

International Symposium on Signed and Spoken Linguistics (1)

‘Description, Documentation and Conservation’

National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, Japan. July 28–29, 2012

Abstract

Documenting a shared sign language: The Kata Kolok corpus

Connie DE VOS

Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics

Nijmegen, the Netherlands

Kata Kolok is a sign language that is indigenous to a village community of Bali that has had a high incidence of hereditary deafness. There are at present 47 deaf signers of all age groups and up to 1,800 hearing villagers sign, albeit with varying degrees of fluency. The sign language has become endangered under the increasing influence of the Indonesian signing varieties used in other parts of Bali and Indonesia as well as socio-economic changes within the community. During fieldwork visits accumulating to 12 months, a corpus of spontaneous sign language use was created that is archived jointly by the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics and the International Institute for Sign Languages and Deaf Studies. With 100 hours of video data, this digital archive is comparable in size to the corpora of other sign languages but it has a different composition. The Kata Kolok Corpus covers typical sign language use by multiple generations of deaf adults, in various informal participant configurations. These linguistic data include locally entrenched narratives about deaf ghosts and cock fights, but also elicited data, which are optimally comparable to data of other sign languages. In addition, documentation activities have targeted peripheral domains of sign language use by so-called bimodal bilinguals—hearing villagers who use Kata Kolok as well as spoken Balinese—mixed conversations with Indonesian Sign Languages and Kata Kolok sign bilinguals, and longitudinal video-recordings of deaf children acquiring Kata Kolok from birth. This paper addresses some of the theoretical questions, ethical considerations, and methodological decisions that underlie the creation of the Kata Kolok Corpus.