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## 1. Introduction

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### 1.1. About This Volume

This is the second volume of the *Minpaku Sign Language Studies* series, the first of which was published in 2019. This series was launched originally with the aim of disseminating the research results of projects about sign language linguistics hosted at the National Museum of Ethnology, commonly known as Minpaku, an abbreviation of its Japanese name. Since 2011, when a workshop was hosted on “Developing historical linguistic’s corpus of sign languages,” which was organized by OSUGI Yutaka at the 20th International Conference on Historical Linguistics at Minpaku, the research museum has been undertaking various Sign Language Linguistics related endeavors. A project for the promotion of sign language linguistics took place from April 2013 through March 2016, followed by the launching of a Sign Language Linguistics Research Section (SiLLR) to be continued for five years (April 2016 through March 2021), both with the support of the Nippon Foundation.

The activities of SiLLR include annual hosting of conferences of Signed and Spoken Language Linguistics (SSLL), as well as assisting and/or coordinating Sign Language Linguistics’ courses at universities. The former is aimed at introducing the state of the art of sign language research in other countries to Japanese scholars, in order to encourage local researchers to be interested, or to further continue with sign language research. The latter is to assist or provide universities with courses on sign languages and deaf culture. Many spoken language linguists are interested in offering such courses to students as well as sitting in one themselves, however, with no resident specialists at their institutions, it has been difficult to materialize. The courses (with credit) have been provided at institutions including Tohoku and Osaka Universities, where the courses were offered as a part of liberal studies, and more than 100 students attended each year. This has been with the hope that Japanese people would have more accurate knowledge about sign language, and also that there would be future scholars who would specialize in research related to sign language.

The *Minpaku Sign Language Studies* series started as another activity of SiLLR. Papers are widely solicited for publication from general researchers, including but not exclusively, the presenters at the conferences of SSLL. Each submitted paper is internationally reviewed by two referees at least, and those which have been accepted are included in the volume.

We thank all the anonymous reviewers and collaborators for their help that enabled the two volumes of *Minpaku Sign Language Studies* to come out.

Preparing the first two volumes, we started to receive inquiries about submitting papers, particularly by graduate students. For the future development of sign language research, young researchers' contributions, as well as those by experienced scholars, are inevitable. Also, as some of the papers in this issue are preliminary, this is serving as a venue for the early research results of projects. Although this issue will be the last to be produced as an activity of SiLLR, we are currently seeking a way to continue the series.

## 1.2. About the Papers in This Volume

This volume consists of six papers covering a wide range of languages and topics.

Sze (chapter 2) discusses how constituent order interacts or does not interact with the semantic reversibility of constituents and verbal morphology. It has been claimed in previous studies that were based on observations on American Sign Language (ASL), SVO order is typically used in a transitive verb phrase when the agent and patient are semantically reversible. It has also been pointed out that morphological factors, such as the cooccurrence of a classifier and affixation reflecting spatial expressions and agreement, triggers SVO order. Sze, analyzing data from Sri Lankan, Jakarta and Hong Kong Sign languages, examines whether this principle based on ASL applies to other sign languages as well. She shows that whether the constituent order interacts with semantic reversibility and verb morphology, and when it does, differs depending on the language. She also shows that the strategy for differentiating agent from patient when they are semantically reversible varies depending on the language. Constituent order is merely one of the factors. It is commonly known that in sign languages, such as Japanese and South African, regardless of semantic reversibility, the constituent order is fixed. Sze's study where detailed examination is conducted on three Asian languages draws attention to the fact that principles based on ASL need to be reexamined in the light of a wide range of sign languages.

Penner, Yano, and Terasawa (chapter 3) analyzes examples of relative clause (RC) in Japanese Sign Language (JSL). They extracted RCs from video recordings of natural conversation and found three types of RCs in the language. One is an externally headed pre-nominal RC, which is restrictive. Another is an externally headed post-nominal RC, most of which are non-restrictive. The third type is a headless RC. A full list of all the RCs in their data is provided as an appendix. Their research results have the potential to be developed in various directions. For example, Penner *et al.* point out that the first type of RC structure is commonly shared with spoken/written Japanese, and although the two languages are syntactically different because of the modality difference, the possibility that the use of this structure may be "influenced by Japanese, especially since there are other ways in JSL to form RCs." However, it is commonly known that post-nominal subordinate clauses are also common in the natural conversation of spoken Japanese. Further examination and observation on various aspects presented in this paper are expected to expand both the understanding structure of JSL as well as the relationship between the two languages.

Grose (chapter 4) is a theoretical approach using morphological feature geometry

towards the understanding of referring expressions in sign languages. While referring expressions contrast person and number in spoken languages, in sign languages, referring expressions include locative adverbials as well as personal pronouns, which is a modality specific characteristic resulting from the use of space. He argues that this could be explained within the theory as distinguishing only first person from other participants. Grammatical distinction is made between referring expressions of other than first-person addressees and non-participants. This explains that referring expressions in sign and spoken languages are functionally equivalent but with different realizations.

Grose (chapter 5) is also a theoretical approach using an evolutionary framework that accounts for differences between plain verbal signs with fully lexicalized forms and directional and classifier verbal signs with flexible analogue components. He argues that the former allows for flexible meanings across contexts and thus may express a broad range of meanings, while the latter do not allow such polysemy, but instead allow a sign to express context-dependent meanings with a narrow semantic range. Analyzed as such, all verbs are said to be constrained grammatically and so are their interpretations. Based on such observations, he also argues that the range of possible forms and meanings associated with these verbal traits are analyzed as reaction norms that are targeted by linguistic selection pressures and that this offers a way of unifying analyses of grammatical and productive gestural traits. The chapters by Grose are both highly theory- oriented and with more data of different types of sign language becoming available, it would be interesting to see what these propositions predict and are supported by detailed language data.

Chen Pichler (chapter 6) is a pilot study, which focuses on previously under-researched language acquisition and the circumstances of hearing parents of newly diagnosed deaf or hard-of-hearing children. According to Chen Pichler, about 95% of deaf children in the US are born to hearing parents. The parents' attitude toward sign language and the degree of their acquisition of sign language can well influence the children's linguistic ability. Through semi-structured interviews with those who choose ASL as the "family language," she examines the parents' attitudes toward ASL, their recognition of the roles of ASL and (spoken) English, and the effect of the parents' attitudes to their children's language acquisition. She also examines their appreciation of the Deaf community and the obstacles the parents face in ASL learning. She reports that the parents targeted in her study are better informed about ASL-English multilingualism than reported in previous studies. She notes that some parents clearly notice that signing helps their children's acquisition of English as well. They also view ASL and English as complementary rather than mutually exclusive, a point that is partly based on the practical fact that devices such as cochlear implants or hearing aids can break down anytime. She also examines the factors that encourage or discourage parents from learning ASL. As Chen Pichler states, the hearing parents that are targeted in this study do not represent all parents in the same situation, however, capturing the facts related to those who actively choose to use ASL will be a first step toward the understanding of the role of hearing parents of deaf or hard-of-hearing children.

Hofer (chapter 7) based on anthropological fieldwork provides observations of place names for Tibetan locations in Tibetan Sign Language (TSL) used in Lhasa, the capital and the largest city of the Tibet Autonomous Region. Taking specific examples of place names,

she shows that the TSL location names are composed by various types of iconicity, which she defines as “processes of mental mappings that are mediated by social, political and cultural context and ideals at various levels.” She also compares such place names with corresponding expressions in the Lhasa variety of Chinese Sign Language (LhCSL), where place names are used that are formed on Chinese characters or fingerspelling. Although young deaf Tibetans tend to code-switch depending on who they are communicating with, iconicity-based TSL place names so far have not been replaced with Chinese-based place names. Hofer attributes this to the fact that the majority of the dominant TSL signers have not learned the writing system. In addition, this is the first report about the details of TSL place names, and tries to capture the role of iconicity in forming them. It is also a valuable contribution in that it reflects the social background of users of TSL, and also that it provides ideas as to how this category of words change in relation to non-linguistic contexts.