MANIPULATIVE VISUAL LANGUAGE: A COMPLETE CLASSROOM APPROACH FOR VISUAL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Jimmy Challis Gore and Robert Gillies’ Manipulative Visual Language tool is a complete classroom approach that addresses key elements that help visual learners achieve literacy. Achieving literacy in reading and writing has long been problematic for visual learners such as Deaf persons who access the English language largely through reading.

Achieving literacy is important for many aspects of life such as employment and academics. Attempts to improve literacy among Deaf visual learners have been modeled on what works for the majority of learners: a particular classroom arrangement, oral lectures and phonetic approaches are components of these models. In the past few years, recognition of American Sign Language (ASL) as a genuine language has revolutionized instruction among Deaf learners. Gore and Gillies have enhanced instruction with MVL, adding a kinesthetic/visual/tactile aspect.

There is a compelling need to establish consensus in terms of what works in helping Deaf internationals achieve literacy. Many Deaf internationals come to the USA due to its leadership role in equal educational access hoping to achieve English competence for immigration purposes or academic success.

Gore and Gillies’ complete visual/kinesthetic classroom approach blends ASL, ESL principles, the use of kinesthetic materials, and modern technology in effective lesson plans. MVL has proven effective in English instruction with Deaf children at Sequoia School for the Deaf, Phoenix, AZ, and more recently at Marie H. Katzenbach School for
the Deaf, New Jersey where this instructional tool has been introduced. In 2009, a successful pilot study with promising results was completed with Deaf adults in Glasgow, Scotland.

Having personally witnessed at Gallaudet University how Deaf internationals respond to Jimmy Gore’s English instructional methods, I describe how the MVL tool is used in the classroom to demonstrate how Gore achieves surpassing results with international Deaf students.

I also accessed the pilot study done in Glasgow, solicited feedback from various professionals with experience in this area of research, and past students who benefited from Gore’s instruction. As a result, my conviction is that the MVL complete classroom approach is an outstanding instructional literacy tool with visual learners.
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INTRODUCTION

In the late 90s, a teacher who had taught at schools for the deaf in Vermont and Maine, Jimmy Challis Gore, conceived, and in later collaboration with a hearing colleague, Robert Gillies, developed a visual/kinesthetic literacy teaching tool for visual learners the two instructors named Manipulative Visual Language (MVL). Highly successful with the school populations, Gore and Gillies offered a workshop for Deaf adults in 2001, and discovered that this group of visual learners also responded enthusiastically to this learning tool.

MVL utilizes American Sign Language as the language of instruction, manipulatives derived from Montessori, and other pioneers in kinesthetic learning techniques, character icons based on the manipulatives, color coding, and innovative uses of ASL logic, in the instruction of visual/kinesthetic learners in English literacy. Manipulatives as used in MVL provide support and inspiration to ESL learners by providing a “short cut” in conventional grammar instruction. Gore also designed a textbook that conveys his vision of instruction for visual learners (Gore interview 2012).

Deaf students display some of the same characteristics as English-as-a-Second-Language learners (ESL), or bilingual learners (Grushkin 1998, 180), because they may use a visual language, American Sign Language, or another signed language. American Sign Language is incorporated in the MVL approach with Deaf students although voice instruction could also be used with hearing visual learners in the application of the MVL tool. This thesis will focus on the use of the MVL tool with a specific Deaf population: internationals, immigrants and American students needing to achieve English competency.

1Every country has a signed language used by its deaf population.
for academic success or employment although some references will be made to grade school aged learners.

Students using Gore and Gillies’ MVL learn to recognize grammar patterns visually and can self-edit their grammar use. Rather than teaching students to recognize the parts of speech via words such as verb, noun, adjective, or subject, predicate, and so on, or through spoken exercises, the MVL learning tool leads students to encounter grammar structure from a visual standpoint. Instead of words such as noun, verb, adjective, etc, the markers in this system are color coded manipulatives, user friendly character icons, a textbook designed for visual learners that employs the visual logic of American Sign Language, a teaching philosophy, and whole classroom approach, that addresses the learning needs of this group.

In 2002, Jimmy Gore began to teach at the English Institute at Gallaudet University where he instructed adult ESL learners: Deaf students who were internationals or immigrants with the occasional American. As was true in Maine, Gore discovered that the MVL tool made grammar visual, and assisted the learning process.

The MVL tool’s accessible visual presentation of English grammar has led to its adoption by two grade schools in the USA; Sequoia School for the Deaf, Phoenix, AZ, and more recently the Marie H. Katzenbach School, or New Jersey School for the Deaf, Trenton, NJ. In 2009, BBC News announced that Deaf Connections, based in Glasgow, Scotland, was the “first organization in Europe to pilot Manipulative Visual Language” (BBC News 2009) Deaf Connections issued a report describing the pilot study and the results. Prepared by Lucy Cole, this document was titled, “Deaf Adults and Manipulative

Gore has been invited to lecture or conduct workshops on MVL in Ontario, Canada; Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; and at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic, where, in addition to working with students, Gore conducted a workshop with representatives from various European institutes on adapting MVL for use with other languages (Janakova 2010). Currently, Gore has been awarded a Fulbright at Charles University for fall 2013.

In preparing this report, I used an upper case “D” (Deaf) to describe my focus population. This is not intended to indicate audiometric status but a particular group membership. In instances where I used quotes from sources that used a lower case “d,” I kept that form. I address English literacy acquisition among the population group encountered at the English Language Institute at Gallaudet University since Gore is an ESL Trainer at this institute.
CHAPTER ONE

ESL INSTRUCTION FOR DEAF STUDENTS

Jimmy Challis Gore, who has taught English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students at the English Language Institute (ELI) at Gallaudet University, Washington D.C., since 2002, utilizes a unique learning tool named Manipulative Visual Language (MVL) in his introductory English 01 classes. Gallaudet University is the only liberal arts university in the world for Deaf students, which also welcomes qualified hearing students. Gore graduated from Gallaudet University in 1978 with a BS degree in Physical Education and Health from Gallaudet. He then attended Boston University where he obtained an MA in Education in 1994. In 1995 Gore began teaching at the Austine School for the Deaf in Brattleboro, Vermont. In 1997 Gore began teaching at the Governor Baxter School for the Deaf in Maine.

MVL is a visual/kinesthetic/tactile tool used in English grammar instruction devised in collaboration with a colleague, Robert Gillies, when both were instructors at Governor Baxter School for the Deaf. Gore and Gillies developed their techniques in response to the needs of visual learners: in this case, grade school aged Deaf students. Later, as an ESL Trainer at Gallaudet University in 2002, Gore taught English to post secondary Deaf American students, immigrants and internationals using the MVL tool.

This chapter will provide a brief discussion of visual education with second language learners at Gallaudet University at the English Language Institute at Gallaudet University, how I became aware of this group of learners, and of Jimmy Gore’s instructional techniques and visual learning tool, Manipulative Visual Language. This chapter will also
mention some European scholars who also contributed to literacy for Deaf students. This document will not provide a comprehensive review, but will focus on a few highlights.

I became aware of the teaching methods of Jimmy Gore while employed at the English Language Institute (ELI) at Gallaudet University between the years 2006-08. I was intrigued by Gore’s instruction and his learning tool. He had a self-designed textbook as well as classroom posters, and manipulatives he endowed with character via ASL storytelling. He’d also devised unique explanations for grammar constructions, some of which were amusing and made me laugh. Everything he did constituted a departure from the standard lecture, board work, student textbooks and other aspects of literacy instruction that I had seen in other classes or experienced myself as a student. Donald A. Grushkin, writer and researcher, in his article titled “Why Shouldn’t Sam Read? Toward a New Paradigm for Literacy and the Deaf,” suggests that many visual reading strategies are available to Deaf readers and could be utilized by them in reading (Grushkin 1998, 186). Gore enlists many visual reading strategies that are innovative, visually-based and also include kinesthetic and tactile elements.

As a Deaf student himself, Gore was baffled by English during his grade school years and later as a student at Gallaudet University. He studied English in classes that used the traditional lecture plus English textbook, which he experienced as arcane. Recognizing that the traditional modes of teaching English to Deaf students was predicated on procedures used with a hearing majority, he saw that these constituted a barrier to literacy for those who were visual, kinesthetic, and/or bilingual learners. As a teacher, Gore looked for ways to reassemble the learning toolkit to fit visual/kinesthetic/bilingual learners. One day, while teaching in Maine, Gore accompanied his son Seth, then six years old, and
witnessed a demonstration of basic Montessori manipulatives in sentence construction and began to consider the possibilities in manipulates and how they could be used to a greater extent (Jimmy C. Gore interview, September 13, 2012).

Manipulative Visual Language is designed for visual/kinesthetic/tactile learners, and is not, therefore, the exclusive domain of Deaf students. This learning system can be used by and with anyone who benefits from visual/tactile instruction. This study, however, focuses on the use of MVL with three groups of visual learners: Deaf Americans, Deaf immigrants and Deaf Internationals. Members of these three groups comprise the majority of visual learners in Gore’s current classes, and focusing on this group not only simplifies the process of explaining the use of MVL, but also simplifies the description of the use of ASL in the classroom and its role teaching.

Also, these groups experience, throughout the world, considerable oppression and misunderstanding. Becoming literate in English, or another written, spoken language, for these groups, represents a significant level of achievement and opportunity in terms of self-esteem, employment and quality of life. In Chapter Two I will introduce some media presentations of these visual learners, and why they strive for literacy. I will also explain how existing teaching methods, even in programs designed to help these learners, can create problems for them, and how these problems can be resolved through understanding the experience of visual learners in the classroom, and the particular benefit of Gore’s classroom teaching and learning techniques.

English is fraught with difficulty for Deaf persons since it is a spoken language that is only partially accessible to Deaf learners. English is also structurally different from ASL or any signed language which is a visual language not a spoken one, and employs a visual
logic that differs from auditory logic. Print materials, frequently labeled visual materials, i.e., accessible, are often something less than accessible because print conventions, such as punctuation, are based on a knowledge of conversational pauses, emphases, and voice inflections about which Deaf persons might have little or no knowledge (email interview, name withheld, 7/13/2013).

Consequently, English, particularly academic or written English, poses specific problems in comprehension for visual learners. Tatiana Bolivar Lebedeff, a “supervisor of trainees in secondary grades and trainees in the early years of college” (Lebedeff 2013, 2) in Passo Fundo, Brazil, states that, although everyone agrees that Deaf students need visual instruction, no one has “a plausible answer” when asked what visual instruction should consist of. Teachers “… simply repeat teaching techniques that resemble … a phonetic-based literacy program (italics added), using oral … tools … [but] Deaf students don’t want to be copycats of the hearing … They want education for deaf students” (Lebedeff 2013, 1).

As Lebedeff notes, there is often confusion about what instruction should be, how it should be done. Gore’s innovative techniques, many of which arose spontaneously from his visual response to life, or that of his students, offers solutions. Like Lebedeff, I too want to know what a visual program of instruction “looks like,” and wanted to answer the question Lebedeff poses, and hoped to show through written description and photographs what this innovative, fully developed course of instruction, with Deaf ESL adult learners, looks like.

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1 For a more in-depth discussion of Deaf learners’ situation in terms of language acquisition, see Connie Mayer’s “Issues in second language literacy education with learners who are deaf,” *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 12:3, May 2009: 325-34. DOI: 10.1080/13670050802153368
This thesis will explain how the Manipulative Visual Language tool aids visual instruction and how the full classroom system as used by Jimmy Challis Gore\(^2\) incorporates features prominent researchers put forward as essential for Deaf learners (or visual learners) and the relevant answers Gore has found, synergistically, over many years of direct classroom application, through student input rather than through a research-based approach, emphasizing the visual. Gore’s Manipulative Visual Language tool is a complete classroom application that addresses how visual learners can be helped to achieve literacy (Jimmy C. Gore interview by author, September 13, 2012; Seth Gore 2012, 1). The MVL tool employs color, plus graphics, cartoons, pictures as well as shape, form and tactile, kinesthetic elements, and involves unusual explanations and approaches for teaching grammar conventions and syntax. It is a fully developed tool with a wide range of shapes, colors, forms and strategies, differing from similar materials which might bear an initial resemblance to MVL, but lack the abundant features.

When Jimmy Gore began, in 2002, to teach English to adult language learners as an ESL Trainer at the English Language Institute, he became part of an institute that, at its outset in 1986, had chosen to utilize ASL, discarding many aspects of ESL instruction (Cordero-Martinez 1995, 474). Gore’s kinesthetic tools furthered the original philosophical aims of the ELI to establish a visual curriculum.

Dr. Donald Grushkin, whose comments on this subject are mentioned in this thesis, distinguishes between visual methods used with hearing students and those used with Deaf students, pointing out, in particular, that although literacy is taught visually via reading and

\(^2\)MVL was developed by Jimmy C. Gore and Robert Gillies. For convenience’s sake I will sometimes use Gore’s name alone.
writing, the instructional process is auditory, and therefore not accessible, in its entirety, to Deaf persons (Grushkin, 1998, 181). It is easy to become confused on this point, and claim that a program is *visual* on the basis that books, print and other visual media are used, and overlook the fact that, notwithstanding the presence of these materials, the overriding instructional medium is *auditory*.

To establish *some* chronology relating to English literacy at Gallaudet University, the first attempt to devise ESL (English as a Second Language) methodology for deaf students at Gallaudet University, according to Bochner and Walter, occurred in 1974. Instituted by Goldberg and Boardman{3} (Bochner and Walter 2005, 232), this instruction was based on immersion and repetition:

Oral-aural (audio-lingual) methods involving drill and practice . . . exercises commonly used in ESL instruction were adapted to teach grammatical structures to deaf students through print . . . adaptations of ESL methodology closely resemble traditional structural approaches to teaching English to deaf students over the course of many decades. (Bochner and Walter, 2005, 233)

Goldberg had studied a second language, Spanish, at an Army language school, and because he found he learned rapidly using pattern practice, or listening to and repeating spoken phrases, he felt that immersion and repetition was the key to learning a second language. Goldberg thought Deaf students needed the same type of instruction in English: immersion and repetition, through visual means. He introduced non-credit English classes, and hired others including an ESL teacher. These persons produced a series of English courses and textbooks based on pattern practice (Interview, Terry Coye, 6/20/2013).

In fall of 1986, the English Language Institute, as a result of various embassy requests for ESL classes for international Deaf individuals, or Deaf immigrants expressing interest

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{3} Boardman is a misspelling of Bordman.
in attending Gallaudet University but lacking English competence, opened its doors as part of the International Center on Deafness. Also, sometimes family members from abroad visited the campus or made inquiries for a similar purpose (Cordero-Martinez 1995, 469). This spurred the establishment of an ESL program for Deaf students. Francisco Cordero-Martinez noted in his study that students at the ELI might have attended an oral educational program before they came to Gallaudet. Such a program might or might not use sign language but would attempt to model as closely as possible ESL programs and use “speech production and development of speech reading skills,” as was done with hearing students (Cordero-Martinez 1995, 471). The ELI, however, as was true of most English instruction at Gallaudet, took another approach. Cordero-Martinez explains:

The ELI program offers a year long intensive literacy program in American English. Like most similar institutes, ELI follows ESL principles and utilizes ESL methodology. However, it does not offer any conversation, listening, pronunciation nor phonetic courses. Furthermore, English is not spoken at all in class (1995, 473).

Gallaudet University was founded on the principle of signed language and visual instruction upon its inception in 1864. But the ideal of signed-language-based instruction, as originally conceived by the founders of the new institute, had been lost and obscured after 1880 when the use of signed language was banned worldwide at the Second Milan Congress. Although the visual language known as sign language, or ASL, sprang

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4According to H-Dirksen L. Bauman as written in “Postscript: Gallaudet Protests of 2006 and the Myths of In/Exclusion,” Gallaudet was the fulfillment of “an enduring human dream”: in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, philosophers such as Bulwer and Rousseau speculated about the possibility of institutes or societies that used non-speech means of communication, *Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking*, 329.

5Speech was regarded as “the only true human language” (Hilde Haualand, “Sound and Belonging: What is a Community?” in H-Dirksen Bauman, ed. *Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, MN, 2008, 111).
spontaneously from the interaction of Deaf persons (Cordero-Martinez 1995, 471-2),
English instruction for Deaf students deteriorated into spoken language drills and print
presentations after the Milan Congress (Stokoe 1960, 1). Deaf students were expected to
comprehend text that employed a grammar foreign to their visual perspective (Grushkin
1998, 180).\(^6\)

The philosophy of the ELI, as described by Cordero-Martinez, was that of
“recognizing Deaf people as members of a “distinctive linguistic community,”” as
described by Dr. William Stokoe’s work, “Language in the Hand: why Sign came before
Speech,” 1960 (Cordero-Martinez 1995, 471). Teachers at the ELI were encouraged to
develop their own teaching materials (Cordero-Martinez 1995, 471). Since, as Cordero-
Martinez noted, “there are no specialized textbooks to develop English literacy skills with
deaf students” (Cordero-Martinez 1995, 476) and there existed recognition that mainstream
English textbooks used for English grammar instruction in English classes at Gallaudet fell
short of ideal with a Deaf population (Cordero-Martinez 1995, 476; Eilers-Crandall, 2001,
1-2), the ELI resolved to allow their ESL instructors, who were required to have expertise
in ESL instruction, fluency in ASL and English, and a positive outlook on the students’
potential (Cordero-Martinez 1995, 472), to exercise their own discretion in regard to
instruction.

\(^6\)“Although educators have traditionally viewed deaf and hard-of-hearing people as
“Hearing” people with a “deficient” auditory sense . . . educators must instead identify and
utilize visually based strategies for literacy development rather than those primarily rooted
in sound, which is . . . the weakest point of access to language and literacy for this
population” (Donald A. Grushkin. “Why Shouldn’t Sam Read?: Toward a new Paradigm
Adaptation of ESL textbooks is time consuming. It requires careful consideration of the visual as opposed to the auditory presentation. Many other books are used as reference to expand and reinforce concepts. In most cases . . . teachers prepare their own materials . . . (Cordero-Martinez 1995, 476)

This suggests that the ELI recognized that conventional ESL textbooks were not entirely appropriate for their population of visual learners. Teachers were given liberty in designing curriculum and prepared their own materials using widely available ESL textbooks as a reference (Cordero-Martinez 1995, 476).

Gore and Gillies might have been referring to the appropriateness of textbooks in a 2003 article, based on their joint experience as teachers, titled “Manipulative Visual Language: a tool to help crack the code of English,” when they wrote that Deaf students were often “soured on English” after struggling with “text presentations” (Gore, Gillies 2003, 75). By employing the visual tool they’d devised, Manipulative Visual Language, the two teachers were able to make English more accessible to their students, opening up new possibilities in the appreciation of printed information (Nacelewicz 2001, 1B). To understand this, and avoid the confusion inherent in the persistent avowal that text is a visual medium, it may be useful to refer again to Grushkin’s observations, and those of Eilers-Crandall, that text, although ‘visual,’ is usually accompanied by auditory explanations, including spoken discourse and associated conventions the students are assumed to have familiarity with (Grushkin 1998, 190; Eilers-Crandall, 2001, 1, 2).

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7 Cordero-Martinez does not mention the many literacy classes and learning materials that were designed or developed in the seventies by Goldberg et al. which were prepared specifically for Deaf students and did not involve voice or aural training. The ELI was not unique in its efforts to devise a literacy program that recognized the uniqueness of Deaf learners at Gallaudet University (email interview, Terry Coye, 7/13/2013).
By 1995, a total of 150 students from 17 countries had attended the ELI (Cordero-Martinez 1995, 470). While Cordero-Martinez does not mention classroom adaptations other than those prevalent at Gallaudet such as the use of light switches to get student attention in a classroom (Cordero-Martinez 1995, 475), an intriguing technique employed at the ELI was TPR, or Total Physical Response (Cordero-Martinez 1995, 475).

Total Physical Response is a “basic approach in ESL that allows students to use their bodies to associate the word with its meaning” and is “an alternative to the traditional grammar-based approaches” as explained by Tim Anderson, who, as an ELI Trainer, gave a presentation at the First Prague International Teacher-Training Seminar at Charles University, Prague, in 2001, where he noted that deaf students “prefer to learn directly from the teacher [rather] than through an interpreter” and also that their learning needed personal involvement for retention:

> Here’s how it works. The teacher holds up a card with a printed word. The teacher silently acts the word out. The students are then expected to act the word out whenever the card appears. The students then write the word down and often do not soon forget it . . . TPR need not be restricted to vocabulary learning; it can incorporate complete sentences or paragraphs. TPR can be applied to history lessons by reenacting scenes using communicative instruction. (Anderson 2000, 77)

I learned Shakespeare and Greek tragedy first by acting in a high school play when I was ten. In between scene rehearsals, I read the script and the original context of the play. During rehearsal, I observed the deaf director’s ideas on how to express my line. Then, I had to do the scene to his satisfaction, sometimes I had to deliver my lines repeatedly while others looked on. I have not forgotten this lesson. (Anderson 2000, 77)

Anderson noted some shortcomings with TPR: the imperative mode was dominant, he noted, with short phrases and single words only being taught, and there was difficulty with passive voice instruction (Anderson 2000, 77).
Commonly, students studying a second language take advantage of a dictionary or translations from their native language. However, at the ELI at this time, this apparently was not an effective learning strategy:

. . . translation into the learner’s native language, has no place in current ESL practices . . . ELI teachers do not use ASL for translation from English. ASL is used extensively in explaining the concepts conveyed by words in English . . . (Cordero-Martinez 1995, 476)

In 2002, an international festival held at Gallaudet University, Deaf Way II, brought “more than five thousand international Deaf persons to the campus in the heart of Washington D.C.” This awakened many outside the USA to the existence of a liberal arts university for Deaf people, and convinced many Deaf persons, and their families or associates, that they could seek higher education.8 The Deaf Way event also led to much exploration, for example, as represented in the writing of Carlos Skliar and Ronice Muller Quadros in their publication titled “Bilingual Deaf Education in the South of Brazil,” published two years after Deaf Way which challenged the standing ideology in education: “The handicap definition is not the way to think about Deaf people . . . [but] . . . that the Deaf live a visual experience in the world” (Skliar and Quadros 2004, 371, 372).

The international festival also brought Jimmy Gore to Gallaudet University; he conducted a workshop demonstrating his Manipulative Visual Language learning tool, and made a successful application for a position as an ESL trainer at the English Language Institute in June of 2002 (Gore interview 2012). Cordero-Martinez mentions in his article

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8Bader Alomary, a “Deaf sign language speaker,” sought to attend university after completing high school in 2004 in Saudi Arabia, but “institutes of higher education did not admit deaf people” so he turned to the “only university in the world for deaf people.” Alomary achieved a master’s degree at Gallaudet, graduating cum laude in 2012 (Bader Alomary. About me, http://saudisignlanguage.com/about-me/2012).
the “severe lack” of professionals qualified to teach ESL to Deaf students (Cordero-Martinez 1995, 470).

Since education beyond elementary school is not available for deaf students in many countries, applicants seeking admission to the ELI often do not possess a high school diploma, but, in defense of the academic potential of this population of learners, it is recognized that learning accrues whether one hears or not simply from living.

The next chapter will introduce some members of the target population of this thesis: Deaf Internationals, Deaf immigrants and Deaf American students; the persons Cordero-Martinez and Delgado are writing about, and, through their poignant stories, explain why achieving literacy, whether in English or in the language of their home countries, is elusive for them, yet of extreme importance, driving them to leave their home countries and confront unknown hazards in search of relief. These are the persons who can benefit from access to the MVL learning tool and the complete classroom approach as practiced by Gore and Gillies.

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9According to a fact sheet prepared by the World Federation of the Deaf, 1992, www.wfdeaf.org, “only 20% of deaf children receive any education at all,” which suggests that the Deaf students Cordero-Martinez was writing about in 1995 were exceptionally blessed in terms of educational opportunity.
CHAPTER TWO

VISUAL LEARNERS SEEK LITERACY

The real life representatives of the population being explored in this report are vital, interesting people. This chapter will attempt to give a face to these persons. Who are the Deaf Americans, immigrants and Internationals who want or need to learn English or achieve literacy?

A search of the internet will yield articles about Deaf immigrants, although many will be “human interest” stories written for local newspapers, and necessarily somewhat limited in scope although poignant. In the USA, concentrations of Deaf immigrants exist in Southern California as that location offers considerable resources to assist this population (Leovy 1995, 1). There are also locations that offer literacy or training programs in Boston, MA (Mann, 2012), Chicago, IL (DAEAP), or Washington D. C. (The English Language Institute, http://www.gallaudet.edu/eli.html and others). In such areas, Deaf immigrants can often find others like themselves plus an aggregation of resources and knowledgeable personnel.

Occasionally, a Deaf immigrant will turn up in an ESL class that has predominantly hearing adult students with modifications enacted to “accommodate” a visual learner as exemplified in the November 14, 2010 issue of the Times-News in an article titled: “Deaf immigrants learn two languages at once.” Ardalan Asgari, an Iranian refugee at College of Southern Idaho, is described by Melissa Davlin as attending an ESL class with the aid of two sign language interpreters. A photograph is provided: Ardalan sits upright in contrast to all the bowed heads around him.

As the title of this article indicates, the focus of this piece was the off-the-beaten-path aspect of one man’s approach to learning English: he has to learn two languages, ASL and English, simultaneously, a difficult, circuitous route to literacy, because he learns visually. In service to this, the article features a photograph of a hand in soft focus in the foreground while just beyond the hand, in sharp focus, is Ardalan, a refugee, who is deaf.¹

A similar story is Michael A. Chandler’s “VA Teen among Deaf youths learning what homelands couldn’t teach” (Chandler 2006) published in the Washington Post, January, 2006. Mauricio Escobar-Gallego from El Salvador, at sixteen years of age, is another immigrant who, like Ardalan, is seeking literacy. He grew up without spoken or signed

¹Ardalan is also mentioned in Chapter Four: Seeing in the Classroom.
language access and relies on drawing to convey his needs or wants. In El Salvador, Mauricio had attended school with ‘children with disabilities’ where he drew pictures and made long lists of Spanish words without ever learning what those words meant (Chandler 2006, 3).

In the USA, Mauricio first began school in Fairfax County in 2003, and then entered a class for Deaf students at Heritage High School in Leesburg, VA (Chandler 2006, 1). At Heritage High, Mauricio learned ASL and began to learn written English, following: “. . . the typical development that a Deaf child goes through but just much, much later. . .” (Chandler 2006, 3).

Michael Chandler reports that “Families with Deaf or hard of hearing

2Mauricio may have acquired a great deal of visual knowledge such as the utilization and interpretation of images, which, as described by Marlon Kuntze, “Turning Literacy Inside Out,” in Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking, H-Dirksen L. Bauman, ed. (146-157), constitutes a form of literacy. Also, Donald A. Grushkin writes that Deaf students have “drawn signs on paper along with writing when they did not know the spelling of the word or concept they wished to represent.” (Donald A. Grushkin. “Why Shouldn’t Sam Read?: Toward a new Paradigm for Literacy and the Deaf,” Journal of Deaf Studies & Deaf Education, (1998) under “Theoretical and Review Articles,” 197. http://jdsde.oxfordjournals.org/content/3/3/179.full.pdf+html (accessed October 12, 2012).


children often migrate to the Washington area from around the world to live in the shadow of Gallaudet University and enroll their children in special education programs in nearby school districts” (Chandler 2006, 2).

In a similar manner, in “Deaf immigrants find signs of life,” Jill Leovy, writing for the Los Angeles Times, 1995, introduces a Deaf immigrant named Araks Shakhmuradyan, from Armenia, age 31, who, like Mauricio or James, knows neither English, nor Armenian, nor a signed language. She is one of many Deaf immigrants in Southern California, considered a “mecca” for Deaf immigrants: “Few places in the world offer . . . [as] many options . . .” (Leovy 1995, 1). While no one knows how many Deaf immigrants reside in Southern California, their numbers—from Mexico, Syria and Romania—“. . . overwhelm that of native-born students in adult-education classes” (Leovy 1995, 1).

Martine Powers’ “Deaf students new to US find their footing,” March 12, 2010, echoes many aspects of Severn’s and Chandler’s articles. Powers describes Deaf immigrant students at Boston’s Horace Mann School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing’s Language Enrichment and Academic Pursuit program (LEAP), designed for students who “come from public schools in developing countries that lack special classes for deaf children, where they struggled to keep up with lessons they couldn’t hear” (Powers 2012, 1).
In this photograph, a student, Oscar Coello, appears to be working on spelling or vocabulary at Horace Mann; his closed fist appears to be making a ‘S’ in the manual alphabet, while he awaits approval from Teacher Katy Burns before he writes on the sheet of paper using the black felt tip marker he holds. Another student, Pedro Veras, looks on. On the whiteboard behind them are words and numbers. This may be a class or a tutoring session. There is no evidence of innovative visual teaching techniques although the instructional medium may be ASL. Visual aids seem to consist of “writing on the board” typical in most classrooms, or as exemplified in the photograph of Oscar with Teacher Katy Burns, finger spelling and writing with a felt tip marker on paper.

James Alzate-Medina was age fifteen when he entered Horace Mann School’s LEAP, begun in 2009, (Martine 2012) (Figure 2 does not feature James but Pedro Veras and Oscar Coello who may be James’ contemporaries at the school. Katy Burns is one of James’ teachers). James is from Colombia where he experienced, according to Powers, “a
childhood of silence at school and at home,” which suggests that his parents or relatives are/were all hearing and knew no signed language, and/or that he learned no signed language, or any language at all within his community.\(^6\) James was sent to school but apparently he understood nothing. At Horace Mann, at age fifteen, James began to learn ASL: “...teachers showed me pictures that went along with signs, and then I learned vocabulary, and then I started to string things together”\(^7\) (Powers 2012, 1).

\(^6\)There are many ways to interpret Powers’ statement as well as statements made in the other articles regarding the family background or level of functioning of the students mentioned. Although the newspaper reports seem to demonstrate that Deaf immigrants are ignorant, this is not necessarily a safe assumption. Cordero-Martinez describes Deaf students at the English Language Institute (ELI) at Gallaudet University as “often documented to have knowledge of two or more languages” and “demonstrated ability to read and write with fair command of grammar and of an extensive vocabulary. It is not surprising to find that in a typical class of seven, twelve to fifteen languages are known but none are actually spoken in class” (Francisco Cordero-Martinez, 473). Grushkin also pointed to evidence of skills and knowledge that might not be immediately apparent (“Why shouldn’t Sam read?: Toward a new paradigm for literacy and the Deaf,” Journal of Deaf Studies & Deaf Education, 1998, 199. [http://jdsde.oxfordjournals.orb/content/3/3/179.full.pdf+html](http://jdsde.oxfordjournals.orb/content/3/3/179.full.pdf+html) (accessed October 12, 2012). Another researcher who took issue with assessments of Deaf students’ capability was Dr. William Stokoe. Stokoe challenged the standing beliefs of his day which held that only activity of the auditory and speech channels constituted language. Those who supported these beliefs argued that gestures were incapable of “the sharp, clear contrasts necessary for language” and that only voice could make such contrasts (Stokoe, “Language in the Hand,” Washington D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 1960, 39). Stokoe demonstrated that sign language not only could make these contrasts but also that “linguistic expression of meaning...could not have originated with speaking.” (William Stokoe, 41)
An additional educational obstacle is the characteristic lack of background knowledge among students like James:

. . . instructors (in LEAP) often find themselves teaching more than academics. “My kids may not know the names of any of the people they live with,” said Katy Burns, LEAP team leader, “because nobody’s told them.”

Chief among these knowledge gaps, Burns said, is their internal sense of time. Because they grew up without hearing offhand remarks like “We’re leaving in 30 minutes” or “I’ll see you next week,” they have trouble grasping what it means to feel time pass. One student, she said, had never been told the meaning of “weekend.”

“I had to sit him down on a Friday and explain, ‘OK, tomorrow, you’re going to wake up at home, and the next day you’re going to wake up at home, and then the day after that you’re going to wake up and come back to school,’” Burns said. “How does that not look like they’re stupid?” she continued. “But you forget how much linguistic information is conveyed auditorily. . . .” (Powers 2010, 1)

Harold Johnson, a professor at Michigan State University College of Education, was reported as saying that not much was known about how best to educate immigrant Deaf students: “This is an area we are not addressing with teacher preparation programs” (Powers 2012, 1).

These are typical educational difficulties in the lives of English learners like Ardalan and Mauricio. They often lack a shared language with their families, and may have grown to maturity without achieving not only the language used in their communities but also essential background knowledge (Grushkin 1998, 179) ordinarily shared within a community, and a shared consensus about how they can or should be taught (Grushkin 1998, 179). As early as fourth grade their learning gap may be apparent: only 7 per cent of English-language learners read at grade level. In 2011, just 67 per cent finished high school “on time” (Severns 2012, A19). Sometimes they’ve attended school “in developing countries that lack special classes for deaf children” (Powers 2012, 1).

Also, the schools or programs James, Mauricio and other visual learners attend in the USA may provide schooling for students such as these for a limited time only. James
Alzate-Medina, for example, can only attend school until age 22 which age he was fast approaching at the time this article was published (Powers 2012, 1).

Despite all of this—or perhaps because of it—the lack of background knowledge; the lack of language access; being generally disregarded in their home communities; the lack of textbooks designed for them; no teacher training programs that address their needs; Deaf immigrants often exemplify a powerful longing for knowledge:

Some have traveled halfway across the world with no concept of maps or calendars. They relate their stories with gestures, mimicking⁸ airplanes and cars. Others are well-educated in other languages, and become remarkably proficient in English despite never having heard it spoken. Many remember the agonizing tedium of life without language. “I was all by myself. I was so bored. I was so frustrated, I wanted to tell someone how I feel. I couldn’t do anything. I just sat around. It was so awful.” (Leovy 1995, 1)

They report fleeing harassment and prejudice. Out of shame, their families kept them hidden, and they were forbidden to drive. They were shut out of higher education and channeled into “rote factory jobs” (Leovy 1995, 2). Choon Cho, from Korea, had no deaf friends until she came to the USA and learned ASL, which “opened up a whole new world of light” (Leovy 1995, 3).

Achieving friends and community is not the only benefit Deaf immigrants may realize in their search for literacy. Liliana Mora, from Mexico, who finished high school at age 19 at the California School for the Deaf, overcame her early language deprivation, and is employed in a hospital where she contemplates a career in health care (Leovy 1995, 3).

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⁸Leovy probably meant that the Deaf students used classifiers. Using classifiers is not “mimicking.” Classifiers are hand shapes or movements that can resemble the object or activity being discussed but is not mimicry. See http://www.jal.cc.il.us/ipp/Classifiers/ for a review of the use of classifiers in ASL.
A study by Gilbert L. Delgado, in 2001, titled “Hispanic & Latino Deaf Students in Our Schools,” focuses on Hispanic/Latino Deaf and Hearing populations noting that there have been “no national studies, regarding the condition of Hispanic/Latino Deaf students since April of 1981” (Delgado 2001, 5). Delgado cites statistics that indicate that “Hispanics were about one in every ten Americans in 1990 and may be one of every five in 2050” and that this population has a high drop-out rate of 30-35 percent, warning that this situation is a potential powder keg for the USA yet there is unlikely to be a quick fix since the problem is “enormous.” Delgado draws a parallel between hearing and Deaf Latinos and their needs:

The numbers going into and completing college program are depressing. We have failed to capitalize and take seriously the work and research that exists related to success factors with Latino (non-Deaf) students and apply these strategies, reforms and curricula to Latino Deaf students. (Delgado 2001, 8-12)

Since 1981 Gilbert Delgado has prepared demographic studies of Hispanic/Latino populations including numbers of deaf Hispanic students when it was evident that “the Hispanic population of the United States was on the verge of dramatic growth,” yielding, by 1990, one Hispanic person for every ten in the population with *appropriate proportions of deaf students* (emphasis added) (2001, 5). Delgado notes that “the mobility of people seeking a better chance at life is . . . a powerful driving force” (2001, 7). This researcher apparently considers deaf immigrants or Deaf Americans to be as likely to seek ‘a better chance at life’ as those who are hearing.

A June 1, 2012, article by Maggie Severns, titled “Teaching the new majority,” published in the *Washington Post*, avers that in the near future the population of the United States will consist of “a majority of minorities,” or large numbers of children of immigrants. In the next forty years these children will “account for virtually all growth in
the workforce” yet “20 per cent of these children live in households where they hear little or no English.” In the state of Illinois, for example, 21 per cent of residents speak a language other than English at home (Severns 2012, 19A).

In Chicago, the Deaf Adults Education Access Program, or DAEAP, established in 1996, assists Deaf immigrants in learning ASL, and English, and in obtaining citizenship. DAEAP reports that there are roughly 3,000 Deaf immigrants “who use a Signed Language as their primary means of communication” in Chicago. “Basic written English,” DAEAP reports, “combined with ASL, provides the Deaf immigrant with access to jobs and other education opportunities” (DAEAP 2013, 4). DAEAP employs “native Deaf sign language users” as teachers because they are “familiar with the underlying linguistic principles shared among signed languages of the world” and “Deaf immigrant students experience higher levels of communication and gain greater understanding of the lessons with Deaf teachers…” (Anderson 2001, 77; DAEAP 2013, 4).

The newspaper articles cited are some of many published throughout the United States—in Massachusetts, California, New York and Washington DC—stories about deaf immigrants from Mexico, Vietnam, Syria, Romania, Colombia, Iran, and Africa—some of whom braved unbelievable odds in hopes of achieving literacy, employment, associates and freedom.

An educational delay such as that of Mauricio’s, James’, Araks’, Choon’s, or Ardalan’s is common among Deaf populations, and is not unique to Deaf immigrants. The same situation that prevented Mauricio from obtaining an education in his home country, El Salvador, can also prevail in many parts of the USA for Deaf children and adults, even
though the United States has been cited as a bastion for learning for Deaf persons\(^9\). (It is worth noting that sometimes hearing members of minority groups may also suffer illiteracy for many of the same reasons.) Finally, there is yet a third group, Deaf internationals hoping to obtain a college degree at an American university.

Representatives of these three groups of Deaf persons can be found on the campus of Gallaudet University in Washington D.C. or elsewhere. As immigrants, they may be employed, and need to achieve literacy to keep their jobs. As internationals, they may be seeking degrees. As Deaf Americans they may not have achieved literacy in their home communities or schools, whether at a state school for the deaf, or in a mainstream program, just as hearing students also often do not achieve literacy.

In 2005, I met, for the first time, members of the population described in this report as a volunteer at the ELI. I assisted Tim Anderson, an ESL Trainer, with a group of second language learners, immigrants and internationals. Trainer Anderson used, in addition to ASL, intriguing palm sized magnetized icons of different colors and shapes when discussing grammar use after students had written their assigned sentence constructions on chalk or whiteboard. He would arrange these forms above the students’ writing (sample arrangements will be shown later in this report) and comment on the result. I knew nothing about the Manipulative Visual Language tool at the time, had not met Jimmy Gore, and knew nothing about what instructional methods, other than signing, were used to teach Deaf students. I had heard about the ELI; that this institute taught English visually to deaf students from abroad. I wondered how this might be done; I had experienced only the

\(^9\)See Easterbrooks and Stoner’s description of three Deaf students attending a day school, page 98.
phonological version of English instruction and had achieved literacy largely by self-teaching.

And so I watched as Anderson lectured in ASL, wrote examples on white board, assigned students to compose sentences, and advised about their grammar usage while arraying the colored icons over the words they’d written. He also acted out portions of his instruction. I remember in particular a demonstration of “dignity” he provided one day, falling to the floor of the classroom as if inadvertently, then hurriedly getting up again, smoothing his hair and clothing in an adroit parody of someone restoring personal dignity after a stumble. Anderson did many such presentations of word meaning. I thought this, and his use of the colored icons, must be representative of a standard of excellence in education; I had no idea that I was seeing a demonstration of TPR or Total Physical Response, and that Tim Anderson had lectured on this in Prague, or that the icons were samples of Jimmy Gore’s learning tool, MVL, which had only just recently appeared at Gallaudet.

Researchers in Europe were also looking for ways to improve instruction with Deaf students, and Dr. Daniela Janakova at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic, in particular, was instrumental in bringing together researchers and teachers in the USA and Europe to address this question and share what they had learned. The next chapter will show how this developed and what researchers had to report. All the recommendations put forward by these scholars and researchers are addressed in the MVL classroom program.

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10 Marlon Kuntze notes: “The range of communicative tools available to humans extend from one that is fully analogically based such as pantomime or drawing, to one that is fully digitally based, like writing,” (“Turning Literacy Inside Out,” in Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking, H-Dirksen L. Bauman, ed. 2008, 147).
CHAPTER THREE
MEANWHILE, IN PRAGUE . . .

Better literacy practices for Deaf students were also being sought among researchers in Europe who were opening their programs of instruction for students needing visual access. This resulted in information exchanges, the importance of which will become apparent since it brought many innovative instructors together to share what they were doing or had learned. In striking contrast to aural ESL programs, the numbers of instructors who work with Deaf students are few resulting in a sense of isolation as mentioned by Gerald Berent of the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester, NY, who also explains what features of the English language can cause difficulty for Deaf students (Berent 2001, 130).

In 1998, Dr. Daniela Janakova, a lecturer and researcher at Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic, was asked to teach English to deaf Czech students as part of a “newly developed study program called Czech in the Communication of the Deaf.” Seeking to learn at firsthand from those involved in teaching deaf students, she collected books, planned seminars, gathered speakers, and raised funds. She sat up nights writing grants, and traveled to Gallaudet University, Washington D.C. and NTID, Rochester, New York, and the University of Bristol, Great Britain, as well as other institutes, in her efforts to arrange cooperative information sharing (Janakova 2001, 1).

In 2001, on November 2-4, a seminar arranged by Dr. Janakova was held in Prague, with presenters from Gallaudet University, Washington D.C., the National Technical

Likewise, materials designed for “first language learners of English” who have difficulty with some aspects of grammar in reading or writing are also based on assumptions that the users of the learning material “. . . typically have a good command of the spoken English used in their communities . . .” but, again, this description does not fit Deaf students (Eilers-Crandall 2005, 1).

Eilers-Crandall notes that online sources provide few materials “designed specifically for Deaf or hard-of-hearing students learning English” (Eilers-Crandall 2005, 2), and that some schools or programs for Deaf students do make their materials available but these materials cannot be found “through the normal publishing venues”:

For example, a search on amazon.com for “learn English language” yielded 114092 books entries and 58 software entries . . . “learn English second language” 113227 books and 48 software items were listed . . . “learn English deaf” . . . there were 505 books and 0 software items . . . This situation causes teachers and programs to make decisions about using materials not specifically designed for Deaf students . . . (Eilers-Crandall 2005, 2)3

In explaining how instruction was conducted at the ELI, Tim Anderson explained what Total Physical Response was; that he’d adapted techniques he’d learned in acting out plays in order to further visual instruction. He also mentioned the importance of finger spelling (Anderson 2000, 77-78).

In his presentation titled, “English for Deaf Students: Assessing and Addressing Learners’ Grammar Development,” Gerald P. Berent notes that a “good, functional

3Seth Gore argues that existing visual/kinesthetic materials currently available “are often primitive and underdeveloped” and tend to offer suggestions rather than explicitly explain how to teach basic grammar, obliging teachers who wish to use such methods to undertake the “lengthy and strenuous process of compilation” from various sources. Gore notes that only the MVL instructional system has done this compilation for them (“The Unique System of Manipulative Visual Language: Exceedingly Visual, Unusually Tactile, and Extremely Successful,” (senior thesis, Gallaudet University, 2012) 1, 8.
knowledge of English is essential” for academic success, gainful employment, accessing information on the World Wide Web and other “educational and technological sources” for American students and for those from non-English-speaking countries, (Berent 2001, 1). Yet there are, as Berent explains, particularly problematic areas of English grammar usage that are baffling to Deaf students:

Deaf learners . . . experience tremendous difficulty in acquiring . . . [spoken] languages in contrast to their . . . effortless acquisition of signed languages . . . . Some deaf learners are somehow able to compensate for . . . lack of auditory access . . . and attain native-like knowledge of the language. However, many deaf learners . . . experience persistent difficulties in reading comprehension and written expression. (Berent 2001, 1)

Expression of grammatical relations, or the strict word order employed by English such as SUBJECT VERB OBJECT (SVO) and used in simple sentences, is the first of four problems listed by Berent. Deaf learners learn SVO readily.

But when Deaf language learners encounter a sentence in which the SVO order is ‘disturbed,’ which occurs with many features of academic English such as passive voice, questions, sentences containing relative clauses, sentences with infinitives, participles, gerunds, Deaf students find these changes difficult to comprehend (Berent 2001, 1). In fact, Berent noted, “. . . the relative order of difficulty . . . experienced on a variety of structures generally correlated with the extent to which structures deviated from expected SVO order” (Berent 2001, 3).

The Interruption of major grammatical constituents is the first specific problem Berent lists, as exemplified in the sentence, “The teacher read the book which the student found.” The sentence begins with the favored SVO construction, but then the phrase “which the student found” interrupts the “major grammatical constituent,” “The teacher read the book” (Berent 2001, 3).
With an “interrupted” sentence such as this, Deaf students experience difficulty in determining which noun phrase is associated with the verb. For example, the following sentence: “The book which the student found explains English grammar” might be understood to mean “the student explains English grammar” because the relative clause occurs between the main noun and the main verb (Berent 2001, 3).

When a sentence exhibits what Berent calls *Distance that constituents move from logical positions*, the student encounters even more difficulty. In the three sentences below, this problem is illustrated:

- Who translated the sentence for the student?
- Who did the teacher help ____ with the translation?
- Who did the student say the teacher helped ___ with the translation?

The students can comprehend the first sentence because ‘who’ is in its logical place. But the other two sentences would be problematic because ‘who’ is far from its object, the verb (Berent 2001, 3).

Another problem in English is *establishing identity between sentence constituents*. An example cited by Berent is: *The student bought a book and started reading it.* “It” refers to the noun phrase “A book.” So, both the noun phrase and “it” refer to the same thing: “A book” (Berent 2001, 4). While in this case, the sentence is relatively simple, the sentence involved can become more complex when infinitives, gerunds and/or participles are present, and the language learner needs to be able to interpret the subjects.

*Finishing the book, the student completed the assignment.*
In this sentence, the subject is ‘missing’ from the beginning of the sentence and appears in the main clause. This kind of ‘movement,’ from a logical position to one less logical, baffles Deaf English language users (Berent 2001, 4).

Berent presents suggestions for teachers to address these grammar problems and warns:

Unfortunately, many teachers of deaf students work in complete or relative isolation. In contrast to the hundreds of thousands of teachers worldwide teaching the millions of hearing students of English as a second (ESL) or foreign language (EFL), the number of teachers of English to deaf students (and the number of students) is, relatively speaking, extremely small. Therefore, these teachers have unique responsibilities . . . that contribute to their success as teachers and their students’ success as learners. (Berent 2001, 7)

The problems posed by Berent are among those Gore and Gillies achieved innovative visual solutions for through their work with MVL. In a later chapter I will introduce some solutions to English language quandaries offered by MVL. I will also explain how the MVL tool presents a solution to the problem of inflexibility in SVO instruction. Finally, Gore’s textbook, *Manipulative Visual Language: handbook for reference and instruction of MVL*, offers an alternative to the texts that are problematic as described by Eilers-Crandall, and is specifically designed for Deaf students. The supportive features of this handbook and its evolution will be described for its singular role in promoting literacy among visual learners.
CHAPTER FOUR
SEEING IN THE CLASSROOM

Do classrooms also reflect a “phonetic-based literary program”? If so, what physical features make this apparent? What should “education for Deaf students” (Lebedeff 2013, 1) look like in terms of the actual physical environment?

Since the classroom setting can often be the most significant yet most overlooked problem for Deaf students, this chapter will consider an aspect of a conventional classroom setting as presented by current researchers Susan Mather and Diane Clark. According to these authors, a classroom can be visual or auditory.

In the 2012 issue of Odyssey: Research to Practice magazine, a publication of the Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, Gallaudet University, in an article titled “An issue of learning: the effect of visual split attention in classes for Deaf and hard of hearing students,” the authors, Susan Mather and Diane Clark, describe the effect on Deaf children of being in a classroom with hearing children taught by a hearing teacher (aided or unaided by a sign language interpreter).

Mather and Clark point out that Deaf students in a classroom (Mather and Clark 2012, 21) are confronted with varied forms of visual linguistic information: the interpreter’s translation of what the teacher is saying, the handouts the teacher has provided, information the teacher has written on the board, and questions and comments.
from the children in the classroom. Unlike hearing children who use “dual channels,” both auditory and visual:

. . . Deaf and hard of hearing children experience an increase in the cognitive load required as they shift their visual attention from an instructor to the materials. This splitting of attention can affect their classroom performance. Teachers must understand that for many learners . . . visual learning is a stand-alone input model, and traditional classrooms have historically focused on learners who can take in information both visually and auditorily. (Mather and Clark 2012, 21)

Mather and Clark describe the distinct differences between aurally and visually oriented classrooms. An auditory classroom is one “where the primary mode of communication was speaking and listening.” Eye contact occurs only between the teacher and individual students (Mather and Clark 2012, 21).

Visually oriented classrooms, by contrast, are “settings where the primary mode of communication was sign language and lip-reading, which required continuous eye contact not only between the instructor and the students but also among all students in the classroom.” These differing communication styles indicate a particular type of classroom as well as specific classroom behavior. For example, with auditory learners, students recognize a change of speaker and switch their attention. Also, when students provide feedback in classroom discussions or lectures, the instructor is able to recognize the voices of different respondents (Mather and Clark 2012, 21).

However, in a classroom of Deaf or hard of hearing students, only one person can comment at a time since direct eye contact with the instructor is required. The other students also must shift their attention from the instructor to the student speaking. This situation requires different rules, procedures and a physical layout that differs sharply from
an auditory classroom:

Auditory-oriented classrooms are traditionally rectangular in shape, whereas visually oriented classrooms are typically square. The seating arrangements for auditory-oriented classrooms usually comprise several rows facing the front of the classroom, seating as many as 30 students. However, visually oriented classrooms have a more limited capacity, and the seating is arranged in a semicircle so that visual contact can be made with each person in the room. (Mather and Clark 2012, 22)

To participate effectively in a class, whether auditory or visual, a Deaf or hard of hearing student needs a 360-degree view of the room. In a class of 35 to 40 students, where an interpreter is provided, the instructor should use the U- or V- shape seating arrangement so that the Deaf or hard of hearing students can have sight lines to the instructor, the interpreter, and the other students. If placed in the front row, he/she will be unable to look at the other students during classroom discussions, which reduces participation (Mather and Clark 2012, 22-23).

Mather and Clark provide illustrations showing an instructor working with a graphic display, in one case not “integrating” her signing with the display, and in the other case making a successful integration. There are also “sight lines” drawn on the graphic to indicate which students watching in the semicircle they prescribe for a visual classroom can optimally view the instruction.

At the end Mather and Clark note:

Deaf and hard of hearing individuals who are mainstreamed generally struggle to achieve academic parity . . . . These lower levels of academic achievement may be related to the nature of auditory-based classrooms. Unfortunately, the . . . traditional class model unfairly increases the cognitive load for Deaf and hard of hearing students by requiring them to constantly engage in splitting their visual attention . . . Recognizing this . . . could go a long way towards eliminating . . . low levels of academic achievement. (Mather and Clark 2012, 24)
The photograph provided for Davlin’s article on Ardalan (Figure 1) may show what Mather and Clark describe as the traditional rectangular classroom. In addition, Ardalan’s particular classroom looks crowded; crammed with desks, or tables, laid out to accommodate the greatest number of students possible, with no regard for “sight lines.” Ardalan may be seated at the “front” of the classroom, or close to the instructor, a seating arrangement often made so that a Deaf student can “see the interpreters” who are most likely positioned near the instructor. But, as Mather and Clark note, in this position, Ardalan is unable to see the other learners in the classroom, and cannot interact with them. As one researcher notes,

. . . literacy should not be regarded solely as a set of individual abilities, but as a set of social patterns of behavior linked to reading and writing, abilities which allow for social interaction (Lebedeff 2013, 2).

Reviewing the photograph of Ardalan in light of Mather and Clark’s findings provides considerable insight into Ardalan’s situation, and his ability to respond and participate. The interpreters’ comments—“Sometimes he says his mind is just boggled. He’s tired”—shows that the interpreters recognize the task confronting Ardalan (Davlin 2012).

The quality of the signing provided by the interpreters\(^1\) cannot be determined from the photograph; the reader can’t know whether the interpreters have studied the particular needs of Deaf or Visual ESL/EFL learners and can maximize Ardalan’s learning, or if they

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are skilled at integrating their signing, as described by Mather and Clark. The viewer cannot see what educational aids the teacher might be using, but, as Mather and Clark explain, there are many factors contributing to Ardalan’s “cognitive load” (Mather and Clark, 2012, 21-23) as we can guess after studying Susan Mather and Diane Clark’s graphics while referring to the article and photograph of Ardalan. He’s learning both ASL and English, while also learning to “lip read,” according to Davlin. And--he’s looking for a job (Davlin 2010, 1). The bowed heads in the background of the photograph are evidence of students using “dual channels” (Mather and Clark 2012, 21) or listening to instruction while also using their vision to view text or graphics, or take notes. Ardalan cannot shift his attention from textbook to interpreter or vice versa without shifting his vision also.

A photograph of Gore and Gillies conducting their Adult Education class in Falmouth, Maine, 2001, in the Maine Telegraph in Tess Nacelewicz’s article, “Better Way to Learn: An Innovative visual system gets deaf people excited about the rules of grammar,” makes it readily apparent that the two instructors provided their students with the essential sight lines described by researchers Susan Mather and Melody Clark eleven years later in 2012.

In classes conducted by Gore, either alone or in partnership with Anderson or with another instructor, the visual environment described by Susan Mather and Melody Clark is consistently maintained. In later chapters I will mention Gore’s use of eye contact in the classroom and seating arrangements. Also, photographs in later chapters of this report, such as those featuring students at Marie H. Katzenbach School in Trenton, New Jersey, which uses MVL, demonstrate consistently the prerequisite awareness and regard for sight lines in the classroom, and support my contention that Gore and Gillies’ Manipulative Visual
Language tool meets or exceeds agreed-on parameters to create the maximal learning environment for visual learners in a complete classroom approach.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE KINESTHETIC/VISUAL/BILINGUAL CLASSROOM

In midsummer of 2001, in Augusta, Maine, Jimmy Gore and Robert Gillies offered an adult education class in English using their visual tool, Manipulative Visual Language. They hoped their visual system would be as successful with adult learners as with their grade school students. Feedback from adult students attending the three hour class “at the end of a long work day” at the Kennebeck Learning Center in Augusta as reported by staff writer Tess Nacelewicz in the Maine Telegram, July 22, 2001, realized such comments as . . . “different from the boring and baffling” classes they had endured as youngsters. The workshop attendees laughed, wrote sentences on the board, and said, “. . . they wished they’d learned English through the MVL method when they were young. If they had, they wouldn’t have the problems with their writing that has held them back from pursuing such dreams as attending college . . . ” ¹ (Nacelewicz 2001, 1B). What made this experience different for them was “. . . explicit grammar without . . . the gobbledygook jargon names” (Nacelewicz 2001, 5B).

“I’d sure like to have a little ball with an arrow on it rather than learn what the pluperfect is,” noted a linguistics professor who observed the class, and commented that, compared with Deaf students’ reaction to conventional English instruction (where they would have to confront terms such as participle, pluperfect, and present progressive) “. . .

¹Lucy Cole noted that at Deaf Connections in Glasgow deaf adults often report “anxiety and bad memories” of testing procedures in English literacy (“Deaf Adults and Manipulative Visual Language,” 2009, 13).
you would not see . . . [that] they are really excited and enjoying English” (Nacelewicz 2001, 5B).

One attendee said she wished the class could continue all night (Nacelewicz 2001, 1B). There was also speculation that MVL could be used to teach English to second language learners (Nacelewicz 2001, 5B).² In the following year, Gore would be able to put this to the test at Gallaudet University where he began to teach English to Deaf internationals at the English Language Institute.

The two instructors realized, with growing excitement, that their language system could be used with any language, anywhere, and with any students. Gore spent the following years polishing, revising and adding to this system, creating and revising a textbook, and adding more two and three dimensional forms that could be handled or “manipulated,” attaching magnets to the backs of the two dimensional forms so they could be placed on a whiteboard for optimal viewing in a classroom, and assembling the components into an efficient portable kit for students and instructors. Gore also devised extensive lesson plans, filmstrips, and classroom posters. At each step, Gore solicited student input: (Seth Gore 2012, 12).

MVL . . . is heavily based on the philosophy that grammar should be visually fun and entertaining for the student . . . Coloring language and grammar with student-invented symbols and comical personalities, MVL allows the student to extract far more explicit and meaningful evaluations of grammar . . . (Jimmy Gore interview 2012; Seth Gore 2012, 12, 13)

²When there was an interpreter shortage at the University of Southern Maine, Gore had the opportunity to test this theory by using MVL to teach American Sign Language to hearing students (Tess Nacelewicz, Better Way to Teach: an innovative visual system gets deaf people excited about the rules of grammar, Maine Telegram, 2001, 5B).
The MVL system currently consists of “over 50 manipulatives” and is “not only a grammar-learning tool, but . . . a complete classroom approach.” Because MVL is not “research based, and is currently being actively used in a real classroom” it is “free from . . . [the] constraints of focus and funding” required for research. (Gore 2012, 9)

The Manipulative Visual Language tool began when Gore, working as a teacher at Governor Baxter School for the Deaf, and seeing differently colored three dimensional symbols used by Montessori, wondered if similar tactile/kinesthetic symbols could make English language patterns “visible.” Enlisting the feedback of his pupils in this project, and, with the assistance of a contemporary, Robert Gillies, also a teacher at Governor Baxter, the rudiments of the new language learning tool began to take form (Nacelewicz 2001, 5B, Gore 2012, 14). Seth Gore notes:

“The use of manipulatives in classroom pedagogy is not unusual. An internet search will yield a plethora of manipulatives: blocks, cones, balls, made of plastic, wood or some other material, colored or not. Manipulatives are “divided into two categories: representative objects that look like their actual counterparts, i.e. a miniature human body, and non-representative, objects that help one understand mathematical or abstract concepts . . . .” (Gore 2012, 9)

MVL began as a limited color-coding system that consisted only of about 8 different colors and blocks, covering only the most basic parts of speech . . . resembling . . . those of Montessori, Lea, and Bryan. . . the simple MVL colored blocks were due to student requests then taken to a new level of increased complexity to accurately and more fully represent English . . . where color and shape gives the grammar components a visual pattern and stance, symbols and anecdotes bring the grammar closer to the student by giving her/him an opportunity to identify the blocks as lasting visual personalities . . . . (Seth Gore 2012, 12)

The first manipulative symbols Gore prepared were flat forms made with paper. Gore tested other materials in the making of two and three dimensional forms: tile, wood. Having carpentry skills, Gore first crafted the language symbols from wood himself until he found a workshop that would make them for him (Gore interview, 2013).
Gore and Gillies watched their students perform grammar practice using the MVL shapes which the two inventors referred to as “symbolizing” (Gore and Gillies 2003, 73-74). In their 2003 article they comment on the visual effect of the manipulatives:

When our students are “symbolizing” sentences on the whiteboard, they work with two-dimensional shapes made from sturdy, vibrantly colored pieces of plastic with magnetized backings. The visual impact of these shapes against a white or black background is striking. (Jimmy Gore and Robert Gillies 2003, 73-74)

Figure 3. A student studies using 3 dimensional MVL forms. *Odyssey: Directions in Deaf Education*, fall, 2003, 73-76.

This “striking” effect—the visual impact—was what the two instructors had sensed they needed; something that would do for deaf students what sound did for hearing ones: make them aware of a recurring pattern or rhythm, in language.

The value of a visual tool is that the VK (Visual/Kinesthetic) learner internalizes the linear and explicit rules of a written language beforehand as “images, sounds, movements” (Seth Gore 2012, 6). “This process requires the introduction of objects that are either visual or tactile that create a connection between the graphics and the linguistic signifiers . . .” (Seth Gore 2012, 7).
Symbolizing refers to the kinesthetic activity of arraying the MVL symbols in relation to a sentence in order to determine its grammatical correctness (see photograph). Performing this action lets the students get their hands on grammar (Gore and Gillies 2000, 75) and engages color and shape in the decoding process.

Not only did the two teachers find that MVL helped with reading and grammar, but it helped with writing too. Using colored pencils, another vital accessory, their students were encouraged to use blocks of text and mark MVL symbols over the words to analyze or “symbolize” them by way of studying grammar and sentence construction. The students, they reported, “enjoy this exercise because it helps them imprint basic structures into their memories, further reinforcing patterns in English” (Gore and Gillies 2003, 75).

Constructing sentences with MVL symbols allows students to be more freewheeling than the same exercise using a pencil. There is no need to erase—the forms are easily moved. There is no need for paper.

Figure 4. A student works at sentence creation using a worksheet and MVL symbols. Odyssey: Directions in Deaf Education, fall, 2003, 73-76.
The researchers discovered multiple ways the visual aspect of the symbols could be enhanced in lesson planning:

If teachers are working on a set structure, they can set a left-to-right sequence of shapes, placing the shapes on a road or train track they have drawn, so students can identify the elements they need to make a sentence. Then the teacher can add forks in the road to show that a choice has to be made: for example, between *is* and *are*, or *the* and *her*. This approach is flexible enough to let teachers target specific grammar goals.

Another creative activity relates to verb tenses. We draw a timeline based on a short length of real videotape: students who have just acted out a brief videotaped drama can then plot the verbs along the line by putting the shapes along it. They can see the sequence of actions, and compare progressive and simple verb tenses with ease. (Gore and Gillies 2003, 74)

The two instructors soon found themselves with a blizzard of ideas for lessons, charts, field trips, reading lessons and all sorts of applications for their new tools, and new ways of using it. Their conceptions will become apparent in my classroom observation descriptions provided in a later chapter as well as other aspects such as how MVL addresses specific grammar situations. Seth Gore notes that, of visual tools available today “few exist solely for instruction of grammar,” and “while there are some good handbooks/guides for VK grammar instruction . . . few cover such instruction systematically, as in having a whole classroom approach readied for the teacher” (Gore 2012, 7). Seth Gore writes:

Most of the VK instructional materials I have found would either cover a single subject or writing in general, failing to cover grammar instruction of VK learners. For instance, in [a book by Donovan Walling] the purpose of *Teaching Writing to Visual, Auditory and Kinesthetic* learners is simply to “offer a useful instructional perspective and practical strategies that teachers can use to help their [VK] learners to become effective writers,” but fails to show how instruction of grammar is achieved. (Seth Gore 2012, 7)

Seth Gore argues that the lack of a corpus and teaching materials “can be attributed to the recent changes in pedagogical paradigm” and, as a result, teachers would have undertake the “lengthy and mentally strenuous process of compilation” of these methods
and materials themselves for their VK students were it not for the “presence of
Manipulative Visual Language, released in 1997, a whole classroom approach dedicated to
the VK student” (Seth Gore 2012, 7). Seth Gore’s “recent changes in pedagogical
paradigm” may be a reference to the recent transition, in Deaf education, from
phonological instruction, with voicing, oral work, and memorization, to the use of ASL in
instruction, and the recognition of Deaf students as visual and/or bilingual learners.

Figure 5. A student develops her literacy with MVL symbols, worksheets and colored
pencils. Odyssey: Directions in Deaf Education, fall, 2003, 73-76.
Articles and Nouns—the First Grammar Story

Gore may begin a grammar lesson by employing storytelling and characterization to introduce a particularly important grammar relationship. His lesson on Nouns provides a good example.

Some nouns need articles; others don’t. Gore uses characterization, or what Marlon Kuntz describes as an “analogic device” (ed. Bauman 2008, 152) to clarify the relationship between nouns and articles. This particular grammar situation also creates the framework for the introduction of the basic sentence.

In English instruction, students are taught there are “proper nouns” and “common nouns.” Both are names of people, places and things. A proper noun is a more specific kind of noun. All of the parts of speech are introduced in this manner, orally. An exposure to spoken language is presupposed with this instruction.

If Gore took this approach with his population of adults with little or no spoken language familiarity considerable time would be consumed with the explication of the concepts of “proper” and “common.” At some later date, having established an English language base, Gore’s students could transition to use of the conventional explanation. But at this juncture, a grouping of manipulatives—three black triangles marked with N, T, and P—simplifies the teaching of grammar. The visual forms, also available in a kinesthetic form, stand in for the three kinds of nouns: Name, Thing and Place. Story telling with characterization establishes in the mind of onlookers the role and place of the actors on this stage.
The Visual/Kinesthetic Teacher Tells a Story

Figure 6. The visual kinesthetic teacher tells a story. Photograph by author. June, 2012.

Gore places the black Name Noun two dimensional icon on whiteboard or chalk board, conveying by posture, nuance and subtle gesture that this is a figure of importance. (The students infer that the Name Noun is important by Gore’s demeanor, that is, his use of an “analogic device”\(^3\) or “conceptual mnemonic device”\(^4\)). Next, he takes up the light blue Triangle (which is smaller than the black Noun icon) and indicates that it is seeking partnership (the students are able to infer this, and also infer a smaller, less powerful character). Seeing the black triangle, the blue one hurries over to align itself with the Name Noun. But the Name Noun pushes it rudely away. “Go away,” the Name Noun gestures,


\(^4\)Dr. Kristin Di Perri, email to author, 2013.
“You don’t belong here! This is the wrong place for you!” (Gore appears to be looking down on someone in disapproval as he frowns and gestures emphatically: “Go away!”)

When he wishes to represent the blue triangle, he looks up.

This grammar situation is represented in the MVL textbook:

Figure 7. Name Noun with article icon: the MVL textbook begins with Articles and shows that this particular arrangement, an Article with a Name Noun, is forbidden or improper, 8.

Rebuffed, the light blue Triangle, backs away, confused. It sees the Thing (or Place) Noun also standing alone and approaches it, hesitantly. The Thing Triangle greets the light blue Triangle joyfully. “Yes, yes, please come here! Stand beside me!”

The blue triangle happily aligns itself to the left of the Thing Noun. “No! Not there!” the Thing Noun says. “On this side, not that side!” The blue triangle moves to the right of the Thing Noun, which beams approval. The light blue Triangle complains plaintively about the Name Noun’s rejection. The Thing Noun explains that the Name Noun does not need an Article: it prefers to be alone. The Thing Noun points to the letter on its front, and abjures the Article to always look for a T or P for that indicates an Article is needed.
A slightly different version of the Article and Noun story is featured in the article titled “Manipulative Visual Language: a Tool to Help Crack the Code of English” by Gore and Gillies, 2003, pages 72-75. The story can be found on page 73 along with several photographs of children using the manipulatives in various ways. Explain Gore and Gillies:

We often use stories to introduce the shapes as symbols to students. Besides providing a memory aid, this technique helps explain a symbol’s origins and purpose. For example: The little blue triangle [which denotes the article] was looking for a friend one day and approached the big ‘N’ triangle [proper noun]. ‘N’ was very proud, and said: “Go away! I don’t need you! I prefer to be alone!” Luckily for the little blue triangle, there was a kinder triangle, the “T” triangle [common noun], and it was very happy to have a friend. The two of them became inseparable. (Gore and Gillies 2003, 73)

The story yields itself to alteration as fits the intended population, in this case, school-aged children.
Figure 9. The Name, Thing and Place nouns.

Figure 10. Nouns with/without Articles

The light blue triangle represents articles: the, a, an (in this case, the).

The black larger triangle represents nouns which are designated as Name, Place or Thing. This information will be repeated often, and impressed on the students through readings and further grammar work.
The students, who were amused at the altercation between the light blue Triangle and the Name Noun, have now absorbed a basic tenet in English and can progress to the simple sentence which is signaled by the addition of a verb:

![Diagram](image.png)

Figure 11. Basic sentence with singular verb.

The verb symbol has been positioned to indicate the present. Bearing one inverted triangle on its face, the verb symbol indicates it is a singular verb. More nouns can be introduced, and a basic verb vocabulary. Again, placement is emphasized: the verb must be placed in this relationship to the Article and Noun. But now another critical juncture has been reached: matching singular and plural verbs with their subjects.
Figure 12. Plural Thing Noun Symbol.

This black Thing Noun icon has a red corner. This indicates it is plural. It must have a plural verb:

The dogs walk.

Figure 13. Basic sentence with plural verb.

Summer 2012, Classroom Observation

In summer of 2012, for his English Reading class, Gore has thirteen students. Eleven are from Saudi Arabia, one is American, and one is from Thailand. One student has just one working eye, another has cerebral palsy. Queried, the Saudi students say they know Saudi Sign Language (SSL) and a few words of written Arabic.

In the first class Gore distributes his assessment tool: the Basic Grammar Comprehension Test. This consists of 84 groups of four English sentences. In each four sentence grouping, only one sentence is free of grammar errors. Listed as a, b, c, and d, the students are asked to indicate which one is correct.
Example 1

a) Rosa jumping over the box.
b) Larry taked his mother to doctor’s office.
c) Harry is hopping over the rock.
d) Gregg walks over hill.

In the example above, c) would be the correct choice. When the class ends after six weeks, Gore will administer this assessment again.

This grammar assessment is designed to test a student’s knowledge of twelve key parts of speech: not + verb, plural verbs, prepositional phrases, adjective phrases, adverbs, nouns, passive voice. The sequences of sentences offer each of the twelve parts of speech seven times which reduces the possibility of student guessing.

Three of Gore’s students had taken previous classes at the ELI. One student had had three other instructors over three semesters but his pretest showed a score of just 31% correct responses, keeping him from advancing to the next class level. This summer he is attempting Gore and Anderson’s collaboratively taught English Reading class.

In the first twenty minutes of the class, the students pursue self-directed reading. The spacious classroom is equipped with a range of beginning level books: there are two tall book shelves in the classroom stocked with books. Upon arrival in the morning, the students select a book and begin reading. There is also a table upon which books are displayed.

At one point, a student looks up the word “teenager” using his pager. Gore sees this, asks him what word he is looking up, then explains, using the board and writing numbers:
anyone aged 13 to 19 is a “teenager”: points to “teen” at the end of the written numeral. Later, the student explains this to another student seated across the room.⁵

During my observation of Gore and Anderson’s summer reading class, I witness many student learning exchanges (and sometimes I am drawn into the learning process myself!). I see a girl across the room fingerspell “cold” to another student to check her spelling. On another occasion a boy asks another to spell “beautiful” while holding a pencil in readiness to write. The second boy, looking thoughtfully at his right hand, spells “b-e-a-u...” then decides “u” is wrong and tells the first boy to drop “u”.

I intervene and tell them “u” is correct. Exchanges of this sort are common, and happen constantly, spontaneously, throughout the days and weeks of the class, and are an important part of the learning process. This is also what happens, spontaneously, in an auditory classroom consisting of hearing students. But this kind of exchange and supported learning does not occur if one or few Deaf students are inserted into an auditory classroom, i.e. what appears to be Ardan’s situation in Chapter Two.

The classroom is well-lit and boasts current technology; a whiteboard with a projector. A desk is nearby with a computer monitor. The students’ desks are ranged in a comfortable semicircle facing the whiteboard. Chalkboards fill most of the wall space on all four walls. Placed at intervals at the top of the chalkboards are pictures of famous persons: Abraham Lincoln, Mohandas Gandhi, etc. Also placed prominently are MVL grammar charts or MVL sentence diagrams. The charts and diagrams are also provided in

⁵Another example of how students learn from each other via classroom interaction and the importance of sight lines in the classroom.
the MVL textbook. These will be referred to during the course of the class when appropriate in amplifying a lesson.

But more importantly, the posters catch the students’ eyes during idle moments, reminding them of questions to ask, the material they’ve covered and act as prompts in helping them remember words they can use when composing in written formats. In this way, the charts or posters provide additional supportive visual input and maximize learning opportunities within the classroom.\(^6\) This is important for a population that lacks access to auditory learning where auditory learners would have the same support via aural input.

While the students are reading, Gore and Anderson are preparing the day’s lessons by pulling up “Click & the Kids” on Smart board, and other online interactive websites they’ve planned to use with the class. In the days to come the students will learn about Benjamin Franklin’s experiments with kites, the city’s water system, silkworms, Yellowstone Park, and will visit, both virtually and by field trip, the city of Philadelphia.

The students all have pagers and/or an IPad. They consult these to look up vocabulary words and other information during class. They often make video recordings of Jimmy and Tim’s ASL lectures on English grammar for later play back and review.

\(^6\)In their 2003 article, Gore and Gillies refer to this and explain how differently they do it: “Like many elementary school teachers, we have filled the walls of our classrooms with examples of the most common patterns in English sentence structure. The big difference in our classrooms, though, is that we display sequences of shapes that illustrate these sentence patterns \textit{rather than printed advice for students to follow in developing their understanding of grammar. Our students vividly see that before a noun they usually must put an article, that an article follows a preposition, and that a noun and subject are followed by verbs}” (Italics added) (Jimmy Gore and Robert Gillies, “Manipulative Visual Language: a tool to help crack the code of English,” \textit{Odyssey: Directions in Deaf Education}, (2003):74).
On June 1st, the “Click & the Kids” segment entails a visit to Yellowstone National Park. Gore shows a map of the state of Wyoming after asking the class, “Where is Yellowstone Park?” Some vocabulary words involved in this presentation are: ranger, leisurely, through. When a student asks what the word “through” means, Gore rolls up a piece of paper to form a tube, and tosses a pencil through it. He also writes “through” on the board, and positions the green bridge symbol over the word (the green bridge symbol represents prepositions).

A cartoon segment shows the “Kids” entering Yellowstone Park in a vehicle. The vehicle has to be driven slowly through a group of elk. “Make way for elk, Liz!” one of the kids says in a conversation balloon. Gore asks students to come to the front of the class and act out driving “through” a herd of elk: a number of students assume the roles of the driver and the children riding within the vehicle while others are the elk standing outside. They demonstrate that the vehicle has to make way through the herd, protectively. The elk are protected and can go anywhere they want in Yellowstone Park. Because Gore demonstrated the meaning of the word “through” prior to the encounter with the word in the story, the students have formed a mental picture of the word’s meaning that they now apply to the action of the car maneuvering its way “through” the herd. As the class progresses, yet other applications of “through” will surface: through the tunnel, through the day, etc. In this way, parts of speech such as prepositions are demonstrated to have dimension and breadth beyond the given meaning of the word.

When the cartoon segment shows a uniformed park ranger addressing a group of tourists, Gore asks the class, “Who is this?” A student responds with the ASL sign for
“police, guard.” Gore assents, then assumes the role of a park ranger; taking tickets, giving directions.

“Made to preserve,” Gore reads from the whiteboard. “What does “preserve” mean?”

There is discussion of “keep, care for.” Gore reminds the group that the elk are preserved then describes the careful removal of giant cacti for highway construction in Arizona; the concept of a state or national park; having an area protected from construction and development; to enter, a ticket is purchased.

When a student complains that another student is yelling, Gore instructs him not to yell, saying; “We are all deaf.” He asks the class if they remember the morning lesson about Yellowstone which included a cartoon graphic of a Bighorn sheep with the caption, “Please don’t disturb me!” Everyone laughs.

When the afternoon session begins, Gore passes out a vocabulary sheet with pictures from the morning’s activities with blanks to be filled in. The names of the characters from the morning’s “Click & the Kids” segment are easy but other words are harder: robin, blue jay, starfish, mine, feather, waves, gull, sea, frog, fishing pole, and cattail. The sheet is homework. Gore moves to an adjacent classroom, taking six students with him, while six remain with Anderson.

Anderson assigns an essay, writing on whiteboard: “Why is this room comfortable?”

Anderson provides directions for composing the essay:

1) Write in English.

2) Tell in ASL.
3) Two different reasons: This room is comfortable because . . . .

Anderson explains that the structure should consist of an introductory paragraph with reasons one and two, then a conclusion. The students can choose the position of:

“This classroom is comfortable because . . . .”

Or, “This classroom is not comfortable because . . . .”

Articles and Nouns

Anderson begins a lesson on Articles by writing on the chalkboard: I bought a used car.

The White board displays a Conversation balloon showing graphics of different limousines:

Julia just arrived here in a limousine.
Jack arrived here in a limousine.
The limousine was pink.

Gore points out that first “a” is used, then “the.”

Gore and Anderson conduct an impromptu discussion of different kinds of dogs, books, cars in which first “a” is used, then “the”. Activity related to this concept will be repeated often throughout the study program.

Tim returns to the subject of cars, writing on the board: “I need a car.”

Gore writes, “I have a car,” pulling his car keys out of his pants’ pocket, and holding them aloft. Tim then takes the keys from Gore and writes: “I have the car.”

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7 This is an example of how Anderson makes the lesson bilingual.
Another Lesson on Articles

The Smart board displays MVL graphics: light blue triangle, dark blue triangle with the following words:

- a Paul
- a store
- a boy
- a car

Figure 14. Use of articles.

Gore asks the class if these usages are correct and encourages feedback from everyone. For example, if a student responds to Gore’s query about the accuracy of the listing above by giving the signed equivalent of, “No, that’s wrong!” Gore will challenge the other class members, “What do you think?”
The class agrees that “A Paul” is wrong. “Paul” is a Name noun which “does not want the light blue triangle” (the class hereby demonstrates they’ve absorbed the lesson on nouns and articles. The students won’t have the ‘formal’ explanation, “The first one is wrong because Proper Nouns do not take an Article!” Instead they recognize the placement as erroneous because they’ve internalized the repeating pattern of grammar they learned at the outset. Having shown this recognition of a common grammar pattern in class, once presented with a grammar worksheet that consists of sentences with and without errors, which will include name nouns preceded by an article, the students will again recognize the error. If not, they will continue to encounter this grammar situation until they have mastered it.)

The last hour of the class is given to a reading of a Roald Dahl story. The students remove to the theatre classroom and Gore opens the reading by asking the class what happened in the story the day before. The students eagerly volunteer to tell what they remember of the previous day’s reading of the story. Today three boys take turns doing this. The others vet their use of ASL and the telling of the story. Interest is high; there are smiles and laughter.

Then Gore begins to “read” visually. He works in “whole language” style, not reading word for word, but indicating the action and meaning of a sentence. His signing is often inferential.8 For example, when the word “odd” appears, Gore makes this “visual” by

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modeling seeing something strikingly unusual. When there are illustrations, Gore makes the action rich and graphic, indicating the mood involved via facial expression. A student asks for enlarged text, and Gore provides this.

Gore reads to his class in the same manner as the “deaf mother” described by Donald Grushkin on page 193 of the article titled, “Why Shouldn’t Sam read?” The deaf mother used “14 strategies” at “book sharing times.” She signed on the pictures and “maintained eye contact for control of interactions.” “She expended . . . effort to confirm the child’s understanding through explanations, relating ideas in the text to the child’s background experiences,” she “focused the child’s attention on the book . . . through pointing . . . prompting of the child to read . . . all the mother’s activities were geared toward . . . reading goals and the connection of manual signs to the printed word” (Grushkin 1998, 193, 194).

Gore uses “real” reading tasks, he uses ASL, he recognizes the Deaf student as a second language learner, and he uses classroom interaction (Grushkin 1998, 199). Gore points to words, phrases. He focuses the students’ attention. He prompts the students to read. He makes eye contact with the class constantly. He pauses and asks for feedback. He fingerspells onto the text displayed on the whiteboard as recommended by researchers Mather and Clark, 2012, 24, and Grushkin, 1998, 179.

Gore does not use materials that, as Eilers-Crandall explained in her presentation at Prague “presume that these students have already amassed a wide base of background knowledge and have already become proficient readers and writers in at least one other

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Kuntze describes this as “using analogic devices,” and provides a description. (Marlon Kuntze, “Turning Literacy Inside Out,” in Open Your Eyes: Deaf Studies Talking, ed. H-Dirksen L. Bauman, 2008, 152.)
language” (Eilers-Crandall 2005, 1). As described by Francisco Cordero-Martinez in Chapter 1, page 16, the students may know a little or a great deal of the spoken language used in their home countries. They may know their community’s traditions, history and religion although they may know these by observance and inference rather than spoken instruction or discussion. They may also know something of other languages used in their country (1995, 471). They may have an impressive amount of knowledge gained visually-spatially. They may be fluent in a signed language wherein a series of hand and arm movements, facial expressions, subtle or not so subtle, convey meaning that in a spoken format would involve a complex range of words and sentences. Obviously this represents a formidable difference in learning.

They would not possess the background knowledge base of a hearing American student of the same age, and therefore would have difficulty with most ESL texts. In Chapter One I mentioned specific problems involved in understanding and using punctuation; that Deaf students might have no knowledge of the connection between commas, periods, exclamationations, question marks, and the voice inflection, pauses or emphasis used in speech (Email, Terry Coye, 7/12/2013). While a knowledgeable teacher could utilize a textbook that assumed a knowledge base the students reading it might not possess, and make plans that would encompass this vacuum, chances of success would be greater with students more advanced than Gore’s as might be apparent in the later section of this chapter where I discuss the structure of Gore’s MVL textbook and the reasons he gives for his design and arrangement which varies significantly from that of widely available textbooks.
Deaf students, whether American or otherwise, may have what would be considered gaps in background knowledge. On the other hand they may have extensive visual knowledge or knowledge gained simply from living and observing. They may also have work related skills. Consequently, the graphic teaching materials Gore uses involves situations or materials the students will encounter in their daily lives, and are sufficiently relevant and sophisticated as to match the maturity of the group. For example, one lesson I saw involved photographs of common signs seen in the DC area or throughout the United States such as warnings posted at gas stations, signs directing traffic, instructions for operating self serve gas pumps and making payment. Going to a restaurant and ordering dinner, seeing a movie, and buying snacks such as popcorn were other graphics Gore and Anderson shared with their class.

This information contributes to the students’ knowledge base and helps them become informed and independent, arming them with vocabulary they might need, explanations related to spoken language conventions, and that they can see a distinct purpose for learning.

But another way in which Gore addresses literacy is through the various learning devices he employs either through his explanations of grammar, spoken language conventions, or the learning graphics supplied in the MVL textbook, some of which will be introduced in the next chapter.
Figure 15. Jimmy Gore and Tim Anderson, class observation. Photograph by author, June 1, 2012.
CHAPTER SIX
THE USE OF CHARACTER ICONS IN MVL

Jimmy Gore’s ESL/EFL class makes clear the role of storytelling in grammar instruction and the introduction of the MVL grammar icons. Gore’s MVL textbook, titled Manipulative Visual Language Handbook for reference and instruction of MVL, provides a glimpse into Gore’s use of characterization in grammar. Measuring 8 ½ inches by 11, with 159 pages, the book features cartoon characters who introduce themselves and their language functions, projecting helpfulness and naiveté, plus arrangement, color use and text, that, through years of trial and error, and feedback from Deaf learners, Gore determined as most effective visual learning features for a diverse population of language learners: sign language users, visual learners, Deaf students.

Text is kept to a minimum with usually one grammar lesson with examples per page. The pages set out grammar rules boldly in red and black.

Character Icons

Some MVL character icons are:
Figure 16. MVL Character Icons: MVL forms endowed with character or personality. Courtesy Jimmy Challis Gore.

The symbols given above are examples of graphics used in the MVL handbook and with MVL lesson plans or on posters. ASL is incorporated into the symbols via the hand “movements” and facial expressions but the forms also bear other clues to their linguistic functions. The character icons conform to their counterparts, the two and three dimensional forms, except that the character icons possess human features such as arms and legs. They also demonstrate ASL properties.

For example, the green bridge symbol (prepositions) holds up a finger and waggles it to and fro: “Where or who?” (used by ASL users to make inquiries related to who/where.) The ‘Had’ graphic (red ball second to far right) gestures back over its shoulder: the ASL sign for “past”. The red ball at far right of “Had” points to its two inverted white triangles and holds up two fingers to indicate it is a plural verb indicator. The two purple Pronoun forms point to slates where subject and object pronouns have been chalked in. The violet Adjective bears a color palette and a dripping brush: color is a common descriptor.

The character symbols possess human features: arms, hands and feet, and facial expressions with pronounced eyebrows (eyebrow movement is significant in ASL). They
project friendliness, helpfulness and naiveté.1 Their angles are rounded. In the MVL textbook they occupy helpful, eye-catching locations, usually at the top of a page where they introduce themselves and set the tone for the lesson. When they demonstrate joint action, as is the case on page 63 of the MVL textbook titled “Action Verb Sentences,” which deals with the use of –ing, the two character icons, the Verb and the ING character, clasp each other fondly at the foot of the page, saying, “We are close friends!” 2 A similar use is made on page 65 with “Passive Voice” (Gore and Gillies, “Manipulative Visual Language: Handbook for reference and instruction of MVL,” R & R Publishers: Lawrenceville, NJ. 2003).

The handheld symbols are employed in the classroom in 2 dimensional and 3 dimensional forms as manipulatives meant to be handled while seated at a desk, for example, or in the case of the flatter, lighter two dimensional forms, are magnetized for use with white board.

In this way, the symbols or icons are encountered by the student in four forms for different learning enforcement: as cartoon graphics used as accessories in the MVL textbook or classroom posters, as three dimensional manipulatives for kinesthetic learning assistance used in ‘symbolizing’ and intended for handling, and as two dimensional flat magnetized forms for use with white board and also for handling. Finally, the forms appear with text on paper as small icons much as might be encountered with computer programs.

1“... the student is able to make friends with the blocks/symbols, understanding what they represent through natural, friendly and inductive interaction.” (Seth Gore 2012, 14.)

2This is an example of how Gore uses the logic of common, well-known human interactions as a substitute for conventional grammar explanations to simplify the process of learning grammar.
These are used in the MVL textbook and with lesson plans or posters as guides for student learning.

Figure 17. MVL poster illustrating the use of pronouns. Notice the green thumbs-up, thumbs-down. This poster employs two common error messages making the point inescapable. Photograph by author, summer observation, June 1, 2012.

The visual logic of ASL is incorporated into the design of the icons. This happens in several ways. First, as noted previously, the icons employ ASL related hand shapes and actions in addition to facial features and facial expression. Second, Gore created ASL related graphics such as those on pages 50-53 of the MVL Textbook to explain the use of verb tenses. Third, Gore solicited student input in devising the icons at the inception of the MVL system in Maine. This tapped into appropriateness in representation since the
perspective of those who rely on ASL as an instructional medium is relevant to better comprehension.³

For persons unfamiliar with the MVL grammar icons, or with ASL, the importance of these features can easily be overlooked. But, in light of the target population, these aids establish a familiarity between them and their textbook: it is “speaking” their language. It was designed for them. They recognize this instantly.

The red circle icon represents verbs. Its color was intended to suggestion action and vigor. The placement of the white arrows on its face represents the time feature of verbs: past, present, future, and also indicates the verb’s status as either singular or plural. The circle can be “rolled” to change the direction of the verb to indicate past, present, or future. The Noun icon is black and triangular “because it is as unchanging as the Egyptian pyramid[s] and is black as coal because most nouns have been around for quite some time” (Seth Gore 2012, 17).

Again, instead of teaching “words with words,” i.e., noun, verb, article, or “definite article, indefinite article, proper noun, common noun,” the information is conveyed visually. The student learns to associate the application or effect of a particular group of words with the symbol that represents that group. The affect is immediate and continuous. Having learned this visual arrangement, the basic sentence and its components, Gore and Gillies’ students can begin to compose initial simple sentences almost at the outset of the course of study. As they advance in grammar and ASL prowess, and personal expressiveness, they can employ sentence maps as they proceed. A sentence map resembles

³Seth Gore notes that “Coloring language and grammar with student-invented symbols and comical personalities, MVL allows the student to extract far more explicit and meaningful evaluations of grammar . . .” 2012, 19.
a road map. Students are offered alternative “routes” to arrive at the sentence they wish to have.

Sentence maps can be seen on many pages of the MVL textbook and in photographs taken in the classroom and included in this report. The objective in providing a sentence map and instructing students in its use is to avoid the problems encountered with SVO instruction: that the student learns only one way of constructing a sentence as explained by Berent in Chapter Three of this report. The MVL maps provided in the textbook chart possible “paths” a sentence might take.

Page 15 (of the MVL textbook) features a simplified map for an Adjective Phrase and three possible paths in its usage: Mike’s house, Mike’s big house, Mike’s big wooden house. This map and others are placed appropriately in the MVL textbook as accessories to the lessons.

On pages 28 and 29 are sentence diagrams for the use of the subject noun phrase and the object noun phrase. Page 41 has a diagram for To Be + Adjectives. The next page has a diagram for To Be: Yes/No Questions. The same sentences used on page 41 are use as questions on page 42. Again, students are invited to consider the flexibility of the English language and incorporate this into their schema.

Adjectives

Having introduced the Article and Nouns, Gore might introduce Adjectives. The MVL symbol for Adjectives is a blue triangle larger than the Article triangle but not as large as the Noun.

Page 113 of the current MVL textbook elaborates on the order in which adjectives must be used. Gore’s array of adjective symbols represent the various categories such as:
quantity, opinion, size, shape, age, color, origin, materials, and qualifiers, and the order in which they must be used is emphasized in the MVL textbook, and on the MVL posters in the classroom. One cannot write, for example, “the red old dog” but “the old red dog” because an age adjective must be placed before a color adjective.

In this way, on the first week of class, through gesture and demonstration, posture, facial expression, humor and symbolism, Gore has made significant progress: he has visually conveyed to his class a dominant grammar pattern, and in their first week they begin to compose basic sentences.

Figure 18. International deaf students writing beginning level sentences in Gore’s class in their first semester. MVL two dimensional magnetized icons are ready for use on the upper part of the chalkboard, and there are MVL posters on the wall nearby. Photograph by author, 2008.
On June 19th, the day’s lesson with “Click & the Kids” involves a birthday party and afterwards a practice test is administered to determine how well the class understood/remembered the main ideas in the presentation, and the basic action that took place. The use of verbs is important in this story. On the practice test, the students are asked:

What is the main idea?
How did Emilio’s grandmother come to the birthday party?

Other relevant questions that require the students to make inferences will be included. While showing a segment from “Click & the Kids” which featured children entering a home, and being greeted at the door, with one child introducing his grandmother, Gore points to the verb “introducing” and explains that this is the present (“now” ASL hand shape) and represented by the use of two MVL verb symbols, one which signals the present and another which signals the ongoing action in the verb “introducing” and the use of a gerund.

Pages 112 and 113 of the MVL textbook feature Gerunds and Infinitives. The Gerund character holds a “photograph” and points to the “ing” emblazoned on its front within a red circle. The photograph has a simplified logo representing the action of “swimming.” When explaining a gerund to his class, Gore says that a gerund is like a snapshot. The action caught in a snapshot does not begin or end. It is a moment arrested in time.

On the page opposite the Gerund character appears the Infinitive. This character stands pondering the actions of swimming, running and bicycling shown in “balloons” over its head. Emblazoned on its front is a red circle with the word “to.”
Gore designed the first MVL textbook after he began to work at the ELI in 2002. The first MVL textbook debuted in 2004, a basic pamphlet with cut and paste graphics. Thereafter, Gore regularly produced updated and improved new handmade editions.

The current MVL textbook features a computer enhanced design by Gore’s son, Seth Gore, a graduate of Gallaudet University. When asked why he made his own textbook, Gore said that the design of English textbooks was wrong for his population. For example, many textbooks will feature words in boxes such as shown below to teach grammar:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>were</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 19. How textbooks often demonstrate verb use. Created by author, June 20, 2013.

This arrangement, commonly found in English instructional text books, and others like it, can be confusing to Deaf international students. Gore wanted his handbook to reflex a clear syntax without the use of boxes or lines: he wanted the pronouns and verbs shown in clear association:

She is, He is, It is,

You are, We are, They are,
The ELI has many students from Saudi Arabia or another country where print and graphics look very different from English, and are used very differently on a page. Gore’s students might be unable to negotiate a page that contained English graphics, punctuation, print, and boxed areas of text all placed on the same page in small print as is common in many English texts. Accordingly, Gore designed a textbook with as few distractions as possible so that the students could absorb the lessons and progress by increments toward understanding of a page of print through guided exposure. He found that students made rapid progress if given this kind of introduction.

Once they’d begun to familiarize themselves with English, his students could begin to recognize how boundaries were used on pages, what punctuation marks indicated, and begin to use conventional English grammar texts confidently. In his classroom, Gore presented students with clean, simplified, yet highly relevant English grammar, in a rich context, within a highly visual environment. Gore explains how speech influences sentence structure, punctuation, and verb use, for example, irregular verbs.

When Gore informs his students that irregular verbs were instituted to ease speaking, the students become aware of voice conventions and influences they would otherwise have no notion of, and the lesson is more memorable than if they were merely informed that “some verbs are irregular” (Gore interview 2013).

The lessons contained in the MVL textbook gains depth in the matter of word choice by using color to convey meaning, for example, with adverbs. These graphics are used in several locations and are instantly recognizable as a type of thermostat, a measurement of warming or cooling. Examples are pages 78 through 85 which deal with Adverbs of Degree and feature horizontal or vertical lines with a color gradient from red to blue.
As mentioned earlier, adult students such as those introduced in this report will inevitably have knowledge gained through living. The use of a color gradient is a tool that can speak directly to anyone. For this population, who might have dealt with superlatives and gradations of meaning exclusively in unspoken terms, recognizing shades of meaning in a print format is made visually accessible by employing a basic and widely used form of measurement. Page 85 of the MVL textbook, titled *List of Adverbs of Frequency* employs a vertical color gradient alongside a neutral text box containing adverbs with a percentage advisory. There is also a character icon representing adverbs of frequency which holds up a miniature scale of a line between two points. A partial reconstruction of the graphic found on page 85 of the MVL textbook is provided:
# List of Adverbs of Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Adverb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100% of the time</td>
<td>always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>constantly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>continuously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>almost always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90% of the time</td>
<td>usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>generally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>normally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75% of the time</td>
<td>frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>typically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% of the time</td>
<td>sometimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35% of the time</td>
<td>occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5% of the time</td>
<td>seldom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hardly ever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0% of the time</td>
<td>never</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 20. An example of vertical gradient used in MVL textbook, page 85. Created by author, 7/16/2013.
When the students return from lunch, they begin their afternoon class by joining either Gore or Anderson in an adjoining classroom. Gore distributed a sheet of grammar exercises relating to the morning’s class. Using the MVL symbols, the students work kinesthetically, visually and logically in completing their exercises: they ‘symbolize’ sentences. They can select from three possible learning activities: completing a grammar worksheet, symbolizing sentences using MVL manipulatives or playing a vocabulary game devised by Gore.

These are kept in a small white plastic box with drawers placed on a table in the classroom. In the drawers there are folded papers. On one fold the student encounters the word “under.” Turning this fold over, the student finds “stand.” Another fold reveals “ing.” Finally, the student turns the unit over and sees the completed word: “understanding.” The drawers are labeled: verbs, conjunctions, prepositions. All begin with a base word and then as the paper is unfolded, the word is revealed in altered forms. The drawers are marked: suffixes, prefixes, conjunctions, prepositions, etc.

The reading sessions conducted by Gore and Anderson are done much the same as those done by the deaf mother as described by Dr. Grushkin (1998, 193), and integrated as described by Mather and Clark (2012, 23-24). While the mother held the reading material so her Deaf child could see it, Gore and Anderson use a large white board, and their students sit facing it, their seats arranged in an arc for good sight lines. The students use pagers and IPads at their discretion, often recording Gore’s or Anderson’s lectures/explanations for later replay. Gore points to words, phrases. He makes eye contact with the class constantly. He pauses and asks for feedback. He fingerspells onto
the text displayed on the whiteboard as recommended by researchers (Mather and Clark 2012, 23, Grushkin 1998, 180, 193). He uses “real” reading tasks, he uses ASL, he recognizes the Deaf student as a second language learner, and he uses classroom interaction (Grushkin 1998, 195, 199). Gore will often place an MVL icon over a word, such as a verb, or an MVL adjective phrase indicator, in the text displayed on the white board, then pause, make eye contact with the students, and ask for feedback, by way of reinforcing the learning.

Although this summer class focused on reading rather than English grammar, at the end of the session, when tested, the students showed not only improvement in vocabulary and reading comprehension, but grammar gains too. Asked about their satisfaction with the class, the students are happy to comply. Confidently, they answer questions about their summer study with Gore and Anderson: they are definitely learning English, they assert. The student who reported having taken three previous classes at the ELI without having understood anything, now relates exultantly that his English comprehension has surged. In fact, I saw him in attendance at every class and noted his rapt attention, his participation at every step. He said he wished he could have spent those previous three semesters with Gore and Anderson. His work this summer will propel him to the next class level. Although other classes at the ELI do not utilize MVL, the grounding that this student received under Gore’s instruction will help him continue to advance in English regardless of where or with whom he studies English.
Figure 21. A 2010 class in MVL: students proudly display their classroom reading: a popular DC newsmagazine which featured an article about the trapped Chilean miners. Photograph by author, September 19, 2010.
CONCLUSION

In the 2003 magazine article by Gore and Gillies, titled, “Manipulative Visual Language: a Tool to Help Crack the Code of English,” in a section entitled “Tradition was Not Enough,” the two instructors said that they developed MVL in reaction as described below:

... to traditional ways of teaching English grammar, which almost always entail presentation through text . . . using words to explain words can be a baffling approach if words are themselves the problem! (Gore and Gillies 2003, 75)

In describing words as being the problem, Gore and Gillies attempted to usher their audience into a world that might be unfamiliar to many readers,¹ and introduce, as far as that is possible in a print format, an alternate reality experienced by a significant number of students, as Delgado’s study (Delgado 2001) demonstrates, among all nationalities. While it is tempting, and often prevalent, to see these persons as having defects or deficiencies, and reason that auditory amplification, intensive speech training, and drills in syntax and vocabulary is the correct route, a more effective answer sometimes is that the students possess answers within themselves. They crave, as noted by Seth Gore, the visual/kinesthetic tools offered in the complete classroom instructional format that the MVL tool encompasses because these tools make learning visual (Seth Gore 2012, 7).

Grushkin urged the adoption of a new paradigm or model that “does not place the root of reading problems within the child” but favors a view of the individual as

¹While a senior at Gallaudet University Seth Gore composed a work of fiction titled, “The Buzz Buzz Boom,” published in The Washingtonian magazine, August 18, 2010. This piece of writing is an evocative contemporary look at experiencing the world visually/kinesthetically.
“possessing a language difference that must be accommodated if the child is to achieve reading proficiency” (Grushkin 1998, 182). The MVL tool and its philosophy does this, honoring Deaf students as individuals with a visual language that has its own syntax, phonology, discourse structure and modality from that of English: American Sign Language (Grushkin 1998, 182). A phonological approach (the teaching of reading through sound recognition) is, as Grushkin argues, “a strategy that would be to continue to teach to the students’ weakest points, as deficit paradigm-based education has done” (1998, 190).

In Chapter One I mentioned the many players, many now forgotten, who in past years at Gallaudet created literacy materials for this population. In walking through the halls, I often saw discarded textbooks. Once I picked up a substantial volume created entirely from typewritten pages. Page after page dealt with common faulty sentence constructions. The problem was identified and a solution presented and explained. It was a wonderful document. However, fluency in English was required to use it.

According to Delgado, a significant problem in achieving improved strategies, reforms and curricula for Latino Deaf students is that “educators who work with “different” children . . . cannot see that there are “different” Deaf children among the larger difference. “Different” to them means cannot hear, nothing more, nothing less.” But “. . . the barriers to implementing a successful program for Hispanic Deaf students are the same encountered with regular Hispanic students . . . eclectic cultural attitudes, lock step pedagogy, close-mindedness, the usual resistance to change and a pervasive attitude that “they are Deaf kids, period.” Delgado cites a report titled “No More Excuses,” whose preparers visited innovative successful schools and teaching programs that were, unfortunately, all too rare,
serving a small number of Hispanic students when the programs offered could have easily been replicated and made to serve so many more (Delgado 2001, 13). Likewise, the MVL tool also could be used with so many more students.

About 2002, I had a student whom I will call Ira. Ira was then a freshman at Gallaudet. He was required to take remedial English classes offered at Gallaudet at that time. Ira had graduated from a state school for the deaf in the US with high marks but upon applying for entry to Gallaudet Ira was found to be in need of improved English literacy and was granted admission to Gallaudet on a provisional basis. Ira brought me his English classroom handouts and homework assignments, materials widely used in phonetics based instructional programs. I saw that Ira could not use singular or plural verbs correctly, or conditionals, or verb tenses, among other difficulties; the state school he attended had not taught him these things. The exercises he was given in class were the same as the practice exercises I printed out for him to use from books widely available: sample sentences with a verb or another part of speech missing, and choices for filling in the blanks, some with entertaining cartoon graphics intended to make the material more interesting. Ira and I would go over these until they were all correct, with me pointing out Ira’s errors. Ira was certain he was making progress; he had always enjoyed learning. We worked at composing basic essays: “What I did over summer vacation,” “Why I want to graduate from Gallaudet.” Ira got As in all his classes including English: he completed all homework assignments, turned in corrected English worksheets and had excellent attendance.

Yet, Ira still did not use verb tenses accurately in writing, or gain any insight into the use of singular or plural verbs. When, in a sentence, he needed to select either “was” or
“were,” he would choose one or the other randomly. When the semester ended Ira was devastated to learn he had not met required English competency.

Then I learned about Gore’s MVL and witnessed Gore’s classroom work, I wondered if that would help Ira. I told Ira about Gore’s classes and encouraged him to enroll in the ELI. He did this, and in a short time said to me, his face glowing, “I understand it now!” To demonstrate his newly acquired prowess, he proudly wrote sentences for me, using the correct verb form and showing recognition of singular and plural.

Ira had not learned in English 50 or at his state school, nor did he learn from the conventional widely-distributed classroom handout assignments—but he did learn with Gore’s MVL instruction. His problem was not a lack of motivation or study. Ira cared deeply about improving his English. He did the homework and assignments conscientiously, the same strategy he’d used at his former state school. He thought, just as he probably had when at his state school, that he was doing “fine.” But somehow, neither at his state school nor in the remedial class at Gallaudet, was anyone able to tell/demonstrate to him what his problem was and how he might solve it.

The MVL instructional tool and classroom procedures presented Ira with a forceful combination of various visual markers all pointing to the necessity for arranging language elements in specific ways in order to achieve meaning. The markers appeared in various formats; they could be seen, felt, handled. They provided Ira with new options toward literacy since he could work without pen and paper. They possessed impact, repetitiveness. Ira’s MVL textbook possessed the same visual symbols used during classroom lectures so whenever Ira reviewed a lesson, the coordinated symbols reappeared, tied to his classroom experience. When worksheets were used, these too would feature the accessory symbols,
the colors, the arrangement, plus the ASL features Ira had grown up with and used daily. When performing exercises on his own, in class or at home, Ira had access to the manipulative icons which matched the symbols: the lesson repeats itself in a feedback loop of color and image.

Seth Gore argues as follows:

“. . . in order for the VK learner to be able to process the explicit and linear rules of a written language in his mind, he has to “internalize” the information beforehand, where the information is processed as “images, sounds, movements”. This process . . . requires the VK learners to be introduced to objects that are either visual or tactile that will . . . create a connection between the graphic and the linguistic signifiers . . . These objects . . . are called visual tools, whose purpose is to “represent organized thoughts and concepts graphically.” (Seth Gore 2012, 6)

Although there are several visual learning systems, some of which employ manipulatives, few focus on grammar instruction. Some provide a discussion of the need for visual grammar instruction (but do not provide it) and others that do provide instruction, do not offer a complete classroom approach. Consequentially, the MVL learning tool is currently a stand-alone system or program.

Like many students who study with Gore’s MVL, Ira treasured his MVL textbook, something he’d never done with his conventional English texts. He could find relevant grammar pages handily. I watched Ira use his MVL text. He would scan a page, then nod; he remembered the lesson. What used to be incomprehensible was now clear as day! As Seth Gore notes, “The most salient feature of MVL is probably its abundance, if not joyful excess, of readily available tools, and materials” (2012, 14).

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\(^2\)Seth Gore 2012, 9.
Deaf Connections, a Glasgow, Scotland, organization, completed a research, or pilot, study, with MVL in 2009 with 12 deaf adults. The report, “Deaf Adults and Manipulative Visual Language: A Pilot Study by Deaf Connections and Glasgow Community Learning Strategy Partnership” was prepared by Lucy Cole who led the pilot study.

Figure 22. Lucy Cole of Deaf Connections, Glasgow, Scotland, pictured with three dimensional MVL manipulatives. Lucy Cole’s study demonstrated positive results with deaf adult learners, 2008.

In the Deaf Connections pilot study, twelve participants were given a 30 question assessment both at the outset of the study and at the completion. In the final assessment, ten of the participants were found to have improved their scores. Writing samples done by the participants during the study is provided prior to, and after, instruction with the MVL tool which was conducted over three months. The volunteer tutors providing instruction attended workshops given by Jimmy Gore and Robert Gillies. Due to time constraints, the tutors focused on verb tenses, order of adjectives, and passive voice features of grammar (Lucy Cole 2009, 12). The four writing samples provided in the study demonstrate evident improvement. In “Example 1,” a participant wrote, as a first attempt, “She is sit and sell
some flowers.” After receiving instruction, this participant then wrote on the same subject: “The beautiful woman sitting on low wall and sell some flowers to him.” An analysis of this student’s progress is given:

Although this student is still inconsistent in the use of the verb ‘be’ he has attempted use of ‘-ing’ verb and the final sentence shows correct placement of adjectives and object pronouns. The final sentence shows some development of prepositional phrases “on (a) low wall” and “to him.”

Cole notes that although there existed constraints in the study such as that the participants received MVL instruction only once a week and therefore had to retain the knowledge between sessions unlike what would happen in a classroom where students might get instruction daily, and for a longer period of time, the participants still made significant progress, demonstrating that “These limiting factors make the results of the Glasgow pilot even more remarkable” (Cole 2009, 16).

MVL is currently in use at Sequoia School for the Deaf in Phoenix, AZ, and has been for some years. More recently, MVL instruction was introduced at the Marie H. Katzenbach School for the Deaf in Trenton, NJ.
This school is featured in a current newspaper article in *The Star Ledger* of February 6, 2013, titled “Enrollment at state School for the Deaf has dwindled but services are still vital for some,” (Jessica Calfati 2013) and there are many photographs of the students with their language work on a website named “Marie H. Katzenbach School.” From the writing samples given, it is clear that the children not only use adjectives in their writing, but they also compose grammatically correct sentences. They are being instructed using the Manipulative Visual Language tool instituted at the direction of the new superintendent, Dr. Angel Ramos, who also introduced the MVL learning tool at Sequoia School. This change was made, according to Dr. Ramos, because:

. . . prior to introducing MVL . . . the students hated writing class - they just did not enjoy class due to their difficulty in comprehending grammatical rules. Teachers also had a difficult time trying to teach some grammatical concepts to the students. As a result, students did not put much effort into mastering English grammar.
With the introduction of MVL you could actually see students eyes light up and eager to learn. They were no longer afraid to make errors and readily helped each other. For the first time the students were actually having fun learning how to write correct English sentences. MVL changed the darkness into light for our students - they finally understood the grammatical rules and were able to explain the rules themselves. I give MVL 100% credit for the improved writing skills of our students (Email to author, June 3, 2013).

Photos used with *The Star-Ledger* article of February 6, 2013 feature students proudly holding up slates on which they’ve written sentences using colored markers. All the writing samples are excellent.

Figure 24. Student works at sentence composition using the MVL learning tool under a teacher’s watchful eye at Marie H. Katzenbach School. *The Star-Ledger*, January 25, 2013, Trenton, NJ.
Figure 25. Students studying grammar using MVL tool at Marie H. Katzenbach School. The Star-Ledger, January 25, 2013, Trenton, NJ.

The MVL classroom system provides the students at Marie H. Katzenbach School with a means of visually/kinesthetically monitoring their writing, and continuing their literacy development as it did for the adult participants in the Deaf Connections pilot, or the students at Sequoia in Arizona, or for those who attend Gore’s English class at the ELI on the Gallaudet campus. In one photograph a boy aged fourteen at Marie H. Katzenbach is shown writing on whiteboard using MVL symbols to support or justify his grammar choices while his teacher looks on (Figure 23). Since he is unable to rely on a memory bank of auditory exposure that imprints the English pattern of “she is, he is, they are,” and other repetitive language patterns on a daily basis throughout the fourteen years of his life as is true for his hearing peers, the MVL system provides a visual kinesthetic device that can give him that exposure to language.
Class results achieved at Sequoia School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Phoenix, AZ, which adopted Jimmy Gore’s MVL learning tool under the leadership of Superintendent/Principal Dr. Angel Ramos in 2008-9 are reported in an unpublished article by Dr. Ramos titled, “Manipulative Visual Language: A Fun Tool to Help Deaf & Hard of Hearing Students Master the English Language” included in the index to this report on page 97. Dr. Ramos states that MVL reverses negative reactions to English instruction induced by conventional teaching methods:

. . . the most impressive fact about MVL are [the] comments from students and teachers . . . Students love it. Where once there was dislike, even hatred, of learning English, there is now a genuine desire among the students to learn English. They are no longer afraid, no longer fearful of making mistakes because MVL is FUN (Ramos, 3).

Figure 26. Angel Ramos, PhD, Superintendent Marie H. Katzenbach School, instituted MVL instruction at Marie H. Katzenbach School in 2012. The Star-Ledger, January 25, 2013, Trenton, NJ.

Dr. Ramos’s report provides three tables for grades 1 through 6 with pre-test and post-test English results for the school year 2008-09, the first year that MVL was used at
Sequoia. The graphs show consistent gains, the most pronounced being in the first and second grades.

Former students of the Maryland School for the Deaf in Frederick, Maryland (MSD) sometimes enter the English Language Institute in hopes of achieving the English competence they did not achieve at MSD, and thereby gain entry to Gallaudet University. Like the students who attended Gore and Gillies’ Adult Workshop in Falmouth, Maine, these students also seek a visual/kinesthetic literacy program. Fortunately, these students can find the complete MVL classroom system offered in Gore’s beginning English class at the ELI.

While working on this thesis, I watched the movie “Rise of the Planet of the Apes,” 2011 by Rupert Wyatt. The main character, an ape named Caesar, is raised by humans and taught ‘sign language.’ However, Caesar does very little signing, and when he does, it is crude and hard for the viewer to ‘read.’ What little signing Caesar does is reported via captions in broken English (which may lead the viewer to assume ASL itself is broken English). Throughout the movie, ASL is never used with any real sophistication.

Caesar never fingerspells: perhaps the costume used for this character with its ape-like “hands” makes sophisticated hand shapes difficult. The humans speak when they want to communicate with each other or the ape; they behave towards the ape’s signing like adults tolerating a child’s antics. At the end of the movie, having ingested a serum that increases intelligence, Caesar suddenly begins to speak. At the same time, he begins to hold himself upright, and appears taller and more imposing in weight and stature. The other apes, and humans, are awed. Intelligence, it seems, predisposes individuals towards speech.
By contrast, a simple autobiography provided by Jimmy Gore demonstrates a more genuine ASL experience. Used to inform his students about their teacher, as well as serving as a model for their own autobiographies, Gore’s autobiography echoes experiences the students themselves have had.

Gore began school at age four and a half. He was punished for signing “too much.” The various punishments meted out to him consisted of being sent to the principal’s office, having his hands rapped with a ruler, having his mouth washed out with soap, and being shut in a dark closet. His teachers, he noted, “could not sign.” It wasn’t until he entered high school that he had teachers who signed, or used ASL with greater or lesser fluency.

Five of my sources mentioned negative emotions Deaf students exhibited toward English instruction: Gore and Gillies, Angel Ramos, Tess Nacelewicz, Lucy Cole and Donald Grushkin. It’s not hard to understand the source of these negative emotions or how this might contribute to illiteracy in a population. When teachers demonstrate respect toward their students’ language and culture, and are able to use that language as a teaching tool, and in the case of the focus population described, engage the concepts put forward in this report as regards visual/kinesthetic instruction, students make good progress.

Where many might distance themselves from a source of anguish and frustration, Gore used his experience with adversity to create new learning tools and an exciting, joyous classroom that nourishes successful students. It is a superb demonstration of dedication in teaching as well as humanistic values.

While this thesis was in progress, Jimmy Gore was notified of his acceptance as a Fulbright Scholar. This award came about as a result of an arrangement made by Dr. Daniela Janakova for a group of Deaf students from the Czech Republic to study English at
the ELI in summer of 2008, from May 19 to June 11. Dr. Janakova extended an invitation for Gore to visit Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic in 2010 for two weeks to lecture on the use of MVL in English instruction with Deaf students. Gore was then encouraged to apply for a Fulbright in 2013, and as of this writing is preparing to fly to Prague this fall to spend the fall semester at Charles University in the Czech Republic.
Figure 27 & 28: Jimmy Challis Gore lectures to faculty on the use of MVL at Language Resource Center, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic.
APPENDIX

Testimonials and endorsements of Manipulative Visual Language.

A. Fernando Ayala, 2007 World Deaf Leadership Scholarship

Fernando Ayala from Santiago, Chile, studied with Gore his first year at the English Language Institute at Gallaudet University. In two years, using MVL, Fernando achieved English competency and gained admittance to Gallaudet University. Upon graduation he was awarded the 2007 World Deaf Leadership Scholarship by the Nippon Foundation. In conjunction with other ELI students, Fernando gave a presentation at Gallaudet University in which he credited Gore’s MVL with his academic success. Fernando currently resides in Santiago, Chile where he manages his own vineyard.
Hypothesis (noun): a tentative assumption made in order to draw out and test its logical or empirical consequences (Merriam-Webster).

This paper stipulates the following hypotheses about Manipulative Visual Language (MVL):

Hypothesis #1: MVL helps improve Deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) children’s command of the English language.

Hypothesis #2: MVL makes learning English grammar FUN for D/HH children.

Hypothesis #3: MVL is suitable for D/HH people of ALL ages.

Hypothesis #4: MVL can be used with D/HH of ALL languages.

Hypothesis #5: MVL can be used with hearing people.

If you are satisfied with the typical 17-year old Deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) students reading at the 4th grade level, read no further. But, if you are like me, someone who is disgusted with that statistic and believes the education system can do better, read on.

When I approach educational institutions for D/HH students about using MVL with their students, the most frequent response is “Show me the research that MVL works!” This, despite the fact most of these educational institutions have failed to help D/HH
students master the English language. Well, we can spend the next three to five years setting up a research environment with two controlled groups of students – one group using MVL and another group not using MVL. We could even include a control group using an MVL placebo. But why would we want to do that? Why would we want to risk the educational achievements and future success of Deaf children by denying them MVL just because there is not enough research to prove the value of MVL?

Perhaps the existing limited research will entice you to try MVL and see if it is all it claims to be. Initial results of research with D/HH students at Sequoia School for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (SSDHH) are very promising. MVL was used extensively with elementary school students, from 1st grade to 6th grade. The data accumulated from the first year usage of using MVL is very exciting. Take a look at the three tables below and see the improvement in the elementary students during the 2008-09 school year. Students in each class have been given a letter label (horizontal axis) and their MVL scores are shown (vertical axis):

![Figure 29: MVL Results for 1st & 2nd Grades](image-url)
As the data in the above three tables show, all of the elementary students improved their MVL scores (the MVL score tests knowledge of specific grammatical structures). One
interesting fact we learned was that students who had teachers knowledgeable in the use of MVL did better than those students whose teachers were not. This is why it is imperative that teachers who use MVL also receive extensive training on its usage. The good news is that starting August, 2009, continuous on-line training and support will be provided by the Angel Ramos Foundation on the usage of MVL (www.angelramosfoundation.org/mvl)

Although the data is impressive, the most impressive fact about MVL are the comments from students and teachers about MVL. Students love it. Where once there was dislike, even hatred, of learning English, there is now a genuine desire among the students to learn English. They are no longer afraid, no longer fearful of making mistakes because MVL is *FUN*. It is non-threatening, a ‘game’ that children love to play. Here is what Heather Laine, lead elementary teacher at SSDHH, had to say about MVL:

As a teacher for almost 10 years, I never found a right tool to teach Deaf/HH students to become independent writers until two years ago, our school had MVL training. Once I learned MVL, I fell in love with it and wished I had it a long time ago. With MVL, it's amazing. It helps me and my students understand the rules of English by making it visual using the blocks. MVL does teach my Deaf/HH students how to write simple sentences using MVL tool in English. My 1st and 2nd graders love hands-on activities with the magnet blocks, worksheets, and more. They are able to write many simple sentences.

It is noticeable that our students are motivated to write their own sentences using the blocks. They are able to figure out how they want to express an idea about something than relying on the staff to write sentences for them. In addition to MVL tools, their reading skills have improved.
Right this very moment you are probably asking yourself, “Manipulative Visual Language, MVL, what is that?” Let me give you a short history and description of MVL.

Manipulative Visual Language was created by two educators, Jimmy Gore and Robert Gillies, in 2000. MVL is a portable, manipulative tool comprised of a multitude of colorful blocks of various shapes, representing every grammatical part of the English language. Diagram 1 above shows several of the 3-dimensional MVL blocks. A 2-dimensional set is also available to use on magnetic boards. A program to use MVL blocks on a Smartboard will be available this Fall. A Student Handbook and Teacher’s Handbook are available.

MVL is an outstanding tool for students who are visual learners. It can be used with students of all ages (students at the English Language Institute at Gallaudet University are using it successfully) and with foreign students (students in Spain are using it with a Spanish version of MVL). Even hearing students are using it (hearing students at the Sequoia Family Learning School are using it and this Fall the Washington School District
will be using it with their hearing students). Give it a try with your students – you won’t be disappointed.

[NOTE: If you would like to purchase MVL for your students and be part of this exciting movement, or just want more information on MVL, you can contact Dr. Angel Ramos at: Angel@angelramosfoundation.org.]
C. Dr. Kristin DiPerri

Dr. Kristin Di Perri, an independent literacy consultant, author and trainer of deaf and hard of hearing children, who has followed Gore’s work for years, first at Governor Baxter in Maine, and later with international Deaf student population at the ELI at Gallaudet University, in an email message, February 5, 2013, had this to say about MVL:

Jimmy has that rare genius that sees beyond what is historically or currently available in educational approaches… He is able to identify the main issue - in this case understanding the syntax of English, and figure out a way to make it accessible to children who will not use a phonetic approach to encode/decode. Then he brought meaning to the whole concept by providing each symbol with a story that individuals could identify with and easily understand. The story is plausible and therefore easy to retain. The addition of this heightened memory device (conceptual mnemonic device) allows the child to organize his thinking to reflect what he knows about syntax. Additionally the hierarchy of skills described allows the user to constantly build on an existing foundation of understanding. This is significant in the field of deaf education where most students are exposed to a number of expressive writing scatter skills- disconnected bits of information about English…. (Email to author, February 4, 2013).
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