

## Online Japanese extra-linguistic signs and orthographic creativity

### A study of the personal weblog.

#### Introduction

100 Japanese personal online weblog articles and their comments were analyzed in a study of how unorthodox online orthography and extra-linguistic signs are used semantically to allow blog writers to express their affective stance and tone towards the interaction, and pragmatically, in how they imply their pragmatic intention and identification with the propositional content of the message.

#### Online Japanese unorthodox orthography

Online extra-linguistic depictions and unorthodox orthography such as emoticons, vocal spellings and unconventional punctuation usage is reflected in the attempt to convey orally or visually spoken and non-verbal language that indexes the writer's emotional stance. The inclusion of the smaller hiragana vowel font in Japanese as in 終わりましたかあ *owarimashitaa* (I finished) and the wavy dash that signifies a long drawn out vowel as in そうですね〜 *sou desu yo ne* (that's right) are techniques employed to mimic vocal spellings that give the reader a more vivid picture of how this expression/phrase might be pronounced in face to face communication (Nishimura 2003). Similarly *kaomoji* (emoticons) enacts a kind of intimacy that relies in part on their visual play. This paper examines how in a faceless text based environment Japanese users create a human social presence both visually and orally within their online environment through these extra-linguistic signs and creative unorthodox orthographic and how they act to enhance the semantic or pragmatic meaning of the message. In addition it was found that they can also function as tools in the creation of writer self presentation and can be used to add a decorative effect upon the typed message.

#### Methods

100 Japanese personal weblog articles and their comments were collected to form a corpus of over 40,000 counted sentences and their extra-linguistic signs and unconventional Linguistic orthography as in table 1 were counted and analyzed.

**Table1.** Online Japanese extra-linguistic signs and unconventional linguistic orthography.



Extra-linguistic signs	Unconventional Linguistic orthography
Emoticons : text based (^_^) (^o^;>)	Unconventional phonetic spelling 香りもいいんでしょうね〜っ。
Emoticons: icon based 	Representations of laughter (phonographic あはは、ふふふ and logographical 笑 )
Pictograms (絵文字) ♪ ☆ 🌟 🌸 @@ 🍌 🖤	Multiple exclamation use 彼女ができた！！！！

In an adaptation of the Pierce (1955) triad that divides signs into symbols, indexes and icons, extra-linguistic signs were classified into:

**Icons** (Signs that resemble the signified and function to add semantic meaning) ex: ステキな  
ブランチに(●●●)ノ)) which indicates the writers affective stance and tone.

**Indexes** (Signs that index pragmatic meaning) ex: おしえてください m(\_ \_)m

Pragmatic intention and identification with the prepositional content of the message is indicated through this bowing emoticon.

**Symbols** (Signs that have no semantic / pragmatic meaning but have a decorative purpose and function to aid in self-presentation) ex: 月曜日は学校休みなので火曜日から元気に学校に行けるといいなあ〜.

Unconventional linguistic orthography was divided into its pragmatic function as in unconventional phonetic spelling used in speech acts (ex: 休ませてあげてくださいねえ (softening of requests) and semantic function as in adding tone and emotion to the typed message. (ex: よく耐えたっ！！！！)

## Results

Within the blog articles which have no particular reader in mind these extra-linguistic signs and orthographic creativity was used primarily as an indicator of the writers tone and feeling and utilized as a way to add decoration or added cuteness to the articles especially within female authored blogs. Blog comments however, which are effectively interactions between two people, used these unconventional features in far greater frequency (ex: 18% of sentences had emoticons attached to them) with the majority of extra-linguistic signs and unconventional Linguistic orthography categorized as icons and implemented by the writers to indicate semantic meaning that functioned to create warm friendly dialogue that led to a sense of intimacy between writers. Extra-linguistic signs and unconventional Linguistic orthography categorized as indexes were used to add pragmatic meaning to interactions, indexing speech acts such as making requests, and the stating of opinions which led to smooth interactions. However the majority of pictograms in both the blog articles and comments were classified as symbols and were seen to be used as forms of decoration that added no semantic or pragmatic meaning and if removed the prepositional content of the message would not be altered. This it is argued this is an extension of the deformed characters as seen in Japanese female letter writing (Yamane, 1989) of the 70's and 80's in digital form.

## References

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