

syntactic structure of JSL. With the greater understanding, people around DPro established the first bilingual-bicultural School for the Deaf in Tokyo. At this school, the first official JSL course for elementary school children in Japan is now being offered. The Ministry of Education has officially certified the course and many newly invented educational materials based on a Sign Linguistic foundation are being used in the course. The findings of Sign Linguistics are also being used to improve courses for training JSL interpreters.

There are still many problems and barriers for the Deaf in Japan, including an official recognition of Sign

Language. However, the development of Sign Linguistics has contributed to positive changes for deaf communities in Japan. The United Nation's Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities entered into force in 2008. This convention mentions Signed Language in several of its articles. Academic recognition of Sign Language and its research development has led to several important changes in the world. Some Sign Linguists in Japan are now interested not just in JSL but also in Signed Japanese and its uses. We can expect further research on the languages being used, and on the linguistic situation in Japanese Deaf communities.

A Signers' Village in Bali, Indonesia

Connie de Vos

University of Central Lancashire, UK

The author is a post-doctoral research assistant at the International Institute for Sign Languages and Deaf Studies (ISLanDS) at the University of Central Lancashire, UK. As a project manager for the EuroBABEL project on Endangered Sign Languages in Village Communities, she is responsible for the creation of a digital archive including linguistic and anthropological data from multiple field sites. Her publications include 'Kata Kolok color terms and the emergence of lexical signs in rural signing communities' (The Senses and Society 6(1), 2011).

Bengkala is not marked on most maps, and even in the nearest city, Singaraja, few people know of the village or the extraordinary situation that obtains there. In Bengkala, 2.2% of the villagers are congenitally deaf. This level of incidence is extremely high when compared with, for example, the USA, where less than 0.1% of children are born with a severe hearing impairment. Deafness in Bengkala is caused by a recessive gene that is wide-spread in the village population. The gene (known as DFNB3) appears to cause shortened hair cells in the cochlea and profound deafness as a result, and there are no known other characteristics that set deaf individuals apart from the other villagers. There are at present forty-eight deaf signers in a village of little more than 2,000 inhabitants.

A very striking feature here is that a sign language has emerged that is used by both deaf and hearing members of the community. Deaf villagers use signs to communicate with their hearing relatives, as well as many of their hearing friends and colleagues, and approximately two thirds of Bengkala's hearing population can understand and use this indigenous sign language with varying degrees of proficiency. For the reasons stated above, the Balinese refer to Bengkala as Desa Kolok — which is Balinese for 'deaf village' — and its sign language as Kata Kolok 'deaf talk'. Kata Kolok currently functions in all major

aspects of village life including politics, gossip, Hindu ceremonies, as well as education.* The language has been acquired from birth by multiple generations of deaf, native signers. Kata Kolok is thus a fully-fledged sign language in every sense of the word. Notably, the language is grammatically distinct from and historically unrelated to the sign language varieties used in other parts of Bali, and Indonesia.

The socio-cultural construction of deafness in Bengkala

Deaf individuals and fluent hearing signers are found in all ten village clans. In daily life, therefore, the deaf individuals of Bengkala will not often face someone unwilling or unable to communicate with them in sign. Presumably because of the use of a shared sign language, deaf individuals are well-integrated into the wider hearing community. The integration of deaf villagers is mirrored by the fact that they have equal chances of getting married and have similar professional opportunities. Deaf villagers also occupy crucial offices within the village including water pipe maintenance and burial of the dead. In fact, the *kolok* men are often characterised as particularly strong yet sensitive, and dominate the village's civil defense brigade for this reason. Interestingly, the community has also developed unique socio-cultural adaptations to

deafness including a shared belief in *Bhatara Kolok* — a deaf God. On special occasions, the deaf villagers are also known to perform the *Janger Kolok* — a deaf dance — which is cued exclusively by a visual beat.

Endangerment of Kata Kolok

In recent years, many deaf teenagers from Bengkala have entered the deaf boarding school in Jimbaran, in the south of Bali. These adolescents have become fully bilingual in Indonesian Sign Language and Kata Kolok, and such contact situations often result in linguistic change in favor of the majority language, which is associated with perceived educational and professional opportunities. Attendance at this deaf boarding school has also resulted in increased contact between the Kata Kolok community and the large Deaf Community of Bali, resulting in changing marital patterns. The intensification of contact between the Kata Kolok signers and Indonesian Sign Language signers has resulted in an increasing number of deaf individuals from Bengkala seeking out deaf spouses from surrounding villages and other parts of Bali. Because deaf individuals outside of Bengkala are not carriers of the identical recessive gene causing deafness, these couples are unlikely to have deaf offspring.

This latter tendency, to marry outside the village, is also observed in hearing villagers from Bengkala, due to socio-economic change. These changing marital patterns dilute the frequency of the recessive gene in the population of Bengkala, and the incidence of deafness as a result. When the number of deaf individuals decreases significantly, the communicative need for the sign language is likely to disappear. Since 2005, no deaf children have been born to parents using Kata Kolok, and this makes the study of the acquisition of Kata Kolok especially pressing as opportunities to study the acquisition of this endangered sign language without the influence of Indonesian Sign Language may soon decline.

The Kata Kolok corpus

In response to these recent developments, the author has created a *corpus* — a digital archive — of Kata Kolok, which is maintained jointly by



The Kata Kolok corpus includes a section on sign language acquisition at Bengkala, Bali (Ketut Kanta, 2008)

the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen and by the International Institute for Sign Languages and Deaf Studies in Preston (UK). The Kata Kolok corpus currently comprises 100 hours of high-quality video data. Translations in Indonesian and English make sections of the corpus accessible to a national and international academic audience. During field trips accumulating to one year, the video recordings targeted core functional domains in which the language is used. A sub-corpus of spontaneous conversational data includes informal group conversations among deaf and hearing villagers as well as culturally entrenched monologues such as stories of a deaf ghost and Balinese cock fights. A special section of the Kata Kolok corpus charted the development of two deaf toddlers growing up in deaf families over the course of two years. In light of the language's endangered status, further documentation efforts are specifically planned to continue with this latest generation of Kata Kolok signers.

*An inclusive deaf school, in which Kata Kolok is used as a language of instruction, was set-up at the initiative of the author in collaboration with local authorities in mid-2007.