

***USTED ES HARAGÁN PERO VOS SOS LAZY: INITIALIZATION IN HONDURAN SIGN  
LANGUAGE***

by

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**SIGN LANGUAGE**

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Initialization, an outcome of language contact common to signed languages, has become a global phenomenon. I define initialization as the incorporation of the orthography of a word of a dominant spoken language via the cultural construct of a manual orthography into signs with a semantic correspondence to that word. Despite its being very common within (relatively) well-documented sign languages such as American Sign Language (Padden & Brentari, 2001), Australian Sign Language (Schembri & Johnston, 2007) and Québec Sign Language (Machabée, 1995), the literature on the subject is very small. To assist in expanding the nascent fields of sociolinguistics and anthropology of Deaf communities, ethnographic research involving primarily corpus building, interviews and participant observation was performed within the Deaf community of central Honduras to offer preliminary insights into how the personal and group identities of the Honduran Deaf are negotiated through linguistic interactions. Variable initialization is quite a salient marker because of its use in the diverging sociolects of Deaf Honduras. This poses the questions: what instances of variable initialization exist in the community; how are these variable forms manipulated to construct identities; how does variant initialization mark social differentiation in the community? How are linguistic variation and social differentiation intertwined? Social relationships and individual identity are studied by means of this linguistic marker as language is used to build social meaning. In particular, I argue

that linguistic variation is polarizing as variant initialization is used to both reflect and justify the social division of the community into central and peripheral.

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## **PREFACE**

I would like to thank first and foremost the Deaf community of central Honduras who graciously tolerated my intrusion and allowed my fieldwork to be such a rewarding and enjoyable experience.

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This study has been motivated by the scarcity of literature on the Latin American Deaf. Some Latin sign languages such as Argentine Sign Language (e.g. Behares & Massone, 1996), Nicaraguan Sign Language (e.g. Shepard-Kegl, 2009; Senghas, 2003) and Meemul Tz'ij (Mayan Sign Language, e.g. Fox Tree, 2009) have received attention from the linguistic community. In addition, the Summer Institute of Language has worked admirably to document the Deaf communities of the Americas (for examples, see Parks & Parks, 2008, 2010a, 2010b; Parks, 2011; Parks, Epley & Parks, 2011; Parks, Williams & Parks, 2011; Williams, 2010) most sign languages of the region have been ignored. Furthermore, much of the research, especially regarding Nicaraguan Sign Language, has been focused on the structure of the language. This work is essential, yet, it is important to also begin engaging these communities with sociolinguistic theory. Nonaka (2004) argues for the study of undocumented sign languages because of the possibility (and probability) of new information arises from these varieties. Her own study of a minority language of Thailand reveals formerly unattested phonological contrasts and challenges the supposedly universal mapping of language onto color (Nonaka, 2004). It is impossible to predict what information will emerge from these minority languages, yet it is worth trying (according to Nonaka). This study is founded on the suspicion that investigating the sociolinguistics of these under-documented communities will similarly be enriching for the discipline. It is possible that previously un-recognized sociolinguistic processes are at work

among the Deaf in Honduras; however, more realistically, the case at least provides an avenue to test key concepts of sociolinguistic theory in a yet unexplored field. If these tenets surface in such a radically different environment (much of sociolinguistics deals with the “speech community” that is the “English” speaking world), then those ideas are likely more universal than the original studies could suggest. The Deaf communities of Honduras provide a perfect opportunity to test sociolinguistics with new data while documenting currently overlooked linguistic cultures.

To accomplish this, ethnographic fieldwork was performed in the central mountainous region of Honduras (defined as the departments of Comayagua and Siguatepeque) with the Deaf communities there. The goal was to pinpoint crucial loci of the social practice of linguistic variation in these communities. Because sociolinguistic activity seems to become very evident along the margins of social communities (Eckert, 2000), this study focused on discovering sites of linguistic and social differentiation. One particular linguistic phenomenon came to the foreground almost immediately: initialization. Thus, this study investigates the particular role of variant initialization in the construction of personal and group identity within the Deaf communities of central Honduras.

## 2.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With this in mind, the following research questions serve to guide the study. In particular, I am interested in how linguistic form is used and manipulated to reflect, construct and re-construct social processes. I want to know how the personal and group identities of the Honduran Deaf are negotiated through linguistic interaction in Honduran Sign Language (or LESH0, the popular name derived from the Spanish title *Lengua de señas hondureñas*)<sup>1</sup>. When multiple linguistic forms for the same or similar concepts circulate, they create variants. Speakers are free to choose from among the variable forms available without affecting the reference of the statement; however, it is exactly these variants that are capitalized upon to for the making of social meaning via linguistic production (Eckert, 2000). This leads to the question:

*What kinds of variable forms exist in the community? How are these variable forms manipulated to construct identities?*

Variable forms are of particular interest because a decision must be made by the speaker for each speech act regarding which one to use as motivated by, responding to and (re)constructing the social situation. As it is impossible to not make a decision (though the

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<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the term LESH0 (the common name for *Lengua de señas hondureñas*) is used in an almost metaphorical sense. Instead of referring to a structurally homogenous set of idiolects, the term as used in this paper refers to a community of practice as expressed through linguistic output. Especially given the structural similarities to ASL, attempting to define what exactly is LESH0 and what is ASL on structural grounds alone is not germane to the purposes of this study. Instead, LESH0 will be used to denote common processes which are engaged in by the Deaf Honduran communities of practice. To paraphrase Saussure (1916[1966]), one could say that LESH0 is a process, not a substance.

decisions may change as new situations arise or the individual desires to construct his/her personal or group persona differently), these variant forms, in a sense, force the individual to apply sociolinguistic reasoning to language, thus publicizing it. However, this question is far too broad. It is impossible to talk about all variation within the communities and its use for the creation of social significance. Rather, it is necessary to select a subset of variant forms which seem particularly salient and socially marked. After a very short period of “feeling around” the sociolinguistics of Deaf Honduras, initialization becomes a very salient process with variable forms subject to many ideological processes, ideal for investigating the relationship between the linguistic and social spheres. This allows a more manageable research question:

*What kinds of variant initialization exist in the community? How is initialization manipulated to construct identities?*

Because variation is strongly implicated in the construction and mapping of social identities, it seems likely that variant initialization will be implicated in the differentiation of the social structures of the community. In Eckert’s (2000) study of a Detroit high school, the vocalic variables she investigated seemed to delineate the social structure of the high school, which was dominated by polar differences between the “jocks” and the “burnouts.” Thus, this study will attempt to discover what poles of social identity (if any) exist within the community and how the differentiation between these poles is achieved through linguistic practice. This can be rephrased as a research question.

*How does variant initialization mark social differentiation in the community?*

*How are linguistic variation and social differentiation intertwined?*

Variant initialization is likely to map out processes of social differentiation as individuals in the community construct their personal identities as well as group identities and distinctions. I



will argue that variant initialization marks and helps to construct and perpetuate the process of the group's polarization into the division which I term the central versus the peripheral Deaf. In Section 3, the relevant literature regarding initialization, Latin American Deaf communities and sociolinguistic theory will be reviewed. Section 4 discusses some of the methodological considerations for this study. Section 5 introduces the variants circulating in the community, the social contexts in which these variants are found, the sociolects present in the community, and finally how this variation and differentiation is both expressed in ideology and in practice.

### **3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **3.1 INITIALIZATION**

I define initialization as the incorporation of the orthography of a word of a dominant spoken language via the cultural construct of a manual orthography into signs with a semantic correspondence to that word. For example, the sign \*F\*AMILY in ASL incorporates the /F/ handshape. In LESHÖ, the sign for the language itself incorporates both the /L/ and /H/ handshapes. Initialization is inexorably intertwined with the manual representations of the orthographies of spoken languages, as without a manual representation, there can be no contact between the sign and the orthography. Thus, it is essential to discuss the phenomenon of manual alphabets and other manual representations as a prelude to discussing initialization.

##### **3.1.1 Manual representations of orthographies**

While the most famous manual representation of an orthography is the French Sign Language family grouping of manual alphabets, many different systems of manual representation exist, including, but not limited to: the BANZSL two-handed manual alphabet (Schembri & Johnston, 2007), Taiwanese Sign Language characters signs (Ann, 1998), etc... While it is not known exactly how these manual representations of orthographies are developed, they are at least not totally artificial systems – they seem to be linguistically well-integrated (Padden &

Clark Gunsauls, 2003; Duarte, 2010). An excellent example is the representation of the abugida of Amharic. An abugida is a median point between a syllabary, where the syllables of the language are represented by arbitrary characters, and an alphabet, where the individual segments are represented by arbitrary characters, as there is a relationship between the form of the abugida and its component parts, though writing a segment in isolation is, to all extents and purposes, impossible. Ethiopian Sign Language uses a complex morphological processes native to the language (Duarte, 2010). Duarte (2010) argues that the manual abugida is not foreign to the linguistic system. If fingerspelling systems were truly some artificial system invented by hearing people and forced on the Deaf<sup>2</sup>, then one should not expect it to have such sign morphology (Duarte, 2010). Padden and Clark Gunsauls discuss the use of fingerspelling in ASL to do more than simply represent English. In particular, they argue that specific signification processes allow the Deaf community to use fingerspelling productively to create different sets of the lexicon with different sociolinguistic connotations (Padden & Clark Gunsauls, 2003). Thus, fingerspelling systems should be deemed a contact phenomenon when a Deaf community encounters a spoken orthography, should sufficient motivation exist for the Deaf to interact with the orthography. However, this is not proof that other phenomena related to fingerspelling systems are natural to Deaf communities and their sign languages. Two very polemic issues in Western Deaf communities are fingerspelling (as a linguistic act and not a system) and initialization. Fingerspelling as a linguistic output will not be taken into account, as it is not very common in Honduran Sign Language (LESHO). Initialization has been less studied and is very common in LESHO, and due to the many initialized variants in the lexicon, is an ideal process to focus on while looking at the negotiation of identity in contact situations.

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<sup>2</sup> Though this does not exclude the possibility of the system to oppress the Deaf, as has been seen in many cases in Deaf history.

### 3.1.2 Definition of initialization

Up to this point, the linguistic phenomenon of initialization – the subject of this paper – has been mentioned many times without providing any detailed definition. Unfortunately, none of the definitions in the literature are satisfactory because they focus almost exclusively on the first letters in the written word. Data from LESH0, as well as LSQ and ASL, demonstrates this to be a generalization which is not always true. Thus, I have found it necessary to develop a new set of criteria to define the phenomenon which builds on past studies but which can include those signs rejected by out dated definitions. In order for potential initialization to be identified, the following requirements must be satisfied. In other words, I define initialization as signs demonstrating all of these properties.

**Table 1. Requirements to identify potential initialization**

1.	The sign language has a manual representation of a dominant language orthography
2.	A sign shares semantics with a word of the dominant language
3.	The phonology of the sign corresponds with some part of the orthography of the semantically corresponding word via the manual representation of said orthography

However, even this attempt at creating a list of features which define the phenomenon is miserably inadequate. For instance, it is unclear how exact the semantic correspondence must be to trigger or allow initialization, especially in the case of sign families. Sign families are groups of semantically corresponding signs which differ only in handshape (Machabée, 1995). For example, ASL has a sign family which includes but is not limited to: \*M\*ATH, \*A\*LGEBRA,

\*S\*TATISTICS, \*C\*ALCULUS, \*G\*RADE, etc...<sup>3</sup> This is problematic because it appears that many initialized signs derive from a previously initialized sign which it then draws upon a semantically related but not identical word. In LESHQ, the ASL sign PREACH seems to have been borrowed and re-initialized to \*P\*REDICAR „to preach“, which then was used to create the sign \*E\*VANGELIZAR „to evangelize“, which is usually signed in ASL as GO-AROUND PREACH. Thus the entire sign family is based on the ASL sign PREACH, but „evangelize“ has slightly different semantic content. Furthermore, there are many cases which make writing a rule for which parts of the orthography to which a sign can initialize is quite problematic. For example, Padden and Brentari (2001) write a rule to derive signs which incorporate both the first and last letter, but then include the sign \*V\*IET\*N\*AM in their data set. How does one explain the ability of initialization to result in such variable outcomes? However, resolving all of the potential issues regarding initialization as a process is far beyond the reaches of this study, and is a rich area of future work. For the present time, it is necessary to accept the above criteria defining the phenomena as it provides a useful (but not unproblematic) heuristic for focusing the research.

### 3.1.3 Initialization in Québec Sign Language

One of the very first studies regarding initialization is the analysis of the linguistic integration and sociolinguistic status of initialized signs in Québec Sign Language (LSQ) by Dominique Machabée (1995). It appears that since this excellent analysis of the phenomenon, the

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<sup>3</sup> Notes on transcriptions: The norms for transcriptions here are mostly consistent with those used by Machabée (1995). Signs are glossed in all CAPS, with semantic glosses in „single quotation marks“ where necessary. Handshapes are enclosed between forward slashes like the /A/ handshape. Initialized signs are also written in caps, with the incorporated letters of the orthography set apart by being enclosed with \*stars\*.

literature has been hesitant to pick the subject up again. As this study is both foundational and singular, it is crucial to describe Machabée’s work and conclusions here in considerable detail. The present study will frequently refer back the data from LSQ and Machabée’s analysis.

The most important innovation of the LSQ study is the descriptive division between three classes of initialization or initialized signs. These classes will be succinctly described here, and the contact linguistic analysis presented by Machabée will then also be briefly elaborated. Class 1 and class 3 signs are particularly distinctive, and as such will be discussed before class 2. Class 1 signs, which intuitively give the impression of being related to fingerspelling, can be identified by their conspicuous combination of two traits:

**Table 2. Required features of class 1 signs**

1.	Articulated in the fingerspelling or neutral spaces
2.	An absence of path movement

The fingerspelling space is the small area just to the side and somewhat in front of the shoulder on the dominant hand side of the signer where fingerspelling is usually produced. Non-fingerspelled signs are not commonly articulated in this area. The neural space is an area located in front of the upper chest of the signer without contact with either the non-dominant hand or the chest itself. Path movement is any movement which involves more articulation than just the upper arm and wrist. Thus, small circulating motions of the upper arm are not considered path movement (such as the signs for the days of the week in both ASL and LESHQ). Path movement involves more motion, even if the path is circular, such as in the sign GUSTAR (see § 8.0 – Appendix:Figures).

Class 2 signs are either articulated outside of the fingerspelling or neutral spaces or exhibit path movement or both. In a sense, class 2 is defined negatively as signs which are not class 1. This is because very few non-initialized signs in LSQ demonstrate class 1 features. The vast majority of non-initialized signs fit into class 2. This strongly suggests that class 1 signs are relatively more marked with regards to the rest of the language code than are class 2 signs. Machabée points out that class 1 is best analyzed as borrowing and code-switching, and initialized class 2 signs as hybrid creations<sup>4</sup>. A hybrid creation occurs when certain material is borrowed into the language, but is fitted into native paradigms of word construction. This demonstrates a less significant incorporation of foreign material into the linguistic act than do borrowing or code-switching, where relatively more foreign lexical and particularly grammatical material is maintained.

Padden and Brentari (2001) also divide signs which incorporate the manual alphabet but are not fully fingerspelled into “initialized” signs and “abbreviated signs.” They separate these signs using the litmus test of the number of handshapes. Signs incorporating only one manual letter are considered initialized, and those with two handshapes are considered abbreviated. Machabée’s division is much more elegant as it separates initialized signs by contact phenomenon and not by the number of handshape morphemes utilized in the sign. Thus, for the study at hand, class 1 and class 2 will be utilized as analytic tools and the “initialization” versus “abbreviation” distinction will not be discussed.

Class 3 signs are also quite particular. They are produced by sequencing a handshape in the fingerspelling space with an LSQ sign following. For example, a sign for

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<sup>4</sup> Machabée cites Haugen’s (1950) term *hybrid creation* as defined as “loan morphemes substituted into native models (Machabée, 1995, p. 58).” She also uses his example of *liusnooka* „to pray” which incorporates the Spanish term *Dios* „God” into Yaqui phonological morphological patterns to create a new lexeme.

\*E\*XPLOITATION was produced by signing /E/ in the fingerspelling space followed by the sign TO-TAKE-ADVANTAGE-OF (Machabée, 1995, p. 44), which does not use the /E/ handshape. These signs are not frequently observed, but their inclusion in dictionaries suggests that there are at least a few established, stable class 3 signs (Machabée, 1995). The second part of the sign may or may not be initialized, and, in the case of initialization, the added handshape is redundant. However, only one sign exhibits this redundancy. \*I\*NTERNATIONAL is already an initialized sign in LSQ (and is identical to both the ASL and LESHQ signs), but one informant signed an additional /I/ in the fingerspelling space before articulating the initialized sign. There is indication that this sign may have been “made up” on the spot<sup>5</sup>. Due to the unique characteristics of this class, they were not discussed in depth in Machabée’s article. There appear to be class 3 signs in Honduran Sign Language as well (though with significant differences), and so this categorization will be retained throughout the current study.

### **Table 3. Definitions of class categories**

#### **Class 1**

1.	Articulated in the fingerspelling or neutral spaces <u>AND</u>
2.	An absence of path movement

#### **Class 2**

1.	Articulated outside the fingerspelling or neutral spaces <u>AND/OR</u>
2.	The presence of path movement

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<sup>5</sup> To illustrate this point, an example directly from the Machabée (1995) text is quite revealing. The sign was meant to convey the semantic content of *écologie* ‘ecology’ and was produced by signing the E in the fingerspelling space, followed by the sign ÉCOLE ‘school’ and then finishes by fingerspelling L-O-G-I-E. This appears to be an outlier in Machabée’s corpus, much as do most of the class 3 signs.



### **Class 3**

1.	Segment articulated in the fingerspelling or neutral spaces AND without path movement (class 1 sign) <b><u>AND</u></b>
2.	Segment articulated outside the fingerspelling or neutral spaces AND/OR with path movement

These class differences are very useful heuristics for the study at hand, because they allow us to rapidly distinguish between levels of contact. Class 2 signs can be thought of as hybrid creations, which demonstrate less contact influence than do class 1 and class 3 signs which seem to be borrowing and/or code-switching. This can be used in the analysis of linguistic interactions to attempt to pinpoint the relative salience/foreignness of specific signs. Thus, because of its structural properties, a class 1 sign seems to be further away from the core of the language's grammar and may be more salient and perhaps socially meaningful. Now that initialization has been discussed, it is necessary to narrow the focus to initialization within a cultural context more similar to that of Honduras. Thus, it is imperative to discuss initialization in Latin America.

#### **3.1.4 Initialization in Latin America**

##### **3.1.4.1 Initialization in Mexican Sign Language (LSM)**

Initialization is nothing new to Latin American sign languages. It has been found to be extensively utilized by other sign languages of the region such as Mexican Sign Language (LSM, Faurot et al., 1999) and Dominican Sign Language (LSD, Gerner de García, 2000, 2004). Faurot, Dellinger, Eatough and Parkhurst (1999) performed a pilot study as part of their article regarding

LSM a 100 sign corpus and calculated the percentage of possibly initialized signs. In ASL, 12% were initialized, whereas in LSM, 27% were. If the corpus was representative of both languages, Mexican signs are more than twice as likely to be initialized compared to their ASL counterparts. Furthermore, they go on to mention that the process is not regarded with the same derision that it is in ASL. The authors attribute this difference in the language ideologies towards initialization to the phenomenon's connections with contact signing within the American Deaf community and comparative unimportance of contact signing<sup>6</sup> in Mexico (Faurot et. al., 1999). The much greater frequency of such signs suggests that the process is less marked in LSM (see Mufwene, 2008 for a discussion of markedness). The overarching pattern seems to be that initialization is incredibly common in Latin American sign languages, whether it be something endemic to the region (Faurot et. al., 1999) or a result of contact with foreign sign languages, specifically ASL (Gerner de García, 1990). These potential explanations for the frequency in Honduran Sign Language will be kept in mind throughout the duration of this study to allow the empirical field evidence to inform the evaluation of these suggestions.

#### **3.1.4.2 Initialization in Dominican Sign Language (LSD)**

Initialization in Dominican Sign Language<sup>7</sup> looks very similar to data from Honduras and gives clues as to what might be occurring in LESH0. An important observation made by Gerner de García (1990) is the use of initialization to re-lexify ASL signs and nativize them into LSD. For example, there exists a sign for \*P\*ADRES „parents“ which is identical to the ASL sign except that the handshake is now a /P/. There is an identical sign in LESH0 which means the

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<sup>6</sup> Rutherford (1993) mentions contact signing as a code which mixes ASL and English, generally with substantial English influence on the syntax but also on the lexicon.

<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that this data is now over two decades old.

same. Furthermore, many signs initialized to English in ASL have become re-initialized to Spanish. The days of the week also have adopted similar changes. For example, \*L\*UNES „Monday“, \*M\*IÉRCOLES „Wednesday“,<sup>8</sup> \*J\*UEVES „Thursday“ and \*V\*IÉRNES „Friday“ have changed to /L/, /M/, /J/ and /V/ handshapes respectively (from the ASL /M/, /W/, /H/ and /F/). Many signs, such as \*T\*ÍA „aunt“ are identical to the ASL sign but with just a change in handshape in both LSD and LESH. This suggests that the situation in Honduras at least roughly parallels the Dominican Deaf community. In particular, the process of re-initialization of already initialized ASL signs is of interest. She lists the following forms as demonstrating this phenomenon.

**Table 4. Re-initialization in LSD**

English	Spanish	ASL handshape	LSD handshape
Water	Agua	/W/	/W/
Lazy	Haragán	/L/	/L/
Ready	Listo	/R/	/R/
World	Mundo	/W/	/M/
Live	Vivir	/L/ or /A/*	/L/ or /V/
Church	Iglesia	/C/	/C/ or /I/

\*A/ not in Gerner de García's table

The signs VIVIR and IGLESIA are beginning to become re-initialized. The older form of the sign corresponds with the English orthography, and variant signs alluding to the Spanish

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<sup>8</sup> This sign has can be produced with both the /M/ and the /W/ handshapes in LSD. Only the /M/ is used in LESH. MARTÉS, so as not to be homophonous with \*M\*IÉRCOLES uses the /3/ handshape.

orthography are now in circulation. This creates an interesting dilemma as the few signs which appear to be autochthonous to the island are usually viewed as backward and rarely observed in daily conversation. This is particularly interesting as the Dominican community, according to Gerner de García, looks to the ASL community as a model. Furthermore, there are many instances of non-ASL derived signs being rejected in favor of the “correct” ASL-like sign. There is a notable ambivalence here, as US influence is both accepted and rejected in the negotiation of linguistic form in social practice. This ambivalence is crucial and reveals that simply rejection of ASL influence not exactly the whole story. Instead, there seems to be an ambivalent appropriation of linguistic material. Signs that demonstrate influences from English are having those influences erased via substituting Spanish orthographical information; however, signs which are not derived from ASL are phasing out. This data is somewhat dated and revisiting the Dominican Deaf community would likely greatly augment understanding of sociolinguistic processes diachronically. However, the similarities between initialization in LSD two decades ago and the current situation in Honduras are too striking to be ignored and allow more informed hypotheses.

### **3.2 SOCIOLOGICALS OF DEAF COMMUNITIES**

Very little work had been done on the sociolinguistics of most of Deaf Latin America until 2008<sup>9</sup>. The Summer Institute of Language (SIL) recently conducted four studies regarding

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<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that some studies which are not directly relevant to the study at hand have also been conducted, such as Senghas, 2003 and Behares & Massone, 1996.

the Deaf communities of Guatemala (Parks & Parks, 2008), Peru (Parks & Parks, 2010), the Dominican Republic (Williams & Parks, 2010) and finally Honduras (Williams, 2010). However, these studies were very brief and involved making rapid observations throughout the country. This method certainly has its benefits and their work documenting the Deaf of the Americas is critical; however, it only scratches the surface of an otherwise unexplored field. This study focuses on a more ethnographic methodology.

### **3.2.1 Deaf identities**

A critical starting point for this study is establishing the validity of Deaf communities as a legitimate site for ethnographic study. Traditionally, Deaf culture has been thought of in terms of what is commonly called the “medical model”, or rather, the concept of “deafness” as simply a disability and problem which needs to be remedied. Of late, Deaf communities throughout the world have made great strides in obtaining societal recognition of their flourishing minority cultures. A Deaf identity is just as valid of a construction of identity as any ethnic identity (Baker, 1999). Of course, this in no way suggests that there is one, homogenous Deaf culture and/or Deaf identity. Deaf cultures are at liberty to construct themselves in a variety of ways (Padden, 1980). While not all locations with large populations of deaf persons necessarily develop the concept of Deaf culture – what Washabaugh (1981) called an isolated Deaf community such as the Yucatec Mayan (Johnson, 1994), Providencia Island (Washabaugh, 1979) and Grand Cayman Island (Washabaugh, 1981) Deaf communities.<sup>10</sup> However, Williams (2010) documents a metacultural awareness of Deaf identity in the LESH community, and so

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<sup>10</sup> These communities of deaf persons seem to lack metacultural awareness.

discourses surrounding the negotiation of the social identity are likely to be found within the community.

### **3.2.2 The role of language**

Language is of particular importance to the construction of ethnicity in the case of Deaf communities (Baker, 1999). As a linguistic minority with little no access to the majority language, this makes intuitive sense. In the case of the Latin American Deaf, this is compounded by the iconization of Spanish as being essentially synonymous with Latino identity, as evidenced by the famous poem *Oda a Roosevelt* (Darío, 1907). Thus while it is possible to express ethnic identity without competency in the heritage language, such as in the case of the Navajo and Puebla youth, this can be a complex and difficult matter (Lee, 2009). This could very potentially apply to the Honduran Deaf who are separated from what seems to one the strongest and most available icons of Latin American cultures (Rajagopalan, 2005). While in regions with heavily oralist tendencies and the resources to support such a system (Behares & Massone, 1996) there may be the possibility to access the language which is considered iconic of the ethnic identities. But for most Deaf communities this is simply not an option, especially in countries such as Honduras and Nicaragua where auditory technology has yet to truly come into force (Baker 1999). This is particularly problematic in the case of the Latin American Deaf, as so much Pan-Latin identity seems to revolve around the dominant spoken languages of Latin American varieties of Spanish and Portuguese (Rajagopalan, 2005). The sparse literature on the subject of Deaf Latin America is unanimous that there is some sort of cultural borrowing occurring from hearing Latin American language ideology. Something which seems to be ubiquitous, as least in Spanish speaking countries, is the identification of the native sign language as “Spanish sign”

and non-Latin sign varieties as “English sign” or even simply “English” (Parks & Parks, 2008, 2010; Williams & Parks, 2010; Williams, 2010; Cahill, 2010, 2011). It is clear that cultural constructions of identity are occurring in Deaf Latin America, and they are certainly problematic and open for negotiation through linguistic practice.

Contact with ASL has occurred in almost every Latin American Deaf community (with the probable exception of isolated Deaf communities) and causes one of the two principle sites of contact, conflict and cultural semiosis in these communities. There is frequently an ambivalent attitude towards ASL: it is both respected due to the advances that the ASL community has achieved in propagating Deaf culture but simultaneously rejected as it reaches deeper and deeper into the native community (Parks & Parks, 2008, 2010; Williams & Parks, 2010; Williams, 2010; Cahill, 2011a, 2011b). Contact with ASL is quite frequent given the sheer quantity of missionaries and other types of visitors from the United States and Canada and the relative availability of ASL materials (Parks & Parks, 2008, 2010; Williams & Parks, 2010; Williams, 2010; Cahill, 2011a, 2011b). Many of these sign languages do not have any sort of documentation and, if they do, then this was only very recently completed. Due to this, it seems that restructuring of the local sign variety to be more like ASL is quite common. In the case of LESHQ, the restructuring has brought the language so close to ASL that they could perhaps be classified as members of the same dialect complex. The substrate of LESHQ appears to be LSM, given the many shared vocabulary items and other features with no record or memory of contact. LSM is already closely related to ASL (Faurot et al., 1999), and so it is not surprising that given this typological similarity and the intensity of contact, that LESHQ should look very similar to ASL. The majority of the lexicon is shared with ASL and ASL signers find texts in LESHQ collected for this study to be very easy to understand. There are syntactic differences such as

reduced use of “wh-” questions and an increased used and slightly different marking of “rhetorical questions,” but ASL signers do not seem to have difficulty getting around these linguistic differences.<sup>11</sup> Though there is substantial evidence to suggest that sign languages look more similar even across typological divides, perhaps due to iconicity (Currie et al., 2002), this in no way diminishes the typological and contact influences on the convergence of ASL and LESH0. Regardless, their language is central to their community, and so the LESH0 speakers must wrestle with and construct their identity like any ethnic group and assert their uniqueness through their language.

The situation of the Honduran Deaf becomes even more complicated as they wish to construct an identity which is both Deaf and Latin, but their language does not distinguish them from other groups (like ASL users) particularly clearly on structural grounds alone. It seems that the easiest way to Latinize their language is through borrowing from Spanish. However, too much influence from Spanish could turn LESH0 into something similar to Manually Coded Spanish, thus risking the Deaf aspect of their identity by highly altering a visual modality language. This point was as far as the literature appeared to reach before this study was conducted. One idea suggested that initialization is a process consciously applied to signs borrowed from ASL to mark them as Latino. This may be true, but it seems reductive as the negotiation of social identity through linguistic practice is usually complex and certainly is not a one way street. The following data collected from the LESH0 community reveal that in fact this very process, rather than unifying the community, is actually causing linguistic divergence and the creation of sociolinguistic poles of behavior.

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<sup>11</sup> At least according to the renowned signer who I asked to review tapes of LESH0 performances.



### 3.3 SOCIOLINGUISTIC THEORY

It is necessary to begin with relevant linguistic literature in order to stake out a theoretical approach to the issues at hand. In particular, this study attempts to build off of and reconcile two great sociolinguists whose work is not generally utilized side by side, namely Salikoko Mufwene (2008) and Penelope Eckert (2000). Despite the vast differences in approaches, there are common threads found in both Mufwene and Eckert's theorizing which should be further pursued in linguistics as a whole, but specifically within sociolinguistics.

#### 3.3.1 Language Evolution: Contact, Competition and Change

Salikoko Mufwene is most famous for his mapping of language change onto biological models of evolution, though obviously maintaining certain distinctions between biological and linguistic materials. His most recent book, *Language Evolution: Contact, Competition and Change* (2008), proposes a model whereas the spread and selection of linguistic units most closely replicates the ecological life of viral species. Language ecology, which Mufwene attributes primarily to "socio-economic" forces shapes the selection, spread and disappearance of linguistic units, much like ecological pressures shape the changes in viral activity. However, Mufwene himself notes that the exact functioning of this socio-economic language ecology is not well understood, and that significant research must be done to explain how the influence of ecology actually works.

Mufwene makes two very important distinctions between his approach and other related theorists revolving around the agency of the speaker. First, he directly rejects the viewpoint espoused in Thomason (2001) and Thomason and Kaufman (1988) which proposes that language

change can be both externally and internally motivated, and that it is up to the linguist to classify language changes into these two types. Rather, Mufwene's argument is that all language change occurs as the individual speaker adapts and changes his/her linguistic output responding to the surrounding language ecology, which will be referred to from now on as the sociolinguistic ecology. While the individual speaker by no means needs to have any conscious say in the change, it is still his/her agency which is the locus of a potential change in the community linguistic practices. Language change then occurs as certain linguistic units successfully spread throughout a population. Thus, especially in sociolinguistics, it is impossible to invoke the structures of the language(s) themselves as motivations for sociolinguistic contact, competition and selection; rather, it is necessary to look at the linguistic units themselves as utilized by the individual speaker in response to the sociolinguistic ecology to truly understand the forces affecting and being affected by linguistic interaction.

While keeping in mind the agency of the individual, it is important to note that this does not suggest that the speaker is somehow completely autonomous. Rather, the agency of the speaker is always oriented towards other speakers. There is a crucial inter-individuality of this selection process. While many studies in sociolinguistics have been interested in inter-group variation, relatively few are interested in inter-individual variation within a group. Mufwene (2008) argues that this impoverishes the field and further hypothesis regarding all current linguistic variation, including language typology, that: "... inter-individual variation is where the answer may lie (p. 92)..."

As seen here, Mufwene's (2001, 2008) linguistic theory is quite rich and allows this study to focus on groups of linguistic units and how they are used by individuals in social contexts within LESH. This provides the research questions with specific methods of analyzing the data

which are very germane. Yet, this perspective can be strengthened by including the work of a radically different but similarly rich theoretical perspective provided by Eckert in her work *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice* (2000).

### **3.3.2 Linguistic Variation as Social Practice**

While Penelope Eckert (2000) is concerned with similar questions, she in no way builds directly off Mufwene's theory.<sup>12</sup> Eckert focuses on explaining linguistic variation on a large scale through micro-level, local interactions. Like Mufwene, Eckert emphasizes the agency of the speaker. She explicitly challenges Labov's concept of below consciousness changes, and indirectly also challenges the internally motivated change assumptions of Thomason (2001): "Innovation does not come in through accident and inattention (Eckert, 2000 p. 216)." For Eckert, the locus of linguistic change is the individual and his/her attempts to construct personal identity within social contexts via linguistic variation and innovation. Thus, the speaker is an agent, constructing his/her person in an active (though probably not pre-meditated) manner. Further, the linguistic output does not simply reflect a personal and/or social identity; rather, all communicative acts help to construct the personae, frequently updating and tweaking an older conception of self.

However, like Mufwene, the speaker is not conceived as a completely autonomous actor. Instead, the speaker's actions and more specifically choices must be taken into account within the context of communities of practice. Communities of practice are the basic unit of social organization for Eckert's theory as they unite persons around common activities through which

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<sup>12</sup> Mufwene is not cited at all in the book and his seminal works on his biologically-inspired model were published after Eckert's work, so this is to be expected

social semiosis is negotiated. The individuals actions must be analyzed in light of communities of practice, both ones to which the speaker belongs and ones with which the speaker has contact. An excellent (though non-linguistic) example is given by Eckert in the case of two girls who belong to one community of practice but slightly alter their garb to also imitate and incorporate a trait of a different community of practice which they also admired. Without this context, the girls' alternation of their clothing means nothing. Only situated with regards to the local communities of practice can one appropriately appreciate the semiosis of their actions – the constructions of their personae through social interaction. The individual alone cannot demonstrate meaningful construction of identity; rather, this can only occur through the agency of the speaker in contact with other speakers, who themselves are also agents. This directly parallels Mufwene's emphasis on the inter-individuality of sociolinguistic processes. Both are highly concerned with the agency of the speaker, but they both qualify this agency, and by qualifying, enhance this argument by insisting that this individual agency is inter-individual.

Particularly important to the social construction of personae and group identity are linguistic variables. Certain linguistic features tend to become loci, sites of sociolinguistic contention. For instance, Eckert's (2000) work in a Detroit high school found that vowel quality correlated quite well with social divisions (both class and gender) within the high school. The use of extreme vowel qualities by those also considered extreme ground breakers within the school's social ecology reflects as well that these correlations should not be conceived of in the Labovian sense. These linguistic variations are in no way simply markers of social structures. Rather, the use of linguistic variation by those in the social sphere who seem to lead change reflects that these correlations derive from the agency of the speakers as they construct and reconstruct their personae. This perspective also avoids a crucial critique of sociolinguistics,

particularly articulated in Singh (1996), that cultural constructs such as class are frequently treated as *a priori* and are argued to be the motivators behind sociolinguistic variation. Rather, Eckert (2000) proposes a way of accounting for the mutual influence of social structures and linguistic variation, which can explain correlations between linguistic behavior and the surrounding social ecology without falling into the trap of treating the current shape of the ecology as an *a priori*.

The data presented by Eckert also points to another critical aspect of sociolinguistic inquiry. The higher the variation, the more important the sociolinguistic processes. While dialectologists focused on certain aspects of Detroit speech, Eckert's fieldwork suggests that these very dialectal markers are not usually subject to sociolinguistic competition, as they are so spread in the local system that they are not useful for personae building. These features are useful for indexing a person as a member of the local socio-cultural-political structure, but these same features did not seem to be key loci of sociolinguistic construction and competition as many other variant features. Variation is a sociolinguistic resource and the higher the variation, the more likely that the feature will be used for constructing personae and identity via linguistic production.

The final crucial argument from Eckert's *Linguistic Variation as Social Practice* is the concept of liminality. Eckert draws upon the sociolinguistic literature of class variation and notices the great linguistic variation of those who can be thought of as "stuck in the middle." Those who are neither near the upper end of the spectrum nor the lower demonstrate the widest variation in their linguistic production and frequently utilized features from both ends – the higher prestige and the lower prestige variants. This reveals that there are pressures encouraging uses of features both ones associated with the prestige variety and ones associated with the

vernacular. No case of sociolinguistic variation can be conceived of as a monochromatic continuum from socially powerful to socially un-powerful. On the contrary, the sociolinguistic sphere is rich with pressures which point in many different directions. The ambivalence of those caught in the middle – their liminality – is really quite crucial; however, the concept itself is relatively young and has not yet been developed to its full potential. I find this concept useful because it provides a tool to maneuver around the trap of prestige. Liminality is implicated in differentiation towards two poles, perhaps explaining why there is not a unanimous march towards varieties considered more prestigious. Thus, even if it is possible to identify variants perceived as more desirable in LESHQ, it is more interesting and useful to look at how divisions are being created and maintained.

Comparing the theoretical perspectives of these two great sociolinguists, many common threads emerge, though both obviously do have useful concepts which are not salient in the other's work. By combining their perspectives, the Honduran Deaf community can now be approached keeping in mind these crucial sociolinguistic concepts: the agency of the speaker, inter-individuality, variation as a key aspect of the sociolinguistic ecology and ambivalent liminality. As sociolinguistics attempts to explain metalinguistic variation, it should be expected that these processes will appear in any community, including the Honduran Deaf, though in a locally adapted context.

### **3.4 INTRODUCTION TO HONDURAN SIGN LANGUAGE (LESHO)**

#### **3.4.1 Typological properties**

The genetic ancestry of LESHO is not known. While this study has classified it as a member of the French sign language family, this classification has little basis in the literature. Williams (2010), the only linguist to have published on Honduran Sign Language, states that it has many similarities to ASL, but also to Mexican and Costa Rican Sign Languages (LSM & LESCO respectively). This study will treat LESHO as a restructured form of what was once a Columbian (not Colombian) Mesoamerican sign language complex – perhaps paralleling the indigenous, Pre-Columbian sign language complex of Meemul Tzijj (Fox Tree, 2009) – which is now a member of the many dialects that can be classified as belonging to the same complex as ASL. This decision is a necessary one to allow some sort of idea as to the substrate and superstrate influences in the contact situation arising from the arrival of American linguistic material. The evidence for such a claim is rather tenuous; however, it is the strongest one given the utter dearth of information regarding the history of LESHO and due to the shared core vocabulary, which includes colors and core verbs such as GUSTAR „to like“ and TENER „to have“ and even the sign OYENTE „hearing“, with no record or memory of contact between the Honduran and Mexican Deaf. All Deaf Hondurans and hearing Hondurans involved with the Deaf community were all shocked when I presented them with the lexical similarities between modern day LSM and LESHO. If these signs did not arise from recent contact, they must have shared a common source somewhere in the past. While it is not known if the educators who arrived with LSF in Mexico (Faurot et al., 1999) spread this throughout the Mesoamerican region, or if perhaps undocumented educators brought LSF directly to Honduras, this core

vocabulary suggest that LESHO's is closely related to LSM. There are also many similarities in what might be considered core vocabulary to Costa Rican Sign Language (LESCO). For example, kinship terms in LESHO and LESCO look very similar; however, there are also systematic differences. This study will classify LESHO as a member of the LSF language family most closely related to LSM and LESCO and subsequently creolized from contact with ASL, not unlike what is suggested to have happened upon the arrival of old LSF in the United States (Shepard-Kegl, 2009).

### **3.4.2 Socio-historical context of LESHO**

Before presenting the sociolinguistic findings of this study, it is important to briefly present the socio-historical context in which the LESHO community finds itself. This exposition is based primarily off of the work of Williams (2011) and Gerner de García (1990, 1994) as confirmed by the author's fieldwork. Williams (2001) presents a very brief overview of the sociolinguistics of the community and Gerner de García (1990, 1994), though she is discussing the Dominican Republic and not Honduras, touches on many important points which seem to be very common in Meso-American Deaf communities.

These communities are very young. Most have roughly twenty to thirty years of ethno-historical memory. The Nicaraguan Deaf did not exist as a linguistic community much before 1984 (Shepard-Kegl, 2009; Polich, 2005). Deaf communities may have existed in the countries before; however, some essential break of transmission must have occurred in every case. Whether or not this is true is very difficult to ascertain; however, what is important is that the concept of recent nascence is quite common in these communities and must be taken into account. The communities view themselves as young and tend to have a relatively specific



moment of genesis (such as a particular year). A general consensus among the Honduran Deaf seemed to locate the “birth” of LESHO somewhere around 1985-1990, though no date or event is specified for this sudden “language genesis.” This idea is at least partially justified by the lack of a central Deaf tradition. Unlike in the United States, where Deaf culture appears to have been fostered by the residential schools, even public education is frequently too costly for deaf children in Honduras and only an estimated thirty Deaf persons have graduated from high school in the entire country (Williams, 2011). The vast majority of Deaf education centers are primary schools, both integrated with other “disabilities” or Deaf only, are run by non-profits usually affiliated, to various degrees, with a proselytizing<sup>13</sup> religious group with connections to the United States and Canada. There are a handful of public centers that accept the Deaf and high school aged Deaf teens have recently been mainstreamed, at least within the larger cities.

Just as in the Dominican Deaf community (Gerner de García, 1990, 1994), missionaries play a large part in the dynamics and politics of the community. The subject of North American missionaries is too broad to discuss thoroughly, so this paper will only mention some basic observations from the Honduran community. The Deaf community, much like the wider Honduran populace, can be roughly divided along a mainstream/Catholic versus non-mainstream/non-Catholic axis. Canadian and American missionaries are ubiquitous in the nation.<sup>14</sup> This is particularly important for the Deaf community as religious missionary activity by non-mainstream groups (usually affiliated with Evangelical churches, Jehovah’s Witnesses or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) is the main vector allowing ASL influences to reach the LESHO community.

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<sup>13</sup> This term refers to the fact that the religion actively seeks new members, as opposed to non-proselytizing religions which do not seek or do not allow conversions to their creed.

<sup>14</sup> I would comfortably estimate that over half of the air traffic into the country consists of missionary teams or humanitarian teams with direct religious affiliation

However, religion is not the only site for language contact. Smaller numbers of Americans and Canadians with non-religious motivations also enter the country every year, and bring with them the potential for the introduction of ASL features. Graduates of Gallaudet University<sup>15</sup> are known to make appearances from time to time, visiting with the Deaf communities as they travel through the Central American isthmus. Audiologists and speech therapists and other similar professions frequently show up in larger intervention programs; however, their numbers make them significantly less influential than their religiously motivated countrymen. Pedagogical specialists in Deaf education, some speech therapists have been known to develop relationships with local organizations and make periodic visits to do training and routine evaluations; however, their presence and numbers are quite limited. Other than Holly Williams and her associates from SIL and the author himself, it does not appear that many other language contact situations with ASL have resulted from the academic community visiting the country.

The Deaf community is generally ignored by the wider Honduran population. Very few hearing people, even persons with Deaf family members, learn how to sign and even these hearing individuals who sign generally have no knowledge about Deaf culture or LESHQ. This includes most persons who interact with the Deaf community frequently; many interpreters' signing skills are intermediate at best. Education for the Deaf is usually done via sign, but via very underdeveloped L2 varieties.<sup>16</sup> For the few students who attend high school, interpreters are provided; however, the same problem persists. These same interpreters frequently work as tutors

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<sup>15</sup> From the website ([http://www.gallaudet.edu/gallaudet\\_university/about\\_gallaudet.html](http://www.gallaudet.edu/gallaudet_university/about_gallaudet.html)): "Gallaudet University is the world leader in liberal education and career development for deaf and hard of hearing students."

<sup>16</sup> My informants mentioned on multiple occasions how confusing and unclear the signing was of the vast majority of interpreters and teachers. This excludes the few professionals who do appear to have well developed L2 varieties, but they are found almost exclusively in Tegucigalpa (and perhaps San Pedro Sula).

for their students after hours; however, the goal of these sessions is the completion of written homework assignments, including English, which is a required subject. Highly educated Deaf persons (ones who have graduated or even just attended a high school) have a limited lexicon of fingerspelled English words, and the typical Deaf persons knows a smattering of English fingerspelled lexical items. However, it appears that few, if any, Deaf person has reached anything beyond the most beginner level of written English proficiency.

The above brief overview gives an outline of the socio-historical context of the Honduran Deaf community, highlighting the opportunities for language contact. While certainly more could be said regarding the community's sociological life, the above description should be sufficient for the purposes of this study.

## **4.0 METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **4.1 FIELDWORK**

The present study was conducted during a ten week ethnographic research trip to central Honduras. Due to time constraints and the high internal variation within LESH0 – see Williams (2010) –, all data collection and participant observation was restricted to the Deaf communities in the cities of Comayagua and Siguatepeque, both in the department of Comayagua. These cities lie directly on the major national route between the political capital of Tegucigalpa and the economic capital of San Pedro Sula (also the two largest cities in the country). Because the two major dialects of LESH0 are centered in these cities, the two large cities between them were selected so as to minimize dialectal variation among the participants but also allow for representation of both dialect groupings. Existing LESH0 data from Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula was included; however, it was primarily used to gauge the attitudes of the Deaf in the department of Comayagua towards certain variants (see § 10 – existing texts).

#### **4.1.1 Video Corpus**

A video corpus was also assembled using a variety of recordings of users of LESH0; the genres included wordlists, short stories and conversations according to the preferences of the informants. Informants were informed that I was interested in the relationship between sign and

orthography. All video elicitation was carried out in the central region (Comayagua & Siguatepeque). Existing texts available online were also included if an informant could identify the signer as a Deaf Honduran who utilizes LESHO – all of these texts came either from the Tegucigalpa or San Pedro Sula communities.

#### **4.1.2 Dictionaries**

Dictionaries were also used. In Honduras, only one dictionary of LESHO is available. Entitled *Comuniquemos Mejor*, it was assembled by the country's national Deaf association ANSH (*Asociación Nacional de Sordos de Honduras*) in Tegucigalpa and published in 2006. Before including any sign from the dictionary, I checked with informants to elicit any intuition judgments regarding the sign. For a few signs, the informants felt that they were old fashion or did not reflect their signing, in which cases I would include the versions of the signs with the informants produced.

#### **4.1.3 Interviews**

Interviews were conducted with two Deaf persons as preliminary attempts to elicit opinions via interview were unsuccessful. The interviews were informal in nature and no attempt was made to standardize the questions or to control certain variables. These interviews also had to be informal because many informants did not seem to understand the genre of interview. For example, when asked how people from the United States sign and what she thought of their signing, one informant repeatedly stated UNITED-STATES THERE SIGN DIFFERENT+++. This was quickly abandoned. Further, the ability to explicitly discuss metalinguistic usage of

variants was not very wide-spread and most metalinguistic commentary occurred in every day conversations, rather than in the interviews themselves. This required a greater focus on participant observation. The major purpose of the interviews was to inform, support and/or revise ideas taken from participant observation. In total, eleven persons were included in this phase. The following table demonstrates the metadata.

**Table 5. Metadata**

Self-identification	Gender	Age	Residence	Religious Affiliation
Deaf	M	20	Comayagua	Catholic
Deaf	F	25	Comayagua	Evangelical
Deaf	M	25	Comayagua	Catholic
Deaf	F	23	Comayagua	Catholic
Deaf	F	18	Comayagua	Catholic
Hard-of –Hearing	M	23	Siguatpeque	Evangelical
Deaf	M	28	Siguatpeque	Evangelical
Deaf	F	28	Siguatpeque	Jehovah’s Witness
Deaf	F	35	Siguatpeque	Evangelical
Deaf	M	24	Comayagua	Jehovah’s Witness
Hearing	M	24	Comayagua	Catholic

The number of participants was severely limited due to the size of the community, and most Deaf people active in the community were under the age of 18+ and so were not included..

#### **4.1.4 Participant observation**

Unrecorded participant observation was the major basis of this study and was conducted within the Deaf communities of Comayagua and Siguatepeque. This involved a myriad of different social situations, including genres such as private banter, public presentations, committee meetings and festivals. From these data, any signs with a correspondence between the handshape of the sign and a salient part of the Spanish and/or English orthography of a semantically related word which were also not considered highly iconic were recorded manually. Further, through participant observation, the use of linguistic variants in sociolinguistic situations was directly observed.

#### **4.1.5 Other considerations**

These multiple methodologies were utilized because of many methodological difficulties. The most difficult of all was the inability of many of the informants to engage in direct metalinguistic discourse. This is certainly not to say that there is no metalinguistic discourse occurring in the community (quite the opposite), but it was impossible to elicit it directly, and observing it in everyday conversations proved to be a much richer source of data. Further, all of these (with the exception of the participant observation) were carried out aided by a research assistant who was a respected member of the community. His insider knowledge of the language and culture was invaluable, particularly his metalinguistic evaluations of various persons' signing.

## **5.0 SOCIOLINGUISTICS OF LESH0**

### **5.1 THE VARIABLES**

There are many instances of variant initialization in LESH0, but there is a very specific subset of these signs which seem to be deeply implicated in the construction of social meaning through linguistic interaction. There is a division of the community and language into two different styles, which I will refer to as sociolects. The actual linguistic differences between the two groups are very small, and so it may be difficult to label their relative styles as sociolects. However, they are processes of differentiation. The degree of the difference between the codes is not as important as the existence of active differentiation (Irvine, 2001). Thus, I am not concerned with classifying these codes according to structural similarities and divergences; rather, I refer to these codes as sociolects because they correspond consistently with differences in social behavior and activity in different communities of practice.

#### **5.1.1 Pronouns**

The first set of initialized variants contains personal pronouns. Below is a chart of all of these forms, as well as figures which demonstrate their articulation (including non-initialized personal pronouns).



**Table 6. Initialized pronouns in LESH0**

English	I	You	You.formal	We	Our	You.plural
Spanish	Yo	Vos	Usted	Nosotros	Nuestro	Ustedes
Gloss	*Y*O	*V*OS	*U*STED	*N*OSOTROS	*N*UESTRO	*U*STEDES

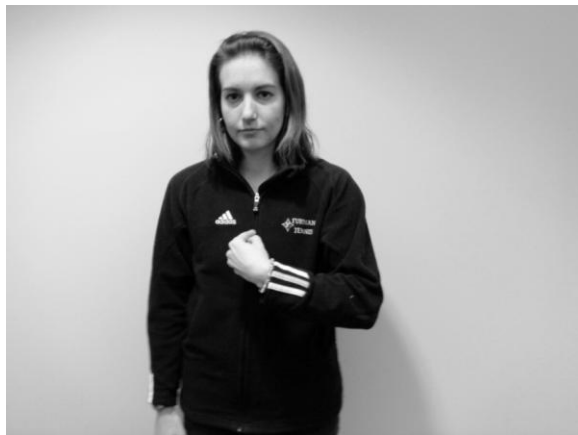
**Figure 1. First person variants**

\*Y\*O

MÍO



YO



**Figure 2. Second person variants**

\*U\*STED

TÚ



\*V\*OS



Three variants were found for the first person singular. They include \*Y\*O, YO and MÍO. The first is an initialized /Y/ handshape contacting the center of the chest. The second is the index finger contacting the same location, and the final variant is the /B/ handshape, also contacting the center of the chest. This final pronoun is utilized in ASL and LESH0 as the possessive marker, but as will be discussed later (see § 5.5), it is sometimes used in a nominative sense. There are many options for expressing the second person singular. Initialized \*U\*STED is

a variant which marks formality and respect. The index form TÚ is an informal pronoun, but there also exists the initialized sign \*V\*OS. The second person plural has both an initialized formal \*U\*STEDES and a non-initialized informal version which uses the same movement pattern but with the index finger. The first personal plural has both nominative and possessive initialized forms, but these are rarely seen in daily conversation as numerical agreement is usually used. For example, if a LESH0 signer were to be conversing with two interlocutors, he or she would use a /3/ circling horizontally in the neutral space, just as do ASL signers. LESH0 allows this numerical agreement up to 9 persons. If in a larger group, the sigh TODOS „all“ is usually used and the initialized \*N\*OSOTROS and \*N\*UESTRO are very rarely observed.

### 5.1.2 Other lexical items

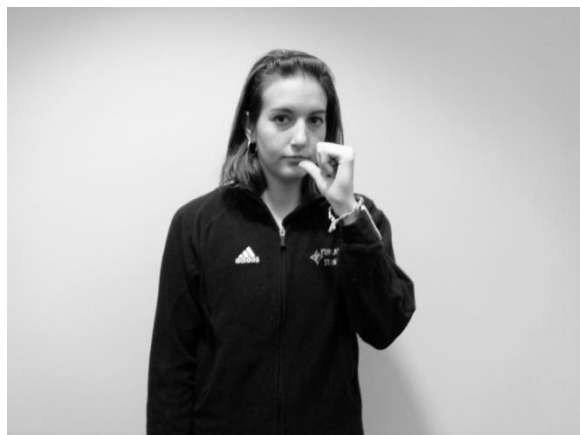
Further, there is a short list of lexical items in open classes which are used to mark the differentiation of the community into sociolects. These include the following table of variants.

**Table 7. Lexical variant initialization in LESH0**

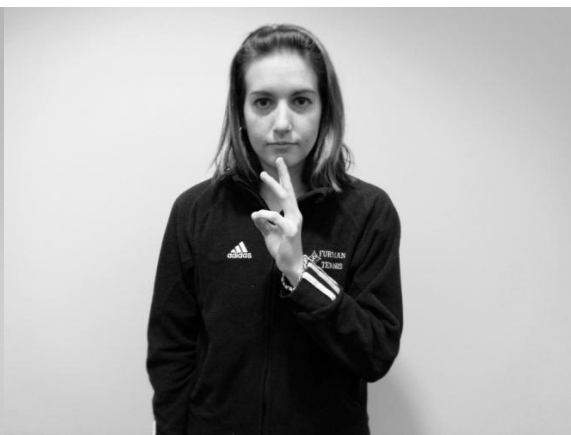
Variant 1	Spanish Gloss	English Gloss	Variant 2
*A *GUA	Agua	Water	*W *ATER
*H *ARAGÁN	haragán	lazy	*L *AZY
*V *IVIR	vivir	live	*L *IVE
*R *AÍZ	raíz	root	ROOT
MAR (3)	mar	sea	*M *AR/ MAR (2)

**Figure 3. Initialized variants in LESHO**

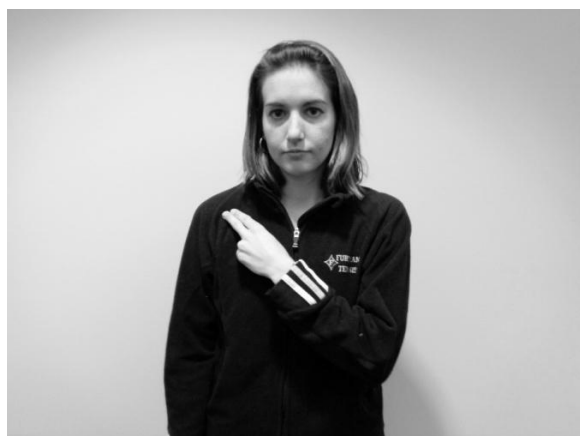
\*A \*GUA – „water“



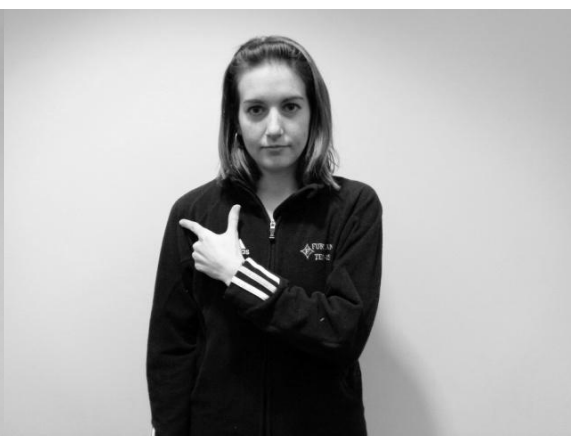
\*W \*ATER – „water“



\*H \*ARAGÁN – „lazy“



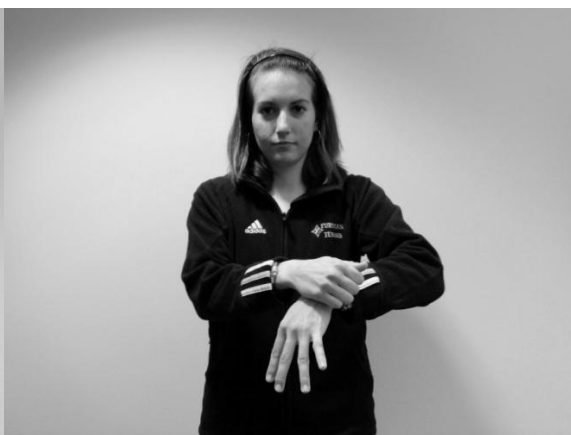
\*L \*AZY – „lazy“



\*R \*AÍZ – „root“



RAÍZ - „root“



\*V\*IVIR – „to live“



\*L\*IVE – „to live“



MAR(2) – „sea“



\*M\*AR – sea



MAR(3) – „sea“



While there are other signs that could be added to this list, these in particular stick out as linguistic markers of social practice. The two most salient and polemic are actually the first two - „agua/water“ and „haragán/lazy.“ This will be discussed later (see § 5.3).

## **5.2 THE SOCIAL LIFE OF LESHO**

The LESHO using community in Comayagua and Siguatepeque can be divided into two poles – the central Deaf and the peripheral Deaf. The first group involves a very small number of leaders in the community, and the vast majority of Deaf persons who use LESHO<sup>17</sup> belong to the second group. This division is marked quite saliently by variant initialization, but it is necessary to begin by briefly discussing this division in the social sphere.

### **5.2.1 The central Deaf**

The central Deaf are numerically the minority, but these are the same individuals who are most active in the community at a national level (for example, attending the planning meetings held by the national Deaf association or participating in the official translation of the national anthem) and are recognized as leaders in the community. Members of the central Deaf tend to have contacts all over the nation. They are involved in the shaping of the community at a national level, but they also tend to head their local Deaf organizations. I term them *central* due

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<sup>17</sup> No instances of isolated deaf persons without a language or cultural identity were found, but it would be hasty to assume that there are none.

to their location in the social network. If a social network were developed which included the entire Deaf population of Honduras, they would be located in key locations connecting the local communities. They are in some sense similar to Deaf persons with Deaf parents in the ASL community. The leaders of the community tend to be relatively well educated, yet it would be problematic to refer to this group as the educated Deaf. Many of the peripheral Deaf have completed similar levels of education and even come from wealthier socio-economic backgrounds and theoretically should then have better access to education. Further, the person with the highest level of educational achievement in the community belongs to the peripheral, and not the central, group. Thus, the central Deaf grouping is not a function of the institutional arrangement of Honduran society. Rather, the members of this group behave in ways that are somewhat different from the peripheral community and seem to form their own community of practice.

### **5.2.2 The peripheral Deaf**

In contrast, the peripheral Deaf do little of the active building of the national community. Even if nominally involved in the leadership of the local community, they rarely affect any decisions.<sup>18</sup> The peripheral Deaf do travel throughout the nation to visit Deaf friends in distant cities, but do not seem to be actively and intentionally involved in the forging of a national Deaf community nor do they frequently attend any meetings where the central Deaf convene to decide the direction of the community's next steps of action. The vast majority of the

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<sup>18</sup> The only time that I observed the subaltern Deaf who were technically leaders in the community fulfill this role occurred when a delegation from Nicaragua arrived to forge regional ties among the Central American Deaf. Their role was mostly symbolic.



Deaf fall into this category, but obviously not everyone is homogenously peripheral. There are some who travel extensively (and sometimes even accompany the central Deaf in their travels), but they are not as active in the leadership of the community. There are also those who, despite or perhaps because of, their relatively advantageous situation of having found a career, do not seem interested in leading the community. There are also those who are perhaps the most peripheral who know very few Deaf people outside their immediate local and rarely travel and are not involved in any type of leadership.

Much like the distinction between the jocks and the burnouts in the Detroit high school described by Eckert (2000), there is division of the Deaf community of Honduras into the sub-communities of practice of the central and peripheral Deaf. The distinctions between the two groups do not seem as well developed or as socially salient as the schismogenesis found in Eckert's study, but it is in some ways quite similar. Eckert (2000) discusses a key difference between the jocks and the burnouts which is their attitude towards the institution of the school. The jocks are quite involved and define themselves in relation to the national institutional context rather than the locality. The burnouts do exactly the opposite and reject the institution in favor of local networks. The central Deaf are implicated in the development and functioning of the (nascent) Honduran Deaf institution, whereas the peripheral Deaf are at least not directly involved.

This distinction that I have just outlined would not be germane to this study if it were not to be marked by trends in sociolinguistic behavior. The two styles or sociolects which have developed along this division can be described with a limited set of highly polemic signs around which revolve a wealth of sociolinguistic processes.

### 5.3 THE SOCIOLECTS OF LESHO

The sociolinguistic divisions between the two groups can be efficiently mapped out by the following table.

**Table 8. Sociolects of LESHO**

Elite Deaf	English Gloss	Subaltern Deaf
YO	1st person singular	*Y*O
TÚ	2nd person singular informal	*V*O*S*
*U*STED	2nd person plural formal	*U*STED
*A*GUA	water	*W*ATER
*H*ARAGÁN	lazy	*L*AZY
*V*IVIR	live	*L*IVE
*R*AÍZ	root	ROOTS
MAR(3)	sea	*M*AR / MAR(2)
HOJA	leaf	HOJA

The above signs provide ideal examples of several of the important differences between the two groups' linguistic output.

#### 5.3.1 The central sociolect

The central Deaf use re-initialized signs and almost never use a sign which is initialized to English (except those signs in which the English and the Spanish orthography match, in which case no changes are apparent). When an initialized and a non-initialized sign are

in competition, the central Deaf tend to select the initialized variant, whereas the peripheral Deaf use the uninitialized form. However, there are some exceptions, like the sign MAR(3) „sea.“ The peripheral Deaf utilizes \*M\*AR and MAR(2) – which are identical except for the initialization. The central Deaf use the unrelated sign MAR(3), which is uninitialized. They claim to prefer this third variant because it is more “beautiful” and “artistic.” The initialized formal second person \*U\*STED is used quite frequently, but the initialized informal sign \*V\*O\*S\* seem to never be used. Instead, they usually use the indexical form of TÚ. The initialized first person pronoun is almost always eschewed in favor of the indexical sign or the possessive variant used in a nominative function.

### **5.3.2 The peripheral sociolect**

The peripheral Deaf tend to use signs which have retained their English influences. They are not consistent in their usage of initialized versus non-initialized lexical variants, but seem to tend slightly towards the non-initialized side. Both initialized and non-initialized versions of the sign MAR „sea“ circulate within their community of practice, but the non-initialized version is significantly more common. All three second person pronouns are used by the peripheral Deaf, but the formal version is not used as often as it is by the elites. The initialized first person pronoun variant is almost exclusively used.

There certainly is variation both between and within these sociolects; however, the usage of forms like these makes it very easy to classify a person as elite or subaltern. The sentences \*U\*STED \*H\*ARAGÁN „you are lazy“ and \*V\*O\*S\* \*L\*AZY „you are lazy“ mean essentially the same thing; however, they are prototypical markers of personal belonging to one

of these two groups. It is inconceivable that a central signer would produce the latter sentence or a peripheral signer the former.

## **5.4 DIFFERENTIATION IN IDEOLOGY**

This data begs the question of what kind of metalinguistic ideologies circulate among the central Deaf. There at least three different trends, but they are unified by the act of differentiation from the peripheral Deaf. Through their participation in the nascent institution of the Honduran Deaf, they use the variants above to construct certain individual personae, but even more importantly, they construct an idea of what it means to be a Honduran Deaf person by contrasting linguistic forms.

### **5.4.1 The central ideologies**

The most obvious of these ideologies is the rejection of English influence in favor of Spanish. Signs that index the English-speaking world (which is certainly not iconized as Latin American in most spheres) must be altered. This seems to (as least in most cases) be accomplished through the substitution of a handshape which indexes Spanish and thereby a Latin American identity. As they participate in the formation of national Deaf community, the central Deaf can draw on the culturally meaningful resources at hand and appropriate that which Spanish indexes to differentiate themselves from other national Deaf communities. This differentiation is then considered crucial to becoming a “good” LESHO signer. It is acceptable to use the non-altered form, but it is certainly not an exemplary way to sign like a Honduran. This process of re-

initialization is at least partially triggered by increased trilingualism in the community. All of the central Deaf I asked could fingerspell the English orthography of words in the process of re-initialization. Gerner de García (1990, 1994) also argued that some initialized words are not yet recognized as initialized upon being borrowed from ASL, but rather analyzed as a totally arbitrary handshape. However, as I will argue in the subsequent section regarding the metalinguistic discourse of the peripheral Deaf, this is not the whole story.

The second trend in the central Deaf community of practice is the creation of educated personae. For example, an informant claimed that the non-initialized sign is perfectly fine, but it is best suited to be used by young children to aid comprehension of lesson materials. Once the person begins to mature, he or she should switch the initialized variant because it is more sophisticated. This again sets up an example of what a good Honduran signer should be and how he or she should sign. The linguistic form should be less iconic in order to communicate higher levels of education and abstract thought. However, this discourse does not always result in the use of an initialized variant. The central Deaf use an uninitialized version of the sign that means „sea“ which is different from the two most popular signs that are used by the peripheral Deaf. These two signs are almost identical, except that one uses a /B/ handshape and the other initializes to /M/. They claim that the sign that they use is more “beautiful” and “artistic.” Interestingly, it is also the sign that is used in the translation of the national anthem used in Comayagua.<sup>19</sup> It is impossible to decide whether the central Deaf began to use this sign because it is sanctioned as a national symbol by its inclusion in the anthem or whether the sign was included in the anthem because it was the variant used by the central Deaf who would be

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<sup>19</sup> The translation of the hymn was in the processes of standardization to reconcile all of the different versions used throughout the country. While I was able to observe the very beginning of this process, I am not aware which sign for „sea“ was decided upon for the standardized version.

involved in the process. What is important, however, is this correspondence, regardless of the social history of the sign. The central Deaf utilize the sign which is also the sign selected as appropriate for the song that honors the nation.

Up to this point, it would seem like the central Deaf are only interested in forging an exemplary Honduran identity; however, they are also very concerned with indexing the international Deaf community. The initialized first person and second person singular informal pronouns are almost never utilized by the central Deaf. They refer to these signs as “confusing” for other Deaf people and “unclear” or “vague.” They state that they prefer to utilize the index finger forms because they are much more intelligible to the rest of the Deaf global community. Thereby, they demonstrate that another ideological pattern encourages the imitation of other sign languages, to make LESHO less marked and unusual. This clashes with their insistence on the marking of previously “English” signs with Spanish influences, which is explicit carried out in the name of using “Spanish” (and thereby Honduran) signing instead of “English.” By rejecting these initialized variants, they are also erasing something seemingly very unusual for sign languages. These signs are likely to be unique to LESHO, which would be a fantastic way to iconize Honduran identity, yet the central Deaf, who are so concerned with national and ethnic identity, vigorously oppose the use of these signs. This demonstrates a sort of liminality, as the central Deaf do not simply try to forge a linguistic identity that looks half-Deaf and half-Honduran, rather they are actively trying to perform a more Honduran and a more Deaf identity than their peripheral peers through the selection of linguistic variants.

This is even further complicated by the central Deaf’s retaining of the initialized second person formal forms. These also are not “un-marked” signs, as it is extremely unlikely to find these variants in other sign languages. And yet these forms are not erased like \*Y\*O and

\*V\*O\*S\*. One informant stated explicitly that not using \*U\*STED form was “MAL \*E\*D\*UCACIÓN” (poorly raised, rude, low-life). What this means is that the \*U\*STED and \*U\*STEDES form has been retained because, in wider Honduran society, the formal Spanish *usted* is used in most social situations, and using the informal *tú* or *vos* forms would be highly inappropriate in many situations. This rule of etiquette seems to have been borrowed into LESHO ensuring the continued circulation of the \*U\*STED and \*U\*STEDES variants even while \*Y\*O and \*V\*O\*S\* are actively being erased by the central Deaf. An interesting linguistic caveat to this case is that, in order to reflect upon his use of the initialized formal signs for second person, an informant who was central utilized the signs MAL \*E\*\*D\*CACIÓN, the second of which is a class 1 sign. According to the criteria established by Machabée (1995), this then should be considered code-switching. To explain this cultural borrowing from Honduran Spanish, the informant code-switched from LESHO to a class 1 sign, which is part of a larger direct borrowing from the Spanish *maleducado*, which in turn is a borrowing of “proper” ways of speaking. However, another caveat about this case is that Honduran identity was not directly invoked to justify this language ideology; rather, it seems to float somewhat under metalinguistic consciousness. The local norms which govern the moral judgments on ways of communicating help influence the selection and de-selection of various linguistic units by the individual. Even given the vigorous language change that the central Deaf would like to lead, they must function in the local system.

It is obvious that copious amounts of indexicality are being utilized to construct the identity of the national community. Spanish is indexed through initialization of iconic signs as well as the re-initialization of signs with English-based initialization. The corpus of initialized signs does not suggest that the processes of initialization targets ASL related signs any more than

signs with no known connection to ASL. Rather, signs specifically identified as initialized to English are progressively being targeted for elimination through alteration, almost certainly tied to issues of indexicality. The handshake corresponds with the English instead of the Spanish orthography, which indexes the “English” code which thereby indexes not only a non-Spanish identity, but specifically an identity against which Spanish-speaking Latin American is usually defined. The signs must be re-initialized to break this connection and differentiate the linguistic form from its perceived non-Latin essence.

However, these issues of indexicality cannot account for why the pronouns are being de-initialized by the central Deaf. For whatever reason, indexing Spanish through initialization is actively embraced closer to the periphery of the lexicon, but is being actively eliminated in the core vocabulary (or at least in the personal pronouns). Yet the \*U\*STED and \*U\*STEDES variants are retained, and seem to be used much more frequently in daily conversation by the central Deaf. To remove the initialization from one’s signing would risk being viewed as *maleducado*. This inconsistency points to a critical point of analysis: they know how to sign “appropriately.” The central Deaf are not only engaged in the attempt to standardize LESHO (though they prefer the term “unify” as in ANSH, 2006), but are also about the business of being exemplary LESHO users. They accomplish much of this through their differentiating use of linguistic variants.

To sign in the manner of the central Deaf, one has to know not only which variants are acceptable (and perhaps mandatory), but also when and how to use them. One cannot simply index Spanish as much as one wants, rather it is important to index Spanish by initializing certain lexical items, but not \*M\*AR because that sign is not as “artistic” as MAR(3). Further, one must know to initialize to Spanish on formal pronouns (because that’s what good-



mannered people do) and to avoid using the process with informal pronouns. Indexing Spanish (through initialization) or the international Deaf community (through de-initialization) is not really what is at stake in these instances of sociolinguistic negotiation; rather, these seem to be simply tools upon which LESHO users, and in particular the central Deaf, can draw upon to create a sociolectal style which distinguishes and differentiates them from both the average Deaf Honduran as well as hearing and non-Honduran persons. It would be wrong to focus on the rich tools at hand upon which sociolinguistic contentions can draw; what is important is the process of active differentiation. The central Deaf are who they are by creating their identity in opposition to other perceived options. This is a clear case identity-as-differentiation.

#### **5.4.2 The peripheral ideologies**

The peripheral Deaf also engage in metalinguistic ideology, though, not in the same way as do the central Deaf. In particular, their metalinguistic discourse is almost all implicit and, therefore, incredibly difficult to elicit. Not a single question posed about sociolinguistic use of signs or codes was ever really responded to. The only method available for studying the underlying ideologies of the peripheral Deaf was through participant observation in daily conversations. A few particularly fortuitous occurrences revolved around direct language conflicts between the central and peripheral groups. At one point, two members on opposing sides of the divide began to contest the “correct” form of \*L\*AZY or \*H\*ARAGÁN. They both insisted that the other was using the “English” sign, and that their own variant was “Spanish.” Other members of the community called me over to “resolve” the dispute and as an English/Spanish bilingual, decide which was the “Spanish” sign. It was impossible to evade the interrogation, and so I demonstrated the English and Spanish orthographies, much to the delight

of the central person involved due to the correspondences between his sign and Spanish, and the other's sign and English. However, even though the peripheral person had now been informed of the "proper etymology" of the sign, continued to use the English-initialized sign. This phenomenon of the relative lag of the peripheral Deaf to reinitialize signs to the Spanish orthography is partially due to significantly less developed knowledge of written English and Spanish. Many simply do not parse the sign as initialized. However, I argue that there is much more occurring in this situation. To begin, there is an unspoken implicature which assumes the desirability of enacting a Honduran Deaf identity through language use. The argument revolved around which was the "Spanish" sign. There was no question to whether or not the "Honduran" sign should be used: the polemics revolved around which sign should be considered the authentic Honduran sign. The continued use of the \*L\*AZY sign even after such a vociferous "education" in "proper" language use by the central Deaf representative in the conversation suggests that the possibility of indexing English through the handshape simply is not a deciding factor. This seems to suggest a fundamental ideology where the possibility of indexicality is not taken as something inherent to "reality," but rather subject to the judgment of the signer. The correspondence between the English orthography and the sign's handshape is simply not a convincing motivation for language change for the peripheral Deaf.

## **5.5 DIFFERENTIATION IN PRACTICE**

However, the picture is still not complete without discussing the everyday practice of sociolinguistic variation, especially in the case of the central Deaf. The peripheral Deaf ideological construction of the sociolinguistic divide matches their daily output quite well.

On the other hand, there are some discrepancies worth noting for the central group. The first person singular pronoun turns out to be rather problematic. The primary text collected to represent central-style signing shows much variation in the articulation of the first person singular. The text begins with the indexical YO, but there are three instances of the possessive being used in a nominative syntactic location. For example, the informant at one point signs: “NO USE REJECT DEAF CULTURE, NOT-MATTER MY UNDERSTAND” „they don’t use and reject Deaf culture, but that doesn’t matter, I understand.” Later he signs: “JOIN SCHOOL MY LEARN+++” „I joined school and I learned a lot.” This variant is utterly unacknowledged in the explicit language debates. Until analyzing this text, I had not noticed its use. Even further in the text, he actually signs the initialized variant \*Y\*O, which he claimed never to use. This was during a section of particularly fast and emotional signing, suggesting that the initialized variant is actually the most nativized of all of the variants. It is unclear if this linguistic faux-pas (according to central Deaf ideology of the differentiation of language use) was caused by inattention, or perhaps by the emotional pitch of his signing in that moment. If one follows Eckert’s (2000) lead, and thinks of all linguistic variation as conscious (though certainly not rational), this suggests that the initialized variant is coming to hold a position similar to the negative concord in English. No one admits to using it, but, like most features stereotyped as pertaining to African American Vernacular English, the form can be appropriated for projecting certain types of personae (Hill, 2008). This is a very difficult issue to definitively resolve with so little data, but I would suggest that there is more happening behind the scenes than mere inattention. This is a rich area of future research, not only among the Latin American Deaf, but for all of sociolinguistics.

## 6.0 SUMMARY

As initialized variants circle in the community, they are picked up to both mark and justify the social division between those Deaf who are involved in the forging on a Deaf institution in the nation (the elite Deaf) and those who are not (the subaltern Deaf) . Initialized variants line up on both sides of the divide in a fairly stable way and their use can inform us about the person and what kinds of practices that person is likely to be involved in. The elite Deaf are involved in the forging of the nascent community and set their speech up as exemplary both Honduran signing and Deaf signing. The subaltern Deaf do not seem interested in the active construction of identity and seem to have a fundamentally different conception of language (which needs further research). However, practice tells a somewhat different story than does ideology, and more in-depth collection of data is necessary to tease apart the influences in this relationship.

Variant initialization is an active locus of sociolinguistic contention in LESH0 and is utilized to achieve identity-as-differentiation. These processes of differentiation seem to underlie and direct sociolinguistic variation. Certainly the communities of Comayagua and Siguatepeque locate themselves within and draw upon the historical moment, for example by frequently indexing Spanish; however, tools themselves are not as significant as underlying differentiation itself. This study suggests that, at least in the sociolinguistic sphere, it may be very helpful to conceive of the linguistic construction of identity as identity-as-differentiation.

## **7.0 CONCLUSIONS**

What is exceedingly clear is that linguistic variation is already implicated in the enacting of social differences even in such a young community as the Deaf of Central Honduras. Variation and differentiation are linked processes. Even though this processes cannot have been occurring for very long in the Honduran community (as opposed to ethnic based distinctions in the US or class based differentiation in the UK as discussed in Milroy, 2000, which had centuries to develop the sociolinguistic differences found in those societies), this differentiation is already fairly stably marked in sociolinguistic practice. Two distinguishable styles have emerged which correspond so well with the social division within the community. Thus, this study is another piece of evidence that these sociolinguistic processes of differentiation are universal. It had been suggested that multilingualism in Amazonia was somehow “egalitarian” and this variation was not capitalized upon by sociolinguistic structures, an idea which Aikhenvald put to rest (2003). Rather, strict prohibitions against code-mixing assist maintaining socially created difference (Aikhenvald, 2003). This study provides data from a community as yet without a standard language culture (see Milroy, 2000 for further discussion of standard language cultures) which demonstrates how standardization is not necessary for the interaction of variation and differentiation. These two phenomena seem to intertwine regardless of the specific language culture and ideologies, though this intertwining is obviously expressed in locally specific ways.

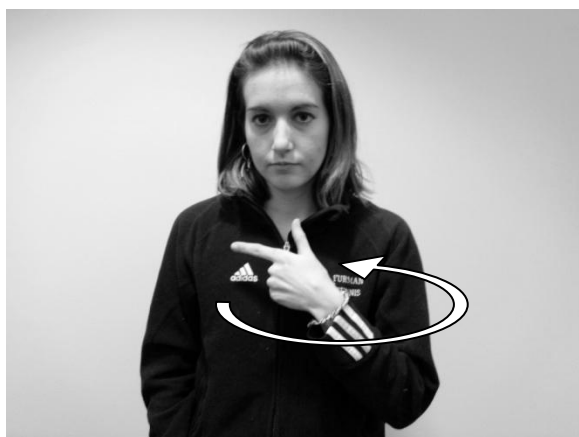
## **8.0 FURTHER WORK**

Much further work is need on Latin American Deaf communities, sign language linguistics, sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. Many unanswered questions remain about the structure of initialization in LESHQ, as well as question involving the language's genetic make-up and history. A deeper look at the language ideologies expressed in this differentiation process is also critical to allow a deeper understanding of how this process works. Further, processes of sociolinguistic variation and differentiation should be analyzed from the perspectives of anthropologists interested in difference. For example, the structures of the sociolinguistic divide in LESHQ, as well as much of the sociolinguistic literature, look very similar to Lévi-Strauss' analysis of myth. This case should also be analyzed from the perspective of mimetic theory as articulated by Girard (1977, 1986, 1987a, 1987b, 1996, 2001, 2009, Girard, Oughourlian & Lefort, 1987), as model/rival relationships and issues of ambivalence – typical Girardian topics – surfaced in the above discussion. Through further study of these forgotten languages, I believe that it is possible to arrive at a much better conceptualization of the human language faculty.

## APPENDIX A

### SELECTED LESHO SIGNS

Figure 4. GUSTAR – ‘to like’<sup>20</sup>



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<sup>20</sup> Note that this signs semantics are like the English „to like“ and not the Spanish gustar because the recipient of the pleasure is the subject, not the object of the verb.

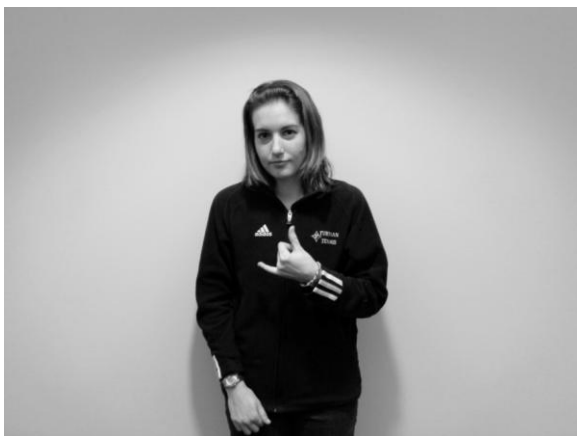
**Figure 5. TENER – ‘to have’**



**Figure 6. OYENTE – ‘hearing’**



**Figure 7. \*Y\*O – ‘I’**

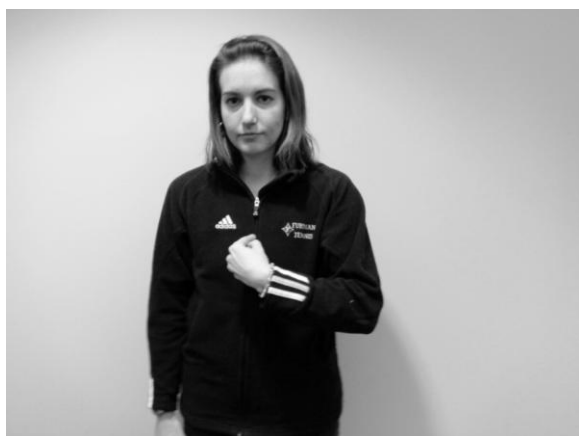




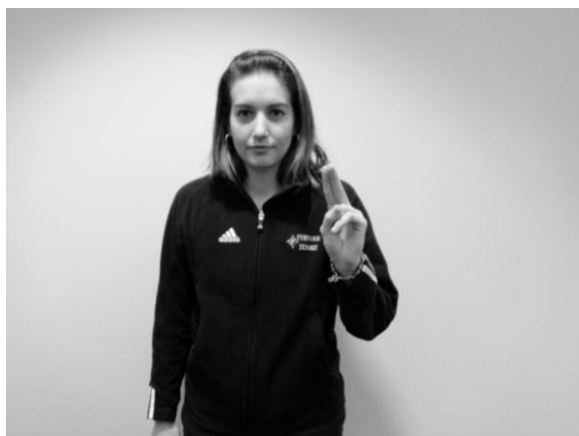
**Figure 8. MÍO – ‘my’**



**Figure 9. YO – ‘I’**



**Figure 10. \*U\*STED – ‘you.formal’**



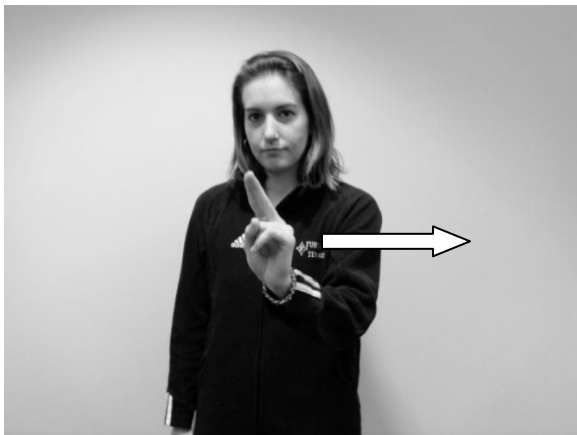
**Figure 11. TÚ – ‘you.informal’**



**Figure 12. \*V\*OS - ‘you.informal’**



**Figure 13. \*U\*STEDES – ‘you.plural.formal’**



**Figure 14. \*N\*OSOTROS – ‘we’**



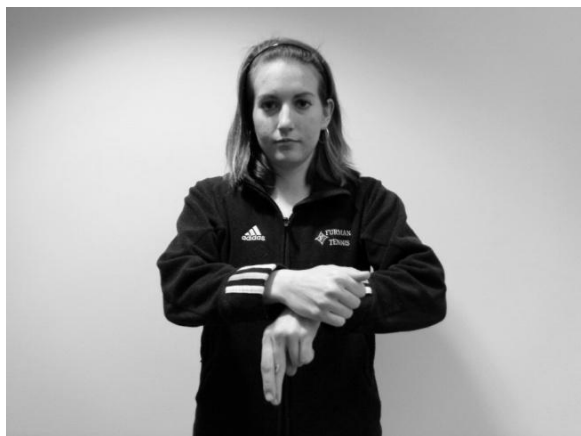
**Figure 15. \*N\*UESTRO – ‘our’**



**Figure 16. RAÍZ - ‘root’**



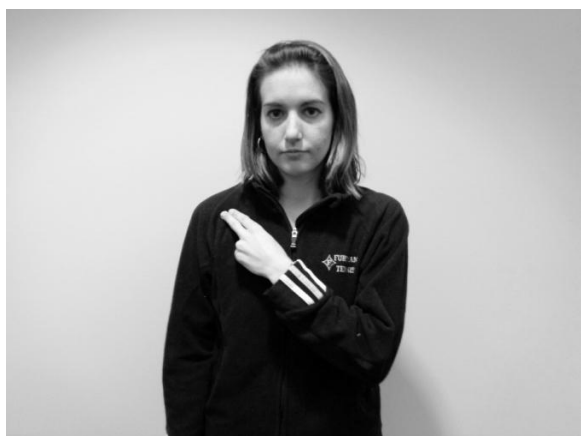
**Figure 17. \*R\*AÍZ – ‘root’**



**Figure 18. \*L\*AZY – ‘lazy’**



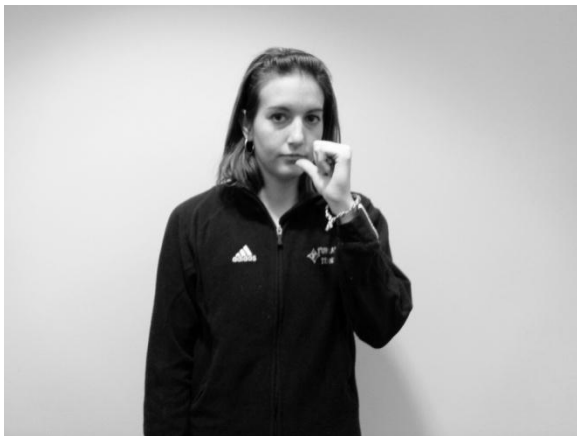
**Figure 19. \*H\*ARAGÁN – ‘lazy’**



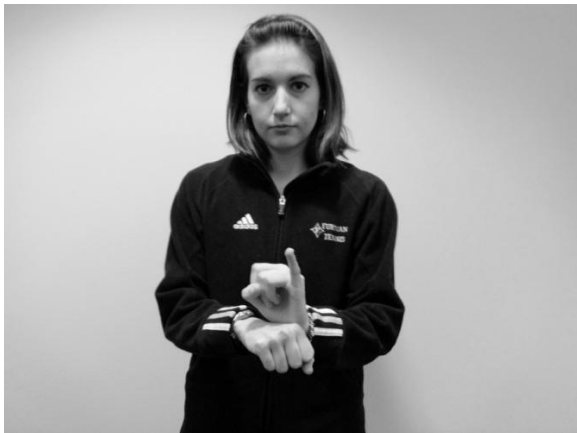
**Figure 20. \*W\*ATER – ‘water’**



**Figure 21. \*A\*GUA – ‘water’**



**Figure 22. \*I\*GLESIA – ‘church’**



**Figure 23. \*C\*HURCH – ‘church’**



**Figure 24. \*V\*IVIR – ‘to live’**



**Figure 25. \*L\*IVE – ‘to live’**



**Figure 26. \*M\*UNDO – ‘world’**



**Figure 27. \*W\*ORLD – ‘world’**



**Figure 28. MAR(2) – ‘sea’**





**Figure 29. \*M\*AR – sea**



**Figure 30. MAR(3) – ‘sea’**



**Figure 31. \*L\*ES\*H\*O – ‘Honduran Sign Language’**



**Figure 32. PREACH – ‘to preach’**



**Figure 33. \*P\*REDICAR – ‘to preach’**



**Figure 34. \*E\*VANGELIZAR – ‘to evangelize’**



## **APPENDIX B**

### **EXISTING TEXTS**

1. Honduras 2009 Deaf Joke

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wUzbptXFIA&feature=relmfu>

2. Honduras 2009 Joke 2

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QZB1eRDnrZs&feature=relmfu>

3. Honduras 2009 Joke 3

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9e37rcD3Aw>

2. Honduras 2009 Junior Part 1 of 3

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSNbPZX3TuY&feature=relmfu>

3. Honduras 2009 Junior Part 2 of 3

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmxGjGRbLw4&feature=relmfu>

4. Honduras 2009 Junior Part 3 of 3

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o3gCVhuhjTc&feature=relmfu>

## **APPENDIX C**

### **LESHO MANUAL ALPHABET**

**Figure 35. LESHO Manual Alphabet (ANSH, 2006, p. 7)**



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