

THE THIRD CULTURE: WORKING TOGETHER

MJ Bienvenu
(Hyattsville, Maryland)
(Translation by Marina L. McIntire)

This text is the revised version of an address delivered to the
Sign Language Interpreters of California, April 6, 1987.

Introduction

This morning, we're going to talk about third culture. What does "third culture" mean? We have some understanding of standard American culture and of Deaf culture — although perhaps not as deep an understanding as we might wish or think we have. Before we begin discussing third culture, however, let us talk about what culture itself really represents.

The important characteristics of any culture include at least four features: language, rules for appropriate behavior (such as how and when to sit and stand, what is humorous and the like), values, and a sense of history and tradition. Most of all, though, a culture must have people. That will serve us as a superficial but adequate definition of culture *per se*.

Third culture and bi-culturalism

Third culture is not a full culture that people can identify as such. Third culture consists of people from two other cultures, for example, hearing and deaf people, coming together. Each of these cultures is different. This means that third culture participants need to determine which set of cultural rules to follow when they are together. Members of third culture bring their own cultural biases with them, but establish a temporary set of cultural rules and values, including those touching on language usage. Some of these rules and values are clear and others are not so clear.

Third culture is neither permanent nor stable. It varies constantly, depending on the immediate reason for the contact. It is a very flexible, changeable, and temporary phenomenon. There is an important distinction to be made between this third culture phenomenon and normal bi-culturalism. People who are bi-cultural have a first culture which they temporarily give up in exchange for a second culture. In the move to the second culture, they take on the language, rules, and values of that second culture. Then they are able to return to their first culture. Being bi-cultural means knowing how to move comfortably between two distinct cultures. Third culture is special in that it represents the possibility of coming to a halfway point, making contact with members of the other culture, but maintaining all the while one's identity as a member of one's first culture.

Third culture

What is third culture? What does it look like? (We should be clear at the outset that it is ours; that is, it belongs both to interpreters and to deaf people.) First, let

Bienvenu

us address the issue of language. It is possible to use either ASL or English in third culture contexts. But when we make initial contact with another third culture member, we tend to use Pidgin Signed English (PSE), or 'foreigner talk.' PSE represents an attempt to match conversational partners at that point along the continuum where they are comfortable and competent. We call this 'language,' but a more appropriate term would be 'accommodation.'

Another communication alternative is simultaneous communication, or sim-com. Sim-com is often used because someone needs to accommodate the needs of a deaf person and a linguistically naive hearing person. The hearing person who can sign in such a situation may use sim-com. Others are superbly skilled at alternating between speech and ASL, or — in the case of a linguistically skilled deaf person — between ASL and signed English. The point is that the most basic and important function of language is communication — bringing people together in mutual understanding.

Let us address rules for behavior next. Some of these rules will seem obvious; others may surprise you. It is important first of all to point out that these rules are not normally 'acquired' in the sense that one's first culture is acquired, but rather they are learned consciously. This is a case of hearing people learning about deaf culture and deaf people learning about hearing culture. This process takes place through observation on the part of both hearing and deaf, as they interact. Some third culture rules may, in some sense, be acquired, but the discussion of rules in each other's culture occurs both formally and informally. For example, Deaf people may ask a hearing friend about appropriate behaviors in the hearing world; hearing people may attend a workshop on deaf culture.

What about third culture rules? Let us take the example of an event such as this: in a large audience, the front row seats are reserved for deaf people. We recog-

nize the importance of deaf people being seated near the front. Hearing people save seats for Deaf people there, and even ask other hearing people to move out of them. We accept this readily as a norm of our third culture.

As a second example, let us think about lighting. If the lights are dimmed, for example, at some social event, hearing people set about remedying that. Hearing waiters look on in bemusement, as the lights are brought up to full power. For people in American hearing culture, the acceptable lighting standard is fairly dim. But in the third culture, bright light is considered to be important — and for obvious reasons.

A third cultural rule requires people to withhold the expression of any cultural conflicts they are experiencing. We simply keep these things to ourselves. For example, when a deaf person approaches and asks a hearing person to interpret a phone call, the hearing person must neither refuse nor complain. The hearing person's feelings about such a request are unimportant; the request must be complied with. In fact it is rarely stated as a request, but rather in terms of an expectation. The rules do not require the deaf person to ask about convenience, nor do they allow the hearing person to resist or to complain.

The same thing holds true when a hearing person approaches a deaf person and asks for help in arrangements for a panel on deaf culture. The deaf person may feel inconvenienced or disinterested, but still must comply. Often, I feel disinclined to participate in such a panel, but I recognize that third culture rules require me to acquiesce, so I go ahead with it.

Many of you saw my presentations yesterday and may have been thinking about the things that we discussed. You may wonder whether and how these issues show up as rules for behavior. Remember that I talked about interpreters being permitted to stop a deaf speaker. The

converse is not permitted: an interpreter is expected never to interrupt a hearing speaker. This seems to be something we have come to accept. Deaf speakers have become accustomed to the idea that the interpreter will be behind the deaf person and they have to accommodate the interpreter by stopping and allowing her to catch up. By contrast, when interpreters are working voice-to-sign, they simply sign away. If they miss something, they do not stop the hearing speaker. Apparently, we have integrated the notion that hearing speakers' status is sufficiently higher than deaf speakers, that we cannot impose on them in the same way.

Yet another example is the situation of a large mixed audience, in which we have interpreters and transliterators working at the same time on a single stage. The interpreter is expected to be stage left (audience right) and the transliterator stage right (audience left). Should some emergency arise, causing them to change places, the deaf people must be informed and allowed to re-seat themselves.

We should note that some of these third culture rules have come from deaf people's experiences, while others come from hearing culture. The third culture rules have been formed by mutual influences from both cultures.

Let us now look at some of the values of the third culture. I think the most highly cherished value in third culture is communication and equal access. All people are accepted equally, whether they are hearing, deaf, dimwitted, fat, skinny, sign wretchedly, or have poor speech. We accept everybody equally. Some of these people may be rejects from their own world — whether deaf or hearing — but the third culture accepts them all. The notion of equality and equal access is primary.

The concept of mainstreaming is an important one to the third culture. After all, third culture itself is a sort of 'mainstreaming' phenomenon. It does not matter where people have come from; we give

respect to, and accommodate each other. Even the person who is inept at signing is welcomed into the group without question.

Many of you in the third culture place value on signing songs [roar of laughter]; enough said. This brings us to some remarks about values: it is very difficult to measure or to categorize values. Conflicts in terms of behavioral violations are much easier to identify than in the area of values. The whole notion of values is a very subtle one. Keeping in mind the importance of equal access, the participation of deaf people at all levels is crucial to the third culture. (That, of course, is one of the problems with song-signing.)

For example, in a convention, it is vital to have a deaf person involved on every panel, on every committee, in virtually every aspect of the event. If there is no deaf person on the board of a third culture organization, that is cause to call a halt to any election process until a deaf person can be included on the board. It is extremely important to have — at the very least — one deaf person's input. It doesn't matter who it is, so long as it is a deaf person.

Who is a member of the third culture? Historically, third culture was strongly influenced by deaf education. For example, hearing people involved in deaf education imported their values virtually wholesale into the third culture. Second, there have been a lot of deaf people (deaf educators) whose lives were lived entirely within the third culture, and who had little or nothing to do with Deaf Culture. Third, a strong influence has come from 'late-in-life' deafened adults. These people grew up hearing and the third culture has offered them a refuge in which their hearing values did not have to change dramatically. Finally, many hearing people who have taken sign language classes enter third culture.

A broad spectrum of deaf people participate in third culture: there are 'heafies,' oral deaf, hard-of-hearing, as well as bi-

Bienvenu

cultural deaf people. This issue of bi-culturalism is an interesting one. Hearing people cannot enter fully into the Deaf culture. Similarly, Deaf people cannot enter fully into the hearing world. (This is simply because of obvious language differences.) Third culture setting offers such people the opportunity for cross-cultural contacts. Deaf people can live wholly in their own culture, but come to conventions and mix with third culture members. Similarly, hearing people whose families and social lives are in the hearing world, may work as interpreters, thereby entering the third culture. Thus, third culture allows both Hearing and Deaf to participate to some degree in bi-cultural experiences. Some people stay entirely within third culture, giving up any identity with either the Deaf or the Hearing culture.

That is a basic picture of third culture. We have discussed language (with the primary emphasis on communication), third culture rules (influenced by both Deaf and Hearing cultures), and values. The last characteristic of culture I mentioned was history and traditions. I have been unable to discover anything in this area. There may be some traditions that I have overlooked, but we should remember that third culture is an extremely flexible, changeable, and temporary phenomenon. Because of these characteristics, I doubt that third culture actually can have a true history or set of traditions.

I hope to see more formal research into third culture. There has been a certain amount of discussion with deaf and hearing members of the third culture, but no serious analysis of its structure. We are limited in our discussions to what we see. At this point, however, there is simply not enough solid published information, and we need it desperately.

In looking over my notes for this talk and trying to clarify my thoughts, I took another look at Baker and Cokely's (1980) graphic description of the Deaf Community. [See Figure 1.] This figure includes four avenues into the

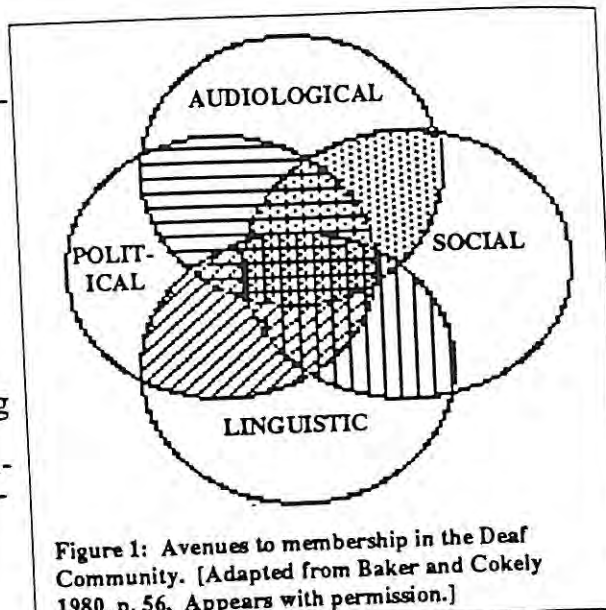


Figure 1: Avenues to membership in the Deaf Community. [Adapted from Baker and Cokely 1980, p. 56. Appears with permission.]

Deaf Community: linguistic, political, social, and audiological, all overlaid with the necessity of the appropriate attitude. It occurs to me that the Deaf Community may be the third culture. If we were to remove the core (equivalent to Deaf culture), the remaining figure may represent third culture. Third culture members may be imagined standing within the shaded areas — having the appropriate attitudes — and using their vantage point to come to an increased understanding of the core.

Significance of third culture

Why is third culture so significant? First, it represents an opportunity for hearing people learning to sign and to meet deaf people. In third culture settings, they can learn about deaf culture and deafness. A second important function is political clout. The Deaf world is very small. In political struggles for deaf people's rights, third culture strengthens the numbers and the impact of demands made on the establishment. Organizations such as RID represent the combined forces of deaf and hearing people working together for political purposes. Many advances have been made — in the field of education, for example — because of the cooperative efforts of third culture members and organizations.

A third function of third culture is the opportunity for Deaf people — myself included — to satisfy our curiosity about hearing culture. Now, of course, I know a great deal about hearing culture; after all, I live in it. Occasionally, though, I want to know more about the hearing world. For example, why does the hearing world place such value on education? Or I may have questions about sound. Why do some sounds — like running your fingernails down the blackboard — seem to upset you hearing people? I always knew that hearing people reacted strongly to that sound — or even to the thought of it, just as you are now as I describe it. Because of my experiences in third culture, I have learned to react just as a hearing person does when I see it, even though I have never heard the effect. Third culture has enriched my knowledge of the lives and experiences of hearing people.

Yet another way in which deaf people's horizons are broadened through third culture is in the area of written English. In my (Deaf) culture, English is not highly valued. Yet on occasion, it becomes important for me to use written English, so I take advantage of the opportunities afforded me by third culture contacts. Most deaf people know hearing members of third culture whom we feel we can trust with our problems in written English. Those contacts can be of great significance to us.

Deaf Awareness week is another valuable function of third culture. Hearing people who know nothing about deafness see other hearing people using their hands, faces, and bodies to communicate and are inspired by the open acceptance of a once-oppressed language. Some of the signing may not be very good, but the very idea of hearing people's pleasure in and acceptance of the language of signs makes Deaf Awareness week of great value to third culture.

Many people have been disillusioned by the linguistic and anthropological research which suggests that it is impos-

sible for them to be bi-cultural. For example, the hearing culture prizes things of no value to me, such as music and spoken English. Such facts might at first glance suggest that we can never have the experience of being bi-cultural — something which is of value to me. These feelings of frustration on both sides are alleviated because of the third culture. By experiencing the contacts and exchanges available in third culture settings, both deaf and hearing people can enjoy the advantages of being bi-cultural. I know many of you feel as I do that bi-culturalism, in and of itself, is a positive thing; we are grateful for the opportunity to experience it. Because of third culture, we can come together in common cause and accomplish much that would be otherwise impossible.

Issues and problems in third culture

In the last few years, in the interpreting field, we've all seen problems and issues arise. Some of them are very emotional. There have been conflicts and arguments of a very serious nature. Why has this happened? Why are people feeling depressed and disillusioned? Why do they not know what to do to resolve the situation? Remember that third culture is a temporary phenomenon and that there are no frozen, established values and rules. As a result, people in third culture never know exactly what to expect.

When something new comes into the culture, it changes things, and people are unprepared for the changes. They do not have the time to prepare for adjustments in the *status quo*. This can be very upsetting. When something new appears, the normal first reaction is emotional — one of rejection. After people understand the impact of any new cultural item, after they understand the impact it has, they can make the necessary adjustments and carry on.

Third culture has always been strongly influenced by interpreters. RID represents interpreters in third culture, and we have, in turn, established the fact that deaf education had a defining role in the

Bienvenu

formative years of RID. Teachers of deaf children had such a strong impact on the field that many rules and common practices in the field of interpreting can be directly tied to deaf education and its view of deaf people. The notion of helping "the deaf," a prescriptive attitude towards deaf people, a certain value placed on teaching deaf people "hearing ways" and how to get along in the hearing world all represent influences from deaf education. Even the name RID — Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf — is an artifact of this attitude.

Recently, a change has taken place: hundreds and thousands of new interpreters are entering third culture. They do not bring any prior experience with deaf culture: they have no deaf family, no experience with deaf education, and no natural connection to the deaf world. They enter third culture *en masse* via interpretation/transliteration programs (ITP's). They have tremendously expanded the numbers in third culture, but they have not yet adjusted to third culture, and *vice versa*. Third culture was not ready for such an influx of new people.

Interpreters have become very Hearing in their attitudes and very "professional," in the sense we have discussed the use of the sign PROFESSION. They have started to take on an attitude that can be expressed as follows: I am a professional. I have paid a great deal for and gone to great lengths to attain my education. It is important for you to pay me for my work. Deaf people are taken aback at this change in attitude, since they were unprepared for this shift toward "professionalism." As this new attitude has become dominant, the relative importance of educators in third culture has decreased. Hearing "professionals" and hearing values are now virtually taking over third culture from the deaf educators. They were not ready, any more than deaf people were. These changes have not yet been integrated into the fabric of the culture.

In the past, interpreting was normally a second job. Maybe one was a teacher and interpreted in the evenings. Or, perhaps one worked for the government, and, in the case of a need for an interpreter, was excused from work to go interpret. Such a person would hurry to court to 'help.' Such people were not usually qualified interpreters. Now, many people work full-time as interpreters; their living depends on interpreting. The notion of "free-lancing" itself is brand-new to the third culture and to many deaf people. They had never thought of interpreting as something that someone would take on as a 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week responsibility.

This great influx of new hearing people (interpreters) and the new notion of "professionalism" have both had a great impact on the third culture. Deaf people have also been changing. For many years, they have been oppressed and held back by all forms of the establishment. Third culture has offered them the opportunity for more positive contacts with the hearing world, and empowered them in their interactions. As we have already established, in third culture we have always placed great value on deaf people and their input. Now, however, some deaf people in third culture have become extremely radical and militant. They have begun to demand that interpreters be qualified in ASL and have been extremely critical when interpreters cannot meet that need. More and more deaf leaders object strenuously when interpreters cannot accommodate their needs in sign-to-voice. In some senses, they have become "too Deaf." Third culture has not been ready for those kinds of changes.

Many of us have seen deaf people proclaiming that their way is best! They have determined that third culture is wrong and have tried to take it over, for instance in the area of interpreter evaluations. Thus, the claim has been made that deaf-designed and deaf-run evaluations would be more appropriate than those offered by RID. Such evaluations often proceed in an interesting way. A

group of deaf people sit down, watch an interpreter work, discuss it among themselves, and agree that they like how this person works and so they "pass" her. The next interpreter they may not like, so they fail him. The third interpreter may be someone they had argued with in the past, and, based on residual ill-will, refuse to pass her. Many new 'evaluations' are like that. (I feel constrained to say in passing that this is reflective of evaluations in the days when deaf education had a larger influence on things.) In any case, many deaf people want to take control of interpreter evaluations.

By contrast, a hearing approach to evaluation is extremely scientific. Hearing people are likely to demand validity and reliability. Deaf people are turned off by this approach. They know what they like and what they understand, and as a result, third culture is in a very serious state of conflict. No solution seems to offer itself readily, and the conflict seems unresolvable. This is just one example of the sort of conflict that has come up.

Another conflict stems from the issue of language use. We have already stated that third culture includes a broad variety of deaf people: 'heafies,' deafened adults, and oral deaf, many of whom live their entire existence within the third culture. Of course, there are also some Deaf bi-cultural members of the third culture. At the same time, we have this tremendous influx of hearing interpreters entering the third culture via ITP's. Those young interpreters meet deaf people and have no idea which to believe. It is an extremely confusing issue for them. Young interpreters have a real need to believe in and follow somebody, but the question is, who?

From an oral deaf person, we may hear the grudging view that signed English is a poor compromise to "real" oralism. The next deaf person we meet may say that oralism is repellent. A third deaf person may have lost his hearing at age twelve and may still be mourning that loss, not yet fully adjusted to his deaf-

ness. Such a person may look on the interpreter as someone who will make life much easier. A new interpreter does not know who to follow, who to believe, or what to do. It also means that third culture is in a very confused state. Deaf Culture has no confusion on these issues at all. But the young interpreter, faced with such a variety of views within third culture, has no clear-cut way to make a decision about who is 'right.'

We have already discussed the notion of equal access and equality for all members of the third culture. Hearing people with strong opinions about the rights of deaf people to ASL may find themselves in any given third culture situation chatting with a hearing friend, using spoken English. Some deaf people object to that behavior, claiming that hearing people who can sign well have no right to speak without signing when there are deaf people present. Yet other Deaf people insist that they would rather have people switching between ASL and spoken English, because they object to even to the principle of simultaneous communication (sim-com). The hearing people in such situations are confused; they may have thought that they have the same rights to their own first language as do Deaf people. There have been articles written around the pros and cons of sim-com: some people support it wholeheartedly and others are repelled by it. Who is the hearing person to believe? More importantly, who has the power to decide?

Speaking strictly for myself, I would much prefer for hearing people to alternate between languages. I have had more than my share of watching bad signing as people try to use sim-com, and I would rather not have to tolerate any more of it. Having taken a very strong stance and believing strongly in the right of deaf people to use ASL, I have to believe that hearing people feel the same way about using their own first language. I cannot, however, speak for all deaf people. Many feel quite strongly that if hearing people can sign, they are obligated to do so in the vicinity of deaf people, regardless of

Bienvenu

who the conversational partner is or what the topic may be.

Because of the indistinct nature of third culture rules, this conflict will likely be with us for a long time. Hearing people have no clear rule to follow. Regardless of what they do, they will find deaf people objecting. If they speak without signing, some deaf people will object. If they try to use sim-com, other deaf people will object. No matter what their behavior, they are going to be 'wrong.'

The number of educational interpreters (i.e., those working in mainstreamed classrooms) has expanded tremendously. They have made their presence known in the third culture. Many of us feel that the people in education can just go back where they came from. This attitude is strong because deaf members of third culture have a very strong feeling of rejection towards education. They have had very bad experiences in education, and educational interpreters functioning in the mainstream setting just represent everything that is wrong about the deaf educational experience. Third culture ought to be a safe place for them. We have enough conflict, enough issues coming up between deaf and hearing people. The prospect of adding in the problems of deaf education as represented by educational mainstream interpreters is just too much for many members of the third culture. They are not ready for it now, and it may be that they will never be prepared to accept educational interpreters. The sense of things is that third culture has enough problems already.

Another issue is, who listens to whom? Some hearing people express strong opinions about the need for deaf people to accept the hearing world and to integrate into that world. Deaf people may indeed be tempted by the possibility, although they naturally wish to retain their links with the deaf world. In fact, there are elitists from each world — hearing and deaf — who view the third culture as a sort of 'dumping ground' for rejects from both cultures. They are likely to insist that

only membership in one culture (or possibly the 'true' bi-cultural experience described above) is an acceptable alternative. This view, of course, is in direct conflict with third culture norms of acceptance for all. If a deaf person accepts the notion that the hearing world is so much 'superior,' then she or he is labeled with a bad attitude. It will be said that such a person has 'sold out' to the hearing world.

The RID has a very strong foundation of experience with third culture. RID was established in 1964 and evaluations were established in 1972. In the early years, deaf board members were 'heafies,' they were teachers in schools for deaf children, they were NAD leaders, people who worked for the government. Those were the deaf board members of the RID who had control. Also, when evaluations first began, the first RSC's were the same people, deaf educators, teachers of the deaf, and so forth. After 1972, however, the interpreting field itself began to make some changes, and more and more deaf people made changes at the same time. Lately, those 'heafies' have not had so much power, and deaf board members have been more and more likely to be Deaf.

Remember the third culture rule that requires an organization to have a deaf person on the board? That has become an increasingly important issue. As we look down a slate of candidates, if there are no deaf people, we experience a sense of distress. When we see a "deaf name", that offers a degree of relief. As third culture members, we recognize the importance of having a deaf person on the board. If only one deaf person running for any office on a slate of candidates in a board election, it will not matter who he or she is running against, or what the qualifications for the job are. If there is only one deaf person, we feel obligated to vote for him or her because of this third culture norm. We view it as crucial to include a deaf person. Some may label this tokenism. Regardless, this is a common occurrence in any mixed group.

Let us look at how interpreters prepare for jobs. The Code of Ethics suggests that interpreters ask for information about the assignment before determining our ability to accept it. This has led to a particular kind of behavior, in which the interpreter gets a call for a job, and the first question on his or her lips is, "What kind of deaf people are they? Do they use ASL, PSE, Manually Coded English?" How many of you have ever asked, "What kind of hearing person are they?" I suspect many of you have never asked such a question. You assume that the hearing person is going to speak perfect English, but with deaf people, there is a 'problem.'

Another interesting rule has to do with dual service situations — 'interpreting' and 'transliterating.' This practice began at the RID convention in 1982, in Hartford [Connecticut]. I did not attend the Hartford convention, because at that time I had not yet become involved with the RID, but I certainly heard stories! People talked endlessly about the agony, the shock, the conflict, that went on between the 'heafies' and the Deaf in Hartford. It had the impact of a hurricane hitting the deaf world. I look upon this as a positive event, because new standard behaviors for equal access have developed as a result. RID has continued this practice, and CIT has joined in. This means that a deaf person coming to a national convention knows that there will be an interpreter audience right and a transliterator audience left. They will be served appropriately, regardless of their language preferences.

Moreover, hearing people do not have to struggle any more with simultaneous communication, or with a second language. They can use their first language in comfort. That very notion of a hearing person using only their first language, English, has been astonishing for many deaf people. Some deaf people are shocked to find that a hearing person, even very skilled signers, might prefer to speak; this has had an amazing impact. I

feel that it is very positive move, and I applaud it and encourage more of it.

Yet it has caused problems at the same time. In any culture, it is the members of that culture who recognize and label each other as co-members. Black people decide who is Black and who is not. The color of one's skin is a trivial issue. If I identify myself as a Black person, and other Blacks identify me as such, then that identifies us as cultural members, sharing a cultural bond. The same thing has been true for deaf people. Hearing loss is fairly irrelevant. Attitude, language, and social patterns form the basis for mutual recognition.

The problem arises in a setting where we have dual services (interpretation and transliteration). This practice has effectively taken away the power of deaf people to label each other as deaf. Deaf people feel threatened. They enter a setting such as this, they see dual service, and they may prefer to use the transliterator. But if deaf people sit on the left side of the audience to watch the transliterator, they now have the anxiety that other deaf people will label them as 'heafies.' In effect, hearing people have decided how to label us and as Deaf people we have lost our power to label each other and to identify each other as deaf cultural members.

In the past, deaf education labelled us, as 'oral failures,' 'learning disabled,' or whatever. Interpreters gave us support in our search for identity and independence, but now they are labeling us. I am sorry to say that some people now experience great discomfort simply because they prefer to watch a transliterator.

I personally prefer to use the interpreter. But I may have a moment of curiosity and wonder what the same message looks like from the transliterator. If I let my eyes wander over to the left, the person next to me may question my motivation. I am not allowed to look at the transliterator! Worse, I miss a couple of minutes of the content of the speech, because

Bienvenu

I feel guilty and confused, wondering to myself why I felt the need to watch the transliterator. It is as though I have done something 'wrong.' Deaf people have now started to feel resentful at this phenomenon. It is as though you are putting labels on us and governing our behavior.

What can we do?

You might be feeling a little depressed, a little distressed at this point. What can we do? Ceasing the dual service and going back to what we had before is certainly not the answer. There are no ready solutions to this very tricky situation. The point is, however, that the world is not going to end tomorrow over this.

Remember that I have said we need more research into third culture. It is a very important issue to all of us. For class projects, third culture members should be taking on some kind of analysis, for instance, of: the role of the interpreter in third culture; how interpreters can make contacts with the deaf world; what the tools are for problem-solving in third culture; the kind of social networking that is done. We need research on who influences third culture; on how they influence third culture; how cooperative ventures can be more effective in the third culture. Research and careful analysis of third culture and its mores is one way that we are going to be able to make changes and make third culture a more effective tool.

Another major means for us to improve third culture relationships is communication. We need to discuss our feelings openly, to blow up if we are feeling angry, and to get things off our chest. Just the very notion of open communication can be threatening, but we should overcome that fear. I have to admit that, when I first started making contacts with third culture, when I observed a hearing person using the wrong sign, I was ready for a fight. I immediately identified simple errors as an attitude problem. Many deaf people still feel the same way. Increasingly, however, I know that it is much better to approach the hearing per-

son, and inform him or her directly of the error. I have become less suspicious, and can offer more support to hearing people. Other Deaf people can do the same thing. We deaf people can spread that kind of attitude. I have to admit that I still have feelings like that. Even today, when I see somebody use a sign incorrectly, I am inclined to be suspicious. The point is that I still work at understanding that other people are making innocent mistakes in their usage and not intending any insults. My experiences in third culture have helped me be more tolerant and accepting of people's errors.

Third culture can help both deaf and hearing people in the same way. Communication such as we have been discussing means we all gain an education. Not 'education' in the sense that deaf people have experienced it; rather, we are focusing on the education that comes from experience. We can educate, and we can be educated, through experience.

How do we get things together? Maybe we could, for a moment, put this notion of third culture on hold, step back, and think for a moment about what our own worlds are like. Interpreters should ask themselves what the hearing world is like, what their values are as hearing people. Many of you would recognize — if you were honest with yourselves — that you have become so involved with the third culture that you have forgotten many of your own hearing values, and many of the rules of the hearing world. That is wrong. You should not drop the rules and values of your own world. You should hold on to them.

I challenge you to go back to the hearing world for awhile. Forget about deafness, forget about interpreting, forget about all the issues, all the money problems, everything. For a full week, go back into the hearing world. Turn on the music, go dancing, whatever being in the hearing world means for you. Just talk to people. I tell you, you will be amazed at the things you have forgotten. You have been so 'into' the deaf world and

third culture that you have forgotten how to be a normal hearing person. Some of you have even forgotten how to speak normal English. You will find yourself saying, pow! pah! cha! Your hearing friends will look at you with at least a little puzzlement. And you will realize that you do not speak normal English any more. You have forgotten how to do it. Go back, enjoy, and appreciate what the hearing world has to offer you. Be bi-cultural!

The same thing holds true for deaf people. It is very easy for a deaf person to become totally engrossed, totally involved, with third culture, because it is so fascinating. But I am absolutely adamant about my Thursday nights! Thursday night is bowling night for me — all deaf bowling night. I would not give it up for the world. I have my bowling shirt, and that is my one dependable contact with the deaf world. It allows me to reinforce and re-recognize my own deaf values. I still carry my third culture values with me, of course, and I might ask somebody about interpreters. Most deaf people only trust their own children, feeling that their daughter or son is the best interpreter possible. That is a true value in the deaf world, and there is absolutely nothing wrong with it.

In the past, I used to try to convince people that they were wrong, and that they should have a professional interpreter. But then I realized that there was nothing wrong with it, and I should not try to challenge it. The feeling of mistrust toward interpreters is perfectly normal. With their daughters or sons, regardless of their qualifications, Deaf people can feel safe. I do not now try to convince them that they are wrong in their attitudes, but I may ask them, "Well, but what if it is something really hard? What if your daughter passed away? You know, you really need to think about other possibilities, in terms of interpreting." People can then be open to other possibilities. This allows me to offer some alternatives without challenging people's need to feel safe or comfortable.

More and more deaf people are aware of interpreters. I can then bring something of value back to interpreters, because I can remind them of Deaf cultural values. You see, we are dealing with two sets of cultural values: what people like, what they do not like, what they find precious in the world, what they find repellent. We members of third culture can bring those sets of values to third culture, and it offers us more solid grounds to negotiate out of those two complex sets of cultural values and rules, what we want, what we do not want, in third culture. We are never going to be fully, one hundred percent members of third culture. We will constantly be in transition between our own (deaf or hearing) world and third culture, where we meet.

Yet if we put third culture on hold, go back to each of our respective cultures, the hearing world or the deaf world, think through our values, think through our cultural rules, that makes it easier for us to have open discussions. Everything is easier because we know what our own values are. We have a clear picture of each other's own culture. Third culture is always going to be unclear, and in a state of flux. We are not going to improve the situation in third culture until we have a clearer understanding of our own values.

That will then allow us to have open and free discussions, which will in turn bring much clarification to the issues we face. Each culture is valuable in and of itself. We should not try to mix or confuse the two. Third culture is wonderful for meeting with members of the other culture, socializing, political advantages, for the exchange of cultural values and of information. It would be inappropriate, however, to allow third culture to influence personal decisions or to influence our lives too much. Third culture is for cross-cultural contacts. We each have our own worlds that we live in, and that is where our personal values should be grounded.

Bienvenu

A valuable thing to do would be to establish a series of panels with various deaf people included. Ask them to share their feelings about interpreters and what they like in an interpreter. I participated on such a panel once in Washington, D.C., and it was an incredible experience. There were terrible blow-ups. People were crying and angry. It was just unbelievable. Deaf people were angry; one man just walked out on it. The woman in charge was dumfounded. One Deaf person got up and was 'screaming' in ASL. The voice interpreter was thrown for a loop, and could not come up with an appropriate translation. She stopped the deaf person, and the response was abusive. Yet, everybody learned from the experience.

One might have felt some sympathy with the hearing people; they were very upset about the deaf man who had gotten up and left in the middle of the panel. At this point, however, I feel indifferent. The level of emotion fails to upset me. We all learned something from that experience. Conflicts like that do not end the world. It is better for them to occur and for us to learn that we can go right on living.

Third culture members function as the middle people — the transmitters of messages and information between the two cultures, hearing and deaf. Deaf consumers especially should look at themselves in this function. We should maintain our own first-culture values and rules, but at the same time recognize that we, as third culture members, have the duty to carry things back and forth.

Our field has become bi-cultural (for third culture really functions that way). We will always find ourselves vulnerable to pain and shock as a result of behaviors from members of the other culture. There will always be people objecting to things that we say or do. But we need to listen to each other: not to be close-minded, but open-minded.

We are vulnerable because of the very serious issues that come between us, but we are learning that we can open ourselves and people will accept us. I am constantly amazed at how important hearing people have become to me as friends. They are no longer "the enemy." Such are the rewards of open communication.

So, in terms of working together, it is very important to regard the other set of cultural values and the language with respect. (If we are honest, probably we'll all be feeling inside that our own is really the best, but that's okay.) Just as important, though, we must hold on to our own languages and cultures, and to keep communication lines open.

Look at the letters of your acronym: S.L.I.C. View them as standing for Struggle, Learn, Interact, and Cope. With those directives as your guidelines, you will be able to carry on and eventually succeed.

Both author and translator wish to thank Bonnie Sherwood, Sandy MacEachern and Gary Sanderson for their assistance with the translation, and Nathalie Marbury for her technical assistance. We also appreciate the moral and financial assistance of the S.L.I.C. board.

The author extends her particular gratitude to Betty Colonomos for her assistance in the preparation of the original presentation and for her many contributions towards an understanding of "third culture."