Abstract: Japanese Sign Language (JSL, Nihon Shuwa) refers to the sign language that deaf children acquire as their first language, typically in a deaf household or through early exposure to the language. Its linguistic characteristics are very different from those of spoken Japanese, as many research results have revealed (Fischer 1996, Ichida 2005, Ichida 2010, Matsuoka et al. 2012, etc.) Nevertheless, the field of JSL linguistics has not been fully developed. One reason is the lack of recognition of JSL as a natural language, due to the political and educational policies implemented in the past. In this talk, the history of JSL, in relation to predominantly oral-oriented deaf education in Japan, is briefly summarized, with an introduction to examples of syntactic and semantic properties of JSL, many of which cannot be attributed to influences from Japanese. At the same time, cultural gestures of hearing Japanese were taken in JSL, which became a part of the language. Those examples are also discussed.

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