

The Logical Principles of Honorification and Dishonorification in Japanese

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Outline

Introduction

Taxonomy of honorifics

Features of the Japanese honorific system

Basic Pragmatic Principles of Honorification

Dual-orientation of Courtesy Honorifics

Non-Redundancy of Iterated Audience Honorification

Conclusion

Aim

- This work:
 1. develops a comprehensive analysis of the meanings of Japanese honorifics (honorific expressions), and
 2. discusses some basic discourse principles regulating their usage.

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Taxonomy of honorifics

- Positive honorifics

- Negative Honorifics

- Hybrid Honorifics

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Taxonomy of honorifics

- (1) a. **positive honorifics (honorifics₊)**
 - i. ARG1 honorifics
 - ii. ARG2 honorifics
 - iii. denotatum honorifics
 - iv. possessor honorifics
 - v. politeness honorifics
- b. **negative honorifics (honorifics₋)**
 - i. ARG1 dishonorifics
 - ii. denotatum dishonorifics
 - iii. possessor dishonorifics
- c. **hybrid honorifics (honorifics_±)**
 - i. courtesy honorifics

Taxonomy of honorifics

- **Positive honorifics** positively characterize the honorability of a certain party.
- **Negative honorifics** negatively characterize the honorability of a certain party.
- **Hybrid honorifics** do both.



ARG1 and ARG2 honorifics

- **ARG1 honorifics** (= predicative *sonkeigo*) elevate the referent of the subject (i.e., the least oblique argument).

- (2) a. Suzuki ga kaku.
 S. Nom write.Prs
 ‘Suzuki will write (it).’
- b. Suzuki-san ga kakareru.
 S.-Suffix Nom write.*are*.Prs
 ‘Mr. Suzuki (who is honorable) will write (it).’
- c. Suzuki-san ga okaki ni naru.
 S.-Suffix Nom o.write *ni naru*.Prs
 ‘Mr. Suzuki (who is honorable) will write (it).’



ARG1 and ARG2 honorifics

- **ARG2 honorifics** (= Oishi's 1975 "*kenjoogo A*") elevate the referent of the second most prominent (second least oblique) argument.

- (3) a. Suzuki-san ni fuutoo o owatashi **suru**.
 S.-Suffix Dat envelope Acc o.hand *suru*.Prs
 ‘(I) will hand the envelope to Mr. Suzuki (who is honorable).’
- b. Suzuki-san o goan’nai **mooshiageta**.
 S.-Suffix Acc go.guide *mooshiageru*.Pst
 ‘(I) guided Mr. Suzuki (who is honorable).’



ARG1 and ARG2 honorifics

- A handful of basic verbs have an irregular (or “suppletive”) ARG1 or ARG2 honorific form; e.g., OSSHARU is an ARG1 honorific corresponding to IU ‘say’.
- Some irregular honorific verbs are not completely synonymous to corresponding nonhonorifics; e.g., MESHIAGARU covers the meanings of both TABERU ‘eat’ and NOMU ‘drink’.

- (4) a. Suzuki-san ga suteeki (#to wain) o taberu.
 S.-Suffix Nom steak and wine Acc eat.Prs
 ‘Suzuki will eat a steak (and some wine).’
- b. Suzuki-san ga suteeki (to wain) o meshiagaru.
 S.-Suffix Nom steak and wine Acc consume.Prs
 ‘Mr. Suzuki (who is honorable) will consume a steak (and some wine).’

Denotatum honorifics and possessor honorifics

- Denotatum honorifics and possessor honorifics are nominals belonging to traditional *sonkeigo*.
- A **denotatum honorific** encodes respect toward its referent; e.g., KIDEN ‘you (masculine)’, HEIKA ‘(his/your/...) majesty’, KATA ‘person’ (as in *ano kata* ‘that person’).
- A **possessor honorific** encodes respect toward the “possessor(s)” (in a broad sense) of its referent; e.g., OKURUMA ‘car’, GOSHISOKU ‘son’, GOCHOSHO ‘authored book’, KISHA ‘your company’.



Politeness honorifics

- **Politeness honorifics** (*teineigo*) are audience-oriented (as opposed to referent-oriented).

(5) Banana ga {aru / **arimasu** / **gozaimasu**}.
 banana Nom exist.Prs exist.*mas*.Prs *gozaimasu*.Prs
 'There is a banana.'

(6) Kore wa banana {da / **desu** / de
 this Th banana Cop.Prs *desu*.Prs Cop.Inf
gozaimasu}.
gozaimasu.Prs
 'This is a banana.'



Dishonorifics

- Negative honorifics, or **dishonorifics**, correspond to Oishi's (1975) "*kenjoogo B*".
- Oishi (1975) characterizes their function to elevate the audience *by means of lowering a certain party* (see also Kikuchi 1997).

ARG1 dishonorifics

- The class of **ARG1 dishonorifics** consists of five verbs (some of which may be used as auxiliaries as well as as main verbs):

- (7)
- ITASU 'do'
 - MAIRU 'go, come'
 - ORU 'exist (with a sentient subject)'
 - MOOSU 'say'
 - ZONJIRU 'know'



ARG2 honorifics vs. ARG1 dishonorifics

- ARG2 honorifics (*kenjoogo* A) require the presence of a non-subject complement referring to an individual or group to be elevated.
- ARG1 dishonorifics (*kenjoogo* B) do not.

(8) Kinoo doobutsuen ni {#ukagaimashita /
yesterday zoo Dat *ukagau.mas.Pst*
mairimashita}.
mairu.mas.Pst
'(I) went to the zoo yesterday.'

(9) Ootoo ga watashi ni soo
younger.brother Nom I Dat so
{#mooshiagemashita / mooshimashita}.
mooshiageru.mas.Pst moosu.mas.Pst
'My younger brother told me so.'



Denotatum dishonorifics and possessor dishonorifics

- Denotatum and possessor dishonorifics are negative counterparts of denotatum and possessor honorifics.
- **Denotatum dishonorifics** lower their referent; e.g., SHOOSHOKU 'I', WATASHI-ME 'I', WATASHI-DOMO 'we (exclusive)'.
- **Possessor dishonorifics** lower the "possessor(s)" of their referent; e.g. GUSOKU '(inferior) son', SETCHO '(poorly) authored book', HEISHA '(inferior) company'.



Courtesy honorifics

- The ARG1 dishonorific verbs, with the exception of ZONJIRU 'know', are said to have a separate use as courtesy honorifics (*teichoogo*), which do not lower the referent of the subject but only elevate the audience (Kikuchi 1997).

(10) (by a sports announcer)

Sanbyaku-nin no senshu ga sanka
 300-Cl Cop.Attr competitor Nom participate
 itashimasu.
itasu.mas.Prs
 '300 competitors will participate (in this event).'

Politeness honorifics vs. courtesy honorifics

- Unlike politeness honorifics, courtesy honorifics pose a (negative) constraint on the honorability of the referent of the subject, to the effect that it cannot be a (group of) individual(s) that is to be elevated even slightly.

- (11) a. Suzuki-san mo ikimasu ka?
S.-Suffix also go.mas.Prs DP
'Are you going too, Mr. Suzuki?'
- b. Suzuki-san mo irasshaimasu ka?
S.-Suffix Nom irassharu.mas.Prs DP
'idem'
- c. #Suzuki-san mo mairimasu ka?
S.-Suffix Nom mairu.mas.Prs DP
(idem)

- Kikuchi (1997) considers this feature of courtesy honorifics, which may be called the "upper-limit effect", to be a residue of their historical origins as dishonorifics.



ARG1 dishonorifics vs. courtesy honorifics

- The distinction between ARG1 dishonorifics and courtesy honorifics is rather subtle.
- One may hypothesize that ITASU, MOOSU, ORU, and MAIRU are invariably used as courtesy honorifics (this would imply that ZONJIRU is the only ARG1 dishonorific).
- A major motivation to suppose the ambiguity of ITASU, MAIRU, etc. is the factor of stylistic distribution.
 - Courtesy honorifics appear to be stylistically more constrained than ARG1 dishonorifics, and characteristic to (though not limited to) formal public speech by announcers, MC's, etc.
 - Kikuchi (1997), in this connection, remarks that the usage of ITASU 'do', etc. as courtesy honorifics is less "typical" than that as ARG1 dishonorifics.

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Gradience

Presuppositionality

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Non-Redundancy of Iterated Audience Honorification





Gradience

- Different honorific expressions are associated with different degrees of respect (McCready *forthcoming*, Kikuchi 1997, among others); e.g.,

- (12) a. *arimasu* 'exist (with a nonsentient subject; politeness hon.)' < *gozaimasu*
 b. *kakareru* 'write (ARG1 hon.)' < *okaki ni naru*
 c. *goan'nai suru* 'guide (ARG2 hon.)' < *goan'nai mooshiageru*

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Gradience

- It is postulated that each honorific expression is associated with a honorific value, i.e., the degree of its “respectfulness”, ranging from 1 (most respectful) to -1 (most disrespectful), with 0 being the neutral value.
- Some major classes of honorifics and their tentative honorific values:

- (13) {V-MASU, (N) DESU} [0.2]
 < {V-(R)ARERU, {o-V/go-VN} SURU} [0.4]
 < {o-V/go-VN} *ni* NARU [0.5]
 < {GOZAIMASU, {o-V/go-VN} MOOSHIAGERU} [0.6]
 < “supreme honorifics”, e.g., ASOBASARERU ‘do (ARG1 hon.)’ [1.0]

Presuppositionality

- It is commonplace to divide conventionally encoded meaning into (i) proffered (or at-issue) content and (ii) conventional implicature (CI).
- Here, CI is construed broadly and as an equivalent of Tonhauser et al.'s (2013) “projective content”.

- (14) conventional meaning
- i. proffered content
 - ii. CI
 - ii.a. nonpresuppositional CI
 - ii.b. presuppositional CI (or simply presupposition)

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Presuppositionality

- I take honorific meaning to be *presuppositional* CI, which must be taken for granted or at least easily inferrable (accommodatable) (Oshima 2016).

(15) (A and B work at the same hotel. A mentions a man who made a scene at a café across the street in the morning. B has seen the man, and realized that he was a professor of her college days.)

A: Kimi wa sawagi o okoshita otoko o mita no?
you Th disturbance Acc cause.Pst man Acc see.Pst DAux
'Did you see the man who made the scene?'

B: Ee, okane o {motte nai / #omochide
yes, money Acc have.Ger Npfv.Neg.Prs omochida.Inf
nai} noni shokuji o {shita / #sareta} yoo
NegAux.Prs although meal Acc do.Pst sareru.Pst Evid
desu.

desu.Prs

'Yes, from what I heard, he had a meal although he did not have money.'



Presuppositionality

- *Pseudo-multidimensional* semantic representation (Oshima 2006, 2016), where clauses translate into formulas of the form: $\langle \phi; \psi \rangle$.
- Informally, $\langle \phi; \psi \rangle$ is “true” iff $\llbracket \phi \rrbracket = 1$, and “felicitous” iff $\llbracket \psi \rrbracket = 1$.

(16) *Transjunction*

syntax:

If ϕ and ψ are expressions of type t ($\mathbf{D}_t = \{1, 0\}$), then $\langle \phi; \psi \rangle$ is an expression of type T ($\mathbf{D}_T = \wp(\{I, II\})$).

semantics:

- $I \in \llbracket \langle \phi; \psi \rangle \rrbracket^{c, w, g}$ iff $\llbracket \phi \rrbracket^{c, w, g} = 1$, and
- $II \in \llbracket \langle \phi; \psi \rangle \rrbracket^{c, w, g}$ iff $\llbracket \psi \rrbracket^{c, w, g} = 1$.



Presuppositionality

- (17) a. I admire Beethoven. (no non-trivial CI)
 b. I only admire Beethoven. (with non-presuppositional CI)
 c. I also admire Beethoven. (with presuppositional CI)
- (18) a. $\langle \text{admire}(\text{Speaker}, \text{beethoven}); \mathbf{T} \rangle$
 b. $\langle \neg \exists x [x \neq \text{beethoven} \ \& \ \text{admire}(\text{Speaker}, x)];$
 $\text{admire}(\text{Speaker}, \text{beethoven}) \rangle$
 c. $\langle \text{admire}(\text{Speaker}, \text{beethoven});$
 $\mathbf{CG}(\wedge [\exists x [x \neq \text{beethoven} \ \& \ \text{admire}(\text{Speaker}, x)]]) \rangle$



Presuppositionality

- The meanings of the ARG1 honorific *oyomi ni* NARU ‘read’ and the politeness honorific GOZAIMASU ‘exist (with a nonsentient subject)’ can be approximated as in (19a,b).
- **HON** represents a function that assigns to individuals honorific values according to their honorability, i.e., the degrees of respect that the speaker publicly acknowledge that they deserve.

$$(19) \quad \begin{array}{ll} \text{a. } \lambda y[\lambda x[\langle \text{read}(x, y); \mathbf{CG}(\wedge[\mathbf{HON}(x) \geq 0.5]) \rangle]] \\ \text{b. } \lambda x[\langle \text{exist}(x); \mathbf{CG}(\wedge[\neg \text{sentient}(x) \ \& \\ \mathbf{HON}(\mathbf{Audience}) \geq 0.6]) \rangle] \end{array}$$

- The function **HON** is indexical in nature, varying across contexts of utterance (depending on who is speaking to whom, etc.).

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- Maximization of Reverence

- The Ban on Self-Honorification, Relativity, and the Dishonorification Constraint

- Dishonorification as honorification

Dual-orientation of Courtesy Honorifics

Non-Redundancy of Iterated Audience Honorification





Maximization of reverence

- For a Japanese conversation to be felicitous, it is required
 1. that “due respect” be expressed toward the individuals mentioned or evoked in the utterance as well as toward the audience, and also;
 2. that none of these individuals be excessively elevated (“overhonorified”).

(20) Ame ga {a. furimashita /b. futta}.
 rain Nom fall.mas.Pst fall.Pst
 ‘It rained.’

(21) Ito-san ga pasokon o {a. kawareta /b.
 I.-Suffix Nom personal.computer Acc buy.are.Pst
 katta}.
 buy.Pst
 ‘(Ms.) Ito {(who is honorable)/∅} bought a personal computer.’



Maximization of reverence

- (22) **Reverence maximization #1:** For any utterance u , each lexical item (word or multi-word unit) i involved in u must be chosen in such a way that i , among its honorific variants, expresses the highest degrees of reverence toward (i) the audience of u and (ii) the referents mentioned or evoked in u that do not exceed what these individuals deserve.
- Any two items are *honorific variants* of each other if they (i) are truth-conditionally equivalent but (ii) are different as to whether or not they have honorific meaning, or whom they (dis)honorify to what extent.

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Maximization of reverence

- Some honorifics have wider truth-conditional meaning than their nonhonorific “counterparts”
- For example, IRASSHARU and MIERU, honorific counterparts of IRU ‘exist (with a sentient subject)’, could also mean ‘go’ or ‘come’.

(23) (Abe is the academic supervisor of the speaker.)

Abe-sensei wa ima Osaka ni
A.-teacher Th now O. Dat
{#iru/irassharu/mieru}.
exist.Prs/*irassharu*.Prs/*mieru*.Prs
‘Professor Abe is in Osaka now.’

- Some lexical-item pairs where the less honorific member is hyponymous to the more honorific (such as ⟨IRU, IRASSHARU⟩) count as honorific variants of each other.

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Maximization of reverence

- An exception to **Reverence Maximization #1**: The use of of audience-oriented honorifics may be exempted or avoided in subordinate clauses (Kikuchi 1997: 361ff)

- (24) a. Ame ga {furimashita/#futta} ga, jikan-doori
rain Nom fall.*mas*.Pst/fall.Pst though time-just.as
owarimashita.
finish.*mas*.Pst
'Although it rained, (it) was finished as planned.'
- b. Ame ga {(?)furimashita/futta} node, enki
rain Nom fall.*mas*.Pst/fall.Pst because postpone
shimashita.
do.*mas*.Pst
'As it rained, (we) postponed (it).'
- c. Ame ga {??furimashita/futta} hi wa kayoo desu.
rain Nom fall.*mas*.Pst/fall.Pst day Th Tuesday *desu*.Prs
'The day it rained is Tuesday.'

Ban on self-honorification

- It is always inappropriate for the speaker to honorify himself.

(25) #Watashi ga okaki ni naru.
 I Nom o.write *ni naru*.Prs
 'I (who am honorable) will write (it).'

(26) **Ban on Self-Honorification:** In any context, the speaker's own honorific value cannot exceed 0.

Relativity

- One must not elevate members of his “micro-level community” (e.g., family, company) when talking to nonmembers (“outsiders”).

(27) (Kato, an employee of a trading company, answers a phone call from another company. Yamada is Kato's superior.)

#Yamada-san wa niji ni modoraremasu.

Y.-Suffix Top two.o'clock Dat return.*are.mas.*Prs
(Mr. Yamada (who is honorable) will be back at 2:00.)

(28) **Relativity:** In any context, if there is some micro-level community C such that the speaker belongs to C and the audience does not belong to C , the honorific values of the members of C cannot exceed 0.



Dishonorification constraint

- The target of dishonorification is limited to the speaker himself or the members of a micro-level community that includes the speaker and excludes the audience.

(29) {Ootoo/#kimi} mo shusseki itashimashita ka?
 younger.brother/you also attend *itasu.mas*.Prs DP
 'Did {my brother/you} attend it, too?'

(30) **Dishonorification Constraint:** In any context, any individual can be assigned an honorific value smaller than 0 only if he or she belongs to some micro-level community that includes the speaker and excludes the audience.



Dishonorification as honorification

- Use of dishonorific expressions is motivated by a desire to express reverence toward the audience, rather than, say, a desire to express (self-)disdain (cf. pejoratives).

- (31) a. Watashi wa chikarabusoku {da/desu} yo.
 I Th inadequate Cop.Prs/*desu*.Prs DP
 'I am not good enough.'
- b. **Watashi-me** wa chikarabusoku {#da/desu}
 I(dishonorific) Th inadequate Cop.Prs/*desu*.Prs
 yo.
 DP

Dishonorification as honorification

- (32) **Summation:** The degree of reverence that a lexical item i expresses toward the audience is the sum of the (positive) honorific value assigned by i to the audience and the additive inverse of the (negative) honorific value assigned by i to the speaker or a member of his micro-level community.
- (33) The presupposition of WATASHI-ME 'I (denotatum dishon.)'
- $\mathbf{CG}(\wedge[\mathbf{HON}(\mathbf{Speaker}) \leq -0.6])$
 - $\mathbf{CG}(\wedge[\mathbf{HON}(\mathbf{Audience}) \geq 0.6])$
- (34) ZONJIRU 'know (ARG1 dishon.)'
- $\lambda y[\lambda x[(\mathbf{know}(x, y); \mathbf{CG}(\wedge[\mathbf{HON}(x) \leq -0.5]))]]$
 - $\lambda y[\lambda x[(\mathbf{know}(x, y); \mathbf{CG}(\wedge[\mathbf{HON}(\mathbf{Audience}) \geq 0.5]))]]$

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Dual-orientation of Courtesy Honorifics

- Courtesy honorifics have a dual orientation, encoding (like politeness honorifics) respect toward the audience while implying the nonhonorability of the referent of the subject.
- In other words, they pose constraints on the honorific values of two parties.
- The meaning of ORU 'exist (with a sentient subject)' as a courtesy honorific, for example, can be represented as in (35).

$$(35) \quad \lambda x[\langle \text{exist}(x); \text{CG}(\wedge[\text{sentient}(x) \ \& \ \text{HON}(x) \leq 0 \ \& \ \text{HON}(\text{Audience}) \geq 0.5]) \rangle]$$

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Non-Redundancy of Iterated Audience Honorification

- Sometimes a lexical item (word or multi-word unit) may contain multiple features that honorify the same individual; e.g. *yomaremashita* in (36a).

(36) (Tanaka, an office worker, grabs a document on the desk.
Eguchi, a younger colleague, says to her:)

- Sore, moo yomaremashita yo.
that already read.*are.mas*.Pst DP
'You read it already.'
- Sore, moo yomimashita yo.
that already read.*mas*.Pst DP
- #Sore, moo yomareta yo.
that already read.*are*.Pst DP

- The infelicity of (36c) is puzzling.



Non-Redundancy of Iterated Audience Honorification

- (37) a. (36a): $\langle \text{read}(\text{tanaka}, x); \text{CG}(\wedge[\text{HON}(\text{tanaka}) \geq 0.2 \ \& \ \text{HON}(\text{tanaka}) \geq 0.4]) \rangle$
 b. (36b): $\langle \text{read}(\text{tanaka}, x); \text{CG}(\wedge[\text{HON}(\text{tanaka}) \geq 0.2]) \rangle$
 c. (36c): $\langle \text{read}(\text{tanaka}, x); \text{CG}(\wedge[\text{HON}(\text{tanaka}) \geq 0.4]) \rangle$
- (38) The statue is (??big and) huge.

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Non-Redundancy of Iterated Audience Honorification

(39) **Reverence maximization #2:** For any utterance u , each lexical item i involved in u must be chosen in such a way that i , among its honorific variants, expresses reverence toward the audience with the largest number of features each of which expresses a degree of reverence that does not exceed what the audience deserves.

- The same principle accounts for the constraint that ARG1 dishonorifics and courtesy honorifics are always used in combination with a politeness honorific.

(40) Watashi mo shusseki {itashimau / #itasu}.
I also attend *itasu.mas.Prs* / *itasu.Prs*
'I will attend (it), too.'

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Conclusion

- The social norms motivating and constraining the usage of honorifics are complex, affected by the factor of registers/styles and involving a great deal of interspeaker variation.
- The framework illustrated above will hopefully contribute to future discussions of honorification from both language-specific and general-linguistic (typological) perspectives.

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Conclusion

Thanks!

(See the proceedings paper for references.)

