

A Contemporary History of Okazaki Honorifics

— Democratization and *-te itadaku* —

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1. Introduction

1.1. Composition of this paper

Linguistic variations are multi-layered. Some speakers use more than one language; and many speakers can differentiate dialect and standard language. In many Asian languages, speakers use different styles according to the situation or interlocutor. This is called honorifics, which can coexist in a brain of a speaker. In this paper honorifics which can be especially managed or controlled among speakers and hearers will be analyzed. The principles of its usage are similar to second person pronouns in most of the European languages.

This paper describes real-time changes in the use of honorifics in Okazaki city in Central Japan over more than 50 years. Some universal tendencies may be observed from the analysis, and these will be connected to a universal theory of honorifics and also to the long history of Japanese honorifics. Honorifics in Japanese are expressed using an abundance of grammatical forms of verbs, adverbs and particles specially developed for showing respect, humbleness and politeness. But nowadays some different expressions and strategies are adopted to control the psychological distance between speakers and hearers. Recent changes in honorific behavior show that the principles of usage have changed from power to solidarity (Brown and Gilman 1960) or from social status to psychological obligation. A steady increase in the use of the benefactive expression *-te itadaku* ('have benefit of') was found in Okazaki. This rapid increase of *-te itadaku* is a typical case of a new way of expressing politeness.

1.2. Recent changes in Japanese honorifics

Honorifics in Japanese are still undergoing linguistic changes. Four main tendencies have been pointed out (Inoue 1999). The first one is the Law of Respect Reduction which can also be observed in many languages in the world.¹ The second one is the overall change towards polite forms (or honorifics for the hearer). The third change is Democratization & Equalization.² Previous scholars have given this various names like: from up-and-down honorifics to right-and-left honorifics, or from status honorifics

to intimacy (or role) honorifics (Neustupny 1978). The increase in the use of the benefactive expression *-te itadaku* is one example of this mechanism of change. This will be the main subject of discussion in this paper. The fourth change is the influence of non-honorific areas in the form of *tameguchi* ('equal talk' in an overly familiar manner). These are a continuation of the long-span historical change of Japanese honorifics (Tsujimura 1968)

from Taboo ----> absolute honorifics ----> relative honorifics.

In a word, Japanese honorifics can be said to be becoming simplified.

1.3. Rapid increase of *-te itadaku* in the National Diet Record

A remarkable change related to honorifics is the recent increasing use of *-te itadaku*. This is observed and mentioned in various books and essays (Inoue 1999). Actual numerical data is available in the National Diet Record, where it can be seen that House members recently began using *-te itadaku* very often (Sano 2008).

2. Okazaki survey on honorifics

2.1. Outline of the Okazaki survey on honorifics

From now on the results of the Okazaki Survey on Honorifics (OSH) will be discussed. This is a large scale sociolinguistic survey executed three times over 55 years (Sugito 2010). The number of informants is about one thousand in total. The first survey was executed in 1953, the second survey in 1972 or 19 years later, and the third survey in 2008 or 55 years later. By utilization of an Excel scattergram, the actual time span of the three surveys can be shown in a graph. Cohort (same generation by birth year) analysis was attempted.

2.2. Transitions of politeness for all the contexts, OSH

The total degrees of politeness of all the contexts (or questions) had been quantified in the past two surveys. Matsuda (2012) attempted to quantify politeness in the same way for the third survey. Judgments using three degrees of politeness were utilized for this paper. Figure 1 shows transitions of politeness values for all the contexts or questions. When the values of the three surveys are plotted according to the real-time dimension, changes of most of the contexts (or questions) form near-straight lines, indicating that changes proceeded at a certain speed. The graph also shows that expressions generally became more polite as time passed.

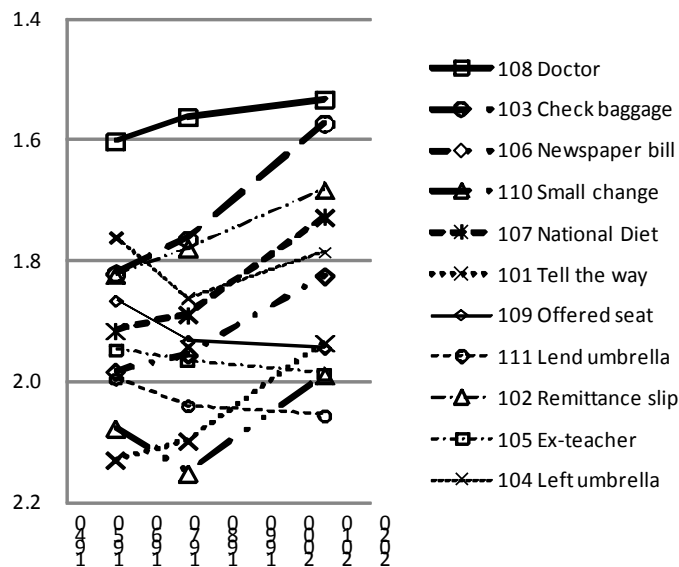


Figure 1: Transitions of politeness for all the scenes, OSH

This can be explained in at least three ways. First, because people in Okazaki are adopting more standard Japanese forms which are generally more polite than dialectal expressions, and secondly because socioeconomic strata have generally become higher owing to industrial development. Thirdly, it also coincides with the tendency of the Law of Respect Reduction which means that more honorific forms are being used in wider contexts.

The order of the contexts is also interesting. Expressions used when calling a doctor are estimated to be the most polite. The next most polite expressions are used for checking baggage in at a shop. Most of the bold lines indicate contexts which showed a steady increase over 55 years. These contexts are connected with the behavior of asking something. Most of the contexts with slim lines are connected with performing a kind of favor for hearers. The ex-teacher context is suggestive – this is where one is supposed to talk to a past school teacher. This shows a steady decrease in politeness, which matches with the general trend of social status change of school teachers and also with other surveys showing less use of honorifics to teachers over the past 70 years.

The degrees of politeness seem to have been governed by the social status of hearer in the first and second surveys, but by psychological relationship with hearer or importance of the topic in the third survey. This trend can be classified as the third category of honorific change into democratization and equalization. Democratization in this sense is an antonym to feudalism. The contrast of these ideas was a topic of

discussion just after the Second World War. It has taken nearly half a century for these political ideas to be sociolinguistically reflected in the form of honorific usage.

2.3. Decrease of response length in mora: Okazaki 3 surveys real time graph

It may be suspected that the Okazaki informants are using longer expressions with more words (forms) to express politeness. In order to test this hypothesis, response length was calculated in moras. A graph was drawn for informants of the three surveys, divided by age groups and plotted according to their actual ages (or average birth year). The approximation line showed that the length of answers became shorter in the three surveys, contrary to our expectation. The lengthening hypothesis was not supported.

3. *-te itadaku* in the Okazaki survey on honorifics

3.1. Use of *-te itadaku* in the Okazaki survey on honorifics

This suggests that some unnoticed, but effective, strategy may have been adopted instead, to express politeness. Many possibilities can be raised. For example more polite expressions may have been adopted from the standard language. One candidate- is the benefactive expression *-te itadaku*. In the following, more frequent use of *-te itadaku* in three surveys will be analyzed in detail. The flow of logic will be explained beforehand. More use for checking baggage than calling a doctor will be demonstrated. This shows that respect for higher social status is now decreasing. Personal psychology of obligation seems to work more for polite expressions. This means that the principle of usage of politeness has changed towards democratization and equalization.

The increase of *-te itadaku* over 55 years is very clear. The use of *-te itadaku* in all contexts has been counted and averaged. The line connecting the three Okazaki surveys is almost straight and similar to the approximation line. When this line is simply extrapolated to the past, the starting point seems to be around the beginning of the political modernization of Japan; that is the Meiji Restoration in 1868.

3.2. Increase of average usage of *-te itadaku* by contexts, real time graph, OSH

Next, the increase of *-te itadaku* is shown in more detail for individual contexts in Figure 2. The increase of *-te itadaku* is again clear. The lines are almost straight. Again the order of the contexts is interesting. Calling a doctor is still the most polite; however the degree of politeness decreases as time passes. Checking baggage has suddenly become polite over these 55 years. The other contexts are far lower in use of *-te itadaku*, though some of them show a steady increase. Some lines indicate contexts which show a steady increase over 55 years. Most of the contexts are connected with giving

instructions to hearers or, in other words, with the behaviors of hearers. In the past surveys, *-te itadaku* was especially used when asking a doctor; but psychological burden or relation with the hearer became a greater factor in the third survey.

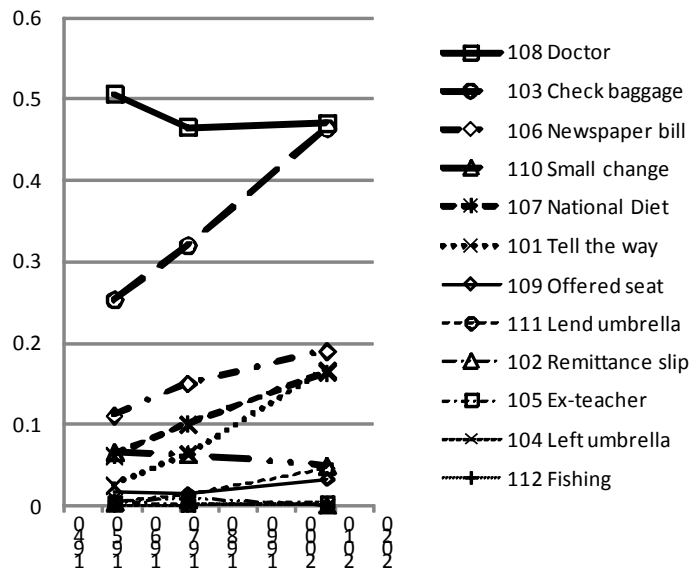


Figure 2: Usage of *-te itadaku* in all the scenes, OSH

3.3. Usage of *-te itadaku* in Okazaki average, 3 surveys real time graph

Next, minute age differences have been shown by age groups of three surveys, shown according to real time of year of birth. In order to reveal the overall pattern, the usage of *-te itadaku* in all the contexts is averaged. The assimilation line shows that the use of *-te itadaku* is increasing slightly. When informants are divided according to age group, the 30's are close to the overall average value. But age differences of the third survey show the opposite tendency. Younger people do not use *-te itadaku* so much in all three surveys, with older people using more *-te itadaku* forms. This can be explained by the notion of late adoption (Boberg 2004). Sociolinguistic rules like honorifics and discourse strategies are often acquired very late in life (Inoue and Yamashita in press), after becoming a full-fledged member of a linguistic community.

3.4. Decrease of *-te itadaku* in Okazaki in the context of doctor, 3 surveys real time graph

However the conditions differ according to individual contexts or questions. As Figure 3 shows, in the context of calling a doctor, informants are using fewer *-te itadaku* forms in the three surveys. At least two conditions should be taken into account to explain the slight decrease of *-te itadaku* forms for a doctor. (1) People's attitudes seem

to have changed towards a doctor, a person of higher social status with higher education, higher income and the sacred task of saving people’s lives. (2) However the general situation has also changed because the custom of a doctor calling on someone at home is now obsolete. Patients are expected to visit hospitals or clinics.

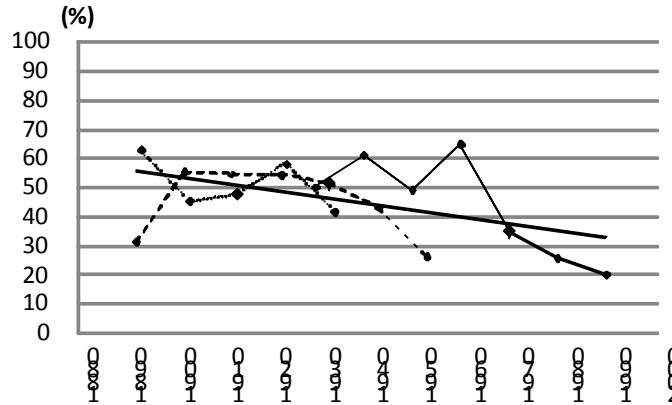


Figure 3: Usage of *-te itadaki* for calling a doctor, OSH

3.5. Increase of *-te itadaki* in Okazaki in the context of checking in baggage, 3 surveys real time

In contrast, expressions with *-te itadaki* forms are recently used more in the context for checking in baggage at a store as Figure 4 shows. We must again consider the change of people’s attitudes and behavior for this context. In the past the personal relationship between a shop owner and a customer was close and friendly. However the relation has become more distant these days. Also, customers are expected to prepare a carry bag with casters or use a car or taxi when one is expecting to carry a heavy bag. The behavior of checking baggage in at a store has become a rare occurrence with more consciousness of obligation.

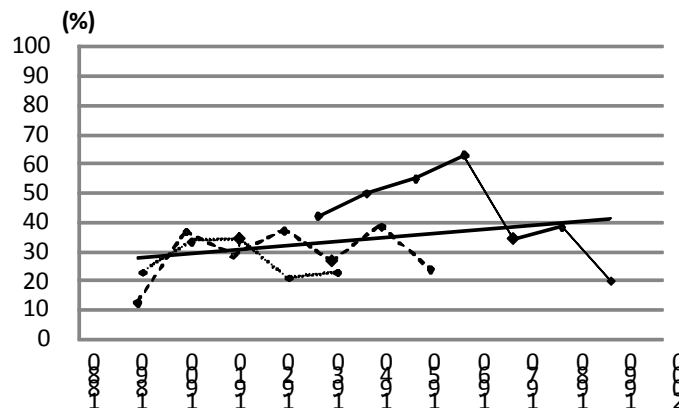


Figure 4 Usage of *-te itadaki* for checking in baggage, OSH

These graphs show that the principle of expression of politeness has changed over this half a century. Of course there are changes in extralinguistic behaviors and situations. The tendencies in more than ten contexts point in a direction which has a logical explanation. It is a change towards democratization and equalization of honorific usage. In the past, just after the end of the Second World War, remnants of the feudal social system influenced the usage pattern of honorifics, so that power relations among different social classes were taken into consideration. Now the modern idea of democratization and equalization among people has become prevalent and people seem to pay more attention to the personal psychological relationship with the hearer in front of the speaker.

4. History and Geography of Honorifics

4.1. Honorifics in Japanese

From here on the result of the Okazaki survey will be compared with the longer history of Japanese and with wider dialectological differences. Honorifics in Japanese dialects reflect the historical trends in Japanese honorifics. According to a classical theory, honorifics have their origin in linguistic taboo, and developed into absolute honorifics and later to relative honorifics (Tsuji-mura 1968, McAuley 2001, Nagata 2006). Changes seen in present day Japanese honorifics can be explained by four tendencies which are continuations of a long history. The increase of *-te itadaku* is one of the remarkable changes.

4.2. Correspondence of history and geography of Japanese honorifics

The history and geography of Japanese honorifics show a mutual correspondence. This correspondence can be shown concisely on a map. The oldest step of absolute honorifics is reflected in honorifics for natural phenomena in remote areas of Japan. The middle step of honorifics is reflected in honorifics for one's own family in the area near Kyoto and Osaka or the cultural center in the past. The modern stage of honorifics can be symbolized by beautifying words with "o-" (Miyake 1999, Inoue and Yamashita in press) which is mainly distributed near the new capital Tokyo. The newest (or future) honorifics may be non-use of honorifics which is often observed in the former colonial territories of Japan, including a part of the northern island of Hokkaido. These steps are parallel or coterminous with the umbrella model (Inoue 2010) of Japanese dialect distribution which was advocated to explain language standardization and New Dialect in Japan.

The new benefactive expression *-te itadaku* displays a typical circular distribution around Kyoto and Osaka area. Okazaki city which was the object of this paper is just outside of the distribution area in central Japan.

4.3. Correspondence between the OSH and present day Japanese honorifics

If one is sensitive and attentive, the movement of democratization and equalization is observable in various aspects of honorific usage and also in many social behaviors. The extension of usage of the *-te itadaku* form is another symbolic case of democratization and equalization of honorific usage, because it does not suggest a power relationship between the speaker and hearer, but instead suggests a relation of equal exchange of benefit between the speaker and hearer. It is a case of right-and-left honorifics or honorifics for the hearer, and it is a realization of democratization and equalization of honorifics. The half century of Okazaki honorifics shows the trend of modernization in real time data, as a continuation of long-span change of Japanese honorifics over more than one thousand years. The large scale survey over a 55-year time-span in Okazaki provides us with an observatory, if not a laboratory, of linguistic change in progress.

4.4. Conclusions

Thus far it has been ascertained that the benefactive expression *-te itadaku* is also increasing in Okazaki. This shows a correspondence to the long history of Japanese. It also symbolizes democratization and equalization of honorifics, or, in other words, a change from power to solidarity. New honorifics seem to be appearing in Japanese, as right-and-left honorifics or as solidarity, intimacy honorifics. The new analysis of the Okazaki surveys from the point of view of the benefactive expression *-te itadaku* was thus successful.

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¹ The tendency of respectful forms being used more widely of people or situations. When newer respectful forms appear the former forms become less respectful. This happened in the use of second person pronouns T/V in Europe and in many honorific forms in Asia. This phenomenon was pointed out in Sakuma 1959 and widely applied in Inoue 1999.

² The use of honorific forms between equal social relations. Honorifics forms were generally used from a lower to a higher social status person from the point of view of age or (feudalistic) social rank. However after the Second World War Japanese honorific expressions are utilized more between social equals to show psychological distance. The etymology of newer honorific expressions also shows mutual psychological obligations instead of respect. This tendency was also observed in T/V forms in Europe (Brown and Gilman 1960).