# The Importance of Visual Literacy

## Voice of a Dyslexic *Tohjisha*

KOYAMA, Tadashi

This paper defines dyslexia for the purpose of clarifying *dyslexic* literacy. People are diverse in their perceptions and understandings. Some have difficulty recognizing written characters as such and perceive them as pictures. Normally, people simultaneously process what is read aloud and what is visually deciphered, but dyslexics are not capable of this. Rather than acquire vocabulary as a set consisting of auditory signals, visual codes, and meaning, they possess a literacy that allows them to immediately create a finished product from disparate resources. The slide presentation format, which consists of keywords and relationship diagrams, mind maps, and flowcharts, is useful. A century ago, dyslexics were not likely to have been labeled "literacy impaired," and even at present, vibrant communication and a culture suited to their idiosyncrasies exist in the developing world. Performing arts, fine arts, sports, and crafts are some of the areas in which dyslexics excel. Recognizing diverse literacies will bring about diverse values and lead to a society with diverse goals. At the end of this paper, I present my literacy strategies in a question-and-answer format.

# Varieties in Technology and in Literacy

## Voice of a Low Vision *Tohjisha*

MORITA, Shigeki

After developing an incurable eye disease midway through my life and spending three years in a tunnel of despair, I encountered an "electronic magnifier," which has enabled me to almost completely restore my ability to read and write. This personal experience changed my life, and I may be the only patient in Japan who would normally *receive* "low vision care" but *performs* it instead. Since then, along with performing this low vision care at many hospitals (e.g., university hospitals) and welfare facilities and giving lectures and private consultations throughout Japan, I have also been working as an adjunct lecturer at universities, junior colleges, and vocational schools. Taking full advantage of my status as a patient, I believe that *learning from patients* is of the utmost importance and have put this belief into practice for 16 years now. I attained most of my knowledge regarding the selection and use of optical aids such as electronic magnifiers from practical experience. As a visually impaired *tohjisha*, I address the fields of medical care, education, and welfare from a unique viewpoint and a commanding position.

# Voice of a Deaf Person

## Born into a Hearing Family

ONO, Kosuke

As I was born into a hearing family, lip reading training was not just something I did at school—it also awaited me when I returned home. Considering that approximately 90 percent of parents of deaf children can hear, I imagine that many children experience similar circumstances.

Until I completed elementary school, I received weekly special instruction from my father, who was a musician. I had confidence in my pronunciation and vocalization, but upon entering high school I learned that my pronunciation was incomprehensible. In the end, I was unable to speak like a hearing person. I was convinced that I was inferior to hearing people.

It was then that I encountered Kimura and Ichida's "Declaration of Deaf Culture" (1995), which saw deaf people as a "linguistic minority," and I was determined to "live as a deaf person." There was a long period of conflict, but my mother now speaks to me in sign language. I married a hearing person, and our son can also hear, but our language in the home is Japanese Sign Language. Currently, I use Japanese Sign Language in my work as a faculty member at Meisei Gakuen School for the Deaf, which provides education in sign language, and as an NHK newscaster. Even in the next life, I want to be born deaf.

# Voice of a Deaf Person

## Born into a Deaf Family

KAWASHIMA, Kiyoshi

I was born into a deaf family, and I did not recognize myself as special. However, upon entering a deaf school, I received rigorous training in lip reading, an experience which could not be communicated outside of school. Watching my mother's friends made me aware of the harsh reality in which deaf people are placed. It was an era in which the surrounding people looked askance at those communicating in sign language. During the same time I learned of the reality that deaf people face, I naturally acquired sign language. I used sign language with my friends in the dormitory at school, but it was incomprehensible to many of my friends with hearing parents.

Today, we live in an age in which hearing people learn sign language, but their sign language is different. However, a deaf person is never unable to make oneself understood because "grammatical particles are missing," or has difficulty expressing their thoughts and feelings because "their vocabulary is limited." This is because hearing people do not know sign language, not because sign language is inferior to spoken Japanese. Even within me, sign language has always been perceived as a language. I am able to live in my own way by properly acquiring my own mother language.

# The Deaf Ask the Deaf

## Has Literacy Been Developed At Deaf Schools?

NAKAYAMA, Shinichiro

I am congenitally deaf, and also bilingual: Japanese Sign Language is my first language, and written Japanese is my second language. The majority of my friends are also deaf, and they conduct their daily communication via e-mail and facsimile. The journals that they keep in written Japanese are far from clear. However, the act of writing in journals is an invaluable tool for them to survive in Japanese society, and its necessity is an unmistakable fact. But how were they educated in written Japanese at the deaf school from which they graduated? This chapter explores, based on conversations during a round-table discussion, how the deaf people who were students themselves view the deaf education they received, emphasizing their viewpoint as *tohjisha* who were educated there. This is unlike most academic articles addressing deaf education thus far, which examine it from the viewpoint of the hearing people responsible for providing it. During the interview, the participants reported on what deaf people expect of deaf schools, based on what their classes were like in the lower grades of elementary school, their recollections of the auditory-verbal method and of sign language, as well as their proficiency in, and acquisition of, written Japanese, along with their feelings when communicating in Japanese Sign Language, Signed Japanese, and in writing.

# *Tohjisha* and Non-*Tohjisha*

SAITO, Michio

Since 2001, progress has been made in attempts at *tohjisha kenkyu* among *tohjisha* with disabilities. *Tohjisha kenkyu* began at Bethel's house, a community of mentally disabled people in Hokkaido, but later spread throughout Japan, and has become a major trend with influence in other areas, such as physical and developmental disabilities. *Tohjisha kenkyu* reconsiders the *tohjisha*'s disabilities and disorders, as well as their symptoms and difficulties, based on the *tohjisha*'s personal knowledge, perceptions, and experience, and considers what has happened and what should be done. *Tohjisha kenkyu* is centered on the *tohjisha*, and through participation and discussion with people who have the same disability, disorder, or difficulty, it highlights a variety of knowledge and experiences that only *tohjisha* can notice, verbalize, and present. The system of knowledge created by *tohjisha kenkyu* clarifies many matters that non-*tohjisha* are incapable of knowing, and relativizes existing academic knowledge while deepening phenomenological insights on human existence. Also, it encourages a re-examination of the relationship between *tohjisha* and non-*tohjisha*, and moreover, the ideal state of our consciousness and society.

# Educational Policy for Deaf Children

## Special Education or Language Education for a Linguistic Minority?

OKA, Norie

Education for the deaf in Japan is considered part of special-needs education for hearing impaired children, and is conducted in a manner similar to that for other disabled children. Namely, children who cannot hear speech are considered "disabled children" with a hearing "disability," and they require special educational support along with visually, physically, and developmentally disabled children.

In Kimura and Ichida's "Declaration of Deaf Culture" (1995), they defined Deaf people, who are deaf children that have reached adulthood, as a "linguistic minority" and not as "disabled people." By doing so, they tried to shift the paradigm from the medical point of view to that of the social and cultural point of view. Even after this attempt to shift the paradigm, education for deaf children continues to be conducted within the framework of special-needs education. In this paper, I examine the current state of deaf education from the government's budget allocation, and discuss how deaf children should be best educated.

# Universal Design for Information

ABE, Yasusi

This chapter defines “universal design for information” as “delivering information to everyone” and “making it possible for anyone to share opinions or information,” as well as outlining what is required for its realization. Also, this chapter focuses on services for library patrons with disabilities as a practical example.

“Universal design for information” means creating a system in which the information format is adapted to the user, so a system that can adjust its response to the circumstances is necessary. Therefore, using information devices and providing support is required. Also, it is important to make it possible to structure information and comprehend the circumstances and overall perspective in order to make predictions, and to display information in an easily understood manner, with attention to how it is expressed. An understanding of who requires what kind of information and how to deliver that information to them is necessary. Also, support is necessary to allow anyone to disseminate information as needed.

# Minorities and Diverse Literacy

SASAKI, Michiko

This chapter considers the meaning of “diverse literacy”—first from the standpoint of traditional literacy (which means the ability to read and write), then from that of expanded literacy (which means the ability to decode and apply). Furthermore, this chapter considers the multilingual literacy inevitable in speakers of minority languages, and then adds meaning from reformist multiliteracy education. In addition, literacy of the visually impaired and hearing impaired as an actual practice for multiliteracy is discussed. Moreover, literacy in hearing impaired children is discussed as the case which best sheds light on minorities, and the conditions required for its practice and orderly development are outlined. After pointing out the importance of understanding the role performed by multimedia and language ability, the chapter presents actual examples of lesson design. Finally, in developing minority literacy, this chapter touches upon the importance of thinking about education that respects diversity and discusses the ideal society.