

—Translation—

An Annotated Translation of a Part of “The
Characteristics of Onomatopoeia”
by Izumi Kuniyisa

Christian J. A. Lister
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Introduction

The taxi wound many times around the bright streets and then Sawakita noticed it.

“It’s been raining, hasn’t it?”

“Yes. Off and on since last night. Coming down in light showers.” said the taxi driver, switching on his windscreen wipers¹⁾. The line of glistening rain water was wiped away. The windscreen shone again like it was new.’

That is a passage from the short story ‘The Lamp’ by Nagai Tatsuo from ‘A Blue Rainy Season’²⁾. The words ‘*potsu-potsu*’ (light showers) and ‘*kira-kira*’ (glistening) in the original text are known as phenomimes and have

1) It seems that the author (Nagai Tatsuo) has mistakenly used the loan word ‘*kuriina*’ (cleaner) to refer to windscreen wipers when the correct loan word is ‘*waipâ*’. He might have done this because (a) he was born at the beginning of the century (older people often do not keep up with the constant flow of loanwords coming into the language) (b) he may not perhaps, have been a driver himself and if not, would not have been au fait with technical words relating to automobiles.

2) Nagai Tatsuo (1965) *Aotsuyu* (A Blue Rainy Season), Tokyo: Shinchô Bunko, p. 136. [The novelist Nagai (1904~1990) won various literary prizes, was a member of the Japan Academy and was awarded the Order of Culture.]

the power to vividly describe things.

We can soon understand how much these kinds of phenomimes as well as phonomimes, such as '*kokekokkô*', (cock-a-doodle-doo), appear even among the everyday words which we casually use, if we consciously try and think back about the things we say. (Hereinafter when referring to both phenomimes and phonomimes I will use the word 'onomatopoeia'.) People who learn Japanese as a foreign language, as they see the Japanese language from the outside, contrary to expectation, grasp the distinctive character which we are not conscious of. These kinds of people frequently point out to us that Japanese is rich in onomatopoeia. But for all that, it does not mean that this kind of phenomenon does not exist in other languages as well. In what follows, while thinking about onomatopoeia in a general way, I'd like to try and bring out the distinctive characteristics which Japanese onomatopoeia has.

Section 1 What is onomatopoeia?

Part 1 The difference between phonomimes and phenomimes

First of all, what is it that phonomimes refer to? We call words which are formed from sounds which imitate sounds of living things as well as other noises in the outside world, phonomimes. For example things like 'a dog goes bow-wow' (*wan-wan* = bow-wow) 'people are talking noisily' (*gaya-gaya* = noisily), 'I heard the sound of water pouring down' (*zâ-zâ* = the sound of water pouring down).

On the other hand we call words which symbolically represent things like movements and states (rather than sounds of the outside world) with sounds, phenomimes. For example things like 'the jewel shone brightly' (*pika-pika* = brightly), 'that man left quickly' (*sassa* = quickly) and 'I was in a daze' (*boyât* = in a daze). We want to be able to say that the essential dif-

ference between phonomimes and phenomimes is whether the input from the outside world, is from the sense of hearing or whether it is from the other senses, but there are not a few cases where it is impossible to clearly differentiate between the two. For example, the word '*koro-koro*' can convey the sound as well as the the state of rolling. While accepting this kind of point, for the time being let us proceed by talking about the two separately.

Part 2 The character of phonomimes

We gather that phonomimes imitate the sounds of living things as well as other noises in the outside world but it is not enough to simply bear a resemblance. Doing things like sounding just like popular singers, famous people and others, giving imitations of things like animal noises and other sounds and vocal mimicry³⁾ resulting in applause, no matter how true to life these performances are, we do not call these sounds phonomimes. What we call phonomimes, refer to things which are fixed in word forms used by all of us, like a dog going 'bow-wow' (*wan-wan* = bow-wow) and a cat going 'miaow' (*nyâ-nyâ* = miaow). They are determined not only by whether the sounds are close to those in the real world but whether they will become accepted usage or not. That is to say it is important that phonomimes be strictly just language. What I call 'language' here is what Saussure⁴⁾ termed '*langue*'⁵⁾ and an important characteristic of '*langue*' is that it

3) The reason that the author has put marks of emphasis next to '*monomane*' (vocal mimicry) is, I suppose, because he wishes thereby to distinguish it as clearly different from phonomimes. That is, in spite of the fact that both phonomimes and vocal mimicry imitate sounds in the outside world, the former is language, whereas the latter is not.

4) Saussure, F. de (1972) *Cours de Linguistique Générale (Ed. Critique)*, Paris: Peyot.

5) '*Langue*' = "language system, having objective reality in a specific society." ↗

becomes a common convention to people living in a co-operative system, where it is used. The fact that language signs are said to be amongst other things arbitrary and contractual is in fact based on this point. The arbitrariness of language signs means it is ordinarily thought that there is no natural or necessary connection whatever between the language signs and the things and matters that they stand for. For example there is no natural connection whatever between the word 'cat' and the animal in the actual world which is called a cat. However we may look at the animal which is called 'a cat' or listen to its meowing we will not be able to find a reason why we have to call it 'a cat'. It is merely a matter of chance that it is called 'a cat' in English. Therefore the truth of the matter is that it wouldn't matter if we called it a 'tac'. However the fact that we call it a cat is because it's been decided historically that way in the English language. Furthermore, the word 'cat' is a language sign where the concept (or meaning) and sound have become a set, but the fact that the language sign is arbitrary also indicates that there is no essential connection between the two. Whenever there is a counter argument concerning the nature of this arbitrariness of the language sign, the thing which is always brought up is phonomimes. 'Cocks going cock-a-doodle-doo' (*kokekokkô* = cock-a-doodle-doo), 'water in a brook making a murmuring sound' (*sara-sara* = a murmuring sound), in these cases we take it, do we not, that there is a direct and natural connection between the sounds of the actual world and the sounds of the words?

In Japanese a cock goes *kokekokkô*, in English it goes cock-a-doodle-doo, in French it goes *cocorico*, in German it goes *kikeriki*. All of these contain the sound 'c' or 'k'. We can say that this is precisely because the words reflect the sound in the natural world. On this point, phonomimes are

↘ This is in contrast with '*langage*' = "the phenomenon of language in general" and with '*parole*' = "individual speech performance." (Matthews (1997), p. 329)

definitely different to ordinary words and I wonder whether we may be able to think that there is some direct connection between the phonomimes and the outside world. However, above and beyond this point, I wonder whether the size of the difference of the impressions of when we hear the sound of the cock expressed in four languages is not the point we must pay attention to. That is to say, each phonomime is not a simple imitation of a sound of the actual world, each language follows its own phonetic patterns. '*Kokekokkô*', 'cock-a-doodle-doo' and '*cocorico*', each fit the phonetic patterns of the Japanese, English and French languages respectively. I think that there are many people who, when they begin studying English and learn that a cock goes cock-a-doodle-doo, not *kokekokkô*, experience a kind of astonishment. At this time we feel it is strange how it is possible to hear the sound of the cock in this way. We also think such things as do cocks in America sound different, but cocks that we see in films etc. don't sound at all different, they duly go *kokekokkô*. Having to remember that cock-a-doodle-doo means the sound of a cock is not greatly different from having to remember that '*inu*'^^ means a dog. For example let us try and translate the French sentences "*Tiens! Vlan! Ça t'apprendra!*" "Hey! *Vlan!* Now you understand!" We have left '*vlan*' as it is here, but if we read the translation we cannot really understand the meaning. Since '*vlan*' is similar to '*buran*' (dangling) I end up thinking such things as I wonder if an object is dangling but in fact it is the sound of a child beating something making a banging noise (*pishan* = with a bang). The way things are going, even if we say that we are able to hear the same sound as that in the outside world, we are surprised at how dissimilar the way of hearing something is. [The words '*kuckkucksuhr*' in German, 'cuckoo clock' in English

^^ I use this mark here and hereafter to indicate Japanese words which are neither mimetic nor names of people or places.

and '*pendule à coucou*' in French, are all made up of the words for 'cuckoo' and 'clock'. However when the clock was imported into Japan and given a name, cuckoo was changed to dove and so it became '*hatodokei*'^{^^} ('dove clock'). I imagine that the issue of phonomimes is bound up with this matter but I do not understand the real reasons.] Even if the sound in the outside world is identical to the sound of the word, we do not understand until we learn a foreign language that when we hear a sound and change it into language, we stay within the framework of that language and an expression comes about. However an interesting thing is, if we make progress with our study of the framework, we reach the point where we are able to hear the sounds of the outside world as close to this framework. In fact we can not only observe this kind of phenomenon when we learn a foreign language, we can also observe it when children acquire language. In the past I heard the following story. When a mother took her child to a farm where cattle are raised and showed her youngster a cow for the first time, the cow mooed. Then the child imitated the sound of the cow but he / she didn't say '*mô*' (moo). Thereupon the mother said, "It wasn't like that, was it? The cow goes '*mô*', doesn't she? From that time on the child ended up by only saying '*mô*' for the sound that a cow makes. Phonomimes which imitate sounds of the outside world are also a part of language which is one of the social sign systems. They definitely have to be learned.

The fact is that within a language, in every region there are differences in this language system, that is, differences in dialect so we can easily understand that dialects ought to affect phonomimes as well. People might think that all over Japan cows probably go '*mô-mô*', owls go '*hō-hō*' (tu-whit, tu-whoo) and sparrows go '*chun-chun*' (tweet-tweet), but that is not the case. The dialect distribution for the sound that cows make, appears in

Volume 5 of 'A Linguistic Atlas of Japan'⁶⁾ and the dialect distribution for the sound that owls and sparrows make, appears in Volume 6. If we look briefly there at the sound that cows make, in Yamaguchi, Hiroshima, Shimane, Oita, Nara and Shizuoka prefectures, the sound takes the form of 'môn' or 'môn-môn'. In the Tôhoku region and in parts of Kyûshû, Shikoku and Mie prefecture, it takes the form of 'mê' or 'mê-mê'. Furthermore in parts of the Noto Peninsula, it takes the form of 'û' or 'û-û'. If you go to the southern tip of Okinawa prefecture to places such as Ishigaki Island and Iriomote Island there are also the forms 'nbô' or 'nbô-nbô' or again 'nbû' or 'nbû-nbû'. There is a region where cows go 'mê-mê' but for me I end up thinking, I wonder why on earth they don't mistake it for a goat in this region? Presumably goats there must make a different sound to 'mê-mê'.

Phonomimes which are once decided by usage in this way, become, in the same way as ordinary words, very difficult to change. A typical example of this is that despite the fact that the sounds of the outside world, which are supposed to be the origin of phonomimes, end up changing, it is probably the case that phonomimes remain in their original form. For example, the sound of a plane is like this. Previously as propeller planes used to be the main sort, people called the sound of a plane flying 'bûn-bûn' (whirr). For me, since I was brought up being told this, the sound of a plane is firmly fixed in my mind as 'bûn-bûn'. However, on one occasion, I became aware that I was saying to a child, "Look a plane is going 'bûn-bûn', and felt it was strange. Now most planes are jets, it would probably be more correct to say 'gô' (roar), instead. As you know, steam locomotives too have disappeared but we see children holding electric locomotives etc.

6) Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyûsho (National Language Research Institute) *Nihon Gengo Chizu Dai 5 Shû* [1972] *Dai 6 Shû* [1975]. (A Linguistic Atlas of Japan Vol. 5 [1972] & Vol. 6 [1975])

saying *'poppô'* (puff-puff) as they play with them and if we also think of other sounds around us, similar kinds of things often happen.

On the other hand, in the case of something appearing which has never existed before, a considerable amount of time is required before the sound takes root as a phonomime. Moreover whether a sound takes root as a phonomime or not is also related to whether a culture accepts it or not. When the restoration of diplomatic relations between Japan and China was brought about, the eagerly awaited panda was presented to Japan by China. At this time, Japanese newspapers made a great fuss and on one occasion the topic of debate became 'what on earth is the sound which pandas make?' Things like, 'I wonder if they go *'wan-wan'* (bow-wow) were written, but to this day it has not been decided how a panda's sound should be rendered as a phonomime and what's more it will probably not be decided in the future.

Part 3 The character of phenomimes

As I also mentioned previously, phenomimes are words which symbolically represent in sound, things in the actual world other than sounds themselves. However, as in the case of phonomimes, I don't mean that there is a direct connection with the outside world. The connection is indirect. And as you know I use the term 'symbolically' but we can say that phenomimes represent things by converting the stimuli from the senses, other than that of hearing, for example, vision, touch etc., into sound. This mechanism is called synesthesia. The connection between colour and sound is well known as an example where one of the five senses is converted in this way to another of the senses. At one time, Disney's 'Fantasia', a film using music, was much spoken of as having made clever use of this mechanism of synesthesia. We can say that phenomimes have

an indirect connection with the outside world through this kind of synesthesia. However if we compare ordinary words like 'desk', 'fun' etc. with the things which they stand for and with which they have no connection whatever, we can say that there is some connection between phenomimes and things in the outside world, although it is indirect. For example, Ullmann (1973)⁷⁾ gives the following example. He told ten non-English-speaking French children that there were two words 'gleam' and 'gloom' and that one indicated light and the other darkness. When asked which one they thought was suitable for indicating light, all of them gave the correct answer, that is 'gleam'. That is to say, the fact is that this shows that it is the 'i' sound in the word 'gleam' which conveys sharpness and brightness and this will be the case for anybody. If we compare onomatopoeia to paintings, phenomimes would probably be abstract paintings as opposed to phonomimes which would be representational paintings. Consequently if we compare phenomimes in various languages, the differences will be greater than with phonomimes and we will frequently have no idea at all what the word means if we are only told its sound. For example, the Swiss linguist, Henri Frei carried out experiments in which he told non-Japanese-speaking students some Japanese onomatopoeic words to find out how they understood them and published the results in '*Cinquante onomatopées japonaises*.'⁸⁾ Most of these were phonomimes and of these several were correctly guessed, but of the phenomimes, not one was correctly guessed. (Of a total of 50 examples of onomatopoeia, only 15.5% were correctly guessed.)

Phenomimes, like phonomimes, differ very much in dialects. In Nôda

7) Ullmann, S. (1973) *Meaning and Style*, Oxford: Blackwell, p. 14.

8) Frei, H. (1970) 'Cinquante onomatopées japonaises' in D. Cohen (Ed.) *Mélanges Marcel Cohen*, The Hague: Mouton.

Tayoko's 'The Vocabulary of Gonohe in Aomori Prefecture'⁹⁾ there is a chapter entitled 'Adverbs and Phenomimes' in which we come across some words which people who don't know the dialect of this region would be unable to guess. For example, I wonder if you know what kind of situation is being indicated by "*otsukai*^^ *ni*^^ (on an errand) *kutên* (?)¹⁰⁾ *to*^^ (in the manner of) *hashitte*^^ *itte*^^ *kita*^^ (ran there and back)?" It indicates the situation of running as fast as possible. In "*itsumademo*^^ (indefinitely) *maya-maya* (?) *shite*^^ (do) *urusai*^^ (annoying)," 'maya-maya' in this case, refers to 'wandering about'. Undoubtedly there are many cases where one thinks that the word really does express the feeling well. For example people say '*nerott*' (?) in "*iyaiya*^^ (oh no!) *doro*^^ (mud) *kaesa*^^ (?) *nerotto* (?) *haitta*^^ (put into)," when they put their feet etc. in mud, but we understand things like this very well.¹¹⁾

Section 2 Some aspects of onomatopoeia

Part 1 The matter of the language level

In looking at the characteristics of onomatopoeia, let us first look at what kind of language level onomatopoeia appear at. We can easily imagine that the rate at which onomatopoeia appear probably varies considerably, de-

9) Nôda Tayoko (1963) *Aomori Ken Gonohe Goi* (The Vocabulary of Gonohe in Aomori Prefecture), Published by the author.

10) '*Kutên*' as well as '*maya-maya*' and '*nerott*' ('*nerotto*' = '*nerott*' with the particle '*to*') which appear a few lines later are all mimetic words in dialect, which are consequently not to be found in ordinary dictionaries. '*Kaesa*' which appears in front of '*nerott*' is another dialect word.

11) The reason that the author says that it is easy for all Japanese to understand why the dialect word '*nerott*' should mean 'the sound of putting your feet in mud' is because there are many similar non-dialect onomatopoeia which have closely related meanings. For example '*nura-nura*' (sticky, slimy), '*nuru-nuru*' (slippery, slimy), '*nechi-nechi*', '*neto-neto*' and '*neba-neba*' (all three mean 'sticky').

pending on the difference in the language level. That is to say, according to the kind of character of onomatopoeia seen in the preceding section, since onomatopoeia make expressions possible which appeal to the senses and which possess graphic concreteness and vigour, it is probably natural that they are frequently used on the kinds of occasions where these kinds of effects are manifested. Grootaers¹²⁾ writes in the following way of the tendency that Japanese have for frequently using onomatopoeia in particular.

"It would probably surprise you that the constant stream of phonomimes or phonomimes among the words issuing forth from people speaking on the Tokyo trains is as great as the number of gestures which we see Italians make when speaking on the streets of Rome. In other words, gestures used with foreign languages = phonomimes and phonomimes in Japanese."

Now let's look at an example from our everyday conversation. I have chosen a part of a dialogue between Endô Shûsaku and Adachi Tôko¹³⁾. You should bear in mind that this is not conversation between children nor a 'here doggy' style of conversation in which adults use child language with children.

Shûsaku: They say you shouldn't walk like a slinking cat and what's more you shouldn't stomp around (*dosun-dosun* = with heavy steps) either. That is difficult for a child to learn isn't it?

Tôko: You mean this kind of thing. When you're eating pickled

12) Grootaers, W. A. & Shibata Takeshi (1967) *Goyaku* (Mistranslations), Tokyo: Sanseidô, p. 16. [Grootaers was a lecturer specializing in dialectology at Sophia University, Tokyo and Shibata was a professor of linguistics at Tokyo University at the time that this chapter was written.]

13) Endô Shûsaku & Adachi Tôko (1973) *Gûtara Taidan* (Idle Talk), Tokyo: Mainichi Shinbun Co., pp. 164~5. [Endô (1923~) is an influential Catholic novelist who has received virtually every major literary award in Japan.]

radish.....

Shûsaku: So it means that you munch (*pari-pari* = sound of chewing) doesn't it?

Tôko: That's right.

Shûsaku: I used to slurp (*jâ-jâ* = sound of water pouring down and splashing) down my tea-flavoured rice¹⁴⁾ and naturally my father scolded me.

Tôko: (with an embarrassed look) Things like eating with your mouth half open....

Shûsaku: So does that mean you chatter (*pecha-pecha* = sound of continuous, noisy speech) with people around you with your mouth full? Well, you are completely different to the image we have of you from T.V., aren't you? So it means that the commercial 'thick and heavy' is complete nonsense, doesn't it? You also do things like dash about in a flurry (*bata-batatt* = in a hasty way), slamming (*batan* = with a bang) the toilet door shut, don't you?

Tôko: Yes.

In the same way, there is probably no doubt that in our everyday conversation too, there are many onomatopoeic words. Even in spoken language when conversation is sometimes formal and sometimes lectures and talks etc. are heavy-going, it is certain that there is a decrease in the amount of onomatopoeia. However, even if phonomimes stop appearing we may probably say that it is seldom, if ever, that phenomimes fail to appear. We cannot imagine words like '*hakkiri*' (clearly), '*yukkuri*' (slowly) and '*sukkari*'

14) '*Ochazuke*' (tea-flavoured rice) is a simple meal or snack consisting of a bowl of rice with small pieces of (dried) salmon and seaweed sprinkled on top over which Japanese tea is poured.

(completely), not appearing.

They are also used frequently in written Japanese. But we can say that it is natural from the concreteness and sensual effect which onomatopoeia have that most will be in literary works such as poetry and novels.

There are many in literary works in European languages too, but not as many as in Japanese. Even if we say this, it is probably necessary to bear in mind the difference that in Japanese, onomatopoeia is either used as it is, as a separate form, which imitates the outside world, or else frequently used adverbially with the particle *to* (in the manner of). This is in contrast to European languages, where onomatopoeia, particularly phenomimes, frequently take the form of verbs. These kinds of verbs are used fairly frequently but their function as onomatopoeia is declining somewhat. For example, in Japanese too, if we compare the onomatopoeic adverb *yura-yura* (swaying) with the verb *yureru*¹⁵⁾ (shake) we immediately know which is more effective as onomatopoeia¹⁵⁾. It is this same difference that I've been talking about between Japanese onomatopoeia and onomatopoeia in European languages. Let us look at the case of Japanese novels in translation. Both examples are from Seidensticker and Nasu's "From Real Japanese Expressions to Real English Expressions."¹⁶⁾

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- 15) To Japanese *yura-yura* is more effective as a mimetic word because the duplication of a sound pattern is very evocative. Non-Japanese-speaking native English speakers might also choose *yura-yura* as the more effective mimetic form even if they were not told the meanings of *yureru* or *yura-yura*. This is because there are also reduplications or partial reduplications of sound in English mimetic words e.g. 'hee-hee' or 'ding-dong'.
- 16) Seidensticker, E. & Nasu (1962) *Nihongorashii Hyôgen kara Eigorashii Hyôgen e* (From Real Japanese Expressions to Real English Expressions), Tokyo: Baifukan, pp. 84 & 146. [Seidensticker (1921~) is Emeritus Professor of Japanese at Columbia University and has translated many literary works including 'The Tale of Genji'.]

“She’s working here?”

“She brings sake, and then stands there staring in at us, with her eyes flashing. I suppose you like her sort of eyes.” (from ‘Snow Country’ by Kawabata Yasunari¹⁷⁾)

Here “*jūitto* ([onomatopoeic adverb]¹⁸⁾ ‘fixedly’) *miten*^^ ([verb] ‘looking at’)” has been rendered as ‘staring in at us’ and “*kira-kira* ([onomatopoeic adverb] ‘twinkling’) *me*^^ *o*^^ (with eyes) *hikarashite*^^ ([verb] ‘shining’)” as ‘with her eyes flashing.’ Usually ‘flashing’ is thought of as a phenomime but not ‘staring’. But we should pay attention to the point that they become simply verbs (in the present participle) in English.

“Outside the great temple, the streets of the old capital lay before us as though shot down by the rays of the midsummer sun. A streetcar, vaguely yellow, wobbled uncertainly down the tracks.” (from ‘The Misshapen Ones’ by Takeda Taijun¹⁹⁾)

Here, “*hissori to* ([onomatopoeic adverb] ‘silent’) *yokotawatte ita*^^ ([verb] ‘was lying down’)” has been rendered simply by the word ‘lay’. “*Yota-yota to* ([onomatopoeic adverb] ‘unsteadily’) *yurenagara*^^ ([verb] ‘shaking’)” has been translated as ‘wobbled uncertainly’, where ‘wobble’ seems to be best thought of as a kind of phenomime and things like ‘*yoromeku*’^^ ([verb]-‘stagger’) seem to fit this interpretation exactly. However as for similar things to this, in the original Japanese too, there is

17) Kawabata Yasunari’s *Yukiguni* (Snow Country) was published in various versions between 1935 and 1948. [The novelist Kawabata, (1899~1972), was, in 1968, the first Japanese to be awarded the Nobel Prize in literature.]

18) For the sake of clarity I have identified Japanese words appearing in the following three paragraphs as either ‘onomatopoeic adverb’ or ‘verb’.

19) Takeda Taijun (1950) *Igyô no mono* (The Misshapen Ones). [The prolific novelist, essayist and playwright Takeda (1912~1976) was, like his father, a Buddhist priest.]

*'boyaketa'*²⁰ ([verb]-'faded') and *'yurenagara'*²⁰ ([verb]-'wobbled'). Even in Japanese, in things like essays and articles other than literary works such as poetry and novels, the use of onomatopoeia is decreasing, and yet phenomimes appear. The following is a passage from Suzuki Takao's 'Language and Society'²¹.

"In contrast with this, in the case of archaic words or technical terms in foreign languages, we experience words as a result of them being objectified and undergoing abstraction. That is to say, it comes about that a definition is assigned in advance. Consequently, words belonging to this kind of vocabulary, even if they are taught once or twice, people don't reach the point where they are able to use the words perfectly correctly. And what's more, time and experience are necessary for us to use them really perfectly (*pittari* = perfectly). Children raised from infancy in villages in the mountains, where deer live, are able to give a detailed account of the life of a deer. Just by glimpsing (*'chiratt'* = glimpsing) a spot where one is hiding in a forest, they know that it's a deer."

From what we have seen, it appears that things like business writing and law related writing might be about the only kinds of writing in Japanese in which onomatopoeia do not appear. For example in the article 'Concerning the Process of Creation of Laws' by the legal scholar Minemura Teruo²²

20) '*Yoromeku*' (stagger), '*boyakeru*' ([*'boyaketa'* = past tense] become faded) and '*yureru*' ([*'yurenagara'* = 'while wobbling'] wobble) are related to the onomatopoeic adverbs '*yoro-yoro*' (staggering), '*boya-boya*' (absent-minded) and '*yura-yura*' (wobbling) respectively.

21) Suzuki Takao (1975) *Kotoba to Shakai* (Language and Society), Tokyo: Chûôkôronsha, p. 29. [Suzuki (1926~) was a professor of linguistics at Keiô University at the time that this chapter was written.]

22) Minemura Teruo (1976) '*Hô no Seisei Katei ni tsuite*' (Concerning the Process of Creation of Laws), *Mita Hyôron*, February. [Minemura (1906~) was a law professor at Keio University at the time that this chapter was written.]

I did not come across even one word which falls into the category of onomatopoeia. In the political and financial sections of a newspaper, there are few onomatopoeia but in human interest stories there are many. The following examples were found among headlines in the evening edition of the Asahi Newspaper of February 21 1976. All are from human interest stories.

(1) “The Lockheed Scandal²³⁾: one more suspicious thing about a receipt.”
“The same seal used for both ID Company and Kodama?” “The same person writes out the receipts at the same time?” “Special order - perfect (*pittari* = perfect) fit.”

(2) “Examinees rush (*dott* = with a rush) to Tokyo.”

(3) “Three Japanese serows.”²⁴⁾ “Taking a snapshot (*pachiri* = with a click) near a village at the foot of the Tateyama Mountains.”²⁵⁾

In this way, as onomatopoeia express things by appealing directly to the senses, it is probably natural that they appear very frequently in advertising copy.

“Radiant sun - you too can dazzle (*kira-kira* = dazzlingly).” (A spring advertisement for a department store.)

“A rapidly growing (*suku-suku* = growing vigorously) trust. Save in amounts starting from Y5,000 every month.” (A bank’s advertisement.)

“A naughty boy’s washing - a little bit (*choppiri* = a little) full (*pon* = full).”

“Everyone’s washing - ever so (*dossari* = large amounts) full (*pon* = full).”

23) The Lockheed Scandal of 1976 involved the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation bribing politicians in order to sell its aircraft. Businessmen and top politicians, including then Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei were prosecuted.

24) The Japanese serow, a protected species, resembles a mountain goat.

25) The Tateyama Mountains are a group of three mountains in eastern Toyama Prefecture in central Honshû. The group of mountains is considered one of Japan’s three holy mountains together with Mt. Fuji and Mt. Haku.

(Advertisement for a fully automatic washing machine.)

Part 2 Distinctive features in terms of morphology

Next I've decided to look at the distinctive features of the form which Japanese onomatopoeia takes and I'd like to classify things here in a general way. Furthermore let us also try to think as much as possible about the relation between the form and the meaning. First I'd like you to look at the following examples.

Yesterday was a fine dry (*karatt* = fine and dry) day.

On the following day the weather cleared up (*karari* = the same meaning as *karatt* but a little less emphatic).

When I kicked the can it made a clanking sound (*karan* = clank or clatter).

When dad heard this he laughed loudly (*kara-kara* = the sound of loud laughter).

During a power cut when the (electric) bell didn't work he tolled (*karan-karan* = sound of bell) the bell.

I could hear the clatter (*kara-koro* = clattering) of wooden clogs.

The church bells rang out (*karan-koron* = the sound of a bell).

He banged (*garatt* = bang) open the door and went inside.

Thereupon that person completely (*garari* = completely) changed his attitude.

The room looked bare (*garan* = empty).

It seemed deserted (*garân* = deserted; emphatic form of *garan*). Not a soul was about.

When I went home, first of all I gargled noisily (*gara-gara* = noisily).

At that moment the front door clattered (*gara-garatt* = clattered; emphatic form of *gara-gara*) open.

He rang the bell (*garan-garan* = sound of bell) at the Shinto shrine.

If we look through these kinds of examples, we become aware that it might be possible to think of them as being variations on the basic element of *kara**. Amanuma Yasushi in his Dictionary of Onomatopoeia²⁶⁾, though suggesting the possibility of a line of thinking which is similar to this, does not adopt it as a system of classification. However I think I'll proceed with this line of thinking here because even if there are some problems, I think that this line of thinking is pretty effective for taking a general view of the distinctive morphological features of Japanese onomatopoeia. The patterns which produce all kinds of variations, then, consist of the following kinds of things:- long consonant sounds²⁷⁾, 'n' sounds²⁸⁾, long vowel sounds²⁹⁾, 'ri'

* I use this mark here and hereafter to indicate that this is a root form of mimetic words, but is not itself a mimetic word.

26) Amanuma Yasushi (ed.) (1974) *Giongo Gitaigo Jiten* (A Dictionary of Mimetic Words), Tokyo: Tôkyôdô, pp. 34-5.

27) '*Tsumeru oto*' (a long consonant sound) literally means a sound which is cut short. The technical term for this in Japanese is '*sokuon*'. Tsujimura ([1996], p. 16) translates it as 'a long consonant sound (or geminate)'. Hamano ([1998], p.13) uses the term 'syllable final moraic obstruent'. There seems to be a peculiarity in describing the sound as both cut short and long, however if we take the example of '*pittari*' (exactly), we can hear the sound immediately after the mora '*pi*' cut short, but we can also see that the effect of this is to double the consonant.

28) The technical word for '*haneru oto*' (an 'n' sound) in Japanese is '*hatsuon*' and in English is 'syllable-final moraic nasal'. I suppose that the reason that Izumi has avoided using the technical word here and in the previous and following cases and has written '*haneru*' in *kana* as opposed to *kanji* is because the writing is aimed at a non-specialist reader. ('*Hane{ru}*' / '*hatsu*' is also not one of the 1,945 *jôyô kanji*.) The reason for using *katakana* rather than *hiragana* might have been because he wished to indicate that he was talking not about syllable-final moraic nasals in general but about their use and the meanings associated with their use in mimetic words i.e. a special, narrow use of the word. Following Izumi, then, I have gone for a non-technical word.

29) '*Hiku oto*' = 'long vowel sounds'. (Tsujimura [1996], p.19). The technical ↗

sounds, reduplications, partial changes of sounds and the contrast between voiced and voiceless sounds.

Basic Form

In the basic form there is one syllable (one beat) or two syllables (two beats). There are forms with more syllables than this but the two syllable form occurs most frequently. However the number of words which are used as onomatopoeia with only this basic form is not so great.

For example with the previous example of *kara** even though the forms '*karatt*', and '*kara-kara*' among others are used, the form of *kara** itself, is not used.

Probably about the only use of the one syllable form, as it is, is '*tsu*' as in 'he approached silently and abruptly' (*tsu* = silently and abruptly). There is also '*fu*' as in 'he thought of it by chance' (*fu* = by chance), but as Amanuma³⁰⁾ notes, since it is always accompanied by '*to*' it is considered unreasonable to treat '*fu*' independently. The number of two-syllable forms being used as they are is greater than the number of one-syllable forms. Examples of these are: 'he left in a huff' (*pui* = in a huff), 'he threw it away without a second thought' (*poi* = without a second thought), 'he guessed it right' (*pita* = exactly), 'he got angry' (*katt* = angry). The basic forms are not used by themselves but many of these forms become the basis of the variations. These are things like *kara**, *doka**, *korī** & *doshi**. Long consonant sounds, '*n*' sounds, long vowel sounds, '*ri*' sounds etc. which are contained in things like '*katt*' (with a bang), '*gun*' (tugging), '*kā*' (cawing [of crows]), '*korī*' (sound of scratching), are not essential elements from which we derive the variations and we should probably think of them as essential

↘ word for '*hiku oto*' in Japanese is '*en-on*'.

30) Amanuma, op. cit., pp. 35~6.

elements which make up the basic form. That is to say, if we think of them as essential elements which produce variations, we end up having to think of *ko** and *gu** etc. as the basic form but this is a little unnatural. We are certainly able to make forms such as '*kon-kon*' (a knocking sound), '*kori-kori*' (a scraping sound), '*gun-gun*' (rapidly), '*gutt*' (tightly) from *ko** and *gu** etc. However even if things like '*kon-kon*' and '*kori-kori*' as well as '*gun-gun*' and '*gutt*' have a similar meaning as sound symbols due to *ko** and *gu** respectively, the similarity is not as great as that between '*korott*' (sudden single rolling action), '*korori*' (single slowish rolling action), '*koron*' (single rolling action with a feeling of momentum) and '*koro-koro*' (continuous rolling action) etc. Consequently it is thought that it might be better to think of long consonant sounds, '*n*' sounds, long vowel sounds, '*ri*' sounds etc. as (a) essential elements which are included within the basic form and (b) essential elements which produce variations and are used as a kind of affix. However it is probably as well to pay attention to the fact that for both, the effect they have as sound symbols is very similar. Furthermore when it comes to the basic form which has many syllables, the 4-syllable form stands out. There are many things which combine with '*n*' sounds or long consonant sounds or '*ri*' sounds as in things like '*sunnnari*' (slender), '*unzari*' (being sick and tired of something), '*zunguri*' (short and fat), '*kikkari*' (precisely), '*gakkari*' (feeling dispirited), '*sappari*' (feeling refreshed). However, among things which have this same form, we should take care as it is possible to think that the basic form of things like '*zanburi*' (splashing) and '*jinwari*' (slowly) is *zabu** and *jiwa** and that the basic form of things like '*kossori*' (stealthily) and '*nossori*' (sedately) is *koso** and *noso**.

The long consonant sound

Due to the fact that a long consonant sound is added to the basic form or

to a form in which the basic form has been developed, it is possible to assign the phonetic value of a sharp sudden stop to a word. This is effective in representing things like the momentariness, speed and uniqueness of sounds and movements etc.

*kara** → '*karatt*' (single sound of one hard, thin object striking another one), *beta** → '*betatt*' (state of something sticking easily), *dosa** → '*dosatt*' (with a thud), '*gô*' (single rumbling sound) → '*gôtt*' (rumbling), '*korori*' (single, slow rolling action) → '*kororitt*' (without effort), '*kuru-kuru*' (rotation), → '*kuru-kurutt*' (fast rotation) or '*kurutt-kurutt*' (rotating movement with a short pause after each rotation).

But according to reasons previously mentioned, it seems better to think of '*katt*' (state of anger), '*patt*' (suddenly), '*sesse*' (diligently), '*totto*' (hurriedly), etc. as the basic form containing the long consonant sound. However we can say that the effect which the long consonant sound has on the meaning is what these words have in common. '*To*' is always attached to onomatopoeia which end with this long consonant sound, when they are used in a sentence. Also, the long consonant sound does not appear either immediately before or after an '*n*' sound.

The '*n*' sound

As the '*n*' sound is pleasing to the ear, it is effective in emphasizing the good qualities, resonance and strength of sounds in the outside world, as well as the rhythmicity, strength and lightness of situations and actions etc.

*kara** → '*karan*' (single ring of a bell), *koro** → '*koron*' (single rolling action with the feeling of momentum), *kachi** → '*kachin*' (with a click or clink), '*kerori*' (soon) → '*kerorin*' (as if nothing had happened), '*doki-doki*' (pounding) → '*dokin-dokin*' (louder and slower throbbing than *doki-doki*), '*gacha-gacha*' (clattering) → '*gachan-gachan*' (jangling) or '*gacha-gachan*'

(rattling).

There are many onomatopoeia for which the 'n' sound should be regarded as one essential element of the basic form. These are things like '*kan*' ('ding' of a small bell), '*pon*' (a pop), '*ton*' (a knock or tap), '*kon*' (a knock) and '*pan*' (a pop or bang). But the effect they have as sound symbols is similar. The 'n' sound does not appear directly before or after a long consonant sound.

The long vowel sound

A change to a long vowel sound expresses the fact that things like sounds, actions and situations are long or take a long time or are continuing etc. We might be able to say that this is an example where we can clearly understand that there is some connection between the sound being lengthened and the thing which this symbolizes.

'*fuwa*' (floating) → '*fuwâ*' (extended floating), '*fuwari*' (floating) → '*fuwâri*' or '*fûwari*' (both mean extended floating), '*don*' (boom) → '*dôn*' (same sound as '*don*' but resounding longer), '*zudon*' (bang) → '*zudôn*' (same sound as '*zudon*' but resounding longer), '*ton-ton*' (knocking) → '*tôn-ton*' or '*ton-tôn*' or '*tôn-tôn*' (same sound as '*ton-ton*' but resounding longer), '*jiwa-jiwa*' (by slow degrees) → '*jiwa-jiwâ*' or '*jiwâ-jiwâ*' (by slower degrees than '*jiwa-jiwa*').

Here it is also better to think that the long vowel sound is included in the basic form as an essential element. We can say that examples of this are '*kâ*' in 'the crows cawed' (*kâ* = caw) and '*gô*' in 'the train roared' (*gô* = roar). The long vowel sound does not appear immediately after a long consonant sound or an 'n' sound. Also, in cases other than forms involving reduplication, rather than ending with a long vowel sound, there are many onomatopoeia which end with a long consonant sound attached to the long

vowel sound, like '*niitt*' (a self-satisfied smile), '*jâtt*' (short sizzling sound).

The '*ri*' sound

We might be able to say that the '*ri*' sound frequently expresses a certain degree of softness, smoothness and a feeling of being somewhat slow.

*pasa** → '*pasari*' (dry), *tsuru** → '*tsururi*' (single slurping sound), *noso** → '*nosori*' (the state of looming), '*koto-koto*' (pattering) → '*kotori-kotori*' (light tapping), *koro** → '*korori*' (single, slowish rolling action) → '*kororin*' (gradual cessation of rolling).

Here too it is also best to think of the '*ri*' sound as part of the basic form. Examples of this are things like *kori** in '*kori-kori*' (crunchy), and *kiri** in '*kiri-kiri*' (squeaking). The '*ri*' sound does not appear immediately after a long consonant sound or an '*n*' sound.

Reduplication

This refers to the repetition of the same sounds (syllable repetition) in things like '*kara-kara*' (bone-dry), '*koro-koro*' (sound of small, round object rolling), '*boso-boso*' (muttering), '*kuyo-kuyo*' (brood over), '*pyon-pyon*' (jumping), '*dosun-dosun*' (crashing sound) and in Japanese onomatopoeia, words which take this form predominate. But then it is not only in Japanese that onomatopoeia frequently take this form. For example in French too, things like '*ouaoua*' (bow-wow) [a dog's bark], '*glouglou*' (gurgling) [the sound of water] exist. It seems we can say that the form of reduplication in onomatopoeia representing repetition of things like sounds and movements is fairly universal and in these cases, we might be able to say that linguistically the number of times the reduplicative form is allowed to represent the repetition is twice. But then in the case of emphasizing the frequency of repetition of things like sounds and movements there are also

forms in which the sound is repeated three times or more as in *'kara-kara-kara'* (clatter), *'kuru-kuru-kuru'* (round and round) and *'sassassassatt'* (quickly). However if people say, 'is there always an automatic connection between the form of repetitions in these kinds of words and the circumstances in the actual world', the answer is no. We need to be careful because there are some completely arbitrary cases, depending on the language. Katô Hidetoshi³¹⁾ writes that in the Polynesian language, words with special meanings are frequently created by repeating the same sound and gives examples such as *'kaukau'* (a meal), *'wikiwiki'* (hurry), *'poipoi'* (put on a lid), *'horohoro'* (walk), as well as *'fumufumunukunukuapuapuaa'*, which is the name of a beautiful fish. There is no correspondence at all with the meaning here like there is with Japanese onomatopoeia.

The form of reduplication like that seen in onomatopoeia is also found in very ordinary words in Japanese, for example things like 'I put off my work' (*nobi-nobi*^^ = delay); 'If we consider the matter well ...' (*yoku-yoku*^^ = very carefully); 'dress as one pleases' (*omoi-omoi*^^ = as one pleases); 'numerous achievements' (*kazu-kazu*^^ = numerous); 'range of mountains' (*yama-yama*^^ = mountains). And it seems we can say that reduplication of form is a characteristic which can also be thought of as a general tendency of Japanese vocabulary, not just of onomatopoeia.

Partial change of sound

Among the onomatopoeia which take the form of reduplication, as we have seen above, there are also forms in which a part of the sound changes.

'kara-koro' (clattering), *'gasa-goso'* (rustling), *'shidoro-modoro'* (confused)

31) Katô Hidetoshi (1974) *Honoruru no Machikado kara* (From the Street Corners of Honolulu), Tokyo: Chûôkôronsha, pp. 47~8. [Katô (1930~) was a professor of sociology at Gakushûin University at the time that this chapter was written.]

Christian J. A. Lister: An Annotated Translation of a Part of "The Characteristics of Onomatopoeia" by Izumi Kuniyoshi

'*gatan-goton*' (rumbling noise), '*kata-koto*' (rattling), '*atafuta*' (hastily), '*chira-hora*' (here and there), '*musha-kusha*' (feeling of aggravation), '*norari-kurari*', (noncommittal).

If we compare the number of these forms with those consisting of simple reduplication, there are far fewer of the former, but there are still quite a number. In this form examples of changes of 'a' to 'o' are seen fairly frequently.

The contrast between voiced and voiceless sounds

One more phenomenon which is seen as salient in Japanese onomatopoeia is the contrast between voiced and voiceless sounds.

'*katatt*' (clatter) / '*gatatt*' (bump); '*kii*' (screech) / '*gii*' (creak); '*kara-kara*' (clattering) / '*gara-gara*' (crashing); '*koto-koto*' (tapping) / '*goto-goto*' (rattling); '*sara-sara*' (smoothly) / '*zara-zara*' (rough); '*kasa-koso*' (quietly) / '*gasa-goso*' (noisily); '*shittori*' (moist i.e. water within the object) / '*jittori*' (moist on the surface); '*suru-suru*' (smooth) / '*zuru-zuru*' (dragging on, drawn out).

Moreover there are also examples where a semi-voiced sound i.e. 'p' is added.

'*hara-hara*' (state of small, light, thin objects fluttering down) / '*para-para*' (sound of small, fine objects falling and scattering) / '*bara-bara*' (sound of grain-like objects falling and scattering).

'*horo-horo*' (state of small teardrops falling softly) / '*poro-poro*' (state of tears tumbling down) / '*boro-boro*' (same meaning as '*poro-poro*' but a little heavier).

'*futt-futt*' (consecutive sounds of exhaling lightly e.g. sighs) / '*putt-putt*' (consecutive sounds of small amounts of air passing through a small opening e.g. puffs) / '*butt-butt*' (consecutive sounds of air rushing out through a

small opening e.g. farts).

'hera-hera' (to talk meaninglessly) / *'pera-pera'* (to speak frivolously without a break) / *'bera-bera'* (to jabber away vigorously without a break).

'patan' (swat; brush off) / *'batan'* (shut with a bang).

'pettari' (lightly stained) / *'bettari'* (heavily stained).

If we include *'p'* here as a voiceless sound and think broadly about the voiced / voiceless contrast and its effect on the meaning, it turns out as follows.

The impression we receive from voiced and voiceless sounds is that voiceless sounds are light and voiced sounds are heavy. So, voiced sounds, which are used as a contrast to voiceless sounds seem to have a tendency to represent things like heavy, dull, loud sounds when representing sounds of the outside world. When representing actions and states, voiced sounds seem to have a tendency to represent strong, large, heavy or violent things etc. Besides, as there is a tendency for us not to receive a good impression aurally from these voiced sounds either, there are occasions when they sometimes represent disagreeable sounds and sometimes cause negative meanings to arise from actions and states. We can frequently see this, especially with phenomimes. For example with things like *'shittori'* / *'jittori'*; *'pettari'* / *'bettari'*; *'pera-pera'* / *'bera-bera'*; *'kira-kira'* / *'gira-gira'*, the voiced sound is appropriate in the case of there being no pleasant feelings arising in the speaker when he looks at the outside world. In these cases, it is necessary that the indicated meaning of both the onomatopoeia using a voiced sound and that using a voiceless sound belong to the identical category. The point we should pay attention to is the fact that the phonetic contrast also comes to be a contrast of meaning is an aspect of the emotional meaning. For example both *'pettari'* and *'bettari'* mean the state of something sticking. *'Bettari'*, though has the sense of

the thing appearing dirty. And with the contrast between '*shittori*' and '*jittori*', both mean the state of being damp but '*jittori*' makes us think of things like sweat and has the feeling of dirtiness about it. In other words, in spite of objectively indicating the same kind of state, this contrast of voiced and voiceless sounds causes an opposition to be set up between positive and negative feelings arising from humans' emotions and their appraisals of the state. But then, the matter of voiced sounds (especially a series of them) as opposed to voiceless sounds, sounding unpleasant might not concern only speakers of Japanese. However an important thing is that the contrast between voiced and voiceless sounds in Japanese onomatopoeia is an example in which the impression which this kind of phonetic value gives to human beings has been positively adopted by the linguistic system³²⁾ as a thing which bestows differences of meaning. For that very reason words like '*gorotsuki*' (hooligan) which is derived from the contrast between '*koro-koro*' and '*goro-goro*' become words with negative meanings. In common with the case of the previously mentioned form of reduplication, this contrast of voiced and voiceless sounds is not limited to onomatopoeia but also extends to very ordinary vocabulary. This is made clear by Suzuki Takao in his paper 'Concerning the Relationship between the Alternation of Phonemes and Semantic Differentiation'.³³⁾ Examples of this are things like

32) The reason that the author has put marks of emphasis next to '*gengo taikei no naka ni*' (by the linguistic system) is, I think, to stress that it is just because the voiceless / voiced sounds found in Japanese mimetic words, which affect humans in particular ways, have been adopted **into the linguistic system** to indicate positive / negative meanings that words in the general vocabulary also come to be affected in the same way.

33) Suzuki Takao (1962) 'Onin Kôtai to Igi Bunka no Kankei ni tsuite - iwayuru Seidakuon no Tairitsu o Chûshin toshite' (Concerning the Relationship between the Alternation of Phonemes and Semantic Differentiation - with Particular Reference to the Contrast between So-called Voiced and Unvoiced Sounds), *Gengo* ↗

'*tama*'^{^^} (ball) & '*dama*'^{^^} ('the ball which forms when you dissolve flour etc. and which you are inconvenienced by', or 'the ball which forms when hairs of a sweater harden'), '*kani*'^{^^} (crab) & '*gani*'^{^^} ('crab's lungs' – it is said that one must not eat them) '*hareru*'^{^^}, (disappear) & '*bareru*'^{^^}, (be brought to light), '*afureru*'^{^^}, (be flooded with, have a glut of) & '*abureru*'^{^^}, (fail to do something) and '*hateru*'^{^^} (be tired out) & '*bateru*'^{^^} (be fagged out). It is necessary in this case as well that the indicated meanings of both words belong to the identical category. If the indicated meanings do not belong to the identical category, the contrast of phonetic values itself becomes the basis of the difference of the indicated meaning as in '*kan*'^{^^} (a can) and '*gan*'^{^^} (wild goose).

Some of the devices for development of several variations that we have looked at so far are able to be combined and are thereby able to express subtle nuances. Examples of this are the variations of '*kara-kara*', (bone dry) which I gave at the beginning. However if it is said that these combinations are possible at all times and in whatever forms, this is not true. We should pay great attention to the point that there are things like rules and restrictions with these ways of combination too.

Part 3 Homonyms in onomatopoeia

There are homonyms in language phenomena which we can see very commonly in ordinary vocabulary. These refer to words which have the identical sound but which are different words. For example regarding words which are pronounced '*kikan*'^{^^} we can think of '*kikan*'^{^^} (trachea), '*kikan*'^{^^} (quarterly), '*kikan*'^{^^} (repatriation) and the like but it is not possible to see any connection whatever between their meanings. These are clearly different words and it is a matter of chance that they are homonyms

↳ *Kenkyū* (Language Research) No. 42.

i.e. have the same sound pattern. This kind of phenomenon is also found in the case of onomatopoeia. For example let's consider '*hara-hara*'. In the case of 'the leaves fluttered down (*hara-hara* = fluttered down) from the trees' and 'I watched with beating heart (*hara-hara* = with beating heart)' it seems better to think of the words '*hara-hara*' as homonyms. According to Amanuma, the former example means "the state of small, thin objects, for example things like petals and leaves or tears and rain etc. continuing to fall, one by one or drop by drop." The latter example means "the state of feeling worried or anxious about someone being in danger or about whether the person is all right or not." We can hardly feel any similarity in meaning between the two. Not only this, they also differ in terms of their syntax. For example, in using the form '*hara-hara to*', the first meaning applies. With the form '*hara-hara suru*' (*suru*^{^^} = 'do or make') the second meaning always applies. The words '*don-don*' in 'the drum goes boom boom' (*don-don* = boom boom) and 'work is progressing rapidly' (*don-don* = rapidly) have no similarity in meaning either and it is considered reasonable to think of them as homonyms. Speaking of similarity, both probably exhibit the quality of continuity but this comes from the form of reduplication and is not in the phonetic value of '*don*' (boom). But in this case, unlike that of '*hara-hara*', the difference in terms of syntax, has not been ascertained. Putting it emphatically, even if the original form is the single '*don*', the forms repeated three times ('*don-don-don*') or four times are also possible but the point is that probably the only remaining possibility is the form '*don-don*'.

Onomatopoeia also, in the same way as quite ordinary words, are endowed with the character of the language sign which has both sound and meaning. The onomatopoeia '*min-min*' does not only represent a sound close to that in the outside world, but also as a Japanese word has the mean-

ing of “the sound of a cicada which goes ‘*min-min*.’”³⁴⁾ So it means that because of this, the property akin to arbitrariness is found in onomatopoeia too. The existence of homonyms is a phenomenon which is often cited as proof of the arbitrariness of language signs. (See Ullmann [1969]³⁵⁾ The reason is that if there is a direct and natural connection between sound and meaning, identical sound patterns ought not to represent different things. Consequently, we may think that the fact that there are also homonyms in onomatopoeia is the best evidence to show that even onomatopoeia have a quality pretty much akin to arbitrariness in the same way as ordinary vocabulary. The fact that I have taken up the matter here of there being homonyms in onomatopoeia too is because I wish to emphasize the fact that onomatopoeia are not simply sounds which imitate things like sounds and movements or states in the outside world. According to Amanuma, people who speak Japanese, when they hear the onomatopoeia ‘*don-don*’ will either understand it as “the sound which emerges when you do things like beating, striking or knocking on something forcefully twice or many times in succession or as the state of beating, striking etc.” Even if they do understand it in this way, the fact that people who don’t know Japanese will not necessarily understand the word like this, is just because the word has a quality akin to arbitrariness. Consequently it is natural that people who don’t know Japanese will not understand that ‘*don-don*’ is also, as Amanuma

34) The reason that the author has put marks of emphasis next to ‘*semi no nakigoe*’ (the sound of the cicada) is, I suppose, because he has just said that a language sign has both sound and meaning but in this case the meaning of ‘*min-min*’ is also the sound. This is unlike other words e.g. ‘dog’ for which the meaning is not the sound but rather “a small furry domestic animal also referred to as ‘man’s best friend’ ”.

35) Ullmann, S. (1969) *Gengo to Imi* (Semantics: An Introduction to the Science of Meaning) [Trans. Ikegami Yoshihiko], Tokyo: Taishūkan, pp. 91~2.

says, a word which represents "the state of things being carried out one after another, continuously, without a hitch, or the state of making progress."

Translator's Note

The translated passage is from a chapter entitled 'The Characteristics of Onomatopoeia' by Izumi Kunihiisa. The chapter comes from a book entitled 'Japanese Vocabulary & Expressions' edited by Suzuki Takao. The book is the fourth volume in a series of six and hence bears the subtitle 'A Course in Japanese - Volume 4'. Izumi, at the time of writing was an associate professor at Sophia University, Tokyo, specializing in French language and linguistics. Suzuki, at the time of writing was a professor at Keiô University, Tokyo, specializing in sociolinguistics and semantics.

Throughout the translation, the system of romanisation employed is the Modified Hepburn System, as used in the Nelson and Kenkyûsha dictionaries. A long vowel though is indicated with a circumflex over the vowel rather than a macron apart from 'i' which is written as 'ii' as in 'ôkii'. Common names, such as Tokyo and Kyoto are another exception to this rule and are written without circumflexes or macrons. A long consonant is written as two consonants e.g. 'pittari' (perfectly). The syllable-final moraic nasal is written as 'n' i.e. not any differently to non-syllable-final nasals. Japanese names are given in their conventional order i.e. family name followed by given name.

As the subject matter of the translated passage is Japanese linguistics and as much of the content has to do with the form which Japanese mimetic words take, I have retained the original mimetic words in the translation along with their English equivalents. However since the passage does not for the most part concern itself with the relation between mimetic words

and other words in sentences i.e. syntactical issues, I have as far as possible avoided the retention of whole Japanese example sentences in which a mimetic word appears and simply supplied the mimetic word itself in Japanese. Many mimetic words have more than one meaning, however, for reasons of space, I have only supplied one meaning in my translations.

The use of the particle '*to*' (with the sound of ...; in the manner of ...) with mimetic adverbs is sometimes obligatory and sometimes optional. However in this translation I have followed Ono (1984) and wherever I have retained only the mimetic word itself in Japanese rather than a whole sentence, (i.e. the majority of cases) I have omitted '*to*'.

I have translated '*onomatope*' as '*onomatopoeia*' throughout in order to reflect the author's desired use of words, however in my notes I have used the term 'mimetic words' to refer to the same thing. The reason for this is that recently many linguists have used '*onomatopoeia*' to refer only to phonomimes (*giongo* or *giseigo*) i.e. words which (a) imitate a sound in the outside world e.g. miaow (*nyâ-nyâ*) or (b) indicate the source of the sound e.g. cuckoo (*kakkô*). In contrast 'mimetic words' refer not only to phonomimes but also to phenomimes (*gitaigo*) and psychomimes (*gijôgo*). Phenomimes describe states, conditions or manners, that is, unlike phenomena represented by phonomimes, they are ascertained through senses other than that of hearing. e.g. '*norô-norô*' (slowly) or '*koso-koso*' (stealthily). Psychomimes express psychological states and sensations e.g. '*sugo-sugo*' (dejectedly) or '*piri-piri*' (tingling pain).

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