although attitudes towards these minorities, including indigenous minorities, are generally positive, the survey by O’Connell and Winston (2006) reveals a confusing picture. Irish people are in general quicker to associate social ills with minorities. They also want to maintain a social distance from them but strongly support anti-discrimination measures in the employment of minorities. Finally, they believe multiculturalism enriches Irish life (O’Connell and Winston 2006: 10-11).

#### **6.6.2.4 Disability;**

Quin and Redmond (1999) state that the growing awareness of disability issues among the general public has not been reflected in the real understanding of what people with disabilities and their carers really need. After the publication of the landmark official report *Strategy for Equality* (1996), which tackled the oppression and discrimination, experienced by people with disabilities, a number of recommendations that were issued in this report are still to be implemented (McDonnell 2007). The recent Disability Act (2005) was not regarded as upholding rights by disability groups

Despite recent progresses in increasing awareness about disability and its issues in Irish society, a subtle negative attitude towards disabled people remains strong. The National Disability Authority survey revealed the extent of negativity towards disabled people, especially those with mental health difficulties. While a majority acknowledged the existence of societal barriers and discrimination against disabled people and supported their removal, they were less tolerant to have their children in the same classrooms as those with disability and similar results are found in employment (National Disability Authority 2007).

#### **6.6.3 Commentary**

Finland is more equitable than Ireland, at least according to several sources. For instance, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations with a responsibility for monitoring global food production and shortage, (<http://www.fao.org>) provides statistics that show Finland is ahead of Ireland in terms of income redistribution, land redistribution and food consumption.

With that in mind, it is generally accepted that egalitarian principles are far more advanced and reflected in Finnish society than its Irish counterpart. For example, equality on the grounds of gender and sexuality as documented above, are way ahead in Finland. However, this does hide some equality issues as people with disabilities and those who belong to minorities have experienced discrimination and marginalisation in Finnish society. Inequality is a common and noticeable feature in Irish life and almost every minority group have documented their experiences of being unequal there.

#### **6.7 Conclusion:**

This chapter attempts to create an initial comparison between Finland and Ireland. The comparative analysis has a considerable amount of pitfalls so I adopt a contextualisation to ensure the comparison is as tight and limited as possible. The contextualisation approach advises researchers limit

comparisons to a number of variables such as the political situation, the nature of economy, the social and cultural situations. Finally, to round up the initial comparison, the equality perspective is added.

However, there are considerable similarities and differences between countries. The level of political representation and the share of political power is more fragmented in Finland than Ireland while their economic situations appear to be similar. It is also interesting to note that both countries tend to downplay the significance of class structure in their societies. It might be explained by their similar experiences of being colonised by a foreign power. The equality situation seems more advanced in Finland though there are a number of critical issues in this area.

Having given a contextual background of both countries, the next chapter focuses on a comparative analysis of statuses, the status of sign languages and linguistic profiles in both countries, Finland and Ireland.

# Chapter 7

## **‘Is it correct that their sign language is officially recognised?’**

### **Status of sign languages in each country**

#### *7.1 Introduction*

Exploring the official status of sign languages<sup>149</sup> is a way of understanding the position of sign languages in particular countries. The status of sign languages is frequently judged by its standing in the legislation. While this judgement is reasonable, it is also misleading to think that legislation alone is a definitive indicator for the status of sign languages (Timmermans 2005). Hence, it is necessary to examine language policy orientations and practices to analyse whether the legislative status of sign languages is reflected in the resources granted to its development. A certain difficulty arises here since in some countries, like Sweden, the state actively supports the status of sign language, yet it is not constitutionally recognised (Timmermans 2005). So, constitutional and/or other legal recognition of sign languages is but a part of what is necessary for the development of a given sign language.

The purpose of this chapter is to create a linguistic profile of sign languages in each country. It is an attempt to locate the status of sign languages in the typology of language policy orientations. This chapter begins with a brief introduction and discussion on the theory for language policy. I use Ruiz’s typology of language policy orientations as a framework for analysing the status of sign languages in both countries. This typology is an ideal one to deal with the official recognition or suppression of languages and this typology is also used in later sections. I also attempt to integrate this analysis with perspectives on deafness. As Ruiz’s typology focuses on spoken languages, it is necessary to modify this to focus on sign languages and make it compatible with the ‘perspectives’ on deafness.

While the second section of this chapter focuses on the difference in language policies generally between Finland and Ireland, the latter part of the chapter focuses on policy responses to sign

---

<sup>149</sup> In this section, sign languages refer to all indigenous sign languages that are used by Deaf communities. In the later sections, sign languages would be specified as Finnish Sign Language (FinnSL) or Irish Sign Language (ISL)



languages *per se*. A brief analysis of the responses of interviewees in both countries as to the status bestowed on the sign languages is included. More specific language policies will be analysed in depth in the next chapters.

## 7.2 *Language policy*

One has to acknowledge the claims of several commentators on the difficulties of theorising language policy (Corson 1993, Spolsky 2004: Kymlicka and Patten 2003, Shohamy 2006). However, for this purpose of the study, it is important to narrow the focus and limit the boundaries of this study to the states' policies on language in order to capture the essential picture of how the states operate language policies. This narrow focus is ably assisted by the references to Spolsky's description of language policy (2004) and Ruiz's approach of categorising language policy orientations (1990).

Spolsky (2004) states that state language policies can take different forms depending on their origins. Some countries have explicit statements on language policy in their constitutions while others adopt legislative approaches to pronounce language policies. Language policies can be found in cabinet documents or government publications rather than in the laws. Other countries do not have explicit language policies in their constitutions or laws but provide interpretation services equally to its citizens in their legal jurisdictions. This guarantee is often based on the principle of non-discrimination including non-discrimination in relation to language. Some countries, especially with a strong federalist government system, adopt implicit language policies in order to minimise tensions between central and local governments.

Language policies can be identified through the dominant ideologies of societies. The US constitution avoids any statement on language policy but the language ideology there has taken root and it accepts that English is the first language. This ideology has influenced a number of groups to advocate for the official support of English as the first language in the face of the growing non-English speaking Hispanic population, seen as a threat to the national unity (Ruiz 1990: 11-12).

Other important factors can influence or shape language policies explicitly or implicitly. Language policies are often shaped by the conditions in which they are found. Language practices and usage such as regional accents and agreed rules as to which variety is appropriate in different situations are examples. They can signify the positions held by people in society. Received pronunciation (RP) is a clear example and it is intertwined with the aristocratic class in Britain (Fennell 2001: 185).

Ruiz (1990) made a distinction between national languages and official languages. National languages can be official languages but official languages are not necessarily national languages. Official languages, without national recognition, often exist to enable minority language users to access government services. For example, some countries have no official languages: English is the national language but not the official language of the United States and the United Kingdom because there is no explicit language legislation<sup>150</sup>.

### 7.2.1 *Ruiz's taxonomy of language policy orientations*

Ruiz's (1990) taxonomy of language policies and language planning is useful for understanding how language policy operates at national levels. Ruiz suggests the first step is to establish the status of languages granted by the state and what types of language policy are adopted as a result of a given status. He claims that language policies can be simply identified by their orientations towards languages - *language as a problem, language as a right and language as a resource* (Ruiz 1984, Ruiz 1990: 17).

*Language as a problem.* When this policy orientation exists, language is blamed for poverty and social disadvantage for particular communities. The official attitude towards these languages is that there is a need to eradicate, alleviate or resolve difficulties arising from them in order to get the language communities access to national services or equal participation in societies. In education, substantive bilingualism may be officially encouraged so that children can be taught in the official languages instead of home or community languages<sup>151</sup>.

*Language as a right* refers to a policy orientation that develops as a reaction and resistance by communities to official integration policies. Those claiming rights for their language would argue for

---

<sup>150</sup> However, there is an anomaly in this distinction. Ruiz (1990) uses the example that Romanche is recognised as an official language in Switzerland but is not the national language. However, the Swiss government website states that four languages including Romanche are national languages but only one of them, Romanche is not the official language (see Swiss Government Portal; [http://www.swissworld.org/en/people/language/language\\_rights/](http://www.swissworld.org/en/people/language/language_rights/) - accessed October 2008)

<sup>151</sup> Substantive bilingualism is one of four different bilingual methodologies in pedagogy (Baker 1988 and Cummins 1979). Substantive bilingualism would see children being taught in their first or home language to learn official language(s). When they reach the necessary threshold of acquiring official language (s), home languages would be actively discouraged. For instance, back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Irish children were actively discouraged from using Irish and they focused on English although their home language was Irish.

prioritising the use of home or first languages to maintain their psychosocial<sup>152</sup> and cultural identity. They also refute the idea that their languages are blamed for their deprivation or social disadvantage. Therefore, they demand legal protection and rights to use their languages in societies and expect to be served in their languages. In education, mono-lingualism or additive bilingualism<sup>153</sup> is actively encouraged.

Ruiz (1990) states the third orientation, *language as a resource*, is less studied than the two other orientations but it is practiced commonly. This views languages as a social resource that should be supported to maintain tolerance and to reduce social tensions. The two other orientations could not offer as much promise to maintain social harmony as this orientation (Ruiz 1990: 17).

Despite the apparent usefulness of Ruiz's language policy orientations, he appears not to include national or official languages in the framework, and his concept of language orientations may be most useful for understanding the status of minority or immigrant languages. While Ruiz's language policy orientations are useful in the identification of the level of language policy, it is noticeable that apart from two orientations, language as a problem and language as a resource, that the language as a right orientation is seen as a perspective emerging from the marginalised community, instead of the state. He did not deal with the state's approach in this regard. However, I resolve this by expanding this '*language as a right*' orientation to include the state's activities on language policy. In this orientation, the state is expected to uphold language rights unreservedly and unapologetically and to resource these languages.

In order to simplify the possible compatible linkages between 'perspectives' on deafness and language policy orientations, a table is created as follows:

---

<sup>152</sup> 'Of or relating to the interrelation of social factors and individual thought and behaviour. Also: of or relating to human cultural evolution' (Oxford English dictionary - <http://dictionary.oed.com> - accessed December 2007).

<sup>153</sup> Additive bilingualism is also identified by Baker (1988) and Cummins (1979) as it refers to the preservation of the first or home language. Other languages are encouraged to be seen as the second or thereafter language. For example, Irish is actively encouraged in the Gaelscoionna while English is regarded as the second language.

Table 7. 1: The Relationship between Language Policy Orientations and Perspectives on Deafness

<b>Language policy orientations</b>	<b>Reasons for inequality</b>	<b>Policy orientations</b>	<b>Compatible with ‘Perspectives on deafness’</b>
Language as a problem	Languages blamed for poverty and social disadvantages	Integration at the expenses of community languages	Medical
Language as a resource	Ambiguity towards reasons for inequality but seek compromises to reduce tension or conflict	Tolerance and support where possible or practicable	Social
Language as a right	Recognises social and economic structures as reasons for suppressing languages and addresses these issues	Unreserved rights and making adequate resources available	Deafhood

While describing three general policy orientations in brief, it is important to locate them in terms of how they integrate with the ‘perspectives’ on deafness<sup>154</sup>. The first orientation, *language as a problem* can be identified alongside with the medical perspective because they share a common view that the problem is located within the individual. Hence, (for example in the work of Griffey 1994) the use of sign language itself is blamed for the existence of poverty and social disadvantage experienced by the individual. In order to address such issues, this orientation requires compensatory and integrationist policies – often at the expense of individual’s own language.

*Language as a resource* can be easily compatible with the social ‘perspective’ on deafness. This acknowledges the existence of various languages and adopts a tolerant, instead of celebratory, attitude towards these languages for the sake of social harmony. This orientation acknowledges inequalities arising from language difference in societies but regards them as inevitable and adopts a tokenistic approach in addressing these inequalities. For example, some countries adopt a symbolic recognition

---

<sup>154</sup> The perspectives on deafness are explained in depth in Chapter 4. This is not necessarily similar to the models of disability.

of sign languages without tackling the related issues in-depth. The Czech Republic is an example (Timmermans 2005, Novakova & Vysucek 2008<sup>155</sup>)

The final one, *language as a right* is most compatible with the Deafhood concept although, some social model theorists like Oliver (2004) would also subscribe to this view. This orientation rejects the thinking that language can be a barrier to equality and argues that inequality can be identified in the social structures, power relations and societal attitudes towards language differences. Therefore, inequalities have to be addressed in these structural contexts. Individuals are not held responsible for their ‘failure’; rather the state and its agencies are deemed to be responsible. This perspective is exemplified in the work of Ladd (2003) and Lane (2005). The Deafhood model is easily aligned with the equality of condition as spelt out in the fourth chapter as the Deafhood model demands unreserved rights for signed languages and signed languages should not be tolerated but celebrated. These points are fundamentally tenets of the Deafhood model and are aligned with the equality of condition.

Having described the nature of language policies and their orientations, a linguistic profile of each country is given using the frameworks outlined above to explore the status of sign languages in the respective countries.

### 7.3 *Linguistic profile*

#### 7.3.1 *Finland*

##### 7.3.1.1 *Linguistic Demographic profile*

While the government of Finland acknowledges that the country has become more multilingual in recent times, the linguistic profile of the country is still dominated by the Finnish language as 91% of the national population state that Finnish is their first language. Almost six percent speak Swedish while the remainder is made up of a number of languages (Statistics Finland 2008). Given the close proximity to Sweden, most of those who speak Swedish live in the southwestern part of Finland (Finland 2006).

Out of 431 local municipalities in Finland, 44 are bilingual while nineteen are predominantly Swedish. Sixteen of these Swedish-speaking municipalities are in the autonomous Aland Islands. Out of the 44 bilingual municipalities, 23 have Swedish as the majority language (Finland 2006: 15).

---

<sup>155</sup> Novakova and Vysucek gave a presentation on the education of the Deaf in the Czech Republic in TCD, June 2008 and it is clear that the national recognition of Czech Sign Language is a symbolic gesture.

As for the legally bestowed<sup>156</sup> minority languages such as Sami, Roma and sign language<sup>157</sup>, they make up much less than one percent of the national population (calculated from Finland 2006: 19-25). Non-legally bestowed minority languages such as Russian and Estonian languages account for three percent. The use of Russian almost trebled from the year of 1994 to 45,000 in 2008 while Estonian doubled to almost 20,000. Immigrant groups such as Somali, Arabic and Kurdish are the principal other minority language speakers (Statistics Finland 2008).

### **7.3.1.2 Legislative rights**

The Finnish State gives two main languages - Finnish and Swedish - full constitutional recognition. Other minority languages (Sami, Roma and sign language) are given limited rights but not on a par with the two main languages (Finland 2006). Section 17 of the constitution recognises Finnish and Swedish as national languages while minority language users are afforded rights to use their languages. Other long established minority languages are not given legal rights such as Russian and Tatar despite their numerical superiority to minority languages (Latomaa and Nouljarvi 2005: 141; Council of Europe 2001: 49).

Although Swedish-speaking individuals make up almost 6% of the population, these individuals see themselves as ethnic Finnish but regard their language – Swedish - as an important identity indicator (Latomaa and Nouljarvi 2005, Finland 2006). For historical and cultural reasons, they are given legislative equality (Østern 1997, Latomaa and Nouljarvi 2005, Sjöholm 2004). Therefore, the Swedish-speaking population is never regarded as a minority in the legal sense (Skutnabb-Kangas 1984: 290).

However, there are incidents, which show that legislative equality is not fully enforced on the ground (Skutnabb-Kangas 1984; Latomaa and Nouljarvi 2005:145). Section 122 of the constitution, states that only Finnish and Swedish languages are given equality when it comes to administrative divisions. This clause provides that administrative services will be given in both languages equally in areas where either national language accounts for at least eight percent of the municipality's population or exceeds 3,000 people. A municipality can go unilingual once one of the national languages drops

---

<sup>156</sup> Legally bestowed languages refer to their recognition in the constitution while other minority but numerically superior languages do not get legal recognition.

<sup>157</sup> The generic term 'sign language' is used in all legislations when referred to except one act; Nationality Act, 2005.

below the six percent threshold as has happened in a number of areas (Finland 2006: 15). Swedish is often the victim of such decisions by some municipalities to go unilingual (Latomaa and Nouljarvi 2005).

Section 122 of the constitution does not extend to minority languages. Although there is a clause in the constitution – Section 6 outlawing discrimination on a number of grounds -which includes language, it is unclear how this anti-discrimination measure is really enforced.

The situation can be explained that minority languages such as Sami, Romany and sign language are only recognised in the newly drafted constitution in 1995 while the two dominant languages dictated language policy since Finland gained independence. Only two languages were recognised under the old constitution of 1922: Finnish and Swedish. This can be explained by the fact that Finnish and Swedish languages were sources of internal tension and only after the Second World War was official bilingualism generally accepted (Spolsky 2004: 165, Singleton 1998).

### **7.3.1.3 Education**

With regard to education, the learning of Finnish and Swedish is compulsory for all children except those living on the Aland Islands<sup>158</sup>. Those on the Aland Islands may opt to learn Finnish voluntarily (Latomaa and Nouljarvi 2005: 155). Swedish, as a subject, is not enthusiastically received or delivered by Finnish speakers, however, and this causes further problems for those Swedish-speaking children when transferring to second-level education because Finnish is the likely dominant language in these schools (Latomaa and Nouljarvi 2005: 156-157).

Finnish speakers are more interested in developing fluency in international languages such as English, and there was a proposal to have the second national language (Swedish) as an optional subject instead of a compulsory subject (Latomaa and Nouljarvi 2005: 157). Doubtless, the issue inevitably causes some tension. For those, especially the immigrants, whose first language is not Finnish and Swedish, they are introduced to the Finnish language, as the second language. The rationale behind this introduction is to ensure their subsequent participation in Finnish society (Latomaa and Nouljarvi 2005: 162). Finnish has been designated as the second language for immigrant pupils in the national

---

<sup>158</sup> These islands are situated in the Baltic Sea and are more autonomous than other provinces in Finland. This is on account of its linguistic profile. Its society is highly monolingual, chiefly Swedish but retains affinity and loyalty to the Finnish state (Singleton 1998)

curriculum since 1994. This implies that the Finnish language is the majority language, despite the legislative assurances that both the Finnish and Swedish languages are treated as equals.

#### **7.3.1.4 Information dissemination**

The Language Act 2004 obliges the local government agencies to provide information in two national languages. This Act obliges the central government agencies to provide information in bilingual approaches but local agencies can be flexible to provide services monolingually or bilingually. The discretion depends on the linguistic demographics (Ministry of Justice [www.om.fi](http://www.om.fi) - accessed November 2007)<sup>159</sup>. The Ministry of Justice also reports that a separate legislation has been drafted to take account of the rights for Sami speakers (Ministry of Justice [www.om.fi](http://www.om.fi) - accessed November 2007).

The state broadcaster, the YLE is obliged by law to transmit TV and radio programmes and to subtitle the foreign made programmes in both national languages (YLE 2006). YLE also broadcasts programmes from Sweden to reach the Swedish-speaking areas. YLE also provides a radio channel in Sami but only offers radio programmes in English, Russian and Latin. The Åland Islands is given a legislative right to supervise its own public broadcast and all output is in Swedish (Jyrkiäinen 2008). There are eight national daily newspapers and one of them is in Swedish. However many provincial and local newspapers are available in both languages. As for the public information on the Internet, all major government websites transmit information in both national languages<sup>160</sup>.

Finland is officially portrayed as a bilingual country but there are tensions in two areas: education and information dissemination. It appears that there are some sections in the Finnish society who would like to limit the legal status for Swedish in order to help them to avail of foreign languages for economic considerations.

### **7.3.2 Ireland**

#### **7.3.2.1 Linguistic profile**

Hudson-Edward (1990) states that the official data on language usage in Ireland is notoriously unreliable. Since there is no official data on the prevalence of English speakers in Ireland, the

---

<sup>159</sup> More information can be obtained from the website of the Ministry of Justice: <http://www.om.fi/en/Etusivu/Perussaannoksia/Kielilaki>

<sup>160</sup> This is based on a quick review of all the websites of major government ministries.



calculation for this prevalence is often and indirectly based on the prevalence of Irish speakers (O'Laoire 2007: 4). Based on the last census, 58% of the national population aged 3 or over do not speak Irish. Of those able to speak Irish, only 40% speak Irish daily or on a weekly basis. 29% of them speak within the education system and the vast majority of them do not speak Irish outside the education system. The actual number of native or regular Irish speakers is just over 72,000 and it accounts for 4.4% of the national population (CSO, [www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie) - accessed November 2007). Most of them live in the designated areas collectively known as the Gaeltacht (O'Laoire 2007).

Cant, which is the native language of Irish Travellers, is very rarely documented in the mainstream media or by the academia. Yet, it occupies a significant history within Irish life. The low profile of Cant was due to inaccessibility, ignorance, and lack of awareness of its existence, by the settled community (Little 2003: 18 –19).

There is no official data on the uses of other languages by ethnic groups. It is possible, however, to identify the number of immigrant languages indirectly. The last census shows a fast growing number of Poles, Lithuanians and other Eastern Europeans. While it is possible that some of them speak English fluently, the number within the ethnic groups is sufficient to maintain their home languages. There is a claim that there are 210 different languages and dialects being used in the Irish courts (Phelan 2006). In addition, it was estimated that 167 different languages are being spoken in Ireland (O'Brien 2006). Little (2003) reports that the VEC in Dublin in 2003 provided English classes to people using 63 different languages.

### **7.3.2.2 *Legislative rights***

The official languages outlined in the Constitution of Ireland are listed in priority of importance, namely Irish and English (*Bunreacht na Eireann 1937*). This was unchanged from the former displaced 1922 constitution; however, Irish was given a higher profile in 1937 and recognised as the first language. There is no recognition or acknowledgement of minority languages in the Irish constitution (*Bunreacht na Eireann 1937*). In order to distinguish Irish national identity from other nationalities, especially English, the Irish language is seen as a crucial factor. This is so in order to build a sense of belonging. Proponents of the Irish language point to heritage and history as proof for the difference between the Irish and English (O'hEallaithe 2004: 159, O'Laoire 2007:5-6).

The constitution reviewed by the Constitution Review Group (CRG) in 1996 did not examine languages beyond Irish and English (Report of the Constitution Review Group 1996:10) and it exemplified the general attitude towards minority language. However, in fairness to the CRG, it recommended the prohibition of discrimination on a number of grounds including language (Report of the Constitution Review Group 1996).

Despite the constitutional recognition of both the Irish and English languages, speakers of both were historically not given specific legislative rights to be served in their language. Although the vast majority of the population speak English, English is rarely seen as a bone of contention in disputes with statutory agencies. For Irish speakers, the experience is somewhat different and they have experienced some forms of linguistic discrimination. The Official Language Act 2003 obliges the public services to serve in Irish; under the Act the office of the Official Language Commissioner (*An Coimisineir Teanga*) was established to monitor language rights of users in dealing with public services (Comhairle 2004). This legal obligation, in particular Section 12, forces statutory agencies to ensure information dissemination in both languages<sup>161</sup>. This has created some sense of resentment in some quarters especially due to the impact on public finances (Coleman 2007). Irish is also an official language of the European Union since 2006. The existence of legislation that creates an agency and a commission to safeguard the Irish language in public services indicates that the Irish language is not to be trusted if left in the hands of public officials.

The Irish state attempted unsuccessfully to reverse the asymmetrical imbalance in the use of English and Irish to pre-Famine days where the majority of the Irish used the native language. For example, the gatekeepers of recruitment to public services after 1937 insisted on fluency in Irish as a requirement of being employed in the services. Although some rules have been relaxed since, rigid and compulsive policies have not won over the majority of the population although they retain affinity for the Irish language (O'Laoire 2007). The failure of the State's education policy for the revival of Irish is most evident in education.

### **7.3.2.3 Education**

The Irish state officially adopts a bilingual approach to education despite the fact that ninety five per cent of its population use English as the language for most transactions on a daily basis. Irish was

---

<sup>161</sup> This extends to cover press releases, websites and emails.

never off the agenda of education reform, however, because the state and their proponents insisted upon the importance of promoting the Irish language.

One observer points out that the inflexible compulsion of having to learn Irish in education has alienated a significant number of people (O'Laoire 2007). Parents have complained about the compulsion of learning Irish in schools while it is rarely used outside the school (O'hEallaithe 2004). On the opposite side, an Irish language enthusiast, O'hEallaithe criticises the direction of the state for its efforts to preserve the Irish language, because he fears it creates more cynicism and pessimism rather than developing patriotism and optimism (Sunday Times January 12, 2003). However, his concern is not supported by the evident rise of a number of children enrolling in the Irish-speaking school system administered by Gaelscoileanna (Sunday Times January 12, 2003).

Little (2003) also criticises the curricular approach of teaching Irish in the schools as the curriculum do not distinguish between those who are native Irish speakers and those who are not. The same curriculum is offered to native and non-native speakers<sup>162</sup>. Interestingly and paradoxically, English is not a compulsory subject in the senior cycle in the Irish post-primary education system: (Irish is the only compulsory subject) yet, the vast majority of children opted for this subject in their final examination (Little 2003: 10).

As for other foreign languages, they are optional subjects at the primary and post-primary levels. The most common languages chosen are: French, German, Spanish and Italian (Little 2003: 11). They are chosen on a basis of its perceived usefulness in career development (Little 2003). However, they are now final year (Leaving Certificate) examinations in-service EU subjects ([www.sec.ie](http://www.sec.ie)). In order to cater for the children of immigrants, a policy of substantive bilingualism is adapted and the English language is the target language for immigrants to learn (Department of Education 2007 – press release on website– [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) – accessed January 2008).

#### **7.3.2.4 Information dissemination**

The Official Languages Act 2003 obliges the statutory agencies and government departments to provide information in both official languages, Irish and English. These bodies must ensure that they have an adequate number of staff to deal with clients in both languages. The Act also gives specific

---

<sup>162</sup> Little said that the same Irish curricula is used to teach native Irish speaking children and monolingual English-speaking children (Little 2003: 1)

rights to the Irish speakers to expect all responses to their query in their chosen language. As for the Gaeltacht areas, the act aims to have Irish as the working language in all statutory agencies. The Act contains a clause for the government to extend the Act to cover the private sector at some stage in the future. This act does not extend to cover other minority or immigrant languages (Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, n/d)<sup>163</sup>.

The state broadcaster, RTE, provides radio and TV programmes in both languages although English is the principal language. The state also sponsors Teilfís na Gaelige (TG4) by financing it from the public exchequer (O'hEallaithe 2004). The other private Irish-owned broadcasters such as TV3 and Channel 6 do not provide any programmes in Irish. With regard to the other spoken minority languages, none of the private broadcasters are obliged to provide any programmes in minority languages<sup>164</sup>. Irish-medium newspapers are also available and sections of some newspapers are given in minority languages, in particular Polish (Horgan *et al* 2007). Independent radio stations do provide programmes in other languages apart from English and Irish (Horgan *et al* 2007; Lisa Ní Choisdealbha<sup>165</sup> – personal communication, October 17, 2008)

With regard to the information dissemination through the websites (apart from the obligatory duty to provide information in English and Irish), major government websites have facilitated a number of foreign languages. The clear examples are: Revenue Commissioners (<http://www.revenue.ie>), Department of Social and Family Affairs (<http://www.welfare.ie>), Department of Education and Science (<http://www.education.ie>) and the Equality Authority (<http://www.equality.ie>). In the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (<http://www.entemp.ie>) and in FAS (<http://www.fas.ie>) foreign translations are limited to certain areas.

### 7.3.3 Commentary:

Both Finland and Ireland portray themselves as bilingual nations with a general toleration of lesser-used national languages. However, the census data returns on language usage show the contrary and it is clear that both countries have strong monolingual policies in practice (although the reasons for this

---

<sup>163</sup> More information can be obtained from the Department's website page:  
<http://www.pobail.ie/en/IrishLanguage/OfficialLanguagesAct2003/>

<sup>164</sup> This is based on anecdotal evidence including the inspection of the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland's website ([www.bci.ie](http://www.bci.ie)).

<sup>165</sup> Email - Lisa Ní Choisdealbha is attached to the Independent Broadcasters of Ireland (IBI – [www.ibireland.ie](http://www.ibireland.ie)).

monolingualism are very different). It would seem that lesser-used national languages are more tolerated than actively encouraged.

In the education arena, both countries make the learning of the two languages dominant. In both countries, law obliges that public information is disseminated through the dominant national languages. In Finland, there is long established legislation governing language; the Language Act 1922 was replaced by its successor, Language Act 2004. The situation is different in Ireland as the Official Language Act 2003 was the first direct legislation in the history of the state dealing with the official languages (Nic Shuibhne 2002).

To apply Ruiz's analytical framework to these national language situations, the policies in both countries are clearly explicit and written in the legal code. However, both countries adopt a number of implicit and unwritten language policies towards minority languages. For instance, despite the significant numerical strength, regarding the usage of Russian and Tatar languages in Finland, they are reduced to the periphery of language policies although there are service provisions available for both languages in some areas (i.e. broadcasting).

It is clear that only Finnish and Swedish are defined as *languages with rights*. As for the minority but recognised languages, such as Sami and Roma, there is substantial evidence from the literature on language policy and practice in Finland that both languages are treated in policy terms as *language as a resource*. But for other long established minority languages such as Russian and Tatar, they appear to be implicitly or tacitly treated as *languages as resources* but in a minimalist manner. However there are some conflicting accounts of how both language communities appear to get on with the majority society. With regard to the Tatars, there is some cultural and linguistic integration with the Finnish language while retaining their own language, culture and religion (United Nations Commission on Human Rights 2004). The Russians are less fortunate as there is evidence that they experience some kind of discrimination such as prejudice and suspicion (Jasinskaja-Lahti & Liebkind 2001, Finland 2006)

Irish and English are both official languages and the Irish state appears to treat other minority and immigrant languages as *language as a problem* in policy terms. The most obvious example is Cant as it is not actively encouraged or even acknowledged in the official policy domains. It appears that the Irish language itself experienced lengthy periods of being defined as '*language as a resource*',

because the legislation was necessitated to protect constitutional rights of Irish speakers when dealing with the public services. Given the enactment of the Official Language Act 2003, a shift in the language orientation to *'language as a right'* has apparently happened but it remains to be seen if the act is effective in this regard. The annual report of 2007 by An Coimisinéir Teanga, acknowledged though there was some progress made in this regard but there were some persistent offending among significant public bodies (An Coimisinéir Teanga 2008).

# Chapter 8

## Language education policies for Deaf children - Policies

### 8.1 Introduction

Given the scope and range of data collected on language education policies with regard to the education of Deaf children, it was decided to have two chapters on this same topic. In order to discuss the topic, language education policies for Deaf children, I have selected six main components that are likely to influence or highlight the language policies. The six components are chosen on the basis of literature review and are regarded as common issues when discussing the educational provisions for Deaf children. These are: philosophical perspectives, early intervention, educational placement, nature of teacher training courses, fluency of teachers in sign languages and the scope of Deaf communities' involvement in the educational process.

Before addressing these six components, it is necessary to discuss the concept of language education policy in general. Having completed this, a general commentary on language education policies for Deaf children is presented. More specific commentaries are also outlined on the same topic with respect to both Finland and Ireland. The purpose of this section is to give background information before each component is discussed in depth. Interview excerpts are used to illustrate key points.

### 8.2 Language Education Policy (LEP)

Language education policy (LEP)<sup>166</sup> refers to a process whereby language practices in education are implemented and practiced. LEP is regarded as a subtext of language policy but commentators hold the school as one of the most important domains for language policy. LEP holds a very significant role in reproducing ideologies about language development in society (Corson 1993, Spolsky 2004, Shohamy 2006, Paulston and Heideman 2006). It cannot be studied in isolation, however; it must be contextualised in a wider framework because it is heavily and mutually influenced by cultural, political and economic considerations (Corson 1993, Shohamy 2006, Paulston and Heideman 2006).

Corson (1993), using the examples of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, states that LEP is often used to legitimise a particular language over other languages and powerful groups in society often

---

<sup>166</sup> The term, 'language education policy' (LEP), is used throughout the chapter though other authors use slightly different terms but have the same meaning. For example, LEP is used by Shohamy (2006); Corson opts for 'language planning in education', and Paulston and Heidemann (2006) use 'educational language policy'. Others adopt 'language acquisition policy'.

decide the choice of language. The choice is often based on vested interests to protect their status in society. He refers to Apple's list of major functions (Corson 1993: 5) that schools have in society: they select and certify a workforce; they maintain privilege by taking the form and content of the dominant culture over other cultures and they define dominant culture as legitimate knowledge to be passed on. In this regard, Corson (1993) claims that language is a key vehicle in the realisation of social goals.

Corson (1993) also applies Gramsci's concept of hegemonic practices. He holds that language policy in education is a key in the schooling process and is regarded as one of the non-coercive forms of domination by powerful groups in society. Through education, some discourses and values can be favoured over others by dominant groups. This therefore, creates discrimination and injustice. However, it often does not appear as an injustice as schools are publicly defined as neutral and universalistic in their practices (Bourdieu and Passerson 1977).

To put this in practical terms, Shohamy (2006) claims that LEP can be regarded as a *de facto* process of implementing ideological views or political / legal statements about language(s) into practice. She also states that language practices can be regarded as a form of imposition and manipulation. Common questions relating to LEP are as follows:

- ❑ Which language(s) to teach or to be learned?
- ❑ When (or at what age) to begin these languages?
- ❑ For how long? (Hours per week, number of years?)
- ❑ By whom, for whom? (Who is qualified to teach and who is entitled or obligated to learn?)
- ❑ Finally, how? (Methodology, materials etc)

(Shohamy 2006: 76)

Such questions appear to be innocuous yet, Shohamy (2006) and Paulston & Heideman (2006) claim that these decisions are often ideologically or politically laden. Educational staff are the key people in the implementation and they are often uncritical and tolerant of these decisions simply because they are often drawn from the same dominant groups in society. Shohamy (2006) warns that LEP should not be dictated by the top-down; indeed, there are cases where parents or minority groups successfully challenged top-down decisions. Hence policies took account of views from minorities and for parents.



Classrooms are viewed as significant sites as they reproduce cultural identity and social inequality (Paulston & Heideman 2006). Language shift<sup>167</sup> is one of the activities in the classrooms. Shohamy (2006) reports that educational staff often view children who have unconventional use of language(s) such as the hybrid approach, as having lower intelligence and lacking in academic skills.<sup>168</sup> Shohamy (2006) also reports that those children from different linguistic backgrounds take more time to acquire the official or national language than those children of dominant groups. Teachers' beliefs about the lower intelligence of hybrid speakers lead to children's internalising beliefs that they are lacking academic skills and have lower intelligence. Hence, they unwittingly consolidate their unequal status in society.

However, schools are not necessarily fixed places; they can be remodelled as sites for resistance. Corson (1993) points out that schools have to recognise structural influences on social injustices and can issue carefully drafted language policies to counter such injustices<sup>169</sup>. Such practical measures have to be implemented to ensure the effective and fair language education policies. There are several measures that are desirable: the management has to adopt a genuine collaborative style to ensure the participation of staff and community; the board of management should be drawn from various interests of the community; parents have to have easy access to the minutes of board meetings and be able to challenge such decisions.

Corson (1993: 160-162) cites examples of the Inuit schools in Canada, the Navajo schools in the US and the recent Aboriginal schools in Australia as proof of the positive inclusion of community in school and the formatting of egalitarian policies. Positive discrimination policies are also applied to these schools as the teachers from majority or dominant groups are available only for numerical and literacy teaching. Such policies have empowered the community.

---

<sup>167</sup> Language shift – (sometimes referred to as language transfer or language replacement or assimilation), is the progressive process whereby a speech community of a language shifts to speaking another language.

<sup>168</sup> Hybrid approach refers to the use and mix of two or more languages in a single written composition.

<sup>169</sup> Corson (1993) points out that feminists have successfully reformed sexist languages but they have not been successful in tackling the wider structures. This, in turn has contributed to the inferior status of women in society.

### 8.3 *LEP for the schools for the Deaf: a general commentary*

This commentary focuses on the language education policy for Deaf children, especially in the western countries<sup>170</sup>. There are several influences that shape the language policy, and the list is not necessarily exhaustive, but philosophical perspectives play a very significant role.

Much discussion about the education of children of the minority language groups assumes children come from groups where language and cultural transmission is generational. However, because more than ninety percent of Deaf children are born to hearing families, language and cultural transmission can be problematic (Marschar, Lang Albertini 2002). Hence, for these Deaf children to acquire cultural norms such as sign languages, and cultural habits from the Deaf community<sup>171</sup>, horizontal learning (from peers) is not always readily available. This brings more emphasis on the process known as '*early intervention*'. This process often aims to identify whether the child is deaf or not and whether appropriate measures can be applied.

The intervention process has influences on later decisions. Decisions about sending the child to a given educational institution are often influenced by initial decisions about intervention (Young *et al.* 2006). If parents are advised in the first place not to encourage signing with their child, they are more likely to send their child to an ordinary school instead of the school for the Deaf. This adds a little more complication to the framework here.

It is beyond argument that language acquisition is very crucial for all Deaf children. Therefore, it necessitates the early identification<sup>172</sup> of deafness in the child. The tasks of identification often fall on medical professionals; therefore, parents are influenced by their recommendations for dealing with the future projection (Young 2002). This influences the language policy quite significantly. This influence is also compounded by referrals to early intervention schemes. Evidence from many countries asserts that medical professionals often dominate the early intervention process with little or no input from parents and the Deaf community (Mathews forthcoming, Cornes & Wiltshire 1999)<sup>173</sup>.

---

<sup>170</sup> In some countries in the majority world, Deaf education does not exist or is only available up to the primary level (World Federation of the Deaf, website: <http://www.wfdeaf.org> - accessed April 2008).

<sup>171</sup> For the definition, please note section 1.8 in the first chapter.

<sup>172</sup> This term is deliberately chosen instead of 'diagnosed' as the author writes from the cultural perspective. The term, 'diagnosed' implies the necessitation of medical intervention.

<sup>173</sup> The medical dominance of the early intervention sector has been challenged to ensure the inclusion of views from parents of deaf children. The best example can be found in the United States as the federal document: 2007 Joint Commission on Infant Hearing Position Statement (JCIH 2007) recommends that parents are to be consulted at every level within the early intervention sector. While the statement said that '*The goal of early hearing detection and intervention*

The movement towards 'inclusive education' or 'mainstreaming' also obscures the issue of language policy for Deaf children. Ordinary schools are dominated by the usage of national, dominant or official languages. Such policies leave little manoeuvre for a separate language policy for Deaf children. It is commonly known that mainstreaming Deaf children into the ordinary schools often means that the Deaf child is left alone (Londen 2004: 14, Ryan 2006, Mathews, forthcoming). Also they have no access to peer sign language and relationships. This raises several questions, especially how they can perform academically, socially and cognitively. Hence, support services are seen as necessary for them and such support is designated under the disability policy rather than under language education policy.

The emergence of cochlear implantation in recent years in several countries has brought the language education policy for Deaf children to the sharp edge. Proponents of cochlear implantations tend to opt for oralism in order to maximise residual hearing. Hence children are advised not to be introduced to sign language (Ladd 2007). In this context, parents opt for a spoken monolingual education for these Deaf children. It is known that anti-bilingual discourse is being encouraged by those who are involved in paediatric cochlear implantation in Norway (Vonen 2008). Less than fourteen percentage of Finnish Deaf implanted children are exposed to sign language (Paivi Raino, personal communication, 2008). However in Sweden, medical professionals are known to encourage parents to learn sign and place their Deaf child in bilingual education. This approach acknowledges the limitation of cochlear implantations for many children (Londen 2004:75; Blume 2005).

The widespread assumption is that cochlear implantation would achieve functional or full hearing in children but this is not the case (US Food and Drugs Administration 2008- website: <http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/cochlear/educators.html> - accessed May 2008). Given the fact that the implantation does not restore hearing, a lengthy, intensive rehabilitative process<sup>174</sup> is necessary to comprehend sound and it sometimes requires the previous memory of sound by the recipient to complement the rehabilitation. Hence, for many children, the implantation only brings additional hearing but not full hearing and hence the access to spoken language would thus remain much compromised (US Food and Drugs Administration 2008 - website:

---

*(EHDI) is to maximize linguistic competence and literacy development for children who are deaf or hard of hearing', the compliance to this statement remains voluntary. Beth Benedict, one of the representatives on the committee confirmed that it was likely not all institutions would adopt this statement but pointed out that they have something in writing to support their stance (Beth Benedict, personal communication, February 15, 2010). .*

<sup>174</sup> The process can take a number of years (US Food and Drugs Administration 2008, Beaumont Hospital, n/d).

<http://www.fda.gov/cdrh/cochlear/educators.html> - accessed May 2008)<sup>175</sup>. For this reason, the aforementioned Swedish policy is to ensure every implantee to have access to sign language.

The most obvious reflection of how language policy can influence parents' decisions as how to educate their child is the educational location of the school. I am not referring to geographical terms explicitly, though it plays a significant role in this decision-making process. The educational location issue refers to whether school parents would send their child to a local mainstream school or the stand-alone school for Deaf children, depending on education policy for Deaf children in the country. Parents are often persuaded by language policies adopted by the school and sometimes by geographical factors (distance of travelling to the school, availability of transport etc).

There is historical evidence that parents were influenced by language policies adopted by the school (for example, see Griffey 1994, Crean 1996).<sup>176</sup> In some cases, the decision is often tactically supported by the state. The state often adopts an apparent neutrality stance in this regard but adopts an active role in promoting mainstream schools ahead of Deaf schools.

Even when the parents opt to send the Deaf child to the school for the Deaf, proficiency in sign language depends on what policy is adopted in the school. It is commonly known that many schools for the Deaf do not have many teachers who have functional fluency in SL in order to deliver the curriculum effectively (Conroy 2006 in the Irish case). The scarcity of such fluent teachers tends to hinder the development of bilingual education in the schools for the Deaf as experienced in several countries (Finland 2006).

Moreover, in recent times, the decreasing number of Deaf children being sent to the schools for the Deaf and the majority of those children who are Deaf and have no disabilities, are being sent to the mainstream education. The increasing survival rate of premature deaf children with disabilities

---

<sup>175</sup> The survey submitted by a cochlear implant manufacturer to the US's Food and Drug Administration in 2002, states that "85 % were able to hear and understand conversation **with the aid of lip-reading**; 12% were able to hear well enough to use the phone. Of the 90 patients who received this implant 18% were not able to hear any sound. The ABI System does not restore normal hearing" (US FDA 2002). These 85% rely on lip-reading; they would not be able to converse in a noisy environment or group discussion. It is estimated that about 30% to 40% of speech sounds can be lip-read under the **best** conditions (National Deaf Children's Society 2008). (Bold underlined, my emphasis). Therefore, it is clear that such approaches like this would compromise the ability to participate in mainstream classrooms.

<sup>176</sup> Griffey (1994) and Crean (1996) referred to the periods of the 1940s and those parents' decisions to withdraw their children from the schools for Deaf children in Dublin in order to avail of oral education in the United Kingdom.

increases the heterogeneity of Deaf children in one classroom – posing pedagogical difficulties in the schools in the UK<sup>177</sup> (Turner 2006).

Such issues above complicate the discursive framework. It is clearly stated earlier on that Deaf children as a group is strictly not a homogenous group but the focus here is the application of language policies to the schools for the Deaf. Most of them can be taught through the medium of signed language without any extra accommodation to take account of disabilities. Inclusion of Deaf children with disabilities demands the need for extra accommodation such as personal assistance and modified communication medium (please see footnote 10 below). For the sake of comprehensibility, it is necessary to rephrase the contents of the LEP framework in order to apply this to the education of Deaf children. The practical questions identified by Shohamy (2006) can arise and can be rephrased into a number of questions. The modified result can be seen in the following table: 8.1.

#### 8.4 *A conclusion to language education policy section:*

Language education policy plays a key role in determining Deaf education policy in a given country. Shohamy (2006) claims that five key questions have to be addressed in language education, and depending on how these are answered, education for Deaf children will vary accordingly. The first question is, what language is taught in school as the first language? If sign language is prioritised and other languages are secondary, this influences where children will go to school, what they will learn and how they will learn. The other questions in language education are: when does a child start to study a language, for how long and from whom? The answers to these are predicated on the answer to the first question. Who teaches the child is also strongly influenced by the answer to the first question. If the oral language is prioritised then it is obvious that they will be the medium of instruction; if sign language is prioritised then this becomes the medium and teachers need to be proficient in sign language.

In the table below, I outline the implications of different perspectives on deafness for language education policy for Deaf children. It is evident that medical perspectives are most antithetical to sign language, as the first language of education for Deaf children while the Deafhood perspective is most sympathetic. The social perspective occupies an interim position although it is clearer to the Deafhood

---

<sup>177</sup> Pedagogical difficulties refer to different communication needs of Deaf children, especially those with disabilities that may require different communication approaches. For example, given the small number of Deaf children, it may be necessary to group some children of a certain age into one or two classes. One may need methodical signing or signing at a slower pace.

than the medical model. Language education for Deaf children can be classified along the continuum in different countries. I will now proceed to analyse Finnish and Irish education policy for Deaf children in terms of Shohamy's (2006) list of questions. For this chapter, the questions focus on philosophical perspectives and early intervention.

### 8.5 *LEP in the Finnish schools for the Deaf: background information*<sup>178</sup>

Historically, LEP in the Finnish schools for the Deaf was dominated by oralism (Takala 1995, Conama 2002). In 1973, in the curriculum review, it was decided that sign language can be used as an 'auxiliary' support to the oral teaching but there was no instruction as to how to use it in this context (Takala 1995: 11). In another review of the curriculum in 1980, sign language was viewed as a supporting method to acquire the mother language (Finnish). However, a breakthrough was made in the 1987 review of the curriculum and there were clear instructions that bilingual education was emphasised for teaching Deaf children. This review also recognised simultaneous signing as a form of pidgin language (Takala 1995:12).

The curriculum of FinnSL was published in 1990 and there was a distinction between Deaf and hard of hearing children. As a consequence, language acquisition is different here. For Deaf children, FinnSL is the primary language while it is an option for hard of hearing children (Takala 1995: 13). Interestingly, the distinction and its consequences are primarily influenced by a medicalised view. Takala (1995) also reports that two main organisations, the Finnish Association of the Deaf and the Finnish Federation of Hard of Hearing adopt a differing outlook on this issue. The former advocates the use of FinnSL as the primary language while the latter opt for the utilisation of residual hearing. Since the Finnish Federation of the Hard of Hearing has the responsibility for the rehabilitation of deaf children up to the age of 16, the oral method dominates.

---

<sup>178</sup> Statistics for these Finnish schools and children etc. are given in the next chapter.

Table 8.1 : Key questions for Deaf Education arising from Shohamy's questions (2006)

Domains of language education for Deaf children	Questions	Language Policy options for parents		
		<u>Medical perspectives</u>	<u>Social perspectives</u>	<u>Deafhood perspectives</u>
Philosophical perspectives	Philosophical orientation	Favours oralism	Favours transitional bilingualism or total communication	Favours maintenance of bilingualism or multilingualism
	What language(s) to teach or be learned?	Monolingualism (One national or dominant spoken language)	One national spoken language and sign language as a compensatory tool	Indigenous national sign language and written language (national or dominant language)
Early intervention	Range of information options for parents	Emphasis on aural rehabilitation.	Offers range of 'choices' but emphasis on spoken language at the expense of sign language under the guise of neutrality	Emphasise SL as the central plank in language acquisition of the child
	Parents are likely to be given such information options	Does not see much merit in alternative formats in disseminating public information		
	Language acquisition orientation	Favours cochlear implantation as the option of increasing the ability to hear, therefore the acquisition process is aural.	Ambivalent towards cochlear implantation but stresses it is a personal choice	Antagonism towards cochlear implantation, yet even those who are implanted, the emphasis is on learning SL
	Parents would be strongly advised to do this			
	Nature of staff in early intervention	Visiting teachers / medical professionals consists of a multi-disciplinary team	Multi-disciplinary team including Deaf team but dominated by hearing staff	ISL advocates / teachers controlling intervention scheme

Nevertheless, the national curriculum published in 2004 has a section devoted to the sign language users (National Board of Education (NBE) 2004: 33). It made no distinction on hearing level categorisation as previously used in the older versions of the curriculum. It suggests that FinnSL is to be made available to all who wish to avail of it and gives particular attention to those whose primary language is FinnSL. It emphasises the bilingual approach of teaching which regards FinnSL as the primary language for Deaf children, while written Finnish or Swedish is the complementary language. The aim of bilingual education here is to enforce a strong sense of cultural identity in children and to help them to value their language equally with the spoken language (NBE 2004: 33). This can be regarded as a clear example of Deafhood ‘perspective’ being practically demonstrated.

Latomaa and Nuoljarvi (2002) report that the current education legislation does not oblige these schools for the Deaf to provide education in sign language. Consequentially, the right to use sign language is still being determined by the levels of hearing loss (Latomaa and Nuoljarvi 2002: 143). The widely held assumption is that the more deaf you are, the more necessary for you to learn sign language. Those who have residual hearing would be exempted from learning sign language. This exemplifies the medicalised attitude towards the Finnish Sign Language.

The emergence of cochlear implantation further complicates the language education policy for Deaf children in Finland. This has caused a serious concern among the Deaf community in Finland as evidence points to the fact of an increasing number of children being implanted and are discouraged from learning sign language (Londen 2004: 74).

### *8.5.1 Interviews with the Finnish participants<sup>179</sup>*

#### *8.5.1.1 Philosophical perspectives*

The philosophy behind language usage can be identified through its language policies in the schools and in early intervention schemes. It can reflect the ‘perspectives’ on deafness quite clearly. It can affect the allocation of resources to support language policies in education.

---

<sup>179</sup> The profile of Finnish interviewees is given in Chapter 5.



When the sign language was constitutionally recognised, one interviewee explained that this had an impact on attitudes towards sign language in education:

At the same time, there was a strong metaphysical view that the spoken Finnish language was more superior to the Finnish SL. Thus, the constitutional recognition of sign language helped to lessen or reduce this kind of attitude among the educators. This had changed attitudes among the educators. I hope the attitudes will be continually changing! (Irene, community, 2005)

However, her hopes appears to be misplaced, as another interviewee described the current situation:

At the moment the resources are too little. I would say that, for example, at school, Deaf people cannot have education in their own language - there is not enough material, there is not enough knowledge, and hearing people get better education than deaf children get. They may get little or no education in their own language (Marja, community, 2006).

This same interviewee pointed out the irony of having the same status as before even though the personal right to use sign language was now recognised by the constitution. Deaf people are further disempowered by the limitations of access to knowledge and information about sign language. This also echoes the similar findings of research by Kyle and Allsop (1997)<sup>180</sup>. The same interviewee expressed her frustration:

Hearing adults can get much better education - they know more about Finnish SL as a language than Deaf people. It is really wrong, this situation (Marja, community, 2006).

However, there are a number of reasons why Deaf children are not exposed to sign language or are not properly instructed to sign. One prominent interviewee explained that there are three general distinct groups of Deaf people. The first group is gradually growing and is becoming more confident in signing; the second group adopts ambivalent attitudes toward signing while the final group can be regarded as not conversant in signing. This interviewee pinpoints the differences between these groups in terms of parental influence and the degree of exposure to signing in the schools. As for the second group: this interviewee claims that:

---

<sup>180</sup> Kyle and Allsop (1997) discovered that in many European countries including Ireland that hearing people often dominate access to linguistic information about sign language, yet most of them are not native signers.

They can identify themselves with Deaf identity etc., but their families adopt a cavalier attitude towards FinnSL (Paula, community, 2005).

As for the first confident group: the same interviewee states:

.....You see within the young Deaf population in Finland a significant but growing sector has expressed significantly in bilingual mode and their education had not ceased to amaze the hearing population - they are fluent in FinnSL, Finnish & Swedish & take them for granted. This is due to their families' positive attitude toward FinnSL (Paula, community, 2005).

However, this interviewee recognises that this group may dwindle in time to come because:

.....not many parents follow the spirit of the law - this is due to the expansion of cochlear implantation. Doctors in the cochlear implantation scheme have advised against the use of Finnish Sign Language among Deaf children. Parents & schools strongly influenced by the doctors now are using Total Communication<sup>181</sup>. It is really a throwback to the old days in Finland in the 1970s (Paula, community, 2005).

Paula's reference to a throwback to the 1970s is that the status of sign language was treated as inferior to spoken languages. This interviewee's fears are quite common among her Deaf compatriots. Even in the schools for the Deaf, it seems that there is a lack of confidence. The following comment exemplifies the degree of scepticism:

A number of Deaf schools declare their belief in bilingualism, but now they move to the concept of multilingualism in line with the UN's policy to encourage linguistic, cultural diversity. Of course, being realistic, Deaf schools emphasise more spoken Finnish language than Finnish Sign Language. I did ask them why it was the case and I suggested the reverse but we kept a distance. Maybe you can visit one of them and ask questions yourself. For the record I do have doubts regarding their declaration for multilingualism considering the amount they devote to Finnish Sign Language teaching .....(Rikka, community, 2005)

---

<sup>181</sup> Total communication refers to the fact that a Deaf child is encouraged to talk and sign simultaneously. It's main proponent, Denton (1976) describes this as Total Communication, that includes the full spectrum of language modes, child-devised gesture, the language of signs, speech-reading, finger spelling, reading and writing. However, it proved unworkable because speech and signing could not be simultaneously matched – signed versions are often incomplete or contradictory to the spoken language. Educators (most are hearing) tend to use spoken language as the standard (i.e. 200 words were spoken while 70 signs were given simultaneously). This resulted in messages being unintelligible and ungrammatical.

It is clear that the philosophical perspectives have influenced the language educational policies for Deaf children directly and indirectly. The dominant philosophical perspective is to have Deaf children exposed to the spoken language as much as possible and to minimise the exposure to Finnish Sign Language. The pessimism among the interviewees regarding the future language education policies is evident.

#### **8.5.1.2 Early intervention**

There is an early intervention system in Finland, which is dominated by the medical professionals. One interviewee describes the position as follows:

Well, in this country, when parents of Deaf children discovered their child is deaf, they tend to seek advice from medical people; they are usually referred to a medical specialist. The typical medical specialist's knowledge on Deaf-related issues is virtually non-existent. This type of specialist would recommend cochlear implantation or mainstream education. Notwithstanding, I must say there are some referral people who are positive towards the Deaf community but they are few and far between (Jenna, administration, 2005)

Another person pointed out that planning for the Deaf child's future in education is organised through the health care system.

We have a system based on the fact that when a child is very young and in every year of their life, the mother or father takes them to a centre where there is a healthcare system which goes through the basic things and that concerns opportunities to learn in the future, especially when the child is five years old (Ella, administration, 2006).

Another interviewee describes the brief composition of the multi-disciplinary team that includes doctors who are involved in the early intervention system, upon which he places importance:

The plan will be done in co-operation between teachers, parents and of course all professionals - doctors and so on (Antti, administration, 2006).

The general consensus among the Finnish interviewees is that the emphasis for language acquisition is increasingly focused on cochlear implantation for young children in order to avail of spoken language. This is the advice given to parents in the healthcare centres. This

emphasis can reflect the medicalised attitudes adopted by the administration. The national health administration is responsible for this scheme.

Interviewees were asked if the parents are encouraged to use Finnish Sign Language. They claimed there is widespread negativity, despite the fact that the Finnish Association of the Deaf has adopted an active role in ensuring the access to FinnSL for those parents.

However, the Deaf community, through the Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD), is determined to have a foothold in this regard. It developed a programme aiming at parents of Deaf children and provides teachers to such families to learn FinnSL. One interviewee describes the worthiness of this programme:

There is a programme aimed at hearing families of the young Deaf child to speed up their signing skills and they have chances to mingle with other Deaf families. This programme is known as the junior programme and is usually held at the weekends. During the summer break, the FAD organises a home tuition programme aimed at parents. I, myself, do that work. This is a good programme for hearing families. This usually takes place at homes and municipalities fund this programme (Laura, administration, 2005).

It is noticeable from this statement that such programmes offered by the Deaf community are to be held on the 'periphery', but local municipalities fund them. This raises an interesting observation as there are two strands operating in this regard. At the first level, the state offers an early intervention with a strong emphasis on spoken language acquisition with cochlear implantation. At the next level, the Deaf community through the FAD, offers FinnSL instructions to families, yet both are paid by the public purse.

With regard to the equivalent of kindergartens, there is only one dedicated kindergarten for Deaf children in Finland as others are placed in other kindergartens across Finland. One interviewee states:

There are kindergartens where many Deaf children are placed individually. There is one kindergarten school focusing on Deaf children in the Helsinki area. It is about 10km away from this school. This kindergarten regularly supplies children to this school [for the Deaf] when they reach the appropriate age - after parents consulting with the specialists (Jenna, administration, 2005).

Many Deaf children individually placed in kindergartens are unlikely to have ready access to sign languages or to have role models of Deaf adults around. Only one kindergarten provides service in FinnSL and it is confined to the Helsinki area. This demonstrates how the medical or social perspectives on deafness influence the individual placing. Another consequence of such individual placing is how the placing of the Deaf children in schools for the Deaf can be diminished.

The dominance of medical professionals in early intervention clearly shapes the language education policies regardless of stated policy intentions. A number of interviewees have identified the involvement of medical professionals as a key factor in determining the lack of interest in a language education policy based on Finnish Sign Language for Deaf children. They also acknowledged the parental attitude towards the FinnSL is a crucial issue in shaping the language education policies.

#### *8.6 LEP in the Irish schools for the Deaf: background information*

The language policy in stand-alone schools for the Deaf was historically biased toward the oralism philosophy as the usage of signing was strictly forbidden (Crean 1997, Burns 1998, LeMasters 2003). However, it has to be pointed out that the Irish experience was unique when comparing it to other countries as oralism was uncharacteristically and belatedly introduced to the Irish Catholic schools during the 1940s and 1950s (Crean 1997, Burns 1998, LeMasters 2003)<sup>182</sup>. LeMasters (2003) also reports how the rapid change by these schools to oralism (from exclusive signing as the method of instruction) brought upheavals to the sense of identity among Irish Deaf people.

The usage of signing by children was often met with harsh corporal punishment; McDonnell and Saunders (1993) documented the personal experience. The huge number of applications by Deaf people to avail of the state Redress Board<sup>183</sup> to compensate for such punishments

---

<sup>182</sup> Oralism was largely employed in several European countries including the UK (including Irish Protestant run schools) during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was given a superior status over sign language in terms of medium of instruction by the infamous Milan conference in 1880. Though the status was not legally binding, it became a widespread currency for several schools in Europe and North America. This status was heavily disputed and became a source of resentment by Deaf communities against the validity of oralism (Lane and Fischer 1993)

<sup>183</sup> The Redress Board was set up under the Residential Institutions Redress Act, 2002 to make fair and reasonable awards to persons who, as children, were abused while resident in industrial schools, reformatories

indicated the systematic approach of the repression of signing (Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse 2009). Some of them even centred on the prohibition of signing. The oralist policy<sup>184</sup> only relented slightly in recent times due to the campaign by the Irish Deaf Society and the more recent exposure to different ideological perspectives, especially from abroad (Conama 2002, LeMasters 2003).

However, the shift has not been to bilingualism completely (Burns 1998, LeMasters 2003). It can be exemplified by references to the websites of these stand-alone schools.

**St. Joseph's** recognizes the right of each pupil to be educated through the means of communication considered to be most suited to his needs.  
(St. Joseph's School, Cabra, website: <http://www.stjosephsboys.ie/>)

Language acquisition through effective communication is at the heart of all we do at **St Mary's**. We endeavour to provide a variety of language environments in which language learning - both formal and informal, take place  
(St. Mary's School for the Deaf: website: <http://www.stmarysdeafgirls.ie/>)

The Primary Curriculum is followed but adapted to meet each Child's individual needs i.e. the Curriculum is presented to each individual child orally and through Sign Language, which would be backed up with concrete materials to enhance the child's learning  
(**Mid-West School for the Hearing Impaired Limerick**, website: <http://www.limerickschoolforthe deaf.com/>)

These schools emphasise the individual needs of each child including her communication needs rather than adopt a language policy which is based on a chosen language or two. Such statements exemplify the lack of distinction<sup>185</sup> between communication and language use<sup>186</sup>.

---

and other institutions subject to state regulation or inspection (Residential Institutions Redress Board <http://www.rirb.ie/aboutus.asp>- accessed June 2008).

<sup>184</sup> According to the Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse Report (2009), the oralist policy remains at least in the one of the schools for the Deaf.

<sup>185</sup> The terms – *communication* and *language* – are frequently interchangeable without defining them clearly and the interchanged terms are often taken for granted. Language is essentially not the same thing as communication. Language is a system for communicating and expressing thoughts and ideas. Communication refers to the *means* of exchanging messages – therefore, communication is distinct from language itself.

<sup>186</sup> 'All language is communication but very little communication is language. With the five senses and body communication in general, our non-linguistic modes of communication in society include music, the visual arts, and the visual aspects of film and television; kinship, status, money, sex, and power; accent, height, shape, and beauty; much mathematics, dreams, and fantasy; images, ideals, emotions, and desires; the production and exchange of commodities; and class, caste, race and sex' (Wilden 1987: 137).

The two major schools in Dublin do not refer to ISL as such and the Limerick school uses the generic term: sign language.

The failure to distinguish between language and communication generally masks the difficulties of pedagogical methodology. It is also compounded by additional difficulties: the number of Deaf children attending these schools has steadily reduced in recent years (Ryan 2006, Mathew forthcoming). According to the Department of Education and Science 193 children attended these Deaf schools in the year of 2007 but no reliable number can be given for those who attended special units and mainstream schools. According to Ryan (2006), there are 1,500 children nationwide receiving the attention from the Department of Education and Science for providing supports such as the visiting teacher service for the deaf<sup>187</sup>. In addition, the increasing number of children with multiple disabilities who are Deaf but unlikely to be fluent signers (Turner 2006: 410) in the schools for the Deaf has been a fact for a number of years. This increases challenges to teachers aiming to deliver education more effectively.

The schools for the Deaf in Ireland avail of the national curriculum (both primary and secondary) to deliver education. This indicates that curriculum delivery is limited and is modified for such reasons as the small number of children and the limited teaching expertise in particular areas. The curriculum adopted by them is very vocationally orientated. Irish is not on the curriculum of these schools<sup>188</sup>. Deaf children attending mainstream schools or in special units are exempted from learning Irish although the exemption is always allowed. One inspector from the Department of Education and Science confirmed that the exemption could be granted but only with the consent of parents and the school concerned (Sean O'Murchu<sup>189</sup>, personal communication, September 2006).

While Sign Language<sup>190</sup> is a subject in the Leaving Certificate Applied programme, this subject is orientated towards the general school-going population. It is chiefly of an introductory nature. Though extra credits are made for these Deaf pupils if they pass this

---

<sup>187</sup> The statistics for Deaf /hard of hearing students are not readily available and this number was based on those who availed of the visiting teachers' services.

<sup>188</sup> Information is based on the schools' respective websites.

<sup>189</sup> Regional divisional inspector attached to the Department of Education and Science

<sup>190</sup> This is termed generically.

subject (NCCA 2000), this is not ideal for these Deaf pupils because the level of ISL is considered as basic and well below their level of comprehension<sup>191</sup>.

With regard to the legislative status of language policy in education for Deaf children, as already stated the Education Act 1998 makes reference to the status of sign language. However, it does not have explicit clauses on the rights to use ISL. The reference to the Education Act 1998 is about providing support services for ISL users:

2 (1).....

*"support services" means the services which the Minister provides to students or their parents, schools or centres for education in accordance with section 7 and shall include any or all of the following:*

.....

(e) provision for students learning through Irish sign language or other sign language, including interpreting services; (Ireland 1998).

While the status of sign language in the Education Act 1998 appears to give symbolic acknowledgement to the language, it clearly exemplifies the official attitude towards Irish Sign Language, namely that it is to be supported not that it is a language in its own right. The emergence of cochlear implantation in Ireland has reinforced this position.

There is only one programme on cochlear implantation and it is carried out by Beaumont Hospital (Beaumont Hospital website: <http://www.beaumont.ie> - accessed – April 2008). It publishes an explanatory guide and there is no reference to ISL or even to sign language in this guide. The language in this guide is exclusively in spoken language – English. This guide states that interpreters would be provided. The guide emphasises that the speech intelligibility is the central goal for the programme.

This Beaumont guide refers to the statistical information of educational placements. Calculating from this guide, there are forty-one children aged under 5 being placed in mainstream schools while fifteen attend special units attached to the national schools and twelve placed in the schools for the Deaf. For those aged over 5, twenty, are placed in

---

<sup>191</sup> The author has seen the curriculum notes for Sign Language and has considered them suitable for those beginners who do not have previous experience of signing.



mainstream schools and seven are in special units and eighteen are in the schools for the Deaf (Beaumont Hospital n/d).

Table 8.2: Deaf children being implanted and their educational placement<sup>192</sup>:

Age of child	Under 5		Over 5 <sup>193</sup>	
	Number	%	Number	%
Types of educational placing				
Mainstream (including preschool)	70	72%	20	44%
Units within mainstream schools	15	15%	6	13%
Schools for the Deaf	12	12%	19	42%
Total	97	100%	45	100%

This table gives us a bit of a statistical jigsaw; however, it is pertinent to have it set against the national census in order to gain wider statistical information. According to the national census, there are 915 children aged under 5 having blindness, deafness or severe hearing or visionary impairment (CSO 2007 31). As mentioned earlier<sup>194</sup>, if we are assuming one quarter of them<sup>195</sup> can be regarded as Deaf (257), the total number of Deaf children receiving cochlear implantation would be 97.

Table 8.3: Figures from Beaumont Hospital against the national census 2006<sup>196</sup>

Figures for children aged under 5	Number
National Census 2006 (including blindness)	915
Assume that 25% of above figure are Deaf	257
Number of Deaf children being implanted (Beaumont)	97

<sup>192</sup> This guide did not give a specific framework, therefore, it is assumed that the statistics covered the preceding three to four years prior to the publication in 2006 (as per se the email correspondence with Jennifer Robertson of Beaumont Hospital, June 12, 2008).

<sup>193</sup> The guide did not specify the limit of age at the other end.

<sup>194</sup> In the earlier chapter.

<sup>195</sup> This assumption was used by Gallaudet University in the similar situation (<http://gri.gallaudet.edu/Demographics/factsheet.html#Q1>).

<sup>196</sup> This has to be treated with a caution since the Beaumont guide did not give a date of publication.

If there are 257 children who are under 5 years old who are Deaf and ninety-seven children are implanted, this would mean thirty-eight percentage of the assumed number of Deaf children in the national census have been implanted. If we accept this speculation as the correct guess, this has a considerable effect on language policies in the education of Deaf children because of the emphasis on speech intelligibility, which would reduce the scope of acquiring ISL.

Medical professionals or visiting teachers, as demonstrated by references in a number of official reports or pamphlets, have dominated early intervention schemes aimed at Deaf children in Ireland. The National Paediatric Cochlear Implant Programme states this:

Again every child has different needs, and your visiting teacher of the deaf and implant centre teacher of the deaf will give you information so that you can decide what is right for your child (Beaumont Hospital, n/d).

It is generally known that the visiting teachers have been a bone of contention for many within the Deaf community (Crean 1997, NDA 2006, Ryan 2004). The Deaf community has expressed a serious concern about their inability to use ISL effectively and the negative attitudes among the professionals in the early intervention period, especially visiting teachers and educational psychologists (NDA 2006, Leeson 2007).

Although it is not widely publicised, the ISL home tuition scheme<sup>197</sup> refers to the deployment of ISL teachers to family homes. These teachers are meant to introduce families to ISL, not only to the child (Irish Deaf Journal 2002). The whole purpose is to facilitate the language acquisition of the child. The establishment of this scheme was down to the determined lobbying of two hearing parents (Irish Deaf Journal 2001). This can be viewed as a counter to these aforementioned services and is similar to the programme in Finland.

### *8.6.1 Interviewees with Irish participants*<sup>198</sup>

#### *8.6.1.1 Philosophical perspectives*

---

<sup>197</sup> The Department of Education and Science finance this scheme and it got no mention in its recent annual report (Department of Education and Science 2006).

<sup>198</sup> The profile of Irish interviewees can be seen in Chapter 5.

There is a widespread acknowledgement that philosophical perspectives on Deaf education are informed by medical views of deafness in Ireland. The alternative philosophy is bilingualism, which emphasises the use of sign languages and its role in language acquisition in conjunction with a spoken language. However, there is a general consensus that bilingualism is not a strong feature in the Irish schools as exemplified by the following comment from a hearing academic:

I think bilingualism is not strong within Deaf education (Bridget, academic, 2006).

This following interviewee identified the likely supporters of bilingualism:

The only people who accept bilingual education and bilingualism are the Deaf community and the parents of Deaf children - a very small number. The others don't accept it (Cathal, community, 2005).

However, there is some resistance to the idea of implementing bilingualism as the language policy in the schools for Deaf children. There is a widespread belief that resistance to bilingualism can be linked to the adherence to a medical perspective. The following comment exemplifies this belief:

So I would say, if you like to think why is there no bilingual education, well I would say...it's because there has been a predominantly medical definition of deafness that has been the prevalent model, eh and the education or educational practices are derived from the thinking that deafness has a medical view rather than a social/cultural. That is the major reason why there has not been a bilingual educational system introduced (Daithi, academic, 2006).

Granted, the medical model can be identified as the prevalent reason that bilingualism could not be implemented in the schools for the Deaf. However, one interviewee claimed that parental involvement had played a significant factor in the non-implementation of bilingualism. The following comment cites the parental influence:

.....but sometimes bilingualism involves sign language. Em, so there maybe some... anxiety on the part of parents when deafness is confirmed for the child and when they hear that the deaf person might have to learn sign language because many parents initially want the child to grow up as a hearing person. Now I'm not saying that they are right or wrong but they have that anxiety about the child learning sign language, that will place them glaringly in the deaf culture.

They want the child to be... part of... their culture. So there would be that little anxiety, initially (Enda, academic, 2006).

Such a comment shows that parents expect their children to grow up as a hearing person. It is clear from this that the medical thinking has permeated beyond the schools. However, others believe this provides an excuse for professionals who resisted signing, hiding behind parents' concerns. It is a general consensus that those, who resisted the idea of bilingualism, can be easily identified. The main known opponents are the teachers in the Deaf schools. Some speculated that the opposition could be based on several grounds including not having the necessary fluency in signing as a threat to job security:

I think a lot of this related to the teachers themselves, because the teachers don't need ISL to teach there. So when they arrive at the school for the deaf they don't have training for ISL. But if there were a bilingual policy in place then there would not be a job for them at the school (Eimear, community, 2006).

Moreover, beside the views on bilingualism, on the official side, it appears that there is a widespread ignorance, not a resistance. This can be exemplified by two examples. The official from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) queried if the concept of bilingualism is understood within the Council (Sarah Craig, personal; communication, 2006). With regard to the second example, one interviewee recalled the situation:

Well I'll tell you a funny story! At one time I met someone working in the Department of Education and we got talking. I was telling him about ISL, and the classes we had in ISL and that they had been booked solid, and that that was normal for these beginners' introductory classes. And he said to me, 'but why would anyone be interested in learning that?' He had not a notion of why people would want to learn sign language, why they would want to know ISL. I think this is interesting, that within the Department there is not so much a resistance but it is just that they don't get it! (Bridget, academic, 2006).

It is clear from the interviews that medical perspectives dominate the philosophy of Deaf education. It is accepted by professionals that medical and other professionals should have power over the language education policies. This apparently is made possible with the state administrators being ignorant or complacent.

### 8.6.1.2 *Early intervention:*

With regard to the early intervention scheme aiming at Deaf children, all interviewees agreed that such a scheme is regarded as not being as transparent as it is supposed to be. One interviewee describes it:

I think again, it's a very confused system, and again it's not clear.. eh , I'm not aware of any research into or...that has been done to ah discover what form does intervention take. Who's involved in this intervention and is there a particular policy as part of this intervention? Now, my own understanding of the situation is that ... by and large, intervention is largely medical, that the.. the . Initial, lets say how intervention is started is largely through medical personnel, and then the guidance services would be informed and would be brought into the situation and this would obviously involve people like the visiting teachers and...But certainly initially it tends to be largely medical and say for example the initial information that parents would be getting would be largely medical (Daithi, academic, 2006)

This interviewee's description of the early intervention scheme being dominated by the medical perspective is universally agreed. The scheme is strongly dominated by the visiting teacher service<sup>199</sup>. This service has been a controversial subject within Deaf education because it is largely perceived that it is heavily laden with medicalised views. It is also common that such teachers are allowed to have discretion to a large extent in terms of advising parents:

When it comes to VISTA<sup>200</sup>, I believe some teachers may have signing ability and support sign language, but at the individual level each Visiting Teacher does their own thing, rather than follow an overall formal policy (Bridget, academic, 2006).

However, not all interviewees share this view as one claims that some visiting teachers have signing ability. This interviewee insists on the usefulness of service including counselling:

Now, there... are some, I'll just mention two, there is the visiting teachers' scheme, so... now, when a child is diagnosed as deaf, it is the function of the visiting teacher service to go and make, em... help the parents cope with having a deaf child, and help the teacher when the child goes to school, and maybe do some work with the child themselves (Enda, academic, 2006.)

---

<sup>199</sup> The visiting teacher service refers to a scheme operated under the auspices of the Department of Education and Science. Their main role is to advise parents of Deaf children on educational placements. However, according to the INTO document, the role appears to exceed this and it includes counselling and advocacy (INTO 2000).

<sup>200</sup>This organisation represents visiting teachers and for some reason, this acronym is not spelt out.

Such is the power of the visiting teachers in advising parents of Deaf children, that they tend not to inform them of the existence of the Model School for the Deaf Project (MSDP)<sup>201/ 202</sup>.

One interviewee describes the implicit power of visiting teachers in this regard:

I know that the DES was involved with the Model School for the Deaf when that was established - DES, Department of Education and Science - and they told VISTA that information about the MSDP had to be given to parents. But there is a question mark about whether that did really happen in practice, or not. It looks like the number of children referred to that school was small (Bridget, academic, 2006).

It is obvious from these interviews that the early intervention scheme is a vital part of sustaining language policy for Deaf children. In this regard, there is a significant development, which could consolidate the medical view within the early intervention scheme: it is known as 'the universal neonatal hearing screening' which makes an early identification of deafness in newborn babies. However, many interviewees confirmed that it remains in the developmental stage and they did not elaborate on whether the new screening took place or not. .

The Health Executive Service has acknowledged the need for neonatal screening and a pilot scheme is to be located in the Rotunda hospital in Dublin (DeafHear.ie, website: <http://www.deafhear.ie> - accessed April 2008). While the neonatal screening is welcomed by all concerned, one has to point out that since the service is established in a medical institute, it would be difficult to offer an alternative perspective in terms of advising parents at this site. This is so unless the medical institute agrees to the inclusion of alternative perspectives terms of the given advice.

Another part of the early intervention scheme that is also not widely known, is the ISL home tuition scheme<sup>203</sup>. This scheme is operated under the auspices of the Department of Education and Science. One interviewee describes the establishment of this scheme:

---

<sup>201</sup> It was reported on the Hands On television programme (October 10, 2004)

<sup>202</sup> MSDP was established in 1998 and opened the preschool in 2001. The MSDP's board consists of Deaf representatives and hearing supporters. It aims to provide bilingual education with a strong emphasis on ISL to Deaf children in Ireland (MSDP, website: <http://indigo.ie/~msdp/> - accessed April 2008). This author is the acting chairperson of this school. At the moment, there are no children enrolled and there is a belief that a referral system dominated by medical perspective has not been in its favour.

But you have that new scheme now, the ISL Home Tuition Scheme. It was established because of two parents who were fighting for it. It came in.... when was it... six years ago. So now you can get those ISL teachers coming in, but only if the parents ask for it. Only then do they supply it, but if the parents haven't heard of it before then they don't ask. And that's a missed opportunity (Ciara, community, 2006).

Despite its usefulness of introducing ISL to hearing parents and their Deaf children, only two interviewees refer to this scheme. In addition, details of the scheme are visibly absent from the Department of Education and Science's website and annual reports<sup>204</sup> (Department of Education and Science, website: <http://www.education.ie> - accessed April 2008).

There are two contrasting early intervention schemes aiming at Deaf children and they are vital in shaping the future hearts and minds behind the language education policies, namely the medical intervention and ISL tuition. Ironically, both schemes are financed by the state but the dominant one receives more attention and favours.

#### 8.7 *Concluding remarks:*

Having outlined the current language education policy in detail, six main components of language policies for both countries are covered for analysis. But for this chapter, I covered two main areas and they are a) early intervention and b) philosophical perspectives.

Firstly, let us focus on general commentaries on language education policies for Deaf children in both countries. It is clear that both countries experienced similar historical situations where oralism dominated language policies. It appears however, that Finland has moved ahead of Ireland with regard to the status of sign languages in the schools. Yet, both countries share a similar weak legislative base to protect the status of sign languages and they have identified two areas: a) the emergence of cochlear implantation and b) a move to mainstream education for Deaf education that would influence the future directions of language education policies. In both countries, sign language specialists and Deaf advocates are equally pessimistic regarding the future status of sign language in education.

---

<sup>203</sup> It is understood that 60 plus families have availed of the service but detailed information is difficult to obtain given its 'absence' in the Department's information dissemination.

<sup>204</sup> The website and annual reports list a wide range of services available under their control.

There is widespread recognition in both countries that the philosophy emphasising medicalised views are influencing the language education policies. In addition, the interviewees in both countries have identified parental involvement and the composition of staff with strong medical views as the main factors impacting on language policy. There is also a resistance to the alternative philosophy of bilingualism. This alternative is deprived of resources and thereby of the ability to develop and be a viable option in the future.

With regard to early intervention schemes, both countries share similar characteristics in this regard. Both schemes are heavily dominated by medical perspectives and staffed by those who champion medical perspectives or do not problematise differing perspectives. The emergence of cochlear implantation appears to consolidate the medical perspectives, as it is known that those who favour cochlear implantation would opt for spoken monolingual education for Deaf children. However, in both countries, there are alternative approaches available to parents of Deaf children albeit with a lower public profile. The approaches are the preschool facilities for Deaf children and home tuition in sign language schemes.

Given the dominant position of those who hold medical perspectives in the early intervention, it is absolutely clear that this model already shapes language education policies for Deaf children. There was an impression among the interviewees that medically driven policies are the default position in Deaf education. In light of this analysis, it is difficult to retain the belief that such policies are created by default considering the fact that little encouragement or publicity is given to the alternative approaches.

The next chapter is to focus on the remaining components of language education policies aiming at Deaf children. The analysis of these remaining components should testify to the power of medicalised views over the direction of language education policies.



# Chapter 9

## Language education policies for Deaf children: Practices in Finland and Ireland

### 9.1 Introduction

Having outlined the six components of language education policies in the modified framework, this chapter focuses on the last four components: educational placement, teacher education, fluency of teachers in sign language and the role of Deaf communities<sup>205</sup> in education.

Educational placement refers to the placement of a child in the school. The evidence will show that the decision, even at the individual level, to place a child in a given school has enormous influence on their learning experience. The nature of teacher training courses refers to teachers who wish to become teachers of the Deaf and this discussion focuses on what type of training is given to these teachers before they teach Deaf children. There is plenty of evidence that such training can be a vital part of consolidating the specific policies on language education. Interlinked to this last component, fluency in ISL and FinnSL among teachers is also analysed. Given that the success of language education policies often centres on the ability of teachers to deliver in classrooms, this is an important issue. Finally, the role of Deaf communities in the process of shaping and directing language education policies is to be examined.

In order to conceptualise the discussion framework, there will be a brief discussion on each perspective - the medical, social and Deafhood and the implications of each will be given. A table is also created in order to simplify the differences between these perspectives. A general commentary on each component in each country is also given and extracts from interviewees in both countries are also used to support or challenge the commentary. The concluding remarks consist of an analysis on how language education policies have been shaped and directed.

---

<sup>205</sup> For the definition, please note section 1.8 of the first chapter for this.

## 9.2 *Aligning perspectives with practical examples*

I have identified three perspectives in operation within Deaf education: the medical, social and Deafhood frameworks. The medical ‘perspective’ focuses on curative and rehabilitative approaches that do not involve Deaf staff or professionals; hence they give no credence to the fluency of ISL or FinnSL among professionals. Therefore, such approaches require minimal or no involvement of Deaf communities in the language education policies. The social ‘perspective’ can be regarded as a reaction to the medical ‘perspective’. This perspective tends to acknowledge impairment but refuses to recognise that impairment is the sole cause for oppression and disability. This perspective is much championed by the disability movement but Deaf people would regard some parts as problematic.

For example, mainstreaming, even with adequate accommodation provisions would be seen as relatively unproblematic from the social model perspective movement, provided protections were in place. It would be problematic because the Deaf communities mainstreaming does not address the linguistic and cultural aspects of Deaf communities. Hence, such provisions as fluency of teachers in ISL or FinnSL would be regarded as a bonus rather than an obligation. The involvement of Deaf communities in the language education policy process would be obscured by the views that in order to accommodate disabled people, compensatory approaches are required because such approaches may not necessitate the involvement of Deaf communities. An example of compensatory approaches is: the employment of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) as communication workers to support teachers in the classrooms<sup>206</sup>.

The Deafhood ‘perspective’ is focused on the idea of championing Deafhood, and it would regard schools for the Deaf with strong language policies on ISL or FinnSL as the first and natural choice for Deaf children. Such strong language policies centre on the fluency of ISL

---

<sup>206</sup> The overall number of SNAs in the schools has reached 18,000 (Irish Times, September 5, 2008) but the Report of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure Programmes (as known as ‘Bord na Snip Nua’ report 2009) reports that there are 10,500 currently employed. While they ‘*are recruited specifically to assist in the care of pupils with disabilities in an educational context*’ (Department of Education and Science circular 07/02), however, for those SNAs working with Deaf children, their roles are widely understood as supporting communication (relaying communication from teacher to pupil through ISL and vice versa) (National Disability Authority, website: [http://www.nda.ie/cntmgmtnew.nsf/0/5B4CE56E1452B0E18025717E00525CDE/\\$File/primary\\_ed\\_report\\_04.htm](http://www.nda.ie/cntmgmtnew.nsf/0/5B4CE56E1452B0E18025717E00525CDE/$File/primary_ed_report_04.htm)). The number of SNAs in this regard is not available but based on the statistics supplied by the Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland (ASTI website: [www.asti.ie](http://www.asti.ie)) and Ryan (2006), the calculated number could be in the region of a few hundred.

and FinnSL and would necessitate the involvement of Deaf communities in the process. To ensure the ownership of process, the influential positions in such schools for the Deaf have to be reserved for Deaf fluent signers. This would require a significant revamp of teacher training courses. In order to simplify the differences between the implications from each perspective, here is the table. This should provide a conceptual table for discussing the language education policy.

### 9.3 *Background information on Finnish LEP*

Finland has sixteen schools for the Deaf and thirteen of them are run by the municipalities while the rest are run by the state. The municipality-run school is known as the community school and it is often attached to the hearing schools. The three state schools are on a stand-alone basis and exclusive to Deaf children (Londen 2004: 83). Latomaa and Nuoljarvi (2002) report that all of these schools (both state schools and municipality run schools) for the Deaf have a relatively free hand to choose the language of instruction which is taught along with the national languages (Finnish and Swedish). Deaf children are also subject to compulsory education like their hearing counterparts (Londen 2004: 82)

Latomaa and Nuoljarvi (2002) also report that the number of Deaf children using sign language in education is very small and therefore, schools do not form separate and distinctive groups for them. Moreover, most Deaf children are educated along with Finnish-speaking dysphasic<sup>207</sup> pupils, hence causing serious pedagogical problems.

Takala (1995) reports that curriculum delivery through FinnSL can be problematic because many teachers' competence in FinnSL is limited. However, many of the schools were anxious to improve their competency and had shown some improvement according to Takala (1995: 12). Londen (2004) also reports that the quantity and quality of Finnish Sign Language varies from one school to another. There is a small pool of qualified Deaf teachers who are native users of FinnSL and these are obviously very skilled in Finn SL. Londen (2004) also reports that negative attitudes exist towards FinnSL among professionals who work with Deaf children. To address these issues, the university in Jyväskylä provides teacher-training courses in FinnSL (Latomaa and Nuoljarvi 2002, Londen 2004: 83). The

---

<sup>207</sup> Dysphasia refers to an impairment of speech and verbal comprehension, especially when associated with brain injury Online Medical Dictionary - website <http://www.online-medical-dictionary.org/omd.asp?q=Dysphasia>+: accessed January 2009).

Table 9.1 : key questions for Deaf Education arising from Shohamy's questions (2006) (part 2)

Domains of language education for Deaf children	Questions	Language Policy options for parents		
		Medical 'perspectives'	Social 'perspectives'	Deafhood 'perspectives'
Educational placement	What school should the child be educationally placed?	Mainstreaming or oral Deaf schools	Mainstreaming schools. Sees mainstreaming relatively unproblematic once support services are in place	Schools for the Deaf –
	Management / staff of schools	Overwhelmed dominated by hearing staff	Some Deaf are on staff but do not occupy influential posts such as manager, principal or head teachers	Staff dominated by native / natural ISL users – Deaf occupy influential posts
	For how long? (Hours per week, number of years?)	Focuses on listening and speaking. Disregards the use of sign languages	Tends to prefer Signed English. As for mainstream education, communication support workers or an interpreter to be employed for this purpose.	Staff largely comprised by native / natural ISL users – Deaf occupy influential posts
	Medium of instructions			
Nature of teacher training	By whom for whom? (who is qualified to teach and who is entitled or obligated to learn?)	Special programme with strong emphasis on medical aspects of individuals	Special / general education training programmes.	Separate training programme emphasising ISL training or an intensive module within general education programme.
Fluency of SL by teachers	Finally, how? (Methodology, materials etc)	Not regarded as vital here.	Seen as a bonus but not essential.	Essential and compulsory
Involvement of Deaf community		Not at all	Some involvement but do not hold significant positions	Control of schools and have significant influences over language policies.

courses in the university of Jyväskylä demonstrate an attempt to move away from the mode of 'special education' among teachers of Deaf children (Paula, interview, 2006).

As for mainstreaming Deaf children into the ordinary schools<sup>208</sup>, the number of Deaf children in the ordinary schools exceeds the number in the schools for the Deaf (Takala 1995, Latomaa and Nuoljarvi 2002). The increase in the number of Deaf children can be attributed to the early intervention process where a multi-disciplinary team<sup>209</sup> decide the process for each child. This team tends to favour the mainstreaming option, which would exclude the child from accessing sign language and related peer<sup>210</sup> relationship with other Deaf children (Londen 2004: 75-76).

Based on a literature review and statistical information, apart from the interviews, it is difficult to determine the extent of the involvement of the Deaf community in the education process. However, there is some evidence that the involvement exists but is confined to the peripheral areas of management and policy-making arenas (Londen 2004, Latomaa and Nuoljarvi 2002). Based on personal communication (Jaana Keski-Levijoki<sup>211</sup>, 2008 e-mail correspondence, 26/2/08), there are a number of Deaf SL teachers employed in the schools for the Deaf including a vice principal in one school. This latter informant also confirms that apart from her, there is no Deaf parent or Deaf community representative sitting on the boards of management of these schools for the Deaf. She served on the board for a brief period during the year 1994-5.

---

<sup>208</sup> Ordinary schools refer to the non-special schools for the national population.

<sup>209</sup> Londen reports that medical professionals heavily dominate the typical team to a great degree. The social worker, nurse and parents only get involved in later stages of the process. She did not mention any involvement of Deaf professionals in this process (Londen 2004:76)

<sup>210</sup> The term 'peer' refers to other children where the child can communicate on equal terms. In this regard, for the Deaf child, sign language is the only natural and spontaneous language (Jokinen 2000). Therefore, it is impossible to have communication on equal terms between the Deaf child and the hearing child if s/he does not have the ability to sign.

<sup>211</sup> Jaana Keski-Levijoki is regarded as a reliable source of knowledge of Deaf education in Finland given her status.

#### 9.4 *Interviews with the Finnish participants.*

##### 9.4.1 *Educational placement*

Interviewees were asked about the state support of mainstreaming policy. The majority agree that the state has adopted an active role in promoting mainstreaming but that it also supports Deaf schools as the alternative, should the mainstream option prove unworkable for the child. One interviewee explained the procedure:

In practice, because the first thing is to check whether it is possible to integrate in the mainstream. But then every school municipality has to think what do they need to provide for the deaf children in the municipalities. We have to choose the best choice for the child, and if they need a special class or special school, they will do, whichever is nearest. But that is the way we in Finland aim to provide the education in schools (Ella, administration, 2006).

The number of Deaf children educated in the mainstream setting has been increasing as one described it:

The number of Deaf children going there is steadily growing. The number there is quite significant in the mainstream education at the moment (Sirikka, community, 2005).

The effects of placing Deaf children in mainstream schools may have serious consequences for Deaf schools as one described the situation:

For this school, we have 45 children but in five years, we might have 22 children - who knows? - Perhaps children find it hard in mainstream education and transfer to this school to maintain the number. I cannot see what will happen exactly in the future (Jenna, administration, 2005).

This statement can be supported by a report published by the Ministry of Education (Finland 2006) which states that more than half of the disabled children are educated in the general education system; ‘other’<sup>212</sup> disabled children are educated in special classes in ordinary schools. Given this fact, there should not be any reason to expect that more than half of Deaf children are educated in mainstream education. However, following an email correspondence with the official statistician, she states that 467 ‘*children with hearing impairment*’ were transferred from mainstream education to

---

<sup>212</sup> Unspecified number as the report did not give an exact number.

‘special’ schools<sup>213</sup> (Riikka Rautanen, Statistics Finland, email correspondence, March 20, 2008). While reasons for such transfer were unspecified, this number signifies the apparent difficulties experienced by Deaf children in mainstream education.

Apart from the state’s proactive role in encouraging mainstreaming, it may not take internal issues for Deaf children as seriously within mainstream. Many interviewees were concerned about the effects on individual Deaf children (as they might) arising from being placed in mainstream education. Many interviewees have expressed this concern and one interviewee articulated this:

I feel those who go to mainstream education would have problems in terms of their own identity and would have subsequent psychosocial problems (Jenna, administration, 2005).

One interviewee – a teacher of the Deaf herself, claimed there was a lack of awareness on the part of parents regarding the pitfalls of mainstream education for Deaf children:

They tend to adopt a view that monolingualism is the ideal one for their child so they can learn one language properly. They are not aware of the importance of language acquisition through Finnish Sign Language and have it as a foundation for learning a spoken or a second language (Laura, administration, 2005).

She qualified this lack of awareness by adding:

I think most of them are hearing and are brought up in a so-called monolingual society - seeing it as proper for a child to be brought up in a monolingual society - one language, one culture - one tradition fitting all of us (Laura, administration, 2005).

However, it would seem that most of those who administer the early intervention tend to view the placing of Deaf children in the mainstream as unproblematic. This interviewee exemplifies the general consensus across the administrative side:

---

<sup>213</sup> She did not specify these special schools so it is a reasonable assumption that some of these schools are for the Deaf. She also did not specify the timeframe but she said the statistics complied for the year of 2006 and ‘years before’.

The policy in Finland is mainstream education, and that it improves them [Deaf children] (Antti, administration, 2006).

It appears from these selected interview excerpts that approaches on an early intervention scheme differ spectacularly between the medicalised attitude and social/cultural attitude towards Deaf children.

However, one interviewee pointed out that the emergence of cochlear implantation had hastened the movement toward mainstream:

Back to the early 1980s onwards, there was a strong tendency to have Deaf children placed in the Deaf schools but now with the advent of cochlear implantation and mainstream education, they are more widely dispersed / individually placed. I don't know why such a policy is adopted. More hard of hearing children are placed in mainstream education but there is a growing number of Deaf children in this mainstream strand. I don't know the exact statistics (Jenna, administration, 2005).

It appears that the decision to support mainstream education by the state baffles a number of interviewees, especially those that are Deaf themselves, given the fact that the personal right to use sign language is recognised in the constitution. This does raise the question whether the inclusion of sign language in the constitution can be reduced to some kind of rhetorical statement. Most interviewees who are hearing do not find mainstream education for the Deaf as problematic:

I have statistics, here you can see from 1 to 6, nearly 30% integrated, and over 15% partly, and over 50% are special groups in normal schools. Of course we have some special groups and classes (Antti, administration, 2006).

Clearly there is difference between hearing and Deaf interviewees regarding the perceived viability of mainstream education placements for Deaf children.

There is a marked concern among Deaf interviewees as to whether mainstream education was desirable for Deaf children. They pointed out that resources are not always forthcoming in mainstream schools:



In the past, there were a lot of Deaf children in the schools for the Deaf but nowadays the number has gradually declined. Although the policy is good, especially because Deaf children are entitled to an interpreter in the mainstream education, but the policy becomes effective depending upon the availability of an interpreter. Alternatively, I am not sure and don't know if there are options (Sirikka, 2005).

Although, there is confusion among parents regarding what education is best for their child, it would seem that the resources may not always be available to some mainstream schools. Yet, some parents opted for the monolingual [spoken language] approach regardless (Paivi Raino – personal communication<sup>214</sup>).

#### 9.4.2 *Nature of teacher education courses*

In Finland, there is a course dedicated to teacher training based on Finnish Sign Language in the University of Jyväskylä (University of Jyväskylä – website [www.jyu.fi](http://www.jyu.fi) - accessed March 2008)<sup>215</sup>. One interviewee gave the short description of such courses in this university:

Yes, there is a provision in Jyväskylä - The four year long course (BA) is available for those who wish to teach children Finnish Sign Language and the course can continue up to the masters degree. One course focuses on Deaf children for 4 years – other courses - MA - you can opt for either of them but they focus on teaching Finnish Sign Language. Markku Jokenien is responsible for the courses in Jyväskylä University. I think, if necessary check it out if I'm wrong - these courses are part of the general university course on education. These courses specialize and focus on SL users (Sirikka, community, 2005).

These courses are available to those who have fluency in Finnish Sign Language regardless of their hearing status as one interviewee describes her experience:

Yes, in fact I was one of the first group that graduated from Jyväskylä University and it was a year ago. I know and am familiar with the programme there. The rationale behind this programme is to train Finnish Sign Language users into proper teachers. They can train both Deaf adults

---

<sup>214</sup> Email correspondence with Paivi Raino (April 30, 2008)

<sup>215</sup> The exact website address of this teacher training section in this university is <http://www.jyu.fi/edu/laitokset/okl/koulutusala/vkluoko/>

and Finnish Sign Language users. I mean SL users - I refer to CODAs<sup>216</sup> who regard Finnish Sign Language as their first language, that is what we were taught there (Laura, administration, 2005).

Other teacher training courses that may be relevant to the education of Deaf children are given under the aegis of special education. One interviewee claims that designating the schools for the Deaf as 'special education', the quality of education compromises the quality of education. To date, no school solely using Finnish Sign Language is open so it is highly likely that these students would end up teaching in 'special schools' for the Deaf.

But there is a huge contradiction since all Deaf schools are regarded as special schools. Yet, these students are trained to become teachers in Finnish Sign Language - not to be special teachers for the Deaf. All Deaf schools are special schools because many teachers (hearings) don't have functional fluency to teach Deaf children. Therefore, we have to consider a possibility of setting up a new school to cater for SL users - not in the mode of special education. These Deaf schools in special education mode have low expectations for Deaf children; hence the quality of education has been compromised. This is a widespread problem across the country (Paula, community, 2005).

This previous interviewee emphasised the difference between the teacher-training courses; the difference is based on the respect for Finnish Sign Language. However, the work opportunities appear to differ between those who are qualified through the special education module and the rest.

Teachers must have a degree in special education and they can be employed permanently but for those without, their employment would be of a short-term nature and depends on the availability of work (Jenna, administration, 2006)

It appears that those who have qualifications in teaching through FinnSL are not prioritised in the field of Deaf education by the state. This exemplifies the relaxed attitude towards the status of FinnSL by the state.

---

<sup>216</sup> CODA is an abbreviation for the 'Child of Deaf Adult(s). This term is first used in the US and the term is frequently used in several literatures. It is generally agreed that given the high percentage of children born to Deaf parents are hearing so CODAs occupy a significant position among the Deaf communities.

#### 9.4.3 *Teachers' Fluency in Finnish Sign Language:*

There is an assumption that teachers teaching Deaf children must have fluency in Finnish Sign Language. It is evident that the assumption is also shared on the administration side as this person states:

*I think that all teachers have sign language. I think it is normal; it must be so (Antti, administration, 2006).*

Another state official was sure that such a policy must be in place:

*Better than the people they are teaching, teachers should be able to explain everything needed... You need to ask in the Ministry of Education because they do the state policy on that issue (Carita, administration, 2006).*

However, their assumptions are not matched by the experiences of many Deaf people who were interviewed for this research. On the side of the Deaf community, there is a sense of disappointment that a policy on the fluency of teachers in Finnish Sign Language is not really enforced. One observer states this:

*Well, I once worked in the school for the Deaf. Well more than half of teachers are not fluent or do not have the necessary fluency in Finnish Sign Language to teach. I did make an enquiry about this. I was told that in the past, teachers are conditioned by the employment protection legislation so they are in the job for life so they can't be sacked for their incompetence (Sirkka, 2005).*

This observer tried to raise the issue among colleagues but the following is the reaction she received:

*I did ask some of them especially those with lack of fluency in Finnish Sign Language to take up classes to improve their fluency for the sake of children. The children would be frustrated by teachers' lack of fluency. They responded by shrugging their shoulders at this suggestion and seemed not to take things seriously. They seemed to be more interested to doing their jobs on a 9am to 5 pm basis, with no motivation on how to improve education (Sirkka, 2005).*

Although the state does not have a clear policy on fluency for teaching in Finnish Sign Language, this does have serious consequences on the quality of educational delivery.

It appears from the interviewees that the general attitude towards FinnSL is complacency on the side of administration. Teachers are expected to be fluent in FinnSL but there is no sanction for lacking fluency.

Many interviewees, especially within the Deaf community, feel strongly that such a policy should be adopted and strictly enforced. However, there is a widespread feeling that native users of FinnSL would probably be the best candidates to become teachers through FinnSL. This following response exemplifies the consensus within the Deaf community:

... I think to be an FinnSL teacher, it would be best if you are born as an FinnSL user or adopt it in early age - use it as a natural language so it would be easy for them to become teachers (Laura, administration, 2006).

Notwithstanding the state's complacent attitude toward this issue, at the institutional level, the policy on fluency varies from school to school. The following observation by one of the interviewees was made as follows:

I have seen differences between Deaf schools in Helsinki and other cities. In Helsinki, there seems to be less of an emphasis on Finnish Sign Language and children appear to teach or correct their teachers. In other cities, I have seen a strong emphasis on Finnish Sign Language and the children there are less frustrated and are able to concentrate on education (Sirikka, community, 2005).

The failure to enforce a uniform policy on fluency has serious consequences as these observers witnessed that children were teaching their teachers. Imagine if such an incident occurs in the mainstream school, it would cause uproar. Kyle and Allsop (1997) reinforce this point: would parents accept the situation where their hearing children could not understand their teachers in their schools?

#### *9.4.4 Involvement of the Deaf community*

Among many Finnish interviewees, there was some ambiguity regarding the involvement of the Deaf community in the education of Deaf children. On the administrative side, one interviewee claimed that the Deaf community is active:

They start in the policymaking and practical levels. They have an organisation and individuals are quite active too (Ella, administration, 2006).

However, many dispute this stance, as the Deaf community has to be vigilant and remain alert. One interviewee described this situation:

But there are some policy-makers or planners who would not consult with the Deaf community on some initiatives that might affect them. The Deaf advocates have to keep alert, be active by attending conferences, acquiring knowledge and build up networks. That's the way how Deaf advocates keep them on tap or informed (Laura, administration, 2006).

Another interviewee also supports this point of view:

Well....most of those involved in the planning or policy-making process are hearing. There are Deaf advocates who would contact and inform them of their stances. These policy-makers would consult us from time to time but most of them tend to carry on with their work without consulting us properly (Jenna, administration, 2006).

There appears to be some dissatisfaction with the current education process and there was some movement towards the establishment of a school that was based on Finnish Sign Language. However, it has not succeeded:

There was a movement for setting up a sign language school but it faded away due to legal complications. Liisa [Kaupinen] knows more about it. The FAD now wants to revive this idea and is currently working on it (Irene, 2006).

Given the responses here, it is clear that the involvement of the Deaf community in education remains marginal. However one interviewee expressed some optimism for the involvement of Deaf community in the education process:

Despite that, there is a positive development since Deaf teachers are hired and employed to teach Deaf children. This is a very vital one since it would enforce the strengths of bilingual/multilingual education in Finland (Paula, 2006).

It remains to be seen whether such optimism proves correct. Given the sporadic level of contact currently between policy makers and the Deaf community, it is difficult to see how it would have a major impact.

#### *9.5 LEP in the Irish schools for the Deaf: background information*

The number of schools catering for Deaf children in Ireland is difficult to pinpoint as some of them have a special unit attached to mainstream schools while others are stand-alone. The known number of stand-alone schools is three<sup>217</sup>. The number of special units attached to the mainstream schools, is difficult to establish because there are tendencies to open and then close a unit after a few years of operation depending on the availability of Deaf children in the vicinity. According to the statistics from the Department of Education and Science, the number of such units is eight (Department of Education and Science – website <http://www.education.ie> - accessed April 2008). All of these units are attached to the national schools and statistics do not provide any information on secondary schools. Most of these national schools have been named after the saints indicating that the Catholic Church owns most of them (see Inglis 1998, McDonnell 2007). The proportion of Deaf children being placed in mainstream schools without adjunct special units is well over eighty per cent of all Deaf children (Ryan 2006; Mathews forthcoming).

With regard to views on mainstreaming, the government is aware of the negative views of the Deaf community on mainstream educational placement for Deaf children. The following excerpt is quoted from the National Disability Authority report on the stakeholders' views on special education:

The very limited availability of Irish Sign Language in mainstream schools was cited as a major barrier to the successful inclusion for Deaf children by some members of the Deaf community, who felt that there was inadequate systemic recognition of their culture and language (National Disability Authority 2006).

---

<sup>217</sup> St. Mary's School, Cabra, Dublin, St. Joseph's Cabra, Dublin and the Mid-West School for the Hearing Impaired, Limerick. All these schools are designated as national primary schools by the Department of Education and Science.

The teacher-training course for teachers of the Deaf had been provided by a postgraduate course in University College Dublin<sup>218</sup>. Several Irish publications have referred to this course when discussing the nature of education for Deaf children (for example, Griffey 1994, Matthew 1996, Crean 1997). From these publications and the author's knowledge of the field, there was no similar course available outside of UCD. Hence, it became a focal point for those who aspired to be teachers of the Deaf. This course was heavily embedded in the medical perspective on deafness as the syllabus was illustrated in one book (Griffey 1994:66). Such was the dominance of this course and the oralist perspective, that there was no concern about the teachers' fluency of ISL<sup>219</sup> nor was there an encouragement for Deaf aspirants to become teachers (Centre Deaf Studies 2002: 10).

The involvement of the Deaf community in the education process is largely limited to the employment of Special Education Needs Assistants (SNA) in the Deaf schools and the mainstream schools. Recently a small growing number of Deaf teacher graduates are becoming secondary teachers as there are nine of them at present while two are currently studying (Dee Byrne, personal communication, July 2009).

Most of SNAs who are assigned to care for Deaf children are Deaf themselves. Their value is recognised by the Deaf community as they provide ideal role models to these Deaf children. However, it is also recognised that they require further training in teaching since some of their work can be regarded as teaching. Yet, this is not widely acknowledged by the Department of Education and Science (National Disability Authority 2006).

In October 2001, the Minister for Education and Science announced the setting up of the second<sup>220</sup> advisory committee to examine the education of the Deaf and hard of

---

<sup>218</sup> This course had been discontinued for a number of reasons. This is discussed further later in the chapter.

<sup>219</sup> The Commission of Inquiry into Child Abuse Report (Ryan Report 2009) expressed disbelief that the majority of staff in these schools for the Deaf did not have ability to communicate with Deaf children there (CICA Investigation Committee 2009 Vol. 1 p570).

<sup>220</sup> The first was established in 1967 and the report was published in 1972. No Deaf representation was on the advisory committee nor were there any submissions from the committee (Department of Education 1972). It is interesting to see the difference of treatment between this committee and the 2001 committee. There were eighteen representatives and four of them were Deaf and one was elected to chair the committee.

hearing (Dáil Éireann - Volume 537 - 12 June, 2001 Written Answers. - Special Educational Needs). However, the majority of those on the committee were hearing professionals though there were also Deaf representatives<sup>221</sup>. Complaints were made to the Minister for Education and Science, Michael Woods regarding the balance of hearing to Deaf people on the committee but to no avail<sup>222</sup>. Inevitably, tensions and conflict arose, chiefly surrounding the differences on approaches and philosophy. Given these reasons, the subsequent Minister Mary Hanafin decided to disband the committee<sup>223</sup> and transferred the responsibility to the National Council for Special Education (Ryan 2006). Her decision was justified by her claim about the committee:

“The differences between the two groups were "not only insurmountable, but historical and deeply felt" (Irish Times, April 27, 2005)

Given the brief background information, the interviews with the Irish participants can complement the wider picture here.

## 9.6 *Interviewees with Irish participants*

### 9.6.1 *Educational placement*

To date, the educational placement of Deaf children in mainstream schools has not been problematised in general by those who administer education in Ireland.

All interviewees accepted that placements in mainstream education had become very common for Deaf children in recent years. This raises two related questions: a) the suitability of such placements and b) the psychosocial effects on an individual Deaf child. These are two issues which frequently arose during the interviews. One describes the impact of the decline of Deaf schools in the context of a growing number of Deaf children attending the mainstream schools:

---

<sup>221</sup> The author was one of them. There were eighteen representatives and four of them were Deaf and one was elected to chair the committee.

<sup>222</sup> Complaints were aired in the Dail Eireann (see Dáil Éireann - Volume 541 - 03 October, 2001 Written Answers. - Committee on Deaf Education).

<sup>223</sup> The author can confirm that there was a promising sign that the committee would agree to the suggestion that two reports were to be submitted; majority and minority but the Minister did not accept the idea of two separate reports (Dail Debates, April 26, 2005).



Now I think that the people who are pushing integration feel strongly that they are doing people with disabilities a service... and they feel that is their right to be [integrated]. I may be wrong but I feel that another road is to have a special school if that is what they want [it], but their rights at the moment are totally geared towards integration. And I feel that that is an issue of human rights, to provide the same kind of education for everyone, and make mainstream accessible to people with disabilities. That is why the numbers in special schools are going down radically...in all special schools (Enda, academic, 2006). [my insertion]

This interviewee suggests that educational placement in mainstream education is a human right issue. Interestingly, his view is not shared by others who point to psychosocial effects such as lack of access to sign languages and, peer relationships could be viewed as a violation of human rights (see Skuttnabb-Kangas 2003, Jokinen 2000).

There was almost unanimity among Irish Deaf interviewees that mainstream placement is not the ideal approach. They claimed, however, that the Department of Education and Science is the main instigator of integration:

They are saying they encourage mainstream but that is because the Department of Education has a policy there. The Education For Persons with Disabilities Act<sup>224</sup>, strongly encourages mainstreaming and does not mention the promotion of deaf schools (Cathal, community, 2005).

As mentioned in the last excerpt, one interviewee describes the Act as proactively encouraging mainstreaming:

Obviously the Act does look at encouraging the education of children in mainstream settings. Having said that... I think we need to recognise that for maybe some children or some groups of children, there are issues about that and how we actually do it (Aideen, administration, 2006).

While not all teaching unions responded to this study, the TUI expressed strong support for mainstreaming (see Appendix 4). Given the impression that mainstreaming is beneficial to the Deaf children, however, one person interviewed

---

<sup>224</sup> The Act mentioned here is the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004, which established the National Council for Special Education (NCSE, website: [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie) - accessed April 2008).

points towards that research, carried out in Trinity College Dublin which shows Deaf children are isolated in mainstream schools:

... They have published a paper looking at what happens in mainstreamed deaf student situations. Parents, teachers and peers were interviewed and asked how they thought the student was getting on – were they satisfied with their educational progression and so on? It turned out that both parents and teachers responded that they were satisfied but peers said that while things might be OK in class that socially they seemed not to be in the loop. The children themselves said they were not satisfied. Classroom support might be there but they still felt isolated. There were not the usual bonds with friends (Bridget, academic, 2006).

This last excerpt can be supported by the submission to the advisory committee on education for the Deaf and hard of hearing by a group of Deaf people who had experienced mainstreaming. This submission called for easy access to Irish Sign Language and peer relationship in mainstream schools. It also suggested that the employment of Deaf persons in such settings would present a positive role model for these Deaf children to inspire confidence and hope for their future (Irish Deaf Society 2004<sup>225</sup>).

#### 9.6.2 *Educating Teachers of the Deaf*

Teachers of the Deaf were educated in the University College Dublin for a number of years until a few years ago (approximately 2001). However, at the time of interview, the course was under review with a possibility of merging the course with the Centre for Deaf Studies in Trinity College Dublin:

The revised course is for the student teachers of the Deaf. They will spend three days here, and two full days in Trinity College, in the Centre for Deaf college [sic], and there, Deaf people will teach them. And they will learn the language and the culture of deafness (Enda, academic, 2006).

The review has not been completed to date (Dr. Lorraine Leeson, personal communication, March 2008<sup>226</sup>). The formal nature of this course in UCD had been a

---

<sup>225</sup> The Irish Deaf Society on behalf of the group of ex-mainstreamed pupils submitted the submission.

<sup>226</sup> Director of Centre for Deaf Studies, Trinity College Dublin.

bone of contention for many. One Deaf person described the nature of its orientation towards Deaf people:

.....it is very focused on the oral method - maybe there is a little bit of information about sign language there, but the main focus is the oralism and audiology (Eimear, community, 2006).

Another interviewee described the nature of qualifications given to teachers up to the cessation of this course:

They become qualified teachers first, but not teachers for the deaf. So a general qualification and maybe as time goes by, they may become interested in teaching deaf children, and the opportunity presents itself to become qualified in the training course in UCD - a one year course which focuses on deaf people, coming very much from the medical perspective (Cathal, community, 2005).

Quite amazingly one can teach Deaf children without doing this course:

.....but first of all it's important to remember that taking this training is optional, it's not compulsory for teachers (Daithi, academic, 2006).

One interviewee describes the process for teachers who wish to avail of alternative courses:

Any teacher that ... wants to train in, I do not want to use the word 'special', lets say designated area, such as, Deaf education, disabilities, autism before they get onto the course, they must spend 2 years working in that area. Now that has been the practice up to now. There has not been a course for Deaf teachers I think for 6 - 8 years (Liam, administration, 2006)

Other interviewees point out that the modules on Deaf education are available in other courses for teachers:

You can go for a Special Education Diploma and there are elements within that course that look at deafness and Deaf education. But they are small enough elements (Bridget, academic, 2006).

Another Deaf interviewee also claimed that education of Deaf children is often reduced to a single module or rarely mentioned:

My niece studied to be a teacher in the Church of Ireland College of Education. But there was no mention of Deaf people there (Ciara, community, 2006).

Considering the paucity of available courses for people to become teachers of Deaf children, and considering that a medical perspective dominated the previous courses in UCD, the language policies in the schools are largely left to the discretion of the schools themselves.

There is a common concern that fluent Deaf teachers are few and far between. This hinders the development of substantive bilingualism for Deaf children in a number of countries. Ireland is no exception, but there is a unique difference about the Irish case. A number of Deaf aspiring applicants sought access to the primary teacher training courses in a number of institutions but their applications were rejected on a number of grounds. Almost all of them were rejected on the grounds of lacking knowledge in the Irish language or they did not get sufficient knowledge through the Leaving Certificate though some of them possessed masters' degrees. That happened two or three years ago (Deirdre Byrne-Dunne and Kevin Mulqueen, personal communication, March 2008).

Ironically, the state language policy for primary schools permits exemptions for those who are adjudged as not educable through the medium of the Irish language (Department of Education and Science 2008 website <http://www.education.ie>)<sup>227</sup>. These very exemptions place barriers to those Deaf applicants who aspire to become teachers<sup>228</sup>. Additionally, the rules for primary schools published by the Department

---

<sup>227</sup>The website address is

<http://www.education.ie/home/home.jsp?maincat=&pcategory=10900&ecategory=19312&sectionpage=12251&language=EN&link=link001&page=1&doc=16901>

<sup>228</sup> It has to be pointed out that in the last few years, three or four Deaf teachers have graduated from Trinity College Dublin in post primary teaching in Ireland (Deirdre Byrne-Dunne, personal communication 2008). Additionally, those who attended mainstream education were often excused from attending Irish classes (personal communications) though there were some taking up Junior and Senior examinations in Irish (Leeson 2005).

of Education and Science and the physical fitness of primary teachers have to be verified by medical professionals. The exact wording can be seen here:

Rule 155 (4) "Before a candidate is admitted to a Training College (a) the medical officer of the College must certify that he is of sound and healthy constitution and free from any physical or mental defect likely to impair his usefulness as a teacher; the medical certificate shall include such details as the Minister may require"(An Rionn Oideachais 1965).

It is clear that the state language policy has doubly discriminated against Deaf aspirants, as most of them are likely not to receive education in Irish. Hence this prevents them from applying for positions within the teacher training courses. It is likely that the prohibition on Deaf people being teachers is in breach of the Equality Status Act (2000) as it is directly and indirectly discriminatory, especially given the need for ISL competent Deaf teachers for Deaf children.

### 9.6.3 *Fluency of teachers.*

Many of the interviewed agreed that the State does not have a policy in developing teachers' skill levels in ISL. However, one interviewee points out:

Em, No, sign language does not have an official status, so ..(Liam, administration, 2006).

This statement implies that if a language does not have official status, this excuses the Department from having a policy. However, it can be argued that an implicit rather than explicit policy exists and it is based on an assumption that signing is useful but one does not need to be educated in sign. This is clearly articulated by this interviewee:

There is no policy in relation to ISL in the schools for the Deaf. If I were to make an assumption, it's that the Government assumes that when somebody can sign, then that's OK...(Eimear, administration, 2006)

An interviewee who pointed to the lack of skills in ISL on the part of inspectors from the Department of Education and Science (DES), supports this view:

There are two inspectors and they had inspected the schools, but the inspectors themselves are not able to sign (Cathal, community, 2005).

Given the lack of fluency in ISL by DES inspectors, this negates the possibility of positive language education policies based on ISL in Deaf schools. However, some would argue that if a policy exists on the fluency of ISL, a consensus would be sought on the 'correct' version of ISL. This person describes the situation:

Now, could I just say eh, some teachers have a difficulty about what is sign language; are the deaf, the Irish deaf, agreed among themselves about what is sign language? Because I remember 2 adult deaf were speaking and one said, I don't understand your sign. Now they were both deaf, now why I mention this is, if there is not clarity there, it can be confusing for people who want to learn sign language (Enda, academic, 2006).

When pressed to clarify this matter in the context of all languages having their own differing accents and styles, it is not necessary for anyone to know all accents and pronunciations of spoken language, without having to wait and agree on a correct version of language. He agreed but went further:

Oh, I know, no, but, you are right, but I remember a teacher. And someone taught them and they thought they were learning sign language. And someone said to them, that is not sign language at all (Enda, academic, 2006).

After clarifying the situation, it transpired that the teachers mentioned by him were taught by someone who had preferred signed English over ISL in a mistaken belief that ISL was not a language in its own right. Such a preference is common and can be related to negative attitudes towards the status of ISL rather than whether there is the existence of a correct version of ISL (Conama & McDonnell 2001).

Yet, this same person refers to the inclusion of sign language in a public advertisement for the visiting teachers, which he feels is significant:

Now. We can look at the state policy like an advertisement for visiting teachers, of the eh... Hearing impaired and they stress that fluency in sign language is necessary, if I remember the ad correctly. Certainly, it's highly recommended, and this is a new development (Enda, academic, 2006).

However, due to this advertisement, the Irish Deaf Society sent a letter to the Minister for Education querying how such applicants were being assessed before being appointed to the job. The Minister replied that one of the interview panelists was competent to assess ISL fluency of applicants (Minister for Education and Science 2006)<sup>229</sup>. Yet, one of the applicants, the only one Deaf person out of several applicants, disputed this, as he was never assessed for ISL nor did he recognise any of these panelists for their proficiency in ISL (Philip Grehan, personal communication, 2008). It is clear that on the administration side, the issue of fluency in ISL is not taken seriously as a vital part of language education policy.

#### 9.6.4 *Involvement of the Deaf community*

The Deaf community's involvement in education for Deaf children has been confined to peripheral areas<sup>230</sup>. Deaf people have been appointed as Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) or ISL teachers under the ISL home tuition scheme. At the organisational level, the representative organisation, the Irish Deaf Society had played a consultancy role on the advisory committee on Deaf education.

There are concerns both about the status of Deaf persons appointed as special needs assistants to work in classrooms, and how they are actually working. The following comment exemplifies this concern:

Well, the SNAs, the Special Needs Assistants, would be meant to assist the teacher if one of the students wanted to go to the toilet when the teacher was busy or something like that, but the Deaf SNAs work quite differently. I think the name Special Needs Assistant is not appropriate for what they do. I think they function more like a communication assistant. I've seen it myself in St. Mary's and you just can't call them SNAs. The hearing view of the SNAs would be that they do things like change the

---

<sup>229</sup> A letter sent to the Irish Deaf Society by the private secretary of the Minister for Education and Science (August 31, 2006: ref: 0602505/AD)

<sup>230</sup> The Teachers' Union of Ireland tacitly acknowledged this position (see Appendix 4).

children's nappies or accompany them to the toilet or help keep them quiet and so on, but you have Deaf SNAs really becoming relay interpreters. They are passing on information. They are working with the children and relaying what the teacher has said (Ciara, community, 2006).

This interviewee made it clear that SNAs had effectively become a communication worker. According to anecdotal evidence, in some cases, SNAs have become substitute teachers if children required further clarifications and they did not bother to ask the teacher (Audrey Conama, personal communication, 2006). Regarding SNAs and ISL teachers under the auspices of the ISL home tuition scheme, there is a concern about the extent of their signing skills. This concern relates to their relationship with children and their parents. This following comment highlights this concern:

...But I think the big problem is the absence of any required minimum levels of signing skills. There's a lot of discussion now about minimum levels of skill for interpreters, but maybe those levels of skill are more important for ISL teachers and SNAs in many ways. So that situation needs to change (Bridget, academic, 2006).

Apart from the concerns about signing skills levels, it appears that the recent involvement of the Deaf community in education has had a significant impact. This can be deduced from the evidence of a growing number of Deaf teachers being employed in the schools for the Deaf. However, one points out that their involvement does not mean that power has shifted towards bilingualism to the Deaf community. The view has been expressed as follows:

But with the exception of MSDP<sup>231</sup>, they are not on equal standing: they are not in control and have no say. The views they may contribute are likely not to be accepted, people do not want to hear what they are saying (Cathal, community, 2005)

#### 9.7 *Concluding remarks:*

Having examined four different areas that are likely to influence language education policies for Deaf children, there are many similarities and differences between the two countries. It is clear that the Deaf communities in Finland and Ireland have little

---

<sup>231</sup> The Model School for the Deaf Project (please see footnote 35 in Chapter 8)



influence over the language education policies. The most obvious evidence in this situation is that most Deaf children are born to hearing parents; therefore, the parents have to deal with educational personnel directly. The vast majority of these personnel are not Deaf and do not have an affinity with Deaf culture and indigenous sign languages.

With regard to educational placement, it is clear that language policies are shaped further by educational placements. Schools for the Deaf in both countries are experiencing a sharp reduction in the number of Deaf children. This has been the case for many years in Ireland. Mainstreaming is increasingly favoured as the first option for many parents, oblivious to the fact that the choice is largely influenced by language education policies that may be more appropriate for some children but not for Deaf children.

Mainstreaming is clearly seen as a threat to the existence of Deaf communities in both countries. However, hearing people in general do not necessarily share the view. Deaf members in both countries tend to concern themselves with long-term effects such as the psychosocial developments of Deaf individuals. Deaf interviewees have expressed concerns about the effects of language policies on the psychosocial and linguistic development of Deaf individuals but their concerns appeared to go unheeded or ignored. Most of Deaf interviewees in both countries do not hold any hope that this trend might be reversed one day.

Both countries have a long tradition of providing a separate postgraduate course for teachers who wish to become teachers of the Deaf. This is seen as unproblematic by many of the hearing interviewees. However, most Deaf interviewees felt traditional teacher training courses are embedded in the special education framework which they reject. This mode obscures the need for a separate language education policy which is aimed at Deaf children because it either emphasises the need for the restoration of hearing, or it wants to maximise the residual hearing in many Deaf children. This emphasis is often done at the expense of indigenous sign languages, especially language acquisition. Many Deaf interviewees expressed horror at this continuous practice and they felt that language acquisition which is based on sign languages should be a central plank of language education policies.

The levels of fluency in ISL or FinnSL are unclear in both countries and non-compliance with policies supporting or requiring fluency is widespread. There was a widespread complacency among state administrators in both countries with regard to SL fluency among teachers in the Deaf schools. Deaf interviewees felt that teachers should have fluency. State complacency testifies a longstanding negative attitude towards the role of ISL and FinnSL in the language education policies in both countries. There is also evidence that the complacency about learning ISL and FinnSL is not confined to the state administrators but to the schools themselves.

With regard to the lack of fluency of ISL and FinnSL among teachers, and the nature of teacher training courses, it is necessary to increase the involvement of Deaf communities in the process of shaping language education policies. It is clear from the data collection that both countries have witnessed the minimal involvement of Deaf communities in the processes. This is a clear consequence of the fact that language education policies are being shaped by hearing people and can be anathema to the views of the Deaf communities. It has to be pointed out that the views of Deaf communities arise from their concerns about the psychosocial effects on Deaf individuals of not being fluent in sign language; they are not simply concerned about their integration into hearing society. As noted by Paddy Ladd (2003), the failure to enforce signed languages undermines the Deaf communities.

Several commentators (Corson 1993, Spolsky 2004, Shohamy 2006, Paulston and Heideman 2006 for example) identify the language education policies as a key factor in promoting new thinking about signed languages. To have a language policy that respects signed languages in education policies, the involvement of Deaf communities must be ensured in every part of the process (Corson 1993). Having demonstrated the six different components of language education policies, which have an impact on Deaf children, it is absolutely clear that the ideology or views favoured by Deaf communities in both countries have been largely or ignored apart from minor concessions granted after protests and negotiations.

# Chapter 10

## Language policy and access to public information

### 10.1 Introduction

The primary focus of this chapter is on analysing findings regarding language policies and access to information for Deaf people in Finland and Ireland. This begins with a short analysis of the relationship between citizenship and language policy. This is followed by an analysis of the findings in light of the responses by the interviewees.

Information helps us all to make decisions and choices about our lives and enables us to live independently, to access social rights and entitlements, and take part fully in society (Pillinger 2005: 8).

Access to information can be easily taken for granted for those who are fluent or literate in the national or dominant languages. However, this can be problematic for those whose first or mother language is not one of the national or dominant languages<sup>232</sup>. Many countries have ensured that information can be disseminated by the translation of text-based information through minority languages or interpreting in person. There is plenty of evidence to show that information is disseminated through different media in Finland and Ireland but it is strongly oriented to the spoken languages.

There are countries that have taken the initiative of ensuring information is accessible in signed languages but they are few: Sweden and the United Kingdom (Timmersman 2005, Kyle and Allsop 1997). The formats of information can be interpreted, translated or relayed into sign languages aimed at the Deaf communities<sup>233</sup>. The

---

<sup>232</sup> Access can be problematic for many reasons such as physical access (i.e. for disabled people – no ramp to library), technical elements (computers being inaccessible), economic reasons (prices of books, obtaining computers and broadband which can be costly for some people) and personal reasons (literacy issues).

<sup>233</sup> For the definition, please see the section 1.8 of the first section regarding the diversity within the Deaf communities

formats include interpreters, videophones<sup>234</sup>, DVDs, videocassettes, programmes on televisions being signed, slots in sign languages on websites, and staff fluent in sign languages. Despite a wide range of formats making information accessible, the formats are often reliant on the availability of resources or goodwill on the authorities' part. Hence, national associations of the Deaf often take the main role in disseminating public information in sign languages<sup>235</sup>, and this is often detrimental to their financial situations (Ladd 2003).

Therefore, the language policy behind access to information is a crucial issue for many Deaf communities including those in Ireland and Finland. However, there are views that the lack of access to information can be regarded as dangerous or worse still, subversive, if badly handled. Hence, barriers such as secrecy laws or systems in place like the Freedom of Information facility are created to keep information secret or limit access (for discussion, see Komito 2004). This chapter does not disentangle these issues as it focuses on the general access to information for Deaf SL users.

The structure of the work begins with the brief discussion on the concept of citizenship and this sets the tone for the chapter. The linkage between citizenship and language policy is also briefly explored; then a general commentary on the findings on how information is accessed by sign language users in both countries is also explored. In order to enhance the understanding of this area, Table 10.1 (below), attempts to identify language policy practices as they relate to the differing perspectives on deafness. The chapter is concluded with remarks on the comparative analysis.

## *10.2 Citizenship*

Many Deaf groups argue for the right to have access to public information, in order to participate in societies, as this would enable them to exercise their citizenship rights and duties. A number of commentaries have been made in this regard (for example,

---

<sup>234</sup> Videophones refer to telephones, which are capable of both audio and video transmission; therefore, signed conversation can be interpreted into voiced conversation.

<sup>235</sup> The Irish Deaf Society with the financial support of the Referendum Commission created DVDs to explain the Lisbon Treaty in Irish Sign Language. The DVDs were distributed to every household that is known to have a Deaf person.

see World Federation of the Deaf <http://www.wfdeaf.org>, European Union of the Deaf <http://www.eudnet.org>, Irish Deaf Society <http://www.deaf.ie>).

Hence, it is pertinent to examine the concept of citizenship briefly and how it is defined in terms of access to information. The understanding of citizenship is wide-ranging as there are at least three general dimensions of citizenship: legal, philosophical and socio-political (Dwyer 2004)<sup>236</sup>. The third dimension is more relevant here and it refers to the situation where citizenship can be understood in terms of a power relationship between the state and the individual, especially in terms of language policy orientations.

Classical liberal views of citizenship are based on universalistic models of citizenship and are generally tied to nation states. Citizens are generally assumed to be relatively homogenous, sharing the same culture, value, language and history. Yet, in reality, no nation state is entirely homogenous either culturally or linguistically.

Oliver (1996) points out the difficulties experienced by disabled people in Britain in exercising their citizenship rights or duties because of the failure to accommodate differences. Lister (1997 & 2003) lists the gender-blind assumptions within the citizenship discussion, especially in Marshall's analysis. Finally, Kymlicka and Patten (2003) point out the importance of extending citizenship to collective groups such as linguistic minorities in a liberal democracy, on the basis of their ethnic or linguistic difference.

Emery (2006) carried out doctoral research on the citizenship question and the Deaf community in Britain. He concludes that the British Deaf community has experienced social exclusion and the application of traditional citizenship theories to this community has proved problematic. He states that these citizenship theories tend to assume that linguistic difference and access to information are unproblematic or are minor aspects. Hence, Deaf people in Britain are excluded from access to information (Emery 2006: 186-187).

---

<sup>236</sup> Legal citizenship refers to formal rights bestowed in the legislation, and philosophical citizenship refers to theoretical discussion on the concept of citizenship

### 10.3 *Linking citizenship with language policy*

From this, it is clear that the concept of citizenship is loaded and contested almost at every front. Yet it carries a powerful meaning as individuals in the state are expected to perform in some way. For Baker, *et al.* (2004), citizens should have a good basic grasp through competencies and capacities to ensure participatory democracy working on the ground. However, they acknowledge that capacities and competencies vary across status, groups, social class and other identities.

In order to participate in a democratic society actively, it is necessary to have good knowledge, understanding and commitment. Therefore, these components are necessary prerequisites for active citizenship (Baker, *et al.* 2004). This depends on the availability and the range of information dissemination. The availability and range refer to physical apparatuses such as notice boards, announcements & debates on radio. It also refers to advertisements, current affairs programmes on television, leaflets and personal contact (telephone query, customer service desks etc.) to name a few. Availability also depends on the languages of text and verbal communication. Therefore, availability and range are a crucial part of language policy for public information dissemination.

Edwards (2004) points out that service provisions must have some kind of language policy. He points out that workers need to know their employment rights, patients need to communicate with doctors and defendants and witnesses need to know what is being said in the courts, etc. (Edwards 2004:48). Therefore, such services must have language policies regardless of its explicitness or implicitness. Edwards also points out that even those who have fluency in the national languages tend to be more comfortable in using their first or mother-tongue languages (Edwards 2004:48)<sup>237</sup>. Hence, language policies are a crucial part of enabling citizens to exercise their rights and responsibilities. Valentine and Skelton (2003) also support this and they pointed out that language is a central feature of citizenship:

---

<sup>237</sup> Edwards refers to many case studies and one of them refers to the Yup'ik community in Alaska who prefer to communicate bilingually; even though most of them understood English. Other cases such as the Welsh speakers aim to increase the profile of their language in political and social circles (Edwards 2004:48-49)

Language is crucial to debates about citizenship and belonging because the State has to rely on language for its very functioning, indeed political practice itself is a form of communicative action (Valentine and Skelton 2003: 2).

Kymlicka and Patten (2003) describe the shift in democracy theories from ‘vote-centric’ to ‘talk-centric’ as they described the gradual changes of viewing citizenship. Formerly, the concept of citizenship was often discussed in terms of voting and preferences for policies but this has changed. The shift recognises the power of public opinions and assumptions. This necessitates the use of, and access to, language in public discussion. Inevitably, if you have no access to the dominant language, it is likely that your citizenship is diminished significantly. This points to the relevance of language policy behind service provisions. If people are to be active, engaged citizens in a communicative democracy, they must have access to information.

Valentine and Skelton (2003) use Painter and Philo’s concept of lived citizenship, to highlight this issue: being able to live citizenship accounts for qualitative differences in people’s lives. This concept goes beyond legal or political citizenship which mostly focus on formal rights of access rather than on the right to participate. Valentine and Skelton (2003: 8-9) listed a number of practical examples in Britain where Deaf people often found themselves excluded from public places just because they used sign language.

With regard to globalisation and the emergence of a knowledge-based economy, access to information becomes crucial for citizens to ensure their participation in societies as much as possible. Lor and Britiz (2007) argue:

In the era of globalization the right of access to information has become one of the most important social rights since it is a precondition for participation in the various socio-economic and political activities of a modern knowledge society (Lor and Britiz 2007: 388).

Therefore, access to information is regarded as a fundamental human right since it enables citizens to participate fully in societies and it is important to examine the access part in terms of linguistic rights.

#### 10.4 Language policy and its relationship to information provisions

This section provides a review of research on access to information for Deaf people. Emery (2006) identifies three main issues in his research collaboration with the members of British Deaf community. They are: information, communication and access. According to him, these issues are strongly interlinked. His interview participants mentioned experiences of being unable to get information, not being articulately understood or access to services not being readily available.

Butler, *et al.* (2001) reports that some local authorities in Britain refused to pay for the interpretation costs and often used auxiliary persons such as social workers or persons with some knowledge of signing as communicators to deal with Deaf people. Deaf people reported the difficulties in procuring clear information on healthcare in Britain (Ubido Huntingdon & Warburton 2002). Similar experiences are reported in the United States (Harmer 1999). This is clearly a feature of language policy dealing with information dissemination and failing to take account of the needs for the Deaf communities.

Not only is there a refusal to finance interpretation or provide alternative formats, reliance on family or friend as communicators have been reported in several instances. Conama (2008) found that the respondents in the Mid-West area of Ireland were still depending on their family members or friends to communicate with information providers. Obviously, confidentiality and independence are issues, but the quality of relaying information can be seriously compromised. Other examples are that the agencies tend to rely on their staff members who are regarded to have competence in signing to communicate with Deaf people<sup>238</sup>. This again is not a satisfactory arrangement or is it an adequate substitute.

---

<sup>238</sup> *'This may not be a realistic goal and caution is urged. There are threshold levels for communicative competence and when it comes to essential information (NB medical contexts), and there are potential hazards regarding negligence if a member of staff, who may assume their skills are better than they are, may mistranslate information. (For example, a case in New Zealand where a Deaf man was acquitted after a retrial on a murdered infant; the acquittal was attributed to mistranslation by a teacher (Napier, McKee and Goswell 2006)'* (directly quoted in Conama 2008; pp 67).



Valentine and Skelton (2007: 127) state that the language is a key factor impact on the Deaf individual's ability to exercise citizenship rights and duties. This is also a major factor influencing how Deaf people participate in wider civil society.

Likewise, lack of language rights can also exclude D/deaf people from information about drugs, alcohol, safe sex etc. that can mean that are exposed to social risks in the community and are unaware of their right to particular forms of health or social care (ibid: 127)

Additionally, oralist education for Deaf people has left many Deaf people with some literacy issues. It is commonly known that Deaf people do not have the same literacy ability as the general population but yet, the general societal expectation is that they are literate sufficiently to read information. This can be exemplified in many responses in this research and will be referred to in other sections below.

While there is no major study into the ability to exercise citizenship among the Irish Deaf community, there are several small-scale studies pointing out similar experiences specifically, feelings of being deprived of access to information and being not adequately understood. These are frequent and recurring themes, particularly in the fields of health care and employment (Dunne 1999, Conama & Grehan 2001, Conroy 2006).

Deaf-led groups have dealt with the lack of supports by the state with some positive outcomes. Ladd (2003) reports how the establishment of a London Deaf Video Project (LDVP) had made considerable impact on government information provisions during 1980s and 1990s. The LDVP forced government bodies to translate their information into British Sign Language (BSL) and this had a positive spin-off by creating employment and training opportunities for Deaf BSL users.

These selected practical examples show how important the formatting of language policy is in determining the character and availability of information services to Deaf people. It is essential to understand that there are different views on how language policy should be shaped in order to ensure information be understood by the targeted populaces.

### *10.5 Differing perspectives on access to information for Deaf people*

Since access to information is overwhelmingly phonocentric and generally text-based, it is fair that this reflects the dominant culture of societies. However, it overlooks one important issue – the provision of alternative formats to ensure access to information in one’s own languages – especially in sign languages for the Deaf communities.

Table 10:1 below summarises the differing perspectives on language policies. It outlines how the three different perspectives on deafness interface with different dimensions of language policy, and how language policy, in turn, impacts on access to information. Let us begin from the premise that the original starting point is that the societies are overwhelmingly phonocentric so access to information is generally based on the assumption that people can hear and also that they can read the dominant language. A medicalised model of thinking prevails in relation to deafness: it is assumed that they should try to use what hearing they have and read English (or other languages) and Deaf people are not considered.

However, in the recent disability awareness campaign regarding the issues affecting disabled people has benefited the Deaf communities to some extent. The benefits are largely confined to assistance or reasonable accommodations. This is because of the reinterpretation of the rights perspective with the social models by the powers that be, rather than by the disability movements. For example, ramps are provided into buildings, voice-overs are subtitled and written texts are made into Braille. The linguistic and cultural nature of Deaf communities has not been taken seriously, however. There is willingness to learn sign language or provide information through sign language but these provisions are treated as if they are compensatory and supplementary, only given when necessary. So we can take this situation as an example of how the social perspective on deafness has been understood in policy terms, even if not intended by social model theorists.

Deafhood is a different perspective from the social model. It believes in SLs as languages in their own right and believes they should be treated similarly to other spoken languages, rather than being defined as disabilities. There should not be any hesitation in making resources available and in providing information through

indigenous sign languages. Most importantly, signed languages are not to be treated as compensatory and supplementary to the spoken languages (Table 10.1).

Table 10.1 is divided by a number of issues that are central to the language policy behind access to information. They are: scope and nature of language policy in access to information, the availability of language support services, demand for SL format, and, finally, the arrangement of interpretation and willingness of agencies to extend information through SL.

The first issue is about determining the scope and nature of language policy in relation to accessing information. The second issue is about examining the choice of methodology for disseminating information. The third issue is about examining what subjects need to be covered in sign language and how they are chosen. Finally, the last issue focuses on the administrative side and determines the attitudinal approach to demands for SL formats.

While the chapter is not able to cover all of these issues, only selected issues are given here. The issues addressed are those identified by the interviewees' responses, literature reviews and my own insider knowledge of Deaf issues evidence. For this chapter, the chosen domains are: the scope and nature of language policy in relation to accessing information, willing of agencies to extend information through SL<sup>239</sup>, demand for SL formats and the arrangement of interpretations. These issues are sufficient to capture the situation experienced by Deaf SL users in general in accessing public information.

---

<sup>239</sup> For the sake of brevity, this 'willing of agencies to extend information through SL' issue covered the Irish situation only while the arrangement of interpretations issue focused on the Finnish situation. This is because Finland has more interpreters than Ireland.

Table 10. 1 : Language policy in access to information depending on the perspectives on deafness and Deafhood.

Key access to information issues in language policy	Differing perspectives		
	Medical	Social	Deafhood
SL as language	SLs are not languages in the real sense	SLs are treated as compensatory or supplementary auxiliaries.	SLs as languages in their own right and should be treated the same as spoken languages.
Scope and nature of language policy in access to information	Oral, audible and text based information in spoken languages	Emphasis on text, audible and a personal approach to spoken languages	Information via the medium of SLs is highly emphasised and can be readily available.
Methods of information dissemination	Limited to text and audible formats in spoken languages	Only use SL (interpretation) when necessary or on request (if finance is available).	Text based information in spoken languages is seen as supplementary.
The availability of language support services	Websites in SL are limited to basic / introductory information.	Subtitles on DVDs / videos (SL included or not) limited to specific issues that are regarded as relevant to Deaf communities.	SLs readily available as a primary language in the major websites.
Willingness of agencies to extend information through SL	TV programmes subtitled with a small percentage devoted to SLs.	Staff with basic competence in SL may be seen as adequate to deal with users.	DVDs / videos are fully given in SL on various important public information (beyond specific and relevant issues).
Demand for SL format	Reasonable accommodation principle applies if costs are perceived as excessive or delivery could not be made in time.	TV programmes signed (own channel seen as a viable option)	Staff fluent in SLs.
Arrangement of interpretation services	Non-existent as does not regard the need for interpretation services.	Often leave the initiative to user. Funding has to be found for interpretation	The availability is regarded as a right rather than a need.
			Providers take initiative to provide and fund interpretation.

## 10.6 Findings from Finland

The scope and nature of language policy in relation to accessing information for Deaf Finnish SL users can be exemplified by the following facilities:

- Interpretation
- Signing on TV programmes
- Websites of main government agencies
- Information Video by the Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD)

In Finland, Deaf users have availed of the right to access public information for many years. The first instance when this right was exercised was in 1982. The Finnish law on administrative procedure obliges the public authorities to provide interpretation if a person could not use the speech *'due to a deficiency in the person's senses or speech, the person cannot be understood'*. (Finnish Association for the Deaf n/d). Though the right was given, the perspective is obviously medicalised.

In addition, the 'Support and Assistance for the Disabled Decree' was enacted in 1987 and it grants 120 hours of interpretation free of charge<sup>240</sup> to each Deaf person. The rationale was to enable the person to participate in society further. This move was significant as it enables Deaf users to deal with public authorities directly<sup>241</sup>. The rationale for this grant was based on the idea that Deaf people are disabled, rather than on their right to use the Finnish Sign Language (Finnish Association for the Deaf n/d). This legislation remains in force to this day though the constitutional right to use sign language was given in 1995.

According to one report, Finland is a leader when it comes to the ratio between the number of qualified interpreters and the number of Deaf Finnish SL users (Comhairle

---

<sup>240</sup> There is an additional 120 hours for those who are deaf and blind (Finnish Association of the Deaf). The hours have been recently increased to 180 hours per year for Deaf persons and 360 hours for Deaf-blind persons (WASLI 2007)

<sup>241</sup> Prior to this Act, Deaf persons were often liable for interpretation costs; hence they declined to deal with public authorities directly and used auxiliary persons such as family members, neighbours or workmates. .

2006). De Wit (2008) reports that the number of Finnish SL users per interpreter is 6:1. Finland has 703 qualified interpreters, of whom 450 remain active while others adopt atypical employment patterns such as seasonal and part time status (SVT<sup>242</sup>, website – <http://www.tulkkit.fi> - accessed July 2008)<sup>243</sup>. The current interpretation services are being organised through private referral agencies and are mainly funded by municipalities. However, there is a plan that the state intends to take over the overall responsibility for these services and have it administered by the state agency (WASLI Newsletter 2007:2)<sup>244</sup>.

The Finnish state television YLE is obliged by law to provide programmes in sign language (YLE 2007: 8). However, the amount is limited to five minutes daily on news and omnibus news programmes and for twenty minutes on Saturdays. The private television companies are not obliged to provide this though programmes through the medium of the Swedish Sign Language are broadcasted from Sweden regularly in Finland.

The government report on the status of sign language in Finland acknowledges that there are not enough websites that transmit information through the medium of Finnish Sign Language (Finland 2006). According to a number of interviewees, the notable exemptions are the websites of the state police and the Finnish parliament. Both have web pages where users can access information through Finnish SL<sup>245</sup>.

In order to address the situation to fill the obvious gaps, the Finnish Association of the Deaf took an initiative to produce and distribute video information (political, educational and/or cultural) in the Finnish SL to each household where there is a Deaf person or more. The contents range from relevant government announcements to

---

<sup>242</sup> SVT stands for Suomen Viittomakielen Tulkit, the national representative organisation of Finnish Sign Language / Finnish interpreters.

<sup>243</sup> Interpreters are required to take a four year-long degree at the polytechnic level before they can be registered as the interpreters (SVT 2008).

<sup>244</sup> WASLI stands for the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters and its main webpage is <http://www.wasli.org/>

<sup>245</sup> The signed website of the Finnish parliament is <http://web.eduskunta.fi/Resource.phx/eduskunta/tervetuloa/viittomakieli/index.htm> and the Finnish police's signed webpage address is <http://www.poliisi.fi/poliisi/home.nsf/pages/F07E4C9C281C6D7BC2256E3600369D2A?opendocument>

community news. They produce videos on a monthly basis and distribute them to almost 2000 households. The municipalities largely finance the scheme (FAD, n/d).

### *10.6.1 Interviews with the Finnish respondents*

#### **10.6.1.1 The scope and nature of language policy in relation to accessing information**

In Finland, the authorities are obliged by law (Finland 2004) to provide information in the national languages – Finnish and Swedish. However, one person believed there is a legislative act obliging the public officials to give information in sign language<sup>246</sup>. This interviewee pointed out that the obligation is already provided in the Administrative Act of 1982:

....the Act says also that the civil service may grant information on the sign language in other situations, that is, for instance in situations where the deaf person herself or himself initiated the matter (Daavid<sup>247</sup>, academic, 2006).

However, the obligation is not often extended to minority languages the clause in other legislation re: the civil service being allowed to do it does not mean the person has a right to it. According to another respondent:

No, the government is legally obliged to provide information in both national languages, Finnish and Swedish and they tend to forget to provide for other minority languages including Finnish SL (Nelma, community, 2006).

However, Nelma remained optimistic as she described the extent of access to information and the extent of access, especially to FinnSL on the websites:

... Not many of them – some of them have Finnish SL inserted. For example, the police website has used Finnish SL to broadcast their information. ...The parliament website has the Finnish SL version too. Only a selected few websites have Finnish SL in their information

---

<sup>246</sup> In this legislation, the term is not specified as the Finnish Sign Language as it uses a generic term.

<sup>247</sup> All names of interviewees are pseudonyms and are identified by Finnish or Irish forenames. Given the small size of the Deaf communities in both countries, the hearing and occupation status are not listed. The list of pseudonyms and their arenas of activity is given in the appendix 3.

dissemination but I think there will be an increase of them in the future.  
(Nelma, community, 2006)

Not everyone shares this optimism. Another interviewee described the state social welfare agency's approach to the disseminating of information: she said it exemplified the slow approach to respecting linguistic rights of Finnish SL users:

The authority responsible for administering social welfare in this country is KELA ...One of its' responsibilities is to disseminate information through several languages; recently they produced videos in the Finnish Sign Language information about drug administration, child benefits and how to get sick benefits etc. It only recently happened, especially after ten years of SL recognition on the constitution. This exemplifies a gradual approach by the state... That's in the year of 2005 (Riikka, community, 2005).

The last interviewee, Riikka, complained about the slow movement by the state to ensure information be given in Finnish SL. However, the next interviewee gave a favourable view. This interviewee, who emigrated to Finland from a western country, had an experience of dealing with access to information in the other country; the situation in Finland was much more favourable, comparatively speaking:

Let me show you the example in [**name of country withheld**] first, when I required using public services like the GP<sup>248</sup> or dealing with public officials. I had to pay the cost of interpretations and this was really a barrier to me because of its high cost. Many Deaf people experienced the same and we had to pay the cost with no state support. But while in Finland, we are entitled to 120 hours of free interpreting whether we need it for dealing with the GP or public officials or any other events (Sirikka, community, 2005)<sup>249</sup>.

Access to information in Finnish SL appears to be provided on a piecemeal or incremental approach despite the presence of legislative clauses obliging the public authorities to provide FinnSL services. However, the allocation of free interpreting

---

<sup>248</sup> Though the term 'GP' may not exist in the Finnish vocabulary, I took the liberty to make a cultural and linguistic equivalent for general practitioner.

<sup>249</sup> This person is an immigrant to Finland so she was in a position to compare the Finnish situation against her home country. The identity of country is withheld for anonymity reasons since the size of the Finnish Deaf community is quite small.



hours to each Deaf person has extended the access to information, which enables her to exercise citizenship duties and rights.

#### *10.6.1.2 Demand for SL format*

This section discusses demand by users for information to be translated into Finnish SL. This can be regarded as a simple barometer for Finnish SL to assert its linguistic rights. The following comment is well put by one of the interviewees:

Well, I think it depends on individuals - some of them are assertive and well able to demand their rights while others are passive. Older people tend to be more passive and reserved while young people are more assertive and confident - able to express their linguistic identity etc. The younger population is quicker to point to the constitution to justify their position while the situation is quite the reverse for the older population. The older population is more passive and quickly accepts their lowly status - maybe due to their historical experience of being repressed (Irene, community, 2005).

It is clear from this comment that a collective Deaf assertiveness is not operational across the age spectrum but it does indicate that the constitutional reference has inspired many young Deaf people. However, the collective assertiveness has not led to public officials responding in FinnSL. This can be exemplified by this following comment:

Personally, I had sent video messages in Finnish SL through email and they are often responded to in Finnish but they would not send a video message in reply. If you want to know more information, you have to go there in person with the interpreter (Nelma, community, 2006).

One would be forgiven for assuming from the legislative provision in Finland as described above, and the hours of free FinnSL available that the interpretation would be regularly available for both public agencies and Deaf users. One interviewee described the level of availability among interpreters in the Helsinki area:

Not really - in the capital area [sic – Helsinki area], about 50% try to order an interpreter and they don't get it, so half of the situation [sic] they need it they get nothing (Marja, community, 2006).

Given the limited availability of interpreters in the Helsinki area, the public official suggested maximising the ‘resources’:

I believe that there would be a need, however, I am afraid that as sign language users generally read Finnish or Swedish, it is considered that kind of information covers the need, and sign language resources should be used in the actual interactive communication situations (Annika, administration, 2006)

If the official attitude is reflected in what Annika said (and both anecdotal evidence and several responses from the interviewees claim it is the official view), a considerable amount of information is not translated into Finnish SL. Moreover, the views of Annika are a clear example of general social expectations for Deaf people, Deaf users can read information themselves so interpretation is limited to verbal communication. This attitude adds a considerable burden on users who cannot avail of electronic communication such as email services and have to travel in order to avail of information.

Despite the availability of free interpreting hours given to each Deaf person, the limited availability of interpreters, and the probable attitude of public officials regarding the economic use of resources and their expectations that the Deaf users have sufficient literacy ability, Deaf people who use Finnish SL struggle to exercise their citizenship rights and duties. Signed language is seen as a compensatory tool and there is little attention given to using FinnSL as a language in its own right, though FinnSL users have the right to chose it, even if they have literacy skills.

Though the Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD)’s attempts to meet the shortcomings in this regard, there are shortcomings: some ministries for example are not willing to fund alternative formats for access to information. The difficulties are identified by this following comment:

There is a contradiction here. For example the ministries won’t pay the likes of FAD to transmit information through Finnish SL, yet we resolved

these situations for them - yet they would not give money because of low demand for signed translation on websites, etc. That is strange... Well, we have to be content with the current information dissemination but we lag behind time wise etc. It takes a considerable amount of time to produce and distribute FAD videos - often one or two months behind - however it is pleasant to see information in Finnish SL (Erkki, community, 2005)

The attitude of ministries towards FinnSL is not the main barrier, as one interviewee claimed that there were regional disparities in access to information for Deaf people across the country:

Some municipalities are very reluctant to provide services if there are few Deaf people in their areas while other municipalities are very responsive; even if the number of Deaf people is few on the ground. Municipalities often assess the feasibility of providing services through the number of people using the services rather than seeing it as a right for the people (Nelma, community, 2006).

In Finland, access to information through the medium of Finnish SL is taken seriously in some parts of the country and some agencies while it remains aspirational in other parts. Deaf people through their representative organisation largely activate the demand for Finnish SL as the medium of information dissemination and the state appears to fund such services when it sees fit. FinnSL is clearly treated as an auxiliary provision rather than as a right for FinnSL users.

#### ***10.6.1.3 Arrangement of interpretation services***

Access to information is often correlated with the availability of the interpretation services and the arrangement of interpreting assignments. For example, agencies tend to view interpretation services as the sole possible means of interacting with Deaf SL users without attempts to develop or avail of other formats.

The arrangement of interpreters can be a considerable burden on the Finnish SL users but are viewed as a necessary evil by many respondents. The following comment is an example:

Personally, we have to arrange our own time in advance. It would be an excellent idea if we leave the booking / arrangement of interpreters to these service providers so we can feel equal [with the hearing society] but

unfortunately, they have to be reminded constantly (Nelma, community, 2006). [My insertion]

Service providers being constantly reminded to arrange interpretations can be considered as a burden on Finnish SL users; hence the language policy on access to information can be regarded as not equitable. Even arranging interpretation for a simple task can be a considerable burden as described as follows:

It would be time-consuming for me as a consumer to organise interpreters. For example, when I need an appointment with the doctor - I have to go to the doctor one week beforehand to let this doctor organise an interpreter for us, rather than my going to the doctor to book on a particular date. Then the interpreter might not be available for this date. This would cause more inconvenience/hassle for me to go to the doctor/ interpreter's agency (Erkki, community, 2005).

The burden of reminding the service providers can be negatively responded to by them by the issuing of clichéd excuses such as financial constraints. The following comment exemplifies this situation:

Yes, I have reminded them that next time, they have to take responsibility for arranging interpreters but they often use the financial restraints as the excuse. I often remind them that municipalities are legally obliged to fund the interpreters (Nelma, community, 2006).

*However, one interviewee claimed that the service providers are legally obliged to arrange interpreters:*

Yes I think so, but actually in the law it says that it is the municipalities' responsibility to arrange the interpreter to be there so it is not the responsibility of the deaf person or the person who needs it. But it is rare (Marja, community, 2006).

There seems confusion in the interpretation of the laws by Deaf people in Finland as they see the rights differing from the municipalities' interpretation of the laws. Despite the apparent reluctance of service providers to arrange interpretation, there

are a number of factors that hinder the interpretation services such as the prudent booking of the interpreters. The following comment described the general situation:

Maybe I am very prudent booking interpreters in advance but whatever you say, interpreters on demand or on the spot don't exist here. The usual period for booking in advance is one week. For example, always contact the doctor to make an appointment; I immediately contact the agency for the interpreter. At one time, I left it too late and managed to get one interpreter from the agency - I was so lucky (Sirikka, community, 2005).

Another factor is the choice of interpreters and the choice is often based on their fluency of Finnish SL:

As for the choice of interpreter, I prefer to choose one myself rather than leave it to the public service or official to book (Sirikka, community, 2005).

However, another interviewee viewed the situation differently. If the state financed the interpretation, she would regard it as the business of the state and not her to choose the interpreter. She went on to explain the situation:

But if I use family occasions such birthdays, christenings so on, I would make a preferential choice - but for other activities - meetings, work etc., they can decide which interpreters are to be assigned to. I don't give it consideration. After all, the government pays all interpreters so it's out of my hands (Riikka, community, 2005).

When she was pressed about the possible scenario when the quality of interpreters might not be as good as she wished, she replied:

If there were 2 interpreters, and I may be not happy in terms of their quality, I would inform the agency not to use them again for me. However, given the scarce number of interpreters available on the ground, I don't have that luxury and many good interpreters are contractually employed elsewhere. Hence, the quality of interpretation in general suffers but I can't do anything about it (Riikka, community, 2005).

The arrangement for interpretation to avail of access to information is overwhelmingly burdened on the Deaf Finnish SL users' shoulders. Allowing for the fact that many users prefer to arrange interpreters themselves to ensure quality and confirmation of appointment, it is clear that the language policy in terms of arranging the interpreter has not been fully thought out. It appears from the responses above that the responsibility for arranging interpreters was often regarded as a personal nature rather than a business matter for service providers.

### *10.7 Irish situation*

The recent initiative in promoting active citizenship by the Irish government is an example of the new focus and understanding of citizenship internationally. In its final report, the concept of active citizenship is regarded as going beyond political participation and it focuses on engagement, participation and involvement in societies. This report issues a number of recommendations to promote active citizenship across the society. Among them, the recommendations, accessibility to public services is defined in terms of supporting those who find it difficult to access services (Taskforce on Active Citizenship 2007).

To deal with this, the Irish state has enacted the law known as the Disability Act 2005 and it aims to ensure that services are accessible for disabled people including deaf people. One of the clauses focuses on access to information as follows:

28.—(1) Where a public body communicates with one or more persons, the head of the body shall ensure —

(a) if the communication is an oral one and the person or persons aforesaid has a hearing impairment and so requests, or

(b) if the communication is a written one and the person or persons aforesaid has a visual impairment and so requests, that, as far as practicable, the contents of the communication are communicated in a form that is accessible to the person concerned (Ireland 2005).

At the first glance, the clause seems reasonable but there are several implied limitations. The wording – ‘*as far as practicable*’ - implies that the clause only becomes effective if there are sufficient resources such as the availability of money.

Worse still, it could depend on a level of goodwill with officials. Deaf users then would be forced to rely on goodwill and cooperation with officials in order to gain access to services. Otherwise officials can use the '*as far as practicable*' excuse.

Another example of implicit limitations is that the alternative format can be limited only to oral communication for Deaf users. This could mean the exclusion of information on websites, leaflets and other text-based information from the translation of spoken languages to ISL. This implies that there are no literacy issues for Deaf people, although it is known that there are serious issues regarding the literacy ability among Deaf people<sup>250</sup>. In addition, this could imply that a Deaf person with sufficient hearing and ability to use speech would be denied access to ISL even if she wished to access information. Another interesting observation regarding this clause is that ISL is clearly seen as a compensatory tool rather than a language in its own right.

To date, a few government bodies, notably the Referendum Commission<sup>251</sup> and the Equality Authority, have been accommodating when requested to have information translated through DVDs or videotapes (Irish Deaf Society 2007). However, these signed versions are not shown on their websites.

The main governmental information websites, Citizen Information (<http://www.citizensinformation.ie>) is entirely text-based and provided in several languages<sup>252</sup> apart from the national languages. There is no ISL translation on these websites. Comhairle (now renamed as Citizens Information Board) prides itself in increasing accessibility to information for the public and has it as one of the main strategic objectives (Pillinger 2005: 9). Following up this objective, Comhairle published a booklet advising information services to have information accessible for all groups in society (Pillinger 2005). It had established the videophone information

---

<sup>250</sup> According to the National Rehabilitation Board's report on literacy levels among Deaf children (1991), it found that of the 300 plus children who were involved in the survey, the average 16 year old child has the reading level of a nine year old hearing child.

<sup>251</sup> This commission recently financed the ISL translation DVD of the Lisbon Treaty referendum explanatory leaflet.

<sup>252</sup> These languages are Polish, Romanian, and French.

scheme<sup>253</sup> but it is not known whether this scheme is successful or frequently availed of.

The number of qualified interpreters in Ireland is difficult to determine because there is no central register of interpreters. From a number of sources ranging from the websites of referral agencies<sup>254</sup> to research reports, the estimated number is 50. According to the report published by de Wit (2008), the 6:1 for Finland while 125:1 for Ireland) for the interpreters against the Deaf population in Ireland estimated as 1:25 (Wit 2008)

According to the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland's (BCI) report, the amount of signing on Irish television is very limited. The overall weekly amount given in the Irish Sign Language is 47 minutes and the signing is done through two specific programmes aimed at the Deaf community. They are News for the Deaf and Hands On (a feature programme) on RTE television. While Hands On is of a seasonal nature, the amount in its absence is reduced to 27 minutes weekly (BCI 2003:64)<sup>255</sup>. The BCI recommends that the amount of signing on the Irish television be increased to almost 30 minutes daily within the time frame from 2005 to 2008 (BCI, n/d – website: <http://www.bci.ie> - accessed July 2008). The target has not been reached and appears to be of an aspirational nature<sup>256</sup>.

It is clear that access to information for Deaf ISL users is severely limited and thus impairs their ability to exercise their participation rights in the Irish society.

---

<sup>253</sup> Comhairle set up this videophone information scheme where ISL users can sign to the live monitor where interpreters can relay to the service provider.

<sup>254</sup> They are Sign Language Interpreting Service (<http://www.slis.ie>), Bridge Interpreting (<http://www.bridgeinterpreting.ie>), the School for the Irish Sign Language (<http://www.cslstudies.com>) and Kerry Deaf Resources Centre (<http://www.kdrc.com>)

<sup>255</sup> While the report was issued in the year of 2003, on the basis of personal monitoring, the amount of signing on RTE television appears static to date.

<sup>256</sup> In an informal personal communication with an official in RTE, she informed that technical and copyright issues are the obstacles in achieving that target though RTE is committed to achieve this target.



### *10.7.1 Commentary from Irish interviewees*

#### ***10.7.1.1 The scope and nature of language policy in accessing information***

This section examines why language policy influences access to information. It is well known that the Language Act 2003 obliges the statutory bodies to provide information in both official languages – Irish and English. They can range from text-based information to telephony dealings (An Coimisinéir Teanga, website: [www.coimisineir.ie](http://www.coimisineir.ie) - accessed July 2008). But for minority spoken languages, there are many instances that information is provided through the medium of these languages (see page 13 of Chapter 7). Having outlined the level of information available through the ISL, the availability of ISL-based information text is viewed as limited by many interviewees. However, people vary in terms of how limited they perceived it to be with some seeing it as severely limited and others as partially limited. The following comment can be typical of the extreme view:

Full? No. Partial? No. Maybe 1% I would say. In terms of information being available to Deaf people in ISL? That's not really a lot, you wouldn't even have 1% - 0.0001% or something like that you would have (Cathal, community, 2005).

While for others, especially the hearing interviewees, access is viewed as partial:

I'd say, there is only ... partial access at the moment, now I believe a lot of that is related to the provision of interpreters for Deaf people, and what they want to do is to fund more places on interpreting courses for deaf people so that it will...<sup>257</sup> they will be able to bring interpreters to every situation where they need information (Enda, academic, 2006).

There is a clear division on this view. Deaf interviewees tend to view the situation more severely than their hearing counterparts. It points out the possibility that hearing people have ready access to information and have not experienced any frustration.

For one, the public view of signed versions can be regarded as a comestic exercise without any meaningful substance for the Deaf community so it signifies the lack of recognition for ISL:

---

<sup>257</sup> This interviewee did not finish off this sentence and he simply continued to this next sentence

In a minor way, in a very minor way, you know like I commented on the election times, you will see advertisements signed, certain health announcements might be signed and it's now the done thing to have a signer up on the podium for public speeches; that's helping raise awareness but I don't think there is a true policy or statement there to press forward with recognition or development (Fiona, 2006).

The last comment made it clear that public exercises, such as putting up interpreters on the stage to interpret at public events does not represent a serious commitment by the public agencies if this is all that is done..

#### ***10.7.1.2 Demand for SL format***

Having outlined the limited availability of information through the medium of ISL, it would be interesting to examine the level of demand by ISL users themselves for the information to be delivered through ISL. There is a mixed reaction to this issue. One optimistic interviewee believes that:

Yes, there are a lot of Deaf people very much like that [they would demand relentlessly] (Ciara, community, 2006). [my insertion]

However, few other interviewees do not share this view. One interviewee explained the dilemma of demanding information through ISL:

Well you can, yes, but many Deaf people do not know how to go about it. Many have never been told. I mean they are not able to demand but it isn't their fault. It's not that they don't want it, that wouldn't be true at all. You need to be careful about how you portray it. They may not be demanding services through ISL but the people who provide the services - I believe they have never refused, so it's not that they are saying they are not permitted to do that. It is more that when we ask, they need time to change and to evolve the services and that can take years (Cathal, community, 2005).

This interviewee believed that there is an amount of good will among information providers albeit, that it would take years to develop an understanding. However, the following comment by an official on the administrative side contradicts this claim:

If there is a demand it is not coming through to us - whether it has not been generated because people do not have an awareness of their entitlement or the need to seek it out. This is what we started recognising when we looked at the work for interpreting services for the deaf, that the demand was not really reflective of the need because people historically or to date, have not had these opportunities to avail of interpretive services so they don't know to ask for it or see the need to ask for it. So measuring demand is perhaps not the best way at this particular point in time of looking at this. I suppose we need to be more proactive in making these services known to people who are deaf (Grainne, administration, 2006).

So for the interviewees, the demand for information to be provided through ISL is largely untested because of the apparent passivity of ISL users themselves and the lack of awareness on the information providers' part. Some Deaf people believe that this is largely symptomatic of the wider society and its political system. One interviewee commented upon this part:

I think users of ISL are just not seen by our legislators. Our legislators just don't understand that there is a whole community out there with its own language that they are not considering. Yeah it's not...[that] we don't have a proactive system, we don't have a legislator that seeks to rectify [the injustice of not recognising ISL] (Fiona, community, 2006). [my insertion]

This person believed the lack of demand for information to be provided through ISL is largely down to the supposed invisibility of ISL users in the society. Yet, one interviewee claimed that such requests were refused from time to time:

The Irish Deaf Society did get some refusals - they kept challenging and going at it on many occasions (Cathal, community, 2005).

The official on the administrative side had a different view of the situation:

Occasionally someone would have a specific request but most organizations would be requested to provide an interpreter and most organizations would be happy to do that. There is a difficulty that can arise from costs from time to time and that is the effective utilization of resources (Malachi, administration, 2006).

When asked if there were legal challenges, most of the interviewees were not aware of any serious attempt to mount a legal challenge. One interviewee claimed that ISL is absent due to the absence of legal supports:

Well there's many major challenges on the Irish [language] side of things but not in ISL because there's no legislation that says you have to recognize ISL, so it's difficult to take a case (Fiona, community, 2006). [my insertion]

From the response from the interviewees, it is quite clear that challenges or demand to extend information through the medium of ISL have to be considered within the context of availability of resources.

#### *10.7.1.3 Willingness of agencies to extend*

Some responses linked the willingness to the lack of legislative obligations while others experienced some rudimentary attempts to deal with ISL users. There are mixed views on the level of willingness agencies to extend information through ISL. Regarding the legislative obligation, one interviewee compared the status of ISL to the Irish language:

Ya [sic] but in a public service you have to employ people who are capable of using Gaelic, the Irish language; everyone in the country has the right to access any public service through Irish. That's a legal right in our constitution, so the public has the right to that, but again ISL isn't a recognised language so that's not going to happen unless the policy says we need to provide this. So we either have an ISL user on [the] staff to handle any query coming from an ISL user or... like you say, they do rely on [interpretation] (Fiona, community, 2006). [my insertion]

But some Deaf interviewees found that a number of agencies were willing to deal with ISL users albeit in a rudimentary manner:

Well, once in the hospital, but it was a pity. I went in and the nurse - let me think where - it was the [name withheld] - Hospital. I went in, and they saw I was Deaf. I hadn't even started to write notes or anything and there was no one asking me if I wanted an interpreter but the nurse said to me 'hold on there' and so I waited, I was told to sit down for a minute, and this man was sent up to me, this big fella in a white coat who worked

there. He wasn't a nurse or a doctor; he was more like a porter or an orderly. And he was able to sign because it turns out he had Deaf parents. But there's no confidentiality there. I was really uneasy about that, with this guy being with me all the time for my appointment (Ciara, community, 2006).

Many respondents had similar experiences. This is also reported in other reports (Conama and Grehan 2001, Conroy 2006). Overall, it seems that the agencies had showed willingness to serve ISL users but failed to recognize the sensitivities and issues surrounding the quality of interpreting and confidentiality. Yet, one respondent disputed the consensual view on the level of willingness of agencies to deal with ISL users:

There is some awareness, yes, but I don't think the awareness is raised enough, I don't think there are enough requests being made by people. But it is very rare for any organisation or group to say that they will make it for you, you always need to ask. And some of these organisations may say yes, and some may say no - as you said, it's based on goodwill (Eimear, community, 2006).

Another interviewee pointed that the awareness can border on ignorance:

Em... there is an interesting one that we have covered and it's not a blank refusal to provide a service but it's the blood transfusion service and with all their rules and trying to prevent anything getting into their blood bank, they have not these private interviews that are very personal where they talk to people about their sexual history, their relationships, and they ... This is something we ran a story on a few times last year. They have a policy of not allowing interpreters into that interview... now... which is stupid because the Deaf person certainly cannot communicate with a hearing person (Fiona, 2006)

It appears from the responses that there is willingness to extend access on the part of agencies. However, the willingness to extend services is often responded to with a rudimentary approach rather than having it properly resourced. Some believed it was down to the lack of legislative obligations on the agencies while others pointed other factors such as the passivity of SL users.

### *10.8 Concluding remarks*

Having covered a number of issues in relation to language policy for access to information, there are some similarities and differences between Finland and Ireland. On the basis of evidence arising from the data collection, it is clear that language policies for access to information is clearly dominated by medicalised thinking though there is some recent movement towards the social perspective in terms of providing access to information.

While Finland has more legislative rights for Finnish SL users, they are not fully enforced or enforceable. The Irish situation is barely covered by a number of clauses in the Disability Act but, these rights are limited in terms of enforcement. On evidence from the data collection, the legislative base makes little or no difference in enforcing the linguistic rights of Deaf SL users in both countries.

The resource allocation to ensure access to information is more impressive in Finland than in Ireland. The number of interpreters in Finland is one example of this (the ratio is the 6:1 for Finland while 125:1 for Ireland), though the issues such as availability of interpreters and quality of service appear to be challenging. For Ireland to reach the number of interpreters, it would take many years. Interestingly, in both countries, Deaf-led organisations such as the Finnish Association of the Deaf and the Irish Deaf Society, have taken their own initiative to develop videos and DVDs to meet the gaps in access to information. Both initiatives were largely supported by the states but they are treated in an ad hoc manner. For example, State web pages though SL is a rare sight in both countries.

The level of demand for the SL format shows some similarities and differences in both countries. The Finnish users appear to be more assertive than their Irish counterparts; however, those who are assertive are a minority few. Passivity was identified as a problem in this regard especially among older people in Finland. Some blamed passivity on poor educational attainments, which in turn caused lack of awareness. For others, complacency was a factor. Both claims had some merit but it requires further research and investigation to determine the reasons for Deaf people's passivity.

Another issue for Deaf people is that the information providers assume that the needs of SL users would be easily accommodated by text-based alternatives. While there are some Deaf people out there who may have sufficient literacy to access all information in text, it does not address the access issue fully for SL users. Even those who are literate, may prefer to express their views or requests in their own SL languages. This issue was not considered in terms of preparing the language policies in both countries. Assumptions that almost everyone has sufficient literacy in the dominant languages held very strongly by the state.

The arrangement of interpreters revealed an interesting insight. Though it is regarded as an important part of supporting language policy, this activity was largely treated as a private or personal matter. Both users and providers easily overlooked the effects of arrangement. For users, concerns over quality of interpreting and identity of interpreters overrode the concerns regarding the arrangement. For providers, they were content to leave the arrangement to the users and signified that they did not regard arrangements for interpretations a crucial part of enhancing language policies. They appeared to lack awareness that the effects of arranging interpreters can be burdensome – be it emotional or physical. Though the problems of arranging interpreters were more common in Finland, it did happen in Ireland too and it may have been greater if there was more interpreters available.

The willingness of agencies to extend access appeared to be strong in both countries. Very few interviewees experienced outright refusals or straight denial. If there were refusals, the reasons were often based on resource restraints. Hence, the language policies in the collective mind of information providers were more influenced and conditioned by the linkage to the availability of resources. This necessitated the goodwill of information providers and it had to be appreciated by users. This effectively reduces the options by the users to flex their rights, and it makes them dependent on goodwill. This creates a difficulty for them if they decide to demand, instead of playing on goodwill, as then they would be viewed as unreasonable. The dominant perspective on deafness is not a Deafhood one because SLs are treated as if they are compensatory or supplementary auxiliaries rather than being treated as languages in their own right.

Returning to the theme of citizenship that sets the tone of the chapter, it is clear that both responses from the Finnish and Irish interviewees exemplify the shift towards the social model. However, current policies have not liberated the Deaf communities in both countries in linguistic terms. While there are more resources and legislative changes particularly in Finland, the attitudinal elements on the part of service providers remain a stubborn barrier. There is considerable evidence of the medicalised thinking. Therefore, it is clear that Deaf people in both countries are not able to exercise their citizenship rights and responsibilities fully.



# Chapter 11

## Concluding commentary and implications

### *11.1 Introduction*

This concluding chapter provides a summary analysis and commentary on the main findings from the research.

This thesis set out to do two things. First, it set out to test the hypothesis that the social model of disability is necessary but not sufficient for realising equality of condition for Deaf people because it does not take sufficient account of the importance of either the culture or language to Deaf people. To test this hypothesis, it undertook a comparative study of two countries, Ireland and Finland that had quite different orientations to the social model<sup>258</sup> in terms of language policies towards sign languages. The goal was to see if having a stronger (in the case of Finland) as opposed to very weak (as in the case of Ireland) allegiance to a social model made a significant difference to the operation of policies in education and access to information for Deaf people in both countries.

The findings show that, although Finland is seen as a model country in Europe in terms of language policy regarding signed languages, and it has a much stronger adherence to a social model, reflected in the relatively high status accorded to the sign language in the constitution, this did not mean that Deaf people in Finland had significantly better access to education and information services in FinnSL than in Ireland. Finland did enhance services but not to a radical degree as it was not sufficiently cognisant of the cultural and linguistic differences between Deaf and

---

<sup>258</sup> Neither set of respondents were asked specifically about the social model of deafness or its applicability to various services. As this model is chiefly confined to academic dialogue, an analysis of their responses has been employed to determine the level to which the social model of deafness is applied.

hearing people. In fairness, both countries had not expressed or intended to implement the social model to deal with the issues facing Deaf communities. What is proposed, therefore, is that a Deafhood model needs to be developed if Deaf people are to experience equality of condition in relation to availing of education and information services on an equal basis with other citizens.

Since there is a widespread acceptance that there are two contrasting models (medical and social) that explain the different approaches of dealing with disability issues (Finkelstein 1991, Oliver 1996, Barnes 2001), it is noticeable that these models are used to deal with the issues facing the Deaf community<sup>259</sup> (for example, Kymlicka 1998<sup>260</sup>, Harris and Bamford 2001, Skelton and Valentine 2003, Quin and Redmond 2003, McDonnell 2007<sup>261</sup>). However, it is argued that the social model is not sufficient to deal with the culture and language unique to the Deaf community (Lane *et al* 1996, Ladd 2003, Batterbury *et al.* 2007, Bauman 2008, Emery 2009). Batterbury *et al* (2007) note the failure by the academic community to recognise the current hegemonic discursive beliefs that issues facing the Deaf communities should be handled within the social model.

Ladd (2003) and Lane (2005) are the most prominent in challenging the use of the social model to understand and address the inequalities of Deaf people. They argue for a different model to understand the issues facing the Deaf community. Ladd names the alternative as a Deafhood perspective. He claims the practices and norms of Deafhood are derived from Deaf heritage developed over many centuries. This research adopts this model as an appropriate model not only for explaining the differing language policies facing the Deaf communities, but also enabling Deaf people to gain equality of condition.

---

<sup>259</sup> The community is highly diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity, disabilities, and sexuality and urban/rural. Please see the definition in the section 1.8 of the first chapter.

<sup>260</sup> Kymlicka in his analysis of ethnic rights ponders the feasibility of extending such rights to the Deaf communities and he kept referring to them as a disabled group despite the fact that the issue of disability was not relevant or discussed in his analysis (Kymlicka 1998).

<sup>261</sup> Harris and Bamford (2001) refer to the effectiveness of social services for the Deaf community in Britain. Skelton and Valentine (2003) focus on geographical space and Deaf people in Britain. Quin & Redmond (1999) and McDonnell (2007) focus on disability issues in Ireland with some references to deaf-related issues.

The section begins by outlining the three differing perspectives on deafness; it then explains how each of these interrelates to different conceptions of equality and different language policy orientations. A brief commentary on the usefulness of applying Deafhood as a concept for researching such issues is presented.

The findings on each specific area of the study are outlined: the linguistic status of sign languages, language policy in education and access to information, and the extent to which findings support the core hypothesis. The policy implications of the findings are summarised in each area as well. While the findings are of a comparative nature, the policy implications are generally exclusive to the Irish situation.

### *11.2 Three differing 'perspectives' on deafness:*

There are three general perspectives on deafness: medical, social and Deafhood. While there are major differences between the medical and social models of deafness, the social model does not fully account for the experiences of the Deaf communities. Consequently, there are a number of issues related to the social model which can be regarded as anathema to many Deaf people as described in chapter 2.

Unlike social model thinkers who define differences as impairments, many Deaf people consider the level of hearing loss as socially insignificant or, even regard it as a characteristic trait. It is not seen as important. The most important principle for those who academically embrace the Deafhood concept is that the fraternisation and solidarity based on signed languages that develops among Deaf people and their related cultures, are of value in themselves. To hearing people, and professionals in the field, these may be contentious claims; however, Lane (2005) pleads that Deaf people themselves are the highest authority possible to identify themselves in a different context. They have a right to name the terms of their own identification like any other cultural minority and society should respect this.

With regard to the medical model, it is evident from a quick analysis of literature that champions the medical model that the references to sign languages and cultures are very rare. If there are references, the tone tends to be dismissive and patronising. Griffey (1994) is the main Irish example. Griffey (in 1967) had dismissed the claims

that signed languages were actually languages in their own right (Conama 2002); she retained the same view in years later:

For the deaf, language and knowledge can never be separated. Sign language is quite dependent on concrete situations and mime. Its informative power can be very limited without knowledge of a majority language such as English, French, etc. (Griffey 1994: 28)<sup>262</sup>

The distinction between impairment and disability emphasised by the disability movement is a huge step in understanding how societies oppress disabled people and deaf people by default. The social model has assisted disabled people considerably and also Deaf individuals. For example, access to the majority society is made possible by technological advances such as text messages on mobile phones, subtitled programmes on TVs and amplified telephones. However, these advances, while welcome, are ultimately about enabling the assimilation of Deaf people into hearing society. Yet, as substantiated in chapters 3 and 4, Deaf people still value the fraternisation and solidarity within the Deaf communities in and of itself<sup>263</sup>. The social model fails to take account fully of the cultural uniqueness of Deaf communities and for this reason is not regarded as taking full cognisance of their perspective in interpreting deafness (Lane et al. 1996, Ladd 2003, Lane 2005, Batterbury et al. 2007, Emery 2009).

Deaf communities are seeking both linguistic and cultural recognition. Yet, it is clear from the literature review and responses from the interviewees that the claims for recognition are often dismissed, submerged or distorted by several factors including economic costs (having interpreters is too costly), pragmatism (it is better for Deaf people to integrate fully with hearing people as advanced technology is making integration more and more possible), attitudes towards the status of sign languages (failures to recognise sign languages in their own right) and structural factors

---

<sup>262</sup> In fairness to Griffey (1994), while she adopted an ambiguous stance on sign languages as a whole, she did see some benefits in signing but only for those who could not speak or write.

<sup>263</sup> Contrary to the widespread belief and assumptions held in several quarters, the Deaf community is not an isolated entity, is an integral part of wider society. It is beyond this study to explain how such assumptions are developed but it would provide a fascinating research.

(capitalism reinforces individualism making it difficult to make collective claims and enabling the commercialisation and control of welfare services for Deaf people by outsiders).

The perspectives based on the medical model tend to dismiss the cultural and linguistic claims of Deaf people overtly while those who favour the social model support such claims but are not focused on its importance for Deaf identity (Lane *et al.* 1996, Ladd 2003, Lane 2005, Batterbury *et al.* 2007, Emery 2009). The supporters of the social model acknowledge the existence of sign languages and applaud the efforts of having them recognised at the national level. However, their reasons for supporting it reflect the underlying view that sign language is a compensatory tool. For instance, Oliver<sup>264</sup> (2004:29) suggests that the social model backs the claim for linguistic recognition by the British Deaf community just because the majority society could not ‘speak’ British Sign Language. In contrast, the Deaf movement, the FDP<sup>265</sup> did not make a similar claim. They sought recognition for BSL as a language in its own right. Other prolific writers such as Shakespeare and Barnes had made references to British Sign Language and the British Deaf community but they retain the underlying dominant view that sign languages are compensatory and still regard the Deaf as a part of the disability movement. Though these social model theorists abhor the idea of an impairment specific approach to claim societal rights (i.e. the Deaf group as a separate and independent one to claim), as they prefer to see the disability movement as the whole one to make a unified claim for societal rights, yet, these writers make an exception of the Deaf community but it is surely a major contradiction.

A quick content analysis of selected literature written by the most prominent proponents of the social model of disability in Britain such as Barnes, Finkelstein, Swain & French, Mercer, Morris, Oliver, and Shakespeare reveals that the frequency of references to key terms such as Deaf people, Deaf community, British Sign

---

<sup>264</sup> Mike Oliver is one of the most prolific supporters of the social model and in fact, he was the first who used the term the social model of disability.

<sup>265</sup> The Federation of Deaf People was the leading movement for a linguistic recognition for BSL.

Language<sup>266</sup> and Deaf culture runs to a single digit number in the writing of each one. They do make explicit references to these key terms but do not address the uniqueness sufficiently (Bynoe Oliver & Barnes 1991, Barnes 1991, Barnes & Mercer 1999 & 2003, Finkelstein 2001, Oliver 1996 & 2003, Shakespeare 2006, Swain & French 2004, Morris 2003, 2005). It is also noticeable from this analysis that the frequency of using such aforementioned terms increased gradually from the early 1990s onwards.

A word of warning is necessary here. Judging from this review of literature on disability rights, those who promote the social model of disability to deal with issues facing disabled people, can be regarded as radical. They are arguing from a radical equality of condition perspective but their work, while valuable, has not recognised sufficiently the uniqueness of Deaf communities and their sign languages. They appear to believe that the rights of Deaf people can be accommodated within the social model of disability. However, many commentators such as Lane et al. (1996), Corker (1998), Ladd (2003), Batterbury et al (2007), Bauman (2008), and Emery (2009) have testified that the social model of disability had not achieved the desired level of equality for the Deaf communities for a number of reasons, not least with its focus on the integration of ‘disabled people’ into mainstream society. This is not prioritised so much by Deaf people.

It is relatively easy to assume that the concept of Deafhood is just an extension of the social model. However; it can be argued that Deafhood operates from a ‘different’ centre because it bases its argument on the centrality of signed languages and related cultures rather than perspectives from hearing society. Deaf communities have consistently claimed that signed languages are part of their intrinsic being and the *raison d'être* of their existences. It would be better to treat Deafhood on its stand-alone basis though it has to be said that the social model does benefit the Deaf individuals in some ways such as giving them access to communication via text messages on mobile phones, subtitled programmes on TVs and amplified telephones. It is also argued that the social model of deafness is the only realistic alternative to offering some

---

<sup>266</sup> These writers are British and their writings permeate the Irish disability literature (for example, see Quin and Redmond 1999; McDonnell 2007).

legitimacy to Deaf communities in terms of claiming resources and spaces in society. This realistic alternative is only made possible because the majority society hold the hegemonic grip of labelling and legitimising minority groups. It only embraces the social model gradually to ensure fairness and justice for disabled groups (Lane et al. 1996, Ladd 2003, Lane 2005, Batterbury et al. 2007, Emery 2009). O'Connell (2008) reports similar experiences in the Irish context with respondents recognising the structural limitations of their quest for collective rights.

Given the relatively small size of Deaf communities in most countries, they often feel it is necessary to opt for pragmatic approaches to avail of whatever support and resources are needed to survive or function in societies. For example, Deaf people avail of state benefits or of legislations aimed at disabled people to reassert their positions. Some view it as an economic necessity or even compensation for the lack of linguistic and cultural recognition (Lane *et al* 1996). Given the high level of individualisation of interest in contemporary capitalist societies (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002), Deaf people, like other members of society are required to individualise their claims in order to function; they have to accept the terms on which services are offered when their collective claims are not accepted. These pragmatic responses should not be mistaken as an indication that the Deaf communities are supporting assimilation into a hearing society or subscribing to a social model of deafness.

If there were viable policy options available based on a Deafhood model that recognised the culture and language of Deaf people, there is growing evidence that most would choose these options. There is a growing demand to understand Deafhood in the US and Britain and there are graduate studies programmes based on this concept available in some universities (for instances, see Centre for Deaf Studies, Bristol University<sup>267</sup>, Ohlone College in California<sup>268</sup>). As well, some universities offer annual or biannual conferences on this subject (for instance, Utah Valley State

---

<sup>267</sup> Centre for Deaf Studies, University of Bristol  
<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/deaf/english/postgraduate/msc/>.

<sup>268</sup> Ohlone College Summer School: <http://www.ohlone.edu/org/gurc/docs/deafhoodflyer.pdf>

College<sup>269</sup>). The president of the World Federation of the Deaf made a plea to the United Nations forum on minorities to include Deaf communities worldwide for their considerations (World Federation of the Deaf website: <http://www.wfdeaf.org/news.aspx#71> - accessed January 2009). There are a number of blogs and websites discussing the concept of Deafhood<sup>270</sup>. It is also exemplified by literature in Deaf Studies, as there are an increasing number of references to Deafhood (Tijsseling 2005<sup>271</sup>; Bauman 2008, Emery 2009).

Ladd (2003) notes that while the concept of Deafhood is terminologically new, its strengths are in the fraternisation and solidarity among Deaf people at local, national and international levels. This has been displayed over decades through the ways in which Deaf people around the world share so much in terms of culture and language. Murray (2007) outlines chronologically the list of international events that Deaf people met for social, cultural and political reasons dated back to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>272</sup>. The international sports competition for Deaf people is dated back to the early 1920s (Eickman 2006). Bauman (2008) describes the continually strong sense of transnational solidarity among Deaf people and it is also supported by many commentators such as Emery (2009), and Banbury et al. (2007). These commentators point to the cultural phenomenon of Deaf communities connecting each other through local, regional, national and international channels.

In fairness to the disabled writers who champion the social model of disability, one has to apply a clear distinction between the theoretical explanation of the social model and the administrative application of this model on the ground. However, the theoretical foundations of this social model, to some extent, underpin the administrative application.

---

<sup>269</sup> Utah Valley State College <http://www.uvsc.edu/asl/deafstudies/DST%20Schedule%202008>

<sup>270</sup> Such an example: see <http://www.deafhooddiscourses.com/>

<sup>271</sup> Corrie Tijsseling is based in the Netherlands and it testifies that the concept of Deafhood is known to and has reached Dutch academics.

<sup>272</sup> It is interesting to note that Irish Deaf people were involved in these events (Murray 2007).



There has been a bracketing together of Deaf people with disabled people in public policy as the equality legislation in Ireland and many other countries shows<sup>273</sup>. Deaf people are defined as disabled and the proponents of the social model have not argued for recognition of the linguistic and cultural uniqueness of Deaf communities. Yet, Deaf people tend to fraternise with each other at local, regional, national and international levels. As part of this fraternisation, a type of endogamy is actively encouraged and sought for by many Deaf people; residential schools are championed over mainstream schools and Deaf clubs become a hub of social and cultural activities. International sports and cultural events and exchanges are actively encouraged and have been held for decades<sup>274</sup>. Many commentators such as Ladd, (2003), Lane, (2005), Batterbury, Ladd and Gulliver, (2007) Bauman, (2008), Emery, (2009) point out that the social model is inadequate to cover these features because the fraternisation of Deaf people is championed and this championing would challenge the overriding assimilationist principle of accessing and participating in the majority world which is a core goal of disability theorists.

The concept of Deafhood emphasises the fraternisation of Deaf people and by default, the sign languages are championed, not just tolerated by them. They seek full access to the majority society but not by assimilationist policies. Rather, they prefer to be recognised by their difference based on the sign languages. Therefore, for the sake of equality and inclusion, the Deafhood concept is the best way of formulating and implementing positive language policies, which are aimed at the Deaf communities.

---

<sup>273</sup> Snoddon (2009) examines disability legislations in Canada, the US and Australia in the context of whether they give recognition to signed language rights. On the findings of her research, she suggests that while these disability legislations view Deaf students as disabled, the ineffectiveness of these legislations to realise the language rights for these students is noted. She suggests: *“Of all the strategies for educational reform and improvement that have been tried by Deaf communities and associations of Deaf people around the world, the legal approach may be the last frontier. Native signed languages are in need of attitude, status, corpus, and acquisition planning”* (Snoddon 2009: 268).

<sup>274</sup> CISS (The International Committee of Sports for the Deaf), the forerunner of the current Deaflympics had its first summer games in 1924 and winter games in 1949 (<http://www.deaflympics.com>). It is also reported that cultural and political events aiming at Deaf people were held internationally starting in the early 1800s (Lane 1992, Ladd 2003, Murray 2007). International and national associations of Deaf people were formed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century well before the disability movements were developed (Ladd 2003, Murray 2007). All events emphasised the centrality of sign languages.

The principles underpinning the Deafhood framework are the championing of signed languages and the related cultures of Deaf communities. The Deafhood perspective shows how Deaf people are in their abilities to communicate transnational; this enables Deaf people to act as global citizens. Any reference to hearing status or hearing loss is rendered. Deaf communities believe that they are an asset in a globalised world and therefore, their existence and culture should not be questioned. These principles clearly differentiate the Deafhood from the social model, as the latter seems to favour more integrational approaches.

### 11.3 Deafhood, Equality and Language Policy

There are three major ways in which equality is defined in policy terms, basic, liberal and equality of condition (Baker *et al.* 2004). As can be seen from Table 11.1, the concept of Deafhood is closely aligned with the concept of equality of condition because it focuses on giving full respect and recognition to signed languages rather than merely tolerating them or facilitating them (a liberal position) or denying their importance (the basic equality model). The Deafhood and the equality of condition perspectives are, in turn, aligned with a ‘rights’ orientation to language policy for Deaf people as each assumes that Deaf people have a culture and language which is distinctive and deserves not only to be fostered but to be celebrated. In order to simplify the interface between all areas, a table is created here (Table 11:1).

Table 11.1: The relationship between levels of equality with the perspectives on deafness and language policy orientations

<b><i>Levels of equality (Baker et al 2004)</i></b>	<b><i>Models of deafness (Corker 1998, Lane 2005, Ladd 2003 etc)</i></b>	<b><i>Language policy orientations (Ruiz 1984, 1990)</i></b>	<b><i>General characteristic reasons for such disadvantaged situations</i></b>	<b><i>General characteristic solutions / reasons to address situations</i></b>
Basic equality	Medical	Language as a problem	Minority languages blamed for poverty /	Banish / ameliorate / replace minority languages with majority languages

			disadvantaged. Individuals, not societies are blamed for problems	in order to increase likelihood of accessing majority societies
Liberal egalitarians <sup>275</sup>	Social	Language as a resource	Signed languages are unfairly treated and should be supported as much as possible. They are treated as compensatory or communication tools rather than languages in its own right	Signed languages are tolerated rather than celebrated or equalised alongside with majority languages
Equality of condition	Deafhood	Language as a collective right	Minority languages are unfairly situated by structural factors and societies	Societal or structural issues must be addressed to ensure the equal treatment of minority languages

With regard to the alignment of the medical model and basic equality, both focus on basic human rights while ignoring significant structural and social inequalities. As for the social model and liberal egalitarians, they recognise the inequalities but aim to minimise them rather than eliminating these inequalities. However, the alignment of the social model and liberal egalitarians can be problematic because of the range of views within liberalism. For example, the borderline between the medical model and the social model is easy to recognise and similarly for the basic equality and liberal

---

<sup>275</sup> Liberal egalitarians should not be treated as a monolithic in their views and application of egalitarian measures. There is a very broad continuum in this category stretching from weak liberals to radical liberals. In the political philosophy, both Nozick and Rawls can be considered as liberals but they do not share the same views on the limits of individual liberty and the extent of government intervention in social services.

egalitarians. However, some liberals are quite radical in relation to equality while others rear towards a more cautious conservative view. It is not surprising therefore, some egalitarian measures based on the social model can be liberating for Deaf communities.

Within the Deafhood framework, the target for achieving the equality of condition for Deaf communities, is the development of positive language policies. Ruiz (1984) provides a useful framework for analysing language policy orientations. He identifies three orientations, namely defining language as ‘a problem’, ‘a resource’ or ‘a right’. Ruiz (1984) suggests that the language is defined as having a ‘problem orientation’ where the state or its agencies regard the minority language as a policy difficulty and it is to be blamed for its own disadvantages. This thinking resembles the medical model’s views on sign languages quite a lot. Both the language ‘problem orientation’ model and the medical model tend to support the assimilation of minority language users. Both claim a noble purpose: to have the users of minority languages assimilated into societies as much as possible. The assimilation can be interpreted as motivated by having basic equality for all and to ensure all have access to society. The assimilation can be interpreted as motivated by providing Deaf people with the basic communicative capacity to interact with other members of society, while assuming that they are incapable of communicating at the same level as those others.

The social model is aligned with approaching language with a ‘resource orientation’ towards language. Ruiz argues that a resource orientation offers a compromise and harmony. This implies toleration and cooperation by all concerned and remains silent on structural inequalities, namely the status and culture associated with the language itself. Both areas emphasise the assimilationist principle but the proponents of the social model recognise that the sources of oppression are in societies not in languages.

The Deafhood framework is easily aligned with the view of language as a ‘right’ because both emphasise the uniqueness of languages and more importantly, recognise the cultural links to the languages. Both the Deafhood and the language as a right perspectives reject the idea that languages are the sources of the problem or that they can be compromised. Therefore, the Deafhood perspectives demand respect and

recognition for languages so their users can enjoy meaningful equality in societies. In that sense, the Deafhood and language as a right perspectives are aligned with the equality of condition perspective as they focus on radical structure changes.

The Deafhood model represents a major challenge to existing models of deafness. Because the radical view of Deaf people and their community are challenges to two former models of deafness, it allows the review of existing materials and the interpretation of them through the lens of Deafhood. The reinterpretation of such materials has been astonishing and has enabled me to pinpoint the differences of treatment and attitudes between these differing perspectives on deafness. This research is the first one to extend the Deafhood concept to the Irish case, and in particular, to attempt to analyse the different language policy orientations.

#### *11.4 Process of research*

The research process involved the compilation of a range of data including the analysis of:

- a) The general political, social and economic contexts of both countries
- b) The wider legislative contexts affecting languages in both countries
- c) The specific language policy contexts of both countries
- d) Short study visits to Finland and similar visits to institutions in Ireland
- e) Interview data from 29 people (14 Irish people and 15 Finnish people, of which 3 Irish and 7 of Finnish respondents are Deaf)

These multiple sources of research evidence allowed me to compare the language policies of Finland and Ireland with respect to the education of Deaf children and Deaf people's access to information.

#### *11.5 Comparative research - Findings*

Since a Deafhood framework is rarely supported or employed as the basis of formal language policies, hard evidence or data are not easy to obtain. The inclusion of Finland was seen as a necessary step as it was widely claimed in the literature reviewed that Finland has been foremost in developing positive language policies

especially aimed at sign language. The comparative analysis enabled me to collect and collate information on language policies and to test the claims regarding Finland and to see where Ireland was placed in terms of language policies for signed languages.

It has to be admitted that in terms of language policy on sign languages, at least on paper, Finland appears to be more advanced than Ireland. However, on the ground, the attitudes and responses to the language policy measures were very similar. It has stimulated an interest to investigate into further issues arising from language policies. The findings are commented upon in the section below.

#### *11.5.1 Status of sign languages – Explicit and Implicit Language Policies*

It is widely known that it is almost impossible to theorise on language policy because it is intertwined with language planning which covers almost all parts of human life. It is possible however, to recognise two different sets of state language policies in practice in terms of explicitness (Spolsky 2004: 39-42). The *explicit language policy* refers to a clear, written statement on the status of language or specific policies on the usage of languages. The *implicit language policy* is more influenced by attitudinal behaviours, societal influences, economic considerations or political prioritisation. There are clear differences between applying explicit and implicit language policies. It is clear from this research that, in both countries, national or dominant languages tend to be explicitly policed but the status of minority languages is different. Sign languages in both countries are more regulated by implicit policies rather than explicit policies.

In Finland, there is a constitutional reference, and thirteen legislative references, to sign language which is very impressive by international standards. However, it is clear from this that in spite of the constitutional clause, the Finnish Sign Language itself is not recognised but the rights of users to use sign language are constitutionally recognised. Another interesting observation arising from these references is that references to sign language in all legislations, apart from the Nationality Act, are

generically termed. The reference to sign language in the Nationality Act is clearly stated as the Finnish sign language<sup>276</sup>.

With regard to the Irish case, there is only one explicit reference to sign language in the legislation and it is in the Education Act 1998. However, this reference to sign language does not signify that it is a language in its own right judging by its placement in this Act. The reference to sign language is found under the Support Services section where it is implied that sign language is a service equated to speech therapies and technological aids. Therefore, this is a clear example that sign language is a compensatory tool.

Regardless of the explicitness of language policies on sign languages, it is very evident in both countries that the language policies are largely influenced by other considerations. Public attitudes and other societal influences shape the language policies on sign languages more effectively than the legislations. In Finland, it is clear that legislative requirements are not always complied with and other factors (resource constraints) take precedence. This is exemplified by the way economic considerations and quite ambivalent attitudes among state officials and service providers, were found to influence the use of Finnish Sign Language. In the Irish case, similar perspectives were detected through the almost complete absence of legislative references to sign language. Evidence of both of these issues can be corroborated in the responses gained from the respondents in both countries.

Let us turn to each case study to specify why language policies towards sign languages such as Finnish Sign Language and Irish Sign Language are not always positive or do not hold much hope for the Deaf communities in both countries.

### *11.5.2 Linguistic rights for the Deaf communities in Finland and Ireland*

It has to be acknowledged that the Finnish Deaf people have more formal linguistic rights than their Irish counterparts. However, it appears that the Finnish state takes a nonchalant approach in terms of enforcing linguistic rights and therefore, the burden is left on the Finnish Deaf community to assert their linguistic rights. This was

---

<sup>276</sup> As for the terms ‘sign language’, they are not capitalised.

evident from the responses of Finnish interviewees who claimed that the Finnish state cannot be assumed to enforce the linguistic rights of Finnish Deaf people. Because of the failure of the State to act, the Finnish Deaf community have developed many initiatives to ensure that their linguistic rights are upheld and promoted.

Another issue is that the linguistic rights available to the Finnish Deaf community are bestowed on the basis of their disability rather than on their linguistic and cultural uniqueness. Therefore, the Finnish Sign Language itself is largely treated as a compensatory tool rather than a language in its own right. Under these circumstances, any accommodation supporting the Finnish Sign Language must be operated under the disability policies or procedures, rather than under explicit language policies. Doubtless, this reinforces the hegemonic thinking that the Finnish Sign Language is a compensatory tool. It is easy to recognise that the frustrations and struggles experienced by the Finnish Deaf community surrounding the promotion of the Finnish Sign Language originated under these circumstances. This very situation hinders the Finnish Deaf community's quest to achieve higher status for Finnish Sign Language, promoting it to above that of a compensatory tool. This is exemplified by the tone of resignation that is to be found in many comments made by the Finnish Deaf respondents.

Another related issue is that other minority languages such as Russian, which are not mentioned in Finnish legislation, receive more official attention and resources. It would appear that language policies are strongly influenced by political and economic considerations. The Finnish Deaf community, given its size and dispersed location within the Finnish state, is small relative to other linguistic minorities and not influential relative to other linguistic minorities.

The Finnish Deaf respondents expressed a somewhat mixed outlook on the future of their rights given their size and status. Consequently, the Finnish Deaf community have taken a pragmatic approach to realise their linguistic rights by repositioning itself in the social model rather than in the Deafhood framework. It is very unlikely that the Finnish state would embrace the Deafhood framework judging by the comments made by the Finnish officials in this study. It seems that the social model of



deafness, while retaining some beliefs that are originated in the medical model of deafness, heavily influenced the officials in Finland.

The Irish Deaf community do not enjoy the same linguistic rights as their counterparts in Finland. However, there are many similarities between the two countries. Linguistic rights are acknowledged and awarded to Irish Deaf people but often by informal conventions. Informal conventions are exemplified in the practice of protecting rights such the right to be equal before the courts and the personal right to be heard in the public domain (the state agencies provide interpreters on the basis of goodwill and personal integrity etc.). In these contexts however, sign language is regarded as a compensatory tool, with the responses given by the Irish respondents corroborating this..

Both countries have seen that their sign language rights are operated under the disability programme or procedures. This has forestalled the development of positive language policies to highlight and promote their sign languages. Practical examples of how this happens can be found in two cases: language policies in the education of Deaf children and access to information.

### *11.5.3 Language policies in education for Deaf children*

The analysis of language policies in Deaf education shows situations in both countries where language policies are often operated in the mode of medical thinking<sup>277</sup>. This has a huge implication for shaping and directing the language policies regardless of the legislative status of sign languages. This is simply because the medical professionals control the vital timeframe and space of the decision-making process

---

<sup>277</sup> Since a language education policy can be analysed separately and individually from the general picture, this situation should not be considered to be in contradiction with earlier claims about the influence of the social model of deafness on language policies regarding signed language in more general contexts. Members of the general public display a more favourable attitude towards the use of sign language by Deaf people, whereas professionals working in the education and health sectors tend to adopt a more ambivalent attitude towards the benefits arising from the use of sign languages. This is exemplified by the responses given by administrative officials during the course of this research when then assuming that all staff members within education are fluent in signed languages (Note: comments by respondents in Chapter 8).

when they identify deafness in each child and inform the parents of options available to them.

There is little or no input or involvement by the Deaf communities in these early intervention processes in either country. It is also clear from the research that the legislative status has made only minor differences to the operation of education and other policy practices. It can be argued that regardless of the legislative status of sign languages, the majority of parents would opt for the medicalised opinion to deal with deafness because parents come from the same societal outlook as the medical professionals. As noted in chapter 3 above, parents in particular often only minimally understand the implications of early decisions for the child<sup>278</sup>.

The respondents in both countries identify the same concerns regarding mainstream education for Deaf children and cochlear implantations. It is also interesting to note that the views of hearing respondents differ from Deaf respondents. Deaf respondents tend to be more concerned about mainstreaming and implants while their hearing counterparts seem more content with these issues. In both countries, it is clear that proponents of cochlear implantation and mainstreaming tend to demonise the use of sign languages actively, or remain silent on the existence of Deaf communities and sign languages.

In both countries, the allocation of resources to mainstreaming and cochlear implantations is actively encouraged. This has direct, negative implications for attempts to develop positive language policies towards sign languages. Promoting mainstreaming and cochlear implantation shifts the attention and resources to the need to accommodate a child's ability to hear, and the shift obscures / crowds out the need for a separate positive language policy on sign language.

---

<sup>278</sup> See Chapter 3 where it is clear that initial decisions made in the early intervention process have long-term implications and parents tend not to be aware of these consequences of making decisions. For example, the critical language acquisition period for any child starts from birth to the average age of 5 or 6. Many parents who decided not to learn sign language or not to have their Deaf child access to sign language, failed to realise the implications of their decisions. Failure to acquire a language in this critical period can lead to more problems in education and learning in the child's later life. The language acquisition is a fundamental basis for education and yet, many parents have no way of knowing in advance how successful language acquisition for their child will be and it would be devastating if they discovered the implications in years to come.

The net outcome of promoting mainstreaming as a core policy is that a Deaf child arrives in the mainstream school and has poor access to peer relationship and sign language. Her inability to hear or participate is visually obvious. So this must be addressed and supports must be provided. This necessitates the operationalisation of a disability policy / procedure in order to accommodate her and this very act obscures the need to develop a positive language policy on sign languages. The presence of disability supports marks her differently from other children in the classroom and this reinforces the assumption that Deaf children require disability policies. Hence, it makes it difficult for educators to comprehend that there is need for positive language policy on sign language<sup>279</sup>.

It is clear from respondents in both countries, especially those who adopt ambiguous attitudes towards the promotion of sign languages, that they have displayed a lack of knowledge or awareness about the status of sign languages. In particular, they do not understand how they can benefit Deaf people significantly in terms of language acquisition and education. I have not met a person who has a considerable knowledge of how sign languages work that adopts an ambiguous attitude towards the promotion of positive language policies for sign languages. It is clear from this that ambiguity towards signed languages needs to be properly researched to ascertain resistance or ambiguity towards sign languages, which appear to be based on misconceptions or ignorance.

The findings suggest that language policies in education in both countries are not positive towards signed languages perhaps because the involvement of Deaf communities in the education processes are kept at a minimal and are limited to the auxiliary posts wherever possible. Yet, it would seem desirable that the communities directly affected by language policies are involved in designing them as they are the direct victims. Corson (1993) outlines the experiences of communities who have been empowered to get involved in education, especially the Inuits in Canada, the Navajos in the US and the Aboriginals in Australia. This might be a good model to follow in order to apply the Deafhood framework but also the language policies in education.

---

<sup>279</sup> The evidence was repeatedly given through personal communication with several people, including respondents in this research.

#### *11.5.4 Access to information*

The language policy behind access to public information is taken for granted by majority groups but it can be problematic for certain minority groups. Access to information through sign languages barely registers on the political agenda even on the priority list of main service providers. Even the service providers who deal with Deaf people directly tend to regard the necessity to develop positive language policies on sign languages as complementary to their services rather than as a core policy.

Both countries have legislative frameworks to ensure that information can be accessible for Deaf people, although the Finnish frameworks are more explicit than their Irish counterparts. These references in both countries are justified on the basis of the disability on Deaf peoples rather than acknowledging the status of sign languages and recognising the existence of Deaf communities. It seems that this is an example of applying the social model at this point. The social model explicitly acknowledges the impairment within the disabled body and demands societal rights of access to information on the basis of impairment. Deafness is seen as a disability that must be accommodated

There are a number of issues arising from implicit language policies behind access to information for Deaf people. One of them is the widespread belief among service providers that there is sufficient literacy among Deaf people that they can avail of text-based information. This clearly ignores the situation where literacy can be an issue in Deaf communities. In addition, it removes the personal right to use or receive information in SLs regardless of literacy levels. This is an example of how sign languages are seen as a compensatory tool, an extra help for Deaf people, not their native language. Moreover, there is an apparent failure to exploit the existence of multi-media facilities to increase information output in SLs such as websites or having some staff members fluent in SLs recruited to deal with such requests on a personal basis.

Interestingly, a number of services facilitating access to information are being 'privatised' and are not regarded as the responsibility of the service providers who deal with Deaf people directly. For instance, the arrangement of procuring interpretation seems to be regarded as a personal responsibility of Deaf clients rather

than of the service providers. In other words, the interpreting service is run as a private business and Deaf people have to liaise with the private agencies themselves. The Finnish Deaf users find themselves arranging the interpretation that could be burdensome but they have stated reasons why they had to do it. The reasons centre on the quality and suitability of interpreters to do such assignments. This is similarly experienced in Ireland. It is clear that in the eyes of service providers in both countries, state involvement in such an arrangement is limited to financing the assignments. As a consequence, both states can be regarded as abstaining in their public duty to sign language users.

On a positive note, there appears to be a good deal of willingness to facilitate providing public information through SL in both countries. However, ignorance or overlooking such issues as confidentiality, suitability and quality of the interpretation for each assignment, can undermine the benefits of what is offered.

#### *11.5.5 Testing the Hypothesis*

Returning to one of the objectives in the central hypothesis: one has to ask whether the higher status for sign language bestowed by the state in Finland under the influences of the social model, has brought about more egalitarian measures as sought by the Deaf community, compared with that of Ireland where there is less legal recognition of sign language. The answer is in the affirmative but it has to be qualified since there are too many anomalies. For example, the reasons for granting linguistic rights are strongly influenced in both countries by a growing allegiance to the social models of deafness. It has to be recognised that both countries have not expressed an explicit statement claiming that they are implementing a social model of deafness as a policy of dealing with SL users. However, such comments and claims from the respondents and literature evidence point to the gradual movement towards the social model.

The Finnish Sign Language itself is not recognised and is only referred to in generic terms<sup>280</sup> in several pieces of legislation. This implies that the Finnish Sign Language

---

<sup>280</sup> Generic terms can be akin to the situation where English, German or Spanish are described in generic terms as ‘spoken languages’ without its national identity explicitly stated. The generic term

is not accepted as a language in its own right and is regarded as a compensatory tool specifically for Deaf people. It also fails to recognise the uniqueness of strong linguistic and cultural fraternisation and solidarity among Deaf people. It is possible to infer from this situation that these policies define deafness as a disability even within a social model framework but they did not achieve radical changes for the Finnish Deaf community.

However, it is interesting to point out that linguistic rights awarded to Deaf people do have positive spin offs. The best example of this is that it is clear from evidence that legislation can be a useful tool. For example, it can reawaken the linguistic and cultural identity amongst many Deaf people and enable them to reassert their linguistic and cultural stances within the Finnish society. This reinforces the positive belief in the status of Finnish Sign Language within and outside the Finnish Deaf community. That is something that would benefit people in the Irish situation.

When the Finnish situation is compared to the Irish situation, it is clear that the Irish situation exemplifies a weak form of the application of the social model of deafness within the disability framework; the medical model is more influential in Ireland than Finland. The Finnish situation is a strong example of how the social model of deafness principles is applied extensively. However, Finland has not reached the threshold of Deafhood.

## *11.6 Policy Implications*

There are a number of policy implications arising from this research and I divide them for the purpose of convenience. There are issues relating to Deaf studies and other studies, and the political situation. The concept of Deafhood has a number of implications for how Deaf Studies, Disability Studies and Equality Studies operate.

### *11.6.1 Deaf Studies and other studies*

To date, the concept of Deafhood is rarely documented in Irish Deaf Studies and is non-existent in general academic studies. The introduction of this concept is an

---

‘sign language’ is widely interpreted as reducing the importance of its status and encourages the belief that it is a compensatory tool and there is one universal version of sign language.

attempt to enhance the status of Deaf communities within academic analysis and society. It poses challenges to the medical and social models to introduce new measures to deal with the position of Deaf people. To date, the medical model is dominant; however, the social model has emerged in recent years, especially with the disability awareness campaign. Both the social and the medical models may be ideal for those deaf people who wish to integrate into societies via assimilationist policies. However these principal goals of many Deaf people is not necessarily a favoured integration. The application of Deafhood has demonstrated that both models have not achieved egalitarian policies for the Deaf communities, though some achievements are made for Deaf *individuals*. The case studies here show how disadvantaged the Irish Deaf community is in terms of language policies based on the weak application of the social model. The Deafhood model attempts to shift policy from an ‘integrationist’<sup>281</sup> approach to linguistic and cultural approaches to Deaf education and language usage.

Ladd (2003) says that the linguistic recognition of sign languages is not sufficient as long as the cultural dimension of indigenous sign languages are silenced or ignored. Therefore, to embrace the concept of Deafhood, the first step is to recognise the existence of the Irish Deaf community and how beneficial the Irish Sign Language is for this community. This also calls for the recognition of the existence of a rich cultural and linguistic heritage within the Irish Deaf community and the preservation of such a heritage for future generations of Deaf children.

This would have huge implication for Irish Deaf Studies if those involved accepted it and used it as a plank for their academic orientations. This is so because the Irish Deaf Studies have applied the social model of deafness to date to explain the experiences of Deaf people in Ireland. At present, the only academic centre in the island of Ireland, TCD Centre for Deaf Studies adopts a bilingual approach, which affords staff and students to have information in both languages, ISL and English. However, the emergence of Deafhood exposes shortcomings within the social model and

---

<sup>281</sup> The term ‘integration’ can be misleading and is a contentious issue for some people. According to Deaf Ex-mainstreamers (DEX), a group of Deaf people who experienced mainstream education, the so-called inclusive mainstreaming is a form of exclusion for them since they were excluded from access to British Sign Language and the Deaf community (cited in Batterbury *et al* 2007: 2904)

emphasises the celebration rather than toleration of the Irish Deaf community and Irish Sign Language. This would raise a number of issues for this centre as its parent university would accept future postgraduate theses in the first language – ISL with the supplementary report in written English. The written supplement is for the purpose of knowledge dissemination while the ISL version retains intact the integrity of information.

Another issue for Irish Deaf Studies when embracing the concept of Deafhood is that it needs to develop a critical theory to test and reinforce this concept and address / investigate the common dissonances arising from the social model. It can research language policies arising from differing perspectives and their implications to add a better understanding and knowledge.

More importantly, it can aid the development of codes of good practice in creating positive language policies. Perhaps it will assist in lowering resistance or lessen ambiguity in the understanding of the importance of the application of Deafhood. This would have the potential to remove the stigma or any negative connotations associated with the usage of sign languages. This would also enable the involvement of Deaf communities to be more involved in policy-making.

The policy implications do not end with Irish Deaf Studies; it is likely to have many ripples on other related studies like Equality Studies and Disability Studies. To date, academic orientations of both centres have not engaged with the concept of Deafhood. This leads to a possible issue: the validation of Deafhood to deal with the experiences of Irish Deaf people. Therefore, I believe it is a responsibility of Equality Studies to recognise the concept of Deafhood as the possible target for achieving the equality of condition for Deaf communities.

With regard to the Disability Studies in general, it is understood that it prefers to base academic analysis on two models, the medical and the social. This judgement is based on the contents in Irish literature and university courses in Ireland. However, Disability Studies has to acknowledge the limitations of the social model though its limitations are already questioned by some of its proponents (for example, Shakespeare 2006). For example, the social model for a while remained silent on the



issue of pain and regular medical support. It is important for Disability Studies to recognise several dissonances arising from the social model when it is applied to Deaf communities (for example, Ladd 2003, Lane 2005, Batterbury *et al.* 2007, Bauman 2008). I think it is time also for Disability Studies to recognise the limitations of the social model in explaining the existence of Deaf communities and their cultures and to accept the concept of Deafhood. This would necessitate a new dialogue between Deaf Studies, Equality Studies and Disability Studies in order to recognise that the Deafhood framework represents the way forward for Deaf communities.

#### *11.6.2 The Policy Implications of Deafhood for Language policies and Sign Languages*

A Deafhood perspective has implications also for the shaping of language policies. The first step is that authorities should re-designate the status of sign languages as languages rather than as disabilities that need compensatory tools or support services. The next step is to remove the re-designated sign languages from the disability policies and denominate them under the aegis of language policies. This would necessitate the making of positive language policies explicit because it is clear from this research that implicit language policies are largely influenced by other factors such as attitudes, economic considerations and political prioritisation.

This re-designated status of sign languages must not be seen as closing off the disability policies from Deaf people who wish to avail of such policies<sup>282</sup> in order to access services. The point here is that ISL should be regarded as a language in its own right and should have its policies under the aegis of language policies rather than under disability policies. This move has the potential to shift public attitudes towards the status of ISL and to lessen the discretionary actions taken by some providers.

Naturally, this would raise the question of expenditure to activate such policies. Because of the size of Irish Deaf community, I do not envisage that such expenditure should be similar to the Irish language. Since Irish is the national language, it can be argued that it deserves huge expenditure. However, ISL could be re-designated as a

---

<sup>282</sup> Facilities such as the loop system, hearing aids, lip-reading etc. should be available for those who wish to avail of them but they are dealt with under the disability policies or procedures.

minority language, not a national language<sup>283</sup>, and expenditure would have to be justified and prioritised for selected areas. Two areas singled out for prioritisation are language policy in education and access to information.

### *11.6.3 Implications of a Deafhood Perspective for Education Policy*

The re-designated status of sign languages would demand the overhaul of language policy in education. The implications are obvious, as signed languages would not be seen as compensatory tools or optional communication tools. The overhaul would see the rewriting of information aimed at parents of Deaf children. Though the formal education process starts at preschool or primary level, for Deaf children, the process begins further back at the intervention process because decisions taken place in this process are often influential and shape the directions of future educational pathways. Therefore, it is necessary to involve the Deaf community, via Deaf professionals, in the intervention process. It is not guaranteed that parents would opt for ISL but it is crucial that they are informed of such available pathways and should be made aware of possible consequences if they decide to choose a particular pathway.

Re-designating sign languages as real language in its own right would have implications on the schools for the Deaf; it would demand a strict enforcement of fluency among teachers. It would demand that teachers have fluency before being recruited to teach in these schools. In order to protect the status of sign languages in the schools, the board of management and management posts would have to be adequately representative of the Deaf communities to ensure their influential presence. This would demand a detailed change that would need cooperation from all concerned starting with the parents and including the teacher unions.

With regard to mainstreaming and cochlear implantation: they are identified as threats to the schools for the Deaf. With the current political, social and economic climate, it

---

<sup>283</sup> The distinction between minority and national languages is beyond this study but briefly, the national or dominant language is often regarded as compulsory for all citizens to learn while the minority language is optional for those outside the community / groups and that is not including those who work with Deaf people or frequently serve them.

is regarded as impossible to roll back such threats<sup>284</sup>. Given that this is impossible, it does not excuse the mainstream schools from implementing language policies on sign languages. These schools have to make distinctions between language and disability policies to ensure that Deaf children in these schools receive the benefits of sign languages. In order to increase access to peer relationships and sign languages, a model of clustering up to ten or fifteen Deaf children in the one school in an appropriate geographical area would be desirable under these circumstances.

#### *11.6.4 Access to information*

The re-designated status of sign languages would have huge implications for language policies relating to access to information. The policies would have to be explicitly stated, as it is clear from both countries that such information policies are largely implicit: the belief is that SL users should avail of text-based information instead of receiving information through SL. This perspective fails to recognise the effectiveness of receiving information through that first, natural or mother language. The re-designated status of sign languages would put in place a requirement to take account of the learning needs of Deaf children.

It appears from this research that both states have failed to exploit the multimedia to transmit information in indigenous sign languages. Websites and email messages with video attachments are the clear examples where general information can be translated into sign languages but they have not been generally utilised to date. The re-designation of sign languages would increase their profiles on websites. Not only would the profile of SLs be increased, it would remove a considerable burden on Deaf users as some of the respondents cited that they had to travel to get information that was not available through other means. These burdens are unfairly imposed (whether unintentional or not), and hinder Deaf people's ability to exercise their citizenship.

---

<sup>284</sup> In this context, the Deaf community's quest for stand-alone Deaf schools is not wholly accepted by policymakers and the like, including the proponents of the social model. The failure to accept such a quest is really strange given the fact the Irish educational system is very highly stratified in terms of wealth, religion, gender, ethnic, language and even intelligence (both external and internal within the schools) (Lynch 1999). Yet, this quest is somewhat seen as a form of separatism in some quarters.

Promoting the status of SLs would increase the scrutiny of interpretation services and this would necessitate the need for an accreditation process. At the moment, it is clear that the quality and suitability of interpreters is done discretionally<sup>285</sup>. There is no statutory body regulating the accreditation and register of interpreters. At the moment, it seems from this study that in both countries quantity is far more prioritised than the quality of the interpretation services. To uphold the status of SLs would mean to shift more attention to the workings of procedures and the authorities might then take more responsibility in arranging interpretation facilities. There is a possibility that such a shift would lead to a realisation that such an interpretation facility is more about abridging between two languages, spoken and signed languages rather than viewing it as a type of support service. Another related development could arise from this shift, namely, that service providers would encourage some of their staff members to achieve functional fluency in SLs to deal with Deaf consumers.

There is a significant deal of goodwill among public and private service providers regarding the status of sign languages and it must be taken advantage of to advance the concept of Deafhood in the reformulation of language policies.

### *11.7 Concluding remarks*

It is obvious from this study that the Deafhood framework is the best option to achieve the equality of condition for Deaf communities. This option would demand an equal recognition and respect for signed languages, as similar to that given to national and dominant languages. This option would shift policies dealing with signed language to the linguistic framework from the disability framework<sup>286</sup>. This move would help minimise the belief that signed languages are merely compensatory tools, which, in turn, would create more egalitarian treatment for Deaf people who wish to

---

<sup>285</sup> At the moment, the Centre for Deaf Studies is the only academic centre in the island of Ireland that provides academically accredited courses for those who wish to become interpreters. These courses are accredited by TCD via HETAC. However, there is a serious lack of continued professional development for interpreters after the college years and some existing agency provides its own quality assurance scheme.

<sup>286</sup> It has to be recognised that governments are more likely to be reluctant to resource minority language policies properly in fear of encouraging separatism or divisions within the society. Given such circumstances, some believe that the disability framework is the best optimal situation *at the moment* for the Deaf communities to gain support and finance from the governments (personal communication with Markku Jokinen, Finland, February 2009).

pursue their main identity on the usage of sign languages. Moving to a Deafhood framework would also mean recognising the limitations of the social model of deafness. Though the social model perspective on deafness does achieve some egalitarian measures for Deaf individuals, it falls short of meeting the wishes of Deaf communities.

# Bibliography

Abberley, P. (1987) 'The concept of oppression and the development of a social theory of disability'. *Disability, Handicap and Society*, 2: 5–19.

Abercrombie N. & Hill, S. (1976) 'Paternalism and patronage'. *British Journal of Sociology*, 27: 413-29.

Adams, I. (1993) *Political ideology today*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.  
Ager, D. E. (1996) *Language policy in Britain and France: the processes of policy*. London: Cassell.

Ahamed, W., Atkin, K., & Jones, L. (2002) 'Being Deaf and Other Things: Young Asian People Negotiating Identities'. *Social Science & Medicine*, 55: 1757-1769.

AHEAD (2001) *Initial Findings of HEA Survey on Participation Rates of and Provision for Students with Disabilities in Higher Education for the Academic Year 1998/99*. Dublin: AHEAD Education Press.

Ahmad, W. I. U. Darr, A. Jones L. and Gohar, N. (1998) *Deafness and ethnicity: services, policy and politics*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Alestalo, M and Uusitalo. H. (1987) 'Finland' in Flora, P. ed. *Growth to Limits: the Western European Welfare States since World War II: Volume 4*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 123-190.

Alker, D. (2000) *Really Not Interested in the Deaf*. Darwen: D. Alker.

Allen, K. (2007) *The Corporate Takeover of Ireland*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press.

Allen, K.. (1999) *The Celtic Tiger, The myth of social partnership in Ireland*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

American Annals of the Deaf (1991 to present) available at  
<http://gupress.gallaudet.edu/annals/>

An Coimisinéir Teanga (2008) *Annual Report 2007* [online]. Dublin: Available from  
[http://www.coimisineir.ie/downloads/Annual\\_Report\\_2007\\_text\\_only.pdf](http://www.coimisineir.ie/downloads/Annual_Report_2007_text_only.pdf).

An Rionn Oideachas (1965) *The Rules for Primary Schools*. Dublin : The Stationery Office.

Andrews, J., Leigh, I.W. and Weiner, M.T. (2004) *Deaf people: evolving perspectives from psychology, education, and sociology*. Boston: Pearson.

Bacik, I. (2008) 'Women's Political Representation' *Sunday Tribune*, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

Backenroth, G. A.M. (1998) 'Counselling in order to develop tolerance between hearing people and deaf people in bicultural working groups'. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 20: 219–229.

Baker, A. (2000) 'Official recognition of sign language in the Netherlands' in *Deaf Worlds, Deaf People, Community and Society*. 16 (2): 34-38.

Baker, J., Cantillon, S., Lynch, K. and Walsh, J. (2004) *Equality: From Theory to Action* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Baker-Shenk, C. & Kyle, J. (1990) 'Research with Deaf People: Issues and Conflicts'. *Disability Handicap & Society*, 5 (1): 65-75.

Baldock, J., Manning N. and Vickerstaff. S. (2003) *Social policy. 2nd ed.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Balkany, T. J., Hodges, A. V., Eshraghi, A. A., Butts, S., Bricker, K., Lingvai, J. (2002) 'Cochlear implants in children—a review'. *Acta Oto-laryngologica (Stockholm)*, 122 (4): 356–362.

Balkany, T., Hodges, A., & Goodman, K. (1999) 'Authors' reply [to Lane and Bahan]'. *Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery*, 121: 673–675.

Balkany, T., Hodges, A., & Goodman, K. (1996) 'Ethics of cochlear implantation in young children'. *Otolaryngology—Head and Neck Surgery*, 114 (6): 748–755.

Barcham, L (1996) 'The international dimension'. In Parasnis, I. ed.: *Cultural and language diversity and the deaf experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Barnes, C. (1991) *Disabled people in Britain and discrimination: a case for anti-discrimination legislation*. London: C. Hurst & Co.

Barnes, C. (1992) 'Qualitative research: valuable or irrelevant'. *Disability, Handiap and Society*, 7(2): 115–124.

Barnes, C. (1997) *Doing disability research*. Leeds: Disability Press.

Barnes, C. (2001) 'Emancipatory' *Disability Research: project or process?* [Online] Public Lecture at City Chambers, Glasgow, October 24. Available from <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/Barnes/glasgow%20lecture.pdf>

Barnes, C. and Mercer, G. (1999) *Disability. 1<sup>st</sup> edition*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Barnes, C. and Mercer, G. (2003) *Disability. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Barnes, C., Mercer, G. and Shakespeare, T. (1999) *Exploring Disability: A Sociological Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity
- Barnes, C., Oliver, M. & Barton, L. (2002) *Disability Studies Today*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Barrington, R. (1987) *Health, Medicine and Politics in Ireland 1900-1970*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.
- Bateman, G. C. (1998) 'Deaf community and political activism' in Parasnis I. ed. *Cultural and language diversity and the deaf experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 146-159
- Batterbury, S.C.E., Ladd, P. and Gulliver, M., (2007) 'Sign language peoples as indigenous minorities: implications for research and policy'. *Environment and planning A*, 39 (12): 2899–2915.
- Batterbury, SCE. Ladd, P., Gulliver, M., Alker, D. Krausneker, V. & Turner, G. (2003) 'An agenda for Change: Principles and guidelines for policy making and research in Deaf-related areas'. *Deaf Worlds* 19: 66-77
- Bauman H.D. (2004) 'Audism: exploring the metaphysics of oppression'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 9(2): 239-46.
- Bauman, H-D. L. ed. (2008) *Open your eyes: Deaf studies talking*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Baynton, D., (1996) *Forbidden signs – American culture and the campaign against sign language*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- BCI - Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (2003), *Accessing Television – November 2003*. [Online], Available from [http://www.bci.ie/documents/accessing\\_television.pdf](http://www.bci.ie/documents/accessing_television.pdf).
- Beck, U. and Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002) *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences*, London: Sage.
- Berbrier, Mitch (2004) 'Assimilationism and Pluralism as Cultural Tools'. *Sociological Forum*, 19 (1): 29-61
- Biesold, H. (1999) *Crying hands: Eugenics and deaf people in Nazi Germany*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.



Bievenau, M.J. (1991) 'Can Deaf People Survive 'deafness'?' *Perspectives on Deafness—A Deaf American Monograph*, 41, (1-2): NAD.

Blaxter, L., Hughes C. and Tight, M. (2001) *How to Research*: 2nd edition: Buckingham: Open University Press.

Blume, S. (2005) 'The Effects of Cochlear Implantation on Deaf Culture'. A paper presented at the Irish Deaf Society 5th National Congress, *Technology and Deaf culture: Has recent technological advances improved or is it killing Deaf culture?* University College Cork: October 22, 2005.

Bradley, D. (1999) 'Comparative Family Law and the Political Process: Regulation of Sexual Morality in Finland'. *Journal of Law and Society* 26 (2): 175-191.

Bragg, B. (1989) *Lessons in Laughter: The Autobiography of a Deaf Actor (as signed to Eugene Berman)*. Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Brannick, T. and Roche, W. T. (1997) *Business Research Methods: Strategies, Techniques and Sources*. Dublin: Oak Tree Press.

Branson, J. and Miller, D. (1997) 'National Sign Languages and Languages Policies' in Wodak, R. & Corson eds. *Encyclopaedia of Language and Education, Vol 1: Language Policy and Political Issues in Education*, S89-98. The Netherlands: Kluwer.  
Branson, J. and Miller, D. (2002) *Damned for Their Difference: The Cultural Construction of Deaf People as Disabled*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Breen, R., Hannan, D.F., Rottman, D.B. & Whelan, C.T. (1990) *Understanding Contemporary Ireland: State, Class and Development in the Republic of Ireland*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan.

Brennan, M. (1997) *Equality before the law: deaf people's access to justice*. Durham: Deaf Studies Research Unit.

Brennan, M. (2000) 'Deaf Studies' in *Scottish Sensory Centre Newsletter No 9: March 2000*.

Brennock, M. (2004), McDowell changes argument on referendum, *The Irish Times* April (2004).

Brien D., Brown, R., & Collins, J, (2002) *The Organisation and Provision of BSL/English Interpreters in England, Scotland and Wales*, Department of Works and Pensions (UK) In House Report No 102.

Britain, D. (2007) *Language in the British Isles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

British Deaf Association (2009) *Sign Community* [online], available from <http://www.bda.org.uk/>.

Broadcasting Commission of Ireland (BCI), (2004) *Report of the Chairman to the Broadcasting Commission of Ireland on the proceedings of The Access Consultative Forum by Kieran Mulvey, 19 March 2004* [online], available from [http://www.bci.ie/documents/chairpersons\\_report.pdf](http://www.bci.ie/documents/chairpersons_report.pdf). [Accessed May 2006].

Broderick, T. (1996) *Origins and developments of St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls, Cabra*. Dublin: St. Mary's School for Deaf Girls.

Bruce, M. (2003) *Protection of sign languages in the member states of the Council of Europe Doc. 973817 March 2003*. Report to Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights in the Council of Europe. (unpublished).

Brueggemann, B. (1999) *Lend Me Your Ear: Rhetorical Constructions of Deafness*. Washington D.C.: Gallaudet University Press.

Bunreacht na hÉireann (1937) *The Constitution of Ireland*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.

Burke, H. (1987) *The People and the Poor Law in 19<sup>th</sup> century*. Dublin: Women's Education Bureau.

Burke, H. (1999) 'Foundations Stones of Irish Social Policy' in Kiely, G. *Irish social policy in context*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press

Burns, J. (2006) 'What's wrong with quangos?' *The Sunday Times (Irish edition)* October 29, 2006.

Burns, S. E. (1998) 'Ireland's Second Minority Language' in Lucas, C. ed. *Pinky Extension and Eye Gaze: Language Use in Deaf Communities*. Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Burns, S., Matthews, P. and Nolan-Conroy, E. (2001) 'Language Attitudes' in Lucas, C. ed. *The Sociolinguistics of Sign Languages*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Busby, H. R. (2001) 'Deafness and intelligence: A multiperspective viewpoint' in King, J. F. ed. *Introduction to deaf education. A deaf perspective*. Hillsboro, Oregon: Butte, 55-73.

Butler, R., McNamee, S. , Skelton, T. & Valentine, G. (2001) 'Language Barriers: Exploring the Worlds of the Deaf'. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 21 (4): 42-52

Bynoe, I., Oliver M. and Barnes, C. (1991) 'Equal Rights for Disabled People, the case for a new law'. *Institute for Public Policy Research*. [Online] available from: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/bynoe/equal%20rights%20for%20disabled%20people.pdf>. [Accessed August 2009].

Byrne, R. & McCutcheon, P. and McCarthy, N. (2001) *The Irish Legal System - Fourth Edition*, Dublin: Butterworths.

Byrne-Dunne, D. (2005) 'Language acquisition of a deaf child in Ireland' *Deaf Worlds* 21 (2): 104-118.

Byrne-Dunne, D. (2005) *Language Acquisition by Deaf Children in Ireland: Some Theoretical Considerations and Two Case Studies*. Unpublished Master in Philosophy (Applied Linguistics) thesis, University of Dublin, Trinity College.

Calderon, R., & Greenberg, M.T. (2003) 'Social and Emotional Development of Deaf Children: Family, School, and Program Effects' in Marschark, M. & Spencer P. eds. *Oxford Handbook of Deaf Studies, Language, and Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Campbell, J. and Oliver, M. eds. (1996) *Disability Politics*, London: Routledge.

Castells, M. & Himanen, P. (2002) *The information society and the welfare state: the Finnish model*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Centre for Deaf Studies (TCD) (2001) *Submission to the Advisory Committee on Education of the Deaf by Lorraine Leeson and Patrick A. Matthews, September 2002*. [online] Available from: <http://www.tara.tcd.ie/bitstream/2262/1577/1/CDS+Submission+DES+Deaf+ed.doc> [accessed January 2007].

Clancy, P. (1999). 'Education Policy' in Quin S. et al. *Contemporary Irish Social Policy*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 72 –107.

Coakley, J. (1999) 'Society and political culture' in Coakley, J. and Gallagher, M. (1999) *Politics in the Republic of Ireland: Third Edition*. London: Routledge.

Coakley, J. and Gallagher, M. (1999) *Politics in the Republic of Ireland: Third Edition*. London: Routledge.

Coleman, M. (2007) 'What Cromwell couldn't kill, we will: The persistent neglect of Irish will lead to its eventual demise' *Sunday Independent*. December 2, 2007.

Collins, N. ed. (1999) *Political issues in Ireland today (2<sup>nd</sup> edition)*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Combat Poverty Agency (CPA) (2005) *Annual Report 2004* [online] available from: <http://www.cpa.ie> [accessed website – January 2006].

Comhairle (2006) *Review of Sign Language Interpretation Services and Service Requirements in Ireland September 2006*. [online], Available from: [http://www.prospectus.ie/documents/8988032Sign\\_Language\\_Report.pdf](http://www.prospectus.ie/documents/8988032Sign_Language_Report.pdf).

Comhairle (now Citizens Information Board) (2004) 'Legislation'. *Relate: information for all*. Vol. 31: Issue 11 September 2004. [online], Available from: <http://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/publications/relate/september2004.pdf>

Committee on the Education of the Deaf (1972) *The education of children who are handicapped by impaired hearing: report of a committee appointed by the Minister for Education*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Conama, J & McDonnell, P. (2001) 'Irish Sign Language'. *Higher Education Equality Unit UCC Newsletter*: April 10, 2001.

Conama, J. B. & Grehan, C. (2001) *Is There Poverty in the Deaf Community?* Dublin: Irish Deaf Society.

Conama, J. B. (2002) *Tourists in their own land - A Social Policy Analysis of the Irish Deaf Community's Participation in Society*. M. Litt thesis (unpublished). University of Dublin, Trinity College.

Conama, J. B. (2005) 'Potential of the Centre for Deaf Studies (CDS): its role in enhancing social justice for the Deaf community: a personal observation'. *Deaf Worlds*. 21 (2).

Conama, J.B. (2008) *Review of the Signing Information Project, Mid-West Region*. Limerick: Paul Partnership.

Conrad, R. (1979) *The Deaf School Child. Language and Cognitive Function*. London: Harper and Row.

Conroy, P. (2006) *Signing In and Signing Out: The Education and Employment Experiences of Deaf People in Ireland. A Study of Inequality and Deaf People in Ireland*. Dublin: Irish Deaf Society.

Coogan, T. P. (2003) *Ireland in the twentieth century*. Michigan: Hutchinson.

Coolahan, J. (1981) *Irish education: its history and structure*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

Coolohan J. ed (1993) *Report on National Education Convention*. Dublin: Government Stationary Office.

Cooper, R. L. (1989) *Language planning and social change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Corker, M. (1996). *Deaf transitions*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Corker, M. (1998) *Deaf and Disabled, or Deafness Disabled? Towards a human rights perspective*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Corker, M. (2000) 'Disability politics, language planning and inclusive social policy'. *Disability & society*, 15 (3): 445–461.

Cornes, A. & Wiltshire, C. (1999) 'Still Waiting to be Heard: Deaf Children in Australia'. *Australasian Psychiatry* 7 (6): 315 – 318.

Corson, D. (1993) *Language, minority education and gender: linking social justice and power*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Corson, D. (1990) *Language policy across the curriculum*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Coulter, C. (2009) 'Three resign from Equality Authority over cutbacks'. *Irish Times*, Jan 1.

Cousins, M. (1997) 'Ireland's Place in the Worlds of Welfare Capitalism'. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 7(3): 223-35.

CPA (Combat Poverty Agency) (2005) *Healthy Communities Programme: Supporting Community Development Funded Initiatives* (2005) [online] available from: [http://www.combatpoverty.ie/health/2006\\_BHC\\_FundedInitiatives2005-2007.pdf](http://www.combatpoverty.ie/health/2006_BHC_FundedInitiatives2005-2007.pdf).

Crean, E. (1996) *Breaking the Silence - The Education of the Deaf in Ireland 1816-1996*. Dublin: Irish Deaf Society Publications.

Cronin, M. & Ó Cuilleanáin, C. (2003) *The languages of Ireland*. Dublin: Four Courts.

Crowe, T. V. (2003) 'Self-Esteem Scores Among Deaf College Students: An Examination of Gender and Parents' Hearing Status and Signing Ability'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education* 8:2

CSO – Central Statistics Office (2006) *Measuring Ireland's Progress* [Online], available from: [http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/other\\_releases/2006/progress2006/measuringirelandsprogress.pdf](http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/other_releases/2006/progress2006/measuringirelandsprogress.pdf). [Accessed January 2008].

CSO – Central Statistics Office (2007) *Quarterly National Households Survey* [Online], available from: [http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/labour\\_market/2007/qnhsunionmembership\\_q22007.pdf](http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/labour_market/2007/qnhsunionmembership_q22007.pdf) [accessed January 2008].

Curry, J. (2003) *Irish Social Services 4<sup>th</sup> edition*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

D'Arcy, J. (1999) 'Citizenship and Irish Social Policy' in Kiely, G. et al eds *Irish Social Policy in Context*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

Dahl, R. A. (2005) *Who governs?: democracy and power in an American city*. Yale: Yale University Press.

Dail Eireann Debates (Debates in the Irish Parliament), 30 June 2004, [online], available from: <http://debates.oireachtas.ie/> [accessed December 2005].

Dail Eireann Debates, (Debates in the Irish Parliament), 26 April, 2005, [online], available from: <http://debates.oireachtas.ie/> [accessed December 2005].

Datamonitor [online] <http://www.datamonitor.com/> [accessed April 2006].

Davis, D. S. (1997). 'Cochlear implants and the claims of culture? A response to Lane and Grodin'. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 7: 253–258.

Davis, L. J. (1995) *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness and the Body*. London: Verso.

Davis, L.J. (2002) 'Bodies of difference: Politics, disability, and representation' in Snyder, S. L. Brueggemann, B. J. & Thomson, R. G. eds. *Disability studies: Enabling the humanities*, New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 100–108.

de Wit, Maya (2008) *Sign Language Interpreting in Europe: 2008 edition*: Unpublished

Deaf Worlds (1997 to present) [online] available from <http://www.forestbooks.com/pages/deafwld.htm>

deBoer-Ashworth, Elizabeth (2004) 'The 'Celtic tiger' in the global context' in Collins N. and Cradden, T. Eds. *Political issues in Ireland*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Dennis, C. (2004) 'Inside Deaf culture' October 20, 2004. *BioEd Online* [online] available from: <http://www.bioedonline.org/news/news.cfm?art=1316>

Denscombe, M. (2003) *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects [2nd ed.]*. Maidenhead: Open University Press

Doyle, A. (1999) 'Employment Equality since Accession to the European Union' in Kiely, G. et al eds *Irish Social Policy in Context*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

Drudy, S. & Lynch, K.(1993) *Schools and Society in Ireland*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

Dublin Deaf Association (DDA). (1978 to 1998) *Contact* - Quarterly Issued Magazine. Dublin: DDA.

Dunne, F. (1999) "The Experiences of Irish Deaf People and Politics". *Deaf Worlds*, 15 (2): 13-15.

Dutton, E. (Forthcoming), Chapter 6 ('We Finns are Equal') in *The Finnuut: Finnish Culture and the Religion of Uniqueness*, Budapest: Akademiai Kiado.

Edwards, R. (1998) 'A Critical Examination of the Use of Interpreters in the Qualitative Research Process'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 24: 197–208.  
Edwards, V. (2004) *Multilingualism in the English-speaking world: pedigree of nations*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Eickman, J. (2006) 'The Role of Deaf Sport in Developing and Maintaining Deaf Identity in Great Britain' in Goodstein, H. ed. *The Deaf Way II Reader Perspectives*

*from the Second International Conference on Deaf Culture*. Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press.

Emerton, R. G. (1996) 'Marginality, biculturalism, and social identity of deaf people'. In: Parasnian, I. ed. *Cultural and language diversity and the deaf experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Emery, S., Middleton, A. and Turner, G (2010) 'Whose Deaf Genes Are They Anyway?: The Deaf Community's Challenge to Legislation on Embryo Selection', *Sign Language Studies*, 10 (2) 155-169

Emery, S. D. (2009) 'In space no one can see you waving your hands: making citizenship meaningful to Deaf worlds'. *Citizenship Studies*, 13 (1): 31-44.

Emery, S.D. (2006) *Citizenship and the Deaf community*, unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Central Lancashire.

Equality & Rights Alliance (2009) 'A Fairer Ireland- Equality and Rights at the Heart of Recovery' [online], available from: <http://www.eracampaign.org/home> - [accessed February 2010].

Erting, C. (1978) 'Language policy and Deaf ethnicity in the United States'. *Sign Language Studies*, 19: 139-152.

Erting, C. J., Johnson R. C., Smith D. L. & Snider, B. D. eds. (1994) *The Deaf World: Perspectives from the International Conference on Deaf Culture*. Washington D.C.: Gallaudet University Press.

Esping-Anderson, G., (1990). *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

European Parliament (1988) *Resolution on Sign Languages as Adopted by the European Parliament in Plenary Session* on 17 June 1988. (Doc. A2-302/87).

European Parliament (1998) *Resolution on Sign Languages as Adopted by the European Parliament in Plenary Session* on 18 November 1998. (B4-0985/98).

European Union of the Deaf (1997) *Guidelines for Deaf people [pamphlet]*. Brussels: Unpublished.

European Union of the Deaf (2001). *Update Part 1 & Part 2*; March 2001: [online], available from: <http://www.eudnet.org/update/archive/2001/032001.pdf>.



European Union of the Deaf (2001): *EUD Update. Special Edition: Update on the Status of Sign Languages in the European Union*. 4 (10): March 2001.

European Union of the Deaf (2009) [online], available from <http://www.eud.eu/>.

Fanning B. (2007) *Immigration and social change in the Republic of Ireland*. Manchester: Manchester University Press

Fanning B. and McNamara T. eds. (2003). *Ireland develops: administration and social policy, 1953-2003*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

Fanning B., Kennedy, P., Kiely, G. & Quin, S. (2004). *Theorising Irish social policy*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

Faulks, K. (2000) *Citizenship*. London: Rutledge.

Feher-Prout, T. (1996) Stress and Coping in Families with Deaf Children. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education* 1: 155 - 166.

Fine, M. (1998) 'Working the hyphens: Reinventing self and other in qualitative research' in Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. eds. *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 130-155.

Finkelstein, V. (1981) 'Disability and the helper-helped relationship'. In Brechin, A., Liddiard, P. & Swain, J. eds. *Handicap in a social world*. Sevenoaks, UK: Beckenham, Hodder, & Stoughton, 58-64.

Finkelstein, V. (1991) "We" are not disabled, "you" are. In. Gregory, S & Hartley, G. M. eds. *Constructing Deafness*, London: Pinter, 265-271.

Finkelstein, Vic (2001) *The Social Model Repossessed: Manchester Coalition of Disabled People*: 1<sup>st</sup> December 2001. [online] available from: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/finkelstein/soc%20mod%20repossessed.pdf>.

Finland (2004) *Language Act 2004* – Ministry of Justice. [online] available from: <http://www.finlex.fi/pdf/saadkaan/E0030423.PDF>.

Finland (2006) *Report of the Government on the application of language legislation 2006*. Helsinki: Ministry of Justice.

Finland (2009) *Report of the Government on the application of language legislation 2009*. Helsinki: Ministry of Justice.

Finnish Association of the Deaf (2009) [online] available from: <http://www.kl-deaf.fi/en-GB/> (English version).

Finnish Institute of Occupation Health (2010) *Overview of gender equality in Finland* [online], available from: <http://www.gender-equality.webinfo.lt/results/finland.htm> - [accessed February 2010].

Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (1995) *Towards a society for all: an action programme on disability policy*. Unpublished.

Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (2006) *Government Report on disability policy 2006*. Helsinki: Helsinki University Press.

Fischer, R. and Lane, H. (1993) *Looking back: a reader on the history of deaf communities and their sign languages*. Hamburg: Signum.

Fitzgerald, J. (2000) 'The Storey of Irelands Failure and Belated Success' in Nolan, B., O'Connell, J. and Whelan, C. eds *Bust to Boom? The Irish Experience of Growth and Inequality*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

Flannelly, M. (1997) *Can the existing trade union structure effectively represents the Deaf - a linguistic minority?* Unpublished B.A. thesis, National College of Industrial Relations Dublin.

Foster, S. (1996) 'Communication experiences of Deaf people: an ethnographic account'. In: Parasnis, I. ed. *Cultural and language diversity and the deaf experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 117-135.

Gallagher, M. (1999). 'The changing constitution'. In: Coakley, J. and Gallagher, M. (1999) *Politics in the Republic of Ireland: Third Edition*. London: Routledge.

Galligan, Y. (1999) 'Women in politics'. In: Coakley, J. and Gallagher, M. (1999) *Politics in the Republic of Ireland: Third Edition*. London: Routledge.

Gannon, J. R. (1981) *Deaf heritage: a narrative history of deaf America*. Silver Spring, Md.: National Association of the Deaf.

Garvin, T. (2004). *Preventing the Future: Why was Ireland so poor for so long?* Gill & Macmillan: Dublin.

Gay Times [online] <http://www.gaystimes.co.uk> – [accessed February 2010]

Gerring, J. (2007) *Case study research: principles and practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gertz, Genie (2008) 'Dysconscious Audism: A Theoretical Proposition'. In: Bauman, H-D. ed. *Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.

Giddens, A. (2006) *Sociology (Fifth Edition)*. Cambridge: Polity.

GLEN: Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (2006) *Press Release* [online], available from:

<http://www.glen.ie/press/docs/Press%20Release%20by%20GLEN%20281106.doc>

Global Gay Zone (2010) *Gay Finland News & Reports*, [online], available from:

<http://www.globalgayz.com/country/Finland/view/FIN/gay-finland-news-and-reports>

- [accessed February, 2010].

Goodin, R. E. Parpo, A. & Kangas, O. (2004) 'The Temporal Welfare State: The Case of Finland'. *International Social Policy*, 33 (4): 531-552.

Goss B. (2003) 'Hearing from the Deaf Culture'. *Intercultural Communication Studies XII-2* [online], available from

<http://www.uri.edu/iaics/content/2003v12n2/03%20Blaine%20Goss.pdf>

Gregory, S. & Hartley, G. M. (1991) *Constructing Deafness*. London: Pinter.

Gregory, S. and Knight, P. (1998) 'Social Development and Family Life'. In: Gregory, S, Knight, P, McCracken, W, Powers, S and Watson, L, *Issues in Deaf Education*. London: David Fulton Publishers.

Gregory, S., Knight, P., McCracken, W., Powers, S., & Watson, L. eds. (1998) *Issues in Deaf Education*. London: David Fulton Publishers.

Griffey, N. (1994) *From silence to speech: fifty years with the deaf*. Dublin: Dominican Publications.

Grin, F. (2003) *Language policy evaluation and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Groce, N. E. (1988) *Everyone Here Spoke Sign Language*. Cambridge M.A: Harvard University Press.

Grushkin, D.A. (2003) 'The dilemma of the hard of hearing within the U.S. deaf community' in: Monaghan, Leila F. et al eds *Many ways to be deaf: international variation in deaf communities*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press 114-140.  
Hands On (2002) *Group Discussion* [Hands On] Raidio Telefis Eireann RTE1, March 3, 2002.

- Hannon F. (2007) *Literature review on attitudes towards disability*. Dublin: National Disability Authority.
- Hantrais, L. (1999) 'Contextualization in cross-national comparative research'. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology: theory & practice*, 2 (2): 93–108.
- Hardiman, N (1998) 'Inequality and the representation of interests'. In: Crotty, W. J. and Schmitt, D. E. eds *Ireland and the politics of change*. London: Longman.
- Hardiman, N., & Whelan, C. (1998) 'Changing values'. In: Crotty, W. J. and Schmitt, D. E. eds *Ireland and the politics of change*. London: Longman.
- Hardiman, N., & Whelan, C. (1998) 'Ireland and the Politics of Change'. In: Crotty, W. J. and Schmitt, D. E. eds *Ireland and the politics of change*. London: Longman.
- Harmer, L. (1999) 'Health care delivery and deaf people: practice, problems, and recommendations for change'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 4: 73-110
- Harris, J. & Bamford, C. (2001) "The Uphill Struggle: services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing people - Issues of Equality, Participation and Access". *Disability & Society*, 16 (7): 969-979.
- Harris, J. (1997) *Deafness and the hearing*. Birmingham: Venture.
- Harvey, B. (2002). *Working for change: a guide to influencing policy in Ireland*. 2nd ed. Dublin: Combat Poverty Society.
- Häyrynen-Alestalo, M. (2006) 'Integrating regional policy with technology policy -- the experience of Finland'. *Fennia*, 184 (1): 3-17.
- Heater, D. (1999) *What is Citizenship?* Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Heinonen, T. MacKay, I., Metteri, A. & Pajula, M. (2001) 'Social Work and Health Restructuring in Canada and Finland'. *Social Work in Health Care*, 34(1-2):71-87.
- Helay, S. & Reynolds, B. (1998) *Social Policy in Ireland - Principles, Practice and Problems*. Dublin: Oak Tree Press.
- Heywood, A. (2002) *Politics*. (2nd ed) Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Higgins, P. (1980) *Outsiders in a Hearing World*. London: Sage.

Hiiilamo, H. (2002) 'The rise and fall of Nordic family policy? Historical development and changes during the 1990s in Sweden and Finland.' *Research report / National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health; 125*. Helsinki.

Hill, M. (1999) *The Impact of Information on Society; An Examination of its Nature, Value and Usage* (2nd edition). London: Bowker-Saur.

Hill, M. J. (2005) *The public policy process* [4th ed.] Harlow: Pearson Longman.

Hilliard B. & Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, M. (2007) *Changing Ireland in International Comparison*. Dublin: The Liffey Press.

Hintermair, M. and Albertini, J.A. (2005) 'Ethics, Deafness, and New Medical Technologies'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 10 (2): 184-192.

Hoffmeister, R. J. (1996) 'Cross-cultural Misinformation: What does special education say about Deaf people?' *Disability & Society*, 11 (2):171-190.

Hoffmesiter, R. & Harvey (1996) 'Is There a Psychology of the Hearing?' . In: Glickman N.& Harvey M. A. eds. *Culturally Affirmative Psychotherapy with Deaf Persons*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.

Horgan, J. , O'Connor, B. & Sheehan, H. (2007) *Mapping Irish Media: Critical Explorations*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

Humphries, T. (2001) *The making of a word: Audism*. [Online] available from: <http://gradschool.gallaudet.edu/clc2002/Readings/audism.PDF> [accessed December 2005].

Hvinden, Bjorn (2004). 'Nordic Disability Policies in a Changing Europe: Is there Still a Distinct Nordic Model?' *Social Policy & Administration*, 38 (2): April, 170-189.

Hyde, A. & Lohan, M. (2004) *Sociology for health professionals in Ireland*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

Inglis, T. (1999). *Moral monopoly: the Catholic Church in modern Irish society*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (2010) Finland [online] available from: [http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewdocument.php?doc\\_id=1956](http://www.ihf-hr.org/viewbinary/viewdocument.php?doc_id=1956) – accessed February 2010).

International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (2010) Finland [online], available from <http://ilga.org/> [accessed February 2010]

Ireland - Commission for the Status of People with Disabilities. (1996) *Strategy for Equality*. Dublin: Government Stationery Office.

Ireland - Central Statistics Office (2006) – *Live Register: June 2006* [online], available from:  
[http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/labour\\_market/current/lreg.pdf](http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/labour_market/current/lreg.pdf):  
[accessed in June 2006].

Ireland - Central Statistics Office (2006) – *Quarterly National Household Survey, 31 May 2006*, [online], available from:  
[http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/labour\\_market/current/qnhs.pdf](http://www.cso.ie/releasespublications/documents/labour_market/current/qnhs.pdf)  
[accessed in June 2006]

Ireland – Department of Education and Science (n/d). [online], available from:  
[http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/sp\\_visiting\\_ts\\_hearing.doc](http://www.education.ie/servlet/blobServlet/sp_visiting_ts_hearing.doc)  
[accessed January 2006].

Ireland - Department of Education. (1972). *The Education of Children Who Are Handicapped by Impaired Hearing*. Dublin: Government Publications Office.

Ireland - Department of Education. (1993) *Report of the Special Education Review Committee*, Dublin: Stationery Office.

Ireland – Department of Health and Children. (1996) *Towards an independent future: report of the Review Group on Health and Personal Social Services for People with Physical and Sensory Disabilities*. Dublin: Stationery Office.

Ireland – Disability Act 2005 – Attorney General's Office, Dublin. [online] available from: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2005/en/act/pub/0014/index.html> .

Ireland – Education Act 1998 – Attorney General's Office, Dublin. [online] available from: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0051/index.html>

Irish Deaf Society (1997) *Bilingual education for deaf children: best option for the future?* St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin. Saturday 22nd March 1997. Dublin: Irish Deaf Society.

Irish Deaf Society (1998) *Annual Report 1998*. Dublin: Irish Deaf Society.

Irish Deaf Society (1999) *Annual Report 1999*. Dublin: Irish Deaf Society.

Irish Deaf Society (2000) *Annual Report 2000*. Dublin: Irish Deaf Society.

Irish Deaf Society (2004) *'You Have to be Deaf to Understand' ... an Interim Report on the Irish Ex-Mainstream Deaf Experience* compiled by Julianne Gillen (Deaforward). Dublin: Irish Deaf Society

Irish Deaf Society (2005) *"Irish Sign Language: "Reclaiming Our Language"* [Leaflet] April 2005. Dublin: Irish Deaf Society.

Irish Deaf Society (2005) *Report for its Annual General Meeting*. Dublin: Irish Deaf Society.

Irish Deaf Society (2008) *Annual Report 2008*. Dublin: Irish Deaf Society.

Irish Deaf Society (2009) **Irish Deaf Society** [Internet], Dublin: IDS Available from: <http://www.deaf.ie/>.

Irish Deaf Society (IDS) (2006a) website address: [www.deaf.ie](http://www.deaf.ie) [accessed June 2006].

Irish Deaf Society (IDS). (2000): *Submission to the Joint Select Committee on the Irish Heritage*. (unpublished), Irish Deaf Society.

Irish Deaf Society (IDS): (1987 – 2005) – *Irish Deaf Journal* - Quarterly Issued Magazine. Dublin: IDS.

Irish Deaf Society (IDS): (2006-2007) – *Irish Deaf News* - Bimonthly Issued Magazine. Dublin: IDS.

Irish Deaf Society with Model School for the Deaf Project and Linkup Project: (2002). *Joint Submission to Educational Disadvantage* (Department of Education and Science) unpublished.

INTO - Irish National Teachers Organisation (2000) *The Visiting Teacher Service for Special Needs*. Unpublished.

Jambor E. & Elliott, M. (2005) 'Self-esteem and Coping Strategies among Deaf Students'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education* 10: 63-81

James, T. & O'Neill, E. (1991) *Reading Assessment of Deaf Children*. Dublin: National Rehabilitation Board.

Jasinskaja-Lahti, I., & Liebkind, K. (2001). 'Perceived discrimination and psychological adjustment among Russian-speaking immigrant adolescents in Finland'. *International Journal of Psychology*, 36: 174–185.

Johnson, R.E., Lidell, S.K., & Erting, C.J. (1989). *Unlocking the curriculum: Principles for achieving access in deaf education*. Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Research Institute.

Johnston, T. (2004) 'W(h)ither the deaf community? Population, genetics, and the future of Australian sign language'. *American annals of the deaf*, 148 (5): 358–375.

Johnston, T. (2005) 'In one's own image: ethics and the reproduction of deafness'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 10(4): 406-416.

Johnston, T. A. & Schembri, A. (2007) *Australian sign language (Auslan): an introduction to sign language linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Joint Commission on Infant Hearing Position Statement (2007) [online], available from: <http://www.jcih.org/posstatemts.htm>

Jokinen, M. (2000). 'The Linguistic Human Rights of Sign Language Users' . In: Phillipson, R. (ed.) (2000). *Rights to Language. Equity, Power, and Education*. Mahwah, New Jersey & London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 200-213.  
Jones, L. & Pullen, G. (1987) *Inside we are all Equal*. Brussels: EUD

Jones, L., Atkin, K., & Ahmad, W. I. U. (2001) 'Supporting Asian Deaf young people and their families: the role of professionals and services'. *Disability & Society*, 16 (1): 51-70.

Jones, S. (2004) 'Problematizing the familiar: Deaf students as researchers of deaf people'. *Qualitative Social Work* 3 (1): 27-38

Jones, S. (2006) 'Structure and Agency in Deafness Discourse: Binaries of Power' *Deaf Worlds*, 22 (2): 49-71.

Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education (1996 to present) [online]: available: <http://jdsde.oxfordjournals.org/>

Jyrkiäinen Jyrki (2008) *The Finnish Media: Internet Moves Media Plates* [online] available: <http://finland.fi/netcomm/news/showarticle.asp?intNWSAID=27113> [accessed November 2008].

Kannapell, B. (1989), "Inside the Deaf community" in Wilcox S. [Ed]. *American Deaf Culture: An Anthology* , Silver Spring, MD: Linstok Press 1 – 16.

Kannapell, B. (1993) *Language choice: identity choice*. Burtonsville, Md: Linstok



- Kannapell, B. (1993), ``The power structure in the Deaf community". In: *Deaf Studies 3: Bridging Cultures in the 21st Century, Conference Proceedings* (College for Continuing Education, Gallaudet University, Washington, DC) 163 – 169
- Karvonen, K. (2007) *Finnish politics - Election analysis 2007, Advantage: Women and Conservatives* – published May 2007 [online] available from: <http://finland.fi/netcomm/news/showarticle.asp>. [accessed June 2007].
- Keatinge, P. & Laffan, B. (1999) 'Ireland: a small open polity'. In: Gallagher, M. (ed.) *Politics in the Republic of Ireland, (3rd Edition)*, London: Routledge.
- Kennedy, P. (1999) 'Women and Social Policy'. In Kiely, G. *et al* (eds)'s *Irish Social Policy in Context*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.
- Kennedy, P. (2004) 'Women, autonomy and bodily integrity'. In Fanning, B. *et al* (eds)'s *Theorising Irish Social Policy*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.
- Kestilä, E. (2006) 'Is There Demand for Radical Right in the Finnish Electorate?' *Scandinavian Political Studies* 29(3): 169-191.
- Kiely, G. (1999) 'The Family and Social Policy'. In Kiely, G. *et al* (eds)'s *Irish Social Policy in Context*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.
- Kiely, G., O'Donnell, A., Kennedy, P., & Quin, S. (1999) *Irish social policy in context*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.
- Kimpimäki, A. (2001) *Vammaispalvelut kunnissa: Vammaispalvelulain mukaisten palvelujen ja taloudellisten tukioimien asiakkaat ja kustannukset kunnissa 2001 (English summary of how effective the Act on Services and Assistance for the Disabled)*, Sosiaali- Ja Terveysministerio, unpublished.
- King, J. F. (ed) (2001) *Introduction to deaf education: A deaf perspective*. Hillsboro, Org. USA: Butte Publishers.
- Knight, P. & Swanwick, R. (1999) *The care and education of a deaf child*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters
- Kohn, M. L. (ed) (1989) *Cross-national research in sociology*, Newbury Park; London: Sage.
- Komito, L. (2004) *The Information Revolution & Ireland: Prospects and Challenges*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.
- Kontra, M., Philipson, R., Skutnabb-Kangas, T. and Varady, T. (1999) *Language, a right and a resource: approaching linguistic human rights*, Budapest: Central European University Press.

Krausneker, V. (2000) 'Sign Languages and the Minority Languages Policy of the European Union'. In Metzger, M. (ed)'s *Sociolinguistics in Deaf Communities*, Washington D.C. Gallaudet University Press, 6.142–58.

Krausneker, V. (2001) 'Sign Languages of Europe-Future Chances'. In Leeson, L. (ed.). *Looking Forward- EUD in the 3rd Millennium- The Deaf Citizen in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Gloucestershire, UK: Douglas McLean Publishers, 64-73.

Krausneker, V. (2003). 'Has something changed? Sign language in Europe: the case of minorised minority languages'. *Deaf worlds*, 19 (2): 33–46.

Kurs, D. J. & Bahan, B. (1998) 'Thoughts on the effects of provisions for the deaf' In: Bragg, Lois (ed): *Deaf world: a historical reader and primary sourcebook*. New York: New York University Press, 275-283.

Kvam, M. H., Loeb, M. & Tambs, K. (2007) 'Mental Health in Deaf Adults: Symptoms of Anxiety and Depression among Hearing and Deaf Individuals'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, Winter 12: 1 - 7.

Kwirotek, R. G. (1999) '*The need for a disability equality model: a new critical theoretical approach to disability*', Unpublished Masters thesis, Dublin: University College Dublin.

Kyle, J. & Allsop, L. (1997) *Sign on Europe: a study of deaf people and sign language in the European Union*, Bristol: Centre for Deaf Studies, University of Bristol.

Kymlicka, W. & Patten, A. (2003) *Language Rights and Political Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kymlicka, W. (1998) 'Can multiculturalism be extended to non-ethnic groups?' In Kymlicka, W. ed. *Finding our way: rethinking ethno-cultural relations in Canada*. Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Laaninen, A. (2005) '*Development Of The Finnish Welfare State, The Transformation Of Finnish Society And Social Policy Model*', University Of Joensuu Department Of Social Policy, Joensuu.

Ladd, P. (2003) *Understanding Deaf Culture: In Search of Deafhood*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

- Laine, J. (2007) *Parliamentarism, Virtual Finland* [online], Available from: <http://finland.fi/Public/default.aspx?contentid=160051&nodeid=41805&culture=en-US> [accessed January 2008].
- Lane, H. (2005) 'Ethnicity, Ethics, and the Deaf-World'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education* 10(3): 291-310
- Lane, H. (1984) *When the mind hears: a history of the Deaf*. New York: Random House.
- Lane, H. (1992) *The Mask of Benevolence: Disabling the Deaf Community*. New York: Vintage Press.
- Lane, H. (1995) 'Constructions of deafness'. *Disability and Society*, 10: 171-189
- Lane, H. (1997) 'Construction of Deafness'. In Davis, L. J. (Ed.). *The disability studies reader*, London: Routledge, 153-171
- Lane, H. (2002) 'Do Deaf People Have a Disability?' *Sign Language Studies* 2: 4 Summer.
- Lane, H. Hoffmeister, R., & Bahan, B. (1996) *A journey into the deaf-world*. San Diego: DawnSignPress,
- Lane, H., & Bahan, B. (1998) 'Effects of cochlear implantation in young children: A review and a reply from a DEAF-WORLD perspective'. *Otolaryngology: Head and Neck Surgery*, 119: 297-308.
- Lane, H., & Grodin, M. (1997) 'Ethical issues in cochlear implant surgery: An exploration into disease, disability, and the best interests of the child'. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal*, 7: 231-251.
- Lasagabaster, D. (2007) *Multilingualism in European bilingual contexts: language use and attitudes*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Latomaa, S. & Nuolijarvi, P. (2005) 'The Language Situation in Finland'. In Kaplan R. B. & Baldauf, R. B. eds. *Language planning and policy in Europe Volume 1 of Language planning and policy: Hungary, Sweden and Finland*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2005. 123-232.
- Leahy A. & Wiley, M. (1998) *The Irish Health System in the 21st Century*. Dublin: Oak Tree Press.
- Lee, J. (1989) *The modernisation of Irish society 1848-1918*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan.

Leeson, L. (1997) *The expression of time in sign languages with special reference to Irish sign language*. Unpublished Masters thesis, Trinity College Dublin.

Leeson, L. (2004) 'Signs of Change in Europe: European Developments on the Status of Signed Languages'. In Patrick McDonnell (ed.) *Deaf Studies in Ireland: An Introduction*, Coleford, England: Doug McLean.

Leeson, L. (2006) *Signed Languages in Education in Europe – a preliminary exploration. Preliminary Study*. Strasbourg: Language Policy Unit, Council of Europe. [online], available from: [www.coe.int/t/dg4/Linguistic/Source/Leeson\\_EN.doc](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/Linguistic/Source/Leeson_EN.doc). [Accessed January 2008].

Leeson, L. (2007) *Seeing is Learning. A Review of education for deaf and hard of hearing people in Ireland*. Unpublished report submitted to the National Council for Special Education.

Leeson, L. (ed.) (2001) *Looking forward: EUD in the 3rd millennium - the deaf citizen in the 21st century*. Coleford: McLean Publisher.

LeMaster, B. (2003) 'School Language and Shifts in Irish Deaf Identity'. In Monaghan, L. et al (eds.), *Many Ways to be Deaf: International Variation in Deaf Communities*. Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press. 153-172.

LeMaster, B. (2006) 'Language Contraction, Revitalization and Irish Women'. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 16 (2): 211-228

Lewis, R.D. (1999) *When cultures collide: managing successfully across cultures*, London: Nicholas Brealey.

Lewis, R.D. (2005) *Finland, cultural lone wolf*. London: Intercultural Press.

Leybaert J. & Alegria, J. (2003) 'The Role of Cued Speech in Language Development of Deaf Children'. In Marschark, M. & Spencer, P. (eds) *Oxford Handbook of Deaf Studies, Language, and Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Licker McKee, R. & Napier, J. (2002) 'Interpreting into International Sign Pidgin: an analysis'. *Sign Language & Linguistics*, 5 (1): 27-54.

Lister, R. (1997) *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives*, London: MacMillan.

Little, D. (2003) *Languages in the Post-Primary Curriculum: a discussion paper*: commissioned by National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. Unpublished.

Londen, M. (2004) *Communicational and educational choices for minorities within minorities: The case of the Finland-Swedish Deaf*. University of Helsinki, Department

of Education Research Report: Helsinki University Press, Finland. Available from: <https://oa.doria.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/3656/communic.pdf?sequence=1>

Luckner, J.L. & Stewart, J. (2003) 'Self-assessments and other perceptions of successful adults who are deaf: An initial investigation'. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 148(3): 243-250.

Lukes, S. (1974) *Power: A Radical Approach*. London: Palgrave Macmillan

Lynch, K (1989) *The Hidden Curriculum: Reproduction in Education, A Reappraisal*. London: Falmer Press

Lynch, K. (1999) *Equality in Education*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan

Mac Coil, L. (2003) 'Irish: one of the world's languages'. In Cronin, M. and Ó Cuilleánáin, C eds. *The languages of Ireland*, Dublin: Four Courts Press

Macpherson, G. (2002) *Black's medical dictionary*, 40th edition. London: A. & C. Black.

Mahshie, S. (1997) *A First Language; Whose Choice is It?*. Washington D.C: Gallaudet University Press.

Mahshie, S.N. (1995) *Educating deaf children bilingually*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press

Mair, P. (1999). 'Party competition and the changing political system'. In Coakley, J. and Gallagher, M. eds. *Politics in the Republic of Ireland: Third Edition*, London: Routledge.

Makkonen, T. (2003) '*Executive Summary on race equality directive: State of Play in Finland*', [online], available from: [http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/fundamental\\_rights/pdf/legisln/mracequality/finland.pdf](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/fundamental_rights/pdf/legisln/mracequality/finland.pdf). [accessed January 2008]

Makkonen, T. (2004) '*Disability Discrimination Law in Finland: Executive Summary*' [online], available from: [www.nondiscrimination.net/.../2006%20Finland%20summary\\_en.pdf](http://www.nondiscrimination.net/.../2006%20Finland%20summary_en.pdf). [accessed January 2008].

Marschark, M. (2003) 'Cognitive Functioning in Deaf Adults and Children'. In Marschark, M. & Spencer, P. (eds) *Oxford Handbook of Deaf Studies, Language, and Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Marschark, M. (2007) 'On Ethics and Deafness: Research, Pedagogy and Politics'. *Deafness and Education International*, 9:45-61.

Marschark, M. & Spencer, P. (eds) (2003) *Oxford Handbook of Deaf Studies, Language, and Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Marschark, M. (2007) *Raising and educating a deaf child: a comprehensive guide to the choices, controversies, and decisions faced by parents and educators* 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Marschark, M., Lang H. G & Albertini, J. A. (2002) *Educating deaf students: from research to practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Marshall, T. H. (1992). 'Citizenship and social class'. In Marshall, T. H. & Bottomore T. (Eds.), *Citizenship and social class*, London: Pluto Press, 1-51.

Martikainen, P., Martikainen, T. & Wass, H. (2005). 'The effect of socioeconomic factors on voter turnout in Finland: a register-based study of 2.9 million voters'. *European Journal of Political Research*, 44: 645-669.

Martin D., & Bat-Chava, Y (2003) 'Negotiating deaf-hearing friendships: coping strategies of deaf boys and girls in mainstream schools'. *Child: Care, Health and Development*. 29 (6): 511–521.

Mathews, E. (forthcoming) "*Policy and Practice of Mainstreaming Primary Deaf Education in Ireland*", Doctorate research, National University of Ireland, Maynooth.  
Mathews, E., (2007) 'Some Statistics Regarding the Education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children in Ireland: The Current Situation'. In Leeson, L., *Seeing is Learning. A Review of education for deaf and hard of hearing people in Ireland*. Report submitted to the National Council for Special Education, 34-54.

Matthews, P.A. (1996) *The Irish Deaf Community: Volume 1: Survey report, history of education, language and culture*. Dublin: Institiuid Teangeolaiochta Eireann.

May, S. (2001) *Language and minority rights: ethnicity, nationalism and the politics of language*. Harlow: Longman.

May, T. (1997) *Social research: issues, methods and process: second edition*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

May, T. (2001) *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process: 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Buckingham: Open University Press

McCashin: A. & O'Sullivan, E. (1999) *Irish social policy review*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

- McDonnell, P & Saunders, H. (1993) 'Sit on your hands: Strategies to prevent signing' in Fischer, R. and Lane, H. (eds) *Looking back: A Reader on the History of Deaf Communities and their sign Languages*, Hamburg: Signum Press.
- McDonnell, P. (1994), 'New Perspectives on the History of Modern Sign Languages: Evidence from Irish Sign Language', paper presented at the Second International Conference on Deaf History, Hamburg, 1-4 October.
- McDonnell, P. (1996) *Verbs in Irish sign language*. Doctoral thesis unpublished Trinity College, University of Dublin.
- McDonnell, P. (2003). 'Education Policy'. In Quin, S. & Redmond, B. *Disability & Social Policy in Ireland*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 28-44.
- McDonnell, P. (2004) *Deaf studies in Ireland: an introduction*. Coleford: Douglas McLean.
- McDonnell, P. (2007) *Disability and Society: Ideological and Historical Dimensions*. Dublin: Blackhall.
- McDonnell, P. (1979) *The Establishment and Operation of Institutions for Education of the Deaf in Ireland*. Unpublished MA Thesis, Dublin: University College Dublin.
- McKinnon C. C., Moran, G. & Pederson, D. (2004) 'Attachment Representations of Deaf Adults'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 9: 366-386.
- McVeigh, R. (2007) 'Ethnicity Denial' and Racism: The Case of the Government of Ireland Against Irish Travellers' *Translocations: The Irish Migration, Race and Social Transformation Review*. [online], available from: <http://www.translocations.ie/volume1issue2/volume1issue2-6.pdf>
- McWilliams, D. (2006) *The Pope's Children: Ireland's New Elite*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan.
- Meier, R.P., Cormier, K. & Quinto-Pozos, D., eds, (2002) *Modality and structure in signed and spoken languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Mercer, G. (2002). 'Emancipatory Disability Research'. In Barnes, Colin, et al (eds) *Disability studies today*, London: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Metzger, M. and Bahan, B. (2001) 'Discourse Analysis', in Lucas, C. (ed.) *The Sociolinguistics of Sign Languages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- Mindess, A. (1999) *Reading between the signs: Intercultural communication for sign language interpreters*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

Mitchell R. (2005) 'How Many Deaf People Are There in the United States? Estimates From the Survey of Income and Program Participation'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 11(1) 112-119.

Mitchell R.E., Young, T. A., Bachleda, B. and. Karchmer M. A. (2006) 'How Many People Use ASL in the United States? Why Estimates Need Updating' *Sign Language Studies*, 6 (3).

Mohr P. E., Feldman, J. J., Dunbar, J.L. , McConkey-Robbins, A. , Niparko, J. K., Rittenhouse R. K. & Skinner, M.W. (2000) 'The societal cost of severe to profound hearing loss in the United States' *International Journal of Technology Assessment in Health Care*, 16 (4):1120-1135.

Moore, D. F. (1978) *Educating the Deaf: Psychology, Principles and Practices*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Morris, J. (2003) 'Including All Children: Finding Out About the Experiences of Children with Communication and/or Cognitive Impairments'. *Children & Society*, 17 (5): 337 – 348.

Morris, J. (2005) *Citizenship and disabled people* – April 2005 [online], available from:

[http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disabilitystudies/archiveuk/morris/Citizenship\\_and\\_disabled\\_people\\_final.pdf](http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disabilitystudies/archiveuk/morris/Citizenship_and_disabled_people_final.pdf) [accessed February 2008].

Murdock, G. (1994) 'Corporate dynamics and broadcasting features'. In Aldridge, M. & Hewitt, N. eds *Controlling Broadcasting, Access, Policy and Practice in Northern America and Europe*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Murray, J. J. (2007) 'A Touch of Nature Makes the Whole World Kin:' *The Transnational World of Deaf Americans, 1880-1924*'. Unpublished Ph.D., Dissertation, University of Iowa, USA.

Napier, J. (2002) The D/deaf – H/hearing Debate. *Sign Language Studies*, 2 (2): 141-149.

Napier, J., McKee, R. & Goswell, D. (2006) *Sign Language Interpreting. Theory and Practice in Australia and New Zealand*. Sydney: The Federation Press.

National Association of the Deaf People (2004) *Annual Report 2003*. Dublin: National Association of the Deaf People.

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2005) *Review of Languages in Post-Primary education: Report on the phase of the review*. Unpublished.

National Development Programme (NDP) (2009) [online], available from: [http://www.ndp.ie/docs/NDP\\_Homepage/1131.htm](http://www.ndp.ie/docs/NDP_Homepage/1131.htm) [accessed February, 2009]



National Disability Authority (2007) *Public attitudes to disability in Ireland: report of findings*, Dublin: Insight Statistical Consulting.

National Disability Authority (2007) *Survey on Public Attitudes to Disability in Ireland* [online], available from :

[http://www.nda.ie/website/nda/cntmgmtnew.nsf/0/FD9B9DBF1F1CF617802573B8005DDED5/\\$File/Survey.pdf](http://www.nda.ie/website/nda/cntmgmtnew.nsf/0/FD9B9DBF1F1CF617802573B8005DDED5/$File/Survey.pdf).

National Rehabilitation Board. (1973) *Sociological Survey of the Young Adult Deaf People Dublin* - Commissioned by National Association for the Deaf and National Rehabilitation Board.

National Women's Council (2009) *Political Equality* [online], available at the <http://www.nwc.ie/>

Nexus (1995) *Poverty: Lesbians and Gay Men. The Economic and Social Effects of Discrimination* commissioned by the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network: Dublin: Nexus

Nic Craith, M. (2006) *Europe and the politics of language: citizens, migrants and outsiders*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan

Nic Ghiolla Phádraig, M. (2007) 'Attitudes to Social Inequality'. In Hilliard B. & Nic Ghiolla Phádraig M. (eds). *Changing Ireland in International Comparison*, Dublin: Liffey Press.

Nic Shuibhne, N. (2002) 'Eighty Years A'Growing – The Official Languages (Equality) Bill 2002'. *Irish Law Times* 13.

Niemelä H. & Salminen K. (n/d) 'Social Security in Finland' [online], available from: <http://www.tapiola.fi/NR/rdonlyres/A542F4E0-5064-4684-8F6930028D0D685E/0/ETKSocialSecurityinFinland.pdf>

Nikolarazi M. & Hadjidakou K. (2006) 'The Role of Educational Experiences in the Development of Deaf Identity'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 11: 477-492

Nivalainen, S. (2005) 'Interregional migration and post-move employment in two earner families: Evidence from Finland'. *Regional Studies*, 39 (7) 891-907, [accessing October 2005].

Nolan, B., O'Connell, P. J & Whelan, C. T. (2000) *Bust to Boom?: The Irish Experience of Growth and Inequality*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

Nover, S. (1995). 'Politics and language: American Sign Language and English in deaf education'. In Lucas, C. (Ed.), *Sociolinguistics in deaf communities*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press, 109-163.

Nover, S. & Ruiz, R. (1992) 'ASL and language planning for deaf education'. In Martin, D. S. & Mobley, R. T. (eds): *Proceedings of the first International Symposium on Teacher Education in Deafness*: Gallaudet University June 4-6, 1992, Washington, D.C.:153-171.

Ó Buachalla, S. (1988) *Education policy in twentieth century Ireland*. Dublin: Wolfhound Press.

Ó hÉallaithe, D.. (2004) 'From Language Revival to Survival'. In Mac Murchaidh C.(ed) *Who Needs Irish?: Reflections on the Importance of the Irish Language Today*, Dublin: Veritas.

Ó Laoire, M. (2007) 'Language use and language attitudes in Ireland' in Lasagabaster D.and Huguet A. (eds). *Multilingualism in European Bilingual Contexts*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters: 164-183.

O'Brien, D. & Waters, E. (2007) 'Governing below the Centre: Local Government in Ireland'. *TASC Research Pamphlets Series*. Dublin: New Island.

O'Connell, M. & Winston, N. (2005) 'Changing Attitudes towards Minorities' in Ireland'. In Garry, J. et al (eds) *Irish Social and Political Attitudes*, Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

O'Donnell, A. (1999) 'Comparing Welfare states: Considering the Case of Ireland'. In Kiely, G. et al (eds) *Irish Social Policy in Context*, Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

O'Donnell, R. (1998) 'Ireland's economic transformation: Industrial policy, European integration and social partnership'. *University of Pittsburgh, Centre for West European Studies, Working Paper No. 2*, December 1998 [online] available from: <http://www.nesc.ie/dynamic/docs/Ireland's%20Economic%20Transformation.doc> [accessed March 2008].

O'Dowd, M. (1955) *The History of the Catholic Schools for the Deaf*. Unpublished MA Thesis, Dublin: University College Dublin.

O'Malley E. & Marsh, M. (2005) 'Ireland' *European Journal of Political Research* 44: 1049-1055.

O'Brien, C. (2006) 'From Acholi to Zulu, Ireland a land of over 167 languages'. *The Irish Times*, March 25, 2006, p1.

O'Connell, N. (2008) '*Post-colonialism: a process towards empowerment in the Irish Deaf community*', unpublished M. Phil thesis, Bristol: University of Bristol.

Oinonen, E. (2004) 'Starting the first family'. *European Societies*, 6, (3) 319 – 34.

Ojala, Jari, (2006). 'Change and continuity in the Finnish economy over time'. Virtual Finland [online]. Available from: <http://newsroom.finland.fi/netcomm/news/showarticle.asp?intNWSAID=56613> [accessed December 2007].

Oliver, M. (1983) *Social Work and Disabled People*. Basingstoke: MacMillan

Oliver, M. (1990) *The Politics of Disablement*. Basingstoke: MacMillan.

Oliver, M. (1992) 'Changing the Social Relations of Research Production'. *Disability, Handicap and Society*, 7 (2): 101-114.

Oliver, M. (1996) *Understanding Disability: From Theory to Practice*. Basingstoke: MacMillan

Oliver, M. (2002) 'Emancipatory Research: A Vehicle for Social Transformation or Policy Development'. A paper given at National Disability Authority's 1<sup>st</sup> National Disability Seminar - *Using emancipatory methodologies in disability research*. Dublin. December 3, 2002. Available from: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/Oliver/Mike%27s%20paper.pdf> [accessed March 2005].

Oliver, M. (2004) 'The Social Model in Action: if I had a hammer'. In Barnes, C. & Mercer, G. (eds) *Implementing the Social Model of Disability: Theory and Research*, Leeds: Disability Press.

O'Malley, E. & Kerby, M. (2004). 'Chronicle of a Death Foretold? Understanding the Decline of Fine Gael'. *Irish Political Studies*, 19 (1): 39-58.

Ornston, D. (2006) 'Reorganising adjustment: Finland's emergence as a high technology leader'. *West European Politics*, 29 (4): 784 – 801.

O'Rourke, S. & Grever, G. (2005) 'Assessment of Deaf people in forensic mental health settings: A risky business!' *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry & Psychology*, 16 (4): 671 – 684.

Øyen, E. (1990) *Comparative methodology: theory and practice in international social research*. London: Sage.

Padden C., & Humphries, T. (1998) *Deaf in America: Voices from a culture*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Padden, C. (1996) "From the Cultural to the Bicultural: The Modern Deaf Community". In Paransis, I. ed *Cultural and Language Diversity and the Deaf Experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Padden, C. & Humphries, T. (2005) *Inside deaf culture*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Paulston, C.B. (1997) "Language policies and language rights". *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 26:73-85.

Peet, H. P. (1997) 'Notions of the deaf and dumb before instruction, especially in regard to religious subjects'. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 142 (3) 8-17

Peillon, M. (2001) *Welfare in Ireland. Actors, resources and strategies*. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger.

Pelkonen, A. (2004). 'Questioning the Finnish Model – Forms of Public Engagement in Building the Finnish Information Society'. STAGE (Science, Technology and Governance in Europe: Discussion Paper 5 June 2004. [online], available from: [http://www.stage-research.net/STAGE/documents/5\\_ICTFinlandcase\\_final.pdf](http://www.stage-research.net/STAGE/documents/5_ICTFinlandcase_final.pdf) [accessed January 2006].

Peters, E. (2000) 'Our Decision on a Cochlear Implant'. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 145(3): 263-267.

Phelan. M. (2006) 'Interpreting Services in Ireland: Setting Standards and Establishing Systems'. *Spectrum*, Issue 12, September 2006 - NCCRI – (National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism: Dublin. 7-8.

Phillipson, R. (2002) *English-only Europe?: Challenging language policy*. New York: Routledge.

Pillinger, J. (2002) *Disability and the Quality of Services: Irish and European perspectives*. Paper for Policy Institute Seminar, on behalf of the National Disability Authority, Trinity College Dublin, 16 April 2002.

Pipp-Siegel, S., Sedey, A. L. and Yoshinaga-Itano, C. (2002) 'Predictors of Parental Stress in Mothers of Young Children With Hearing Loss'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, Winter 2002, 7 (1): 17.

Pollard, R. (2006) *The Avenue - A History Of The Claremont Institution*. Dublin: Denzille Press.

Power, Des (2005) 'Models of Deafness: Cochlear Implants in the Australian Daily Press'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 10 (4): 451-459.

Puig T, Municio A, & Meda C. (2005) 'Universal neonatal hearing screening versus selective screening as part of the management of childhood deafness'. *Cochrane Database System Review*, 18: (2):

Punch R., Hyde, M. & Power, D. (2007) 'Career and Workplace Experiences of Australian University Graduates Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 12 (4): 504 -517.

Pyoria, P. (2003) 'The Finnish Information Society: Progressive but Vulnerable' *ETLA – The Research Institute of the Finnish Economy*. [online]. Available from: [http://www.etla.fi/files/892\\_FES\\_03\\_2\\_information.pdf](http://www.etla.fi/files/892_FES_03_2_information.pdf).

Quigley, S. P. & Paul, P. V. (1984) *Language and deafness*. San Diego: College-Hill Press.

Quin, S. & Redmond, B. (2003) *Disability and Social Policy in Ireland*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

Quin, S. (1999) *Improving Health Care: Health Policy in Ireland*. In Quin, S. et al *Contemporary Irish social policy*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

Quin, S. (2003) 'Health\_Services and disability'. In Quin, S. & Redmond, B. (eds). *Disability and Social Policy in Ireland*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

Quin, S., Kennedy, P., O'Donnell, A. & Kiely, G. (1999) *Contemporary Irish social policy*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

Raunio, T, Tiilikainen, T. and Lipponen, P. (2003) *Finland in the European Union* London: Routledge.

Redfern, P. 1996, "Deaf Professionals: a growing stream,". In Laurenzi C. & Ridgeway S. (eds) *Progress Through Equality: New Perspectives in the Field of Mental Health and Deafness*. London: British Society of Mental Health and Deafness.

Rée, J. (1999) *I see a voice: a philosophical history of language, deafness and the senses*. London: HarperCollins.

Research Institute for the Languages of Finland (n/d) leaflet of what it operates. Available: <http://www.kotus.fi/?l=en>

Ricento, T. (ed). (2006) *An introduction to language policy; theory and method*. Oxford: Blackwell

Ridgeway, S. (1998) 'A deaf personality?' in Gregory, S, et al (Eds.), *Issues in deaf education*. London: David Fulton Publishers

- Rissanen, T. (1987) 'Sign and School in Finland'. in Kyle, J. (ed) *Sign and school: using signs in deaf children's development*, Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Robinson, S., Adam, R. (2003) 'Cultures of disability and deafness: rethinking links between the disability movement and the deaf community'. *Disability Studies and Research Institute and the Deaf Society of NSW* Paper presented at the Australian Social Policy Conference, University of NSW, July. [online], Available from: <http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/ASPC2003/papers/Paper248.pdf>.
- Rooney, N. (2003) 'Creating a culture of change: expositing the perspectives of young people with hearing impairments'. In Shevlin, M. and Rose, R. (eds). *Encouraging voices: respecting the insights of young people who have been marginalised*, Dublin: National Disability Authority.
- Rose, P. & Kiger, G. (1995) 'Inter-group Relations: political action and identity in the deaf community'. *Disability & Society*, 10 (4): 521 – 528.
- Rosen, R. (2003) 'Jargons for deafness as institutional modes of the deaf body'. *Disability & Society*, 18(7): 921 - 934.
- Rosenstock, R. (2008) 'The Role of Iconicity in International Sign'. *Sign Language Studies*, 8 (2):131-159.
- Roush, D. (2007) 'Indirectness Strategies in American Sign Language Requests and Refusals: Deconstructing the Deaf-as-Direct Stereotype' in Metzger, M & Fletwood, F. (eds), *Translation, sociolinguistic, and consumer issues in interpreting*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.
- Royal Irish Academy (2006) *Language policy & language planning in Ireland* (edited by Pól Ó Dochartaigh) Dublin: Royal Irish Academy.
- Rubio-Marin, R. (2003) 'Language Rights: Exploring the Competing Rationales'. In Kymlicka, W. & Patten, A.(eds) *Language Rights and Political Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ruhs, M. (2005) *Managing the Immigration and Employment of Non-EU Nationals in Ireland*, Dublin: The Policy Institute, Trinity College Dublin.
- Ruiz Vieyetz, E. J. (2001) *The Protection of Linguistic Minorities: A Historical Approach*. MOST Journal on Multicultural Societies, 3, (1) UNESCO. Spain.
- Ruiz, R. (1990) 'Official Languages and Language Planning'. In Adams K. L. & Brink, D. T. (eds) *Perspectives on Official English*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter: 11-26.

Ruiz, R. (1984) 'Orientations in language planning'. NABE: *The Journal for the National Association for Bilingual Education*, 8(2): 15-34.

Ruiz, R. (1988) 'Orientations in Language Planning in Language Diversity: Problem or Resource?'. In McKay S. L. and Wong, C. (Eds.). *Language diversity, problem or resource? a social and educational perspective on language minorities in the United States*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Ruiz, R. (1994) 'Language policy and planning in the United States'. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 14: 111-125.

Rush, M. (1999). 'Social Partnership in Ireland: Emergence and Process'. In Kiely, G. et al (eds) *Irish Social Policy in Context*, Dublin: University College Dublin Press.

Ryan, F. W. (2002) *Constitutional Law*. Dublin: Sweet & Maxwell.

Ryan, P. (2006) *The Catholic Institute for the Deaf Strategic Review Report*. Dublin: Catholic Institute of the Deaf People: [online] Available from: [http://www.cidp.ie/downloads/Strategic\\_Review\\_Report.pdf](http://www.cidp.ie/downloads/Strategic_Review_Report.pdf).

SAK- Finnish trade union confederation [Internet] **SAK**. Available: <http://www.sak.fi>.

Schick, B. (2003) 'The Development of American Sign Language and Manually Coded English Systems'. In Marschark, M. & Spencer, P. (eds) (2003) *Oxford Handbook of Deaf Studies, Language, and Education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schiffman, H (2005) 'Language Policy and Linguistic Culture'. In Ricento, T. (ed) *Introduction to Language Policy: Theory and Method*, London: Blackwell.

Schroedel, J. & Geyer, P. (2000) 'Long-term career attainments of deaf and hard of hearing college graduates: results from a 15-year follow-up survey'. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 145 (4): 303-314

Schuchman, J. S. (1988) *Hollywood speaks. Deafness and the film entertainment industry*. Urbana, Ill. University of Illinois Press.

Schuchman, S., & Ryan, D. (eds.). (2002) *Deaf people in Hitler's Europe*. Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press.

Scott-Hill, M. (2003) 'Deafness/Disability – problematising notions of identity, culture and structure'. In Riddell, S. & Watson, N. (eds) (2003) *Disability, Culture and Identity*, Pearson: Essex.

Shakespeare T. (1998) *The disability reader: social science perspectives*. London: Caswell.

- Shakespeare, T. (2006) *Disability rights and wrongs*. London: Routledge.
- Siikala, J. (2006) 'The Ethnography of Finland'. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 35: 153-170.
- Singleton, F. (1998) *A short history of Finland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Sinnott, R (1999) 'The electoral system'. In Coakley, J., & Gallagher, M.(eds) *Politics in the Republic of Ireland*. Third Edition. London: Routledge.
- Skelton, T. & Valentine, G. (2003) 'Political participation, political action and political identities: young D/deaf people's perspectives'. *Space and Polity*, 7 (2): 117-134.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. & Phillipson, R. (1994). 'Linguistic human rights, past and present'. In Skutnabb-Kangas, T. & Phillipson, R. (eds.) *Linguistic Human Rights: Overcoming Linguistic Discrimination*: Berlin. Mouton de Gruyter: 71-110.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (1984) *Bilingualism or not - the education of minorities*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2000) *Linguistic genocide in education, or worldwide diversity and human rights*; London: L. Erlbaum Associates.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. & Phillipson, R. (1994) *Linguistic human rights: overcoming linguistic discrimination*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2003) *Linguistic genocide and the Deaf* at the 14<sup>th</sup> World Congress of World Federation of the Deaf, July 2003 in Montreal, Canada. unpublished.
- SNA - Special Needs Assistants (Deaf members of IMPACT) submission to *the Advisory Committee on Education of the Deaf*. June, 2002: unpublished.
- Spicker, P. (1995) *Social policy: themes and approaches*. London: Prentice-Hall.
- Snoddon, K. (2009) 'Equity in education: signed language and the courts'. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 10: 3, 255 — 271
- Spicker, P. (2006) *Policy analysis for practice: applying social policy*. Bristol: Policy.



Spolsky, B. & Shohamy, E. (2000) 'Language Practice, Language Ideology and Language Policy'. In Lambert, Richard. *Language policy and pedagogy: essays in honor of A. Ronald Walton*. Philadelphia: J. Benjamins.

Spolsky, B. (2004) *Language policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

St. Joseph's School for Deaf Boys. (1957) *Centenary Record 1857 – 1957*. Dublin: St. Joseph's School.

Statistics Finland (2009) *Statistical summary in English* [Internet] Statistics Finland, available from: [http://www.stat.fi/index\\_en.html](http://www.stat.fi/index_en.html)

Stokoe, W. (1993) 'The broadening and sharpening psychological perspectives in deafness'. In Marschark, M. *Psychological perspectives on deafness*. Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Stone, C. (forthcoming) 'The trials and tribulations of creating relevant translations of DEAF BSL informant interviews' in Young, A. et al (eds) (forthcoming) *Research methodology and deaf studies: theoretical developments and practice innovation*.

Stone, E. & Priestley, M. (1996) 'Parasites, pawns and partners: disability research and the role of non-disabled researchers'. *British Journal of Sociology*, 47(4): 699–716.

Sutton-Spence, R. & Woll, B. (1999) *The linguistics of British Sign Language: an introduction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Suviranta, A. (2005) 'Employment, Family and the Law in Finland'. *Comparative Labor Law & Policy Journal*. 27: 437-449.

Swain J. & French S. (2004) 'Whose Tragedy: Towards a personal non-tragedy view of disability'. In Swain J., French S., Barnes C. & Thomas, C. (eds.) *Disabling Barriers – Enabling Environments*. (2nd ed.) London: Sage.

Swan, E. (1994) *Study on the Dublin Schools for the Deaf*. Dublin, Privately Commissioned Report from the Psychology Department, University College Dublin.

Symington, B. & Carberry, J. (2006) *British and Irish Sign Languages: the long road to recognition*. Belfast: Linen Hall Library.

Takala, M. (1995) "“They say I’m stupid, but I just don’t HEAR”": *Hearing impaired Adults’ view of Finnish society*': Research Report 142, Department of Teacher Education, University of Helsinki.

Tang, N. (2002) 'Interviewer and Interviewee Relationships Between Women'. *Sociology*, 36 (3) 703-721.

Taskforce on Active Citizenship (2007) Report of the Taskforce on Active Citizenship 2007. [online] Available from:  
[http://www.activecitizen.ie/UPLOADEDFILES/Mar07/Taskforce%20Report%20to%20Government%20\(Mar%2007\).pdf](http://www.activecitizen.ie/UPLOADEDFILES/Mar07/Taskforce%20Report%20to%20Government%20(Mar%2007).pdf)

Temple B. & Young, A. (2004) 'Qualitative Research and Translation Dilemmas'. *Qualitative Research*, 4 (2): 161-178.

Temple, B. (2002) 'Crossed Wires: Interpreters, Translators, and Bilingual Workers in Cross-Language Research'. *Qualitative Health Research* 12(6): 844–54.

The Model School for the Deaf Project. (1998) *Handbook on the Way Forward for Deaf Education*. Dublin. MSDP.

Thomas, C., Cromwell, J. & Miller, H. (2006) 'Community Mental Health Teams' perspectives on providing care for Deaf people with severe mental illness'. *Journal of Mental Health*, 15, (3): 301-313.

Tiilikainen, T. (1998) *Europe and Finland: defining the political identity of Finland in Western Europe*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Tijokinen, P. (2003) 'Finland: Kalle Könkkölä, Disabled Activist'. *Disability World* [online] available from: [http://www.disabilityworld.org/11-12\\_03/il/finland.shtml](http://www.disabilityworld.org/11-12_03/il/finland.shtml)

Tijsseling, C. (2005) 'From deafheid to Deafhood – a different perspective on deaf children'. *Deaf worlds*, 21 (3): 31–46.

Timmermans, N. (2005) *The status of sign languages in Europe*. In cooperation with the Committee on the Rehabilitation and Integration of People with disabilities (CD-P-RR). Strasbourg, France: Council of Europe Publishing.

Timonen, V. (2003) *Restructuring the Welfare State: Globalization and Social Policy Reform in Finland and Sweden*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Torjman, S. (2005) *What is Policy?* The Caledon Institute of Social Policy, Ontario, [online] Available from:  
<http://www.caledoninst.org/Publications/PDF/544ENG%2Epdf>.

Tovey, H. & Stone, P. (2000) *A Sociology of Ireland*. Dublin: Gill & Macmillan.  
Transparency international [online] <http://www.transparency.org/> [accessed May 2007].

Turner G. H. (2004) 'Exploring British Experiences of Language and Deafhood in Hypermodernity'. In Van Herreweghe, M. & Vermeerbergen, M. (eds) *To the Lexicon*

*and Beyond: Sociolinguistics in European Deaf communities*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Turner, G. T. (2006) 'Why protect heritage sign languages?' *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 16 (3): 243 - 254.

Ubido, J., Huntington, J., Warburton, D. (2002) 'Inequalities in access to healthcare faced by women who are deaf'. *Health and social care in the community*, 10 (4): 247-253

Ulrich, A. (2004) 'National Language and Official Language'. *Sociolinguistics: an international handbook of the science of language and society*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

UNESCO. (1994) *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access And Quality*.

Salamanca, Spain, 7-10 June 1994. Available from:

[http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA\\_E.PDF](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF)

United Nations Commission on Human Rights. (2004) *Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities: The Report of the Working Group on Minorities. On its visit to Finland (17 to 20 January 2004)* Asbjørn Eide, Chairperson-Rapporteur. Available from

:  
[http://www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/f0dc6fdb3df7cb13c1256eb700572d6d/\\$FILE/G0414375.doc](http://www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/f0dc6fdb3df7cb13c1256eb700572d6d/$FILE/G0414375.doc)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. (2006)

A/61/611 Distr.: General 6 December 2006. Available from:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/rights/convtexte.htm>

Valentine, G. & Skelton, T. (2007) 'The right to be heard: citizenship and language'. *Political Geography*, 26: 121-140.

Vernon, M. & Daigle-King, B. (1999) 'Historical overview of inpatient care of mental patients who are deaf'. *American Annals of the Deaf* 144 (1): 51-61

Vonen, A. M. (2008) *Ten years of bilingual deaf education in Norway – where are we?* At the International Perspectives on Educational Interpreting: Online conference organised by Direct Line <http://www.deafshop.co.uk/ashop/catalogue.php>. [accessed February 2008].

Weisel, A. and Cinamon, G. (2005) 'Hearing, deaf, and hard-of-hearing Israeli adolescents' evaluations of deaf men and deaf women's occupational competence'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 10 (4): 376-389

Werngren-Elgstrom. M., Dehlin, O. & Iwarsson, S. (2003) Swedish Prevalence Study of Deaf People Using Sign Language: a prerequisite for Deaf studies. *Disability & Society*, 18 (3): 311 –323

WFD (2003) *World Federation of the Deaf Report for the 13<sup>th</sup> General Assembly*, Montreal, World Federation of the Deaf.

WFD (2009) *World Federation of the Deaf's Survey Results on the Status of the National Associations of the Deaf*. [online], available from: <http://www.wfdeaf.org/pdf/WFD%20Survey%20Report%20on%20OMs%20December%202008%20PDF.pdf>

White, G. (2002) *Social Inclusion and the Legal System: Public Interest Law in Ireland*. Dublin: Institute of Public Administration.

White, T. J.. (2006) 'Why So Few Women in Dáil Éireann? The Effects of the Single Transferable Vote Election System'. *New Hibernia Review*, 10 (4): 71-83

Wierzbicka, A. (1997) *Understanding cultures through their key words: English, Russian, Polish, German, and Japanese*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wilcox, S. (ed) (1989) *American Deaf Culture: An Anthology*. Silver Spring, MD: Linstok Press.

Winzer, M. A. (1986) 'Deaf-Mutia: Responses to alienation by the deaf in the mid-19th century'. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 131:29–32.

Winzer, M. A. (1996) 'Disability and society before the eighteenth century: dread and despair'. In Davis, L. J. (ed): *The Disability Studies Reader*. New York: Routledge.

Woll, B. (2001) 'Modality, universality and the similarities among sign languages: an historical perspective'. In Baker, A. (ed) *Contemporary Development in Sign Languages*, Hamburg: Sigmun Press.

Woll, B., Sutton-Spence, R. & Elton. F. (2001) 'Multilingualism, the global approach to sign languages'. In Lucas' Ceil (ed). *The sociolinguistics of sign languages*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Woodward, J. (1989) 'How You Gonna Get to Heaven If You Don't Talk with Jesus? The Educational Establishment vs. the Deaf Community'. In Wilcox, S. (ed). *American Deaf Culture: An Anthology*, Silver Spring, MD. Linstok Press.

Woodward, J. C. (1972) 'Implications for sociolinguistic research among the Deaf'. *Sign Language Studies* 1: 1-7.

Woolfe, T. & Smith P. (2001) 'The self-esteem and cohesion to family members of deaf children in relation to the hearing status of their parents and siblings'. *Deafness & Education International*, 3 (2): 80-96.

World Federation of the Deaf (2009) World Federation of the Deaf [Internet], Helsinki, WFD Available from: <http://www.wfdeaf.org/> [accessed on several times from January 2007 to December 2009].

Wren, M. (2003) *Unhealthy State: Anatomy of a Sick Society*. Dublin: New Island.  
Wright, S. (2004) *Language policy and language planning: from nationalism to globalisation*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Wrigley, O. (1996) *The Politics of Deafness*. Washington DC: Gallaudet University Press.

YLE - The Finnish State Broadcaster (2007) *Annual Report 2007*. Available from: <http://yle.fi/fbc/pdf/YLEannualreport2007.pdf>.

Young A., Ackerman J, & Kyle JG (2002) *Looking On: Deaf People and the Organisation of Services*. 2nd Edition. Bristol: University of Bristol Press.

Young A., Carr , G., Hunt, R. and McCracken, W., Skipp, A. & Tattersall, H. (2006) 'Informed Choice and Deaf Children: Underpinning Concepts and Enduring Challenges'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 11(3): 322-336.

Young, A. & Ackman J. (2001) 'Reflections on validity and epistemology in a study of working relations between deaf and hearing professionals'. *Qualitative Health Research*, 11 (2): 179-89.

Young, A. (2006) 'Factors affecting communication choice in the first year of life - assessing and understanding an on-going experience'. *Deafness & Education International*, 4 (1): 2 -11

Young, A. M., Ackerman, J. & Kyle, J. G. (2000) 'On creating a workable signing environment: deaf and hearing perspectives'. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 5, 186-195.

Yousif, T. (2007) *Between Rejection and Reception: Refugees in Ireland and prospects for their integration*, PhD thesis unpublished. Equality Studies Centre, School of Social Justice, UCD.

## Appendix 1

*Working title: A comparative analysis of the status for Irish and Finnish Sign Languages: an equality perspective.*

Specific Aim	Secondary Aims	Initial questions	
		Finland	Ireland
To compare the implications of state language policies on the status of sign languages	1. To compare the Deaf communities in Finland and Ireland in terms of linguistic rights	1.1 Do the legislative provisions given under the revised Finnish Constitution of 1995 guarantee the Finnish Deaf community equal treatment compared to the hearing population?	1.2 Are the legislative rights, for example given under the Equal Status Act (2000), enabling the Irish Deaf community to reach a level of equality as their hearing counterparts?
	2. To compare the political attitudes in both countries to quest for linguistic rights for the users of sign languages	2.1 How were the legislative rights developed and given?	2.2 Given the only known legislative right related to Irish Sign Language in the Education Act 1998; how was this legislative right developed and given?
	3. To conduct two case studies on the implications of state language policies on education for the Deaf and the public information dissemination.	3.1 Has the constitutional recognition of sign language and related legislative rights brought about more equal treatment for Deaf people in areas such as access to vital services like education and public information dissemination?	3.2 Would a constitutional recognition of sign language and related legislative rights bring about more equal treatment for Deaf people in areas such as access to vital services like education and public information dissemination?

## For the Finnish situation:

Initial questions	Related Specific Questions for interviews
2.1 Do the legislative provisions given under the revised Finnish Constitution of 1995 guarantee the Finnish Deaf community equal treatment compared to the hearing population?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Is the Finnish Deaf community in a better position since the legal recognition of Finnish Sign Language? If yes, in what way?</li> <li>b) Is access to the media / information services full or partial access for Deaf people?</li> <li>c) Has the state language policy meant an increase in the use of bilingualism in the education of the Deaf? If this is not the case, why?</li> </ul>
2.1 How were the legislative rights developed and given?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Was there any campaign for language rights? If so, what kind?</li> <li>b) Was the legislature sympathetic and supportive of this campaign?</li> <li>c) Were political parties involved? If so, what were their propositions in this regard?</li> <li>d) Was sign language regarded as a problem, a resource, or a right?</li> <li>e) Was there an evolution of language orientation from that of a problem to being a resource or a right?</li> <li>f) Have language policies arising from the legislation been positive or not?</li> <li>g) Are these policies subject to fluctuations of any kind, be they economic, social or political?</li> </ul>

## For the Irish situation:

Initial questions	Related Specific Questions for interviews
<p>1.2 Are the legislative rights, for example given under the Equal Status Act (2000), enabling the Irish Deaf community to reach a level of equality as their hearing counterparts?</p>	<p>a) Would constitutional recognition of sign language and related legislative rights bring about more equal treatment for Deaf people in areas such as access to vital services like education and health?</p> <p>b) Is access to the media / information services full or partial access for Deaf people? If not, why?</p> <p>c) Has the state language policy effect in the education of the Deaf?</p> <p>d) If this is not the case, why?</p>
<p>2.2 Given the only known legislative right related to Irish Sign Language in the Education Act 1998; how was this legislative right developed and given?</p>	<p>a) How was this legislative right developed and given? Explain</p> <p>b) Was there any campaign for this language right? If so, what kind?</p> <p>c) Was the legislature sympathetic and supportive of this campaign?</p> <p>d) Were political parties involved? If so, what were their propositions in this regard?</p> <p>Given the virtual non-existence of ISL or sign language in the legislation, I would like to ask a number of questions?</p> <p>e) Was sign language regarded as a problem, a resource, or a right?</p> <p>f) Was there an evolution of language orientation from that of a problem to being a resource or a right?</p> <p>g) Have language policies arisen from this approach? Examples?</p> <p>h) Are these policies subject to fluctuations of any kind, be they economic, social or political?</p>



**Has the constitutional recognition of sign language and related legislative rights brought about more equal treatment for Deaf people in areas such as access to vital services like education and public information dissemination?**

**NB: This section focuses on education and aims at those who work in the field of education or familiar with it in Finland.**

**Evaluation:** Capacity

- Have language policies made any difference to educational provisions to the Deaf children?
- Is bilingualism a dominant philosophy in the educational delivery in Deaf education?
- Takala (2003) mentions there are 17 schools for the Deaf maintained by the state; Is the state encouraging Deaf children to go to these schools?
- Is there mainstreaming (inclusion)? If so, has the language policy affected this area?
- Lavi (n.d.) mentions that there is a resistance to bilingualism in Deaf schools. Who are the chief players in this resistance? Hearing teachers? (Lorden (2004) mentions teachers were last ones embracing the bilingualism etc). What does the state do about this?
- Has the state implemented the language policy in Deaf education or does it only respond to requests, etc?
- Is there any specific training programme for those who wish to become teachers of the Deaf? Or is it a part or a module of the training programme?
- If so, is it funded by the state?
- Are all teachers fluent in sign language? What is the state policy on the level of fluency?
- Is there an early intervention scheme for Deaf children when they are first identified?
- If so, what kind of intervention is it? Has sign language tuition been involved as part of this intervention? Who administers this scheme?

### *Opportunity*

- Regarding the intervention scheme, what happens if parents refuses to learn sign language? Does the state respect their wishes or does it decide to make the child's interests their first priority? Is there such a policy?
- Are the Deaf community involved in the educational provision? Is there access to peer relations / sign language?
- Are examinations taken through the medium of sign language or spoken languages?

### *Desire*

- Has bilingualism been accepted by all?
- If not, who are the ones that resist this? Who accepts this? Are there any signs of hesitation?
- Is there any alternative proposition that is being pursued by the state or other groups etc?

**NB: This section focuses on education and aims at those who work in the field of public information dissemination or familiar with it in Finland.**

### **Information dissemination**

#### *Capacity*

- Have language policies influenced the approaches to information dissemination?
- If so, does it include sign language?
- If yes, is it limited to specific or important issues, or information on everything, but only upon request?
- If limited to certain areas, why is this, and what areas are chiefly targeted? Who decides which areas are addressed?
- How are the approaches to dissemination funded?
- Is there demand for this format of information dissemination?

- Are there public officials fluent in signing and able to deal with SL users appropriately?
- Has anyone made a challenge to extend the language rights outlined in the Language Act 2004 to users of SL?

#### *Opportunity*

- Can users of SL obtain information on demand in their own language?
- Do public agencies tend to depend on interpretation provisions to communicate or deal with SL consumers?
- Have public authorities expressed willingness to extend services to SL users?
- Is there any record of hesitation in offering such services?

#### *Desire*

- Are there any private or voluntary agencies offering similar services?
- What is the general attitude of the public towards such services?
- Is there any political support or opposition to these services?

**3.2 Would constitutional recognition of sign language and related legislative rights bring about more equal treatment for Deaf people in areas such as access to vital services like education and public information dissemination?**

**NB: This section focuses on education and aims at those who work in the field of education or familiar with it in Ireland.**

**Evaluation:**

*Capacity*

- Is there specific language policy for the education for Deaf children? Who formulates them?
- Have language policies made any difference to educational provisions to the Deaf children?
- Is bilingualism a dominant philosophy in the educational delivery in Deaf education? If no, why?
- There are three schools specifically for Deaf education; is the state encouraging Deaf children to go to these schools? If not why?
- Is there mainstreaming (inclusion)? If so, has the language policy affected this area? In what way?
- If there is a resistance to bilingualism in Deaf schools, who are the chief players in this resistance?
- What does the state do about this?
- Has the state implemented the language policy in Deaf education or does it only respond to requests, etc?
- Is there any specific training programme for those who wish to become teachers of the Deaf? Or is it a part or a module of the training programme?
- If so, is it funded by the state?
- Are all teachers fluent in sign language? What is the state policy on the level of fluency?
- Is there an early intervention scheme for Deaf children when they are first identified?

- If so, what kind of intervention is it? Has sign language tuition been involved as part of this intervention? Who administers this scheme?
- Are there differences in approaches in terms of language policy in between pre-school, primary and post-primary schools for Deaf children?
- At third level, is there a language policy to meet the needs of Deaf students? If so, what are they? Is it uniform across universities?

### *Opportunity*

- Regarding the intervention scheme, what happens if parents refuse to learn sign language? Does the state respect their wishes or does it decide to make the child's interests their first priority? Is there such a policy or guidelines?
- Are the Deaf community involved in the educational provision? Is there access to peer relations / sign language?
- Are examinations taken through the medium of sign language or spoken languages?

### *Desire*

- Has bilingualism been accepted by all?
- If not, who are the ones that resist this? Who accepts this? Are there any signs of hesitation?
- Is there any alternative proposition that is being pursued by the state or other groups etc?

**NB: This section focuses on education and aims at those who work in the field of public information dissemination or are familiar with it in Ireland.**

## **Information dissemination**

### *Capacity*

- Have language policies influenced the approaches to information dissemination?
- If so, does it include sign language users?
- In what way?

- If yes, is it limited to specific or important or relevant issues, or information on everything, but only upon request?
- If limited to certain areas, why is this, and what areas are chiefly targeted? Who decides which areas are addressed?
- How are the approaches to dissemination funded?
- Is there demand for this format of information dissemination?
- Has anyone made a challenge to extend the language rights to users of SL?
- If not, why?
  
- *Opportunity*
- Can users of SL obtain information on demand in their own language?
- If not, why? For what reasons?
- Do public agencies tend to depend on interpretation provisions to communicate or deal with SL consumers?
- Have public authorities expressed willingness to extend services to SL users?
- Is there any record of hesitation in offering such services?
- If so, why? Have they cited reasons?
- Are there public officials fluent in signing and able to deal with SL users appropriately?

*Desire*

- Are there any private or voluntary agencies offering similar services?
- What is the general attitude of the public towards such services?
- Is there any political support or opposition to these services?

# Appendix 2

## Template letter for Irish respondents

Equality Studies Centre  
University College Dublin  
Belfield  
Dublin 4.  
IRELAND

Email: [john.conama@ucd.ie](mailto:john.conama@ucd.ie)

Mobile: 087 6161365 (text or video calls only)

August 24, 2006.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Let me introduce myself – I am currently doing doctoral research (PhD.) in the Equality Studies Centre in University College Dublin. I am Deaf and using Irish Sign Language as my primary language. My research's working title is:

**“Comparative analysis of the status of Irish and Finnish Sign Languages; an equality perspective”**

This research consists of a number of aims and the specific aim is:

To compare the implications of state language policies for the status of sign languages

Secondary aims related to this specific aim are:

To compare the Deaf communities in Finland and Ireland in terms of linguistic rights  
To conduct two case studies on the implications of state language policies, in education for the Deaf and in information dissemination.

I decided to choose Finland because Finland is one of the first countries to legally recognise its indigenous sign language, and is probably the only country that has put in place on the ground actual measures reflecting this legal recognition. Although there are considerable differences especially in the arena of political, legal and administrative structures, Finland can be methodologically comparative to the Irish situation given a similar background: population, history of being colonised by a

foreign power, recent transition from an agricultural economy to a knowledge-based economy.

I completed brief documentary research on the comparative analysis between Irish and Finnish Deaf communities as part of my Masters degree a number of years ago. It has stimulated further interest and motivation for my research.

For the part of data collection and arising from a literature review and personal communications, I have identified a number of potential key contacts that have been involved in the making of public policies, or have been on the frontline serving the communities or have been recipients of these policies or services. Given your known position in these regards, I seek an interview with you. The interview can be conducted either in Irish Sign Language or spoken English. The interpreter will be provided. Your interview will be recorded either by tape recorder or video and this is for recording purposes only. This will not be used for other purposes.

If you agree to be interviewed, can we arrange a location (preferably your workplace or a more convenient place) and timing through email? The interview shall last an hour or so. I would appreciate if an interview can take place where no or minimal interruption is expected.

Should you require further information on this request, please do not hesitate to contact me directly by email.

I look forward to your favourable reply.

Yours sincerely,

John Bosco Conama  
PhD candidate.



# Appendix 3

Template of email requests to potential Finnish respondents

Equality Studies Centre  
University College Dublin  
Belfield  
Dublin 4.  
IRELAND

Friday, 18 March 2005.

Dear

I got your email address from the Finnish Association of the Deaf with a view of contacting you directly to see if you can be interviewed for my doctoral research.

Let me introduce myself first. I am Deaf and using Irish Sign Language as my primary language. I am currently doing a doctoral research (PhD.) in the Equality Studies Centre in University College Dublin (Ireland). My research working title is:

*"Comparative analysis of the status of Irish and Finnish Sign Languages; an equality perspective"*

This research consists a number of aims and the specific aim is:

To compare the implications of state language policies for the status of sign languages

Secondary aims related to this specific aim are:

To compare the Deaf communities in Finland and Ireland in terms of linguistic rights

To conduct two case studies on the implications of state language policies, in education for the Deaf and in the information dissemination.

I decided to choose Finland because Finland is one of first countries that has legally recognised sign language, and is probably the only country that has put in place on the ground actual measures reflecting this legal recognition. Finland can be methodologically comparative to the Irish situation given a similar background: population, history of being colonised by a foreign power, transition from agricultural economy to knowledge-based economy.

I have completed a short documentary research on the comparative analysis between Irish and Finnish Deaf communities as part of my Masters degree a number of years ago and it provided interest and motivation for my research.

My wife and I will travel to Helsinki on Monday, March 28th and will stay there until the following Sunday, April 3rd. I hope to visit several places that are relevant to my research here and hope to have interviews with a number of key people there. We have arranged and secured accommodation in the city centre.

Given the complexities of interpretation, I hope to have interviews in an informal conversational mode through International Sign Language. The interview may be videotaped for data collection purposes. I intend to visit Finland again in September and possibly in the next spring if circumstances are right.

For my draft schedule for the Finnish visit, we hope to visit your institution and set a time aside for an informal interview. I can forward a list of questions in advance if you wish. I have pencilled Friday, April 1st in the morning. And please let me know through email if it is fine with you and confirm timing etc. Please do not hesitate to request change in the timing.

Yours sincerely,

John Bosco Conama  
PhD candidate.

# Appendix 4

List of interviewees and their pseudonyms

Finnish interviews

No.	Pseudonyms	Status	Hearing OR Deaf (H) (D)	Gender
	ANNIKA	Administration	H	F
	ANTTI	Administration	H	M
	CARITA	Administration	H	F
	ELLA	Administration	H	F
	HEIDI	Academic	H	F
	DAAVID	Academic	H	M
	IRENE	Community	H	F
	JENNA	Administration	D	F
	LAURA	Administration	D	F
	ERKKI	Community	D	M
	MARJA	Community	H	F
	NELMA	Community	D	F
	PAULA	Community	D	F
	RIIKKA	Community	D	F
	SIRKKA	Community	D	F

Irish interviewees

	ARDAL	Administration	H	M
	BRANDAN	Administration	H	M
	CATHAL	Community	D	M
	GRAINNE	Administration	H	F
	FIONA	Community	H	F
	EIMEAR	Community	D	F
	CIARA	Community	D	F
	DAITHI	Academic	H	M
	ENDA	Academic	H	M
	BRIDGET	Academic	H	F
	FELIM	Administration	H	M
	AIDEEN	Administration	H	F
	LIAM	Administration	H	M
	MALACHI	Administration	H	M

# Appendix 5

## Response from Teachers' Union of Ireland (24/7/09 email correspondence from Sandra Howard on behalf of Bernie Judge)

Responses to research questions: Irish Sign Language

- *Is there any policy or stance adopted by your union regarding **the Irish Sign Language** that is regarded as the natural or most preferred language by the Deaf community in Ireland?*

No The Teachers' Union of Ireland has no definitive policy in this regard.

- *What is the **main philosophical perspective** of your union on the education for Deaf Children? Does this perspective include the promotion of the Irish Sign Language (ISL)?*

The Teachers' Union of Ireland believes that, where possible and appropriate, Deaf children should receive their education in an integrated classroom setting in mainstream schools. In particular cases it advocates that special schools and special classes are still justified given that the high level of expertise that may be required.

The Teachers' Union of Ireland does not have a specific policy on the promotion of the Irish Sign Language but may consider looking at this in the future as the implementation of the EPSEN Act rolls out.

- ***Early intervention approach:** at the moment, there are two options: one is more prevalent than the other. The prevalent approach – chiefly through the visiting teacher service is to encourage the Deaf child to learn and talk without aid of signing. The cochlear implantation is an option here. The other one is relatively unknown and it is known as the ISL Home Tuition Scheme. It aims to educate families including their Deaf child to learn ISL. Although the Department of Education and Science finances it, it is rarely promoted and is not reported in its annual report. What is your union's view on this?*

As indicated the Teachers' Union of Ireland does not have a well defined policy on education for Deaf children. It would concur the early intervention is extremely important and that as much relevant support as possible should be given to the child, the school/teachers and the family as early as possible.

With regard to the home tuition scheme funded by the Department of Education and Science the union believes that information should be made more widely available to families/parents/guardians of Deaf children in order that they can make decisions whether to, and how to avail of it.

- **Educational placement:** *it refers to the decision to place the Deaf child in an educational setting. More than 90% of Deaf children are placed individually in the mainstream (ordinary) school without ready access to sign language or peer relationship (other Deaf children). Without such access, it can potentially harm the psychosocial and identity outlook of Deaf children. What is your union's view in this regard?*

The Teachers' Union of Ireland believes that as many children as possible whatever their special needs should be placed in mainstream school settings. However, as indicated above it also believes that appropriate support and pedagogy must be available to the children as they progress through the educational system.

The union also believes that there should be extensive in-service and professional development opportunities for individual teachers and whole school staffs so that as much support as possible can be given to the children with particular needs who are being educated within that setting.

It acknowledges the risk that deaf children or others with special needs may experience identity and isolation issues but believes that if sufficient resources, supports and professional development are in place this need not be the case.

It further holds their efforts by the school are only one element of a wider suite of initiatives/supports that are desirable at community and social level to bring about inclusion and integration.

- **Teacher education:** *what does your union say about it? At the moment, there is no training course for those who want to become teachers for the Deaf. They may be trained through general degree courses then opt for a postgraduate diploma on special education, which may be not sufficient for teaching Deaf children?*

The Teachers' Union of Ireland is concerned that many teachers are being expected to address a wide range of special educational needs in their classes without having the adequate training and support. It advocates that the Department of Education and Science put in place a robust and innovative teacher development programme to enable teachers to work effectively with students and children with varying special needs. However, it believes that it is not possible for all teachers to be experts in all areas at all times and is concerned that there may be too much expected of individual teachers in this regard.

However, it advocates that there should be a critical number of teachers in any setting that have the appropriate level of qualifications/courses and skills necessary to work with children with particular /special needs. Such teachers should access to tailor made courses as appropriate.

The Teachers' Union of Ireland is aware that building awareness and breaking down cultural/social barriers is also important and would advocate that considerable supports are put in place by the Department. It looks forward to further decisions on such matters as the implementation EPSEN Act proceeds.

- *It is commonly known that several teachers for the Deaf do not possess necessary **fluency** in Irish Sign Language. The State does not have any active role in monitoring the fluency. What does your union feel about it?*

As pointed out in an earlier question, the union believes that teachers should be equipped to deliver the services that is expected of them but appreciates there are some limitations to this. The union believes that the Department of Education and Science should have a more effective and relevant staff development programme in place. It concurs that it is important that fluency in ISL be maintained and monitored. However, this must be seen in the context of the full range of responsibilities that teachers have to the full range of students.

Where teachers are required to use the Irish Sign Language constantly, it accepts the fact that teachers' fluency is highly important and teachers should therefore, have regular opportunities to up skill in this area as appropriate.

- *To determine the **involvement of the Irish Deaf community** in the education, it is clear from evidence that the involvement remains on the periphery. What is your union's view on this and how can it be encouraged to get involved to the benefit of Deaf children?*

The Teachers' Union of Ireland advocates an inclusive and integrated approach to all types and at all levels of education. Where appropriate, links with particular communities for example, the Irish Deaf Community is welcomed. It recognises that these links have not been well established in the past. In the future it hopes that mechanisms will be in place to encourage stronger relationships. Notwithstanding this it is important to recognise that schools and teachers have limitations and will continue to do so unless they are adequately resourced to embrace the special educational needs effectively.

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.win2pdf.com>.  
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.  
This page will not be added after purchasing Win2PDF.