

# W6-2: Vowel devoicing in Osaka Japanese

JAPN398D: The Sounds and Dialects of Japanese

10/4/2023

# 山中伸弥教授について

## Shinya Yamanaka Facts

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Shinya Yamanaka  
The Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2012

Born: 4 September 1962, Osaka, Japan

Affiliation at the time of the award: Kyoto University, Kyoto, Japan; Gladstone Institutes, San Francisco, CA, USA

Prize motivation: “for the discovery that mature cells can be reprogrammed to become pluripotent”

Prize share: 1/2

<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/medicine/2012/yamanaka/facts/>

# 山中伸弥教授について

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## Life

Shinya Yamanaka was born in Higashiosaka, Japan. He studied for his medical degree at Kobe University and later earned his PhD from Osaka City University in 1993. After spending several years at the Gladstone Institute at the University of California, San Francisco, he returned to Osaka, but later moved to the Nara Institute of Science and Technology, where he began his Nobel Prize-winning research. Yamanaka has been affiliated with Kyoto University since 2004. Shinya Yamanaka is married with two daughters.

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## Work

Our lives begin when a fertilized egg divides and forms new cells that, in turn, also divide. These cells are identical in the beginning, but become increasingly varied over time. It was long thought that a mature or specialized cell could not return to an immature state, but this has now been proven incorrect. In 2006, Shinya Yamanaka succeeded in identifying a small number of genes within the genome of mice that proved decisive in this process. When activated, skin cells from mice could be reprogrammed to immature stem cells, which, in turn, can grow into different types of cells within the body.

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# 山中伸弥教授について

The image shows the homepage of the Center for iPS Cell Research and Application (CiRA) at Kyoto University. The page features a navigation bar with language options (Japanese, English), font size settings (M, L), a search bar, and social media icons. The main header includes the CiRA logo and navigation links for 'About CiRA', 'Research Activities', 'Education', 'For the Public', 'News and Events', and 'Jobs'. A large, colorful banner with the CiRA logo and the text 'Center for iPS Cell Research and Application, Kyoto University' is displayed. Below the banner are two buttons: 'Research Overview' and 'Learn More'. A row of four icons represents different topics: 'What are iPS cells?', 'For patients and their families', 'For researchers and companies', and 'Make a Gift'. At the bottom, there are links for 'News & Press Releases', 'Research', 'Events', 'Others', and an RSS feed icon.

<https://www.cira.kyoto-u.ac.jp/e/index.html>

# 本田圭佑さんについて



- Born: June 13, 1986, Osaka
- Height: 1.82 m (6 ft. 0 in.)
- Position: Midfielder
  
- 2004-2007: Nagoya Grampus
- 2014-2018: AC Milan
  
- 2008-2018: Japan national team

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Keisuke\\_Honda\\_2018\\_\(cropped\)\\_cropped.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Keisuke_Honda_2018_(cropped)_cropped.jpg)

# 近畿大学 (Kindai University) について



- 近畿大学 (きんきだいがく)
  - 近大 (きんだい)
  - <https://www.kindai.ac.jp/>
- Private university in Osaka
- Brings in celebrities as commencement speakers.

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kinki\\_University.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kinki_University.JPG)

# Vowel devoicing

- High vowels /i, u/ get devoiced in the following two environments.
  1. Between two voiceless consonants.
    - /i, u/ → [–voiced] / [C, –voiced] \_\_ [C, –voiced]
    - e.g. く さ (草) ‘grass’ /kusa/ → [kʷsa]
  2. Between a voiceless consonant and a pause (、 or 〇 ).
    - /i, u/ → [–voiced] / [C, –voiced] \_\_ #
    - e.g. です ‘COP’ /desu/ → [desʷ]

# Discussion questions

- You must post at least 1 comment on Canvas.
- How many devoicing environments are there?
- How often do /i/ and /u/ get devoiced in the environments?
- Osaka Japanese is a variety with infrequent vowel devoicing. Do you think that it is true?
- How are Prof. Yamanaka's speech and Honda-san's speech different?
- etc...



# Osaka features/expressions

- Yamanaka-sensei
  - うまいこと = うまく
- Honda-san
  - 手えあげて... = Vowel lengthening (minimality constraint)
    - 手を (bimoraic) vs. 手え (bimoraic)
  - Case drop (e.g. 手えあげて)
    - Case drop is one of the major characteristics of Classical Japanese.

# References

- 本田圭佑オフィシャルWEBサイト  
<https://keisuke-honda.com/>
- Nobel Prize Outreach AB 2023. Shinya Yamanaka – Facts.  
NobelPrize.org.  
<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/medicine/2012/yamanaka/facts/>