




The Logical Principles of Honorification and Dishonorification in Japanese

David Y. Oshima^(✉) 

Graduate School of Humanities, Nagoya University, Nagoya 464-8601, Japan
davidyo@nagoya-u.jp
<http://www.hum.nagoya-u.ac.jp/~oshima>

Abstract. This work develops a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the meanings of Japanese honorifics (honorific expressions), which contrast in terms of whom they “elevate” and “lower” to what extent, and discusses some essential discourse principles regulating their usage.

Keywords: Honorification · Honorifics · Conventional implicature · Presupposition · Japanese

1 Introduction

This work develops a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the meanings of Japanese honorifics (honorific expressions), which contrast in terms of whom they “elevate” and “lower” to what extent, and discusses some essential discourse principles regulating their usage.

2 Taxonomy of Honorifics

Largely following Kikuchi (1997), I assume the following taxonomy of Japanese honorifics. The basic properties of each class will be discussed presently.

- (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

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c. **hybrid honorifics (honorifics_±)**

i. courtesy honorifics

Here, honorifics are classified into three groups depending on whether (i) they positively characterize the honorability of a certain party, (ii) negatively characterize the honorability of a certain party, or (iii) do both.

Another common way to classify them is by syntactic categories, into predicative and nominal ones.

(2) a. **predicative honorifics:** ARG1/ARG2 honorifics, ARG1 dishonorifics, politeness honorifics, courtesy honorifics

b. **nominal honorifics:** denotatum/possessor honorifics, denotatum/possessor dishonorifics

Yet another is into referent-oriented honorifics and audience-oriented (addressee-oriented) honorifics (Comrie 1976). Politeness honorifics are (purely) audience-oriented. Courtesy honorifics have a dual nature in this respect (Sect. 2.3, Sect. 5). All other classes are (purely) referent-oriented, although (the three classes of) dishonorifics can be characterized as having “pseudo audience-orientation” too (Sect. 4.3).

2.1 Positive Honorifics

Positive honorifics express respect toward a certain party (an entity or a group). Corresponding to predicates belonging to what has traditionally been called *sonkeigo*, ARG1 honorifics, elevate the referent of the subject (i.e., the least oblique argument). ARG1 honorific verbs can be formed with the derivational affix *-(r)are*, as in (3b), or with the circumferential “*o-V_{stem}(-i) ni naru*” (*-i* is an epenthetic vowel) or “*go-VN ni naru*” construction, as in (3c). Literally, *ni* is an infinitival copula form, and *NARU* means ‘become’.¹ *VN* refers to a verbal noun, a nominal that may form a verbal predicate with the light verb *SURU* (e.g., *BENKYO SURU* ‘study (lit. do study)’).^{2,3}

(3) a. Suzuki ga kaku.
S. Nom write.Prs
‘Suzuki will write (it).’

b. Suzuki-san ga kakareru.
S.-Suffix Nom write.*are*.Prs

¹ Here and thereafter, expressions in small capitals refer to lexemes.

² The abbreviations in glosses are: Acc = accusative, Attr = attributive, Cl = classifier, Cop = copula, Dat = dative, DAux = discourse auxiliary, DP = discourse particle, Evid = evidential auxiliary, Ger = gerund, Inf = infinitive, Neg(Aux) = negation/negative auxiliary, Nom = nominative, Npfv = non-perfective auxiliary, Prs = present, Pst = past, Th = thematic *wa* (topic/ground marker).

³ The appropriate usage of suffixes like *san* and titles used as “quasi-suffixes”, such as *SENSEI* ‘teacher’ and *KYOOJU* ‘professor’, has close correlation with honorification. However, with Kikuchi (1997), I will not consider them to be honorific expressions *per se*.

- ‘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 honorific adjectives and nominal predicates can be formed with prefix *o* or *go*.

- (4) a. Suzuki ga kuwashii.
 S. Nom knowledgeable.Prs
 ‘Suzuki is knowledgeable (about it).’
 b. Suzuki-san ga **okuwashii.**
 S.-Suffix Nom knowledgeable.Prs
 ‘Mr. Suzuki (who is honorable) is knowledgeable (about it).’

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

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

Some verbal honorifics in different classes (to be discussed below) exhibit the same feature; e.g., the ARG2 honorific UKAGAU covers the meanings of IKU ‘go’, KURU ‘come’, and KIKU ‘listen, ask’, and the ARG1 dishonorific/courtesy honorific MAIRU covers the meanings of IKU ‘go’ and KURU ‘come’.

Corresponding to Oishi’s (1975) “*kenjoogo A*”, ARG2 honorifics elevate the referent of the second most prominent (second least oblique) argument. ARG2 honorific verbs typically have the form: ‘ $\{o-V_{\text{stem}}(-i)/go-VN\}$ *suru*’ or ‘ $\{o-V_{\text{stem}}(-i)/go-VN\}$ *mooshiageru*’. Literally, SURU means ‘do’. MOOSHIAGERU, when used on its own, is an irregular ARG2 honorific corresponding to *iu* ‘say’.

- (6) a. Suzuki-san ni fuutoo o **owatashi sita.**
 S.-Suffix Dat envelope Acc *o.hand suru*.Pst
 ‘(I) handed 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).’

There are a handful of irregular ARG2 honorific verbs, such as MOOSHI-AGERU corresponding to IU ‘say’, ITADAKU corresponding to MORAU ‘receive’, and aforementioned UKAGAU. Some adjectives prefixed with *o*, such as OURAYA-MASHII ‘(be) envious (of)’, can be used as ARG2 honorifics too.

Denotatum and possessor honorifics are nominals belonging to traditional *sonkeigo*. A denotatum honorific encodes respect toward its referent; some examples are KIDEN ‘you (masculine)’, HEIKA ‘(his/your/. . .) majesty’, and KATA ‘person’ (as in *ano kata* ‘that person’). A possessor honorific encodes respect toward the “possessor(s)” of its referent, where possession is to be taken broadly and as subsuming ownership, kinship, and creatorship. Often, the elevated individual (the possessor) is not explicitly mentioned but only is contextually understood. Possessor honorifics are often (though not always) formed with prefixal *o* or *go*. Some examples of possessor honorifics are OKURUMA ‘car’, GOSHISOKU ‘son’, GOCHOSHO ‘book’, and KISHA ‘your company’.

Politeness honorifics, traditionally called *teineigo*, encode respect toward the audience. In contemporary Japanese, this class consists of (i) polite verbs with the component *mas* (which, arguably, are compound verbs with *mas* being a bound base), (ii) DESU, used either as a polite copula or an auxiliary that follows certain finite predicates, and (iii) GOZAIMASU, used either as a main verb meaning ‘(for a non-sentient entity to) exist’, or an auxiliary following an infinitive copula or an infinitive adjective.

- (7) Banana ga {aru / arimasu / gozaimasu}.
 banana Nom exist.Prs exist.mas.Prs gozaimasu.Prs
 ‘There is a banana.’
- (8) Kore wa banana {da / desu / de gozaimasu}.
 this Th banana Cop.Prs desu.Prs Cop.Inf gozaimasu.Prs
 ‘This is a banana.’

2.2 Negative Honorifics

Negative honorifics, or dishonorifics, correspond to Oishi’s (1975) “*kenjoogo B*”. Oishi (1975: 88) characterizes their function to elevate the audience *by means of lowering the referent of the subject* (see also Kikuchi 1997).

The class of ARG1 dishonorifics consists of five verbs: (i) ITASU ‘do’, (ii) MAIRU ‘go, come’, (iii) ORU ‘(for a sentient entity to) exist’, (iv) MOOSU ‘say’, and (v) ZONJIRU ‘know’. ITASU may be used either as a main verb or as a light verb in combination with a verbal noun; MAIRU and ORU may be either used as a main verb or as an auxiliary. A key difference between ARG2 honorifics (*kenjoogo A*) and ARG1 dishonorifics (*kenjoogo B*) is that the latter do *not* require the presence of a non-subject complement referring to an individual or group to be elevated. Whereas (9a) with an ARG2 honorific is infelicitous in violation of the Ban on Self-Honorification (Sect. 4.2), (9b) with an ARG1 dishonorific is not.

- (9) Ani ga watashi ni soo {a. #mooshiagemashita /b.
 elder.brother Nom I Dat so mooshiageru.mas.Pst
 mooshimashita}.
moosu.mas.Pst
 ‘My elder brother told me so.’

Denotatum/possessor dishonorifics are negative counterparts of denotatum/possessor honorifics. Denotatum dishonorifics include SHOOSHOKU ‘I’, WATASHI-ME ‘I’, and WATASHI-DOMO ‘we (exclusive)’. Possessor dishonorifics include GUSOKU ‘son’, SETCHO ‘book’, and HEISHA ‘my/our company’.

2.3 Hybrid 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 sanku itashimasu.
 300-Cl Cop.Attr competitor Nom participate *itasu.mas.Prs*
 ‘300 competitors will participate (in this event).’
- (11) (on the public address system at a railroad station)
 Mamonaku densha ga mairimasu.
 soon train Nom *mairu.mas.Prs*
 ‘A train will arrive soon.’

The functions of courtesy honorifics are quite similar to politeness honorifics; the only difference is that the former 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. The speaker in (12), addressing a senior colleague, may use either (12a) or (12b), where IRASSHARU is an ARG1 honorific, depending on the relationship between them (e.g., their respective positions, social distance, etc.). (12a) is “less respectful” than (12b), but may sound “polite enough” in the context (see below for relevant discussion). (12c), on the other hand, is invariably odd in view of the standard norms.

- (12) (to a senior colleague)
- 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*
 (*idem*)

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

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 item). A major motivation to admit the ambiguity of ITASU, etc. is the factor of stylistic distribution. It appears that courtesy honorifics are stylistically more constrained than ARG1 dishonorifics, and characteristic to (though not limited to) formal public speech by announcers, MC’s, etc. Kikuchi (1997: 273), in this connection, remarks that the usage of ITASU ‘do’, etc. as courtesy honorifics is less “typical” than that as ARG1 dishonorifics. The exact nature of the putative difference between ARG1 dishonorifics and courtesy honorifics in terms of stylistic niches is a matter that calls for systematic investigations in future research.

3 Features of the Japanese Honorific System

3.1 Gradience

Different honorific expressions are associated with different degrees of respect (Hasegawa 2015; Kikuchi 1997: 262–263, McCready *forthcoming*, among others); for example, (i) GOZAIMASU ‘(for a non-sentient entity to) exist’ conveys a higher degree of respect than (truth-conditionally synonymous) ARIMASU, (ii) “{*o-V/go-VN*} *ni naru*” conveys a higher degree of respect than “V-(*r*)*areru*”, and (iii) “{*o-V/go-VN*} *mooshiageru*” conveys a higher degree of respect than “{*o-V/go-VN*} *suru*” (Kikuchi 1997: 146, 296, 366).⁴

I assume the ranking of some representative (classes of) honorific expressions (in terms of the strength of honorification) shown in (13).

- (13) {V-MASU, N DESU} < {V-(R)ARERU, (*g*)*o* V(N) SURU} < (*g*)*o* V(N) *ni* NARU < {GOZAIMASU, (*g*)*o* V(N) MOOSHIAGERU}

I furthermore postulate that each honorific expression is associated with a honorific value—the degree of its “respectfulness”, ranging from 1 (most respectful) to –1 (most disrespectful), with 0 being the neutral value. I tentatively assign (i) 0.2 to V-MASU and N DESU, (ii) 0.4 to V-(R)ARERU and (*g*)*o* V(N) SURU, (iii) 0.5 to (G)O V NI NARU, (iv) 0.6 to GOZAIMASU, and (v) the maximum value 1 to the class of honorifics called *saikoo keigo* (supreme honorifics) like ASOBASARERU ‘do’ (ARG1 honorific) and GYOKUON ‘speech (of an emperor)’ (possessor honorific). According to the present custom, supreme honorifics are used only when the members of the Japanese imperial family, or comparable “highest-ranked” individuals in non-Japanese societies, are involved. It is worth noting that the use of supreme honorifics has been in decline, especially after the World War II.

⁴ A fuller account of honorification also needs to take into consideration the fact that different honorifics are compatible with different ranges of registers/styles. I put aside this matter in the current work.

3.2 Presuppositionality

Conventionally encoded meaning can be divided into proffered (or “at-issue”) content and conventional implicature (CI). Here, CI is construed broadly and as an equivalent of Tonhauser et al.’s (2013) “projective content”. Specifically, I assume the taxonomy/terminology of Oshima (2016), where conventional meaning is divided into (i) proffered content and (ii) CI, and the latter is divided into (ii-a) non-presuppositional CI and (ii-b) presuppositional CI. Presuppositional CI is what is simply called “presupposition” in much of the literature, and differs from non-presuppositional CI in being required to be taken for granted by the interlocutors, or at least be easily inferrable (accommodatable) from the audience’s perspective, in the context of utterance.

Honorific meanings conveyed by honorifics are conventionally implicated, rather than proffered (Potts 2004; Kim 2007; McCready *forthcoming*). Furthermore, with data like (14), it can be shown that they are presuppositional; *omochi* DA and SARERU are ARG1 honorifics corresponding to *motte* IRU ‘have, own’, and SURU ‘do’, respectively.

- (14) (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 nai}
 yes, money Acc have.Ger Npfv.Neg.Prs omochida.Inf NegAux.Prs
 noni shokuji o {shita / #sareta} yoo desu.
 although meal Acc do.Pst sareru.Pst Evid desu.Prs
 ‘Yes, from what I heard, he had a meal although he did not have money.’

(adapted from Oshima 2016: 56)

The use of the ARG1 honorifics in (14B) would be acceptable if B had informed A beforehand of the relation between her and the man in question.

As in Oshima (2006, 2016), I adopt a *pseudo-multidimensional* system of semantic representation, where proffered content and CI are represented within a single logical expression, but nevertheless contribute to the pragmatic effect of the utterance in distinct ways. In this system, two levels of truth values are distinguished. The first is the classic values of type *t*, 1 and 0, for logical formulas of the familiar kind; they will be referred to as *semantic truth values*. The second is the *pragmatic truth values* I and II, which are respectively concerned with “truth of proffered content” and “satisfaction of CI”. The extension of a root declarative clause will be a *set* of pragmatic truth values, rather than an individual (semantic or pragmatic) value. The logical translations of clauses will involve a variant of Oshima’s (2016) *transjunction* operator, defined in (15).

(15) *The syntax and semantics of 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:

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

By way of exemplification, (16a), (16b), and (16c), respectively involving a trivial CI, a non-presuppositional CI (the prejacent implication), and a presuppositional CI (the existential presupposition induced by *also*), will have logical translations along the lines of (17a–c); “**CG**($\wedge p$)” is to be read as “It is common ground that p ”.

- (16) a. I admire Liszt.
 b. I only admire Liszt.
 c. I also admire Liszt.
- (17) a. $\langle \mathbf{admire}(\mathbf{Speaker}, \mathbf{liszt}); \mathbf{T} \rangle$
 b. $\langle \neg \exists x[x \neq \mathbf{liszt} \ \& \ \mathbf{admire}(\mathbf{Speaker}, x)]; \mathbf{admire}(\mathbf{Speaker}, \mathbf{liszt}) \rangle$
 c. $\langle \mathbf{admire}(\mathbf{Speaker}, \mathbf{liszt}); \mathbf{CG}(\wedge [\exists x[x \neq \mathbf{liszt} \ \& \ \mathbf{admire}(\mathbf{Speaker}, x)])] \rangle$

See Oshima (2006) for a compositional analysis of how CI’s induced at the lexical level may be projected, filtered, or blocked as they form clauses with other constituents and are embedded under different kinds of operators.

The meanings of the ARG1 honorific *oyomi ni* NARU ‘read’ and the politeness honorific GOZAIMASU ‘(for a non-sentient entity to) exist’ can be approximated as in (18a, b); note that the latter induces two presuppositions, one concerning the honorability of the audience and the other the non-sentience of the referent of the subject. **HON** represents a function that assigns to individuals honorific values according to their honorability—the degrees of respect that the speaker publicly acknowledge that they deserve; this function is indexical in nature, varying across contexts of utterance (depending on who is speaking to whom, etc.).

- (18) a. $\lambda y[\lambda x[\langle \mathbf{read}(x, y); \mathbf{CG}(\wedge [\mathbf{HON}(x) \geq 0.5]) \rangle]]$
 b. $\lambda x[\langle \mathbf{exist}(x); \mathbf{CG}(\wedge [\neg \mathbf{sentient}(x) \ \& \ \mathbf{HON}(\mathbf{Audience}) \geq 0.6]) \rangle]]$

4 Basic Pragmatic Principles of Honorification

4.1 Maximization of Reverence

For a Japanese conversation to be felicitous, it is required that “due respect” be expressed toward the individuals mentioned or evoked in the utterance as well as toward the audience, and also that none of these individuals be excessively elevated (“overhonorified”). To illustrate, (19a) but not (19b) is appropriate when

the speaker is a high-school student and the hearer is his teacher; conversely, (19b) but not (19a) is appropriate when the interlocutors are high-school classmates.

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

In a similar vein, (20b) is inappropriate if Abe is the academic supervisor of the interlocutors, and (20a) is inappropriate if Ito and the interlocutors are peer graduate students.

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

The fundamental principle accounting for such patterns can be formulated as in (22); the notion of “honorific variants” will be discussed presently.

- (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.

An exception to this principle is the exemption and avoidance of the use of (pseudo-)audience-oriented predicative honorifics in certain subordinate clauses. As detailed by Kikuchi (1997: 361–367), different types of subordinate clause impose different requirements as to the use of politeness honorifics. Suppose that the social relation between the interlocutors is such that the speaker is expected to use politeness honorifics in root environments. In clauses headed by *ga* ‘though’, the use of politeness honorifics is required in much the same way as in root clauses. In ones headed by *node* ‘because’, the use of politeness honorifics is possible, but the choice of neutral forms (the non-use of politeness honorifics) does not incur impoliteness and could be preferred. In relative clauses, the use of politeness honorifics is less typical and likely to be regarded as prolix.

- (23) (An office worker is speaking to a senior colleague.)
 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 shimashita.
rain Nom fall.mas.Pst fall.Pst because postpone do.mas.Pst
'As it rained, (we) postponed (it).'
- c. Ame ga {??furimashita / futta} hi wa getsuyoobi desu.
rain Nom fall.mas.Pst fall.Pst day Th Monday desu.Prs
'The day it rained is Monday.'

It appears that (i) ARG1 dishonorifics with pseudo audience-orientation (Sect. 4.3) and (ii) courtesy honorifics with dual orientation (Sect. 5) follow the same pattern as politeness honorifics, whereas the use of all other classes—ARG1, ARG2, denotatum and possessor honorifics and denotatum and possessor dishonorifics—is regulated in the same way (or at least in very similar ways) in root and subordinate clauses. I will not attempt here to formulate rules accounting for such complex patterns in non-root environments.

What counts as “honorific variants” of a lexical item is largely determined based on the relation of truth-conditional equivalence; any two items are honorific variants if they (i) are truth-conditionally equivalent but (ii) are different as to whether or not they have honorific meaning, or as to whom they (dis)honorify to what extent.

As noted above, however, some honorifics have wider truth-conditional meaning than their non-honorific “counterparts”. IRU ‘(for a sentient entity to) exist’, for example, does not have a truth-conditionally equivalent ARG1 honorific, *oi ni* NARU and IRARERU (as an honorific verb) being ill-formed. The irregular ARG1 honorific IRASSHARU covers its meaning, along with those of IKU ‘go’ and KURU ‘come’. Crucially, utterance (24a) does not conform to the standard norms, contrasting with appropriate (24b).

- (24) (Abe is the academic supervisor of the speaker.)
- a. #Abe-sensei wa ima Osaka ni iru.
A.-teacher Th now O. Dat exist.Prs
'Professor Abe is in Osaka now.'
- b. Abe-sensei wa ima Osaka ni irassharu.
A.-teacher Th now O. Dat *irassharu*.Prs
'Professor Abe (who is honorable) is in Osaka now.'

Such observations imply that some lexical-item pairs where the less honorific member is hyponymous rather than synonymous to the more honorific, such as ⟨IRU, IRASSHARU⟩ and ⟨TABERU, MESHIAGARU⟩, may count as honorific variants of each other.

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

One notable feature of the Japanese honorific system is that it is always inappropriate for the speaker to honorify himself; an utterance like (25) can only be taken to be jocular.

- (25) #*Watashi ga okaki ni naru.*
 I Nom o.write *ni naru*.Prs
 ‘I (who is honorable) will write (it).’

Another, illustrated in (26), is its “relativity”: one must not elevate members of his “micro-level community” (e.g., family, company) when talking to non-members (“outsiders”).

- (26) (Tanaka, an employee of a trading company, answers a phone call from another company. Yamada is Tanaka’s superior.)
 a. *Yamada wa niji ni modorimasu.*
 Y. Top two.o’clock Dat return.*mas*.Prs
 ‘Yamada will be back at 2:00.’
 b. #*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.)

The speaker of (26), Tanaka, would avoid (26a) and might well use (26b) when talking to a colleague of her company—an “insider” of the relevant micro-level community.

Additionally, 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.

- (27) {*Watashi / ootoo*} mo *paatii ni shusseki itashimasu.*
 I younger.brother also party Dat attend *itasu.mas*.Prs
 ‘{I/my younger brother} will attend the party, too.’
- (28) (to a colleague)
 a. *Takahashi-san mo shusseki {suru / shimasu / saremasu}?*
 T.-Suffix also attend do.Prs do.*mas*.Prs do.*are.mas*.Prs
 ‘Are (you) going to attend (it), Mr. Takahashi?’
 b. #*Takahashi-san mo shusseki {itasu / itashimasu}?*
 T.-Suffix also attend *itasu*.Prs *itasu.mas*.Prs

These features are accounted for by principles (29)–(31).

- (29) **Ban on Self-Honorification:** In any context, the speaker’s own honorific value cannot exceed 0.
- (30) **Relativity:** In any context, for any micro-level community *C* such that the speaker belongs to and the audience does not belong to *C*, the honorific values of the members of *C* cannot exceed 0.
- (31) **Dishonorification Constraint:** In any context, any individual can be assigned an honorific value smaller than 0 only if he or she belongs to a micro-level community that includes the speaker and excludes the audience.

4.3 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 such as YAROO ‘jerk’); (32b), which involves the denotatum dishonorific WATASHI-DOMO ‘we (exclusive)’ and the politeness honorific DESU (which is audience-oriented), illustrates that a dishonorific does not simply convey that the targeted individual is dishonorable.

- (32) a. Watashi-tachi wa chikarabusoku {da/desu} yo.
 I-Pl Th inadequate Cop.Prs/*desu*.Prs DP
 ‘We are not good enough.’
 b. **Watashi-domo** wa chikarabusoku {#da/desu} yo.
 I-Pl(dishonorific) Th inadequate Cop.Prs/*desu*.Prs DP
 ‘*idem*’

To capture the audience-oriented effect of dishonorifics, I introduce the following principle.

- (33) **Inversion:** The degree of reverence that a lexical item i expresses toward the audience matches the highest of (i) the (positive) honorific value range attributed by i to the audience and (ii) the additive inverse of the (negative) honorific value range attributed by i to the speaker or a member of his/her micro-level community.

This guarantees that the presupposition induced by WATASHI-DOMO ‘we (exclusive)’, represented in (34a) with the tentative honorific value -0.6 , is effectively equivalent to (34b), and the meaning of the ARG1 dishonorific ZONJIRU, represented in (35a) with the tentative honorific value -0.5 , is effectively equivalent to (35b) (given (31) in conjunction with (33)).

- (34) a. $\mathbf{CG}(\wedge[\mathbf{HON}(\mathbf{Speaker} \oplus X) \leq -0.6])$
 b. $\mathbf{CG}(\wedge[\mathbf{HON}(\mathbf{Audience}) \geq 0.6])$
 (35) a. $\lambda y[\lambda x[\langle \mathbf{know}(x, y); \mathbf{CG}(\wedge[\mathbf{HON}(x) \leq -0.5]) \rangle]]$
 b. $\lambda y[\lambda x[\langle \mathbf{know}(x, y); \mathbf{CG}(\wedge[\mathbf{HON}(\mathbf{Audience}) \geq 0.5]) \rangle]]$

5 Dual-Orientation of Courtesy Honorifics

As discussed in Sect. 2.3, courtesy honorifics have a dual orientation, encoding (like politeness honorifics) respect toward the audience while implying the non-honorability of the referent of the subject. In other words, a courtesy honorific poses constraints on the honorific values of two parties. The meaning of ORU (for a sentient entity to) exist’ as a courtesy honorific, for example, can be represented as in (36) (again, the honorific value 0.5 is tentative).

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

6 Non-redundancy of Iterated Honorification

Sometimes a lexical item (word or multi-word unit) may contain multiple features that honorify the same individual. In (37a), for example, the verb involves (i) the ARG1 honorific marker *are*, which elevates the referent of the subject, Tanaka, and (ii) the politeness honorific marker *mas*, which elevates the audience, who again is Tanaka. Interestingly, multiple occurrence of features honorifying the same target within a single word is not only permitted, but required in certain cases. Observe the infelicity of (37c), which involves only the honorific feature with a higher honorific value, *are*.

- (37) (Tanaka, an office worker, grabs a document on the desk. Eguchi, a younger colleague, says to her:)
- a. Sore, moo yomaremashita yo.
that already read.*are.mas.Pst* DP
'You read it already.'
 - b. Sore, moo yomimashita yo.
that already read.*mas.Pst* DP
 - c. #Sore, moo yomareta yo.
that already read.*are.Pst* DP

This is intriguing, because the meanings of (37a) and (37c), including the honorific content, are expected to be equivalent, the semantic contribution of *mas* being superfluous (cf. the redundancy of *big* in “??The statue is big and huge”).

- (38) (37a): $\langle \text{read}(\text{tanaka}, x); \text{CG}(\wedge[\text{HON}(\text{tanaka}) \geq 0.2 \ \& \ \text{HON}(\text{tanaka}) \geq 0.4]) \rangle$
 (37b): $\langle \text{read}(\text{tanaka}, x); \text{CG}(\wedge[\text{HON}(\text{tanaka}) \geq 0.2]) \rangle$
 (37c): $\langle \text{read}(\text{tanaka}, x); \text{CG}(\wedge[\text{HON}(\text{tanaka}) \geq 0.4]) \rangle$

This observation motivates principle (39), which amounts to saying that when respect toward a certain party can be expressed within a single word with more than one type of honorific expression, it must.

- (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 and the referents mentioned or evoked in *u* with the largest number of honorific feature types without expressing a degree of reverence that exceeds what they deserve.

“Honorific feature types” here refer to the nine types listed in (1). While (39) is formulated in a rather general way, cases where a single lexical item involves multiple honorific feature types targeting the same individual will be limited to a handful of types conforming to one of schemes (40a–c), all of which involves audience-oriented honorification (for independent reasons, there cannot be a lexical item that is both an ARG1 honorific and a possessor honorific, both an ARG1 honorific and an ARG2 honorific, etc.).

- (40) a. {ARG1 honorific or ARG 2 honorific} + politeness honorific
 b. politeness honorific + {ARG1 dishonorific or courtesy honorific}
 c. ARG 2 honorific + politeness honorific + {ARG1 dishonorific or courtesy honorific}

Yomare mashita in (37a) is an instance of (40a).

Principle (39) accounts for the constraint that ARG1 dishonorifics and courtesy honorifics are always used in combination with a politeness honorific, as illustrated in (41); *shusseki itashimasu* is an instance of (40b).

- (41) Watashi mo shusseki {a. itashimau /b. #itasu}.
 I also attend *itasu.mas.Prs* / *itasu.Prs*
 ‘I will attend (it), too.’

The meaning of *shusseki itashimasu* regarded as involving (*itas(hi)* as) an ARG1 dishonorific (rather than courtesy honorific) component will be along the lines of (42a), which is effectively equivalent to (42b) because of (31) and (33).

- (42) a. $\lambda y[\lambda x[\langle \mathbf{attend}(x, y); \mathbf{CG}(\wedge[\mathbf{HON}(x) \leq -0.5 \ \& \ \mathbf{HON}(\mathbf{Audience}) \geq 0.2]) \rangle]]]$
 b. $\lambda y[\lambda x[\langle \mathbf{attend}(x, y); \mathbf{CG}(\wedge[\mathbf{HON}(\mathbf{Audience}) \geq 0.5 \ \& \ \mathbf{HON}(\mathbf{Audience}) \geq 0.2]) \rangle]]]$

An example of (40c) is *o tetsudai itashimasu* ‘(I/he/...) will help (you/him/..., who is honorable)’, whose meaning will be approximated as in (43) if the component *itas(hi)* is regarded as an ARG1 dishonorific, and as in (44) if it is regarded as a courtesy honorific.

- (43) $\lambda y[\lambda x[\langle \mathbf{help}(x, y); \mathbf{CG}(\wedge[\mathbf{HON}(x) \leq -0.5 \ \& \ \mathbf{HON}(y) \geq 0.4 \ \& \ \mathbf{HON}(\mathbf{Audience}) \geq 0.2]) \rangle]]]$
 (44) $\lambda y[\lambda x[\langle \mathbf{help}(x, y); \mathbf{CG}(\wedge[\mathbf{HON}(x) \leq 0 \ \& \ \mathbf{HON}(y) \geq 0.4 \ \& \ \mathbf{HON}(\mathbf{Audience}) \geq 0.2 \ \& \ \mathbf{HON}(\mathbf{Audience}) \geq 0.5]) \rangle]]]$

(39) does not say anything about occurrence of multiple honorific features of the *same* type within a lexical item. While many verbs can be turned into an ARG1 honorific either with affix *-(r)are* or the combination of (*g*)*o* and *NARU* (see (3)), it is uncommon, and is discouraged by prescriptivism, to use both features on a single verb token.

- (45) %Suzuki-san ga okaki ni narareru.
 S.-Suffix Nom *o.write ni naru.are.Prs*
 (Mr. Suzuki (who is honorable) will write (it).)

On the other hand, some combinations of an irregular ARG1 honorific verb and a regular (productive) ARG1 feature, and of an irregular ARG 2 honorific verb and a regular ARG2 feature, are allowed.

- (46) a. Suzuki-san ga suteeki o meshiagaru.
 S.-Suffix Nom steak Acc *meshiagaru.Prs*

- ‘Mr. Suzuki (who is honorable) will consume a steak.’
- b. Suzuki-san ga suteeki o **omeshiagari ni naru.**
 S.-Suffix Nom steak Acc *o.meshiagaru ni naru*.Prs
 ‘Mr. Suzuki (who is honorable) will consume a steak.’
- (47) a. Watashi ga Suzuki-san ni **ukagau.**
 I Nom S.-Suffix Dat *ukagau*.Prs
 ‘I will ask Mr. Suzuki (who is honorable).’
- b. Watashi ga Suzuki-san ni **oukagai suru.**
 I Nom S.-Suffix Dat *o.ukagau suru*.Prs
 ‘I will ask Mr. Suzuki (who is honorable).’

Importantly, forms with multiple ARG1 or ARG2 honorific features, such as *okaki ni narareru* (if it is regarded as well-formed) *omeshiagari ni naru*, and *oukagai suru*, are used to convey a higher degree of reverence than their variants with just one. *Omeshiagari ni naru*, for example, is a honorific variant of *meshiagaru* associated with a(n even) higher honorific value (Hasegawa 2015: 263). Note that a variant of (39) that demands the largest number of honorific features (rather than honorific feature *types*) would exclude (46a) and (47a) along with (37c) and (41b), under the sensible assumptions that (i) MESHAGARU is associated with at least as high an honorific value as (*g*)o V(N) *ni* NARU and (ii) UKAGAU is associated with at least as high an honorific value as (*g*)o V(N) *ni* SURU.

When multiple ARG1 or ARG2 honorific features targeting the same referent occur within a single word (as in (46b)/(47b)), their effects thus can be characterized as cumulative; given that this apparently is not a very systematic phenomenon, I refrain from positing an additional principle to account for it here.

7 Conclusion

This article presented a formal semantic analysis the meanings of classes of honorifics in Japanese, including ones that have hardly been addressed in the existing formal-semantic literature. It also discussed some essential discourse principles regulating the usage of Japanese honorifics. The social norms motivating and constraining the usage of honorifics are complex, involving a great deal of inter-speaker variation and affected by the factor of registers/styles; 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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