

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND Language games, though understudied in cognitive linguistics, can reveal interesting aspects of our linguistic intuition, namely interplay between phonetic and psycholinguistic factors. This paper analyzes Japanese imperfect puns, and argues that, far from being random, pun patterns are shaped by phonetic and morphological factors. In Japanese puns, speakers put together two identical or similar words to make sentences (Kawahara and Shinohara, 2009; Kawahara, 2009). Our talk focuses on cases where speakers combine two words in which one word contains one mora/syllable which is not contained in the other word, as in (1)-(3).

METHOD AND RESULTS Based on website searches and native speakers' consultations, we collected 149 examples where one word contains an 'extra' or 'intruded' syllable. We found that the majority of the examples fit in one of the three following categories: (i) the intruded syllable has a high vowel, as in (1), (ii) the intruded syllable has a vowel identical to the preceding or following vowel, as in (2), and (iii) the intruded syllable is an affix or a particle, as in (3). The results of our searches are summarized in Table 1.

- (1) Fujiki Naoto-wa fushigi-na **ohi**to.
Fujiki Naoto-TOP strange-ADJ person
'Fujiki Naoto is a strange person.'
- (2) Bundoki-o bundott**o**ki.
protractor-ACC take away
'Take away a protractor (from him).'
- (3) Kurisumasu-wa kuri-**de** sumasu.
Christmas-TOP chestnut-with deal with
'I will have chestnuts for Christmas.'

DISCUSSION These patterns derive from the principle that speakers attempt to make corresponding words as perceptually similar as possible—that speakers choose perceptually non-intrusive syllables in cases like (1)-(3). First, high vowels are the shortest vowels in Japanese (Campbell, 1992; Han, 1992), and therefore syllables with high vowels are perceptually least intrusive. Second, copy vowels may be perceptually non-intrusive as well, because listeners are sensitive to changes in incoming signals (Delgutte, 1997), but copied vowels do not involve spectral changes. Third, affixal vowels are non-intrusive because they are psycholinguistically non-prominent (Emmorey, 1989; Fowler, Napps, and Feldman, 1985) and hence non-distruptive.

CONCLUSION When Japanese speakers pair two words with an intruded syllable, they chose syllables with either high, copied, or affixal vowels. This pattern follows from the principle of maximization of similarity between two corresponding elements in puns. We conclude that pun formation is governed by phonetic and morphological—or psycholinguistic—factors.

Table 1

Non-copied high:	33	Copied high:	46
Copied non-high:	54		
Affixal:	11	Others:	5

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