Transforming Research into Sign Language and Identity Advocacy in the Community

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**Language planning of sign language
in Japan
(1969 – present)**

Transformation

**Research on construction
of Japanese Sign Language database
(2009 – present)**

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No definition of official languages on the laws of Japan

- Japanese legislation does not recognize Japanese as an official language, due to historical context.
- Yet, Japanese holds official position as social fact. (Monolingual society)
- "Japanese" - "language" - "sign language" etc. are not defined.

Status of sign language in Japan

- Almost no legislation and no language policy for sign language as a language in Japan.
- Sign language tends to be treated with the viewpoint of welfare. (Compare to accommodations for hearing foreigners)
- Sign language planning has been promoted in Deaf communities.

General definition of language planning

- *Language planning refers to deliberate efforts to influence the behavior of others with respect to the acquisition, structure, or functional allocation of their language codes.*
(Cooper, 1989)

Status Planning

Acquisition Planning

Corpus Planning

Status Planning in Japan

- Movement to promote Japanese Sign Language Act enactment by JFD, 2010.
- Five rights and recommendations
 - Right to acquire sign language
 - Right to learn in sign language
 - Right to learn sign language
 - Right to use sign language
 - Right to protect sign language

Status Planning in Japan

- Establishment of sign language ordinances by municipalities across the country.
- 25 out of 47 prefectures have enacted a sign language ordinance as of Oct 25, 2018
- Enactment of the JSL Act is still far away.

Sign Language Act in Korea

- Korean legislation had already defined Korean as an official language.
- UN encouraged Korean Government to recognize Korean Sign Language as an official language in 2014.
- The Korean Sign Language Act was enacted in 2015.

Acquisition Planning in Japan

- For the Deaf people
 - Deaf education network in 1989
 - Shift to sign language at existing Deaf schools in 1990s - current
 - Local Deaf communities started new schools and sign language acquisition support programs in 2000s

Acquisition Planning in Japan

- For the hearing people
 - Sign language helper training curriculum by Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (Civic-oriented programs) began in 1970.
 - Sign language education at colleges is almost non-existent.

Corpus Planning in Japan

- Sign Language Research Committee under the Japanese Federation of the Deaf, 1969
- Vocabulary books, "Our Signs" series published, 1969-87
 - Writing system: illustration
 - Goal: National-wide standardization of vocabulary

Examples from “Our Signs”

Japanese Federation of the Deaf. 1969. *Our Signs* 1.

Japanese Federation of the Deaf. 1972. *Our Signs* 3. 13

Corpus Planning in Japan

- "New Signs" series published, 1990 - present
 - Writing system: illustration (+ moving image after 2015)
 - Goal: Vocabulary enhancement

Examples from “New Signs”

**FOUR
-SEASONS**

LIFE

**FROM-
BIRTH-TO-
DEATH**

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**Academic training
at University of Rochester in the US
1991 - 2000**

**Activities on advocacy
in Japanese Federation of the Deaf
2000 - 2006**

**Research and education at Tsukuba
University of Technology in Japan
2006 - present**

**Academic training
at University of Rochester in the US
1991 - 2000**

**Life history study of a Deaf immigrant
(1997 - 99)**

**Study of gestural systems
on Amami Island
(1993 - 99)**

Life history study of a Deaf immigrant (1997 - 99)

- Historical facts shown in his storytelling:
 - Native acquisition and use of sign language during his childhood in the 1940s.
 - Discrimination in both Japanese and American societies in the 1960s

Life history study of a Deaf immigrant (1997 - 99)

- Language expression:
 - Fluency in JSL and ASL
 - Still used vocabulary of JSL Osaka dialect from the 1940s
ex. “SCHOOL”
- These findings help us to learn about the Osaka Deaf communities in the 1940s

Study of gestural systems on Amami Island (1993 - 99)

Study of gestural systems on Amami Island (1993 - 99)

- Historical facts:
 - Semi-remote communities using gestural systems existed on the island – 1993 field work
 - Deaf people did not attend school until the 1960s

Study of gestural systems on Amami Island (1993 - 99)

- Language expression:
 - Single gestures, multiple gestures with regularity

ex 1. EGG

ex 2. YEAR

- Lexicalization (Word formation process)

Multiple Gesture Names for the Concept of 'EGG'

Table 5: Sequencing of gestures in multiple gesture names for the concept 'egg'

Gestures used by subject	A	B	C

chicken's wings	1 1	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	
an egg coming from chicken's body		2 2	
shape and size of an egg	1	1 3 2 2 3 2 2	1 1
smashing an egg to crack	2 2	2 4 2 2	2 1
cracking an egg open	1		

Gesture for the Concept of 'YEAR'

Killing pigs

PIG KILL

PIG **KILL**

Making rice cakes

TEAR ROLL

TEAR ROLL

Language planning of sign language in Japan

**Research and education at Tsukuba
University of Technology in Japan
2006 - present**

**Research on construction
of Japanese Sign Language database
(2009 – present)**

JSL language map project (2008 - 09)

- Regional and generational variation in JSL vocabulary
 - 94 Deaf informants from all 47 prefectures
 - 2 informants from each prefecture, one aged 70-79, the other 30-39 years of age
 - Both informants attended the same school

日本手話言語地図(試作版)

作成: 筑波技術大学 大杉 豊

Word

犬
猫
猿
鶏
卵
日曜日
月曜日
火曜日
水曜日
木曜日
金曜日
土曜日

Age group

70代
30代

↑

↓

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Early JSL database project (2009 - 13)

- A sign vocabulary book “Deaf-Education-Sign-Method” published in 1909
- 528 signs are described in Japanese text (No illustration)
- All signs were re-enacted and documented as video data

Early JSL database project (2009 - 13)

聾唖教授手話法（鹿児島）：1909(明治42)年再版発行(初版は1902年発行)				
頁	No	ラベル(翻訳)	読み	説明文(翻訳)
数の部				
1	1	二	いち	掌を自分の方に向けて、人差し指を出す。 人差し指を出す場合、向け方で意味が違ふ。掌を下に向けると前方を指さすことになる。指先を上に向けると空または上となる。 掌を自分の方に向けてといっても力を入れる必要はない。上を指さしたり、前を指さしたりすると混同しなければよい。
1	2	二～五	に、さん、し、ご	(指の) 数を増やしていくだけでよい
1	3	六	ろく	左の5指を伸ばし、その掌に右手の人差し指を当てる。 以下同様
1	4	二〇	にじゅう	親指と人差し指を曲げて、親指の爪の上に人差し指の先を重ねて、指先を上にする。 掌は相手に向けるのがよい。相手がわかりやすいからである。
2	5	三〇	さんじゅう	親指を折り曲げて、その上に人差し指と中指を曲げて重ねる
2	6	五〇	ごじゅう	親指を中にして拳を握る
2	7	六〇	ろくじゅう	同じようにした後、小指を伸ばす
2	8	一〇〇	ひゃく	左の親指と人差し指で右手の人差し指を挟み、その後、人差し指を離して、上に上げる。
2	9	二〇〇	にひゃく	同じようにして、人差し指と中指を上げる
2	10	六〇〇	ろっぴゃく	同じように左の親指と人差し指の間に右手の親指(すべてを)挟み、次に左手すべてと人差し指を上げる
2	11	七〇〇	ななひゃく	六〇〇と同様にする
2	12	千、万	せん、まん	空書する

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ex. number “100”

Colloquial corpus of JSL project (2011 - present)

- Data collection
 - Dialogue tasks (PI: Bono, Mayumi), lexical elicitation (PI: Osugi)
 - 121 Deaf informants from 7 prefectures
 - Age-balanced (30s to 70s) & gender-balanced
 - Enrolled at deaf schools for over 6 years

Colloquial corpus of JSL project (2011 - present)

- Each age group was divided into same-sex pairs during data collection session
- Database of language expressions of Deaf people who lived through the 60 years that sign language was forbidden in classrooms at deaf schools

Corpus Project in Colloquial Japanese Sign Language

[日本語](#)[English](#)[members](#)[collaborators](#)[archive](#)[fundings](#)[contact](#)[For researchers](#)

This page is about Corpus Project in Colloquial Japanese Sign Language.

Corpus is a database that consists of many examples of the language. Our research team provides linguistic descriptions for each example in the database to facilitate linguistic analyses.

It is often said that Japanese Sign Language has many varieties depending on areas. How are they different? We visit many parts of Japan to collect regional varieties of Japanese Sign Language.

Click a region
on this map

Findings from research on construction of JSL database

- Regional variation (implies diversity of concepts in word formation)
- General variation (implies phonological change in time line)
- Analysis of diachronic and synchronic DBs reveal processes of word formation

Findings from research on construction of JSL database

- Some influence of language planning on lexical sharing phenomenon (Osugi, 2012)
- For non-sharing lexicon, the “improvisational signing” phenomenon can be observed in dialogue tasks (Bono, 2017)

Revitalizing heritage for sign language

- Humanistic framework for research on the history, spiritual value, and dialogue among Deaf individuals.
- Transform the research results into sign language advocacy in the community.

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筑波技術大学 トップページ 研究について

日本手話言語地図(試作版)

作成: 筑波技術大学 大杉 豊

単語: 卵 (30代)

犬 猫 狼 鶏 卵

日曜日 月曜日 火曜日 水曜日 木曜日 金曜日 土曜日

年齢層: 70代 30代

北海道 青森 秋田 岩手 新潟 山形 宮城 長崎 佐賀 福岡 島根 鳥取 兵庫 京都 福井 石川 富山 栃木 福島 熊本 大分 山口 広島 岡山 大阪 岐阜 長野 群馬 埼玉 茨城 鹿児島 宮崎 愛媛 香川 奈良 滋賀 愛知 山梨 東京 千葉 高知 徳島 和歌山 三重 静岡 神奈川 沖縄

平成16年〜21年度日本学術振興会科学研究費補助金(若手研究(スタートアップ))「手話言語地図」作成研究に基づく成果の一部です。

聾啞教授手話法 (鹿児島)

: 1909(明治42)年再版発行(初版は1902年発行)

この研究について
聾啞・50音表

頁	No.	ラベル(假名)	読み	説明文(假名)
1	1	二	い	掌を自分の方に向けて、人差し指を出す。人差し指を出す場合、向け方で意味が異なる。掌を下に向けてと前方を指さすことに上を指さしたり、前を指
1	2	二五	に	
1	3	五	る	
1	4	二〇	に	
2	5	三〇	さ	
2	6	五〇	こ	
2	7	五〇	る	
2	8	一〇〇	ひ	人差し指を離して、上に上
2	9	二〇〇	にひやく	同じようにして、人差し指と中指を上げる
2	10	五〇〇	ろっぴやく	同じように左の親指と人差し指の間に右手指(すべてを)挟み、次に左手すべてと右人差し指を上げる
2	11	七〇〇	ななひやく	六〇〇と同様にする
2	12	千、万	せん、まん	空手をする

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Click a region on this map

Research grants

- Research on the life history of a Deaf immigrant was supported by The TOYOTA Foundation Research Grant (PI: Osugi, Y.)
- Research on gestural systems on Amami Island was supported by National Science Foundation of the US (PI: Supalla, T.)
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- Colloquial corpus of JSL project has been supported by four of JSPS KAKENHI Grants (PI of three projects: Bono, M., PI of one project: Osugi, Y.) and President Leadership Fund, Tsukuba University of Technology (PI: Osugi, Y.)