

Reconsidering Linguistic Ideology: A Case Study of Communication among Deaf Children in Kenya

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In Europe, the US, and Japan, language is regarded as both a way of communication and a symbol of people's solidarity. Recent conceptualizations of a deaf identity are based on the notion that people who are deaf are a linguistic minority who share one sign language as a common language. This contention, which is consistent with ideological multilingualism or multiculturalism, is important when reconsidering "hearing-impaired" or "deaf-and-dumb" frameworks from medical and social welfare perspectives. However, the idea of deaf people as a linguistic minority is not consensually accepted. This article explores the limitations of this idea, discussing cases of deaf children and hearing people in Kenya that involve mixed communication modes.

Key words: communication, multilingualism, deaf children, sign language, Kenya

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to reconsider the historical and ideological background of the conceptualization of deaf people as a linguistic minority, which rests on the notion of ideological multilingualism developed in Western societies, and to present the limitations of this conceptualization by discussing the communication modes used by deaf children and others in Kenya. First, I contextualize this conceptualization in the theory of ideological multilingualism based on the "one language, one community" perspective. Second, I introduce the African view of multilingual situations by presenting several cases. Then, based on my fieldwork, I describe the communication modes used by deaf children and hearing people in Kenya. Finally, I conclude by showing that the view of deaf people as a linguistic group is not universal and is based on the assumption that one sign language is common to all members of this community. I propose that communication itself must be described in terms that are independent of a linguistic perspective.

2. HISTORY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LANGUAGE AND COMMUNITY

2.1. The relationship between deaf people and sign language

Deaf people are considered a linguistic minority. Members of this community use Japanese Sign Language (JSL), which differs from Japanese (Kimura & Ichida 1995: 354).

During the last 30–40 years, use of the terms “hearing-impaired” and “deaf and dumb” has been met with opposition, and proposals for a positive identity for deaf people have been advanced in Europe, the US, and Japan. Some people in English-speaking countries consider themselves “Deaf” with a capital “D” because they think of themselves as part of the Deaf community, which is considered equivalent to an ethnic group, and emphasize that they have their own culture. In Japan, Kimura, who is deaf, published the “Deaf Culture Declaration,” which had a multidisciplinary impact (e.g., on education for deaf children, the social sciences, the humanities, linguistics, social welfare, etc.).

Conventional descriptions such as “hearing-impaired” or “deaf and dumb” are based on a medical perspective on hearing and are used by social welfare services. Furthermore, the word “dumb” connotes the “impossibility of speaking language,” even when it is possible to use sign language. In contrast, Kimura’s Declaration views the sign language used by deaf people as equivalent to a spoken language (Kimura & Ichida 1995: 354). In this view, deaf people are defined as a linguistic minority, whose members use one sign language as a common language. They reject the terms “hearing-impaired” and “deaf and dumb”,⁽¹⁾ especially “dumb.” With this new definition, Kimura emphasized two distinct types of sign language in Japan. The first is the sign language used by “post-lingual deaf” people who are hard of hearing and by many sign language interpreters, which is referred to as “signed Japanese”.⁽²⁾ In this system, pronounced Japanese words are attached to corresponding signs. Kimura explained signed Japanese as “the assemblage of gestures that accompany Japanese words, which does not have a linguistic structure. It only works to assist reading what somebody says”⁽³⁾ (Kimura & Ichida 1995: 361). The second is the sign language originally used by deaf people in Japan, “JSL,” which is independent of spoken language.

The use of only verbal and lip-reading methods by schools for deaf children in Japan⁽⁴⁾ rests on the view that sign language is not a language but a series of gestures and, as such, is not worth learning. Additionally, it is thought that the acquisition of spoken Japanese is essential for the integration of deaf children into society. The uniqueness of JSL as distinct from signed Japanese had to be asserted to challenge the previous educational policy, which forced deaf children to acquire spoken language. The reconsideration of oralism requires that JSL be recognized as an independent language equal to spoken languages and distinct from Japanese. This movement has been influential in Europe and the US (Wilcox 2001; Ladd 2003; Padden & Humphries 2003; Monaghan et al. 2003) and relates both to the challenges experienced by deaf people and to broader historical linguistic phenomena. I review the relevant issues in the next section.

2.2. History of the “one language, one community” perspective

In Europe and the US, language was initially considered a symbol of national unity. Nowadays, it is viewed as a symbol of community solidarity. Each country’s language policy both affects linguistic practices and reflects the times; conversely, linguistics also affects language policy. Indeed, language was considered more a symbol of group consciousness than a communication tool after the French Revolution.⁽⁵⁾ Politically, language was tied to the state or nation (Tanaka 1981; Coulmas 1987; Rod 1993), and linguistic trends impacted these social tendencies. For example, the view of languages as individual entities was evident in grammar texts and dictionaries. This movement emerged simultaneously with the appearance of powerful countries during the 15th and 16th centuries (Calvet 2000: 18). Through the 18th and 19th centuries, the idea that individual languages were born by dialectal division was spread by the field of comparative linguistics, which emerged during European colonialism (Coulmas 1987: 23).

Entering the 20th century, Europe and the US favored multilingualism over monolingualism. However, multilingualism, like multiculturalism, is supported by an assumption that a closed and self-sufficient language community and the identity of the people in the community form an “essential entity” and that we should investigate the relationships among such entities (Kang 1997: 139). That is, the dominant view of language was transformed from a “one language, one state” perspective to a smaller “one language, one community” view. Based on this, independence movements by linguistic minorities appeared in Europe (e.g., the former Yugoslavia, Spain, etc.) (Schlieben-Lange 1996: 167),

and the study of bilingualism and diglossia⁽⁶⁾ began in the domain of American sociolinguistics in the 1960s. Early in the 21st century, Finegan and Rickford's (2004) investigation of linguistic diversity and its social, historical, and political importance focused on various individual languages—such as several types of English, Spanish, Native American languages, American Sign Language, and so on—used in the US.

In summary, views of language as individual entities and of “one language, one community” are connected to European and American history, which fostered them.

In the next section, I examine the idea that deaf people emphasize their Deaf identity by using a linguistic perspective as a basis for investigating changes in linguistic educational policy in schools for deaf students and in sign languages.

2.3. *Deaf identity and multilingualism*

During the period from the 1760s to the 1880s, which included the French Revolution, various methods were used to educate deaf individuals in Europe and the US. These included a writing system using fingerspelling, sign language,⁽⁷⁾ oral methods aimed at producing clear utterances, and combinations of these approaches. Specifically, until the international Milan Conference for deaf educators in 1880, sign language and the oral method were the major educational systems at schools for deaf children in Europe and the US (Eriksson 2003: 156). The Milan Conference was the scene of controversy over which system was superior. This controversy was settled with the following pronouncement: “The Congress, considering the incontestable superiority of speech over signs in restoring the deaf mute to society, and in giving him a more perfect knowledge of language, declares that the oral method ought to be preferred to that of signs for the education and instruction of the deaf and dumb” (Wright 1969: 177). Thus, the oral method was the dominant approach in deaf education until the 1980s, when it became known as oralism.⁽⁸⁾

Since this declaration, ensuring that “deaf and dumb” people acquire language—spoken or written—was considered crucial to their integration into society. Indeed, sign language was regarded as an auxiliary method by which spoken and written language could be acquired, but not as an appropriate communication method. In 1960, in *Sign Language Structure*, the linguist William C. Stokoe, a professor at Gallaudet University⁽⁹⁾ in the US, which was established for deaf people, presented sign language as having an independent structure of the sort found in spoken language (Stokoe [1960] 1978).⁽¹⁰⁾ This signified the dawn of bilingualism and diglossia studies in the domain of social linguistics in the US. At the time of Stokoe's arrival at Gallaudet, the sign language used by deaf Americans, now known as American Sign Language (ASL), was generally believed to be a corrupt visual code for spoken English or an elaborate pantomime. It and other national sign languages were widely suppressed in educational programs for deaf students. Stokoe proposed that ASL was, in fact, a fully formed human language in the same sense as spoken languages such as English (Armstrong 2000). In 1980, Stokoe emphasized the individuality of sign language, stating that, “Not only do deaf people of different nations have different sign languages, deaf groups in large nations, or in smaller divisions where mobility is limited, often use mutually unintelligible languages or dialects. The national spoken language has little or no effect on the nature of the sign language used by a national deaf population” (Stokoe 1980: 366).

In the 1980s, school for deaf students began adopting educational policies based on Stokoe's ideas. The importance of teaching sign language at these schools has been gradually acknowledged since the 1990s. Moreover, some countries began recognizing sign language as an official language (Eriksson 2003: 166–172). Since the 1980s, deaf people have emphasized their identity as Deaf people, asserting that sign language was not a universal, but a particular language (e.g., Kimura & Ichida 1995; Wilcox 2001; Padden & Humphries 2003). For example, deaf people in Japan define themselves as a linguistic minority, whose members share JSL as a common language. They also claim that a school for deaf children is the point of entry for membership in the linguistic minority, as this is where a deaf person first meets other deaf people. Furthermore, the original sign language and Deaf culture are passed across generations at such schools (Kimura & Ichida 1995; Ladd 2003). Thus, one shared,

common sign language became the basis of Deaf identity among deaf people, just as one spoken language serves as the symbol of solidarity for hearing people. Teaching sign language at schools for deaf students has been important to the development of Deaf identity.

In the past, the term "one language, one state" referred to spoken language but not to sign language, which was not recognized as a language. The Milan Conference endorsed the idea that "deaf and dumb" people must acquire spoken language to integrate them into society. This was reflected in the educational policy of oralism, which was adopted by many schools for deaf students in Europe and the US for more than 200 years. However, the results of the linguistic studies of sign language undertaken from the multilingualism ideology emerging in the latter half of the 20th century theoretically justified the shift from oralism to sign language at schools for deaf students.

As mentioned above, sign language has acquired the status of an individual language and has become a symbol of solidarity. It has also become important that deaf people in Europe, the US, and Japan claim their Deaf identity as members of the Deaf community. Again, the idea of deaf individuals as a linguistic minority recognizes sign language as a language. Considering sign language to be the same as spoken languages has two implications. First, it implies that it has an independent structure that does not rely on spoken language. Second, it implies that, like spoken languages, it is a symbol of solidarity. These two ideas are rooted in the history of language in Europe and the US. Thus, the "one language, one community" perspective applies to deaf people using a common sign language.

In the next section, I explain why the "one language, one community" perspective cannot be applied universally by providing examples from East Africa. I focus specifically on the modes of communication used by deaf children and hearing people in Kenya.

3. COMMUNICATION MODES AMONG KENYAN DEAF CHILDREN

3.1. *The relationship between language and people in East Africa*

As mentioned in Section 2, in Europe and the US, multilingualism means that each language exists as an individual entity. In this sense, African countries are regarded as multilingual societies, as many languages co-exist within one country. The presence of several languages in one country can divide people, which is regarded as problematic in African countries (Bamgbose 1994; Fardon & Furniss 1994).

However, people in multilingual African societies use several languages in their everyday lives, selecting the one to use according to the particular situation (Komori 2002: 170). Furthermore, one language is not necessarily strongly linked to group solidarity; thus, multilingual situations do not divide people, implying that multilingualism in Africa is not the same as it is in European or American societies. For example, Komori (2002) described the situation in Ukwere in Tanzania as follows: A Sukuma woman, whose husband is from Kerewe, spoke in Kerewe. A woman from Jita also spoke in Kerewe. When Komori asked the Jita woman why she spoke in Kerewe, she said she had spoken in Jita. It is common that what people intend to speak is different from what they actually speak (Komori 2002: 180). Here, the distinction between Kerewe and Jita does not reflect speakers' recognition of a distinction, but linguistic categorization imposed by observers. Based on his analysis of loanwords in Oromo and Rendille, Schlee (1994) demonstrated that language use and identity are not always closely linked. In this context, Islamic groups may adopt non-Islamic or even anti-Islamic forms of linguistic expression, and non-Islamic groups may adopt Arabic or Muslim expressions for the names of customs (Schlee 1994: 196–197).

In summary, there is a difference between a speaker's understanding and that of an observer in Africa. In Komori's case, the language that was actually used was not important to the speaker. In Schlee's study, the connections between language use and identity were not universal.

In the next section, I first provide a historical background for current communication modes in Kenya by examining linguistic education from the colonial period until now. Then, based on my

fieldwork, I describe the African multilingual communication modes used by deaf children and hearing people in Kenya.

3.2. The background of linguistic education for deaf children in Kenya

3.2.1 History of linguistic education at schools in Kenya: the colonial period to the present

Because the French and Portuguese favored assimilation, they discouraged the teaching of African languages in schools. In contrast, the British and Belgians favored separate development, and they encouraged the teaching of African languages (Bamgbose 1983: 57–58). British colonial Kenya was no exception. My research focused on the history of education in the Nandi District from 1905 to 1960. It was based on the District Officer's quarterly report, which indicated that the first education provided in the district was for the indigenous leader's successor (Hemsted 1909). At that time, a mission formed the center of education in the area around the present-day Nandi District. In 1927, translation of the Bible into the Nandi language began at the Nandi station of the Africa Inland Mission (the current Africa Inland Church); this project was completed and the Bible published in 1939 (Biwot n.d.; Bryson 1959). In the 1920s, a Nandi man educated in the Christian educational system became an elder of the church.

In 1925, an industrial school was established at the center of the District. Huntingford, who conducted ethnographic fieldwork in Nandi and became the school's first head teacher, wrote to the Education Department in Nairobi asking for permission to employ an educated Nandi man because he deemed education of young children in the Nandi language essential (Huntingford 1925). According to the curriculum, reading and writing were taught in Swahili and Nandi. The language of instruction was Swahili (Huntingford 1925), and most individuals who are now in their 90s and were raised in this area speak Nandi and understand Swahili. One elderly man who graduated from Huntingford's industrial school speaks Swahili and a bit of English. When I interviewed him, an interpreter translated my English questions into Nandi. This interviewee answered me in Swahili, often mixed with English.

According to the Education Department's 1924 Annual Report, exams at all schools were conducted in the local vernacular (Colony and Protectorate of the Kenya (C.P.K.) Education Department 1924). By the 1950s, the primary school curriculum included English, Swahili, and the local vernacular (C.P.K. Education Department 1953). In 1967, 4 years after independence, the Ministry of Education Kenya (MEK) published a new syllabus (MEK 1967), which replaced the syllabi for African, European, Arabian, and Asian schools that had been published by the British colonial administrator. The curriculum included English, Swahili,⁽¹¹⁾ and a "mother tongue"⁽¹²⁾ rather than a local "vernacular".

During my fieldwork in Nandi, people told me that "vernacular" or "mother tongue" refers to the language spoken by the "tribe".⁽¹³⁾ However, it is impossible to specialize in one mother tongue because residents, especially in urban areas, come from several places; thus, Swahili is learned instead. In some rural areas, a mother tongue is taught as an independent class in the lower grades. In Kenya, only Swahili is spoken in the Swahili class, and English in the English class. In urban areas, the language of instruction is English or Swahili.⁽¹⁴⁾ In summary, since the British colonial period, English, Swahili, and a local vernacular (mother tongue) have all been taught in schools in Kenya.

3.2.2 History of linguistic education for deaf children in Kenya

The establishment of schools for the deaf in Kenya was planned during the British colonial period and implemented before the country's independence in 1963. According to official documents issued by the British administrator in Ministry of Health (MOH) in the Kenya National Archives (MOH/27/7),⁽¹⁵⁾ the establishment of a deaf school was planned in the 1950s under the leadership of the medical and education departments of the British colonial administrator or the Society of Deaf and Dumb Children, which later became the Society of Deaf Children. Most schools for deaf people in Kenya were established—before and after independence—through the support of the Education Department or local churches. Currently, Kenya boasts nearly 80 schools for deaf people.

According to the "Survey of Deafness in Africa: Preliminary Report on a Visit to East and West Africa" (September 18, 1961), "We received no support for any idea that there should be a large central Institute for the deaf. All opinions given to us were in favour of the necessity of keeping deaf children in their own towns or villages in their own language area and integrating them into the normal classes as soon as possible after preliminary training" (MOH 1961: 10). For example, according to "The Annual General Meeting of the Society for Deaf Children" on September 21, 1965, only the Aga Khan Primary School in Nairobi continued to teach in English, Saint Mary's Catholic Mission in Nyalima, near Bond, taught three classes in the Luo language, and Baluhiya was the language of instruction at Mumias, near Kakamega (Ministry of Health and Housing (MHH): 1965).

Today, schools for deaf students follow the "normal" 12-year school system: primary school is 8 years, from Standards (Stds) 1 to 8, and secondary school is 4 years, from Form 1 to 4. Pupils can enroll in vocational schools⁽¹⁶⁾ for more than 4 years, depending on their technical level.

In the past, deaf children in Kenya were educated using the oral method (lip-reading and utterances). However, education using sign language began in the 1980s, when the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE),⁽¹⁷⁾ a school for teachers of special education, was established through support from Denmark.

Education for deaf children in primary schools follows the syllabi for the primary schools (Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) 2002a; 2002b) and schools for deaf students (KIE 2001a, 2001b). The former prescribes teaching English, Swahili, and the mother tongue prior to Std 3, whereas the latter prescribes teaching "Kenyan sign language for schools" (KIE sign language),⁽¹⁸⁾ which is supervised by the KIE under the MEK, and promotes reading and writing. Thus, English, Swahili, and KIE sign language are taught at schools for deaf children in Kenya.

However, schools for deaf children in Kenya combine several other types of sign language with KIE sign language. These include Kenyan Sign language (KSL), which differs from KIE sign language, American Sign Language (ASL), British Sign Language, Korean Sign Language, and Belgian Sign Language according to the Ethnologue website.⁽¹⁹⁾

My research from 2003 to 2006⁽²⁰⁾ confirmed that deaf children used several sign languages at the Kenya National Competition of Sports and Cultural Activities. Some deaf children told me they used KSL; however, I noticed that they primarily used ASL.

When children graduate from primary schools for deaf students and enter secondary or vocational schools, they learn the sign language used at the new school. I noticed that children who did not initially know the new school's sign language continued using it after graduating.

3.3. Case studies

3.3.1 About my research

I stayed and conducted my research at K School for the Deaf (K school) in Nandi District, Rift Valley Province, a residential school.⁽²¹⁾ According to the school's head teacher, more than 70% of the students were from Kalenjin,⁽²²⁾ and the rest were from Luhya, Luo, Kikuyu, and Kisii. This school has 10 classes: nursery and infant (pre-primary) and Stds 1–8. Approximately 100 deaf students are enrolled, and there are 40 teaching and non-teaching staff. The school had previously accepted volunteers from a US volunteer group to teach classes or serve as homeroom teachers.

3.3.2 Linguistic education at K School for the Deaf

K school teaches English and Swahili classes, as they follow the primary school syllabus for deaf children, which means that teachers teach children to read and write and, sometimes, to speak. Sign language is taught in grades lower than Std 3, and the primary school syllabus mandates that the class be taught in the mother tongue, including at the pre-primary level. The syllabus for primary schools for deaf children prescribes KIE sign language according to the dictionary. However, children are taught several kinds of sign language. Most teachers graduated from KISE, which teaches KIE sign language, which they often use with reference to a KIE sign language dictionary (KIE 1990). This dictionary was edited based on ASL by a deaf man who studied at Gallaudet University in the US.⁽²³⁾

The other sign language is KSL, described by members of the Kenya National Association of the Deaf (KNAD) as the original sign language of deaf people in Kenya.⁽²⁴⁾ They recommend using KSL at schools. This dictionary (KNAD 2001) includes sign words and word order. In KSL, the word order, whether SVO, SOV, or OSV, depends on the speaker's topic. For example, the first word is the one he or she wants to mention first. Teachers at K school refer to this dictionary⁽²⁵⁾ when necessary. Teachers also use ASL.

3.3.3 Language "mixing" in everyday life at K School for the Deaf

Figure 1 is an example of the Std 4 Christian Religious Education (CRE) class.⁽²⁶⁾ I translated their sign words into English according to the KIE sign language (KIE 2002c), KSL (KNAD 2001), and ASL (Costello 1998) dictionaries. First, the teacher wrote "Adam and Eve" on the blackboard. Then, looking at the children he said, "Adam - and - Eve - you - remember - you - remember - these - people - OK? - You - remember - them? - This - was - who? - Eric."

In Figure 1, the horizontal line indicates simultaneous occurrences. For example, in 08, the teacher's spoken "people" was accompanied by his signing "PEOPLE" and a child's signing "MALE."

Figure 2 is an example of the difference between the KSL and ASL versions of the word "PEOPLE." In this case, the teacher spoke in English, but his signing was a mixture of KIE sign language, KSL, and ASL. The child's signing was also a mixture of ASL and KSL. A second example involved one teacher's explaining numbers to children using KSL, whereas other teachers used KIE sign language. Furthermore, one teacher taught numbers using KSL and other words using KIE sign language. In these cases, teachers did not indicate that they were using KSL, KIE sign language, or ASL. In another case, a teacher used ASL to interpret visitors' verbal speech into sign language for children, because "ASL has many vocabularies".⁽²⁷⁾ In response to a question about whether the children understood the different sign languages used by teachers, they responded that they did. Similar to the case in Tanzania, which Komori (2002) mentioned, I noticed that they were unaware that different

T=teacher, C=child

	T's speech	T's pointing	[T's signing]	C's signing
01	Adam			
02	and			
03	Eve			
04		pointing "Adam"		
05	you			
06	remember		[REMEMBER] (KIE)	
07	these			
08	people?		[PEOPLE] (ASL)	MALE (ASL)
09	OK?			
10	you			
11	remember		[REMEMBER] (KIE)	MALE (ASL)
12	them?			
13				MAN (KSL)
14	this	pointing "Adam"		
15	was			
16	who?		[WHO] (KSL)	
17	Eric	pointing Eric		

Fig. 1. Dialogue in a Std 4 CRE class (September 29, 2004).

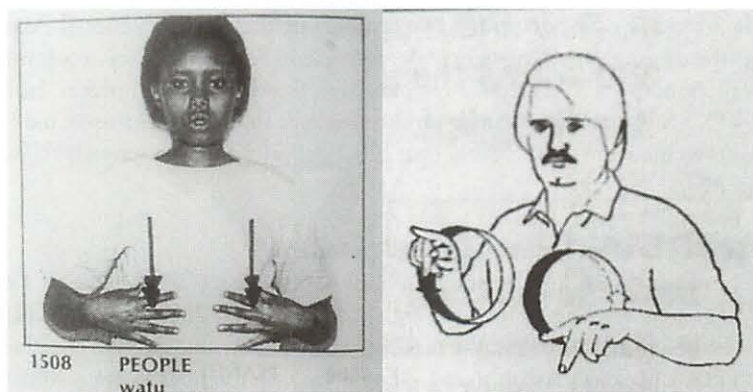


Fig. 2. Expression of "PEOPLE". Left is KSL, Right is ASL (Source: KNAD 2001, Costello 1998).

languages—KSL, KIE sign language, and ASL—were being used. They just used sign language rather than a specific "Kenyan," "KIE," or "American" variety.

Children at K school used several communication modes in their everyday lives. As mentioned, they learned several types of sign language in classes, and those in the lower grades learned signs from children in the higher grades through daily interactions.⁽²⁸⁾ When entering the school, only children with siblings who also attended the school knew anything about sign language. Thus, most learned sign languages in classes, at school events, and during daily life at their residences.

Children used sign languages as well as written and spoken languages. According to teachers and children, their reading and writing in English was better than that in Swahili. Children often exchanged letters written in English.⁽²⁹⁾ In terms of spoken languages, I observed children uttering words or sentences using sign language along with Swahili or vernacular words corresponding to the sign when communicating with hearing people. For example, children often uttered *shamba* ("farm" in Swahili); however, they did not usually use the English word, "farm." Children from Nandi used *senge* ("paternal aunt" in Nandi) and uttered *mamii* ("there is nothing" in Nandi) with their corresponding signs. Interestingly, I observed a child from Luhya, not Nandi, utter *mamii*, accompanied by the same sign. Furthermore, children were good at using several sign languages while reading and writing, making utterances or producing vocal speech, and miming. I noted that their miming was better than that of hearing children. Although beyond the scope of the current discussion, this issue warrants further discussion.

Children learned and freely used several communication modes, which was evident at their homes. They spoke without hesitation to family members, neighbors, and even people they had never met before using several modes. A boy⁽³⁰⁾ who was attending the school for deaf children told me that he talked to his much older sister using spoken languages and, if he was tired, with sign language. I witnessed the sister talking in sign language when she visited the school.

Similarly, many hearing people responded flexibly to deaf children. They tried to use sign languages, with which they became familiar by communicating with deaf children. Even when they initially met a deaf child, they tried using their hands as if using sign language if they recognized the child was deaf. They rarely asked me what the deaf child said. Indeed, they usually did not need an interpreter between spoken and sign language in their everyday lives.⁽³¹⁾

This flexibility in using several communication modes may derive from hearing people's way of speaking. For example, Nandi individuals in urban and rural areas often speak a mixture of Nandi, Swahili, and English among themselves. Thus, unlike most people in Europe, the US, and Japan, they do not fret over which language to use in everyday life.

3.4. *Is the Western perspective on language universal?*

Foreigners cannot always accept these everyday practices in Kenya. When I was at K school, a US volunteer who taught at the school argued that Kenyan deaf people should use KSL and also insisted that we should develop one standardized sign language instead of using the current mixture of several sign languages. A teacher from Nandi told her that a different sign language was needed depending on one's conversation partner, just as hearing individuals used Swahili or English when communicating with those from outside Nandi. The volunteer from the US remained unconvinced.

Another volunteer, who was deaf, was sent by the same US group. This volunteer used only one sign language. When a teacher at K school spoke to her in sign language, she did not understand the sign he used for "father." He used other signs for "father" while explaining with gestures. Finally understanding, she pointed out that his signing was wrong and taught him the correct way to express "father" so that she could understand.

In contrast to these US volunteers' attitudes, teachers at K school promoted the flexible use of sign languages. One teacher explained, "Sign language differs at each school for deaf children in Kenya. If you use the one you already know, you cannot understand other sign languages used at other schools. You must unlearn the sign language you already know and try to relearn the sign language used in that school." This teacher had learned a sign language that differed from what he had already learned at KISE when he attended a school for teaching deaf children. Most of the teaching and non-teaching staff at K school confirmed that they learned new forms of sign language from the deaf children at the school.

Where did the different attitudes held by the volunteers and teachers at K school toward the use of sign language originate? Why did the volunteers use only one sign language as a system or form of expression? Their attitudes emerged from their perspective on language, which was developed in Europe and the US. As mentioned in Section 2, language has been regarded more as a symbol of solidarity than as a way of communicating. Reflected in the ideology of "one language, one state," the use of one language helped to construct the identity of the language users. Recently, this view shifted to "one language, one community" based on the ideology of multilingualism. This trend has affected Deaf identity in Europe, the US, and Japan, where deaf people are considered a linguistic minority with one common sign language. It now promotes the same logic as ideological multilingualism.

Most arguments related to ideological multilingualism are based on the idea that each language exists as an independent entity. In other words, "English" means pure English, "KSL" means pure KSL, and each is regarded as a pure, unique, and independent system. However, as mentioned above, linguistic practice in African societies, especially in East Africa, is ambiguous. Observations of communication modes in Kenya have revealed that deaf children and hearing people use a flexible mixture of languages. Thus, in Kenya, "one language, one community" does not appropriately describe the behavior either of deaf children using sign language or of hearing people using multiple languages.⁽³²⁾

4. CONCLUSION

This article initially reviewed the background of the notion of a linguistic minority as presented in the "Deaf Culture Declaration" from Japan, which opposed the conventional "hearing-impaired" or "deaf-and-dumb" framework. This declaration shares the logic of the linguistic perspective developed in Europe and the US, which regards language not only as one form of communication but also as a symbol of solidarity for the people who share the language. The contention that those who share one common sign language are members of a Deaf community and have a Deaf identity can be conceptually located within the global "one language, one community" perspective rather than in the "one language, one state" perspective.

Results of studies conducted from a linguistic perspective have theorized that sign language is equivalent to spoken language; thus, it was important to reconsider the policy of oralism, the cornerstone of mainstream education for deaf people in Europe, the US, and Japan. Oralism was based on

the idea that deaf people had to acquire spoken language to be integrated into society. Thus, the use of sign language at schools for deaf students was forbidden.⁽³³⁾⁽³⁴⁾ This is similar to forbidding the use of other languages in the “one language, one state” policy.

Second, I showed that the “one language, one community” perspective cannot be applied to at least some cases in East African societies. Indeed, since the British colonial period, English, Swahili, and each vernacular have been taught in parallel in Kenya. Thus, people in Kenya communicate with one another in a flexible manner. For example, people easily shift from one language to another depending on their conversation partners, and people speak a mixture of a vernacular, Swahili, and English even when talking to a speaker who uses the same vernacular as they do. This practice continues in their conversations with deaf children, when they flexibly use several communication modes. The deaf children at K school were raised within this linguistic context, and they were comfortably familiar with several sign languages and used several communication modes in their everyday lives.

It is also important to note the following additional points. According to Kimura, JSL includes several dialects (Kimura & Ichida 2014: 46). In other words, even in Japan, sign language is characterized by diversity. However, the issue is not whether there is diversity within JSL; it is the attitude of JSL users toward their sign language: Kimura emphasized the distinction between JSL and signed Japanese or spoken Japanese. JSL includes the dialects used by JSL users as well as by Japanese speakers, who usually regard their language as Japanese rather than as a particular dialect.

The difference between Japan and Kenya in this regard is that people in Kenya do not consider language a way to distinguish themselves from others. Additionally, using more than two languages is quite natural for them, so it is unnecessary to label them as multilingual. There is no hierarchical distinction between sign language and spoken language among either deaf or hearing people in Kenya.

In this article, I use the phrases “mixture of (sign) languages” or “several types of sign language.” Some may criticize this practice, because I presuppose that a language can exist individually. The categorization of sign languages is based on my, the observer’s, classification. This classification depends on the KIE sign language, KSL, and ASL dictionaries, which are organized as if representing individual language systems.⁽³⁵⁾ However, deaf children and teachers at K school communicate with one another without referring to these distinctions.

How are sign languages “mixed”? I asked children at K school, “Are there differences in the sign language used by different teachers?” They responded that there were. However, they all confirmed that they could understand everything the teachers said. Some graduates of the school told me that they recognized differences between the sign languages used at their former and their new schools. How did they recognize these differences? How did they communicate using a “mixture” of sign languages?

These questions cannot be answered by adhering to a linguistic classification developed from the observer’s viewpoint. Here, we must reconsider the European perspective toward language as a means of communication. Stokoe showed that each sign language has its own structure; however, he also wrote, “while there may be great or slight differences ... between sign languages, deaf people who travel are skillful to varying degrees at communicating with ‘foreigners’ (i.e., deaf people who use different languages). This international communication is established and maintained, either consciously or out of awareness, by relaxing the strict rules of the communicator’s sign language and using gestures, mime, and whatever people do to communicate across language barriers” (Stokoe 1980: 366, emphasis added). In other words, we should discuss human communication apart from strict linguistic rules. Instead, I discuss this issue by focusing on body movement.

As mentioned, Kimura criticized the historical perspective on sign language that regarded sign language as less valuable than spoken language because sign language was considered a collection of gestures without a linguistic, grammatical structure. Here, linguistic ideology affects not only the hierarchical relationship among languages but also the relationship between language and body movement.

In Kenya, there is no hierarchical distinction between the language and the body movements used in typical communication. One interesting phenomenon provides a way to explore questions of com-

munication: deaf children in Kenya freely dance together, sometimes with children who can hear (Furukawa-Yoshida 2012). They dance extemporaneously. How does this extemporaneous dance happen and proceed? Answering this question is necessary when discussing communication.

Finally, the data in this article are based on my research until 2006. In Kenya, the linguistic education policy in schools for deaf children changed in 2008. According to teachers at K school, deaf children are now taught in KSL rather than in Swahili and KIE sign language. Additionally, the 2010 Constitution of Kenya acknowledges KSL as one of Kenya's official languages. According to my latest research, conducted from 2011 to 2012, deaf children continue to use several sign languages. My future task is to collect more data and examine whether communication modes have changed among deaf children.

NOTES

- (1) Kimura and Ichida did not deny the medical perspective, which regards the term "hearing-impaired" as correct (Kimura & Ichida 2000: 398–399). They emphasized the sameness of sign and spoken language and argued that deaf people have their own community if they share the same sign language. One cannot protest education for deaf students, in which children are educated using the oral method (lip-reading and utterance) based on a conventional linguistic perspective (see the next section).
- (2) Nowadays, most interpreters refer to JSL.
- (3) Kimura and Ichida acknowledged "signed Japanese" as a communication tool (Kimura & Ichida 1995: 361).
- (4) According to Sasaki (2008), many schools for deaf students in Japan still use the oral method. Although teachers sometimes use signed Japanese, spoken Japanese has higher information content. Students are asked to repeatedly reiterate what the teacher says, which causes them to fall behind in their schoolwork.
- (5) For example, language is not regarded a communication tool: "As a differentiating symbol, a national language can simply remain iconic. Citizens do not necessarily need to master it, as is the case of Irish in Ireland" (Wright 2000: 77).
- (6) Ferguson, a social linguist, conceptualized this term as follows: "Two varieties of a language exist side by side throughout the community, with each having a definite role to play" (Ferguson 1971). Here, language becomes hierarchically bipolarized according to the situation (Schlieben-Lange 1996: 150).
- (7) The type of sign language used at the time is unclear because few documents on sign language before the 19th century are available. However, at the time, "sign language" referred to "signed language," which was applied to spoken language. The ultimate goal in Europe and the US was for deaf people to acquire vocal and written language through education using signed language (Bézagu-Deluy 1994; Lane 2000).
- (8) In "A conceptual diagram of a history of controversy of deaf education," Lane (2000) discussed the methods proposed in the educational policies for education of deaf children and their source of support in each period and area. These are natural sign language, methodical signs (signed language), fingerspelling, and the oral method.
- (9) The forerunner of this university was established for deaf people in Washington, DC, in 1864. According to the Annual Report of Achievements (October 1, 2012–September 30, 2013) (Gallaudet University 2013), the undergraduate and graduate enrolment totaled 1,176 "deaf/hard of hearing," 338 "hearing," and eight "unknown."
- (10) I refer to the revised edition published in 1978. Stokoe explained that revisions were minimal (Stokoe 1978: ii).
- (11) The syllabus identifies Swahili as the second language.
- (12) The syllabus states that "mother tongue" includes Swahili.
- (13) Teachers at K school viewed Nandi as their vernacular. Here, they used "vernacular" rather than "mother tongue." They told me that sign language is the mother tongue of children at K school and did not use the term "vernacular" in this context. The criteria for distinguishing between "vernacular" and "mother tongue" should be examined in greater detail.
- (14) In Kenya, all school textbooks are in English, except for the course in Swahili language, which is taught in Swahili. One of the urban primary schools I visited taught in English or Swahili, but teachers spoke to children in Swahili during breaks.

- (15) This is the index number given to materials contained in a box in the Kenya National Archives. I refer to many materials in the box, which I cannot treat as one book.
- (16) Some vocational schools included both deaf and hearing pupils.
- (17) This institute is under the Kenya Institute of Education. There are teacher-training courses to teach “mentally handicapped,” “visually handicapped,” “physically handicapped,” and “hearing-impaired” people. (All of these expressions are in accordance with the Institute’s brochure.)
- (18) This sign language is not based on the KSL dictionary, which is edited by the KNAD, but on the Kenyan Sign Language for Schools dictionary, originally issued by KIE (KIE 2002c).
- (19) Owing to updating of the website, we now cannot refer to this information. Comparing the older and newest information, this situation seems to have changed; “Schools under the Kenya Institute of Education use the Kenyan version of (American) Exact Signed English, including one at Machakos. KSL is used at Nyangoma School in Bondo, a primary and boys’ technical school (Sakwa), and in one girls’ school. A school in Mombasa uses British Sign Language (Ethnologue 2014).”
- (20) I conducted my research from 2003 to 2006 and from 2011 to 2012. This article draws on data I collected from 2003 to 2006.
- (21) During school holidays, I stayed mostly at K school’s children’s home while conducting my research. I also accompanied teachers and children to the Kenya National Competition of Sports and Cultural Activities. I studied the children, teachers, and non-teaching staff at K school as well as their families and neighbors, and the children and teachers at other deaf schools.
- (22) According to Konma, “Kalenjin” is an ethnic group in the Southern Nilote in Kenya. The group includes Nandi, Kipsigis, Tugen, Keiyo, Marakwet, Pokot, Terik, and Sabaot (Konma 1994). “Kalenjin” politically united these “tribes” into one group (Matsuda 2000).
- (23) According to KIE (2002c), the fourth edition of KIE (1990) overlaps with the Kenya National Association of the Deaf (KNAD) dictionary. For example, the expression of dates, except for Saturday, is the same in KSL as it is in KIE (2002c); Saturday is the same in KIE (1990), KIE (2002c), and KSL. According to KIE (2002c: v), the book was revised, and the new and emerging signs used in schools for deaf children and in the deaf community were included in the expanded edition. However, the KNAD dictionary is not listed in the bibliography. Teachers at K school referred only to the 1990 version.
- (24) In an interview, a member of KNAD explained that they have KSL in Kenya, but before they published their dictionary, members of KIE had already published another one year before. He mentioned a relationship with a man who had studied at Gallaudet University: “We cooperated with each other before, but now there is no collaboration. He graduated from university, so he ignores us because we graduated from only primary or secondary schools.” In my interview with this man, he did not mention his career or express elitism.
- (25) In this article, I refer to KNAD (2001). K school uses the first edition published in 1990.
- (26) This case first appeared in Furukawa-Yoshida (2011).
- (27) I interviewed one member of KNAD who also used ASL despite acknowledging KSL as the sign language of Kenyan deaf people. He explained the reason for this as follows: “I borrow from ASL because it includes some vocabularies that KSL does not.”
- (28) A teacher told me that there was “slang” used only by the children, but only a few teachers close to the children understood its meaning.
- (29) The word order is SVO in English; however, in written English, it is sometimes OSV. Furthermore, in English, the word “move” is a verb; however, the sign for “move” is often used as a conjunction meaning, “well, ...” (to change the topic).
- (30) When I met him for the first time in 2003, he was 13 years old. In 2011, I visited a deaf girl’s home near his sister’s home. She told me he had begun to work in town as a motorcycle taxi driver.
- (31) Some deaf children told me they needed an interpreter when attending church services. They enjoyed hymns, clapping their hands, and using body movements, but they were bored during the sermon when there was no interpreter.
- (32) When they distinguished themselves from others, they did not consider language as an index. Rather, they considered their father’s descent, clan, gender, and the church to which they belonged.
- (33) In Kenya, education for deaf children officially incorporated sign language in the 1980s, although it was allowed before then.
- (34) Or vice versa. For example, in the Sign Language Interpreter Training Course at the College, National Rehabilitation Center for Persons with Disabilities in Japan, spoken language is not allowed in all places.

It can only be used for lectures by hearing lecturers from outside the college and in interpretation skills classes, where sign language is translated into oral Japanese (Kitabayashi 2011: 37). This policy was designed to help hearing students realize that if hearing people use only spoken language around deaf people, deaf people cannot join the conversation or easily receive information and thus they are excluded. It is also to learn the patterns of behavior involved in using sign language with deaf people (Kitabayashi 2011: 37).

- (35) These dictionaries use figures or photos of the signer's upper body, who expresses each signed word. It is difficult to express a chain of signing movements on paper, as only the presumably most important fragments of a chain of signing movements are depicted. Similar to spoken languages, sign language is difficult to divide into elements. I discussed this in my doctoral dissertation using visual data (Furukawa-Yoshida 2012).

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