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On the categorization of the Japanese honorific system *Keigo*

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Abstract

The way the structure of the Japanese honorific system *keigo* is grasped and presented influences the understanding and appropriate use of the honorific forms this system includes. Functional categorization makes it easier to perceive principles that are not immediately evident.

This paper argues for the superiority of the new 5-category division into *sonkeigo* ('deferential speech'), *kenjōgo* ('humble speech'), *teichōgo* ('formal polite speech'), *teineigo* ('polite speech') and *bikago* ('refined speech'), recently promulgated by the Ministry of Education, over the traditional and wide-spread 3-category division into *sonkeigo*, *kenjōgo* and *teineigo*. It proposes that the new system offers significant functional advantages in that it better captures the ways social relations are expressed within the Japanese honorific system and that it sets out more clear-cut categories which better reflect the differences between the forms available to the speaker. Through description and comparison of the more notable frameworks proposed by Japanese linguists over the past fifty years, the paper seeks to demonstrate that the 5-category system is not just another more extensive model but also represents a logical outcome of developments in this field of scholarship.

Keywords

politeness, keigo, Japanese honorifics, deferential speech, humble speech, polite speech.

Within Japanese linguistic scholarship, especially in the last third of the twentieth century, there have been numerous attempts to finalize the categorization of Japanese honorifics, *keigo*.¹ A variety of theoretical models and methods of categorization have been proposed, from the simplest ones created as early as the Meiji period², to more complex ones which pay attention to the nature of *keigo* and attempt to capture its essence. The most common and widely used categorization of *keigo* is the division into three basic categories: *sonkeigo* ('deferential speech'), *kenjōgo* ('humble speech') and *teineigo* ('polite speech'). This categorization is commonly taught in Japanese elementary and high schools and it is this division that the average Japanese person is familiar with.

However, as will be demonstrated, this basic division (from here on referred to as 'traditional') is not sufficient to accurately capture the honorific system, as it classifies forms of different character and function in the same category. To a student of Japanese who does not have a feel for the language and the experience of a native speaker such categorization can be misleading when deciding which form to use. Moreover, as evident from public opinion surveys, appropriate usage of *keigo* causes problems not only for learners of Japanese but also for an increasing number of native Japanese speakers, who are not sure about the correct forms (see e.g. Bunkachō, 2008). In 2007, the Japanese Ministry of Education introduced a new division of *keigo* into five categories: *sonkeigo* ('deferential speech'), *kenjōgo* ('humble speech'), *teichōgo* ('formal polite speech'), *teineigo* ('polite speech') and *bikago* ('refined speech'). The adoption of

¹ *Kei-* means 'respect' or 'deference' and *-go* means 'language'.

² 1868-1912

this system has met with various responses, including resistance from some teachers of Japanese as a foreign language who prefer the traditional categorization and argue that the new system is unnecessarily complicated.

In response to this debate, this paper argues for the superiority of the new 5-category system over the traditional 3-category one, as the new model better captures the ways social relations are expressed within the Japanese honorific system and sets out more clear-cut categories which better reflect the differences between the forms available to the speaker. It further seeks to demonstrate that the 5-category system is not just another more extensive model but also represents a logical outcome of developments in this field of scholarship over the last fifty years.

After a brief introduction of Japanese honorifics, the traditional categorization is described with a focus on its limitations. The following section examines the efforts of selected Japanese linguists – Tsujimura (1963 and 1988), Watanabe (1971), Miyaji (1971), Oishi (1975 and 1976) and Kabaya, Kawaguchi and Sakamoto (1988) – to elaborate a more fine-grained categorization of Japanese honorifics. At the same time, this section explores the strengths and weaknesses of those proposed frameworks and finally concludes that the 5-category system promulgated by the Ministry of Education represents a useful synthesis of these models. The last section presents the 5-category division with the emphasis on its advantages over the traditional system, demonstrating how it overcomes the limitations of the traditional model.

The examples of utterances used throughout the paper are illustrative, focusing on the issues under discussion. The examples of inappropriate use of honorifics reflect common problems of learners of Japanese the author has encountered in Japanese language classes using the traditional categorization.

1. The traditional categorization of *keigo*

Keigo designates honorifics, i.e. grammaticalized features of politeness. They are the main means of social indexing: in practice, any utterance encodes the speaker's acknowledgement of the addressee's social context. *Keigo* integrates morphological, syntactical and lexical devices, mainly using verbs but also nouns, adjectives and other parts of speech. In the

traditional categorization,³ as it is used today, *sonkeigo*, or deferential speech, is usually defined as a set of honorific forms by means of which the speaker raises the position of the grammatical subject; *kenjōgo*, or humble speech, is defined as a set of honorific forms by means of which the speaker lowers the position of the subject; and *teineigo* is defined as polite speech towards the listener, which includes the polite forms *desu/masu* and also expressions with the honorific prefix *o-go* (Kikuchi, 2010, pp. 30–31).

In expressing deferential and humble forms, some of the verbs commonly used in everyday communication have suppletive forms. For example, the deferential form of the verb *iu* ('to say') is *ossharu* and the humble form is *mōshiageru*. However, the majority of verbs make use of morphologically standard ways of forming deferential and humble forms. The structures *o-V ni naru* and *V-(ra)reru* are used in deferential forms and the structure *o-V suru/itasu* to create humble forms. For example, the deferential form of the verb *oshieru* ('to teach') is *o-oshie ni naru* (plain form) and *o-oshie ni narimasu* (polite form), while the humble form is *o-oshie suru* (plain form) and *o-oshie shimasu* (polite form). The following examples demonstrate the basic usage of deferential, humble and polite speech:

- (1) a. Murakami sensei wa uchi no daigaku de **o-oshie ni narimasu**.
Murakami professor TOP our university at teach(HON)-POL
'Professor Murakami will teach at our university.'
b. Murakami sensei wa uchi no daigaku de **o-oshie ni naru**.

³ The origin of the traditional, wide-spread division of *keigo* into *sonkeigo*, *kenjōgo* and *teineigo* can be traced to the categorization by Yoshioka (1906). He distinguished three types of 'respectful and humble verbs' (*keijō dōshi*), i.e. verbs which: 1) express the action respectfully (*dōsa o uyamatte iu*); 2) express the action humbly (*dōsa o herikudatte iu*); and 3) express the existence politely (*sonzai o teinei ni iu*) (Tsujimura, 1992, p. 113). A similar division into three categories, which more or less corresponds to the division into deferential – humble – polite speech, was proposed by Uchiyama (1928), Hashimoto (1935) and in 1953 by Saeki (*sonkei*, 'honorific' – *kenjōgen*, 'humble' – *teinei*, 'polite'), whose model became the basis for school education (Wetzel, 2004, pp. 24–25).

Murakami professor TOP our university
at teach(HON)
'Professor Murakami will teach at our
university.'

- (2) a. Kinō Murakami sensei ni **o-ai
shimashita.**
yesterday Murakami professor
meet(HON)-POL-PST
'Yesterday I met professor Murakami.'
b. Kinō Murakami sensei ni **o-ai shita.**
yesterday Murakami professor
meet(HON)-PST
'Yesterday I met professor Murakami.'

In example 1a, the speaker indicates deference to Professor Murakami, who is the object of the communication, by the use of the deferential form *o-oshie ni naru* 'to teach', while speaking politely to the listener, using the polite form (*teineigo*) of the verb *naru* → *narimasu*. In example 1b, again the speaker shows deference to the professor but is speaking informally to the listener (the informal form *naru*). In example 2a, the speaker uses the humble form *o-ai suru* ('to meet') to lower his/her own action, thus indirectly expressing deference to the professor, while speaking politely (using the polite form *shimashita*) to the listener. Similarly in 2b, the speaker shows deference to the professor but is speaking informally to the listener. As can be seen from these examples, in Japanese deference is indicated not only to the listener (addressee), as it is, for example, in languages with the T/V forms of address⁴, but also to the person who is being spoken about, i.e. the referent. Depending on the situation, the referent can be identical to the listener.

With regard to this, one of the major drawbacks of the 3-category division is that it does not sufficiently distinguish between forms that indicate deference to the object of communication and forms that express polite concern for the listener. The category of *kenjōgo* includes expressions of both referent-controlled honorification and addressee-controlled honorification. Let us consider the following pairs of examples. While 3a, 4a and 5a can actually be used, 3b, 4b and 5b would be considered inappropriate.

⁴ For example the pronominal variants *tu* (singular) and *vous* (plural) in French, *Du/Sie* in German, *ty/vy* in Russian and *ty/vy* in Czech and Slovak.

(3) a. O-tegami o haiken
shimashita. (to a teacher)
(HON)letter ACC see(HON) – POL – PST
'I read your letter.'

b. Kinō terebi o *haiken
shimashita. (to a teacher)
Yesterday television ACC see(HON) –
POL – PST
'I watched TV yesterday.'

(4) a. Sensei no tokoro ni **ukagau.**
(to a friend)
professor GEN place to go(HON)
'I will go to the professor's place.'

b. Sensei no tokoro ni *mairu. (to a
friend)
professor GEN place to go(HON)
'I will go to the professor's place.'

(5) a. Sensei ni go-renraku **shita.** (to
a friend)
professor DAT contact(HON)-PST⁵
'I contacted the professor.'

b. Sensei ni go-renraku *itashita. (to
a friend)
professor DAT contact(HON)-PST
'I contacted the professor.'

In example 3a, the speaker informs the listener (using the humble verb *haiken suru*) that he has read the listener's letter and in 3b that he watched TV the previous day. The definition of humble speech provides no clue to understanding why one can humbly say to one's superior 3a but not 3b. Neither makes it clear why it is possible to use the verb *ukagau* (4a) when telling a friend about going to see a teacher but not the verb *mairu* (4b), although they are of a similar meaning and moreover are classified in the same category. Similarly, if both the structure *go-V suru* and the verb *itasu* are classified as *kenjōgo*, it may seem logical to think that the structure *go-V itasu* (5b), which is also classified as *kenjōgo*, is just a more polite version of the structure *go-V suru*. This is, however, true only provided that the referent and the addressee are the same person.

Another problem can be found in the category of *teineigo*, which includes the polite forms *desu/-masu* and also expressions 'beautified' with the prefix *o-*

⁵ The abbreviations used in the examples are as follows: ACC: accusative; COP: copula verb; DAT: dative; GEN: genitive; HON: honorific form; MOD: modality; NEG: negation; NOM: nominative; NOMI: nominaliser; POL: polite; PROG: progressive aspect; PST: past tense; PT: end particle; Q: question marker; TOP: topic marker.

/go. As will be explained later, these linguistic devices are of a different nature and classifying them in the same category may cause the false impression that expressions with the prefix *o-/go* cannot be used in other than polite speech.

As we see in the cases above, the 3-category classification faces limitations. The category of *kenjōgo* is too broadly defined, and as a result it leaves space for inappropriate use of certain verbs. Similarly, the broadness of the category of *teineigo* leaves room for misinterpretation of the linguistic devices included under it.

2. Towards the 5-category classification

The fact that the traditional categorization has always been found lacking is evident from the persistent endeavour of Japanese linguists to find a more suitable model. Tsujimura in his 1963 categorization⁶ (see Chart 1) drew a basic distinction between the referent and the addressee. He set up two main categories which are still commonly used today – *sozai keigo* (deference to the person who is talked about – in English usually rendered as ‘referent honorifics’) and *taisha keigo* (politeness in regard to the listener, or ‘addressee

honorifics’).⁷ Referent honorifics he further divided into three subcategories: *jō’i shutaigo* (‘higher-ranking subject expressions’) and *ka’i shutaigo* (‘lower-ranking subject expressions’), which correspond to *sonkeigo* and *kenjōgo* in the traditional categorization, and *bikago* (‘beautification words’). The category of *bikago* includes expressions ‘beautified’ by the prefix *o-*, which, in the traditional categorization, are classified as *teineigo*. Tsujimura included the category of *bikago* in the broader category of referent honorifics, explaining that he did not see these expressions primarily as means of politeness towards the listener (Tsujimura, 1967, p. 109). Tsujimura’s contribution to the development of a more functional model is that his categorization considers the target of politeness and deals with the so-called ‘beautification words’ in a separate category.

⁶ Further presented in *Gendai no keigo* [Contemporary keigo] (1967).

⁷ He built on Tokieda’s 1941 division into *shi keigo* and *ji keigo*. The so-called *shi keigo* includes words with a semantic content, while *ji keigo* includes, for example, the polite forms *desu/-masu*, i.e. language forms that have a certain function. *Shi keigo*, i.e. politeness in regard to the person who is the object of the utterance, includes *sonkeigo* and *kenjōgo*. *Ji keigo* expresses politeness to the listener. According to Tokieda, the speaker’s intentional deference towards the listener could be found in this category, as the forms classified in this category have no other function than a direct expression of politeness to the listener.

<i>keigo</i> (敬語)	<i>sozai keigo</i> (素材敬語) referent honorifics	<i>jō’i shutaigo</i> (上位主体語) higher-ranking subject expressions	<i>zettai jō’i shutaigo</i> (絶対上位主体語) absolute higher-ranking subject expressions
		<i>ka’i shutaigo</i> (下位主体語) lower-ranking subject expressions	<i>kankei jō’i shutaigo</i> (関係上位主体語) relative higher-ranking subject expressions
		<i>zettai ka’i shutaigo</i> (絶対下位主体語) absolute lower-ranking subject expressions	<i>kankei ka’i shutaigo</i> (関係下位主体語) relative lower-ranking subject expressions
		<i>bikago</i> (美化語) beautification words	
<i>taisha keigo</i> (対者敬語) addressee honorifics			

Chart 1: Tsujimura’s 1963 categorization

The object or target of politeness is also the starting point of the categorization by Watanabe (1971), who, however, in addition to the referent and listener also considers the speaker, i.e. the speaker's own decorum, and thus divides *keigo* into three basic categories: *keigo* towards the referent, *keigo* towards the listener and *keigo* towards the speaker (Chart 2). In the first category he distinguishes between deference to the recipient (*ukete sonkei*), a subcategory which partially corresponds with the traditional category of *kenjōgo*, and deference to the agent (*shite sonkei*), which corresponds to the traditional category of *sonkeigo*.

Expressions of modesty and humility that are addressee-controlled (for example, the verb *mairu*, 'to go, to come'), and were also traditionally classified as part of *kenjōgo*, are dealt with in the subcategory of *kenson*, which Watanabe included in the broader category of *keigo* towards the listener. This category also includes the subcategory of deference to the listener (*kikite sonkei*), which in the traditional division corresponds to *teineigo*, i.e. it contains, for example, the polite *desu/-masu* forms.

The last category, which he defines as concern for self, is the so-called *tashinami*, which can be translated as 'taste' or 'modesty'. This category roughly corresponds to Tsujimura's *bikago*, but it also includes *desu/-masu* forms, which Watanabe thus classifies in two categories (*kikite sonkei* and *tashinami*), arguing that, depending on the context, these forms can express either polite concern for the listener (ex. 7, 8) or just the speaker's concern for the quality or refinement of his/her own speech. In examples 9 and 10, taken from a dialogue between a customer and a shop assistant, it is, according to Watanabe, more likely to be the second case - these forms are used without polite regard to the shop assistant.

(7) Ame ga futte **imasu** yo.
rain NOM fall-PROG-POL PT
'It's raining.'

(8) Sō de gozai**masu** ka.
this way COP-POL Q
'Really?'

(9) Kono nekutai ikura **desu** ka.
this tie how much COP(POL) Q
'How much is this tie?'

(10) Otsuri motte **masu** ne.
change carry-PROG-POL PT
'I have change'

(adapted from Watanabe, 1971, pp. 438-439)

This distinction in the usage of *desu/-masu* (as *kikite sonkei* or *tashinami*) can be seen as slightly problematic, as it is based on a rather subjective interpretation. Moreover, even if the speaker has chosen the polite form *desu/-masu* because of their own sense of self, the recipient of the utterance is still the listener, and therefore it is practically impossible to separate these two cases.

An important contribution of Watanabe's model is that it considers the primary motivation for the use of expressions that 'beautify' speech to be the speaker's concern for the quality and refinement of his/her own speech and places such expressions in their own category outside the referent and addressee honorifics.

<i>keigo</i> (敬語)	<i>keigo</i> towards the referent	<i>ukete sonkei</i> (受手尊敬) deference to the recipient
		<i>shite sonkei</i> (為手尊敬) deference to the agent
	<i>keigo</i> towards the listener	<i>keigo yokusei</i> (敬語抑制) <i>keigo</i> restraint
		<i>kenson</i> (謙遜) expressions of modesty and humility
		<i>kikite sonkei</i> (聞手尊敬) deference to the listener
	<i>keigo</i> towards the speaker	<i>tashinami</i> (嗜み) concern for self

Chart 2: Watanabe's 1971 categorization

The traditional division into *sonkeigo*, *kenjōgo* and *teineigo* was taken as a point of departure by Miyaji (1971) and further expanded to include Tsujimura's *bikago* as well as a new category of *teichōgo* (Chart 3). Miyaji demonstrated the problematic nature of Tsujimura's category of lower-ranking subject expressions (*ka'i shutaigo*), which includes qualitatively different types of verbs. Verbs such as *itasu* ('to do'), *mairu* ('to go, to come'), *mōsu* ('to say') and

zonzuru ('to know, to think') express polite concern (*hairyo*) for the listener (Miyaji, 1965, pp. 200–201; 1971, pp. 268–269), rather than lowering the position of the speaker and thus indirectly raising the position of the referent. While expressions such as *ukagau* ('to visit, to ask, to hear'), *sashiageru* ('to give') or the humble form *o-V suru* are classified in Miyaji's categorization as *kenjōgo*, expressions that cannot be used without expressing polite concern for the listener are classified as *teichōgo* (1965, p. 201; 1971, p. 269). Examples 11 and 12 (cf. 4a, 4b) demonstrate this difference.

(11) Kinō shachō no otaku ni
ukagaimashita/ukagatta.
 yesterday president GEN home to
 go(HON)-POL-PST/go(HON)-PST
 'Yesterday I went to the president's
 home.'

(12) Kinō shachō no otaku ni
mairimashita/*maitta.
 yesterday president GEN home to
 go(HON)-POL-PST/go(HON)-PST
 'Yesterday I went to the president's
 home.'

While both the verbs *ukagau* and *mairu* can be used in polite forms – *ukagaimashita* and *mairimashita* – only the verb *ukagau* sounds natural in the plain form, since it expresses politeness to the referent (the company's president), not to the listener. By the choice of the humble verb *ukagau* (instead of *iku* 'to go') the speaker expresses deference to his superior while speaking informally (informal past tense *ukagatta*) to his/her acquaintance. On the contrary, the verb *mairu* expresses polite concern for the listener. Therefore, it would be unnatural to use it in the plain (informal) form. The morphosyntactic structure *o-V itasu* (ex. 13) Miyaji perceives as a borderline phenomenon between two categories – *kenjōgo* and *teichōgo* – i.e. possessing the qualities of both categories. This structure contains the feature of higher – lower ranking and thus it can be considered *kenjōgo*. However, as it also expresses polite concern for the listener (it can only be used in the form *itashimasu*, cf. 5b), it incorporates qualities of *teichōgo*.

(13) Kare ga o-tazune **itashimasu.**
 he NOM visit(HON)-POL
 'He will visit you.'
 (adapted from Miyaji, 1965, p. 201)

Miyaji, like Tsujimura, saw the need to move expressions that 'beautify' speech from the category of *teineigo* to an independent category but perceived them, like Watanabe, mainly as a means of expressing one's own refinement (1965, p. 204).

With this innovation, Miyaji essentially arrives at the 5-category system later adopted by the Ministry of Education.

<i>keigo</i> (敬語)	<i>sonkeigo</i> (尊敬語) deferential speech
	<i>kenjōgo</i> (謙讓語) humble speech
	<i>bikago</i> (美化語) beautification words
	<i>teichōgo</i> (丁寧語) courteous speech
	<i>teineigo</i> (丁寧語) polite speech

Chart 3: Miyaji's 1971 categorization

A similar approach, but using slightly different terminology, is taken by Ōishi (1975), who divided *keigo* into four basic groups: *sonkeigo*, *kenjōgo*, *teichōgo* and *bikago* (Chart 4). As *sonkeigo* he classifies forms that raise the position of the person spoken about, regardless of whether the person is the listener or a third party. However, in the category of *kenjōgo*, whose forms indirectly express deference by lowering one's own (or in-group's) position, he differentiates between cases in which the object of deference is the person affected by the communicated activity (*kenjōgo A*, ex. 14, 15) and cases in which there is no such person and the object of deference is the listener (*kenjōgo B*, ex. 16). In example 14, the recipient of the action is explicitly expressed (*sensei* – teacher); in example 15 the recipient is not explicitly expressed; nevertheless the action has a recipient and it is most likely the listener. If there is no recipient, the object of deference expressed by lowering the speaker (or in-groups), is the listener. Such cases Ōishi classifies as *kenjōgo B*. This is the case in example 16 when the speaker, using the verb *mairu* (instead of *iku*), speaks humbly about the activity of his/her in-group (*chichi* – father) and thereby expresses politeness to the listener.

(14) Otōto ga sensei ni
mōshiageru koto ni natte iru.

younger brother NOM teacher DAT
say(HON) NOMI become
'My younger brother will say it to the teacher.'

(15) Haha ga o-me ni kakaru hazu desu.
my mother NOM visit(HON) MOD
COP(POL)
'My mother will [should] come to see you.'

(16) Chichi wa raishū shutchō de Kyūshū e mairu hazu desu.
my father TOP next week business trip on Kyūshū to go(HON) MOD COP(POL)
'My father is going on a business trip to Kyūshū next week.'
(adapted from Ōishi, 1975, pp. 87-88)

According to Ōishi (1975, pp. 93-94), *teichōgo* differs from *sonkeigo* and *kenjōgo*, which raise or lower the position of the person who is talked about, in that it directly expresses respect for the listener (ex. 17 and 18). He classifies as *teichōgo* the polite copulas *desu* (ex. 17), *de gozaimasu* and the polite form *-masu*, and also the verbs *mairu*, *itasu* and *mōsu*, which he thus classifies, depending on their particular usage, as *kenjōgo* (ex. 16) or *teichōgo* (ex. 18). He explains this by the fact that they are used in two different ways (ibid: 94).

(17) Kore ga otōto no shashin desu.
this NOM younger brother GEN photo
COP(POL)
'This is a photo of my younger brother.'

(18) Ame ga futte mairimashita.
rain NOM rain-GER come-POL-PST
'It started raining.'
(ibid: 93)

As *bikago* Ōishi classifies expressions that are used mainly in regard to the speaker, making his/her speech more cultivated, although its use may also be motivated by consideration for the listener. A year later Ōishi classified *keigo* within the system of *taigū hyōgen* (lit. 'expressions of treatment'), which includes a whole spectrum of verbal behaviour, and polite behaviour is only part of it. The most significant change compared to the previous model is the removal of *bikago* from the system of *keigo* and placing it within the broader concept of *taigū hyōgen*.

Ōishi made the point that verbs such as *mairu* have two effects: while they always show polite concern for the listener, depending on their use they may or may not lower the position of the speaker (or in-group). However, placing the same verb in two categories is not very systematic and, moreover, placing it in the same category as the polite forms *desu/-masu* may not be very practical either, as *mairu* and the other verbs mentioned are more formal. Ōishi also contributed to further the discussion over the position of *bikago*, showing a new way of perceiving this type of expression.

<i>keigo</i> (敬語)	<i>sonkeigo</i> (尊敬語)	
	<i>kenjōgo</i> (謙讓語)	<i>kenjōgo</i> A (謙讓語 A)
		<i>kenjōgo</i> B (謙讓語 B)
	<i>teichōgo</i> (丁寧語)	
	<i>bikago</i> (美化語)	

Chart 4: Ōishi's 1975 categorization

In 1988, in response to Miyaji's criticism, Ōishi's classification and development in the field in general, Tsujimura reconsidered his 1963 categorization of *keigo* (see above) and came up with a more detailed model.⁸ He added to his two major categories of referent honorifics and addressee honorifics another category, referent-addressee honorifics (*sozai taisha keigo*), which shares the qualities of the previous two categories, i.e. it has the quality of referent honorifics, but the object of respect is always the listener. As can be seen from Chart 5, this more detailed categorization is also based on new terminology.

The broader category of referent honorifics includes the subcategories *shutai jō'igo* (*sonkeigo*), i.e. expressions raising the position of the subject; *kyakutai jō'igo* (*kenjōgo I*), i.e. expressions raising the position of the object; and *shutai ka'igo* (*kenjōgo II*), i.e. expressions lowering the position of the subject. This last subcategory, which includes, according to Tsujimura, verbs such as *itasu* and *mairu*, is rather problematic. These verbs not only lower the position of the subject, as is implied in the name of this subcategory, but

⁸ 'Keigo bunrui no mondaiten o megutte' [On Problematic Points in the Classification of Keigo] (included in Tsujimura, 1992, pp. 88-103).

at the same time they express polite concern for the listener. Thus it would seem more logical to classify them within the category of referent-addressee honorifics. *Bikago* is still included in the category of referent

honorifics, or, more precisely, part of it (expressions 'beautified' by the prefix *o-*/*go*).

<i>keigo</i> (敬語)	<i>sozai keigo</i> (素材敬語) referent honorifics	<i>keigo</i> which raises or lowers the status of the grammatical subject's or object's action or condition	<i>shutai jō'igo</i> (主体上位語) / <i>sonkeigo</i> subject higher- ranking exp.	<i>kyakkanteki shutai jō'igo</i> (客觀的主体上位語) objective subject higher- ranking exp.	
			<i>kyakutai jō'igo</i> (客體上位語) / <i>kenjōgo I</i> object higher- ranking exp.	<i>onkeiteki shutai jō'igo</i> (恩惠的主体上位語) benefact. subject higher- ranking exp.	
			<i>shutai ka'igo</i> (主体下位語)/ <i>kenjōgo II</i> subject lower-ranking expressions	<i>kyakkanteki kyakutai jō'igo</i> (客觀的客體上位語) objective object higher-ranking exp.	
				<i>onkeiteki kyakutai jō'igo</i> (恩惠的客體上位語) benefact. object higher- ranking exp.	
		<i>bikago</i> (美化語)			
	<i>sozai taisha keigo</i> (素材對者敬語)/ <i>teichōgo</i> referent- addressee h.	<i>shutai taisha jō'igo</i> (主体對者上位語)/ <i>sonkei teichōgo</i> subject-addressee higher-ranking expressions			
		<i>kyakutai taisha jō'igo</i> (客體對者上位語)/ <i>kenjō teichōgo I</i> object-addressee higher-ranking expressions			
		<i>shutai ka'i taisha jō'igo</i> (主体下位對者上位語)/ <i>kenjō teichōgo II</i> subject lower-ranking addressee higher-ranking expressions			
		<i>sozai bika taisha jō'igo</i> (素材美化對者上位語)/ <i>bika teineigo</i> referent beautifying addressee higher-ranking expressions			
	<i>taisha keigo</i> (對者敬語)/ <i>teineigo</i> addressee honorifics				

Chart 5: Tsujimura's 1988 categorization

Yet another approach to the categorization of *keigo* - and the last one to be introduced here - was taken by Kabaya, Kawaguchi and Sakamoto (1998), and which, like Tsujimura's, is quite specific due to the terminology used and the detailed division. It divides *keigo* into two major categories - conceptual *keigo* (*gainen keigo*) with five subcategories (*sonchōgo*, *teichōgo*, *sonchō teichōgo*, *sonpigo* and *bikago*) and style *keigo* (*buntai keigo*), which includes the polite forms *desu*, *-masu* (*teinei buntaigo*), *de gozaimasu*, *de arimasu* (*teichō buntaigo*)

expressing polite concern for the listener and adding politeness to the entire utterance.

Instead of the traditional *sonkeigo* and *kenjōgo* it uses the terms direct (*chokusetsu*) *sonchōgo*⁹ and indirect (*kansetsu*) *sonchōgo*. The subcategory of *teichōgo* corresponds with Miyaji's and includes expressions that do not raise the position of the subject of an action; they contain the feature of formality,

⁹ The expression *sonchō* is used in the meaning 'to respect the character of every person' (Kabaya, Kawaguchi and Sakamoto, 1998, p. 91).

and the action does not relate to any person whose position would be raised. The structure *o/go-V itasu* (ex. 5b, 14) received, as in Tsujimura’s classification, its own category – *sonchō teichōgo* – justified by its special character (Kabaya, Kawaguchi and Sakamoto, 1998, p. 98). *Sonpigo* includes respectful formal expressions (*aite sonchōgo*), which raise the position of the listener (e.g. *kisha*, ‘your company’) and humble formal expressions (*jiko hige*), which lower the position of the speaker (e.g. *heisha*, ‘our company’).¹⁰ *Bikago* is defined

as neither raising nor lowering, it may and may not add formality, and it beautifies the utterance.

This categorization makes fine-grained distinctions between individual forms, capturing well the functional differences between them, although, paradoxically, the complexity of the system may lead to confusion in practice, especially for learners of the language (for the whole model see chart 6).

¹⁰ i.e. corresponding to Tsujimura’s *shutai taisha jō’igo* and *shutai taisha ka’igo*.

keigo (敬語)	gainen keigo (概念敬語) conceptual keigo	sonchōgo (尊重語) respectful expressions	<i>chokusetsu sonchōgo</i> (直接尊重語) direct respectful expressions
			<i>kansetsu sonchōgo</i> (間接尊重語) indirect respectful expressions
			<i>onkei chokusetsu sonchōgo</i> (恩恵直接尊重語) benefact. direct respectful expressions
			<i>onkei kansecu sonchōgo</i> (恩恵間接尊重語) benefact. indirect respectful expressions
		<i>teichōgo</i> (丁寧語) polite formal expressions	
		<i>sonchō teichōgo</i> (尊重丁寧語) respectful - polite formal expressions	
	sonpigo (尊卑語)) expr. of respect and humility	<i>aite sonchōgo</i> (相手尊重語) addressee respectful exp.	
		<i>jiko hige</i> (自己卑下) self humility	
	<i>bikago</i> (美化語)		
	buntai keigo (文体敬語) style keigo	<i>teinei buntaigo</i> (丁寧文体語) polite style expressions	
<i>teichō buntaigo</i> (丁寧文体語) formal polite style expressions			

Chart 6: 1998 categorization by Kabaya, Kawaguchi and Sakamoto

As can be seen from the descriptions above, although the individual models significantly differ in the terminology used as well as in the level of detail of the division, from the point of view of defining the basic categories they more or less correspond to one another. An important criterion for the classification is **the target or focus of politeness** (that is in terms of to whom politeness is expressed), which is not sufficiently considered in the basic 3-category model. In comparison with the widely spread traditional categorization, the above-described models clearly indicate the need for a more detailed classification,

especially within the categories of *kenjōgo* and *teineigo*.

If we look at these concepts through the prism of the traditional division, the category of *sonkeigo* can be found in all these models, just under different labels. Tsujimura introduced the term *jō’i shutaigo* and later on *shutai jō’igo* (‘higher-ranking subject expressions’). Watanabe uses the term *shite sonkei* (‘deference to the agent’) and Kabaya, Kawaguchi and Sakamoto chose the term *chokusetsu sonchōgo* (‘direct respectful expressions’), while Miyaji and Ōishi keep the traditional term *sonkeigo*. Tsujimura and Kabaya, and Kawaguchi and

Sakamoto make use of a more detailed classification with two subcategories based on the presence or absence of the factor of benefaction. This subdivision is important for the categorization itself in the sense that it makes a distinction between linguistic devices that are of a different nature, but it is not as crucial for the actual usage of these devices – keeping them in the same broader category should not lead to difficulties concerning their use.

While in the category of *sonkeigo* there seem to be no major discrepancies, the same cannot be said about the category of *kenjōgo*. Except for Tsujimura's earlier definition (1963), which only mentions the lowering of the status of the subject, all authors define *kenjōgo* as raising the status of the recipient of an action, which some of them reflect in the terminology used. While the commonly used term *kenjōgo* ('humble speech') expresses the lowering of the speaker's (or in-group's) position, the new terms express the purpose of this lowering, that is, raising the position of the person who is talked about. Watanabe uses the term *ukete sonkei*, or deference to the receiver, Tsujimura (1988) the term *kyakutai jō'igo*, or object raising expressions, and Kabaya, Kawaguchi and Sakamoto *kansetsu sonchōgo*, or indirect respectful expressions. Some expressions traditionally classified as *kenjōgo* were removed from this category. These are verbs denoting actions or conditions that have no recipient whose position would be raised. They differ from those classified as *kenjōgo* in that the polite concern they express is not aimed at a recipient of the action but at the listener. Watanabe terms this type of expressions *kenson* ('expressions of modesty and humility'), Ōishi *kenjōgo II*, or rather *kenjōgo B*, and Miyaji – and later on also Kabaya, Kawaguchi and Sakamoto – uses the term *teichōgo* ('formal polite expressions'). Tsujimura (1988) also set up a category for this type of expression, *shutai ka'igo* ('lower-ranking subject expressions'), but he classifies them within the broader category of referent honorifics.

There are situations when the communicated action has neither recipient nor a human agent and the use of a polite form is motivated by a polite concern for the listener. An example of this is *Ame ga futte mairimashita* ('It started to rain.' – see ex. 18) or *Hidarigawa ni otera ga miete mairimashita* ('A temple appeared on the left'). Some authors do not distinguish these

cases from the last mentioned category. But, for example, Ōishi classifies the use of the verb *mairu* in ex. 16 as *kenjōgo II*, while its use in ex. 18 is classified as *teichōgo*.

Another specific case is the morphosyntactic structure *o-/go-V itasu*. The reason it is difficult to classify within the basic categories is that it raises the status of the recipient of the action, but at the same time the use of the verb *itasu* creates a formal and polite effect on the listener. Therefore, some authors classify it in a separate category (see above). This is meaningful in the sense that it makes the speaker realize that by using the structure *o-V itasu* instead of *o-V suru* the speaker does not express a higher degree of politeness toward the recipient of the communicated action (to the professor in ex. 5b above) but to the listener. For this reason it is not appropriate to use this structure in communication with a close person (as in ex. 5b).

In addition, the category of *teineigo* has not been preserved in either of the described models to the same extent as in the traditional 3-category division. Miyaji uses the term *teineigo* for the polite copulas *desu*, *de gozaimasu* and polite form *-masu*, which corresponds with Tsujimura's *taisha keigo* ('addressee honorifics'), Watanabe's *kikite keigo* ('keigo to the listener') and Ōishi's *teichōgo B*. Kabaya, Kawaguchi and Sakamoto use the term *buntai keigo* (style keigo). Expressions that were removed from the traditional category of *teineigo* are expressions now most commonly referred to as *bikago* ('beautification words').

However, a consensus has not been reached yet on their categorization within the system of *keigo*. The effort to classify them separately from *teineigo* is obvious; however, their categorization within the honorific system varies. Tsujimura, who introduced the category of *bikago*, placed it in the category of referent honorifics, perceiving 'beautification words' to be 'affected by considerations regarding the content matter' (Pizziconi, 2011, p. 49). Such expressions are, according to Tsujimura, often used in consideration of the listener, but not always – the speaker can also use them when talking exclusively to him/herself. The use of *bikago* is mainly motivated by the speaker's concern for the quality of the expression itself, reflecting his/her own dignity and refinement. This understanding is supported by Miyaji as well as Watanabe, who labels the category *tashinami* ('concern for self'), which roughly corresponds to the more common

term *bikago*. Ōishi, who in his later classification replaced the term *bikago* with the term *jōhingo* ('refined words'), removed this category from the system of *keigo*. If we understand *bikago* as expressions that do not directly reflect the relationship between the participants in communication but express the refinement and dignity of the speaker's utterances, we can agree that *bikago* really stands outside this system. However, if we understand them as motivated also by the concern for the listener, we can definitely include them in the system.

The models by contemporary authors introduced above differ, in addition to their terminology and the way they approach the system, in the level of detail of the division. The effort to reflect all possible differences in the function and meaning of individual forms leads to a very detailed division (see e.g. Kabaya, Kawaguchi and Sakamoto), which depicts the system of Japanese honorifics quite well. However, it is a question of whether such a detailed categorization is not counterproductive in that it makes the essence of *keigo* even harder to comprehend. From this point of view a less detailed classification which reflects major similarities and differences seems more advantageous.

1. The 5-category division of *keigo*

The above-described efforts at a more functional categorization of *keigo* that would capture this language system in a better way were reflected in the language policy of the Ministry of Education. The document *Keigo no shishin* [Keigo guidelines] (Bunkachō, 2007) officially introduced a more detailed, 5-category division and recommended it as a more suitable method of categorization than the traditional 3-category division. This new categorization preserves the traditional terminology, to which *kenjōgo II* (*teichōgo*) and *bikago* have been added, thus it most closely resembles Miyaji's division. This categorization seems advantageous as it is not too detailed, but at the same time it captures important basic differences between the individual categories.

<i>keigo</i> (敬語)	<i>sonkeigo</i> (尊敬語)
	<i>kenjōgo I</i> (謙讓語I)
	<i>kenjōgo II</i> (謙讓語II)/ <i>teichōgo</i> (丁寧語)
	<i>teineigo</i> (丁寧語)
	<i>bikago</i> (美化語)

Chart 7: Categorization introduced in *Keigo no shishin* (2007)

The following sections describe each of these five categories with a focus on how the system elaborates meaningful distinctions between the categories, thus overcoming the limitations of the traditional model.

Sonkeigo and *kenjōgo*¹¹

Sonkeigo is defined as expressions which raise the position¹² of the listener or a third person whose action(s), object(s) or condition(s) are being talked about (Bukachō, 2007, p. 14). This category includes suppletive forms such as *irassharu* ('to be, to go, to come'); *nasaru* ('to do'); *ossharu* ('to say'); and structures *o/(go)-V ni naru* (*o-kaki ni naru*, 'to write') and *V-(ra)reru* (*kakareru*, 'to write'); *o/(go)-V da* (*o-machi desu*, 'he/she is waiting'); *o/(go)-V kudasaru* (*o-kaki kudasaru*, 'to write' – to do as a favour for the speaker) etc. It also includes nouns with the prefixes *o/go-* (*sensei kara no o-tegami*, 'a letter from the teacher'); *ki-*, *on-* (*kisha*, *onsha*, 'your company'); adjectives with the prefix *o/go-* (*o-isogashii*, 'busy') etc. This category fully corresponds with *sonkeigo* in the traditional division.

Kenjōgo is defined as expressions raising the position of the listener or a third person who is affected by the action(s), object(s) or condition(s) of the speaker (Bukachō, 2007, p. 15). This definition, unlike the definition of the traditional category of *kenjōgo*, provides explanation for why it is possible to

¹¹ From here on in the text the terms *kenjōgo* – *teichōgo* will be preferred to *kenjōgo I* – *kenjōgo II*. The term *kenjōgo* has an ingrained meaning of lowering the status of the speaker (or in-groups), which does not fully correspond with the latter category.

¹² In *Keigo no shishin* the verb *tateru* is used. This verb in Japanese means 'to build up' and is used here in the sense of verbally raising the position of the person spoken about (Bunkachō, 2007, p. 4).

use the humble verb *haiken suru* ('to see') in 3a (*O-tegami o haiken shimashita*. 'I read your letter'), but not in 3b (*Kinō terebi o *haiken shimashita*. 'Yesterday I watched TV'). While in 3a there is a person (the listener) who is affected by the action expressed by the humble verb (and thus the target of the deference), in 3b there is no such person. The limits and uses of this category are, thus, more clearly defined.

This group includes verbs such as *ukagau* ('to visit, to ask, to hear'); *mōshiageru* ('to say'); *haiken suru* ('to see, to look at'); and structures *o-/(go)-V suru* (*o-kaki suru*, 'to write') and *V-te itadaku / o-/(go)-V itadaku* (*kaite itadaku*, *o-kaki itadaku*, 'to get written') etc. It also includes nouns with the prefix *o-/go-* (*sensei e no o-tegami*, 'a letter for the teacher').

It is clear that the categories of *sonkeigo* and *kenjōgo* are of a similar character – they both show deference to the person who is being talked about, by raising his/her status either directly (*sonkeigo*) or indirectly (*kenjōgo*).

Teichōgo and teineigo

The category of *teichōgo* is a different case. It includes expressions by which the speaker speaks politely about his/her action(s), condition(s) etc. in regard to the listener. This difference is quite essential, and dividing the forms that under the traditional categorization are classified together under *kenjōgo* into two separate groups is important for their appropriate usage. Since the forms classified as *kenjōgo* raise the person who is the recipient of or affected by the communicated action, their usage is limited to cases in which it is suitable to express deference to such a person. On the other hand, with language means classified as *teichōgo* we have to consider the listener. The following examples demonstrate this difference:

(19) Sensei no tokoro ni
ukagaimasu/mairimasu.
 professor GEN place to go(HON)-POL/
 go(HON)-POL
 'I will come to your place (professor).' or
 'I will go to the professor's place.'

(20) Otōto no tokoro ni
***ukagaimasu/mairimasu.**
 younger brother GEN place to go(HON)-
 POL/ go(HON)-POL
 'I will go to my younger brother's place.'

(21) Sensei no tokoro ni
ukagau/*mairu.
 professor GEN place to
 go(HON)/go(HON)
 'I will go to the professor's place.'

(22) Otōto no tokoro ni
***ukagau/*mairu.**
 younger brother GEN place to go(HON)
 /go(HON)
 'I will go to my younger brother's place.'

In example 19, if the professor affected by the communicated action is at the same time the listener, the verbs *ukagaimasu* (*kenjōgo*) and *mairimasu* (*teichōgo*) have essentially the same politeness effect. However, if the listener is someone else, by the choice of the verb *ukagau* (instead of *iku*) the speaker shows deference to the professor, while in the second case the polite concern expressed by the verb *mairu* (instead of *iku*) is aimed at the listener. In example 20, the use of the verb *ukagaimasu* is not appropriate, because it raises the speaker's younger brother. The same can be said about example 22. The verb *mairu* in examples 21 and 22 is used inappropriately because in order to express polite concern for the listener it has to be used in the polite form (*teineigo*), i.e. *mairimasu*.

The category of *teichōgo* also includes cases when the communicated action or state does not have a human agent (see ex. 18), because in these cases the use of such language means is also motivated by polite concern for the listener.

This category includes, in addition to the verb *mairu* ('to go, to come'), also the verbs *mōsu* ('to say'), *itasu* ('to do'), *oru* ('to be'), *zonjiru* ('to know, to think') etc. Furthermore, it includes nouns with the prefixes *shō-*, *hei-* (*shōsha*, *heisha* 'our company') etc., which are used mainly in writing.

To sum up this discussion, the main difference between *kenjōgo* and *teichōgo* is that the former indirectly expresses deference to the person (communication partner or a third party) who is the recipient of or affected by the speaker's action, while the latter directly expresses polite concern for the listener. Moreover, their character differs as well – *teichōgo* is rather formal. As a consequence of this, verbs that are categorized as *teichōgo* can only be used in their polite forms (*mōsu* → *mōshimasu*, *itasu* → *itashimasu* etc.). The traditional categorization did not make it possible to

see the differences between these two types of linguistic devices. Separating them into two different categories makes their usage clear.

The structure *o-/go-V itasu* is described in *Keigo no shishin* as sharing features of both *kenjōgo I* and *kenjōgo II (teichōgo)*, (Bukachō, 2007, p. 20). Although due to its nature it partially fits into both categories, its usage (instead of the construction *o-/go-V suru*) is motivated by polite concern for the listener. Therefore, this construction can also be used only in the polite form. Moreover, also due to its formal character it stands closer to the category of *teichōgo*. Its categorization as *teichōgo* thus makes it immediately clear why the example in 5b (Sensei ni go-renraku **itashita*. 'I contacted the teacher') cannot be used.

From the point of view of the target of the speaker's polite concern it is obvious that the category of *teichōgo* is closely related to the category of *teineigo*, and, as already mentioned, verbs classified as *teichōgo* require the polite form *-masu (teineigo)*. However, upon closer inspection, forms included in these two categories are not always used in the same way. The verbs classified as *teichōgo* cannot be used when talking about the action(s) or condition(s) of the listener or a third person (ex. 23), while *teineigo* has no such limitation (ex. 24). Also, due to the formal nature of the expressions included in the former category, it is better to distinguish between these two types and classify them in two separate categories.

(23) Kinō **mairimashita* ne.
yesterday come(HON)-POL-PST PT
'You came yesterday, right?' 'He came yesterday, right?'

(24) Kinō *kimashita* ne.
yesterday come-POL-PST PT
'You came yesterday, right?' 'He came yesterday, right?'

In addition to the polite form *-masu* and polite copula *desu*, *teineigo* also includes the today seldom used construction Adj. + *gozaimasu (oishū gozaimasu, 'it is delicious')*.

Bikago

Bikago, which especially includes nouns 'beautified' by the prefix *o-* (*o-sake, 'rice wine'*), and less frequently *go-* (*go-shūgi, 'a tip'*), has a special position within the system of *keigo* in that it does not directly reflect

the relationship between the speaker and the listener. Nonetheless, its use undoubtedly contributes to the expression of polite concern for the listener. Although it is also used outside the system of *keigo* and is commonly understood as a mark of refinement, it is part of the system at least in the sense that failing to use it may in various situations sound coarse or uncultivated, and thus impolite.

The following examples demonstrate the use of *bikago* in relation to *teineigo*. While example 25 uses both *bikago* (the prefix *o-* with the word *kane, 'money'*) and *teineigo* (the polite form *-masen* in *arimasen, 'not have'*), in example 26 *bikago* is used in informal speech (the plain form *nai, 'not have'*) and, by contrast, example 27 shows the use of the word *kane* without the prefix *o-* in a polite speech (*arimasen*). Although, admittedly, this last example is not very common, it is still used. On the other hand, the use of *bikago* in informal speech is very common.

(25) Okane ga arimasen.
money NOM exist-POL-NEG
'I have no money.'

(26) Okane ga nai.
money NOM exist-NEG
'I have no money.'

(27) Kane ga arimasen.
money NOM exist-POL-NEG
'I have no money.' (Women should avoid this form)

As can be seen from these examples, the use of *bikago* is not conditional upon the use of *teineigo* and vice versa, as their inclusion in the same category in the traditional system may imply, although it is most common to use *bikago* when using *teineigo*. Moreover, the usage of *bikago* is to a certain degree gender specific – it is used more by women. Therefore it makes sense to classify it as a separate category.

Conclusion

Although only selected concepts of the categorization of *keigo* that were developed in the second half of the 20th century have been examined here, their variety makes it obvious that Japanese *keigo* is a complex system and setting up clear-cut categories is a difficult task. It remains to be seen whether the 5-category division that has recently been promoted represents the definitive end of efforts to finalize the categorization of *keigo* or will be replaced in

time. Nevertheless, as demonstrated above, this division clearly captures the honorific system better than the traditional 3-category division and can help avoid inappropriate usages of Japanese honorifics that are a common result of the limitations of the traditional system. An important criterion for the use of *keigo* is the target of the speaker's deference. The category of *sonkeigo* (deferential speech) and *kenjōgo* (humble speech) include forms that express politeness by directly or indirectly raising the person who is spoken about. On the other hand, the categories of *teichōgo* (formal polite speech) and *teineigo* (polite speech) include forms that express polite regard for the listener. *Bikago* (refined speech) helps the speaker express himself/herself in a dignified manner, thus creating a polite impression on the listener.

Naturally, the categorization itself does not provide guidance in regard to what type of communication partner and in what communication situation it is appropriate to use *keigo*. Nonetheless it captures the basic differences between the forms available to the speaker and serves as an important tool for comprehending the honorific system as a whole. The division into five categories constitutes a certain compromise between the traditional 3-category division and more detailed systems with excessively specific and limited subcategories. This categorization reflects the system quite well and at the same time is still comprehensible for common users, including foreign students of Japanese.

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