

Specified NPO:  
Sign Language Acquisition Research Institute  
(NPO Comekko)

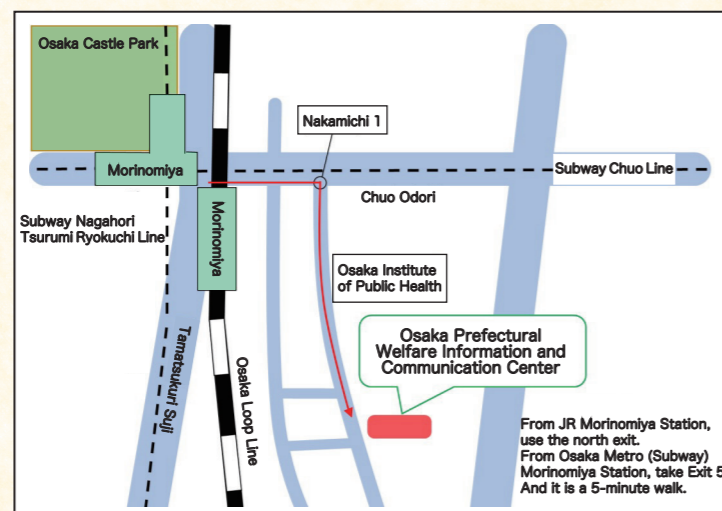
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Website



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NPO Comekko is participating in the "Improving Parenting Skills in Families with Infants and Toddlers" project endorsed by the Osaka Prefectural Board of Education. The leaflet "Raising Children During Infancy - The Power to Work for the Future of Children" created in this project can be downloaded here.



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# Here at Comekko, you will be accepted for who you are.

Nurturing our ability to work for the future  
of the deaf and hard-of-hearing children.



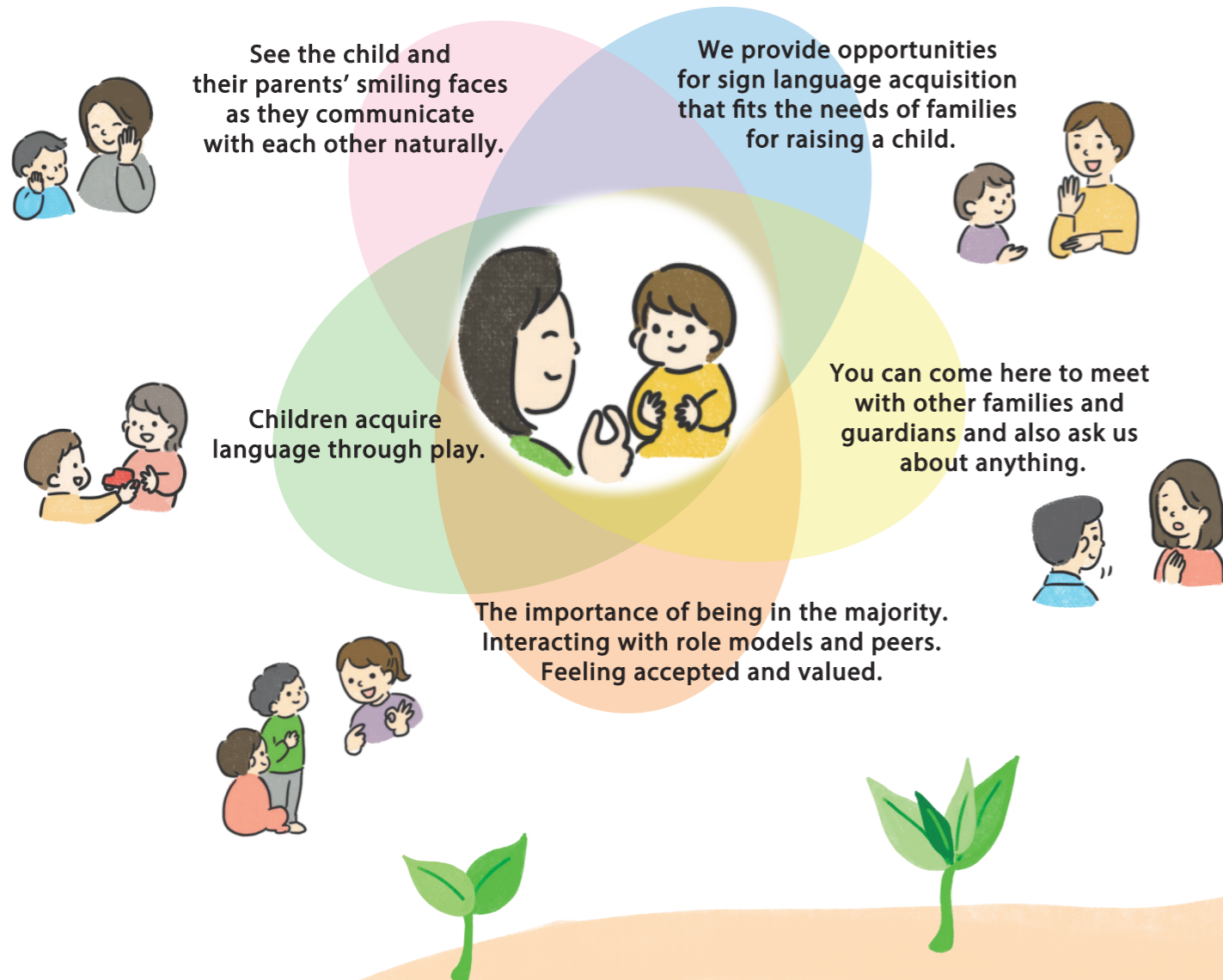
Nurturing the sign language development at

## NPO Comekko



# The beginning of a life-long journey with comprehensive support

## Towards bilingualism and the world of sign language



### Akiko Monoi

President of NPO Comekko



Being born to deaf parents, I was brought up in a home where I naturally acquired Japanese Sign Language (JSL) as my first language. My upbringing made me bilingual, both fluent in JSL and Japanese. Regardless of the hearing ability, deaf children need a language that they can comprehend visually. At Comekko, the children can have their first exposure to JSL and learn to communicate with others through their eyes and hands. It has been my greatest joy to witness such precious moments and to continue supporting the families of these children during their crucial developmental stages. We give our full support to the children who navigate the world by the eye and their families.

### Yutaka Kubosawa

Executive Director of NPO Comekko



Comekko began as a sign language support center for children between the ages of 0-6, and thanks to support from the Nippon Foundation, we have now expanded our activities to include research and support for elementary school-aged children. We closely monitor the development and the progress of children from infancy to elementary school through daily activities and assessments. This allows us to share the children's growth and achievements with their families and guardians. As a deaf individual, I am committed to continuing this work and research and expanding Comekko's reach to connect with more families across the country.

## Emotional and Social Development · Sign Language · Families



### Sign Language Learning for Families and Guardians

You will enjoy learning sign language skills useful for your journey as a parent. We practice by creating short, context-specific sentences. As communication between parents and children improves, children will build comprehension of the language.

### Supporting the Acquisition and the Development of Sign Language

In a sign language-rich environment, babies naturally acquire language. Through play-based activities, children absorb a wide range of knowledge and develop the ability to communicate with others. As a result, their linguistic skills and cognitive abilities are enhanced.

### Encounters and Identity Development

Comekko has a wide range of staff members with diverse ages and backgrounds, including CODAs (Children of Deaf Adults) who were raised by a deaf parent(s). Exposure to such role models from various backgrounds using sign language can help children with developing their identities and providing families and guardians with a positive outlook on their child's future.

### Beginning of Emotional Growth: Developing Bonds

Sign language gives families and guardians the ability to confidently look into the eyes of their baby without fear, and to love and embrace their child as they truly are. The strong bonds created between infants and their families in a loving and accepting environment will help the child grow and reach their full potential.

At NPO Comekko, we view the acquisition of sign language and use of hearing as two complementary wheels of support. We also support children with cochlear implants.

### Yoshiko Kawasaki

Professor at Kobe University Supervisor at NPO Comekko



As a psychologist, I have spent many years working with deaf people. NPO Comekko and its initiatives actualized my vision. The one-stop consultation service "Hidamari-MOE" for newborn hearing screening tests aims to provide balanced, continuous support from infancy to adolescence, with a focus on multidisciplinary collaboration. We strive to create a place where the children and their families and guardians can acquire JSL as a first language while recognizing the potential use of hearing abilities. Our goal is for the children to become bilingual! With a focus on lifelong learning, we aim to be the place where everyone - children, families and guardians, and staff - can develop rich and abundant interpersonal relationships as well as personal growth.

### History of Comekko

March 29, 2017

The Osaka Prefecture Sign Language Ordinance is enforced. The Act enables JSL to be recognized as a language with the same legal status as Japanese to promote awareness and ensure opportunities for language acquisition.

June 2017

Sponsored by the Nippon Foundation, Comekko is established as a support service focused on the sign language acquisition of infants to toddlers. The Osaka Association of the Deaf, in cooperation with the Osaka prefecture, begins operations of Comekko.

February 2020

The establishment of NPO Comekko (Special NPO: Sign Language Acquisition Research Institute)

April 2020

NPO Comekko takes over the initiatives taken by the original Comekko.

June 2020

NPO Comekko office moves into the Osaka Prefectural Welfare Information Communication Center. ("Hidamari-MOE" and "More Comekko" are added)

# Programs at Comekko

Comekko is a place where deaf and hard-of-hearing children and their families meet sign language and its users. Our play-based programs support children's sign language acquisition and provide sign language learning opportunities for families and guardians.

## For whom?

### Deaf and hard-of-hearing children and their families

We also welcome families and guardians who are deaf and hard-of-hearing, and siblings of the deaf and the hard-of-hearing.

Welcome to the world of sign language.  
We use our hands to talk.  
We use our hands to play.

## Baby Comekko

When : Tuesday and Friday afternoons

Who : 0-3 year olds and their families

1. A place for children to interact with deaf staff
2. Families and guardians learn sign language that can be used in daily life
3. We provide individual consulting on children's development and interaction



Shuwa Panpan (JSL Rhythmic Stories)  
Creative Language Play  
Storytelling and more!



No problem if you do not know sign language!  
Staff interpreters will support you.



With sign language,  
you will build  
comprehension.

## Comekko

Children thrive in communication.  
Communicative Members,  
Kirari Kids of Osaka

When : Every first and third Saturday afternoon of the month

Who : 0-6 year olds, infants and preschoolers, and their families

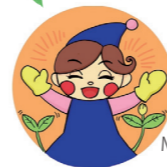
1. Children build on the experience where they understand in a sign language-rich environment.
2. They learn communication skills through interactions with peers and deaf role models.
3. Various programs are available for families and guardians, such as sign language lessons, mini lectures, and social events.



Sign Language Plays  
Shuwa Panpan (JSL Rhythmic Stories)  
Storytelling  
Games, Quizzes, and more!



Children understand  
the rules and  
the processes.



Mascot : Sora ("Sky")

Broaden the horizon  
by sharing the moments  
where children understand.

## MORE COMEKKO



When : The first and the third Saturday afternoon of the month

Who : Elementary school-age children

Deaf and hard-of-hearing children in elementary schools get together here. They play, engage in conversations, and learn through sign language.

We meet for zoom  
group chat sessions.



"More Comekko" is part of the  
"Children Acquiring Sign  
Language Research Project"  
sponsored by the Nippon  
Foundation.

## AFTER SCHOOL Comekko AFTER SCHOOL MORE COMEKKO

When : Weekday afternoons

Who : 3-year-olds to elementary school-age children



### Atsuko Koishi



(Professor Emerita,  
Keio University)  
(linguistics &  
language education policy)  
Children grow up by exchanging words with their peers as if they were playing catch.

During these verbal interactions, it is crucial for children to use a language which allows them to focus on "meaning", not on "form." By "playing catch" with words freely and without restrictions in such a language, children can make friends, develop critical thinking skills and increase their ability to work together. If sign language can become such a tool, it will also provide a foundation for further growth and development of their use of the Japanese language.

### ~ We began sharing pre-recorded videos with families during the pandemic. ~

In-person programs were suspended during the coronavirus pandemic beginning in February 2020, and during this time we distributed daily videos incorporating various activities we used to do pre-pandemic. We did this with the goal that children can continue having fun learning sign language at home with their families and guardians. This endeavor was a big success, and we are still sharing videos everyday even after our in-person programs resumed. \*Voice interpretation in Japanese is available in these videos.



If you are interested in joining our programs, please use the contact form on our website.



Our Website



facebook



instagram



Baby Comekko and  
Comekko are part  
of the Osaka  
"Comekko Project."

## Everyone Including Children, Moms and Dads, and Staff Enjoys Comekko Together.

### Storytelling in Sign Language

Children are captivated when picture books are read in sign language.



### Sign Language Plays

Our deaf staff perform plays of stories in Japanese Sign Language. Sometimes, they improvise and make the audience explode with laughter! Adults also find these performances fascinating.



### Short Stories

These condensed stories only focus on the key events.



You can watch these stories by scanning the QR code.

「こめっこ」「手話ぱんぱん」は登録商標です



### Shuwa Panpan (JSL Rhythmic Stories) Are Created Purely From JSL

We have a wide variety of rhythm activities, including the popular "Comekko Panpan," as well as ones about seasons and daily activities, and many more.



Scan the QR code to watch the videos

Native signers create these "Shuwa Panpan" (JSL rhythmic stories), which include unique rhythms, pace, and cadence—a true reflection of sign language prosody. Young children are naturally drawn to rhythms and acquire language through repetitions. We add voice-over in Japanese specifically translated by us to capture the essence of sign language and rhythm.



### Play-Based Activities Original Exercise Sessions



### Sign Language Learning for Moms and Dads

Have fun learning the language through play. You will gain a better understanding of communicating with your child by looking them in the eye, using hands and facial expressions. We will provide you with the opportunities to learn the language that fits your needs as parents.



Scan the QR code to watch the videos.

### Staff at Comekko

Let's Play, Chat,  
and Have Fun  
in Sign Language!



Our staff come from diverse backgrounds. We also have staff that use cochlear implants.

ひだまり・MOE  
Hidamari

A close-up, circular frame image of a newborn baby sleeping peacefully, wrapped in a white blanket, with hands clasped. The baby's face is in profile, showing closed eyes and a calm expression. The hands are small and pink, with fingers slightly curled. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white and yellow pattern, possibly a blanket or background fabric. The overall tone is gentle and serene.

"What does the education for deaf and hard-of-hearing children look like?"



"I want to meet other moms and dads who have similar experiences."



**We are here for you to listen to your concerns and support you and your child's sparkling interactions.**



A video message to  
parents from Dr. Kawasaki,  
our Chief Consultant.  
**“Healthy Minds”**

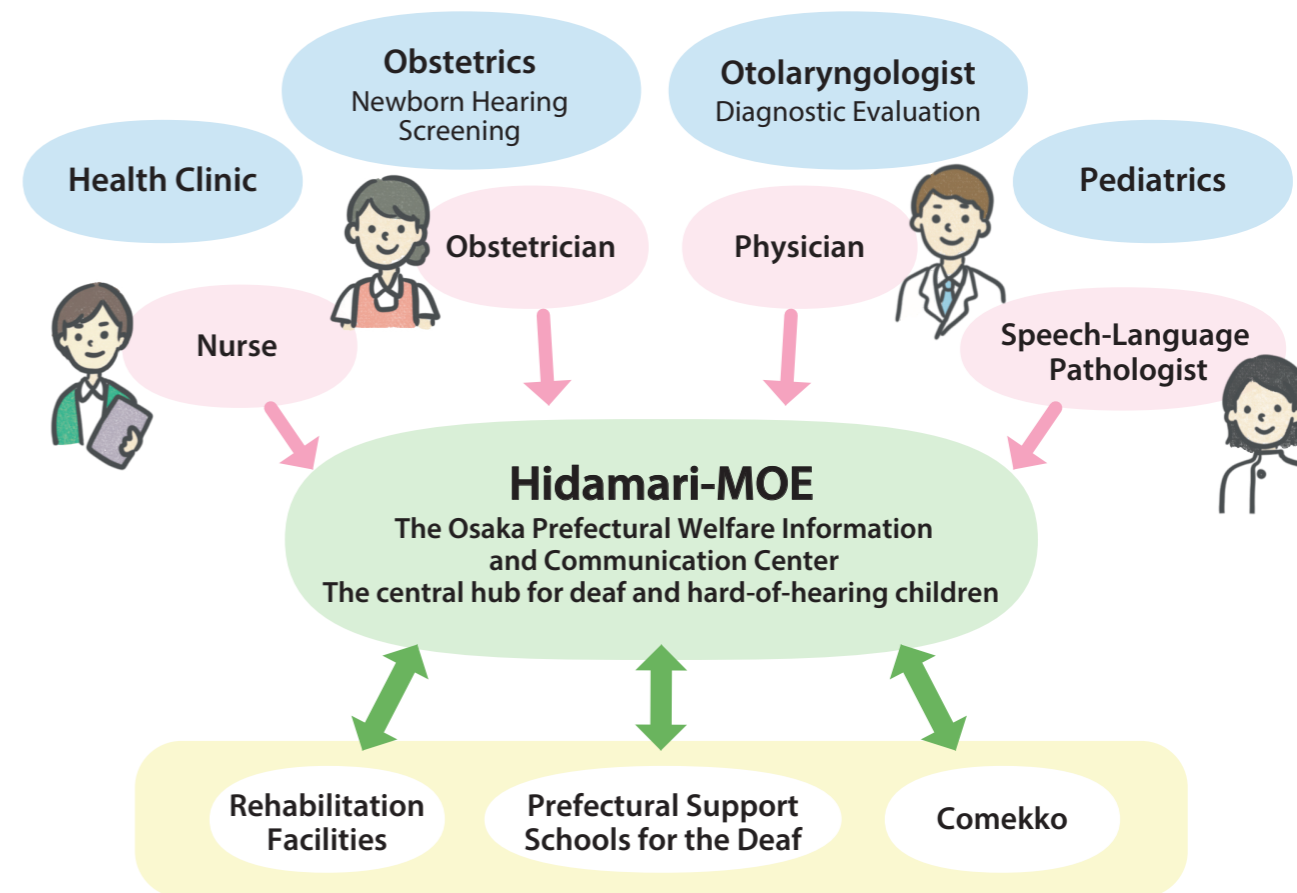


Scan the QR code to watch  
the video message.

**Emiko Nakao** Vice President of NPO Comekko



As a clinical psychologist, I have met many deaf and hard-of-hearing children and their families. Numerous families shared their feelings of isolation and anxiety during the time between the newborn hearing screening and the diagnosis. Their struggles stem from a lack of adequate information. My goal is to provide a supportive environment where parents can focus on their child's overall psychological well-being, not just their hearing, and raise them with a sense of comfort and security. I look forward to speaking with you soon.



The Osaka Prefectural Welfare Information and Communication Center serves as the central hub for supporting deaf and hard-of-hearing children. “Hidamari-MOE” offers comprehensive consultations, such as providing unbiased information on rehabilitation facilities, prefectural support schools for the deaf, and support for acquiring sign language, with an emphasis on psychological support. As needed, while taking any privacy concerns into consideration, we work cooperatively with the rehabilitation facilities to support the child, in response to the inquiries of the parents after the newborn hearing screening test. The center also provides opportunities for sign language acquisition and learning for infants and their families and guardians through visits to the prefectural support schools for the deaf and rehabilitation facilities. In Osaka, this type of mutual cooperation builds a multidisciplinary network to support each child’s growth from an early stage.



### Chief Consultant

Yoshiko Kawasaki (Professor at Kobe University Graduate School,  
Clinical Psychologist, Certified Psychologist)

## Consultant

Emiko Nakao  
(Clinical Psychologist, Certified Psychologist, School Counselor)  
Akiko Monoi  
(Clinical Psychologist, Certified Psychologist, a former Early  
Intervention Consultant at a deaf school)

**We offer free consultations.**

**(Please let us know if you live outside of Osaka.)**

Please contact us via email or phone to provide us with your name, address, phone number, and the name and age of your child. We may also do a home visit depending on your needs.

## Contact Us

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537-0025  
☎090-3848-7195   ✉hidamari-moe@comekko.org

“Hidamari-MOE” is a consultation service offered at the Osaka Prefectural Welfare Information and Communication Center (a designated management service).  
 “Hidamari-MOE” is operated by NPO Comekko (Specified NPO Sign Language Acquisition Research Institute.)

# Children Sign Language Acquisition Research Project



This research project is funded by the Nippon Foundation.

For children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing, sign language acquisition can support cognitive developments including comprehension and critical thinking. Rich, free communication through sign language is understood to have a significant impact on personality formation and mental health. This research project aims to accurately evaluate the language ability of deaf and hard-of-hearing children through their involvement with Comekko, based on four fields: neuroscience, psychological development, language acquisition (sign language and Japanese), and learning ability (comprehension and cognition)

## Psychological Development (Personality Formation)

We are conducting a longitudinal study to capture the development of children who acquire sign language while being raised by parents who are also learning sign language. The study will address multiple aspects of development, such as attachment formation, cognition, communication, interpersonal relationships, self-awareness, and more. Data will be collected through observing the children, analyzing them using developmental assessments, and interviewing the families and guardians and analyzing them afterwards. Personality tests will also be incorporated in the study.

## Brain Science of Language

Brain science has shown that signers understand sign language as a natural language in the brain. Our search aims to use MRI scans to reveal the relationships among unique grammatical structures, network development, and language-thought abilities of signers.

## Japanese Language Ability

We will research and track the Japanese language ability of children acquiring and growing up with sign language in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and communication.

## Sign Language Ability

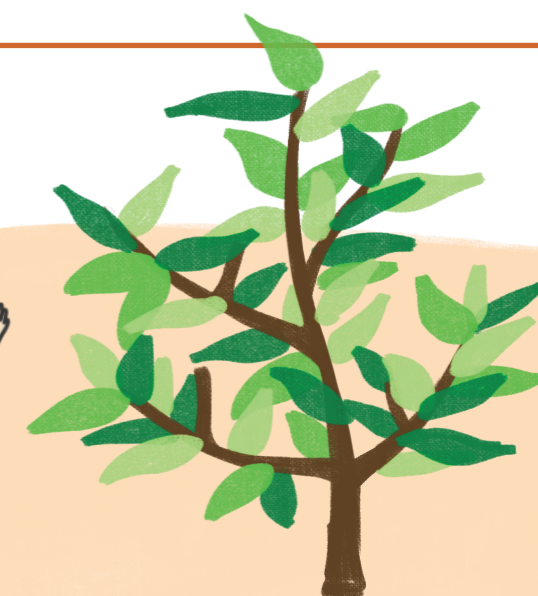
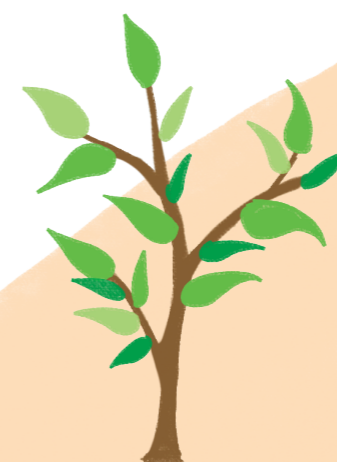
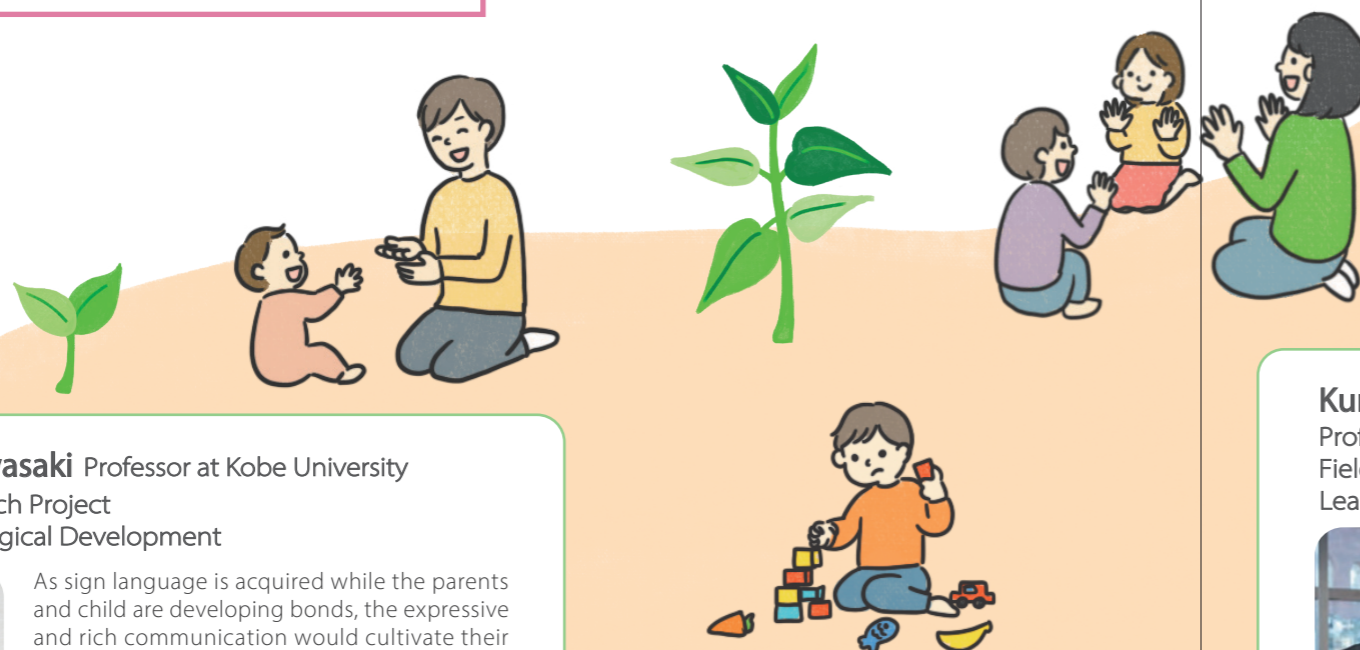
To assess sign language grammar and vocabulary knowledge, we are conducting "Japanese Sign Language Receptive Skills Test" and "Japanese Sign Language Vocabulary Fluency Test." In addition, we are performing "Question-Answer Interaction Development Test" to evaluate communication ability and analyze the results of each test to track the development of children's language skills over time.

## Learning Abilities (Power of Thought)

Along with the process of acquiring language, children learn about concepts and the world, and their powers of thought and imagination are gradually developed. We will conduct thinking ability tests to explore insights into how objects are connected, including the use of natural sciences and the discovery of rules.

## Learning Ability (Comprehension Skills)

To better understand the comprehension skills of children acquiring sign language, we have developed a test battery using stories and plays told in sign language. The test will be conducted with both a questionnaire and an interview, and we will assess the developmental changes in memory, knowledge, and comprehension.



**Yoshiko Kawasaki** Professor at Kobe University  
Head of Research Project  
Field : Psychological Development



As sign language is acquired while the parents and child are developing bonds, the expressive and rich communication would cultivate their ability to interact with people. Children will then be able to identify what they understand and do not understand, deepening their understanding and improving their thinking skills. Comekko will continue to support the growth of children who live authentically.



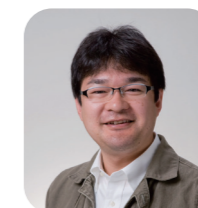
## Kuniyoshi Sakai

Professor at the University of Tokyo  
Fields: Brain science of language,  
Learning abilities (Power of thought)



As long as there is language accessible to them, infants can naturally acquire it as their own mother tongue. This is true not only for spoken language but for signed language. Such language cultivates the power of thought. Even if the hearing abilities of children are not sufficient, they can develop their power of thought by using sign language. This is because the high power of thought is realized only through language.

**Wataru Takei** Professor at Kanazawa University  
Fields: Language Acquisition  
(Sign Language and Japanese),  
Learning Abilities (Comprehension Skills)



By learning both sign language and Japanese, deaf and hard-of-hearing children will be equipped with valuable skills that can greatly benefit them throughout their lives. While there are many opportunities to learn Japanese such as in school, access to environments where sign language is used is limited. That is why a place like "More Comekko" is crucial in providing an exceptional setting for children to immerse themselves in a vibrant linguistic environment.