As the first book on sign language policy and planning in the Deaf-World, Reagan does the impossible with this book—write comprehensively, yet concisely for two broad audiences—those unfamiliar with language planning and policy and those unfamiliar with the Deaf-World. As someone who grew up smack dab in the Deaf-World, and with degrees in ASL and deaf education, I prepared myself for a redundant “One day, Laurent Clerc hopped on a boat to the United States … blah, blah …” But that was not the case. Reagan, as a master storyteller, was able to write succinctly with just enough information necessary for people unfamiliar with the Deaf-World to follow and yet include information to astonish and engage someone (who thought she was) quite familiar about the history of the Deaf-World.

Did you know that, in 1819, American School for the Deaf (known as Connecticut Asylum at that time), submitted a report to the directors of the school, saying, “Articulation is not taught. It would require more time than the present occasion furnishes, to state the reasons which have induced the Principal of the Asylum and his associates not to waste their labor and that of the pupils upon this comparatively useless branch of the education of the deaf and dumb” (p. 100).

Articulation and speech is one of many controversial themes Reagan does not dance around in his book, and he also tackles the increase of cochlear implants, developments in genetic testing, eugenics, the decline of residential schools, the fluidity of local deaf communities, and English (and ASL) imperialism, to the point where it is subtly suggested that Signed Languages may fit the definition of endangered languages. He makes a number of suggestions on next steps, and he has faith in the Deaf-World “to survive and, perhaps, even to continue to thrive … whose commitment to it as their vernacular language is unquestionable” (p. 128).

Quite a number of references are made to signs and concepts in ASL to Deaf Art, ASL standards, Sign Language legislation in different countries, and online dictionaries of sign languages all over the world. With current technological advances, I found myself wishing there were active, direct links to the art, quotes in sign language (in video) and Web sites from the book. Clearly, this is not possible with a static book but perhaps Reagan will take note, and I will be the first in line for the second edition, in e-reader format!

The staticity of this book, like the majority of books out there, does not take away the fact that this book is teeming with information and citations (the references section is 45 pages altogether!) including in-depth information about Deaf Culture and ASL, Language Planning and Policy, History of ASL from 1800’s to today, Manual Sign Codes, and Sign Language Planning and Policy in Other Parts of the World.

Considering all that the book has to offer, Language Policy and Language Planning for Sign Languages would be meaningful for those in the field of education, psychology, sociology, philosophy, political science, anthropology, linguistic and cultural studies, especially the fields of Deaf Studies and Sign Languages. Reagan concludes the book with insightful candor analyzing language and power in the Deaf-World: “Language policy for deaf people, both in the United States and in most parts of the world, does not yet reflect equality or social justice, and this colors language rights everywhere and for everyone” (p. 185).

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