HONG KONG SIGN LANGUAGE

A Trilingual Dictionary with Linguistic Descriptions

香港手語詞典

Edited by Gladys Tang

鄧慧蘭 編撰

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The Chinese University Press

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Compiling a dictionary is a mammoth undertaking in lexicography. It presupposes an extensive understanding of the language on the part of the researcher. Given the short history of sign language research, the compilation is all the more daunting due to the scarcity of relevant literature and research findings. I am deeply indebted to the group of deaf informants who have participated in the dictionary project at various stages of its development, allowing me to tap their linguistic knowledge of Hong Kong Sign Language and rendering their service with wit as well as unfathomable wisdom. Among them, I would like to thank Kenny Chu, my long-time co-worker and model for the dictionary; he opens the window of the deaf community for me and helps me understand and appreciate the Deaf as a minority group in the society, their sign language as well as deaf culture. There are other deaf individuals whom I chanced upon and consulted. I would like to thank them for their unfailing support and enthusiasm for clarifications whenever I got baffled by the language. They are Wang Kai Fung, Lam Tung Wah, Warren Tso, Choi Wai Hung, Brenda Yu, Jenny Lam, Chan Chi Wai and Bernand Lee. I would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on the manuscript of the dictionary.

James Woodward deserves my heartiest tribute. When we met in 1992, he challenged my speech-oriented linguistic concepts with his socio- and anthropological perceptions on the language of the Deaf, thereby making me see my gap of knowledge in the pursuit of linguistics, and putting me on the cruise of sign language analysis. I would like to dedicate this dictionary to him for his works for the Deaf in Asia.

This dictionary of Hong Kong Sign Language would not have come to fruition if it had not been for the initial and continual support of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Association of the Deaf. Since 1992, two direct grants (22100460, 2010202 and 2081006), two RGC grants (CUHK10/93H and CUHK4278/01H) and one strategic grant (SRP9302) have been obtained to conduct research on Hong Kong Sign Language and its acquisition by deaf infants. Grateful thanks also to my longtime friends and colleagues, Virginia Yip, Gu Yang, Jiang Ping and Yap Foong Ha, who have witnessed the birth of sign linguistics research at The Chinese University of Hong Kong and have been giving me support and encouragement all along the way.

Throughout the years, the Hong Kong Association of the Deaf provides a venue for

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me to meet and verify the data with the deaf informants. I am also deeply grateful for their generous donation to support the huge printing cost of the dictionary. Another major contributor is the Freemason's Fund for East Asian Studies, to whom I extend my sincerest gratitude.

The research into Hong Kong Sign Language also enables me to acquaint myself with a group of dedicated undergraduate and postgraduate students. Their commitment to sign language research and consistent concerns for the welfare and educational opportunities for the Deaf command my love and respect for them. They are Felix Sze, Scholastica Lam, Jafi Lee, Fion Wong, Sarah Lee and Prudence Lau. They gave me all the support I needed and sent in soothing words of encouragement while I trudged through the piles of images in my office.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family for their understanding and whole-hearted support for the past ten years. I hope learning Hong Kong Sign Language from this dictionary will become a wonderful pastime for my little twin daughters, Ruth and Hannah; and a source of philanthropic inspiration for my husband, Ken.

鳴謝

在詞典編彙學的角度來說，編寫一本詞典是一項艱巨的任務。一本好詞典的先決條件是研究人員對該語言有深入廣泛的認識。不過手語研究只有短短數十年的歷史，而關於香港手語的文獻和研究又少之又少，所以撰寫本詞典的過程可謂困難重重。在這裏，我要衷心感激在不同階段曾經參與詞典編彙工作的聾人，他們協助我去發掘他們對香港手語的語言知識，從中我深刻體會到他們是一群既有無限能力又有智慧的人。我尤其多謝朱君毅先生，他過去數年和我一起並肩工作，並當上了詞典的相片模特兒，他爲我開啓了聾人社群的門，亦幫助我明白到聾人在社會上作爲少數社群的情況，以及他們聾人的語言和文化。另外我亦曾向一些聾人討教，徵詢他們對手語的意見。我十分感激他們一直以來對我的支持，每次我發現香港手語中一些難明之處，他們總是熱衷的爲我解答，他們包括王繼鋒、林東曄、曹志康、蔡偉雄、余瑋琳、林素然、陳智偉和李振威。我亦謹在此多謝兩位不透露姓名的手語學者，他們詳細審閱了本詞典的初稿，提出了極寶貴的意見。

在此，我也要向伍德華教授(Prof. James Woodward)致上最衷心的敬意。我們在一九九二年結識，那時我滿腦子的語言學概念都是建基於口語的研究。在聾人手語的問題上，伍教授以社會學和人類學的觀點去挑戰我一些固有的想法，令我醒覺我對語言學認識的不足之處，並驅使我踏上手語語言學的路。我謹將本詞典獻給伍教授，表揚他爲亞洲聾人所作出的貢獻。

這本香港手語詞典最終得以面世，實有賴香港中文大學和聾人福利協進會由始至終的支持。由一九九二年開始，我們得到了兩項研資局直接撥款(CUHK10/93H, 2010202),、兩項大學研資局保助金角逐撥款(2081006, 2110067)以及一項策略性研究撥款(SRP9302)去研究香港手語和聾童手語獲得的情況。我特別感激一班與我共事多年的學者既好友，她們是葉彩燕、顧陽、蔣平和葉鳳霞。除了見證了手語語言學在中文大學的誕生外，她們在我發展是項研究中給予我無限的支持及鼓勵。

在過往數年間，聾人福利協進會爲我提供了場地去跟聾人會面，一起驗證手語的資料。我也非常感激聾人福利協進會的慷慨捐款，支持本詞典部分的印刷費用。印刷費的另一筆主要捐款來自共濟會研究東亞學科基金，我在此衷心多謝這個基金的補助。

透過研究香港手語，我認識了一班熱心的大學本科生和研究生。他們對手語研究充滿熱誠，同時也非常關心聾人的福利和教育機會。我對他們敬愛有加。他們是施婉萍、林慧思、李然輝、黃悅安、李慧鳳和柳倩儀。當我在辦公室對著一大堆手語相片埋頭苦幹的時候，他們送上了安慰鼓勵的說話，給了我極大的支持。

最後，我多謝我的家人在過去十年來對我的諒解和支持。我希望我的一對孿生女兒皓琳和晏琳會學習香港手語詞典中的手語，並視之爲有趣的課外活動。我也希望這詞典和手語研究令我的丈夫體會到社會不同階層的精神面貌。

Foreword by the Hong Kong Deaf Association of the Deaf

The Hong Kong Association of the Deaf welcomes the publication of this unique trilingual dictionary of Hong Kong Sign Language (HKSL), which is regarded as the mother tongue of the Deaf in Hong Kong and is commonly used among the local Deaf people. There have been no systematic documentation of HKSL and no formal curriculum devised to teach the language to the local hearing people and deaf children. The past few decades saw a rapid development of the society and demands are there for HKSL to enrich its lexicon. Hence, this unique dictionary comes in timely, thanks to the efforts of Prof. Gladys Tang and her research team over the past decade. For our prolonged involvement with the deaf community, we have no doubt about the status of HKSL as an independent language and we believe this dictionary will help confirm its status and bridge the gap between the Deaf and the Hearing people in Hong Kong. More importantly, it is our hope that this dictionary will kindle people's interest in sign language analysis and pave the way for enhancing opportunities for quality deaf education.

October 2003

序言 - 香港聾人福利協進會

香港聾人福利協進會對香港手語詞典的面世感到非常欣慰。詞典以三種語文寫成，在坊間是獨一無二的。香港手語是香港聾人的母語，是他們互相溝通時慣常採用的語言。在本詞典出版之前，香港手語並沒有有系統地記載下來，本地亦沒有爲健聽人士和聾童而設的正規手語課程。過去數十年間香港社會各方面發展迅促，香港手語因而增加了不少新的詞彙，所以本詞典的出版正合時宜。在此多謝鄧慧蘭教授和她的研究小組過往十年來的努力。本會參與聾人社群事務多年，確信香港手語是一個獨立的語言，我們深信本詞典會有助確立香港手語的地位，並成爲健聽人士和聾人中間的橋樑。更重要的是，我們希望本詞典可以引發讀者對手語研究的興趣，爲進一步改善聾童教育質素舖路。

二零零三年十月

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Part I. Introduction

1. Background of the dictionary project

Between 1993 and 1996, James Woodward and Gladys Tang obtained two grants: *A Study of Sign Language Varieties in Hong Kong* (Research Grant Council #2110008) and *Asian-Pacific Sign Language/Deaf Studies Research & Training Program* (CUHK Strategic Research Grant #SRP9302) to launch an investigation into the varieties of Hong Kong Sign Language (HKSL). During that period, they had documented a set of signs either adopted by the local deaf signers or included in the manuals published by the deaf organizations and the Hong Kong Government (Goodstadt 1972, Hong Kong Education Department 1990). Woodward and Tang's work provides a source of data for the current dictionary. Thanks to digital technology, these HKSL signs were recaptured and analyzed using the phonological theories advanced in sign linguistics research.

This dictionary serves two purposes:

- Being trilingual, the dictionary enables hearing Chinese or English users to access the language and to appreciate the properties of deaf sign language. The deaf signers of HKSL are able to gain knowledge of the correspondence between HKSL and the two spoken languages commonly adopted in the local community.
- It is hoped that the linguistic information documented for each sign entry will contribute to the development of sign linguistics research in Hong Kong.

This dictionary documents 1982 signs that either appeared in the earlier manuals of HKSL or are used commonly in Hong Kong nowadays. They were verified by five native to near-native deaf signers of HKSL and the members of the Hong Kong Association of the Deaf at various stages of the dictionary project. Yet, the signs contained in the dictionary are by no means exhaustive; we believe that there are signs that await to be uncovered in future research. Also, readers will notice that the dictionary involves the 'frozen signs' as far as possible. Frozen signs are those individual signs that are fixed in form over time and are relatively stable in terms of their form-meaning correspondence (Brennan 1992). However, one should not ignore the fact that in sign language, there is an 'on-line' dimension of creative lexical usage, by which we mean the signer 'creates' meaningful signing as the discourse progresses, by combining the different values of the phonological parameters of natural sign language. Classifier predicates are a case in point. This category of signs is observed in the natural sign languages thus far and they are typical examples of 'productive

signs' under study so far. They also pose a challenge to deaf child learners as they are usually acquired late, probably due to the fact that space is involved in the construction of grammatical meaning. While compiling the dictionary, we observed that some classifier predicates have been lexicalized over time to become frozen signs. In Appendix 5 we list the classifier handshapes adopted in HKSL.

The signs in this dictionary are not meant to reflect a 'standard' variety of HKSL. On the contrary, the documentation proceeds with the assumption that variations should be recorded as far as possible. Therefore, readers may find a number of signs sharing the same meaning at various places. Hopefully, this dictionary will kindle people's interest in analyzing sign variation from the perspective of some well-attested sociolinguistic variables such as age, social class, ethnic or regional background and gender; only then will we be able to understand the relationship between HKSL and other sign language varieties.

2. Organization of the dictionary

The dictionary is organized into four parts. In Part I, we aim to show the readers how to use the dictionary. Part II describes the development of sign linguistics as a discipline of research and the history of sign linguistics research in Hong Kong. Part III includes the indices of the page numbers for individual handshapes, the English translations and the Chinese translations for citation purpose, to be followed by an analysis of the signs collected for the dictionary project. In this section, each sign entry is represented with one or a set of images depicting as far as possible how it is articulated in real time. There is also linguistic information for each entry and the way the information is presented will be discussed in Part II. Part IV includes:

(a) examples of number signs (Appendix 1);
(b) manual alphabets (Appendix 2);
(c) examples of local place signs (Appendix 3);
(d) examples of foreign place signs (Appendix 4);
(e) classifiers and referents (Appendix 5); and
(f) a list of phonological features (Appendix 6)

3. Organization of signs

The signs in this dictionary are organized according to initial handshapes observed in the signs. These handshapes are presented in Table 1 of Part II. In that table, each handshape is assigned a handshape symbol. Most of these symbols are adapted from Stokoe et al. (1976) and Brien (1992). The small marks on some of the

symbols represent some specific values of handshape configuration. For instance, 'A' with a dot on top (Ȧ) is associated with a handshape that has an extended unopposed thumb (). 'I' with three dots on top (Ï) is associated with flexion of the selected, with the pinky finger at the non-base joints () (see Figs. 2 & 3). Each handshape consists of at most four categories of signs arranged according to the principle of classification discussed in the sign linguistics literature: one-handed signs come before two-handed signs; the latter category is further divided into three types of two-handed signs. Some handshapes may have all four categories and some have fewer (see Fig. 1). Within each category, signs articulated in the neutral signing space are presented first, followed by signs produced at specific body locations starting from the head, trunk, down to the arm and the non-dominant hand, and finally the legs (see Fig. 2).

Figure 1. Classification of signs

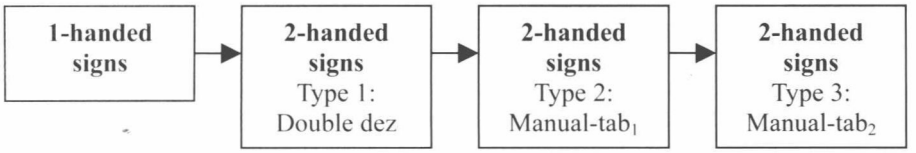
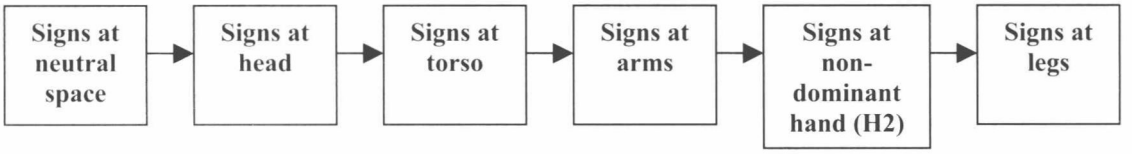


Figure 2. Order of presentation



4. How to locate information in the dictionary

There are two ways to locate a sign in the dictionary. One may:

(a) Consult the handshape listed at the top of the page. Also, one may consult the table of contents in which the page numbers of individual handshapes are listed;

(b) Consult the indices in Part III. The English translations are arranged in alphabetical order and the Chinese translations are arranged in terms of the number of strokes of the first character of the Chinese translations. Each translation is accompanied by an entry number.

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