

On Japanese Unisex Names

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Abstract

This study deals with Japanese unisex names and discusses 39 confirmed unisex names.

First, I analyze the structure of Japanese unisex names. My previous studies revealed that there are five types of phonological gender differences that determine gender and one type of semantic gender difference. Among the 39 unisex names I collected, 20 names are structurally masculine, while 19 names are feminine.

Next, I focus on judgments by native speakers of Japanese. I conducted a questionnaire in which, with respect to each name, I asked if it is more commonly used as a male name than as a female name, or vice versa. 52 native speakers judged that 11 names are more commonly given to males and 22 names are to females, while only 6 names are neutral.

This study reveals: (i) native speakers believe that Japanese unisex names are used more for females than for males, (ii) judgments by native speakers and the expected judgments are different for 16 names among the 39 unisex names, (iii) the difference might be because of the structure and semantics of those names, and (iv) judgments by native speakers might be affected by the structure, especially the sound pattern, of the unisex names.

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Introduction

The present study deals with Japanese unisex names. I have been working on Japanese given names for about 10 years, but the given names that I had worked on were mostly male and female names. In this study, I focus on unisex names and analyze them to understand Japanese given names better.

This paper is structured as follows. After introducing previous studies on how the gender of Japanese given names is determined, the structure of Japanese unisex names is analyzed. Then, I focus on judgments by native speakers of Japanese. I collected 39 unisex names, which are confirmed to be used for both males and females, and conducted a questionnaire. With respect to each name, I asked if it is more commonly used as a male name than as a female name, or vice versa. The results of the questionnaire are discussed. Finally, the present study is summarized in the concluding section.

Previous Studies

This section reviews previous linguistic studies concerning the gender in Japanese male and female names. Gender in Japanese given names has not received much attention in the literature and not many scholars have studied it. Kindaichi (1988) claims that the alveolar stop /t/ sounds masculine and the bilabial nasal /m/ sounds feminine, and Makino (1999) claims that nasal sounds are feminine.

I have been working on the gender in Japanese given names. My previous studies are divided into three groups. The first group is a series of studies on gender differences found in

given names. Japanese given names show one type of semantic gender difference, i.e. flower and plant names, and five types of phonological gender differences: first syllables, last syllables, heavy syllables, palatalized consonants, and length (Mutsukawa 2005, 2008, 2009) (see (1)). Moraic parts of syllables do not play major roles in determining the gender, whereas whole syllables play crucial roles in determining the gender of Japanese given names (Mutsukawa 2006). Mutsukawa (2010) compares the gender differences found in Japanese given names with those in English given names and reveals that the majority of the gender markers found in Japanese given names do not play major roles in determining the gender in English given names, and vice versa.

(1) Gender Differences in Japanese Given Names (Mutsukawa 2010)

	Masculine	Feminine
First Syllables (Onset Cs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · k- (especially <i>ke</i>) · s- (especially <i>soo</i> and <i>shoo</i>) · t- (especially <i>ta</i>) · ry- (<i>ryuu</i> and <i>ryoo</i>) · d- 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Onsetless Syllables (especially <i>a</i>) · sa- · h- (<i>hu</i> and <i>ho</i>) · Nasals (<i>m-</i> and <i>n-</i>) · d^z- · w-
Last Syllables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · o (–1965) · si, zi (–1985) · ki (1946–) · ke, ta, to (1966–) · ma (2002–) · ku 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · ko, mi · ka (1966–) · na (1986–) · o (2001–)
Heavy Syllables	· Yes	· No
Palatalized Cs	· Yes (1906–1945, 1986–)	· Yes (1946–1985)
Length (Structures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · $\sigma_{\mu\mu}$ · Names with Four or More Morae 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$ · $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu\mu}$ (ending with /n/)
Semantics		· Flower and Plant Names

The second group focuses on how gender is determined. The phonological gender differences in (1) do not equally determine the gender, but they can be hierarchically ordered based on their contribution in determining the gender (Mutsukawa 2007, 2009). For example, each name in (2) - (6) has one feminine feature and one masculine feature, but interestingly none of them sound neutral. Analysis of those names leads to the ranking in (7).

(2) Last Syllables >> First Syllables

Male Names	(a) Masaki	(m- = Feminine, -ki = Masculine)
	(b) Naoto	(n- = Feminine, -to = Masculine)
Female Names	(c) Kazuko	(k- = Masculine, -ko = Feminine)
	(d) Tomomi	(t- = Masculine, -mi = Feminine)

(3) Length >> First Syllables

Male Names	(a) Motoharu	(Quadrimoraicity = Masculine, m- = Feminine)
	(b) Naonori	(Quadrimoraicity = Masculine, n- = Feminine)

(4) Length >> Last Syllables

Male Names	(a) Yosihumi	(Quadrimoraicity = Masculine, -mi = Feminine)
	(b) Yuktaka	(Quadrimoraicity = Masculine, -ka = Feminine)

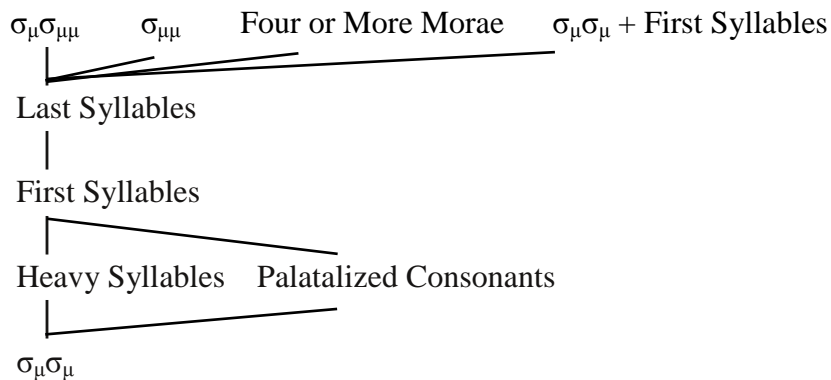
(5) Last Syllables >> Heavy Syllables

Female Names	(a) Yooko	(-ko = Feminine, Heavy Syllable = Masculine)
	(b) Yuuka	(-ka = Feminine, Heavy Syllable = Masculine)

(6) First Syllables >> Heavy Syllables

Female Name	(a) Miiru	(m- = Feminine, Heavy Syllable = Masculine)
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(7)



As mentioned above, Japanese given names also reveal a semantic gender difference. Semantics plays a more significant role than phonology and kanji, i.e. Chinese characters, in determining the gender, although it is in a very limited way, and kanji also play roles, but they play less significant roles than phonology and semantics (Mutsukawa 2008).

In Japanese, flower and plant names are the only type of names in which gender is determined semantically. That is, when a given name is homophonic to a flower or plant name, it always sounds feminine regardless of its phonological characteristics. For example,

consider the names in (8). *Momizi* in (8a) has one masculine feature in the name-final position and one feminine feature in the name-initial position. As shown in (7), last syllables play more significant role than first syllables in determining the gender, which leads to the prediction that *Momizi* sounds masculine. But, *Momizi* sounds feminine because it is homophonic to a plant name. *Kaede* in (8b), which has one masculine feature in the name-initial position and has no feminine features, also sounds feminine because it is homophonic to a plant name.

The fact that given names that are homophonic to flower or plant names always sound feminine regardless of its phonological characteristics suggests that semantics plays more significant role than phonology in determining the gender. This is probably true, but it is in a very limited way. Consider the names in (9). *Ume* and *Kiku* in (9), which are homophonic to flower names, sound feminine. When they are followed by a masculine last syllable /to/, however, they sound masculine. The names in (9) indicate that semantics plays a role only when the whole name is homophonic to a flower or plant name. When a flower or plant name is a part of a given name, semantics does not play a major role and the gender is phonologically determined.

(8) Flower Names = Female Names

- | | | |
|------------|--------------|----------------------------------|
| (a) Momizi | ‘maple tree’ | (-zi = Masculine, m- = Feminine) |
| (b) Kaede | ‘maple tree’ | (k- = Masculine) |

(9) Female Names → Male Names

- | | | | |
|----------|--------------------|---|--------|
| (a) Ume | ‘Japanese apricot’ | → | Umeto |
| (b) Kiku | ‘chrysanthemum’ | → | Kikuto |

Japanese given names are usually written in kanji, i.e. Chinese characters. Each kanji has its own meaning and can be used in either male or female names, or sometimes in both male and female names, depending on its meaning. Japanese speakers can guess the kanji used when they hear Japanese given names. As shown in (1), the name-final onsetless syllable [o] is found in both male and female names (e.g. *Tatuo* ‘a male name’ and *Rio* ‘a female name’). When Japanese speakers hear *Tatuo* and *Rio*, they guess that the kanji with the meaning of ‘male’, ‘man’, or ‘husband’ can be used for the male name *Tatuo*. But, they never guess that those kanji are used for the female name *Rio*. Why are those kanji not assigned to the female name *Rio*? That is because, when they hear Japanese given names, Japanese speakers judge the gender before assigning kanji. In other words, the gender of Japanese given names is determined phonologically or semantically, and kanji does not play a major role in determining the gender. Assignment of kanji is schematized as in (10). In sum, kanji play a role in determining the gender in the sense that Japanese speakers can judge the gender when they see names written in kanji. But, when they hear them, kanji plays less significant role than phonology and semantics.

(10) Assignment of Kanji

Tatuo

↓

The gender is determined phonologically or semantically: a male name

↓

Divided into parts for possible kanji assignments: *Tatu.o* or *Ta.tu.o* (but not *Ta.tuo*)¹

↓

Kanji are assigned (/o/ = 夫 ‘husband’, 雄 ‘male’, 男 ‘man’...)

Questionnaire studies are the third group of my previous studies. The previous studies mentioned above are theoretical studies. Based on the theory I developed, I conducted three questionnaire studies (Mutsukawa 2011, 2012, 2013). In Mutsukawa (2011), I asked native speakers of Japanese if they can tell the gender of 51 Japanese existing names and found out that they can tell the gender of Japanese existing names even when they hear them for the first time. In Mutsukawa (2012), I asked non-native speakers of Japanese if they can tell the gender of 51 Japanese existing names, which are used for Mutsukawa (2011), and showed that Japanese language learners are not as good as native speakers, but they have acquired the ability, to some extent, to judge the gender of Japanese existing names that they are not familiar with. In Mutsukawa (2013), I asked native speakers of Japanese how they judge the gender of 30 Japanese fictional names, which contain phonological and semantic features in (1), and revealed that native speakers of Japanese judge the gender of Japanese given names based on the features in (1) and the ranking in (7).

Structure of Japanese Unisex Names²

Japanese parents keep creating given names, but unisex names are not common. I collected 39 unisex names, which are confirmed to be used for both males and females. Each of the unisex names has at least one phonological or semantic feature in (1). The unisex names and their phonological and semantic features are shown in (11).

(11) Unisex Names and Their Phonological and Semantic Features

Aoi	(Feminine = a-, Plant Name)
Akira	(Feminine = a-)
Akemi	(Feminine = a-, -mi)
Kaoru	(Masculine = k-)
Kazumi	(Masculine = k-, Feminine = -mi)
Katumi	(Masculine = k-, Feminine = -mi)
Kimi	(Masculine = k-, Feminine = -mi, $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)

¹ There is no kanji whose reading is *tuo*.

² An earlier version of this section appears in *Studies on Japanese Language and Culture* 14.

Kei	(Masculine=k-, Feminine= $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Koo	(Masculine=k-, $\sigma_{\mu\mu}$)
Kokoro	(Masculine=k-)
Sinobu	(Masculine=s-, Feminine=Plant Name)
Jun	(Masculine= $\sigma_{\mu\mu}$, Heavy Syllable, Feminine= d^z -)
Sunao	(Masculine=s-, -o, Feminine=-o)
Sora	(Masculine=s-, Feminine= $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Tiaki	(Masculine=t-, -ki)
Tiharu	(Masculine=t-)
Tihiro	(Masculine=t-)
Tukasa	(Masculine=t-)
Terumi	(Masculine=t-, Feminine=-mi)
Tomomi	(Masculine=t-, Feminine=-mi)
Towa	(Masculine=t-, Feminine= $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Natuki	(Masculine=-ki, Feminine=n-)
Hikaru	(Feminine=h-)
Hinata	(Masculine=-ta, Feminine=h-)
Hiromi	(Feminine=h-, -mi)
Makoto	(Masculine=-to, Feminine=m-)
Masami	(Feminine=m-, -mi)
Masumi	(Feminine=m-, -mi)
Mahuyu	(Feminine=m-)
Maya	(Feminine=m-, $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Miki	(Masculine=-ki, Feminine=m-, $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Mizuki	(Masculine=-ki, Feminine=m-, Plant Name)
Miroku	(Masculine=-ku, Feminine=m-)
Yuu	(Masculine= $\sigma_{\mu\mu}$, Heavy Syllable)
Yuuki	(Masculine=-ki, Heavy Syllable)
Yuki	(Masculine=-ki, Feminine= $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Yoo	(Masculine= $\sigma_{\mu\mu}$, Heavy Syllable)
Yosimi	(Feminine=-mi)
Rui	(Feminine= $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)

Among the 39 unisex names in (11), 10 names have only masculine features and 11 names have only feminine features, whereas 18 names have both masculine and feminine features ((12)-(14)). Each name contains up to 3 features, as summarized in (15). In terms of features they contain, they are not unisex because 10 names have only masculine features and 11 names have only feminine features.

(12) Unisex Names with Only Masculine Features (10 names)

Kaoru	(Masculine = k-)
Koo	(Masculine = k-, $\sigma_{\mu\mu}$)
Kokoro	(Masculine = k-)
Tiaki	(Masculine = t-, -ki)
Tiharu	(Masculine = t-)
Tihiro	(Masculine = t-)
Tukasa	(Masculine = t-)
Yuu	(Masculine = $\sigma_{\mu\mu}$, Heavy Syllable)
Yuuki	(Masculine = -ki, Heavy Syllable)
Yoo	(Masculine = $\sigma_{\mu\mu}$, Heavy Syllable)

(13) Unisex Names with Only Feminine Features (11 names)

Aoi	(Feminine = a-, Plant Name)
Akira	(Feminine = a-)
Akemi	(Feminine = a-, -mi)
Hikaru	(Feminine = h-)
Hiromi	(Feminine = h-, -mi)
Masami	(Feminine = m-, -mi)
Masumi	(Feminine = m-, -mi)
Mahuyu	(Feminine = m-)
Maya	(Feminine = m-, $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Yosimi	(Feminine = -mi)
Rui	(Feminine = $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)

(14) Unisex Names with Both Masculine and Feminine Features (18 names)

Kazumi	(Masculine = k-, Feminine = -mi)
Katumi	(Masculine = k-, Feminine = -mi)
Kimi	(Masculine = k-, Feminine = -mi, $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Kei	(Masculine = k-, Feminine = $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Sinobu	(Masculine = s-, Feminine = Plant Name)
Jun	(Masculine = $\sigma_{\mu\mu}$, Heavy Syllable, Feminine = d ² -)
Sunao	(Masculine = s-, -o, Feminine = -o)
Sora	(Masculine = s-, Feminine = $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Terumi	(Masculine = t-, Feminine = -mi)

Tomomi	(Masculine = t-, Feminine = -mi)
Towa	(Masculine = t-, Feminine = $\sigma_\mu\sigma_\mu$)
Natuki	(Masculine = -ki, Feminine = n-)
Hinata	(Masculine = -ta, Feminine = h-)
Makoto	(Masculine = -to, Feminine = m-)
Miki	(Masculine = -ki, Feminine = m-, $\sigma_\mu\sigma_\mu$)
Mizuki	(Masculine = -ki, Feminine = m-, Plant Name)
Miroku	(Masculine = -ku, Feminine = m-)
Yuki	(Masculine = -ki, Feminine = $\sigma_\mu\sigma_\mu$)

(15)

# of features	# of names
1 masculine	5
2 masculine	5
1 feminine	5
2 feminine	6
1 masculine and 1 feminine	13
1 masculine and 2 feminine	3
2 masculine and 1 feminine	2

The features found in names in (12) - (14) are categorized as in (16) and (17).³ It is not clear yet why the names in (11) are used as unisex names but, if they are unisex names because they sound unisex, i.e. not masculine nor feminine, to native speakers of Japanese, it suggests that the contribution of the features in (12) and (13) in determining the gender is less than the contribution of the features found only in (14) because, as mentioned above, the gender differences in (1) do not equally determine the gender.

(16) Features Found in (12) and (13)

	Masculine (found in (12): n=15)	Feminine (found in (13): n=17)
First Syllables (Onset Cs)	· k- (3) · t- (4)	· Onsetless Syllable <i>a</i> (3) · h- (2) · m- (4)
Last Syllables	· ki (2)	· mi (5)
Heavy Syllables	· Yes (3)	
Length (Structures)	· $\sigma_\mu\mu$ (3)	· $\sigma_\mu\sigma_\mu$ (2)
Semantics		· Flower and Plant Names (1)

³ Numbers in parentheses in the tables indicate the number of names each feature is found.

(17) Features Found in (14)

	Masculine (n=20)	Feminine (n=21)
First Syllables (Onset Cs)	· k- (4) · s- (3) · t- (3)	· h- (1) · m- (4) · n- (1) · d ^z - (1)
Last Syllables	· o (1) · ki (4) · ta (1) · to (1) · ku (1)	· mi (5) · o (1)
Heavy Syllables	· Yes (1)	
Length (Structures)	· $\sigma_{\mu\mu}$ (1)	· $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$ (6)
Semantics		· Flower and Plant Names (2)

Finally, let us make a prediction how native speakers of Japanese judge the gender of the unisex names. The unisex names in (11) are confirmed to be used for both males and females, but they are not well-known and native speakers of Japanese are not familiar with (at least some of) them. As introduced above, the gender of Japanese given names is phonologically and semantically determined. The phonological gender differences found in Japanese given names do not equally determine the gender, but they can be hierarchically ordered based on their contribution in determining the gender (cf. (1) - (9)). Based on the ranking in (7), we can predict that native speakers of Japanese judge the gender of the unisex names as in (18) and (19): 20 names including those in (12) might sound masculine while 19 names including those in (13) might sound feminine.

(18) Names That Might Sound Masculine (20 names)

Kaoru	(Masculine = k-)
Kei	(Masculine = k-, Feminine = $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Koo	(Masculine = k-, $\sigma_{\mu\mu}$)
Kokoro	(Masculine = k-)
Jun	(Masculine = $\sigma_{\mu\mu}$, Heavy Syllable, Feminine = d ^z -)
Sunao	(Masculine = s-, -o, Feminine = -o)
Sora	(Masculine = s-, Feminine = $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Tiaki	(Masculine = t-, -ki)
Tiharu	(Masculine = t-)
Tihiro	(Masculine = t-)
Tukasa	(Masculine = t-)
Towa	(Masculine = t-, Feminine = $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Natuki	(Masculine = -ki, Feminine = n-)

Hinata	(Masculine = -ta, Feminine = h-)
Makoto	(Masculine = -to, Feminine = m-)
Miroku	(Masculine = -ku, Feminine = m-)
Yuu	(Masculine = $\sigma_{\mu\mu}$, Heavy Syllable)
Yuuki	(Masculine = -ki, Heavy Syllable)
Yuki	(Masculine = -ki, Feminine = $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Yoo	(Masculine = $\sigma_{\mu\mu}$, Heavy Syllable)

(19) Names That Might Sound Feminine (19 names)

Aoi	(Feminine = a-, Plant Name)
Akira	(Feminine = a-)
Akemi	(Feminine = a-, -mi)
Kazumi	(Masculine = k-, Feminine = -mi)
Katumi	(Masculine = k-, Feminine = -mi)
Kimi	(Masculine = k-, Feminine = -mi, $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Sinobu	(Masculine = s-, Feminine = Plant Name)
Terumi	(Masculine = t-, Feminine = -mi)
Tomomi	(Masculine = t-, Feminine = -mi)
Hikaru	(Feminine = h-)
Hiromi	(Feminine = h-, -mi)
Masami	(Feminine = m-, -mi)
Masumi	(Feminine = m-, -mi)
Mahuyu	(Feminine = m-)
Maya	(Feminine = m-, $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Miki	(Masculine = -ki, Feminine = m-, $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)
Mizuki	(Masculine = -ki, Feminine = m-, Plant Name)
Yosimi	(Feminine = -mi)
Rui	(Feminine = $\sigma_{\mu}\sigma_{\mu}$)

Judgments by Native Speakers

This section focuses on judgments by native speakers of Japanese. The unisex names I collected are confirmed unisex names. But it does not mean that they are totally unisex: some of them can be used more as male names and others can be used more as female names. I conducted a questionnaire in which, with respect to each name, I asked 52 native speakers of Japanese if it is more commonly used as a male name than as a female name, or vice versa. A sample of the questionnaire is shown in (20) where native speakers are asked to choose the reason as well as the sex.

(20) *Aoi*

- SEX: ① male ② female
- REASON: ① Because I know someone with that name.
 ② Because of its meaning
 ③ Because of its sound pattern
 ④ I don't know why, but somehow...
 ⑤ Other (specify):

The reasons I conducted this questionnaire are twofold: (i) to find out how these names are really used, and (ii) to see how native speaker judge the gender when they are not familiar with those names. I divided judgments by native speakers into 5 categories based on the criteria in (21). They judged that 11 names are more commonly given to males (S-M and W-M) and 22 names are more commonly given to females (S-F and W-F), while only 6 names are neutral (N). The result of the questionnaire is summarized as in (22).

(21) Strongly Masculine (S-M): More than 85% of the subjects judged that it is used more for males.

Weakly Masculine (W-M): 70-85% of the subjects judged that it is used more for males.

Weakly Feminine (W-F): 70-85% of the subjects judged that it is used more for females.

Strongly Feminine (S-F): More than 85% of the subjects judged that it is used more for females.

Neutral (N): Judgments that do not apply any of the above.

(22)

	Male	Female	Both	No Response	Category	Expected (=18)(19))
Aoi	3	49	0		S-F	F
Akira	50	1	1		S-M	F
Akemi	0	52	0		S-F	F
Kaoru	23	26	3		N	M
Kazumi	10	41	1		W-F	F
Katumi	49	3	0		S-M	F
Kimi	2	49	1		S-F	F
Kei	34	16	2		N	M
Koo	40	11	1		W-M	M
Kokoro	1	50	1		S-F	M
Sinobu	7	43	2		W-F	F
Jun	46	5	1		S-M	M
Sunao	39	12	1		W-M	M

Sora	30	21	1		N	M
Tiaki	5	46	1		S-F	M
Tiharu	2	50	0		S-F	M
Tihiro	3	48	1		S-F	M
Tukasa	41	11	0		W-M	M
Terumi	8	43	1		W-F	F
Tomomi	0	50	0	2	S-F	F
Towa	25	24	1	2	N	M
Natuki	5	41	4	2	W-F	M
Hikaru	28	18	4	2	N	F
Hinata	10	39	1	2	W-F	M
Hiromi	9	38	3	2	W-F	F
Makoto	47	3	0	2	S-M	M
Masami	3	46	1	2	S-F	F
Masumi	13	36	1	2	W-F	F
Mahuyu	6	43	1	2	S-F	F
Maya	2	47	1	2	S-F	F
Miki	1	49	0	2	S-F	F
Mizuki	6	42	2	2	W-F	F
Miroku	44	6	0	2	S-M	M
Yuu	22	24	4	2	N	M
Yuuki	40	6	4	2	W-M	M
Yuki	0	50	0	2	S-F	M
Yoo	46	4	0	2	S-M	M
Yosimi	12	37	1	2	W-F	F
Rui	40	9	1	2	W-M	F

Comparing the judgments in (22) and expected judgments in (18) and (19), 16 names are judged differently (see (23)). Among the 16 names in (23), 12 names are expected to be judged as male names while 4 are expected to be judged as female names. That is, names that are expected to be judged as male names are more commonly judged differently. There are two possible explanations for this asymmetry. One, it is simply because unisex names are more commonly used for female names as native speakers judge. Two, semantics and structure play a role. In terms of semantics, *Kaoru*, *Kokoro*, *Hinata*, and *Yuki* are homophonic to Japanese words *kaoru* ‘to smell sweet’, *kokoro* ‘heart, mind’, *hinata* ‘sunshine’, and *yuki* ‘snow’. The meaning of these words might be relevant to the non-masculinity of those names. Regarding the structure, the assignment of kanji, i.e. Chinese characters, for *Tiaki*, *Tiharu*, and *Tihiro* must be *Ti.aki* or *Ti.a.ki* (but not *Tia.ki*), *Ti.haruru* or *Ti.ha.ru* (but not *Tiha.ru*), *Ti.hiro* or *Ti.hi.ro* (but not *Tihi.ro*), respectively. Impossibility of kanji assignment $\circ_{\sigma\sigma}\circ_{\sigma}$ might be relevant to the femininity of those names. Asymmetry found in (23) requires further study.

(23)

	Male	Female	Both	Non-Res.	Category	Expected (=(18)(19))
Akira	50	1	1		S-M	F
Kaoru	23	26	3		N	M
Katumi	49	3	0		S-M	F
Kei	34	16	2		N	M
Kokoro	1	50	1		S-F	M
Sora	30	21	1		N	M
Tiaki	5	46	1		S-F	M
Tiharu	2	50	0		S-F	M
Tihiro	3	48	1		S-F	M
Towa	25	24	1	2	N	M
Natuki	5	41	4	2	W-F	M
Hikaru	28	18	4	2	N	F
Hinata	10	39	1	2	W-F	M
Yuu	22	24	4	2	N	M
Yuki	0	50	0	2	S-F	M
Rui	40	9	1	2	W-M	F

When I asked native speakers to answer the sex of those names, I asked the reason as well. Some participants chose ‘I know someone with that name’ for some names. But the participants are not familiar with most of the unisex names adopted in the questionnaire and the most common reason they chose is ‘because of its sound pattern’. The answers from those who know someone with the unisex names and the answers from those who do not know anyone with the unisex names do not show any difference. This result suggests that judgments by native speakers are affected by the structure, especially the sound pattern, of unisex names.

Conclusion

The present study deals with Japanese unisex names and analyzes their structure. In this study, I introduce the result of the questionnaire I conducted and discuss judgments by native speakers. The present study reveals: (i) native speakers believe that Japanese unisex names are used more for females than for males, (ii) judgments by native speakers and the expected judgments are different for 16 names among the 39 unisex names, (iii) the difference might be because of the structure and semantics of those names, and (iv) judgments by native speakers might be affected by the structure, especially the sound pattern, of the unisex names.

In future research, I would like to continue the study on Japanese unisex names and pursue the following 3 questions.

- (i) How are Japanese unisex names really used?
- (ii) Why are those names used as unisex names?
- (iii) What is the origin of those names?

Cassidy *et al.* (1999) claim that '[t]he vast majority of unisex names were originally restricted to males but then became extended to females'. I would like to study if their claim applies to Japanese unisex names as well.

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