

NINJAL International Symposium 2016

**MIMETICS IN JAPANESE AND OTHER**

**LANGUAGES OF THE WORLD**



*Opening address*

# **A Quick Guide to Japanese Mimetics\***

**Taro Kageyama**

Director-General, NINJAL

\*aka “ideophones” or “expressives”.

# Guest speakers from overseas

- **G. Tucker Childs** (Portland State U)
- **Shoko Hamano** (George Washington U)
- **G rard Diffloth** ( cole fran aise d'Extr me-Orient)
- **Iraide Ibarretxe-Antu ano** (U of Zaragoza)
- **Masako Ueda Fidler** (Brown U)
- **Mark Dingemanse** (Max Plank Inst. for Psycholinguistics)
- **Janis B. Nuckolls** (Brigham Young U)

# Purpose of this symposium

➤ In his *Romeo and Juliet*, William Shakespeare (Juliet) utters “What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.”

In this conference, we will ask “What’s in mimetic words?”, with the goal of showing how deeply they are rooted in the linguistic and cognitive systems of human beings.

➤ In Japan at least, this is the very first time to have a large-scale conference on this fascinating topic.

➤ 『ロメオとジュリエット』の中でウィリアム・シェイクスピア（ジュリエット）は次のように問いかけた。「名前の中にどのような実体があるというの？バラと呼ばれているものは、他のどんな名前と呼ぼうと、その香しさは変わらないはずよ。」

このシンポジウムでは「オノマトペの中に何があるの？」と問いかけ、オノマトペがどれほど深く人間の言語・認知システムに根ざしているかを明らかにすることを目標とする。

➤ 日本国内では、この興味深いテーマについて大規模なシンポジウムを開催するのは、今回が初めてである。

# Organization of the symposium

## Major areas discussed in this symposium

Day 1: Phonology, Morphology/Syntax

Day 2: Semantics, Pragmatics/Cognition

An important area that is missing is the **lexicon**.  
To fill the gap, **I will outline the lexical properties of mimetics in this opening address.**

Besides, photocopies of two papers are provided in the package that will serve as an excellent introduction to the basics of Japanese mimetics:

1. Kimi Akita and Natsuko Tsujimura “Mimetics”
  2. Akio Nasu “The phonological lexicon and mimetic phonology” (excerpts)
- Both from the *Handbooks of Japanese Language and Linguistics* series.

このシンポジウムでは、初日は音韻論と形態論/統語論、2日目は意味論と語用論/認知を議論します。重要な分野として**レキシコン（語彙的特性）**が抜けていますが、それについては、**私の開会の辞で概略**します。

その他に、日本語オノマトペの理論的研究への導入として次の2つの論文を配布しておきますので、ご参照ください。

# Goshu or "word types" in traditional Japanese grammar

"Word types" or *goshu* in traditional Japanese grammar, based on the historical origin of individual words, do not pay due recognition to mimetics as an independent vocabulary class.

- (a) *wago* or *native* (indigenous, native Japanese words),
- (b) *kango* or *Sino-Japanese* (words entering from Chinese)
- (c) *gairaigo* or *foreign* (words other than *kango* entering from foreign languages since the 16th century),
- (d) *konshugo* or *hybrids* (compound words consisting of two elements from different word types)

伝統的な国語学では、語彙は歴史的出自により、次の「語種」の分類される。

- (a) 和語, やまと言葉
- (b) 漢語
- (c) 外来語
- (d) 混成語

オノマトペを表だって扱っていないのは残念なことである。

Since mimetics have no independent place, quantitative studies of the Japanese vocabulary (e.g. old NINJAL) have been limited to the statistics of native, Sino-Japanese, and foreign words, with no reference to mimetic words – an unfortunate situation.

# Mimetics as an independent lexical stratum in modern Japanese linguistics

In the synchronic analysis of Japanese, mimetic elements display characteristic behavior in phonology [see the [Nasu paper in the package](#)].

☞ Hence, they are regarded as forming an independent lexical stratum (McCawley 1968, Ito & Mester 1999).

現代語の共時的分析において、オノマトペ語彙は音韻的に特徴的な振舞いを示す【配布資料のNasu論文を参照】。そのため、オノマトペは独立の語彙層 (lexical stratum または vocabulary stratum) を形成すると考えられる (McCawley 1968, Ito & Mester 1999)。

## FOUR LEXICAL STRATA IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE

indigenous	The <b>native</b> or <i>wago</i> stratum	The <b>mimetic</b> stratum
		(Some mimetics are of S-J origin.)
borrowed	The <b>foreign</b> stratum	The <b>Sino-Japanese</b> or <i>kango</i> stratum

# Mimetics as full-fledged lexical items

Japanese mimetics are not primitive or childish sound sequences but are mostly qualified as **full-fledged lexical items** (words and morphemes) that are tightly integrated into the lexicon, on a par with the other lexical strata.

As lexical items, mimetic words and morphemes constitute a **form-meaning pair that has direct relevance to morphology and syntax, i.e. involved in the determination of the well-formedness of complex word structure as well as syntactic structure.**

日本語のオノマトペは、原始的あるいは幼児的な音連鎖ではなく、他の語彙層 – すなわち和語、漢語、洋語 – と同様にレキシコンに堅固に組み込まれた一人前の語彙項目（語、形態素）としての資格を有する。

オノマトペは、形態構造と統語構造に直接関連する「形と意味のペア」を構成し、語構成と統語構造の適格性の決定に関与する。

# Lexical properties of mimetic elements

- Although mimetics exhibit somewhat distinct behavior in phonology and stylistic usage as well as perception, their **lexical properties as ingredients of language are not radically different** from the words of the other lexical strata. This can be shown by three criteria.
  - A. Lexical categories
  - B. Participation in word formation
  - C. Involvement in syntax
- オノマトペ語彙は、音韻や文体あるいは知覚において独特の振る舞いをするものの、言語を構成する要素としての語彙的な性質は、他の語彙層に属する語や形態素とほとんど変わらない。このことは、次の3つの側面から窺い知ることができる。
  - A. 語彙範疇（品詞）
  - B. 語形成への係わり
  - C. 統語構造への係わり



# A. Lexical categories

➤ While McCawley (1968) assumed that mimetics are basically adverbs, they are actually versatile enough to **function as all kinds of major lexical categories**, though with varying degrees of freedom depending on individual categories: **Adverbs** (often propped with the quotation particle *to*), **Nouns, Verbs** (with the verb-forming suffix *-r-*), quasi **Verbal Nouns** (functioning as verbs with the help of *suru* 'do'), and **Adjectival Nouns** (functioning as predicates in combination with the copula *na/da*).

➤ McCawley (1968)は、オノマトペは基本的に副詞であると考えたが、実際のところ、オノマトペはすべての種類の主要な語彙範疇として機能するだけの柔軟性を有する（ただし、品詞により自由度は異なる）。すなわち、**副詞**（しばしば「と」が後続）、**動詞**（オノマトペの後に動詞形成の接尾辞 *-r-*を伴う）、**名詞**、**動詞的名詞**（Verbal Noun）に準ずる名詞（「する」を伴って動詞として機能する）、**形容詞的名詞**（Adjectival Noun）（「な/だ」をとって述語として機能する）。

# Lexical categories of mimetic lexemes

	Noun	Verb	Adjective	Adverb	Verbal Noun	Adjectival Noun
Native	<i>ie</i> 'house'	<i>tabe-ru</i> 'eat', <i>kumo-r-u</i> 'become cloudy'	<i>hoso-i</i> 'slender'	<i>tsugi-tsugi</i> 'one after another'	<i>kasi-kari (suru)</i> 'borrowing and lending'	<i>odayaka (na/da)</i> 'gentle'
Sino-Japanese	<i>gakkoo</i> 'school'	<i>syoku-s-u</i> 'to eat'	---	<i>totsuzen</i> 'suddenly'	<i>sanpo (suru)</i> 'take a walk'	<i>yuushuu (na/da)</i> 'excellent'
Foreign	<i>baiku</i> 'bike'	<i>kopi-r-u</i> 'to copy'	---	---	<i>kopii (suru)</i> 'to copy'	<i>kuuru (na/da)</i> 'cool'
Mimetic	<i>garagara</i> 'a rattle'	<i>pochi-r-u</i> 'to click to buy'	(dialectal) <i>guzu-i</i> 'sluggish'	<i>dondon</i> 'rapidly'	<i>harahara (suru)</i> 'feel uneasy'	<i>zarazara (na/da)</i> 'rough'



© Can Stock Photo

# sound-meaning iconicity

➔ Accent correlates with meaning (according to my Kansai accent).

## Dynamic events — front accent

**Verbal:** 喉がガラガラする。  
*Nodo ga GARagara suru.*  
'My throat feels irritated.'

**Adverbial:** 岩がガラガラくずれ落ちた。  
*Iwa ga GARagara kuzure-ochita.*  
'Large boulders came rumbling down.'

## Static concepts — flat or end accent

**Nominal:** 赤ちゃんにガラガラをあげた。  
*Akachan ni GARAGARA o ageta.*  
'I gave the baby a rattle.'

**Adjectival:** 映画館はガラガラやった。  
*Eigakan wa gaRAGARA datta.*  
'The movie theater was almost empty.'

## B. Participation in word formation

Mimetics participate in a variety of word formation processes. The table below shows the patterns of compounding based on lexical strata.

Right-hand Left-hand	NATIVE	SINO-JAPANESE	FOREIGN	MIMETIC
<b>NATIVE</b>	<b>default</b> <i>hitori-tabi</i> 'solo travel'	<b>common</b> <i>omote-genkan</i> 'front entrance'	<b>common</b> <i>mado-garasu</i> 'window pane'	<b>common</b> <i>hara-peko</i> (stomach-empty) 'hungry'
<b>SINO-JAPANESE</b>	<b>common</b> <i>kiroku-yaburi</i> 'record-breaking'	<b>default</b> <i>kokunai-ryokoo</i> 'domestic travel'	<b>common</b> <i>zyuutaku-roon</i> 'housing loan'	<b>not common</b> <i>nekki-munmun</i> (heat-steamy) 'hot and stifling'
<b>FOREIGN</b>	<b>common</b> <i>amachua-zumoo</i> 'amateur sumo'	<b>common</b> <i>terebi-bangumi</i> 'TV program'	<b>default</b> <i>Amerikan-kooonii</i> 'weak/regular coffee'	<b>rare</b> <i>pan-tira</i> (panty-showing) 'panty shot'
<b>MIMETIC</b>	<b>common</b> <i>garagara-hebi</i> 'rattlesnake'	<b>common</b> <i>chinchin-densya</i> 'tinkling train'	<b>common</b> <i>bikkuri-man</i> (surprise-man) 'Bikkuriman'	<b>default</b> <i>garagara-pon</i> (rattle-pop) 'lottery wheel'

# Other word formation processes

## 1. Reduplication 畳語

ごつごつ *gotu-gotu* 'rugged', のろのろ *noru-noro* 'sluggish'

Cf. reduplication of native words: つぎつぎ *tsugi-tsugi* 'one after another'

reduplication of Sino-Japanese morphemes: 続々 *zoku-zoku* 'one after another'

## 2. Mimetic prefixes オノマトペの接頭辞

ずば抜ける *zuba-nukeru* [PREF-stand.out] 'far excel',

ぶら下がる *bura-sagaru* [PREF-hang] 'dangle loosely'

## 3. Mimetic suffixes (rare) オノマトペの接尾辞 (まれ)

*huto-ttyo* [fat-SUF] 'fatty', *gaki-ntyō* [kid-SUF] 'brat'

## 4. Verb-formation with the suffix *-tsuku* 「つく」による動詞化

がつつく *gaQ-tsuku* 'pig out on', いらつく *ira-tsuku* 'get irritated'

## 5. Verb-formation with the suffix *-r-* (colloquial) *-r-*による動詞化

ぱくる *paku-r-u* 'steal' (cf. past *paku-r-ta*, negative *paku-r-anai*)

## 6. Composite verbs with *suru* or *kuru* 「する」「くる」を用いた合成動詞

しっくりする／くる *shikkuri suru/kuru* 'match well'

## C. Involvement in syntax

Like regular verbs, mimetic verbs are grouped into standard grammatical classes such as “transitive”, “intransitive”, “psychological”, etc.

**Some classes of mimetic verbs with *suru*** (Kageyama 2007 “Explorations in the conceptual semantics of mimetic verbs”)

1. intransitive verbs (volitional, unergative)

*akuseku suru* ‘work hard’, *ninmari suru* ‘give a satisfied smile’

2. Psychological verbs (intransitive)

*gaQkari suru* ‘be disappointed’, *wakuwaku suru* ‘be excited’

3. Transitive verbs of impact

*doa o dondon suru* ‘bang a door’, *futon o panpan suru* ‘beat a futon’

4. Motion verbs taking a “route” argument in the accusative

*machi o burabura suru* ‘stroll about the town’, *kaban no naka o gosogoso suru* ‘rummage in the bag (for a missing object)’

5. Kindaichi’s class 4 verbs: Change-of-state verbs denoting a resultant state with the resultative *-teiru* or the prenominal *-ta*

*Futon ga hukahuka shiteiru* ‘The futon is fluffy’ / *hukahuka shita futon* ‘a fluffy futon’

# Syntactic properties of mimetic verbs

Mimetics even have argument structure, though defectively. (Kageyama 2007).

A. Selection of comitative *to* (like *collide*, as in “X and Y collided” and “X collided with Y”)

1. *Kare to kanojo ga kooen de icha-icha shita.* ‘A boy and a girl made out in a park’

2. *Kare ga kanojo to* [COMITATIVE]/ *?ni* [DATIVE]/ *\*o* [ACCUSATIVE] *icha-icha shita.*  
‘He made out with a girl’

3. *Kare ga kanojo to* [COMITATIVE]/ *?ni* [DATIVE]/ *\*o* [ACCUSATIVE] *icha-tsuita.*  
(Same meaning as 2)

Hence, *icha(icha)* selects a comitative argument marked *to*.

B. Selection of dative *ni*

*Kanojo ni* [DATIVE]/ *\*to* [COMITATIVE] / *\*o* [ACCUSATIVE] *mero-mero da.*

‘I’m crazy about her.’

Hence, *meromero da* selects a dative argument designating the target of emotion.

# Limited availability of accusative case

- In syntax, accusative case is an important property of verbs. Mimetic verbs are defective in that their accusative marking property is limited to specific semantic types.
- C. Accusative case for “route” arguments of motion verbs (as in ‘climb a tree’)

## Animate subjects

*Shiranai hito ga kinjo o urouro siteiru.* ‘An unfamiliar person is hanging around my neighborhood’

*Nezumi ga daidokoro o chorocho shiteiru.* ‘A mouse is scampering around in the kitchen’

## Inanimate subjects

Interestingly, this accusative marking is not available with an inanimate (non-volitional) subject.

\**Iwa ga saka o gorogoro shita.* ‘Boulders rolled down a hill’

\**Amamizu ga kabe o chorocho shiteiru.* ‘Rainwater is trickling down the wall’



# Transitive verbs of action vs. causation

## ➤ D. Accusative case with transitive verbs

### (1) Transitive verbs of impact

*doa* o *dondon* *suru* 'bang a door'

*futon* o *panpan* *suru* 'beat a futon'

*atui ocha* o *huuhuu* *suru* 'blow on hot tea' (childish-sounding)

### (2) Transitive verbs of bodily movement (Subject acts on own body part)

– Accusative is available only to a limited extent.

*Me* o *pachikuri* *suru/sita*. 'blink (one's eyes)' [Google hits: 3,240]

*Me* o *pachikuri* *saseru/saseta*. 'make one's eyes blink' [Google hits: 24,060]

*Karada* o *kunekune* *suru/sita*. 'twist ones body' [Google hits: 1,971]

*Karada* o *kunekune* *saseru/saseta*. (causative) [Google hits: 14,180]

### (3) Transitive verbs of causation and change of state

– Accusative is not available.

\**Watashi wa kutu* o *pikapika* *sita*. Intended: 'I polished the shoes shiny clean'

Cf. *Watashi wa kutu* o *pikapika* *ni sita*. (causative 'make' construction)

'I made the shoes shiny clean'

\**Yu* o *guragura* *suru*. 'boil water'

Cf. *Yu* o *guragura* *saseru*. (causative)

# *Enjoy the two-day conference.*

➤ **To wrap up:**

**Mimetics and ideophones are important elements of language that are deeply embedded in the linguistic and cognitive systems of humans.**

**Due to their complex character, interdisciplinary and multi-faceted research is needed to fully understand their fundamental nature. I believe this two-day conference will serve as a solid stepping stone toward this goal.**