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Style shifts in Japanese video game commentary monologues

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Abstract. Honorific markers play an integral role in many languages, but their purpose and meaning are still widely debated. Ide (1989) claims a one-to-one relationship between social rank difference and linguistic form, but Cook (1997, 2011) proposes that honorifics are used to display a 'disciplined self,' which further indexes a variety of social meanings. This study examined style shifts between the honorific and plain form in Japanese video game commentary monologues. We found that instances of honorific form can be grouped into four categories regarding their contextual functions: to make an announcement, to indicate seriousness, conventionalized formulae, and to quote others. This conclusion supports Cook's proposal.

Keywords. Honorifics; Japanese; monologues; politeness; video games

1. Introduction. In one way or another, social context is incorporated into every linguistic statement. Politeness is one of the most significant aspects of such social linguistics, with its presence or absence capable of governing the social outcome of any conversation. However, despite taking up a considerable portion of the brainpower necessary for everyday conversation, our mastery in politeness carries very little over to our true understanding of it. This complexity is further magnified in honorific languages such as Japanese, in which there exists a separate dimension of vocabulary and mannerisms dedicated to a variety of possible purposes—these purposes still being the subject of debate.

1.1. POLITENESS THEORY: AN EARLY EXPLANATION OF POLITENESS. In part as a correction to traditional Gricean conversation theory, which restricts the purpose of communication to that of efficient information exchange, Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory extends Goffman's concept of face to describe politeness as a vital non-informational force in conversation (Deckert & Vickers 2011; Matsumoto 1988). As politeness itself does not carry semantic information, politeness theory explains the non-informational forces of conversation that are not accounted for in Grice's theory (Matsumoto 1988).

Broadly speaking, politeness theory dictates that linguistic politeness is derived from attempts at mitigating threats to an individual's face. At its core, politeness theory revolves around the assumption that any member of any society possesses two elementary faces: a positive and a negative face (Deckert & Vickers 2011). As defined by Brown and Levinson, *positive face* is 'the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others' (Brown & Levinson 1987). Meanwhile, *negative face* is 'the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others' (Brown & Levinson 1987).

Another essential concept in politeness theory is a face-threatening act (FTA), which can correspond to positive or negative faces. FTAs for positive face are defined acts that suggest an indifferent, rejecting, or aggressive attitude towards an individual's wants and goals. FTAs for negative face are defined as acts that introduce pressures on an individual to perform a behavior

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(e.g., orders, threats, suggestions), become indebted (e.g., being offered favors), or protect/forfeit property.

If an FTA is unavoidable, the speaker can use politeness to mitigate its damage. *Positive politeness* is used to conserve positive face by expressing mutual interest in an individual's wants (e.g., explicitly favoring the wants, highlighting mutual belonging to an in-group, favoring the individual as a person to minimize perceived disrespect). Meanwhile, *negative politeness* conserves negative face by avoiding or showing a desire to avoid imposition on an individual's territory or rights.

According to the universality of politeness theory, politeness in every culture has the sole purpose of mitigating face-threatening acts; as Brown and Levinson assume that aggression is an always-present potential in human interaction, politeness is linguistically expressed as a preventative countermeasure to this aggression (Ide 1989; Pizziconi 2003).

1.2. NORMATIVE THEORIES OF JAPANESE HONORIFIC USAGE FOCUS ON SOCIAL HIERARCHY. Matsumoto (1988) demonstrates that while the Japanese language may appear at first glance to follow Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, upon closer inspection, significant deviances appear. These deviances are rooted much deeper than the superficial cultural differences in positive and negative face that Brown and Levinson assumed in their universality principle.

More specifically, Matsumoto explains how the individualism and individual rights that serve as core components of Western culture are mostly, if not entirely, absent in Japanese culture. Instead, the Japanese concern themselves with social positioning and acceptance. As Japanese culture does not include desires to preserve one's territory and freedom from imposition, negative face does not exist.

Matsumoto (1988) later points out that many instances of politeness have absolutely no involvement with FTAs. For instance, there exist three different ways of saying *today is Saturday* in Japanese. The following examples are of plain form, polite form, and super polite form, respectively:

(1) a. Kyoo-wa doyoobi da.
Today-TOP Saturday COP
'Today is Saturday.' (plain)

b. Kyoo-wa doyoobi desu.
Today-TOP Saturday COP
'Today is Saturday.' (polite)

c. Kyoo-wa doyoobi degozaimasu.
Today-TOP Saturday COP
'Today is Saturday.' (super polite)

While the semantic meaning of all three is completely identical, it is the speaker's ever-constant responsibility to determine which honorific form to use. A speaker's inability to choose the appropriate form is, in turn, considered a threat to their face, as it reflects poorly on their ability to respect and follow social rules.

Ide (1989) similarly points out the insufficiency of Brown and Levinson's claim of universal applicability for their politeness theory: the importance of formal linguistics as a source of politeness, especially in the context of honorific languages such as Japanese, is severely overlooked. While Brown and Levinson categorize formal forms as falling under negative politeness strategies, Ide claims that speakers in honorific-based societies hold little to no freedom

over which honorific 'strategy' to employ. A Japanese speaker, for instance, chooses which honorific forms to use based not on how much they wish to mitigate FTAs, but rather on which honorific forms are most appropriate given the current speaker/referent socio-hierarchical difference. Further, an honorific language speaker is obligated to decide on honorific usage with every statement they say; without the existence of a 'neutral' form, either plain or honorific forms must always be used.

Due to this constrained nature of formal forms, then, Ide proposes that formal forms should be considered a politeness device utterly independent from politeness strategy usage. Ide further ascribes this lack of serious consideration of formal forms as a consequence of western-centrism; the egalitarian nature of Western societies creates considerably more choice for when and where to use formal forms compared to more hierarchically-oriented societies. In this sense, politeness theory fails to account for the constant awareness of social rank differences present in such cultures and the honorific rules that follow.

1.3. CURRENT MODELS OF JAPANESE HONORIFICS SUGGEST DYNAMIC, MULTIFACTORIAL USAGE. Matsumoto and Ide's strict, rule-based explanations of honorific usage in Japanese society are widely accepted as truth (Cook 2018; Okamoto 1997). These 'normative' (as coined by Okamoto 1997) honorific usages that follow a particular social variable are reflected in the notion of incorrect honorific usage; when a speaker fails to follow hierarchical difference or social distance in conversation strictly, the most common explanation would be that the speaker is linguistically incompetent, uneducated, or simply ignorant. This notion is readily observable in various media (e.g., magazines, TV programs) offering education on how to 'correctly' use honorifics.

However, most of the conclusions supporting normative usages are drawn from theoretical examinations of Japanese language ideology. More recent investigations of real-world honorific data have highlighted evident shortcomings in Matsumoto and Ide's theoretical-based normative descriptions, instead opening the door for a broader range of non-politeness, non-discernment usage.

In a study of Japanese caregiver-child conversations, Cook examines how parents used honorifics towards their children (ages ranged from three to seven years old) (Cook 1997). Should Matsumoto and Ide be correct in their assumptions of hierarchically-based honorific usage, it would be expected that parents would only use plain form towards their children, as their children can safely be assumed to hold lower relative social standings. However, this was not the case; Cook recorded numerous instances of parents using honorific language towards their children, none of which were meant to signal politeness or discernment. To explain these deviances in honorific usage, Cook proposes an *indexicality model* in which honorifics (specifically the *desu/masu* form) directly index a self-presentational stance, which can create a wide variety of social consequences depending on the social context (Cook 2018). Key to understanding this self-presentational stance is the notion of heightened self-awareness: the honorific user understands that they are in the spotlight of the social stage, and as naturally follows, they are aware of an addressee's presence.

In the parental caregiver-child conversations, the indexicality model explains the parent's honorific usage not as an attempt to express politeness towards the child, but rather the parent's temporary transition into the more formal role of a parent. The parents' use of honorifics indexes a heightened sense of self-awareness that signals to the child their intent to fulfill parental duties (e.g., serving food to the child and ensuring proper discipline). Put another way, the parent steps away from their more familiar identity to the child into the more socially-defined, deliberate role of a parent to perform specific duties.

Okamoto (1997) further demonstrates the variety with which honorifics appear in Japanese conversation. In examining conversational data between customers and salespersons in a fish market, she demonstrates that honorific usage is uncommon, with plain form being the salesperson's default. Whereas Ide and Mastumoto's normative theories would consider the salesperson's plain form usage rude towards the customer, Okamoto states that this is not the case; this salesperson's informality can be interpreted as indexing friendliness to the customer or incorporating the liveliness of the fish market environment.

The social distance between the fish market salesperson and the customer is still very much present. However, this fact does not necessitate the use of honorifics, nor does the lack of honorifics mean the salesperson disregards social distance. Alternatively, the social distance may still be conveyed through other means, such as bowing or greeting the customer. This point is key to Okamoto's central idea: whether a speaker uses honorific of plain form is a strategy dependent on both 1) the social context of the conversation and 2) the speaker's personal linguistic attitudes. After deliberate or subconscious consideration of all these factors, the speaker uses the honorific style they deem most appropriate.

1.4. NO MONOLOGUE-BASED STUDIES OF HONORIFICS EXIST. Despite their disagreements, all previously mentioned studies are similar because their conclusions are based on the idea of a conversation. By definition, conversations involve two or more interlocutors. No two individuals are identical; there inherently exist differences in social status, rank, known or unknown intentions, interpersonal distance, responsiveness, and more (Cook 1997). Ideas on how and whether the speaker modifies their language to reflect these variables differ among researchers. However, the fact that the relationship between two interlocutors is in some way related to their linguistic behavior (and thus their honorific usage) is unanimously agreed upon.

This consensus naturally leads to considering how well these established theories surrounding honorific form usage hold up when viewed in the context of non-conversational linguistic data: monologues. Despite many examples of monologues in modern society (e.g., political speeches, religious sermons, standup comedy, lectures), there has been very minimal research on the behavior of honorific language when there is only one speaker. Additionally, studying data in this context provides an alternate angle from which past theories of honorific usage can be supported or refuted.

The current lack of monologue research in the field raises whether multiple interlocutors are a prerequisite for honorific usage. Thus, two main research questions guide this research: 1) are Japanese speakers capable of honorific usage (as opposed to plain form) in monologues, and 2) if so, what specific conversational purpose (e.g., cueing a change in topic or emotion) do honorifics hold in monologues?

Additionally, this study uses video game commentary videos for data. To date, there have been no Japanese linguistic studies involving video games despite their unique potential to consistently produce rich data sets from the excitement, fear, concentration, and humor that one expresses while gaming.

2. Methods. The data for this study was sourced from a ~30-year-old Japanese man who uploads YouTube videos of himself playing Super Mario Maker 2 (Nintendo, 2019), a video game in which players control a virtual character (Mario) to traverse a 2D side-scrolling level, avoid monsters, and solve puzzles in stages created and shared by online strangers. Due to this open-

internet system of stage selection, the YouTuber plays through a wide variety of stages; every stage varies in its difficulty, length, and purpose. Stage creators can place blocks, characters, objectives, music, timed events, and more. As such, the premise of each stage is limited only by the stage creator's creativity. Some stages follow the typical side-scrolling platformer formula Mario is most well-known for, while others attempt to bring out intense emotional reactions in the player (e.g., forcing the sacrifice of companion characters to reach an end goal, hiding necessary blocks or obstacles with the sole purpose of causing frustration). Throughout each video, the YouTuber typically plays through two to four stages.

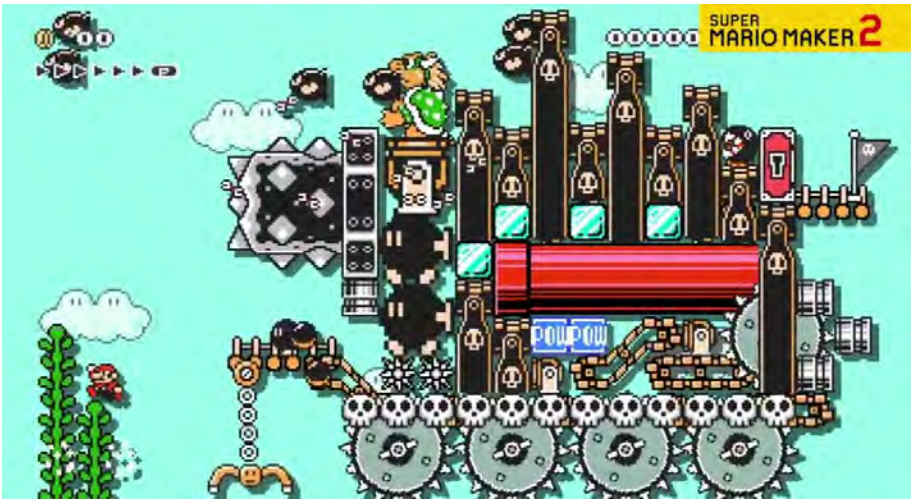

Figure 1. Screenshot of *Super Mario Maker 2*.[2]

While the YouTuber uploads many other videos of himself playing a wide range of games, for the sake of consistency, this study only considers videos focusing on *Super Mario Maker 2*. This video game can allow up to four players simultaneously, but any videos involving other live players were excluded from the dataset; the purpose of this footage is to examine honorific behavior in a monologue setting, and as such, videos with only the YouTuber are included.

The gameplay takes up the entire screen in these videos while the YouTuber's voice is overlayed as he plays the game. There appears to be minimal editing, the only noticeable edits being the splicing out of long silences.

These videos are only available to the public upon upload to YouTube, meaning no audience or any other possible interlocutors are actively influencing the YouTuber's behavior during the time of gameplay and filming. Of course, the YouTuber knows that he is recording a video to be watched by others eventually. Accordingly, he typically includes a verbal introduction and conclusion to each video.

Nine monologue videos were analyzed for a total of three hours of footage (average video length: ~21 minutes). All videos were uploaded over two months from July to September of 2019, and the total view count across all nine videos neared 6,000,000 views as of November 2021 (average video view count: ~650,000 views). The intended audience for these videos includes any Japanese speakers who enjoy watching or playing video games.

All instances of honorific form were counted as indexed by *desu* and *masu* forms. Instances include any variations of these forms, including past tense (*deshita, mashita*), proposals

[2]Image taken from promotional video by Nintendo (https://supermariomaker.nintendo.com/play/)

(*mashoo*), and negative form (*masenn*). For later comparison, instances of plain form (as indexed by a non-honorific sentence ending) were counted in three of the nine videos. Plain and honorific forms found in dependent clauses (indexed by *kara*, *kedo*, and *ga* endings) were not counted due to the form variability of such clauses.

Honorific instances were then considered in the context of usage (e.g., obstacles the player faces in the video game, the YouTuber's intent, the YouTuber's emotions, how the YouTuber speaks before and after using honorific form). After close examination of these honorific contexts, functional categories for honorific usage were created according to Cook's 2018 indexicality model of Japanese honorifics (i.e., assuming honorifics signal a disciplined self, what specific purpose does an honorific play?). While there were no strict rules in creating these functional categories, they were generally made to have a low enough number of categories to avoid overfitting the data while also maintaining appropriate coverage of the diverse situations in which honorifics arose. Once these functional categories were defined, all honorific instances were categorized. The distribution of this categorization was examined to determine which functions were most common in the monologue setting.

Plain form was only considered in three of the nine videos; as this study is not categorizing functions of plain form, it is only necessary to demonstrate that plain form is the default form (alternatively, honorific form is the exception). While counting plain form in all nine videos would be ideal, the frequent recurrence of instances of plain form would significantly increase the labor involved in data collection. Moreover, this study's question of how honorific form is used in a monologue context is answered only by closely examining honorific form data, not plain form data. As such, this limited sample size for plain form is adequate in comparing the YouTuber's tendency to use one form over the other.

3. Results. In assessing whether a monologue can contain honorifics despite the absence of other interlocutors, instances of plain and honorific forms were counted and summed across three videos for a total of 62 minutes of footage (Table 1). We counted 36 honorific instances and 143 plain instances (20.1% and 79.9% of all forms, respectively). Thus, plain form is the default form in these monologues.

	Honorific	Plain
Video #1	14	38
Video #2	8	53
Video #3	14	52
Total	36 *(20.1%)*	143 *(79.9%)*

Table 1. Honorific and plain form usage counts.

In defining honorific function categories, we counted and transcribed instances of all honorific forms across nine videos for a total of 182 minutes of footage. We identified four honorific categories from 130 honorific functions: 1) announcement-making, 2) emphasizing seriousness, 3) conventionalized formulae, and 4) imaginary quotations (Table 2). The announcement function saw the highest usage at 85 instances (65.4% of honorifics). Next was the seriousness function at 20 (15.4%) and conventionalized formulae at 17 (13.1%). Finally, the imaginary quotation function was the rarest at 8 instances (6.2%). All four functions heavily agree with Cook's 1997 two-way indexical model: honorific form indicates a disciplined self, creating a contextual role that a speaker then assumes.

	Announcement	Seriousness	Formula	Quotation
Video #1	5	5	2	2
Video #2	0	5	3	0
Video #3	10	1	2	1
Video #4	18	2	1	3
Video #5	4	3	2	0
Video #6	6	0	2	0
Video #7	30	0	1	2
Video #8	6	1	2	0
Video #9	6	3	2	0
Total	85 (65.4%)	20 (15.4%)	17 (13.1%)	8 (6.2%)

Table 2. Honorific functional category counts.

3.1. ANNOUNCEMENT FUNCTION. The announcement function accounts for 85 of the 130 observed honorifics, making it the most frequent explanation of honorific usage. The function's purpose explains this high frequency. Since the YouTuber frequently reaches transition points while playing the video game, honorifics serve as useful linguistic markers for separating emotion-packed gameplay from important information. For instance, consider the following excerpt in which the YouTuber accidentally kills an ally character:

> Kooiu koto ne. De, hatena burokku ga tatakare—
> 'So, that's how it works. And, I can hit this button here to—'
>
> [Upon pressing the button, an ally character suddenly dies.]
>
> Ah, koroshichaimashita!
> 'Ah, I have killed it!' (polite)
>
> Sookka, are shinu osore ga arunoka, mettoga. Gomenn na.
> 'Got it, so the Buzzy Beetle can die. I'm sorry.' (plain)

Before killing the ally character, the YouTuber is completely immersed in the gameplay. Since his game-playing demeanor is casual, he uses plain form. However, the unexpected killing of his ally is a crucial detail for the gameplay context going forward. As such, it is necessary to highlight this event. The YouTuber thus makes an abrupt change from plain to honorific form, as seen in the extremely polite *masu* past derivative *mashita* in *koroshichaimashita* (English: I have killed it).

It is unknown how deliberate this form change is. However, we can predict the benefit such a form change has on the audience's video comprehension. Before the honorific, the audience is completely used to hearing the YouTuber speak casually in plain form. However, upon unexpectedly hearing an honorific, the audience now pays closer attention to the information paired with that honorific; since the speaker has just changed the way he speaks, it is worth listening closely.

This announcement function is an excellent example of Cook's indexicality model in action: honorifics help present a more disciplined, conscious self than the natural, spontaneous self he spends most of the video. In turn, this disciplined self lets him play a specific contextual role—in this case, the role of an announcer.

Recall how Cook's indexicality model emphasizes that honorifics can be used for non-politeness purposes. We reach a similar conclusion with this announcement function. When announcing this information, the YouTuber is not being polite. Rather, he is taking on a presentational role to present the facts. Nothing is polite about these honorifics.

Consider another example. In the following excerpt, the YouTuber prepares to traverse a dangerous pathway, only to die immediately:

> Moo kokomadewa sukutto kuruyooni nattekitayoodemo.
> 'At least up to this point, it's been pretty easy to get here.' (plain)
>
> Yoshi, ikimasuyo.
> 'Alright, I am going to proceed.' (polite)
>
> [He immediately dies by running into a hidden obstacle.]
>
> Sonna tokorode…
> 'In a place like that…' (plain)

After remarking about how easy the previous obstacles had been, the YouTuber announces that he will proceed onwards. The honorific usage in the *masu* informative derivative *masuyo* in *ikimasuyo* (English: I am proceeding) creates a stark contrast from the default plain form. As such, we can interpret this contrast as him taking a step back from the gameplay to highlight crucial information: he is continuing ahead.

3.2. SERIOUSNESS FUNCTION. We saw that honorific usage can signal a commentator role in the previous function. However, we also observed 20 instances of honorific usage signaling a much more emotionally intense meaning: emphasizing the speaker's seriousness. We only observe this seriousness function when the YouTuber is extremely surprised, frustrated, or confused. These honorifics are a way of signaling 'I am being dead serious right now.'

In the following excerpt, the YouTuber is running through an extremely hectic level that he has failed multiple times. Obstacles fall all around him. As he thinks he has reached the end, even more obstacles start falling. As a result, he expresses disbelief and frustration towards this chaos:

> Hai, kakenukeru…
> 'Okay, I run past this…' (plain)
>
> [More obstacles start falling.]
>
> Moo kuriade yokunaidesuka?
> (yelling) 'Isn't this good enough for a clear?' (polite)
>
> Haite, Mario, isoide!
> 'Get in (the pipe), Mario, hurry!' (plain)

The YouTuber is surprised that the obstacles keep coming and uses honorific form to emphasize his seriousness when asking why the game is so tough on him. In this case, the honorific is the

desu question derivative *desuka* in *yokunaidesuka* (English: isn't this good enough?). The plain form analogs of *yokunai* or *yukunaika* would have sufficed, but the honorific usage adds more punch to his question; the obstacles are stressing him out, and the honorific helps convey some of that stress. Put simply, this honorific means he is so serious that he is temporarily stepping out from the role of a spontaneous, focused video game player.

The honorific's impact on the audience follows the same logic as the announcement function; as the plain form the audience is used to hearing is interrupted by the honorific, this serves as a cue to pay attention to the speaker. This logic follows Cook's indexicality model; honorifics index a disciplined mode of self as opposed to the spontaneous self. This disciplined mode of self goes on to facilitate different roles depending on the context (i.e., announcing information, emphasizing seriousness).

In another instance of the seriousness honorific function, the YouTuber is solving a puzzle level. He believes he has the solution, but when he executes it, one last obstacle remains. He has to restart the puzzle.

> … de, POW o chokusetsu butsukeru.
> '… then, I do a direct hit with the POW block.' (plain)
>
> [He gets a direct hit.]
>
> Oshya!
> 'Nice!'
>
> Are? Chotto nokorundesukedo… nokorundesukedo…
>
> (yelling) 'What? Wait, it is still there… it is still there…' (polite)
>
> Ah, moo jikan ga nai.
> 'Ah, I've run out of time.' (plain)

In this situation, the YouTuber is shocked that his solution was wrong. This realization startles him, causing him to use the desu explanatory derivative *desukedo* in nokorunndesukedo (English: it is still there). Plain form alternatives to *nokorunndesukedo* include *nokorukedo* and *nokoruyo*, but these alternatives are not strong enough to adequately express his feelings. He is not expressing politeness; he is taking a step back from his role as a video game player to express his genuine disbelief in what has just happened.

Interesting to note is how videos four and seven show significantly more announcement honorifics than seriousness honorifics (Table 2). Both videos were of the YouTuber walking through stages that he created himself, explaining the thoughts behind each level. As this naturally makes for a more informational video, he likely experienced less emotion than his other, more stressful videos where he plays through unfamiliar stages. There are no real reasons to be serious in these two videos, likely leading to their relative rarity of seriousness honorifics.

3.3. CONVENTIONALIZED FORMULAE. The third most common honorific function we identified (17 instances) was conventional speech acts: formulaic phrases containing honorifics. Our observations for conventionalized formulae consisted entirely of two phrases: *yoroshikuonegaishimasu* (English: I am counting on you) and *arigatoogozaimashita* (English: thank you very much), both of which are very frequent in Japanese speech. Both have plain form analogs: *yoroshiku* and *arigatoo*, respectively. However, the honorific forms are well established as independent chunks.

The conventional formulae function demonstrated the most consistent usage of all four honorific functions we identified in the monologue data; all nine videos ended with *yoroshikuonegaishimasu*, *arigatoogozaimashita*, or both. Consider the following excerpt from the last 30 seconds of a video:

> …wakede Mario Maker wa, maa, futeikide tookoo shitemasu kedo
> '…so, my upload schedule for Mario Maker has been irregular.' (polite)
>
> Mata jikai, yoroshikuonegaishimasu.
> 'I hope to see you next time.' (polite)
>
> Arigatoogozaimashita.
> 'Thank you very much.' (polite)
>
> [The video ends.]

In these final lines, the YouTuber is wrapping up the video and bidding farewell to his viewers. As is evident, the last two phrases he says are conventionalized formulae. While the YouTuber sometimes used conventionalized formulae in the middle of the video, 15 of the 17 instances came at the very end.

Interestingly, Dunn (2005) has described the phenomenon of opening and closing conventionalized formulae in her examination of Japanese wedding speeches. Regardless of whether a wedding speaker used honorifics in the main portion of their speech, Dunn found that speakers would open and close their speech using conventionalized formulae without fail. For instance, speeches typically opened with conventionalized congratulatory phrases to the couple and conventionalized apologies for speaking ahead of distinguished guests. Similarly, speeches closed with conventionalized thanks and congratulations. In this sense, the use of honorifics in conventionalized formulae allows the speaker to actively play the 'wedding speaker' role.

Considering the context of video game commentary videos, the use of conventionalized formulae—especially at the end of the videos—can be thought of as transitioning from the unaware, focused 'player' role to the self-aware, hosting role of a YouTuber. By linguistically marking this transition, the YouTuber may better clue the viewer about the video's approaching end. Of course, viewers may reach such a conclusion without hearing conventionalized formulae. Thus, such formulae are supplementary, as is practically all honorific usage.

3.2. QUOTATION FUNCTION. The least common honorific function we found (8 instances) is unique in that the YouTuber uses it when speaking for others. Consider the following excerpt. The YouTuber has just died from a trap where all but the last obstacle moved as expected, causing him to run into it:

> Nanka ayashii kiga shitandayona!
> 'I had a feeling something was suspicious!' (plain)
>
> Hitoridake 'boku kankei arimasenkedo' mitaina yatsu itamon ne.
> 'One of them looked as if 'I have no relation to the others' (polite)' (plain)

The YouTuber confirms his suspicions in this situation, and to have fun with debriefing what just happened, he imagines what the obstacle would say if it could talk. Whereas his own speech is in plain form, only the obstacle's imagined words are in honorific form. Specifically, it uses the *masu* negative derivative *masen* in *arimasenkedo* (English: there is no).

Interestingly, we also observe this quotation phenomenon in Cook's 1997 study examining parental use of honorifics: parents often prefer honorific form when imagining what their child or an authority figure says. Cook suggests that this is because parents wish to instill the notion of the public self into their children. Placing honorifics in the imaginary speaker's mouth teaches their children what proper speech is.

However, the YouTuber's use of honorifics in quotes has a different function. Rather than serving as a model of proper speech, the obstacle's imaginary quote in this case comes off as snarky; it is mocking the YouTuber for assuming it would move out of the way like all the others. If anything, we can interpret this honorific usage as rude of the imaginary speaker.

4. Discussion. As honorifics are present in the data, we conclude that monologues can incorporate honorifics. Similarly, assuming the presence of these honorifics is not entirely random, there must be some underlying reason for the speaker to switch from the default plain to honorific form. As such, we find four independent functions for honorifics in our monologue data: to make an announcement, to indicate seriousness, conventionalized formulae, and to quote others.

This finding allows for a new, critical lens on past literature. Should we follow the logic of previous conclusions, whether or not a monologue could theoretically have honorifics is debatable. Brown and Levinson (1987) claim that honorifics are 'direct grammatical encodings of relative social status between participants … in the communicative event.' This assumes honorific usage is directly tied to interpersonal differences. Extending this reasoning to a monologue setting, without multiple speakers there are no interpersonal differences, and without interpersonal differences there are no honorifics. Similarly, the hierarchy-based rules of honorific usage concluded by Matsumoto (1988) and Ide (1989) would not predict this study's finding.

The fact that this study's data set showed honorific usage in a situation where social or hierarchical differences are restricted suggests that Brown and Levinson's, Matsumoto's, and Ide's arguments are insufficient for explaining every social situation.

4.1. CONSISTENCY WITH OTHER MONOLOGUES. To determine the validity of honorific functions we found in this YouTuber's speech, we also conducted a cursory examination of four other Japanese YouTubers' speech when playing the same game. Interestingly, we found that the functions we defined in this study translate very well across different speakers; in addition to using plain form as the default form, the situations in which they used honorifics align with our four functions (announcement, seriousness, conventionalized formulae, and quotation).

Regarding consistency on a broader scale, if we can define indexical functions of honorifics for YouTube commentary monologue data, it can also be reasoned by extension that the honorifics of any given monologue can exhibit such functions. While the actual honorific functions may differ from situation to situation, the notion that these functions can exist in monologues in the first place is globally applicable to the study of monologue honorifics.

4.2. SOURCING FROM YOUTUBE OVERCOMES OBSERVER'S PARADOX. In addition to serving as a near-limitless data source, using YouTube videos for such linguistic analysis is advantageous to previous data collection methods due to its lack of observer's paradox. Observer's paradox lies in how 'our aim is to observe how people talk when they are not being observed' (Labov 1981). Previously mentioned studies involve the researcher to some extent in creating the data: the researcher is the subject's interlocutor, the researcher him or herself is recording the conversation, or the researcher tasks a subject with recording their own conversations. Regardless of the method, the fact that the subject knows he or she is being recorded is a significant variable that should not be disregarded. However, as it is impossible to quantify how much a conversation with observer's paradox mirrors natural conversation, researchers have no choice but to consider such data

'realistic' conversations. However, observer's paradox can essentially be disregarded when using online videos; the YouTuber has no interaction or specific awareness of the researcher, and although their awareness of an audience may influence their linguistic behavior, this awareness is already an element of the video and can thus be considered completely natural. In the case of the video game commentaries, the player's monologue does not depend in any way on the existence of this study.

4.3. FUTURE DIRECTIONS. The most immediate direction for future research is seeing how these honorific conclusions change upon slight modifications to variables in the speech setting. As the present study only examines speech data from a specific YouTuber playing one particular video game, it is of interest to see whether the YouTuber changes his frequency or manner of honorific usage depending on what game he plays. Additionally, this particular YouTuber has plenty of videos of himself playing video games (including *Super Mario Maker 2*) with three other fellow YouTubers. Speech data from these multi-interlocutor videos of the same video game would be directly comparable to the monologue data of him playing alone. Any significantly different trends in honorific usage may then be attributable to the presence of social interlocutors.

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