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Developing Sign Linguistics in Adult Deaf Education in the Asia Pacific Region

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Acknowledgement

Nippon Foundation Grant for "Practical
Dictionaries of Asian Sign Languages"
2003-2007

(Project # 617330)



Summary of Presentation

- The emergence of sign linguistics
- Linguistic intuitions of deaf informants
- Sign Linguistics Research and Deaf Education
- The Program on "Practical Dictionaries of Asian Sign Languages"

Early stage of linguistics research

Study of speech = Study of language

- In the early 20th Century, linguistic studies paid little attention to studying the 'gestures' of deaf people.
- Preoccupation: Linguistic analysis must be done through human speech.
- Edward Sapir (1921) *Language: An Introduction to the Study of Speech*.

William Stokoe (1919-2000)

- William C. Stokoe, Jr. pioneered the scientific study of American Sign Language in the 60s.



Established findings

- Linguists and psycholinguists proved that:
 - Sign language is a natural language and subject to the same constraints as demonstrated in spoken language (Fischer 1981)
 - Sign language varies between countries but 'family ties' can be set up (Woodward 1983)
 - The human brain is equipped for language in any modality (Klima and Bellugi 1979)

Sub-disciplines of Sign Linguistics

- Sign language syntax
- Sign language phonology
- Sign language morphology
- Sign language processing
- Sign language acquisition
- Neurological organization of sign language
- Sign language, society and culture (Sociolinguistics)
- Sign language families (historical linguistics)
- Sign language teaching and interpretation (applied linguistics)

Impact of Sign Language Research

- In America alone, 40 years of sign language research now makes ASL the 5th most popular foreign language in the country
- Sign Linguistics undergraduate and postgraduate programs are sprouting across the globe
- There is an increasing demand for quality sign language dictionaries and resource materials to support sign language instruction and interpretation

- There is an increasing demand for supporting deaf education with natural sign language -- Bi-Bi programs
- There is an increasing demand for supporting hearing children's spoken language development with natural sign language -- Baby signing

Auslan



Signing Baby Shop!



Books, DVD's, flash cards, more!

Sign Babes
ASL

BSL

MOST IMPORTANT STILL!!

- More and more deaf individuals who have made their way to tertiary education are attracted to Sign Linguistics training

Intuitions in linguistic research

- To investigate a language requires the linguist not only to observe the linguistic phenomena in some commonly occurring conversational data, but to be able to probe into some subtle nuances of the language through linguistic judgments.
- A common strategy in linguistic research is to consult one's own native language through linguistic intuitions
- Such probing allows linguists to know what is and is not feasible in the language
 - In English, **"*Tom said that Peter hated himself"**

Linguistic Intuitions in Sign Language Research

- How to obtain data for sign language analysis?
- Linguistic intuitions from deaf informants are crucial, especially those from a native signer (i.e. a signer, deaf or hearing, who grew up with deaf parents and learn the language since birth)
- Obtaining native intuitions of sign language is not as easy as has been observed in spoken language research because:
 - In some Asian countries, native deaf signers are hard to come by
 - Misconceptions about sign language in the larger community make deaf people distrust their own language or cause confusion between giving judgments on natural sign language and signed spoken language

What needs to be done in Asia?

- ♦ To develop the discipline of sign linguistic research
- ♦ To engender a group of deaf researchers who can consult their own linguistic intuitions for adequate grammatical descriptions of native sign language
- ♦ To set up a database to document the sign language varieties in Asia
- ♦ To support sign language teaching and interpretation through compiling dictionaries and resource materials based on sign linguistics principles

Practical Dictionaries of Asian Sign Languages (2003-2007)

- ♦ Nature:
 - ♦ Funded by an International Organization -- The Nippon Foundation based in Japan
 - ♦ A multi-phase project with collaborations at regional level
 - ♦ Analysis based on methodology grounded in Sign Linguistics

♦ Aims:

- ♦ To preserve the sign languages in Asia through linguistic documentation
- ♦ To train deaf individuals Sign Linguistics in order for them to assist in the documentation
- ♦ To place the training in the context of adult deaf education program

♦ Output

- ♦ To publish sign language dictionaries and teaching resource materials for needs of societies.

♦ Organization

- ♦ Administratively based at Chinese University of Hong Kong
- ♦ 4 Asian countries participate in the project
 - ♦ Vietnam : Project on Opening University Education for Deaf People in Vietnam
 - ♦ Cambodia : Deaf Development Program
 - ♦ The Philippines : The Philippines Association of the Deaf
 - ♦ Hong Kong : The Centre for Sign Linguistics and Deaf Studies, CUHK

Training in Sign Linguistics & Sign Language Teaching

- ♦ Led by a team of sign linguists & associates recruited either locally or from abroad, mainly:
 - ♦ James Woodward
 - ♦ Gladys Tang
 - ♦ Liza Martinez
 - ♦ Yukata Osugi
 - ♦ Mike Kemp
 - ♦ Ceil Lucas

Curriculum

- ♦ Formational Structure (SL phonology)
- ♦ Grammatical Structure (SL Syntax)
- ♦ Sociolinguistics
- ♦ Lexical Structure (SL Morphology)
- ♦ Sign Language Lexicography
- ♦ Applied Linguistics (SL teaching, instructional design, materials development)

Vietnam

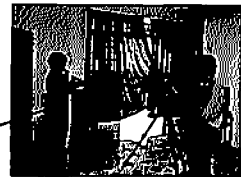
- James Woodward and Nguyen Thi Hoa lead a group of 5 deaf trainees chosen out of 42 deaf students of another Nippon Foundation-funded project called "Opening University Education to Deaf People in Viet Nam Through Sign Language Analysis, Teaching, and Interpretation".
- Focus on Ho Chi Minh City Sign Language *

*other sign languages used in Vietnam are Ha Noi Sign Language and Hai Phong Sign Language

Work of the Vietnamese Team



Tien



Nhut



Huong

Tu

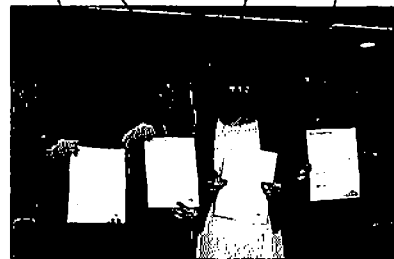
Hong Kong

- The project is led by Gladys Tang, supported by James Woodward, Mike Kemp, and a group of postgraduate students of sign linguistics: Felix Sze, Jafi Lee, Scholastica Lam, Fon Wong, Daisuke Sasaki, Wong Ying Wai
- Other supporting trainers: Denise Chan, Lance Mann

Hong Kong

- 4 deaf students have been selected:

Brenda Yu, Jenny Lam, Adele Ng, Kenny Chu



The Philippines

- Led by the Philippines Federation of the Deaf whose leaders are Marites Racquel de Corpuz and Raphael Domingo.
- Supported by sign linguists Liza Martinez, James Woodward, Yukata Osugi & Ceil Lucas

Deaf trainees of the program

2003-2004



GEORGE LINTAG



EUGENE SORDILLA



ALMA SAN PEDRO

2003-2006



RAFAELITO ABAT



ROMMEL AGRAVANTE



MARICRIS SILOTERIO

Current Deaf Research Team



YVETTE APURADO
Deaf Coordinator



ROWELLA TANJUSAY
Sign Language Analyst

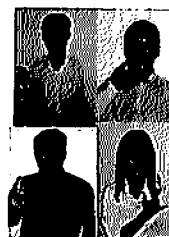


MARY JANE PUSON
Sign Language Analyst

Cambodia

Sign Language Researchers

- Mr Long Lodine
- Mr Heang Samath
- Mr Mat Seila
- Ms Chea Sokchea



Project Manager

- Mr Justin Smith (DDP Programme Advisor)

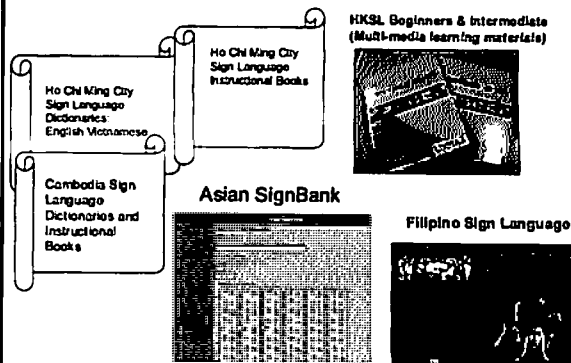
Sign Linguist

James Woodward

Progress

- Training is complete in all sites
- Some programs receive professional recognition
 - HK programs are awarded diplomas by the School of Continuing and Professional Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong
 - Vietnam programs are awarded certificates by the Dong Nai Provincial Department of Education and Training, Vietnam

Outputs



Related Activities

- Teaching sign language to hearing and deaf individuals by the deaf students from the program
 - Vietnam: To hearing teachers of deaf students, hearing students of Dong Nai Provincial Teaching College & hearing individuals at various places of southern and central areas of Viet Nam
 - Hong Kong: To hearing students of Chinese University of Hong Kong, parents of deaf children, educators/teachers of deaf students, and there is a plan to teach HKSL to the general public this winter
 - Cambodia: To deaf students who do not know Cambodia Sign Language at various places

Sign Language Teaching

Hai, our student, is teaching HCMCSL at Dong Nai Teaching College

Teaching HKSL to CUHK students



Collecting native Cambodia Sign Language data



Introduction of the Program by Deaf Students from HK

The National Deaf Forum, Hangzhou, China, 10 May 2006



Giving seminars at local institutions

Representatives of Philippines Federation of the Deaf, Philippine Deaf Resource Center & James Woodward have been giving lectures at many places, examples:

- University of San Carlos, Cebu City;
- University of South Eastern Philippines, Davao City,
- National Capital Region, Baguio City, Ateneo de Naga
- 9th Philippine Linguistic Congress, University of the Philippines (UP)
- University of the Philippines (UP) College of Social Science and Philosophy
- Linguistics Society of the Philippines, *Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino* at the UP College of Education
- World Bank-Knowledge on Development Center forum...National Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation Week 2005
- International Deaf Day Celebration 2006

Feedback from Deaf Students:

1. Awareness of a native language

- Awareness of 'possessing' a native language in the signing modality, justifying the existence of some fundamental human property
- Discarding the misconception that the native language of deaf people is bound to be a spoken language
- Proud to know that sign language has a grammatical system distinct from the neighboring spoken language
- Proud to learn about the linguistic heritage of sign language of one's own country

2. Recognition of the importance of Sign Linguistics training in:

- Compiling sign language dictionary and resource materials
- Distinguishing and accepting sign language variation of one's country
- Distinguishing the grammar of sign language, signed spoken language, and spoken language
- Supporting the career development of deaf people
→ professional sign language instructors
- Supporting deaf education reform in one's country
- Analyzing sign language as an academic endeavor, not for ridicule

Impact of Program

- Positive local responses from the local community
- Invitations from various official bodies to discuss share the information and findings of their research
- An increasing number of hearing people queuing to learn the language and they are very receptive to being taught by trained deaf instructors.
- All deaf students are yearning for more training and research on their sign language

- To run Phase II of the Deaf Training Programs at Chinese University of Hong Kong:
- **"Asia Pacific Sign Linguistics Research and Training Program"**
- Deaf students from Asian countries will visit the university to receive training in the following areas, leading to sub-degree qualifications:
 - Sign Linguistics & Applied Sign Linguistics
 - Deaf Studies
 - Computer Skills
 - English Literacy Skills

