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The Impact of "Inclusive" Education on the Language of Deaf Youth in Iquitos, Peru

Abstract

In Iquitos, Peru, a city of about 500,000 in the Peruvian Amazon, there is a disparity in the sign language skills of deaf individuals based on age. Large numbers of deaf adults use Peruvian Sign Language (LSP) as their primary means of communication and interact with one another at deaf association and church gatherings. In contrast, the majority of deaf youth younger than eighteen years old grow up primarily in hearing environments, without access to spoken Spanish or LSP. In order to communicate with the hearing individuals around them, many develop rudimentary manual communication systems, called homesigns. The disparity in language skills between deaf youth and deaf adults has not always been so prominent. In the past, deaf students in Iquitos gained access to LSP by attending one of four special education schools, where they could routinely interact with deaf peers and, sometimes, deaf adults. In recent years, however, deaf youth have been placed in regular education "inclusive" classrooms, where they are typically the only deaf person in the school and receive no support services to access the language of the classroom. This change in policy has had the unintended effect of cutting off the previous pathways by which deaf youth in Iquitos gained access to LSP in the classroom. Thus, the adoption of "inclusive" education as the new special education policy has resulted in large numbers of deaf youth relying on homesigns as their primary form of communication. This research is based on ethnographic fieldwork with deaf individuals in Iquitos that has been ongoing since 2010.

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In Iquitos, Peru, there is a disparity in the sign language skills of deaf individuals based on age.[1] Large numbers of deaf adults use LSP (*Lengua de Señas Peruana*/Peruvian Sign Language) as their primary means of communication (Clark 2017; Park and Parks 2010; Rodríguez Mondeñedo in press) and interact with one another at deaf association and church gatherings. In contrast, the majority of deaf youth under eighteen years old grow up primarily in hearing environments, without access to spoken Spanish or LSP. In order to communicate with the hearing individuals around them, many develop manual communication systems, called homesigns, that develop over the lifetime of the deaf individual (Coppola 2002; Goldin-Meadow 2003). The disparity in language skills between deaf youth and deaf adults, however, has not always been so prominent. The recent shift in special education policy to adopt "inclusive" education has resulted in large numbers of deaf youth relying on homesigns as their primary form of communication.[2]

Inclusive education is the practice of educating all students, including those with disabilities, together in classrooms that provide a child-centered approach (UNESCO 1994). The signing of the Salamanca Statement in 1994 at the World Conference on Special Needs Education marked the first international support for the inclusive education policy. International support continued with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which Peru was the first Latin American country to sign in 2007. However, prior to both of these dates, the Peruvian Ministry of Education was already educating students with disabilities in regular education schools. After the United Nations World Declaration on Education for All in 1990, Peru joined an UNESCO-supported pilot project to integrate students with special needs in regular education classrooms and presented these experiences at the 1994 conference in Salamanca (UNESCO 2001). Peru formalized the "inclusive" policy within the Peruvian education system in the 2003 reformulation of the General Education Law.

Although the global disability rights movement largely supports policies of inclusive education, deaf rights activists who promote the use of sign language are generally opposed to forms of education that isolate deaf children in all-hearing settings without access to a

deaf community or a sign language (Brennan 2003; de Meulder 2014; Ladd 2003). This tension came to the forefront during the drafting of the UNCRPD's Article 24 on education. This article begins with a declaration of support for the right to inclusive education. The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), however, successfully made efforts to also include the needs of deaf individuals within the section on education (Batterbury 2012; Kauppinen and Jokinen 2014). The WFD tried to include wording that deaf students have the right to be educated in bilingual programs with other deaf students. These claims were argued to be too specific to the deaf community; instead, the passage the UNCRPD provided support for learning sign language and the right to education in the most appropriate language for deaf children (Kusters et al. 2015). Not only the UNCRPD, but also the Salamanca Statement noted that inclusive classrooms may not meet the linguistic needs of deaf students. The one paragraph in the Salamanca Statement that mentioned deafness was a paragraph about the importance of educational settings attending to individual differences. The paragraph stated that the linguistic needs of deaf students and their use of sign language may make it more suitable to educate them in separate schools or classrooms (UNESCO 1994, 18). Despite both international documents highlighting the language-specific concerns of educating deaf students in regular education settings, deaf children in Iquitos are placed in "inclusive" classrooms with no support services to access the classroom language.

In this article, I trace how the adoption of "inclusive" education has led to large numbers of deaf children and teenagers in Iquitos relying on homesigns as their primary form of communication. I base these findings on participant observation and interviews from my ethnographic fieldwork between 2010 and 2018 with the deaf population in Iquitos. Following an overview of my research, I discuss how deaf children in Iquitos are born into hearing families, where they cannot access the spoken language used in the home. Moreover, they receive no access to either hearing assistive technology or sign language services to address their language needs. In the next section, I contrast the experiences of deaf adults and deaf youth in the education system. While deaf adults attended special education schools where

they interacted with deaf peers and, sometimes, deaf adults, in recent years, deaf youth have been placed in regular education "inclusive" classrooms in hearing schools. In contrast to the special education system, the "inclusive" policy cuts off the previous pathways through which deaf youth in Iquitos gained access to LSP in the classroom. Thus, this policy extends the number of years that deaf youth must rely on a homesign as their primary means of communication. I end with a brief description of the communicative practices of deaf youth in Iquitos today. Comparing the lives of deaf adults and deaf youth reiterates findings from Deaf studies that it is not deafness, but societal factors that are the principal cause for limiting deaf individuals' access to language (Groce 1985; Padden and Humphries 1988).

Methodology

Over the last eight years, I have lived and worked with the deaf population in Iquitos, Peru, a city of 471,730 in the heart of the Peruvian Amazon (INEI 2015). Iquitos is an important site for studying the impact of the international policy of inclusive education on deaf students because it makes it possible to contrast the outcome of previous educational policies that provided interaction among deaf peers and current policies that separate deaf youth from one another. Iquitos is one of the few cities in Peru that had a private deaf school within the special education system prior to the implementation of "inclusive" education. I first arrived in Iquitos in 2010 under the auspices of a Fulbright grant and conducted nine months of preliminary fieldwork. I conducted interviews, observations, and video recordings in three institutions with deaf students: a private special education deaf church school, a general special education school, and an "inclusive" classroom. The last school year that deaf classrooms existed in the special education schools was 2010. This preliminary research provided me with firsthand experience of the educational system as many deaf adults experienced it before the shift to "inclusive" education.

After my preliminary fieldwork, I returned to Iquitos from 2013 to 2015 to conduct an ethnographic study with ten deaf youth in "inclusive" classrooms for my dissertation research. I arrived at the end of the 2013 school year[3] in order to meet deaf students within the

education system and select focal students to observe during the following school year. I selected students who were enrolled in a regular education "inclusive" classroom, had limited to no previous contact with deaf adults or LSP, had severe to profound hearing loss, and presented no compounding disabilities. The students I selected were from six to seventeen years old, included boys and girls, spanned from first grade of primary school to the second to last year of secondary school, and were from all four municipal districts in Iquitos. During the 2014 school year, I conducted observations and video recordings in the schools, visiting each student in his or her classroom once a week for approximately four hours. This resulted in about twenty classroom visits per student. In 2015, I visited the same students in their homes between ten and twelve times video recording between four and six hours during each opportunity. Over the course of the research, I also conducted interviews with classroom teachers, special educators, parents, and officials in the local and national governments. Interviews were semi-structured but included topics such as the deaf students' communication skills, education level and educational background, the cause and detection of deafness, how family members/classmates interacted with the deaf student, opinions about "inclusive" education, and the history of the implementation of "inclusive" education in Iquitos.

Outside my research with deaf youth, I have worked informally with an association of parents with deaf children, which has more than forty members. Working with the parents' association has provided me the opportunity to talk with many families about the education of their deaf children outside of those involved in my dissertation project. I have also spent a significant amount of time visiting the deaf associations and churches in Iquitos. When I returned to Iquitos in 2013, the older students that I worked with in 2010 in the deaf church school had joined a deaf association, and they invited me to the meetings. I have helped deaf adults navigate the paperwork required to obtain disability identification cards and was asked to help with interpreting in a variety of contexts. Since 2015, I continue to return to Iquitos twice a year for two- to three-month stays to work with the parents' association, as well as conduct research projects that include more than sixty deaf children and adults.

Being Born Deaf in Iquitos

Deaf youth and deaf adults have shared similar experiences of being born deaf in Iquitos because, both historically and today, deafness is not identified at birth and deaf individuals receive no services to address their language needs. When I visited the public hospitals in Iquitos, I discovered that newborns do not go through any form of hearing screening, nor does deafness appear on hospital forms as one of the possible pathologies that could affect a newborn. Parents in Iquitos have stated that they discovered their child's deafness between one and five years of age. In the United States, it is estimated that 90 to 95 percent of deaf children are born to hearing families (Mitchell and Karchmer 2004; Schein 1989). In Iquitos, this percentage seems to be even higher. Despite making inquiries with deaf adults around Iquitos, I have only identified three deaf individuals with deaf parents. Another four families with deaf siblings and a handful with deaf cousins were living in the city during the time of my fieldwork. These findings demonstrate that within the deaf population in Iquitos, very few have grown up as native signers of LSP, while the vast majority have been raised in all-hearing families.

One might assume that with so many deaf children born to hearing families, parents would make efforts to capitalize on the residual hearing of their child. However, medical services in Iquitos are such that no assistance is provided to increase access to spoken language. Upon identifying a child's deafness, families have few options even for diagnosing the level of hearing loss. There are no audiologists in Iquitos, and public hospitals do not have audiometers to conduct hearing tests. Most of the parents that I work with in Iquitos are from a low socioeconomic background and do not have the financial resources to take their child to the private clinics of otolaryngologists for hearing exams. Moreover, since otolaryngologists in Iquitos are not trained to work with deafness, doctors will often suggest that families go to Lima for diagnosis, which is even further outside of the economic reach of most families. Due to the lack of roads leading to Iquitos, families can only reach Lima by taking a plane or a long and arduous combination of boats and buses. For this reason, most deaf individuals in Iquitos have never had their hearing level diagnosed. As an example,

one family, who was concerned that their three-year-old son was not speaking, took him to the private clinic of an otolaryngologist. Based on the parents' description, the doctor told them he believed that their son was deaf, but they would have to go to Lima for testing and diagnosis. The family did not have the financial resources to go to Lima. That same year, they brought their son to a speech therapist, who informed them that their son would start speaking as soon as he was around other children. Even after the boy's first year in kindergarten, the speech therapist continued to tell the family that he would eventually speak. This took place only five years ago.

Due to the lack of medical attention, very few deaf individuals use hearing assistive technology. Since my first stay in Iquitos in 2010, the number of individuals with hearing aids has increased due to Starkey Foundation hearing aid campaigns in 2013, 2014, and 2015. Few prelingual deaf individuals, however, receive much benefit due to the fact that these hearing aids are fitted without audiometry exams, are not accompanied by speech therapy, and often have a short lifespan because of the humid climate in Iquitos. I volunteered as an interpreter during the 2014 campaign, and many deaf individuals who received hearing aids at the time no longer use them. Cochlear implant surgeries are available in Lima, but there is no audiological or training support for individuals with cochlear implants in Iquitos. Only one person currently living in Iquitos has received the surgery, which he received in 2015 at the age of nine. Without access to any hearing assistive technology, deaf individuals with mild hearing loss are generally able to participate in the aural Spanish language of the hearing community. On the other hand, those with moderate to profound hearing loss have limited to no access to spoken language.

Hearing families in Iquitos with deaf children not only have no support from the medical community or access to hearing assistive technology, but they also have limited access to services to support learning a sign language. As I will discuss in the next section, historically, deaf individuals gained access to LSP in the school, but there has not been a mechanism to bring sign language into the predominantly hearing homes of deaf individuals. The deaf churches in Iquitos do not have a history of working with the families of the deaf. The Jehovah's Witness group made home visits to teach the Bible to deaf individu-

als, but one parent told me that when she asked if she could also be taught LSP, she was told that they only worked with the deaf. The only group that provides services dedicated to parents of deaf children is the parents' association, which was established in 2014. Parents in the association show interest in their deaf children learning LSP but said that they did not have the time to learn themselves. Only two mothers in the association had learned some LSP prior to the establishment of the association. Since the founding of the association, there have been two efforts to provide parents with LSP classes, and on both occasions the classes ended because of a lack of attendance.

In Iquitos, the high percentage of deaf children born to hearing families, the lack of adequate healthcare services to increase access to spoken language, and the lack of families learning LSP virtually guarantee that deaf individuals do not have access to either spoken Spanish or LSP in the home. The implications of this situation are that more than 99 percent of deaf children in Iquitos are not acquiring an established language from birth. These children naturally turn to the manual modality, relying on sign systems that have emerged over their lifetime as their primary means of communication. This situation has not seen much change over the years, and deaf youth today have as little access to language in the home as deaf adults had. While deaf studies have pointed out the risks associated with the medicalization and pathologization of deaf people (Humphries et al. 2012; Ladd 2003; Lane 1992), the situation in Iquitos underscores how, even without medicalization, deaf children can be deprived of access to a standardized sign language. It also points to the way that medical tools, such as hearing screening, can be used to either medicalize deaf people or ensure they have access to linguistic input.

Since most deaf individuals in Iquitos do not have access to LSP in the home, historically schools have played an important role in exposing children to other deaf individuals and LSP. Over the last ten years, the shift to "inclusive" education has greatly impacted the interactional lives of deaf youth and the possibility of accessing language in school. To demonstrate these changes, I will compare the schooling practices of deaf youth and deaf adults. Table 1 provides a summary of the educational institutions that have worked with deaf students in Iquitos. While the experiences of deaf adults in Iquitos

Table 1. Summary of the Educational Institutions that Have Worked with Deaf Students in Iquitos

Year	School	Educational philosophy influencing language input for the deaf	Age group affected (as of 2016)
1967–2010*	Three General Special Education Schools (two were established in 1986)	• Originally oralism, slowly adopting LSP as a classroom resource • Hearing teachers • Educated with other students with disabilities, but deaf students grouped together	Current teenagers to adults in their mid-sixties
1985–2013 (school closed)	Evangelical Baptist church school (a private Special Education School)	• Deaf-only school • Education in LSP with signing hearing and deaf untrained teachers	Current teenagers up to adults in their late forties
2007–present	"Inclusive" education	• All-hearing classmates and teachers • No LSP	Current children and teenagers

*I mark the end date of the special education schools as 2010 because the following year there was an effort to send as many deaf students as possible into regular education classrooms. All three of these schools still exist today and sometimes still work with deaf students for short periods of time before "including" them. However, there were no classrooms of deaf students after 2010.

mirror many of the common findings in Deaf studies, the situation of deaf youth in "inclusive" education has resulted in a large population of deaf children who are socially integrated into the society but must rely on homesign systems as their primary means of communication.

Schooling

Deaf Adults: Special Education Schools

In 1971, the Peruvian government signed into law the creation of the special education system. Until the reformulation of the general education law in 2003, this policy mandated that students with disabilities and regular education students be educated in separate facilities. From the 1980s until 2013, there were four special education schools in Iquitos: three public general special education schools and one private special education school. The first general special education school

opened in 1967, and in 1986 two more opened in districts outside the city center. The general special education schools served students with all types of disabilities, including mental, sensory, and physical disabilities. The only private special education school to exist in Iquitos was a deaf-only church school that first opened in 1985. In this section, I will discuss the role that these special education schools played in the transmission of sign language within the deaf population in Iquitos. Although I discuss the positive role of these schools in terms of language socialization, as educational institutions the schools have otherwise failed to educate deaf individuals. According to national law, special education schools only provide primary education, which has severely limited deaf individuals' opportunities to pursue secondary or higher education. Additionally, most of the teachers that worked in these institutions either had no training to work with deaf populations or were not certified teachers. The special education system has provided most deaf adults in Iquitos with only basic math skills and poor literacy skills, making it difficult for them to find and keep jobs.

Deaf adults state that sign language arrived in Iquitos in 1985 with the founding of an Evangelical Baptist deaf church and school. The church was established by a young deaf pastor, who was one of the first students of Vernon Miller, an American Deaf missionary who arrived in Lima in 1968. The opening of the deaf church school was the first time in Iquitos that deaf individuals from hearing families could gain access to LSP in childhood. During the eighteen years that the deaf pastor led the church, no other churches or deaf associations existed. According to stories of deaf adults and hearing missionaries in Iquitos, church activities included Sunday worship, Bible study, and literacy classes, all held in LSP. I was told that the deaf school, which existed from the church's inception, regularly had ten to fifteen students. The school did not always have trained teachers but employed deaf and hearing adults with some knowledge of LSP. The presence of deaf adult role models in the school was most prevalent during the first eighteen years of the church, when it was led by the deaf pastor and his wife, who was also deaf. Deaf students also met deaf adults during church activities, which they often attended outside of school hours. During this time period, the school gained official recognition as a private special education school. I was told that at the time the

deaf pastor left Iquitos in 2003, more than forty deaf people were regularly attending the church. After his departure, a hearing pastor took over, and the school had approximately ten students enrolled every year until it closed in 2013 (the church still exists today).

Deaf students in Iquitos who did not attend the deaf church school went to one of the three public general special education schools. These schools did not have instruction in LSP or adult signing models, but students still had opportunities to socialize with other deaf students. Teachers at the special education schools in Iquitos are regular education teachers who have not had training in special education, deaf education, or LSP. This is due to a lack of special education training programs in Iquitos and deaf education programs in the country. The Ministry of Education's original education philosophy for deaf students was oralism and, thus, for many years there were no institutionalized attempts to use LSP in the classroom. This began to shift when the Ministry of Education published the first lexical reports of LSP in 1987 and 1996 and began organizing LSP workshops, which teachers from Iquitos told me they attended. Today, teachers also attend LSP classes taught in Iquitos. Based on my interactions with Iquitos special educators, however, their knowledge of LSP is extremely limited. García Benavides (2002) also found this to be the case in Lima. Additionally, special educators demonstrate negative ideologies towards sign language (Kusters 2014; Kroskrity 2004)—more than one special education teacher in Iquitos told me that they believe sign-only education is detrimental for deaf students.

Although special education schools did not provide immersion in LSP, deaf students still had the opportunity to socialize with deaf peers in primarily deaf classrooms, thus providing a platform for LSP transmission. The classroom I observed in 2010, for instance, included students who were deaf and students with Down syndrome. Peer interaction in these classrooms was critical to the proliferation of LSP. Some deaf children attending the general special education schools had previously attended the deaf church school or attended the church on Sundays. In this way, even those students who only attended the general special education schools were exposed to LSP through their deaf classmates. Moreover, deaf adults returned to their special education schools to visit during school events and to play pick-up soccer

with their teachers. It is unclear how much intergenerational contact there was during these visits, but deaf adults told me that they would meet new deaf children when they visited their old schools.

With the founding of the first special education school in Iquitos in 1967, the opening of the Evangelical Baptist deaf church school in 1985, and the proliferation of general special education schools in 1986, there was a trend of deaf individuals accessing LSP at increasingly younger ages. The oldest deaf adults to enter school attended the first special education school and later joined the Evangelical Baptist church, learning LSP rather late. But with the arrival of the deaf church, and even more so when the school was formalized, deaf individuals finally started having access to LSP as children. Many of the current twenty- and thirty-year-olds, for example, gained access to LSP during their childhood years, some even as young as four years old. Bringing together deaf individuals and exposing them to LSP also led to the proliferation of other deaf gatherings, including deaf associations and other deaf churches, which are an important part of the social lives of deaf adults in Iquitos today. By the end of my dissertation research in 2015, however, I could only identify five deaf youth under the age of eighteen in Iquitos who were fluent users of LSP.

Deaf Youth: "Inclusive" Education

In 2003, the Peruvian Ministry of Education passed the new general education law, Ley General de Educación Nº 28044. One of the significant policy changes was a shift from general special education schools to "inclusive" education. Following the new law, children with a mild to moderate disability, a physical disability, or a sensory disability (such as deafness) attend regular education classrooms, and only students with multiple or severe disabilities remain at the special education schools (Ministerio de Educación 2006a). Within the "inclusive" education system, students with disabilities spend their entire school day in a regular education school, but they are still registered with the special education school in their district, and special educators supervise their academic progress. The placement of deaf students in regular education classrooms has had a significant impact on the language socialization of deaf youth. Deaf students no longer meet deaf peers or deaf adults in school and thus do not gain access to LSP.

This has resulted in the majority of deaf youth in Iquitos relying on homesigns as their primary means of communication.

Inclusive education as a philosophy does not necessitate that deaf students must be in entirely hearing contexts. Kelman and Branco (2004) describe an example of inclusive education in Brazil in which half of the classroom students were deaf and the other half were hearing. In Iquitos, however, the general rule is to place one student with disability in a regular education classroom. Teachers across all four districts in Iquitos and within both the special and regular education schools told me that each student with a disability represents the workload equivalent of anywhere from three to ten regular education students. According to the special education law, there is no maximum number of students with disabilities allowed in a regular education classroom; however, teachers receive class size reductions for having a student with special needs (Ministerio de Educación 2005). Therefore, the general rule is to place one student with a disability in a regular education classroom, so as not to overburden teachers. I have also heard from educators that they believe it is important for deaf students in particular to attend all-hearing classrooms. During my first trip to Iquitos in 2010, one of the special education teachers told me that it was better for deaf students to be with all-hearing classmates because when there are multiple deaf students in the same classroom, they prefer to interact with one another rather than with the hearing students. In 2014, only two "inclusive" classrooms had more than one deaf student. Due to the tendency to place deaf students in all-hearing classrooms, deaf peers no longer meet one another in school, one of the primary ways through which deaf individuals in the special education system learned LSP.

Deaf children also have no opportunities to meet deaf adults in regular education schools. Deaf children stopped visiting the deaf church after the school closed in 2013, and no deaf adults work in or visit the regular education schools. Deaf adults have noticed the lack of deaf youth at the deaf church and in special education schools. In 2013, I was talking with a deaf woman at an end-of-the-year Christmas party. Remarking on the small quantity of deaf children at the party, she told me that the number of deaf births comes in waves. At the time, she said, the number of deaf children was in a trough, but in

the future there would be another resurgence in deaf births. This narrative demonstrates an example of a personal theory that has formed to explain the shrinking number of deaf children that deaf adults meet. The deaf woman was not aware that Iquitos still had many deaf children but that they were attending regular education schools and had no opportunities to meet deaf adults. In addition to this woman, deaf adults in general were ignorant of the changes in education policy impacting deaf youth. When I spoke with two deaf association presidents about my research in 2014, both said that they did not know that deaf children were attending regular education schools. One of the presidents even spent an extended amount of time trying to argue with me that deaf students could not attend regular education schools; they are deaf, so they must attend special education schools, he told me. These conversations, which took place eleven years after "inclusive" education entered Peruvian law and seven years after its implementation in Iquitos, demonstrate that deaf adults were both not aware of and not involved in shifts in education policy.

Deaf students in "inclusive" classrooms do not have the opportunity to learn LSP from interactions with other deaf children or deaf adults, nor do educators provide them any LSP services in the classroom. While Peruvian "inclusive" education shares similarities with many international efforts to educate deaf students in regular education schools (e.g., Holmström et al. 2015; Power and Hyde 2002; Powers 2002; Ramsey 1997), a significant difference is that in Iquitos, deaf students receive no resources to access the language of the classroom. There are no interpreting services to provide access to the classroom language in a visual modality, nor do regular education teachers know LSP. Schools also provide no written services, such as note-taking or captioning. Such services would be of little help since deaf students in "inclusive" classrooms in Iquitos are illiterate—many cannot even write their complete names—but the services would at least demonstrate attempts to address the visual language needs of deaf students in the classroom. As previously mentioned, deaf students also have no hearing assistive devices to access spoken Spanish.

Over the course of my research, the only support services that students with disabilities "included" in regular education classrooms received were visits from a team of special educators known as SAANEE

(*Servicio de Apoyo y Asesoramiento para la Atención de Estudiantes con Necesidades Educativas Especiales*/Services for the Assistance and Assessment of Students with Special Education Needs), who are responsible for evaluating students with special needs and monitoring their progress in regular education classrooms, along with providing support and training to classroom teachers (Ministerio de Educación 2006b). This support, however, did little to address the language needs of deaf children. Although SAANEE team members are supposed to meet with students weekly, teachers often could not maintain this schedule due to their responsibilities at their own special education schools. These visits were also only a half-hour in length, which was not enough time to address the large amount of information that students missed during the school week. Moreover, as stated previously, the special education teachers in Iquitos did not have the training to work with deaf students (e.g., knowledge of LSP, training in deaf education). This lack of training not only limited the effectiveness of their classroom visits, but also the workshops that the teams organized for classroom teachers. In one workshop I attended in July 2015, a SAANEE teacher provided a basic LSP lesson. He projected slides of a sign language alphabet different from that used in Iquitos. He also frequently missigned as he demonstrated basic vocabulary to the teachers.

Not only do deaf students receive no support services to address their language needs, but educational authorities also demonstrate a lack of awareness of these needs. During a meeting with the principal and the director of the SAANEE team from one of the special education schools in August 2016, I discussed how the "inclusive" policy failed to provide deaf students with the opportunity to acquire LSP. In response, the SAANEE director claimed that hearing teachers and deaf students in "inclusive" classrooms already knew LSP because she had personally witnessed them signing to one another. I replied, saying that deaf students communicating in homesigns should not be confused with LSP and questioned how the director determined whether teachers and students knew LSP if she herself did not sign. The SAANEE director continued to repeat that she had witnessed these conversations and knew it was LSP. Gal and Irvine (1995, 974) define erasure as "the process in which ideology, in simplifying the field of linguistic practices, renders some persons or activities or sociolinguistic phenomena invisible." When this semiotic process is at work,

language practices that do not match a generally held ideology are ignored or explained away. In Iquitos, special educators believe so staunchly in the benefits of "inclusive" education that they explain away any criticisms of the policy. Thus, the fact that deaf students do not have access to the classroom language is erased by the very individuals who are meant to evaluate the progress of deaf students in "inclusive" classrooms.

Although the SAANEE director gave no explanation for how deaf students acquired LSP, she believed that classroom teachers had learned to sign from LSP classes. Starting in 2013, the regional government and other entities began offering LSP courses in Iquitos, which some teachers do attend. These courses are voluntary, and only one of the eight teachers in my dissertation project was taking the LSP course in 2014. Another of the classroom teachers involved in my research told me that after attending one course, he felt that he did not need to continue taking the classes to communicate with his deaf student. Deaf adults generally teach these courses, but the effectiveness of the courses is limited by the large class sizes, the lack of LSP materials or information about LSP grammar, and the lack of pedagogical training among the teachers, whether deaf or hearing. Moreover, these classes are having an unintended negative effect. Hearing individuals who take these classes receive certificates of completion, and I know of two cases in which women presented these certificates and were hired as interpreters despite having limited LSP skills. My personal experience observing "inclusive" classrooms was that if teachers used LSP at all, it was limited to basic signs such as the ABCs, numbers, and frequent classroom signs (e.g., SIT, PAY-ATTENTION, BATHROOM), and was used in direct conversation with deaf students but rarely in classroom lessons.

The lack of awareness of the language needs of deaf students is present not only at the local level, but even within the Peruvian Ministry of Education. In 2014, representatives from the Ministry of Education in Lima visited one of the Iquitos classrooms with which I was working. The classroom teacher told me about the experience.

> When the [representative from the] Ministry of Education came to visit me, I told him of my concern, because, I said, "how can the Ministry open up regular education classrooms that are inclusive when they haven't even trained the teachers?" . . . And he told

> me, "Yes, I understand, but I noticed something surprising about you—your classroom . . . that the girl doesn't have any kind of problems with her classmates; there's, in fact, a great camaraderie with them." . . . They only told me that I should use a greater variety of materials. And said, "congratulations."[4]

This response from the Ministry of Education representative clearly demonstrates that the primary goal of educating deaf students in regular education classrooms is for them to socialize with individuals without disabilities. His statement makes explicit that the student's ability to learn classroom information is not a major concern. Moreover, the representative did not even demonstrate awareness of the language needs of the deaf student in the classroom. He never brought up language, either sign language or oral methods, for increasing the student's academic performance.

Due to the continued efforts of deaf rights activists in Lima, in recent years, the Ministry of Education has finally made an effort to bring LSP into the classroom. In 2016, the Ministry of Education made money available for SAANEE teams to hire interpreters and deaf adult language models (Ministerio de Educación 2016). Despite the existence of these funds, in my personal conversation with a representative from the Ministry of Education in August 2017 about securing this funding for Iquitos, I learned that the money available for allocation is significantly less than the country needs. Additionally, there are no interpreter or language model training programs in Peru to prepare the individuals that will fill these positions. There is also no system in place to determine whether someone has the sign language skills necessary for these jobs, which, as I previously mentioned, has already resulted in the hiring of untrained interpreters in Iquitos. This demonstrates how even though awareness of the language needs of deaf students is increasing, the lack of financial and human resources hinders efforts to bring LSP into "inclusive" classrooms.

Communicative Practices of Deaf Youth

The discussion above demonstrates how the practice of "inclusive" education isolates deaf youth from one another, from deaf adults, and from LSP. The implementation of this system of education in Iquitos has extended the number of years that deaf youth born into

hearing families must rely on a homesign as their primary means of communication. Yet there is limited information on what growing up using a homesign means for deaf youth. Most studies of homesign have focused on the linguistic structures of these communicative systems but have provided little information on the social lives of the deaf individuals who use them (e.g., Goldin-Meadow 2003). Ethnographic research in Iquitos, however, draws attention to the active social lives of these deaf youth (Goico 2019). They are integral members of their households, visit the corner stores and game rooms in their neighborhoods, play with friends who live on their street, and attend school where they are busy doing the work of being students. For most of these deaf youth, their social worlds are made up of exclusively hearing individuals. One student with whom I worked was an important exception—his mother was also a deaf homesigner, and therefore he learned her homesign from birth.[5] Deaf youth interact with hearing friends and family using a wide variety of communicative resources, including manual signs, facial expressions, gaze, body orientation, vocalizations, and the manipulation of objects. They use their communicative abilities to navigate the distinct affordances of their social environments.

Interactions in the Home

The ten families I worked with during my dissertation research demonstrated a range of approaches to communicating with their deaf child. Most families tended to combine the oral and manual modalities in their utterances but usually provided enough visual information for the deaf child to participate in the interaction. However, this was not the only communicative pattern among family members of deaf youth. On one extreme, there were families that believed their deaf child had residual hearing and emphasized speech in their interactions. Due to the lack of medical attention for deafness, unless a family has visited doctors in Lima, they generally do not receive orientation from the medical community about how to communicate with their deaf child. It was more often parents' own ideologies about their child's hearing level that caused them to emphasize speech. When faced with utterances that relied heavily on speech, deaf children had difficulty participating in the interaction. For example, one deaf teenager, whose

family used a significant amount of spoken Spanish with him, would turn to me for clarification when his sister spoke, and he preferred that I voice his utterances rather than himself try to communicate with her directly.

On the opposite extreme, I worked with a family that exclusively used the manual modality to communicate with their deaf child. The father told me that he used the manual modality because it was more efficient, and he did not want to waste energy on speaking. In all the interactions I recorded between the father and son, the father never once used any speech or even mouthings of Spanish words. His two hearing daughters also primarily used the manual modality, although at times they mouthed or mumbled words while signing to their brother. This family also engaged in more complicated interactional routines than the other families I observed, such as argumentation and negotiation routines. The father believed it was important for his children to understand the thinking behind his decisions and, consequently, he frequently talked about his mental reasoning with them. These conversations provided his children with the opportunity to question his opinions and suggest an alternative viewpoint.

Interactions in School

In previous work, I noted that a deaf second-grader in Iquitos appeared "comfortable and unconfused" in her all-hearing classroom (Goico 2011, 65). I found a comparable situation in the eight classrooms I observed in 2014. This was because deaf youth were extremely adept at "doing" school. Deaf students were able to perform appropriate school behaviors, even if they lacked much of the academic content. Since teachers relied primarily on group demonstrations of knowledge, such as group work and call-and-response routines, it was easy for a deaf student—and hearing students who did not know the answers—to blend in with the group. For instance, during prayer each morning, one deaf student would stand with his hands open in front of him and move his mouth along with his classmates. No attention was ever called to the fact that he did not actually know the prayer, but when he did not stand for the prayer, the teacher was quick to correct his behavior. Similarly, since most classroom work required copying from the board into a notebook, as long as the deaf students stayed

on task, teachers typically did not question whether the deaf students understood the content of what they wrote in their notebooks.

Some students appeared to thrive in their "inclusive" classrooms. One boy was constantly in conversation with his hearing girl friends, discussing the latest television shows and poking fun at other classmates. For many of the deaf students, especially young children, interactions with classmates generally involved doing activities together that did not require constant conversation. Many hearing peers were more than willing to share their answers with their deaf classmates, and some students even tried to teach them what they were learning. Hearing and deaf classmates played jump rope or marbles together at recess. These joint activities made it easy for individuals, such as the representative from the Ministry of Education, to overlook the many conversations that the deaf students missed that were going on around them as they played. The oldest student in my study, who was in his second to last year of secondary school, found it much harder to join in the interactions of his classmates. He was very sociable and always volunteered to play soccer or participate in classroom dances and plays. He got along with his classmates and was well-liked among his peers. Nevertheless, much of the hearing students' joint activity comprised talking rather than playing together as was the case in the primary classrooms. During recess most days, his hearing classmates would sit together and talk, but he could not participate.

My dissertation research sheds light on the rich social and communicative lives of deaf youth in Iquitos and the ways in which they utilize their communicative resources to creatively navigate their diverse social worlds (Goico 2019). Nevertheless, it also demonstrates the ways in which deaf youth are excluded from classroom learning and the insecurity of their future possibilities as they move into adulthood. In the next section, I discuss recommendations to improve the educational situation for deaf youth in Iquitos.

Recommendations

Inclusive education, per its name, was meant to promote an inclusive and accepting society that is welcoming to the diversity of the human population (UNESCO 1994). Nevertheless, the situation in Iquitos demonstrates how the attempt at social inclusion has led to linguistic

exclusion. My research is not the first study to highlight the linguistic exclusion of deaf students in inclusive classrooms. Even in contexts in which deaf students have access to interpreters (Antia et al. 2002; Ramsey 1997; Schick et al. 2005) and hearing assistive technology (Holmström et al. 2015), there is evidence that deaf youth do not have equal access to the classroom language. Yet, my research in Iquitos is the first case to document how "inclusive" education not only limits deaf students' access to the classroom language but can also cut off pathways for these children to acquire a sign language resulting in large numbers of deaf youth growing up as homesigners.

Unfortunately, this situation is not unique to Iquitos. Due to the fact that most sign language research is conducted in the Global North, where there are medical services such as universal hearing screenings, it is easy to overlook the prevalence of deaf individuals who live without access to an established language in the Global South. Even with this limited attention in the literature, the reports of the Summer Institute of Linguistics on deaf communities point out just how common homesigners are, suggesting that in some countries more than 50 percent of deaf individuals rely primarily on homesign systems (Eberle et al. 2015; Herrera et al. 2009; Hurlbut 2014; Johnson and Johnson 2008; Parks 2011; Parks and Parks 2008; Parks et al. 2011; Williams and Parks 2010; Wood 2011). Following international trends, many countries in the Global South have adopted inclusive education policies, even though they lack the human and financial resources to support deaf students in these programs (Reilly and Khanh 2004; WFD n.d.). This evidence would suggest that there are many deaf students in hearing classrooms around the world who have never acquired an established spoken or signed language. Today we also know how detrimental it is to the linguistic and cognitive development of deaf individuals when they grow up without acquiring an established language. Research demonstrates that acquiring language late impacts the neurological organization of language in the brain (Ferjan Ramirez et al. 2014), all levels of grammatical structure (Mayberry and Eichen 1991), and areas of cognitive development such as Theory of Mind (Gagne and Coppola 2017).

Bringing together these distinct lines of research—the prevalence of deaf individuals without access to an established language, the in-

creasing popularity of inclusive education programs around the globe, the linguistic exclusion of deaf students in inclusive programs, and the negative impact of late language acquisition—it becomes clear that the current system of inclusive education is hurting rather than helping deaf individuals. In order to address this problem, educators and policymakers must recognize the language needs of deaf students. If the recurring difficulty with inclusive education is linguistic exclusion, then inclusive programs will continue to fail to meet the needs of deaf students. It will never be possible to achieve educational or social inclusion without first addressing linguistic inclusion. Establishing education systems for deaf youth from a perspective of full language access will require working with deaf populations to implement policies that reevaluate our understanding of terms such as "inclusion" (Kusters et al. 2015). The notion of "inclusion" must prioritize inclusion in the learning and social interaction of the classroom, not merely including deaf children's bodies in hearing spaces.

Conclusion

Comparing the lives of deaf individuals in Iquitos demonstrates that there are significant differences in the language skills of deaf youth and deaf adults. Deaf adults acquired LSP within the special education system and, as adults, continue to use LSP in deaf association and church meetings. Over the past ten years, however, the implementation of "inclusive" education in Iquitos has slowly cut off the previous pathways that provided deaf children access to LSP. Deaf alumni visit their old schools but no longer find classrooms of deaf students. Instead, deaf children are educated in all-hearing classrooms and do not meet other deaf peers. By placing deaf children in hearing classrooms and not providing access to LSP, the Peruvian "inclusive" education policy ensures that schools are not sites of language socialization for deaf children. The effects of "inclusive" education in Iquitos were compounded by the closing of the Evangelical Baptist deaf church school in 2013, removing the option for deaf-only education and the intergenerational contact that occurred at the school. Thus, by 2014, the only educational option for deaf students was to attend regular education schools. This situation has led to large numbers of deaf youth who have not acquired Spanish or LSP, relying instead

on homesign systems. Deaf youth utilize these homesigns to become active members of their families, neighborhoods, and schools. Nevertheless, they are excluded from the language of the classroom and the possibility of fuller participation in the larger Iquitos society as they grow into adulthood. It is therefore imperative that educators and policymakers become cognizant of the language needs of deaf students and reassess how they interpret the meaning of "inclusion."

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Notes

1. I choose not to use the D/d distinction to distinguish between Deaf cultural identity (D) and the medically defined inability to hear (d) when referring to deaf individuals in Iquitos because this practice is not followed in Iquitos.

2. I use the term "inclusive education" when referring to the practice of placing students with disabilities in regular education classrooms because that is how the policy is referred to in Peru. I place the word "inclusive" in quotation marks when I use it to refer to the Peruvian system to highlight that I do not believe the policy actually provides an inclusive educational environment. There is no equivalent term for mainstream(ing) in Peruvian Spanish.

3. In Peru the school year runs from mid-March to mid-December.

4. Cuando llegó el Ministerio de Educación a visitarme, le conté . . . mi malestar porque le dije, "como el Ministerio puede aperturar aulas de EBR que sean inclusivas cuando ni siquiera nos han capacitado a los docentes?" . . . Y él me decía, "sí te entiendo, pero hay algo asombroso que noto en ti- en tu aula . . . que la niña no tiene ningún tipo de problemas con sus compañeros, hay una sociabilidad única" . . . . solamente me dijeron de que debo usar más materiales. Y me dijeron "te felicito."

5. For discussions of family sign, see Haviland (2013ab, 2015, 2016) and Hou (2016).

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