



Teaching Japanese Honorifics More Effectively

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Outline

Introduction



Redefining honorifics



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Conclusion

Motivation of the presentation

- The discrepancy between what is taught in the classroom and what is used in real life
- Obsession on using (correct) honorifics in the “manuals”
- Misconception of the relationship between honorifics and politeness
- Diversity in the usages of honorifics and multifunctionality of honorifics
- And now, I finally have a chance to teach Japanese as a full-time instructor...
- How exactly would I apply my research to classroom teaching? And what have I done differently?

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Categories of honorifics

	+ Referent honorifics	- Referent honorifics
+ Addressee honorifics	e.g., <i>osshai-masu</i>	e.g., <i>ii-masu</i>
- Addressee honorifics	e.g., <i>ossharu</i>	e.g., <i>iu</i>

- From p.502, Harada, S. (1976). Honorifics. In M. Shibatani (Ed.), *Japanese Generative Grammar* (pp. 499-561). New York: Academic Press; American Academic Press.

Categories of Japanese honorifics

Subdivisions	Example	Definition
Sonkeego (Respect Forms)	<i>irassharu, o-isogashii, o-namae</i>	Elevating the third person's or the addressee's action, related items, or status
Kenzyōgo I (Humiliative Forms I)	<i>ukagau, otegami</i>	Elevating the third person or the addressee by describing the actions or related items of the speaker's side
Kenzyōgo II (Humiliative Forms II)	<i>mairu</i>	Describing the actions or related items of the speaker's side politely to the reader/hearer
Teeneego (Polite Forms)	<i>desu / masu</i>	Narrating texts or speeches politely to the reader/hearer
Bikago (Beautification Forms)	<i>o-hana</i>	Beautifying things

Guidelines on honorific expressions: Report. (2007). Subdivision on the Japanese Language at the Council for Cultural Affairs.

Honorifics index interpersonal relationships.

Meanings of honorifics

Indexicality refers to the way language can directly refer to or point to aspects of the speech situation. (Silverstein, 2003)

Form	Meaning			
	1 st order	2 nd order	3 rd order	4 th order
Lexical category (RH, HFI, HFII)	semantic meaning + distance	Elevate the referent (RH, HFI) / Distance the addressee (HFII)	Formality	Educatedness / Etiquette / Professionalism
Grammar category (PF)	distance	Distance the addressee		Discourse marker

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An example from the textbook for intermediate-low level learners

- 1 大 家：おお や ジョンさん、留守るすの間に警察あいだ けいさつから電話でんわがありましたよ。犯人はんじんが捕まっ
2 たので、警察けいさつに来てほしいそうです。
- 3 ジョン：ジョン ありがとうございます。よかった。
- 4 大 家：おお や それから、かぎを新しくしましたから、どうぞ。本当に大変ほんとう たいへんでしたね。
- 5 ジョン：ジョン ええ。でも、そのおかげで、いいこともありました。みんないろいろ
6 な物ものをくれたり、おごってくれたりしたんです。
- 7 大 家：おお や ジョンさんは、いい友だちともがたくさんいて、幸せしあわですね。

Genki L21, Conversation 3, p.207

Ōya: *Jon-san, rusu no aida ni keisatsu kara denwa ga arimashita <AH> yo. Hannin ga tsukamatta node, keisatsu ni kite hoshii sō desu <AH>.*

Landlord: Jon, while you were away, the police called. The culprit has been caught, and they want you to come to the station.

Jon: *Arigatō gozaimasu <AH>. **Yokatta** <plain>.*

Jon: Thank you. I'm glad.

Ōya: *Sorekara, kagi o atarashiku shimashita <AH> kara, dōzo. Hontō ni taihen deshita <AH> ne.*

Landlord: And here's the new key. It was really tough, wasn't it?

Jon: *Ē. Demo, sono okage de, ii koto mo arimashita <AH>. Minna iroiro na mono o kuretari, ogotte kuretari shita n desu <AH>.*

Jon: Yes, but thanks to that, some good things happened too. Everyone gave me things and treated me to meals.

Ōya: *Jon-san wa, ii tomodachi ga takusan ite, shiawase desu ne <AH>.*

Landlord: Jon, you have a lot of good friends. You're really lucky.

An example from animation

- *Card Capture Sakura* Episode 1, conversation between Sakura and Tomoyo: Tomoyo speaks the so-called “Princess language”. In addition to rising-intonation *wa*, she constantly uses polite forms, and even Respect Forms to her best friend, whereas Sakura uses normal plain forms as other female students would do. Instead of being estranged, Tomoyo’s usage of polite forms highlights her proper etiquette as a young lady (4th-order meaning).

Tomoyo: Yarimasu <AH> **wa** ne.

Tomoyo: She's quite something, isn't she?

Sakura: Aa! Tomoyo-chan!

Sakura: Ah! Tomoyo-chan!

Tomoyo: Sarigiwa ni purezento towa yaru yatsu desu<AH> **wa**.

Tomoyo: Leaving a present behind as you go... He knows how to do things.

Sakura: O, ohayō <plain>, Tomoyo-chan.

Sakura: G-good morning, Tomoyo-chan.

Tomoyo: Ohayō gozaimasu <AH>, Sakura-chan.

Tomoyo: Good morning, Sakura-chan.

Tomoyo: Saikin no Sakura-chan, kawaikatta desu <AH> **wa**.

Tomoyo: Sakura-chan has been so cute lately.

Sakura: Fue?

Sakura: Huh?

Tomoyo: Kyandi o nigirishimetsutsu uttori nasatteru <RH> n desu <AH> mono.

Tomoyo: You were holding that candy in your hand and just daydreaming away.

Sakura: Ano, Tomoyo-chan.

Sakura: Umm, Tomoyo-chan...

Tomoyo: Bideo ka shashin ni totte okitakatta desu <AH> **wa** ne.

Tomoyo: I wish I could've captured it on video or taken a picture.

Sakura: Kiiteru <plain>?

Sakura: Are you listening?

Tomoyo: Sō sō <plain>! Atarashii bideo kamera kaimashita <AH> no. Mata, torasete kudasai <AH> ne.

Tomoyo: Oh yes! I bought a new video camera. Please let me film you again.

Sakura: Un, demo, watashi yori motto omoshiroi mono totta hō ga yokunai <plain>?

Sakura: Uh, wouldn't it be better if you filmed something more interesting than me?

Tomoyo: Sakura-chan ijō ni omoshirokute kawaii mono nante arimasen <AH> **wa**. Sassoku ashita kara bideo mottekimasu <AH> **wa**. Rarararara.

Tomoyo: Nothing's more interesting and cuter than Sakura-chan. I'll bring the camera starting tomorrow! Lalalalala.

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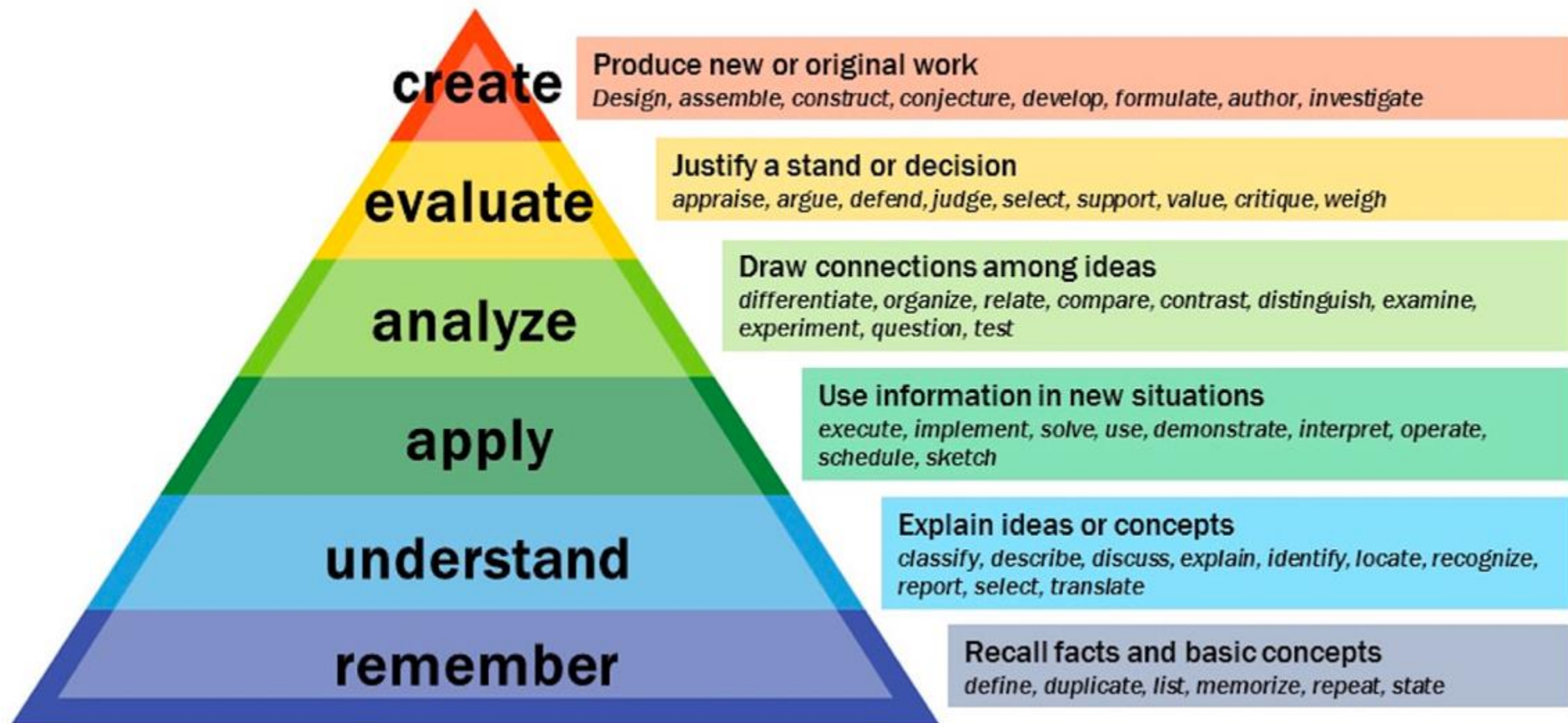


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Bloom's Taxonomy – Cognitive Domain



Sample writing task

○ Write an email to ask for a recommendation letter.

1. The addressee can be "[AUTHOR'S NAME]", or any teacher.

2. The program can be real ones or imaginary ones. Don't spend too much time on researching programs 😞. You can also use "[EXCHANGE PROGRAMS AKA JAPAN EXCHANGE PROGRAMS]" if you want.

3. Don't force yourself to use honorifics everywhere. Only use them when NECESSARY!

4. Pretend that you don't know the teacher very well, so you can't mention your connection with the addressee (e.g., I've taken your XX class before.)

5. Please do give the reason why you are interested in the program, and/or what you can benefit from the program.

6. Rather than immediately seeking help from Google or ChatGPT, try to play around with your language repertoire. I know that this assignment is slightly challenging. It's OK to sound awkward or unnatural. That's why we are practicing! However, if you do need some help, you can always meet with me / [JAPANESE TA]/[JAPANESE TUTORS], and please put an asterisk next to the words that you found online.

7. No length requirement but be sure to provide all the information as instructed.

○ * In real-life, it's always courteous to provide a **deadline** for your recommendation letter writers and give them the **at least 14 days** to do it, even if you are doing this in English!

One of the most plausible scenarios for students to put honorifics into practice as college students

Put into the context of our institution

Still requires some naturalness

Implying the usage of honorifics to students

Some scaffolding

A growth mindset

I think this is important to include, too~

Rubrics for the writing assignment

Focusing on the basics, target of the module

- Content (4 points): Any misuses of honorifics? Will the addressee understand what you are asking them for? Have you provided enough information so that your addressee can write a letter for you without asking you for 10 more pieces of information? (The structure / organization of the email will not be graded since you are relatively unexperienced. I will provide some comments when grading your assignments if necessary.)

Important accommodation

- Task completion (3 points): Please double-check the assignment description. You should all get full marks on this one.
- Grammar accuracy (2 points): This one has the lowest weight because I value your conveying yourselves more. However, I might be stricter on the grammar that we have already covered before, especially particles and conjugations.

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- Redefining honorifics: Honorifics index interpersonal relationship. There is no one-on-one mapping between honorifics and its functions. Honorifics are multifunctional.
- Materials: Textbooks already have some existing demonstration of the diversity of usages of honorifics. Having students pay attention to the endings of animations (TV drama, etc.) that they already know the content can be a good start for noticing.
- Assessment: Pick appropriate assessment tasks based on students' level and teaching objectives. Do not ask students to perform at a level where they are not ready for yet.

THANK
YOU!

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