

Research on the life worlds (Lebenswelt) perceived by individuals with Auditory Agnosia and elderly individuals with similar symptoms who have lost the ability to understand language

Principal Investigator: Masazumi Mitani
Visiting Professor, Institute of Natural and
Environmental Sciences, University of
Hyogo

This study describes and analyzes the life worlds (Lebenswelt) of individuals exhibiting aphasia and auditory agnosia, higher brain dysfunction following cerebrovascular disease, from a medical anthropology perspective. Qualitative research using semi-structured interviews yielded the following findings. First, cases were identified where a speech-language pathologist volunteering with the civic group “Aphasia Peer Circle” failed to provide accommodations tailored to the characteristics of auditory agnosia, effectively excluding individuals with this impairment. Additionally, testimonies emerged regarding physical restraints imposed by medical staff during acute care due to communication difficulties with aphasic patients. These represent serious issues from a human rights perspective. Psychologically, isolation can induce suicidal ideation, while social inclusion by family members may serve as a buffer against depression. Japan should transition to a “human rights model” prioritizing the removal of social barriers, based on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, moving toward mutual inclusion where both individuals with disabilities and society accept each other reciprocally.