The "Third Ear" Decolonizes: Integrating Deaf Students into Post-Secondary Classes

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Can we effectively integrate Deaf students into our post-secondary classes before recognizing and listening to them? Studies indicate that Deaf students continue to struggle, be silenced, and experience isolation when mainstreamed. Deaf students, or second-language students, inevitably develop new identities once included; however, we cannot justly ask that they abandon their own cultural identities, nor ignore that they have their own cultural and individual identities. This paper draws on the literary theorist Homi Bhabha, specifically his notion of the "third space." I propose that as educators we enter and create this space for our students and begin listening to them using a "third ear" so as to enable the surfacing of their cultural identities in hopes of countering their struggles, perpetual silencing, and isolation. The essay focuses largely on the implementation of the third ear and third space by programs found in the humanities.

Since cultural spaces or discourses define what is acceptable in society, and this acceptance of an individual within a particular society mediates around the individual's body, that is, his or her normal/abnormal body, we must recognize the classroom as a cultural space and investigate what we have been including or excluding. This paper calls for the integration of Deaf [1] students into a post-secondary class through the establishment of a metaphorical "third ear." [2] The third ear is an extension of what Bhabha (1990) refers to as the "third space," the interstices, or openings, between two cultures, "which gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and rep-

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[1] Deaf (with a capital D) denotes one who is born Deaf or became Deaf at a very young age, whereas deaf (lower case d) represents one who has developed a hearing impairment later in life.

[2] The notion of a third ear disrupts the notion of a perfect body by removing access to the categorization of a perfect body. In other words, the addition of this ear de-emphasizes notions of the ideal body, because now a person, metaphorically, has three ears. The entire class can engage in cross-cultural performances where the students embrace alternative ways of understanding language. The third ear presents the notion of hearing through seeing, that is, shifting the focus from speech to movement in the classroom.

resentation" (p. 211) – a space created through action and interaction between students, and their instructor, specifically by dissolving the divide between oral and gestural speech. Ultimately, the third ear should function to decolonize pre-dominant perceptions of what it means to be Deaf: the false presumptions that deafness is a physical disability and that the Deaf are communicatively deficient. This paper aims to elucidate the term third ear, and provide examples of how we can use it in a class, and the university at large. This paper essentially moves from theory – theorizing about the concept of Deafness and pedagogy – to practice – how to teach the Deaf, and understand Deafness in a classroom.

Before explicating the third ear, I will establish the need to better integrate Deaf students. Hocutt (1996) compares the academic results of students with various disabilities that have been integrated into regular classes, and discovers that these students, especially deaf students, tend to do poorly in comparison to their peers due to the lack of remedial instruction. The key factors perpetuating such poor academic results are communicative and social.

Most Deaf students suffer from extreme isolation or feelings of alienation upon entering a post-secondary institution. For many, it is the first time that they enter into a mainstream education. The classroom should function as a site of resistance to these feelings of isolation through the introduction of new means of communication. Lang and Meath-Lang (1992) stress that "[d]espite technological advances, social change, and increasing acceptance of sign language communication alone and in various combination with oral/aural communication, the isolating effects of deafness remain" (p. 84). When mainstreamed into a post-secondary class or institution, they feel loneliness more pronounced than what disabled students feel. As a response to this isolation, the classroom should become a space in which the Deaf are seen and heard among their peers and instructors. Additionally, it is important to use text and materials developed by Deaf people, because as Lang and Meath-Lang (1992) point out, many Deaf students have been inculcated with the belief that the hearing world is a metaphor, and so within it, they feel like outsiders entering a space

they cannot fully access.

Instructors should understand the historical subject-positions of their students to render them visible – modern subjects with the ability to communicate with other modern subjects. The hearing-enabled have attempted to normalize the body of the Deaf by imposing that the Deaf learn to speak in order to belong as members of society. The Deaf were, and still are, perceived as either disabled individuals, or somehow lacking, in other words – abnormal. Kocchar-Lindgren (2006) advocates for a "'third space' as a way of articulating a site where the hearing, Deaf, and hard-of-hearing come together" (p. 418). While Kocchar-Lindgren's (2006) third space is theatrical, it can be extended to the classroom, where integration can take place. Upon entering this third space, the class becomes a location of disruption of master narratives that privilege orality. Signs, through Sign language and visual mediums, should emerge as a discourse alongside that of the spoken word. This new discourse transforms the body into a speaking body.

Many times, Deaf students are excluded from class participation and informal discussions that take place between their peers or the professor and peers. As expected, all students should have access to discussions and class activities. Deaf students tend to feel isolated in large group settings and withdraw from class participation and, further, from learning if they feel the instructor is not addressing/including them. To ensure that the Deaf still have a voice, the instructor can hold optional conferences for all students, where these students can begin one-on-one dialogue. During the conferences, the professor can 'hear' the Deaf students' voices that are evoked through a combination of language and gesture, and understand how his/her Deaf students speak through bodily performances. Instructors that adapt to Deaf learners inevitably enhance their overall teaching.

Focusing on the development of ideas rather than final products helps to motivate Deaf students. Because as Hermans, Ormel, Knoors, and Verhoeven (2007) have pointed out, Deaf children learn languages through visual mediums. As a result, a class must include the visual, whether through PowerPoint presentations, artwork or performances in

the class. Deaf students can listen visually to the gestures, sounds, and movements of the instructor. Students, both hearing and non-hearing, will find the opportunity to think with and through signs. Subsequently, this third ear functions as a dialogical tool where contrasting perspectives or mediums are presented without privileging one over the other. An animated instructor, who speaks at a slower pace, and only when facing his/her students, can communicate more effectively to all students. In addition, if more attention is given to the writerly bodies themselves, rather than merely the text or linguistic positions of individuals, the class becomes more inclusive. As a result, we have an overlapping of cultures, in which all cultures, including Deaf culture, become visible.

We integrate the Deaf community in this third space by giving them access to academic discourse. With the third ear they enter a site of resistance, a space in which change becomes possible. The move towards multiculturalism relocates abandoned knowledge – knowledge that has been rejected because it belonged to the 'Other' in society – and consequently reinstitutes 'aliveness' through difference. Davis (1995) reminds us that we need to be aware of the political and social implications of labelling one's body as disabled. But, by reconceptualising the space they exist in through the act of bringing them into a third space, and then further re-imagining their bodies through the addition of a third ear, we eventually acknowledge the visibility of the students and their comfort in this space.

Furthermore, the third ear establishes negotiation, collaboration, and reflection as possible. Sacks (1989) notes that "[t]o be deaf, to be born deaf...exposes one to a range of linguistic possibilities, and hence to a range of intellectual and cultural possibilities, which the rest of us, as native speakers in a world of speech, can scarcely even begin to imagine" (p. 116). By redesigning our conception of difference, by accepting difference, we must also be prepared to redesign our own physiology, inventing the third ear within our classrooms, such as, in the ways we approach space, how we interact with students, the assignments we give, and so on. We create an ear that hears by paying attention to the ways the body speaks.

Integrating Deaf students begins at the university level and progresses into classrooms. It is crucial that universities provide a home base on their campuses for the Deaf that will provide resources for mainstreamed students. Not only would it provide essential resources to Deaf students, but would also attract them to pursue an education at a post-secondary level, which should counter the low entrance of Deaf students at a university level, as well as the trend of dropping out of school. This home base should include developmental courses, social activities, as well as make available various technological developments, such as Real Time Graphics Display (RTGD). The professor, moreover, should become involved in this process. For instance, professors may evaluate the class notes being offered to their students. Alone, however, these do not disrupt the ongoing historical silence that Deaf students have faced.

In creating the third space, we can complicate our students' assumptions about Deafness. As Kocchar-Lindgren (2006) points out: "[a] hearing person assumes that deafness is based on a lack, an inability to hear sound with insufficient access to spoken language" (p. 418). A study conducted by Harris (1995) reveals that "Deaf people…did not conceptualize Deafness as a loss at all" (p.167). This presumed lack should manifest itself as a false assumption. Depending on the course being taught, the instructor may provide works written by Deaf or hard of hearing authors, and invite classroom collaboration and reflection on the material taught.

Instructors must not only be aware of their space within the class, but their Deaf students' abilities, and the ways they acquire knowledge. They must realise that, for Deaf students, reading is difficult because it highlights a new way of thinking. It becomes important to make the connection between the theory of language and epistemology. The Deaf cannot rely on spoken language alone, and so their language skills are not as developed as those of the hearing culture. Teachers must address the intent of the writer being discussed to their students, so that the students conceptually organize the text in order to comprehend its meaning. The class, with the help of the instructor, should break the silence that has been relegated to the Deaf. As Davis (1995) reminds

us, "in sign language, as in written or printed text, there is no silence. There can be stillness in sign language or in print there can be blank space" (p. 112). Silence is a fabrication by the colonizer that wishes to silence his/her subjects of colonization. It is this silence that the third ear battles against. As I mentioned earlier, the instructor must be aware of the reality of his/her Deaf students' subject positions before embarking on teaching them. Educators must develop a relationship based on understanding with their Deaf students, rather than one based on behavioural differences.As such, instructors must become conscious of their Deaf students' positions as second-language writers. Anderson (1993) explains the Deaf students' difficulty in grasping this new language, since "most deaf people do not know how to get around verbally in hearing communities and eventually stop trying" (p. 35). While the semantic structure of English will remain difficult, even unavailable to some Deaf students, they can still communicate their thoughts and experiences in the mainstream classroom depending on how the instructor presents his/her lessons and/or assignments. To do so, the teacher would have to subvert educational bureaucracies that only value acoustically-based languages.

Realizing that English is a second language for Deaf students, institutions should validate Sign language as a language, one that shapes the identity of Deaf persons, since our identities are created socially and largely by language. Many universities offer language courses in German, Latin, French, and Italian to name a few, but why not a class in Sign language? As a first step, more universities should take the lead of York University's Department of Languages, Literature and Linguistics which offers credit in courses in American Sign Language (ASL), though not a degree program or certificate in ASL. Learning sign language is not merely a way of communicating in another language, but revolutionizes how we think of language. The integration of a Sign language course at universities will be beneficial for all students. It allows for an appreciation for difference, and recognition of the difficulties of becoming bicultural. A class in Sign language would denote the beginning of a pedagogically inclusive framework which sets to balance the

unequal distribution of power.

The classroom – a smaller space than the university that can foster the full practice of democracy – should further dislocate the colonizing of Deaf students. Change begins with a collective self-consciousness pertaining to the facilities available on campus, as well as a professor's self-acknowledgement of diversity within the class. The third ear establishes a politics of inclusion by exceeding the confines of verbal communication in a classroom at the post-secondary level.

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Biography

Zeinab McHeimech completed her Masters in English Language and Literature at the University of Windsor. Her latest project in English explored the role of Enargeia and epistemology in Early Modern Travel and Zoology texts. She is currently conducting independent research investigating the impact of Tarab music on literature, focusing largely on Beat writers in Tangier.