



The Japanese Keigo Verbal Marker

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Abstract

This research studies Japanese *keigo* in the office domain, a case study at XXX Corporation Japan. *Keigo* consists of *sonkeigo*, *kenjougo*, and *teineigo*. Each of those speech levels is going to be analyzed based on linguistic and nonlinguistic factors. In this qualitative research, the data are in form of natural conversations gained by using several techniques such as recording, observation, and interview. Natural conversations were obtained through the recording process done with a tape recorder at XXX Corporation. There were 20 respondents coming from business fields to fill in the questionnaire and five informants for the interview. This research shows that *keigo* has lexical, morphological, and syntactical verbal markers. There are some nonlinguistic factors influencing the implementation of *keigo* in the office domain, especially the position gap and age.

Keywords: *Keigo*, *Sonkeigo*, *Kenjougo*, *Teineigo*, lexical, morphological, syntactical

1. Introduction

Sociolinguistics is one of linguistics branches focusing on the relationship between the language and its users in a society. Language is one of social institutions which is similar to other institution such as marriage, inheritance, and many others. It has contributed in giving understanding about language social dimension. Sociolinguistics studies the relationship between language and society by connecting two separated fields, i.e. the formal structure of language that belongs to linguistics and the social structure of a society that belongs to sociology. (Holmes, 1993; 1; Hudson, 1996:2).

In this case, language is viewed as both social and communicative systems which belong to certain society and culture. Language and its use cannot be observed separately; they are always related to the social activities conducted by the people of a society.

If we study a language without studying its users, we will lose the possibility of finding out the social reasons for a certain structure to be used. Based on the explanation, it is clear that sociolinguistics places the language which is closely related to the users in the heterogeneous society. (Wijana:2006; Jendra:2010).

To use a language or to communicate using a language is a verbal interaction involving several elements, such as speaker, hearer or receiver, topic, setting, situation, and so on. In the language use, every speaker will always consider to whom s/he speaks, where s/he speaks, the topic of the speech, and the condition in which s/he speaks. (Suwito,1985:30).

Japanese native speakers have *keigo*. *Keigo* is language variation whose differences are determined by the speaker's position (O₁) related to the hearer or receiver (O₂) (Yukiko,1998:23, Hiroyuki, 2010:32-47). The relations are nonlinguistic factors that can affect the language users. O₁ as the speaker will mind the O₂ as well as O₃ (topic of the conversation) as the hearer or receiver whether s/he has higher level in terms of social-economic factor, age, position, interpersonal relationship, etc. In Japanese, if O₁ speaks with O₂/O₃ whose position is higher, s/he will use *sonkeigo* (a honorific speech act to respect the hearer or receiver) (Kikuchi,1998; Hiroshi,2009;Hiroshi,2010) and in addressing him/herself, O₁ uses *kenjougo* (to respect the hearer by lowering one self's position) (Kikuchi,1996). While *teineigo* is a language that is used when the speakers are having conversation in a formal situation (Hiroyuki,2006:23). In nonlinguistic factors Hiroshi (2009, 3-12) says; *keigo hyougen* 'honorific language expression' is influenced by five aspects; they are: *ningenkankei* 'inter-participant relationship', *ba* 'place', *ishiki* 'consciousness', *naiyou* 'content' and *keishiki* 'form'.

In Japanese linguistics, there have been many research topics focusing on *keigo* 'honorifics', for example the study of referent honorifics in Japanese (Nagata, 2006). Research on the use of *keigo* at companies has also been conducted by Language Research Center (Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyusho,1982). David (1996) studied The Sociolinguistics of Addressee Honorifics (*Teineigo*) Style Mixing in Japanese Semi-Formal Interviews, Honorification in the Nominal Domain in Japanese: An Agreement-Based Analysis (Ivana *et al.*,2007), and a research entitled The Acquisition of Kinship Reference Terms by Learners of Japanese as a Second/Foreign Language (Miho,2005).

The previous researches commonly talk about the condition of the use of *keigo* 'honorifics' by Japanese native speakers. Therefore, the researcher is more interested in focusing the research on office domain because the use of *keigo* in Japanese speech level is dominated by business utterances. In the office domain, the gap between the employers and the employees is clearly seen. The authority factor that differentiates the position of the speakers definitely influences the utterances that are produced. This research studies *keigo* as the Japanese verbal sign; the system is studied based on linguistic and nonlinguistic factors.

2. Method and Material

In a sociolinguistic study, language has to be analyzed naturally; therefore the data should be real (naturally occurring language) and contrived. Recording technique is a technique to obtain data by recording spontaneous spoken language. (Subroto, 1992:36). The researcher uses a tape recorder to record the conversation occurred in a Japanese eyelash company. The researcher uses tape recorder because it is quite small and handy, so the speakers do not realize that the conversation is being recorded.

The data are in forms of *keigo* verbs used in the natural conversation at the office domain, and they are analyzed based on the lexicon, grammatical, and syntactical markers. Whereas the nonlinguistic data are in forms of social factors as the background of the use of *keigo* at the office domain. The primary data are obtained by recording the conversation done by the employees. The natural conversation as the primary data is a case study conducted at an eyelash manufacturer. There are 20 Japanese native speakers who are involved in this research as the respondents and informants. They are taken from five companies in the Eastern Osaka.

Table 1. List of the respondents

Sex	M	M	M	M	F	F	F	F	Number
Age	(20-30)	(30-40)	(40-50)	(50-60)	(20-30)	(30-40)	(40-50)	(50-60)	
Leader	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Manager	0	1	1					0	2
Head of the department	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	3
Supervisor	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
Leader	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Employee	5	2				2	1		10
TOTAL									20

M: Male F: Female

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Basic Concepts in Forming Japanese Keigo

The term *keigo* 'respectful language' basically depends on the use and word choice as well as the form or the sentence structure. In *keigo*, *sonkeigo* 'respectful language' and *kenjougo* 'humble language' refer to two definitions; lexicon and construction (sentence or sentence structure), while *teineigo* 'polite language' refers only to the construction, namely forming verb ~*masu* and copula ~*desu*. The following analysis will be preceded with *sonkeigo* and *kenjougo* analysis in the frame of lexicon and construction. The analysis of *Keigo* will be closed with the study of *teineigo* in the frame of *teineigo* ~*masu*, ~*です* ~*desu*.

3.1.1 Verbal Marker *Sonkeigo* 'Respectful Language'

Japanese has a limited number of *sonkeigo* lexicons. This lexicon is used by the first speaker (O1) to respect either the second speaker (O2) or the third speaker (O3)/ the person who is being talked about. Here are some examples of the use of *sonkeigo* lexicon:

- 1) 先生、あした 大学 に いらっしやいますか。

Sensei, ashita daigaku ni irasshaimasu ka.

Teacher, tomorrow university Dat go (Son) Q

'Teacher, are you going to university tomorrow?'

'Are you going to the university tomorrow?'

- 2) 高橋さん も 出荷 日 に おいでになりますか。

Takahashi san mo shukka bi ni oide ni narimasu ka

Takahashi Mr. also shipment hari Dat come (Son) Q

'Did Mr. Takahashi also come on the shipment day?'

- 3) 永田 先生 は 伝統 的なもの を

Nagata sensei wa dentou teki na mono wo

Nagata Prof. Top traditional ly things Acc

ご覧になりたかったら, ヨグジャカルタ は いかがでしょう か。

goran ni naritakattara, yogujakaruta wa ikaga deshou ka

see (V)Son) want if, Yogyakarta Top how (Son) Q

‘If Prof. Nagata wants to see traditional things, why not visit Yogyakarta?’

- 4) 12 月 の ストーンモデル を ご存知でしょう か。

Juuni gatsu no sutoon moderu wo gozonji deshou ka

December month Gen stone model Acc know (Son)(Cop) Q

‘Do you have any idea of the stone model in December?’

- 5) 奥田さんのお姉さんは ゴルフ を なさいます か。

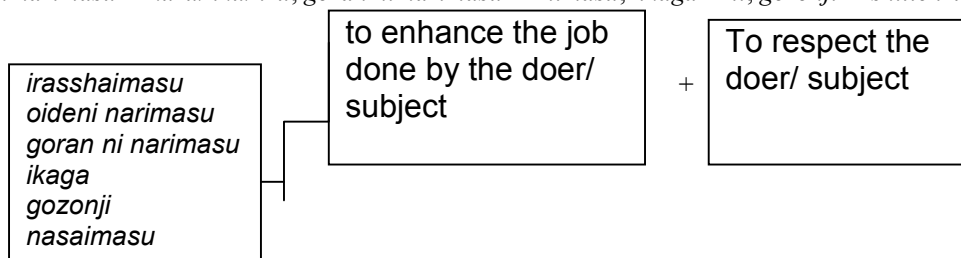
Okudasan no oneesan wa gorufu wo nasaimasu ka.

Mr. Okuda Gen sister TOP golf Acc do (Son) Q

‘Does Mr. Okuda’s elder sister play golf?’

Sentences numbers 1 to 5 show us the use of *sonkeigo*. Those words are used to show respect to the receiver or hearer or even the person who is being the center of the conversation.

The word *irasshaimasu* ‘go/come/present’, *oideni narimasu* ‘come’, *goran ni narimasu* ‘see’, *ikaga* ‘how’, *gozonji* ‘know’, *nasaimasu* ‘do’ are *sonkeigo* from verbal marker *jishokei* (lexical meaning)¹; *irasshaimasu*→ *kuru/iku/iru*, *oide ni narimasu*→ *kuru/iku/iru*, *goran ni narimasu*→ *mimasu*, *ikaga*→ *ii*, *gozonji*→ *shitte iru*, *nasaimasu*→ *suru*.



The two *sonkeigo* words *irasshaimasu* and *oide ni narimasu* have the same lexical meaning, that is *kuru/iku/iru*, or one word *sonkeigo* may have two lexical meanings at once, for example the word *meshiagarimasu* ‘eat’ means *tabemasu* ‘eat’ or *nomimasu* ‘drink’. The use of this word depends on the context of the sentence in which it is constructed.

Morphological marker *~rareru* in the words; *yomareru* ‘read’, *hashirareru* ‘run’, *hajimerareru* ‘start’, *riyousareru* ‘use’; and morphological markers *o/go ~ ni naru*, *oyomi ni naru* ‘read’, *ohashiri ni naru* ‘run’, *ohajimeni naru* ‘start’, *goriyousuru* ‘use’ have the same function as *sonkeigo* marker. The following sentence shows us the differences between *~rareru* and *o/go ~ ni naru*:

- 6) 社長 が これ を 書かれました。

Shachou ga kore o kakaremashita.

Chief (Son) Nom this Acc write(Son.Past)

‘The chief has written this.’

- 7) 社長 が これ を お書きになりました。

Shachou ga kore o okaki ni narimashita.

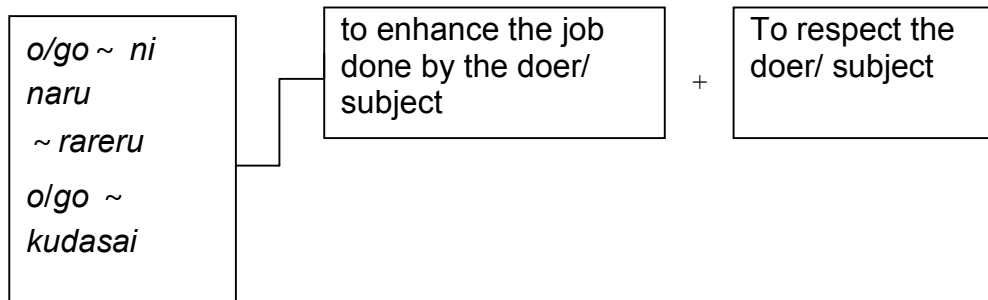
Chief (Son) Nom this Acc write (Son.Past)

‘The chief has written this.’

Jishokei verbal marker (lexical meaning)¹ is the verb listed on the dictionary. This verb is ended with syllables ; ~う (~u), ~く (~ku), ~つ (~tsu), ~す (~su), ~む (~mu), ~る (~ru), ~ぐ (~gu), ~ぶ (~bu), dan ~ぬ (~nu), ~える (~eru), ~いる (~iru), ~する (~suru), ~くる (~kuru). Jishokei is the base in changing the next verbs (such as verb ~masu, etc).

Those two sentences are specifically aimed at respecting the *shachou* ‘leader’ as the respected person or subject and as the second person who also has to be respected. Honorific words to the subject of the sentence are marked with morphological markers on lexical meaning of *jishokei* verb *kaku* ‘write’ that can be changed into *kakaremashita* or *okaki ni narimashita*. The word *shachou* also shows respect to a leader. The patterns of *sonkeigo* *o/go ~ ni naru* and *~ rareru* are forms of morphological markers. Those patterns are applicable for certain verbs. Verbs which have their modifications in terms of lexicon cannot be changed into *o/go ~ ni naru* and *~ rareru*. Verb *miru* ‘see’ or *neru* ‘sleep’ will be ambiguous if it is changed into *omeni naru* or *oneni naru* because that verb has lexical marker *sonkeigo* namely *goran ni naru* and *oyasumi ni naru*.

Besides, the verb BJ which comes from *gairaigo* ‘an adaptation of a foreign word’ cannot be modified using affix *o/go ~ ni naru*. For those adapted words, there is the pattern of *~ reru* or *~ nasaru*. The foreign verb *memo suru* ‘take notes’ has the form of *sonkeigo memo sareru* or *memo nasaru*. Whereas the verb *copii suru* ‘copy’ changes into *kokopii sareru* or *kopii nasaru*.



3.1.2 Verbal Marker Kenjougo ‘Humble Language’

Similar to *sonkeigo*, *kenjougo* ‘humble’ is limited in number, and as a result, *kenjougo* is marked with an unlimited number of morphological markers. Sentences that use *kenjougo* are aimed at respecting other people. Unlike *sonkeigo*, *kenjougo* is a vocabulary item used by the speaker to lower his/her position to respect the hearer or the person who is being the topic of conversation.

Expressions in which *kenjougo* is used can be seen in the expression *~to moushimasu* spoken by a new employee when s/he is introducing her/himself:

8) けんさん: はじめまして、

Ken san : *hajimemashite*

けんと申します。どうぞよろしくお願ひします。

Kentomoushimasu. Douzo yoroshiku onegaishimasu.

The expression above is used commonly by the Japanese in introducing oneself. The word *hajimemashite* is the opening in introduction. The expression *~to moushimasu* is the lexical marker of *kenjougo* which is uttered after the name to lower the utterer’s to respect the hearer. *Kenjougo* is often used in the following expressions:

9) 大変お待たせいたしました！

Taihen omataseitashimashita!

Waited too long (Ken.Past)

‘Sorry for keeping you wait!’

The expression above is addressed to the hearer who has been waiting for a long time. The word *omataseitashimashita* ‘keep you wait’ as *kenjougo* verb is used to respect the hearer by lowering his/her position.

10) よろしくお願ひいたします。

Yoroshiku onegaiitashimasu

can ask for a help (VKen)

Could you help me.

‘I need your help.’

Yoroshiku onegaiitashimasu ‘ask for a help’ is a *kenjougo* spoken to the hearer as in order to be helped when the speaker needs a help. This kind of expression is often uttered by a new employee to other employees after introduction. Besides lexicon as *kenjougo* marker in those expressions, here are some examples of the use of lexicon in certain verbs.

11) 実 は 時間 を 伺った とき、

Jitsu wa jikan o ukagatta toki,

Actually Top time Acc asked (Ken.Past)when,

11 時 を 1 時 と 聞き間違えて

Juuichi ji o ichi ji to kikimachigaete

eleven at Acc one at that ask wrong

しまったんです。

shimattandesu.

disappointed (Cop)

‘I was wrong when you asked, it’s not at 1 but at 11’

The verb *ukagatta* ‘ask’ is *kenjougo* verb of *jishokei kiku* ‘ask’. This utterance is used to respect the hearer.

12) 現場 の 状況 を 見 に 参りました。

Genba no joukyou o mi ni mairimashita.

factory gen condition Acc see Dat come (Ken.Past)

‘Have seen the condition of the factory.’

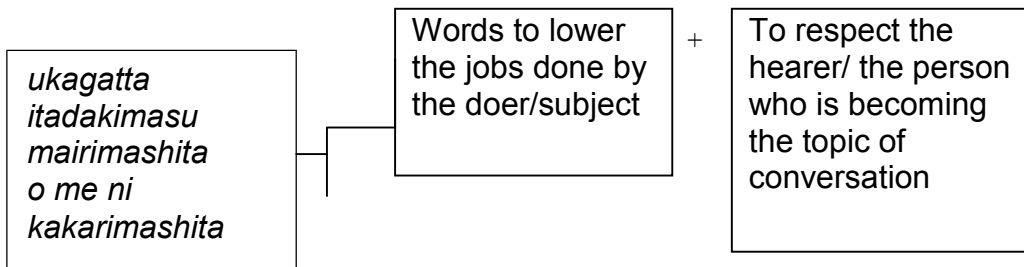
13) 先日 奥様 に 初めて お目にかかりました。

Senjitsu okusama ni hajimete o me ni kakarimashita.

Yesterday (Son) wife (Son) Dat first time saw (Kenj.Past)

‘Yesterday saw your wife for the first time.’

The verb *mairimashita* has synonym in *futsuugo kuru* ‘come’, while the verbo *me ni kakarimashita* ‘see’ has the same meaning as *miru*. The lexicon of *kenjougo* refers to the doer in purpose to respect others.



Morphological patterns that can mark *kenjougo* verb; *o/go ~ suru* or *~ itasu*. Those two patterns are to show respect to others by lowering the speaker’s position. The following conversation shows us the expression of *kenjougo* marked in the verb.

14) たける : あのう社長、 手伝います か。

Takeru : *Anou shachou, tetsudaimasu ka.*

Emm chief (Son), help (Ken) Q

‘emm, Sir (chief), can I help?’

社長 : おお、たけるくん。頼む よ。

Oo, Takeru kun. Tanomuyo.

Ee, Takeru (Fut) ask for.

このアンダーラインの部分 が わからないんだけど。

kono andaarain no bubun ga wakaranaindakedo.

this underline Gen part Nom know don’t but.

‘I don’t know the underlined. Ee, Takeru. I think I need your help.’

たける : はい。これはわたしが お書きします。

Hai. Kore wa watashi ga okakishimasu.

Yes. This Top I Nom write (VKen)

‘Yes. I did it.’

すこし時間を いただいてもよろしですか。

Sukoshi jikan o itadaitemoyoroshi desuka.

A little time Acc receive (Cop)(Tei)Q

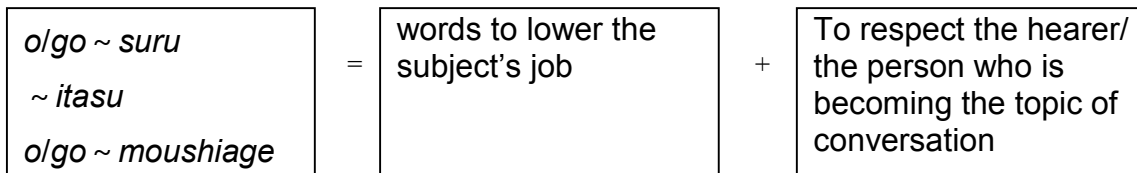
社長 : 助かるよ。ありがとう。

Tazukaruyo. Arigatou.

It helps. Thanks.

‘It really helps. Thanks.’

In the sentence above, the verb *okakishimasu* ‘write’ has pattern *o ~shimasu* as the *kenjougo* sentence marker, that is language to respect others by lowering the speaker’s position. Lowering the speaker’s position is expressed in *kenjougo*. The form *jishokei* from the word *okakishimasu* is *kaku* ‘write’. Below is the conclusion of *kenjougo* marker:



3.1.3 *Teineigo*

Unlike *sonkeigo* and *kenjougo* which have lexical and morphological markers in appreciating the honor to others, *teineigo* is defined as formal language. *Teineigo* is used mostly at office or in any formal occasion, but *sonkeigo* and *kenjougo* are also used when needed if the speaker has to show respect to others. The following sentences are expressed in form of *teineigo*:

- 15) 12月 30 日 の 発送 分 は、
Juunigatsu sanjuu nichi no hassou bun wa,
 12 months 30 days Gen delivery part Nom
 予定 通り です か?
yotei doori desu ka?
 Plan as (Cop)(Tei) Q

‘Did the delivery in December 30 go as planned?’

- 16) 学生 を 調査 する の です か。
Gakusei o chousa suru no desu ka.
 Student Acc survey do Gen (Cop)(Tei) Q
 社会 人 を 調査 する の です か。
Shakai jin o chousa suru no desu ka.
 People person Acc survey do Gen (Cop)(Tei) Q
 どこ で 調査 する の です か?
Doko de chousa suru no desu ka.

Where Post survey do Gen (Cop)(Tei) Q

‘Did you do a survey to students. Will you do survey to people? Where will the survey be held?’

Teineigo in those sentences is marked at the end of each sentence. Nonverbal sentences in *teineigo* will get copula *desu*. In sentence number 15 *yotei doori* ‘as planned’ which is a noun is ended with copula *desu* to change it into *teineigo*. As so in

sentence number 16, the verb *suru* ‘do’ cannot directly be followed by this copula, but it has to be changed into a noun by adding particle *no*. The *teineigo* marker above will change into *~deshita* the past time marker as seen in the following expression:

- 17) 12月 30 日 の 発送 分 は、
Juunigatsu sanjuu nichi no hassou bun wa,
 12 months 30days Gen shipment part Top
 予定 通り でした。
yotei doori deshita
 plan as Cop(Tei.Past)
 ‘The delivery on December 30 went as planned.’

Unlike the following verbal sentence,

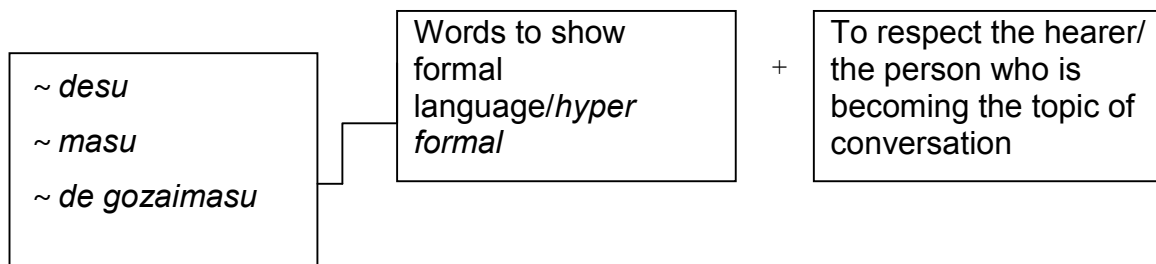
- 18) また 11月 の 出荷 数 の
Mata 11 gatsu no shukkasuu no
 again 11 monthsGen shipmenttotal Gen
 修正 が ありました。
shuusei ga arimashita.
 revision Nom there (Tei.Past)
 ‘There is one more revision for the total delivery in November.’

~masu / ~mashita is *teineigo* marker ended with a verb. The verb *arimashita* ‘there’ is a *teineigo* past verb marked with *~mashita*. Besides the *teineigo* marker mentioned previously, *~de gozaimasu* is also often used as *teineigo* marker in the following expression.

- 19) おすしレストラン で ございます。
Osushi resutoran de gozaimasu.
 Osushi restaurant (Tei)
 ‘Osushi Restaurant’
- 20) せんだいホテル で ございます。
Sendai hoteru de gozaimasu.
 Sendai hotel (Tei)
 ‘Sendai Hotel’
- 21) DMI 会社 で ございます。
DMI kaisha de gozaimasu.
 DMI office (Tei)
 ‘DMI Office’

Those three sentences are *teineigo* sentences with marker *~de gozaimasu*. Before *~de gozaimasu*, there is the name of the place showing the speaker’s (O1) origin or the speaker’s (O1) work places such as *Osushi resutoran* ‘sushi restaurant’, *Sendai Hoteru* ‘Sendai Hotel’, *DMI kaisha* ‘DMI office’. The marker *~de gozaimasu* shows that the sentence is a formal language used in a formal situation. If the marker *teineigo ~desu, ~masu* is compared to *~de gozaimasu* in term of formality, the marker *~de gozaimasu* is politer (*hyper formal*).

Here is the conclusion of the analysis:



4. Conclusion

Keigo is one of Japanese heritages that is still used and preserved by the speakers. It is obviously seen in the office domain. The key to the successful and smooth communication, particularly in the office domain, is the ability in selecting the words based on the rules. When the speaker is expressing something in order to respect the hearer, *sonkeigo* is used. The lexicons of *sonkeigo* are limited in number. The morphological markers of *sonkeigo* are *~rareru* and *o/goinaru*. To respect the hearer or the person that is being the topic of the conversation, the speaker can also use *kenjougo*. *Kenjougo* is a language lexicon used to lower the speaker's position. Similar to *sonkeigo*, *kenjougo* is also limited in number and it is marked with unlimited number of morphological markers such as *o/go~suru* or *~itasu*. *Teineigo* refers only to the construction, that is verb *~masu* and copula *desu*. *Teineigo* is more suitable to be defined as polite language or formal language.

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