

## Deaf Culture and Deaf Studies: The Phenomena and Issues in South Korea\*

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This paper discusses three points regarding the issues: (1) Why deaf studies should exist as a special meaningful part of disability studies? (2) Why cochlear implants threaten the identity of deaf people? (3) What is the issues and challenges to construct the deaf culture and deaf studies in South Korea? The deaf culture has formed its own discourses under the Deaf studies before the discourses of disability studies were established. Deaf studies emphasizes the empowerment of the deaf people by actively participating in a new social movement. Currently, the cochlear implantation threatens the identity of Deaf pride. In this viewpoints, the future of Deaf studies depends on how the ontology of the deafness and the status of the deafhood will be embodied in our society in order to create the collectivism of deaf culture in a positive meaning.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of education for the deaf in our country, however the identity of the deaf education is not yet clear, and the same goes for the deaf culture and Deaf studies. The reality of the Korean deaf culture is very poor and the level of supports and interests from hearing people are also very low. The primarily effort to build the identity of the deaf culture should be made by the deaf themselves, while the understanding and supports from the hearing people are also very important.

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## I . Introduction

Culture is a product of consecutive linguistic activities and communication. A visual language which has been used between deaf people as a naturally developed communication mode is referred to a sign language. The communication with a manual sign is the Deaf-world language. Just as the non-deaf Americans speak English, the deaf American people have their own sign language called American Sign Language(ASL or Ameslan). Like this, the deaf society has developed their own deaf culture through the medium mode of their unique language, a sign language. From the perspective of the deaf, “Cultural and Artistic Festival of People with Disabilities” is not new for the deaf and there is no ground to call the occasion a festival. If this occasion should be called a festival, we have to make more efforts to construct the lives of the deaf as a festival.

Disability studies refer to a perspective that disabilities are not an individual pathological problem, and a social pathological problem constructed by the present society itself. Deaf studies are considered a parallel study with disability studies and has a special position in disability studies. It is noteworthy that we should capitalize the first letter of Deaf studies, just as in the case of a proper noun such as Korean and American. In other words, Deaf studies refers to all the deaf discourses by the deaf people as the same as an ethnic group. In this regard, Deaf studies and the deaf culture are different expressions, but Deaf studies in disability studies is a specific part of disability discourses, which emphasizes the identity of deaf people.

However, the Korean deaf culture has not clearly formed its identity and not developed properly. In the sense, Korea should develop Deaf studies from the perspective of disability studies. Moreover, the rapid development and distribution of cochlear implantation are threatening the identity of deaf people. This paper will present three points regarding the issue as follows:

First, what is the reason that Deaf studies should exist as a special meaningful part of disability studies?

Second, what is the ground to say that the development and distribution of cochlea implantation, a medical and technological breakthrough, threat the identity of deaf people?

Third, what is the issues and challenges to develop deaf culture and Deaf studies in Korea?

## II. Disability Studies and Deaf Studies

Korea recently has become more interested in the discourse of disability studies along with the movement of people with disabilities. Disability studies has formed a confrontational relation with the existing paradigm of social welfare, rehabilitation and education for people with disabilities, because some groups, who tried to independently decide and solve their own problems from the perspective of people with disabilities, have been politicalized. Those who support the slogan of the so-called “Nothing About Us Without Us” as a way to the empowerment of the disabled through participation criticize the existing welfare and rehabilitation service system for people with disabilities as a “representative approach” . Therefore, the aim of “the empowerment of the disabled” is to overcome the traditional “representative approaches.”

The disabled-consumer approaches are based on the premise of a new paradigm shift in dealing with the problems of the disabled. They consider that disabilities are an extreme personal experience and an issue of existence, while the essence of disabilities is originally attributed to social, cultural, political and educational limitations. Oliver(1996) presents Social Model to respond to Individual Model in order to emerge from the traditional viewpoint of disabilities which are considered as personal limitations because of their functional impairments. He also points out that Individual Model defines disabilities as a personal tragedy so that it focuses on individual treatments and medical correction and stresses the importance of professionals’ authorities and the development of policies and programs for individual care and treatments. In contrast, Social Model regards

disabilities as an issue of social discrimination, which should be considered a matter of social oppression, so disability should be dealt with as a social and political agenda, which need to be politicized and considered as an issue of rights for people with disabilities.

Hearing impairment has been regarded as an impairment which brings about a functional disability, and it means that the deaf become the socially handicapped. Moreover, it regards the disability as a pathology to be cured and so focuses on the rehabilitation of oral language. As a result, even though the educational programs for the deaf mostly depends on a sign language, it tried to move toward oralism. Oralism dominated the educational programs for the deaf around the world from the international conference at Milan in 1880 to the middle of the twentieth century based on the theory of normalization. However, neo-oralism, which combined an oral language and finger spelling method, appeared in the Soviet Union in the 1950s because of the limitation of oral-only approach. The United States adopted the combined method earlier as Rochester method. After that, Total Communication(TC) approach, which stresses its flexibility of communication modes according to the demands and convenience of the deaf, was developed in the United States in the 1970s. It rapidly spread out across the world, gaining its popularity in the 1980s(Kim, 1984).

However, TC approach turned to Simultaneous Method, a variation of TC approach despite its legitimacy as a philosophy. In particular, TC approach revealed a difference from a sign language which is commonly used among the deaf community by adopting a kind of methodical sign language that confirms to the grammar of a oral language. As a result, 2Bi(bilingual and bicultural) approach, which stresses the use of a natural sign language as the first language at the first stage of development was developed in the early 1990s. It is reported that children with hearing impairment, who belong to the deaf society as a member and naturally acquire a sign language as the first language and then learn a written language as the second language, are better than children who don't in terms of the comprehensive development including academic performance(Lewis, 1995). 2Bi approach stimulated the new perception on a natural sign language and the deaf culture.

In particular, deaf culture includes a special issue about disability studies. For example, Davis(1997), the lead author of “Disability Studies Reader” , writes about deafness in seven chapters among the total 27 chapters, and among six about the history of disability studies, four are dealt with the deafness. The deaf culture has formed its own discourses under the name of Deaf studies before the discourses of disability studies were established. The reason why hearing impairment is classified to several categories according to the degree of hearing loss(dB) is the deep impact of a medical model which defines hearing impairment in a pathological aspect. The deaf is the people who speak a sign language instead of a oral language. In other world, the Korean deaf people mean some Koreans who speak the Korean sign language. Under these circumstances, the deaf culture has been formed among the people who use a sign language as a unique language, and it has become an agenda of Deaf studies. It is noteworthy that Bauman(2008) published his book titled 「Open your eyes: Deaf studies talking」 .

Here is a question raised from the perspective of Deaf studies: Do deaf people have a disability(Lane, 2008)? Deaf studies express the following three aspects in terms of establishing deaf culture. First, it stresses the importance of establishing the identity of deaf people by accepting their deafness based on “Deaf Pride” . In this regard, it is very meaningful that the deaf students at Gallaudet University protested with the slogan of “Deaf President Now” in 1988 as an expression of their “Deaf Pride” , and finally a deaf president was appointed. The media in the United States reported that the public awareness on deaf people was improved positively thanks to the protest.

Secondly, it stresses that a sign language, which is a linguistic mode for deaf people, should be regarded as an independent language in terms of linguistics or social linguistics. Stokoe greatly contributed to constructing linguistic characteristics of American Sign Language(ASL) through comparing with linguistic characteristics of oral languages. After that, Stokoe(1971) founded Linguistics Reserch Laboratory at Gallaudet University and published a journal titled “Sign Language Studies” . Nowadays, ASL ranks the fifth in the most commonly used languages in terms of social linguistics in the United States.

Lastly, Deaf studies emphasizes the political empowerment of the deaf people by voluntarily actively participating in the process. Now is the era when the rights of minority groups are respected and guaranteed. This movement is referred to as “New Social Movement” or “New Civil Rights Movement” . It is one of the movements for guaranteeing various rights of vulnerable minority groups since the era of revolution in the 19th century. It can be said that disability rights movements appeared at the end of these kinds of movements like a mosaic. The reason why disability movement is referred to as a “mosaic movement” is that it is divided into categories of its characteristics according to different categories in terms of disabilities.

### Ⅲ. Cochlear Implantation and the Crisis of Deaf Pride

Cochlear implantation is a breakthrough in medical technology, but it is a problem of threatening the identity of the deaf people. Why are there different parties who positively support or negatively oppose the implants when we discuss cochlear implantation? That is because there are two different views on deafness. Is deafness a pathological defect or a personal characteristic? Is deafness a shame or a natural phenomenon for deaf people? These kinds of questions reflect different views on deafness.

A few years ago, there was a heated dispute about the pros and cons of cochlear implantation between parents with children with hearing impaired and the deaf adults at a conference held at Korea National Institute for Special Education. At that time, most experts attending the discussion emotionally supported parents’ positions. The reason that they supported the parents’ position is simple. They are not deaf. Wonhyo(元曉), who is one of the great Korean Buddhist philosophers, said the Hwajaeng(和靜) paradigm that if you want to really stop a fight, you should hear both arguments first and then decide which party is right or wrong(Park, 2009). It is not good to approve or disapprove an argument before you know both parties’ positions when there is an argument. In

this regard, it is understandable why parents with children with hearing impaired support cochlear implantation, but the deaf children's rights and self-identities are more important factors in dealing with this controversy.

Cochlear implantation has been rapidly distributed across the nation since it was introduced in 1988 in our country. Recently, more and more infants with hearing impairment have undergone cochlear implantation since the insurance covered the implant in 2005. For example, almost of all the infants with hearing disability in a deaf school, already received the implants, so they can learn a oral language and adjust to regular kindergartens and day care centers rather than remain at special schools(Interview with Jo Hae-sun, a teacher at Seoul Aehwa Deaf School, 2007). Thanks to the insurance coverage, cochlear implantation has rapidly spread throughout Korea. More importantly, the fervent hope of parents with deaf children has a major role in expanding the practice of the implants in our country.

Moreover, many otologists normally recommend the surgery to parents with deaf children and the parents who already had their children receive the implant urge other parents who consider the surgery in an impulsive way. As a result, many parents with deaf children come to think cochlear implantation as a cure-all. However, Lee Mi-hye, a director general of Korea Association of the Deaf, opposes cochlear implantation on behalf of many organizations for deaf adults. She says as follows:

*Cochlear implantation can be a great gift from advanced medical technology to parents with deaf children, but there is a severe concern that many parents regard the implant as the only hope and alternative for deaf children and excessively depend on it without considering other alternatives, because they just focus on the fact that their children can hear if they get the implant at an early age. It is important to understand that the first language for the deaf people is a sign language. After that, a comprehensive and the most suitable communication method to each child should be established. We also stress that parents need to deal with their children's disability not in a pathological viewpoint but from their children's perspective(Lee, 2006, p.66).*

Cautions and opposition about cochlear implantation as mentioned above reflect the position of Korea Association of the Deaf which represents deaf adults. Like this, there are conflicting views on cochlear implantation between parents with deaf children and deaf adults. Otolologists guarantee successful recovery of hearing loss after the surgery, because they usually are more interested in the surgery itself. Most parents with deaf children have a strong belief and determination that they will do anything if their children can hear, so they regard recommendations from medical doctors as the gospel or apocalypse. For parent with deaf children, auditory rehabilitation for normalization of their children can be a lifelong wish and religious belief.

In this situation, there is a sharp conflict of opinion on deafness between the deaf people and non-deaf people. As mentioned above, Lee stresses that parents need to deal with their children's disability not in a pathological aspect but from their children's perspective(Lee, 2006). We think that two points of views on deafness are significant.

First of all, parents should not to deal with the disability of their children in a pathological aspect. In other words, parents should not consider hearing impairment of their children as a personal tragedy like an illness and a problem to be eliminated or corrected. It means the transition from Individual and Medical Model to Social and Cultural model(Oliver, 1996) in the discourses of disability studies. From the perspective of the deaf, they are just a minority group that uses a sign language, and deafness is not a defect or disability to be eliminated. Secondly, parents should deal with their children's disability not from their own perspective but from their children's perspective, because their children should be the entity of the issue. It means that parents should provide their children with the chance of choosing and deciding their own language as a means for their lives. In this situation, Korea Association of the Deaf opposed the movement of establishing "Day of Cochlear Implantation" campaigned by some civil groups, and filed a petition to the Korean president on January 20 of 2006 as follows:

- 1, The Korean government should not approve the establishment of "Day of Cochlear Implantation" because it leads to reckless practices of the surgery.



2. Second, the Korean government should establish a legal system that a deaf child's rights to self-decision should be guaranteed and recorded when the child undergoes the implant.
3. Third, the Korean government, local governments, civil groups or related companies should reduce or stop financial supports for cochlear implantation until a comprehensive study about side effects after the implant is conducted.
4. Cochlear implantation is not the only answer to eliminating discrimination against the deaf, and the Korean government should approve Korean Sign Language as a formal language for the deaf and make a proper policy and budget to guarantee the social and cultural accessibility and the right to live of the deaf.

As reflected in the petition above, from the perspective of the deaf, cochlear implantation is regarded as a violation of human rights just like mentally retarded women are forced to be sterilized. The petition has three significant implications. First of all, many deaf people are concerned about some civil groups that try to establish "Day of Cochlear Implantation" and increase financial supports for the surgery, because they consider deafness as a disease to be cured through a social campaign. There are already "Day of Eye" or "Day of Ear(September, 9)" in terms of medical campaign and "Day of People with Disabilities" in terms of social campaign. From the perspective of the deaf, "Day of the Deaf" sounds much more reasonable and appropriate than "Day of Cochlear Implantation" to the deaf.

Secondly, it is very important for the deaf to have the rights to self-determination before they undergo cochlear implantation symbolically and technically, so the due process for that should be legally considered and made. It is a violation of human rights or forced choice if parents unilaterally decide whether their children get the surgery or not, because they think that their children are too young to decide that. Parents should carefully think what results and impacts brings to their deaf children after the surgery such as identity confusion and medical risks, and try to provide their children with the chance to decide and choose the surgery by themselves. Cochlear implantation is the last procedure for the deaf in terms of medical treatments, and it is irreversible after the implants. More

importantly, the surgery can cause a negative impact on the deaf children through their whole lives.

Third, the demand that the Korean government should approve Korean Sign Language as a formal language for the deaf, and make a proper policy and budget to guarantee the social and cultural accessibility and the right to live of the deaf in the petition belongs to the basic rights for the deaf. Therefore, it is very important to reconsider a sign language as linguistic rights for the deaf(Abe, Kim, 2004). The transition from the non-deaf people-centered spoken language approach to deaf people-centered sign language approach is still a long-pending issue to solve. In fact, the educational history for the deaf has greatly contributed to making the issue of deafness an agenda of disability.

It is need to systematically discuss scientific evidences about substantial and long-term effects as well as ethical issues related to cochlear implantation. Kimura(2002) raises a question about the surgery from the viewpoint of deaf people as a linguistic minority group as follows:

*Another problem threatening the deaf society is cochlear implantation... (omitted) Even though cochlear implantation is the most advanced technology to cure "deafness", it is drawing a strong protest from the deaf society. Contrary to the people who lost their hearing after birth, deafness is not a sudden tragedy for the congenital deaf. Deafness has been a part of themselves and an evidence of their existence since they were born(Kimura, 2002, p.36).*

For them, "deafness" is not a disease to be cured. The same goes for hereditary deafness. Fundamentally, a sense of ethical problems go along with the thought that hereditary deafness should be prevented(Kimura, 2002).

Deafness is an identity and evidence of the deaf, especially for the deaf who have been deaf since they were born. In particular, hereditary deafness is regarded as a disease to be prevented, cured or eliminated, so it brings about a severe ethical problem from a eugenic point of view(Gwak, 2006). In fact, some who strongly support cochlear implantation have a strong thought in their mind that deaf people should be eliminated

on Earth(The objection of Bienvenu, a leader of the deaf in the U.S., Kimura, 2002). Lane(1999) also reached a similar conclusion after comprehensively reviewing the issues related to cochlear implantation as follows:

*The medical policy that recommends cochlear implantation to deaf infants and toddlers has severe problems scientifically and ethically. In addition, the reality of the deaf should not be distorted in the process of discussing scientific and ethical problems caused by cochlear implantation. Nowadays, as cochlear implantation is rapidly spread throughout the world, more and more deaf children undergo the surgery. However, most of them are suffering from unexpected damages and losses during their lives, because they have a lack of linguistic ability and socially and psychologically lost their own identity after the implant(Lane, 1999, p.255)*

This concern about cochlear implantation can be a severe warning to the Korean people who make a hasty conclusion that if a deaf child gets the surgery, everything is going to be ok. Like this, cochlear implantation on deaf children causes a lot of ethical problems ranging from violation of rights to choosing their own language and human rights for the deaf society and people, to eugenically denying the identity of the deaf who live as members of the deaf culture beyond medical and technical limitation and risks(Gwak, 2009).

In the long-term, medical and technical development of cochlear implantation will be achieved more, while deaf culture of deaf adults and the independent linguistic community will secure its influential position. Under these circumstances, the conflict between the ethics and rights to choices will be continuously occurring. In this sense, Christiansen and Leigh(2002) raise a question about parents' decisions, saying that many points of views on the implant should be carefully considered such as whether parents have the right to have their deaf children undergo cochlear implantation without their children' s consents, and whether they postpone the surgery until their children can decide whether they get cochlear implantation even though it is better to undergo the surgery earlier.

They also systematically review both arguments from the two parties on whether cochlear implantation is a blessing, whether it has no maleficence, and whether the rights to self-decision or privacy are respected in the process. Now, it is parents who consider these issues carefully and decide the surgery according to their individual ethical standards. Moreover, there is a new point of view on cochlear implantation emerging recently. It is called neocolonialism which denies the existence of the deaf community. Ladd(2007) says in the discussion about neocolonialism and sign language people that a new wave of neocolonialism on deafness is striking hard our society with three ripples of mainstreaming, widespread practice of cochlear implantation and gene manipulation. Internally, the three ripples are closely linked with each other.

Ethnics and justice should not be dealt with depending on the power of the majority. In this vein, Lane(2007) points out that Deaf-World can be classified as an ethnic minority because it consists of internal characteristics of an ethnic minority such as its name, community sentiment, regulations, value standards, knowledge system, habits, social structure, language, arts, history and relations. He also distinguishes primarily activities by the deaf and for the deaf in Deaf-World from activities in Hearing-World which have an influence on the deaf people. Ladd focuses on the fact that there has historically been colonialism with which Hearing-World applies to Deaf-World by reviewing the history of Deafhood, and how deaf culture and Deaf studies as a protest against colonialism have responded to it. He proposes the international solidarity among the deaf because the social status of the deaf are very different in each country. In this regard, he calls for Deaf studies to conduct the movement of decolonialism from Hearing-World in order to establish the existence of deafness and the status of the deaf in society. The future status of Deaf studies depends on how the ontology of the deaf and the status of the deaf will be embodied in society in order to create collectivism of deaf culture in a positive meaning.

#### IV. Issues and Challenges of Deaf Culture and Deaf Studies in South Korea

This year marks the 100th anniversary of education for the deaf in Korea, but the identity of education for the deaf is not clear and the same goes for the deaf culture and Deaf studies. For example, the schools for the deaf in the United States have played an important role as the incubator of their own history as well as the deaf culture, since the education for the deaf started for the first time in 1817. Moreover, the United States founded the first national university of Gallaudet named after Thomas H. Gallaudet who started education for the deaf in the history of the United States. In particular, since the university created a new tradition of appointing a deaf person for the president under the slogan 'Deaf President Now(DPN)' in 1988, Gallaudet University has been a brand for the deaf as a symbol of "Deaf Pride". Deaf-World of the United States has built their own tradition and culture and created many historical stories(Gannon, 1981).

In contrast, it is very doubtful that Seoul National School for the Deaf, which is the oldest school in Korea since the Institute of the Blind and Deaf under Medical and Rehabilitation Center(濟生院) was established in 1913, has played its role in creating the deaf culture. Seoul National School for the Deaf changed its name to Seoul Seun-hui School which literally means that it is located at the site of Palace Seun-hui according to an order from the Ministry of Education when the Seoul Olympic was held in 1988. Priest Kang Ju-hye, who graduated from Gallaudet University and worked as a priest at Youngnak Church for the Deaf, expresses his regrets about that as follows:

*It is very painful for the deaf to live their whole lives with physical disabilities, but there are some people who try to even make the deaf feel more painful by denying their existence itself. Even if they delete the letters of the deaf from the school name, they cannot make all the deaf people disappear from Korea or turn to non-deaf people. There is no ground to delete the letters*

of the deaf in the school name in this sense(Kang, 2002, pp.81-82).

The school regained its original name of Seoul National School for the Deaf because the continuous efforts were made by the alumni association for 14 years. It is an obvious indicator of showing the low status of the Korean deaf people and the public awareness on the identity of the deaf. Priest Kang is the writer of the book "Who Is the Deaf?" (1989, 2002), which is the first book written by a deaf person and is regarded as a representative of the Korean deaf community. In this book, he describes the difference of clubs for the deaf between Korea and other developed countries in the section of "Is there any problem in clubs for the deaf in Korea?" as follows:

- First, the former clubs for the deaf are opened for two days a week during the weekend, but the latter are open for 365 days a year.
- Second, the former is opened only in the afternoon, but the latter is no limitation in operating time during a day. So there is a risk for the deaf to indulge in amusement of the clubs and do not go to work.
- Third, the former has its characteristics of a place for social activities, but the latter is a place for recreation or amusement.
- Fourth, the former has an elegant and refined atmosphere, but the latter is vulgar and noisy. Finally, the former is being operated by Association of the Deaf, but the latter is being operated by an individual(Kang, 2002, p.141).

Needless to say, the latter is Korea clubs, but the former is clubs in the western countries. The deaf culture in Korea has been criticized for being less elegant compared to other countries. Why is the phenomenon happening? What is the real reason? We would like to analyze the trend in three aspects. First of all, deaf people should be the first who takes the responsible for failing to build more elegant culture for the deaf. In order to enhance the impact of the slogan "Nothing About Us Without Us" which emphasizes the deaf-oriented approach, deaf people enhance the solidarity between the deaf, and try to exercise persuasion toward the

non-deaf people about the issue of the deaf. Above all, the deaf should take the lead in empowering the deaf by sharing their power through participation based on Deaf Pride.

Second, education for the deaf as a special education system should set up its identity to enhance its accountability to reform the problems as mentioned above. Even though the Korean education for the deaf marks the 100th anniversary, it is still facing the crisis of its identity between a spoken language and a sign language(Kim, 2006) and currently between the inclusive education and separated education system(Kim, 2007). The purpose of education for the deaf is not to improve the ability of oral language. The ultimate purpose of education for the deaf is to build the identity of the deaf and to realize their identity. The distortion of the purposes leads to the failure in education for the deaf. If education for the deaf plays its proper role, the future deaf culture will be established properly.

Finally, the non-deaf people should also try to change their prejudice against the deaf and enhance their awareness of the deaf. The deaf culture can take its root securely in our society only when the non-deaf people overcome their poor prejudice against the deaf and indifference to them. Kong Ji-young, a Korean famous writer, describes the characters of the deaf through a counselling teacher for the deaf in her new novel titled 「Dogani(a crucible)」 (2009) as follows:

*I think the deaf is the most difficult to deal with among the people with disabilities. As we normally say, they can't hear what others say. That's why they consider that they are always right or do not accept the fact they are wrong even if they realize that they make a mistake... (omitted) Even worse, they have a strict hierarchical structure in their own closed community. Many deaf teenagers, who become physically matured, recklessly have sexual relationships with others(Kong, 2009, p245).*

It is very serious if it is the point of view on the deaf not from ordinary people but a teacher who can use a sign language well at a school for the deaf. In short, this point of view on the deaf comes from imagination of the deaf. The hearing people should not judge the deaf from

their own perspective, but try to stand in the deaf people' s shoes so that they can communicate with each other based on inter-subjectivity.

It is Korea Association of the Deaf(KAD) that should take the lead in building the deaf culture and Deaf studies as the representative of Korean organizations for the deaf. KAD was established under the name of Joseon Association of the Deaf in 1946 and joined the World Federation of the Deaf(WFD). Kim ki-chang was selected the first president of KAD and served the four terms. KAD established Day of the Deaf on the occasion of the 50th anniversary, and held the National Conference for the Deaf on the occasion of "Day of the Deaf" on June 3, 1997. It also contributed to producing interpreters for a sign language by building 14 centers across the nation in 1998. Moreover, it established Deaf Broadcasting Network in 2004 and distributed 20,000 receivers for TV subtitles to the deaf. KAD is nowadays trying to provide the deaf with easy accessibility to information.

In fact, KAD has played a great role in guaranteeing the deaf accessibility to information, but it is true that they failed to substantially build "Deaf Pride" for the deaf culture by the deaf and for the deaf in Korea. First of all, the deaf culture needs cultural cohesion and a politicalized entity in order to show its identity as a subculture of the Korean culture. In addition, Hearing-World should positively show the tolerance of understanding and embracing the deaf culture. It is an indicator of the low level of Korean culture if the deaf culture fails to set up their obvious identity.

Chang Jin-suk, who majored in Deaf studies at Gallaudet University and works as a professor of the department of Interpretation for a Sign Language at Korean Nazarene University, said in an email to Kim that many American deaf people create and publish the deaf literature such as jokes, essays, poems, short stories, and perform gags, songs and acts with a sign language under the theme of the deaf(Chang, 2009). It is sad that the Korean deaf have few chances in participating in these kinds of activities contrary to the United States. He adds that the only cultural activity for the deaf in Korea is Sign Language Festival developed and held by Incheon Association for the Deaf in the 1990s.



There is no typical cultural activity as a representative of the Korean deaf culture. That is because the deaf culture is limited, individual and collective efforts are not enough to make for the development of the deaf culture, and the supports from universities and the government are also very small in creating the deaf culture. In this situation, the deaf people and organizations for the deaf as well as the academia, universities, the government, the National Assembly and local governments should join forces to develop the deaf culture together(Chang Jin-seok, 2009.8.21.).

The reality of the Korean deaf culture is very poor and the level of supports and interests from non-deaf people are also very low. As We mentioned before, the primarily effort to build the identity of the deaf culture should be made by the deaf themselves, while the understanding and support from the hearing people are also very important. It is noteworthy to consider the comments by Chang that individual and collective efforts from the deaf are not enough to make for the development of the deaf culture, and the efforts and supports from universities and the government are also very poor in creating the deaf culture. Since the introduction of special admission system to enter universities for the students with disabilities, the chances for the students with hearing impairment to receive higher education have increased. However, it is very difficult to find the deaf culture in colleges developed by deaf students. Even worse, we found out that many college students with hearing impaired usually do not use a sign language and think it as unfamiliar language to them. Recently, disability studies are drawing more attention from the public, while the Deaf studies is still gaining little attention. It can be said that it reflects the reality of the Korean deaf people and the Korean people's views on deafness.

## V. Conclusion: A final comment

A festival is a venue where everyone joins and enjoys together. There are many festivals in this fall. This year marks the 100th anniversary of education for the deaf in Korea. We think that it is also a festival of celebrating the 100th anniversary. However, for whom is the festival held? With the question, it is reminded us of the deaf-centered approach. The festival should be held for the deaf people. When the deaf culture is built by the deaf and for the deaf, the lives of all people can turn to a festival.

Short-sighted and repeated festivals have no meaning in creating the deaf culture. The slogan of “Nothing about us without us” is a cry from the people with disabilities to the non-disabled, but it can be also a warning to leaders of some organizations for people with disabilities. We hope that this festival will be a good opportunity to enhance the solidarity between the people with disabilities and groups for them. We are really looking forward to turning the hope of establishing Deaf Pride from a vision to a reality.

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## 농문화와 농학: 그 현상과 과제

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### <Abstract>

이 연구는 장애학(disability studies)의 입장에서 농문화와 농학(Deaf studies)의 현상과 과제를 밝히기 위해 다음 세 측면의 연구문제를 중심으로 논의하였다. 첫째는 장애학에 대해 특별한 의미를 부여하는 것으로, 왜 ‘농학’이 별개로 존재하는가? 둘째는 공학과 의료기술의 개가(凱歌)라 할 수 있는 인공와우이식수술(cochlear implatation)의 발전과 보급이 왜 농의 정체성 위기를 야기하는가? 셋째는 우리나라에서 농문화와 농학의 현상과 그 정립과제는 무엇인가?

농학의 입장에 의하면 농(deafness)은 결코 장애가 아니다. 농문화의 정체성 정립과 더불어 농학에서는 특히 다음 세 측면을 강조한다. 즉, 첫째는 농 프라이드를 앞세워 농(deafness)을 결합으로 보지 않고 또 다른 이상세계로서 소위 Deaf-topia를 지향한다. 둘째로 농인의 고유한 언어권으로서 수어(sign language)를 언어학 내지는 언어사회학적인 측면에서 독자적인 자질과 세력을 지니는 언어로 강조한다. 마지막으로, 농인 스스로의 능동적이고 품위 있는 참여에 의한 정치적 세력화로서 ‘Empowerment’를 강조한다.

최근 기술공학적·의료적 혁신에 힘입어 청각장애영유아에 대한 인공와우이식수술의 급속한 보급은 농문화와 농세계를 향해 심각한 정체성 위기를 야기하고 있다. 따라서 농학의 입장에서 볼 때 인공와우이식수술은 이 지구상에서 농의 존재를 제거하려는 일종의 신식민주의(neocolonialism)로 인식되고 있다. 이 신식민주의적 파고는 메인스트리밍, 인공와우이식수술, 유전인자의 인위적 수정 등 세 갈래로 영켜 몰아치고 있다. 이런 상황에서 ‘농학’은 농과 농신분(deafhood)에 대한 정당한 인식론과 존재론을 정립하기 위해 청세계(hearing-world)를 향한 탈식민주의(decolonialism)운동으로서 농 집산주의(collectivism)를 제기하고 있다.

우리나라의 현실에서 농문화와 농학의 정립은 아직 많은 과제를 안고 있다. 품위 있는 농문화의 정립을 위해 무엇보다 농인계 내부로부터 소위 ‘Deaf Pride’를 당당히 제기하는 각종 문화 활동이 다양하게 축적되어야 한다. 이를 구현하기 위해 특수교육으로서 농교육은 그 일차적 책임을 절감해야 한다. 농세계(Deaf-World) 스스로의 긍정적 자기표현과 더불어 청세계(Hearing-World)의 농인에 대한 공감적 이해와 톨레랑스 역시 중요하다. 나아가 정부 차원에서 농문화 정립을 위한 적극적 지원과 대학에서 농학에 대한 학제적(學際的) 관심이 체계적으로 제공되어야 한다.

**Key Words**

: 농문화, 농학, 장애학

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