

手話の多様性そして日本のろう教育への課題

Sign Language Variation and Implications for Deaf Education in Japan

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ABSTRACT

本論では、ろう者が使用する、Visual-gestural 言語（手話）に注目し、日本で使用されている三種類の手話の分類：「日本手話」、「対応手話」、「中間手話」について詳しく検討をする。ろう者の場合、言語環境及び教育環境がさまざまであり、言語の多様性が見られる。親が聴者の子供たちは、音声言語で育ち、親がろう者の子供たちは、手話で育ち手話を自然に習得する。日本では、かつて手話は教育現場で禁じられていたが、少しずつ認可されている。本論では「手話」がどのようにろう学校で取り扱われているのか調べ、手話の多様性について理解が広まることを願う。

This paper focuses on the visual-gestural language of the deaf by discussing the three types of shuwa used in Japan: 'Nihon Shuwa' (Japanese Sign Language or JSL), 'Taiou Shuwa' (Manually Coded Japanese) and 'Chuukan Shuwa' (Contact Signing). Diversity in language use occurs for the deaf as their linguistic and educational backgrounds are never the same: some deaf children have hearing parents and are surrounded by spoken language, while others have Deaf parents and acquire sign language naturally. In Japan, sign language use has been prohibited in deaf schools but is currently gaining more acceptance. This paper aims to investigate the status of 'shuwa' in deaf schools in Tokyo to raise awareness of the variations that exist when the term 'shuwa' is used.

Introduction

Most children in Japan learn and study in their first language. But there are children who cannot acquire Japanese as their first language because they are deaf ('deaf' with a small 'd' will be used in a neutral manner while 'Deaf' with a capital 'D' refers to a linguistic minority that uses sign language). The natural language for these children should be sign language but the Japanese educational system insists on the acquisition of Japanese, thus depriving deaf children of their rights to learn in a visual language. Throughout history, the educational methods used to teach the deaf have varied. The current trend in Japan is slowly shifting towards the recognition that sign language should be used in deaf schools. In Japan, sign language is referred to as 'shuwa'. On the surface, this is beneficial for deaf children, but a closer examination of the term 'shuwa' and of its usage reveal that variations exist and that many types of 'shuwa' do not refer to the natural sign language of the deaf.

The first half of this paper aims to look at variations in 'shuwa' to investigate how these variations may affect the education of the deaf. The term 'shuwa' is very broad and encompasses 'Nihon Shuwa' (Japanese Sign Language or JSL), 'Taiou Shuwa' (Manually Coded Japanese or language signed according to Japanese grammar) and 'Chuukan Shuwa' (Contact Signing). These three distinctions are based on a model of sign language variation proposed earlier by Yazawa (1996, as cited in Nakamura, 2006). Note however that the term, 'Dentouteki Shuwa', that Yazawa uses is referred to here as 'Nihon Shuwa' (JSL). The second half of this paper discusses these three types of sign variety for deaf education in Japan.

Three Variations in 'Shuwa'

Nihon Shuwa (JSL)

The natural language for the Deaf is called Japanese Sign Language (JSL) (in Japanese, 'Nihon Shuwa'). Unlike spoken languages, sign languages use the visual-gestural modality. This characteristic of sign language resulted in many misconceptions that sign languages are only gestures and not language, and culminated in sign language being banned in deaf education.

Research on American Sign Language (ASL) shows that sign languages are more iconic than spoken ones (Emmorey, 2002). Since sign languages are visual languages, many signs represent the object or things being described. For example, when describing the appearance of a person, signers often give detailed traits of the person so that the viewer can actually visualize the person being discussed. If a signer is trying to explain that the person wears glasses, the sign for 'glasses' is made (with both hands drawing the line of the frame of glasses), then the signer actually draws the shape of the glasses near their eyes. If one needs to describe 'the man is wearing square-framed glasses' in English, there is no iconic connection between the meanings of each word in the sentence. But in ASL, the sign that will have the meaning of 'squared-frame' is similar to a gesture that actually draws the shape of the glasses. This was one of the characteristics of ASL that caused it to be perceived as not being a true language. Careful attention reveals that, although the signs for 'glasses' and 'square-framed' may look iconic, other signs, such as 'man' (signed with open hands and the thumb touching the forehead and the chest), do not have iconic images. The sign for man is arbitrary in its relationship to the actual meaning. In JSL, 'man' is shown by the thumbs-up sign, indicating that sign languages around the world are not universal.

In the Japanese context, people typically think that

JSL is ungrammatical because it has no particles. Ichida (2001) objects to this view and provides evidence that not all languages in the world have particles. Moreover, word-order and Non-Manual Signals (NMS) (such as head movement, eye/eyebrow movement, mouthing and eye gaze) have important grammatical roles in JSL. For example, one can make different types of questions by changing the head placement (like tilting the head forward).

Ichida (2001) describes many linguistic aspects of JSL and clearly states that JSL is a language. He believes problems have arisen in deaf education because hearing teachers are not aware that their students have such a complex language and teachers think they have to teach the children 'shuwa' instead of teaching in 'shuwa'.

Taiou Shuwa

Japanese Sign Language is a language for the Deaf that developed naturally, but manually coded signs exist also that were invented artificially to follow the grammar of Japanese to support spoken language development. Since most deaf school teachers are hearing, it is inevitable that they speak and sign at the same time.

When the Deaf adapts to the hearing, it is usually in the form of Taiou Shuwa, which means that the signs used in JSL are arranged in the order of spoken Japanese, so that it is easier for the hearing to understand. Are these signed systems languages? Bos (1994) states that signed languages are unnatural and are not real languages. They are artificial as they try to fit the signs of sign languages into the grammar of spoken ones. In the English setting, Strong (1988) also makes clear that signed systems used in a classroom that advocates the Total Communication Approach (an approach that believes that any form of communication mode can be used to communicate with the deaf) is an artificial code used to represent English in a visual-gestural

mode. Stevens (1980) cautions teachers of the deaf not to use Manually Coded English (MCE) as a tool to teach language but as a tool for communication that may lead to language learning. According to Supalla (1991), MCE is different from ASL and lacks the language component of ASL because it does not have the modality constraints that ASL has. To prove this hypothesis, Supalla (1991) observed deaf children in an MCE-based educational setting. The children did not use MCE and case markings of English were missing from their communication mode. The question of different modalities in spoken and sign language and the possibility of actually transferring a spoken language to a signed system was raised in this study.

Torigoe (1996) provides reasons for why such a system has spread in Japan. In sign language circles and sign language courses offered by the municipal governments in Japan, the textbooks are in Japanese, providing an advantageous situation for hearing teachers. Thus the so-called 'shuwa' learned in Japan is mostly 'Taiou Shuwa' and heavily influenced by Japanese word order.

In the Declaration of the Deaf that promoted the Deaf as a linguistic minority, Kimura and Ichida (1995) used the term SimCom (abbreviation for simultaneous communication) to describe how the hearing would produce signs as they spoke or mouthed Japanese utterances. One of the main points in the Declaration of the Deaf is that a clear distinction between those who are deaf, hard of hearing and adventitiously deafened should be made as Deaf people prefer JSL while hard of hearing ones prefer SimCom (as outlined in Quay and Rackham, 1999).

Municipal governments, however, have not made such distinctions in their many sign language class offerings. When people finish such classes offered mostly free of charge, they believe that they have acquired JSL. Most of the time, their signing is heavily influenced by Japanese grammar

as they usually speak and sign at the same time (SimCom). When these people interpret for the Deaf they believe that their signing is 'better' and more 'correct'.

Sign language classes in Musashino city, for example, consist of four levels: beginner, intermediate, advanced and interpreter training. Up until the advanced class, there is always a pair of instructors where one is deaf and one is hearing. But the final training class for interpreters is taught only by a hearing instructor. Members of Deaf Associations may also not all use JSL. Some may have grown up with a cochlear implant, and some may have gone to hearing schools and learnt signing later on in their life. These members of the deaf community are more likely to use SimCom or Contact Signing than JSL.

Nakamura (2006) discusses the political clash between the Japanese Federation of the Deaf (JFD) and D-Pro (a group that strongly supports the Declaration of the Deaf) about the use of new signs and the acceptance of these signs in the vocabulary of JSL. Many hearing interpreters learn new signs from JFD, but the Deaf themselves do not recognize these signs. JSL versus SimCom is an on-going debate due to the diversity of language backgrounds of the deaf. Depending on the city, the situation varies. More deaf people using the natural approach are now becoming sign language instructors so the situation may change in Japan. But the fact remains that many interpreters still use 'Taiou Shuwa' with the Deaf. Also in the deaf schools, Hashiba (2006), a Deaf parent, has pointed out that although deaf schools say that they use 'shuwa' most of the time, it is 'Taiou Shuwa', an artificial language that is difficult for deaf children to understand.

Chuukan Shuwa or Contact Signing

'Chuukan Shuwa' is the third type of signing that can be found in the Japanese setting. 'Chuukan' can be translated as 'in between' or 'in the middle'. In

research on the Deaf in the U.S.A., the term, 'contact signing', is equivalent to 'Chuukan Shuwa' so it will henceforth be referred to as contact signing.

Contact signing is used when there is language contact between different signers and/or different hearing signers (Messing, 1999). It is also called pidgin signs. Pidgin signs form when there is interaction between people of different backgrounds with different language abilities. Since deaf people are raised in different environments, the dominant language or communication mode differs from person to person. Knight and Swanwick (1999) describe pidgin signs as a communication mode existing in between sign languages and spoken and written languages.

Defining this type of signing is complicated by the fact that manual codes of the spoken language exist as well. There is no clear identifiable point on a continuum between sign and spoken languages to place pidgin signs.

Lucas and Valli (1990), in describing pidgin signs as contact signing, list possible contact situations for the American deaf community as follows:

- deaf bilinguals with hearing bilinguals
- deaf bilinguals with deaf bilinguals
- deaf bilinguals with hearing spoken-English monolinguals
- hearing bilinguals with deaf English signers
- deaf bilinguals with deaf English signers
- deaf English signers with hearing spoken-English monolinguals
- deaf English signers with hearing bilinguals
- deaf English signers with deaf ASL monolinguals
- deaf bilinguals with deaf ASL monolinguals
- deaf ASL monolinguals with hearing bilinguals

Pidgin signing or contact signing can occur in these situations. When the deaf interact with hearing people, they tend to shift away from ASL (Lucas and Valli, 1990). By trying to make adaptations, ASL signs tend to be signed in English word order.

The discussion of the situation in the American

setting can also be applied to the Japanese setting. The type of language produced between a sign and spoken language is equivalent to what the Japanese refer to as ‘Chuukan Shuwa’. It is more complex than what can be indicated by a linear continuum as different factors such as age, gender, place where sign language is learnt, can result in many variations. Researchers of sign language criticize the broad meaning of ‘Chuukan Shuwa’ as some contact signing may be closer to spoken language, and some may be closer to sign language (Kanda, 1996; Saito, 2007). ‘Chuukan Shuwa’ remains an ill-defined category and more research is needed in this area before we can understand its place as a type of sign language variation in Japan.

The Status of ‘Shuwa’ in Deaf Schools in Japan

What is the status of ‘shuwa’ at deaf schools in Japan? According to Ichida (2004), deaf schools are important because they provide a community for the Deaf where they can interact in sign language. When deaf children are integrated into hearing schools, they may become semi-lingual by not being able to speak nor sign. Without sign language input, these children cannot develop a complete language. In Tokyo, due to changes in the education system, there are only four public deaf schools and two private ones. One private school in Tokyo is an Oral School which will not be discussed further. Each deaf school has a homepage on the internet and their school goals are examined to see the status of ‘shuwa’ in the different schools.

The Ootsuka Public School for the Deaf lists two separate goals for deaf children with and without other disabilities. Kindergarten children without multiple disabilities:

Use many kinds of communication methods such as residual hearing, oral method, ‘shuwa’ [underlined on the original below], finger

spelling and gesture to suit individual needs. Also through experiences where the students can understand each other, the basis of communication, the concept of language is acquired thus leading to the development of the basis for Japanese.

[My translation of:

聴覚活用, 口話, 手話, 指文字, 身振り等一人一人の特性に応じて多様なコミュニケーション手段を活用する. そして心が通じあう経験を重ねながらコミュニケーションの力の基礎を培うとともに, 言語概念を養い, 日本語の基礎を育てる.] (Source: <http://www.otsuka-sd.metro.tokyo.jp/otsuka/otsuka05.html>)

The above statement shows that the educational goal for deaf children without multiple disabilities is the acquisition of Japanese, and ‘shuwa’ is only a supplementary tool to support this. The word ‘kotoba’ (language/word), is used in the school’s goals later on but it remains unclear whether it is spoken Japanese or Japanese Sign Language. The objectives for primary school are the same as for the kindergarten. As the language for classroom instruction, this school clearly states that they use mostly ‘Chuukan Shuwa’ in the classes. On their homepage, they introduce three types of ‘shuwa’- ‘Nihongo Taiou Shuwa’, ‘Chuukan Shuwa’ and ‘Nihon Shuwa’ - and describe the characteristics of each type. The grammatical characteristics of ‘Nihongo Taiou shuwa’ and ‘Nihon Shuwa’ are the same as what have been discussed in the previous sections. But this school clearly defines the meaning of “Chuukan Shuwa” as mostly following Japanese grammar along with mouthing the Japanese morpheme that comes with each sign. The definition of ‘Chuukan Shuwa’ is somewhat close to SimCom and this definition is relevant in the deaf school setting as most teachers of the deaf are hearing and are dominant in the spoken language. After defining the different types of ‘shuwa’, the pros and cons of using ‘shuwa’ in the school are

listed. The advantages of using 'shuwa' are that it is very expressive and can help early communication between mother and child. Also learning 'shuwa' can raise the self-esteem of the students and raise their pride in being Deaf. Since 'shuwa' is used in a broad sense here, the use of 'shuwa' as a form of Total Communication (an eclectic method allowing all types of communication modes to achieve efficient communication) is considered as an advantage. On the other hand, they state that one of the disadvantages of 'shuwa' is that it cannot show Japanese sounds and does not have a written form. Other disadvantages are limitations of vocabulary and limitation when communicating with hearing people (as not everyone can use 'shuwa'). This typically shows that the final aim for deaf students is to integrate with the hearing.

Chuuou Deaf School has a junior high and high school and does not specify in their objectives the use of sign language but indicates as their goal, the cultivation of communication and expressive skills that will help deaf students to enter university. What this 'communication skill' encompasses remains unclear but is most likely to be Japanese rather than sign language. In the 'Address by the Principal', 'shuwa' is considered to provide access to information along with note-taking and is thereby useful as a secondary tool to develop deaf students' knowledge of the world.

Tachikawa Deaf School with kindergarten to high school sections does not state specific educational goals on their homepage. Goals related to language are only referred to in junior high, stating that they aim for students who can understand their disability and overcome it with language and learning skills. 'Language' seems to be used in a very general term similar to the word 'kotoba' used by the Ootsuka Deaf School. The implication again points towards the acquisition of the oral rather than the visual language.

Katsushika Deaf School with kindergarten to

high school sections also does not use the term 'shuwa' but clearly states for their primary school that their goal is to develop communication skills and Japanese ability. They add though that they support the use of 'shuwa' to decrease information deficiency. Thus 'shuwa' again plays a secondary role as at the Chuuou Deaf School.

Looking at the educational objectives of public deaf schools in Tokyo, the term 'shuwa' is surprisingly used less frequently than expected and detailed educational methods are not stated. Kanazawa (2001) points out that many people often use the term 'Kouwa hou' for the Oral Method and 'Shuwa hou' for the Sign Language Method without clearly defining each method. Some people may use 'Shuwa hou' to refer to the use of some signs to supplement speech while others may consider 'Shuwa hou' to refer to teaching all classes in JSL. In Japan, using some signs to supplement speech during the early development phase (a so-called 'Shuwa-hou') is sometimes considered only as a form of communication rather than of language as can be inferred from the school goals. Kanazawa (2001) indicates that sometimes, 'Shuwa-hou' is considered to support 'Kouwa-hou'. That is, children learn how to communicate in the early years using some signs but are slowly shifted towards the use of spoken language.

In the past, the use of 'shuwa' has been prohibited in the deaf schools but students are now allowed to sign in schools. The current problem in the schools is that most teachers of the deaf are hearing and have hardly any background training in deaf education. Sasaki (2006) has a strong view that most teachers at public deaf schools use 'Taiou Shuwa' and this type of signing is not useful for the language development of the deaf. Sasaki explains that teachers do not have enough time to acquire sign language and the rotation system prevents teachers from staying at deaf schools long enough to master how to teach the deaf. Ueno (2003) categorized two types of signing

in terms of their relationship to deaf education: 'Taiou Shuwa' is used in deaf schools following the Total Communication Approach, while JSL is used in Bilingual-Bicultural Education. Although 'Chuukan Shuwa' is used to describe the language of instruction, many deaf schools have not fully shifted from Total Communication as at the Ootsuka Deaf School.

With a new focus on Special Needs Education, deaf schools are in danger of closure (Quay, 2005). Students are decreasing and those with multiple disabilities are entering deaf schools. As deaf education is being threatened by new educational reforms, a private school for the Deaf that uses Japanese Sign Language started in Tokyo in April 2008. Meisei Gakuen is the first Deaf school in Japan to adopt the bilingual-bicultural approach to teach Deaf children. Students are taught in JSL and they learn how to read and write in Japanese. Unlike the public schools, Meisei clearly states their use of JSL in the classrooms. This school has just started so research still needs to be conducted on the use of JSL and the development of written Japanese.

Conclusion

This paper looked at three ways of signing ('shuwa') in Japan. Out of these three types, only JSL is the natural and pure language for the Deaf. The other two 'shuwa' have developed through interactions between deaf and hearing people. Many deaf students have different backgrounds and this complicates the educational situation for the deaf. Those with hearing parents may not learn sign language until they meet Deaf peers. Those with Deaf parents may acquire a sign language from birth.

In the previous section, the status of 'shuwa' in deaf schools has been discussed. For hearing teachers, because of the school system, it is hard for them to acquire JSL and most teachers sign and speak at the same time (SimCom). Unless more deaf

teachers are hired, this problem cannot be solved. Also some students may have gone to hearing schools and feel more comfortable using Japanese-based signing. JSL is the language for the Deaf and this cannot be denied. However, when it comes to deaf education, what is most important is for teachers to understand the form of signing their students feel the most comfortable using. None of these three ways of signing is wrong if used by the deaf, so it is crucial that teachers are aware of the differences and respect the 'shuwa' their students are using and do not treat it as 'incorrect'. In order to define each type of signing precisely, a closer analysis of sign interactions is necessary as the parameters used thus far to define the three types of "shuwa" still remain very broad. Only by understanding the distinctions between sign variations can we begin to understand the richness and diversity of the Japanese deaf community and culture.

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