Proper names in Japanese: What the learner needs to know

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Introduction

The aim of this paper is to draw attention, predominantly from the perspective of the foreign language learner, to the important linguistic and cultural position of proper names in the vocabulary, and to suggest that they deserve more systematic treatment in linguistic descriptions, dictionaries and language courses than they commonly receive. The focus of illustration is on Japanese, and our main concern is with proper names referring to specific entities rather than with name inventories (cf. Lehrer 1992: 125), although we also comment on some aspects of these.[1]

Proper names are at base a semantic category: they are lexical items, in the simplest cases single proper nouns, institutionalized as names for individual persons, places, organizations and things (cf. Allerton 1987; Huddleston 1988: 98). Their grammatical status varies across languages, where they may also exhibit special phonological and orthographical features. In this paper we are concerned to point out the significance of proper names from four main standpoints. Firstly, in terms of weight: proper names occur in larger numbers, and across a wider range of semantic types, than is suggested by their typical representation in descriptive and pedagogical materials. Secondly, in terms of linguistic structure: languages have particular formal patterns for constructing proper names, and these deserve to be treated in linguistic descriptions. Thirdly, in terms of meaning and cultural content:

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while proper names may have an atypical semantic status, they do possess general semantic properties, and their referents are associated with culturally shared knowledge and beliefs which are important in everyday communication. Finally, proper names pose interesting questions of use from the standpoint, for example, of stylistic and discourse restrictions among alternative terms. In all these respects, proper names stand out as an area of vocabulary where the competence of foreign learners typically lags significantly behind that of native speakers.

Below we develop these points with illustrations from Japanese. Our primary concern throughout is with proper names which are generally known across the Japanese speech-community. We also focus mainly on names with Japanese referents (i.e. on names like *tookyoo*[2] 'Tokyo' rather than *rondon* 'London'); this is purely for convenience of treatment, and 'foreign' proper names form an equally integral part of the topic.

Range

While language descriptions and course materials typically include some common examples of personal and place names, reflection tells us that proper names occur in large numbers and across a wide range of referent types and sub-types. Here we adopt a general classification into five major types: people, places, organizations, things, times. These are each illustrated below with representative Japanese examples.

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[2]Japanese forms are rendered in a modified Hepburn romanization, with long vowels written double and the mora nasal represented everywhere as n; Japanese proper names are capitalized only at the beginning of a sentence. Hyphens are employed in the interests of clarity, generally between components of a compound or between base and affix.

People

Shootoku taishi, kooboo daishi; *momotaroo, urashima taroo, kaguya hime, issun booshi*; *ono no komachi, matsuo bashoo, rafukajio haan, natsume sooseki, kawabata yasunari, yoshimoto banana*; *tokugawa ieyasu, shoowa tennoo, tanaka kakuei*; *misora hibari, mifune toshiroo, yokoyama nokku*; *tora san, gojira*; *nagashima kantoku, takanohana* are examples of universally-known names of individuals in Japan. As with proper names of all types, they include historical and contemporary, and mythical and real cases. Names of animals and of vehicles, such as trains or ships, may be considered as extensions of this basic category; *hachi-koo* and *hikawa-maru* are familiar Japanese examples.

Places

Names of major cities and island regions appear in most Japanese language courses, but Japanese place names occur in a wide range of sub-types. Proceeding from larger entities to smaller, they include a variety of regional names (*nishi-nihon*; *kyuushuu, shikoku, kansai, hokuriku, toohoku, hokkaidoo*), prefectural and old provincial names (*tookyoo-to, kyooto-fu, shiga-ken*; *satsuma, shinshuu*), area names (*bandai, nikkoo, kita-arupusu*), and names of districts of cities (*roppongi, ginza, umeda*; *shinjuku-sanchoome*); names of islands and archipelagoes (*oni-ga-shima, sado-ga-shima, awaji-shima*; *ogasawara-shotoo*) and of peninsulas and coasts (*izu-hantoo*; *shoonan-kaigan, nichinan-kaigan*); names of oceans, seas, channels, bays, lakes and rivers (*taiheiyoo*; *nihon-kai, seto-naikai*; *tsugaru-kaikyoo*; *tookyoo-wan, suruga-wan*; *biwa-ko*; *kamo-gawa*); and names of mountains (*fuji-san, aso-zan*). They include names of bridges and tunnels (*sanjoo-oohashi*; *seikan-tonneru*) and of rail lines and roads (*yamanote-sen*; *toomei-koosoku*), as well as of buildings and venues of all kinds (*kookyo, kokkai, tookyoo-eki, haneda-kuukoo,*

*teikoku-hoteru, meiji-jinguu, hooryuu-ji, odawara-joo, tookyoo-tawaa,
dizuniirando, ueno-kooen, kooshien-kyuujoo).*

Organizations

Names of public and private organizations are a further major type of proper names.
Commonplace examples include the names of government ministries and agencies
(*monbu-shoo, tsuusan-shoo; booei-choo*), of political structures, parties and
groups (*tokugawa-bakufu, satoo-naikaku; shakai-too, jimin-too; shijuushichi-shi*),
of military, professional and occupational organizations (*jiei-tai; keidanren,
nikkyooso*), of public and private universities (*toodai, keioo, waseda*), of
corporations and companies (*enuetchikee, fuji-terebi, nikkoo, jeeaaru, dentsuu,
kootsuu-koosha, sanseidoo, kenkyuusha, sonii, toyota, takashimaya, daimaru*), of
banks (*fuji-ginkoo, sumitomo-ginkoo*), of artistic groups (*enu-kyoo*), and of sports
teams and organizations (*kyojin, chuunichi; se-riigu*). Particular names may refer
to more than one type of organization: *seibu* is the name of a railway company, a
department store, and a baseball team. Some organizations are embodied in
particular buildings or other locations, and such names may double as place names.

Things

Proper names for things primarily refer to works or products. Familiar examples
include names of written works of various kinds (*genji-monogatari, manyooshuu,
hoojooki, chuushingura, botchan; koojien*), of films (*rashoomon, shichinin no
samurai*), of songs (*kimigayo, sakura*), of magazines and newspapers (*fujin-
kooron, bungei-shunjuu, josei-jishin, shuukan-asahi, mainichi-shinbun*), and of
television programs (*nodo-jiman, nyuusu-suteeshon*). Brand names of various
kinds of manufactured products are class rather than individual labels, but they are

familiar vocabulary items which may be mentioned here: Japanese examples include *karupisu* (soft drink); *seirogan, jintan* (medications); *piisu, mairudo-sebun* (cigarettes); *gekkeikan, hakutsuru* (sake). *Kirin, sapporo* (beers) and *toyota, nissan* (cars) exemplify the class use of company names to designate products associated with those companies (cf. Allerton 1987: 77).

Times

Proper names may refer to periods or points in time, including individual events. Here belong names of historical periods of various types (*joomon-jidai, chuusei, kindai, sengo, hachijuu-nendai*), including era names (*meiji, shoowa*). Examples of historical events include *kurofune-raikoo, meiji-ishin, nichiro-sensoo, kantoo-daishinsai, niiniiroku-jiken, tookyoo-orinpikku*. They include the names of national holidays and similar cyclical events (*kodomo-no-hi, kenpoo-kinenbi; tanabata, shichigosan, gion-matsuri, gooruden-uiiku, obon, barentain-dee, oshoogatsu, koohaku-utagassen*), and arguably the names of months and days (*sangatsu; tsuitachi, kin'yoobi*) (cf. Allerton 1987: 78-9 on the intermediate status of these terms).

The precise referential distribution of proper names across different sub-types in particular languages reflects cultural emphases: thus the Japanese sports pantheon includes sumo wrestlers and baseball teams rather than cricketers and yachtsmen, and everyday urban place names feature districts or district blocks rather than streets.[3] The key point here is that large numbers of proper names form part of the

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[3]Cultural differences in the distribution of proper names may be more striking than in these examples. Historically, swords and tea utensils have received proper names in Japanese (Kokugogakkai 1980: 444) and in Baganda, for example, proper names are applied to bushes and trees (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 178).

universally-known vocabulary, and thus of the potential input to lexicographical descriptions and to the lexical syllabus of language courses.

Structure

As with other lexical items, many structural features of proper names are amenable to systematic description, and this information deserves to be recorded in linguistic descriptions and is of clear value to language learners. This includes information on the grammatical characteristics of proper nouns in languages where these are distinct from those of common nouns. In Japanese it is generally agreed that few clear grammatical distinctions of this kind are present, but many structural details remain. For example, how are names of mountains, or lakes, formed in Japanese? Proper names are often prone to abbreviation: what patterns of abbreviation commonly occur in Japanese?

Formation

Personal names are an important category on which some basic structural information is commonly provided in linguistic descriptions and language courses. Thus ordinary personal names in contemporary Japanese consist of a family name and a single given name, in that order. As in many languages, they exhibit various orthographical complexities: in the case of Japanese, these include the presence of many kanji and morphemes ('readings') unique to personal (and sometimes place) names, and a relatively high incidence of the phonetic use of kanji. Given names are typically gender-distinctive: common formal patterns include the elements *-o/ -roo/-suke* in male names and *-ko/-e* in female names; orthographically, female given names may be wholly or partly written in kana. (Professional personal names adopted by writers and entertainers have the same basic structure—*matsuo*

bashoo, misora hibari, yoshimoto banana, yokoyama nokku are examples—, but may include Western loan elements, written in katakana, as in *nokku*.) In terms of prosodic shape, with few exceptions names of both types are either unaccented, or accented on the antepenult (penult in the case of two-mora names); given names with *-o* and *-e* are regularly unaccented (*masao, kinue*), and accented with *-ko* (*kazuko*) (Kindaichi and Akinaga 1981: 23-7). Structurally, personal names are the locus for postposed courtesy, hypocoristic, and professional titles such as *sensei, sama, san, shi, joshi*; *kun, chan*; *kantoku, oyakata, senshu, shushoo*, etc.

Simple (i.e. non-suffixed) place names show similar accentual patterns to personal names (i.e. unaccented, or accented on the antepenult), with two-mora names commonly being accented: *nara, ise, chiba, kyooto, koobe, nagoya, sendai, kanazawa, nagasaki, wakayama* are accented names; *edo, shibuya, hakone, oosaka, tookyoo, yokohama, kamakura, sapporo, hiroshima, okinawa* are unaccented (Kindaichi and Akinaga 1981: 22-3).[4]

Many types of Japanese proper names are formed by suffixation, with regular accentual patterns. For example, names of prefectures and lakes are formed by the addition of *-ken* and *-ko*, both of which are pre-accenting (i.e. place the accent on the previous mora) (McCawley 1968: 158): *nara-ken, nagano-ken, wakayama-ken*; *towada-ko, mashuu-ko*. (The names of two historically famous lakes, *biwa-ko* and *suwa-ko*, are unaccented and thus irregular in this respect; cf NHK 1985: 145.) The same pattern applies with names of castles, government ministries, and

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[4]Some place names and family names are shared in Japanese. The normal expectation is that accentual properties will be identical in such cases, but there are exceptions: *ueno* and *shibuya* are accented as family names but unaccented as (Tokyo) place names (Kagami 1982: 188). The prevalence of the unaccented pattern with common Tokyo area place names, including these two examples, is specifically noted by Kindaichi and Akinaga (1981: 22); the implication is that this pattern is associated with familiarity/frequency of use, so that these cases may have arisen through loss of the original accent.

government agencies, formed with *-joo*, *-shoo*, and *-choo*, respectively: *oosaka-joo*, *matsumoto-joo*; *gaimu-shoo*, *ookura-shoo*; *kunai-choo*. By contrast, suffixes such as *-too* (for political parties) and *-sen* (for rail lines) are de-accenting (i.e. produce unaccented words) (McCawley 1968: 163): *koomei-too*, *minsha-too*; *marunouchi-sen*, *chuuoo-sen*. Names of mountains are more varied, ending commonly in *-san/-zan*, but also in *-yama* and *-take/-dake*: *kooya-san*, *hiei-zan*, *daimonji-yama*, *yatsu-ga-take*; *-san/-zan* are usually preaccenting, but there are exceptions with *-san*, including *fuji-san* (accented on the initial).

Some other types of proper name take the form of compounds with the postposed component indicating the category involved; these are normally accented, on the antepenult. Typical components of this type include *-kooen* (parks), *-ginkoo* (banks), *-shinbun* (newspapers): *hibiya-kooen*, *mitsubishi-ginkoo*, *asahi-shinbun*.

A list of suffixes and postposed compound components which commonly appear in proper names is given below; accentual information is largely derived from Kindaichi and Akinaga 1981 and NHK 1985 (P = pre-accenting suffix; D = de-accenting suffix; C = compound component).

-choo P (government agencies)
-daigaku C (universities)
-dake P (mountains)
-dera D (temples)
-doo D (stores)
-eki P (stations)
-fu P (municipal prefectures)
-gawa P, D (rivers)
-gekijoo C (theatres)
-ginkoo C (banks)
-gun P (rural district)
-hantoo C (peninsulas)
-hoteru C (hotels)

-in P (houses of Diet; temples)

-ji irregular: commonly initial (temples)

-jidai C (historical periods)

-jima D (islands)

-jinguu C; alternatively penult (shrines)

-jinja C (shrines)

-joo P (castles)

-kai P (seas)

-kaigan C (coasts)

-kaikyoo C (channels, straits)

-ke P (families)

-ken P (prefectures)

-ko P (lakes)

-koo P (harbours)

-kooen C (parks)

-kookoo C (high schools)

-koosoku C (expressways)

-ku P (wards)

-kuukoo C (airports)

-kyuujoo C (baseball stadiums)

-maru P (boats)

-matsuri C (festivals)

-monogatari C (tales)

-onsen C (hot springs)

-san P, with exceptions (mountains)

-sen D (rail lines)

-sha P (companies)

-shi P (cities)

-shima P, D (islands)

-shinbun C (newspapers)

-shoo P (government ministries)

-shotoo C (archipelagoes)

-take P (mountains)

-terebi C (television companies)

-to P (metropolitan prefecture)

-too D (political parties)
-wan P (bays)
-ya D (stores)
-yama D (mountains)
-yoo P (oceans)
-zan P (mountains)[5]

A few proper names involve preposed components, such as the names of weekly magazines (*shuukan-*) and of some hotels (*hoteru-*): *shuukan-shinchoo*, *shuukan-gendai*; *hoteru-ookura*, *hoteru-nyuuootani*. These behave accentually like compounds.

Abbreviation

Many proper names give rise to shortened variants. In Japanese we find that compound proper names are sometimes abbreviated, in two principal ways.

The first is simple truncation, involving dropping of the second component of the word; this is exemplified by *keioo(-daigaku)* quoted above, by *haneda (-kuukoo)*, and by newspaper names as in *mainichi(-shinbun)*, *yomiuri(-shinbun)*. The second is composite truncation, involving the shortening of each component of the compound. This applies most commonly with Sino-Japanese compounds formed from two binary words, with the second element of each binary being discarded: i.e. compounds with the structure (1 + 2) + (3 + 4) produce abbreviated

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[5]While 'foreign' proper names are not considered here, it is worth noting that many of these items are regularly used in the formation of such names: thus, *-ko* appears in *baikaru-ko* 'Lake Baikal', *mishigan-ko* 'Lake Michigan', *nesu-ko* 'Loch Ness' and *-gawa* in *temuzu-gawa* 'the Thames', *mishishippii-gawa* 'the Mississippi', etc. Interestingly, some suffixes appear to be used exclusively in non-Japanese names: an example is *-shi* P used in the names of foreign newspapers (*eeji-shi* 'The (Melbourne) Age', *taimuzu-shi* 'The Times', etc); foreign island names commonly end in *-too* D rather than *-shima/-jima* (*sebu-too* 'Cebu', *mokuyoo-too* 'Thursday Island', etc).

variants consisting of 1 + 3; the resulting items are mostly unaccented. Examples appear to be particularly common amongst organizational names, as in *nikkoo* (from *nihon-kookuu*), *toodai* (*tookyoo-daigaku*) and *jimin-too* (*jiyuuminshu-too*) quoted above. Note that in many such cases simple truncation would yield unsatisfactory results: *keioo(-daigaku)* is an acceptable abbreviation for the university, perhaps because the name *keioo* otherwise occurs only as a historical era name, but *tookyoo* is not interpreted as an abbreviation for *tookyoo-daigaku*.[6] Further examples of composite truncation include *nichigin* (*nihon-ginkoo*), *kyoodai* (*kyooto-daigaku*), *nikkei* (*nihon-keizai(-shinbun)*), *kintetsu* (*kinki-tetsudoo*) and *zennikkuu* (*zen-nihon-kookuu*). Composite truncation applied to three components is seen in the quoted examples *keidanren* (*keizai-dantai-rengookai*) and *nikkyooso* (*nihon-kyooshokuin-kumiai*), this last example involving the additional process of 'reading change' (from *kumi* to *so*) of the kanji concerned. As mentioned, composite truncation is particularly associated with Sino-Japanese items (and indeed is also employed in Chinese), and it can be viewed here as a graphologically-based process comparable to alphabetic abbreviation in English; in the Japanese case, abbreviation is to the initial kanji rather than to the initial letter.

Amongst proper names we also find items of similar composite structure formed, not from compounds as such, but from two individual place names: the process involves taking one element/kanji each from the two names, often with accompanying reading change, and combining these into a name which refers to a combination of the two places. Examples of such blends are *toomei* (from *tookyoo* and *nagoya*), *tooyoko* and also *keihin* (*tookyoo* and *yokohama*), *keihan* (*kyooto* and *oosaka*), *hanshin* (*oosaka* and *koobe*), *seikan* (*aomori* and *hakodate*), *kanmon*

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[6]Japanese thus contrasts in this respect with English, which readily uses city names such as *Cambridge*, *Melbourne*, etc to refer to universities.

(*shimonoseki* and *moji*). The resulting items typically occur as regional names, or in the names of rail lines, roads, etc, linking the two places (*toomei-koosoku*, *tooyoko-sen*, *seikan-tonneru*, *kanmon-tonneru*) and in names of associated organizations (*hanshin*: name of a railway company).

The composite truncation template is occasionally extended beyond Sino-Japanese, principally to Western loanwords. Examples among proper names include *asapen* (a product name, from *asahi-pentakkusu*); *pa-riigu* and *se-riigu* involve truncation of the initial components of *pashifikku-riigu* and *sentoraru-riigu*, respectively. In addition alphabetic abbreviations, both 'initialisms' (read as series of letters) and acronyms, occur as one type of Western loanwords in Japanese, and proper names feature prominently among these: examples include *enuetchikee* (written NHK), *jeeaaru* (JR) and *jaru* (JAL).

Finally, looking beyond formal abbreviation as such, let us note the obvious point that names of well-known individuals may permit shortened reference through a single name rather than by the full combination of family and given name. Of interest is the fact that, while the family name may be taken as the normal choice here, in some cases it is the given name which is conventionalized: thus, family name is used in the case of *chikamatsu (monzaemon)*, *kawabata (yasunari)*, etc, but given name in such cases as *(minamoto no) yoshitsune*, *(oda) nobunaga*, *(toyotomi) hideyoshi*, *(matsuo) bashoo*, *(natsume) sooseki*.

Content

It is generally accepted that proper names differ from other lexical items in certain aspects of their meaning: in particular, since their function is to name individual referents, it is not possible to give general definitions of proper names. Thus *mizuumi* 'lake' can be defined generally as a large area of water surrounded by

land, but *biwa-ko* is simply the name of one particular such entity, located in Shiga Prefecture. However, this does not mean that proper names are devoid of more general semantic properties. Furthermore, proper names carry culturally shared content which must be distinguished from encyclopedic descriptions of their referents.

General semantic properties

As linguistic forms, proper names in the first place carry what we may refer to as 'categorical' meaning, relating to the type or sub-type of referent to which they are applied. As we have seen in the discussion of range above, different sets of proper names are applied to different types of referents, and an awareness of the various name-repertories involved is part of the linguistic knowledge of native speakers. We have also seen that in many cases this information is more or less clearly structurally marked. Names such as *akita-ken*, *bunmei-doo* and *sakura-ginkoo* are morphologically identified as names of prefectures, stores and banks, respectively; a name like *yamada*, while not marked compositionally in the same way, is a member of the repertory of Japanese personal (family) or place names, and this is indicated to some degree in its component elements (the morpheme *ta/da* 'rice field' being a common element in names of this type). Similarly, personal given names constitute a distinct inventory, again marked to some degree by structural features including common suffixal elements, and in Japanese they are also generally categorized for gender. In addition, many male given names distinguish birth order, marked by the presence of numeral and related elements in their composition; thus *jun'ichi/taroo, jiroo/kenji, shoozoo/saburoo* are characterized semantically as given names applied, respectively, to eldest, second-eldest, and third-eldest sons,

by virtue of the elements *ichi/ta(roo)*, *ji*, and *zoo/sabu(roo)* with their appropriate kanji representations (cf Morioka 1977: 19).

Secondly, like other lexical items proper names enter into semantic relations such as synonymy and contrast among themselves. The clearest cases of synonymy hold between 'full' names and their abbreviated variants discussed above (*mainichi-shinbun/mainichi*, *tookyoo-daigaku/toodai*, *nippon-hoosoo-kyookai/enuetchikee*, etc). As with synonyms generally, the members of such pairs are typically distinguished stylistically, in this case in terms of formality; these give rise to questions of use, discussed below. More widely, proper names in the same category constitute contrast sets: *akita-ken* contrasts with *yamagata-ken*, *oosaka-fu*, *tookyoo-to*, etc. Given the basic function of proper names to differentiate uniquely among similar entities, this is clearly a fundamental semantic property. Contrast sets such as era names (and names of months and days, if we admit these) involve additional relations of order: *shoowa* not only contrasts with *heisei*, but immediately precedes it, etc. As a further type, part-whole relations are found with many place names: thus *roppongi* is related to *tookyoo*, *miyazaki-ken* to *kyuushuu*, etc, and the implication between, for example, *Roppongi ni sunde imasu* 'I live in Roppongi' and *Tookyoo ni sunde imasu* 'I live in Tokyo' holds axiomatically in the Japanese speech-community.

Thirdly, again like other lexical items, proper names may carry temporal associations, as archaic, old-fashioned, neologistic, etc. Perhaps the clearest cases come from the category of personal given names. Thus male given names like *monzaemon* are now archaic, and ordinal names like *shiroo*, *goroo* and *rokuroo* (given respectively to fourth-, fifth- and sixth-eldest sons) have been rendered at least old-fashioned by current social trends towards smaller-sized families; by

contrast, female given names such as *mari, mika, rina* carry a contemporary flavour in comparison with formerly pervasive names ending in *-ko* and *-e*.

Cultural content

In addition to the above properties, proper names carry cultural content based on generally shared knowledge and beliefs concerning their individual referents. The question of whether proper names possess 'sense' (i.e. descriptive content, as opposed to 'reference') has been widely debated by philosophers. While it is generally accepted that they do not, and are thus not definable (although, as we have seen, structural properties may serve to indicate the category of referent involved), it has been persuasively argued that specific names carry 'conventional presuppositions' (Searle 1958: 173) which tie their application to their particular referents. Our concern here is with core presuppositions which are widely shared throughout the culture concerned. To take a simple Japanese example, Tokyo University is regarded by Japanese not simply as a tertiary educational institution but is universally acknowledged as being the most prestigious university in Japan, admitting only the highest academic performers, producing the elite of the nation's bureaucrats, and so on; ignorance of these associations of the name *toodai* (and related terms such as *toodaisei* 'Tokyo University student' or *toodaisotsu* 'graduated from Tokyo University') marks one as a cultural outsider. Similarly, *bunmei-doo, sansei-doo* and *shisei-doo*—while sharing structural marking as names of stores—are universally known in Japan as names of confectioners, booksellers, and cosmetics suppliers respectively. While cultural content in this sense is not unique to proper names (it is found, for example, with lexical items denoting certain animals, where it is based on shared knowledge and beliefs concerning the class which they denote), it forms a prominent part of the 'meaning'

of well-known proper names in view of their function as identifiers of notable individuals.

The cultural content of proper names needs to be recorded in dictionaries. In most lexicographical traditions proper names are excluded from conventional dictionaries and regarded as the preserve of encyclopedias. However, it is important to emphasize that shared content is not to be equated with encyclopedic descriptions of referents. A full factual account of Tokyo University will include details of its history, its organizational structure, its precise location in Tokyo, and so on. Clearly individual Japanese will differ widely in their familiarity with such facts, and they may form only a small part of shared knowledge. A further important consideration is that cultural content rests in part on beliefs, which may not be factually true.

Use

Many proper names raise questions relating to appropriacy of use: if we assume that alternatives such as *tookyoo-daigaku/toodai* are cognitively synonymous, then it follows that the choice between them rests upon aspects of the circumstances in which they are used. This area awaits detailed textual study, and we can offer little more than preliminary suggestions here. However, it seems useful to consider restrictions of this kind under two headings: firstly, general situational factors (here termed 'stylistic') relating to the purpose and mode of communication and the social identities and relationships of participants; and secondly, lower-level factors relating to discourse organization.

Stylistic factors

It is intuitively plausible to view pairs of full and abbreviated items like *tookyoo-daigaku/toodai* as varying in terms of their position along a cline of public/private communication: full terms are associated with more public or formal functions, abbreviated variants with more private or informal ones. Thus *tookyoo-daigaku* rather than *toodai* is seen on a degree certificate, and *nihon-kookuu* rather than *nikkoo* is heard in public flight announcements at airports.[7] While this basic polarity will be maintained, individual pairs may vary with respect to their proportional division of the cline; in particular, certain abbreviations (such as *keidanren* vis-a-vis *keizai-dantai-rengookai*) appear to have a wider range of use, extending further into the public domain, than others. Not all alternate choices involve full and abbreviated terms: *nippon/nihon* are a familiar pair of full alternates, and *bankokuhaku/banpaku* are both abbreviations of *bankokuhakurankai*. The stiffer stylistic status of *nippon* and *bankokuhaku* in these examples gives further support to what appears to be a general correlation between length and formality.

Reference to persons is a complex matter in all linguistic communities. Options in Japanese include the use of name alone (family name/given name/family + given name/hypocoristic name (aishoo: cf Kokugogakkai 1980: 534)), name + title (courtesy/hypocoristic/professional), title alone (courtesy/professional/ professional + courtesy), as well as kinship terms (alone or with title) and pronominal terms. While the full details of this topic go beyond our central concern here, they are of relevance insofar as they may impinge on the use of personal names to refer to well-known individuals. A simple illustration of some of the possibilities found is provided by the following representation of a recent magazine

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[7] That *toodai* or *nikkoo* may occur in newspaper headlines is presumably due to the dominance of a competing factor, namely spatial economy.

article (*Shuukan Shinchoo* 27 July 1995: 134-5) concerning the famous film actor

Toshiroo Mifune.

	Toshiroo Mifune	Mika Kitagawa
Text		
Headline	*mifune toshiroo* (1)	
Lead-in text	*mifune toshiroo* (1), *mifune* (2)	*kitagawa mika san* (1)
Main text	*mifune* (7)	*mika san* (6), *kitagawa mika san* (1)
Photo caption	*mifune* (1)	*mika san* (1)
Quotes		
Neighbour	*mifune san* (2)	
Film journalist	*mifune* (4)	*mika* (3)
Lover	*mifune* (15)	

(The Japanese forms are name references occurring in different
sections of the article, with numbers indicating total occurrences
in each section. For purposes of contrast, data are also given
for references to Mika Kitagawa (Mifune's lover), the other
main person mentioned in the article.)

Here the actor is referred to by name in three different ways: *mifune toshiroo*,

mifune, *mifune san*. Various factors appear to influence the choice of forms,

including stylistic and discourse considerations. In the first place, reference in the

text of the article is by *mifune toshiroo* and *mifune*, the choice between these two

forms resting apparently on discourse factors. The use of *mifune* rather than

toshiroo in shortened reference reflects the general avoidance of male given names

in Japanese outside of intimate contexts (although exceptions are found with some

historical figures, as noted earlier), while the absence of courtesy titles (e.g. *san*)

illustrates what appears to be normal journalistic practice in referring to public

figures. In the quoted sections, reference is by *mifune san* (by a neighbour) and

mifune (by a film journalist, and by Mifune's lover). Here *mifune san* signals the

relationship with the actor as a neighbourhood acquaintance; the (veteran) film

journalist's *mifune*, by contrast, appears to signal reference to the actor as a member of the same professional circle, and the lover's *mifune* exemplifies a more familiar case of the non-use of titles with reference to intimates and close associates. Mika Kitagawa differs from Mifune in two important ways: she is not a public figure to the same extent, and she is female. Reference to her in the text is as *kitagawa mika san* and *mika san*, with the alternation between these appearing once again to reflect discourse factors. The presence of *san* contrasts with the case of Mifune and signals reference to a private individual, while the use of given name in shortened reference is normal with females. The film journalist uses *mika*, which suggests reference to a professional associate (she was formerly an actress). The article clearly illustrates some of the semantic and pragmatic complexities involved in the use of proper names (and titles) in Japanese; importantly for our general topic here, these include the fact that status as a well-known individual (as with Mifune vs Mika) is a significant consideration in the application of reference rules.

Discourse factors

The relevance of discourse factors in the selection of alternative names has been suggested above: in particular, they appear to be responsible for the alternation between full name and single name in *mifune toshiroo/mifune* and *kitagawa mika san/mika san*. Thus *mifune toshiroo* appears in the headline and in the first reference in the lead-in, with *mifune* used throughout the subsequent text. Similarly, *kitagawa mika san* appears on first mention, followed by repeated reference by *mika san*. (Note incidentally that the example demonstrates that *san* may not be omitted in shortened reference.) In her case, there is one subsequent occurrence of the full name; significantly, this appears on first mention after the major break (marked by a sub-headline) in the text, which signals a transition to

Mika's viewpoint as the primary focus of attention. The examples bespeak a natural sequencing principle at work of 'full names as introducers, shortened names in subsequent mention' in relevant discourse units.

Alternative forms of reference, as *mifune san* with courtesy title and as *mika* without, occur in quoted sections and are stylistically motivated, reflecting the social relationship between the respective speakers and the referents. At the same time, however, they serve incidentally to instantiate discourse divisions, in this case between quotation and narrative text.

Conclusion

We hope to have demonstrated in this article that there is much to learn about proper names in Japanese, both as linguistic items and as bearers of cultural information. Specialized though they may be in their central semantic function, proper names remain linguistic items, with formal, structural, grammatical, semantic and pragmatic properties. As labels for notable individuals of various types, they are also the locus for shared cultural knowledge and beliefs.

As we have attempted to show, some of this information is amenable to statement at a general level, including prosodic tendencies, common structural patterns and processes, and certain broad principles of use. Other aspects relate to proper names as individual items and demand dictionary-style treatment, whether in single entries or in lists. Thus, generic lists of common Japanese family and given names (with indications of gender-specific and ordinal items), for example, are plainly useful to language learners.[8] With respect to our main topic of universally-known specific names, all the examples given in this article, and many more, need

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[8]To consider an adjacent category: what do Japanese animal names look like, and what kinds of animals are they given to? Minimal examples would include *pochi, shiro, taroo* (dogs); *mii, tama* (cats).

to receive individual entries in, for example, a learners' dictionary of Japanese.[9] We have seen that conventional dictionaries tend to omit proper names, or else to give them encyclopedic treatment, but entries in a learners' dictionary should include, as their most important element, a description of culturally shared content; they should also indicate variants, together with shortened reference conventions where relevant. This calls for selection of appropriate entries across the full range of proper names, together with investigation of their shared content in the Japanese speech-community.

The importance of background cultural knowledge in language learning is axiomatic, and methods of providing this are a frequent topic of debate. Proper names offer one useful perspective here. While proper names are linguistic items, the repertory of familiar names known to individual speakers is a function of their participation in a particular culture or sub-culture. The stock of proper names— referring to specific people, places, organizations, things, and times—known throughout a language-community is thus an important index of one aspect of its common culture, and together with their shared content, proper names are one significant type of cultural vocabulary which learners need to acquire in order to approach native-like participation in the speech-community: in the present case, they are an area of the vocabulary whose control involves knowledge of Japan as well as of its language. Cf. the following quotation from a recent summary treatment of foreign language learning and teaching:

> 'A cultural frame of reference becomes increasingly important the greater the 'distance' between languages. But a cultural perspective is needed even with 'nearby'

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[9]A recent innovative example in the field of English-language learners' dictionaries is Longman 1992.

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languages, in order to grasp the social significance of a linguistic feature...or to follow the subject matter of daily conversation. For example, in every country, knowing the names of the most famous men and women of a culture, whether they are political figures, folk heroes, or media stars, is a major factor in really understanding the meaning of a newspaper report, a debate on television, or the course of conversation.' (Crystal 1987: 368)

Knowing the names and, let us stress again, the culturally shared content, but not necessarily encyclopedic information: this latter is gained through specialized study but is not the possession of the average native speaker, which is our first priority here.

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