Pragmatic Constraints on Extragrammatical Morphology in Japanese Sign Language Onomastics

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BACKGROUND

In JSL, one can find a robust influence of written/spoken Japanese on the generation of onomastic words or name signs (Ann 1998, Nonaka 2005, Nakamura 2006, George 2011, Nonaka et al. 2015). The semantics, morphology, or even phonology can contribute to a given onomastic output. This phenomenon has been discussed in the literature of JSL and of other sign languages such as Taiwan SL (Ann 1998, Su and Tai 2009) and Hong Kong SL (Tang 2015). While most work is descriptive, the current work frames onomastic formation as an extragrammatical process driven by analogy and pragmatics.

OBJECTIVES

This work compares output paradigm distributions from personal and prefectural name signs in order to determine factors that may drive output selection.

OUTPUT PARADIGMS

Although JSL onomastic formation in JSL is systemic, multiple paradigms exist. This work applies two broad categories of onomastic formation.

1 Semantically or Phonologically mapped signs

Names in this category are mapped semantically, morphologically or phonetically to the Japanese source name. Semantic mapping refers to names in which each morpheme or character is represented by a sign carrying the same meaning. Phonological mapping refers to cases in which the sign name indexes to the sound of the spoken name.

2 Referential signs

Sign names in this category refer to a characteristic or association that the source name has. These sign names have structural independence from the spoken name equivalents. Associations oftentimes involve well-known historical references.

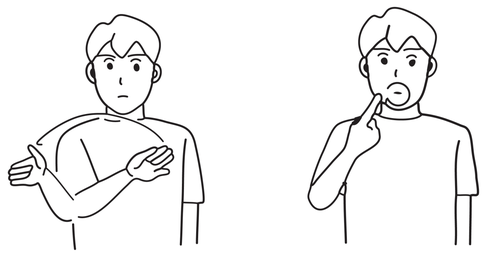
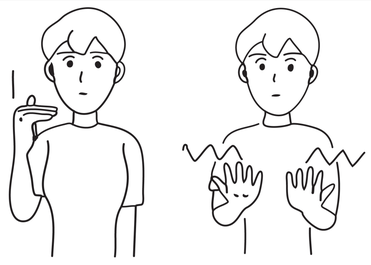
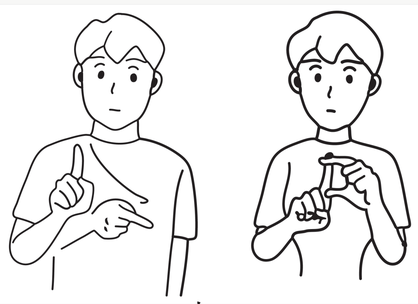
BRENTARI SYLLABLE (2008, 6-7)

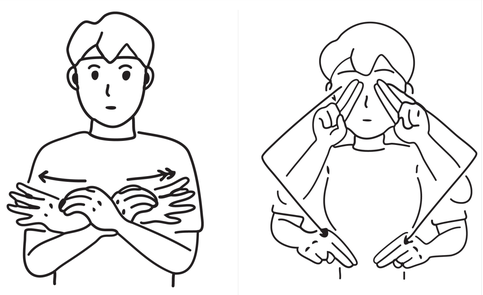
A sign consisting of a single movement, whether path, local or trilled, can classify as monosyllabic.

METHOD

- Collected citation forms for prefectural signs from Yonekawa (1997) and compared them with independent sources, such the corpus described in Bono et al. (2014).
- Compared paradigm distribution of prefectural signs with Nonaka et al. (2015) name signs
- Analyzed prefectural sign output structure

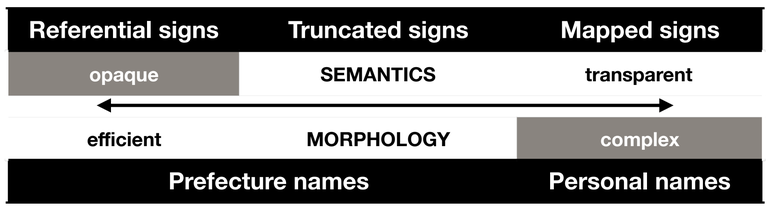
WORD COMPLEXITY	47 PREFECTURE NAMES (YONEKAWA 1997)	216 PERSONAL NAMES (NONAKA ET AL. 2015)
Monomorphemic	29/47 (62%)	11/216 (5%)
Two morphemes	18/47 (38%)	205/216 (95%)
Monosyllabic	**26/47 (55%)**	**~11/216 (~5%)**

SEMANTICALLY OR PHONOLOGICALLY MAPPED	47 PREFECTURE NAMES (65 MORPHEMES)	216 PERSONAL NAMES (421 MORPHEMES)
Semantically mapped Loan translations/character signs (Nonaka et al. 2015)		
	YAMA [MOUNTAIN] + GUCHI [MOUTH] 55% (36/65)	TAKA [HIGH] + KUSA [GRASS] **84% (352/421)**
+Truncated		
	SAI + TAMA ——-> TAMA [BALL] **14% (9/65)**	0%
+Initialized		
	TO (YAMA) 3% (2/65)	NO + NAKA [INSIDE] 9% (37/421)
Phonological/Homonymic	0%	4% (16/421)

REFERENTIAL	47 PREFECTURE NAMES (66 MORPHEMES)	216 PERSONAL NAMES (421 MORPHEMES)
Famous culture Physical qualities (isomorphism) Habits/characteristics Historical figures (c.f. Nonaka et al. 2015)		
	OKAYAMA HOKKAIDO	DESCRIPTIVE NAME [MANGA/COMIC]
	28% (18/65)	**2% (10/421)**

All images from Yonekawa (1997)

PARADIGM DISTRIBUTION



JSL name signs exhibit a tension between morphological efficiency and semantic transparency. The dominant paradigm distribution of personal name signs and prefectural name signs differ. Almost all personal name signs semantically map and preserve outputs of two morphemes. A majority of the place name signs semantically map; however, over a third of them are referential (18/47, 36%). More significantly, a majority of prefecture name outputs are monosyllabic; therefore, structurally simpler. Increased reliance on referential signs and truncation produce more efficient outputs.

EXTRAGRAMMATICALITY IN JSL

JSL onomastic formation acts as an extragrammatical process (Mattiello 2013), in that output production is systemic yet not completely predictable using only grammatical rules. Analogy and pragmatics appear crucial.

Analogy—JSL outputs mapping to spoken Japanese names are the most common. Analogy based on mapping to a source spoken language word initially generates most outputs. In the case of prefectural signs, well-formedness constraints, such as truncation, create morphologically efficient outputs.

Pragmatics—Widely used names license the use of semantically opaque but efficient outputs. The paradigm split between personal and prefectural name signs are licensed by Mattiello's (2013) notion of "contextual suitability". With respect to a person's name, especially in a new social context, semantic clarity is highly salient and requires the use of multiple segments. In contrast, prefectural names represent a small set of culturally familiar entities, so the use of opaque, culturally indexed and truncated forms do not pose a semantic barrier.

CONCLUSION

Social context determines the ability of an interlocutor to connect a sign name to its correct referent; therefore, pragmatics drives the selection of the most appropriate output paradigm for recoverability and efficiency.

Future work collecting elicited place name data and variants would better test the conclusions. The Nonaka et al. name signs might only refer to names in formal contexts. Names from contexts with familiars such as a classroom may yield more morphologically simple forms.

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