

## Creating a School Where Butterflies Flitter ~ A 2011 Fulbright Visiting Scholar Report (2) ~

Toshikazu KIKUCHI

*If each hearing person studying ASL and Deaf culture talks with just one other person about their studies, imagine the awareness spreading like wildfire. The inquisitive student will seek out deaf counterparts to talk with to learn more about deafness. Sensitivity, awareness, respect, understanding, that's what this is about.*

Ms. Peggy J. Selover (1988)

### **Introduction**

During late October 2012, powerful hurricane Sandy devastated the most densely populated northeastern region of the United States. While New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg addressed anxious citizens about storm damage and safety issues during his press conferences, all eyes were on a sign language interpreter to his right. Her name was Lydia Callis. Callis brought Mayor Bloomberg's words to life, adding facial expressions and emotions as her fingers and hands flew to translate each briefing into American Sign Language (ASL). With her dramatically expressive televised sign language, Callis warmed the hearts of New Yorkers even in the face of disaster, consequently turning her into a "hurricane star", the world's most talked-about sign language interpreter. Laine Nooney, a PhD candidate at the State University of New York, tweeted that Callis is "the only sign

language interpreter I've ever seen who signs with a New York accent.”<sup>\*1</sup>

As a person who had already recognized sign language interpreters' dedicated work while studying in the U.S. in the 2011 academic year, I showed Callis's video to my Japanese students at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies (NUFS). Watching Callis's animated facial expressions and emphatic signs, the Japanese students, who are often reluctant to show their feelings due to their cultural background, chuckled a couple of times at first. By the end of the video, however, the students changed their attitudes toward Callis, recognizing that what Callis did was important to Deaf people in a tense and dangerous situation. The students learned that sign language, unlike spoken language, which has tone and volume to indicate changes in emotion, relies on body language and facial expression. Furthermore, and most importantly, the students learned that fingers and hands talk, while eyes listen to the story. Callis's exposure to the public was priceless in that she was able to help many people raise their awareness toward sign language.

Almost around the same time as Callis's performance caught the attention of the news media in the U.S., a notable accomplishment was made in Japan at the University of Tokyo, also known as Todai, to further promote the social status of Japanese Sign Language (JSL). The University of Tokyo, established in 1877 as the first national university in Japan, started a JSL course in the 2012 Fall Semester for the first time in 135 years since its foundation. It is worthy to note that Todai, one of the leading research universities, recognizes JSL as a language, and that a native signer of JSL teaches the course. With the movement toward greater inclusion of least commonly taught languages in university education, sign language will become increasingly attractive to educators and administrators as well as students in Japan, and consequently the study of signed languages can assume a central role in the cognitive science of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Japan.

This is the second of two installments reporting on my continuing research and teaching resulting from my activities as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Teachers College, Columbia University in New York City. In the first report published in February 2013, I focused on education reform in Japanese elementary schools, drawing attention to two schools in New York City, the Bank Street School for Children and the Studio School. In the report, placing *critical thinking* at the heart of education reform, I proposed that the Japanese Ministry of Education should reflect the philosophy and spirit of these two schools to establish a new style of elementary school with a progressive education environment with skilled teachers. I also claimed that there was an urgent need in Japan to create a better teacher training program for Japanese elementary school teachers, stressing that it was not at the university level but rather at the elementary school level that education needed urgent fundamental reform if the Japanese government truly wanted to nurture globally competitive human resources who would drive Japan toward future advancement.

In the present report, I will focus on my Fulbright research project, “A Curriculum Development Study for Japanese Hearing Students Learning English with Implementation of American Sign Language.” In the following sections, I will make suggestions for a better NUFs ASL program, while pursuing the possibility of the academic acceptance of ASL as a foreign language in Japan. Since hardly anything has been studied about curriculum development and teacher training programs for Japanese hearing students learning ASL, my project would be a pilot study in this field in both Japan and the U.S. It is my hope that this project will lead to further university innovation and education reform in Japan while at the same time contributing to promoting better understanding between Japan’s and the U.S.’s deaf and hearing communities. It is also my intent to learn more information

about the Deaf World to initiate steps to work with Japanese deaf people.

## 1. Popularity of American Sign Language

Since my primary research concern is to raise Japanese people's awareness of American Sign Language (ASL), first of all, let me provide you an overview of ASL. ASL, the fourth most used non-English language in the U.S. after Spanish, French, and German, is the language used by deaf people in the U.S. and most of Canada. It is probable that the Japanese people associate ASL with Helen Keller (1880-1968). ASL was first popularized among the Japanese people in the 1930s through knowledge of Helen Keller and Annie Sullivan and was reintroduced later through movies such as *Children of a Lesser God* (1986) and *Mr. Holland's Opus* (1995). It should be noted that people's attention was drawn to the world of silence in 2012 by *The Artist*, a French romantic drama in the style of a black-and-white silent movie. *The Artist* won five Academy Awards, including Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor. It was the first mainly silent film to win since 1927's *Wings* won at the first Academy Awards in 1929.

The popularity and prevalence of ASL courses in postsecondary institutions in the U.S. have both increased dramatically since such courses appeared on campus in the early 1980s. For example, Cooper et al. (2011) compared the status of postsecondary ASL programs in terms of structure, content, and resources of sign language program, between 1994 and 2004, and revealed that institutions had strengthened their commitment to their sign language programs in most of the areas studied. It is worthy to note that more institutions now accept sign language in fulfillment of general education and foreign language requirements in the U.S. (See Appendix.)

In terms of the recognition of ASL as a language in the U.S., ASL was first recognized as an official language in 1965 after William Stokoe published his

book *A Dictionary of American Sign Language on Linguistic Principles*. As of 2006, according to Fox (2010), five states, Delaware, Idaho, Mississippi, New Hampshire, and Wyoming had not proposed legislation. Currently the Linguistic Society of America gives ASL all rights and privileges attendant to any spoken language. High Schools and colleges in all fifty states offer and accept ASL for credit whether or not state legislation has been passed.

## **2. NUFS ASL Curriculum Development**

My encounter with ASL dates back to 1999. I was then a visiting researcher at Boston University. My research interest was the educational use of English captioned Hollywood movies for Japanese hearing students learning English. Captioned movies were originally developed for deaf people. While in Boston, I lived with a family with a four-year-old deaf girl. Based on my experience with this family and their four-year deaf child, I left the U.S. in 2000 believing that ASL was more than just a language and that ASL could expand the horizons of our hearing students in the same way as other foreign languages. I strongly felt that teaching only spoken English to prospective English language teachers was not sufficient enough to develop good teachers with broad multi-cultural views.

After more than eight years of repeated petition to both my former and current workplaces, the NUFS administration was finally convinced resulting in the offering of the first ASL courses in 2008. These courses along with a three-week intensive summer ASL course in the U.S. were a first in the departments of English language teaching at Japanese universities. As of writing this article (March 2013), we are now in the fifth year of an ASL program that has successfully expanded from our student population to including a group of potential flight attendants. A total of 120 students are practicing ASL at NUFS. Our department students who participated in

the 2012 intensive summer ASL course at Boston University were highly encouraged to learn more about ASL and Deaf world to read an article about their study in Boston featured in the *Deaf Community News* by the Massachusetts State Association of the Deaf, Inc.<sup>\*2</sup>

The NUFS ASL program has provided Japanese hearing students with an opportunity to look into spoken languages from different perspectives developing a positive attitude toward deaf people. For example, soon after the ASL program started in 2008, our students became interested in the linguistic differences between spoken English and ASL. In addition, my colleagues as well as students learned that a simple sign like “*Thank you*” could make a positive connection with deaf people and encourage more positive interaction as they began to greet each other in sign on campus.

In the past five summer practicum courses held at Boston University, our hearing students developed rapport with American deaf teachers and learned that a teacher could change potentially negative views by students with passionate teaching. With this experience in Boston, a native signer of ASL was hired at NUFS in 2009 for the first time since the university’s foundation in 1988. This deaf teacher inspired us to see him as a teacher, not a deaf person. What is more, Japanese hearing students’ attention positively turned to deaf education in Japan and the learning of Japanese Sign Language which resulted in better understanding toward deaf people. The significance of integrating ASL into a hearing students’ curriculum lies right here in empowering hearing students, especially prospective future teachers, to pursue new lines of thinking and new perspectives for people who might be viewed as different.

While establishing the ASL program at NUFS, I found that ASL is also potentially useful to hearing students, especially to students wishing to become English language teachers, for further study in other areas,

such as language policy (Baynton, 1996; Nakamura, 2006; Rosen, 2008), bilingualism (Delana et al. 2007), language acquisition (Daniels, 1996; Klima & Bellugi, 1979), acculturation (Ladd, 2003; Larson and Smally, 1972), motivation (Kemp, 1998; Johnson, 2009), developmental psychology (Vygotsky, 1978; Lane et al., 1996), brain science (Corballis, 2002), psychology of language (Kimura, 2007; Kikuchi, 2009, 2010; Saito, 2007), teaching-material development, and curriculum design.

To make the NUFS ASL program a more attractive and flexible one, I, as the program coordinator, am responsible for further improving the quality of teaching and striving for the highest possible standards while working with very real limitations in human and financial resources. Among others, I will focus especially on two issues here.

## **2.1 Deaf-Hearing Bicultural Team Teaching**

Currently, two instructors, one Deaf and one CODA<sup>\*3</sup>, are teaching their classes independently at NUFS. How about setting up a team-taught class? Simply having two qualified teachers participating at all times has, in itself, the benefit of providing double the feedback, and expertise of a single-teacher classroom. When one of these team members is deaf, there are additional benefits not possible in teams of two hearing or two deaf teachers. Diversity within the NUFS ASL program, therefore, can be best modeled through the creation of such deaf-hearing bicultural teams.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, Thomas H. Gallaudet (1787-1851) and Laurent Clerc (1785-1869) provided the field of deaf education with its first deaf-hearing bicultural team. The power of such a great idea has never been fully tapped in hearing classrooms. One of the most important aspects of having a team of two teachers, one Deaf and one hearing, is that they share equal status. In this environment, students are immersed in a situation where

differences are not degraded but viewed as valuable and respected. The members of a deaf-hearing bicultural team combine background, interests, talents, skills in ASL and English, Deaf culture, and hearing culture, which may be helpful in developing a strongly motivated learning community as well as in guiding course development and ASL teacher training.

There are outstanding examples of deaf-hearing bilingual teams across the U.S. According to Andrews and Covell (2007), Nover and his colleagues at the Center for ASL/English Bilingual Education and Research, in the course of providing in-service and pre-service teachers with a state-of-the-art ASL/English bilingual curriculum, formed such teams in more than 15 schools for the deaf and at five universities in the U.S.

As team teaching, in which a Japanese English teacher and a native speaker of English collaborate to help hearing students fully understand and participate in the lessons, is a recent trend in a teaching English as a foreign language setting in Japan, the creation of a deaf-hearing team can also be beneficial to Japanese hearing students learning ASL.

## **2.2 Content-based ASL Curriculum**

Is there any possibility of integrating the NUFS ASL program into our department content-based English curriculum while at the same time preparing for a content-based ASL curriculum itself?

The Department of English Language Teaching at NUFS, where the NUFS ASL program is housed, currently adopts a content-based English curriculum (CBEC), consisting of a theme-based core program and a non-core program. In the theme-based core program, one topic is covered in two weeks through four courses (Discussion & Debate, Intensive Reading, Academic Writing, and Power-up Tutorial.) For example, in Week 1, students are first introduced to a topic and vocabulary, practice listening, and discussing the topic in



Discussion & Debate. Then, in Intensive Reading, students read deeply about the topic utilizing an authentic news article. Then, furthermore, students write an essay stating their opinion about the topic in Academic Writing. Finally, students discuss the main topic with native speakers of English in Power-up Tutorial. In Week 2, students strengthen their abilities to introduce topics, listen actively, provide and elicit information to and from partners, and show agreement or disagreement while performing argumentation and critical analysis through the same course cycle as Week 1.

Rosen (2010) points out that there is no content-based instruction (CBI) ASL curriculum presently available in the U.S. Content refers to topics that people talk about subjects such as science, math, social studies, and the arts. The precepts of CBI are that people learn second or foreign languages more successfully if they use them as a means of acquiring information. According to Rosen, typical CBI-based lessons include a topic, brainstorming concepts, vocabulary, discussion of grammatical structures for conversation in monologues and dialogues, and learners' group discussion or individual presentations of topics using the concepts and conversation structures learned.

Since there is a separation in our department between practicing ASL and learning English in the form of separate courses and classes, very little attention has been given to cross-cultural interactions between the two languages. Future curriculum development in our department should take the ASL program into consideration so that our students can learn the two languages interrelatedly under the same content-based curriculum. We may be able to create a natural language environment in our NUFS ASL program by integrating our ASL program into the CBEC, sharing the same topics as those of the CBEC. I believe that our ASL students will be able to develop conversational skills in sign for beginners that easily transfer

what they learn in class to real-life situations.

### **3. Indications for Future Research**

After the establishment of the ASL program in Japan, my interests turned to research that needs to be undertaken on the status of signed languages and longitudinal use of a signed language with Japanese hearing students. In addition, while studying in the U.S. in the 2011 academic year, I also found some other issues to be further explored. The followings are research areas that I would like to share with language teachers, as well as administrators and policy makers, who are trying to create a better curriculum and learning environment for students.

#### **3.1 Advantage of Chinese Characters over the English Alphabet**

Here is an article that suggests an encouraging future for the Japanese people learning sign language. Flaherty and Moran (2004) indicate that readers of Japanese can encode and remember more visual shapes than readers of English. On average, a fluent Japanese reader knows approximately 2,000 Chinese characters (called kanji in Japanese), each of which is composed of two or more components. There are approximately 300 of these components. By comparison, readers of English need only remember the 26 letters of the Roman alphabet.

In sign language, the lexical items are made up of a finite set of hand configurations, spatial locations, and movements. Chinese characters are also made up of a finite set of radicals and forms, and these units are also spatially and visually related to one another in writing. Therefore, Flaherty and Moran assume that Japanese and Chinese perform better than their American counterparts on spatial memory tests. Can we prove scientifically

that by learning kanji, Japanese apparently have developed the ability to memorize visual forms, which potentially can lead to a better performance in ASL?

### **3.2 ASL as a Foreign Language in Japan**

Not a university in Japan has ever accepted ASL as a foreign language. I need to advocate strongly the widespread acceptance of ASL as a foreign language for curricular purposes in Japan. In the process of recognizing ASL as a foreign language in the U.S., the primary objection to ASL being considered a foreign language was that it is not foreign. In the study of Sinett (1995), how the respondent defined the word *foreign* correlated with whether they objected or not. If *foreign* was defined as “outside a place or country,” ASL was usually objected. If *foreign* was defined as “unfamiliar,” ASL was more often accepted.

From a viewpoint of extralinguistic factors, Reagan (2011) claims that objections and challenges to ASL as a foreign language are based not on the available evidence but rather on beliefs and attitudes that are extremely problematic. The core ideological issue here has to do with what has been called “linguistic legitimacy”, which is the idea that some languages are more real and proper than others. The academic acceptance of ASL as a foreign language in Japan should be based on linguistic factors rather than political, economic, and social factors. The first important thing to do in Japan is to define the word *foreign*, and then convince university administrators and faculty members that ASL can expand the horizons of students in the same way as other foreign languages (Kikuchi, 2011).

### **3.3 Multimodal Language Processing**

The NUFSS ASL program brings issues dealing with a variety of aspects

of language acquisition and processing in a situation where two languages other than the native language are involved.

In the studies of Daniels (1996), Robinson (1997), and Capirci et al. (1998), it seems possible to generalize that sign language offers positive effects on hearing children. The subjects of these studies were Americans learning ASL, Britons learning British Sign Language, and Italians learning Italian Sign Language, respectively. They were all hearing children in kindergarten or elementary school. On the contrary, the NUFS ASL program is unique in that learners are university hearing students aged 18 to 22, born in Japan and raised by hearing parents, whose first language (L1) is Japanese and who are learning English as a foreign language (L2). When they learn a complex visual-spatial language such as ASL (L3), how are they simultaneously processing the three languages? Is there any relationship between their Japanese (L1) literacy skills and ASL (L3) ability? Do their English (L2) levels affect ASL (L3) performance? No research in this situation has ever been presented in either Japan or the U.S.

Additionally, it is already known that deaf children approach learning English as though it were a foreign language. Charrow and Fletcher (1974) gave the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) to deaf high-school students of college-entrance age. Although the deaf subjects did not perform as well as foreign college entrants, in general their results more closely resembled those of foreign students than those of native speakers of English. Do our NUFS ASL learners' TOEFL scores resemble those of American deaf students?

### **3.4 Voiced or not**

Cooper (1997) reports that higher education administrators making decisions about sign language programs are concerned about the use of voice

in conducting classes. In Pfeiffer's (2003) study, a large majority of the responding administrators and ASL teachers surveyed in the state of Virginia in 2001 indicated that voiced English was used on a limited or a very limited basis by the ASL teachers and students. Most ASL teachers thought that spoken English was sometimes useful in explaining grammatical concepts or in discussing Deaf culture, but agreed that students progressed faster in learning the target language when less or no voice was used.

Few empirical studies have been conducted to examine the use of spoken English. The efficacy of different teaching strategies or the impact of using spoken English, voiced by the teacher, for more or less time during classes are examples of studies that could provide worthwhile information to teachers. Based on my experience of introducing ASL to Japanese hearing elementary school children<sup>\*4</sup>, it is suggested that using spoken Japanese (L1) or spoken English (L2) is useful to some extent in teaching ASL to Japanese hearing students.

### **3.5 Required or Elective**

In a case study by Sofinski (2011), it is interesting to learn that there was no significant difference in outcomes after five semesters of ASL study between the students in high school and community college settings. However, statistically significant differences were identified in the area of sign production on an ASL proficiency assessment between student outcomes after five semesters of ASL study in the university setting and the previous two settings.

There are some compelling reasons potentially influencing this outcome. Sofinski points out the impact of required courses versus electives. The ASL students in the high school and community college environments are completing a required course. In contrast, university students studying a

fifth semester of ASL do so as an elective, as the course neither satisfies any requirement for any course of study, nor serves as a prerequisite for any other course at the university. These factors may play a role in the disparity between outcomes identified in this study in that the university students may have more intrinsic motivation to participate in the course. Can we prove that motivational factors affect Japanese students' performance in learning ASL?

### **3.6 A Lead Teacher and a Drill Instructor**

In relation to the study discussed in 3.5, Sofinski (2011) also points out the potential impact of drill instructors at the university level as a compelling reason which influenced the outcome. The university staffed the same course with both a lead teacher and a drill instructor, whereas community college instruction was typically provided by one teacher per semester. It can be assumed that prolonged exposure to both the lead teacher and the drill instructor contributes to the increase in sign vocabulary displayed by the university students in the study. Should the NUFS ASL program offer a team-taught class of a lead teacher and a drill instructor? It is worthy to examine how a team of a lead teacher and a drill instructor affects student performance.

### **3.7 Joint Projects**

Creating a better language curriculum with ASL needs further specific background knowledge of ASL and the Deaf world. In this respect, there is great potential for joint projects that could be developed with Tsukuba University of Technology, the only university for the hearing impaired and visually impaired in Japan. Furthermore, an international network could be established, including organizing an exchange program for teachers and

students, with distinguished universities that have Deaf Studies Programs, such as Boston University, Teachers College, Gallaudet University, Rochester Institute of Technology, California State University at Northridge, and the University of New Mexico, to learn the strategies that were successful in how ASL became recognized as a world language. ASL curriculum development in Japan is also expected to form productive and educational partnerships with PEN-international and the Nippon Foundation of Japan to hold an international symposium with deaf and hearing educators on the topics of language and education of the deaf in the world.

### **3.8 ASL Teacher Preparation Program**

Currently, there is no American Sign Language Teacher Preparation Programs in Japan. As interest in ASL and in ASL as a foreign language option for students grows in Japan, it is expected that administrators at institutions of higher education will be challenged to keep up with the growing demand of qualified ASL teachers.

LaSasso and Wilson (2000) suggest that teacher preparation programs are essentially organized into three basic parts, according to what they provide: (a) prerequisite courses for back-ground knowledge, (b) major courses of instructional skills and curricular knowledge, and (c) student teaching as an opportunity for the pre-service teacher's initial mastery of expected skills. Taking this suggestion into consideration, it is time for Japan to create an ASL teacher preparation program in cooperation with the U.S. institutions mentioned in 3.7.

### **3.9 Baby Signing**

“Baby signing” refers to the use of visual-gestural signs between hearing parents and their young hearing children with the goal of earlier and clearer

communication. Pizer et al. (2007) suggest that baby signing practice will be beneficial to children's linguistic, emotional, and intellectual development. Another benefit claimed for baby signing is the acceleration of spoken-language development.

Holmes and Holmes (1980) conducted a study of the language acquisition of a normal hearing male child of hearing parents, who was presented with simultaneous signed English and spoken English language input. Both parents used a total communication approach in communicating with their child in signs and spoken language from his birth. The results showed that the child acquired his first 50 spoken words 3.6 months earlier than the mean of children of his age included in the control group. Holmes and Holmes analyzed that the combined modality interaction between the child and his parents may have accelerated his development both of language production and language comprehension.

Prinz and Prinz (1979, 1981) obtained a similar result in their study and implied that learning languages in two different modalities (spoken English and ASL) since birth and with approximately equal exposure to both did not interfere with semantic development. Furthermore, Prinz and Prinz noticed that their hearing child, Anya, exhibited manual as well as vocal babbling behavior, that is, Anya would wave her hands in apparent imitation of signs produced by her parents. They analyzed that Anya's overall communicative effectiveness was not at all impaired or retarded. Anya successfully conveyed messages to hearing and deaf addressees alike through ASL, English, or a combination of the two. It is very worthy to examine whether baby signing practice will be beneficial to Japanese hearing babies as well.



### **3.10 Early English Education Combined with ASL**

Topics on gesture and sign language have recently appeared in major English textbooks inspected and approved by the Japanese Ministry of Education for elementary and junior high school students. With regard to early English education in elementary schools that was officially started in Japan in 2011, it is worthy to examine how early English education combined with ASL affects Japanese hearing children in their cognitive development, which potentially can lead to coeducation with deaf children.

### **3.11 Collaborative Efforts with High Schools**

Because of limited awareness of ASL among high school principals and superintendents of education in Japan, the NUFS ASL program has not been a recruiting device in attracting high school students to our university. We should well advertise our ASL program and offer real potential for getting more Japanese English language teachers interested in learning ASL. As Clary (2004) points out, a collaborative effort between a high school and a university in the form of an articulation agreement is a possibility for offering ASL to high school students. NUFS should make a collaborative effort with high schools to spread high school students' horizons out further.

### **3.12 ASL and Technology**

The need for advanced pedagogical practices incorporating the use of technological tools has become greater in language education. Since Japanese ASL learners have little opportunity to practice ASL with native ASL signers outside of class, Japanese universities should provide as many opportunities as possible for their students to interact with native and advanced ASL signers. In this point, the possibility of online communication through the Internet between hearing and deaf students should be explored in Japan

to expand the horizons of our students in Japan in the same way as other foreign languages. Especially, in terms of mobile-learning, current research is insufficient in documenting hearing students' perception and experiences learning a sign language by using smartphones or tablet computers.

A case study conducted by Ehrlich-Martin (2006) indicates that the inadequate technology, along with the primarily teacher-centered style of teaching, negatively influenced students' perceptions of their ability to learn ASL in a videoconferencing setting. Discourse strategies such as turn-taking and interruption were at the forefront of the frustration of the students who were unable to interact effectively using ASL in the course. Additionally, the inability to maintain eye contact among all participants, including the instructor, created a great sense of disconnectedness, making the opportunity to create language learning communities difficult. How can we improve these negative conditions in Japan? Can we effectively make use of online communication resources for Japanese ASL learners in the form of e-learning?

### **3.13 Lack of Media Appearances**

As a national strategy to raise awareness of Japanese Sign Language and the deaf community in Japan, Japan should send more messages in English all over the world. Power (2006) used an Internet search tool, Google Alert, to survey the global English-language press from July to December in 2005 for references to deaf people. The survey found that such references focus on people who are deaf rather than the disability itself, thus demonstrating how well deaf people fit into the mainstream.

Analysis of the resulting occurrences of the word *deaf* revealed that reporting from media outlets in 47 different countries appeared. The eight countries with the most mentions are the United States (445, 65%), the

United Kingdom (104, 15%), India (54, 8%), Canada (27, 4%), South Africa (20, 3%), Australia (18, 3%), New Zealand (11, 2%), and Ireland (10, 1%). These countries' 689 mentions represented 89% of all occurrences in the survey period (n=774). Japan had only two mentions in the six-month survey period. Even admitting that the search was restricted to English-language newspapers, Japan should make more efforts to provide other countries with opportunities to know about deaf education in Japan and their culture.

### **3.14 English Education to Japanese Deaf Students**

Deaf students in Japan follow the same national curriculum as hearing students in Japan and are expected to attain the same achievement goals as their hearing peers in English classes. However, no consensus has been reached on how English should be taught to deaf students in Japan. Matsufuji et al. (2011) criticize the Japanese Ministry of Education, stressing that Japanese schools for the deaf are extremely restricted from teaching foreign languages and that no consideration has been made for the pupils with hearing impairment in their foreign language learning in Japan.

Quay (2005) points out that many teachers at deaf schools in Japan are interested in introducing ASL into their classrooms as one of the strategies to motivate their students. It is surprising, however, to learn that sign language is not a required course to become a teacher at the deaf schools in Japan. Deaf students have the right to receive their education through sign language, not only through the oral method. It is expected that Japanese deaf students will benefit from learning ASL when they learn English.

## **4. The American School for the Deaf**

From among U.S. schools for the deaf I visited during my stay in the

U.S. in the 2011 academic year, let me draw your attention to the American School for the Deaf, which profoundly impacted my life and gave me a tremendous advantage in my research and perspective.

#### **4.1 The Birthplace of Deaf Education**

The American School for the Deaf (ASD), founded in 1817 in Hartford, Connecticut where Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and Mark Twain, author of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, lived in the late 1800s, is the oldest school for the deaf in the U.S. and the birthplace of deaf education in America and American Sign Language. About 50% of the students spend the school week in dormitories on ASD's beautiful 54-acre campus which is located in a safe and attractive suburban setting mid-way between the cities of Boston and New York City.

It is widely known in the field of deaf education in the U.S. that Thomas H. Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc started their teaching at ASD and they have traditionally been seen as forerunners. Sayers and Gates (2008) argue that these two men would never have been called on to play the roles they did without the earlier contributions of Lydia Huntley Sigourney (1791-1865), commonly known as “The Sweet Singer of Hartford”. Before Gallaudet and Clerc enrolled their first pupil, Alice Cogswell (1805-1830) in 1817, Sigourney had taught Alice to read and write English. There is no doubt that Sigourney's contribution to the education of Alice was a vital link in the founding of deaf education in the U.S.

It is coincidentally interesting that ASD has a close relationship with Columbia University, where I studied ASL in the 2011 academic year. Frederick Augustus Porter Barnard, who was president of Columbia College (now Columbia University) for 25 years, taught in Hartford alongside the eminent Thomas H. Gallaudet and Laurent Clerc during the early years of his

career. Barnard was honored for his dedicated work of higher education for women when Barnard College at Columbia University was named for him. According to Lang and Stokoe (2000), Barnard was a progressive thinker whose insight seems more than a century ahead of his time. Barnard's accomplishments as a deaf professional serving as a president of an American college during a period when technology and other communication support had not yet become available are indeed unprecedented.

#### **4.2 A Caterpillar Turns Into a Butterfly**

At the end of my stay in the U.S. as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar, I made a visit to ASD on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2012. Mr. Edward F. Peltier, executive director of ASD, welcomed me and guided me around the campus. He kindly took me to the resting places of the Laurent Clerc family and Lydia Huntley Sigourney by car.

In a Preschool class observation at ASD, ten deaf children were learning the process of metamorphosis watching a video in which caterpillars were turning into butterflies. A four-year deaf girl, who seemed to be the leader of the group, was actively teaching sign vocabulary, *caterpillar* and *butterfly*, to other friends in the classroom. Seeing me enter the classroom, the girl approached me smiling affably and guided me to a table. She sat next to me and began to teach me how to express “*A caterpillar turns into a butterfly*” in ASL. The signs for *caterpillar* and *butterfly* were easy to learn, but signing “to *turn into* (to become)” naturally to move to the word *butterfly* was not so easy. While watching my awkward signing, the girl waited patiently showing a model of natural signing for me until I became able to sign better. She showed me the model signing again and again, and apparently she was my teacher at the time.

Once the girl knew I had mastered how to express the phrase in ASL,

she began to run about the classroom, signing repeatedly “*A caterpillar turns into a butterfly*” from table to table, window to window, and flower to flower, instructing us in the classroom to follow her. The girl seemed proud and confident of what she was doing. The other children following her seemed happy and relaxed as well. The scene was memorable and highly significant, filling me with a sense of purity and delight, even of spirituality. I experienced my soul slowly but clearly awakening then.

While moving about the classroom with the deaf children, I thought, “These children may be dreaming that they will definitely turn into butterflies when they grow up. They may be caterpillars now, but they eat and eat leaves of knowledge and wisdom in society, like a caterpillar eats many varieties of leaves in nature, and turn into beautiful and elegant butterflies in the future. What wonderful children they are to believe that they will turn into butterflies in the future!” I couldn’t help hoping that they would turn into colorful and unique butterflies when they grew up. It was at this moment that I appreciated from the bottom of my heart that American Sign Language was beautiful, and I made up my mind to give a nation-wide presentation in Japan to raise the awareness of Japanese people toward sign language and deaf people. Every element of the visit to ASD was unforgettable and from then on “a caterpillar turns into a butterfly” became my motto which translates my vision and philosophy of education. It is my hope that I will bring my students to ASD in 2017 when they celebrate its 200th anniversary of foundation.

## **5. Conclusion**

In the 2011 academic year, I was privileged to study at Teachers College, Columbia University as a Fulbright Visiting Scholar. Teachers College is the oldest and largest graduate school of education in the U.S., and has long

adhered to a social-cognitive constructivist perspective that has its root in the philosophies of John Dewey (1859-1952), who, along with the noted behaviorist Edward Thorndike (1874-1949), taught at Teachers College. I was taking courses about John Dewey and Edward Thorndike when in university, little realizing that I would have an opportunity to study at their workplace 35 years later. I witnessed John Dewey's continued legacy at Teachers College reflecting his spirit faithfully and respectfully. What was impressive at Teachers College was that faculty and students were aspiring to become inquiring and reflective practitioners, learner-centered educators, effective collaborators, and advocates of social justice and diversity. It was my great honor to spend time in such a professional learning community where I learned that passion is education itself.

One late March day in 2012, I was walking along the Tidal Basin under the cherry blossoms in Washington, D.C. The year 2012 marked the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the planting of the cherry trees from Japan to the United States. As I was thinking of the people in my home country who sent about 3,000 cherry trees to Washington as a gift of friendship, I could not help appreciating the American people who had looked after the trees carefully and thoughtfully for the past 100 years, while at the same time hoping that our friendship between the two countries would continue in the years to come.

To conclude this report, I would like to make a few interesting historical links that seem connected to the NUFs implementation of ASL into a hearing curriculum in 2008. As President John F. Kennedy once stated, we have learned that one man can make a difference. Exactly 150 Januaries ago, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which changed the course of the Civil War and led to the eventual freeing of slaves. It has been exactly 50 years since Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech dreaming for America where people would be judged by the content of their character rather than by the color of their skin. And this year, President Barack Obama took office for the second time as the first black president of the United States. On his Inauguration Day, President Obama took the oath of office to become the 44<sup>th</sup> president of the U.S. with his left hand placed on two highly symbolic Bibles: one used by Abraham Lincoln and the other by Martin Luther King, Jr. Coincidentally the day happened to fall on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. The link that ties these historical events together is that innovation is possible when somebody initiates the momentum for change. Mutual respect and equality for all people, like any change, begins with somebody taking the first step.

For Teachers College, the year 2013 is going to be an exciting year filled with festivities and intellectual exploration to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the founding of the nation’s first professional school of education. Although the Japanese people are not familiar with this, the most well-known melody of “Happy Birthday to You” comes from the song “Good Morning to All”, which was written and composed by American sisters Patty Hill and Mildred J. Hill in 1893. Patty (1868-1946) was a Teachers College faculty member for thirty years.

More than ever, languages other than English are playing an increasingly significant role in government and society. As language and cultural diversity have become widely recognized and increasingly accepted, so too have people with disabilities, in particular people who are Deaf or hard of hearing, have also become more and more mainstreamed into society. My journey will not be complete until I fulfill my dream of establishing an elementary school in my hometown, which was totally devastated by an unprecedented massive earthquake and tsunami that occurred in March 2011,



and still has not recovered. Deaf and hearing children study together in the school and Deaf and hearing teachers and staff members work together in the school. My journey will not be complete until I say “Happy Birthday” to the new elementary school standing on a hilltop over my reconstructing and reborn motherland. With my motto in mind, my journey will go on: a caterpillar turns into a butterfly.

## Notes

\*1 <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/national/2012/10/58518/>

\*2 [http://www.msad.org/images/uploads/DCN\\_AUTUMN\\_ISSUE.pdf](http://www.msad.org/images/uploads/DCN_AUTUMN_ISSUE.pdf)

\*3 CODA is the acronym of Children of Deaf Adults, specifically refers to hearing persons who were raised by one or more deaf parents or guardians.

\*4 At the end of August 2012, I submitted the first of two installments of my Fulbright report which was later published in February 2013. Since the submission, I have attended following five symposiums: *Teachers College Alumni Reception* featuring Provost and Dean of Teachers College Thomas James, Tokyo, 10/29/2012; *Creating a Contemporary U.S.-Japan Vision, Mansfield Foundation Task Force on U.S.-Japan Shared Progress and Prosperity*, Nagoya, 12/3/2012; *Real Leadership Workshop* by Dr. Dean Williams of the Harvard Kennedy School, The Tokyo American Center, 12/14/2012; *Globalization in Higher Education in Japan*, Sophia University in Tokyo, 12/23/2012; and *Fifty Years After Historic Speech, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Vision Closer*, by Mr. Kevin Powell, The Tokyo American Center, 2/9/2013. In addition, I made two presentations in Japan: A nation-wide presentation with the aim of raising awareness of ASL, Nagoya, 11/10/2012; and a lecture for elementary school students with the aim of introducing ASL, Nagoya, 2/17/2013. These activities were all catalyzed by my stay in New York City as well as at Teachers College.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following schools and their faculty and staff members for bringing me productive and meaningful experiences in the U.S. both professionally and personally: The American Sign Language &

English Secondary School (School Number 47) in NYC, Lexington School for the Deaf in NYC, St. Joseph's School for the Deaf in NYC, The American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut, The Learning Center for the Deaf in Framingham, Massachusetts, and Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C. The relationships I cultivated with these schools will continue to shape my life fueling my academic and personal adventures in the future.

I am profoundly grateful to Mr. Jeffrey S. Jaech, Ms. Cathy Markland, Ms. Maria M. Micioni, and Mr. Bryon Rowe for their dedicated work as sign language interpreters during my stay at Teachers College. In addition, I am also indebted to Ms. Bianca Aabel of Teachers College, Mr. Bruce Bucci of Boston University, and Dr. Kristin Di Perri for their kind permission to audit or observe their ASL classes. My deepest thanks go to Dr. Russell S. Rosen of Teachers College, Columbia University for his acceptance of me as a co-researcher in his Teaching of American Sign Language as a Foreign Language Program. He continually encouraged me to explore a new world, saying "Go out to the city and get lost. It is you yourself who can draw a map of the city." Many thanks also go to my fellow colleague Paul A. Crane, who has been a helpful commentator to my articles as well as a good listener to my dream since we started working together at Nagoya University of Foreign Studies.

Last, but by no means least, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Robert J. Hoffmeister of the Boston University Deaf Studies Program for his continuous advice and support for my work. His message, "Passion, belief, and truth are stronger than all the armies of the world," has always been with me in my mind since I encountered American Sign Language in 1999 in Boston.

## References

- Andrews, F., and A. Covell. (2007). Preparing Future Teachers and Doctoral-Level Leaders in Deaf Education: Meeting the Challenge. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 151(5), 464-475.
- Baynton, D. (1996). *Forbidden Signs*. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.
- Capirci, O., A. Cattani, P. Rossini, and V. Volterra. (1998). Teaching Sign Language to Hearing Children as a Possible Factor in Cognitive Enhancement. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 3(2), 135-142.
- Charrow, V. R., and J. D. Fletcher. (1974). English as the Second Language of Deaf

- Children. *Developmental Psychology*, 10, 463-470.
- Clary, W. M. (2004). *American Sign Language as a High School Language Elective: Factors Influencing its Adoption*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Southern California, No. 3145184.
- Corballis, M. (2002). *From Hand to Mouth: The Origins of Language*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Cooper, S. B. (1997). *The Academic Status of Sign Language Programs in Institutions of Higher Education in the United States*. Doctoral Dissertation, Gallaudet University, No. 9735644.
- Cooper, S. B., J. I. ReisMan., and D. Watson. (2011). Sign Language Program Structure and Content in Institutions of Higher Education in the United States, 1994-2004. *Sign Language Studies*, 11(3), 298-328.
- Daniels, M. (1996). Bilingual, Bimodal Education for Hearing Kindergarten Students. *Sign Language Studies*, 90, 25-37.
- Delana, M., M. Anne, and J. Andrews. (2007). The Efficacy of ASL/English Bilingual Education: Considering Public Schools. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 152(1), 73-87.
- Ehrlich-Martin, S. M. (2006). *A Case Study of an American Sign Language Course Taught via Videoconferencing*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Cincinnati, No. 3218060.
- Flaherty, M., and A. Moran. (2004). Deaf Signers Who Know Japanese Remember Words and Numbers More Effectively Than Deaf Signers Who Know English. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 149(1), 39-45.
- Fox, A. L. C. (2010). *Teacher Certification of American Sign Language Faculty at K-12 and Higher Education Institutions*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Louisville, No. 3437632.
- Holmes, K. M., and D. W. Holmes. (1980). Signed and Spoken Language Development in a Hearing Child of Hearing Parents. *Sign Language Studies*, 28(4), 239-254.
- Johnson, C. (2009). EFL and the Deaf: Teachers Making a Difference. *Essential Teachers*, 6(2), 16-18.
- Kemp, M. (1998). Why is Learning American Sign Language a Challenge? *American Annals of the Deaf*, 143(3), 255-259.
- Kikuchi, T. (2009). Implications of Teaching ASL to Japanese Hearing Students. *Journal of Nagoya University of Foreign Studies*, 36, 1-27.

- (2010). The Impact of Teaching ASL to Japanese Hearing Students and Their Attitude Change toward Deaf People. *Journal of Nagoya University of Foreign Studies*, 38, 49-76.
- (2011). The Possibility of Teaching American Sign Language as a Foreign Language in Japanese Universities. *Journal of Nagoya University of Foreign Studies*, 40, 67-93.
- Kimura, H. (2007). *Japanese Sign Language and Japanese Deaf Culture*. Tokyo: Seikatsu Shoin. (In Japanese).
- Klima, E., and U. Bellugi. (1979). *The signs of language*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.
- Ladd, P. (2003). Understanding deaf culture; In search of deafhood. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters LTD.
- Lane, H., R. Hoffmeister, and B. Bahan. (1996). *A Journey into the DEAF-WORLD*. San Diego, Calif.: DawnSignPress.
- Lang, H. G., and W. Stokoe. (2000). A Treatise on Signed and Spoken Language in Early 19<sup>th</sup> Century Deaf Education in America. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 5(2), 196-216.
- Larson, D., and W. Smalley. (1972). Becoming Bilingual: A Guide to Language Learning. In Kemp, M. (1998). Why is Learning American Sign Language a Challenge? *American Annals of the Deaf*, 143(3), 255-259.
- LaSasso, C., and A. Wilson. (2000). Results of Two National Surveys of Leadership Personnel Needs in Deaf Education. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 145, 429-435.
- Matsufuji, M., M. Suto., and Y. Osugi. (2011). Teaching English at Elementary Department of Special Needs Education Schools for the Deaf. *NTUT Education of Disabilities*, 9, 1-8.
- Nakamura, K. (2006). *Deaf in Japan: Signing and the Politics of Identity*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Pfeiffer, D. L. (2003). *The Implementation and Administration of American Sign Language Programs for Foreign Language Credit in Public Secondary Schools*. Doctoral Dissertation, The George Washington University, No. 3083807.
- Pizer, G., K. Walters., and R. P. Meier. (2007). Bringing Up Baby with Baby Signs: Language Ideologies and Socialization in Hearing Families. *Sign Language Studies*, 7(4), 387-430.

- Power, D. (2006). Googling “Deaf”: Deafness in the World’s English-Language Press. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 151(5), 513-518.
- Prinz, P. M., and E. A. Prinz. (1979). Simultaneous Acquisition of ASL and Spoken English. *Sign Language Studies*, 25(1), 283-296.
- . (1981). Acquisition of ASL and Spoken English by a Hearing Child of a Deaf Mother and a Hearing Father. *Sign Language Studies*, 30(5), 78-88.
- Quay, S. (2005). Education Reforms and English Teaching for the Deaf in Japan. *Deafness and Education International*, 7(3), 139-153.
- Reagan, T. (2011). Ideological Barriers to American Sign Language: Unpacking Linguistic Resistance. *Sign Language Studies*, 11(4), 606-636.
- Robinson, K. (1997). Sign in Education: The Teaching of Hearing Children British Sign Language in School. Birmingham: Teesside Tec Press. In Daniels, M. (2001). Sign Language Advantage. *Sign Language Studies*, 2(1), 5-19.
- Rosen, R. (2008). American Sign Language as a Foreign Language in U.S. High Schools: State of the Art. *The Modern Language Journal*, 92(1), 10-38.
- . (2010). American Sign Language Curriculum: A Review. *Sign Language Studies*, 10(3), 348-381.
- Saito, K. (2007). *Sign Language as a Minority Language*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press. (In Japanese).
- Sayers, E. E., and D. Gates. (2008). Lydia Huntley Sigourney and the Beginning of American Deaf Education in Harford: It Takes a Village. *Sign Language Studies*, 8(4), 369-411.
- Selover, P. J. (1988). American Sign Language in the High School System. *Sign Language Studies*, 59, 205-212.
- Sinett, D. R. (1995). *An Investigation of How Foreign Language Departments at American Colleges and Universities View American Sign Language*. Doctoral Dissertation, Florida International University, No. 9610898.
- Sofinski, B. A. (2011). *Negotiating the American Sign Language (ASL) Maze: Examining the Status of ASL in Virginia*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Virginia, No. 3475669.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). *Mind in Society*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

## Appendix

### Fall 2002, 2006, and 2009 Language Course Enrollments (Languages in Descending Order of 2009 Totals)

	2002	2006	% Change, 2002–06	2009	% Change, 2006–09
Spanish	746,267	822,985	10.3	864,986	5.1
French	201,979	206,426	2.2	216,419	4.8
German	91,100	94,264	3.5	96,349	2.2
ASL	60,781	78,829	29.7	91,763	16.4
Italian	63,899	78,368	22.6	80,752	3.0
Japanese	52,238	66,605	27.5	73,434	10.3
Chinese	34,153	51,582	51.0	60,976	18.2
Arabic	10,584	23,974	126.5	35,083	46.3
Latin	29,841	32,191	7.9	32,606	1.3
Russian	23,921	24,845	3.9	26,883	8.2
Greek, Ancient	20,376	22,849	12.1	20,695	-9.4
Hebrew, Biblical	14,183	14,140	-0.3	13,807	-2.4
Portuguese	8,385	10,267	22.4	11,371	10.8
Korean	5,211	7,145	37.1	8,511	19.1
Hebrew, Modern	8,619	9,612	11.5	8,245	-14.2
Other languages	25,716	33,728	31.2	40,747	20.8
Total	1,397,253	1,577,810	12.9	1,682,627	6.6

Source: Nelly Furman, David Goldberg, and Natalia Lusin. (2010). *Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2009*. The Modern Language Association of America, Web publication, p.19.

Cited from [http://www.mla.org/pdf/2009\\_enrollment\\_survey.pdf](http://www.mla.org/pdf/2009_enrollment_survey.pdf)