**Book Review**

**A New Frontier: Emerging Theories in American Sign Language Discourse**


Some of you will recall Ceil Lucas, a pioneer in sociolinguistics who conducted the very first research project that launched visits to 10 cities across the United States in the 1990s. At around the same time, Scott Liddell conducted a groundbreaking study on spatial use in American Sign Language (ASL). Another pioneer, Ted Supalla, identified classifiers used in ASL in his dissertation. Others in the field of ASL linguistics have also broken new ground and are deserving of recognition. In the 1990s, I had the honor of working as a research assistant with some of these scholars on their projects. Much has changed since then.

This book is the 17th volume published in the *Sociolinguistics in Deaf Communities* series—it presents a refreshing and novel way of thinking about ASL discourse at a higher level and in a different way. Although the main focus of this book is on discourse in ASL, the author of each chapter offers his/her perspectives applied to discourse—that is, how sign-language users sign within their social and cultural contexts in face-to-face interactions.

In this book, Roy has assembled a cast of cognitive linguists, sociolinguists, and discourse analysts, who are clearly knowledgeable in their fields. In the initial chapter, Paul Dudis describes depiction related to use of the body (human physical actions) and use of space within a setting in ASL discourse. Next, Mary Thumann identifies and analyzes depiction in action and constructed dialogues in ASL presentations made by four nationally renowned ASL teachers.

In Jack Hoza’s chapter, he discusses politeness functions of “HEY” and “WELL” signs in ASL as examples of discourse markers. Laurie Swabey discusses reference in ASL discourse. Christopher Stone, a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter, describes registers found in BSL genres. Daniel Roush analyzes and discusses “conduit” metaphors in English and ASL. Finally, Jeffrey Davis presents groundbreaking studies in the area of discourse in Plains Indian Sign Language.

Although each chapter has its own theme and the book provides a nice variety of discussions, Roy does a nice job of highlighting related material and tying all of them to the latest research findings in the field of ASL discourse. Depiction is currently the latest groundbreaking research topic studied in the field of ASL Linguistics. “Depiction” has become the new buzzword, and in the future, it may replace terms such as “classifiers” and “space”—it is still a little too early to say for sure. The studies are definitely promising and have considerable merit.

What is missing are projections about the future direction these studies will take, and some suggestions or recommendations about follow-up research. For those who enjoy learning more about ASL structures and their forms and functions used by people in actual situations, this book will be enlightening and thought provoking. It will bring readers up to speed on the latest findings in the field of ASL discourse. This is a “New Frontier”—a new way of thinking—compared to our knowledge and understandings in the 1990s. It makes me wonder where we will be 20 years from now—I cannot wait to find out!

Kim B. Kurz
American Sign Language & Interpreting Education, National Technical Institute for the Deaf, Rochester Institute of Technology