

I SIGN, THEREFORE I AM

JUHANA SALONEN



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Finnish original (Viiton – olen olemassa) © 2017 Salonen, Juhana

English translation © 2021 Eva Malkki

Published by: BoD – Books on Demand, Helsinki, Finland

Printed by: BoD – Books on Demand, Norderstedt, Germany

ISBN: 9789528049876

Acknowledgements

There are not enough signs or words in the world for me to thank those who have supported me throughout my life. First and foremost, I am deeply indebted to my mother, Sisko-Margit Syväoja. She has contributed to this book her version of my coming-of-age story. I am particularly grateful to all my sign language friends, who have been incredibly supportive. I won't name specific names; I am referring to the sign language community as a whole. Great thanks are also due to my family (my wife and Titta), who have always been there to support the completion of my book's translation process, my late father, my extended family, and all those who have observed my life at close range.

Jussi Rinta-Hoiska created most of the photo illustrations for the book. Hats off to him for this unique photography project, during which I literally got to look back in time and comb through memories – some of them painful. A picture is worth a thousand words. Thanks also to Noora Karjalainen, Antti Kronqvist, Teemu Lipasti-Sjöroos (with car) and Olga Green, who appear in the pictures. Assistance in arranging the photography sessions came from, among others, Juha Leppänen, Mattokymppi in Jyväskylä, Sveitsin lukio upper secondary school in Hyvinkää and the Hyvinkää Hospital.

Special thanks to Tiina Särkkä, who created the layout of the book, including visual elements pertaining to deaf culture. Nor must I forget Eva Malkki, who translated my Finnish original work into English, and my advance reader Gavin Lilley, whose contributions have been invaluable. Similarly, thanks are due to the advance readers of the Finnish original (Annemari Ahoste, Kirsimarja Alatalo, Liisa Kauppinen, Arttu Liikamaa, Lea Nieminen, Mika Rasila, Iris Rautiainen, Janina Rintala, Olivia Timmermans and Outi Toura-Jensen), whose insightful comments helped me fine-tune the book, and to Marjo-Leea Alapuranen, who checked my references to bibliography in English. Thank you to my colleagues Danny De Weerdt, Tommi Jantunen, Laura Kanto,

Hanna Niutanen-Di Renzo and Elina Tapio, who commented on translations of sign language-related terminology. I am also indebted to my employer, the Sign Language Centre of the University of Jyväskylä, for the support I have received in writing this book. Finally, thank you to all those who have contributed financially to the translation of this book: an anonymous donor, Evantia, Finnish Association of the Deaf, Mokoma Oy, TulkkausILONA Oy, Tulkkauspalvelut Mireal Oy, VAMLAS Supporting Foundation for Children and Youth with Disabilities, the Via Sign Language Sector Cooperative and VIPARO Oy.

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This book is dedicated to
the sign language community,
from which I have drawn and continue
to draw so much strength.

**“What matters deafness of the ears
when the mind hears? The one true deafness,
the incurable deafness, is that of the mind .”**

Victor Hugo, writing to Ferdinand Berthier (25/11/1845)



I Sign, Therefore I Am is the powerful story of a deaf young man struggling with his identity, and of his growth into a sign language user who is proud of his culture.

Being the deaf child of hearing parents and the only deaf person in my early surroundings: these were the foundations for the identity crisis I underwent in my youth. The crisis could have had a tragic end, but fortunately in my case it did not. It took years of searching, however, to finally grow into my identity as a deaf person and to adopt Finnish Sign Language as my mother tongue.

I wrote this book to share my life experiences with members of any linguistic or cultural minority. This is a highly topical issue in society, as such minorities are increasingly in the limelight.

Many automatically assume that minorities have it bad, and that their members deviate – in a negative sense – from the majority population also in other ways. This book offers excellent opportunities for seeing the world through a deaf person's eyes and for correcting misguided views. At the same time, it provides compelling evidence of the benefits of deafness and sign language for both the deaf and the population at large.



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