

11.00 – 11.30

Keiko Sagara: *Historical Relationship between the Numeral Signs of Japan, Taiwan and South Korea Sign Languages*

JSL has been noted as belonging to the same language family as South Korea Sign Language and Taiwan Sign Language (Fischer and Gong, 2011), referred to as the JSL family. Influences are noted as the result of the colonisation of Taiwan by Japan from 1895 to 1945 and of South Korea by Japan from 1910 to 1945. Sasaki's (2007) research suggests that this relation is also due to teachers from two regions of Japan (Tokyo and Osaka) being sent to teach in the Taipei and Tainan areas of Taiwan during the colonial occupation period, as well as due to geographical proximity.

The current study examines sign language variation (such as Schembri and Johnston, 2012) in the number system of JSL, with particular reference to the differences in the numeral signs used in the two main areas of Japan: Kanto, in the East (including Tokyo) and Kansai, in the West (including Osaka). The two regions present an interesting case of numeral variation, with the Kansai area making use of a zero paradigm, where multiples of 10 are based on a representation of the number of zeroes present, a paradigm that is not seen in the Kanto region. The distinct use of lexical signs for 12-19 in Hokkaido is also discussed, as this stands in contrast to the additive numerals used elsewhere. This may be accounted for by its geographical closeness to South Korea where similar lexical numerals are found.

Having collected data from 40 participants, 20 from each of the Kanto and Kansai prefectures, quantitative findings of 413 JSL tokens has been drawn via ELAN. Regional variation is counted as significant for the numeral 1,000; no significant link is found for age and gender variables for this numeral sign. In sum, the use of traditional (Stamp et al., 2013) Kansai signs is maintained by the older generation and younger JSL users are found as using more non- traditional (i.e. non-Kansai based) numeral signs. Data for the comparative study was taken from an existing collection of numeral signs held by the Sign Language Typology Project at the University of Central Lancashire, UK. The historical relationship between the countries is illustrated in the maintained use of traditional JSL numeral structures across Korea and Taiwan, when compared to the changing numeral signs seen in the younger generation of JSL users. It is of interest to note in this paper that such numerals have maintained a similar form in Taiwan but have undergone a phonological process of shortening in the sign language of South Korea. This typological approach to the study of sign languages reveals much about the historical influences of language contact and brings innovative insights to sign language research.

References:

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Sasaki, D., 2007. Part Two: Lexical Comparisons: Comparing the Lexicons of Japanese Sign Language and Taiwan Sign Language: A Preliminary Study Focusing on the Difference in the Handshape Parameter. In *Sign Languages in Contact*. Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press.

Schembri, A. & Johnston, T. (2012). Sociolinguistic aspects of variation and change. In: R. Pfau, M. Steinbach & B. Woll (Eds), *Sign Language: An International Handbook* (pp. 788-816). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Stamp, R., A. Schembri, J. Fenlon, R. Rentelis, B. Woll & K. Cormier. (2013). *Lexical Variation and Change in British Sign Language*. In Press.