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# Place Naming Strategy in *Kata Kolok* Sign Language

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**Abstract**

The nomenclature employed for location naming signs in *Kata Kolok* is analogous to the naming conventions observed in the naming of individuals. In essence, each location in Bali strives to physically embody its distinctive character, resulting in the creation of numerous statues within a given area. However, following conventional practice, the most popular landmarks that are considered to be representative of the character of an area are selected as objects to be signed. The naming of locations based on landmark features employs a descriptive nomenclature. This system describes the most iconic physical features of an object. In general, the center and upper portion of the object are selected as the location to be signed. In addition to the descriptive naming system, there is also an arbitrary naming system that employs the initials of the name of a location. It can therefore be concluded that in *Kata Kolok*, the sign name of a location is given in two ways: firstly, by describing the iconic character or symbol of a place, and secondly, by initializing a place.

## 1. Introduction

Sign language is a language that employs different modalities than those utilized in spoken language. The modality in question is the process of production and perception of a language. Spoken language is a language that is produced orally and received in the form of audio. Accordingly, it is referred to as audio-oral language. In contrast, sign language is produced through hand gestures and (or) body movements accompanied by facial expressions, and thus is referred to as visual-gestural language. This fundamental distinction indicates a distinct realization of language. In spoken

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language, a word is comprised of several phonemes and can be articulated in a single breath. As a result, it is possible to utter a word comprising several letters. In sign language, a word comprising a sequence of letters from the alphabet can be pronounced individually as a single sign. Nevertheless, this approach would be highly ineffective and would render the finger alphabet inaccessible for referring to objects regularly. Consequently, individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing typically convey a sign that encompasses the defining characteristics of an object. It is commonly observed that deaf individuals exhibit a high degree of sensitivity to the visual features of an object, with a tendency to respond more rapidly to the recognition of an object when presented with a picture or other visual representation of the object in question.

Sign language, as a visual-gestural language, is inherently linked to the visualization of the object it refers to. The majority of the signs are formed in a manner that is highly reminiscent of the object in question, a phenomenon known as iconicity. This iconicity is deeply embedded in sign language and represents a fundamental distinction between it and spoken language (Caselli & Pyers, 2017; Woll, 2009). Although iconicity is often conceptualized as a form of imitation of the object and its meaning, it is important to note that the lexicalization stage of the sign is mapped out in several stages in the human brain. From the various characteristics or traits possessed by an object, the most salient ones and other less necessary characteristics will naturally be selected for elimination (Wedayanti et al., 2023). From these selected characteristics, the possibility of expressing them using the language tools at hand is considered. In this context, Taub employs Analogue Building Mapping to illustrate the process by which an object becomes a sign (Taub, 2001b, p. 32, 2001a, pp. 68–69).

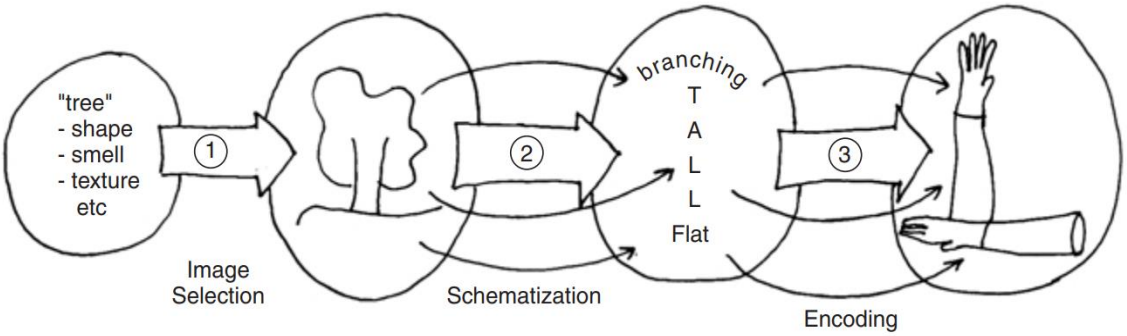



Figure 1. Analogue Building Mapping for sign of TREE in ASL (Taub, 2001)

Figure 1 presents a schematic representation of the process by which an object becomes a lexicon. By the object depicted in the figure, the general character of a tree can be identified. The character or image in question may derive from the texture, function, visual, or other characteristics of the object. The most specific and recognizable characteristics of the selected characters are those that are most likely to be perceived by the intended users of the sign. Subsequently, the selected feature is also considered, namely that which is most likely to be produced using the articulatory components possessed by deaf people. Subsequently, the selected object is mapped into a tangible form that can be produced by the natural human articulator. In this process, cognitive mapping is employed to intelligently imagine the visual representation of the selected object, with the closest symbol or sign that can be produced. Following this mapping, a sign lexicon is formed, and the sign is conventionally used as the vocabulary to refer to the object “TREE" within the community. The

process illustrates the general stages of a lexicon in sign language being mapped until it is produced into a word or lexeme.

In light of Taub's model for the lexicalization of a sign, this study aims to ascertain how the deaf community in Bengkala Village, Singaraja City, Bali, selects an image for an object before its schematization. The object of study is the naming of places, which is the designation of the village or city known by the deaf community in the village. This paper presents the results of research on a similar topic, the topics that share similarities with this research. No research has been identified that examines the naming strategies used by deaf people in general when naming a place, whether a city or a country. Nevertheless, the perspective presented in the naming system of individual names provides an overview of strategies that might be applied to the object of this research. At the concept level, the paper goes on to explain the socio-cultural situation related to sign language in Bengkala Village.

## Literature Review

Indonesia is an archipelago comprising numerous islands, each with its own distinct culture and language. It is reasonable to posit that these differences will also affect the variety of sign languages used. In its Wordlist Report, SIL International has designated the sign language spoken in Bali, particularly in the Bengkala region, as 'Bali Sign Language'. Nevertheless, in the same report, the name was proposed to be replaced with 'Bengkala Sign Language', as the signers are from Bengkala (Hurlbut, 2014, p. 5). *Kata Kolok* is said to be a sign that emerged and developed in Bengkala after the third generation of deaf people in the village. The terms *kolok* is used to refer to deaf communities and *inget* to the hearing communities within the village. For individuals who are deaf in the village, the term *kolok* is added before their name. For example, Wayan is the name of a deaf person, and therefore Wayan Kolok is the name of that individual. This practice is documented in (Marsaja, 2008). Genetically, the condition of deaf individuals in Bengkala Village is congenital deafness and muteness, with an indication of the DFNB3 gene (a gene called deafness carrier). The analysis indicates that the prevalence of deaf individuals in Bengkala Village is attributable to the full content of recessive chromosomal mutations of the DFNB3 gene. A population analysis revealed that 17.2% of the hearing Bengkala community exhibited this DFNB3 chromosome (Winata et al., 1995). The finger alphabet employed in *Kata Kolok* differs from the alphabets used in BISINDO (*Bahasa Isyarat Indonesia* 'Indonesian Sign Language') and SIBI (*Sistem Isyarat Bahasa Indonesia* 'Indonesian Sign Language System').

*Kata Kolok* does not have a finger alphabet (Adnyani et al., 2021, p. 9), yet the finger alphabet is still known and used by the deaf population in the village, particularly those who have received formal education in special schools. It is postulated that the finger signs employed are derived from those used in SIBI. The finger alphabet is employed as a communication strategy, whereby the object in question is spelled out letter by letter. This is particularly useful when communicating with individuals who are not proficient in sign language. The investigation of *Kata Kolok* has been increasingly intensified by researchers from Indonesia and international teams. *Kata Kolok* is designated as a shared sign language, as it is employed for communication not only among the deaf population within the village but also among the non-deaf villagers who can communicate with the deaf (de Vos, 2016; Zeshan & de Vos, 2012).

Research on the use of signs for names in *Kata Kolok* has been conducted by Lutzenberger (2018), who examines the common features used by deaf people in Bengkala Village in making name signs. Signs for names are those that refer to individuals personally and are not used in vocative constructions. The *Kolok* language is a sign language that develops naturally in a relatively isolated environment, with minimal contact with other sign languages. This illustrates that the finger

alphabet, which is a common feature of other sign languages, is not employed in *Kata Kolok*. Such conditions are said to be common in rural sign languages. In *Kata Kolok*, name signs are predominantly articulated in the head area without any form of name initialization with the finger alphabet. They are typically given to a person since childhood. The practice of naming children since their infancy is a consequence of the natural acquisition of sign language, particularly in the case of children with deaf relatives in the village. In Lutzenberger's research, name signs in *Kata Kolok* are typically comprised of a single sign, with 75% articulated in the head area. The remaining 25% may be articulated in the area above the head, on the hips, or at the end of the shoulders. However, the majority of the signs is articulated in the head, particularly on the face. It is posited that the sign of *Kata Kolok* names exhibits minimal realization of both directional movements (sign movements) and non-manual features. The present study examines a different object to that studied by Lutzenberger. The present study examines the location of the signs for names used by *Kata Kolok* signers, whereas Lutzerberger's study focuses on individual names that refer to a person's characteristics.

Conversely, Nonaka (2015) researched the use of names in Japanese Sign Language (JSL), employing linguistic and cultural perspectives. In JSL, there are several common strategies employed to sign the name of an individual. These strategies are inextricably linked to the cultural values of Japanese society, which are reflected in the practice of using surnames. Furthermore, the language employs more than one orthographic pattern, including *kanji*, which originated from the Chinese language, *Hiragana* and *Katakana* letters, and the Latin alphabet. Surnames with simple *kanji* are typically indicated by the act of writing in the air (*kuusho*, which translates as 'drawing the word/names in the air'). Other strategies employ a combination of Latin and Hiragana letters to create the initials of a person's name, in addition to their specific character. This results in the name sign in JSL being a combination sign, which is distinct from the sign in *Kata Kolok*, which is predominantly a single sign (Nonaka et al., 2015).

In the study by Supalla (1990), it is explained that name signs are an integral part of the deaf community's culture of providing individuals with a proper identity, which is conveyed through the use of signs that are based on the specific character or appearance of the individual in question. Name signs are typically descriptive or arbitrary. Descriptive name signs are based on the individual's character and are not related to their spoken name. In contrast, arbitrary name sign systems are not intended to describe anything other than the person's name. The arbitrary name sign system (ANS) employs an alphabet of individual name initials, followed by a series of movements, including contacting, brushing, dual contact, and bilateral wrist movement. According to (Supalla, 1990), ANS is more commonly used to name individuals, whereas descriptive naming is employed to bestow a nickname. The two sign language naming systems described by Supalla in his article, namely the Descriptive Name Sign System and the Arbitrary Name Sign System, are employed by the deaf community in Bengkala Village to classify the naming system used to designate an area.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This research is a descriptive qualitative study, which employs a descriptive analysis of sociocultural phenomena. The study draws upon linguistic rules to provide a detailed account of the phenomena under investigation. The data were collected from the participants, who are native signers of *Kata Kolok* in Bengkala Village. The data were then classified and their meaning and use were confirmed with research assistants in the field where the research was conducted. The data collected focused on location names, which included several village names and city names in Bali that were known to the participants. Once the data had been classified, an analysis was conducted to determine the general strategies employed by *Kata Kolok* signers in selecting or choosing characters

from objects. This was followed by a mapping of the selected characters to the corresponding signs. The conclusions are presented in a narrative form, explaining the analyzed data.

## 3. Results and Discussions

In general, villages and towns in Bali exhibit specific characteristics that contribute to the region's distinctive identity. These characteristics may take the form of statues, traditional dances, regional cuisine, or other elements that differentiate the area from others. Based on the findings of the data analysis, it can be observed that the deaf community in Bengkala Village predominantly employs descriptive strategies in the naming of places. The descriptions taken are conventionally closely related to the general Balinese understanding of a place. For example, the Ubud area is renowned for its artistic values. Additionally, place names are derived from iconic landmarks in a given area. To illustrate this, the regencies in Bali have their icons, with statues erected in their honor. In Denpasar Municipality, there is a statue of Catur Muka, in Singaraja City there is a statue of a lion, and in other places as well. In addition to characterizing a place based on its iconic landmarks, the deaf participants in Bengkala Village also utilize the Latin alphabet and the initials of the city name to name their sign language.

### *A. The Descriptive Name Sign System*

The strategy of naming by describing the landmarks of places that are considered the most iconic is the most prevalent strategy employed by deaf groups in Bengkala Village. The selected landmark is typically a statue that is considered iconic. The statue is generally described in terms of its torso and above. The most distinctive parts of the face, ears, hand shape, or props carried are the most frequently described parts. This may be related to the addressee's means of articulation and perception, that is to say, to facilitate communication. This is because it is more likely to be articulated and more effective for the addressee to see. The sign for the city of Singaraja, the capital of Bengkala village, is represented by a statue of a sitting lion with wings (see Figure 2). The statue was erected in the 1970s on the protocol road in front of the Singaraja city government office. From this statue, the image chosen is the wings of the lion statue, as it is a distinctive feature. The sign for Singaraja City is articulated in the neutral area in front of the signer's chest with a symmetrical cupped-5 hand shape, akin to wings situated adjacent to the body (cf. Figure 2).

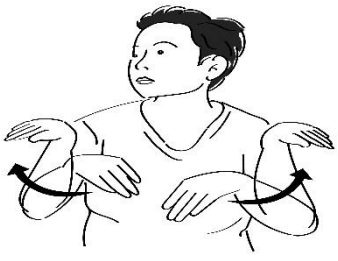


Figure 2. SINGARAJA (KK)



Figure 3. The most iconic statue of Singaraja City[5]

[5] source : https://damkar.bulelengkab.go.id/informasi/detail/artikel/84_asal-usul-tugu-singa-ambara-rasa-buleleng

Furthermore, the sign for the name of another city, Denpasar City, is represented by the Catur Muka statue, which is situated in the heritage area of Denpasar City. The sign for Catur Muka is articulated on the face, with the dominant hand forming a bent-B shape, which touches the chin and forehead in sequence. The statue is described as representing the face. In other areas, the sign also employs a similar strategy, which is the description of the symbol in the form of a statue that is considered the most iconic of an area. For instance, in the neighboring village of Sudaji, the sign is formed with the hand forming the letter O, touching the lower earlobe. This sign is a reference to a statue with earrings that is located in the village.



Figure 4. Sign of Denpasar City



Figure 5. Catur Muka Statue[6]

*B. The Arbitrary name sign system*

The arbitrary naming system employs the Latin alphabet to represent the initials of a region's name. This system was employed to devise a sign representing the village name, Bengkala. The village of Bengkala is indicated by forming a hand into the shape of the Latin alphabet letter B in a neutral area (see Fig. 6). For another area or place called Jimbaran, the ASL (American Sign Language) alphabet is employed to indicate the village of Jimbaran, which is renowned for its tourism potential in Bali. The sign used to signify this village is the same as that used to indicate the letter /J/ in the alphabet. This alphabet is an initialization of the initial letter of the name of the area, Jimbaran. The next sign is for the tourist area of Nusa Dua. The area is signed with the letter /N/ in Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO), which is articulated with an outward movement. In Indonesian sign language, the letter N is articulated with the index and middle fingers attached to the inner palm. However, to sign the Nusa Dua area, the index and middle fingers do not touch the palm (see figure 7).





[6] source : https://www.denpasarkota.go.id/berita/patung-catur-muka-denpasar-kini-tampak-lebih-indah

Figure 6. Sign of BENGKALA Figure 7. Sign of NUSA DUA

In addition to these cities, Denpasar City also has a sign that is articulated using the initials of its name, which is the capital D or lowercase d (See Fig. 8). Denpasar City articulated with its initials is signed by the older generation deaf group. The sign for the city that touches the hand or that uses the descriptive system of the city landmarks is employed by younger children who use Indonesian Sign Language (BISINDO) in their social interactions. The sign for the city with initialization is more commonly employed by the deaf community in Bengkala Village when communicating with their peers. Furthermore, signs for the city that employ descriptions of landmarks are most likely to be employed when communicating with individuals from outside the village. Both signs are currently still in use within the group to refer to the city.



Figure 8. DENPASAR (KK)

## 4. Conclusion

Names are a significant aspect of cultural identity in a multitude of communities across the globe. The act of bestowing a name upon an individual or a geographical location is typically undertaken with great care and involves a number of considerations. In sign language, the naming of regions, whether villages, cities or countries, is also undertaken with some consideration and utilizes various strategies or systems. In essence, an area is signed from the landmarks that are most prominent and known by the wider community. The deaf community in Bengkala Village employs two distinct systems for the purpose of indicating the name of a location. These include the descriptive and arbitrary signing systems. In the descriptive signing system, the naming of locations is accomplished by selecting objects or landmarks that are widely regarded as the most iconic symbols in a given area. These may include statues erected in a particular location. The statue is selected as the source of the sign, and the most distinctive part is identified. This is typically the central portion of the statue, extending from the base to the top. The location of the sign articulation was determined by the actual position of the most distinctive feature of the statue. In addition to the use of a descriptive system, the naming a town or village also employs the technique of initialization. The initial letter of the name of the location is employed to refer to it. The articulations for names in this system are typically formed in the neutral area of the signer, with no contact with the body.

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