SIGNPOSTS: PLACE NAME REFERENCE IN NZSL

NZ Linguistics Society Conference, Nov 21, 2016

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Context for signer's use of place names

1. Childhood deafness impedes acquisition of spoken languaculture; (name learning through incidental exposure is reduced)

2. Sign language lexicon exists in contact with, but does not directly parallel, lexicon of an ambient spoken language

3. Visual-gestural modality of SL generates different referential strategies

4. Deaf impressions of word forms rely on visual cues (lips, print)

5. Critical mass of SL users occurs in very few locations in NZ > limited conventionalisation of historically & spatially shared place names

Why investigate NZSL toponyms?

Applied reasons

- 39 place names in *Online Dictionary of NZSL*; NZ Geographic Board query 2014 - official status of NZSL re. place names?

- Functional need to talk about precise locations, eg. a relayed 111 call; interpreted broadcasts (eg, natural disasters)

- Learners of NZSL (L1, L2) – need local place vocabulary

- Māori users of NZSL - places associated with whakapapa

Documenting place names responds to perceived needs of NZSL users. *But -*

- *How many exist?*

- *How are they created?*

- *Are they stable enough to go in a dictionary?*

Theoretical & descriptive reasons

What types of signs occur in the contact zones?
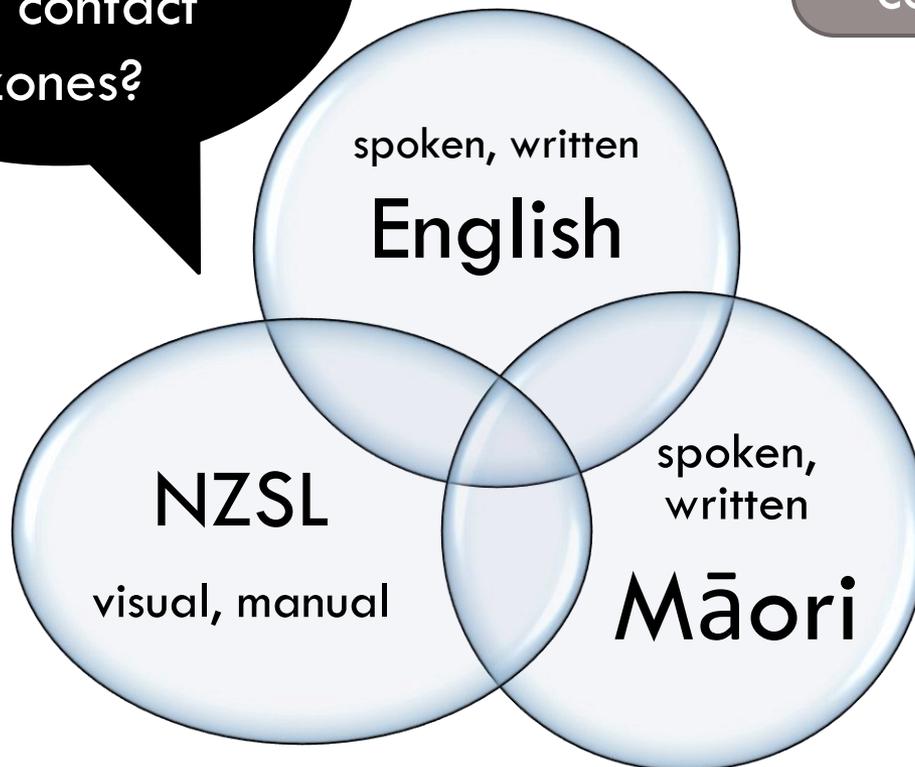
Lexicography: what qualifies as a stable, conventional 'sign'?

How does change in toponyms reflect changing context of NZSL use?

spoken, written
English

NZSL
visual, manual

spoken, written
Māori

Data

Site	Signs recorded	> 50% agreed	Participant no.
Whangarei	67	35	6
Auckland	194	61	18
Hamilton	51	44	6
Napier	71	37	12
Bay of Plenty	54	21	5
Palmerston North	71	41	10
Wellington	286	39	10
Nelson	74	28	10
Christchurch	148	71	10
Dunedin	41	32	5
Invercargill	11	8	9
Total	1068	417*	101

*238 (22%) of recorded signs were agreed by ALL present in the source group

Types of Toponyms

Motivation & Form

Descriptive association – feature or activity: visual metonymy

Place name	SIGN GLOSS
Kaikoura	WHALE
Taupo	FISHING
Te Kuiti	SHEARING
Claudelands	CLOWN
Rotorua	BUBBLING
Tokoro	PINETREE
Waikanae	DOUBLE-TICK

Place name	SIGN GLOSS
Waiouru	ARMY
Waitangi	TREATY (scroll)
Parnell	SLOPE-up
Kaitaia	LIGHTHOUSE
Avondale	SPIDER
Meremere	CAR-RACING
Mapua	UNDRESS

Calque: loan 'translation'

Place Name	Sign Gloss
Longburn	LONG BURN
Freeman's Bay	FREE MAN BAY
Kingsland	KING LAND
Mission Bay	PRIEST BAY
Bunnythorpe	RABBIT
Foxton	FOX
Bluff	RUBBISH (talk)
Bombay Hills	BOMB HILL
Blockhouse Bay	B HOUSE BAY
Te Aroha	AROHA
Balaclava	BALACLAVA
Mt Cook	MOUNTAIN COOK

Play on word appearance (mis-approximation)

Place name	Sign gloss	Place name	Sign gloss
Paraparaumu	PRAM	Zimmer Hill	SUMMER HILL
Lyall Bay	LIAR BAY	Norsewood	NOSE WOOD
Manukau	MAN COW	Titirangi	TITS
Bishopdale	BISHOP-TAIL	Hagley	UGLY
Silverdale	S-TAIL	Brooklyn	BOOK
Fordell	FORKLIFT	Hamner	HAMMER
Whitby	WHIP	Katikati	CAT
Stoke	CHOKE	Matamata	NO-MATTER
Papatoetoe	P-TOE TOE	Caversham	CARAVAN

Use of fingerspelling

1. SINGLE & DOUBLE LETTERS

Oamaru	O
Auckland	A / A-K
Te Awamutu	T-A
Akaroa	A-K
Warkworth	W-W
Johnsonville	J-V

2. INITIALIISED

(FS handshape in a sign)*

Coromandel	C-hills
Wanganui	W-river
Petone	P-sea
Lincoln	L-farm
Khandallah	K-India
St Clair	C-saint

American Sign Language word formation strategy

3. Mixed - letter + sign

Place Name	SIGN GLOSS
Taupiri	T-MOUNTAIN
Rototuna	R- FISH
Hillcrest	HILL+C
Ruakura	R-FARM
Cambridge	C-BRIDGE
Paparangi	P-SUN
Turangawaewae	N-MARAE
Balclutha	B-BRIDGE
Gisborne	G-SUNRISE

Distribution of 'types'
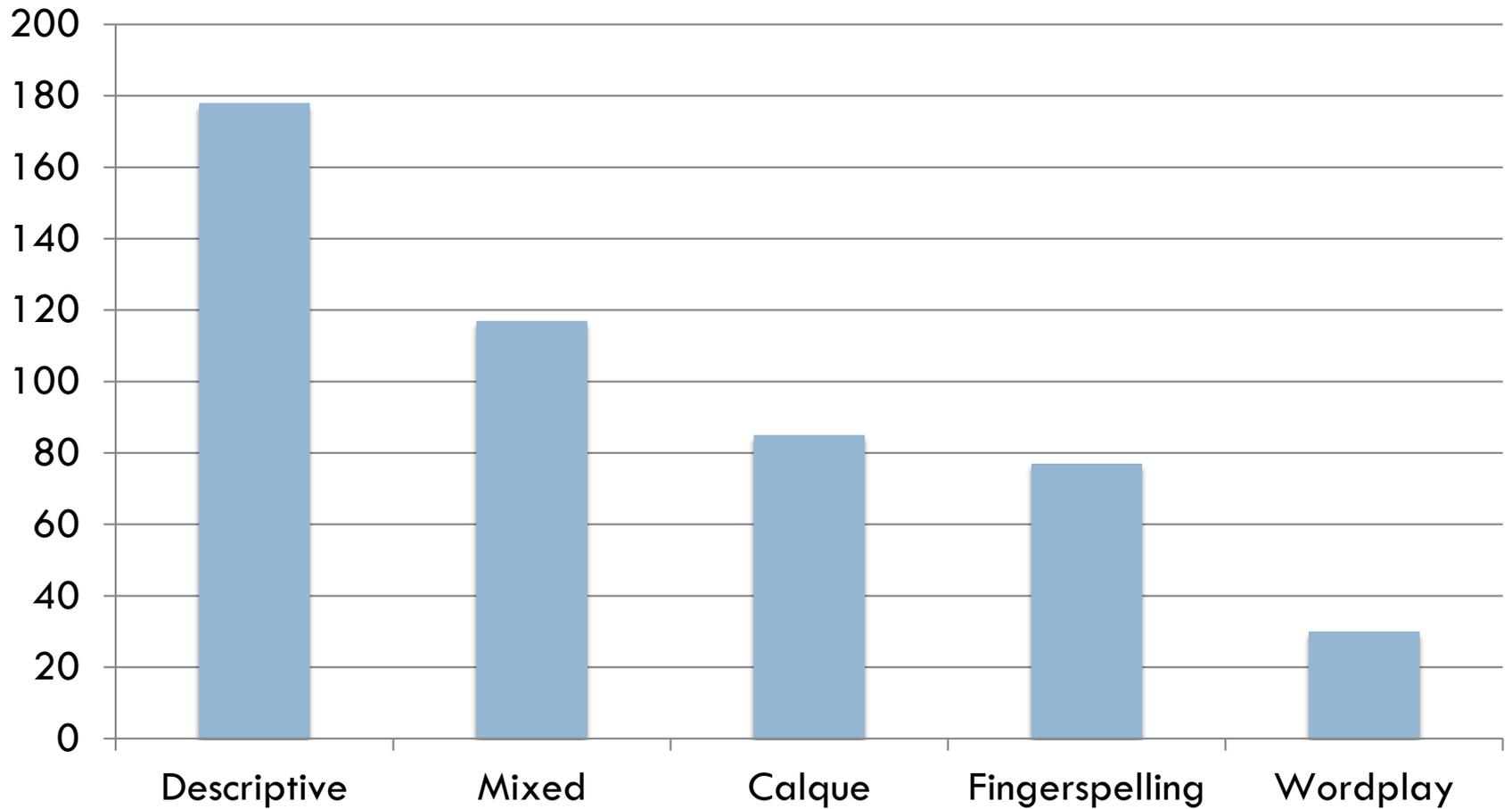
Nonce reference strategies

Older signers: mouth a place name with

- ☐ generic 'town' sign
- ☐ generic 'place' sign
- ☐ pointing – literal direction

Younger signers: mouthing with

- ☐ Fingerspell one or more letters
- ☐ pointing – literal direction

Retrieval of place reference requires local context in most cases

NZSL form	Signifies places …	Type
drive-up-windy road	Takaka, Kaimai, Rimutaka	descriptive association
POSH	Karori, Remuera, Fendalton	descriptive association
HORSERIDING	Addington, Ellerslie	descriptive association
FRUITPICKING	Motueka, Kerikeri	descriptive association
AIRPLANE	Mangere, Wigram, Miramar	descriptive association
ARMY	Hamilton, Hastings,	(?) similar word
C-C	Christchurch, Cannons Creek	fingerspelling
KILL	St Kilda, Kilbirnie, Kelburn	word appearance

What's in a name?
Signs of a changing context for NZSL

'legitimisation' of NZSL: expansion of domains & lexicon

- Following, Deaf individuals first assumed **roles in deaf education** from mid 1990s as itinerant teachers >> created local place names with mainstreamed deaf students in regions, and used the ones they already knew

- Deaf people became agents of wider language development & transmission via education

iconic signposts: new visual referents

- Tirau – before 'T', now 'sheep' or 'dog'
- Taihape – before 'T', now 'gumboot'
- Palm Nth – before PN, now 'wind turbines'
- Gore – before 'G' now 'upright fish'

new language contact repertoire

- ☐ 'Bilingual' society: more awareness in younger generations that Māori names have meaningful parts; wanting to display knowledge of Māori

- ☐ Online & international exposure to ASL as a global language. Initialisation (using a fingerspelled handhsape in a sign) is a productive sign formation strategy in ASL – this has cachet with younger NZ signers: borrowed into NZSL for coining proper names ('non-native' lexicon)

'Nativising' and 'cleansing'

- **Internal** attitude change - recognition of NZSL as a language >> Deaf feeling that visually motivated signs are 'more NZSL' (more linguistically independent) than signs reflecting spoken words through fingerspelling >> replacement of previous place name signs.

- Growth of L2 teaching: learners dislike polysemous signs – promotion of unique signs for places relevant to learners' needs

- **External** scrutiny of name signs by hearing L2 learners: eg, Māori place names - Onehunga, Papatoetoe: hearing desire to remove English influence in sign formation

- Social awareness – eg. Porirua (old sign racially pejorative)