

***Inte* at Intersections:
Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Mainstreamed Japanese Youth
and the Search for Belonging**

Jennifer Mary McGuire



St. Antony's College
Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology
University of Oxford

Word Count: 91, 295

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Trinity 2017

■ ■ Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
PREFACE	v
INTRODUCTION	1
i. Inte	1
ii. Integration as the ‘Antidote’ to Segregation	6
iii. The Research ‘Puzzle’	9
iv. Discovering and Defining ‘Inte’	17
v. Overlapping Identities	24
vi. Inte in Context	31
vii. Studying Japanese ‘Youth’	39
viii. Finding a ‘Place to Belong’	42
ix. Drowning in the Mainstream?’	44
x. Searching for Belonging	48
xi. Dissertation Outline	51
xii. Note to the Readers	54
CHAPTER 1: Methodology	58
1.0 (Re)Entering the Field	58
1.1 Finding ‘Youth’	59
1.2 Linguistic Complexities	65
1.3 Positionality	70
1.4 ‘Central-Actor Research’ (<i>Tōjisha kenkyū</i>)	74
1.5 Field Sites	77
1.6 Research Methods	78
Peer Interviews	78
Participant Observation	91
Interviews	100
Questionnaires	102
Social Media	102

CHAPTER 2: Language and Education; Nationhood and Selfhood	105
2.0 Introduction: Historically Situated <i>Inte</i>	105
2.1 Grounding the Language Debates:	
Sign Language (<i>Shuwa</i>) and Oral Communication (<i>Kōwa</i>)	108
What is <i>Shuwa</i> ?	113
What is <i>Kōwa</i> ?	128
2.2 Transnational Flows in the History of Deaf education	134
2.3 Nation-building and the Oral Communication Method	140
2.4 From the Era of Integration to the Era of Inclusion.....	149
2.5 Contested Views of Integration	152
2.6 The Path Not Chosen: Schools for the Deaf.....	160
2.7 Conclusion.....	163
CHAPTER 3: Family Integration: Intimacy, Identities, and Communication	165
3.0 Introduction	165
3.1 Types of Families	166
Deaf families	168
‘Mixed’ Families	170
Hard-of-Hearing Families	171
Hearing Families	172
3.2 Vertical and Horizontal Identities.....	173
3.3 Language Acquisition across Identities	178
3.4 Communication within the Family Unit	183
3.5 Education as the ‘Answer’	191
3.6 The Family as the First School	197
3.7 ‘The Other’ at Home	203
3.8 Conclusion.....	208
CHAPTER 4: ‘I’m a Grey-Zone Human’: Negotiating Belonging in a ‘Hearing School’	211
4.0 Introduction	211
4.1 The Solitary Student	213
4.2 ‘Hearing Schools’ and ‘Deaf Schools’	217
4.3 From the Golden Age to the Solitary Stage	223
4.4 Mechanisms and Strategies to Mitigate Difference	228
The Unwelcome Gaze	228
Concealing Markers of Difference	232

	Rejecting Information Support	238
	Performing ‘Communication Competence’	243
	Mimicry	253
4.5	<i>Inte Habitus?</i>	256
4.6	Pride in Perseverance	261
4.7	Conclusion	262
CHAPTER 5: Finding <i>Shuwa</i> , the Self, and a ‘Place to Belong’		264
5.0	Introduction	264
5.1	The Lens of Stigma	265
5.2	Stigmatizing the Self, Stigmatizing Others	271
5.3	‘Self-Searching’	278
5.4	Self-searching through Friendships	285
5.5	<i>Shuwa</i> as an Inclusive, Embodied Language for Peers	294
5.6	Returning to the ‘True Self’, Discovering a ‘New Self’	300
5.7	A ‘Place to Belong’ in the In-Between	310
	The Hearing World	312
	The Deaf World	312
	A Hard-of-Hearing World?	316
	Inclusive Mixed Spaces	317
	Finding an <i>Ibasho</i> through Acceptance	322
	Translocal and Transnational Belonging	328
	Adapting to a New Deaf World	332
5.8	Conclusion	334
CONCLUSION.....		338
I.	Reflecting on Integration	338
II.	Personhood and Belonging	346
III.	Data in the ‘Gaps’	348
IV.	Integration for All?	351
V.	Technology and Integration	355
VI.	Future Research: Deafness and Intersectionality	356
VII.	Epilogue	358
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....		361
APPENDICES.....		379

■ ■ Abstract

This dissertation explores the lived realities of young deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) Japanese who were educated in mainstream schools. Colloquially known as '*inte*', a shortened form of the loanword 'integration', these youth are poised at intersections: between special education and academic integration, deaf and hearing, and signed and spoken languages. This study focuses on how participants negotiate this distinct positionality. *Inte* are 'the other' in the private sphere of the family and the public sphere of the school. I aim to illuminate how *inte* negotiate this in-between status as they search for belonging. The integration of DHH students is a relatively recent phenomenon. For nearly 100 years, deaf students were educated in separate educational institutions. Therefore, I begin by situating the *inte*'s experiences in a historical and comparative context by exploring the shifts in educational trends for DHH students and the debates regarding the most appropriate communication modalities for their education. I argue that the first phase of integration does not occur within schools but within the home. *Inte* are typically born into families in which the taken-for-granted shared vertical (inherited) identity and language must be re-examined and re-configured. As a minority in mainstream schools, *inte* demonstrate agency by employing 'covering' strategies to mitigate difference and perform 'communication competence'. Upon encountering signing DHH peers, *inte* re-evaluate their positionality and sense of self. By utilizing a number of methodological approaches, including an approach developed for this research, 'peer interviews', this dissertation contributes to the understanding of anthropological concepts of belonging, personhood, intimacy, 'passing' and identity. Through an actor-centered approach that concentrates on the voices of 'youth', I explore how members of this marginalized group in society (re)negotiate their position in the mainstream.

■ ■ Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I wish to thank my supervisor, Professor Roger Goodman. Without his expertise, insight, guidance, constant encouragement, patience, and moral support, I would have never reached the end of this journey. I would also like to thank my second advisor, Professor Sho Konishi, for his continued support and for inspiring me to consider interdisciplinary approaches. I am also very grateful to Dr. Hélène Neveu Kringelbach for providing my first introduction to the field of anthropology with such an inspiring enthusiasm for the discipline. I am thankful to the faculty, staff, and students who make ISCA a dynamic institute in which to study anthropology.

This DPhil project would not have been possible without the generous support of the Wellcome Trust. I would like to sincerely thank the Trust not only for the studentship but also for their pastoral care during difficult personal times. In addition, I thank the British Association of Japanese Studies for additional fieldwork support.

My fieldwork in Japan would not have been possible without the unfailing support of my host, Professor Ritsuko Kikusawa and the National Museum of Ethnology. Kikusawa-sensei went above and beyond her ‘hosting duties’ to open doors, make introductions, and support my research through every stage. I would also like to extend my deep thanks to Keiko Sagara at Minpaku for exchanging ideas, sharing insights, patiently fielding my never-ending questions, and chasing down sources.

My colleagues, friends, and office-mates at Oxford helped to make the experience ever more enriching and fun. It was an incredible opportunity to be a part of such a stimulating and interesting academic community. I would especially like to thank Loretta for her insights, advice, and kindness, Anna for her unique academic perspective, creativity, and good humor, and Suwita for being a tireless cheerleader, dear friend, and generous host.

Japan has been my home for over 10 years now, and I could not possibly thank everyone here who has supported me from the moment I decided to take the leap to apply to Oxford’s master’s program to the final days of the DPhil writing up process in Tokyo. However, I

would be remiss not to mention two special people. A sincere ‘arigato’ to Yuki for being a true friend and for helping me in too many ways to mention. My deep gratitude goes to my dear friend Marion who has encouraged me from the very beginning and has never run out of ways to demonstrate her support. Your friendship is irreplaceable.

In order to protect their anonymity, I cannot thank by name the many Japanese people and institutions that made it possible for me to complete this research. I was incredibly fortunate to be supported by this community. My fieldwork was one of the highlights of my life thanks to the young DHH Japanese who welcomed me into their inner circles and shared their most personal experiences. Their DHH ‘elders’ were equally welcoming and generous with their time, offering me an invaluable comparative view. My deepest thanks to the faculty and students of ‘Kaiba University’ and all of the other schools and institutes I visited. I will forever be indebted to all of the participants in this study.

I am also indebted to a host of Deaf scholars, especially Kimura-sensei, Professor Yutaka Osugi and Professor Soya Mori and hearing scholars in deaf communities, particularly Ichida-sensei, Hosono-sensei, Shirasawa-sensei, and Professor Matsufuji. There are many more scholars I wish to thank but must refrain from doing so in order to protect their anonymity. I was very fortunate to have many doors opened to me. I would like to thank Meisei Gakuen for inviting me to join many activities at their school, including their overseas trip to the Philippines. I am particularly grateful to Norie Oka-sensei for acting as a mentor, liaison, wealth of knowledge, and interpreter. Although I received much guidance, all errors of fact and judgement, of course, remain my own.

I am very thankful to my family in the United States, especially my mother, who has believed in me, always, and encouraged me to continue my studies. To my little family in Japan, ‘the gang’, you have brought me more joy and laughter than should be allowed. Ann-chan, you are always there to motivate me and cheer me up. Last, but absolutely not least, this dissertation would not have been possible without the unconditional love, dedication, sacrifice, encouragement and support of my beloved wife and best friend, Vilma. I could never have done any of this without you. You are mi vida.

I dedicate this work to my belle-mère, Mary.

■ ■ List of Figures

Figure i	Identity Labels
Figure ii	Matrix of Overlapping Identities
Figure iii	Common Educational Paths for DHH Students in Japan
Figure iv	Matrix of Target Research Group
Figure v	‘Mainstream’ ASL Sign 1
Figure vi	‘Mainstream’ ASL Sign 2
Figure 1.1	Forms of ‘ <i>Shuwa</i> ’ in Japan
Figure 1.2	Main Field Sites in Japan
Figure 1.3	Peer Interview
Figure 2.1	Presentation on <i>Shuwa</i>
Figure 2.2	One Possible Sign for ‘River’
Figure 2.3	Sign Variations for ‘Name’
Figure 2.4	Sign for ‘Airplane’
Figure 2.5	Chinese Characters for <i>Shuwa</i>
Figure 2.6	Chinese Characters for <i>Kōwa</i>
Figure 2.7	Communication among ‘Hard-of-Hearing’ People
Figure 2.8	Enrollment in Schools for the Deaf
Figure 3.1	Family Communication by Type of Schooling
Figure 3.2	Communication in Families with DHH members
Figure 4.1	One Possible Sign for ‘ <i>Hitori Bocchi</i> ’
Figure 4.2	Japan's Educational System
Figure 4.3	‘Deaf School’ Classroom
Figure 4.4	‘Hearing School’ Classroom
Figure 4.5	Information support received
Figure 5.1	Chinese Characters for ‘ <i>Henken</i> ’
Figure 5.2	One sign for ‘ <i>Henken</i> ’
Figure 5.3	‘Self-searching’
Figure 5.4	Sign for ‘ <i>Watashi</i> ’ (I)
Figure 5.5	Sign for ‘ <i>Jibun</i> ’ (myself)
Figure 5.6	‘Between Worlds’

■ ■ Preface

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Oxford, Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology. The research described herein was conducted under the supervision of Professor Roger Goodman and Professor Sho Konishi. This study was supported by the Wellcome Trust Doctoral Studentship (WT096703MA) with additional fieldwork support from the British Association of Japanese Studies (BAJS).

I hereby certify all work is original, except where references are made to previous work.

Introduction

i. Inte

‘Would you like the cake set?’

Yasushi stared impassively at the barista.

‘Would you like the cake set? It’s Mont Blanc today.’

Yasushi and I were in a chain coffee shop in the Ikebukuro district, a commercial and entertainment area in Tokyo. It was a mild autumn Sunday afternoon, and the café was full of young couples leaning across tables, teens testing out booming voices, middle-aged women with heaps of shopping bags overflowing onto spare chairs, and patrons of all ages trying to study or read amid the din. Yasushi had selected this café, but the conditions could not have been worse for a person who cannot hear to communicate in spoken Japanese. I stood uncomfortably at an angle beside him, shifting my weight slightly to try to read his expression. I had already told Yasushi and the barista that our orders were to be rung up together. I waited for his cue. I would not dare intervene unless he looked to me to do so. At this stage in my research, I was aware that many deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) people in Japan do not appreciate hearing people taking control of situations in this manner. It is perceived as patronizing and of robbing them of a chance to navigate their world with autonomy. A flicker of confusion danced across the young barista’s face. ‘He’s Japanese, isn’t he?’, her expression seemed to say. She looked at me inquisitively. I stared blankly

back. I would not do anything to cause Yasushi to lose face. Moments before, he had ordered his mocha latte in spoken Japanese while also pointing at the laminated menu on the counter. With the clattering of cups and the cacophony of café chatter, it would have been difficult for anyone to detect a ‘deaf accent’. He was ‘passing’ for hearing—something that he had many years of practice doing. Yasushi looked down at the menu again. His index finger traced the list of items. He looked up and nodded. Had he understood the question, I wondered. Yasushi and I chatted for over two hours in our hybrid communication style of *shuwa* (Sign language), spoken English, written English, and written Japanese. He poked his fork into the gooey chestnut mound several times, but the cake remained uneaten.

Yasushi and I first met following the screening of a documentary on deaf people who were affected by the natural disasters of March 11th, 2011. The film was directed by a deaf female filmmaker, and the turnout was large. It was a ‘who’s who’ from deaf communities across the Kanto area.¹ Yasushi and I were introduced by a (hearing) lecturer at his university. I had only met her minutes before. I had been explaining my research puzzle to a deaf studies scholar when he interrupted me to say I should meet Professor Zeniya before she leaves the venue. It was fortuitous timing. As I approached, I could see that she was talking to four young people in *shuwa*. All four university students were friendly and eager to chat with the foreign researcher, but Yasushi stood out due to his

¹ The Kanto region includes Tokyo and the neighboring prefectures Saitama, Chiba, Kanagawa, Ibaraki, and Gunma.

height, lightened brown hair, and open, expressive face. I explained my research to the students (one of whom I later learned is hearing but highly proficient in *shuwa*). As the venue was closing, there was little time to talk to the students, so I asked if I could contact them directly.² They all agreed. Each student I met that evening helped me in some manner, but Yasushi became one of the participants with whom I worked most closely. He was a couple of months shy of turning 21 years old.

Yasushi grew up in a hearing family. His parents divorced when he was in elementary school. His family had a somewhat uncommon setup: he lived with his mother, while his younger sister primarily lived with their father. Although he spent a lot of time during his childhood with his mother, he felt she did not understand him. He felt as though no one understood him. Yasushi had been a confident, cheerful, and sociable child, but by the time he reached junior high school, he had transformed into a withdrawn, anxious, and solemn person. Adolescence was a blur of feeling ‘all alone’ in his mainstream school and in his ‘hearing family’, while trying to pass for ‘normal’ in a world designed for hearing people. Whatever environment he entered, he found that he was a minority of one. What Yasushi did not learn until he entered university was that his experience was shared by many other DHH youth across Japan. He did not know that he is an *inte*.

² Fortunately, they were all over 20 years old, the age of ‘adulthood’ in Japan, which meant I did not have to obtain parental consent.

Born during the post-mainstreaming era, the participants³ at the core of this study are part of a move toward educating DHH and hearing students in the same institutions, rather than in separate spaces. An ‘*inte* person’ (*inte no hito*) is a deaf or hard-of-hearing (DHH) person in Japan who was educated exclusively in the mainstream school system rather than in a school for the deaf. ‘*Inte*’ (pronounced IN-TAY) is the shortened form of the loanword in Japanese ‘integration’ (*integureshyon*). ‘Integration’ is a global catchword for the movement toward a shared humanity: integrating race, ethnicity, gender, disabled, and non-disabled. The implication is that integration is, in effect, the opposite of ‘segregation’.

This is an ethnography of a loosely bound ‘community’ in formation, an informal community that most of Japanese society does not know exists. Born in the late 1980s and 1990s, this generation of *inte* did not exist before a movement toward educational integration in the 1960s and 1970s. *Inte* cannot easily be described as a well-defined community as they are positioned within various communities. At the same time, educational experiences are unifying. *Inte* are a very specific group of individuals in Japan due to their upbringing. Educational pasts are seen as shapers of the self. Being ‘an *inte*’ is provided as a reason for someone’s way of thinking or behaving (e.g. ‘because they are

³ Due to the participatory nature of this project, I use ‘participants’ rather than ‘informants’ throughout this dissertation.

“*inte*”, *inte no hito dakara*) and even positioned as a basis for selecting romantic partners (e.g. two participants said ‘[they wanted] to marry fellow *inte*’, *onaji inte no hito to kekkon shitai*).

The fact that most Japanese do not know about *inte* is not surprising. *Inte* were discovering this positionality just as they were being discovered by the researcher in the field. Through the course of this research, I unwittingly introduced several *inte* to the term, while introducing them to other people ‘like them’. This research brought a new level of visibility to individuals who cover their difference. In some ways, they are an invisible group that has become visible through this project. *Inte* are part of a linguistic and cultural case that is unique in its scope and approach. The term reflects a choice in upbringing through education. *Inte*’s social and educational paths reflect the movement in education first toward oralism (education through spoken language), and then toward integration, and the resulting in-betweenness. ‘Integration’ does not fully represent the complex reality of the people it describes: *inte* are not fully integrated but poised at intersections and boundaries between languages and worlds as they search for belonging.

ii. Integration as the ‘Antidote’ to Segregation

As places where children learn behavior, absorb cultural understandings, and develop personal identity, schools are powerful institutions in which selfhood and its discourses are constantly being reshaped (Cave 2007:43).

‘Common-sense wisdom’ in North America and much of Europe is that segregating individuals in society is ‘negative’ and integrating people is ‘positive’. People should not be segregated based on characteristics such as race, gender, age, sexuality, or ability. Special education has been described as ‘ghettoization’ of students with special needs (Thomson 1997:15). Segregation, in the form of ‘special education’, and integration through mainstreaming practices are central to public debates and to the private lives of ‘disabled people’. Since the 1970s, there has been a large-scale international movement toward educating students of all abilities in the same schools. Globally, deaf students were among the first to be integrated into mainstream settings (Kyle 1993:201).

Educational decisions play a particularly important role in the lives of deaf and hard-of-hearing (DHH) people because schools shape the self and introduce crucial opportunities to develop language and social networks. Schools for the deaf can become a part of a deaf person’s heritage, and the relationships developed in these ‘separate cultural space[s]’ often last a lifetime (Preston 1994:77). Sign languages are developed and transmitted in schools for the deaf rather than within family groups because only approximately 10% of DHH students are born to deaf parents. Therefore, it is believed that

in the case of ‘the other 90% of Deaf children, born to hearing parents, access to a sophisticated language and its traditions can only be gained by attending Deaf schools’ (Ladd 2003:7).⁴

Integration moves DHH students from separate spaces into mainstream educational settings. In many OECD member countries, the integration of DHH children has become a core element of educational practice since the 1970s. In 1975, the United States passed the Public law 94-142, now known as the IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act), which stipulates that students should be educated in the ‘least restrictive’ environment. For DHH students, ‘least restrictive’ is usually defined as participation in regular school classrooms (Monaghan 2003:14). However, this notion of desegregation began 20 years prior with the landmark case of Brown versus the Board of Education in the United States (1954-1955), in which the Supreme Court ruled it was unconstitutional to have separate schools for black and white students. As a result of this case and the momentum of the Civil Rights movement, the concept of integration and mainstreaming was brought into the national discourse (Winzer 1993:376).

Integration has been framed as an antidote to perceived segregation practices. The special education system in Japan has been described as ‘highly segregated’ as most students are educated in special schools (Heyer 2015:136), and the post-war disability

⁴ Capitalization of ‘Deaf’ in original.

policy in Japan has been characterized by ‘benevolent paternalism and segregation’ (Heyer 2015:130). Japan’s approach to special education has been based on the medical model, which concentrates on ‘separate treatment’ (Heyer 2015:24). This approach is contrasted with the ‘rights’ and ‘equal opportunity’ approach based on the social model found in the United States and the United Kingdom (Heyer 2015:24). The ‘separate treatment’ approach leans toward the segregation of students with disabilities. In Japan, students who do not attend mainstream schools are part of the special education system, which is both fiscally and politically separate from mainstream education (Heyer 2015:136).

Japan became part of a global move toward the integration of DHH students. Since the start of integration, the enrollment in schools for the deaf in many societies has been decreasing as mainstreaming is increasingly the chosen educational path for more DHH children. In the 1960s, Japan began experimenting with mainstreaming, and this trend became common practice by the 1970s, initiating the first generation of mainstream students. Since the era of integration began, enrollment figures at schools for the deaf have been dropping year upon year (Nakamura 2006). Japan’s aging society plays a role in this decrease, as does the declining birth-rate along with developments in technology that enable children to better function in ‘normal’ schools, such as cochlear implant devices and improved hearing aids. The negative image of schools for the deaf has also been a factor, with students who can communicate in spoken Japanese being placed into mainstream

schools.

The decrease in the number of students attending schools for the deaf means that fewer DHH youth are meeting DHH peers or encountering Sign language before graduating from senior high school. It also means that more young DHH students are being raised in oral-only environments among hearing peers unlike them. As mainstreaming has become the ‘new normal’, the youngest members of deaf communities are increasingly bringing experiences from the ‘hearing world’ into the ‘deaf world’. This is a dissertation of a particular group of individuals that sits at intersections: between special education and academic integration, deaf and hearing, and spoken and signed language.

iii. The Research ‘Puzzle’

This dissertation emerged from a basic research question: What happens when mainstreamed, ‘oral’ (*kōwa*) educated youth encounter and begin to learn Sign language (*shuwa*) after completing secondary education? This research was not motivated by advocacy or a focus on ‘resilience’ (Young, Green et al. 2008), nor was it based on a search to determine the best educational practices for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. Deaf education is a field in which professionals take very strong pedagogical stands (Kyle 1993:201). However, this is not their story. Further, this is not a dissertation on special education, nor is it a dissertation on disability rights or the construction of disability in

society. This is an ethnographic account of young people whose set of experiences in mainstream schools shaped their selfhood, identity, language, and positionality. The focus is on young people's voices and experiences, and it is their descriptions and interpretations of the quotidian that form the basis of this analysis. Parents and educators lend their voices to the narrative, particularly the background which is grounded in a historical examination of educational practices.

My research interest is rooted in exploring everyday lived realities. Karen Nakamura (2001, 2003, 2006, 2006b, 2014) extensively studied the politics of Sign language and political movements in Japan. In contrast, I am interested in the quotidian, the mundane. How do DHH people navigate the world and their interpersonal relations? The personal is political, and language politics continue to be a contested issue within deaf communities. However, as I learned, for most young DHH people (of all educational backgrounds) politicized debates are secondary to the role that language plays in developing 'human relationships' (*ningen kankei*).

Similarly, it was not a political agenda but rather such 'human relationships' or friendship that initiated this project. Informally, I entered 'the field' many years before 'formally' beginning this research project through a friendship with a deaf Japanese woman in her early 30s. Sekino-san⁵ had been educated in a school for the deaf and was a

⁵ I use first names for young *inte* and surnames for all other participants. 'San' is an honorific.

proficient signer since childhood. Through this friendship, I met another woman in her thirties who was educated in mainstream schools and had learned to sign when she was 19 years old. This became the catalyst to consider the effect of educational paths on themes such as selfhood, identity, language, and socialization.⁶ In the early stages of my fieldwork, I decided to focus on DHH youth. As I will describe in greater detail later in this chapter, through this research I discovered the existence of *inte* and began to uncover their complex positionality in mainstream (hearing) Japanese society (known as ‘the hearing world’) and deaf spaces (known as ‘the deaf world’). In the same manner of discovery, participants reflect upon their status and role as DHH youth as they come of age and ‘come out’.

I could not rely on written accounts to provide necessary background since there is a lack of literature on integrated students in Japan. In general, the anthropology of deafness is still a nascent field, and most studies focus on Sign languages (Kisch 2008, LeMaster 1997, Nakamura 2006) or on schools for the deaf (Erting 1985, Hayashi, Tobin 2015, Senghas, Monaghan 2002)—although this is changing. The literature I found on the mainstreaming or integration of deaf students tended to be first-hand accounts, such as *Alone in the Mainstream* (Oliva 2004) and *Madness in the Mainstream* (Drolsbaugh 2013).

⁶ Before ‘formally’ (re)entering the field in late 2012, I had considered these themes. However, at the same time, I was weighing this project against one in which I explored how Japanese society constructs disability. Early interactions in the field guided me toward the final research questions.

The titles alone reflect a stance on mainstreaming. My research revealed parallels between the lived realities of American and Japanese mainstreamed individuals, but these have never been problematized. Nakamura discusses the post-mainstreaming generation (2006) and some traits found among this generation (e.g. oral influences in signing). However, she focuses on generational waves and the politics of signing for each generation without exploring the day-to-day lives of *inte*. She refers to them simply as being part of the ‘post-mainstreaming generation’. They come across as passive riders of waves of change rather than autonomous actors. Moreover, the post-mainstreaming generation she encountered in the late 1990s early 2000s are now in their forties. They are the ‘older generation’ that *inte* reference. There has been some very recent literature on the social integration of Japanese students with disabilities (not specifically deaf or hard-of-hearing students) in mainstream schools (Mithout 2016), which is perhaps a sign of an emerging field of study.

In the past two decades, there has been an increase in the number of publications in Japanese that deconstruct deaf education and related issues such as deaf literacy (Kanazawa 2001, Kanazawa 2013, Sasaki 2012, Sasaki 2014) as well as literature on Deaf culture (Kimura, Ichida 1995, Kimura 2007, Kimura 2009) and Japanese Sign Language (JSL) linguistics (Matsuoka 2015, Oka, Akahori 2011). There have also been scholarly works on early deaf history and the origins of deaf education (Itō 1998). However, whenever I inquired into first-hand or ethnographic accounts of ‘integrated students’ or

integration as a ‘community’, I was usually referred to a book written by a scholar who was educated in a mainstream school, called *Tatta Hitori no Kureōru* (A Creole of My Own) (Uenō⁷ 2003). Although there is a lack of literature, this research attempts to go beyond ‘missing piece scholarship’ where a lacuna is identified and a case is made to ‘fill’ the identified lacuna. It is an effort to explore a poorly understood ‘group’ through an anthropological lens while contributing to key discussions in the field.

Inte have a unique position and a peripheral membership in both the ‘hearing’ and ‘deaf’ worlds—a position which touches upon many themes in anthropology.

Anthropology has been problematizing and exploring cases of in-betweenness since the discipline first came into existence. *Inte* offer a case of individuals who explore their positioning within social groups through language and education. Their existence crosses boundaries between hearing and deaf worlds as well as lines within deaf communities. This flexibility and boundary crossing is not limited to *inte*. DHH youth in Japan today are creative and flexible with identity labels. In addition, students from schools for the deaf are interacting with and being influenced by *inte*.

In hearing spaces, *inte* are ‘the other’ and often work to mitigate difference. On the other hand, DHH people are ‘expected’ to know the language of the deaf world, Japanese Sign Language, but it is a ‘foreign’ language with a ‘foreign’ culture to most *inte*.

⁷ Author’s Chinese characters are transliterated with a long ‘o’ not the standard short vowel sound in ‘Ueno’.

An exploration of *inte* experiences sheds light on and helps to problematize issues of language, belonging, socialization, peer identities, and family relationships for other minorities and marginals in Japan.

As noted, the research puzzle took shape over time. Before discovering *inte*, I was focused on DHH youth and ‘first encounters with sign language’ (*shuwa*⁸ in Japanese). I would explain my research, somewhat clumsily, as an examination of the lives of ‘orally raised mainstreamed deaf and hard-of-hearing students’ first encounters with sign language’. As my research progressed, I learned that ‘encounters’ were only one element of one stage in their life histories. When I approached the puzzle from the perspective of ‘first encounters with Sign language’, participants spoke of their families, their school days, and their history with ‘oral method’ (*kōwa hō*) training. Learning Sign language is a process that causes emerging signers to reflect upon and often reconfigure their sense of self, identity, and positioning in the deaf and hearing worlds, and relationship to their families and newfound DHH friends.

This research objective was originally based on the supposition that once *inte* were introduced to Sign language, they would embrace a new language, a new set of peers, and a new community. Admittedly, these early assumptions were informed by prior

⁸ In chapters one and two, I will explain the different variations of *shuwa*. I will refer to *shuwa* when speaking most generally about the different forms of signing (often combined) used by young people.

interactions with and observations of signing ‘culturally deaf’ identified people in Japan. It is because of this inability to separate the self from the study that ‘fieldwork is situated between autobiography and anthropology’ (Hastrup 1992:117). As much as I endeavored to be an impartial researcher, as with all researchers, I brought my personal biography to the field. Who is asking the questions and writing the answers can lead to varying levels of partiality as ‘[w]hat we find depends on the questions which we ask and on the angle of vision from which we approach our material’ (Caplan 1988:12) . My initial ‘hypothesis’ was also encouraged by older DHH people (usually in their thirties, forties, and fifties) who attended ‘regular’ schools and now embrace a ‘deaf’ (*rō*) identity. They position themselves as belonging to a distinct subculture in Japan. From their perspective, JSL is a birthright, and there is no question as to why an *inte* would want to learn how to sign. Emerging signers are following a natural, inevitable path to the language and culture of deaf people. It is an inevitable outcome of introducing DHH people to one another. In contrast, *inte* do not typically view this as a straightforward route or inevitable conclusion.

There is a need to look beyond the ‘cultural’ aspects of deafness to encompass the diversity of deaf experiences. One Japanese scholar of deaf studies, Tanaka-sensei, said (with cynicism) that anthropologists are always looking for the ‘cultural story’ and ‘cultural angle’ when it comes to deaf people. According to Tanaka-sensei, this is because they find the cultural perspective ‘most interesting’, and they do not want to know about

the lives of people who do not fit into the Deaf culture paradigm. He reminded me, ‘it is not like that for everyone’. Just as Tanaka-sensei argued, as an anthropologist, I was initially drawn to the narratives of Deaf culture proponents and found myself fascinated by the differences found in culturally deaf spaces. However, by the time I had this conversation with Tanaka-sensei, I had already finished my fieldwork. Fortunately, I had allowed the participants, the central actors, to guide my research. These young participants taught me about the grey areas had steered me away from the black and white thinking that Tanaka-sensei criticized.

Being deaf or hard-of-hearing is not only about the ‘interesting’ cultural aspects. *Inte* participants have to navigate the mainstream, hearing world, where they are rendered ‘disabled’ on a daily basis. Fieldwork findings revealed nuanced stories centering on this distinct but varied ‘group’ of youth known as *inte*. They taught me that encountering *shuwa* and DHH peers was a pivotal moment but that their complex histories and their ambiguous imagined futures are equally significant pieces of the puzzle.

Therefore, this dissertation interrogates the following research questions:

- 1) What are the effects of integrating DHH students into mainstream educational settings?
- 2) What are the roles of ‘horizontal’ identities and peer relationships in the lives of *inte*?
- 3) What can *inte* tell us about language and communication, relatedness, selfhood, and belonging?

As I explained, I did not enter ‘the field’ with these specific questions firmly in place. Rather, I allowed the phenomena I encountered to shape and design my investigation. While I was certain I wanted to study the effect of education on DHH youth from the outset, it was my encounters with these adolescents and young adults that guided me to the study of *inte*. In the next section, I will unpack the phenomenon colloquially known as ‘*inte*’.

iv. Discovering and Defining ‘*Inte*’

Japan is a society in which there is an interplay between an adherence to rigidly defined roles and a high degree of contextual role-shifting. There is a tendency to categorize every permutation of social existence, coining terms for people based on hobbies, age, sexuality, and even lack of sexual experience, among others. When a term for men who are virgins in their thirties (*yaramiso*) has been created, it should come as no surprise that there is a specific term for individuals who were educated in integrated environments. However, what is evident now did not reveal itself at the outset of this

research because *inte* is an ‘in-group’ term. It is used by DHH youth to describe themselves and their peers but is little-known to outsiders.⁹

When my fieldwork began in December 2012, I was researching youths’ ‘encounters with sign language’ (*shuwa to no deai*) after completing secondary education. One day, several months into fieldwork, I sent an email to a key participant, Ryuta, 24 years old, to seek advice on meeting other potential participants. I first met Ryuta very early in my fieldwork at a ‘cram school’ for deaf and hard-of-hearing students in central Tokyo. He worked part-time as one of the teachers there while pursuing graduate studies. After describing the ‘profile’ of potential research participants (educated solely in mainstream schools) he replied, ‘Are you looking for *inte*?’ Since this was the first time I had encountered this term, it did not immediately occur to me that *inte* is the shortened form of *integureshyon* (integration). I had signed and seen people sign ‘integration’ as well as ‘people who attended hearing schools’. However, as I soon learned, the signs used for ‘*inte*’ as well as ‘*integration*’ are the same (as shown in **figure vi**). Therefore, I had (mis)understood that this sign I had frequently observed and used only referred to educational ‘integration’ and not the people who had been integrated. When I replied that, yes, I was looking for *inte* to interview, Ryuta quickly compiled a list of 23 other *inte*.

⁹ The only hearing people I met who knew the term were involved in the deaf community.

Suddenly, it became apparent there is not only a specific word for this phenomenon but also an informal network.

It is important to note that I never assigned identity labels to participants. Instead, I waited to see how people defined and positioned themselves. Even after Ryuta introduced me to *inte*, I continued to approach participants asking if they ‘encountered sign language’ after senior high school. Nevertheless, ‘*inte*’ frequently appeared in discussions and interviews.

Inte is not an ‘official’ term. It cannot easily be found in standard dictionaries or databases,¹⁰ nor does it seem to be in any of the dictionaries of youth language or loan words held at the International Japanese Center in Tokyo (*Kokusai Nihongo Center*).¹¹ Rather than to continue looking for non-existent ‘official’ definitions, I asked participants to define *inte* in their own words.

Inte is an abbreviation for integration in education. [It refers to] educating ‘disabled people’ (*shōgaisha*) in the same place as ‘able-bodied’ people (*kenjyōsha*).

- Chika, female, 20 years old

[*Inte*] attend mainstream schools rather than schools for the deaf.

-Yasushi, male, 21 years old

¹⁰ After searching through all the dictionaries on the shelves of the Japan Foundation Tokyo, the head librarian aided me in an extensive search through the online databases as well as the dictionaries in the closed stacks. However, ‘*inte*’ did not appear in any of the sources.

¹¹ See Appendix 1 for list of sources consulted.

[*Inte*] attend mainstream schools and they have long-term experience interacting with hearing people. Also, everyone else in their family is hearing.

-Hisae, female, 23 years old

As the final quote suggests, there is a sense of ‘purity’ to *inte*-ness: not every DHH person who attended a mainstream school is considered an *inte*. Firstly, the family should be headed by hearing people, not culturally deaf signing people. However, oral ‘hard-of-hearing’ parents or DHH siblings did not exclude someone from being an *inte*. Secondly, having some experience at a school for the deaf is seen to negate *inte*-ness. If an individual had studied in a school for the deaf (and therefore had signed and communicated with deaf peers), they were no longer ‘hearing school-raised’. Notably, experience in a school for the deaf at the preschool level was *not* seen to negate *inte* status as many *inte* had attended preschool at a school for the deaf. Most participants agreed with the views expressed in the quotes below.

I often use ‘*inte* person’ (*inte no hito*) to describe someone who attended a mainstream school (*ippan gakkō*) from elementary school to senior high school. I think someone who experienced a school for the deaf isn't an *inte* person. For example, I have a friend who attended a mainstream school for elementary school and senior high school but went to a school for the deaf for junior high school. I think he isn't an *inte* person but a person with deaf school experience (*rōgakkō keiken no aru hito*).

-Tatsuo, male, 21 years old

[An *inte* is someone] who received a mainstream education from elementary school to senior high school. [They are] people who have no experience in a school for the deaf (*rōgakkō no keiken ga nai*) from elementary school to senior high school.

-Mayuko, female, 21 years old

There are exceptions to the definitions given here. As the author, no matter how much I endeavor to give agency to participants, ultimately, I am deciding which stories to tell and which voices will tell them. Even when an anthropologist applies a polyphonic approach, it is still the anthropologist selecting which quotes to use and even with direct quotation, participants may not be able to ‘penetrate the discursive speech of the ethnographer’ (Hastrup 1992:121). While I tried to select quotes which best represent participants’ views, it is impossible to represent every opinion encountered in the field. For instance, several participants asserted that if someone was ‘mainly’ educated in a mainstream school, they could be considered an *inte*. One participant’s opinion was unique. She stated that an *inte* is someone who had experienced *both* mainstream and deaf education and was therefore ‘integrating’ experiences.¹² This was an intriguing perspective but one shared by no one else.

Since *inte* is an unofficial word, which is not taught in schools or used by medical professionals, it must be deliberately encountered. Just as I had to ‘encounter’ this word in

¹² I found this concept fascinating; however, no other *inte* or ‘deaf school-raised’ shared this opinion.

the field, *inte* had to discover its existence. The term and concept were discovered by *inte* at various stages and through different means.

I think I was relatively late to pick up [the word *inte*]; I was 18 years old and a vocational school student. I was taught it by a senior member (*senpai*) of the Sign language circle I was in at that time. She called herself an *inte*.'

She said to me, 'I was "raised in a hearing school" (*kenchō gakkō de sodachi*), and I communicate by speech, little by little. However, once I encountered Sign language everything changed'. I did not know such a world existed. When I would first meet someone who asked, 'Are you hard-of-hearing? Deaf? I often couldn't come up with an answer. But when I heard 'integration', I thought 'That's me!'

When I heard [the senior member's] story, I realized I am '*inte*', too.

-Ayumi, female, 22 years old

When I was a first-year university student, I participated in a social event for deaf university students held at a school for the deaf. A questionnaire was distributed which had '*inte*' written on it. I didn't know what the word meant, so I asked the teacher who explained it to me.

-Tatsuo, male, 21 years old

[I first learned the term '*inte*'] when I was in junior high school; my mother used it in daily conversation.

-Mayuko, female, 21 years old

I learned the word '*inte*' after I started hanging out more with deaf friends.

-Ryohei, male, 19 years old

[I first knew of ‘inte’] because I read the word in a book when I was in senior high school.’¹³

-Yasushi, male, 21 years old

‘*Inte*’ is not an uncontested term. Terms used to describe people from minority groups are rarely neutral. Although there is no politicized discourse on the use of *inte*, and most participants used the term freely, several participants identified the potentially controversial nature of this term.

Some people dislike the word *inte*. On the other hand, there are people who think it is discriminatory against others (*aiteteki sabetsu to kangaeru kata mo imasu*). It depends on the young person, but in our generation, there are a lot of *inte* so there are many people who use [the word]. [Nevertheless] it is probably best not to use the word indiscriminately.

-Kenta, male, 20 years old

I am aware of its contested meaning, and I am very careful not to use the word ‘indiscriminately’. I considered using ‘hearing school-raised’ throughout this dissertation but chose to use *inte* because it reflects the spectrum of the integrated nature of their upbringing. Furthermore, ‘hearing school-raised’ (*kenchō gakkō no sodachi*) is not neutral either and has a similar connotation. I conferred with ‘hearing school-raised’ youth and ‘deaf school-raised’ youth (as well as those with mixed hearing and deaf school

¹³ He could not recall the title of the book.

backgrounds) on my inclusion of ‘*inte*’ in this work. Participants agreed that it was not necessarily a discriminatory term. No one objected to it. In fact, the only serious concern I fielded was that this colloquial term might not be ‘academic enough’ for a doctoral dissertation.¹⁴

Inte, like most terms, depends on context and usage. In addition, biased attitudes can be found on both sides: ‘deaf school-raised’ and ‘hearing school-raised’ people hold biased views against one another. As one 20-year-old *inte* explained, ‘Some *inte* look slightly down upon deaf schools’. Indeed, there *inte* who believe they are better educated and better at using Japanese than their peers who attended schools for the deaf. This sense of superiority is not lost on their deaf school-raised peers who sometimes express resentment.

v. Overlapping Identities

Although this dissertation is not primarily focused on ‘deaf identities’ and the variations, I highlight the varying identity labels among young DHH people because usage demonstrates the flexible, fluid, and contextual understanding of their lived realities. *Inte* is

¹⁴ For example, I was invited to present with DHH university students to other DHH students. I proposed a title incorporating ‘*inte*’ and asked the organizer for his approval. He suggested I use ‘integration’ instead. I asked if it were at all offensive, and he replied ‘No, but you probably should not use abbreviated words (*shōryakugo*) in an academic presentation’.

one of many terms used in overlapping identities. Participants rarely, if ever, exclusively refer to themselves using this in-group term. When young people are asked to self-identify, they often select from the following categories: ‘deaf’ (*rōsha*), ‘hard-of-hearing’ (*nanchōsha*), and ‘hearing impaired’ (*chōkakushōgaisha*).

Bat-Chava’s research on deaf adults in the United States suggests the existence of three identities related to deaf people: culturally hearing, culturally deaf, and bicultural as well as a ‘marginal’ category of people who are uncertain about their attitudes (2000). This is a good starting point as Bat-Chava goes beyond the deaf-hearing dichotomy, acknowledging a possible third identity. However, applying clearly delineated clusters for attitudes and language preferences draws firm boundaries where permeable ones exist. Firstly, few—if any—*inte* refer to themselves as bicultural. As *inte* have experience in both hearing and deaf spaces, it might seem that they embody two cultures. Yet I contend that their positionality and attitudes are fluid. *Inte* are poised at boundaries. Bicultural implies ‘cultural proficiency’ in both cultures as well as a clear division between the two. Neither point is true in the case of *inte*.

The notion of static identity labels obscures the way young people use labels flexibly and contextually over time. Based on her year of fieldwork from 1998 (and her archival research between 1996 and 2001), Nakamura’s data suggested that younger people at the time were identifying as ‘hard-of-hearing’ (*nanchōsha*), ‘hearing disabled’

(*chōkakushōgaisha*), or ‘not-deaf’ (*rō dewanai*) (Nakamura 2003:221). My research from late 2012 to early 2014 painted a different picture. Participants also use ‘hard-of-hearing’ and ‘hearing disabled’; however, not one participant or questionnaire respondent reported using ‘not-deaf’ (*rō dewanai*) even when given the option to add their own identity labels. In addition, I have not observed ‘not-deaf’ being used on social media. In fact, rather than distancing themselves from ‘deaf’ (*rō*)¹⁵, many young people embrace or aspire to embody this identity. Others describe it neutrally, but add that they do not have a right to claim this identity because of their own background and language skills. Further, I observed young people using *rō* (deaf) to indicate deaf pride and an association with Deaf culture. It is evaluated as a term that indicates a greater stake in ‘cultural deafness’. Accordingly, many participants believe that it is a term for people who sign fluently and who are embedded in Deaf culture. It is also commonly used to ‘officially’ label activities, such as a ‘deaf sports clubs’.

‘Hard-of-hearing’ *could* be based on a medicalized view of hearing loss: someone with more residual hearing would be ‘hard-of-hearing’. On the other hand, it is frequently an attitudinal label. Only two participants fall into the ‘hard-of-hearing’ category based on audiological tests, yet many young *inte* use this label. Unlike these terms which can refer to both hearing status and/or identity, ‘*inte*’ situates individuals into an educational

¹⁵ This was most commonly written in the phonetic alphabet, *hiragana* as ‘ろ う’.

framework.

Although my data is from a relatively small sample size (86 respondents), the results of a questionnaire illustrate the fluid, overlapping identities held by DHH youth in contemporary Japanese society. As the figure below shows (**figure i**), on a questionnaire distributed to first and third year university students at a university campus for DHH students, 33 out of 86 respondents use ‘deaf’ (*rō*) as one of their identity labels.

(Respondents could choose as many labels as desired.) In my fieldwork, I did not encounter any *inte* who identify exclusively as ‘*rō*’ (deaf) in the core 18 to 24-year-old age group. However, I interacted with numerous older generation mainstreamed participants who identified exclusively as ‘deaf’ (*rō*) due to their involvement in Deaf culture and their use of JSL. Unexpectedly, ‘deaf’ was chosen more frequently by young respondents than ‘hard-of-hearing’, although I had heard that many young people use the latter term. Nine respondents selected the romanized version of the English word ‘deaf’ (*defu*). These nine respondents are all from deaf school backgrounds.

‘Hearing impaired’ (*chōkakushōgaisha*) was most frequently selected with 63 out of 86 respondents reporting using this term. This is the ‘official’ term written in policy documents. It is also the term readily understood by ‘mainstream’ hearing society. As many participants explained, this term is used to explain deafness to hearing people. In formal or official writing (*seishikina bunshō*) ‘hearing impaired’ is employed by many young people,

regardless of educational backgrounds. As explained by one *inte*, it is ‘the formal style’ for explaining identity.

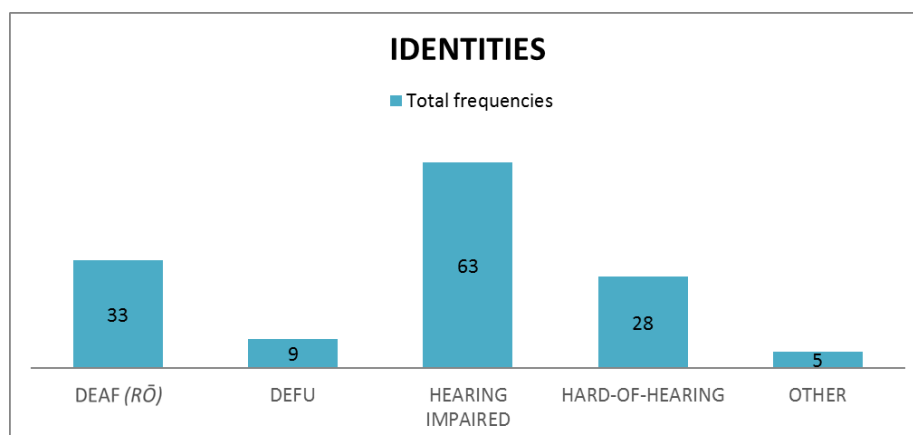


Figure i Identity Labels (n=86)

In line with the highly contextual nature of Japanese society, preferred identity labels depend on context. Firstly, DHH youth may switch labels based on the mode of communication, namely whether they are communicating in speech, writing, or signing. As noted, many young DHH say that ‘hearing impaired’ is the preferred identity term for formal writing. Another variation is that young people may sign ‘*rō*’ (deaf), while mouthing or vocalizing ‘*nanchō*’ (hard-of-hearing). Secondly, identity labels can differ based on the audience. For instance, Ryuta, introduced earlier in the chapter, told me, ‘In America, I am “Deaf” [capital D], but in Japan I’m “hard-of-hearing”’. Ryuta did not feel comfortable calling himself deaf (*rō*) in Japan because he was raised orally and can communicate, to some degree, in spoken Japanese through lip-reading. On the other hand, his first experience in the United States was studying in a program with deaf students and accessing information via an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter. He learned ASL

at the same time he was supposed to be attending classes with their support. Ryuta has never had any speech training in English. Since he only communicates in ASL in the United States, this makes him ‘deaf’, in his view. Some participants use ‘*inte*’ as a label but only when with other *inte*. How one chooses to self-identify is in flux.

The matrix below (**figure ii**) illustrates this flexibility regarding identity labels.

For example, of the 28 respondents who replied that they use ‘hard-of-hearing’ (*nanchōsha*) as an identity label, seven also use ‘deaf’ (*rō*) and two use the English loanword ‘deaf’ (*defu*). Although I met older DHH people who claim to use ‘deaf’ (*rō*) exclusively, of the 33 young respondents who use deaf (*rō*), 20 respondents also refer to themselves as ‘hearing impaired’ (*chōkakushōgaisha*). They do not claim one identity but many.

	DEAF (<i>RŌ</i>)	<i>DEFU</i>	HEARING IMPAIRED	HARD-OF- HEARING	OTHER
DEAF (<i>RŌ</i>)	33				
<i>DEFU</i>	8	9			
HEARING IMPAIRED	20	5	63		
HARD-OF- HEARING	7	2	20	28	
OTHER	1	0	2	0	5

Figure ii Matrix of Overlapping Identities

In addition, some participants have highly individualized approaches to self-

ascribing identity. Ryuta's childhood friend, Masao, also 24 years old, offers an example. Masao explained that he primarily calls himself 'hard-of-hearing' or 'hearing impaired', but when he joined his new company, he decided to introduce himself as 'deaf' (*rō*) rather than 'hearing impaired' (*chōkakushōgaisha*). He explained that he wanted his co-workers to understand that he cannot hear *at all*, even though he can speak. Ryuta thought there is dissonance in speaking while identifying oneself as 'deaf'. According to Ryuta, people who are deaf do not speak. Introducing oneself as 'deaf' as a means to ensure understanding seems counterintuitive, because most mainstream Japanese are not familiar with this term. As '*rō*' is a homonym for 'elderly', hearing Japanese sometimes ask me, 'You study elderly people...?'

Other *inte* express frustration with societal demands to assign labels to everyone. As Ayumi signed exasperatedly, 'I want to tell people, just call me "Ayumi Kunitada"'. Earlier in my research, she had confided that being involved in this project was an emotional and eye-opening experience for her. One reason was that she is conflicted as to whether she should call herself 'hard-of-hearing' or 'deaf'. On the one hand, she grew up signing with her mother and her lineage is 'hard-of-hearing'.¹⁶ On the other hand, she attended a mainstream school for her entire educational career, can speak well, and uses speech with everyone in her family aside from her mother. Ayumi's comments highlight

¹⁶ See chapter three for further analysis of family types.

the stakes involved in ascribing or being ascribed identity labels. Ayumi felt ‘betwixt and between’, and in the absence of a label that ‘fits’, she had grown frustrated about society’s penchant for labelling.

Contextual identity labelling among DHH people is not universal. It clashes with ‘Western’ views of the self. Based on my discussions with DHH people from the United States and Europe as well as a review of the literature, it appears that people in these cultural contexts have a more static concept of ‘deaf identity’. I hypothesize that in these societies the self is seen to be unified. ‘Authenticity’ means presenting the same (deaf) identity in most or all contexts. The same is not true in Japan. There is no hypocrisy in changing identities based on context. This aligns with norms regarding role performance and contextual communication in Japanese society.

Although young DHH flexibly apply multiple identity labels, they are careful not to impose identity labels on their peers. Instead, they often use very general, medicalized, unpoliticized terms when describing others, such as ‘people who can hear’ (*kikoeru hito* or *kenchōsha*) and ‘people who cannot hear’ (*kikoenai hito*). They are hesitant to offend an imagined audience by (mis)ascribing identity.

vi. *Inte* in Context

Although ‘facts are never innocent’ (Moeran 1990:6), statistics are often believed to hold the power to validate arguments and situate groups within society. Although the

implication of increased mainstreaming is significant, there is a lack of verifiable data on deaf and hard-of-hearing students who attend mainstream schools. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) in Japan collects data on the number of schools for the deaf and the students who attend them. Yet, by all accounts, there appears to be no centralized reporting system for integrated students.¹⁷ Until reliable statistics on integration are gathered, it is necessary to draw conclusions from estimates.

According to the latest report on ‘physical disability’ from the Ministry of Health Labor and Welfare of Japan, of the roughly 127 million people in the country, a total of 343,000 people have an ‘auditory/language impairment’ in Japan and 17,300 are under the age of 18 (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2012). Therefore, the percentage of people with a hearing impairment in Japan is just 0.28%.¹⁸ The Ministry of Education has tabulated that 6,639 students attend one of the 104 schools for the deaf in Japan (Ministry of Education 2009). However, the figures on the number of young people with an ‘auditory impairment’ are based on individuals who have a ‘disability handbook’ (*shōgaisha techō*).

¹⁷ Since the start of my research, I have been searching for statistics on mainstreamed students with the belief they *must* exist. However, after talking with many specialists in deaf education and finally having a meeting with a staff member of PEP-NET Japan (Post-Secondary Education Network of Japan), which is an organization that supports deaf and hard-of-hearing students in higher education, I had to accept that only with approximate calculations and deductions can any (unreliable) figures be given.

¹⁸ Overall, disability figures are comparatively low in Japan. In 2006, Sweden classified 15.7 per cent of its population as disabled, while, in comparison, Japan only classified 5.8 percent of its population as disabled. However, this discrepancy rather than demonstrating differences in the number of impaired individuals highlights differing attitudes towards the concept of disabilities across societies.

Since it is not mandatory to apply for the passport, there could be DHH youth who are ‘invisible’.

Other researchers have also been trying to determine these figures. Two educators from Meisei Gakuen School for the Deaf estimate the percentage of DHH students who attend mainstream schools to be slightly over 50%. Based on this estimate, since there are 6,639 students at schools for the deaf, the total number of mainstreamed students would be somewhere between 6,000 and 7,000 out of over 13,000 students. It is difficult to confirm these numbers as mainstream schools do not self-report, and even though there are figures on the number of students in hard-of-hearing classrooms within mainstream schools, not all students in mainstream schools receive support in these ‘resource rooms’. Another scholar on deaf education estimates the figure to be much higher, at somewhere between 60 to 70%.

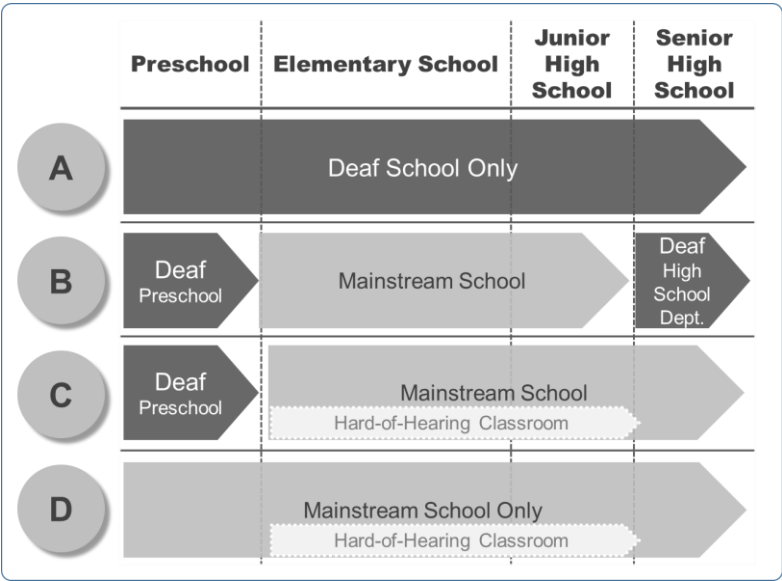


Figure iii Common Educational Paths for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students in Japan

In addition, figures taken from a single year offer only a snapshot of the situation. They do not account for the transitions that occur between educational institutions during a DHH student's academic career. The figure above (**figure iii**) indicates the four main patterns of deaf education: (A) deaf school only from preschool through senior high school, (B) deaf preschool, followed by mainstream elementary school and junior high school with a return to deaf senior high school department (a common phenomenon referred to as 'U-Turn'), (C) mainstream school only, and (D) deaf preschool followed by a mainstream education.

These are not the only patterns. This research reveals certain 'universalities' about being deaf, some of which will be touched upon in this dissertation, but deafness is not a universal experience. In addition to the patterns above, there are other variations: there are students who drop out of school to attend correspondence schools, those who move back and forth between schools within a stage of education (e.g. transferring to a mainstream school in the middle of elementary school), and students who were educated in schools for the deaf until the end of junior high school and then transfer to a mainstream school. Consequently, the number of students in schools for the deaf and mainstream students is in flux.

	1 Hearing Family All family members are hearing	2 Mixed Family At least one other family member is deaf or hard-of-hearing	3 Hard-of-Hearing Family Two 'hard-of-hearing' parents or multi-generational 'hard-of-hearing' household	4 Deaf Family (Two) Deaf parents
A Deaf school only				
B Deaf Preschool ↓ Mainstream ↓ Deaf High School				
C Deaf Preschool ↓ Mainstream School *hard-of-hearing classroom				
D Mainstream school only *hard-of-hearing classroom				

 Target group
  'U-turn' cases

Figure iv Matrix of Target Research Group: Educational Path against Family Structure

In this study, I focus on the experiences and views of individuals who comprise a specific segment of DHH youth. This research concentrates on a certain type of *inte* in the ‘purest’ form: students who had ‘exclusively’ been educated in mainstream schools after preschool. In reality, it is common to U-turn to a school for the deaf, or to attend a mainstream school for senior high school only. However, the aim was to explore the reality of young people who had not interacted with groups of DHH peers until after senior high school.

Inte in this study are from a hearing, ‘mixed’, or hard-of-hearing family and educated in a mainstream school. In chapter three, the differences between hearing, ‘mixed’, hard-of-hearing, and deaf families are explored in greater detail. In short, hearing families are those where all family members besides the *inte* are hearing, ‘mixed families’

are those where there is a parent or sibling(s) who is DHH, hard-of-hearing families have two ‘hard-of-hearing’ parents or represent a multi-generational ‘hard-of-hearing’ household, and ‘deaf families’ include two deaf parents who use JSL.¹⁹ The figure above (**figure iv**) indicates the position of *inte* in the matrix: C1, C2, C3, and D1, D2, and D3. Only one participant was from a family in category C3 and one participant was from a family in category D3. The majority of participants were from categories C1 and D1 because they come from ‘hearing families’. Whenever including ethnographic accounts from B1, B2, or B3, I specify that these were ‘U-turn’ participants and not ‘pure’ *inte*, *per se*.

Why does this research ‘exclude’ mainstreamed participants from signing deaf families? I contend that students from signing deaf families have backgrounds that differ greatly from other DHH youth educated in mainstream schools. DHH mainstream educated youth in deaf families grow up in signing environments and usually have early contact with deaf communities. Therefore, they ‘encounter’ Sign language and deaf communities long before most *inte*. Furthermore, they share an inherited or ‘vertical’ identity²⁰ with their parents, who can advocate for them in schools. While I spoke with a few young people

¹⁹ Or a single parent who is deaf. As I will explain in chapter three, a deaf family is usually agreed to be one where there is no hearing parental figure. I never encountered anyone from a deaf family who had a single parent, but, in theory that could be a ‘deaf family’ given that there is no hearing parent present in the home.

²⁰ ‘Vertical’ (and ‘horizontal’) identities are discussed in chapter three.

from deaf families who attended mainstream schools, I do not consider them to be *inte* according to the definitions given by participants. Therefore, I do not categorize their experiences as being akin to those of *inte*.

The categories depicted obscure the diversity of families. Even hearing families come in many forms. As I will elaborate in chapter three, the traditional patriarchal Japanese household (*ie*) with the grandparents, son, wife, and children is no longer the standard in Japan but one of a multitude of household patterns (Ronald, Alexy 2011a). Accordingly, participants included DHH youth raised by single parents, divorced parents, and extended family members, such as grandparents as well as those raised in two parent households. In addition, the family dynamic I refer to as ‘mixed families’ (families with at least one other DHH family member) were encountered in the field far more often than anticipated.²¹

Differences among deaf people extend beyond the social to the physical. DHH people not only come from a wide range of educational and familial backgrounds but also differ in their access to and reception of auditory information. As an anthropologist, I do not take a ‘pathologizing’ approach to deafness in this work (i.e. one which follows the medical model) by drawing boundaries based on audiological data. Instead, I explored a ‘narrative-experiential’ approach. At the same time, I acknowledge that the physical can

²¹ This is an area lacking in research. Studies tend to focus on either hearing or deaf families.

affect the social. DHH individuals will receive disparate levels of auditory input and therefore experience spoken language environments differently depending on a host of factors, such as the pitches and tones that can be heard as well as the use of hearing devices. Moreover, participants are often concerned with their peers' practical hearing abilities. For example, one of the key questions DHH youth ask is whether someone can use the telephone.²²

The participants in this study all have a 'severe to profound hearing loss' (70 decibels to 120 decibels) with the typical participant registering a hearing loss between 90 and 110 decibels. The level of hearing affects the nature and degree of auditory input received. Although I do not adhere to the medical model, certain sensorial phenomena are attached to one's hearing status. For instance, conversation and environmental noise may or may not be perceptible without hearing devices (and usually even with the aid of devices).

Moreover, whether deafness was a condition before or after speech was acquired affects an *inte*'s access to spoken language and therefore her ability to function in a 'regular' school. Most participants in this research were pre-lingually deafened, meaning

²² Only one participant could functionally use the telephone. Another participant, Chika, said she used the phone to call her father because he did not like texting. However, she does not speak *with* him but *to* him, simply relaying information over the phone. She can recognize the tone of his voice when he answers the phone, but she cannot decipher individual words.

they lost their hearing before acquiring speech. However, there are also several participants who were progressively deafened (*jinkōsei no rō*) during childhood and adolescence—with some participants still experiencing a continual decline—as well as those who were suddenly post-lingually deafened, that is, after acquiring speech, due to serious illness. From a ‘pathologizing’ perspective, the majority of participants fell into the category of ‘severely’ or ‘profoundly’ deaf. Hearing levels alone tell little about the actual lived experience of individuals. Finally, participants included those who wear hearing aids, those with a cochlear implant (a surgically implanted hearing aid device), and participants who do not have any hearing devices. Most *inte* involved in this research wore hearing aids, and only three central young *inte* participants had cochlear implants. I contend that while cochlear implantation is a highly-contested issue, the implants do not affect the most pressing issues in lives of *inte*. The same issues of ‘solitude’, ‘communication barriers’, and ‘covering’ arose in conversations and interviews with youth with cochlear implants.

vii. Studying Japanese ‘Youth’

In some ways, the choice of age group was informed by ‘coming of age’ as a life stage. I concentrated on *inte* between the ages of 18 and 24 years old because they are in the process of ‘encountering’, ‘self-searching’, and seeking an *ibasho* (a place to belong) as they are transitioning from childhood into adulthood via the rocky route of adolescence.

One of my first fieldwork activities happened to be a coming of age ceremony in Osaka for Kansai area DHH youth who have turned (or are turning) 20 years old. The years following senior high school graduation are a time of transition for all youth in Japan. There is an added dimension for DHH youth graduating from mainstream senior high schools. This not only marks a time of independence and exploring new horizons but it can also mark a period of exploration into another language and culture. As Lane et al. noted, ‘Like other language minorities, most people in the DEAF-WORLD²³ were born into it. However, unlike other minorities, children born into this one gain access to the language and culture at various ages’ (1996:6). ‘Deaf school-raised’ students usually encounter the language and culture in elementary school, whereas ‘U-Turn’ students will encounter these environments in junior or senior high school. For *inte*, this encounter typically occurs much later in life as they are leaving adolescence and entering young adulthood.

Individuals who are 18 to 24 years old might not unequivocally be considered ‘youth’ in many social contexts. However, I followed an *emic* definition of youth. At the time of fieldwork, the *inte* at the core of this study were university students or had graduated from a university, junior college, or vocational school in the past five years.

²³ Capitalization in the original.

Older people in deaf communities, as well as educators and parents, referred to them as *wakamono* or ‘young people’.

Young *inte* are poised at an in-between stage: they are leaving childhood behind while preparing for adulthood. In *Disability in Japan* (2013),²⁴ Carolyn Stevens points out that childhood is centered on education and dependency, whereas young adults are concerned with entering the labor market. Since the main participants in this study are between 18 and 24 years old with most having attended, at minimum, training school or junior college or university, they have spent much their lives in the education system. In the case of *inte* entering the workforce, anxieties and anticipation about employment feature prominently in narratives. They have only been ‘members of society’ (i.e. ‘working adults’) (*shakaijin*) for a number of years. At the time of writing, no *inte* are married or have children. Most participants still live at home with their parents, which is not uncommon in Japan.²⁵ *Inte*’s position in the life cycle shapes not only their impressions of their experiences but also their choices regarding language and socialization. They reflect on their past while projecting their hopes onto uncertain futures.

²⁴ It is debated in the literature and in deaf communities whether DHH people should be classified as ‘disabled’ or as part of a linguistic minority. In Japan, the state defines ‘hearing impaired’ people as ‘disabled’ for the purposes of education and care.

²⁵ Therefore, their ‘family’ is their family of birth. This is in contrast with older participants who have created their own families, often with a deaf or hard-of-hearing spouse.

I could have opted to focus on the ‘older’ generation of participants with mainstreamed background in their thirties, forties, and fifties who were part of the first waves of integration. However, it was illuminating to work with youth who are currently ‘coming of age’, ‘coming out’, and exploring their positionality through new encounters with *shuwa* and DHH peers. To distinguish between older participants and the core younger cohort, I refer to the former as ‘mainstreamed’ and the latter as ‘*inte*’. However, I did note people in their thirties and forties being referred to as ‘*inte*’.

viii. Finding a ‘Place to Belong’

Valentine argues that, ‘[b]elonging has to be a major focus in any study of marginality, as those who fully belong are in a sense the opposite of those who are marginal’ (1990:38-39). Although belonging is undoubtedly an essential aspect of this and any study of marginals, the concept of ‘fully belonging’ is flawed. Belonging is not positioned in a dichotomy: it is interactional, fluid, and contextual. People may belong in one context but be rendered ‘the other’ in another one.²⁶

Belonging is a key issue facing people with disabilities. Unlike people from ethnic groups, disabled people are cut off from other disabled people, ‘existing often as aliens

²⁶ I experienced this vividly during a dinner with deaf British adults before my fieldwork in Japan. I did not (and do not) know British Sign Language (BSL), so I was largely excluded from the conversation. Further, I was dependent upon informal interpreters to ‘translate’ my English writing into Sign language when I wanted to speak to more than one person. Hearing people, in this context, were ‘the other’ and socially marginalized.

within their social units' (Thomson 1997:15). Typically, their families and peers do not share their disability nor do they have the same status in society. For DHH people, they could find belonging in schools for the deaf. As integration is increasingly becoming the educational method of choice, more and more DHH people must actively seek out 'a place to belong', known as '*ibasho*' in Japanese.

Ibasho can be translated as 'whereabouts', 'a place to stay', or a 'place to belong'. It 'connotes a place where a person feels acceptance, security, belonging and/or coziness' (Bamba, Haight 2007:405). In *An Ethnography of a Community of People without an 'Ibasho'* (*Ibasho no nai hito bito no kyōdōtai no minzoku shi*) (Yamamoto 2007) different types of people without an *ibasho* in Japanese society are introduced, including 'disabled people' (*shōgaisha*), 'foreigners' (*gaikokujin*), 'weak people', and people 'suffering' in society (*jyakusha*). To be without an *ibasho* is to be 'without a place or space where one feels comfortable and "at home"' (Allison 2013:47).

Anthropologist Anne Allison asserts that in a contemporary 'relationless society' (*muen shakai*), where human relationships are weakening, there is a 'plethora' of people who suffer isolation (2013:8) because of the 'dilution of human relationships' and the 'shrinkage of groupism' (2013:81). Allison points to NEET (people not in education, employment, or training) and *hikikomori* (people suffering from social withdrawal) as examples of youth who feel isolated in contemporary Japanese society.

People with disabilities in Japan tend to be marginalized and subject to stigma. Creating an *ibasho* is especially important for children with disabilities who face stigma and other difficulties in interpersonal relationships (Kayama, Haight 2014:13). According to Kayama and Haight, this can be achieved through ‘empathetic and mutually accepting relationships, the opportunity to contribute to others’ well-being, and the performance of clear roles within the group’ (2014:13).

As will be explored in this dissertation, *inte* frequently do not have opportunities to achieve belonging because the necessary conditions are not present in mainstream environments. Most *inte* have difficulty finding a ‘place to belong’. Within the family, they are often ‘the other’, as the majority of DHH people are born to hearing families. *Inte* do not have the same opportunities as their peers in schools for the deaf to find sameness. Students who attend schools for the deaf (*rōgakkō*) are socialized in an environment with peers who are ‘like them’. They also usually learn some form of signed language from their peers, older classmates, and (sometimes) deaf teachers.

ix. Drowning in the mainstream?

The word ‘integration’ implies a bringing together, combining into a whole. The reality of integration is that a minority student is brought into a majority environment. Some academics argue that these students are being subsumed by the whole as they drown in the mainstream (Lane 1995). In a paradoxical manner, it may be that integration results

in social segregation, while separation can foster connectivity. Thomson calls this the ‘silver lining’ of segregation as she claims that positive aspects such as community and political consciousness are formed as a result of people being educated in segregated spaces(1997:35-36). She supports this claim by pointing out that the deaf community was formed precisely because deaf people attended ‘segregated’ schools for the deaf (Thomson 1997:35-36).

The concept of ‘special treatment’ found in Japanese special education may seem at odds with participants’ accounts. As will be examined in this dissertation, to a certain degree, *inte* were expected to act ‘the same’ as hearing students. For example, although it is common practice to seat DHH students in seats with high visibility to enable lip-reading, one participant’s senior high school teacher said this arrangement was ‘not fair’. Everyone else rotated seats throughout the year at random and he should have to do the same, regardless of his deafness. As this ethnographic account suggests, ‘separate treatment’ may only apply when a student is in a ‘special environment’ (i.e. school for students with disabilities). ‘Regular’ schools have mainstream values: equal education opportunities in an egalitarian and meritocratic system. At the time of their enrollment in mainstream schools, there was a tension between students receiving ‘special treatment’ in mainstream environments in the form of hard-of-hearing classrooms and resource rooms as well as ‘information support’ (e.g. note-taking, summary notes) and the basic premise of education

in Japan: ‘equity’. Participants described ad-hoc support, which varied drastically across the country and even across cities.

However, even in cases from the United States and the United Kingdom, in which there are ‘equal rights’ and ‘individual approaches’ (Heyer 2015), segregation within an integrated environment is said to occur. This is because individualized education plans may meet students’ academic needs, but they do not meet social needs (see Drolsbaugh 2013, Oliva 2004). In the Japanese context, trying to fit into a mainstream environment has been described as ‘lonely and intense effort’ (Kaya 2012:172). As will be explored in this dissertation, one of the most common descriptive terms for the self during mainstream schooling was ‘*hitori bocchi*’, which means ‘by myself’ or ‘lonely’.

As ‘hearing school-raised’ youth, *inte* attend schools in an environment very different from those found at schools for the deaf: it is one based on difference rather than sameness. At schools for the deaf, it is accurately assumed that all students are deaf or hard-of-hearing. At mainstream schools, the opposite is true. *Inte* are usually the only DHH student in the grade level and often in the entire school. A surprising number of participants asserted they were told they were the first DHH student to attend their school.

The idea of being subsumed by the mainstream is represented in the sign for ‘mainstream’ or ‘integration’. Japanese Sign Language (JSL) borrows one of the signs for

‘mainstreaming’ that is used in American Sign Language (ASL). There are two signs for ‘integration’ in ASL. The first sign (**figure v**) is more commonly used and considered ‘neutral’. Two open hands, with palms facing down, come together, ending with one hand on top of the other. JSL borrows this first sign for ‘integration’ to show two parts being brought together to make a new whole. The second sign (**figure vi**) is more contentious. The index finger (or thumb) on the left hand represents a lone DHH student. The right hand comes down upon the finger or thumb, covering it to show that this student has been subsumed under the whole.



Figure v ‘Mainstream’ ASL Sign 1 (Signing Savvy 2016)

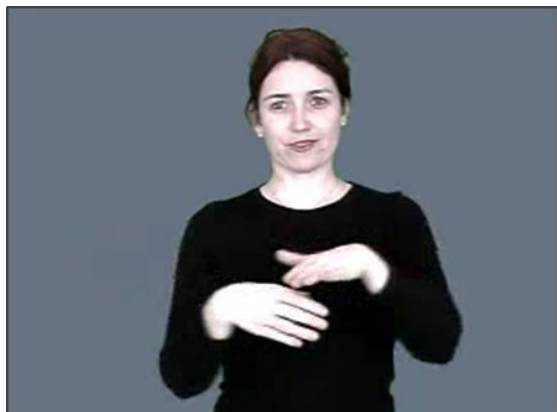


Figure vi ‘Mainstream’ ASL Sign 2 (Handspeak 2016)

Integration has been described as ‘anathema’ to the DEAF-WORLD²⁷ (Lane 1997:161) and a ‘form of systemic violence’ (Branson, Miller 1993:22). Deaf cultures and their languages are developed in schools for the deaf. There is a fear that the increase of mainstreaming will spell the end of Deaf culture as more and more DHH people are assimilated into mainstream society. I will problematize these ideas more in chapter two and question these highly charged views via participant accounts, which are more nuanced. However, this dissertation does not attempt to advocate for any particular educational practice.

x. Searching for Belonging

The day I first met Hisae, her hair was pulled back so that her hearing aids were visible. Delicate dangling earrings drew attention to her ears. ‘I didn’t do this before’, she said pointing to her exposed ears and the hearing aids inside them. Hisae had grown up feeling different and trying to hide this difference.

Hisae was born into a hearing family, which includes her mother, father, and elder brother. To her knowledge, no one in her extended family is deaf or hard-of-hearing. She said this was ‘strange’ (*fushigi*), but her family dynamic is actually the most common one among DHH individuals. As a young child, her parents enrolled her in a preschool class at the nearest school for the deaf. Hisae has few memories of this time aside from playing

²⁷ Capitalization style used by the authors.

with friends. After preschool, she entered a mainstream elementary school. From her entrance into elementary school until her graduation from senior high school, she was educated exclusively in public mainstream schools in Tokyo.

Elementary school was a time of play, but the social and academic challenges multiplied after entering junior high school. Competition increases for all Japanese students at this age, but in Hisae's case, academic challenges were not the primary cause for her anxiety. The inability to keep up with group conversations was the greatest source of stress. One-on-one conversations 'were kind of OK', but group conversations were 'impossible' due to the necessity to lip-read one person at a time. For years, she had been the only DHH student in her school. When Hisae reached senior high school, there was a deaf female student in the year ahead. Having a deaf upper classmate (*senpai*) improved her situation because she was no longer 'the only one' and because teachers and upper classmen were accustomed to having a deaf student in the school. Although Hisae and this deaf student chatted from time to time, a difference in grade level and separate extracurricular activities meant they did not develop a close friendship. Even though they rarely interacted, Hisae was very glad to have someone else 'like [her]' at school. Nevertheless, she was uncomfortable in this 'hearing school' (*kenchō no gakkō*). To hide her deafness, Hisae concealed her hearing aids with her long hair and managed social interactions by employing strategies such as pretending to understand. One of her main

goals was to avoid being seen as different from her hearing classmates.

When Hisae reached university age, she applied to and was accepted at a private university. She was the only deaf or hard-of-hearing student in her year. Hisae began to think about finding ‘others like [her]’. ‘Deaf people’ equalled signing people to Hisae, so she inquired into a ‘*shuwa* circle’ (Sign language club), but her university did not have one. She turned to the Internet. Determined to meet DHH peers, she went online and typed ‘*shuwa* circle’ ‘Tokyo’, and ‘university’ into the search bar. The top result was Ichirui University Sign language circle. She emphasized that while learning to speak was not her decision, she made *this* choice all on her own.

It was at the *shuwa* club where Hisae met another core participant, Ayumi. The two quickly became close friends. When I first met Hisae and Ayumi, they had been friends for over four years. Thanks to friends like Ayumi (whose first language was JSL) and other ‘elders’ (*senpai*) in the circle, Hisae learned to sign. After more than four years of signing, Hisae is not proficient in any form of signing. She uses a clumsy combination of signed Japanese and pidgin signing: speaking Japanese while signing according to the grammatical forms of Japanese. She frequently makes grammatical mistakes or does not know the correct signs for words. Ayumi patiently corrects Hisae, teasing her gently when a linguistic mix-up is a particularly funny one.

From a linguistic perspective, Hisae has not achieved fluency in *shuwa*. However,

from Hisae's perspective, *shuwa* has transformed her life. *Shuwa* has introduced her to new people who are like her and given her opportunities to understand and be understood. By meeting others with whom she shares a marginal status, she has come to understand herself better. Through reflecting upon her experiences, being able to communicate freely, developing friendships with DHH peers who understand her, and in feeling a sense of community, Hisae has found a 'place to belong' (*ibasho*).

Every participant's narrative is unique; however, Hisae's story could be described as 'typical' because it includes recurring themes and milestones in many of the participants' narratives. She was born into a hearing family, educated in a hearing environment, and chose to learn Sign language after graduating from senior high school. Learning to speak Japanese is usually compulsory. In contrast, studying *shuwa* is typically a DHH person's choice. An *inte* has agency to cross borders and explore new language horizons and spaces. Hisae approached this process with intentionality. As Jambor and Elliot point out, 'Unlike some other cultural minority groups, deaf people have to make an active effort to find and associate with each other' (2005:64). Hisae logged on to search for sameness and belonging.

xi. Dissertation Outline

Chapter One: The first chapter describes the method of finding participants, problematizes the linguistic complexities of this research, explores the fieldworker's

positionality, outlines the actor-centered approach, and explains the research methods used.

Chapter Two: Historically, debates in deaf education have centered on whether students should be taught using the ‘manual method’ or the ‘oral method’. Therefore, chapter two begins by contrasting *shuwa* (signing) and *kōwa* (oral communication). Current trends in deaf education are part of an ongoing narrative whose central actors are found across the globe. An overview of these transnational flows in deaf education is followed by an outline the history of deaf education in Japan. The discussion pays particular attention to the debates over Sign language and the connection to nation-building efforts. It then analyzes how *kōwa* connects to integration and the perceived impact of immigration on Deaf culture. Next, it looks at Japan’s move from the era of integration to the era of inclusion. The discussion then turns to contested views of integration. The chapter concludes with an exploration of an *inte*’s imagined alternative past: schools for the deaf.

Chapter Three: The first site of integration is not the mainstream school but the family. Therefore, the chapter begins by introducing the different types of families: deaf, mixed, hard-of-hearing, and hearing. Then, it explores the concept of vertical (inherited) identities, which are often absent for DHH children, and the horizontal (peer) identities they form outside of the family unit. As deafness is a disability that most affects communication, the following section explores language acquisition and communication within the family. Next,

chapter three examines how education in the form of mainstreaming is posed as the ‘answer’ to the ‘problem’ of the DHH child with *kōwa* training as a requisite to integration. Finally, it examines the sense of otherness *inte* describe due to a belief that family members cannot relate to their lived experiences.

Chapter Four: Chapter four analyzes how *inte* negotiate belonging in the mainstream education system where they are often a ‘minority of one’. It opens by illustrating their sense of isolation through first-hand accounts of how they metaphorically position themselves in ‘hearing’ institutions. Next, it demonstrates how the *inte* experience grows increasingly difficult as students move through the educational system due to institutional and social factors. However, *inte* are not passive actors. They are active in attempts to transform their circumstances. The chapter shows how *inte* demonstrate agency by employing ‘covering’ strategies to mitigate difference and ‘perform communication competence’. These strategies and performances develop into an *inte* habitus. Finally, the chapter looks at the intangible rewards of their trials: a pride in having ‘persevered’ in a mainstream school.

Chapter Five: The final ethnographic chapter looks at the interplay between the processes of ‘self-searching’ (*jibun sagashi*) and searching for a ‘place to belong’ (*ibasho*). Upon encountering signing DHH peers, *inte* re-evaluate their positionality and sense of self.

They undergo a process of self-searching as they reconcile biases regarding their own deafness and signing deaf people with a desire to create horizontal (peer) identities through friendships. The acquisition of *shuwa* is inextricably intertwined with these reflexive processes. It is through learning *shuwa* that *inte* begin to integrate with DHH peers in deaf spaces. Improving communication competence also enables *inte* to express themselves and pursue interests—both of which are linked to finding a ‘new’ self or returning to the ‘true self’.

Conclusion: After summarizing the research findings, the conclusion examines how this study contributes to anthropological understandings of personhood and 'belonging'. Next, it explores the 'data in the gaps', the insight that can be gleaned from what is not explicitly said by participants. Then it questions the concept of 'integration for all'. Finally, the conclusion points to the potential for intersectional research to illuminate diverse deaf experiences.

xii. Note to the Readers

Terminology

d/Deaf: Following renowned Sign linguist James Woodward’s convention (1972), many studies of deaf communities use lowercase ‘deaf’ to refer to the audiological condition and uppercase ‘Deaf’ to refer to people who share a culture and language. However, I primarily

use lowercase ‘deaf’. This is not to deny the existence of language and culture but to acknowledge that there is no clear dichotomy in Japan. These positions are contested and fluid. Moreover, to attribute a ‘Deaf’ identity to one person or group and a ‘deaf’ identity to another is to impose a fixed identity. At what point does a ‘deaf’ person become ‘Deaf’? The exception is that I do capitalize ‘Deaf culture’ because I am referring explicitly to a group with a self-ascribed cultural identity, which uses the capitalized version when writing in English.

deaf communities: Wherever possible, I use the plural ‘deaf communities’ rather than ‘deaf community’. Japan is not comprised of one, singular, homogeneous deaf community but various communities that are connected through translocal associations. For example, young DHH people have a multitude of intersecting communities from university Sign language circles to sports associations to LGBT groups.

deaf spaces: I use ‘deaf spaces’ to refer to spaces in which deaf and hard-of-hearing people determine social norms. Deaf spaces are usually—but not necessarily—spaces in which some form of signing is used. Hearing people may be in attendance, but they are in the minority in these spaces. Moreover, DHH people are the gatekeepers and decision-makers in deaf spaces.

DHH: As explained in this introduction, only two of the main *inte* participants are considered ‘hard-of-hearing’ from an audiological perspective. Everyone else involved is classified as ‘severely’ or ‘profoundly’ deaf, with most participants falling into the category of ‘profoundly deaf’. However, ‘hard-of-hearing’ is one of several identity labels used by DHH youth. Therefore, I use the more inclusive ‘DHH’ to indicate ‘deaf and hard-of-hearing’ in order to follow emic terminology and respect participants’ chosen identities.

JSL: I use ‘JSL’ when I am explicitly referring to Japanese Sign Language, the fully developed natural language with its own grammatical system and syntax.

Kōwa: *Kōwa* refers to the oral method, which involves lip-reading and producing speech. I use the ‘indigenous’ term to preserve the connotation in Japanese. The oral method has many permutations; however, I use ‘*kōwa*’ to indicate the oral method in Japan, as described in chapter two.

Shuwa: As will be described in chapter one and chapter two, there are several forms of *shuwa* in Japan, including contact/pidgin sign and signed Japanese. If I am referring to other ‘artificial’ modalities or more generally to the action of using sign, and not necessarily JSL, I

use *shuwa*. As with *kōwa*, I maintain the ‘indigenous’ connotation by using *shuwa* rather than ‘Sign language’. This is especially important as sign linguists would argue that much of what is considered *shuwa* in the Japanese context is not Sign language but ‘manual Japanese’.

Transliteration

Japanese words are transliterated using the Hepburn system. Pseudonyms are used for all people, places, and institutions to preserve anonymity with the exception of Meisei Gakuen (School for the Deaf) in Tokyo. This school is also a research center and the gatekeepers encourage/request academics to use the school’s name in their research.²⁸

Translations

All translations are my own unless otherwise mentioned. Whenever possible, I contacted the authors or editors for their feedback on my translations because many authors were also participants in this study.

²⁸ For example, anthropologist Joseph Tobin has cited Meisei Gakuen in all of his research.

■ ■ Chapter 1 Methodology

1.0 (Re)Entering the Field

Ethnographers are never dropped into the field as ‘tabula rasa’ (Strathern in Fardon 1990). Not only do I have my own background and biases, but I also had a ‘relationship’ to the field years before beginning this DPhil project. My ‘official’ fieldwork period was from the beginning of December 2012 until the end of February 2014 (15 months). However, I lived in Japan from 2003 until beginning my master’s studies at Oxford in 2010. During this time, I became friends with two DHH Japanese women, who inspired my interest in this topic. Further, my field research began in England before I re-entered ‘the field’. In March of 2012, eight months before I returned to Japan for my fieldwork, I was invited by my soon-to-be host supervisor in Japan to attend a lecture at the International Institute for Sign Languages and Deaf Studies (iSLanDS²⁹) at the University of Central Lancashire, England. After the lecture, I was able to discuss my research with two teachers from Meisei Gakuen, a school for the deaf in Tokyo. I also met a DHH Japanese researcher who was based at the iSLanDS institute. My language studies in England offered another early connection to the field. I began studying (what I later identified as being) signed Japanese from a DHH Japanese woman in London who had been mainstreamed. During this time, I met some of her British deaf friends. The deaf

²⁹ Distinct capitalization is represented in all departmental literature.

world is transnational. When my *shuwa* teacher's Japanese acquaintance visited London, I took over as a tour guide one day, showing the visiting woman around the Palace of Westminster as I practiced my developing signing skills. She later became a helpful contact during my research.

1.1 Finding 'Youth'

Meeting DHH youth proved to be a methodological challenge. Although I had made a number of key contacts before even beginning my fieldwork in Japan, they were all in their thirties or forties. In the early days of fieldwork, I attended social gatherings, conferences, lectures, events, and activities for DHH people in Kanto as well as Osaka. With the exception of the coming of age ceremony I attended at the start of my fieldwork (which included youth by default), DHH people in their late teens and twenties were rarely present at participant observation events. Meeting older DHH people was never a problem. For instance, I attended a weekly Sign language circle in Saitama (a prefecture north of Tokyo) where DHH members were all in their mid-forties and above. Upon a recommendation, I joined an event at a Sign language café because I was told I might meet young people there. However, I was disappointed to discover that the only DHH participants were the two leaders of the class and one attendee. All three men were in their thirties.

Karen Nakamura wrote that the younger deaf Japanese were 'avoiding traditional

deaf organizations' (2003:216). At the time of my fieldwork, I also found this to be true.

All communities have a degree of heterogeneity but deaf communities are especially heterogeneous. In the hearing world, Japanese people tend to socialize along the lines of gender, occupation, class, education, institution, and age group. In comparison, in deaf communities the boundaries within society are traversed, including geographical ones. At many 'traditional' events for deaf organizations, people in their seventies and eighties socialize with people in their thirties and forties. However, in these multigenerational spaces, one age group of DHH people is noticeably absent. This does not mean that youth are apathetic or detached from one another. Young deaf people are active in deaf groups. It is because most of their groups are closed to 'older people' that they appear invisible.

Young DHH people were missing from the most accessible deaf spaces.

Therefore, whenever the opportunity arose, I would ask for advice on how to meet young DHH people. It took several months before I could make inroads into this elusive 'group'. Time and time again I was told that 'young people' (*wakamono*) do not join events but instead prefer to spend time on their own. This is a drastic change from the Japanese deaf communities of the past. Events were highly anticipated and well attended. In the interim, people communicated via letters, newsletters, and later facsimile. In the absence of Skype, FaceTime, and SNS, deaf events were unique opportunities to gather and communicate freely.

The older DHH people I met complained about the youth being not only absent from the deaf scene but also being apathetic about ‘deaf issues’. When I asked ‘older’ participants (over 50) about how deaf communities in Japan have changed over time, they often commented on the fact that the younger generation never had to fight for basic rights. Other people spoke of the *kurō* (hardship) that younger people cannot understand. For instance, their elders were in the courts battling for the right to obtain drivers’ licenses in the 1960s (Nakamura 2014). Some older people believe that since the younger generation inherited these rights, they take them for granted. They explained (and lamented) that the youth do not come to events held by deaf organizations because they just want to ‘have fun’ (*asobi*), rather than proactively take part in ‘deaf activities/movements’ (*rō undō*). These complaints echo the complaints found in mainstream society about ‘apathetic youth’.

At this early stage of my fieldwork (winter), I had already been granted access to observe at a university for DHH students from the spring; however, I wanted to expand my scope beyond that one institution. Young people tend to shy away from activities organized by local branches of national organizations such as the Japanese Federation of the Deaf. Instead, they carve out their own spaces. It is important to note that older DHH people in Japan do play a significant role in the lives of young DHH people, even if they do not socialize together often. DHH youth watch their ‘elders’ on TV (e.g. signing news

broadcasts, TV programs profiling deaf people), attend their lectures, ‘friend’ them on Facebook, and seek their advice.

Along with the significant problems related to finding young people for this research, another difficulty was that I was looking for participants who do not have shared geographic or institutional roots. It was possible to obtain permission to visit schools for the deaf and meet the students there while observing classes. Moreover, cultural festivals at schools for the deaf are attended by some graduates and so it is possible to meet ‘deaf school-raised’ youth in the target age group (18-24 years old). However, *inte* do not share an alma mater, which made it necessary to cast a much wider net.

A young CODA (Child of Deaf Adults), Yumi, issued me my passport to the world of DHH youth. Yumi was raised by two deaf parents in Western Japan. Her native language is JSL, and she had spent her childhood attending deaf events with her parents’ deaf friends. Yumi and I met at a tour of a school for the deaf. Even though Yumi was only an undergraduate student at the time, she had decided to start conducting research on deaf education. She had also decided to join the Japanese Deaf Students Association (*Zen Nihon Rōgakusei Kondankai*). Membership is open to hearing Japanese students, although their membership type and membership privileges (e.g. voting) are restricted. However, would it be open to a 32-year-old foreign researcher? Yumi’s own in-between status as a hearing child raised using JSL in a deaf world seemed to make her especially interested in

supporting my research. Yumi worked some behind-the-scenes magic, and one spring morning, I found myself at a community welfare center in central Tokyo attending an information session for prospective members. When the session was over, the meeting became closed to non-registered members. Yumi had another appointment, but by a stroke of good fortune, I was invited to join a large group of male and female DHH prospective members to ‘hang out’. We spent the afternoon shopping and sightseeing in Odaiba, an artificial island packed with shops and attractions. By the end of that day, I had begun making inroads and had received Facebook and LINE ‘requests’. Around the same time, I had begun my fieldwork observing classes at Kaiba University, a university campus for deaf and hard-of-hearing students (described in this chapter), and I was regularly eating lunch with students and chatting with them in the common areas.

Once I finally gained access to the youth ‘scene’, I discovered they *are* very active in deaf spaces, but the spaces are all their own. Young DHH Japanese have carved out a niche. They have a distinct, somewhat closed, social network, which functions on terms that suit this generation’s interests and preferred modes of communication. Young DHH socialize in ways that resonate with them. DHH youth create informal opportunities to spend extensive time with one another, such as retreats, ski trips, and overseas excursions. They have their own youth-focused ‘drinking parties’ (*nomikai*), Sign language circles, dance performances, and organizations such as the aforementioned Japanese Deaf

[University] Students Association, *Zenkon*, as it is known by members with its local branches throughout the country. Each summer the organization holds a retreat, known as the *natsu tsudoi* (summer gathering), which is open to non-members, too. I was fortunate to participate two years in a row³⁰ In general, social activities are closed to older people and organized through social media. Offline interactions are supplemented by online ones that strengthen and extend their groups across translocal boundaries. The organizations for youth have an official age limit, while the drinking parties have an implicit one. As I will explain, I was an anomaly that was able to transcend these boundaries due to my (graduate) student status and my positionality as a ‘gaijin’ (foreigner).

While this group is ‘closed’ from the perspective of age, it is more open in terms of accepted communication modalities. Organizations such as D PRO as well as Meisei Gakuen School for the Deaf have events that are ‘JSL only’. Events for the younger generation are more accessible to all types of DHH youth because of captioning and the extensive use of visual aids. For example, when applying for *Zenkon*’s summer retreat, it was possible to request ‘information access’. Participants, hearing and DHH alike, were given distinguishing name tags to designate that communication support had been requested. Not only was captioning (on two large screens on either side of the stage) provided, but also ‘staff’ (volunteer members) would check on these designated participants, offering written support whenever

³⁰ The second year I had already ‘officially’ completed my fieldwork, but I was back in Japan for the writing up of my dissertation.

needed. This inclusive type of environment is easier for *inte* to enter.

DHH youth activities go largely unnoticed by the older generation because they are not included in them. (I was almost always the only person in attendance above mid-twenties.) Once I gained access to this world, I was, like many researchers, granted a certain outsider-insider status. If I were a Japanese woman in her early thirties, it is unlikely I would have been as welcomed. However, my foreignness rendered me ‘cool’. The same was true for a deaf Singaporean friend who is also in his thirties.

1.2 Linguistic Complexities

My knowledge of the Japanese language and culture was not enough to overcome the inherent linguistic methodological complexities of this research. I had to grapple with multiple languages and language modalities and to engage in cultural spaces with social norms that differ from those found in mainstream (hearing) spaces. This was not the Japan I had become familiar with over the years. The methodological complexity of this research stems from the very nature of the study and the multitude of communication methods used by participants.

Data collection was complicated by these linguistic issues. It was necessary to use and comprehend multiple languages and communication modalities: three forms of *shuwa* (Japanese Sign Language, Signed Japanese, and Contact/Pidgin Signing) (**figure 1.1**) and the related manual alphabet, Japanese oral communication, and communication via written

Japanese (*hitsudan*). For participants who are not yet confident in any form of *shuwa*, their preferred method of communication is normally spoken Japanese via lip-reading (*kōwa*). However, with more fluent signers the preferred method of communication tends to be signing. For *inte*, *shuwa* and *kōwa* were used together simultaneously in forms of signed Japanese or contact/pidgin signing. It was important for me to always first determine a participant's preferred communication method(s) and then proceed accordingly.

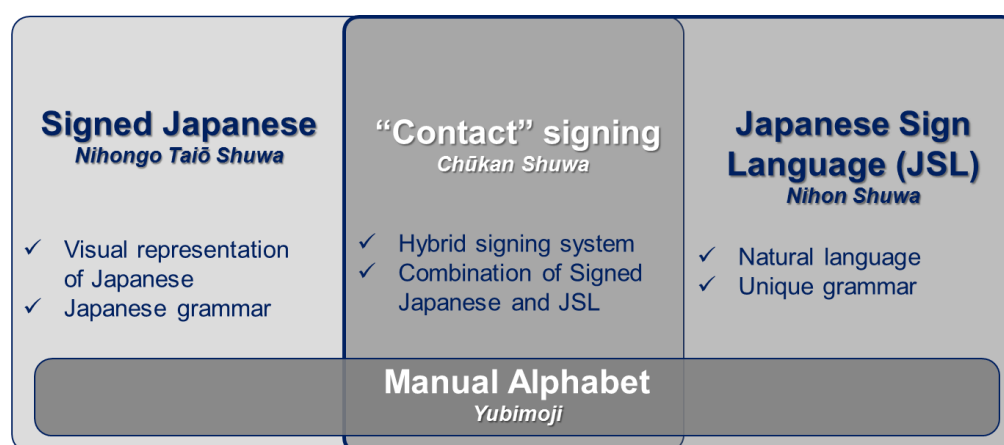


Figure 1.1 Forms of ‘Shuwa’ in Japan

The nature of *shuwa* (the term I use more generally for signed language) will be problematized in the following chapter, but I will briefly outline the differences here.

Japanese Sign Language (*nihon shuwa*) is said to be the ‘natural’ language of deaf people.

Signed Japanese (*nihongo taiō shuwa*) and ‘contact’ or ‘pidgin’ signing (*chūkan shuwa*) are visual communication modalities. They are not considered ‘natural’ languages but rather manual forms of Japanese. There is also the manual alphabet (*yubimoji*), which uses fingerspelling to spell out vocabulary. Although this is not a ‘standardized’ communication

method, DHH individuals sometimes use gestures (*miburi*) to communicate with hearing people when necessary. I use ‘*shuwa*’ in this research not to gloss over the important differences between JSL and the spoken language-based variants but to acknowledge that most young people today use a hybrid style of signing that cannot be easily classified.

My own use of signing was affected by events before and during fieldwork. As noted, I began learning signed Japanese in London before entering the field. After returning to Japan, I studied Japanese Sign Language (JSL) intensively for four months at an interpreter training institute. As a result, I had a grasp of both signed Japanese and JSL. However, my interactions with *inte* (who are not usually proficient in JSL) affected my signing style. When I started working with *inte*, they could not understand my non-voiced JSL as the grammar is completely different from Japanese. Therefore, I adapted my signing to *inte* and, as a result, I became most confident in signed Japanese or contact signing. I conducted all interviews on my own except for the ones with deaf leaders and educators. These deaf leaders are fluent JSL signers with a highly complex style of signing. In three cases, I hired interpreters who were either selected by the interviewee or approved by the interviewee.³¹ The selection of interpreters revealed tensions between interpreters and culturally deaf identified people regarding language and linguistic competency.

³¹ This was important as, according to fluent JSL signers, most interpreters can only interpret accurately in signed Japanese or contact or pidgin signing.

The necessity of multiple communication modalities also complicated documentation methods. I aimed to videotape all interviews, especially those which involved any form of signing. However, there were times when conducting an ‘informal’ interview in a preferred location (usually near the *inte*’s home or school), when I would have to rely on jotted notes, illustrations and multiple follow-up emails to gather and confirm information. Furthermore, there were other situations in which I was not permitted to tape participants. For example, at Kaiba University, I was allowed to interview students under 20 years old provided I received formal parental consent. The caveat was that I was only allowed to record their voices. On the one hand, younger participants were the ones less able to sign and more reliant on speech. On the other hand, when reviewing recordings, I could not always understand their Japanese speech. To handle this problem, I took copious notes during audio recorded interviews. In addition, I would do my best to jot down any signing (no matter how minimal) which emphasized or even was in juxtaposition with the spoken Japanese. I would also ask to save any written communication if it was done on paper.³²

The age of participants added a layer of complexity to research documentation. Anyone under 20 years old is considered a ‘minor’ in Japan. As my target group was *inte*

³² Surprisingly, given participants’ gravitation towards technology, they tended to prefer communication via erasable boards. They worried about privacy when exchanging information on paper or iPhones as this left a ‘record’ of communication. Data could be erased forever on boards.

between 18 and 24 years old, a significant number were still considered minors, and I had to obtain parental consent. Communication barriers within the home often made obtaining this consent complicated.³³ Oftentimes, several communication modalities were used during one-on-one interviews, peer interview, or even casual interactions. For instance, an informant might use signed Japanese with Japanese speech, go ‘voice off’ at times signing only (often contact signing) and also write down notes. My field notes reflected the linguistic complexity of my research. Drawings of signs cover pages of my notebooks in lieu of and alongside text.

Data analysis required a complex multi-layered approach due to the use of multiple communication modalities. This was not a matter of analyzing gestures or body language during a spoken interview but of analyzing multiple linguistic forms occurring simultaneously. For example, if someone voiced while signing (signed Japanese or contact signing), the signs did not necessarily correspond to the spoken Japanese. When analyzing the data, I transcribed both the signed and spoken comments and analyzed competing and/or complementary information. In cases where *inte* had more experience with signing, signs might enhance spoken Japanese. Some *inte* signed without vocalizing, even if their signing was still developing and they were using signed forms that align with Japanese

³³ Some *inte* reported that they had difficulty explaining the nature of the project to their parents due to communication barriers.

grammar. In other cases, where a signer was less proficient, the signed Japanese might not correspond with the spoken Japanese. Other times, *inte* deliberately made up signs for words they needed to use frequently but did not know how to sign (because fingerspelling with the manual alphabet is laborious) or guessed at the sign for a word or phrase, with varying degrees of accuracy. What made the data complicated and time-consuming to analyze is also what made it ‘thick’.

This research is a ‘bottom up’ micro-level study of a marginalized group, which has not traditionally had the power to share its views due to its marginalized status. Historically, DHH people have had limited agency over their education, employment, and personal lives. Furthermore, I was working with younger participants, many of whom are not yet considered adults in Japan. Therefore, as will be discussed in the next section, my positionality as a hearing adult played an especially important role in my methodological approach.

1.3 Positionality

Researchers in the social sciences are always highly aware of their positionality. I am a foreigner in Japan but one who has prior understanding of the social norms and language as a result of living in Tokyo for almost eight years before attending Oxford. Depending on the situation, I would leverage my ‘foreigner’ status or my ‘culturally fluent’ status. This could be advantageous. On the other hand, my attendance at a ‘prestigious

university’ and my status as a hearing person had the potential to alienate me from all participants—not only the ‘youth’.

Even though I approached everyone as ‘experts’ and made every effort not to pathologize or patronize anyone,³⁴ I remained concerned about potentially significant power imbalances between myself and *inte* (and other DHH youth). As a researcher working with younger people, I was aware of my age and the potential for ‘power abuse’. This is especially important in a society such as Japan which places an emphasis on age-based hierarchies in social interactions. At 32 years old when my fieldwork began, I was between eight and fourteen years older than the core participants. I did not want anyone to ever feel pressurized to join my research or have difficulty declining further requests after initial participation. There were two factors that helped to level the playing field: my assigned role and my nationality.

Firstly, I was positioned by participants in a grey area between friend and mentor. As Bell and Coleman argue, ‘Development of some form of friendship is inherent within anthropological practice. Fieldworkers usually have to establish cordial and even close relations with informants if they are not to become ethnologists, observing interactions while remaining aloof from close social contact’ (1999:2). I believe ‘some form of friendship’ is key, but I was under no illusion that young people saw me as a ‘normal’ or

³⁴ This meant avoiding controlling situations as a hearing person or stepping in ‘to help’ when there were communication issues, unless I was explicitly requested.

‘typical’ friend. After all, I am from another country. Moreover, I am older than them in a society where even someone marginally older is perceived as an ‘elder’ (*senpai*). Perhaps given my status as a ‘student’ and the fact that I dressed more casually than their professors, bosses, and other ‘elders’ in their lives, participants usually guessed my age to be around 26 or 27, which bridged the gap to a degree.

On the whole, I did manage to avoid the teacher role and to play more of a mentor role. Participants did—and do—come to me for advice on their curriculum vitae or getting work or even their dating life. It was important to balance my role as an institutionally affiliated researcher with my role as an anthropologist. This meant that I would sometimes accept invitations to eat with professors at lunch at Kaiba University, but I would primarily sit with the students to avoid being associated with a teacher role. As I first met a number of participants in various academic settings, I was careful to let them know that there was no obligation or academic requirement to participate in this research. It helped that we got to meet at informal social activities hosted by university students.

I was fortunate to be welcomed in their world more than I had anticipated. Once I found some spaces where young people socialized, it was easy to gain access to open events such as the Sign language circle for youth in Tokyo. Then I started being invited to ‘secret’, closed *nomikai* (drinking parties), brought to extracurricular activities, and even permitted to participate in the three-day summer retreat for DHH university students.

Although I was highly conscious of the power imbalances and never pressurized anyone to participate in the research, it is probably an unfortunate inevitability in this type of fieldwork that there may have been young people who, nevertheless, felt obliged to support my research.

The second highly welcome but unexpected ‘advantage’ regarding positionality was my nationality. I had not expected that my being from the United States would help me to gain the trust of DHH people. However, due to the ADA (the Americans with Disabilities Act) and the numerous social and political strides made by American deaf people, the United States is held up as a model of equality. Although deaf and hard-of-hearing people continue to face discrimination in the United States, some Japanese perceive it as a utopia. Whereas older deaf people with international experience were aware of the complexities in the United States, younger DHH (both *inte* and ‘deaf school-raised’) made comments, such as ‘America is different. Here in Japan we have a lot of discrimination against deaf people’. Consequently, it was assumed that because I am from this ‘open-minded society’, I am balanced and fair toward DHH people. This opened doors. In addition, my affiliation with two prominent sites of Deaf culture, an interpreter training program and Meisei Gakuen (the first and only bilingual, bicultural school for the deaf in Japan) also positioned me as an ‘accepted’ and ‘accepting’ hearing person who is respectful of deaf communities. Interestingly, these institutions are to some degree

‘foreign’ and ‘intimidating’ to *inte*, as people there are strongly ‘deaf’ identified. In addition, there were some people, specialists and non-specialists, who are opposed to Meisei Gakuen’s pedagogical approach. I had to be careful to stress my neutrality and remind people that I was not ‘taking a side’. Of course, anthropologists can never achieve total neutrality in the field. Working with one group can be seen as excluding another.

1.4 ‘Central-Actor Research’ (*Tōjisha kenkyū*)

It was very important to this project that I avoid imposing my framework on the research, as much as possible. The participants are not only younger but they are also ‘disabled’ and marginalized in Japanese society. As Okano and Tsuchiya point out, although young people’s voices are not the strongest in discussions of education, they may be the most critical (1999:53). I wanted to let these voices come through the research, rather than the voices of gatekeepers, and for it to happen with as little ‘filtering’ as possible. I was influenced by my knowledge of *tōjisha kenkyū* and my engagement with practitioners to seek ways to involve the central actors in decision-making processes.

Tōjisha kenkyū (first person or central-actor research) influenced the spectrum of methodologies suitable to the purpose and theme of this research. ‘*Tōjisha*’ refers to the central players or actors. In particular, the term emphasizes ‘the person in question’ (*tō no honnin desu yo*) as opposed to the people surrounding the individual such as family, medical professionals, and specialists (Saito 2014:89). Today in Japan *tōjisha kenkyū*,

where the people involved are the researchers and reporters of their own lived reality, is receiving increasing attention, particularly in the fields of disability and Deaf studies (Sasaki 2014). It has even reached the United Kingdom via a joint Japanese and British Research team project (UTCP 2014). *Tōjisha kenkyū* was defined as follows by a Japanese researcher in the field,

In this research method, the *tōjisha* is someone with a disability or illness who through self-recognition and awareness (*jibun jishin no chikaku ya ninshiki*) reaches the point of re-framing their disability or illness and opening up to peers to discuss and share their issues (Saito 2014:90).

Tōjisha kenkyū originated in Bethel House in Japan's northernmost island of Hokkaido. Established in 1984, the center is for people with psychiatric disabilities. Residents of Bethel House are encouraged to study and rehabilitate themselves through actor-centered 'research'. Bethel House is the subject of Nakamura's latest book *A Disability of the Soul* (2013). This method has since been applied to a wide range of *tōjisha* in attempts to deepen understanding on varying topics including feminism (Ueno 2009).

This central-actor approach calls into question emic and etic concepts. Clifford Geertz applies psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut's 'experience-near' and 'experience-far' concepts to the anthropological project in lieu of other terms such as emic and etic (2000). Geertz warns that adhering to experience-near concepts 'leaves an ethnographer awash in immediacies, as well as entangled in vernacular', while moving too far in the other direction 'leaves him stranded in abstractions and smothered in jargon' (2000:57). The way

a *tōjisha* explains her experiences would be considered ‘experience-near’. As a hearing non-Japanese person, I am not a *tōjisha* but rather *hitōjisha* (non-central actor). By virtue of my status as a non-central actor and a researcher, I am introducing ‘experience-far’ concepts in my analysis, which, I argue works to balance those introduced by participants.

Tōjisha kenkyū is intended to give agency to people who often are voiceless in the literature. My philosophy toward research has no bearing if concrete measures are not taken. I endeavoured to place the focus on the central actors, the *inte* (as well as their DHH peers), and to let their perspectives rather than the gatekeepers and those making decisions about their education (such as parents, educators, and policy makers) form the central narrative. The ‘people surrounding the individual[s]’ gave their perspective, but the *inte*’s insight remains central. One method I used to accomplish this goal was an interview process I call ‘peer interviews’, which will be discussed in section 1.5 on research methods. Undoubtedly, it is impossible to remove all of my influence as a researcher. In the end, I am the one collecting and analyzing the data, and forming the argument. Nevertheless, my value placed on central-actor research and the use of peer interviews shifted the control of the research activity to the participants in interesting ways.

1.5 Field Sites

This research was both translocal and transnational. Today many research projects involve ‘multi-sited’ fieldwork. It is no longer the ‘norm’ for researchers to limit their scope to one geographic field site. My primary field sites were the Kanto region (Tokyo and the neighboring prefectures Saitama, Chiba, Kanagawa, Ibaraki, and Gunma) and Osaka in Japan (**figure 1.2**); however, I traveled around the country during my fieldwork and worked with people from all regions of Japan. Furthermore, as noted, my research began in England. I also traveled to the Philippines with a group of Japanese students and teachers. Through the use of social media, discussed in the next section, boundaries in the field were blurred even further as my fieldwork entered virtual spaces.

Even within Japan, my fieldwork was fairly spread across diverse sites. This is because *inte* are not part of a centralized group and are not associated with one institution or locale. Moreover, deaf communities are translocal by nature, with associations, networks, and relationships crossing geographical lines. As noted, my research was generally concentrated in the Kanto region, where I lived, and Osaka, where my host institute is based. Although I visited numerous institutions and engaged in various activities, Kaiba University (the university campus for DHH students), the Japanese Deaf [University] Students Organization (*Zenkon*), Meisei Gakuen School for the Deaf, and the interpreter training course could be considered ‘regular sites’ of participant observation based on frequency.

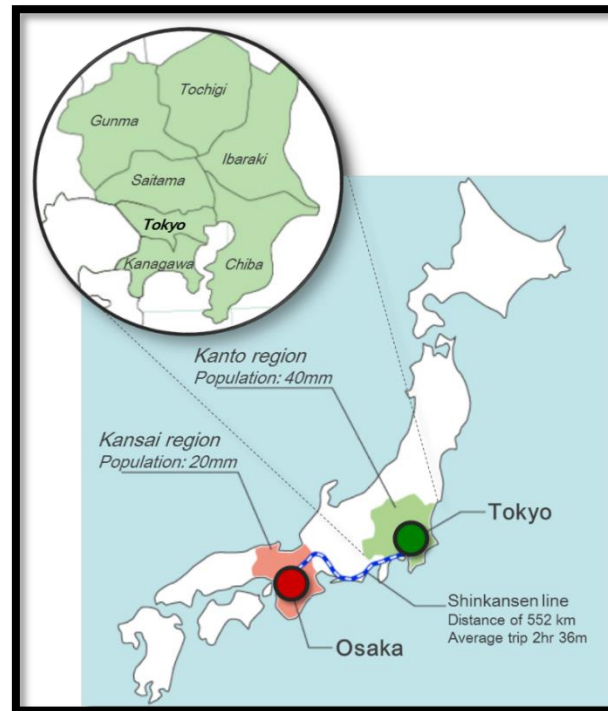


Figure 1.2 Main Field Sites in Japan³⁵

1.6 Research Methods

My primary research methods included ‘peer interviews’, participant observation, interviews, questionnaires, and the use of social media. I will begin by discussing ‘peer interviews’.

Peer Interviews: Co-constructing Meaning through Collective Reflexivity

Me: Why do you think I use peer interviews?

Kenta (male 20): To kill two birds with one stone (*isseki nichō*)? (Laughter)

Me: Why do you think I use peer interviews?

Hisae (female 23): Because we were both integrated and can talk about it?

³⁵ Created by author.

Being a fair and respectful researcher is a basic expectation. It is only the first layer. A greater concern was finding a method to let the *inte*'s perspective — not the anthropologist's — guide this research. The research method that permitted the *inte*'s perspective to come through the clearest was what I called the 'peer interview', a method in which *inte* interview one another. The 'peer interview' was a key research method because it situates the 'control' of the research with participants.

The concept of the peer interview developed over time. During my early months of research, I met with a number of Japanese academics researching deaf communities to ask for their advice. I had yet to enter the intensive JSL training program, and I was worried about interviewing people in *shuwa*. One hearing researcher suggested I prepare a list of questions and hire a deaf person to interview people on my behalf. However, after I started working with young *inte* (who are usually emerging signers), my concerns dissipated as I discovered my signing level was more than adequate. Much to my surprise, with younger *inte*, I often was a stronger signer, as I had been signing for longer than these participants. I also found I could interview older people in signed Japanese and JSL. As mentioned, on three occasions, when I worked with highly fluent JSL signers at the center of the Deaf cultural community, I hired professional interpreters (JSL-Japanese). In addition, participants were very open to my asking questions to confirm and clarify nuance. As a result of their backgrounds, they highly value being 'fully understood'. Once

my linguistic concerns had been put to rest, I realized that it was not *necessary* to ask a deaf person to conduct the interviews. It was not necessity but research interests and aims that led to the implementation of peer interviews.

One day I was talking with a 19-year old *inte* at his ‘hearing’ university campus. Suddenly, I posed the question, ‘If you were the interviewer, what would you ask?’ His questions were novel and probed issues I had not yet considered. I reflected upon the concept of *tōjisha kenkyū* and asked myself, ‘Who better to interview *inte* than fellow *tōjisha* (central actors)?’ That question was the seed that grew into the peer interview project. As a former junior and senior high school teacher, I knew first-hand how peer-oriented adolescents and young adults can be. I felt optimistic that this approach would shed new light on the *inte*’s past lives, present realities, and imagined futures.

After deciding to experiment with this method, I attempted to locate examples of peer interviewing in anthropological literature, but I turned up empty-handed. The few examples I found appeared in studies in the fields of behavioral sciences (e.g. Peters 2003) and psychology (e.g. Bloom, Padilla 1979). Although I could not find examples of peer interview methods in anthropology, for decades anthropologists have been using visual methods in anthropology which facilitate ‘informants’ authoring their own narratives. A particularly apt example is Turner providing Kayapo in Brazil with video cameras and editing facilities to document their own rituals and political activities (1992). Similarly, I

had considered turning over the video camera to *inte* to do their own filming. However, practicalities prevented this: I was borrowing a camera from my host institute, and I could not take such a risk when using borrowed equipment. I hope in the future to be able to try such documentation methods with young DHH people.

As I believed strongly that the best insight could be gained by letting the *inte* as *tōjisha* guide the research, I proceeded with the first ‘trial’. It was a success in terms of data collection and participant feedback, and so it became the first of nine peer interview sets. After returning to Oxford from fieldwork in March 2013, I had the opportunity to see a presentation given by a member of Catch22 National Care Advisory Service (NCAS) on care leavers (National Care Advisory Service 2014). The organization had decided to train former care leavers in interviewing young people in care, a method they refer to as ‘peer research’. Although there was an interviewer and an interviewee, rather than participants sharing the roles, I found similarities between our approaches. The NCAS staff described the care leavers as ‘experts by experience’ (National Care Advisory Service 2014), which I believe is the same for *tōjisha* in this study.

Before continuing, it is necessary to address some misconceptions that I have encountered. Firstly, as noted, I did not use the peer interview method because I *had* to in order to gather data. I was fortunate to have an incredible amount of access to deaf spaces, as I will describe more in this chapter and throughout the dissertation. Although I was

‘back’ in Japan, I was in a new world in which the majority of my encounters were with DHH people or their allies (interpreters and other hearing people active in deaf spaces). I became so immersed that I would sometimes unconsciously begin signing while talking to hearing Japanese friends. Secondly, as the first quote at the start of this section humorously alluded to, I did not engage in peer interviews because it was a ‘quicker’ or ‘easier’ method to collect data. I decided to use peer interviews because I believed that they could offer unique opportunities for ‘central-actor research’ and empower participants to engage in ‘collective reflexivity’. Participants agreed and responded favorably. Many *inte* reported that it was the first time they had deeply reflected upon their pasts with someone ‘like [them]’.

In *A Room Full of Mirrors* (1998), anthropologist Keiko Ikeda analyzes the ‘collective reflexivity’ of American high school reunions. She notes that reunion attendees create a ‘biography of the self’ and ‘as a person composes a biography of the self, past experience does not exist as a fixed entity frozen in memory but is in flux, being continuously and figuratively transformed to reconstruct, or to reconfirm, a sense of self at the present point in time and to orient oneself to the future’ (Ikeda 1998:35). Unlike the reunion goers who had a ‘collective reflexivity’ developed from reflecting on shared experiences long past, *inte* are not speaking with someone who shared their experiences through attendance at the same school. Instead, they met on intersections of

common memories and parallel experiences. They are constantly reconstructing themselves based on the listener, the current situation, and their hopes for the future. For instance, a participant who presented himself in every situation as an *inte* who embraces Deaf culture and JSL in an interview in the winter of 2013 was nine months later pondering whether it would be advantageous to speak and try to ‘cover’ his deafness when applying for jobs. As university was drawing to a close, he began thinking of how to position himself as someone adept at navigating the hearing world. Once again, he reconfigured himself when introduced to a mainstreamed professional woman who signs. As Ikeda points out, the biography is always in flux.

This collective reflexivity was novel to *inte* who for most of their past had lacked peers as mirrors. The story of integration is one of oral education. However, unlike oral education in schools for the deaf, integration means being a minority, often a minority of one. As my fieldwork took place ‘after the fact’ (i.e. after the research participants had left the mainstream schools), the data collected was often drawn from participants’ memories. In this way, I was collecting ‘retrospective opinions’ and ‘secondary rationalizations’ (Tahhan 2014:123). Older *inte* are able to reflect upon the past and rationalize their actions and the actions of others in a way different from a child or young adolescent. Through these retrospective views, *inte* found camaraderie in reflecting on what had been a solitary endeavor. I could observe *inte* as young adults navigating new spaces, but it was the

participants' storytelling and not these observations that revealed younger integrated selves. Participants recreate themselves and their narratives depending on the receiver. In one-to-one interviews, in which I was the sole observer/listener, the perspective shifted and the narrative was adjusted to enable a hearing outsider to understand. In peer interviews, participants are both the interviewer and the interviewee, the storyteller and the audience. There was a narrative shorthand: a knowing language based on insider knowledge. Information was revealed, confirmed, and elaborated upon as they co-constructed meaning.

This peer to peer method offered a new perspective based on questions generated by those who are 'experience-near', while at the same time introduced certain ways of repositioning the self, based on the peer as audience member. *Tōjisha* could anticipate each other's experiences and therefore ask highly detailed questions that would never occur to me as an 'outsider'. The 'me too!' element meant that partners could empathetically draw out information.

This method reduced my influence while introducing a peer influence, which could color narratives. Generally, *inte* were open to disagreeing or voicing differing insights from their partner. However, some *inte* recast their responses to align with their partner's, and their statements in one-on-one communication or interviews differed slightly in tone and content. For example, a participant might joke with a peer about struggling to understand teachers but tell me that it had been an oppressing (*kurushii*) experience. These

‘discrepancies’ provided an interesting insight into peer relations and offered an alternative interpretation of the participants’ own pasts. Overall, the peer interviews revealed a more nuanced, insider look into the *inte* experience, both past and present, than could possibly be revealed with only researcher-driven methods.

The selection of peer interview participants was especially important as this was the first step in transferring decision-making to participants. I did not want to ‘handpick’ the participants. Of course I had to start with an initial participant, and so I consulted with one of the older *inte*, 24-year-old Ryuta, who was mentioned in the introduction. I asked Ryuta to select his partner. After his peer interview, I asked both participants to recommend people. Meanwhile, I also selected one of the main research participants at Kaiba University, and asked her to select a partner. Adhering to the concept of *tōjisha*-led research, whenever possible, I allowed subsequent participants to select their own partners and to recommend other pairs in a ‘snowball’ approach. The main requirements for inclusion were being between 18 and 24 years old and ‘completely’ educated in mainstream schools from elementary school through senior high school. No one suggested anyone from a deaf family. At the time the peer interviews began coming together it was already almost 10 months into my 15 months of fieldwork, and I was described as being ‘*kao ga hiroi*’ (having many acquaintances, being widely known) as a foreign, hearing female heavily involved in deaf communities. Even though I asked them to choose or

suggest partners, in the end, there were only two participants who I had not met previously in some capacity. All of the other peer interview participants were individuals I had already known quite well through various participant observation activities. I had also ‘formally’ or informally conducted interviews with over half of them prior to the peer interview activity. On more than one occasion, I discovered that two people I knew from very different circles were close friends or new friends. Following an actor-centered method meant that I had to be flexible when one participant suddenly decided she no longer wanted to work with a peer, even though she had originally suggested him. I did step in behind the scenes and negotiate the delicate issue, blaming it on a scheduling conflict, and arranging a new partner for the ‘rejected’ participant. I never vetoed a suggested peer interview participant.



Figure 1.3 Peer Interview³⁶ (Tokyo, January 12, 2014)

There were a total of 18 participants (eight women and 10 men) partnered into nine peer interview pairs. There were same gender pairings and opposite gender pairings.

³⁶ Although the participants consented to their image being used, I decided to blur faces to protect their anonymity.

Of the 18 participants, 16 participants came from the target age (18 to 24 years old). Two participants were in their early forties who had been educated in mainstream schools. I included them because one woman had become a performer of traditional Japanese theater in Japanese Sign Language. (She selected her friend to be her peer interview partner.) I thought it would be useful to compare the experiences of ‘younger’ *inte* to their ‘seniors’ (*senpai*) using the peer interview method. Finally, I could not use the peer interview method with non-signing, *kōwa* raised youth as they could not communicate easily with one another. As I will describe more in the next chapter, *kōwa* is a method designed for communicating with hearing people—not for mutually comprehensible communication between two or more DHH people.

The relationship between participants ranged from total strangers (in the one case where I was asked to select the partner) to acquaintances to close childhood friends. I found that there were advantages and disadvantages to each type of pairing. The friends with the longest history touched upon the most highly personal of issues without hesitation but their deep knowledge of one another made it more difficult to discover new territory. The most evocative interviews resulted from the coming together of friends or acquaintances who had met after senior high school. Regardless of the prior relationship, every participant commented that they learned something new about their peer interview partner. In their usual day-to-day encounters, like most young people, they talk about daily

life: school, work, boyfriends and girlfriends, traveling, arguments, and so forth.

Sometimes at lunchtime Kaiba University, students would start talking about Sign language or their relationship with their parents, communication barriers, etc. However, these topics were not brought up regularly. I was surprised by the way some participants described the almost therapeutic effect of peer interviewing.

In most cases, peer interviews were held in a private rented space for small meetings and social functions.³⁷ It was run by a café company, and the drink bar and cozy chairs helped to make the environment less sterile. However, I was under no impression that this was a ‘natural’ setting or scenario. Everyone was aware that they were being brought together for a research activity. Since I knew nearly all of the participants before beginning the peer interview project some of the tension was diffused. Moreover, there was a lot time spent ‘hanging out’ before and after the interviews. I had worried that participants might become nervous about having to conduct an interview or feel uncomfortable being videotaped, but surprisingly most participants seemed comfortable and did not hesitate to jump right into the activity. The nature of communication between DHH individuals was undoubtedly a factor in reducing nervousness. Communication

³⁷ In one case, there was a ‘minor’ of 19 years old involved in the peer interview project. I received parental consent, and conducted the interview at his ‘hearing’ university with the support of his professor. His selected peer interview partner traveled to his university. In another case, I had to hold the peer interview in a karaoke box due to scheduling issues. The peer interviews with students from Kaiba University were held in a private discussion room on campus.

between DHH individuals, regardless of whether it is through lip-reading or signing, requires eye contact. The participants must look at each other and not the camera. In fact, perhaps because the camera was out of their line of view, they often seemed to forget about it altogether.³⁸

In the peer interviews, participants determined communication modalities, length of interview, and interview questions. *Inte* would ask ‘Should we use our voices?’ (*koe o dasu?*). I would explain that it was not necessary and they should decide themselves. To those who had a relationship prior to the interview, I suggested, ‘communicate as you normally would’. For those who had not communicated at all (or much) before the peer interview day, I let them naturally determine the communication modality without any intervention. One 23-year-old female *inte* who is a lower-level signer asked if she could use her ‘boogie board’ (LED writing board). Her partner patiently wrote words and phrases whenever she could not understand his more fluent signing. Regarding the interview content, the only guidance participants were given was in the form of a list of bullet points of basic background information (e.g. place of birth, age of discovering deafness, communication with family, schooling) with the main discussion point being the open ended topic ‘encountering Sign Language’. Notably, ‘*inte*’, ‘integration’, and ‘oral communication’ (*kōwa hō*) were not included in the list of discussion points. Nevertheless,

³⁸ In the cases where I needed to call for a break, it took several attempts to catch their attention through visual means.

these terms and topic were brought up by all nine pairs. Participants had the freedom to shape the style and the content of interviews. The length of the peer interview was also undetermined as I reserved hours of extra time in the rooms.³⁹ In one case, it was necessary to extend the room reservation twice. The actual recorded peer interviews averaged about 1 hour and 45 minutes to two hours. The entire session including the greeting, downtime, and wrap-up was usually between four and five hours.⁴⁰

The peer interviews became ‘popular’ and well known in young circles, which I think had little to do with me as the researcher, and nearly everything to do with the fact that participants enjoyed the opportunity to talk about these issues with *inte* peers. After one participant posted about his experience on Twitter, I received questions from other potential participants.⁴¹ The summer after my fieldwork ‘officially’ ended (August 2014), I attended my second *Zenkon* summer retreat. During the retreat, I received two more offers to join the project. Having developed a network, I plan to continue employing this highly effective method in future research.

³⁹ In only one particularly long peer interview, I could not extend the reservation long enough (I had already extended the interview booking), and we had to cut the discussion short.

⁴⁰ It was a tactic to briefly leave the room toward the start of the interview to enforce that even though I had arranged the room, how the time was used was entirely up to them. Participants knew that they could give a signal to take a break at any time and take as little or as much time as they wanted.

⁴¹ Unfortunately, I was not able to use them this time in the project due to time and financial constraints.

Participant Observation

The peer interviews occurred after I had developed relationships with participants and an understanding of the issues affecting them through participant observation. Given the decentralized nature of this loosely formed ‘group’, in order to meet *inte* and get a full picture of their situation, it was necessary to engage in a wide range of activities. As there are no visible ‘markers’ or institutional affiliations, it is not easy to identify *inte* until engaging in conversation. Through the activities described below, I met well over 200 DHH people, and interviewed (both informally and formally) approximately 50 people including *inte*, ‘deaf school-raised’ youth, ‘older’ DHH people of all educational backgrounds, educators, parents, and deaf leaders. Since ending my fieldwork I have met many more people while writing up in Japan. However, although I spoke with and interviewed a significant number of people, I always prioritized depth over breadth. Therefore, I interviewed certain participants up to six times.

a) “Kaiba University”

Twice a week (and sometimes three times a week), from May 2013 to February 2014, I went to Kaiba University, which is the only university campus in Japan for DHH students. In any given year, there are approximately 200 DHH students studying there. I observed classes and joined extracurricular activities with the students. At the university, I met research participants and collected data on their experiences. I also interviewed

students, both *inte* and ‘deaf school-raised’ DHH professors, and hearing professors at the institution.

Founded in the 1990s, Kaiba University is the only institute of higher education in Japan for ‘visually and hearing impaired’ students. The university offered the possibility of meeting many *inte* in the same place and spending extensive time with them. I observed classes, ate lunch with the students, and joined in their cultural festival and extracurricular activities, such as the Sign language circle with a neighboring university. It was also a chance to see *inte* interact with ‘deaf school-raised’ peers both inside and outside the classroom. In addition, I visited other universities with DHH students to observe classes and join their Sign language circle activities.

b) “*Shisetsu*”⁴² Interpreter Training Program

The *Shisetsu* Interpreter Training Program is the only national full-time two-year training course for JSL interpreters. Through the support of one of my contacts, I was able to intensively train in JSL for four months (April-July 2013) at the center. I joined the morning classes three to five days a week, and took part in my other research activities in the afternoon. All of the teachers of the first year JSL classes are deaf. Not only was I able to improve my signing skills and develop a deeper understanding of JSL, the center was

⁴² Although it is difficult to anonymize this unique program, I have done so to respect those at the institute who were not involved in the decision to grant consent to this research.

also an opportunity to observe deaf-led education and be exposed to the dominant ideologies of Deaf culture. Further, I interviewed two of the deaf teachers there to understand their views on deaf education and students' experiences in mainstream schools. As mentioned, my 'affiliation' with the center gave a positive impression to people active in deaf communities. I was told by one informant that people saw me as respectful of Sign language and deaf people because I invested time and energy in intensively studying there.

c) Japanese Deaf Students Association (*Zenkon*)

I joined the Kanto branch of the national Japanese Deaf [University] Students Association (*Zen nihon rōgakusei kondankai* or *Zenkon*, for short), and I am still a member today. The organization was first established in 1959, and there are branches throughout Japan. The association's three main precepts are 'Let's eliminate lonely deaf students', 'The right to hear. The right to learn' and 'Social change'. As discussed earlier in this chapter, I was invited to the first information session in May 2013 by Yumi, a Japanese CODA (Child of Deaf Adults), and permitted to become a member after that initial meeting.⁴³ I participated in their meetings, social activities, and annual summer retreat (in both 2013 and 2014). I also receive their regular publications with articles written by members. After 'finishing' my fieldwork, while writing up my dissertation at home in

⁴³ Hearing members of the association are allowed to participate in all activities but not to vote on reforms or measures.

Tokyo, I was asked to give a presentation in *shuwa* at the summer 2014 retreat along with four DHH graduate students. It was an opportunity to present my research to an audience that included a number of participants.⁴⁴

d) Schools for the Deaf

Throughout the duration of my fieldwork, I visited schools for the deaf in Kanto (Tokyo, Chiba, Saitama, Kanagawa, and Ibaraki) and Osaka to situate mainstream education within the framework of deaf education. Visits to these schools offered a better understanding of the ‘path not chosen’ for *inte*. I was sometimes asked to give presentations or ‘team teach’ with the instructors, which added to the participatory experience. Cultural festivals at schools for the deaf are open to the community, and so I joined as many events as possible. I also joined a Sign language class for members of the community held at one school for the deaf in Tokyo.

In particular, as mentioned, I regularly visited one school for the deaf, Meisei Gakuen in Tokyo, and participated in many of their school activities (as well as an overseas trip to the Philippines with the junior high school students). As noted, Meisei Gakuen is the only bilingual-bicultural school for the deaf in Japan. Instruction is entirely in JSL, a visual language, whereas instruction in mainstream schools is in Japanese. My research there

⁴⁴ It was my first presentation in *shuwa* and my first presentation to an audience that included *inte* participants.

allowed me to make contrasts in classroom practices as well as students' relations with peers.

e) **Hard-of-hearing Classrooms and Resource Rooms**

My research also included hard-of-hearing classrooms (*nanchō gakkū*) and other 'resource rooms' (*tsūkyū shidō kyōshitsu*) in mainstream schools. It was difficult to gain access to these classrooms. My DHH contacts facilitated my visits to schools for the deaf through their own translocal networks. However, the mainstream Japanese education system is far more bureaucratic. I was fortunate to be welcomed to a hard-of-hearing classroom at an elementary school near Kaiba University thanks to a DHH professor who had a research connection there. I also spoke with and interviewed educators who currently and previously worked in these hard-of-hearing classrooms. Fortunately, after my fieldwork was 'officially' completed, I was granted the long-awaited permission to visit a mainstream junior high school with DHH students and observe their lessons in the mainstream class and hard-of-hearing classroom. I was also allowed to conduct a group interview and to administer a questionnaire to the three students. During this same time period, I was given the opportunity to visit another elementary school with a 'resource room'. I observed one-on-one lessons, met parents who were bringing their children (from other schools in the area) for speech therapy and interviewed one of the teachers. In addition, as part of a reciprocal arrangement, I was asked to present on special educational

needs (SEN) in the United Kingdom in Japanese to hearing teachers at the elementary school. However, I was not permitted to observe the students in their mainstream classroom at this elementary school either.

f) Sign Language Circles

I collected data on how hearing and DHH people interact in ‘mixed spaces’ through participation in Sign language circles (clubs). For the first six months of fieldwork I lived in Saitama, the prefecture directly north of Tokyo where I joined the local Sign language circle twice a week.

After moving to Tokyo, I continued to join various Sign language circles. It was especially interesting to participate in several university-based Sign language circles as well as a Tokyo-based Sign language circle targeted at younger members. Local language circles (such as the one mentioned above) tend to be dominated by hearing members, the majority of whom are older housewives and male retirees. Furthermore, the leaders are typically hearing. However, this youth Sign language circle was created by younger DHH members for their peers and typically more than half of participants in attendance are deaf or hard-of-hearing. The leadership is also shared between DHH and hearing people: two leaders are DHH, two leaders are hearing. Whenever possible, I joined their ‘drinking parties’ (*nomikai*) following the circle activities.

g) Deaf Events

I attended numerous deaf social events and cultural performances throughout Kanto. These were valuable opportunities to meet participants of all ages from different educational backgrounds. The ‘Deaf Happy Hour’ events were particularly popular. The larger Deaf Happy Hour was held at an Irish pub in central Tokyo and a smaller one happened to be held in my neighborhood in ‘downtown’ Tokyo at a small Japanese pub. While the one in my neighborhood was only attended by a small number of mainly 30 to 50-year-old locals, the larger event in central Tokyo was well-attended (typically upwards of 40 or 50 people) by individuals from a wide age range and diverse backgrounds. Several ‘main’ participants joined these social events (as did more of the older participants), which gave me a chance to talk with them in an informal atmosphere. Since the event is not ‘closed’ but held in an open pub there was some mixing of DHH and hearing participants and other pub goers. Not only are these spaces ‘mixed’ in terms of DHH and hearing attendees, but I saw DHH as young as 20 (the legal age to drink in Japan) up to late sixties at these lively events. I also attended cultural performances, such as *shuwa rakugo* (traditional Japanese storytelling in JSL) and *shuwa noh* (traditional Japanese drama in JSL). These were fascinating events that offered a glimpse into the rich Deaf culture in Japan. However, I rarely saw youth in attendance.

I also spent time with *inte* and ‘deaf school-raised’ youth during small dinners, larger ‘drinking parties’, over coffees and lunches, and on outings, such as museum visits

and film events.

h) Sign Language Project at the National Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku)

My host institution during fieldwork was the National Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku) in Osaka. In January 2013, I was invited to be a member of the institute's three-year collaborative research project (April 2013-May 2016) on signed and spoken languages titled 'Toward a New View of Human Language Based on Comparison of Signed and Spoken Languages'.⁴⁵ I was part of the planning workshops and supported the symposiums (e.g. during 2015's symposium, I was a 'team member' helping to guide workshop activities). Many scholars in Sign linguistics and Deaf Studies gather at the institution. Through this project I have not only learned from senior scholars but also been able to meet members of various deaf communities who are interested in or involved in Sign linguistics and Deaf studies. There have been several valuable opportunities for the cross-cultural exchange of knowledge with visiting scholars from overseas.

i) 'Universal' Activities

I was invited by a mainstream educated participant that I met at a local Deaf Happy Hour night to take part in 'universal' activities organized by Universal Events

⁴⁵ Core project description (in Japanese)

http://www.minpaku.ac.jp/research/activity/project/corp/core_kikusawa13

Association. ‘Universal’ events are based on the principal of ‘diversity’ and ‘participating in society together’. In the summer of 2013, I joined the ‘Universal Camp’ on Hachijo Island approximately 287 kilometers south of mainland Tokyo. The goal of this camp was to bring together people of all backgrounds and abilities to share in team-building activities and awareness workshops. There were three core workshops: on deafness, on blindness, and on physical impairments that impeded mobility.⁴⁶ Three participants with mainstream school backgrounds from three different age brackets (twenties, thirties, and forties) joined the camp. I also regularly participated in the ‘universal’ Sign language circle in Tokyo.

j) **Philippines Deaf Study Tour**

In October 2014, I traveled to the Philippines with the junior high school students and teachers from Meisei Gakuen. In Manila, we visited a university for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, a mainstream school with an ‘inclusion’ program for DHH students, and a school for the deaf. Through observations and discussions, I gathered data that helped me look at the Japanese situation in a cross-cultural perspective. I also observed deaf transnational community-making first-hand as relationships were quickly formed between the Japanese and Filipino students. Preparation for this trip provided a chance to observe native and fluent Japanese signers engage with Deaf people from another country and

⁴⁶ ‘Diversity’ extended to nationality: I was asked to give a speech on my experiences as a foreigner in Japan in the ‘meet up room’ (*kakawari no heya*).

‘encounter’ two foreign Sign languages: FSL (Filipino Sign Language) and ASL (American Sign Language).⁴⁷ I also had the chance to study ASL alongside the Meisei students and teachers.

k) Academic Activities

I have attended conferences, lectures, seminars, workshops, study events, and films since the start of my research on issues such as bilingual-bicultural deaf education, Deaf studies, literacies, information access, Sign language, and linguistics. Even when the events were not directly related to my research, I attended whenever possible as they proved to help not only increase my knowledge about the broad field but also to meet new contacts and collect data. It was especially useful to see DHH researchers present their research. I also presented my research in more ‘traditional’ settings, such as at academic conferences, as well as in informal deaf spaces.

Interviews

Participant observation provided an understanding of how DHH interact with one another both inside and outside the classroom. Interviews and informal one-on-one conversations shed light on the broad spectrum of opinions and experiences of *inte* and

⁴⁷ For lack of a FSL teacher in Tokyo, the students had a week of lessons in ASL, which is similar to Filipino Sign Language. The similarity is due to the influence of American teachers at schools for the deaf in the Philippines.

‘deaf school-raised’ youth. I conducted ‘traditional’ one-on-one interviews with *inte* (18-24 years old) to learn about their experiences. I also interviewed older participants who attended mainstream schools and DHH youth of all backgrounds as well as educators, specialists, and prominent deaf leaders in their thirties to fifties. This was useful for gauging how other people view *inte* and the trend of mainstreaming. In addition, I interviewed ‘elders’ in the deaf community in their sixties and seventies to gather life histories, which helped to place current trends in a historical context.

One-on-one interviews revealed information that DHH youth sometimes hesitate to share in front of groups of their peers. For example, I had been told by numerous deaf adults who are active in deaf spaces that once they ‘encountered Sign language’ their lives changed and they instantly became immersed in ‘deaf life’. When speaking in front of their peers I did not observe students saying anything ‘negative’ about signing or Deaf culture. This was especially true for university students at Kaiba University, who were studying and living in a small community where ‘gossip’ (*uwasa*) travels quickly. Yet in one-on-one conversations, some *inte* disclosed that they are or were in ‘opposition’ (*teikō*) to *shuwa* and ‘spending time in the deaf world’. Others spoke of their own ‘bias’ (*henken*) toward deaf people. This type of personal information could be revealed in peer interviews as well, thanks to the intimate environment and friendly relationship of many of the participants. To some extent, the interviews were important preparation for analyzing peer interviews. It

was through these one-on-one interviews that I learned the key issues that affect *inte* and those around them.

Questionnaires

I administered two paper-based questionnaires: one to the junior high school students⁴⁸ at the aforementioned Meisei Gakuen and one to first and third-year students at Kaiba University. The questionnaire elicited information about students' communication methods with peers, teachers, and family members, educational experiences (including 'information support'), and identities. This data enabled me to place the stories collected during peer interviews, interviews, and participant observation into a broader perspective and to question my findings.

Social Media

The internet and social media have altered the way people interact in societies around the world. It has had and continues to have a particularly transformative effect on deaf communities. In the past, in order to communicate with friends and family, DHH people had to exchange letters with friends (waiting days or weeks for a reply). Later they could communicate via facsimile. Sharing ideas on a larger scale was only possible through newsletters and small publications. DHH people would anticipate deaf social events as they offered rare chances to socialize with their DHH friends.

⁴⁸ As Meisei Gakuen does not include a high school department, these were the oldest students enrolled at the school.

Today with the advent of social media, DHH people of all ages can and do take advantage of the ability to text, Skype or FaceTime, chat over LINE,⁴⁹ comment on friends' pictures on Facebook, post their opinions on Twitter, and send around last minute invitations via a multitude of communication channels. Furthermore, blogs and websites are speedy and easily accessible methods of exchanging news and other information with larger audiences. Generally, only 'mildly' hard-of-hearing individuals can hear well enough to use the phone, limiting the ability for others to communicate via that medium. Now everyone can have Sign-based conversations via Skype or FaceTime. Restaurants, hotels, and flights can be booked online and nearly every company has a website or email address. In addition, this ability to communicate online makes it easier for DHH to be actively engaged in their professional lives. Technology reduces boundaries within the company (as colleagues can communicate internally via chat or email) as well as externally (as DHH can contact clients quickly via email).⁵⁰

My use of social media for research called into question issues of privacy. Out of respect for individuals' privacy, I do not freely quote directly from social media sites. This is because, unlike a blog or forum, content posted on sites such as Twitter or Facebook are intended to be viewed by only select people who are approved as 'friends'. They are not

⁴⁹LINE is a Japanese application for instant messaging. Users can talk via video, exchange texts, send graphics, and make free calls.

⁵⁰ Today business cards are usually printed with the 'hearing impaired' mark and a request 'to please email not call'.

open to the public. Therefore, there is no assumption on the part of the users that the information they post will be included in my research. If I wanted to speak about something posted on Facebook or Twitter, I always asked the informant in advance, and then gave a summary of the anonymized post, focusing on the general concept. I never assume ‘consent’ has been given.

Social media has enriched my research. At the time of writing, I have 294 ‘friends’ on my ‘professional’ Facebook account, with under 20 of these contacts being unrelated to this research. The remainder are deaf and hard-of-hearing people from Japan and overseas as well as hearing people active in deaf communities. Interestingly, I have received ‘friend’ requests on Facebook from DHH people around the world (that I have never met in real life) simply because we have mutual DHH friends somewhere. Through these ‘virtual friends’, I have been privileged to glimpse into the lives of DHH people in other societies. My use of social media has meant that I maintain regular contact with participants, even when I make trips back to Oxford. I have also helped connect Japanese and Filipino DHH people through social media. It has been an exciting opportunity to be part of the formation of translocal and transnational networks of deaf and hard-of-hearing people.

■ ■ Chapter 2

Language and Education; Nationhood and Selfhood

2.0 Introduction: Historically Situated *Inte*

One of the classes I observed at Kaiba University was a beginner-level Sign language class for first-year university students. All of the students enrolled in this introductory course graduated from mainstream schools.⁵¹ A few of the students in the class knew basic fingerspelling. Overall, they had very little to no knowledge of *shuwa* (in any form). In order to communicate with these students, I had to speak (while they lip-read) or communicate via writing. When I did sign (very slowly), the students either responded with confused expressions or undeserved praise for my ‘skilful’ signing (*gyōzu*). Regularly observing this class and the students’ progress with Sign language acquisition greatly shaped my research focus and questions. It also caused me to reflect upon the ‘pity’ some people have for *inte*.

Earlier in my fieldwork, an educator who is a staunch critic of *kōwa* said, ‘It is really pitiful (*kawaisō*) to watch integrated students trying to communicate with one another in *kōwa*.’ Initially, rather than finding it ‘pitiful’, I had been impressed with the creative strategies *inte* employ to communicate. However, when I saw these first-year *inte* at Kaiba University awkwardly communicate with one another in loud broken simplified

⁵¹ There were several *inte* who knew how to sign before entering Kaiba University, but they were placed in the ‘advanced’ class.

speech, I wondered if she had been right. Were they ‘victims’ or successes of the hearing-led mainstream education system? Moreover, how did *inte* view themselves? Although their trajectory can be interpreted as a sign of the merits of oral methods in ‘normalizing’ DHH children or alternatively as evidence of the failure to protect Deaf culture and its children, these findings demonstrate that the reality is more nuanced. They also point to the need to look to the past to answer questions about the present. The contemporary *inte* experience is inextricably linked to early developments in the history of deaf education.

The term ‘*inte*’ references historical trends in deaf education. Although it is not possible to ‘engage in participant observation of the past’ (Eriksen 1995:37), there is no separation between history and anthropology (Comaroff, Comaroff 1992:13). On the one hand, participants do not appear to fully conceptualize their position in a complex transnational narrative. On the other hand, they readily identify that ‘*inte*’ is a historically situated phenomenon. More specifically, most participants argue that ‘*inte*’ is a relatively recent term which is not used by ‘elderly’ (*toshiyori*) people due to historical changes in educational practices.

‘For elderly people, historically, disabled people ‘equalled’ [attendance in] special education schools (*tokubetsu shien gakkō*). So they are not familiar with the word “*inte*”’.

-Kenta, male, 20 years old

‘I think young people use [*inte*], but most elderly people don’t use [*inte*] because they were mainly [educated in] deaf schools.’

-Tatsuo, male, 21 years old

The ‘elderly people’ the participants make reference to were raised and educated before the earliest mainstreaming efforts of the 1960s. At that time, it was assumed that all deaf students in Japan would attend schools for the deaf because no other educational options were available. The same assumption cannot be made today as it is estimated that at least 50% of DHH students attend mainstream schools.

This chapter begins with a comparison of *shuwa* (Sign language) and *kōwa* (oral communication) and their positions in Japan. Exploring the role of *shuwa* and *kōwa* is crucial to any discussion of deaf education. *Kōwa* is both a route to and a root of integration. Next, the chapter traces the transnational trends in deaf education from its origins in Europe to its arrival in Japan during the Meiji Period (1868-1912). Then the international debate over the oral versus manual method and its relationship to integration are explored, followed by a brief overview of the move from the era of integration to the era of inclusion. This is followed by an examination of the contested nature of integration in Japan. The chapter concludes by exploring the role of deaf schools in *inte*’s lives as the imagined ‘path not chosen’.

2.1 Grounding the Language Debates: Sign Language (*Shuwa*) and Oral Communication (*Kōwa*)

Some *inte* describe themselves based on the communication method involved in mainstream education: *kōwa*. It is necessary to emphasize that *kōwa* training is not limited to *inte*. Speech therapy is an educational component in most schools for the deaf. On my visits to schools in Japan, a tour would inevitably include a viewing of the hearing testing room and the speech training classroom(s)⁵² as well as an explanation (and sometimes a demonstration) of speech training techniques and/or hearing testing methods. Often a great deal of time would be spent explaining such techniques and methods. On one occasion, I was taken to observe a hearing mother and her 15 month-old son as he underwent his audiology exam. The woman had come to the school for further testing because her pediatrician had informed her that there was a high likelihood her son has a significant hearing loss. There was a sombre tone in the small room, and the mother was visibly anxious. As a fieldworker, I felt uncomfortable intruding on what was clearly a difficult moment for this woman. I knew that the results of the tests would have a long-term impact on his language and education. Before the results were given, the person leading the school tour seemed to, at last, sense that it might not be appropriate to continue observing someone who had not provided her consent.

⁵² Meisei Gakuen is a noted exception.

Although DHH students of nearly all educational backgrounds⁵³ confront *kōwa* *bunka* through the expectation to communicate with hearing people via *kōwa* and through rigorous speech training, only *inte* described themselves as being raised using the *kōwa* method (*kōwa [no] sodachi*).⁵⁴ While deaf school-raised youth nearly always have some form of signing in their communication toolbox, for most *inte*, *kōwa* is the primary communication method both inside the home and at school during childhood. Consequently, their ‘ability’ to communicate via *kōwa* carries significant weight. As a result of having to rely solely on oral skills, their world-view is filtered through the lens of *kōwa* with an ability to use it determining if they are ‘successes’ or ‘failures’.

While most participants view *kōwa* as a method that shaped their upbringing and a tool to interact with the ‘hearing world’, it was described by one participant as a ‘culture’ situated in opposition to signing culture. Although this is an unusual interpretation, his explanation sheds light on the complex relationship between language, education, and identity.

Aogu, 20 years old, and I first met in the summer of 2013 at the *Zenkon* retreat for DHH university students. There were 151 participants from across Japan: university

⁵³ Students at Meisei Gakuen in Tokyo are taught in JSL and written Japanese and are not expected to speak. They do not undergo *kōwa* training. Furthermore, their parents are expected to learn to sign as all school functions are conducted in JSL.

⁵⁴ Very occasionally an *inte* spoke about someone he or she knew as being ‘raised with Sign language’ (*shuwa [no] sodachi*).

students, ‘members of society’, and high school students. Having ‘U-turned’ back to a school for the deaf at the senior high school level after attending a mainstream elementary and junior high school, Aogu declared that he has first-hand knowledge of ‘both cultures’. About one month after the retreat, Aogu and I reconnected in Osaka. He traveled nearly an hour from a neighboring prefecture to show me around the city. We went to the HEP Five, a shopping complex popular with young people. While chatting in a coffee shop, Aogu suddenly mentioned ‘*kōwa bunka*’ (literally ‘oral communication culture’). He signed and vocalized ‘*kōwa*’ and ‘culture’. Aogu had been in the middle of telling me about how he had transferred from a mainstream school to a school for the deaf. He had been ‘*kōwa [no] sodachi*’ (raised orally) at home and at school until entering the deaf school environment.

It was in this school for the deaf that ‘*kōwa bunka*’ (oral culture) and ‘*shuwa bunka*’ (signing culture) collided. I asked him some questions about his experience as a U-turn student, but this was not Aogu’s preferred topic. What Aogu *really* wanted to talk about was his trip to England during senior high school. He excitedly showed me photos of his travels. In one photo he was standing with local deaf people he had met in a small pub in the English countryside. Meeting deaf people by chance had been the highlight of his overseas adventure.

On my Shinkansen journey back to Tokyo, I reflected on our conversation as I began to record my fieldnotes from the afternoon. I realized that I had not been able to delve

into Aogu's conception of *kōwa bunka*. I wondered what he had meant by 'oral method culture'. Based on his stories, it appeared that there had been tensions in his school between students who preferred to communicate in *shuwa* and those who preferred to communicate via *kōwa*. However, there were unanswered questions. Many *inte* call themselves '*kōwa [no] sodachi*' (raised orally), but I had never heard *kōwa* framed as a culture. What did Aogu mean? When I wrote to him to ask for clarification, I did not anticipate this lengthy and illuminating reply.

'*Kōwa bunka*' comes from a time in the past when *shuwa* was forbidden. I think *kōwa bunka* is when you don't use *shuwa* but develop your own means (*jibun no chikara de*) to communicate. In other words, the effort is aimed at being able to communicate with hearing people. To make communication easier for hearing people rather than for 'hearing-impaired people' (*chōkakushōgaisha*), understanding happens through memorizing sounds, and reading lips and voice tones. ...[I]t may seem that you are required to speak using *kōwa*. However, I found *kōwa* to be a source of confidence. If I could just clearly convey what I wanted to say, then I would feel happy. And if the person I was communicating with could understand what I was saying, that too would help to build up my confidence. I remember clearly that once I learned *shuwa*, I felt very uneasy (*tsuyoi fuankan o kanjita*) that maybe I couldn't communicate in *kōwa* [anymore]. I think that *shuwa bunka* is the result of *shuwa* being forbidden because of the negative stereotype of people with a hearing disability. Also, according to some anecdotes I have heard, the reason for this was that when [people were] communicating in *shuwa*, hearing people couldn't understand them. To sum up, it was like hearing people were instructing [DHH people], 'Talk in *kōwa*!' (*kōwa de hanase!*). I came to be immersed in *shuwa* (*shuwa ni kakumareta*) as a student during my senior high school years. The people around me told me they wanted me to learn *shuwa*. I couldn't help but to be taken aback. But if I did not have *shuwa*, I could not have gotten to know all of these good friends.

Aogu's response touched upon key themes in this research. First, he discussed the oft-cited point that *kōwa* is designed for and promulgated by hearing people. *Kōwa* is for hearing people. *Shuwa* belongs to DHH people. Secondly, he identified the ambivalence of DHH youth regarding *kōwa*: the drudgery of speech training and the frustration of failing to grasp communication in one's environment are juxtaposed with a sense of pride when 'succeeding' in spoken language communication situations. This pride is an inevitable result of parents and teachers praising DHH students whenever they use *kōwa* effectively. Thirdly, Aogu hinted to the fear that immersion in a *shuwa* environment would cause his *kōwa* skills to falter. In describing *shuwa bunka* as resulting from the proscription of *shuwa*, he was introducing the way in which deaf communities and *shuwa* thrive in spite of, and in reaction to, a shared marginal status. Finally, Aogu talked about his DHH peers' expectations for him to learn *shuwa* and the friendships that resulted from this language acquisition. These are all issues that will be addressed herein beginning with the unpacking of *shuwa* and *kōwa*.

What is *Shuwa*?

Sign language is both the language of Deaf culture and the means to develop, express, and maintain it. Sign languages are seen as the foundation of Deaf cultures around the world, including Japan. The most common answer given by *inte* to the question ‘What constitutes Deaf culture or the deaf community?’ is ‘*shuwa*’ or ‘people who use Sign language’. This simple definition leaves out much of the rich tapestry of Deaf culture which includes performing arts, storytelling, and social movements. At the same time, many DHH people agree that *shuwa* is the foundation. However, respect for *shuwa* is not shared by all DHH people. As for hearing people, they may not understand the nature of *shuwa* at all.

In the field of deaf education, linguistic approaches are inseparable from educational practices. *Shuwa* and *kōwa* are deeply embedded in the history of deaf education, yet, among ‘lay people’, Sign languages are poorly understood. As deafness is a low-incidence disability,⁵⁵ the average hearing person has too little experience interacting with DHH people and too tenuous a grasp on the nature of Sign languages to enter into language debates.⁵⁶ It is not uncommon for hearing people to have never had meaningful

⁵⁵ Out of approximately 127 million people in the country, 343,000 people have an ‘auditory/language impairment’ (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2012), which is just 0.28% of the population.

⁵⁶ Whenever I am asked about my research topic by someone from outside the field, the most common follow-up question is ‘Does each country have its own Sign language or is there one universal Sign language?’ This is true regardless of the professional or educational background of the questioner. Upon explaining that there is no universal Sign language but different culturally situated Sign languages, the next question is often some variation of, ‘Why? Why don’t they make one language?’

interactions with a deaf or hard-of-hearing person. As a result, hearing Japanese often erroneously believe that all DHH people can sign, and that Sign languages are universal gestural communication systems rather than ‘true’ languages.

The importance of clarifying misconceptions regarding Sign languages was highlighted at a seminar for researchers affiliated with The Graduate University for Advanced Studies (Sokendai) held in Kanagawa, Japan. The two-day multidisciplinary academic event featured presentations by specialists in diversified disciplines on topics ranging from museology to thermal susceptible systems. In other words, this was not an audience of specialists in deaf education or Sign linguistics. Professor Ritsuko Kikusawa,⁵⁷ a hearing spoken language linguist who leads the core project on spoken and signed linguistics at the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka Japan,⁵⁸ gave a presentation about media transmission and e-learning. After introducing the project theme, she displayed the slide below (in Japanese) and asked audience members to demonstrate by a show of hands whether they agreed or disagreed with these statements in a *shuwa* ‘quiz’.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Kikusawa is a relative ‘newcomer’ to the field of Sign Linguistics. She has navigated this new territory by working closely with deaf scholars, both Japanese and international, and consulting members of deaf communities.

⁵⁸ As noted in chapter one, I joined this project in 2013.

⁵⁹ If ‘*shuwa*’ were to be replaced with a majority spoken language such as Spanish, this ‘quiz’ would seem incredibly facile. It would be unlikely that anyone in the audience would hesitate to answer. However, given the misconceptions surrounding Sign language, when speaking to a lay audience, it is usually necessary to begin by outlining the basic linguistic principles.

Below is my translation of the original Japanese slides. Note that Kikusawa used ‘*shuwa*’ (Sign language) rather than ‘*Nihon shuwa*’, Japanese Sign Language (JSL), ‘*Nihongo taiō shuwa*’ (signed Japanese) or ‘*Chūkan shuwa*’ (contact or pidgin signing). However, based on the facts displayed, it is evident that she is referring to JSL and not a signed variation.⁶⁰

SIGN LANGUAGE.... (O or X)
Was created artificially X
Has native users O
Has the same grammatical structure as Japanese X
Has a dialect O
Is universal X
Sign language has no orthography O
Sign language is a language ◎

Figure 2.1 Presentation on *Shuwa* (Kikusawa 2015)⁶¹

Firstly, JSL was *not* created artificially. JSL developed amongst groups of deaf people, especially students in residential schools. There is some uncertainty about the exact origins of JSL as there is no ‘founding language father’ or linguistic connection to Sign

⁶⁰ As a linguist, Kikusawa focuses on the ‘natural’ language, JSL, not the artificially created manual methods.

⁶¹ Translated by the author.

language in the United States, Europe, or China (Nakamura 2006:23). However, JSL is believed to be an indigenous language (Nakamura 2006:23). In academic literature, it was not until the 1960s that Sign languages began to be recognized as natural languages with high-level grammatical systems instead of crude gestural systems (Stokoe 1960). In the years following Stokoe's landmark work, Sign linguists around the world have dedicated their prolific academic careers to the rigorous study of Sign linguistics.

In contrast to Sign languages, *signed* versions of national languages (such as signed Japanese in Japan) were invented by educators in schools for the deaf. The aim of signed languages in schools has been the acquisition of the national spoken language or languages. In Japan, many DHH people first learn signed forms in schools for the deaf due to the influence of hearing educators and peers with hearing parents, although their peers from deaf families may introduce JSL. However, upon reaching adulthood, after spending more time in deaf spaces, they will often learn to sign in a manner closer to JSL.

Secondly, as indicated on the slide, there are native signers. Native signers are part of a statistically small but socially significant minority group. There are two main categories of native signers: 'deaf of deaf', which are signing deaf children of signing deaf adults, and CODA, children of deaf adults, who are hearing children raised by signing deaf parents. As only one in ten people in a deaf cultural group (*rōbunka shūdan*) have Sign language as their 'mother tongue' (*bogo*), native signers are a minority within a minority

(Saito 2014:44). Despite their small numbers, native signers play an important role in deaf communities and are responsible for passing on JSL, even in times of school prohibitions.

Thirdly, JSL does *not* have the same grammatical structure as Japanese. The grammar and syntax are distinct from Japanese and include classifiers and non-manual markers expressed on the face and body (Oka, Akahori 2011). On the other hand, signed Japanese follows the word order of Japanese and even incorporates Japanese particles, which are short words that indicates the relationship of words (e.g. *ga*, *ha*, *ni*). Although the grammar and syntax of JSL is distinct, the language displays Japanese influences. Communication in JSL includes fingerspelling of the two phonetic alphabets in Japan, hiragana and katakana, for vocabulary which does not have official signs. In addition, JSL contains signs which depict the shape of Chinese characters used in Japanese writing. For example, one of the signs used for ‘river’ resembles the Chinese character for river (*kawa*) as shown in figure 2.2.

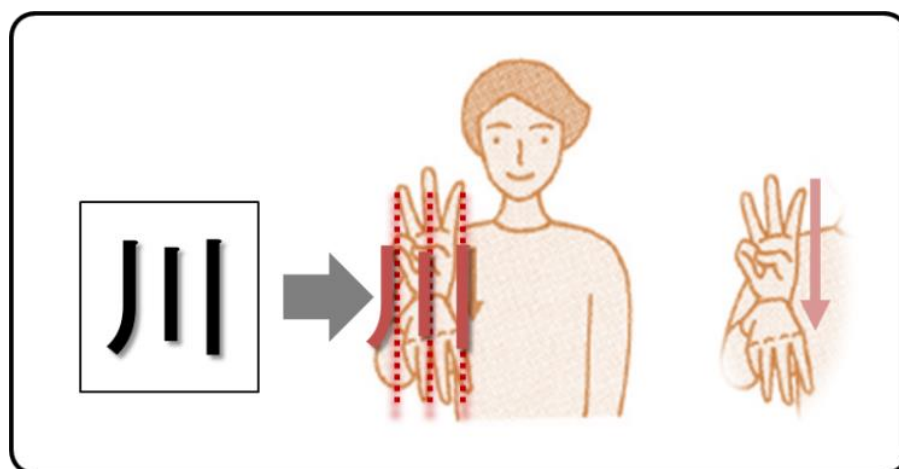


Figure 2.2 One Possible Sign for ‘River’ (*kawa*) (Ogata, Yonaiyama 2004:122)

Kikusawa's fourth point is that JSL does have 'dialects'. Different regions in Japan have variations in signs and signing styles. These variations become apparent when signers move to or visit other regions in Japan. For instance, one participant explained that when she returned to Osaka after years of living in Tokyo, her friends teased her for having picked up a 'Tokyo accent'. Language variations occur throughout the country with areas such as Kansai (to the West) and Kanto (to the East) having distinct signs. For instance, the sign for 'name' is different in Tokyo and Osaka (**figure 2.3**). Nakamura explains these regional variations in greater details in *Deaf in Japan* (2006).

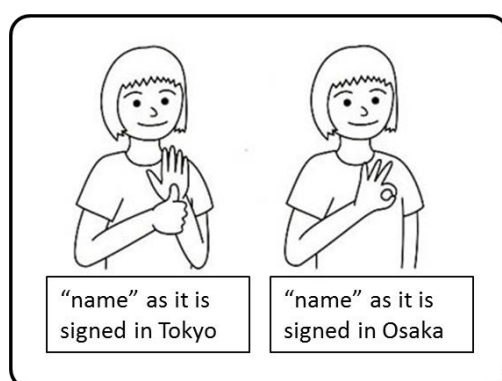


Figure 2.3 Sign Variations for 'Name' (Kamei 2009:77)

The fifth point relates to perhaps the biggest misconception of Sign languages: they are 'universal'. Sign languages around the world are not mutually intelligible. People often ask me, 'But wouldn't it be *easier* if they were universal?' Easier for whom? Sign languages are not constructed languages such as Esperanto, which are created with an aim to overcome

national boundaries. Natural languages do not develop out of convenience. Sign languages are culturally situated. For example, in JSL, greetings are formed by bending both index fingers toward one another, as though two people are bowing. ‘Good morning’ is signed, MORNING + GREETING (*bow*). In the United Kingdom, which does not have a tradition of bowing to greet people, this sign would not be logical or intelligible.

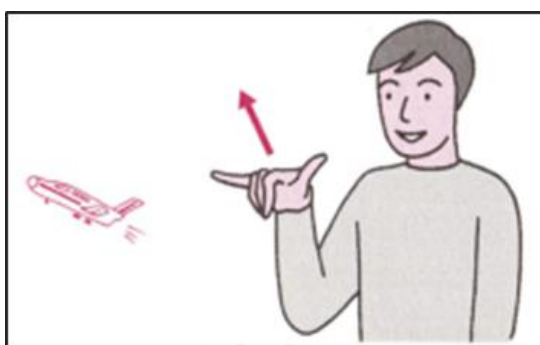


Figure 2.4 Sign for ‘Airplane’ (*hikōki*) (Ogata, Yonaiyama 2004:404)

While Sign languages are not universal, iconicity, in which the form of the sign conveys its meaning, results in certain signs being mutually intelligible across cultures. Iconicity occurs in all languages, to some degree. In Sign languages, the handshape conveys meaning. For instance, the JSL sign for airplane (*hikōki*) resembles an airplane (**figure 2.4**). Iconic signs in other Sign languages can often be understood by skilled signers. The closest approximation to a universal sign language is International Sign (IS); however, this is a constructed contact system which utilizes signs from different Sign languages to facilitate communication in global spaces, such as international conferences and sporting events. It is not considered a ‘natural’ Sign language.

Next, no standardized orthography has been developed for Sign languages. There are several Sign transcription systems, mainly iconic shape-based ones, as well as ongoing attempts to create more useful systems, but these should not be confused with widespread written literacy (Senghas, Monaghan 2002:86-89). Orthography affects the status of languages in industrial societies, which tend to frame literacy as normative (Ong 1986:23) and illiteracy as pathological (Miller 1990:68). While Sign linguists challenge the belief that literacy is limited to the written word with in-depth studies of Sign literacy, the dominant paradigm in mainstream society remains.

Orthography is an especially salient point in a ‘developed’ and highly literate nation such as Japan where there is an expectation for all citizens to be literate (Bondy 2015:43). Unlike the English alphabet, which is taught and mastered in kindergarten, the Japanese writing system requires years of intense study to master. After Japanese students quickly learn the two phonetics alphabets (*hiragana* and *katakana*), they spend the remainder of their primary and secondary education studying how to read and write complex Chinese characters (*kanji*). It is frequently said that in order to read a newspaper, one must understand approximately 2000 Chinese characters. JSL is incongruous in a highly literate society, where the writing system is admired for its beauty and difficulty.

An absence of orthography impacts the transmission of knowledge. As will be discussed more in the next chapter, since the majority of DHH people are born into hearing

families, deaf identities are not usually inherited but acquired through peer relationships. In the absence of a writing system, deaf histories have been more difficult to record and to transmit inter-generationally. Furthermore, the absence of a writing system can complicate some forms of communication. I have met elderly signers in their seventies and eighties who are not comfortable using written Japanese.

However, technology is redefining the role of literacy. Today, signers can communicate through JSL, images, videos, and short text messages. For instance, signers can chat across great distances in *shuwa* through videophone applications. Social Networking Services such as LINE (a popular free application in Japan), Twitter, and Facebook, facilitate communication through emoticons, short text, images, ‘likes’, and videos.⁶² Online written messages tend to be brief. Regardless of literacy skills, users can access a wealth of information in various forms. Literacy becomes a lesser concern in these virtual environments.

Finally, as noted earlier in this section, JSL is a natural language.⁶³ Sign languages were not created or invented but developed naturally when DHH people came together in communities and later in schools for the deaf. JSL is not a collection of ‘gestures’ (*miburi*) or pantomime. Therefore, JSL users who use Japanese (in written

⁶² For instance, when I communicate with younger people on LINE, they often use many ‘stickers’ (images), which may be animated, in place of words.

⁶³ Kikusawa used double circles on the slide to emphasize this essential point.

and/or spoken form) are bilingual. This is often overlooked as people may fail to register Sign languages as true languages.⁶⁴ The stigma attached to deaf people is also attached to their language.

The relative status of *shuwa* in Japanese society directly influences parents' desires to mainstream their children. Sign languages are minority languages in all nations. On a global scale, the unequal relationships between 'dominant hearing languages and native sign languages', as minority languages, are believed to be relatively the same (Branson, Miller 1993:27-28). Around the world, most governments are said to have an attitude of 'tolerance and indifference' toward Sign languages (Burns, Matthews et al. 2001:191). While several communities—both past and present—can be found in which the majority population uses Sign language such as the historical Martha's Vineyard community in the United States (Groce 1985) and present day Bengkulu, Indonesia (Branson, Miller et al. 1996, Vos 2012, Winata, Arhya et al. 1995), there is no nation in which a Sign language has been or is today spoken by the majority of the population.

Sign languages are not only minority languages, they are marginalized languages. Spoken languages are at the top of the language hierarchy in most societies. Statistical minority groups are not necessarily marginalized groups (Goodman 2008:325), but deaf

⁶⁴ I recall speaking to one British academic about Meisei Gakuen being a 'bilingual-bicultural school'. Although I had already told him JSL was the language of instruction, he inquired about the 'other' language besides Japanese. It did not occur to him that the bilingual paradigm could be applied to a visual language.

people in Japan occupy a marginalized position in society. In the case of signers, their language has been seen as inferior to the national spoken language (or languages). Stokoe's landmark work may have argued that Sign languages are natural languages worthy of serious study and evaluation, but academic practices do not determine societal mores and beliefs. The parents encountered during fieldwork did not place a high value on their child(ren) learning to sign. At best, signed modalities (JSL, pidgin signing, signed Japanese) were viewed as a means to learn Japanese and therefore tolerated. At worst, they were seen as a possible hindrance to (Japanese) language acquisition.⁶⁵

JSL is not granted equal status to Japanese, neither officially or symbolically. JSL is a minority, marginal language used by an estimated 57,000 deaf people in the country (Ichida 2001, Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2012) out of the 343,000 deaf and hard-of-hearing people totalled by the government (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2012). Although in *nihonjinron* (theories of Japaneseness) literature Japan is argued as having an 'ideology of homogeneity' with a homogenous people, more recent literature has shed light on Japan's diversity. Nevertheless, in practice, Japan is not a multilingual society. There is little space for the official recognition of other languages. Japanese is unequivocally the 'default' language. For example, most schools that use a

⁶⁵ The exception was parents at Meisei Gakuen who have chosen to educate their children in a bilingual and bicultural environment.

foreign language for instruction such as Korean (e.g. schools for ethnic Koreans) and English (e.g. international schools), have difficulty gaining official recognition from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT).

There have been some small steps taken toward improving the status of *shuwa* in Japan. During my fieldwork in the summer of 2013, Tottori prefecture in Japan passed an ordinance promoting *shuwa*. In 2015, Gunma prefecture passed a similar ordinance. However, these measures have not granted JSL official status but rather have helped ensure that deaf people have access to *shuwa* interpretation in bureaucratic settings, such as town halls and hospitals. Some of the proponents of bilingual JSL-Japanese education have argued that what these prefectures are promoting is actual signed Japanese and *not* JSL. They express frustration over what they perceive to be the further marginalization of JSL. On the other hand, most of the young people I spoke with (regardless of their educational background) were hopeful about these measures, choosing to interpret them as steps in a positive direction. It remains unclear whether these measures will affect the rates of mainstreaming or the use of JSL in schools for the deaf.

A major reason why Sign language is subject to bias (*henken*) in Japanese society is because it is used by ‘disabled people’. The manner in which ‘Sign language’ is written in Japanese is both a reflection of and reflects upon perceptions (*kachikan*). Nanette Gottlieb has written extensively on the relationship between language and disability,

minorities, stereotyping and citizenship in public and private spaces in Japan (2001, 2005, 2006, 2012), arguing that '[l]anguage constructs social practice as much as it reflects it in a two-way process, which informs both perceptions and their inevitable outcome' (2001:993). Interestingly, in *Language and Society in Japan*, Gottlieb explores the 'major cultural, social, and political aspects of language in Japan' (2005:vi) but does not mention Japanese Sign Language, even in her chapter about language diversity.⁶⁶ This underscores the degree to which Sign languages are under-represented in the literature—even in works on language politics. The representation of '*shuwa*' in Japanese can be seen as influencing and having been influenced by social practices. The character for '*go*', meaning word or language, is usually added to a country (or region such as Catalonia) to designate a language. For example, the two characters for 'Japan' (*Nihon*) and the character for 'language' (*go*) combine to form 'Japanese' (*Nihongo*). JSL is set apart from recognized languages by being written as (hand) 'talk' rather than 'language' (**figure 2.5**). I once mistakenly jotted down the characters for 'hand language' in my notebook, much to the delight of a JSL advocate. He said that this should be the 'correct' way to write *shuwa*.

⁶⁶ When searching for literature on 'JSL' what usually appears is research on Japanese as a Second language. In these academic works, there is no recognition that 'JSL' could be confused for Japanese Sign Language. I presented at a conference where the program indicated there would be a panel presentation on 'JSL'. I was disappointed to realize it was about Japanese as a Second Language when I turned up at the appointed presentation time.

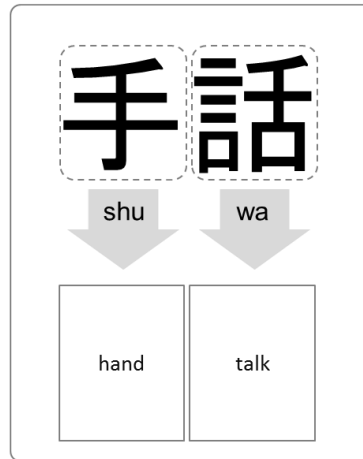


Figure 2.5 Chinese Characters for *Shuwa*⁶⁷

Biases (*henken*) toward people with disabilities affect perceptions of *shuwa* because attitudes toward a language are hard to separate from the attitudes held toward the users (Burns, Matthews et al. 2001:182). For signers, the primary characteristic is that they receive information through four senses with an emphasis on the visual one. However, ‘disability’ in the form of a ‘hearing impairment’ is framed as the dominant characteristic. According to this disability model approach, Sign language is seen as a method to accommodate people with ‘special needs’. For example, in bookstores and public libraries in Japan, resources on *shuwa* are not shelved in the language sections. Instead they are categorized as ‘social welfare’ (*fukushi*) and placed alongside books on nursing care, rehabilitation, and disability support. Further, hearing students of *shuwa* often work or intend to work in welfare-related fields. In these contexts, *shuwa* is a tool to ‘help’ or ‘support’ DHH people, positioning Sign language users in a dependency-based disability category. This is known as the ‘service oriented view’. *Shuwa* is associated with access and

⁶⁷ Created by author.

information not education or enrichment. For other language learners, *shuwa* is a hobby rather than a linguistic pursuit.⁶⁸

The bias toward spoken (and written) language remains and is manifested in both public and private spheres. For example, up until Meisei Gakuen was officially established in 2008,⁶⁹ JSL was not taught as part of the official curriculum or language of instruction of any school in Japan. Accordingly, Meisei Gakuen's bilingual approach has not been without controversy. Both hearing and DHH people have criticized the school for not placing a high enough priority on Japanese learning although 'bilingual' is referring to instruction in JSL and (written) Japanese. I had even been warned by one of the teachers at the school that my research there could mark me as being 'on their side'.

The biases in society (and within the intimate sphere of the family) are absorbed by *inte*, many of whom grow up believing that *shuwa* is a communication system associated with deficiency and dependency rather than a language worthy of serious study. As one *inte* explained, before he learned *shuwa* he thought, 'signing was for deaf people who *cannot* speak'. *Inte*'s complicated perceptions of deafness and *shuwa* will be explored throughout this work.

⁶⁸ Certainly, the same could be said for 'professional housewives' (*sengyō shufu*) who study spoken foreign languages, such as English, in order to pass time and socialize with friends. However, they are not studying marginalized languages which have contested language statuses.

⁶⁹ It began as a private free school in 1999.

What is *Kōwa*?

Unlike JSL, the *kōwa* method (*kōwa hō*) is not a language; it is a method to communicate in spoken Japanese. *Kōwa* contains the Chinese characters for ‘mouth/lips’ and ‘talk’ (**figure 2.6**). The *kōwa* method (oral method) involves both output and input. It incorporates the production of speech and the process of ‘speech reading’ or ‘lip-reading’ (*dokushinjyutsu*). This method requires the user to produce speech and to try to lip-read and, if there is residual hearing, to also ‘listen’ (*kikitori*). The emphasis on *kōwa* training tends to be on the ‘output’, the performance of speech, with the goal being a voice which ‘works’ or ‘sounds normal’. *Kōwa* is significantly easier for post-lingually deafened individuals who lose their hearing after acquiring speech because they have a foundation in spoken language.

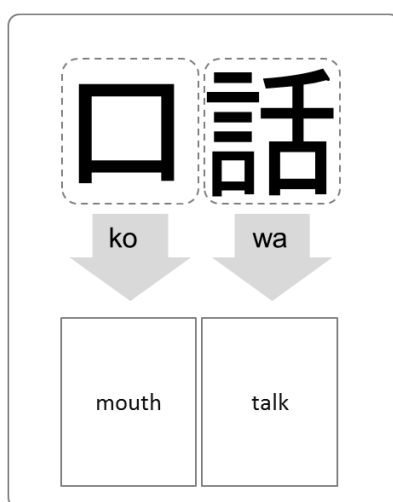


Figure 2.6 Chinese Characters for *Kōwa*⁷⁰

The *kōwa* method involves years of training in both input (i.e. lip-reading) and

⁷⁰ Created by author.

output (i.e. spoken communication). Depending on the level of residual hearing and the use of hearing devices, lip-reading can be the primary or only method to access spoken Japanese. Lip-reading requires great dedication and practice. Despite these efforts, it remains, at best, imprecise because it is easy to confuse mouth shapes. The example most often given is ‘*tabako*’ (tobacco/cigarettes) and ‘*tamago*’ (egg), words which produce the same lip shapes. Similarly, output, the production of speech, requires years of intensive speech therapy. Years of training and practice does not mean that a DHH person will sound like a hearing person or even be intelligible. One of the challenges of interviewing first-year university *inte* is deciphering their speech since they usually cannot sign. In some cases, it became necessary to gently and tactfully switch to written communication. Transcribing interviews conducted in *kōwa* was a complex process due to numerous unintelligible utterances. At that stage of fieldwork, I was already accustomed to ‘deaf voices’ yet I could not always decipher speech. It begs the question of how well these participants were understood by their teachers and fellow students in mainstream schools.

Deaf bodies are medicalized and pathologized as attempts are made to correct ‘defective’ voices. Hearing aids and cochlear implants are supposed to ameliorate the ‘loss’ of sound, while speech therapy aims to not only produce but also ‘fix’ deaf voices. The majority of DHH I met (*inte* and ‘deaf school-raised’ alike) had undergone some form of speech training (*hatsuon kunren*). The decision to have a child use *kōwa* and undergo the necessary training to

use this method was not made by parents alone. It was promoted by specialists at schools for the deaf, hospitals, and rehabilitation centers. According to proponents of the oral education method, *inte* are ‘successes’ because they are able to ‘succeed’ in the spoken language environment found in mainstream schools (and presumably in society). Based on this set of values, DHH who leave the mainstream school system may be perceived as ‘*kōwa* failures’. *Inte* internalize these messages, too.

As will be discussed more in the next chapter, while a first language or first languages are typically acquired ‘naturally’ through socialization in the family (and later in school), *kōwa* requires bodily techniques designed by educators. In Japan, speech training involves various pedagogical methods. For example, during visits to schools for the deaf, the speech therapists demonstrated how candies and rice crackers are used to build strength and mobility in the tongue and how mirrors enable students to copy and practice mouth movements. During interviews or conversations, *inte* spontaneously recalled and re-enacted these methods. For instance, one female *inte* recreated a speech training session during a peer interview. She mimed holding a tissue in front of her mouth to practice aspirated consonant sounds (e.g. *ha*, *hi*, *hu*, *he*, *ho*). Her peer interview partner immediately recognized this method and contributed examples. In addition to speech therapy, cued speech is regularly employed in schools for the deaf to improve speech acquisition and oral

communication. In cued speech, hand shapes are made near the mouth and face to visually represent sounds, which is said to facilitate spoken language comprehension.⁷¹

As Aogu's interpretation of *kōwa bunka* suggests, *kōwa* can be seen by some DHH people as a method adapted to hearing people's expectations and needs at the expense of DHH people's needs. One participant in her forties, who was 'fully raised in mainstream schools' but became a teacher at a school for the deaf, described *kōwa* as follows in her book *Shuwa de Ikō* (Let's Sign),

This method (*kōwa*) is where Deaf (*rōsha*) vocalize and look at the other person's mouth and try to understand. Although many years are spent training, it is not a method in which the person can understand everything being said. For hearing people, it is a convenient method, but for Deaf it is not a method in which they can speak on an equal basis, so it involves much pain (*kutsū*) (Akiyama, Kamei 2004:50).

Akiyama-sensei is not alone in her view. *Kōwa* is not considered an accessible communication method by many DHH people in this study. As will be argued in chapter four, *kōwa* is more performative than communicative and can pose barriers to two-way communication while making group communication virtually impossible. As noted, lip-reading is an inaccurate method even in the best of circumstances. The level of accuracy drops dramatically when one is trying to lip-read multiple speakers at the same time. Most

⁷¹ In schools for the deaf, I regularly saw cued speech charts on the walls of the elementary school classrooms and halls. Some *inte* learned cued speech if it was taught in their particular speech training classroom or rehabilitation centre.

participants describe lip-reading in such group settings as ‘impossible’ (*muri*), even though mainstream school environments necessitate this practice.

Moreover, *kōwa* is not a method which facilitates communication *between* DHH people. Rather, it facilitates communication between a hearing person and a DHH person, with the onus of deciphering lip movements placed on the DHH person and the onus of monitoring comprehension placed on the hearing person. Two DHH people face great difficulty in communicating with one another using lip-reading and speech. As a result, a reliance on *kōwa* does not enable DHH people to integrate easily in deaf spaces. The figure below illustrates the barriers imposed with ‘spoken language’ (*onsei gengo*) communication.

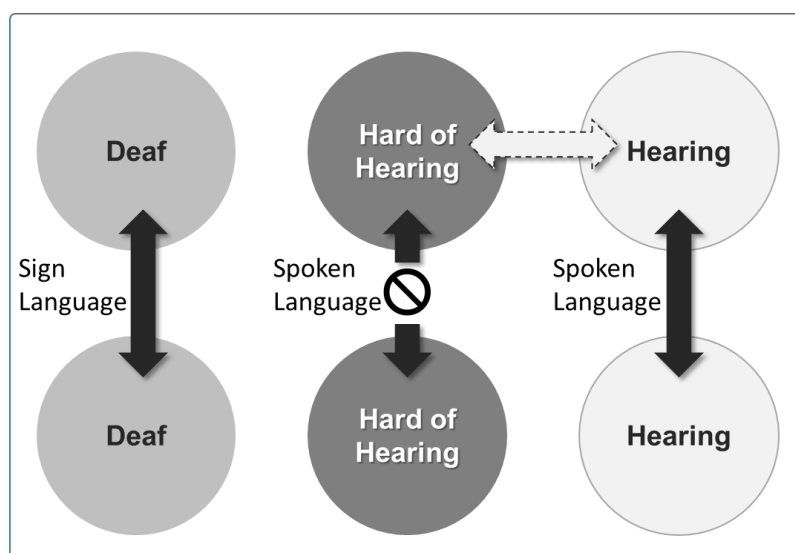


Figure 2.7 Communication among ‘Hard-of-Hearing People’ (*nanchōsha*) (Uenō 2003:21)⁷²

⁷² Translated from the original Japanese

Uenō's⁷³ diagram does not completely capture the complexities of communication for DHH individuals. First, Uenō draws the conclusion that communication in *shuwa* renders someone 'deaf' (*rō*), whereas there are deaf and hard-of-hearing people who sign but do not embrace a deaf (*rō*) identity. Second, he determines that users of spoken communication will identify as 'hard-of-hearing' (*nanchō*). However, as discussed in the introduction, my research revealed that identity labels are in flux. Perhaps the most salient point in Uenō's diagram is the obstacle to communication between 'hard-of-hearing' people when spoken language through *kōwa* is the chosen method. Participant observation revealed that deaf school-raised youth rarely talk to their DHH peers solely in *kōwa*, choosing to sign or blend signing and speech. To some extent, *kōwa* enables communication between hearing people and DHH people. However, spoken communication is prohibitive when more than one DHH person is present.

Why does *kōwa* pose a significant barrier to mutually intelligible communication involving two or more DHH people? When speaking with hearing people, they will try to lip-read the hearing person's speech. Even though lip-reading is inaccurate, *inte* can feel somewhat confident that the listener is, at minimum, hearing what they are saying. Depending on the clarity of the DHH person's speech, at least one-sided intelligible

⁷³ As indicated, author's Chinese characters are transliterated with a long 'o' not the standard short vowel sound in 'Ueno'.

communication is possible. Moreover, if the hearing person does not understand what is being said, they can request repetition. Finally, as noted, the hearing party can ‘monitor’ the communication to see if linguistic slippages have occurred. In contrast, when two DHH people are using spoken language to communicate, miscommunications can compound as there is no one to ‘monitor’ accuracy or redirect conversation. This can result in the halting simplified style of oral communication mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

Kōwa has been described as a ‘double-edged sword’ (Nihon no Choukakushogaisha Kyōiku Kōsō Purojekuto 2005). On one hand, it was said to be the ‘engine’ powering deaf education ahead of the education of students with other disabilities. On the other hand, it contributed to the movement towards academic integration, which is not viewed favorably by all (Nihon no Chōkakushogaisha Kyōiku Kōsō Purojekuto 2005:13-14).

2.2 Transnational Flows in the History of Deaf education

The history of deaf education is, as much or more, about concerns over national identity and selfhood as it is about pedagogical technique or theory (Baynton 2006:131).

The *inte* in this study were educated in mainstream schools; however, their integration is the outcome of transformations in the history of deaf education. Their ‘acceptance’ in mainstream settings is a result of changes in international linguistic and

educational approaches. Japan's educational history is part of transnational shifts in pedagogies and language perceptions. The proliferation of deaf education was promoted through 'the transnational circulation of ideas and practices' (Cleall 2015:2). In Japan, the course of deaf education has changed alongside global changes (Kanazawa 2013: 80). The most significant turn was from the manual method (signing) to the oral method (speech).

Deaf education began at a time when deaf people were seen as incapable of speaking, being educated, or receiving salvation (Plann 1997:13). Education of deaf students originated among the elite in Western Europe. In the 16th century, Pedro and Francisco Velasco y Tovar, deaf brothers from one of the wealthiest families in Spain, were sent to a monastery to be taught by Pedro Ponce De León, considered by most historians to be the first teacher of the deaf (de Chaves, Soler 1974). The Benedictine monk created an informal signing system in order to teach deaf pupils to read and write. Following Ponce De León's successes in Spain, the teaching of deaf students spread across Europe among wealthy families (Monaghan 2003:2). Tuition usually occurred one-on-one or in small groups.

The first documented case of a person teaching a large number of deaf children was Charles-Michel de l'Épée in France. Épée opened the first public school for the deaf, the French National Institute of Deaf Mutes in Paris 'sometime between 1759 and 1771' (Plann 1997:80). Épée had synthesized the Sign language used by deaf Parisians with the

manual alphabet documents produced by a Spanish priest (Juan Pablo Bonet) to create a manual method for signed education (Cleall 2015:3). Épée believed that through (manual) language, deaf people could receive sacraments. For over one hundred years, there was a divide between schools using manual methods and those using oral ones. Épée's 'nemesis' was his contemporary, German teacher Samuel Heinicke, an oralism advocate (Monaghan 2003:3).⁷⁴ In 1777, Heinicke opened the first oral school for the deaf in Leipzig, Germany. As a result of their geographical origins, oralism was known as 'the German method' and manualism was known as 'the French method' (Monaghan 2003:1).

The Meiji Period (1868-1912) marked dramatic shifts in Japanese history, which paved the way for deaf education in Japan. The preceding period, the Edo Period (1615-1868), was a time of feudal rule, closed borders, and decentralized education. During the Edo Period, a child's access to education was dependent upon gender, family status, and area of residence (rural or urban) among other factors (Holloway 2010:145, White 1987:53). The children of elite samurai were privy to the most educational opportunities; however, local *terakoya* ('temple schools')⁷⁵ provided a rudimentary education to the lower classes, particularly the peasant class (Duke 2009:56-58). Informally, deaf education began in these village *terakoya* where deaf students studied alongside other local students

⁷⁴ This was not 'pure oralism' as was later seen because Heinicke was known to have used fingerspelling (Monaghan 2003:3).

⁷⁵ Although commonly translated as 'temple schools' these private schools were also held in homes.

(Itō 1998:135-136). However, only families who could afford to go without the extra hands laboring in the fields could send their children to these schools; therefore, most deaf children did not receive an education (Nakamura 2006:39).

After more than two hundred years of national seclusion, the isolated country began to open its borders in 1853 with US Commodore Perry's expedition to Japan. In the Meiji Period, the Tokugawa Shogunate was stripped of power and imperial rule was restored as the government sought to become an 'enlightened' nation by abolishing the caste system and increasing interactions with 'the West'. Japan began looking overseas for ideas on national development, not as a 'passive object of "Westernization"' but as an active force in developing and modernizing itself as a nation' (Hall 1971). The Ministry of Education was formed in 1871, and the First National Plan for Education (the *Gakusei*), issued in 1872 and implemented in 1873, was a blueprint for the first public school system (Duke 2009:61-71). Schooling was intended to build national identity rather than parochial identities (Holloway 2010:145). The first school for the deaf and blind in Japan was established in this historical context.

In Japan, the concept of deaf education was a result of a group of scholars taking a covert trip to Europe toward the end of the Meiji Period. The father of deaf education in Japan is Yamao Yōzō, one of the 'Chōshū Five': five Japanese noblemen who travelled in 1863 to study in the United Kingdom. The men had to be disguised as sailors because

overseas travel was forbidden as Japan was still a ‘locked country’ (*sakoku*). In England, the Chōshū Five studied at the University College London. While later studying engineering in Scotland, Yamao Yōzō observed deaf workers on the docks of a shipyard and was impressed by the deaf men toiling alongside hearing workers (Itō 1998:216).

Officially, the education of deaf (and blind) students began after the start of the Meiji Period. In 1871, Yamao wrote a petition to the government titled ‘A White Paper on the Creation of a School for the Blind and Mute’ in which he argued that deaf and blind people could also be active citizens by leading independent lives (Tsukuba University School for the Deaf Alumni Association 1991:4). In this document, he argued that deaf and blind people were ‘poor and needy’, but they could also become hardworking, contributing citizens by learning a profession (Tsukuba University School for the Deaf Alumni Association 1991:4). By comparing Japan to the United Kingdom, he was openly challenging a government striving to modernize and to strengthen itself against potential colonial invasion.

The Meiji government eventually decided to lend its support to the project, and in 1878 the first school for the deaf in Japan was opened in Kyoto by Furukawa Taishirō called the Kyoto Blind-Mute Institute (*Kyoto Mōa'in*). Two years later, the second school for the blind and deaf was opened in Tokyo (Itō 1998). The ‘manual method’ or ‘manualism’ (Signed language) was the method of instruction in the classroom. Alumni associations and

national conferences soon followed, in 1891 and 1906, respectively (Nakamura 2006:42-43; Tsukuba University School for the Deaf Alumni Association 1991:8). Early schools for the deaf had some government backing but as students had to pay much of their own fees, the cost was prohibitive to all but the children of the wealthy (Nakamura 2006: 42).

Deaf education in Japan may appear to lag in comparison to the United States and Europe; however, the country both followed and led trends. By the time the first school in Japan was founded in 1878, there were already well-established deaf communities and clubs based on alumni relations in ‘the West’. On the other hand, Japan was a leader in deaf education in Asia and is considered to be the first Asian society to educate deaf citizens (Hodgson 1953:267). For instance, China founded its first school for the deaf in 1914, 36 years after Japan (Lytle, Johnson et al. 2005:458). Nearly 30 years after Japan began mainstreaming DHH students, the first student was enrolled in a mainstream program in China in 1986 (Lytle, Johnson et al. 2005:459). In a global context, opportunities in Japan are far more abundant than in many societies. Education is not available to 80% of the 70 million Deaf people in the world (World Federation of the Deaf 2016).

Moreover, the education of deaf students was at the forefront of special education within Japan. Deaf and blind students were the first students with disabilities in the nation to be formally educated. In 1948, education for deaf (and blind) students became

compulsory (Mogi 1992:442). In contrast, education for students with other physical and cognitive disabilities or with health impairments was not made compulsory until 1979 (Mogi 1992:442). High-incidence learning disabilities were not officially classified as disabilities until 2007 (Heyer 2015:137).

2.3 Nation-building and the Oral Communication Method

The history of deaf education in Japan has been shaped by the debate over whether education should be carried out using Sign language or using the oral communication method (Kanazawa 2013:80). Globally, debates on language and education have been linked to concepts of nationhood. Historical developments in the United States illustrate how attitudes and ideologies which shaped the *shuwa* versus *kōwa* debate are culturally situated and in flux. These landmark events are also better documented than those which occurred in Japan. The history of deaf education in Japan has gaps due to a lack of verifiable and non-biased historical accounts; however, this chapter attempts to situate *inte* experiences in a historic context.

The first school for the deaf in the United States was the American School for the Deaf in Hartford, Connecticut in 1817 (Connecticut Asylum for the Education and Instruction of Deaf and Dumb Persons) (Leigh 2009:89). It was a ‘manual school’, meaning that Sign language was used. The years between the opening of the first school

and the Milan Congress in 1880 are sometimes known as the ‘Golden Age’ for deaf people in the United States because deaf administrators and teachers played a significant role in deaf education (Pray, Jordan 2010:171). In contrast, it is said that there was no Golden Age of deaf education in Japan due to an emphasis on literacy (Nakamura 2003:218).

This may have been a ‘Golden Age’ for deaf people, but people in ‘mainstream American society’ worried about their salvation. Until the 1860s, deafness ‘was most often described as an affliction that isolated the individual from the Christian community’ and Sign language was framed as a means to communicate with God (Baynton 1996:15). This construction of deafness would soon change with an influx of immigration. Historian Douglas C. Baynton titled one of his chapters, ‘Foreigners in their own land’ based on a headline in a magazine about Sign language and how its use could render a deaf person ‘a foreigner in his own land’ (1996:27).

As more immigrants arrived in the United States, concerns about personal salvation waned while tensions about nation-building increased. Deaf people were likened to immigrants in their ‘foreignness’ and immigrants were a cause for concern. After the 1860s, the new preoccupation was that ‘[d]eaf people were cut off from the English speaking American community’ (1996:15). As the country’s attention shifted to nationalism, oralists argued that English was the unifying language.⁷⁶ American Sign

⁷⁶ There were other negative constructions of Sign language, including the argument that it was a ‘savage’

Language was a foreign language at a time when the assimilation of immigrants was the primary goal for promoting nationhood.

In Japan, the education of deaf students was not related to religious salvation or unifying a population of immigrants but to developing and fostering productive citizens who view themselves as part of one nation with a unified national identity. The Meiji Period (1868-1912) was an era of modernization and of national identity building. The education of deaf (and blind) students was promoted as a means to ensure that all members of Japanese society could contribute to these efforts. During the Meiji Period, the slogans ‘a wealthy nation and a strong army’ (*fukoku kyōhei*), ‘encouraging industry’ (*shokusan kōgyō*) and ‘civilization and enlightenment’ (*bunmei kaika*) urged citizens to ‘contribute toward the good of the nation’ (Low 2005:1-2). In this context, people with physical and mental ‘weakness’ were seen as hindering the growth of the country (Low 2005:4). Education was a means to enable deaf people to contribute to the advancement of a burgeoning nation.

In his work on nationalism, Doak asserts that few ‘ordinary’ people in the early years of the Meiji Period saw themselves as part of a nation ‘in the modern concept’ (2007:43). In order to encourage a sense of national identification, the government fostered an ideology of homogeneity despite linguistic and ‘cultural’ differences across the islands.

language. (Baynton 1996:40).

In doing so, it developed a concept of ‘Japaneseness’ that can still be found in contemporary society. Japaneseness follows the ‘narrow Japanese ethno-national identity’, which requires ethnic descent as well as ‘complete linguistic and cultural proficiency’ (Weiner 1997:211). As this ideology called for one national language, it is unsurprising that Sign language was seen as inferior to the spoken and written national language (Tsuchiya 1994:67). In spite of these factors, *shuwa* was permitted in schools throughout the Meiji Period.

Debates in language and education came to the forefront at the Second International Congress on the Education of the Deaf in 1880 in Milan. At this landmark conference, it was decided that the oral method (speaking and lip-reading), rather than the manual method (signing), should be used from that point on in deaf education. Notably, 163 of the 164 attendants were hearing, and deaf educators were largely excluded from these proceedings (Van Cleve, Crouch 1989). Following this decision, schools in Europe and the United States began switching to oral methods; however, Japan did not immediately adapt its pedagogy. Education of the deaf had just begun in Japan and the Congress’s impact did not reach the nation (Itō 1998:211). Until the Taisho Period (1912-1926) the manual method prevailed, even though ‘Western influences’ are said to have attempted to persuade Japan to adopt the prevailing oralist philosophy (Kanazawa 2013).

The promulgation of the oral method appears to have been led by Japanese

educators. In 1898, Alexander Graham Bell visited Japan to advocate oralism, but there is no verifiable literature in English or Japanese proving that his visit had a major impact. Overall, 'Western' attempts to implement oral methods are described as 'sporadic', and the language instruction method did not change (Kanazawa 2013:80-81). It was Japanese scholars, Unosuke Kawamoto, Tokuichi Hashimura, and Yoshinosuke Nishikawa, who helped the oral method spread 'like a brush fire' from the Taisho Period (1912-1926) to early Shōwa Period (1926-1989) (Kanazawa 2013:80-81). The new emphasis was on lip-reading rather than pronunciation, and Sign language was banned because it was seen as an impediment to speech (Kanazawa 2013:81). This began the history of 'the hardship of Sign language' (*shuwa no kunan*) (Itō 1998:211).

The proscription of Sign language in schools affected generations of deaf students who were educated orally; however, it did not prevent the transmission of Sign language among deaf people. Elderly deaf participants recalled how students continued to sign covertly in their dormitories and on the playground. It is this agency and the human need for language from which Sign language has developed and survived even during times of strict prohibition. For instance, one elderly participant in his late 70s vividly described a 'harsh' teacher in his school for the deaf who tied the children's four fingers on each hand with string to prevent them from signing. This severe method did not 'gag' them. Instead, it caused the students to sign with clumsy determination whenever their hearing teachers were

not looking.

At the outset of deaf education, deaf and hard-of-hearing students were educated separately from their hearing peers. Integration has been described in Japan as the endpoint or ‘success’ of the oral education method by practitioners who are in favor of these methods (Kaya 2012:172). Although the education of deaf and hard-of-hearing students alongside hearing peers progressed slowly in the mid-1950s to mid-1960s, integration did not become a common educational practice until the 1970s (Kaya 2012:172).

A constellation of factors converged to create the conditions necessary to mainstream DHH students. First, as spoken Japanese was a requisite to participation in mainstream education, an ability to communicate in *kōwa* enabled DHH students to gain access. Secondly, the declining population in Japan meant that schools could use or apply resources to support a smaller number of students (Nakamura 2006:138). Thirdly, assistance was offered in the form of ‘information support’ and resource rooms. ‘Information support’ (*jōhō hoshō*, literally information security) will be addressed in greater detail in chapter four. In short, students receive support in the mainstream classroom, such as note-taking, which helps them to grasp instruction in spoken language. This support is usually provided by school staff or local volunteers. In the 1990s, resource rooms in mainstream schools became another feature as a result of reforms (Abe 1998:90, Heyer 2015:137). Once again, DHH students received support earlier than students with other disabilities.

Starting in elementary school, there are technically two types of ‘resource rooms’ for students: *nanchō gakkyū* (hard-of-hearing classes) and *tsūkyū shidō kyōshitsu* (instruction or resource rooms). However, these are not standardized nationwide and the two are often conflated by the local districts themselves. I was told by several educators that what might be called a ‘hard-of-hearing classroom’ by a local district should actually be classified as a ‘resource room’. Hard-of-hearing classes may be self-contained and function as a school within a mainstream school (e.g. as seen in Kyoto) but more commonly they are a classroom for extra help in Japanese literature, math, and English as well as speech training. The Ministry of Education’s latest survey in 2014 indicated that there were 1,439 elementary and junior high school students in 918 ‘hard-of-hearing classrooms’ across the country (Ministry of Education 2014).

Depending on the region, a ‘resource room’ may be held within the school itself or a student might need to travel to another school (with students attending between one and five times a week) (Nakano, Nemoto 2006:129-139). Regarding elementary and junior high school students participation in ‘resource rooms’, in 2014 there were 394 students receiving support in their schools, 1,473 students receiving support at other schools and 314 students receiving ‘coaching’ or ‘instruction’ from visiting teachers (Ministry of Education 2014). Hard-of-hearing classrooms are said to focus more on interactional, peer based lessons, while resource rooms have a more teacher-centered, unidirectional approach to instruction

(Nakano, Nemoto 2006:135)

Inte do not use these official distinctions. They invariably refer to all of these resource rooms as ‘hard-of-hearing classrooms’ (*nanchō gakkū*), ‘language training rooms’ (*kotoba no kyōshitsu*), or ‘hearing and speech rooms’ (*kikoe to kotoba no kyōshitsu*). Based on their recollections, it was not possible to determine the exact type of class. However, it was possible to ascertain that none of the core participants were enrolled in a ‘school within a school’ type program in which they were enrolled as full-time students in a hard-of-hearing classroom. The types of activities conducted vary greatly from district to district. Some students had opportunities to join social activities with other DHH students and adults, while others report that activities were purely academic. In terms of communication modalities, none of the participants reported the use of *shuwa* or even fingerspelling in the hard-of-hearing classroom/resource room.⁷⁷

Schools for the deaf vary in size, history, and ‘school culture’ but most schools in Japan have been influenced by oralism.⁷⁸ Today both oral and signing methods are found in classrooms. In the 1990s, due to pressure from deaf activists, schools for the deaf began incorporating signing in the classroom again (Hayashi, Tobin 2014:25). This was done in

⁷⁷ In one elementary resource room class I visited in 2014, the teacher used some fingerspelling to spell Japanese words.

⁷⁸ A notable exception is Meisei Gakuen the only bilingual-bicultural school for the deaf in Japan where classes are taught in Japanese.

the form of signed Japanese, which was a type of precursor to adopting the ‘Total Communication Method’, which became an official part of school curricula (Hayashi, Tobin 2014:25-26). The majority of schools for the deaf today apply the Total Communication method, which was developed in the United States. Total Communication employs a technique known as simultaneous communication, or Sim-Com, in which spoken language and a manual signed version of the local oral language are used simultaneously to convey information. In Japan, schools that implement the Total Communication method do so not as a way to improve students’ signing skills but as a way for students to access and learn Japanese. Since JSL is not typically seen as a language worthy of proper study, signed Japanese is approached as a communication tool to bridge the gap between visual methods and Japanese. One hearing educator described the inclusion of signed Japanese in her classroom as an ‘unfortunate necessity’.

There are some exceptions to the practice of Total Communication. As discussed earlier in the dissertation, Meisei Gakuen uses JSL and Japanese to implement a bilingual-bicultural curriculum. Founded in 2008, it is the only school in Japan to reject MEXT’s support of the Total Communication approach (Hayashi, Tobin 2015:382). The Ministry of Education granted the school special permission to teach Japanese as a foreign language (*nihongo*) rather than as a traditional language/literature class (*kokugo*).

There is also a ‘school within a school’ at the Sapporo School for the Deaf: a signing program run in parallel with an oral program (Hayashi, Tobin 2015). On the oral communication front, the Japan Oral School for the Deaf (*Nippon Rowa Gakkō*) continues to focus on oral methods. Spearheaded in 1920 by two American missionaries who were inspired by oral education methods in the United States, it was founded to promote oral education methods in Japan (Kato 1996). Today it continues its commitment to the oral approach and promotes the use of listening devices (hearing aids and cochlear implants) and assistive classroom technologies.

2.4 From the Era of Integration to the Era of Inclusion

Before moving on to the contested views of integration, it is important to address recent developments in the education of deaf and hard-of-hearing students. *Inte* is a shortened version of the loanword for ‘integration’, but today Japan is said to have entered the era of ‘inclusion’. ‘Inclusion’ is not the same as ‘integration’. Integration is focused on treating the group as a whole, with the student with a disability being expected to assimilate into the existing environment (with some modifications). The ‘problem’ is located in the individual. In contrast, inclusion is focused on accommodating individual needs and removing existing barriers so that the child can be fully included. The amendment of the School Education Law in 2006 (enacted FY2007) marked a shift with

the establishment of a new special education system called ‘Special Support Education’ (*tokubetsu shien kyōiku*) in which students with different disabilities may be educated in the same schools. Previously, students had attended three different types of schools under the system of ‘Special Education’ (*tokushu kyōiku*): schools for deaf students (*rōgakkō*), schools for blind students (*mōgakkō*), and schools for students with developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, and health impairments (*yōgakkō*) (Appendix 2). The government also adjusted its focus to ‘equal opportunity’ and committed itself to addressing students’ individual needs.

By the time this law was amended, the oldest participants in this study had already graduated from senior high school and the youngest participants had nearly completed their compulsory education (junior high school). As a result, the narratives in this dissertation are from the era of integration not the era of inclusion. Today’s integrated students are being educated in an environment where there is an ideology of inclusion if not actual inclusive practices.⁷⁹

Inclusion practices demonstrate that educating deaf and hard-of-hearing students in mainstream schools does not necessarily result in neglect and social isolation. Inclusive pedagogies may offer opportunities for DHH students to find belonging in diverse classrooms spaces. This was illustrated in a study from an integration classroom in a public

⁷⁹ Although the Ministry of Education refers to ‘inclusive education’ in many of their documents, the type of support which continues to be offered to students is closer to the philosophy of ‘integration’ than ‘inclusion’.

school in Brazil (Kelman, Branco 2004). The class was categorized as ‘inclusive’ and taught by two teachers, a ‘master teacher’ and a Brazilian Sign Language (BSL) teacher who worked to create a classroom setting in which deaf and hearing students were active members contributing to the learning environment.⁸⁰ Strategies for inclusion included advantageous spatial arrangements in the classroom, linguistic inclusion through BSL or Signed Portuguese, and pairing deaf and hearing students as shared ‘mediators’ or mentors. The researchers found that deaf and hearing students interacted more than in other ‘non-inclusion’ classrooms observed.

Another policy development occurred in Japan in April 2016. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was signed in 2007 and ratified by Japan in 2014. In an effort to align domestic laws with international policies on April 1, 2016, the Law to Eliminate Discrimination against People with Disabilities (*Shōgaisha Sabetsu Kashō Hō*) was enacted. The law calls for the provision of ‘reasonable accommodations’ for disabled people. What is appropriate ‘reasonable accommodations’ (*gōriteki hairyo*) for ‘hearing impaired’ people is currently being discussed and debated by disability organizations, including the Japanese Federation of the Deaf (JFD). In terms of ‘hearing impaired’ students, the Ministry of Education is considering types of accommodations, such as FM system (auditory transmission systems connected to hearing

⁸⁰Seven out of 26 students were deaf.

aids) and subtitling teaching materials. As noted, the Ministry also worked to reconfigure the system of separating schools for the blind, deaf, and otherwise disabled into a system of ‘schools for special needs education’ (*tokubetsu shien gakkō*).

2.5 Contested Views of Integration

The academic integration of DHH students is a highly controversial topic, particularly among DHH people. School integration has been described as ‘anathema’ to the DEAF-WORLD⁸¹ (Lane 1997:161) and a ‘form of systemic violence’ (Branson, Miller 1993:22) by ‘Western’ scholars. In her chapter on mainstreaming in *Deaf in Japan*, Nakamura uses the word ‘disastrous’ twice, once to refer to the effect of the dropping birth rate and mainstreaming on schools for the deaf (2006:136) and another time to describes the atmosphere in schools for the deaf, which she depicts as ‘ghost towns’ (2006:137). I hesitate to say that these descriptions are appropriate to describe conditions in Japan where there is a nuanced approach to interpreting situations. Furthermore, the central actors in this study did not interpret the situation in such drastic terms, as will be discussed.

Although schools for the deaf in Japan have seen a steep drop in enrollment as demonstrated by **figure 2.8**, the many schools I visited in urban areas were far from ghost towns. Undoubtedly, there were fewer, smaller classes. Nevertheless, the decrease in

⁸¹ Capitalizations style used by the authors.

student numbers did not stop the schools from remaining as lively bustling hubs of deaf sociality. Even the smallest school I visited had a well-attended school festival, with local DHH people converging to support the schools' activities. In particular, at the larger school festivals, I saw DHH 'deaf school-raised' youth with *inte* peers, indicating that deaf schools still serve as sites of deaf community building in spite of their decreasing student numbers.⁸² At another large school in the Kanto area, there is a regular gathering of DHH teens and university-age students from all educational backgrounds.

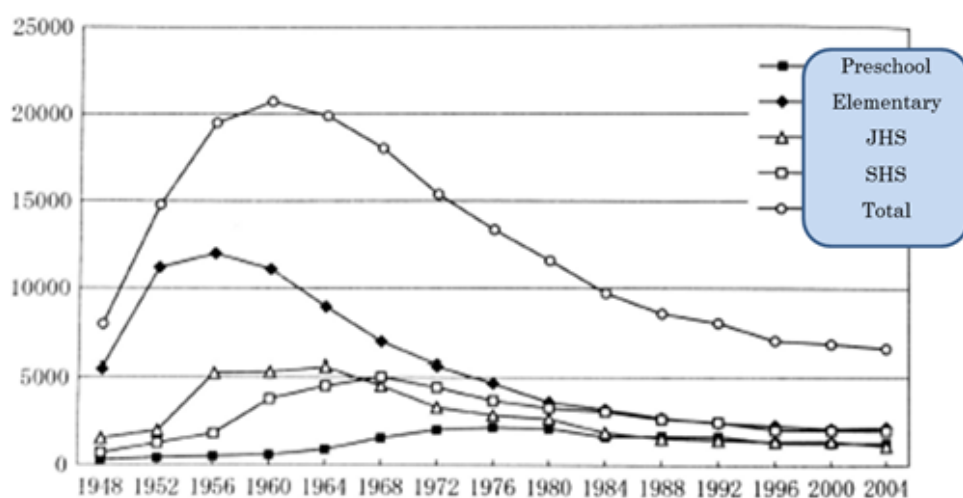


Figure 2.8 Enrollment in Schools for the Deaf

Although calling deaf schools 'ghost towns' is hyperbolic, mainstreaming has left an indelible mark on deaf communities and Deaf culture. As mentioned, there are numerous accounts from scholars 'in the West' about the threat of integration. I

⁸² At one large school festival, it was a 'who's who' of the deaf world, and nearly every time I turned a corner, I met DHH people I knew of all ages and diverse backgrounds.

wondered if the same concerns are expressed in Japan. I first received confirmation that integration is viewed negatively by some deaf people when I began sharing that my research topic had evolved from (first) ‘encounters with *shuwa*’ (*shuwa to no deai*) to the experiences of *inte*. Many older participants did not hide their displeasure as the following ethnographic example demonstrates.

During interviews, I ordinarily asked participants (of all ages) who had attended mainstream schools why their families chose this educational path. I posed the same question to participants who graduated from schools for the deaf. In an interview with a deaf teacher and activist from a deaf family,⁸³ the premise of this question was not only unwelcomed but rejected.

The perspective that attending a school for the deaf can be a *choice* was initially met with puzzlement by deaf activist and educator Morita-sensei. After all, one would not ask why a student without disabilities was sent to a mainstream school. This confusion led to misunderstandings and tension.

My interview with Morita-sensei was one of just three interviews in which I used a Japanese-JSL interpreter because the interviewees use a fluent form of ‘pure JSL’ signing. Even though the interpreter, Komuro-san, is highly trained and has extensive experience working with fluent JSL signers, her linguistic competence was called into

⁸³ The different types of families are explored in greater detail in chapter three.

question.

Me (via Komuro-san): Do you know why your family chose [to send you] to a school for the deaf?

Morita-sensei (to Komuro-san): One more time?

Komuro-san signs my question again. This time she elaborates by prefacing that Morita-sensei ‘grew up’ in a school for the deaf and that I am asking as to [her parents’] ‘goal’ or ‘purpose’ when choosing that school.

Morita: Who? (*looking confused*) When?

Rather than following the interpreter-client protocol and waiting for the interpreter to interpret Morita-sensei’s JSL, I nodded to Komuro-san before signing,

Me: For example, when you first began elementary school...

Morita-sensei crosses her arms across her chest and covers her mouth with one hand. She raises her brows in confusion, as the interpreter once again signs the question. I notice that this time she adds even more to what I said,

Komuro-san: Rather than a ‘hearing school’, you went to a school for the deaf...

There are a few more back and forth stops and starts, with Morita-sensei finally saying that she doesn’t recall what she thought about entering the school.

Morita-sensei: I don’t really understand the question.

Once again, I interjected.

Me: I'm very sorry. I think I did not phrase the question well. Do you know why your parents selected a school for the deaf, as opposed to a mainstream school?

Morita-sensei: For me? (opens her eyes wide) There was no particular reason. (narrows eyes)

This line of questioning was the first in a series of uncomfortable interactions in what developed into a tense interview. At one point Morita-sensei blamed Komuro-san for her 'poor interpretation' of that contentious question. I reassured her that this was indeed my intended question. Although the research plan submitted before our interview explained that I was studying *inte* and mainstream students, my questions about mainstream schools seemed to surprise and irritate Morita-sensei. She answered each one curtly. It was only in the latter part of the interview, when I switched to the topic of Deaf culture and her role within it, that she smiled and began expanding upon her answers.

Morita-sensei's reaction must be understood in a broader context. This research is about an educational practice which threatens the culture she treasures and dedicates her life to protect. For activists like Morita-sensei, mainstreaming is a dangerous practice that moves DHH students away from key sites for forming the relationships that help Deaf culture to flourish. These schools are the birthplaces of many associations in Deaf culture, a culture without a homeland, as expressed by Lane, Hoffmeister, et al.

Deaf culture is not associated with a single place, a 'native land'; rather it is a culture based on relationships among people for whom a number of places and associations may provide common ground (1996:5).

All schools are important sites of socialization for young people, but schools for the deaf are especially important sites of relatedness and belonging. Throughout the world, schools for the deaf have served as the foundation of deaf communities and Deaf culture. As will be discussed more in chapter three, the majority of DHH people are born into hearing families. Therefore, unlike with other identities, Deaf culture and its language, Sign language, are developed and learned in schools rather than within family units. I would argue that the terms 'hearing school-raised' and 'deaf school-raised' point to the crucial role of schools in the upbringing of DHH youth.

Oralists recognized the important function of schools for the deaf, and therefore, tried to dissolve the social ties they facilitate. For instance, in the late 1870s, Alexander Graham Bell was described as one of the 'leading lights' of the eugenics movement as it related to deaf people. He 'feared' the creation of a deaf race. Bell advocated against the intermarriage of deaf people on the pretence that it would result in hereditary deafness through reproduction (Monaghan 2003:8). Therefore, Bell fought against residential schooling and the hiring of deaf teachers, believing that day schools and hearing teachers would curb intermarriages and reproduction among deaf people (1884). Bell attacked

residential schools because the tightknit relationships were strengthened among students who lived together away from their (hearing) families. Classmates were surrogate families during their school days and sometimes actual families later through intermarriage in adulthood. Bell (and other eugenists and oralists) wanted to put a stop to this practice.

In Japan, residential schools for the deaf also played an invaluable role. As one older participant in his sixties explained to me, ‘At home, I was alone. I looked forward during the entire school break to returning to my deaf school friends’. Although the proportion and total number of students who board at schools has decreased, even participants who lived at home discussed the importance of their school life. When speaking with participants of all ages who have experience in schools for the deaf, they describe close friendships with their schoolmates and lasting bonds created out of sameness. In the majority of cases, schools for the deaf are the only places where students can associate with other DHH people. Society—and their families—are hearing. DHH peers may become ‘chosen family’ or fictive kin.

Schools for the deaf are not only sites for creating childhood bonds but also for lifelong networking and connectivity. These relationships are strengthened throughout the life cycle at gatherings at schools for the deaf. The cultural festivals I attended in Tokyo brought together students and alumni, current students and graduates of other schools for the deaf as well as *inte*. Events held at schools for the deaf are important temporal spaces

for deaf community-making. School events are opportunities for young DHH students to meet deaf role models and interact with the larger multi-generational deaf community.

Long after graduation, schools for the deaf can offer informal and formal support to graduates. Historically, many graduates have chosen to reside near their alma mater, a trend which appears to have continued to some extent.⁸⁴ Alumni not only meet with their former classmates but also return to their schools to seek advice from educators and staff. For example, one older participant said he asked a former teacher to act as a liaison to help resolve issues with an employer. In another case, ten years after graduation, a hard-of-hearing *inte*'s deaf mother returned to her alma mater to 'redo' her speech training. She wanted to ensure that her son would not speak 'strangely' due to her 'deaf accent'.

As the enrollment in schools for the deaf continues to decrease and rates of mainstreaming increase (along with a declining birth rate) there is a fear that the relationships which give DHH people a sense of belonging and provide mutual support will weaken or disappear. A common question DHH people ask one another upon first meeting is 'Which deaf school did you attend?' When schools for the deaf were the primary or sole educational option, this question could be answered by most DHH people. This is no longer true. At the same time, young DHH people demonstrate that even when

⁸⁴ My train station in Tokyo happens to be just three stops from a school for the deaf. I now see people signing on the train more than anywhere else I have lived previously.

educated in isolation, cut off from peers, they will gravitate toward one another, seeking out opportunities for belonging in adulthood, no matter what obstacles are in place. As will be explored, *inte* continue to find their way into the deaf world even when they have been completely removed from it.

2.6 The Path Not Chosen: Schools for the Deaf

Inte's sense of self is explored through reflecting on the path not chosen: schools for the deaf. Their identity, their language skills, their literacy, and their selfhood were all informed by their experiences in mainstream schools. There is also a parallel, imagined self who *would have, should have, and could have* had an alternative reality. To some extent, their identity as *inte* is inextricably linked to negation: they are *not* deaf school-raised. However, unlike Morita-sensei and other activists, they have highly nuanced and contradictory views regarding mainstreaming.

Inte may not have first-hand experience but they do have some basic knowledge about schools for the deaf. They understand that Sign language has been learned and developed in these schools. Many are also aware that schools for the deaf are the foundation of Deaf culture and communities and that these relationships are sustained through attachments to these institutions. On the other hand, *inte* hold many misconceptions. In particular, they often imagine their trials to be without parallel because

they see ‘deaf school-raised’ youth as having grown up without hardships in a type of deaf utopia. In reality, deaf schools are predominantly hearing-led institutions and most DHH youth were raised in hearing families.

While schools for the deaf are the birthplace of Sign language and Deaf culture, the majority of teachers and administrators are hearing. Despite conducting my own investigation and exploring several channels and sources, I was unable to obtain an exact figure of the number of deaf teachers in schools for the deaf. One deaf educator offered the explanation that if an organization were to collect such statistics, it would be seen as ‘violating the privacy’ of teachers because deafness is stigmatized. She had her own personal estimate, but she was reluctant to share it. Finally, I was directed by a scholar to Soya Mori’s entry in the *Deaf Studies Encyclopedia*, which lists the 2009 membership of the Japanese National Liaison Council of Deaf Teachers (JLCDT) as 318, with 85% (270) working at schools for the deaf (Mori 2016:530).

Some hearing teachers are seen as deaf allies because they are respectful of Sign language and Deaf culture. Other teachers are seen as having an unchecked power over deaf education and DHH youth and a lack of respect for Deaf culture. Accordingly, one of the bonds shared by deaf students throughout history has been the hardship they endured in schools for the deaf. Deaf culture has developed and flourished in schools for the deaf despite the strong influence of hearing educators and policymakers.

In addition to misunderstanding the environment in schools for the deaf, *inte* seem unaware of the pressures ‘deaf school-raised’ students face. They rarely acknowledge that their peers not only (primarily) have hearing teachers but that the majority of them are also born to hearing parents. Teachers in schools for the deaf may not understand what it means to work with DHH students. Through my fieldwork, I learned that is not unusual for a teacher to enter a school for the deaf without any prior experience teaching or working with DHH students. For instance, I met a teacher who had recently begun teaching at a school for the deaf following a long career working with students who had serious medical issues and were infirmed. Working with hospitalized children had been her only ‘special education’ experience. Moreover, mainstream Japanese (hearing) values are a part of schools for the deaf as most teachers are hearing people or DHH people who were raised by hearing parents. There is an emphasis on oral communication and on functioning successfully in society according to hearing standards. By concentrating on all of the differences between deaf school-raised youth and themselves, *inte* seem to overlook all of the similarities in their upbringings.

The path that was not taken affects the perception of the one chosen. *Inte* express ambivalence regarding mainstreaming. They do not view it as threat nor do they view it as unequivocally positive. While claiming to envy the bonding and social inclusion of the deaf school experience, they consistently say they are grateful for the skills they acquired in the

mainstream system, especially Japanese language skills. *Inte* are biased against schools for their deaf, a bias that stems from parental and societal influences. These biases do have a basis in reality as schools for the deaf are consistently ranked lower than mainstream schools in Japan. One contributing factor is that teachers simplify class content due to their own signing skills as well as the students' ability to lip-read. In addition, much effort, especially in the lower grades, is put into speech training both within and outside of the classroom. Further study on the reasons for lower academic standards and performance is needed. *Inte* have a tendency to idealize deaf schools and the experience students have there, while simultaneously looking down upon these institutions and their graduates.

2.7 Conclusion

While *inte* narratives center on the people in the private sphere (parents, siblings and, less frequently, teachers at school or a rehabilitation center), *inte* are situated in a broad political and cultural framework. Ostensibly, decisions about their education and care have been made by their parents and a handful of educators. More accurately, the decision was informed by transnational transformations in deaf education. For much of the history of deaf education throughout the world, there have been two opposing pedagogies: manualism (signed language) and oralism (spoken language). Scholars argue that the landscape of deaf education began moving in the direction of 'integration' with the trend toward oralism. The integration of deaf students in mainstream schools can be seen as the

‘end point’ of oralism.

At the start of formal deaf education in the Meiji Period, DHH children were educated separately from their hearing peers. Since the education of deaf students has from its inception been led by hearing educators, shifting to mainstream education does not shift the locus of power in deaf education. However, it does move deaf education into ‘hearing spaces’. DHH students at schools for the deaf are amongst hearing peers, whereas DHH youth are often alone (or in a small minority) in mainstream schools.

The goal of education today is increased integration rather than segregation. Scholars and advocates often argue that this isolates DHH children from their peers and cuts off opportunities for language acquisition and socialization. Unlike other ‘disabilities’, deafness is related to a language and tradition, which are born and developed in educational institutions. Families are often preoccupied with how their child will grow up to be productive citizens in mainstream hearing society, not with how they will become members of a geographically present but metaphorically distant deaf community. As young children, *inte* are subject to their parents’ decision-making regarding education. In the next chapter, the role of identities, relatedness, language, and education within the family will be explored in greater depth.

■ Chapter 3

Family Integration: Intimacy, Identities, and Communication

3.0 Introduction

The first phase of integration for an *inte* child occurs within the home. Debates over language and education take place in the public sphere; however, initial discussions about language, education, and identity happen in the private sphere. Today the care of people with disabilities is believed to be a matter for the state, but, historically, care for a disabled child was provided by the family, usually its female members. ‘*Kazōku no ai*’ (literally ‘family love’), was a euphemism for the physical labor of female relatives (Stibbe 2004: 21). Typically, Japanese mothers are held responsible for child-rearing, particularly education, with the success of the child being attributed to the relationship with the mother (White 1987:22). My research suggests that although mothers continue to take on the primary caregiving role, the entire family is affected by the introduction of a deaf or hard-of-hearing family member. These domestic and kinship relations are shown to have a deep and profound effect on disabled individuals (Ingstad, Whyte 2007:24).

Although the family is perceived to be a unit of intimacy and belonging, a DHH child can introduce difference and unfamiliarity into the home. In most cases, a hearing child was expected, a deaf or hard-of-hearing child was not. After receiving the diagnosis, parents must make critical decisions regarding the upbringing (*shitsuke*) of their child,

especially the language of choice for the home. A DHH child will face barriers to learning the parents' spoken language and will likely be perceived as a minority member of society. Parents' responses to this difference have far-reaching impacts, especially regarding language and education. These parents' personal choices are set against the background of highly politicized debates over language and education for DHH children.

This chapter begins by introducing the different types of families. Next, it will examine the role of vertical (inherited) and horizontal (acquired, peer-based) identities. Following this discussion, the focus will turn to language acquisition for DHH children, with special attention paid to the differences between *kōwa* (oral communication) and *shuwa* (Sign language). As will be explained, with the exception of 'deaf families', *kōwa* is the primary communication modality in most families. Then, I will discuss how families communicate across barriers. After discussing communication methods, the reasons why mainstream schooling is chosen as the educational path and how access to these environments is achieved through *kōwa* training will be addressed. The final section explores the ways in which the highly valued trait of 'empathy' is interpreted by *inte* and the effect on familial intimacy.

3.1 Types of Families

The family or kin group is perceived to be one of the most basic units of analysis. At the same time, anthropologists have long acknowledged the complexity of kinship. As

this study demonstrates, there is a need to break down this unit. Families with DHH children shed light on the complex nature of familial relations. Even though studies of Japan have moved away from investigations of the traditional family (*ie*) into explorations of diverse family structures, it is still often assumed that the family in Japan is one of shared identity and language. *Inte* remind us that this assumption must be questioned.

The *ie* has a political and social role in Japan. '*Ie*' refers to the house or home itself as well as the family that dwells within it (Ronald, Alexy 2011a:1). It is an economic, social, emotional, and spiritual entity (Stevens 2013:125). The traditional, ideological *ie* is multigenerational and includes both ancestors and unborn descendants. This household was such an important element of Japanese society that it was even a basis for legal measures during the Meiji Period (1868-1912). The *ie* today continues to play a role in organizing society. It acts as a metaphor for labelling and ordering relationship, such as the parent-child (*oyabun-kobun*) relationships between seniors and juniors in a company (Nakane 1970, Rohlen 1974) and masters and 'generations' of apprentices in the traditional arts, such as *kabuki*, *noh*, calligraphy, and martial arts.

The ideology of the family remains; however, in practice, many family variations can be found in Japan today from divorced couples, 'household divorces' (Alexy 2011c), unmarried adults, single mothers (Hertog 2009), and couples without children. This diversity was reflected in participants' definitions of 'family'. Families were defined

flexibly. When I asked *inte* to describe their family (*kazōku*), some determined the family to be the people with whom they co-habitated, thereby including grandparents in extended families. Other *inte* focused on members of their nuclear family, regardless of whether they co-habitated. For example, Yasushi included his father in his family, although, due to his parents' divorce, they had lived separately for many years. Participants were raised in diverse family units including single-parent families, extended families, nuclear families, and families headed by extended family members. Participants' diverse family backgrounds add layers of meaning to their experiences.

The diversity of families extends to hearing status. *Inte* were raised in families⁸⁵ with a wide range of dynamics, which have been simplified for this study into three basic categories: Mixed families, Hard-of-hearing families, and Hearing families. There is one outlier: Deaf families. Although participants agreed that a mainstreamed student from a deaf family would not be considered an *inte*, this type of family needs to be introduced because of its vital role in the transmission of Deaf culture and Sign language.

Deaf families

Deaf families are unique. DHH people are seldom in a position to pass down attributes and values intergenerationally. As Baynton explains,

⁸⁵ As none of the core 18- to 24-year-old participants have families of their own, 'family' refers to their family of origin.

Deaf people occupy a unique position. They make up the only cultural group where cultural information and language has been *predominantly* passed down from child to child rather than from adult to child, and the only one in which the native language of the children is different from the language spoken by the parents. (1996:2)⁸⁶

The key word here is ‘predominantly’. A distinct minority of ‘deaf of deaf’, that is, deaf children of deaf signing parents, may share their parents’ identity and language. The majority of DHH people are born to hearing parents. It is generally agreed by scholars in Japan that only approximately 10% of DHH children have deaf parents.⁸⁷ However, not all of these households with two deaf parents are classified as ‘deaf families’. Two parents with hearing losses do not automatically constitute a ‘deaf family’. Deaf families were narrowly defined by participants (of all educational backgrounds) as families in which both parents (or one parent, in the case of single parenthood)⁸⁸ were signers and active in deaf spaces. Families with one hearing parent and one DHH parent were not classified as ‘deaf families’ since a hearing parent is said to push the household toward oral communication except in cases where the hearing spouse is a fluent signer. When the hearing parent is a signer, ‘mixed communication’—oral communication and *shuwa*—usually occurs. Furthermore, I did not meet any families with a hearing parent that had a strong ‘deaf’

⁸⁶ Original italicization.

⁸⁷ According to one deaf academic, the figure Japanese scholars are using in their literature comes from the United States. Japan does not have its own ‘original’ figure (personal communication). Further investigation revealed that this figure is used as a blanket figure in many societies.

⁸⁸ I did not meet any participants with both a deaf and a hearing parent who described their family as being a ‘deaf family’.

identity. However, given the diversity of families, it is highly possible alternative deaf families do exist in Japan.

Deaf families are afforded a certain prestige in deaf communities. Under the cultural model of the deaf organization, D PRO, the ‘purest deaf’, are those born to deaf parents (Nakamura 2006b). Today D PRO does not hold the same influence as it did during Nakamura’s research, but this ‘cultural model’ can still be found in the ‘Meisei Camp’.⁸⁹ In deaf spaces, people from deaf families are seen as role models and leaders. Referring to someone as ‘from a deaf family’ can be a way to signify he or she is ‘confident and outgoing’. Some *inte* say that they ‘long to’ (*akogareru*) belong to such a family because they imagine their parents would understand them better (*rikai shitekureru*).

‘Mixed’ Families

‘Mixed families’ is used to refer to families in which at least one member of the immediate family (aside from the research participant) is deaf or hard-of-hearing. This DHH family member could be a parent or a sibling. In cases where all siblings are DHH, the family is not considered ‘deaf’ but a type of ‘mixed family’. The reason given is that the family is still led by hearing adults who typically do not sign.

‘Mixed’ families were encountered in the field more frequently than my pre-

⁸⁹ There is a great deal of overlap between the membership of D PRO and the people involved in establishing Meisei Gakuen.

fieldwork research had suggested. Several *inte* had one deaf or hard-of-hearing parent or one or more deaf siblings. *Inte* from mixed families sometimes have more insight into issues affecting deaf people in Japan as well as an ability to use rudimentary *shuwa* (e.g. fingerspelling). When Japanese scholars state that 10% of families are deaf families and 90% are hearing families, it is unclear how these ‘mixed families’ are being factored into these statistics.

Hard-of-Hearing Families

Hard-of-hearing families or households (*nanchō no katei*) were categorized into two distinct types. One type is a multigenerational family in which each generation has at least one member who identifies as ‘hard-of-hearing’.⁹⁰ One example of a hard-of-hearing family is Ayumi’s family, in which her mother, her grandmother, and a great-aunt are all ‘hard-of-hearing’.⁹¹ Ayumi’s mother signed with her from childhood, and Ayumi considers JSL her ‘native language’. However, both women (usually) identify as ‘hard-of-hearing’ and Ayumi’s father and younger sister do not sign. The second type of hard-of-hearing family has two self-identified ‘hard-of-hearing’ parents. For instance, a male *inte* from a hard-of-hearing family has two ‘hard-of-hearing’ parents. His mother signs (with her

⁹⁰ As previously noted, ‘hard-of-hearing’ does not necessarily refer to the actual hearing level. It can be a self-ascribed label used by people who are severely or profoundly deaf.

⁹¹ She believes that it is likely there were other family members in previous generations who were hard-of-hearing, but her mother does not like to talk about the possibility that the family has hereditary deafness.

friends), but his father cannot sign. Although his mother signs, he did not learn *shuwa* until entering Kaiba University. Such families in which Japanese (via *kōwa*) is the primary communication model are usually described as ‘hard-of-hearing’ families rather than ‘deaf’ ones. As with ‘mixed families’, the percentage of ‘hard-of-hearing families’ remains unclear and understudied.⁹²

Hearing Families

Labelling a family in which only one member is DHH a ‘hearing family’ may look like a misnomer. However, ‘hearing family’ is used to indicate that a participant was raised and socialized among hearing people in a ‘hearing household’. Approximately 90% of DHH people are said to be born into these ‘mainstream’ (i.e. hearing) families, making this the most common type of family.

In most cases, Japanese is the primary language of communication. It is rare to encounter *inte* from hearing families in which there are multiple fluent or even competent signers. The same is true for DHH people who attended schools for the deaf at some point during their education.⁹³ This does not mean that *shuwa* is banned from the home. A number of participants from hearing families said their mothers had joined local Sign language ‘circles’ (clubs) where they picked up rudimentary signs. In addition, some

⁹² I consulted with scholars and other experts about both types of families.

⁹³ As noted, an exception is Meisei Gakuen, where parents are expected to learn JSL and events and meetings are conducted in Sign language.

hearing and DHH siblings created non-standard ‘home signs’ or gestural systems to facilitate communication.

3.2 Vertical and Horizontal identities

‘Deaf children are born into circumstances of difference’ (Slobodzian 2011:650) because the majority of DHH children are born into families in which they are in the minority. This difference was keenly felt from a young age. *Inte* spoke of being ‘different than everyone else’ (*mina to chigau*), of not being able to communicate fluently, and of their family members’ ‘lack of understanding’ (*rikai shite kurenai*). Most social and ethnic minority groups find difference ‘outside’ (in society) and sameness ‘inside’ (the home).⁹⁴ In contrast, the birth of a ‘disabled’ child introduces difference into the intimate family sphere. Parents are prepared for a child that shares their attributes. They are not usually ready for one who seems so unlike them.

The concept of vertical and horizontal identities offers a useful framework with which to analyze these intra-family relationships. Psychologist Andrew Solomon refers to inherited identities as ‘vertical identities’ (2014). In relation to vertical identities ‘[a]ttributes and values are passed down from parent to child across the generations not only through strands of DNA but also through shared cultural norms’ (Solomon 2014:2).

⁹⁴ Certainly, there are exceptions, such as LGBT youth who are unlikely to have a LGBT family member and who will seek out sameness among peers.

Vertical identities are expected and often celebrated by the family. In contrast, a ‘horizontal identity’ occurs when an individual ‘has an inherent or acquired trait that is foreign to his or her parents and must therefore acquire identity from a peer group’ (Solomon 2014:2). Solomon (2014) describes various horizontal identities such as transgender, deaf, dwarf, autism, Down syndrome, and prodigy.

Typically, a child will inherit an identity from her parents (or a mixed identity in combination). For instance, the able-bodied child of ethnically Japanese parents would be considered ‘Japanese’ without question. She is ‘automatically’ born into her parents’ culture—with a few exceptions. The language of the home would be Japanese and the parents (or parent) assume the child will share a mainstream Japanese identity, at least during her formative years. Many minority identities in Japan, such as Ainu and ethnic Korean, have the potential to be transmitted vertically, even if the child ultimately chooses to reject or conceal this identity. In this vertical identity structure, language may be passed down from generation to generation.⁹⁵ Even in ‘multicultural’ societies, such as the United States and the United Kingdom, which were the primary sites of Solomon’s study, parents typically expect their (biological) child to share certain traits with them.

DHH Japanese⁹⁶ are not the only children who may have a different identity than

⁹⁵ For example, some newcomer parents focus on the child learning the language of the newly adopted country and choose not to pass on their ‘native’ language.

⁹⁶ Or more generally disabled people.

their parents. Being the ‘other’ in Japan can take many forms. In some cases, the native language or cultural identity of children can differ from one or both parents. For instance, international marriages produce children who have mixed ethnicity and may self-identify or be identified as ‘half’ (*hāfu*). Another case is Filipina daughters of Filipina women who are married to Japanese men (Tokunaga 2011). The Filipina teens in Tokunaga’s study spent their early years in the Philippines while their mothers worked in Japan before joining them. Difficulties communicating with their Japanese stepfathers and adapting to Japanese society created a sense of ‘otherness’ both at home and in school (Tokunaga 2011). Another group is ‘returnees’ (*kikokushijyo*) who spent part of their childhood overseas (Goodman 1990) and who may possess a bicultural identity as well as bilingual ability, which are not be shared by their parents. Children who do not have ‘multigenerational sameness’ may go through a process akin to the process of adoptees (Leigh 2009:68) as they try to make sense of their identity and roots.

Among disabilities, deafness presents itself as a unique horizontal identity because it can result in language barriers between hearing parents and DHH children. I argue that a child born with a physical disability such as blindness or mobility problems may be unlike her parent in many respects. However, unless the physical disability includes a communication disorder, language will usually be shared. Moreover, unlike deafness, other ‘disabilities’ are not associated with a shared history, language, culture, or set of norms.

Shared vertical identities may be found in deaf families as well as some hard-of-hearing and mixed families. ‘Deaf of deaf’ children provide an example of the transmission of vertical identities within deaf communities. Children born into these families are raised in environments that differ from other family types. Japanese Sign Language (JSL) is generally the first language and DHH children have total access to language used in the home. The DHH child is ‘normal’ in this environment. Also, deaf parents can introduce their children to Deaf culture and deaf role models. They are likely to understand the challenges of navigating a world designed for hearing people because they have first-hand experience. This situation most closely mirrors the ‘traditional’ linguistic and cultural transmission seen in ‘mainstream’ (i.e. hearing, ethnically Japanese) families.

Deaf families can be multi-generational. The self-identified hard-of-hearing families in this study tended to have ambivalent attitudes toward continuing deafness down the family line.⁹⁷ In contrast, deaf families typically welcome the birth of a deaf child. Conversely, the concern was about the potential challenges of raising a hearing child who may not share their identity or native language. During my fieldwork, I spent time with one multigenerational deaf family who was celebrating the recent birth of a deaf child, which

⁹⁷ For example, although Ayumi is the third generation in her family to be born hard-of-hearing, her mother insisted Ayumi’s hearing loss was due to an ear infection. Ayumi believed that her mother did not want to be ‘blamed’. On the other hand, another hard-of-hearing family had two out of three hard-of-hearing siblings, and the parents accepted it as a matter of fact.

extended their lineage to three generations on the maternal side. The family was ecstatic about this opportunity to pass down their language and traditions.

Such multigenerational deaf families are rare. Often native-signing ‘deaf of deaf’ children are the first—and only—native signers in their family, rendering it a single generation phenomenon. Their deaf parents were most likely born to hearing parents. Lane argues the linguistic construction of deafness is difficult to promote because the ‘most persuasive advocates for Deaf⁹⁸ children, their parents, must be taught generation after generation the counter-intuitive linguistic minority construction because most are neither Deaf themselves nor did they have Deaf parents’ (1997:167). Therefore, Sign language must be ‘encountered’ in an intentional manner. As the process of language acquisition first begins in the home, and few hearing parents have the language skills or inclination to teach their children Sign language, children are usually raised in the majority spoken language of the society.

In hearing families, the identity of parents is not always secure. I argue there is an interplay between vertical and horizontal identities. The parents’ identities are challenged by the birth of a DHH child. They are no longer ‘mainstream’ Japanese parents but parents of ‘minority children’. Furthermore, parents (especially the parents of deaf school-raised

⁹⁸ Capitalization in the original text.

children) begin entering and interacting in deaf spaces with DHH people, such as school festivals and other cultural events. This may shift their positioning and self-identity as they acquire a ‘courtesy stigma’ (Goffman 1986 [1963]).

3.3 Language Acquisition across Identities

The first communication obstacles in an *inte*’s life are in the home as she struggles to acquire her parents’ native language. In the presence of vertical identities, language acquisition occurs without intervention. Hearing Japanese children born to hearing parents can acquire Japanese as a native language ‘naturally’ and fluidly through daily interactions with their parents, siblings, and the other people in their lifeworld. From the moment a hearing child is born, her parents will begin talking in Japanese, even if in simple ‘baby talk’. The child will hear the sounds around her and begin to make sense of these sounds as language.

Similarly, language acquisition can occur with ease in Sign language. JSL is a visual-spatial language, which enables (sighted) DHH children to access, absorb, and process all information.⁹⁹ Researchers have shown that deaf children using Sign language follow the same series of milestones as hearing children in the development of spatial perception (Nakano 2002). A DHH child who is fluent in JSL can express ideas, feelings,

⁹⁹ Language acquisition takes a different shape for deaf-blind children who may learn to sign through tactile methods.

and emotions with the same degree of proficiency as a hearing child who uses Japanese, and a signing adult can express complex high-level concepts because Sign languages are not gestural systems but natural languages. Therefore, DHH Japanese children in signing homes can begin acquiring age-appropriate language through everyday interactions in JSL. A DHH child with signing models will be fully immersed in natural discourse via JSL without intervention or ‘rehabilitation’.

Most DHH children are not fully immersed in natural discourse within the home. Consequently, ‘most deaf children do not have native access to the spoken language of their hearing parents’(Lucas, Schatz 2003:141). The exposure to natural discourse is a necessary condition to acquire language. Seemingly ‘inconsequential’ language is the root of language acquisition,

Language acquisition does not happen in a social and cultural vacuum. Children are exposed to language in the midst of a lifeworld filled with chores, requests, moral and aesthetic evaluations, displays of feelings, expectations, and political stances. While they are learning the words and the grammar of the language (or languages) around them, children also learn what to say to whom, when, and how. Language is not just *part of social life*; language *is* social life: it helps organize activities and the roles that different people are expected to play in them (Duranti 2009:293).

DHH in spoken language homes miss out on the richness of the family’s lifeworld. It is precisely the limited access to this seemingly inconsequential but essential ‘background’ speech that causes DHH children to feel excluded from family life.

As a result of incomplete access, DHH children frequently struggle to acquire their parents' native language, Japanese, to a native level. Although Japanese becomes the 'first' language for the majority of DHH children, a native level of proficiency is difficult to achieve, even in the written form. Some DHH children may be lacking in any complete language fluency as the 'critical period' for first language acquisition is childhood, and if they are lacking access to a fluid model in a language, it is difficult to develop 'complete fluency' in any language (Mathur, Napoli 2011:4).

DHH children miss out on 'adult directed' speech¹⁰⁰ and only have (some) access to the language directed at them. Given that deafness deters complete language acquisition and socialization through spoken languages, even with years of intense *kōwa* training, DHH children and youth are precluded from accessing valuable information and opportunities for socialization that occurs in the hearing world. Lip-reading requires intense concentration on a communication partner's lips to attempt to decipher speech. As mentioned, it is considered virtually 'impossible' to simultaneously lip-read multiple speakers during group conversations. As a result, DHH children in spoken language households miss out on the hustle and bustle of family life. Also, through observing parents, hearing children can learn how to adjust their speech to match different

¹⁰⁰ For example, one *inte* told me that he did not know what his mother said to her friends or other people she interacted with in front of him.

conversation partners. DHH children cannot easily model the hierarchical language structures through observation.

The Japanese language is hierarchical and chameleon-like, changing depending on the context. Adjusting for formality in *keigo* (the honorific language system) goes beyond adding polite expressions. Japan is a highly contextual society. The speaker is required to evaluate relationships and use certain verbs, add honorifics, and modify grammatical structure depending on the social status of the conversation partner(s) and the situation. When *kōwa* is the sole communication method, as it is for most *inte*, youth must find other means to learn the ‘rules’ of communication. They often turn to literature to try to understand the adaptive, contextual, hierarchical nature of Japanese. Indeed, this is why some *inte* say they were ‘raised by letters’ (*ji sodachi*). Participants talk about learning spoken Japanese through reading. In particular, manga comics taught them utterances and ‘real life’ Japanese.

Data from the field indicates that some DHH youth use Japanese in a manner closer to a ‘foreign’ person than a Japanese one. In one-on-one interactions in which signed Japanese, contact signing, or *kōwa* was used, I noticed that *intes*’ Japanese was not only slower but also demonstrated less influx with parallel complex constructions and onomatopoeic inflexions (which are standard components of spoken Japanese). Initially, I had thought a simplified structure was being used to accommodate the researcher as a non-

native speaker. However, as described in the previous chapter, novice signers communicate with one another in highly simplified Japanese spoken at a slow speed. It became apparent that DHH must modify their Japanese to understand and be understood when communicating in *kōwa*. Simple, direct speech is not only easier to lip-read but also easier to produce.

DHH youth not only speak more plainly but they also tend to make grammatical errors. In particular, DHH youth are apt to make mistakes in written and spoken Japanese with particles (*jyoshi*).¹⁰¹ A *jyoshi* is a word/particle that shows the relationship of a word, a phrase, or a clause to the rest of the sentence, which has a similar grammatical function to English prepositions. Hearing Japanese children are said to learn them ‘naturally’ (*shizen ni*) through daily life. Particles appear in their mother and father’s everyday speech: in the supermarket, during visits the doctor, on television, and in conversations with friends and family members. As one hearing professor from Kaiba University explained, from ‘age zero’ hearing children are unconsciously (*muishiki ni*) learning *jyoshi* through exposure and through mimicry and repetition. Since DHH students have limited to no access to spoken language, they must actively study *jyoshi*. However, particles are considered difficult to

¹⁰¹ Students’ anxieties about using Japanese became particularly apparent one afternoon at Kaiba University at a career training seminar on *keigo*, the formalized polite form Japanese. Although it was a voluntary seminar, on this particular day the room was nearly full to capacity.

grasp because they do not have meaning by themselves.¹⁰² Although the *inte* in this study were all native-born Japanese people, their challenges in Japanese have been compared to those made by non-Japanese people.¹⁰³

3.4 Communication within the Family Unit

While visiting a school for the deaf in Chiba, a suburb of Tokyo, the head English teacher remarked, ‘Deaf children are very sensitive to language (*kotoba ni binkan*)’. She was referring to students’ eagerness to embrace any language, even English, unlike many of their hearing Japanese peers.¹⁰⁴ Language is a major concern for DHH people of all ages. It is central to public debates and personal identities. Language can also be a double-edged sword.

It is, perhaps, among the Deaf that language and culture achieve an unparalleled relationship. In Deaf culture, language is the integral feature: both its soul and its demon, both the barrier to and the means of social interaction (Preston 1994:220).

¹⁰² Some *inte* youth told me they practice particle usage but continue to make small errors.

¹⁰³ For instance, Sugaya-sensei, a Japanese teacher at Meisei Gakuen, was one of several educators who drew this comparison. Before working at Meisei Gakuen, Sugaya-sensei had been a teacher at a Japanese language school where most of her students were Korean or Chinese. Prior to her post at Meisei Gakuen, she had never worked with deaf students. However, Sugaya-sensei discovered that the pedagogical techniques employed with Korean and Chinese students were also effective with deaf students. Further, Meisei students encountered some of the same difficulties as her foreign students in learning Japanese.

¹⁰⁴ As an English teacher in Japanese schools, I was often told by colleagues that Japanese students do not like studying English. In my experience, students could be motivated, but they were reticent to try using English in case they made a mistake.

Language can break down barriers or fortify them. Most DHH children do not learn to sign in their earliest years as even deaf school-raised youth do not learn *shuwa* until they are school age. The communication method within the family unit is predominantly Japanese, which DHH children have limited access to through *kōwa*. Yet this is not the only method. One questionnaire I distributed at Kaiba University revealed that families leverage a multitude of communication tools.

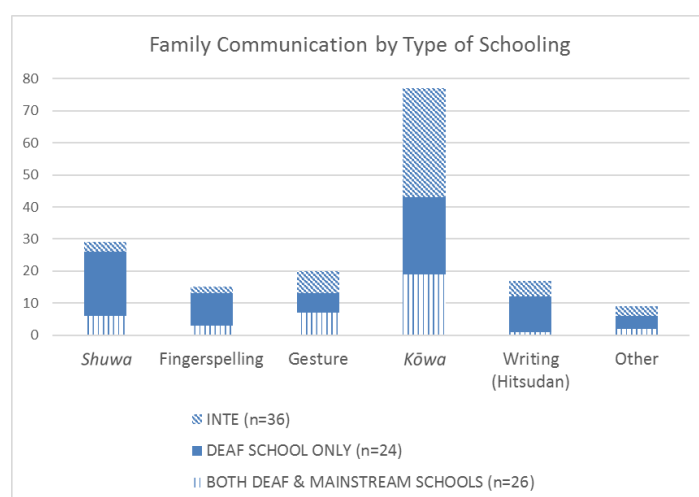


Figure 3.1 Family Communication by Type of Schooling (n=86)

The chart above (**figure 3.1**) displays the types of communication methods used in families versus the type of education the respondent received: mainstream school only (*inte*), deaf school only, and both mainstream and deaf schools. Questionnaire respondents could select multiple answers regarding communication modalities used with their family (*gokazōku to no komyunikēshyon hōhō*). As the chart indicates, *kōwa* is the most popular communication method within the home with 78 out of 86 respondents indicating that they use *kōwa* as one possible modality. 20 respondents who had exclusively attended a school

for the deaf use *shuwa* with their family versus three out of the 36 *inte* students and six out of 26 students with ‘mixed’ educational backgrounds. Nearly all *inte* respondents (34 out of 36) reported using *kōwa*. All 24 out of 24 exclusively deaf school-raised students reported using *kōwa* with their family. At the same time, deaf school-raised students overwhelmingly reported (20 out of 24) using some form of *shuwa* with their family. On the other hand, just three *inte* reported using a form of *shuwa* with their family and only six students with both deaf and mainstream school experiences reported using *shuwa*. The results from this questionnaire were supported by data gathered through participant observation not only at Kaiba University but in other fieldwork settings. *Inte* mainly use *kōwa* with their family, infrequently having adequate proficiency in *shuwa* (or even fingerspelling) to communicate. Exclusively deaf school-raised students tend to use a more varied range of communication modalities, but *kōwa* is always employed except for in the cases of deaf families.

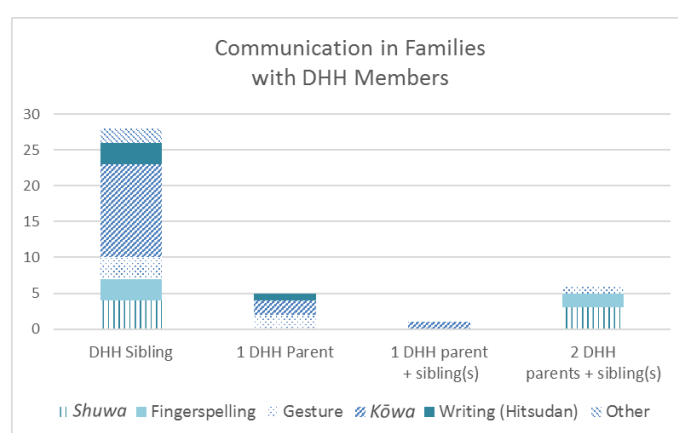


Figure 3.2 Communication in Families with DHH Members

What about communication modalities in families which have more than one deaf or hard-of-hearing member? As shown above (**figure 3.2**), families with more than one

DHH family member (mixed, hard-of-hearing, and deaf families) employ various modes of communication. In particular, in families with two DHH parents and more than one DHH child, *shuwa*, fingerspelling, and gestures were used but not *kōwa* or written communication. These signing families would be categorized as ‘deaf families’.¹⁰⁵ In contrast, all 13 respondents who came from families in which only the children are deaf or hard-of-hearing and both parents are hearing reported using *kōwa* as one of the communication methods. Only four of the 13 respondents raised in this family dynamic reported using *shuwa*, and three out of four reported using fingerspelling with their family. Although this is a very small sample size, it indicates some possible patterns of communication as well as the diversity of experiences based on family type.

Since communication methods and strategies are contextual, there are significant limitations to working with questionnaires. Through participant observation, more nuanced data emerged. Participants and their families selected from available communication tools, shifting methods based on the appropriateness for the given situation. For example, Ayumi and her hard-of-hearing mother only sign together when they are alone and speak when hearing family members are present. In another family, both daughter and mother only use *kōwa* together. Aya, a first-year university student, explained that when communication breaks down, her father will ‘sit on the couch and interpret’. This ‘interpretation’ entails

¹⁰⁵ In fact, one student wrote ‘deaf family’ (*defu famiri*) in the margin of her response.

slowly repeating the other party's words to enable lip-reading and monitor accuracy. The communication difficulties between mother and daughter were highlighted when Aya approached me to request another parental consent form. Her mother had misunderstood her explanation and thrown away all the paperwork. Aya was embarrassed and frustrated.

Inte are expected to participate in the spoken language setting of mainstream schools via *kōwa*. To what degree is intelligible communication possible through *kōwa*? Data reveals that comprehensibility of spoken language varies greatly depending on the context. It even varies within the family unit. Nearly all *inte* said they had 'grown accustomed to' (*nareta*) their family's speech patterns and could therefore lip-read family members more easily than outsiders, including people at school. There is a 'medicalized' dimension to comprehensibility. For instance, due to the nature of his deafness, one male *inte* said that he can hear higher sounds better than lower sounds. Consequently, he strains to decipher the speech of his younger sister whose tone of voice is deep. In general, elderly family members are said to be the most difficult to lip-read, especially if they wear dentures. Further investigation revealed that *inte*, on the whole, can converse most smoothly with their mothers.

During childhood, mothers spent more time than fathers with a DHH child, supporting her in health and education related activities. For instance, mothers learned the manual alphabet to facilitate communication, guided their children in one-on-one tutoring

and language training, and even enrolled in local Sign language circles. In contrast, many respondents said communication was and remains most difficult with fathers due to a lack of contact. Working hours are notoriously long in Japan. Most participants' fathers worked full-time jobs, whereas their mothers worked part-time or not at all. As a result, participants' fathers tended to have little free time to help with *kōwa* training or to learn basic *shuwa*, although notable exceptions can be found.¹⁰⁶ Generally, participants described fathers as being less patient and less understanding. When fathers did attempt signing it was, as one first year *inte* at Kaiba University put bluntly, 'poor and sloppy' (*detarame*). Regarding siblings, their potential to talk to one another often depended on whether siblings worked together to adapt communication methods, such as implementing a combination of fingerspelling, 'home sign', and gestures.

In spite of significant communication barriers, intimacy within the family can be facilitated through non-verbal means. One way in which emotional connections are developed between parents and children is through 'skinship'. Skinship has been written about extensively in the literature on Japan (Ben-Ari 1997; Clark 1994; Doi 1973; Lebra 1976; Lebra 2004). In her recent work, Tahhan (2014) includes breastfeeding, *onbu*, massage, co-bathing, tone, heart-to-heart communication, and co-sleeping in the category of

¹⁰⁶ For instance, one participant, Ayumi, teaches a special class for fathers at a community center. Another participant, Naho, reported that her father had learned the manual alphabet.

skinship. Tahhan found that father-child *skinship* forms are less about touch and more about play. Fathers maintain closeness with children through spending time with and sharing moments of togetherness in activities. In the earliest days of the child's life, bonding between parent and child is largely non-verbal. Many *inte* were between two and three years old when diagnosed. Therefore, most likely parents were unaware that they were raising a DHH child, a 'different' child, during this crucial early bonding period.

On the other hand, there is a risk of fetishizing or overemphasizing the role of non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication has its limitations in terms of creating mutual understanding and a sense of belongingness. Tahhan notes that forms of intimacy shift as the child grows older, with less tangible, less visible forms replacing touch (2014:108-112). Further in-depth research is required, but my preliminary ethnographic findings indicate that these forms of intimacy are strained for DHH children and hearing parents. The data suggests that the limits of language can impose limitations on familial intimacy. In one instance, a Sign language interpreter was needed to help bridge the gap within a family. Due to a family disagreement, a deaf woman in a hearing family had brought in an interpreter for the first time to mediate the discussion. The interpreter, who shared this story with me, said it was a very emotional day for everyone involved. The hearing parents and deaf adult child had never *truly* spoken before. The deaf woman was shocked to learn that her father has a very good sense of humor. Cases such as this question

the so-called ‘power’ of non-verbal communication in Japan, such as ‘*haragei*’ (literally, stomach art), in which people are said to wordlessly communicate. Tangible, concrete communication was necessary to finally ‘introduce’ these adult family members to one another.

As the example above suggests, the family is perceived to be a sphere of intimacy, but some DHH people can only have ‘shallow’ (*asai*) communication with their hearing family members. This situation is not specific to *inte* as most parents of deaf school-raised youth cannot sign well enough to engage in fluent conversation. The primary distinction is that for *inte*, communication barriers were present both within the home and at school. Many participants reported that these ‘shallow’ conversations with hearing parents tend to revolve around daily routines. As one deaf school-raised male explained, he usually talks with his family about practical, day-to-day matters such as what they are eating for dinner or when they need to leave the house for an appointment.

Language can be a barrier to full integration within the family unit as DHH children remain peripheral members of the group. Although difficulty understanding classroom instruction in mainstream schools was a source of frustration and stress, nearly all *inte* agreed that the most significant communication barriers are those that prevent them from forming meaningful personal relationships. In contrast, for many hearing parents, the most significant concern is securing their child’s future through the ‘best’ education.

3.5 Education as the ‘Answer’

The diagnosis of a ‘hearing loss’ introduces new questions to which education is often conceptualized as the ‘answer’. In Japan, there is a widely accepted ‘equation’ that one has a ‘good life’ by receiving a ‘good’ education and becoming a ‘good student’ (Castro-Vázquez 2013:97). Parents of DHH children are especially concerned about their child’s academic achievement and hold a ‘wish’ that she ‘will be able to learn’ (Uenō 2003:95). They see education as a means to improve the situation, normalize the child, and offer her the best opportunities to succeed in life. The promise of a ‘better’ education is one reason parents may elect to send their children to a mainstream school. In Japan, the Ministry of Education is standardized across the nation. Therefore, the curriculum and standard of education appear to be equal across the country. In specialized schools, however, the level of education is estimated to be approximately two years behind mainstream schools (Nakamura 2006).¹⁰⁷

The awareness of a ‘problem’ to be solved starts with diagnosis. According to *inte* participants, their deafness was identified when they were between one and three years old.¹⁰⁸ Most commonly a failure to speak or a failure to respond to one’s name prompted hearing testing. Parents were not always the first to identify a hearing loss. In a number of cases, it was a relative, such as a grandparent, who insisted the child be examined. When a

¹⁰⁷ Personal communication with specialists has confirmed this is still the case today.

¹⁰⁸ Diagnosis was most commonly made around the age of two or three.

child of hearing parents is diagnosed with a 'hearing loss', this may trigger a period of shock, confusion, and even mourning. My research suggests that mothers of DHH children have the most difficult time reaching acceptance. This is related to the role of mothers in Japan.

The mother is also often 'blamed' for the child's disability by society and, in turn, she blames herself. This may be because a mother in Japan often sees 'a mirror image of herself in the child' in a type of 'double identity', and she will frequently say that her child is her '*ikigai*', or reason for living (Lebra 1984). The mother's social role is closely connected to producing healthy children, and she may encounter shame and alienation if this is not achieved (Heyer 2002: 143). In contrast, there is the image of the man as the central pillar (*daikokubashira*) who supports the home as the breadwinner (Hidaka 2010:89), and he may consider both work and family to be his reasons for living (*ikigai*) (Hidaka 2010:165). As a result of these expected roles, there is significant social pressure placed on mothers to educate and care for children with disabilities.¹⁰⁹ During my research, I met and interviewed mothers of DHH children; however, these were not the mothers of the *inte* at the core of this study. The data I gathered on parental reactions to diagnosis of

¹⁰⁹ In 1970, there was a famous case in which a mother killed her disabled child in a 'failed' parent-child suicide (Hayashi, Okuhira 2001). The public rallied to her support, sympathizing with the strain placed on the mother.

core participants came from central-actor (*tōjisha*) life histories. I also analysed first-hand accounts written by the parents of *inte* or older generation mainstreamed DHH people.

Participants claimed to be keenly aware of their parents' ambivalence. Numerous *inte* declared that their parents did not accept (*mitomenakatta*) their deafness upon diagnosis. Several *inte* said they did not know how their parents reacted to the news at the time but suspect that it was a very negative response based on current negative attitudes. Moreover, several *inte* believe that their parents' concerns were actually about other people's perceptions, which can be described as a 'watchful normative presence' (*sekentei*) (White 1987:38). The 'eyes of others' may have influenced the decision to mainstream their child(ren).

Although many participants had to surmise parents 'true feelings' (*honne*) about their deafness, one mainstreamed deaf male in his 50s, gained rare insight into his mother's state of mind via her own writing. Ikeda-san was raised in a mixed family and educated solely in the mainstream school system. His mother and father were both hearing. His two siblings are deaf. Ikeda's mother was proactive in securing the best education for her children, working to create a resource room which would educate deaf students. Throughout his life, it had always appeared to Ikeda that his mother had accepted her three deaf children. She was an outspoken advocate. However, the diaries he discovered after her death told a darker story. Her writing revealed despair, confusion, and anguish over her

children's deafness. She had worried constantly about their education and future prospects.

This inner turmoil was kept well-hidden from her children.

Sometimes this inner turmoil is made public. One well-known figure in the field of deaf education in Japan, wrote frankly about her initial reaction to her daughter's diagnosis. Minamimura Hiroko had wished for her daughter to be 'without physical defect' (*gotai manzoku*). When she learned her daughter was deaf, her thoughts quickly turned to everything that would be lost.

I cannot talk to my daughter in spoken language (*onsei gengo*). [We] cannot communicate. My daughter will spend her life without hearing the sounds of this world. She cannot hear the sounds of music, the birds, or the wind (Minamimura 2001:236).

Minamimura's worries extended to her daughter's potential to be a 'full-fledged adult' (*ichininmae*) in society.

Will my daughter be able to get a job? Will she one day get married? No doubt she will live her life in solitude (*kodoku no naka*), won't she? Can she survive on her own? Someone who cannot work and cannot marry is a simpleton (*hanpasha*). Is my daughter a simpleton? If she is as such, then we will live together. No, I will raise her to be a full-fledged adult (*ichininmae ni shite yarō*).

Minamimura's fears of her child becoming an 'incomplete' adult, a 'simpleton', reveal biases (*henken*) in Japanese society. Her daughter was born over 40 years ago, but even today some people express surprise to learn that deaf people drive cars, hold jobs, live independently, and raise children. Parents often appear to internalize these biases. In

Kayama and Haight's recent study, parents with disabled children were biased (*henken*) toward individuals with disabilities (2014:109-112). Minamimura determined that education was the solution. Through education there was *something* that she could do to support her daughter, even though there was nothing she could do to make her daughter hearing (2001:236). She hardened her resolve to use education as a tool to improve her daughter's life. Through education her daughter could become a productive member of society.

Minamimura's concerns are shared by many other hearing parents. According to a large deaf support center I visited in Osaka, the most common reason parents (usually mothers) seek advice is to consult on choice of schooling.¹¹⁰ During consultation, parents also ask, how do we ensure she develops language? How do we help her to succeed in life? The answers to these questions may have long-lasting impacts on the child's identity, sense of belonging, and language choices. Although not all parents place a high expectation on children, most participants in this study come from families in which education is a priority, and most *inte* in this study are university graduates or currently enrolled in university. In this way, their representation in higher education makes them relatively elite as 'disabled' members of society.

Children are involved in the decision-making process regarding their education but only to a nominal degree. Some *inte* in this study said that they had input into the

¹¹⁰ Increasingly, there are also discussions about cochlear implantation surgery.

decision to attend a mainstream school. Nakano (2001) is sceptical about their agency. She points to the manner in which children may answer the question, ‘Do you want to go to a deaf school or a mainstream school?’ According to Nakano, when children answer ‘a regular school’, they offer perfunctory reasons such as, ‘My older brother and older sister go there’, ‘So and so goes there’, ‘I can make many friends’, which echo their parents’ expressed views (2001:325). In other words, Nakano contends that these explanations demonstrate that the children have internalized their parents’ beliefs.

I argue that, to some degree, there is a desire for the child to be more like the rest of the family by attending a ‘normal’ school rather than a special, segregated school. As attendance in a mainstream school (at the time *inte* were students)¹¹¹ required some degree of *kōwa* proficiency, ensuring a child’s academic success and path to full-fledged adulthood leads to the ‘inevitable’ route of *kōwa*. Unless a child has been deafened after acquiring speech or has enough residual hearing to hear and reproduce speech, intervention, in the form of training, is required in most cases.¹¹² The family plays an invaluable part in this first stage of (informal) education.

¹¹¹ This has changed in very recent years, as will be discussed in the conclusion.

¹¹² In three cases, an *inte* did not undergo any *kōwa* training. In one case, the participant was post-lingually deafened. Chika, who was raised by her grandparents and her father at different stages in her life, never underwent *kōwa* training. According to Chika, it was not necessary because she had a progressive hearing loss and learned to speak naturally before she was classified as ‘profoundly deaf’. However, other *inte* and DHH school raised youth who followed a similar trajectory did undergo *kōwa* training in order to maintain the speech they had acquired. A male *inte*, who has the mildest hearing loss in this research and was raised in a hard-of-hearing household, did not engage in formal speech training but was coached by his hard-of-hearing mother.

3.6 The Family as the First School

The family is the first school in that family members, primarily mothers, teach children how to speak. The oral communication method (*kōwa hō* or *kōwa*, for short) is born from a medical, pathologizing approach to disability, which situates the problem with the disabled person. Disability is a malady and personal flaw that requires medical attention. The ‘responsibility’ is placed with the disabled individual for not ‘fitting in’ (Brown 2006: 4), and those ‘suffering’ from a disability are expected to depend on doctors for a ‘cure’, on psychologists for help ‘adjusting’ to life with a disability, or to work hard to be as ‘normal’ as possible (Davies, Pointon 1997). If the disabled person ‘fails’ to get better, then he or she should surrender to the protection of a non-disabled person (Brown 2006, Stibbe 2004: 27). ‘Curing’ deafness with cochlear implants (surgically implanted electronic devices that enable hearing) is an example of the medical model (Monaghan 2003). Although not as invasive as cochlear implantation, *kōwa*’s medical approach (as opposed to a cultural linguistic approach) draws upon this pathologizing discourse. Some medical specialists and educational specialists view *kōwa* as a type of ‘cure’ and tool for normalization.

There are differences between pre-lingually and post-lingually deafened children regarding speech training measures. As noted earlier in the dissertation, pre-lingually deafened means that a significant hearing loss occurred before language was acquired, and post-lingually deafened means that this hearing loss occurred after (spoken) language was

acquired. In post-lingually deafened DHH individuals, language may have originally been acquired ‘naturally’ (meaning without intervention). However, depending on the age of hearing loss, the development of sophisticated, age-appropriate language and the ‘maintenance’ of whatever language was acquired before deafening may require significant intervention. In pre-lingually deafened DHH youth, only individuals with a mild or progressive loss are able to acquire Japanese without any form of intervention. This intervention begins at an early age in the school and at home. In most cases, it is the mother who is responsible for *kōwa* education.

Although in the late Edo and early modern period it was fathers who guided children’s education (mainly boys’), since the post-war period, it has been mothers who are (usually) responsible for education (Holloway 2010:147-148). Scholars and media have long focused on highly involved ‘education mothers’ (*kyōiku mama*) (Lebra 1976) and the importance of this extra help in succeeding in an ‘academic career based society’ (*gakureki shakai*). Hidaka’s study of ‘salarymen’ (white collar business men) found that most men preferred to turn over choices regarding education to their wives, claiming that their wives were more familiar with the children (2010:97). Increasingly, there is greater diversity in men’s attitudes toward their home life. This is illustrated in so-called ‘fads’ such as ‘my homeism’ (*mai hōmu-shugi*), a commitment to family life as well as movements for men to

have paternity leave.¹¹³ However, it is important to note that the central participants were mainly born in the 1990s before gender parity in the home had become a ‘talking point’.

In addition to education, care is also gendered in Japan. Women are frequently held responsible for the caregiving of disabled family members (Stevens 2013:126). A DHH child does not (unless she is multiply disabled) need help with mobility or basic hygiene. This type of ‘care’ is not needed. ‘Care’, if more broadly defined, could include *kōwa* training. Stevens also reminds us that all children are dependent to some extent as they require care, not just children with disabilities (2013:104). However, when a child is diagnosed with a disability, it becomes a ‘watched child’ who is under professional care (Gill 1997:40). Parents heed these professionals’ guidance to varying degrees.

As nuclear families are becoming the norm in Japan, especially since the war, mothers shoulder most of the burden of childrearing (*shitsuke*) alone (Holloway 2010:119-142). During the preschool years, childrearing objectives include ‘greetings’ and ritualized fixed expressions (such as when leaving and entering the home), etiquette including body positioning and appropriate bowing, teaching the child to do things for herself (*jibun no koto o jibun de suru*), such as eating food, going to the toilet and being responsible for belongings, and learning to make ‘distinctions’ (*kejime*) and classify categories such as good and bad, inner and outer (*uchi* and *soto*) (Hendry 1986). There are variations, but the

¹¹³ As exemplified by the 2016 public statement of Liberal Democratic Party House lawmaker Kensuke Miyazaki to take care leave after the birth of his child.

ideal child is believed to be one who tries hard, is compliant and meek (*sunao*), and is kind (*yasashii*) (Hendry 1986:87) as well as bright (*akarui*), gentle (*otonashii*), active (*genki*), brisk, prompt, clear (*hakihaki*), and obedient/smart (*oriko*) (Hendry 1986:27). Selfishness is one of the most commonly cited highly negative traits in a child (Hendry 1986:90). Nearly 20 years after Hendry's study, Holloway found that mothers most hoped for children to 'learn to value human relationships' and 'become skilful at interacting with others' (Holloway 2010:124). Parents today also wish for the child to show 'basic kindness' and to be empathetic (*omoiyari*) (Hayashi 2015:44), sensitive (*sensai*), polite (*reigi tadashii*), gentle (*sunao*), and to avoid bothering others (*meiwaku kakenai yōni*) (Holloway 2010:124). The data collected in this study suggest that the high value placed on interpersonal relations proves difficult for many DHH children, particularly *inte*.

How do hearing parents impart these values to a DHH child? I hypothesize that when parents consider sending the child to a 'regular' school, one implication is that the school will help teach a child 'typical' Japanese values. Although never explicitly stated as such, parents have commented on their wish for their DHH children to be 'like other children'. DHH students could learn in a familiar mainstream environment by observing peers. However, to have the opportunity to study in a mainstream school, a child first needs to learn to speak Japanese. When a child cannot acquire Japanese 'naturally' (that is,

without intervention) a key element of ‘childrearing’ (*shitsuke*) becomes language acquisition. Mothers take on the role of trainer.

Kōwa training takes place in both formal and informal settings. Lip-reading and producing coherent speech requires years of training and practice. In spite of these efforts, lip-reading or speech-reading remains ‘an inexact art form even for the most advanced practitioners’ (Nakamura 2006:134). Training formally takes place in speech rehabilitation centers, hospitals, and schools for the deaf. Informally, this training continues within the home. The family is the school with the mother as the first teacher. The highly involved ‘education mama’ (*kyōiku mama*) becomes even more dedicated to education when the child has a ‘disability’. *Inte* recognize this dedication and credit their mothers for their academic achievements and oral communication proficiency. *Kōwa* training is a difficult, repetitive, intensive process. One male *inte*, who was raised in a rural area, explained that he travelled at least once a week to the next prefecture with his mother in order to attend a ‘famous’ speech rehabilitation program at a hospital, averaging two hours of car travel each way.

In nearly all cases, formal and informal *kōwa* training is a highly intensive, time-consuming aspect in the lives of DHH children. These hardships can be framed positively by participants. There is a belief in Japan that ‘It’s best to have [the child] endure difficulty’ (*kurō saseta hō ga ii*) for personal growth (White 1987:27-29). As a new

English teacher in Japan, I was surprised to see young elementary school children practice human pyramids for Sports Day. To this foreign teacher, it appeared to be a dangerous and unnecessary event. I came to understand that this endurance training was part of the educational challenge. Students' parents did not complain about the intensive and potentially dangerous practice but rather supported the teachers and cheered on their children to 'Fight!' (*ganbattte!*). Similarly, although *kōwa* training is not an inherently enjoyable activity, *inte* expressed gratitude to their mothers for their patience and devotion. 'Thanks to my mother' (*okāsan no okage de*) was a common response to being praised for a 'clear voice'.¹¹⁴

Even though mothers are the primary caregivers, the entire family is affected by the 'extra care' a DHH child may receive. In mixed or hard-of-hearing families, the DHH child is not 'the other', and so-called 'care' is dispersed more evenly across family members. In a hearing family with more than one child, adjustments made for a DHH child can cause tension among siblings. Siblings are less frequently discussed in the literature on deafness in the global context.¹¹⁵ Yet siblings are also affected by and affect the DHH family member. Siblings of deaf adults (SODA) often play a key role in a DHH person's life. They may be informal 'interpreters' and advocates. In some cases, hearing siblings' needs may

¹¹⁴ Conversely, fluency in signing is credited to peers and elder classmates *tomodachi no okage de* (thanks to my friend) or *senpai no okage de* (thanks to my elder classmate).

¹¹⁵ I would also argue that sibling relationships tend to be overlooked in studies on Japan.

come second to their DHH siblings' needs. For instance, two male *inte* spoke at length about 'pitying' (*kawaisō*) their siblings. In both cases, their mothers would leave the hearing child with grandparents or other relatives to shuttle the *inte* to *kōwa* training and other support services. In contrast, when the DHH child is an only child, the parents can focus their attention solely on the child's perceived needs.

'Special care' is not a universality. If a child does not use a hearing device or communicate via *kōwa*, then no extra 'care' is needed. As noted earlier in this chapter, Sign language acquisition does not require intervention. However, a DHH child who uses a hearing aid or cochlear implant and communicates via *kōwa* requires added attention in the form of medical and rehabilitation (speech training) appointments.

3.7 'The Other' at Home

Parents hope for their children (Hendry 1986), as well as the people educating them, to demonstrate empathy (Kasahara, Turnbull 2005:258). The irony is that many *inte* believe that their parents and siblings cannot relate to, anticipate, or understand their feelings or challenges. Consequently, *inte* often feel like 'the other' at home. It is important to preface this discussion by noting that the parents I met had their child's best interest in mind. Hearing parents base their choices on the world they know and the advice they receive from professionals. Decisions are not usually made lightly. The parents I spoke with

and read about had a high level of anxiety about their child's deafness and often felt it best to place their trust in experienced specialists. These medical practitioners, educators, and audiologists from whom they end up seeking counsel are invariably hearing individuals, a point of contention for many people in deaf communities. The suggestion of mainstreaming is welcome. Ultimately, mainstream schools and speech are known entities; *shuwa* and schools for the deaf are the unknown. Education is often held up as a panacea for all 'problems'. Yet this solution can often be the cause of new problems.

Yasushi, introduced at the start of this dissertation, spent a lot of time during his childhood with his mother; yet he feels that she does not understand him. During their peer interview, when Yasushi's good friend Ryohei, 19 years old, asked, 'Did you want your mother to see you as "Deaf" (*rōsha*)?' Yasushi responded,

My mother thought that since I could communicate normally (*futsū ni kaiwa dekiru*) inside the home that communication was fine for me. [During my school days] I would tell her I struggled because I cannot hear (*kikoenai no de muzukashii*), but she always said it would be OK, it'll be OK. So, I just really wanted her to finally realize that there is a limit (*seigen*) to *kōwa*.

Yasushi's voice is especially clear and comprehensible, and he appears to have 'mastered' the art of lip-reading. According to Yasushi, this is a well-honed act. One day, he told me it was mostly 'pretending' and 'guesswork' (*suisoku*). He claimed, 'all deaf people are good at guesswork'. Yasushi explained that communicating with hearing people in *kōwa* is about adaption and conjecture. He is particularly adept at presenting this self and can function

well in spoken language environments. However, during his school days, there was a cost to this performance. It caused him tremendous stress, which resulted in physical illness.

According to Yasushi, his mother could never and has never appreciated the trials of assimilating in mainstream settings.

As chapter four will explain, *inte* invest a great amount of thought and energy into performing ‘communication competence’. This guesswork involves lip-reading, gauging facial expressions, and contextualizing conversations. No matter how skilled the lip-reader, unless she has enough residual hearing, fragments of a conversation will always be missed. In response, young *inte* pretend to have understood (*wakatta furi [o] suru*). One of the most common ways to do so is by taking cues from others in the group. Upon interpreting these cues, they respond with short verbal and non-verbal agreement. Many *inte* assert that their parents could not understand the work needed to keep up in mainstream, hearing environments. Furthermore, they feel their parents were unaware that the same efforts are often necessary within the home. Participants lamented their family—particularly the parents’—lack of understanding (*rikai*) about their positionality and their lived experiences.

Occasionally, parents were presented with opportunities to empathize and ‘truly understand’. Ryuta and Masao, both 24 years old, have been friends since early childhood and share a bond like brothers. They first met at a speech training center as toddlers. Their mothers helped them to keep in touch through childhood even after Masao and his family

moved to the next prefecture. One day at a ‘karaoke box’, the two young men joked about how communication is always most difficult with their fathers. Their mothers reminded the fathers to look directly at their sons and to speak slower—but they are stubborn. Rather than expressing annoyance, Ryuta and Masao remarked that it ‘couldn’t be helped’ (*shōganai*). Half-laughing, Ryuta shared a story about his father’s eye-opening night in the deaf world (*rōsha no sekai*).

Even though Ryuta’s father did not know a single sign, he had been appointed as his company’s Sign language ‘circle’ (club) leader. This title was ‘in name only’ (*namae dake*). He never attended classes or social events. For years, he remained a figurehead, merely signing off on activities when required. However, one night, two years prior, Ryuta’s father had decided to join the ‘drinking party’ (*nomikai*) following a club meeting. Ryuta has no idea what prompted this sudden change of heart. His father was uncomfortable from the moment he entered the *izakaya* (Japanese pub). Everyone around him was signing. He couldn’t understand anything. He felt lost, confused, and irritated. It was his father’s ‘first ever experience’ facing communication barriers: he had never traveled abroad or spoken with a non-Japanese person in a foreign language. When Ryuta’s father returned home that night, he told Ryuta’s mother, ‘I understand how our son feels’ (*musuko no kimochi ga wakatta*). Both boys laughed. Ryuta smiled as he simultaneously signed and vocalized, ‘Finally, he got it’. Masao shook his head and signed, ‘Yes, finally’.

Not all *inte* feel ‘othered’ at home. Some *inte* describe being fully integrated into their family. For instance, second-year Kaiba University student Naho was born in a suburb of Tokyo. She is the oldest of three children: she has a younger sister in senior high school and a little brother in elementary school. Even though her entire family is hearing, Naho says she has never felt left out because everyone makes a concerted effort to accommodate her communication needs. Ever since Naho was a young child, her parents have ensured a seating arrangement at the dinner table that provides her optimal visualization. There is also an unofficial house rule that only one person may speak at a time to facilitate Naho’s lip-reading. Shortly after Naho started learning Sign language, her mother began training to become a local interpreter. She now interprets for her daughter when communication within the family breaks down. In addition, her younger sister and father have learned fingerspelling of the phonetic alphabet to facilitate communication. Naho said when her younger brother is old enough to spell well, she will teach him the manual alphabet, too.

One day I met Naho’s family at the Kaiba University cultural festival. Their close bond was immediately obvious. Naho describes herself as being ‘blessed’ (*megumareteiru*) to have been born into her family. Naho’s ‘empathetic’ and inclusive family stands out for the extent to which they work to fully integrate a DHH family member into the fabric of family life.

3.8 Conclusion

The family is believed to be a sphere of intimacy, familiarity, and shared understanding. However, a DHH child born to hearing parents introduces difference into the family unit while complicating a taken-for-granted, vertical identity. Despite sharing the same ethnicity, background, and environment as the rest of their family, DHH participants (of all educational backgrounds) raised in hearing families described feeling some degree of ‘otherness’ due to their positionality as the sole DHH family member. The birth of a DHH child pushes language, communication, and belonging into the spotlight. Parents in all family types must decide what language(s) to expose their DHH child to and what educational path to follow. They are worried about their child’s ability to communicate, their child’s education, and their child’s long-term future.

Parents tend to frame the decision to send their child to mainstream schools in terms of seeking the best educational opportunities. I argue that there is an underlying belief that studying in a ‘normal’ school not only offers better educational opportunities but also the chance to assimilate into hearing society. My research suggests that parents’ choices and strategies were centered on mitigating difference and preparing the child for a successful life in mainstream society.

Kōwa (oral communication) is frequently framed as a method to integrate *into* into mainstream society and mainstream schools. Hearing parents’ main concern is how the

child will succeed in the mainstream ‘hearing world’ (*kenchō no sekai*), not how to introduce their child to an unknown world, the ‘deaf world’ (*rōsha no sekai*), or its language—*shuwa*. Moreover, as noted in the previous chapter, *shuwa* is frequently not evaluated as a ‘true’ language by hearing people but a gestural system, in spite of its status as a natural language. *Kōwa* is not a language, which is acquired naturally through socialization. It is an intentional skill and technique to access a spoken language, which is ‘mastered’ to varying degrees through years of repetitive, embodied training.

To communicate is to connect. When oral communication is the method chosen for DHH children, there are frequently barriers to communication within the family. *Kōwa* presents impediments to immersion in natural discourse for DHH children because it becomes a supposed passport to engaging in ‘hearing world’ communication but without full access to it via ‘inconsequential’ language and ‘background’ speech. Non-verbal communication facilitates early childhood bonding, but, in practice, does not overcome communication barriers in late childhood and adolescence. However, receiving familial ‘understanding’ (*rikai*) of the challenges of negotiating the hearing world as a DHH person, ranked higher in importance to *inte* than the actual communication modalities employed. When parents re-configure family communication patterns to integrate the DHH child, she experiences a sense of belonging.

Inte in hearing families communicate in *kōwa* in all spheres of life. Overall, the sense of otherness within the family appears to have a greater negative impact on *inte* as they are unable to form horizontal identities with peers at school. Both the outside and inside lifeworlds are ones of passing, confusion, misunderstandings, bluffing, and distance. Pervasive themes in the *inte* experiential narrative included a sense of being misunderstood, of being alone (*hitori bocchi*), and of sticking out (*medatsu*). The following chapter will explore the strategies and mechanisms *inte* employ to negotiate belonging and mitigate difference in mainstream school settings.

■ ■ **Chapter 4**

‘I’m a Grey-Zone Human’: Negotiating Belonging in a ‘Hearing School’

4.0 Introduction

‘People live in groups’ (Nakano 2001:321). Dr. Satoko Nakano, a deaf Japanese scholar, was referring to her failure to find group belonging as a student in a mainstream school. As a young student, she wistfully watched groups of girls go together to the washroom. This unlikely source of envy stemmed from the knowledge that the washroom was a place for chatting, exchanging gossip, and bonding. Nakano had no place there.

Scholars have debated whether Japan is a society of group-oriented people or individuals who push against these ideas (Cave 2007:2), but there is arguably an interplay between groupism and individualism, which may fluctuate through the life cycle. Young people are particularly peer-oriented, with friends playing a significant role in their lives (as will be explored in chapter five). Students with disabilities appear to have trouble making peer connections. Referring to the difficulties with ‘problematic peer relationships’ for students with disabilities, Kayama and Haight note that ‘a failure, to connect to people may be experienced as a “nightmare”¹¹⁶ in Japan (2014:17)’. Schools generally focus their attention on the academic aspect of education rather than the social and developmental requirements of special educational needs students (Cambra, Silvestre 2003:197).

¹¹⁶ I would argue that this ‘nightmare’ is not unique to Japan.

However, the primary concern of young people is social integration.

Integration into the family and into mainstream society can be problematic for DHH students regardless of their educational background. However, social segregation at school is a particular *inte* phenomenon. ‘Deaf school-raised’ youth enter educational institutions where opportunities for forming and maintaining horizontal identities with DHH peers are in abundance. *Inte* are educated in environments in which there may be significant barriers to forming relationships with hearing peers, which can lead to marginalization within the school. As I will discuss in this chapter, *inte* employ strategies and mechanisms to mitigate this perceived difference and try to ‘cover’ their deafness in an attempt to belong. The result is a sense of being trapped at an intersection between worlds.

Nozomi, a first-year *inte* at Kaiba University, described herself as a ‘grey-zone human’ (*grei zōnu ningen*).¹¹⁷ The world is black and white, hearing and deaf, and she does not know where she belongs as a person who inhabits grey spaces. She was raised in an ‘all hearing’ family and she carried the weight of difference with her to school, where she was the sole DHH student. At school, Nozomi struggled to make friends and found her deafness to be a barrier to pursuing her true passion: dancing. She was unable to join her high school dance team due to communication barriers with teammates and an inability to

¹¹⁷ Similarly, another first year student from a hearing family, said that he was a ‘resident of another world’ (*mō hitotsu no sekai no jyūnin*).

hear the music. However, as will be explored in this chapter, during her first year at Kaiba University, she was able to become a member of a dance troupe. Nevertheless, she continues to see herself as trapped in a grey zone between deaf and hearing.

4.1 The Solitary Student

Comparative research suggests that deaf and hard-of-hearing students in mainstream schools tend to face social isolation. This is perhaps unsurprising as placing diverse students in the same classroom will not inevitably result in common ground (Okano, Tsuchiya 1999: 132). Over the course of my fieldwork, I encountered school-day narratives in which classmates and friends were scarcely mentioned. If peers were mentioned, they were generally done so in the context of describing ‘classmates’—not ‘friends’. Knowing that data can often be found in the gaps, I began directly inquiring about participants’ ‘friends’ (*tomodachi*). Explicit questions regarding friends were often met with hesitation, embarrassment, and reluctant ‘confessions’. I quickly found that this is because *inte* were often ‘solitary’ and ‘lonely’ in mainstream educational environments.

Social neglect rather than overt bullying is the prevailing theme in mainstream narratives. Research suggests that DHH students in mainstream settings are not more likely to be rejected or bullied but they are more likely to be neglected, which could be framed as

a type of bullying. A study of two mainstream schools¹¹⁸ in London with nine deaf pupils and 62 hearing peers conducted by Nunes et al. (2001:123) revealed deaf students were not any more disliked based on peer ratings but were most likely to be neglected and to be without friends in the classroom. On ‘social preference scores’, deaf pupils did not fall into the category of ‘rejection’ (below the 25th percentile) but according to ‘social impact’ scores, 67 percent of deaf students were in the ‘neglected’ category in comparison with only 27 percent of hearing pupils. Overall, the researchers determined that deaf pupils were less likely to have friends in their class and more likely to be socially neglected.

Inte are educated in an environment where there are physiological and social barriers to belonging. Although there are variations in mainstream students’ experience, commonalities can be found across societies due to a lack of opportunities to form ‘horizontal identities’ (Solomon 2014:2). Cross-cultural central-actor (*tōjisha*) accounts reveal parallel difficulties facing deaf and hard-of-hearing students in mainstream schools. In writing about her experiences in the mainstream in the United States (and the experiences of the mainstreamed adults she surveyed) in *Alone in the Mainstream* (2004), deaf academic Oliva describes being isolated, misunderstood, adrift, and unaware of what it is like to be part of the group. She uses the term ‘solitaires’ to describe the individuals

¹¹⁸ One school used the total communication approach, where a specialist teacher in the classroom used sign-supported English. The second school used an oral approach. Some of the specialists could use British Sign Language (BSL).

who go through ‘the solitary mainstream experience’ (2004:20). Drolsbaugh, also from the United States, writes, ‘Academically I did fine. An American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter made sure of that. But socially? I was a mess... [Y]ou get used to being left out’ (2013:9).¹¹⁹ Similarly, in his reflection essay on being educated in the mainstream school program in South Africa, McIlroy describes feeling like a ‘foreigner who was never fully included,’ and being ‘an outsider’ socially (2010:501). It is not an anthropologist’s role to take data from diverse cultural contexts and paint universals in broad strokes. Yet despite the culturally situated nature of Japanese *inte*’s experiences, they share some basic fundamentals with their mainstreamed international peers.



Figure 4.1 One Possible Sign for ‘Hitori Bocchi’ (loneliness) (JFD 2014:362)

Oliva’s ‘solitaires’ in the United States are comparable to ‘*hitori bocchi*’ in Japan, a term which can be translated as ‘loneliness’. Repeatedly, *hitori bocchi* was both signed (**figure 4.1**) and spoken during recollections of junior and senior high school. ‘Loneliness’ and

¹¹⁹ Drolsbaugh was born into a deaf family in the United States, educated in mainstream schools, and became ‘deaf again’ as an adult (see Drolsbaugh 1997). He had knowledge of American Sign Language (ASL) and access to an ASL interpreter. Nevertheless, having sufficient access to class content via ASL did not translate into weaving into the social fabric.

‘isolation’ were key words that appeared frequently throughout my fieldnotes. While only a few participants discussed outright bullying (*ijime*), the majority of participants told stories of social neglect and isolation as exemplified by three first-year students at Kaiba University. For instance, Masanori said that during recess in junior and senior high school, he would sit and read books while the other students played. Emiko faced some ‘verbally bullying’ (*kotoba no ijime*) from her classmates but was, on the whole, ignored by her peers. Social isolation could lead to school withdrawal. For instance, Haruka found the social aspects of school so trying that she switched to studying via a correspondence course (*tsūshin kyōiku*).

When friendships were formed, they were often superficial and temporal. Even when *inte* students could join friend groups, a sense of full inclusion was often elusive. Friendships were sometimes said to only exist on school grounds with few meaningful or lasting relationships extending outside of school environments. Group conversations were said to be ‘boring’ (*tsumaranai*) because it is impossible to lip-read multiple speakers simultaneously. This lack of understanding of what was occurring within the group could also contribute to a sense of interpersonal distance. For example, Hisae, whose story was told in the introduction, could not name one ‘true’ friend from junior or senior high school and does not keep in touch with anyone from her school days.

Some *inte* had hearing ‘allies’ at schools, but research indicates these relationships

may have been unequal. Nunes et al. noted that effects of neglect can be counteracted by having one friend in the class who ‘prevents feelings of loneliness’ (2001:132). However, when friendships were forged, the role of friends differed from hearing-hearing friendships. Hearing students saw their roles as interpreters who tried to make the deaf students feel better (Nunes et al. 2001:133). My research suggests similar dynamics. Numerous *inte* spoke of there being one ‘kind’ (*yasashii*) person in their class. This person acted as an informal interpreter because he or she could understand their ‘deaf voice’ and could guess what they wanted to say. *Inte* described the relationship as being one in which they received a lot of ‘support’ and ‘help’. There was an element of care-taking in these descriptions, which hints at unequal relations between hearing and DHH students.

4.2 ‘Hearing Schools’ and ‘Deaf Schools’

Participants tend to divide Japanese society into two worlds: hearing and deaf.¹²⁰

‘Hearing’ is used as an adjective to describe every space which is not explicitly deaf.

Although ‘*ippan gakkō*’ or ‘*futsū no gakkō*’ are the terms used by educators for

‘mainstream schools’, *inte* nearly always refer to these schools as ‘hearing schools’

(*kenchō gakkō*). They also call themselves ‘hearing school-raised’ (*kenchō gakkō [no]*

sodachi) and ‘hearing-raised’ (*kenchō [no] sodachi*). Families are ‘hearing families’

¹²⁰ There is even a book by a famous Japanese deaf scholar entitled *The Deaf World* (Kimura 2009).

(*kenchō no kazōku*). Majority Japanese are ‘hearing people’ (*kenchōsha* or *kikoeru hito*).

The world in which they have been raised and educated is in the ‘hearing world’ (*kenchō sekai*). The terms chosen for schools, mainstream settings, and the other actors reflect and illustrate a marginal positionality and sense of ‘otherness’. In contrast, most hearing people do not label mainstream institutes as ‘hearing’. For hearing people, a school is simply ‘my school’. The hearing world is the default. When I gently pointed out to one *inte* that hearing people do not refer to mainstream schools as ‘hearing schools’ but simply as ‘schools’ (*gakkō*), she widened her eyes in surprise.

Despite their marginal status within it, the ‘hearing world’ is familiar to *inte*. In their accounts, it is the world most people know, the world at large. Every time someone enters a company, a (mainstream) school, a shop, or other establishment, they are stepping into the hearing world. The primary language of communication is assumed to be Japanese. (No one mentioned recent immigrants or other minorities who might not be able to communicate in Japanese.) It is often implied that all people who can hear are part of the hearing world, even though participants also acknowledged the existence of other minority groups. Intersectionality is similarly overlooked.

While the hearing world is everywhere, the deaf world is a mythical land for the youngest *inte* in the study (i.e. recent graduates of mainstream senior high schools). They

cannot articulate it beyond the use of Sign language and the presence of deaf school-raised people. *Inte* are largely unfamiliar with the norms and cultural patterns that occur in deaf spaces until they start spending time with DHH peers.¹²¹ At Kaiba University, the majority of first-year *inte* were interacting not only with *inte* but also with peers who have previously spent time in deaf spaces by virtue of their experiences in schools for the deaf.

Before discussing *inte*'s experiences in 'hearing schools', it is necessary to briefly outline the Japanese education system to contextualize their position in it. Compulsory education in Japan today includes six years of elementary school, followed by three years of junior high school as seen in **figure 4.2**. Post-compulsory secondary education includes three years of senior high school. There are six classifications of senior high schools in Japan: elite academic high schools, non-elite academic high schools, vocational high schools, evening high schools, correspondence high schools, and high-school departments of the schools for the blind, the deaf, and the otherwise handicapped (Okano, Tsuchiya 1999:64). Tertiary education options range from two-year specialist training/vocational school or junior colleges to four-year universities.

¹²¹ To be discussed in chapter five.

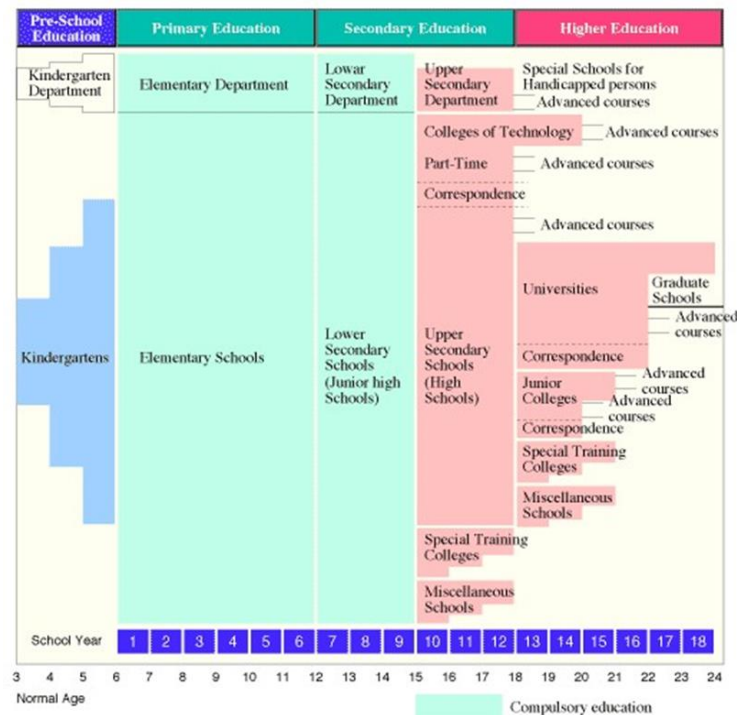


Figure 4.2 Japan's Educational System¹²²

The greatest distinction between ‘hearing schools’ and ‘deaf schools’ is obviously the hearing status of the students. Class size is another major difference. The average class size in a mainstream class in Japan is 28 students for elementary school (maximum 35) and 33 for junior high school (maximum 40) (Ministry of Education 2011). In contrast, in the schools for the deaf I visited, classes had as few as three students, with the average class size between five to six students. Furthermore, deaf schools are contained on one campus and often in one building. Each level (elementary, junior high, and senior high) is referred to as a ‘department’ or ‘division’ rather than a ‘school’. In contrast, hearing schools usually have separate campuses for elementary, junior, and senior high school, although there are

¹²² http://www.sf.us.emb-japan.go.jp/en/e_m08_01_05.htm

shared campuses, such as ‘escalator schools’ attached to universities in which elementary, junior, and senior high schools are located on the same campus.

Spatiality is another fundamental difference between ‘hearing school’ and ‘deaf school’ classrooms. In schools for the deaf, fewer students mean desks *can* be arranged in a U-shape (**figure 4.3**). Moreover, DHH students *need* to be seated in this arrangement as it affords optimal visibility for watching signing or doing lip-reading. In mainstream school classrooms, the desks are normally arranged in rows. When a DHH student studies in a mainstream school, provisions must be made to facilitate lip-reading. As **figure 4.2** illustrates, the ‘special provision’ is that DHH students are usually seated in the front row.



Figure 4.3 ‘Deaf School’ Classroom

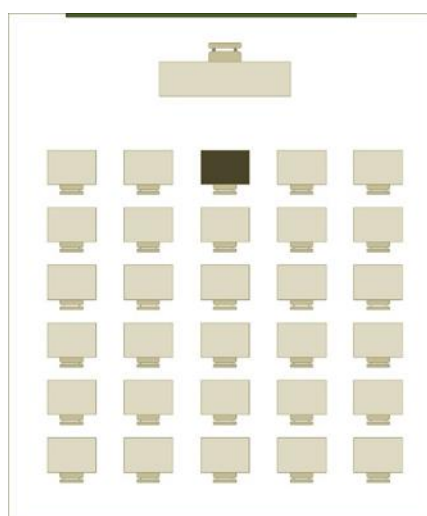


Figure 4.4 ‘Hearing School’ Classroom¹²³

Generally, *inte* found this special seating arrangement to be undesirable. Firstly, it was ‘annoying’ to be seated directly in front of the teacher because it forced them to be

¹²³ Figures 4.3 and 4.4 created by author.

attentive at all times. *Inte* said they had wanted the same chance to ‘disappear’ in the back of the classroom and to relax, play around, and ‘space out’ like their hearing classmates. In addition, many participants felt that such special treatment caused them to ‘stick out’ (*medatsu*). Their classmates switched desks throughout the year, while an *inte* student had a year-round, fixed, ‘special’ seat. Also, the front row seating arrangement prevented *inte* from watching their classmates, which had tangible disadvantages. Being able to observe classmates and ‘mimicking’ (*mane suru*) their actions was crucial to assimilation. Participants also believed they missed out on the daily class life that was unfolding behind their assigned seats. Already their deafness caused them to feel like outsiders. Not having a chance to observe or lip-read their classmates compounded this sense of separation and isolation.

There is a discrepancy between participants’ accounts and certain educators’ statements regarding seating arrangements. Although most of the *inte* from the core 18 to 24 year-old participant group reported that they were seated in the middle seat of the front row, educators who currently work or have worked with DHH students in mainstream schools stated that it is common practice to seat DHH students in the second, third, or even fourth row precisely because it facilitates observation of classmates and class activities. After my fieldwork period ‘officially’ ended, I visited a mainstream junior high school with three DHH students. In one class, the student sat in the second

row. In another class, the two students sat in the fourth row, with the note-taker seated in between them. I suspect the discrepancy between the two parties' accounts is due to changes in educational practices—even though the educators claimed the current informal seating policies had been in place for a long time. The core participants completed junior high school between three to nine years prior to my fieldwork. It is possible that these changes to seating assignments are more recent.

4.3 From the Golden Age to the Solitary Stage

Mainstream schools are not always a place of solitude and struggle. Elementary school had been a golden age for most *inte*. Life in the mainstream became increasingly difficult over time with the most pronounced shift occurring between elementary and junior high school. Many *inte* began their education in a school for the deaf because, as noted earlier, it is not uncommon for *inte* to attend a preschool class there.¹²⁴ *Inte* had few concrete memories of preschool aside from 'learning to talk' and 'playing'. Based on observations of early childhood and preschool classes in schools for the deaf as well as interviews, it appears that it is common for mothers to join children in classes to learn to communicate with them. The transition to a mainstream elementary school from a preschool is a relatively smooth one.

¹²⁴ In fact, this was such a common path that, as noted, attending a 'deaf preschool' does not change someone's *inte* status.

Japanese educational practices contributed to participants' ease of integration in elementary school. In the early years of elementary school, a high priority is given to interpersonal skills with students being socialized in peer groups, while co-managing classroom activities (Lewis 1988). Education in elementary school is not limited to academic skills. It focuses more on the 'whole child'. One practice is the '*han*' unit. The *han* or small group system is supposed to help foster cooperation and an ability to attend to the needs of others. *Han* groups are typically comprised of six students. Students sit near one another to complete academic and non-academic tasks (e.g. classroom chores) together. These students collaborate on tasks such as classwork, lunch duty, and classroom management (Sato 2004:57-81). Due to inclusion in a *han* unit, *inte* automatically were part of a cooperative peer group. Another practice is the focus on five areas: relations, feelings, hardships, experience, and heart (Sato 2004:51). Students are encouraged to cooperate, to collaborate, and to think of others, with 'empathy' (*omoiyari*) being an important goal set forth by the Ministry of Education (Kayama, Haight 2014:16, Ministry of Education 2008).¹²⁵

According to participants, socializing in the earliest years of elementary school centered on kinesthetic, non-verbal play. Friendships were easily formed by 'playing without

¹²⁵ It is also a value that is seen to be 'at risk among contemporary Japanese young people' (Tobin, Hsueh et al. 2009:114).

thinking’ and ‘joking around’. In this context, hearing abilities and the limitations of *kōwa* were not significant impediments to social integration. As Hisae explained, ‘We didn’t play using words (*kotoba tsukau asobi de ha nakute*) but by moving around. For example, we played hide and seek or *oni gokko* (monster tag game)’. Embodied play rather than linguistic competence was the path to belonging.

Elementary school is remembered by *inte* as a problem-free time. Even when I explicitly inquired about ‘problems’ (*komatta koto*) during elementary school, participants responded, ‘[I don’t remember] having any worries’, or ‘I have little awareness of communication [issues] (*komyunikēshyon ninshiki amari nai*)’. They recall carefree days of playing and enjoying day-to-day school life. Childhood was a cherished time of social and communicative freedom.

It is important to address the retrospective nature of these accounts. Memory involves filtering experiences because ‘recalling some things necessarily involves placing other events or connections in the shadows’ (Carsten 2007:87). *Inte* may have placed any difficulties of elementary school in the shadows because junior high school shone as period fraught with trouble.¹²⁶

¹²⁶ Parents did not discuss any adversity either. I did not interview the parents of the core (18 to 24 years old) participants who had already graduated from mainstream schools; however, I spoke with parents of students enrolled in mainstream schools at the time of my fieldwork. These parents did not discuss potential difficulties of integrating into the mainstream school system, instead focusing on *kōwa*, speech training, and academics.

Communication and academic ‘walls’ (*kabe*) were raised upon entrance to junior high school. For most students in Japan, regardless of dis/ability, junior high school signals a drastic change in educational and social practices (Cave 2011) from a more nurturing, student-centered holistic and egalitarian learning approach to large-group instruction and an achievement-focused style (Fukuzawa 1994:64, White 1987:141). Junior high school is the final stage of compulsory education in Japan. Since most students must take entrance exams to enter senior high school, they face significant pressures to advance (Fukuzawa 2001). As academics intensify, ‘information support’ (*jōhō hoshō*) becomes an increasingly important aspect for DHH students in the mainstream school system. Yet it is precisely at this point that some *inte* opt to reject this support, as will be examined later in this chapter.

In addition to the intensification of academic competition, the protective cocoon of the elementary school homeroom dissolves in junior high school and students start being taught by different subject specialists, instead of the same homeroom teacher for most of the school day (Okano, Tsuchiya 1999:60). Being taught by multiple speakers is problematic for *inte*. Participants reported that it is easiest to lip-read people with whom they engage with regularly, as they are able to learn their speech patterns. Also, it is more straightforward to have one teacher come to understand their needs rather than to try to seek understanding from multiple teachers. Just as the homeroom class is opening up to

other teachers, the cooperative *han* unit is dissolving.

Entrance to junior high school marks a transition from play to conversation-based relations, and this was where *kōwa*'s limitations became difficult to transcend.

Communication styles are gendered with *inte* noting that girls are more involved in conversation while boys continue with active play. Although students are rarely grouped in *han* in junior high school, group identities continue to be encouraged. Friendships are described as the 'positive aspects of school', and not being a part of a social group precludes students from such positive aspects (Fukuzawa 2001) as seen with Dr. Nakano's story. The self-ascribed 'lonely [student]' (*hitori bocchi*) starts to appear in life histories at this stage.

Some *inte* were able to find a refuge within their school. The hard-of-hearing classroom or resource room (outlined in chapter two) could function as a 'place to escape to' or '*nigeba*'. Outside of the classroom, *inte* may receive extra support (academic and pastoral) during elementary and junior high school in 'hard-of-hearing classes'. The hard-of-hearing classroom could function as an escape from the difficulties of daily life in the mainstream classroom. One hard-of-hearing classroom teacher spoke about students coming in during break times just to 'hang out' (*asobu*). As noted, hard-of-hearing classrooms and support rooms are not uniform around Japan; these classes may be held within the school or held at another school. This meant that some participants did not have

such a '*nigeba*' or place to escape on school grounds.

4.4 Mechanisms and Strategies to Mitigate Difference

This section will introduce some of the tactics or 'coping strategies' (Jambor, Elliott 2005:67) used to mitigate difference, including concealing markers of difference, rejecting information support, performing 'communication competence', and mimicry. I will begin by showing examples of the unwelcome attention *inte* tried to deflect and explain why they try to 'cover' their deafness.

The Unwelcome Gaze

Inte wanted to belong and to blend in, but being a minority in the mainstream presented innumerable opportunities to 'stand out' (*medatsu*). In spite of efforts to integrate, navigating the spaces of a mainstream school causes the DHH student to become the object of unwelcome gazes. It would be essentialist to argue that school age *inte* did not want to stick out because of a Japanese aversion to 'uniqueness' as illustrated by the Japanese adage, 'The nail that sticks up gets hammered down' or because Japanese adolescents detest positioning themselves as different from everyone else (Bondy 2015:112). 'Sticking out' here is involuntarily, uninvited, and based on a perceived deficit according to the medical model in Japan. *Inte* are not presenting an idiosyncratic or individualistic self nor are they conspicuous because of their achievements. From a

mainstream perspective, being deaf or hard-of-hearing is not perceived as something to be celebrated but to be corrected and managed.

Avoiding unwelcome gazes is complicated by educational practices. Deafness is said to be ‘invisible’; however, mundane practices render it visible as seen in Mayuko’s ethnographic account. Mayuko, 21 years old, is an only child from a hearing family.¹²⁷ Like the majority of Japanese children (Cave 2011:4), she attended a public elementary school near her home. In recalling her elementary school days, she lamented the attention brought to her deafness, particularly during swimming lessons.

My swimming cap was a different color! This was to make it stand out (*medatsu yō ni*) that I can’t hear. Everyone else had red caps. I was the only one with a yellow cap. I really stuck out! (*medatsu jyan!*). In 5th and 6th grade of elementary school, I truly hated this. I [hoped to get] the same [cap] as everyone (*minna to onaji ni shite kurete*). It was a kind of discrimination (*sabetsu mitai*). I used to try to get out of having to join in swim time.

Practices intended to ensure Mayuko’s safe integration had the unintended effect of visually segregating her from her peers. As Mayuko’s hearing level designates her as ‘profoundly deaf’, without her hearing aids (which must be removed to enter the pool), she would have been unable to hear safety warnings. Therefore, the teachers needed to be able to quickly spot Mayuko in the case of an emergency. However, Mayuko wished to

¹²⁷ Mayuko and I first met after the screening of a film made by a deaf filmmaker. She was with Yasushi and the other students. I later learned the two have known each other since childhood.

be treated and perceived ‘the same as everyone else’ (*minna to onaji ni*). ‘To remove difference’ (*sabetsu ga nakunaru*) is another way to express ‘integration’. *Inte* wanted to be truly integrated. They wanted to be viewed and treated the same as their peers.

Inte recalled that attempts to avoid potentially stigmatizing gazes (*shisen*) could be thwarted by their teachers. Yasushi said every year his homeroom teacher ‘gave an explanation’ to the class about his hearing loss. By the time he reached his third year of elementary school, he had begun to silently object to this embarrassing exercise. In senior high school, it became his responsibility to explain his hearing status and its implications. While recalling the experience, he signs that ‘all eyes were watching’— something he absolutely did ‘*not* like’ (*iya*). He smiled wryly and signed, ‘[I] looked like a pitiful person’.

Like many *inte*, Yasushi focused on impression management (Goffman 1959). In recollections, the preoccupation was how the self appears before the generalized other (*sekentei*) (Lebra 1976; Lebra 2004:37). According to White, ‘those who don’t have a strong group affiliation are seen as poignantly pathetically lonely—or as suspiciously independent’ (1987:42). There was a keen awareness that their disability and their lack of affiliation could cause them to be viewed as ‘pitiful’. The presentation of the self to the generalized other features prominently in their discourses more than concrete reactions to their deafness. Impression management concentrates on being seen as competent and as

similar to hearing people as possible. The ‘generalized other’ (i.e. classmates) seemed to remain, on the whole, silent on the matter. As Ryohei stated, ‘They just knew [that I am deaf]. I think they thought they’d better not say anything (*iichau dame kana*)’.

This silence facilitated covering strategies. Valentine suggests that one way that marginal people in Japan cope with marginality is by ‘passing’, which he refers to as ‘avoiding recognition as a marginal’ (1990:39). Deaf and hard-of-hearing people in Japan fall into the marginal category, as opposed to the true outsider category. Valentine points to the role of barriers in determining marginality, outsider status, and belonging—with ‘immutable’ barriers, the person becomes an outsider (1990:39). Valentine discusses Koreans who can frequently pass with relative ease, but asserts that people with ‘handicaps’ are often physically recognizable and therefore unable to pass, instead facing insurmountable barriers to belonging (1990:44). However, in the case of deaf people, in silence and stillness, the body could pass, marginally. I contend that due to the strong emphasis on physical difference in Japan, DHH people pose less of a threat to the existing moral order because they can ‘pass’ as ‘normal’ to a degree not possible for those with more visible bodily impairments.

‘Passing’ has been defined in a multitude of ways, including ‘implying impersonation, acting as if someone or something one is not’ (Fordham 1993:3) and ‘the use of strategies to appear more competent’ (Monzo, Rueda 2009:20). I argue that *inte* perform

‘discourses of passing’ (Hole 2007:267-270), which are attempts to perform normalcy and mitigate marginalizing effects. Goffman distinguishes between ‘passing’ and ‘covering’, with the former an attempt to conceal the social identity and the latter an attempt to ‘keep the stigma from looming large’ (1986 [1963]:102). Often scholars conflate the two, using ‘passing’ to refer to attempts to mitigate difference rather than conceal it entirely. In this case, ‘covering’ might be the more appropriate term as *inte* cannot fully pass but do try to minimize stigma.

Inte described ‘covering’ strategies in a myriad of ways including ‘concealing’ (*kakusu*, to hide), ‘pretending’ (*-furi suru*) and avoiding ‘gazes’ (*shisen*). Additionally, the metaphor of ‘coming out’ was used, which can be likened to Goffman’s ‘disclosure’ (1986 [1963]:100). Attempts to pass in the mainstream environment are not necessarily a desire to *be* hearing but to try to ‘cover’ or minimize the most obvious signs of their so-called ‘disability’.¹²⁸ These strategies and mechanisms minimize the most observable differences but do not lead to social integration.

Concealing Markers of Difference

One method of mitigating marginal status is concealing markers of difference. *Inte* did not report trying to pass on ‘official’ levels. For instance, they did not reject a

¹²⁸ Only two participants said they actually desired to be hearing.

government sponsored marker of difference, the disability handbook (*shōgaisha techō*).

Although obtaining one is not a legal requirement in Japan, disabled people often feel obliged to apply for a disability handbook because they cannot receive any welfare or tax benefits or be hired under employment quotas without one (Heyer 2002:126-127). On the other hand, despite the numerous benefits this handbook offers, such as access to services and discounts on transportation, there are Japanese people who forgo registering for it because they worry about the risk of being known as disabled and fear the effect on their families (Kayama 2010:118). In particular, some parents of children with cognitive disabilities avoid applying for the disability handbook because it will potentially serve as a source of stigma for the child (Maret 2008). DHH people do not seem to refrain from registering for the passbook. All participants, regardless of educational background (with one exception)¹²⁹ had received the disability handbook during childhood. Rather than using formal or official means to cover deafness, *inte* rely on informal mechanisms, such as concealing their hearing devices.

Hearing devices distinguish *inte* from their unmarked classmates. Hearing aids and cochlear implants (surgically implanted electronic devices) are visible markers of deafness and may be ‘stigma symbols’ (Goffman 1986 [1963]:46). Numerous *inte* said they

¹²⁹ Only one older formerly mainstreamed adult (in his fifties) had grown up without the passbook, until his twenties. He remarked that now that he is familiar with the system, he is confused as to how this could occur.

were self-conscious and embarrassed about their hearing aids in school. They were loath to ‘stick out’ (*medatsu*) as the sole person in the class using a hearing aid or cochlear implant.

Hearing aids and cochlear implants are objects with physiological and symbolic significance. The significance of such devices changes depending on the context. These devices can be embodied, and the relationship between the user and the object may be complex. Examples of disability and the embodiment of assistive devices can be found in the literature. For instance, in observing a wheelchair basketball team in Japan, Iwakuma contested that wheelchair users were ‘fetishistic’ about their wheelchairs, carefully selecting colors and models according to fashion and ‘identity’ and that players ‘mended the chairs just as one combs hair in a specific way’ (2002:79-80). Iwakuma posited this as being a sign that the players had embodied their chairs. The following ethnographic account introduces a young DHH woman who I argue provides an example of embodying a hearing aid. In contrast, many *inte* do not wish to merge their identity with hearing devices.

Colorfully dressed initiates stood out against the drab grey linoleum floor and beige walls of the assembly room in a community center in Osaka. Nearly all of the female initiates wore brightly colored kimono with long draping sleeves, and had intricately upswept hairdos adorned with delicate ornaments. Male initiates wore dark suits or kimono with *hakama* trousers (except for one participant who stood out in his bright red suit

topped off with orange tinted hair). On a cold morning in early January, these young people, their families, and local deaf community members, gathered to celebrate the coming of age for ‘hearing impaired’ (*chōkakushōgaisha*) youth across the Kansai region who had turned 20 years old during the previous year or were turning 20 before the new academic year.

Even in a sea of color, Takako’s kaleidoscopic hearing aid caught my eye. A purple hearing aid battery case decorated with small gemstones in pastel shades of green, pink, and blue that complemented her kimono pattern rested on the outside of her right ear. In those early days of fieldwork, I had only seen black, blue, grey, or flesh-toned hearing aids: understated, simple, and inconspicuous. As my fieldwork progressed, I saw more of these decorative hearing aids both in person and displayed in photos on Facebook and Twitter.

After the ceremony ended, the rows of metal chairs were rearranged and tables were set up. We enjoyed soft drinks and snacks while listening and watching¹³⁰ speeches and playing games such as Bingo. By chance, I had been seated near Takako’s father, mother, and younger brother, all of whom are deaf. Takako was sitting at a neighboring table with her fellow initiates. As soon as the father learned about my research topic, he proudly introduced me to his daughter, who had graduated from a mainstream high school.

¹³⁰ ‘Watching’ because some speeches were signed.

I signed 'Nice to meet you'. Much to my surprise, Takako replied in very clear English, 'Nice to meet you, too'. The conversation continued in spoken English. Her English pronunciation was very clear, but speech can mask a significant hearing loss. More tellingly, she appeared to hear exactly what I was saying without concentrating on reading my lips, indicating she likely has a fairly significant amount of residual hearing.

I argue that Takako had not only merged her identity as a hearing aid wearer but also embodied the device. Her hearing aid was part of the day's festive garb and a public symbol and celebration of her deafness. Takako's willingness to 'disclose' herself as deaf could be related to her background. Takako may have been 'hearing school-raised', but she was also raised in a deaf family. To present herself as an oral hard-of-hearing person would diverge from the vertical identity of her family unit.

Schooling, family background, and communication methods are shown to affect the likelihood of concealing hearing devices. An analysis of students at a US university with a large DHH population found that covering strategies are employed less often with individuals who have a profound hearing loss, attended residential schools, and sign within the household (Jambor, Elliott 2005:72). My data indicates that students who are from hearing families and who primarily attended mainstream schools, tended to be most likely to cover their hearing devices. Takako appeared to have a mild loss and had never attended a residential school; however, she did sign with all of her family members. In addition, her

mother, father, and brother were all wearing hearing aids. On the other hand, in this study, attendance in deaf schools (whether residential or not) was strongly correlated with *not* engaging in covering strategies during adolescence.

Similarly, a New Zealand study on hard-of-hearing adolescents in mainstream schools found that in order for hearing aid use to be viewed as ‘normal’ the wearer must adjust her narrative to align with concepts of ‘normalness’ (Kent, Smith 2006:467). In schools for the deaf, students are among fellow hearing device wearers, which normalizes their use. I argue that parents and peers who wear hearing aids (or have cochlear implants) may help to normalize the devices, regardless of educational placement. However, unlike in the Kent and Smith study, I found no correlation between level of hearing loss and the likelihood of concealing a hearing device. Even participants with the most profound levels of hearing loss spoke about attempts to cover their hearing aids in mainstream schools, especially during adolescence.

Not all *inte* had the option to conceal their hearing device(s). Many Japanese schools have strict codes about students’ hairstyles. The ability to cover in these contexts is gendered. Female *inte* had an ‘advantage’ because they could grow their hair long enough to fully disguise the hearing devices. Many female participants avoided wearing their hair tied up in a ponytail, preferring hairstyles that offered full concealment (unless in PE class). On the other hand, many male *inte* had to keep their hair shorter than the top of their ears in

accordance with school regulations.

Cochlear implants added another layer of meaning, especially in adulthood. I observed or learned about people in their thirties and forties who conceal their cochlear implants or remove the external pieces when meeting with other deaf and hard-of-hearing people. The motivation for covering, in many of these cases, is to avoid 'offending' deaf people who are opposed to cochlear implants. Interestingly, the three main¹³¹ *inte* participants who had undergone cochlear implantation surgery were ambivalent about their devices being detected. All three attended Kaiba University. One of the three, Yori, a third-year student, stopped wearing the external device 'years ago', which rendered the implanted device useless. However, Yori claimed this was because the implant caused him headaches and, moreover, did not improve his ability to decipher speech. First-year student Emiko's cochlear implant is not visible unless she ties her hair up, whereas third-year Katsu has a short buzz cut, and said he does not care if anyone sees his implant.

Rejecting Information Support

Support which is intended to facilitate academic integration often has the unintended consequence of marking students as 'other' by separating them from their

¹³¹ 'Main' indicates that I regularly worked with them throughout the entire research period. However, there were many other participants who had cochlear implants.

peers. *Jōhō hoshō*, literally ‘information security’ but more commonly glossed as ‘information support’ refers to the assistance methods available to students to gain access to classroom information. According to fieldwork data and to educational specialists, information support in the mainstream classroom and educational services in the hard-of-hearing classroom vary greatly from district to district. Support is largely dependent on the efforts of school organizers and local volunteers. For example, at the public junior high school I visited in Tokyo,¹³² the note-takers were local elderly volunteers who had attended a few training sessions. Similarly, *inte* reported that their note-takers had been local volunteers or school staff.

I gathered data on participants’ experiences receiving information support via participant observation, interview (peer and one-on-one), and questionnaires. I administered a questionnaire to first and third-year Kaiba University students. Of the 86 questionnaire respondents, 62 respondents had experience in a mainstream classroom, which means at some stage in their education they had attended a mainstream school. Out of these 62 respondents, 40 replied that they had received ‘information support’, 17 answered that they had not received any support, and five respondents did not complete this section of the questionnaire.

The definition of ‘information support’ was broadly interpreted by respondents.

¹³² This occurred post-‘official’ fieldwork during a JSPS fellowship.

For example, questionnaire respondents indicated that information support could be considered any assistance from ‘being seated in the first row’ to ‘[my] teacher wrote extra writing for me on the blackboard’.

Writing	6
Note-taking	10
Blackboard	3
Documentation	1
PC notes	6
<i>Kōwa</i>	1
Tutoring	9
<i>Shuwa</i>	8
FM System	5
‘Listening’	3
Front row seating	3
Miscellaneous	6

Figure 4.5 Information Support Received (n=40)

As seen on the chart above (**figure 4.5**), written information support (note-taking, PC notes, documentation, etc.) was the most common type of support received. Only eight respondents reported having information support in the form of *shuwa*. I had expected the total to be even lower since none of the participants I worked with closely talked about using *shuwa*.

Support could extend outside of the classroom. A number of *inte* said teachers provided written summaries of the principal’s morning assembly. One participant laughed

and said she did not bother to read these ‘boring notes’ because her classmates did not pay attention during assemblies. Nevertheless, was happy to have the *option* to ignore these assemblies--just like every hearing student. The majority of participants reported reliance on textbooks and other printed material to fill the large gaps in information. Consequently, it was common for *inte* to say they depended on ‘reading’ or ‘self-study’ (*dokugaku*). In interviews and discussions with *inte* (the majority of whom were *not* the respondents to this questionnaire as they did not attend Kaiba University), it was revealed that some students did not receive any information support during their compulsory education, either because they did not request it or because requests were denied. The need to place requests to secure information support underscores the ways that students and their parents must advocate for inclusivity.

Fieldwork findings suggest that certain information support measures, such as note-taking, do not appear to fully meet students’ learning or communication needs. Given the difficulty of writing quickly by hand, non-PC note-takers are only able to summarize the main points. As a result, students may not be receiving adequate information.¹³³ However, the students I observed did not appear to realize that the notes they receive are ‘incomplete’ and appeared grateful for the ‘extra’ information being provided. At the same

¹³³ For example, in one social studies class, the note-taker did not capture the comments made by students and teachers during the discussion time. She only summarized the teacher’s main arguments.

time, the students did not participate actively in class (e.g. answering teachers' questions).

During my visit to a junior high school, the group interview and questionnaire confirmed that the students could not follow the class discussions or contribute to them. PC note-taking makes it possible to document and relay a greater percentage of class content; however, the *inte* in this study were rarely offered this type of note-taking during their school days. This is a trend that appears to be changing as the use of technological devices (e.g. captioning) is becoming more commonplace in mainstream classrooms.

Information support is a marked activity. Receiving information support attracts unwanted attention and signals disability and difference.¹³⁴ Consequently, information support becomes implicated in 'covering' strategies as rejecting these opportunities could minimize otherness. Educational opportunities are only beneficial if the intended recipients make use of them. Not all young people will utilize educational opportunities to the fullest, creating disparity between what is offered and how the students receive it (Okano, Tsuchiya 1999:54). This was true in my research as well as in Monzo and Rueda's (2009) study of Latino children in the United States who are not competent in English. Young people have agency to balance lost academic opportunities against impression management. The authors suggest that although passing may (negatively) affect a student's academic attainment, it may allow them to

¹³⁴ During my observations of mainstreamed junior high school students, in one class there were two students receiving information support from a note-taker. However, among the *inte* participants in my main study, all reported being the only DHH student in the class (and most commonly the entire school).

‘maintain a sense of dignity’ as they develop their English skills (Monzo, Rueda 2009:37).

Similarly, *inte* were given the option to turn down this support. As academics became more rigorous, students began to reject information support in order to fit in. Hisae explained, ‘Adolescence turned me into a fool’. As a young adult, she regretted turning down learning opportunities due to social pressures. Receiving information support via note-taking is not mandatory. This rejection could be interpreted as a way to exercise one’s agency.

Performing ‘Communication Competence’

Performing ‘communication competence’ can help to alter one’s marginal status. Monzo and Rueda’s (2009) study on Latino children in an elementary school in California provides a relevant cross-cultural example. The primary language in the students’ homes was Spanish. The students were enrolled in a bilingual program that had reconfigured and instituted an English-only policy. Observations revealed that students carried out numerous passing strategies to pass as English-fluent, including avoiding eye contact, giving short affirmative responses, and ‘completing assignments any which way’ when they did not understand the instructions in English (Monzo, Rueda 2009:28). The authors conclude that this form of passing goes beyond students trying to present themselves as English-fluent to making an effort to be ‘accepted as a full member of society’ (Monzo, Rueda 2009:36). The students are aware of the power and status

associated with English. Since they are not white and ‘not American’ (although many were born in the United States), they use English as a tool to avoid revealing a potentially stigmatizing difference (Monzo, Rueda 2009:29). *Inte* also used the tools available to avoid potential stigmatization. They negotiated their membership in mainstream classes through linguistic bluffing and performing ‘communication competence’. While the Latino children had a first language, Spanish, and were trying to pass in a second language, English, the *inte* in this study were trying to pass as competent in their ‘native’ language, Japanese.

Passing in Japanese requires effective application of *kōwa* methods. I contend that *kōwa* is more performative than it is communicative because the focus is on the quality of the performances. Voices are coaxed, corrected, and refined through intervention, with the goal of effective oral communication. DHH youth of nearly all educational backgrounds are accustomed to being evaluated based on the ‘quality’ of their voices. The more time I spent ‘in the field’, the more I came to appreciate how DHH youth wish to be evaluated positively for their speaking skills and seek out praise for their performances. By ‘performances’, I am referring to the activities which ‘serv[e] to influence in any way any of the other participants’ (Goffman 1959:15).

Complimenting certain voices could not only stigmatize others but could also prove that I place a higher value on speech than signing. Hearing families and educators

rarely compliment DHH people on their signing skills. As a researcher, this placed me in an awkward position. Therefore, I was careful during my fieldwork not to praise participants who spoke ‘well’. I did not wish to unintentionally slight any of the participants who may not have spoken as well nor did I want to be seen as taking an oralist stance.¹³⁵ Nevertheless, I was frequently indirectly called upon to evaluate participants’ speech ‘performances’.

‘What is your favorite Japanese food?’

It was break time between classes at a school for the deaf in a prefecture north of Tokyo. I was there for the day to tour the school and observe lessons in the junior high school division. One of the homeroom teachers claimed that there had not been a foreign teacher in this school for nearly ten years.¹³⁶ My visit had caused a ripple of excitement throughout the school. I was looking at the posters and visual aids on the back wall when I heard a loud voice behind me. I turned to see a small boy with short spiky hair, wearing hearing aids, standing with his hands at his sides and his back rigid. I smiled at him. The student, Isamu, repeated his question with a big smile.

¹³⁵ Oral communication is a contested issue in deaf communities, and I did not want to alienate anyone. I was told by one teacher that the reason many deaf and hard-of-hearing people were willing to participate in my research was because I was respectful of deaf people and their language. Putting too much emphasis on oral communication could break the trust I had worked so hard to gain.

¹³⁶ This surprised me as mainstream schools regularly have a foreign ALT (assistant language teacher) co-teach or teach special English classes.

‘What is your favorite Japanese food?’

‘Sashimi,’ I answered slowly careful to enunciate. Even though he was not signing, I also signed ‘sashimi’. ‘How about you?’, I simultaneously signed and spoke.

‘I like tonkatsu!’ Isamu’s voice was loud but measured. His arms remained at his sides. ‘Do you like sports?’, he continued.

‘Yes, a little. I like watching basketball. How about you?’

‘I play soccer. OK, bye!’

‘Oh, bye!’

Just as suddenly as the conversation had begun, it was over. Isamu nodded quickly at the classroom teacher, took a few steps back, and bowed first in the teacher’s direction and then a second time toward me. He paused and flashed a proud smile before spinning on one heel and scurrying back to his classroom.

Isamu’s proud smile and bravado tinged with nervousness brought back memories of my days as an English language teacher in elementary, junior, and senior high schools in Japan. Brave students would approach me in the hall or the teachers’ room and ‘perform’ rehearsed English dialogues. I would praise them generously, which would encourage repeat performances. A key difference was that, on this occasion, the interaction with Isamu was not in a ‘foreign’ language. Our conversation was conducted entirely in spoken Japanese.

Later that day, while observing his class, I saw Isamu signing with his classmates. I began to wonder why he had chosen to speak with me. Isamu may have been accustomed to associating hearing people with speech and DHH people with *shuwa*. Perhaps Isamu

was just excited to be interacting with a visitor, especially an overseas one. Ultimately, I believe the goal of this interaction had been performance. Isamu was demonstrating his hard-won speaking skills.

In this case, the audience was hearing adults, but DHH peers may be the intended audience for performances. DHH people of all backgrounds informally evaluate one another on their speech. For some DHH people, especially those heavily involved in Deaf culture, speaking is a sign of hearing oppression and demonstrates a lack of pride in being deaf. In contrast, young *inte* tend to be quick to praise their friends and acquaintances for having a ‘nice voice’.¹³⁷ Compared to their deaf school-raised and U-turn peers, *inte* appear more likely to compliment peers who are ‘accomplished’ in *kōwa* as well as less likely to criticize peers who use oral communication. This is in contrast with some deaf school-raised youth who are highly critical of people who use oral communication. Having been raised in the ‘hearing world’, young *inte* tend to be unaware of the larger debates over oralism in the ‘deaf world’. Even if they dislike *kōwa* training, they are cognizant of the preference for speech in mainstream society. These same *inte* may be strictly ‘voice off’ in deaf spaces, code switching based on context.

Inte often take great pride in their *kōwa* abilities. Generally, Japanese people are

¹³⁷ In only three of the cases where this happened, the *inte* had been post-lingually deafened. In another case, the female *inte* had lost her hearing slowly over a long period of time (progressive hearing loss). In all of the other cases, the *inte* being praised was pre-lingually deafened.

apt to deflect praise (e.g. ‘Ah, come on, it is not that good!’; ‘*Iie, sono koto arimasen!*’).

However, *inte* usually accept compliments on their speech with pleasure. Sometimes *inte* made light of the fact that as ‘hearing impaired’ individuals, they may not be the best judges of the ‘quality’ of voices. When Tatsuo, 21 years old, complimented his friend, Chika, 20 years old, on her clear pronunciation, he paused before adding, ‘Maybe... I don’t *really* know if your voice is good, do I?’ to which they both laughed heartily.

Performance is also a receptive act. Since communication ‘outs’ the students as deaf and hard-of-hearing, they often try to manage their presentation by appearing as hearing students through speech. Performing comprehension or ‘bluffing’ is an extension of *kōwa* both in training and its implication. The most common way of receptive covering is ‘*wakatta furi*’ or ‘pretending to understand’.

Japanese educational practices and communication patterns in society may facilitate this linguistic bluffing. In educational spheres, the classroom environment might permit students to bluff because there is not a strong emphasis on classroom debates or the free exchanges of ideas. In the wider society, fixed expressions facilitate guesswork. For example, in convenience stores, clerks typically ask stock questions in a fixed order and rarely engage in spontaneous small talk. In workplaces, speech can be scripted at times. For instance, colleagues and superiors invariably say ‘*Otsukaresama desu*’ (We/you’ve worked hard) at the day’s end. Certainly, not every interaction neatly follows a script and

more in-depth conversations require two-way communication. Furthermore, guesswork leaves many gaps. Missing out on communication can lead to stress, frustration, and loss of important information.¹³⁸ The social limits to *kōwa* in mainstream schools become more apparent over the life course as ‘pretending’ and ‘guesswork’ become increasingly necessary.

Performing communication competence can prove more challenging than performing speech. As a result, *inte* with ‘strong oral skills’ sometimes dominate conversations, which I argue enables them to control the topics and flow of conversation. This style of communication makes it possible to express ideas, interest, and wishes without worrying about lip-reading sudden shifts in conversation.¹³⁹ In other words, when communicating with hearing peers and parents, they only need to worry about their side of the conversation as it is assumed that the hearing conversation partner will understand their speech.

This communication strategy might seem counterintuitive because it is their ‘deaf accent’ which ‘outs’ *inte*. Yet if they can control their side of the interaction, ‘slippages’ are less likely to occur. Based on my observations, when slippages do occur, *inte* are reluctant to break the performance, instead continuing to pretend to understand. As a fieldworker,

¹³⁸ I had read that one of the most hated phrases in English for DHH people is ‘never mind’. Therefore, I was not surprised to learn that *inte* disliked being told ‘*nan demo nai*’, the Japanese equivalent, by family and hearing peers.

¹³⁹ I hypothesize that this may have been another strategy for covering or passing.

this behavior could be problematic when communicating with *inte* who rely on *kōwa*. I needed to delicately rephrase questions to determine whether or not they were bluffing. Sometimes I relied on written communication, but I hesitated to suggest this method as it could draw attention to a ‘failed’ performance. At times, this talkative ‘tactic’ or communication ‘measure’ could be useful to me as a fieldworker collecting data. However, this one-sided communication style is unlikely to aid someone in forming mutually beneficial empathetic friendships.

Performing ‘communication competence’ is not only focused on the self and impression management. *Inte* perform ‘communication competence’ to avoiding inconveniencing others. One day, while sorting through my bookcase, I came across an old Japanese language textbook. I began flipping through the pages. Suddenly, an expression caught my attention:

‘Do not inconvenience other people’.
(*Hokano hito ni meiwaku o kakete wa ikemasen.*)

The textbook passage went on to explain that this is an expression that Japanese parents teach their children. Ethnographic research has demonstrated that ensuring a child does not trouble or annoy others is an explicit aim of childrearing (*shitsuke*) (Hendry 1986:82-83). Inconveniencing another person is an unavoidable but egregious offense in Japanese society. Even a *potential* inconvenience is an issue. For instance, in most business emails,

requests are typically softened with expressions apologizing to the other party for ‘causing inconvenience’.

Avoiding ‘inconveniencing people’ figured prominently in ethnographic accounts. Certainly, *inte* try to pass or cover to avoid sticking out and attracting unwanted attention. This is only one motivation. Asking someone to make adjustments to compensate for their deafness could cause inconvenience (*meiwaku*) to the hearing person.¹⁴⁰ This should be avoided. As Chika explained, ‘You don’t want to ruin the mood’. Personal inconvenience is not the priority. It is inconvenient to have to ask others to make phone calls. It is inconvenient not to be able to see most Japanese movies in the theatres.¹⁴¹ It is inconvenient to not be able to hear one’s name called in a hospital waiting room. However, *inte* can endure (*gaman*) these personal inconveniences. They worry about inconveniencing others.

Fear of inconveniencing others could be a deterrent for participating in activities, such as school clubs. When Satsuki, 19 years old, a first-year student at Kaiba University, reached senior high school she was finally able to pursue a longstanding interest: Japanese archery (*kyūdō*). Her deafness quickly became an issue. During practice it was necessary to walk in front of teammates to retrieve arrows. As a safety measure, team members would shout to warn everyone to cease firing. One day, Satsuki did not hear the

¹⁴⁰ Some *inte* even stated that asking members of their family, particularly fathers, to repeat something because they could not lip-read would cause a nuisance and they preferred to avoid doing so.

¹⁴¹ Participants often watch ‘foreign’ movies instead because they would be captioned in Japanese.

warning call and fired her arrow. Fortunately, no one was injured, but a senior club member (*senpai*) scolded her harshly. Shortly after this incident, Satsuki decided to quit the archery club because she did not want to ‘inconvenience everyone’. It would be a hassle for teammates to personally notify her each time someone stepped forward to collect arrows. She ended her story by shrugging and saying ‘*shōganai*’ (‘It cannot be helped’). Satsuki positioned the potential inconvenience of others above her self-interest.

Fear of inconveniencing others sometimes acted as a deterrent to joining extracurricular clubs in the first place. In Japan, school clubs hold great significance, and dropping out or avoiding them means eliminating a crucial means to create bonds with students outside of one’s homeroom and learn about social hierarchies (Fukuzawa 2001:55). These clubs are also said to be essential settings for ‘character building’ (*ningen kaisei*) (Blackwood, Friedman 2015:257). Clubs foster both a group and an individual identity, as students can select which club they would like to join (Cave 2007). Senior and junior relationships (*senpai-kohai*) are practiced as students of all three years are together in the same club, with older classmates guiding the younger ones. A club could provide an important place for belonging (*ibasho*) and peer association. Students who might otherwise be socially isolated gain opportunities to be associated with a group. Participants with alternative narratives of inclusion and belonging during junior and senior high school were nearly always those who were members of sports clubs or

teams during their school days. Excelling in sports carved a path to belonging, as teammates valued their athletic contributions.

Mimicry

Mimicry (*mane suru*) is another strategy for covering difference and negotiating belonging in a hearing environment. Since only a minority of DHH children have a deaf role model in the home, deaf teachers and older classmates (*senpai*) in schools for the deaf serve as role models. In contrast, hearing people are the ‘model’ (*tehon*) for DHH students in mainstream schools (Uenō 2003:199-200). This is believed to set a child up for failure because no matter how hard she tries, if a hearing person is the benchmark, a DHH child will inevitably fall short (Uenō 2003:199-200). Nevertheless, young people are bound to mimic their contemporaries. *Inte* frequently mimicked their hearing peers in mainstream schools. Hearing classmates provided models of how to behave. As Emiko, 18 years old, said, ‘I stood up when they stood up, sat down when they sat down, and laughed when they laughed’. Ryohei, 19 years old, said that he even pretended to sing in music class by copying the mouth shapes of his classmates. Most of the time, *inte* never talked about this behavior with their families. However, sometimes families were made aware of this mimicry, as Ayumi’s story illustrates.

Ayumi, 22 years old, from a hard-of-hearing family is not a ‘typical’ *inte* participant because even though she was ‘completely hearing school-raised’, she used

shuwa with her ‘hard-of-hearing’ mother from a young age. Despite her family background, her experiences in school paralleled those of *inte* from hearing families. In particular, Ayumi frequently bluffed when she could not understand and copied her peers to try to fit in. One of her earliest childhood memories is of mimicking speech.

This is the story I really remember (*sugoi oboetteiru*) about myself as not hearing (*kikoenai kiroku*), the very oldest memory I have ... It was a video taken at my day-care center.

Ayumi’s family first realized she ‘couldn’t hear well’ when she was about one or two years old.¹⁴² Around that time, she began speech training (*hatsuon renshu*) at a university hospital in central Tokyo as well as speech training at a major rehabilitation center.¹⁴³

One day at her day-care center,¹⁴⁴ the students were helping to create an end-of-year video. Each child was approached to record a farewell message. Ayumi remembered the camera being pointed at her but not knowing what to say or do. According to Ayumi, this was not unusual because she spent her days, ‘not knowing what was being said’. All she understood was that she *must* say something, anything. The teachers were waiting. In response, she started muttering nonsense and moving her lips. Her friend Hisae interrupted the story.

Hisae: You kind of fudged it (*gomakashita*)?

¹⁴² Like many *inte*, she was unsure about the exact timeline of her diagnosis.

¹⁴³ She could not remember why she had attended two different speech training classes.

¹⁴⁴ Ayumi’s parents both worked outside the home, so she attended a day-care center.

Ayumi: Exactly!

Ayumi went on to explain that this video was distributed to teachers and parents. First her mother watched the clip. She turned to Ayumi and said ‘I don’t know what you’re saying’. Then her mother called Ayumi’s grandmother, whose hearing loss is mild in comparison, into the room. The grandmother turned the volume up on the television. She responded emphatically, ‘I have *no idea* what Ayumi is saying’. Next, they called in Ayumi’s hearing father. He would be the one who would determine, once and for all, what Ayumi was saying on the tape. He father quietly watched the clip. Then he turned around and announced, ‘She’s not saying anything. That is *not* Japanese’. Ayumi and Hisae laughed.

Ayumi adds,

My way [of getting by] was to look around and act the same as others (*onaji ugoki o suru*).

Mimicry could be looked at as performing a role: the role of a fully integrated student in a hearing environment. Or mimicry could be viewed as embodied learning (*karada de oboeru*) (Kondo 1990:238; Sato 2004:203) as *inte* use their bodies to learn and remember hearing ‘mannerisms’. There is an element of both role performance and embodied learning in mimicry. To some degree, students of all backgrounds copy their peers. Mimicry is part of socialization. When I was a teacher at a private junior and

senior high school in Tokyo, I observed students copying the mannerisms, trends, slang, and styles of the informal class ‘leaders’. For *inte*, the mimicry is not about taste or popularity. It is about securing a place in a hearing world.

School age *inte* devised strategies to ‘cope’ with difference, to mitigate their marginal status, and to adapt themselves to hearing environments. These strategies included concealing markers of difference, rejecting information support, performing ‘communication competence’, and mimicry. The next section will explore the result of acquiring ‘hearing habits’ through mimesis.

4.5 *Inte* Habitus?

Based on Bourdieu’s concept of habitus (1990), I argue that *inte* develop particular linguistic behaviors, bodily skills, habits, and even taste as a result of daily interactions with hearing students. Even though the majority of deaf school-raised youth are exposed to the same primary ‘hearing habitus’ in the home, they acquire a secondary habitus in schools for the deaf. In contrast, an *inte*’s commonsense understanding of the world is solely based on the norms of mainstream hearing society. These strategies become the ‘*inte* habitus’.

Inte acquired certain ways (*sube*) of interacting and habits (*kuse*) from the repeated utilization of strategies associated with negotiating or mitigating difference in hearing school environments. These collections of habits and dispositions become the *inte* habitus.

Firstly, I argue that *inte* become accustomed to producing and performing speech rather than engaging in give-and-take communication. Secondly, *inte* often appear unable to anticipate the needs of a DHH communication partner even though her needs may be similar to their own.

DHH ‘elders’ in their thirties, forties, fifties and older did not hesitate to share their opinions about *inte* behavior. One participant, Yoshida-san, has a distinct angle of view: she spent the first half of her life as a hearing person and the second half as a deaf one. At the age of 19, Yoshida-san lost her hearing following a sudden illness. She entered the hospital as a hearing person and was discharged as a profoundly deaf one. Now in her forties, Yoshida-san has spent over twenty years in deaf spaces. She is neither deaf school-raised nor is she an *inte*. According to Yoshida-san, *inte* behave differently from deaf school-raised DHH youth in terms of demonstrating empathy and awareness.

It is wonderful that ‘integrated people’ (*integureshyon no hito*) made such great efforts (*hontō ni doryoku shite*). If they did not put in that effort, they could not have continued [in mainstream schools]. So much power and endurance (*gaman*) was necessary. When they become adults and we start to do activities together, [I can look and say] ah, that person is *inte*! All by themselves, they had to fight and fight to make it. They made it by not being beaten. Myself, myself (*jibun, jibun*). I think [*inte*] often cannot cooperate well with others ... Certainly, there are some people who can make friends easily (*umaku tsukiai*) if they had some sort of other association, like a local [deaf] circle or [deaf] relatives. If they were raised that way then they can understand other people’s feelings. People from deaf schools (*rōgakkō no shushin*) are much better at it. They could normally communicate in *shuwa*. [For instance] if someone has an accident. They say ‘Are you OK? Are you alright?’ ... If deaf have *shuwa* they can naturally (*shizen ni*) associate. [*Inte*] lack awareness and have little experience communicating with others.

Many DHH people as well as hearing proponents of bilingual education echo Yoshida-san. *Inte* are seen to have poor interpersonal skills and be unable to relate to or empathize with others. In addition to missing out on the ‘gentler’ aspects of friendships, such as affinity and shared sentiment, hearing school-raised youth are said to lack ‘experience in arguing’ (*kenka suru keiken ga nai*). Due to social neglect (rather than bullying), *inte* are rarely ‘told off’ by their peers. Japanese society is said to be based on an ideology of harmony (*wa*); however, in order to maintain this harmony, it is necessary to know how to diffuse potential conflict.

Inte did not doubt their interpersonal skills. In fact, some *inte* view themselves as particularly empathetic, often mentioning that they can understand the feelings of other disabled people and people who do not fit into society. I would argue that *inte* are trying to adapt to the needs of others. As noted, one of the reasons these strategies are used is to avoid inconveniencing people. On the other hand, there is some evidence that *inte* may not demonstrate an ability to participate in give-and-take communication, at least before ‘practicing’ in friendships with DHH peers. The output-focused style of communication described in this chapter does not necessarily contribute to the development of meaningful peer relationships based on mutual affinity. This style also does not correlate to the notion of anticipating the needs and feelings of others. From preschool age, being able to read and understand others without explanation is highly valued (Tobin, Hsueh et al. 2009:139). *Inte*

may be too preoccupied with the labor of performing ‘communication competence’ to consider their conversation partner’s needs.

The *inte* habitus may have helped *inte* to survive in the mainstream schools, but it does little to help them to integrate into deaf spaces. Kenta, 20 years old, describes his first interactions with DHH peers. The first time I met Kenta we were at a gathering of young people for Zenkon (Japan Deaf [University] Students Association). After the party ended, by chance, we ended up walking to Akihabara station in Tokyo together. He was attempting to sign to me while carrying a box, so I offered to help. We swapped the box back and forth, occasionally signing one-handed. A more experienced person may have been able to ‘detect’ that Kenta is an *inte*. However, I was still relatively new to the field, and Kenta signs completely ‘voiced off’ with speed and confidence. He is also a leader in the organization and is highly active in deaf sports clubs. He seems confident and comfortable in deaf spaces. As a result, I had erroneously assumed that he had graduated from a school for the deaf.

However, when Kenta first encountered *shuwa* and signing peers, he did not know how to engage in mutually comprehensible communication. According to one of his deaf school-raised friends, he was ‘chatting non-stop’ although she repeatedly asked him to write, oblivious to the fact that, as a deaf person, she could not understand his speech. He could not anticipate her communication needs, even though, ostensibly, they would be

similar to his own. What appeared to his new friend as a stubborn insistence on speaking was second nature to Kenta.

Even when he began learning *shuwa*, his *inte* habitus shaped his interactions. Kenta continued to pretend to understand (*wakatta furi suru*), often replying in the affirmative to whatever was being signed. This continued until one day a signing deaf school-raised friend interceded, ‘No! Stop that!’ Kenta became conscious that he was bluffing in *shuwa* and started to reflect upon his communication habits. From that point on, he decided to learn *shuwa*—not to use as a method to fit in, but as a tool to ‘truly’ communicate. His language acquisition was rapid because he immersed himself in deaf spaces. He soon acquired a secondary habitus. Many deaf school-raised and *inte* youth told me that Kenta is an example of someone who had quickly become fluent in *shuwa* and who has embraced the deaf world.

As Kenta’s story demonstrates, the reception of the *inte* habitus depends on the space, namely whether one is in a deaf, hearing, or mixed (deaf and hearing) space. Moreover, habitus is not static. Articulation and reinterpretation of the habitus occurs. When an *inte* makes the decision to seek belonging in deaf spaces, she may try to shed her ‘in-betweenity’ and transform by observing and modelling DHH peers.

4.6 Pride in Perseverance

‘Actually, I’m not proud to be deaf. I am proud of having fought hard (*ganbatta*) in the hearing world my whole life’

– Reina, 23 years old

From a young age, Japanese children are raised to demonstrate ‘*gaman*’, which can be glossed as ‘endurance’ (Hendry 1986: 83-34), and to grow through *kurō* or ‘hard work’ or ‘hardships’ (Sato 2004:7). ‘Endurance’, ‘patience’, ‘effort’, and ‘working hard’ could fall under the umbrella of ‘perseverance’ in English. Perseverance is admired in most contexts in Japanese society, but a person with a disability in Japan may be held up as a special ‘role model’ who endures (Stibbe 2001). The desire to see people nobly endure may explain the incredible success of the memoir *Nobody’s Perfect* (Ototake 1998) about a Japanese man born without arms or legs who endured many hardships but triumphed by being accepted to the prestigious Waseda University.

Demonstration of perseverance could be an antidote to pity. *Inte* often proudly refer to situations in which they had to demonstrate such perseverance during their school days. For many *inte*, *not* having gone to a school for the deaf is in some ways as significant as having attended a mainstream school. While expressing envy of the social advantages found in deaf schools, they also express pride in having overcome the challenges inherent in the mainstream school system. Ultimately, they had successfully avoided the alternative: ‘U-turning’. Nakamura wrote about U-turned DHH students in Japan who attend preschool at a

school for the deaf, integrate during elementary school, and then return to a school for the deaf from junior high school (or senior high school) (2001, 2006). My research revealed that this U-turn trajectory is still common today. According to U-turn students I met in the field, such as Aogu introduced in chapter two, after an initial ‘culture shock’, resulting from the sudden immersion in a deaf space, they adapted relatively quickly to the deaf school environment and acquired horizontal identities with peers. U-turn students frame this positively; however, from an oralist perspective, they are perceived as having ‘failed’ to successfully assimilate or integrate in a hearing environment. Parents reinforce the value of enduring in the mainstream system. Most *inte* reported that they never asked to attend a school for the deaf; however, several had voiced this wish to their parents who persuaded them to remain in the mainstream school. There was an expectation that *inte* should ‘persevere’ for the sake of their future as ‘full members of society’ (*shakaijin*).

4.7 Conclusion

I think it is very hard (*tsurai*) for people who cannot hear (*kikoenai hito*) not to meet other people who ‘cannot hear’. [They think] why is it just me? Where are the other people like me? But once they meet other deaf people they learn how to communicate, how to live.

– Hisae, 24 years old

As this dissertation has aimed to prove thus far, *inte* are often ‘the other’ in hearing environments. In hearing families, *inte* are frequently an anomaly as the sole family

member who does not fully share a vertical identity.¹⁴⁵ In mainstream ‘hearing schools’, *inte* are a minority of one in the classroom, if not in the entire school. The challenge of growing up without any DHH role models is illustrated by Hisae’s quote above.

Deafness may be referred to as an ‘invisible’ disability, but there are visible markers of difference that distinguish an *inte* from her peers such as wearing hearing devices and receiving information support. Despite employing strategies to diffuse, mitigate, and conceal difference, *inte* typically struggle to fully socially integrate. It is ‘human relations’ (*ningen kankei*) not academics that pose the greatest obstacle to full integration. Group interactions are said to offer Japanese teenagers ‘a training ground for the demands of adult *ningen kankei* [human relationships]’ (White 1993:146). This training is initiated from the earliest stages of education, but DHH in mainstream schools may not have opportunities to undergo this training. As will be discussed in the next chapter, once *inte* encounter *shuwa* and DHH peers, they may embark on a ‘self-searching’ journey through language and peer association, which can lead to finding an ‘*ibasho*’, a place to belong.

¹⁴⁵ In deaf, mixed, or hard-of-hearing families, there may be some inheritance of identity.

■ ■ Chapter 5

Finding *Shuwa*, the Self, and a ‘Place to Belong’

5.0 Introduction

The moment when a deaf (or hard-of-hearing) person first meets other deaf people is described in American Sign Language (ASL) as MET DEAF, WOW! (2004).¹⁴⁶ This phrase was coined by scholar Gina Oliva, a mainstreamed deaf American woman. These are the eye-opening revelatory moments when a person realizes there are others like her but also markedly different because these people use Sign language. In his book, *Madness in the Mainstream* (2013), Drolsbaugh frequently refers to ‘true peers’ who are met during or after these revelatory moments and the ‘shock’, ‘joy’ and ‘awe’, which follows (2013:72-73).¹⁴⁷ Although *inte* described a version of MET DEAF, WOW!, participants emphasized how these ‘encounters’ are only one chapter in their complicated life stories. *Inte* told ‘messier’ narratives of ambivalence, bias, resistance, and self-searching.

This chapter continues to interrogate the concept of ‘integration’ by focusing on the role of new friendships and Sign language ‘encounters’ in the processes of self-searching and the search for belonging. This chapter begins by looking at the lens of stigma and how *inte*’s internalized stigma translates into bias toward others. Then it

¹⁴⁶ Capitalized to represent that these are ASL signs (MET + DEAF + WOW!).

¹⁴⁷ The author is writing from the perspective of an American deaf man raised by deaf parents (who ‘kept [him] away from the deaf community’), educated in a mainstream school, and now a parent to a deaf child (Drolsbaugh 2008). Yet his school experiences are similar to mainstreamed students from hearing families.

examines the concept of ‘self-searching’ (*jibun sagashi*) in Japanese society, focusing on the forms of the self, which are implicated in this process. I argue that ‘encountering’ *shuwa* and signers is a key element of self-searching. Therefore, I look at how friendships are catalysts for transformation with friends taking the role of informal *shuwa* teachers. Finally, I explore the process of finding an *ibasho*, a place to belong.

5.1 The Lens of Stigma

Disability is not an absolute; it is an ‘attribution of corporeal deviance’ based on the cultural rules about the body (Thomson 1997:6). When the rules are broken, stigma may be applied. ‘Stigma’ is defined by Goffman as ‘the process by which the reaction of others spoils normal identity’ (1986 [1963]:3). The deviance model explores processes of social labelling, discrimination, and the negotiation of stigma in social interactions (Goffman 1986 [1963]). The stigmatized include the physically impaired as well as people who possess ‘character deficiencies’ and those who suffer tribal or kin-based stigma (race, nation, religion) (Goffman 1986 [1963]:17). ‘Deviant’ people experience prejudice and marginalization, while being transformed from victims into culprits. The ‘deviant model’ focuses on flaws in the individual and how people react to them. This relates to the ‘*sekentei*’, how one appears to others, the public self, the world of the unseen audience (Lebra 1992:107, Lebra 2004:65).

Bodily impairments are universal, but the concept of ‘disability’ is a social construct. Even though organizations, such as the World Health Organization, define disability based on ‘objective’ criteria, in reality, the term disability is ‘amorphous and relativistic’ (Murphy 1987: 66). Which individuals are considered ‘disabled’ and how they are perceived by society varies cross-culturally. How and why a society labels certain individuals as ‘disabled’ and the response to this label may reveal new faces of the prism of personhood and the body. People who do not fit standards of ‘normal’ are subject to cultural values placed on ‘abnormal bodies’.

Disability has been negatively framed in Japanese society and disabled people in Japan have historically been seen as ‘an existence which should not exist’ (Hayashi, Okuhira 2001:861). Up until the mid-20th century, they continued to be hidden from the world by family members (Itagaki, Toki 1993). In general, those who could not be ‘cured’ were removed from the public sphere through society’s rejection (Mogi 1992, Norden 1994). Academic integration is believed to help normalize disabled people by socializing them in mainstream spaces.

One reason for the negative evaluation of disability is that it has been associated with harm. According to Shinto concepts of pollution (*kegare*), people who suffer from illness or damage are regarded as polluting and harmful (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984). Language may reflect stigmatizing attributes. The Chinese characters for ‘disability’ have

traditionally been associated with harm and impurity. In Japanese, ‘disability’ (*shōgai*) contains the character ‘gai’, which is written with the Chinese character for ‘harm’ or ‘damage’ (害). Words that contain *gai* indicate harm or tragedy, such as *kōgai* (pollution), *saigai* (disaster), *satsugai* (murder), *hakugai* (oppression), *heigai* (vice) and *kagai* (violence) (Gottlieb 2001:998). However, today there is resistance to the use of ‘harm’ in ‘disability’. Valentine noted the substitution for a Chinese character that signifies social obstacle instead of injury or damage (2002:223). During fieldwork, I observed posters, blogs, and information pamphlets that eliminated the Chinese character for *gai*, instead spelling it out in *hiragana*, a phonetic alphabet, and rejecting the inclusion of the potentially stigmatizing character.

Disability in Japan has also been associated with impurity. Douglas, while not specifically addressing disability, showed that anomaly in society is often associated with impurity (1966). Polluting forces are typically those that fall between important categories of society. Deaf Japanese have Japanese blood and may share cultural skills; however, they speak Japanese ‘imperfectly’ if at all. It is important to remember that anomaly goes beyond classification as it is an embodied status engaged in social interactions (Colligan 2001:115). Dangerous and impure bodies may be stigmatized.

The lens of stigma as an analytical tool is not without theoretical shortcomings. Goffman’s ‘stigma’ category is argued to be too inclusive to be useful (Nicolaisen

1995:40), a point that Goffman himself acknowledged. For instance, when Robert F. Murphy and his colleagues add women to the stigmatized category in the United States, they found that the only non-stigmatized group was 'heterosexual WASP men in reasonably good physical condition, and preferably over five-and-a-half feet tall' (Murphy, Scheer et al. 1988:236). In Japan, a similar exercise would likely leave only white-collar (married) able-bodied Japanese men outside the stigmatized category. This model also fails to distinguish between 'deliberate violators' and people who 'violate' due to birth or fate (Murphy, Scheer et al. 1988:236). The stigmatized in Japan includes both types of violators; in addition to the disabled and other groups 'born into' their status like Buraku and Ainu, the category contains people who acquire their status such as criminals and members of certain political groups (Valentine 1990), single mothers (Hertog 2009), and the elderly (Kiefer 1999). Further, ambivalence surrounds people with disabilities not found in relation to other 'deviant' groups. As members of an 'invisible' minority, DHH people may have opportunities to 'pass' or 'cover' that are not available to more 'visible' minorities who may face greater stigma in their communities.

While there are limitations to analyzing this phenomenon through this lens of stigma, it is applicable to this study. Firstly, using the lens of stigma and deviance is useful to examine how the normative and the deviant are constructed and to draw parallels between culturally oppressed groups (Thomson 1997:32). Further, the term was produced

and reproduced by participants throughout this study. In describing their experiences and views, participants frequently sign or vocalize ‘*henken*’, which can be translated as ‘prejudice’ or ‘bias’. *Henken* is composed of the character for ‘partial’ or ‘bias’ and ‘to look’ or ‘see’ (**figure 5.1**).

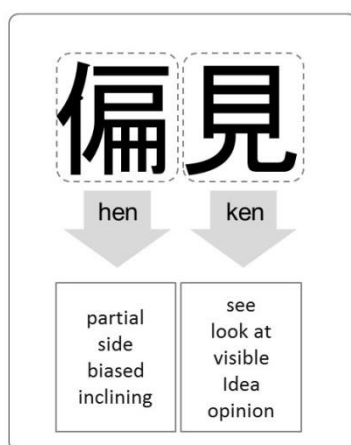


Figure 5.1 Chinese Characters for ‘*Henken*’ (bias, prejudice)

Henken does not have precisely the same connotation as ‘stigma’; however, it has been defined in English as ‘negatively biased views, prejudice, stigma’ in relation to disability (Kayama, Haight 2014). Upon closely analyzing my data, I found that *henken* appeared in the majority of conversations and interviews at some stage of the research. Participants frequently mouthed, finger spelled, or signed (**figure 5.2**) ‘*henken*’. When participants mention *henken*, they are implicitly referencing perceptions and reactions in society that relate to Goffman’s stigma.

Stigma is pervasive in both public and private spheres. Bias against disabled people is found in Japanese society as well as within the home. Most DHH children are

raised by ‘able-bodied’ hearing people who are sensitive to the stigma in Japanese society.

The DHH child may then, in turn, internalize this stigma. Whether or not a child interprets her identity as stigmatized is related to how her family interprets and expresses this difference (Leigh 2009:65).

Stigma is not straightforward. *Inte* often express feelings of bias toward ‘the other’, signing deaf people encountered in their youth. As will be discussed in the next section, before ‘coming out’, they othered signers and subjected them to the stigmatizing views of Japanese society. Also, while stigma is negative, it is important to note the unintended positive outcome. Shared stigma can foster a sense of community (Thomson 1997:15), which often leads to a sense of sameness and affinity among DHH youth in spite of their diverse backgrounds.

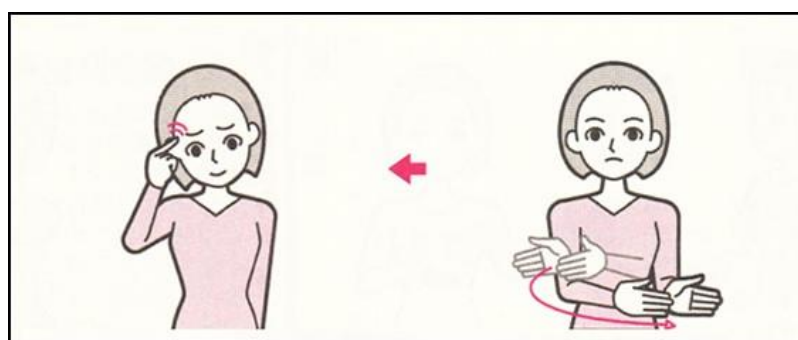


Figure 5.2 One Sign for ‘*Henken*’ (bias, prejudice) (JFD 2014:386)

5.2 Stigmatizing the Self, Stigmatizing Others

Before ‘encountering’ DHH peers, *inte* demonstrated an internalized stigma as well as a tendency to stigmatize other DHH people. In order to self-search through others, *inte* must reconcile their biases (*henken*) and fears of exposure with their desire to communicate freely. For the youngest *inte*, meaning those who have recently graduated from mainstream senior high schools, individual constructions of deafness are generally negative. ‘My ears are bad’ (*mimi ga warui*) was a common synonym for ‘hearing impaired’, ‘hard-of-hearing’ or ‘deaf’. ‘Not being able to hear’ (*kikoenai koto*) was described as a nuisance (*mendokusai*), a burden (*nimotsu*), and a cause of solitude (*hitori bocchi*).

An internalized stigma becomes the lens through which other DHH people are viewed. Before ‘encountering’ signing peers, *inte* often distanced themselves from other deaf and hard-of-hearing people through stigmatizing and ‘othering’ discourses. *Inte* did not want to be the objects of unwelcome gazes, yet they turned judgement on others. They conflated signing with deafness, a source of shame, choosing to resist (*teikō*) association with *shuwa* and its users. The deaf person was the stranger, the other, and the object of stigma. This stance highlights the ways in which the ‘other’ is a relative and contextual concept. As young children, *inte* were primarily immersed in the hearing world with limited exposure to signing DHH people. Public spaces, such as trains,

afforded the first glimpses of *shuwa* for many *inte*.¹⁴⁸

‘We have the same hearing disability, but they seem strange to me.’

-Ryuta, male, 24 years old

Ryuta¹⁴⁹ and Masao¹⁵⁰ both aged 24, are childhood friends. I first met Ryuta very early in my fieldwork at a ‘cram school’ for deaf and hard-of-hearing students.¹⁵¹ Ryuta was tutoring DHH students there. Several months later, I met Masao at a deaf happy hour event in central Tokyo, and I started to spend more time with him, too. It was not until the second time meeting Masao that I learned he is good friends with Ryuta. Masao had invited me to a dinner with ‘two of his friends’. Much to my surprise, when we arrived at the restaurant Ryuta was seated at the table. Discovering connections between participants would happen numerous times during my research. Even though the two young men had been friends since childhood, they claimed they had never discussed ‘serious’ topics connected to their deafness. However, one day during their peer interview, the discussion of early impressions of *shuwa* and its users revealed a bias against ‘other types of deaf people’.

Masao is a more fluent signer than Ryuta. He spends his free time with DHH

¹⁴⁸ *Shuwa* might be encountered in ‘moral education’ classes (*dōtoku kyōiku*) in school, or in community *shuwa* circles. However, most often *inte* first observed signing in public spaces

¹⁴⁹ First introduced in the introduction.

¹⁵⁰ First introduced in chapter three.

¹⁵¹ Ryuta was the person who first introduced me to the word ‘*inte*’.

friends and tends to sign a version of contact/pidgin signing (a blend of JSL and signed Japanese) in a ‘voice off’ mode. However, he adapts his signing style to his less proficient friend, Ryuta, by using signed Japanese with vocalization. Their discussion about *shuwa* quickly turned to early biases.

Ryuta: Up until I finished senior high school, I had not met any deaf (*rō*) people who could use *shuwa*, so I had not studied any signing. Real studying (*chanto benkyō suru*) didn’t begin until university... What was your image of *shuwa* back then?

Masao: My image of *shuwa*...Hm, well when I was in senior high school, rather I should say up until senior high school, [my image] was a little negative (*chotto iya*). To say ‘negative’, well, I mean I was ‘biased’ (*henken*) [fingerspells ‘biased’]

Ryuta echoes ‘bias’.

Masao: I was biased (*henken o motteita*). I didn’t want to learn it. There was that part of me [that thought] I’m different (*Ore ha chigau*). Since I was raised totally hearing (*zutto kenchō sodachi dakara*) there are differences (*sai ga detta*). Up until junior high school, you know. When I reached senior high school, I started thinking different things about communication... (mumbles quietly without signing)

Masao struggles to explain his statement. He continues to vocalize, while fingerspelling ‘bias’ (*henken*). Ryuta waits quietly. Masao shifts awkwardly and looks down, effectively cutting off all communication. Sensing Masao’s hesitation to elaborate, Ryuta volunteers his own background.

Ryuta: I was biased in junior high school. In senior high school I had a little bit of bias. You know how you and I are both ‘hearing raised’, right? We communicate by *kōwa*; we can do it. There’s that. Plus, I had, up until that point, only met elderly deaf people--just old men and old women. If I’m to speak honestly, [I thought] fools used *shuwa* (*shojiki ni ieba baka na hito ga tsukau*). That was what I usually had the chance to see. I did not want to think I was the same as those people (*sō iu hito to onaji to omoetakunakatta*).

Masao: Those people?

Masao’s eyes widened at the mention of ‘fools’ (*baka na hito*). He shifted uncomfortably.

Ryuta quickly explained ‘those people’ were the deaf people on the train using ‘big gestures’ (*miburi ga okikute*) with broad facial expressions (*kao ga ōbā ni*).

Ryuta: [I felt] we have the same hearing disability, but they seem strange to me.
(*Onaji chōkaku shōgai dakedo henna hito da na*)

Masao begins nodding and tries to find common ground.

Masao: You felt like they cannot hear [either], but they are different than [you], right? (*Kikoenai kedo jibun to chigau da kangae ga aru deshō.*)

Ryuta and Masao’s conversation raises several salient points. Firstly, Ryuta engaged in distancing discourses. Until he joined his university’s *shuwa* circle, Ryuta had never seen age-mates signing in public. *Shuwa* was for elderly, ‘foolish’ people who ‘could not’ communicate in *kōwa*. Hearing peers used Japanese. He used *kōwa* to access Japanese.

Ryuta had noted, ‘We can do it’ in reference to *kōwa*. Instead of focusing on signers’ ability to use *shuwa*, he focuses on their perceived inability to communicate in *kōwa*. Also, it did not seem to occur to Ryuta that the people he saw signing could also potentially communicate in *kōwa*.

Given their upbringing, it is unsurprising that both Ryuta and Masao’s value systems (*kachikan*) privileged spoken Japanese. Authority figures such as parents and educators have conveyed that proficiency in *kōwa* is a badge of pride. Using *kōwa* is an exercise in managing expectations, and its users are subject to constant evaluation from both hearing and deaf people in their social web of influence. Like musicians, youth have invested time and energy into training and practicing their ‘instrument’: their voice. Parents sacrifice greatly in the pursuit of these unique skills. From an early age, *inte* are told by teachers, parents, and speech therapists to ‘speak out!’ (*koe o dashite!*). In families without any signers, there is no alternative narrative. Hearing children are not praised by hearing parents for having superior *shuwa* skills. *Kōwa* is the only signifier of linguistic competence.

‘The other’ was someone who called attention to herself and her ‘disability’ by using an unknown visual-spatial language in public spaces. School age *inte* tried to belong in the hearing world while adapting to and meeting the expectations of hearing people. Signers became the object of bias and prejudice (*henken*) due to their ‘strange’ and highly

visible ‘gestures’ that signalled to the world the very thing that *inte* had spent their early lives striving to conceal. The invisible is made visible. The subtle is made obvious. Visible disabilities create a situation in which able-bodied people can observe from a distance without interacting with the disabled person, creating an imagined boundary between the ‘normal’ person and the ‘disabled’ person. *Kōwa* is relatively invisible, private, and unmarked. *Shuwa* is highly visible, public, and marked.

While *inte* were trying to assimilate into mainstream environments and avoid drawing attention to their difference, the ‘strange’ people on the trains or other public spaces were openly performing deafness. These signers were, in effect, ‘outing’ themselves to the world and allowing themselves to be the subject of potentially stigmatizing gazes. Signing in public spaces such as trains inevitably attracts a lot of attention.¹⁵² It also signals deafness, regardless of whether the signer is deaf. Nakamura (2006:134) remarked that a principal at a school mistook her for deaf and complimented her pronunciation. According to Nakamura, this was because the school principal could not imagine the existence of a hearing signer (who was not an interpreter). People thought I was deaf too—but not because of my voice but because of my silence. Oftentimes, I was mistaken for deaf when I signed without speaking. On several occasions, my use of voice-

¹⁵² As a tall foreigner with light hair and blue eyes, I have grown accustomed to being stared at on buses, trains, in restaurants, and in stores after many years in Japan. However, whenever I am signing on the train, especially in groups, there is a heightened level of attention.

off JSL in these situations caused tension between myself and hearing educators who were ardent supporters of oral communication and therefore promoted the use of signed Japanese with vocalization over non-vocalized JSL.

As discussed in chapter two, the ‘set of values’ (*kachikan*) ascribed to Sign languages is usually negative. *Shuwa* is not highly evaluated in Japan—or even considered a ‘true’ language.¹⁵³ Although *inte* could not ‘master’ personal relationships (*ningen kankei*), they could pride themselves on having ‘mastered’ the *kōwa* method well enough to continue studying in a ‘hearing’ senior high school. This view of ‘success’ is not a uniquely Japanese phenomenon. In a global perspective, individuals who were raised orally but then turn to Sign language may be referred to as ‘oral failures’ (Hole 2007:266, Padden, Humphries 1988:52). In Kannapell’s study (1989) of US college students’ attitudes toward American Sign Language (ASL) and English, she determined that the variables which most affected attitudes regarding ASL, English, speech, and deaf people are time spent in schools for the deaf, age of hearing loss, age when Sign language was acquired and parents’ hearing status (1989:198). My data suggests that the same variables affected attitudes of Japanese deaf and hard-of-hearing youth with *inte* from hearing families experiencing the most resistance to *shuwa*—at least initially.

¹⁵³ As noted, although signed Japanese, pidgin signing, and other forms of *shuwa* are not language but rather modalities based on Japanese grammar, JSL is a language in its own right.

5.3 ‘Self-Searching’

Inte engage in processes of self-searching, but this is not a uniquely *inte* phenomenon. Self-searching and searching for happiness are part of youth discourses in popular culture. ‘Youth problems’ such as bullying and *otaku* are heavily reported in the Japanese media (Goodman, Imoto et al. 2011). Youth lifestyle and interests are also frequent topics of televised panel discussions. One evening, while flipping through the television channels, I landed on a program on Japan’s public broadcaster NHK’s educational channel called ‘Under 29, Life Design’ on young people.¹⁵⁴ The television special, titled ‘Our generation, our work’, profiled Japanese people, 29 years-old and under, who are leading self-fulfilling, independent lives. To capture the voices of ‘young people’ (*wakamono*), 160 panellists were gathered on the soundstage. The participants on the program all had ‘alternative’ lives. They lived in shared houses, small trailers, and other ‘untraditional’ accommodations while making (just) enough money to pursue personal interests and passions.

One of the recurring themes of the program was the pursuit of ‘happiness’ (*shiawase*). The panellists discussed cultivating the self through work, leisure, and friendships. Profiled guests and panellists were eager to demonstrate how by focusing first on personal happiness, they were then able to bring happiness to others. For instance, one panellist explained how he works part-time at a convenience store in order to dedicate his

¹⁵⁴ The program was called *U-29, Jinsei Dezain* in Japanese.

free time to working as a stylist for housebound people. These panellists are part of a cohort, which is criticized by older generations for concentrating on ‘leisure’ (*yutori*) and ‘enlightenment’ (*satori*). Contemporary youth are frequently accused of being selfish, but their search for happiness often involves working with or supporting others.

At the end of the program, the panellists held up cards showing their ‘life keywords’. One of the female hosts immediately commented on the number of panellists who had used the word ‘*jibun*’ (self, myself). Life keywords included the ‘fun self’ (*tanoshii jibun*), ‘I will make an impression by living for myself’ (*jibun no tame ni ikite kandō saseru*), and ‘I want to meet a new self’ (*atarashii jibun ni deau*). Profiled participants’ reflective approach and desire to explore the self and personal interests, exemplify the concept of ‘*jibun sagashi*’, or self-searching.

‘Self-searching’ (*jibun sagashi*), as a concept, has been highly popularized and spread through the mass media from the 1980s, with a boom in book publications from 1991 (Kato 2013:24, Sterling 2011:55) and self-searching and self-expression as a core theme in manga and anime (Ishikawa 2007). Self-searching emerges in a context where the future is not secure. Contemporary Japanese society is said to be in the midst of ‘precarious’ times (Allison 2013). Many young people today are facing economic insecurity as the ‘lifetime employment’ system is no longer available or even desirable.

Self-searching is not only a theme in popular media, it has also received scholarly

attention. Anthropologist Etsuko Kato offers an example of ‘self-searching’ in the context of Japanese ‘young’¹⁵⁵ migrants (2013). Kato’s research looks at migrants who were temporary residents in Australia and Canada on working holiday visas. Kato argues that for today’s Japanese youth, the ‘true self’ corresponds with the ‘work one really wants to do’ (2013:22). In this context, self-searching is related to work but work is also linked to freedom, adventure, and individual passions. Adventure and personal fulfilment are elements of self-searching. An internet search for ‘*jibun sagashi*’ generates ‘self-searching trip’ (*jibun sagashi no ryokō*) as the top result.

Self-searching as it applies to the participants in this study, is not focused on adventure or work but on reclaiming or discovering a ‘true self’ or ‘new self’. *Inte*’s process of self-searching integrates inner desires with social relations. Self-searching incorporates meditations on deafness, communication modalities, friendships, and belonging. *Inte* reflect upon mainstream school experiences, the stages of accepting one’s hearing status, ‘coming out’ as deaf or hard-of-hearing, learning to communicate with confidence, and deciding what type of person they wish to become.

As was the case in Kato’s research, participants in this research did not precisely use the expression ‘*jibun sagashi*’ (self-searching). Instead, when vocalizing, they described a reflexive process through terms such as ‘self-analysis’ (*jiko bunseki*),

¹⁵⁵ Kato stated that there were no restrictions placed on age; therefore, informants self-identified as ‘young’.

‘introspection/reflecting on’ (*hansei suru*) and [exploring] ‘awareness’ (*jikaku*). In *shuwa*, they signed ‘self-searching’ as shown below (**figure 5.3**). The sign begins with the hands positioned ‘to see’. The ‘eyes’ then travel to the chest, the site of the ‘heart’, ‘mind’, and signs related to emotions.

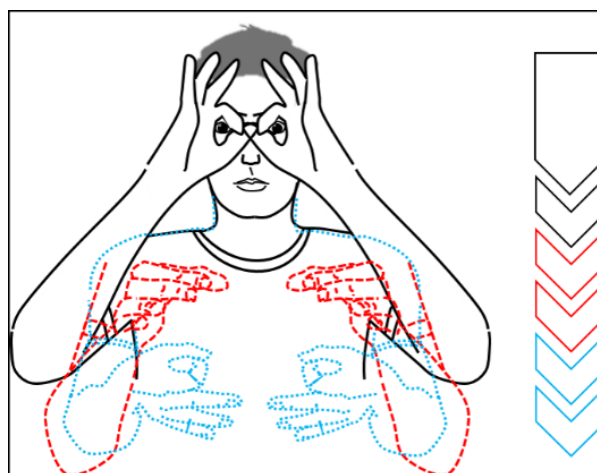


Figure 5.3 Self-searching¹⁵⁶

To explore the concept of ‘self-searching’, it is necessary to examine the concept of the ‘self’ in Japan. ‘I’ is highly contextual in Japanese. In the Japanese language, there are various terms to refer to the self, depending on context (Kondo 1990:29), such as ‘*boku*’ (casual male pronoun) and ‘*watashi*’ (gender neutral, used formally for males and formally or informally for females), which are self-reference terms for the public self (Hasegawa, Hirose 2005:238). Self-reference terms can also refer to someone’s role, such as ‘*okāsan*’ (mother) or ‘*sensei*’ (teacher) (Hasegawa, Hirose 2005:238). The correct term must be selected for each context. For example, a president of a company could refer to himself as

¹⁵⁶ Created by author.

‘company president’ (*shachō*) at work, but that this would be inappropriate usage with his friends (Kondo 1990:28-29). This language attribute is not found in English, where ‘I’ can be used by all speakers on all occasions (Hasegawa, Hirose 2005:241).

In contrast with ‘I’, the public self, the pronoun for the reflexive, private self (*jibun*) is fixed. *Jibun* is the “self-part”—a part of a larger whole that consists of groups and relationships’ (Rosenberger 1992:4). When participants are using ‘*jibun*’, they are referring to this inner self. The difference between the Japanese conceptualization of ‘I’ and ‘myself’ can be seen in the corresponding signs below. ‘I’ is located on the public face (figure 5.4), whereas ‘myself’ is located in the position of the ‘heart’ and ‘mind’ (figure 5.5).



Figure 5.4 Sign for ‘*Watashi*’ (I)



Figure 5.5 Sign for ‘*Jibun*’ (myself)

(Ogata, Yonaiyama 2004:221)

Before exploring the concept of self-searching through ethnographic examples, I will outline anthropologist Takie Sugiyama Lebra’s descriptions of the dimensions of the self to establish the theoretical framework of this discussion. There is not one singular concept of the self in Japan. Rather, there are multiple complex discourses of the self (Cave 2007:39-

43). I believe that Lebra's theory of multiple selves can be applied to this ethnographic analysis.

Lebra classifies the multiple selves into three interconnected dimensions: 'the interactional self', 'the inner self', and 'the boundless self' (1992). The first two are relevant to this study.¹⁵⁷ Lebra argues that all selves are social but the interactional self has a higher degree of awareness (1992:106). Two critical phases of the interactional self are 'the presentational self' and 'the empathetic self'. The presentational self is focused on others' views and evaluations. Of all the metaphors related to presentational self, the one most relevant to this research is 'reputation, public image' (*sekentei*), as analyzed in this dissertation. Lebra argues that this presentational self diverges from Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical analogy because it goes beyond face-to-face interaction to a wider unseen audience (1992:106-107). Having a disabled child challenges the stability of the presentational self along with the parents' social reputation and public image. Further, mainstream hearing settings are negotiated by managing the presentational self. This presentation self is engaged when a young *inte* uses mitigating strategies such as 'bluffing' to avoid being seen as 'pitiful' (*kawaisō*).

¹⁵⁷ Lebra's 'boundless self' is related to Buddhist transcendentalism (1992:114). As the name implies, the boundless self is without constraint. The self and the outer world become intertwined. It is symbolized by the belly (*hara*). This self is empty, passive, and receptive (Lebra 1992:115). The boundless self is not pertinent to the following discussion and will not be explored further.

Instead of focusing on the evaluation of outsiders, ‘the empathetic self’ is engaged in intimate relationships of attachment and bonding. There is continuity between the presentational self and empathetic self. Lebra notes that the empathetic self can be based on mutual affection, while also incorporating an element of face-saving performance, such as obligatory gift-giving. According to Lebra, ‘the interactional self is what occupies Japanese most of the time’ (1992:111). The social and empathetic nature of ‘self-searching’ are evident in *inte* narratives.

Lebra’s inner self is more constant in comparison with the interactional self. It offers ‘a fixed core for self-identity and subjectivity’ as well as a ‘potential basis of autonomy from the ever-insatiable demands from the social world’ (Lebra 1992:112). Whereas the face and mouth are the symbolic loci of the interactional self, the chest or belly are the sites of the inner self (Lebra 1992:112). This inner self is highly private, and often ‘uncommunicated’ (Lebra 1992:112). Of particular relevance here is the idea that the inner self may not be communicated in a traditional manner as it is also perceived to be a platform for unspoken communication. Through ‘belly art’ (*haragei*) Japanese are said to be able to communicate through intuition and cues rather than through words (Lebra 1987:352). As I argued in chapter three, this theory is challenged in the case of DHH people. Attempts to transmit messages through intuition does not enable DHH people to surmount communication obstacles in spoken language interactions. Perhaps a foundation

of mutually intelligible spoken language communication is necessary to move to the 'higher' level communication involved in 'stomach art' or 'belly art'.

Self-searching is simultaneously reflexive and interactive, and there is an interplay between the interactional and inner self. Socially engaging with DHH peers, both *inte* and deaf school-raised, initiates a process of self-exploration in which the interactional and inner self are engaged. 'Who am I?' and 'Who am I with others?' are intertwined. The development of meaningful friendships unlocks new potentials for self-searching through and with others. Friends hold up a metaphorical mirror.

5.4 Self-searching through Friendships

The self-searching process is a reflexive phenomenon, but it is only possible by engaging the interactional self (presentational and empathetic) through relationships with others. When participants discuss 'encountering' or 'meeting' *shuwa* (*shuwa to no deai*), they are implicitly referring to meeting other DHH people. The formerly stigmatized 'other' becomes the friend, and these friendships play a transformative and supportive role in the lives of DHH youth. As one deaf academic emphasized, 'Friendships are incredibly important to deaf youth. With the support of their friends, they can do anything'. Indeed, it is through developing close relationships with DHH peers that *inte* learn *shuwa* and new ways of being in the world.

Friendships can be a ‘critical site’ for exploring the concept of identity, whether personal or social (Bell, Coleman 1999:12) in a ‘continuously emerging social process’ (Evans 2010:191). In spite of its important role in people’s lives, friendship has historically been studied through the lens of kinship as ‘pseudo’ or ‘fictive’ kinships in anthropology (Desai, Killick et al. 2010:4). Other times, friendship is filed under the broad category of ‘relatedness’ (Carsten 2000, Carsten 2004). However, friendships are distinct forms of relatedness. Friendship can be fluid and temporal or static and enduring. It is the form of sociality most commonly associated with notions of *choice*. Bonds which do not depend on or compare to kin relationships or ‘fixed positions’ are not only found in ‘the West’ (Bell, Coleman 1999:4) but are also found in ‘Eastern’ societies such as Japan.

Relationships are believed to play a crucial role in the development of the self. In Japan, relationships are seen as ‘both the end and means of a good life and their cultivation is taught young’ (White 1993:144). Yet during childhood, social isolation and communication barriers may have impeded this cultivation for *inte*. Furthermore, skilful management of ‘human relationships’ is highly valued in Japanese society and is seen as a marker of adulthood. Early difficulties in forming meaningful ‘human relationships’ (*ningen kankei*) or personal relationships (*taijin kankei*) is believed to affect one’s ability to relate to others in adulthood. Numerous hearing professionals in deaf education, deaf studies, and disability support expressed their concerns to me about the potential impact of

social isolation on mainstreamed students' social development. *Inte* were described as being [socially] 'developmentally delayed' (*hattatsu ga okureru*).¹⁵⁸ It is difficult to say whether *inte* lack certain valued social skills or whether educators and other specialists have projected stereotypes of mainstreamed students onto the individuals they met. Specialists' views of *inte* are not the focus of this central-actor (*tōjisha*) research. The central actors, the *inte*, focus on the friendships they are developing. They emphasize the role of these friends in discovering a 'new self' or returning to their 'true self'. The self is discovered through interacting with others.

While friendships are central to the lives of all young people in Japan, for deaf and hard-of-hearing Japanese youth the role of friendships is unparalleled. DHH friends become informal teachers, guides, and mentors, who hold up a mirror to reflect prisms of personhood. Through this process, *inte* cultivate the tools, vocabulary, and relationships to carve out an *ibasho*, a place of belonging. Horizontal identities acquired through friendships create a platform for belonging, linguistic acquisition, and shared understanding—a sense of belonging which is often elusive.

Typically, peers—not family members—are the catalyst for *shuwa* acquisition. During my fieldwork, I was repeatedly asked about my *kikake* (catalyst, motivator) for

¹⁵⁸ Personal communication with interpreters, teachers, researchers, and other professionals who work with DHH students and adults.

learning *shuwa*. This question prompted a discussion on who or what motivated me to sign and why.¹⁵⁹ During this research, I found that instead of asking ‘why’ someone decided to sign, eliciting information on the catalyst (*kikkake*) revealed greater insight into young *inte* life histories as well as to the key actors in their social networks. Peers become pseudo language teachers who are both implicitly and explicitly imparting instruction in social settings. Whereas *kōwa* skills are ‘thanks to’ parents, more specifically mothers (*okāsan no okage de*), learning *shuwa* and self-discovery are ‘thanks to’ DHH friends (*tomodachi no okage de*) as well as classmates and colleagues.

In certain deaf spaces, *not* signing could lead to exclusion. For instance, at Kaiba University, ‘adapting to others’ is no longer a matter of speaking but signing. For these students, the catalyst for learning to sign is inclusion. *Shuwa* is necessary to take part in daily communication. This was exemplified by third-year student Saki’s assertion, ‘If you don’t learn to sign, you cannot communicate at all’ (*oboenai to mattaku kaiwa dekinai*). She noted that there are even students ‘who do not move their mouths at all [when signing]’, which renders her lip-reading skills ineffectual. In a signing environment, to *not* sign would mean returning to a state of social isolation. Although a linguist would argue that most of these students are not using JSL (*nihon shuwa*), *shuwa*, as a broadly defined visual modality, is the lingua franca at this university.

¹⁵⁹ My ‘catalyst’ was similar to many *inte* as it was meeting a DHH friend. Years before my fieldwork, a hearing friend had introduced me to a deaf friend, who was my first informal teacher.

This *shuwa*-rich environment is often deliberately sought out by *inte*. Although some students selected Kaiba University as a last resort because they could not gain admission elsewhere,¹⁶⁰ others selected the university because it was seen as an opportunity to ‘redo’ the deaf school experience. Kaiba University was framed as their ‘last chance’ to meet DHH peers and explore the deaf world. Participants felt the longed-for deaf school experience could be re-created in this university setting. Living and studying alongside deaf and hard-of-hearing peers on a small campus is akin to life at residential schools for the deaf.

Unlike the situation at Kaiba University, participants at ‘hearing universities’ do not *have* to sign, so they must actively search for opportunities. In some cases, their universities have *shuwa* circles (clubs). At campuses without *shuwa* circles, *inte* reported looking for opportunities to join those held at other universities. Often the Internet facilitates this search as described in Hisae’s narrative in the introduction to this dissertation. Also, joining Zenkon (Japanese Deaf [University] Student Association) was a popular choice because the organization brings together DHH students and graduate from the region (in branch activities) and the across the country (for national activities). Young DHH people across Japan use social networking to keep in touch in between Zenkon events and gatherings.

¹⁶⁰ I was often reminded by educators in the field that entrance standards to the university were significantly lower than at other universities. Some students told me that Kaiba University was their second, third, or even fourth choice.

MET DEAF, WOW! implies first encounters; however, there were *inte* who had some experience socializing with DHH peers before graduating from senior high school. On the other hand, the nature of these friendships differed from the empathetic, close friendships developed after ‘encountering *shuwa*’. In a questionnaire distributed at Kaiba University, 39% (14 out of 36) of *inte* responded that they had a deaf or hard-of-hearing friend before entering Kaiba University. This figure is surprisingly high in light of the overwhelming number of ‘lonesome’ and ‘solitary’ narratives. However, the questionnaire method leaves gaps in the data that participant observation helped to fill. In particular, the questionnaire did not specify the nature of friendships, such as whether the friends attended the same school, how often respondents met these friends, the ‘closeness’ of this friendship, or the age at which the friendship began. Moreover, the questionnaire distributed only addresses the experiences of *inte* at Kaiba University and not at other educational or professional institutions. Data gathered during participant observation and interviews indicates that DHH friends were peripheral figures because *inte* could not meet them on a regular basis. *Inte* socialized sporadically with DHH peers at gatherings for DHH students and their parents, or in speech training centers and resource rooms (either within their school or the local school district). Moreover, these childhood friendships were commonly developed with fellow *inte* rather than youth raised in deaf schools. In other words, signers from schools for the deaf remained ‘the other’.

DHH young people move from being the other to the friend as a result of positive associations. Even when a group remains stigmatized, if there are benefits, people may opt to join the group (Leigh 2009:32). For *inte*, establishing peer groups is seen as advantageous even in light of the stigma in Japanese society. Becoming friends with DHH peers has immediate positive benefits: developing friendships mitigates the sense of otherness in society while creating opportunities for empathetic relationships and belonging. Yet there was initially some resistance to learning to sign.

Resistance to signing is partly overcome by relegating Japanese and *shuwa* to divergent spheres. *Inte* may dichotomize *shuwa* and Japanese. *Shuwa* is positioned as a language for friendships, peer bonds, and socialization, whereas Japanese is positioned as the language for intellectual and professional pursuits. This division allows some *inte* to continue to prioritize Japanese without rejecting *shuwa*. At the same time, since Japanese maintains its position as the language for academic and professional endeavours, there is tension regarding how to balance improving *shuwa* skills without losing hard-won *kōwa* skills. A fear of speech skills atrophying was frequently reinforced by hearing parents and hearing educators. At Kaiba University, where students study and socialize in a ‘deaf school atmosphere’ on a daily basis, participants were especially worried about ‘forgetting’ how to speak.¹⁶¹ In contrast, neither young people nor their educators expressed fear over

¹⁶¹ For example, one professor supported his point by showing students questionnaire data in which Kaiba University alumni responded that they needed Japanese in spoken and written form in their place of work. *Inte*

potentially ‘losing’ *shuwa*.

Shuwa acquisition is not immediate nor is it guaranteed for all mainstreamed youth; however, in the groups I studied, it was sometimes framed as an inevitable outcome. This is especially true at Kaiba University. Based on my observations, within several months of enrollment, all students had some degree of *shuwa* proficiency. One professor at the university, Professor Zeniya, stressed that in eight years she had only taught one student who completely rejected *shuwa* along with DHH peers. Ambivalence is relatively common, while pure rejection is extremely rare in such an environment, because ‘fitting in’ requires making an attempt to sign. For participants who enter mainstream settings after senior high school, there is rarely any social pressure to sign. Nevertheless, once an *inte* begins associating with DHH peers, there is a high degree of motivation to improve one’s skills. A tangible benefit of improving one’s *shuwa* is being able to understand and be understood.

Learning to sign is simultaneously a private decision and a public declaration. Signing results in ‘coming out’. In contemporary Japanese vernacular, the ‘coming out’ metaphor is used to describe any process of revealing a stigmatized status or condition.¹⁶²

were anxious about their future employment prospects and such arguments resonated with them.

¹⁶² At a friend’s wedding in Japan, a *Zainichi* Korean (ethnic Korean) guest told me he never need to ‘come out’ (*kamingu auto o suru*) because he has a Korean given name. On the other hand, his younger brother always has to consider whether or not to ‘come out’ because his given name is Japanese. During a conference panel on the March 11th disaster, a clip was shown of a woman who moved to Tokyo following the disaster. She spoke about the

This metaphor is apt for the *inte* in this study. Coming out entails opening up about their status and associating with people who share a stigmatized horizontal identity. After years of honing passing skills and unconsciously developing an *inte* habitus, signing ‘outs’ an *inte*, making her the subject of potentially stigmatizing gazes. Sudden unwelcome hyper visibility has to be negotiated.

Signing firmly positions practitioners as a visible minority rather than a marginal mainstream person. Although hearing people can and do learn to sign (even fluently), signers are usually assumed to be ‘hearing impaired’ by mainstream hearing people. Consequently, people who are seen signing are automatically perceived as the ‘disabled other’, as I discovered as a signing fieldworker. Signing paradoxically marks the user as ‘disabled’, while also aligning her more closely with a linguistic minority cultural group. A DHH person’s deafness is unmarked—with the exception of hearing aids and cochlear implants. When a DHH person communicates solely through *kōwa*, this person might be assumed to be hearing, especially if there is no direct interaction. As a visual-spatial language, signing ‘outs’ the person who may have worked hard to ‘cover’ or ‘pass’ her deafness.

Signing is only one way to ‘come out’. Asking for support is another step in the coming out process. Using an interpreter (Blankmeyer Burke, Nicodemus 2013:4) or

difficulties of ‘coming out’ as a former resident of Fukushima due to the associated stigma of having been exposed to radiation. As these two examples illustrate, in Japan, the ‘coming out’ metaphor is not only used for LGBT people.

other information support in the classroom setting can ‘call attention’ to the recipient. As *Inte* begin to accept a more visible identity, they start to feel empowered to self-advocate. Deaf school teacher and writer Nami Akiyama (2004:112-114) argues that coming out as deaf does not solve the difficulties of navigating society as a deaf person. After all, simply stating that she cannot hear does not secure accessible information support. Further, I argue that coming out does not mean being ‘out’ in every context. Coming out in certain contexts does not preclude attempts to ‘cover’ in other contexts. *Inte* continue to bluff in public spaces, such as convenience stores, supermarkets, and hospitals. ‘Coming out’ as deaf (or hard-of-hearing) is not a singular event; it is a lifelong process.

5.5 *Shuwa* as an Inclusive, Embodied Language for Peers

Learning a minority Sign language has different connotations and implications than learning a spoken majority language. When a majority Japanese individual undertakes diligent study of a spoken foreign language, it is frequently in order to access professional or academic opportunities, or to enrich a personal interest such as foreign travel, music, or literature. On the other hand, DHH people usually study *shuwa* in order to develop friendships, express oneself freely, and communicate ‘normally’. Learning a foreign spoken language broadens spheres of socialization, opening doors to different personal and professional relationships. In contrast, *shuwa* often changes the primary mode of

communication with friends as well as affecting the type of people one calls friends.

Students of spoken languages will study about the country or countries where the target language is spoken. The culture and community to which *shuwa* ‘belongs’ to is metaphorically distant but geographically immediate.¹⁶³

Studying an unwritten language requires social integration and communication.

One cannot study *shuwa* by reading a book or making flashcards. As mentioned, Kaiba University has *shuwa* lessons for both beginners and advanced students. I was fortunate to be able to observe the beginner-level class and the students’ rapid progress. These classes were described as useful introductions to visual communication. However, *inte* at the university reported that while somewhat beneficial for grasping foundational signs, ‘chatting’ rather than ‘(formal) studying’ was the best route to achieving *shuwa* proficiency. Formal learning environments, such as the one presented at Kaiba University, are rare in Japan. Sign language acquisition usually occurs in informal group settings, unlike *kōwa*, which is typically taught through one-to-one repetition and frequently in formal institutionalized settings, although the training is continued within the home. After encountering *shuwa*, the mother-child, teacher-student dyad is replaced by peer mentors.

Shuwa learning is embodied. My first (formal) *shuwa* teacher in London pointed

¹⁶³ JSL (*nihon shuwa*) is an indigenous language in Japan like Ainu languages (Hokkaido Ainu being the sole survivor) or Uchināguchi (the Okinawan language). Although signed Japanese and pidgin signing are not considered ‘natural languages’, they too are ‘domestic’ products.

to the embodied nature of *shuwa* acquisition. I had asked my teacher for recommendations of videos or textbooks to use as study aids to supplement our lessons. She informed me that studying with resources was ‘fine’ but if I *truly* wanted to learn, if I *really* wanted to sign, I needed to physically practice signing in order to learn through my body, ‘*karada de oboeru*’. *Karada de oboeru*, ‘learning with the body’, is a common Japanese expression to refer to learning which goes beyond the cognitive. Kondo demonstrates how skilled artisans in Japan learn their craft through using their bodies, and how this knowledge becomes embodied (1990:238). *Shuwa* is expressed on the body and imprinted on the body’s memory. To do is to learn. I received similar advice from other deaf and hard-of-hearing people. Repeatedly, I was told the best way to learn to sign is to spend time with signers.

Shuwa learning is embedded in the quotidian. Regardless of the age of acquisition, *shuwa* acquisition is generally informal and collective. With the exception of DHH students from deaf (and some mixed and hard-of-hearing) families, DHH youth who attended schools for the deaf learned *shuwa* at school while playing with friends. Until Meisei Gakuen opened its doors in 2008, JSL had never been taught formally in classrooms in Japan. Instead, communication skills are developed on playgrounds, at lunchtime, or while hanging out with friends outside of school. Similarly, *inte* learn to

communicate while sharing meals, watching television and even bathing with friends.¹⁶⁴

These activities are congruous to those which occur within the family.

While the *kōwa* training of their youth is often described with negative adjectives ranging from ‘annoying’ (*mendokusai*) to ‘painful’ (*kutsū*), *shuwa* is described as fun, appealing (*miriyokuteki*), and expressive. *Shuwa* was even viewed by one participant as a ‘weapon’ (*buki*) because it is something that she can do but hearing people cannot. Signers can communicate at distances, even through windows and across crowded spaces. As one new signer exclaimed, ‘It was so cool! (*sugoi*) I was talking to my friend who was inside [the convenience store], while I was standing outside!’ Students can also chat in *shuwa* while their professors’ backs are turned or talk freely and share secrets in front of non-signers. As Nakamura observed, young people also use *shuwa* to make puns, playing off their spoken language skills (2006b:24). I observed the same during participant observation. For example, students signed ‘*yabai*’ (chancy, uh-oh, a risk) by holding both hands in the shape of ‘*ya*’ and then doubling them by putting one wrist atop the other because –*bai* can mean double.

Although the decision to sign was made without parental input or overt approval, in nearly all cases, parents tacitly approved.¹⁶⁵ My data suggests that this is because, at

¹⁶⁴ This is not unusual. Communal bathing has a long history in Japan (Clark 1994).

¹⁶⁵ Kenta was the only one who stated that his parents encouraged him to sign. When I met Kenta he was 20 years old. At 18 years old, his parents had suggested he learned to sign. I hypothesize that because he had

this stage, *shuwa* is no longer seen as a threat or impediment to mastering speech skills. In addition, university in Japan is seen as a time for self-discovery and fun. It is a break between the pressures of preparing for university entrance exams during senior high school and the demands of being a working adult ‘member of society’ (*shakaijin*). Furthermore, all *inte* in this study continue to be ‘voice on’ (verbalizing) when speaking to their parents, even if they are ‘voice off’ in deaf spaces.¹⁶⁶ In this way, they are not completely rejecting the *kōwa* skills (which their parents had nurtured and encouraged) but rather adding to their communication toolbox.

Signing peers encourage and welcome new signers. They are patient and tolerant. Often the most skilful signers demonstrate the highest level of tolerance with emerging signers. For example, Daigo, 21 years old, is part of a small minority of students at Kaiba University who come from deaf families. When I asked him how he felt about classmates who were novice signers, he said that he did not mind that they could not communicate well. He preferred to adapt his signing until they could ‘catch up’. Daigo’s approach is similar to that of most young people. Friends guide newcomers by playfully correcting beginners’ mistakes, teaching them new signs, or adjusting their signing speed for the sake of their less proficient friends. The friend in the mentor role frequently describes these

already ‘proved’ his ability to succeed using *kōwa* in the hearing world (by being accepted at an elite university), and his parents felt comfortable that he had a strong foundation in Japanese.

¹⁶⁶ Going ‘voice off’ was seen as an act of resistance by many hearing parents.

actions as ‘showing’, ‘helping’, or ‘teaching’. This parallels the dynamics in the Nunes et al. study (2001) discussed in the previous chapter except that the ‘helpers’ here are DHH people not hearing people. There is an underlying assumption that horizontal identities are inherently shared and that ambivalent or reluctant individuals will one day embrace signing and signers. Consequently, participants who sign more proficiently may ‘wait for’ reluctant signers to accept *shuwa*. It is not only deaf school-raised youth who guide young *inte*. Older *inte* may teach their younger peers, moving from the ‘student’ to ‘teacher’ role over time.

As described, *shuwa* is a language of inclusion. *Inte* find it ‘impossible’ to be fully included in spoken language group settings due to the one-to-one nature of lip-reading. Communication with others (*tasha*) is not feasible nor is it possible to grasp ‘background’ conversation. When communicating in *shuwa*, the only barrier to full inclusion is one’s level of fluency. As a visual language, there are no physical barriers to full mastery or full engagement. *Kōwa* is constraining; *shuwa* is boundless. An emerging signer has full potential to understand and be understood. The ‘self’ can be discovered and expressed through *shuwa*, in a playful, embodied process guided by peers. *Inte* shift from being observers of sociality to being at the center of their own social worlds. It is through social relationships that an unrealized or long buried self is revealed.

5.6 Returning to the ‘True Self’, Discovering a ‘New Self’

When Yasushi replied to my first message, he wrote in English, signing off with, ‘I like English, so I want to meet you again! and want to talk in English!’¹⁶⁷ We arranged to meet the following week at his university in Saitama, the prefecture north of Tokyo. He suggested we talk in his university’s disability office. The disability office was located in a spacious, brightly lit room in the center of campus. I arrived early and observed staff meeting one-on-one with students. When Yasushi entered the office, the staff immediately recognized him. He feels comfortable there. Yasushi goes to the office whenever he faces a problem with his coursework or professors. The staff assist him in accessing appropriate information support (*jōhō hoshō*). The disability office also functions as a type of *nigeba* (place to run away to) in the same manner as a resource room or hard-of-hearing classroom in elementary or junior high school. It is a place where Yasushi feels a sense of comfort and security.

That afternoon was our second meeting. The first time I met Yasushi was at a film event. He was with DHH friends (and one hearing signer), so we all used *shuwa*. However, in the disability office, he greeted me in English. I realized that when he wrote that he wanted to ‘talk in English’, he meant in spoken—not written—form. Although Yasushi is a young man with a ‘profound hearing loss’, he has clear English pronunciation and a high

¹⁶⁷ English written exactly as appeared in his message.

degree of fluency. This is unexpected, given the impediments to acquiring a second spoken language. When I complimented him on his English skills, he was beaming as he explained to me his ‘self-study’ methods for developing spoken English skills.¹⁶⁸

Yasushi’s laborious efforts to improve his output (speech) reaped rewards, but they did little to help with input (comprehension). As our conversation continued, I quickly determined he could not lip-read my English well. This was to be expected considering he did not have enough daily contact with English speakers to develop English lip-reading skills. His ‘guesswork’ became obvious when he answered my question about his teachers in senior high school with a vague statement about being the only ‘hearing impaired’ (*chōkakushōgai*) student in his school. Yasushi’s ‘bluffing’ behavior was so deeply ingrained in his disposition that even when he had other communication modalities available to him (e.g. *shuwa*, writing), it was his second nature to perform ‘communication competence’. I argue that this is an example of the *inte* habitus.

Sensing his struggle, while also being mindful of his enthusiasm for English, I suggested that he continue speaking in English, and I would write down everything that I was saying so that he could study the sentences later. Yasushi eagerly embraced this idea. Over the next two hours, we continued talking using this mixed communication system:

¹⁶⁸ Yasushi explained that since he could not hear his English teachers clearly, he decided to study English by learning phonetic symbols. He used his long commute to his private school to look up the vocabulary words in the dictionary to see how to pronounce the words phonetically.

speaking (Japanese and English), signing (*shuwa*), and writing (English).¹⁶⁹

Yasushi was equally enthusiastic and proud of his signing skills. The acquisition of these skills was a demonstration of agency.

You know, up until [the end of] senior high school, my parents decided everything, and I just went along...piano, swimming,¹⁷⁰ everything. They told me what I should do, and it was like, alright, I'll do it. The first thing I decided by myself was—as you'd guess—starting to learn *shuwa*. My parents had not instructed me to do this. Not at all. They had not said one thing about *shuwa* (*Shuwa ha ichi koto matakute itte inai*). The decision came from me.

As Yasushi describes the shift toward independence, he continued to empathize 'from me, from me' pointing to his chest, the location of the self in *shuwa*. It appeared as though he wanted to emphasize his autonomy.

Present-day Yasushi is unfailingly cheerful and friendly. Months after our first meeting, he confided that this was not always the case. The positive, good-natured, and well-liked university student is similar to his outgoing childhood self but in stark contrast with his introverted adolescent self.

In junior and senior high school, I was so quiet, always silent. It was too much effort to go out. I hated people. What changed it all for me? Of course *shuwa*. When I starting learning *shuwa*, I understood for the first time who I am and why I am here (*Jibun ha nani mono, wakatta shi, jibun ha nan no tame ni iru*). Up until the end of senior high school, to be blunt, I thought 'It'd be fine if I died.' (*Shindemo ii to omote ita*).

¹⁶⁹ Whenever there was confusion in spoken language modalities, we would switch to signing.

¹⁷⁰ Piano seems to be an unlikely hobby for a profoundly deaf child such as Yasushi. Further, although hearing is not required, swimming is also a problematic hobby. Hearing aid users are more prone to ear infections, and the increased moisture from swimming is said to lead to complications. Yet both hobbies are common for hearing children and also common for DHH ones.

Yasushi continued by describing his social disconnectedness, which was compounded by the pressure to adapt himself to others, namely hearing people.

I felt helpless (*muryokukan*). Every day I would just go about things, watch TV, talk—well, that is to say, to try to fit, to fit myself to hearing people (*kenchō ni awasete*). Well, that’s fine, I thought.

Nowadays, Yasushi can be described as ‘*kao ga hiroi*’ (literally ‘an expansive face’) or ‘to be widely known and to know many’. Whenever I saw him at an event, he was surrounded by a group of friends. Many participants in this research in the Kanto area have some social connection to Yasushi. He explained his social standing was the result of his own ‘effort’ (*doryoku*). Since Yasushi is not a student at Kaiba University (and there were only two other deaf students at his university) he had to actively look for chances to meet DHH peers. Yasushi strategically researched events and groups targeted at deaf and hard-of-hearing students, attending as many activities as possible. One of his first steps was joining Zenkon.

Thanks to the frequency with which he met signing peers and his own efforts, in a relatively short period of time, Yasushi became fairly skilled at signing. Although he strives to sign in JSL, in reality, his signing could be more aptly described as ‘contact’ or ‘pidgin signing’. Attitudinally, I would describe him as an ‘aspirational signer’ as he aspires to be a fluent JSL signer and to be ‘deaf’ (*rō*). He is highly motivated to sign because it enables

him to express himself and to become close to others. I would argue that this is an example of an *inte* realizing the dimensions of the empathetic self.

Although Yasushi focuses on his interpersonal relationships, he also ‘self-analyzes’ to understand his own communication needs and desires. Yasushi explained how mutually intelligible communication only truly began once he learned *shuwa*. It also marked the beginning of his ‘return’ to his ‘true self’

I thought, ‘What do I need?’ Meeting *shuwa* brought me back to my true self.
(*Hitsuyōna mono ha nan darō? Shuwa [to no] deai ha jibunrashisa o modoshite kureta*).

Yasushi returns to his younger self which was integrated, interconnected, and ‘normal’ before he became an isolated outsider. His narrative also introduces the concept of a ‘true self’ (*jibunrashii*). According to Cave, ‘*jibunrashisa*’, one’s individuality or being one’s individual self, is seen as positive, and has been valued more since the 1980s (Cave 2007:41). *Jibunrashii* was variously constructed in this research. For some participants being oneself means being able to communicate one’s own opinions, wishes, and needs. For others, the true self means pursuing interest and hobbies, which were previously off limits due to their deafness.

Yasushi was clear that his adolescent self, who performed selfhood by pretending to understand rather than by expressing his own opinions, was *not* his true self. This was a

‘false’ (inauthentic) self. The true self existed and was expressed in childhood. As described in chapter four, elementary school was a ‘golden age’ for many *inte*: a time when group-work and ‘play’ (*asobi*) takes precedence over verbal communication. It was this interconnected ‘normal’ childhood true self that becomes obscured in adolescence.

...[W]hen I was in elementary school I was very outgoing. I was very talkative with my friends. Normal. I hung out normally (*futsū ni*). In the beginning years of elementary school, I had so many friends. Toward the end [of elementary school], communication started failing more and more. I became all alone [signs but does not vocalize ‘*hitori bocchi*’]. In junior and senior high school, I was just... [He shrugs and drops his hands and looks down at his lap].

There is nostalgia for the days of uncomplicated belonging. For *inte* who refer to ‘going back’ to ‘how they used to be’, they believe that the ‘true self’ was suppressed for years due to attempts to cover and assimilate into mainstream hearing environments.

Yasushi’s process of finding his true self has not been a solitary experience but a socially engaged process. His friends are fellow DHH youth—*inte* and deaf school-raised alike. As his *shuwa* fluency improved, he gained clarity and understanding through interactions. As Yasushi demonstrates, ‘self-searching’ can include the reactions and opinions of others.

Then I started learning *shuwa*. It was like, ‘What kind of a person is Watanabe?’ From the reactions of my friends (*tomodachi kara no hannō*), I could understand: OK I am this type of person.

In analyzing both the signing and text of the interview, the interactional element of his self-searching presents itself in his language use. When Yasushi explores his personhood, he

uses an address for the public self, namely, his family name, 'Watanabe' as well as '*ore*', the masculine casual form of 'I'. However, there is a linguistic overlap. Yasushi simultaneously signs '*jibun*' (myself) by his heart rather than 'I' (**figure 5.5**). In other words, his *shuwa* does not correspond to his verbal Japanese, which identifies the public self. Since his first language is Japanese, and he is in the process of learning *shuwa*, I believe that Yasushi intended to indicate the social 'I' rather than the inner self 'myself' (*jibun*). While recalling his 'encounters with *shuwa*', Yasushi shifts his attention from the inner self (*jibun*) to the social self. The inner self, '*jibun*' is reflected upon in his decision to learn *shuwa*. It is his interactional, public self that is evaluating and responding to the opinions of peers. Yasushi's friends' 'reactions' told him that the outgoing, friendly Yasushi of childhood—not the solitary, reclusive Yasushi of adolescence—is his 'true self'.

'Returning to a former self' is a concept also discussed by educators, albeit for different reasons. For example, one of the teachers of a mainstream junior high school hard-of-hearing resource room (*kikoe no gakkyū*) in Tokyo placed the onus of social integration on the DHH students. According to Amano-sensei, DHH students in mainstream schools need to go back to 'as they were in elementary school and as they are at home with their families' if they want to be welcomed by their classmates. When I asked him to elaborate, he said the students need to try to speak out, to make an effort in class, and to try to befriend their hearing classmates. I wondered how feasible it would be to

‘return’ to this elementary school self when the educational and social contexts are so dramatically different in junior high schools.

Uncovering a ‘new self’ (*atarashii jibun*) is a second metaphor used by *inte* when describing self-searching. Chika Yamagishi, 20 years old, contrasts a new ‘cheerful’ (*akarui*) self against a ‘gloomy’ (*kurai*) former self. Chika was born into a hearing family, a family which she describes as ‘complicated’ (*jibun no katei ha fukuzatsu*). Mrs. Yamagishi died shortly after giving birth to Chika’s younger sister, Hikari. As a nurse, Mrs. Yamagishi was aware that due to her ‘serious heart condition’,¹⁷¹ giving birth to a second child would threaten her already precarious health. Chika said that her mother took this risk because she wanted to ‘leave behind’ (*nokoshitai*) a younger sibling for her daughter. Shortly after Hikari’s birth, Mr. Yamagishi became a widower and a single father of two very young children. The pressures of working full-time and caring for his daughters alone quickly became too much to bear, and he decided to send Chika and Hikari to be raised by their grandparents.

Chika had a relatively stable upbringing with her grandparents until her first year of senior high school. Her grandfather became seriously ill, and her grandfather’s wife, the second wife (*gosai*) did not want sole responsibility of two children who were not ‘real family’. Chika and her sister were sent back to their father.

¹⁷¹ Chika does not know the name of her mother’s condition.

Immediately, tensions flared between Chika and Mr. Yamagishi. One point of contention was that the elder Yamagishi expected his daughter to hear and speak normally. While her childhood had been stable, her hearing had not. As a young child, Chika had enough residual hearing to learn to speak clearly without intervention and to use the telephone. However, Chika's type of hearing loss is progressive. By the time Chika reached senior high school, her deafness had reached the point that she is now considered profoundly deaf. Chika said she tried in vain to explain to her father that her hearing had deteriorated, but Mr. Yamagishi continued to concentrate on his daughter's speech, '*kuchi no hataraki*' (literally, the work of the mouth). In response, Chika avoided being at home by working part-time jobs throughout high school and hanging out with her co-workers until late at night. As soon as she was able to distance herself from her father, she did so, choosing to enroll in a university far from her hometown.

Chika's first 'encounter' with *shuwa* was through a deaf support staff at her university. She attends a 'hearing university' that is known for offering extensive support services to DHH students. The staff member who counsels her on information support and other needs has a 'mild' (*karui*) [hearing loss]' but a 'deaf' (*rō*) identity. It was revelatory to meet someone who *chooses* to sign because Chika had always believed that people who sign do so because they have no other choice. She decided it was 'necessary' to learn to sign 'for him', even though he *could* speak. This triggered a process of self-analysis. Chika

began to reflect upon how and with whom she wished to communicate. One day Chika learned about Kankon, the local Kanto branch of Zenkon, through an acquaintance and decided to join this deaf student organization.

It was at a Kankon social event that she met her former boyfriend, a deaf school-raised deaf-identified (*rō*) university student.¹⁷² Chika's boyfriend quickly became her informal language teacher. Chika boasted that 'everyone' tells her she is a fast *shuwa* learner (*nobi ga hayai*), but she was quick to add that her *shuwa* skills are due to her ex-boyfriend's tutelage.¹⁷³ She recognizes that she had an advantage over other *inte* at 'hearing universities' because she had the opportunity to practice using *shuwa* nearly every day with a proficient signer.

Chika saw *shuwa* as a transformative force that 'introduced [her] to a new self' (*atarashii jibun ni atta*). This new self was bright and cheerful. For young Japanese, 'akarui' (bright, cheerful) is positioned at the opposite end of the spectrum from 'kurai' (dark or gloomy), with the former being attributed to sociable students who are at the heart of school life and the latter applied to isolated and unsociable students (Fukuzawa

¹⁷² Chika hinted that he was another member of Zenkon. I was careful not to ask about his background as I suspected her ex-boyfriend was one of the participants in this study, and I did not want to compromise a participant's anonymity, especially as another participant was present.

¹⁷³ The irony is that in her first year of university, she had difficulty understanding the interpreters provided to ensure information access. According to one of her professors, she was a 'difficult' and obstinate student who complained about the interpreters at her university using JSL rather than signed Japanese, which she is more comfortable using.

2001:47-61). As Chika's hearing began to decrease, she became increasingly isolated and unsociable at school. These difficulties were compounded by her father's pressure to continue to communicate fluently in spoken Japanese, even though her hearing status had changed. Chika's narrative highlights the complexities of growing up *inte*. Also, Chika remembers life when she was 'like a hearing person'. She expresses more resistance than other participants in accepting her deafness. For many years, she felt 'I want to be hearing' (*kikoeru yō ni naritai*). Like most participants, she credits friendships and mutually intelligible communication with helping her to discover a new self. These DHH friends accept her 'as is' (*sono mama*) rather than as she 'once was'.

5.7 A 'Place to Belong' in the In-Between

I contend that 'self-searching' is an ongoing, reflexive process, which incorporates a search for '*ibasho*' (a place to belong). *Ibasho* can be translated as 'whereabouts', 'a place to stay' or 'a place to belong'. It 'connotes a place where a person feels acceptance, security, belonging and/or coziness' (Bamba, Haight 2007:405). This place is both physical and psychological (Kayama, Haight 2014:13). In Japanese schools, 'peer group acceptance', 'feeling a sense of belonging' and 'contributing to the group' with a distinct role as well as self-expression are requisites for *ibasho* (Bamba, Haight 2007:421, Kayama, Haight 2014:13). A sense of *ibasho* can include 'the sense of recognizing my true self', 'the sense of recognizing deep person to person relationships' and 'the sense of

establishing myself' (Kunikata, Shiraishi et al. 2011:59). Creating an *ibasho*, which can be achieved by establishing 'empathetic' and 'mutually accepting' relationships, is especially important for disabled children who face stigma and other difficulties in interpersonal relationships (Kayama, Haight 2014:13).

In the mainstream school settings, the conditions for having a sense of *ibasho* were frequently not present. *Inte* were unable to contribute to groups due to communication barriers. Strategies to mitigate difference did not lead to belonging nor did they lead to finding the true self. There was an absence of mutually accepting relationships. In addition, in some homes, *inte* did not feel that they were fully accepted. In contrast, they felt that their deafness was a problem and an unwelcome addition to family life.

Inte cross and re-cross borders, searching for an *ibasho* in the process. They describe themselves as poised between two worlds: 'deaf' and 'hearing'. The definitions and descriptions of the deaf world (*rō[sha] no sekai*) (deaf world) and the hearing world (*kenchō[sha] no sekai*) were varied and contested, but the existence of two distinct worlds with distinctive norms and values was never called into question by participants, regardless of their educational background. There is a subtle distinction between 'culture' and 'world' with Deaf culture focusing more narrowly on the language and traditions. However, participants tend to conflate the two. Moreover, *inte* only refer to a 'hearing world', not to a 'hearing culture'. Therefore, I have juxtaposed hearing world with deaf world in this

analysis.

The Hearing World

The hearing world (*kenchō no sekai*) is everywhere. Every time someone enters a company, a shop, or other establishment they are in the hearing world. Japanese is the lingua franca. *Inte* frame most hearing people regardless of their ethnicity, sexual orientation, or socio-economic background as full members, even though in reality they may be marginalized in Japanese society. An inability to communicate with members of the hearing world prevents full participation. On the other hand, a hearing ‘loss’ does not translate into immediate membership in the deaf world. As orally educated, mainstreamed students, they did not have contact with the deaf world.

The Deaf World

The hearing world is familiar. It is the world in which *inte* were raised and educated. The deaf world is unknown. Young *inte* are aware of the deaf world, but reduce it to Sign language, deaf families, and attendance in schools for the deaf. The deaf world is seen to originate in schools for the deaf, which are sites of belonging for DHH youth. Sign languages are formalized in schools, which remain the epi-center of language, associations, meaning, and relationships. *Inte* position themselves in opposition to peers who were educated in schools for the deaf who are believed to be at the heart of the deaf world and possess unchallenged membership.

The deaf world challenges assumptions of space and place. Worldwide, Deaf cultures are without geographic homes but are based on relationships. Residential schools have historically been a permanent place where numerous ‘associations’ are established. Associations made at schools for the deaf are lasting; the spaces are usually temporary. Events, performances, Sign language circles, and other activities are transitory. Today deaf owned restaurants and businesses offer new types of permanent spaces.

The deaf world has distinct cultural norms and ways of being in the world that differ from mainstream society. Language is the key marker of Deaf culture and thereby the deaf world, but it is not the only one. While studying JSL at the Shisetsu Interpreter Training Program, I had the opportunity to see how these norms are explained to ‘outsiders’. For example, one day we studied greetings in the deaf world, such as a type of wave. Another day we studied appropriate techniques to get a deaf person's attention, which included shoulder tapping. The students in the class were all hearing, and none were CODAs (Children of Deaf Adults). They were unfamiliar with the deaf world. These hearing students were uncomfortable with the more expressive styles of greetings as well as the bodily contact needed to get someone’s attention. When *inte* first enter deaf spaces, they too are novices. There is a steep learning curve in negotiating the deaf world’s communication style.

The deaf world is a realm of direct communication. DHH Japanese will

immediately try to identify shared friends and personal connections. Conversations will then quickly move to personal topics of conversation. Sign language necessitates a direct style of communication. Japanese is an indirect and deliberately *aimai* (vague) language, and there is a ‘step by step’ (*ippo ippo*) style of communication. According to participants, hearing people prefer benign topics and rely on stock phrases to make small talk (‘The weather is nice, isn’t it? ‘*Ii tenki desu ne*’).¹⁷⁴ Moreover, Japanese is a language of inference and an expectation for others to read between the lines. On the other hand, JSL (and more generally forms of *shuwa*) require a person to complete an idea unambiguously.

Although I had spent many years in Japan before beginning fieldwork, spending time in deaf spaces introduced me to entirely different ways of communicating with Japanese people. For instance, before spending time with signers, I had never been asked such probing questions about my finances or personal life in Japan. Overall, communication was open, frank, and informal.

Direct eye contact is another characteristic of deaf world communication. Hearing Japanese tend to avoid holding direct eye contact as it is seen as impolite and even aggressive. Conversely, in the deaf world, deliberately avoiding eye contact is perceived as a sign of aggression or rudeness.¹⁷⁵ This is because eye contact is an essential feature of

¹⁷⁴ Indeed, I had never seen anyone sign about the weather (or any other small talk standard). Having been accustomed to the indirect and exceedingly polite style of communication of the Japanese language, I was at first surprised by the direct style of communication inherent in *shuwa*.

¹⁷⁵ Two deaf scholars have a well-known friction, which became immediately apparent the first time I saw

communication in *shuwa*. The grammar of JSL incorporates not only the hands but also the face. Even when communicating in signed Japanese or contact/pidgin signing, it is necessary to look at the other person's face. Diverting one's eyes halts or abruptly ends communication. One of my *shuwa* teachers informed me that if I ever needed a moment to think of what I wanted to say, I should *never ever* look downward, turn my head, or close my eyes without first signing 'please give me a moment'. Suddenly breaking eye contact is equivalent to walking away mid-conversation with a hearing person. Although visual language communication can happen across a crowded train platform, or through the glass window of a convenience store, it is also inherently intimate because it is necessary to maintain eye contact to communicate (Blankmeyer Burke, Nicodemus 2013:12).

Furthermore, there is a higher degree of body contact in the deaf world than in the hearing world. Japan is a low physical contact society compared to societies such as the United States (Barnlund 1975). In order to get someone's attention when using *shuwa*, one cannot say 'excuse me'. When it is possible to step into the eye line of an individual, a person can wave her hand to attract attention. However, as mentioned above, when interrupting a conversation or attracting attention, a firm shoulder tap is used. Newcomers to deaf spaces are often uncomfortable and unfamiliar with these higher levels of contact. Due to these differences, some *inte* are initially more comfortable

them together as the two men blatantly avoided eye contact, essentially making communication impossible.

spending time with signing hearing people than with DHH people. Hearing acquaintances had ‘hearing ways’ of interacting, which aligned with an *inte* habitus.

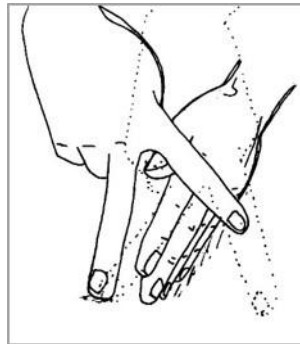


Figure 5.6: ‘Between Worlds’,¹⁷⁶

Inte describe themselves as crossing and re-crossing the boundaries between the hearing and deaf worlds. Very often they use the signed metaphor above (**figure 5.6**) to express this concept. The open hand represents the border, and the two fingers represent shifting back and forth between worlds without firmly positioning oneself in either one. *Inte* are neither fully in the hearing world nor in the deaf world but instead continuously traverse borders. Participants referenced two worlds: deaf and hearing. I wondered, what about a third possibility: a hard-of-hearing world? Could belonging be found in another realm?

A Hard-of-Hearing World?

Although ‘hard-of-hearing’ (*nanchō*) is a popular identity label, a hard-of-hearing world is not recognized as a distinct world. Even though there are hard-of-hearing organizations in Japan, participants never reference a ‘hard-of-hearing’ world (*sekai*) or

¹⁷⁶ Created by author.

culture (*bunka*). When I explicitly questioned its existence, only one participant from a hard-of-hearing family believed, without a doubt, there is a hard-of-hearing world (or culture) in Japan. According to Jun, 21, a hard-of-hearing world is a blending of cultures: deaf and hearing. He was unable to offer any further details other than people speak and sign. The majority of participants do not believe a hard-of-hearing world exists as a separate realm in Japan. However, they hypothesize that *if* such a world were to exist, it *would be* comprised of people who speak, do not sign, and who request captioning rather than interpretation. People in this world would be ‘raised as hearing people’, focus on using their voices and reading lips, and have a disregard for *shuwa* and a bias toward its users. They were highly critical. In many ways, it appears as though *inte* are essentially describing their younger selves—a point I did not dare raise.

Inclusive Mixed Spaces

During their school days, *inte* were academically integrated but socially isolated. They stood on the perimeter of social cliques, often removing themselves or avoiding potential sites of group belonging, such as school clubs. In contrast, these youth-oriented deaf spaces are diverse and inclusive. Although older generations are split into ‘factions’ or ‘camps’ (some of which superior signing skills are a condition for ‘membership’), the younger generations appear less divisive and more tolerant. The fluidity and openness of these spaces provides opportunities to locate or create an *ibasho*. Inclusiveness extends to

accepting people of all signing levels and communication modalities. While people within culturally deaf identified circles negatively critique young people's *shuwa* skills, their peers are more permissive. Young DHH Japanese are welcoming to newcomers, appearing eager to expand their social network. An absence of *ibasho* in many arenas of mainstream society leads deaf and hard-of-hearing people to create and want to share their own *ibasho*.

Even though the deaf world is foreign at first to many *inte*, the boundaries between the hearing and deaf worlds are more permeable than *inte* recognize. Youth deaf spaces are particularly diverse with central actors coming from all educational and linguistic backgrounds. Given the increasingly high rate of mainstreaming, deaf spaces are nearly always populated by actors who have attended a mainstream school at some point in their educational career. In other words, *inte* are rarely a minority in mixed contemporary deaf spaces.

The deaf world is not only populated by other *inte*; it is also populated by hearing people. Hearing people may be welcomed in deaf spaces if they are respectful. Respect is shown by treating deaf people as equals, following social norms and etiquette, and making efforts to learn *shuwa* as well as not speaking to other hearing people, an act which automatically excludes most DHH people.¹⁷⁷ Some hearing people have an early

¹⁷⁷ This was not always the case. In the first *shuwa* circle I joined, there was a lot of tension between the hearing organizers and the deaf participants who comprised a minority in the circle. The deaf members were unhappy that the circle was run by hearing people and that they often spoke without signing. There was confusion as to whether this was an activity to integrate DHH and hearing people in the community, or a

introduction to the deaf world due to family connections, such as CODAs (Children of Deaf Adults) who are born into signing deaf families and usually have JSL as their first language. SODAs (Siblings of Deaf Adults) are seldom described in the literature, but they also may become active in deaf spaces due to family connections. Certain hearing people may be granted conditional citizenship, but the deaf world is believed to truly belong to deaf (and hard-of-hearing) people.

Ibasho is continuously and reflexively determined. Through finding the ‘true self’ or ‘new self’, it is possible to discover or create an *ibasho*. An element of finding an *ibasho* is identifying places where *inte* can be full participants in communication and where they can determine communication methods. These mixed deaf spaces have mixed communication modalities. I argue that an *ibasho* can be forged through the negotiation of language. *Inte* have agency in making decisions about language preferences. Opportunities for decision-making are in abundance. *Shuwa* is politically situated and transformative while at the same time quotidian. Decisions regarding language are made day-to-day and must be re-evaluated in each context. *Choice* is expanded exponentially from the time when *kōwa* was the primary communication modality.

‘continuing education’ type of night class for hearing people. This tension was never resolved. After each class, we would go to a local ‘family restaurant’. I recall hearing members who spoke without signing, which had the effect of excluding DHH members. Other hearing members tried to be more inclusive by using written communication to chat with DHH members. Nevertheless, I would not describe this *shuwa* circle as a ‘deaf space’ but a hearing-led space.

The majority of *inte* today draw upon a range of communication modalities rather than communicating exclusively in *shuwa*. According to questionnaires and interviews, signed Japanese and *kōwa* were the two most frequently employed methods followed by contact/pidgin signing and JSL. As mentioned, some *inte*, such as Yasushi, are what I term ‘aspirational signers’ in that they aspire to use JSL rather than a signed modality. This is regardless of their actual level of proficiency. However, most *inte* are what I call ‘contextual communicators’ because they are flexible in their communication styles, switching from (voiced) signed Japanese or contact/pidgin signing, to *kōwa*, particularly when communicating with hearing people. They carefully assess the context and adapt accordingly. Contextual communicators do not necessarily place a high priority on mastering JSL, even though some of them sign relatively well. There are some *inte* who are highly ambivalent about linguistic choices and self-presentation. *Inte* in this ‘ambivalent’ category demonstrate a low level of *shuwa* proficiency, despite having encountered *shuwa* between one and six years ago. They tend to mix *kōwa* and *shuwa*, relying heavily on spoken and written Japanese communication.¹⁷⁸ Overall, the majority of *inte* continue to use *kōwa* or written communication (or a combination of the two) when talking with

¹⁷⁸ For instance, with one 23-year-old *inte*, I had to write on my boogie board (LED board) or iPad. She had graduated from Kaiba University, and had been involved in the dance team, but was unable to communicate smoothly with peers who *only* signed. She preferred communicating with people who signed and spoke (i.e., signed Japanese).

hearing people.

Different approaches to *shuwa* may be tolerated but that does not stop DHH youth from self-segregating based on preferred communication modalities. They often opt to associate with peers whose personal philosophies most closely align with their own. For example, Reina, a fourth-year Kaiba University student, introduced her social group by declaring, ‘We are kind of a hard-of-hearing (*nanchō*) group because we use *kōwa* with signing’. She positioned her chosen peer group in opposition to peers who primarily communicate in *shuwa*. Occasionally, I witnessed people disparaging individuals or groups who made different linguistic choices. However, criticisms were usually exchanged privately and rarely expressed openly.

It is important to note that *inte* do not automatically feel comfortable using *shuwa*. After all, they have spent their lives communicating in *kōwa*. On the questionnaire distributed at Kaiba University, respondents were asked the following question, ‘Currently, how confident are you in communicating in *shuwa*?’¹⁷⁹ Very few, if any, participants would declare that they are confident in JSL. Therefore, I was careful not to specify whether it was JSL, signed Japanese, or contact/pidgin signing, instead, using the general term *shuwa*. The concern was whether or not they use a signed modality. The survey results revealed that 63% of first and third-year students who were solely educated

¹⁷⁹ The question was ‘*Genzai shuwa de komyunikēshyon o toru koto ni dono gurai jishin ga arimasuka?*’ My aim was to measure their confidence in communicating via sign not their actual level of signing.

at schools for the deaf self-reported being confident or very confident in communicating in *shuwa*. In contrast, only 17% of first and third-year *inte* students answered that they were ‘confident’ or ‘very confident’. My data suggests that interest in *shuwa*, the level of proficiency in *shuwa*, and attitudes toward deafness tend to be directly correlated to the degree to which horizontal identities are forged with DHH peers. In other words, those who have many signing friends are typically more confident communicating in *shuwa* and have positive attitudes toward other DHH people.

Finding an *Ibasho* through Acceptance

In hearing schools, *inte* were peripheral observers. During the self-searching process, the potential to be central actors, even to accept leadership positions, is explored. Masao, 24 years old, had never been a leader during his school days. This was not even considered as a possibility. However, only one semester after joining his university’s *shuwa* circle, he was nominated for the position of club president. Given his weak signing skills at the time, Masao was shocked by the nomination. He was far from being the best signer; there were even more proficient hearing signers. Masao hesitantly accepted the nomination and won the election. As club president, it was necessary to speak in front of others, not only in the circle but at other university-wide events. Being a leader called attention to Masao. This role also required him to make decisions for and with others. This

new highly visible self was in stark contrast to Masao's younger self. As a child and adolescent, Masao was focused on avoiding attention and followed his parents' guidance on all decisions. Much to his surprise, Masao discovered that he enjoyed leading and supporting others. He began to find belonging in a mixed space where hearing members outnumbered DHH members but DHH members were in charge. He also found transnational belongingness. One of the DHH members of the club introduced him to a deaf basketball team. Through this team, he has had the chance to play in games and tournaments across Japan and even in Europe, broadening his connections to DHH peers across local and national borders.

Finding a place to belong could entail pursuing personal interests, which had been prohibitive in hearing environments. I met Nozomi, 19 years old, during her first term at Kaiba University. In classes, she hesitated to give answers and at lunchtime she said very little. Despite her reticence, she was one of the first students to return the parental consent form required for 'minors' (under 20 years old) to participate in interviews.

Nozomi grew up in a hearing family in a northern region of Japan. After failing the entrance exams to her first and second choice universities, she enrolled in her third choice, Kaiba University. When she first moved into the dormitories she was nervous, convinced that she was the only student unable to sign. Prior to entering university, she had extremely limited experience with *shuwa*. As a senior high school student, along with her

mother, she had attended just ‘two or three’ meetings of her local community’s *shuwa* circle. She had decided not to continue going because the meetings were full of ‘elderly people’.

During her school days, Nozomi struggled to lip-read speech. Now, at a ‘deaf university’, she struggles to decipher *shuwa*. Instead of being excluded or neglected (as was the case in her mainstream schools), her peers made adaptations to include her. For instance, her signing dorm-mates wrote on their iPhones or small whiteboards. They invited her to eat meals together and to go shopping in the center of town. They patiently signed slowly to her, repeating the signs while mouthing the words. Moreover, Nozomi discovered she was far from being the sole student unable to understand *shuwa*. She was one of many emerging signers.¹⁸⁰

A shy smile appeared on Nozomi’s face when our conversation turned to the subject of dancing. When Nozomi was in junior and senior high school, she had yearned to join the dance team. However, she refrained from even auditioning out of fear that she would not be able to follow the music.¹⁸¹ There were no provisions in place for a deaf dancer. As soon as she learned about Kaiba University’s dance team, she tried out for a troupe. The dance team at Kaiba University was created for and by students who have

¹⁸⁰ I observed Nozomi’s beginner *shuwa* class every week. Nozomi was on par with her classmates.

¹⁸¹ Nozomi’s hearing is measured at 105 decibels in her right ear (profound hearing loss), and 90 decibels in her left ear (severe hearing loss).

limited access to auditory input. Members closely collaborate to overcome any obstacles. During practices and performances, the music is blasted at floor shaking volumes and the bass is turned up to maximum levels. Students carefully count out the beats together in *shuwa*. One of Nozomi's dance club *senpai* (elder) claimed there is a higher percentage of *inte* members. Although I tried to get an accurate figure, given the nature of the student run organization and the number of individual squads or troupes within the club, it was difficult to gather this data. However, anecdotally it seemed true. I spoke with several *inte* dance team members who said they had first wanted to try dancing while in a mainstream junior or senior high school.¹⁸² It may be that students who were at mainstream schools observed their hearing peers on dance teams and developed an interest in such a 'hearing activity' as part of their *inte* habitus.

Three weeks before my interview with Nozomi, I had attended the university festival held on an autumn weekend. The dance team shows were the highlight of the festival and attracted DHH university students from across the Kanto region who travelled to support their friends. Nozomi appeared on stage with a small troupe of three girls. Nozomi was the youngest. In her first performance, she looked nervous, but later told me it had been 'lots of fun'. At the time of writing, Nozomi is preparing to participate in her

¹⁸² One alumni reported joining her senior high school dance team but quitting because she felt her deafness imposed a burden on her teammates.

third annual dance show.

Masao and Nozomi found acceptance among peers by exploring their interests. Experiencing acceptance is one of the conditions for *ibasho* (Bamba, Haight 2007:405) a condition that is often elusive. *Inte*'s hearing parents tend to have difficulties accepting a 'disabled' child, while their hearing classmates tended to neglect them. For the first time, participants are presented with people who not only share a horizontal identity but want to build friendships based on that identity. In comparison to hearing families, who are described as those 'who do not have an understanding' (*rikai ga nai*). DHH peers are described as those who 'have an understanding' (*rikai ga aru*).

Internalized stigma and negative constructions of deafness may shift to positive ones through self-acceptance. For example, Reina says that she now believes she was 'chosen' by god (*kamisama kara erab[ar]eta hito*) because being disabled makes her a nicer, more empathetic person. Other *inte* describe turning their deafness into a positive trait after they began to accept themselves. For example, Satoshi, 18 years old, spoke about using his deafness as a 'charm point' (charming feature) when interviewing for a part-time job. During a job interview, he told the manager that being deaf made him more patient with customers because he appreciates when hearing people are patient with him. According to Satoshi, this greatly impressed the manager. He believes this statement was one of the key reasons he was hired.

This new or rediscovered self seeks acceptance within the family. Learning to sign to communicate with a signing *inte* could be viewed as acceptance, but families did not adjust their communication patterns. The majority of *inte* in this study did not report a shift in household communication after developing *shuwa* skills. Japanese, mainly in spoken communication but also via writing, remains the primary communication method in hearing families. Several participants from Kaiba University said that their first summer returning home after entering university was a ‘shock’ as they had to shift from visual communication with friends back to *kōwa* with family. For years *kōwa* was a connection to the world. Once there is the option to use another communication modality, a visual one without impediments, *kōwa* can become *mendokusai* (a nuisance). Rather than solely focusing on fitting in with hearing people, they begin to think about their own communication needs by looking inward as illustrated by the ‘self-searching’ sign (**figure 5.3**).

Inte tend to respond pragmatically to their hearing families. On the one hand, they are disappointed that their family members do not learn how to sign ‘for them’. Increasingly, they lose patience with communication barriers associated with *kōwa*, because, as one participant explained, ‘now I know what I didn’t know before’. On the other hand, *inte* accept that the time required to learn a new language is prohibitive. As some parents opposed *shuwa* during *inte* childhoods, they take heart in the fact that parents

are not rejecting their newfound friends and language. By not rejecting their attempts to learn *shuwa*, parents demonstrate tacit acceptance. Furthermore, some parents demonstrate more overt acceptance by joining local *shuwa* circles or other deaf-related organizations.

Translocal and Transnational Belonging

Inte discover that potential sites of *ibasho* extend across Japan and across international borders. Encountering *shuwa* and DHH friends brings potential for membership in translocal and transnational communities. Translocal and transnational connections in deaf communities have been discussed in the literature (Breivik 2013, Haualand 2007). An imagined shared history and a common horizontal identity brings together people from diverse geographic and social backgrounds.

Connections supersede social structures. In Japan, relationships in the hearing world are often based on a shared environment or frame (Nakane 1970). These relationships may be formed because people studied in the same school or worked in the same company. The shared environment can be highly specific and narrowly defined with clearly delineated boundaries. For instance, as I observed as a teacher in mainstream Japanese schools, students will create boundaries around even the smallest units, such as homeroom classes, cementing an ‘us’ and ‘them’ identity.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ When I was a junior and senior high school teacher in Tokyo, I noticed students would identify themselves as ‘A *kumi*’, ‘B *kumi*’ (A group/class, B group/class) and so forth. For instance, ‘We’re B class; we are the best

The translocal deaf community in Japan is more than an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1983); there is tangible connectivity across the country, even if only through name recognition. The national deaf community has been described in ‘*han’i ga hiroi*’ (literally ‘have a big range’ or be ‘large in scope’). A deaf person in the southernmost islands of Okinawa could easily know—or at least know of—a DHH person in the northernmost island in Hokkaido. Alumni of schools for the deaf expand the ‘range’ after graduation by ‘creating a pipe’ (*paipu o tsukuru*). These pipelines cross geographic and metaphoric boundaries. Ties are created and maintained across distances through shared pasts, present commonalities, and visions of the future. Participation in deaf events, membership in organizations, reading and watching deaf media, and personal introductions have all provided opportunities to strengthen translocal bonds. Local chapters of the national organization Zenkon cut across the lines of university, gender, geography, year level, and academic major. Activities such as their annual summer retreat bring together DHH and hearing students from across the country.

As the percentage of students enrolled in schools for the deaf continues to decline, technology is creating new possibilities for translocal connections. The ‘pipe’ created by newsletters, deaf school alumni events, and other deaf events is now reinforced via forms of technology, especially social media. Linkages that traverse local and international

at performing skits’.

borders are strengthened by virtual pipelines. DHH people of all ages are early adopters of new technology. Information is exchanged via Line, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and other social media modalities. Opportunities for *ibasho* are found in virtual spaces. As indicated in the ethnographic vignette about Hisae in the introduction, it is common for young *inte* to seek out opportunities to learn to sign and to meet DHH peers via the Internet. The end goal is usually face-to-face interactions (rather than relationships sustained in virtual spaces), but technology is an important platform to forge and maintain ties.

Inte also learn that there are opportunities for developing transnational friendships. The shared experience of navigating deafness in mainstream hearing societies transcends geographic and linguistic boundaries. Deafness is not universal, but there is a ‘universalizing’ dimension to the deaf experience. Deaf and hard-of-hearing people around the world have common challenges including fighting to have their Sign language recognized as a natural language, difficulty communicating with hearing family members, strong bonds and peer socialization at schools for the deaf or exclusion and isolation at mainstream schools, struggles to interact with or be respected by mainstream (i.e., hearing) society, and obstacles to gaining access to information. DHH people seek understanding on how deaf people in different contexts cope and thrive. Commonalities contribute to the ease with which deaf people forge transnational friendships and

communities.

Inte (and their DHH peers) often actively seek out chances to spend time with ‘local’ deaf people during their travels. As Aogu showed in chapter two, transnational deaf connections could be the highlight of foreign travel. In one case, Mayuko, 21 years old, included me in the process of transnational community-making. Mayuko and seven other DHH university students from universities across the Kanto region were planning a trip to the Philippines. She contacted me to ask for introductions to ‘deaf people’ (*rōsha*) there. Mayuko had known about my visit to the Philippines with Meisei Gakuen in the autumn. During our stay in Manilla, we had spent time with deaf university students. I had been impressed with the efforts both groups made to communicate across linguistic boundaries and their success in doing so. Although Filipino Sign Language (FSL) and JSL are mutually unintelligible and the Japanese students had only a rudimentary knowledge of American Sign Language (which has influenced FSL), the intercultural exchange was aided by the iconic nature of Sign languages as well as the two groups’ extensive first-hand experiences communicating across linguistic barriers.

Through social media, I had kept in contact with a handful of these Filipino university students. I introduced them to Mayuko. They were eager to meet their Japanese counterparts. Through the magic of Facebook, I saw the Filipino students playing host to the Japanese students in real time. The Japanese students did not know Filipino Sign

Language (FSL), and the Filipino students did not know JSL. However, the two parties developed strategies to communicate: leveraging common knowledge of the ASL alphabet, written English, and iconic signs to bridge the gap. This was not a unique case. Many DHH people shared stories of meeting up with acquaintances or strangers overseas. In each story, the commonality of deafness superseded most differences.

Adapting to a New Deaf World

Although *inte* are immersed in the deaf world through relationships and associations, they sometimes find this world to be an uncomfortable fit. Experience with both worlds does not render *inte* ‘bicultural’. Therefore, I hesitate to refer to *inte* as ‘cultural brokers’ who can facilitate the bridging of gaps between cultural groups. On the one hand, ostensibly, *inte* have access to two worlds: the hearing world, in which they were raised and the deaf world to which they gained membership as teenagers and young adults. However, having ‘birth rights’ to the deaf world does not necessarily preclude the dissonance between one’s background and new spheres of sociality.

The deaf world introduces uncomfortable norms. In particular, participants remarked that conversations in the deaf world revolve too much around ‘human relations’ or ‘personal relationships’ (*ningen kankei*) in this insular, ‘small world’ (*sekai ga semai*),

which leads to ‘rumors’ (*uwasa*). Talking about other people often takes precedent over discussing career or other interests. Historically, deaf and hard-of-hearing people have not had equal opportunities for employment or advancement in the workplace nor have they had equal access to information. Consequently, sharing information and staying connected was and is of the upmost concern. Whenever I meet signing deaf people in groups, our time together stretches for hours. I have come to appreciate that these social outings are treasured departures from the hearing world— a world that no one is eager to return to prematurely.

This insular, highly connected world can also be overwhelming to *inte* who are accustomed to being isolated. In relaying a story about her dormitory mates, Kaiba student Emiko, 18 years old, suddenly blurted out, ‘I just wanted to go to 7-11 [convenience store]. But my dorm-mates would ask “Where are you going? Why?” They’d even invite themselves to come with me!’ Emiko demonstrates the tension between desiring acceptance and feeling pressurized to become more group-oriented. *Inte* may have felt isolated in mainstream schools, but a solitary lived reality was their ‘normal’. They welcome opportunities to belong, but must reconcile an ‘independent’ self with a highly connected, socially engaged emerging self.

5.8 Conclusion

Shuwa is the language for and by friends and ‘encountering’ *shuwa* entails meeting deaf and hard-of-hearing peers. There are two metaphors employed in self-searching: finding a ‘new self’ and ‘returning’ to a former self. New friendships and a shared understanding that stems from a common positionality and a mutual language, *shuwa*, enable *inte* to embark on ‘self-searching’ (*jibun sagashi*) as they search for a place to belong, an *ibasho*.

Meeting DHH peers is a catalyst for learning *shuwa*. Through friendships with deaf and hard-of-hearing age-mates, *inte* learn *shuwa*, reflect upon their own biases, and try to uncover or rediscover ‘new’ or ‘true’ selves. Relationships are means for interpreting the past and for reflecting upon their self-concept. Co-constructions and interpretations are possible because DHH friends are seen to have an understanding (*rikai*) that hearing people do not—and cannot—possess. A shared visual communication modality and positionality in society facilitates positive ‘human relationships’ based on sameness and mutual recognition of these commonalities.

Inte’s self-searching does not take place in isolation. The interactional self is ‘searched’ or analyzed through friendships with other deaf and hard-of-hearing friends. The inner self is the most private self, yet it is often by entering new interactional environs that both the inner and interactional selves can be realized and reconciled. For many *inte*, the

present-day true self is implicitly contrasted against the performative self of the past, which was primarily concerned with ‘pretending’ and ‘covering’. Discovering new interests, returning to positive patterns of interaction from childhood, and finding one’s voice in both a linguistic-communicative and metaphorical sense occur upon searching both the inner and interactional self. The self, whether ‘new’ or ‘reborn’, is ever engaging, ever reflecting. Through these processes, *inte* can discover an *ibasho*. There is an interplay between self-searching and finding a place to belong with friendships central to both.

Finally, *‘jibun sagashi’* is a concept indigenous to Japan; however, it has applicability in cross-cultural analysis. I argue that similar ‘self-searching’ processes can be found across deaf studies literature. Evans’ study of British working class students (2010) shows how positioning oneself socially ‘vis-à-vis others’, namely friends, is not a uniquely Japanese phenomenon. One example of ‘self-searching’ in a comparative perspective is Norwegian scholar Stein Erik Ohna’s ‘Deaf in My Own Way’ concept (2004). This study is frequently cited in literature in discussions on the various ways people reflect upon their deafness and position themselves against deaf and hearing people. Ohna’s concepts provide a frame of analysis for interpreting relationships with other deaf people, with hearing people, and with oneself.

Ohna takes the ‘experience-near’ approach to examine how deaf people manage their relationships with deaf and hearing people. He interviewed 13 deaf people aged 18 to

22 and nine deaf people aged 40 to 45. Through narrative discourse analysis, Ohna uncovers four phases: Taken-for-granted, Alienation, Affiliation, and Deaf in my Own Way. These phases are not necessarily observable but rather are ‘mediational means’ employed by deaf people in narratives (Ohna 2004:33). Ohna found these stages in narratives of deaf people with hearing parents as well as deaf people with deaf parents. I will briefly look at how Ohna’s study can be compared to the case of *inte*.

In Ohna’s Taken-for-Granted phase, the deaf person recognizes she is deaf but thinks ‘I am like the others’ (meaning hearing people) (2004:33). This phase appeared in *inte* narratives about elementary school. When confronted with communication ‘breakdowns’, alienation occurs and hearing people become ‘those who do not understand me—those who are normal’ while the self-reflection is ‘I am *abnormal*’ (Ohna 2004:33).¹⁸⁴ *Inte* describe this Alienation phase at home and in school, particularly after elementary school.

In the first two phases, the role of other deaf people remains ambiguous. However, in the third phase, Affiliation, deaf people become ‘the *own*’.¹⁸⁵ The solitary, misunderstood person finds affiliation with deaf people, becoming an ‘us’, while the hearing person becomes the other (Ohna 2004:34). In the Japanese context, befriending DHH peers aligns with Ohna’s Affiliation phase and finding spaces of belonging. In my

¹⁸⁴ Italicized in original.

¹⁸⁵ Italicized in original.

research, this Affiliation phase could be fraught with uncertainties regarding language, identity, and belonging. Moreover, I found that affiliation does not preclude alienation. Society remains hearing, and DHH people continue to be segregated in mainstream society. In addition, students at 'hearing universities' may experience alienation among their hearing classmates.

Ohna's 'Deaf in my own way' phase is the most complex. There is a re-shuffling of the self and other, and relationships toward hearing people become ones of ambivalence (2004:34). The deaf person sees that hearing people do not understand deaf people, whereas deaf people understand one another (Ohna 2004:34). Despite discussing shared understanding, the person recognizes she cannot associate exclusively with other deaf people and must also associate with both deaf and hearing people (Ohna 2004:34). Reaching the 'Deaf in my own way' phase is seen to require maturity; Ohna argues that 20 year olds did not have enough life experience to approach this stage. However, I disagree with his view on age. *Inte* demonstrate a level of sophistication and insight when negotiating relationships. They understand the need to live in both worlds. I believe Ohna's 'Deaf in My Own Way' phase can be likened to the process of creating and discovering an *ibasho* in both mixed deaf and hearing spaces.

■ ■ Conclusion

I. Reflecting on Integration

‘Are there any happy stories of integration?’ One day a hearing teacher from a school for the deaf posed this question over a cup of tea. Even though Yamaguchi-sensei is immersed in the bilingual-bicultural education ‘camp’, she admitted that she hopes mainstreaming could be a positive experience for students. Since Meisei Gakuen does not have a senior high school department, students must transfer to a school for the deaf or to a mainstream school for their final years of secondary education. Yamaguchi-sensei was seeking reassurance that the students she taught could still thrive in mainstream settings. She had heard many negative reports about integration. I attempted to give her a clear-cut answer, but instead found myself speaking about the complexities of being a DHH student in a hearing educational setting. It is not uncommon for *inte* to assert that, despite the difficulties inherent in such environments, the efforts associated with studying in a mainstream school are worthwhile in the long-term. *Inte* narratives are rife with ambivalence. They do not provide straight-forward answers. Instead, participants’ experiences illuminate the layered ambiguities of life as ‘the other’.

This research revealed that *inte* tend to be ambiguous and anomalous in the private sphere of the home and in the public sphere of the school. Although the family is envisioned as a sphere of intimacy, a child who cannot fully access her parents’ native

language and who may attend a special school introduces an element of ‘foreignness’ and complicates the transmission of taken-for-granted vertical identities. Accordingly, this study showed that ‘otherness’ may be felt within the home, especially in the absence of a mutually intelligible language or a shared identity. In deaf families (and in some mixed and hard-of-hearing families) the birth of a DHH child introduces familiarity along with an opportunity to continue the transmission of language and traditions. This ‘sameness’ creates a psychological sense of belonging. The significance of a family’s hearing is demonstrated by the frequency with which DHH people ask one another, ‘Is your family hearing or deaf?’

Questions about family type are typically preceded by the question, ‘What deaf school did you attend?’ In contemporary Japan, it is just as likely that a DHH child will attend a mainstream school as it is that she will attend a school for the deaf. However, up until the 1960s, it was assumed that DHH students would be educated in separate spaces. While *inte* narratives concentrate on the immediate actors (parents, siblings, teachers, friends), *inte* are implicated in a larger, transnational network. The trajectory of deaf education has been moving toward the ‘inevitable’ destination of integration since the oral method versus manual method debates at the end of the 19th century. Although the manual method was the chosen method in the early days of deaf education in Japan, the oral communication method (*kōwa hō*) has been used in schools since the Taisho Period (1912-

1926). From the perspective of many educators and parents, a DHH student's attendance in mainstream schools is evidence of the applicability of the *kōwa* method. Academic integration 'proves' that DHH children can learn to speak and read lips well enough to study alongside hearing students.

The advent of integration brought choice. For the first time, parents (and to some extent their children) were given opportunities to determine whether schooling would occur in a 'special' school, which may be geographically removed, or in a 'regular' school, which could be located within the community. The decision to integrate is informed by an array of factors. One factor is that mainstream schools are believed to normalize a disabled child, and therefore avoid stigmatizing gazes within the community. Schools for the deaf may offer full inclusion in the daily school life of a child, but they simultaneously mark her as different or abnormal in the 'eyes of others' (*sekentei*). Mainstream schools project an image of normality because, in the primary years, the majority of the children in the community attend local public schools. A mainstream education is believed to help integrate students with disabilities into the local community and broader society.

In addition to avoiding stigmatizing gazes, many parents believe that the perceived negative effects of deafness can be mitigated through an 'upbringing' in a mainstream school by shoring up opportunities for the future. The decision to send a child to a mainstream school is often based on the notion that a 'normal' school will not only

provide a better education but also a better chance to be educated in the ways of (hearing) society. *Inte* are seen to be signalling the potential to adapt to mainstream society by demonstrating an ability to assimilate in mainstream settings and remain in an all-hearing environment for the duration of their schooling. Any difficulty involved in ‘mastering’ *kōwa* is believed to be worthwhile for the tangible rewards it will bring. However, the reality of navigating the academic and social life of a ‘hearing school’ as a DHH student is far more complex. The long-term positive outcomes of a mainstream education are juxtaposed against the difficulties encountered during schooling.

Academic integration is believed to be an antidote to segregation, but participants suggest that it can result in social segregation. Integration is viewed by some parents as a way of preventing ‘a life of solitude’ and of ensuring a successful future as a productive member of Japanese society. However, the central-actor accounts of everyday lived realities reveal that integration can result in segregation, solitude, isolation, and a sense of otherness. Although there are very real obstacles to accessing classroom content due to their deafness, these academic barriers are seen as secondary to the social ones. *Kōwa* is presented as a panacea; however, it does not eliminate the sense of difference nor does it enable ‘barrier-free’ communication. Being raised with *kōwa* as the primary communication method imposes subtle and overt boundaries to inclusion, whether within the family or the school.

On the other hand, this study demonstrates that even young marginalized people can exercise agency as they try to improve their circumstances. DHH youth are aware of the bias toward ‘disabled’ people in society and consciously and unconsciously work to cover stigmatizing traits. In subtle, nearly imperceptible ways, they attempt to mitigate their otherness by adopting coping tactics such as concealing markers of difference, rejecting information support, performing ‘communication competence’, and mimicry. *Inte* are chameleons, transforming their social markings to match their environment.

In most cases, these mitigating strategies were carried out in the absence of an *inte* role model. Instead, the hearing student served as the model for behavior and mannerisms. By reading and interpreting social cues, *inte* use the available tools for impression management. In this process of covering, performing, and mimicry, they acquire certain habits (*kuse*) and ways (*sube*) of interacting, which I refer to as an ‘*inte* habitus’. This distinguishes them from their peers in schools for the deaf who model their behavior on fellow DHH students. An unconscious mimesis becomes conscious and realized when *inte* encounter a secondary habitus in deaf spaces. They begin exchanging ‘shared’ pasts with other *inte*, demystifying their own ‘uniqueness’ in the process. Through the discovery of shared traits, *inte* may acquire a horizontal (peer) identity.

Despite the presence of familial vertical relationships and a preference for Japanese within the household, school-age DHH children and teens are able to acquire (some form

of) *shuwa* because they are not fully dependent on adults. Children and youth are not objects of socialization or passive participants in their lived reality; they have agency to make their own choices. Most deaf school-raised youth learn *shuwa* among peers at school. Later they become the informal *shuwa* teachers for *inte*. As *inte* ‘come of age’, they learn about *shuwa* and the self.

As *inte* in this study ‘come of age’ chronologically, they also may elect to ‘come out’ as deaf or hard-of-hearing. After graduating from senior high school, many *inte* look for opportunities to meet DHH peers and to learn *shuwa*. The two are mutually causative. Meeting DHH peers can be a catalyst for learning *shuwa* or learning *shuwa* can be a platform to meet DHH peers. *Inte* are introduced to a shared visual language, *shuwa*, and an alternative positionality. No longer are they a ‘minority of one’ or ‘the other’; they are one of many in a peer group. In deaf spaces, deafness is not to be hidden or concealed: it is the bond that unites people in translocal and transnational networks. At the same time, signing transforms ‘invisible’ deafness into a visible phenomenon, and may therefore serve to further differentiate *inte* from ‘able-bodied’ people. Paradoxically, it is when they face difference on the macro level that they experience sameness on the micro level.

The development of these close relationships with DHH peers can facilitate an examination of the self. In the early days of deaf education, there were few schools across the country. Most students had no choice but to attend residential schools, which were the

birthplace of language, identity, friendships, and mutual understanding. Separated from their families, classmates became a type of ‘fictive kin’. *Inte* at Kaiba University have a ‘second chance’ to experience this type of support and socialization by living and studying among peers. Even participants outside of the Kaiba University environment find opportunities to develop horizontal identities with DHH peers. These relationships are a means for interpreting the past and for reflecting upon their self-concept.

Through friendships, *inte* co-construct meaning, reflect upon their own biases, and explore the self. *Shuwa* facilitates this exploration. Whereas *kōwa* is the modality of performances and ‘shallow relationships’, *shuwa* is the modality of intimacy, deep personal relationships and self-searching. The barriers imposed by spoken communication to developing meaningful friendships and engaging in the social life of school (and to some degree the family) are believed to have prevented *inte* from fully expressing and understanding the self. Exploration of the self becomes possible because DHH friends demonstrate an unparalleled ‘understanding’ (*rikai*) on multiple levels. DHH friends understand the language modality, *shuwa*, as well as the minority position from which the other is communicating.

DHH peers become the catalyst for processes of self-searching. These processes occur through learning to communicate, learning about themselves, and learning where they belong as they negotiate a balance between their ‘hearing raised’ background and their

new role in deaf spaces. Discovering new personal interests, returning to positive patterns of interaction from childhood, and finding one's voice in both a linguistic-communicative and a metaphorical sense occur upon searching both the inner and interactional self. 'Who am I?' and 'Who am I with others?' are intertwined. The self, whether 'new' or '(re)encountered' is ever engaging, ever reflecting.

Through self-searching, *inte* find or create an *ibasho* (a place to belong), which had been elusive for much of their lives. While deaf school-raised students from hearing families left home to enter environments where they were surrounded by others like them, *inte* were often 'the other' both at home and at school. Frequently, *inte* described this former self as '*hitori bocchi*', which can be translated as 'solitude', 'loneliness', and '[feeling] alone'. The dual sense of 'otherness' in the private sphere of the home and the public sphere of society hindered the creation of an *ibasho*.

Inte understand themselves through situated relationships. *Ibasho* is co-constructed with others, while also being individually defined. As conceived, *ibasho* is more closely connected to communication modalities and friendships than physical spaces.

Encountering *shuwa* and signing peers is a multi-faceted phenomenon. There is no single *inte* experience nor is there a single way to integrate as an *inte*. In inclusive, mixed spaces *inte* discover and create *ibasho* by expressing themselves through language and common interests among peers who share an understanding of what it means to be a DHH person in

Japan.

II. Personhood and Belonging

One of the earliest childhood memories of most *inte* is an awareness (*ninshiki*) of the differences ‘caused by’ their deafness. Difference could be manifested in visible symbols of deafness on the body, such as hearing aids and cochlear implants. Difference could also be manifested in the social world. *Inte* tried to grasp the significance of their uniqueness: Why am I the only person in my family who cannot hear the television? Why am I the only person in my class who attends speech therapy? The sense of being alone in a ‘grey zone’ was compounded by the relentless demands of communicating in spoken language. Communication barriers (*kabe*), constraints (*seigen*) and limitations to ‘something’ (*kagirareru*) were obstacles to expressing the self and to belonging. From the perspective of *inte*, their solitude is beyond comparison.

However, in practice, *inte* are far from being the only group in Japanese society which struggles to belong. Vertical (inherited) identities are often taken for granted, even in the literature on Japan; however, children of ‘international marriages’, ‘returnees’, and the children of immigrants may not share a vertical identity with their parents. Further, other phenomena, such as *futōkō* (school ‘non-attendance’), *ijime* (bullying), and *hikikomori* (social withdrawal, ‘shut ins’), are associated with loneliness and solitude and may parallel those of *inte*.

Anthropology often problematizes in-betweenity. *Inte* offer an example of the intricacies of mitigating difference and defining selfhood. Examining social constructions and media depictions as well as relevant policies can shed light on a particular public dimension. However, illuminating the quotidian, the private lives of minority groups, yields highly nuanced data. I argue that taking a central-actor research approach (*tōjisha kenkyū*) not only gives the voiceless a voice but also contributes to the anthropological understanding of personhood.

This study highlights the fluid and contested nature of personhood. Self-searching is a concept often applied to self-fulfilment through work (as demonstrated with Kato's study of migrants), but in the context of this study it relates to understandings of personhood. Japan is described as being a high-context, society, which values role performance. It is contrasted with low-context societies where the self is ideologically fixed, such as the United States. In a highly contextual society like Japan, redefining roles is seen as a natural part of being an adult. Yet this research demonstrates that role performance can be considered 'inauthentic' to some Japanese. *Inte* contrast an 'inauthentic self' who is engaged in performance and covering against a 'true self' or a fully realized 'new self'. An *inte* habitus may be linked to an inability to be one's 'true self' (*jibunrashii*). By 'truly communicating' rather than performing 'communication competence' the authentic self can be expressed. This study calls for nuanced

considerations of *personhoods* in Japan.

Finally, in a broader context, studies of ‘disabled people’ and personhood often look at how a society constructs the disabled person, particularly through interpretations of corporeal deviance. This study illustrates how central actors reflexively interpret their personhood. In spite of constraints, *inte* can demonstrate agency, creativity, and flexibility to improve their circumstances. In addition, their narratives demonstrate how stigmatized individuals can stigmatize others. This was seen with young *inte* who labelled signers as ‘stupid’ (*baka*) and avoided being associated with them. Further, this study points to the fluid and temporal nature of stigma. As *inte* acquire horizontal identities by spending time with peers who use *shuwa*, the stigmatized ‘deaf other’ becomes a trusted and valued friend, mentor, and teacher.

III. Data in the ‘Gaps’

Ethnographies cannot escape being partial in both senses of the word: biased and incomplete. In chapter one, the role of bias and positionality was explored. Here I will discuss the ‘incompleteness’ of this ethnography and the data that can be gleaned from examining such apparent ‘omissions’.

First, *inte* do not usually classify themselves as ‘semi-lingual’. Overall, they do not appear to share the linguistic concerns of specialists. While bilingual-bicultural education advocates and Sign linguists voice strong misgivings about mainstreamed

students being denied a ‘natural’ native language, only two participants spoke of being semi-lingual or lacking a native language, namely *shuwa*. These two participants are not *inte* but part of the older mainstreamed generation. Both are JSL signers who are actively engaged in Deaf cultural movements. According to *inte*, Japanese is their first language. In some cases, the first language is more specifically identified as *written* Japanese. In addition, *inte*’s orally influenced style of *shuwa* is a point of contention for many culturally deaf Japanese but not for *inte*. These ‘concerns’ about *inte* are part of a very specific, charged debate. *Inte* are viewed as victims of the oppressive hearing advocates for oralism. According to this view, they have been deprived of a native language as well as a chance to meet DHH peers during their school days. However, *inte* position themselves as being language learners who cannot sign well *yet*. Upon self-reflection, *inte* acknowledge that communication in oral Japanese is an artistry of mimicry and ‘bluffing’. Skilled signers point out that *inte* also ‘bluff’ when signing, but *inte* never describe themselves as performing ‘communication competence’ in *shuwa*. On the contrary, *shuwa* is framed as a language of fluid and free communication. Overall, their language concerns are related to accessing information not to levels of linguistic proficiency. The views of culturally deaf people (often part of the DPRO and/or Meisei ‘Camp’) do not always align with the views of *inte*.

Second, *inte* are *not* saying that they regret ‘being made’ to learn how to speak.

Inte usually express gratitude for the oral communication skills they acquired, even though they did not enjoy the actual *kōwa* acquisition process. Even *inte* who primarily sign without vocalizing (i.e. ‘voice off’) claim to be grateful that they have the *possibility* to speak with hearing people when necessary. On this point, generational differences emerge. Older mainstreamed participants tend to express regret, anger, and resentment over the years wasted on *kōwa* training with some participants insisting that nowadays they only communicate using written Japanese (*hitsudan*) with hearing people—never in *kōwa*.

Third, *inte* do not claim that assimilating in mainstream schools transformed them into hearing people. They have a distinct positionality. Along the same lines, they are not stating that they become the same as deaf school-raised peers after learning *shuwa*. Their unique biography cannot be rewritten: they are DHH people who were ‘raised hearing’. *Inte* continue to define themselves against peers with experiences in schools for the deaf.

Furthermore, this dissertation does not delve into the lived experiences of *inte* who remain in the hearing world. *Inte* acknowledge that they are not a monolithic group, but one ‘type’ of *inte* is rarely mentioned: mainstreamed DHH people who continue to live exclusively in the hearing world. Alternative narratives reveal that not all *inte* ‘come out’ or decide to sign. There are ‘fully hearing school raised’ youth who elect to associate with oral DHH people or hearing people. Their lived experience is worthy of further study but

fell beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Finally, *inte* participants do not usually question their ‘Japaneseness’. They see themselves as a different kind of Japanese person: a minority, an excluded one. However, they do not view deafness as a type of ethnicity, as has been argued in other societies such as the United States (e.g. Lane 2005). ‘Japanese’ is their ethnicity. ‘Deaf’ or ‘hard-of-hearing’ is the adjective to qualify this ethnicity. Certainly not all deaf people in Japan share this view. During this research, I encountered people who place being ‘deaf’ above any other identity.

IV. Integration for All?

The UNESCO Salamanca statement declared that ‘[t]he practice of “mainstreaming” children with disabilities should be an integral part of national plans for achieving education for all’ (UNESCO 1994:24). However, as not all students with disabilities are the same, academic integration is not universal. Although this dissertation aims to shed light on a group that was shaped by educational practices that evolve from certain policies and societal views, it does not attempt to advocate or to inform educational policy. Nevertheless, my data has shown that a more nuanced approach to integration should be considered.

For students with intellectual and mobility-related disabilities, education alongside ‘able-bodied’ peers may yield different outcomes. Some potential benefits of integration

were highlighted in *Nobody's Perfect (Gotai Fumanzoku)*, a memoir by Hirotada Ototake, a Japanese man who was born without arms or legs (1998). Ototake's parents fought tirelessly for the right to send their son to a mainstream school. The barriers he faced in school were largely mobility-related: navigating the school facilities, participating in school events, and writing class notes. The upbeat memoir describes the strategies he successfully employed to integrate into every facet of school life—even gym class. Ototake was held to the same standards as his classmates, and he welcomed this equal treatment. Ototake became well-liked and academically successful, attending Waseda University, a prestigious private university.

Ototake's memoir highlights the role of parents, more specifically the significance of their socio-economic status and resources. His parents were in a position to act as advocates and were highly involved in his education (especially his mother). The same might not be true for a family with two working parents or a single parent. It also questions the notion of 'segregating' students. In the case of Ototake, what would have been the impact of segregation? Would Ototake have acquired a horizontal identity with other students if he had attended a special school? Although Ototake's disability is highly visible, his bodily difference did not prevent him from being a full participant in school life. His persistence and outgoing personality helped him to 'overcome' any obstacles and prevented social marginalization.

Special education discourses focus on a dichotomy between segregation and integration. However, deafness muddles black and white thinking. Disability is always a social phenomenon, but Ototake saw his disability as being primarily a physical one. Deafness is largely social because it primarily affects communication and interpersonal relationships. Physically, DHH appear the same as ‘normal’ people, especially in the absence of hearing devices. Deafness becomes visible in social interactions.

The case of *inte* raises the controversial issue of whether some degree of separation can be beneficial for the development of DHH students’ potential. There is no historic community of people with bodily impairment like Ototake’s, but there are deaf communities with shared language and traditions created and transmitted in schools. *Inte* do not conceive of mainstream schools as spaces of belonging: ‘deaf schools’ are for DHH students and ‘hearing schools’ are for hearing students. Long-term anthropological studies can shed light on the diversity of experiences and lived realities of people with disabilities in education. Separation and segregation are not synonymous. Voluntary separation rather than forced segregation may promote integration. My data suggests that integrating ‘disabled’ students into mainstream institutions increases academic opportunities while potentially decreasing opportunities for social integration. As a result, mainstreamed students may have less ‘typical’ educational experiences in ‘regular schools’ than students in ‘special’ schools.

On the other hand, a diachronic analysis suggests that academic integration can bring together DHH and hearing students over time. During their school days, *inte* are often socially segregated; however, as young adults, they may facilitate social integration through the diversification of deaf spaces. The increase in mainstreaming of DHH students may have the effect of bridging the gaps between the deaf and hearing worlds. As *inte* begin spending time in mixed deaf spaces, they bring extensive first-hand experience with hearing people. They also tend to have stronger oral skills and therefore tend to be able to communicate more easily with hearing people. Moreover, as students attend ‘hearing universities’ and mix in ‘hearing workplaces’ (as opposed to subsidiary companies or workplaces for disabled staff) they are crossing boundaries. The blending of hearing and deaf worlds could be seen at Zenkon events, such as the summer retreat where there was a spoken language interpreter for hearing participants.

The diversification of deaf spaces is met with mixed reactions. This increase in deaf-hearing interactions as an indirect result of mainstreaming is evaluated positively by people who welcome the opening of an insular world. However, it is viewed negatively by actors who fear that mainstreaming poses a threat to the ‘traditional’ ways of Deaf culture. Mainstreaming is seen as a practice that dilutes the foundations of Deaf culture by weakening the role of schools for the deaf.

V. Technology and Integration

Another significant change in the education of DHH students is the introduction of technological devices. Although *kōwa* has been seen as a prerequisite for mainstreaming, there is evidence that this is changing. Newly developed technology enables DHH students to receive information support in any environment in a discreet manner. One example is CART (Communication Access Real-time Translation). Since the people typing up the captioning can work remotely, the burden of securing support staff does not fall on the school. Students only have to place an iPad or other handheld devices on their desks and the text will appear automatically on the screen. I would argue that this type of information support would be preferred by DHH students over ‘more intrusive’ note-taking, which visibly marks the student as ‘different’, ‘dependent’, and ‘disabled’. I hypothesize that students would be less likely to reject information support provided through inconspicuous electronic devices than support provided by adult staff members in the classroom. At the time of writing, the use of these devices in schools and universities is increasing. While these devices promote academic integration, assistive technologies cannot fully address the social dimensions of education.

VI. Future Research: Deafness and Intersectionality

One day I went to a hot spring with a deaf school-raised woman in her mid-forties named Mari. Over lunch she asked me to explain my research, which led to a discussion about generational differences. Mari said she was fortunate to have a university education, but most of her friends from her school for the deaf did not have the same opportunity. They had entered the workforce immediately after graduation, and (most of them) hold low paid jobs. She claimed that there is tension over contemporary DHH youth, and sometimes more specifically *inte*, because they are seen as ‘privileged’ due to matriculating at four-year universities in record numbers. There is a combination of envy and admiration regarding this new generation who are believed to be able to secure better jobs and earn more money than their predecessors. Mari was one of many ‘older’ DHH people to express these sentiments in the field.

It is not preferential treatment but a combination of factors which contribute to the rise in the proportion of DHH youth attending universities and other forms of higher education, such as the falling birth rate in Japan (which leads to opening up university admissions to different segments of the student population), the increase in mainstreaming, and rise in the number of universities providing ‘information support’ (*jōhō hoshō*). Generally, the younger generation could be seen as having advantages compared to their elders who had fewer opportunities to access higher education.

During my fieldwork, I tried to include *inte* participants from diverse educational

backgrounds. I interacted with senior high school, vocational school, and junior college, and deaf school-raised graduates. However, the majority of *inte* participants depicted in this dissertation are current university students or university graduates, and therefore, have had access to more educational opportunities than their elders. On the one hand, I would have liked to have greater diversity in research participants. On the other hand, despite my involvement in numerous activities and organizations, I rarely encountered *inte* without some involvement in tertiary education.

Are *inte* better positioned in Japanese society? I was unable to obtain data on the percentage of *inte* who attend institutes of higher education versus students graduating from schools for the deaf. However, personal communication with scholars as well as my own time in deaf youth spaces, suggests that *inte* make up a slightly larger proportion of the DHH students enrolled in higher education. Further research is required to substantiate these preliminary findings. They do illustrate the diversity of deaf experiences and the need to apply a more intersectional approach to studies of deaf communities.

Deafness in the Japanese context crosses socio-economic, gender, and ethnic lines. In particular, gender needs to be problematized further. For example, a recent study suggests that women ‘with hearing loss’ in Japan differ from men in terms of marital status as well as the likelihood of smoking (Kobayashi, Tamiya et al. 2015). DHH woman are held up against the same constraints and standards in society as hearing Japanese woman

and likely are even more constrained due to their minority status. At many conferences and events, the people in charge, the people on stage, are nearly always men. DHH women's lack of leadership positions in deaf spaces exemplify gender roles found in Japanese society. The younger generation does not appear to have the same strict gender divide. However, *inte* are at a particular stage in the life cycle, poised between childhood and adulthood. The social constraints of adulthood and the pressures of expected motherhood may alter gender relationships in this generation. Longitudinal research on *inte* could shed light on the role of gender in their lives.

VII. Epilogue

During the afternoon of my café outing with Yasushi and the untouched Mont Blanc cake, we discussed his career prospects. Yasushi was mulling over the idea of becoming an English teacher at a school for the deaf. He saw this as a chance to merge his love of English with a newfound deaf identity. I had little advice to offer him on reaching his goal, so I suggested that we set up an informal meeting with another participant—a deaf English teacher at a school for the deaf. That evening I contacted Toriia-sensei. She agreed without hesitation.

About one month later, Yasushi, Toriia-sensei, and I gathered in a café in the underground shopping area of Tokyo station. Toriia-sensei brought us key chains from Gallaudet University in the United States, the World's only university for deaf and hard-of-

hearing students.¹⁸⁶ She had spent time studying there. Toriia-sensei and Yasushi were born approximately twenty years apart, but they have similar backgrounds. Both are graduates of mainstream schools who decided to embark on careers in the deaf world. After making introductions and breaking the ice, I said little as Yasushi peppered Toriia-sensei with questions, which she patiently answered. Yasushi took copious notes. Later he told me that he remained undecided as to whether to pursue graduate studies or to train to become a teacher at a school for the deaf.

Over a year after our Tokyo Station meeting, I received a long New Year's greeting from Yasushi. In the interim we had 'liked' each other's posts on social media and sent birthday greetings, but we had not met in person. He had 'big news' to share. Yasushi had passed the test to become a teacher at a school for the deaf *and* the exam to enter graduate school at a university in Tokyo. He had recently made his decision. He was going to teach DHH students. Like Toriia-sensei, Yasushi had been educated among hearing students but in adulthood he would be in charge of the education of DHH students in a quintessential deaf space.

When I first learned the expression, 'encounters with *shuwa*' during a lecture at Kaiba University, I had hypothesized that these encounters would result in either rejection or acceptance of *shuwa*, as *inte* chose to remain in the hearing world or to fully immerse in

¹⁸⁶ Other universities, such as Kaiba University, have campuses or departments for deaf and hard-of-hearing students.

the deaf world, shedding their former selves in the process. As they stand at intersections between academic integration and special education, hearing and deaf, ‘performative selves’ and ‘true selves’, *kōwa* and *shuwa*, *inte* reveal nuanced and reflexive interpretations of the past and projections for the future. In co-constructing meaning with DHH peers, they re-interpret the self and re-evaluate their role performances. The self and the role are endlessly contested, endlessly reflected in a continuous search for belonging.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: ‘Youth’ and Loanword Dictionaries Consulted for ‘*Inte*’

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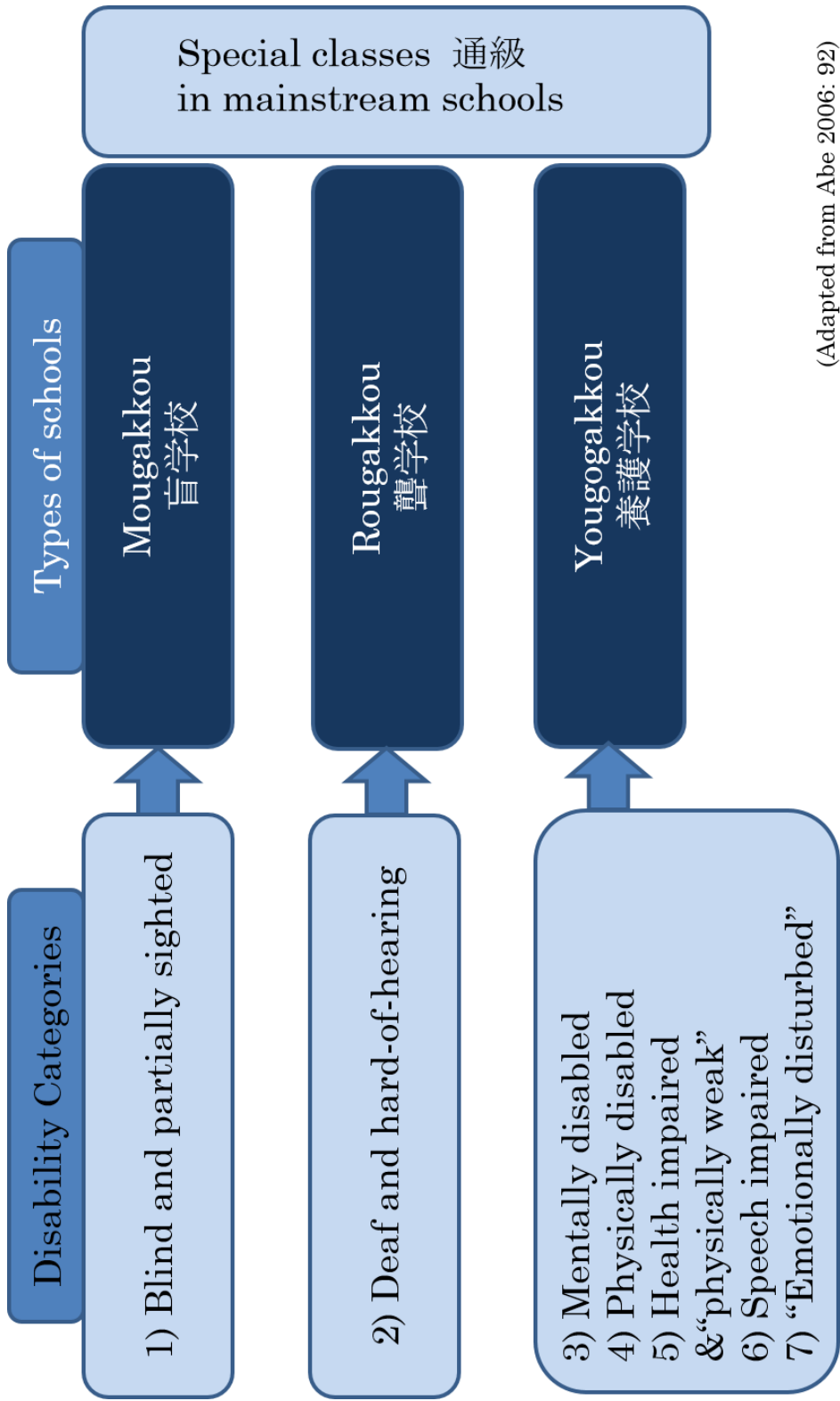
Kitahara, Yasuo, 2009, [*Afururu Shingo*], Taishūkanshoten.

Obunsha Hen kan, 2000, [*Katakana, Ryakugo Jiten*] Dai 3 Ban.

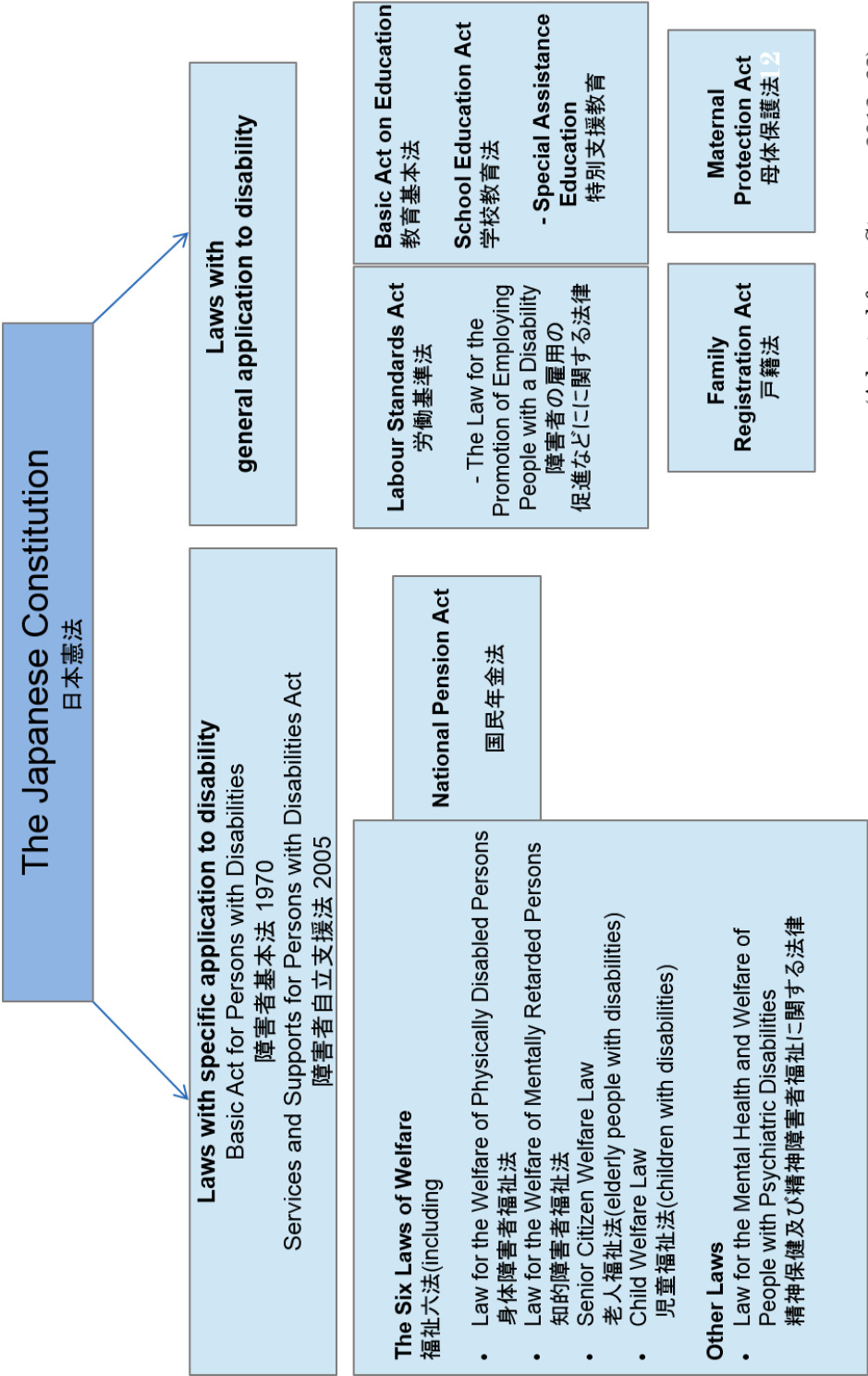
Sanseido Editorial, 2004, *Netto de Yoku Hiku Katakana Shingo Jiten*.

Appendix 2: Special Education System (*Tokushu kyōiku*)*

*System prior to the Special Needs Education reform (enacted FY 2007)



Appendix 3: Japanese Laws Related to Disability



(Adapted from Stevens 2013: 63)