

Talking Hands: What Sign Language Reveals About the Mind

By Margalit Fox

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Talking Hands: What Sign Language Reveals About the Mind By Margalit Fox

Imagine a village where everyone "speaks" sign language. Just such a village -- an isolated Bedouin community in Israel with an unusually high rate of deafness -- is at the heart of *Talking Hands: What Sign Language Reveals About the Mind.* There, an indigenous sign language has sprung up, used by deaf and hearing villagers alike. It is a language no outsider has been able to decode, until now.

A *New York Times* reporter trained as a linguist, Margalit Fox is the only Western journalist to have set foot in this remarkable village. In *Talking Hands*, she follows an international team of scientists that is unraveling this mysterious language.

Because the sign language of the village has arisen completely on its own, outside the influence of any other language, it is a living demonstration of the "language instinct," man's inborn capacity to create language. If the researchers can decode this language, they will have helped isolate ingredients essential to all human language, signed and spoken. But as *Talking Hands* grippingly shows, their work in the village is also a race against time, because the unique language of the village may already be endangered.

Talking Hands offers a fascinating introduction to the signed languages of the world -- languages as beautiful, vital and emphatically human as any other -- explaining why they are now furnishing cognitive scientists with long-sought keys to understanding how language works in the mind.

Written in lyrical, accessible prose, *Talking Hands* will captivate anyone interested in language, the human mind and journeys to exotic places.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
The world of sign languages and cognitive research comes to life in this story of a remote Israeli village that's become a test bed for understanding how the human brain processes language. *New York Times* reporter Fox follows researchers, led by University of Haifa professor Wendy Sandler, to the Bedouin village of Al-Sayyid, where isolation, genetics and inbreeding have led to a higher than usual percentage of deafness in the population. In response, the villagers have created a home-brew sign language used by both the hearing and deaf. By studying this unique language, Sandler and her cohort hope to gain deeper insight into how the brain acquires and uses language. Chapters alternate between the painstaking work in Al-Sayyid and a history of sign language itself. Both are gracefully reinforced with vivid examples, from the early insistence of experts that proper sign language must produce words in one-to-one correspondence with spoken language to a lively gathering in Al-Sayyid where conversation flows freely in six languages: English, Hebrew, Arabic, American Sign Language, Israeli Sign Language and the local sign language. Fox takes readers on a fascinating tour of deaf communication, clearly explaining difficult concepts, and effortlessly introducing readers to a silent world where communication is anything but slow and awkward. *(Aug. 21)*
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From Booklist
New York Times reporter and linguist Fox joined a team of researchers as they traveled to a remote Bedouin village in Israel to record a unique sign language developed over generations. The language, used by deaf and hearing alike, afforded the researchers the ideal conditions for studying a "virgin sign" language, one developed through isolation and heredity, passed down through three generations. Fox recounts the experience of learning and adapting to a new culture—the Bedouin and the signing—as the researchers share meals, lodging, and common experiences with the families they encounter. Fox interweaves the research expedition with the long history of the politics and science behind the study of sign language and human language in general. Drawing on research by linguists, psychologists, and neurologists, Fox reveals the complexity of sign language and the efforts by the deaf to communicate with each other and the hearing. She recalls the contributions of pioneers, including Gallaudet College, Noam Chomsky, and Ursula Bellugi, as well as the Bedouins in their remote village, preserving a beautiful and expressive language. Bush, Vanessa

Review
"This is a captivating and important book, minutely researched and vividly narrated, about an isolated Bedouin village where hearing and deaf people alike communicate in sign language. Such situations are increasingly rare and precious. Fox's book will be fascinating to anyone interested in the nature of human language or indeed in cognitive neuroscience."

-- Oliver Sacks, M.D.

Users Review

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As people who live in the actual modest era should be change about what going on or information even knowledge to make them keep up with the era that is certainly always change and make progress. Some of you maybe will update themselves by reading through books. It is a good choice for yourself but the problems coming to you is you don't know what one you should start with. This Talking Hands: What Sign Language Reveals About the Mind is our recommendation to help you keep up with the world. Why, because this book serves what you want and want in this era.

Doris Stanford:

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John Casteel:

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