

# Honorifics in Japanese: A Distributed Morphology approach to their verbal morphology

## Abstract

Japanese SUBJECT and OBJECT HONORIFICS are of interest from several perspectives, in particular, from the viewpoint of morphology. While there are several insightful works extant (Harada, 1976, Hamano, 1993, and Niinuma, 2003), they each display varying problematic aspects and ignore the morphological phenomena. This paper argues that FISSION (Halle and Marantz, 1993, Noyer, 1997 and Halle, 1997), where a single terminal head splits into two, provides a recognized morphological mechanism for explaining the BLOCKING (Aronoff, 1976 and Embick and Marantz, 2006) of the multi-morphemic default by monomorphemic suppletive forms. Japanese Honorifics have recently been considered a form of Chomsky (2000)'s AGREE (Niinuma, 2003, and Boeckx and Niinuma, 2004). (cf. Bobaljik and Yatsushiro, 2006) I introduce some unnoticed data that bears on this issue and argue that Japanese Honorifics, rather than being a type of morphological agreement, show properties associated with the morphology of EXPRESSIVE DERIVATIONS (Beard, 1995).

**Keywords:** Blocking, Fission, Subject and Object Honorifics, Expressive Derivations

## 1. The domain of honorifics in Japanese

Japanese SUBJECT and OBJECT HONORIFICS are used to display the speaker's attitude towards a subject and a subject's attitude towards a discourse participant, respectively. The term Object Honorific seems untenable in Harada (1976)'s sense; an issue I address below. NON-SUBJECT HONORIFICS (Hamano, 1993) has been suggested, but SUBJECT HUMBLING, is the designation I argue to be more appropriate, below. It directly reflects the Japanese term, *kenjō-go* literally: 'humble words', while covering the relevant phenomena.

Aspects shared by both Subject Honorification and Object Honorification is that a native prefix *o-* attaches to a non-finite verb form and a light-verb, *nar-u* 'become' for Subject Honorifics, and *sur-u* 'do' for Object Honorifics, bear the tense features. Additionally for both, the productive default form is blocked by suppletive verbs where they exist. Crucially, the choice to use honorifics is left to the speaker so that there are no cases where the forms must be used.

Curiously, there are no native speakers of Japanese honorifics. They are grafted on to the language through conscious effort at an age when the native speaker is thought to understand the hierarchal characteristics of the society.

Example (1), below, shows the two types of honorific forms as productive defaults; example (2) shows cases of blocking by suppletion for both:

- (1) a. Sensei-wa o-machi-ni nari-mas-u.

teacher-TOP PREFIX-wait-ESSIVE become-HON~POLITE-NON-PAST  
'The teacher deigns to wait.'

- b. Watashi-wa o-machi shi-mas-u.

I-TOP PREFIX-wait do-HUMBLE-POLITE-NON-PAST  
'I will humbly wait.'

- (2) a. Sensei-wa irasshai-mas-u. (cf. \*Sensei-wa o-iki-ni nari-mas-u)  
 teacher-TOP go-HON-POLITE-NON-PAST  
 ‘The teacher deigns to go’  
 b. Watashi-wa mairi-mas-u. (cf. \*Watashi-wa o-iki shi-mas-u)  
 I-TOP go-HUMBLE-POLITE-NON-PAST  
 ‘I will humbly go’

Example (1) a. and b. are the productive forms for Subject Honorifics and Subject Humbling, respectively. Examples (2) a. and b. demonstrate suppletive forms that mandatorily block the productive forms.

## 2. The prefix *o-*

Since both Subject Honorification and Subject Humbling display the prefix *o-* in their productive forms, the presumption has been that the prefix itself is honorific (Bobaljik and Yatsushiro, 2006, Boeckx and Niinuma, 2004, Niinuma, 2003, Hamano, 1993, and Harada, 1976). Native prefixes are exceedingly rare in Japanese. The prefix *o-* is one of only two found in the language.

It occurs in (semi-)grammaticalized expressions which seem to have little to do with honorification; absence of the *o-* often result in near or total ill-formedness:

- (3) a. *o-nara* ‘flatulence’ (cf. *naras-u* ‘to sound-TRANS’)  
 b. *o-naka* ‘stomach’ (cf. *naka* ‘inside’)  
 c. *o-sagari* ‘hand-me-downs’ (cf. *sagar-u* ‘lower-INTRANS’)  
 d. *o-bake* ‘a ghost’ (cf. *bakemono* ‘ibid.’)  
 e. *o-shaberi* ‘a chatterbox’ (cf. *shaberi* ‘chatting’)

Honorific meaning is not associated with the prefix in examples (3), e.g. *o-nara* ‘#an honorable fart’ or *o-bake* ‘#the honorable ghost (that scares the hell out of me)’. There is, rather, a sense of jocularity or irony found in these examples.

An optional use of the prefix *o-* is conventional, polite, but not necessarily honorific. Martin (1975: 332) notes this use of *o-* is more closely associated with the speech of women and children:

- (4) a. *o-uchi* ‘house, dwellings’  
 b. *o-cha* ‘tea’  
 c. *o-kane* ‘money’  
 d. *o-tenki* ‘the weather’  
 e. *o-tagai* ‘mutually’

Some examples in (4), above, serve a deictic role, a property often associated with Expressive Derivations.

An additional usage of the prefix is clearly sarcastic. Martin (ibid.) cites examples (5) a., b. and c.:

- (5) a. *o-era-gata* ‘big-wigs’ (lit. ‘the great people’)  
 b. *o-erai shakai hyōronka nado* ‘our great social critics and the like’  
 c. *on-deru* ‘leave before being tossed out’ (cf. *der-u* ‘leave’)  
 d. *on-boro* ‘my old jalopy’

The final two examples display a nasal coda, a “corrupted” form of the prefix *o-*.

My point in this section is that the prefix *o-* is not necessarily honorific, but shows features more closely associated with EXPRESSIVE DERIVATIONS, i.e., optionality of usage, deictic properties and semantic elasticity. Additionally, Expressive Derivations; cross-

linguistically limited to Augmentatives, Diminutives, Perjoratives, Affectionates, and Honorifics; are never involved in lexical category-change.

### 3. Blocking in Subject Honorification and Humbling

One of the most relevant morphological phenomena in terms of the structural imperatives it imposes is found for both Subject and Object Honorifics; a productive default form is blocked by suppletive forms. Absolute or COMPETITION BLOCKING are where native Japanese suppletive verbs specified for the relevant feature blocks a default form. In such cases, blocking is deterministic; it must occur.

An additional type of “semi-blocking” consists of a EUPHEMISM (Martin, 1975), typically a Sino-Japanese word (*kango*) which uses the morphology of the productive forms *o-* V-*ni naru* for Subject Honorifics and *o-*V *suru* for Subject Humbling. An example from Subject Humbling is *go-haishaku shimasu* ‘humbly borrow’. The allomorph *go-* is found in place of *o-* for Sino-Japanese lexemes. Crucially, this Euphemism does not block the productive default form *o-kari shimasu* ‘humbly borrow’ and cannot be considered blocking, but rather free-variation. True blocking is:

COMPETITION BLOCKING where insertion of a more highly specified VOCABULARY ITEM is inserted into a terminal node blocking a less-highly specified item (Embick and Marantz, 2006).

Thus *went*, the product of a root and abstract morpheme, blocks *\*goed*; failure to do so results in ungrammaticality. Competition blocking is for insertion into a single terminal node. The fact that competition blocking always occurs in the context of a functional category is crucial support for the postulation of the functional Expressive Phrase. (See below) The multi-morphemic default form must be the product of a single terminal node in order to explain competition blocking by a monomorphemic suppletive form:

**Table 1: Subject Honorifics and Blocking**

Basic Verb	Default Honorific	Suppletive	Euphemism
<i>yom-u</i> ‘read- <sub>NON-PAST</sub> ’	<i>o-yomi-ni nar-u</i>	$\emptyset$	$\emptyset$
<i>tabe-ru</i>	<i>*o-tabe-ni nar-u</i>	<i>meshiagar-u</i>	$\emptyset$
<i>i-ru, ku-ru, ik-u</i> ‘be, come, go’	<i>*o-i-ni nar-u, *o-ki-ni nar-u, *o-iki-ni nar-u</i>	<i>irasshar-u</i>	<i>o-ide-ni naru</i>
<i>sur-u</i> ‘do’	<i>*o-shi-ni nar-u</i>	<i>nasar-u</i>	$\emptyset$
<i>i-u</i> ‘say’	<i>*o-ii-ni-naru</i>	<i>osshar-u</i>	$\emptyset$
<i>mi-ru</i> ‘see, look at, watch’	<i>*o-mi-ni nar-u</i>	$\emptyset$	<i>go-ran-ni nar-u</i>
<i>shir-u</i> ‘know’	<i>*o-shi-ni naru</i>	$\emptyset$	<i>go-zonji desu</i> <sup>1</sup>
<i>wakaru</i> ‘understand’	<i>o-wakari-ni naru</i>	$\emptyset$	<i>go-zonji desu</i>

The pattern of blocking shows that, where there is a suppletive in the absence of a Euphemism, the suppletive is the only grammatical form. Where a suppletive exists in the presence of a Euphemism, both suppletive and euphemistic forms are grammatical and they are therefore free-variants, not examples of blocking. Defaults and Euphemisms may

<sup>1</sup> Subject Honorific defaults occur in free variation with the copula *da*, usually in its polite form *desu*, which can replace *-ni naru*. The Subject Honorific *o-yomi-ni naru* and *o-yomi desu* are in free-variation, excepting Euphemisms, which select for one of the variants.

co-exist and are non-participants in competition blocking. Defaults and Euphemisms display the same pattern morphologically, i.e., prefix plus light verb and therefore their SPELL-OUT is identical, only the ROOT is different. Notice cases in Tables 1 and 2 where no suppletive or default exists. In such cases the Euphemism is used.

**Table 2: Subject Humbling and Blocking**

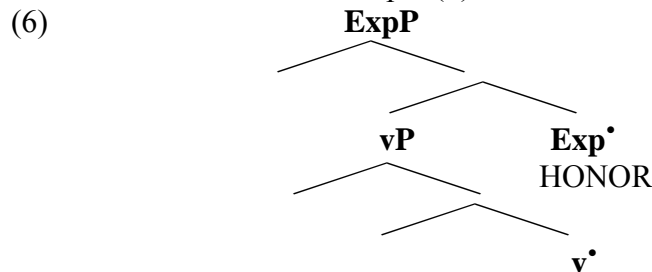
Basic Verb	Default	Suppletive	Euphemism
<i>i-ru</i> ‘be- <sub>EXISTENTIAL</sub> ’	* <i>o-i su-ru</i>	<i>or-u</i>	Ø
<i>ik-u</i> ‘go’	* <i>o-iki su-ru</i>	<i>mair-u</i>	Ø
<i>i-u</i> ‘say’	* <i>o-ii suru</i>	<i>mōs-u</i>	Ø
<i>kari-ru</i> ‘borrow’	<i>o-kari suru</i>	Ø	<i>go-haishaku suru</i>
<i>mi-ru</i> ‘see’	* <i>o-mi su-ru</i>	Ø	<i>go-haiken su-ru</i>
<i>shir-u</i> ‘know’	* <i>o-shiri suru</i>	<i>zonji-ru</i>	Ø

Note also that there is a near one-to-one relationship of suppletive verbs for both Subject Honorification and Subject Humbling in Tables 1 and 2. This is indicative of the crucial role played by subjects; subjects must be +Human in both.

#### 4. Subject Honorifics: Syntax, Spell-out and pragmatics

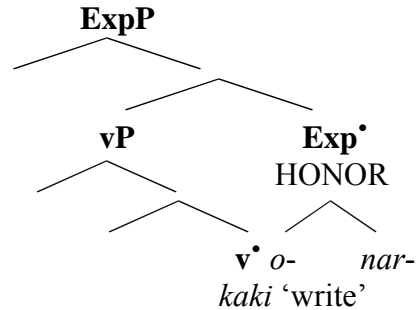
As noted since Harada (1976: 501) a subject SOCIALLY SUPERIOR TO THE SPEAKER (SSS) determines the felicity of Subject Honorifics. Like Subject Humbling, Subject Honorifics must be predicated of human subjects. Niinuma (2003) considers a feature [+human] the feature responsible for Agree in subjects and objects, but it is always optional. This paper is decidedly anti-agreement and the reader is referred to Bobaljik and Yatsuhiko (2006) for a detailed discussion of problems with the Agree analysis, in particular that of Boeckx and Niinuma (2004). The use of Subject Honorifics is always a speaker-chosen evaluation; its absence never results in ungrammaticality or ill-formedness.

I call the phrase that bears the feature for Subject Honorifics EXPRESSIVE PHRASE or ExpP. The feature responsible for Subject Honorifics is HONOR. The partial narrow syntax for Subject Honorifics is shown in example (6):



The default form at PF consists of three morphemes, the prefix *o-*, the light-verb *nar-u* and a ‘postposition’ *-ni*. The terminal head Exp undergoes FISSION (Halle and Marantz, 1993, Noyer, 1997, and Halle, 1997), a morphological mechanism which divides one terminal node into two terminal nodes. In the nodes the prefix and the light-verb are inserted at Spell-Out, shown in example (7) for the eventual output *o-kaki-ni nar-u* ‘(an honored person) deigns to write’:

(7)

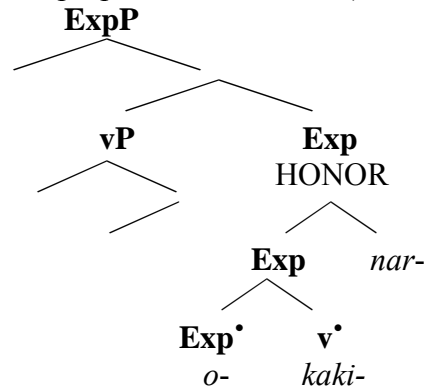


The prefix *o-* attaches to its complement *v* by MORPHOLOGICAL MERGER (MM) (Marantz, 1984; Halle and Marantz, 1993; Bobaljik, 1995; and Embick and Noyer, 2001); the claim that:

At any level of syntactic analysis a relation of lexical head *x* and *y* may be replaced by the affixation of *x* to *y* (Embick and Noyer, 2001: 561).

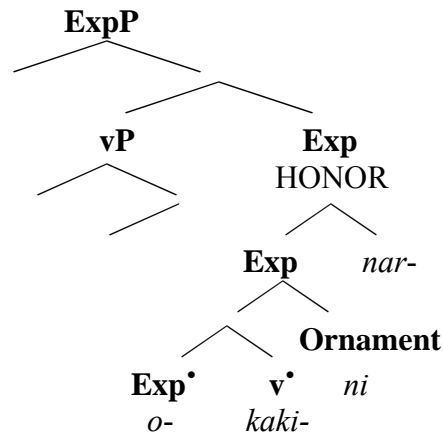
Since this occurs at PF linear order is irrelevant. Crucial is that the head *v* and the fissioned head *o-* establish the morphological relation of MM, which allows for affixation according to the subcategorical properties of the affix (Halle and Marantz, 1993):

(8)



The morpheme *-ni* is the postposition/case-marker that the verb *nar-u* 'assigns' to internal arguments and therefore, not totally unmotivated, but there are no DPs or nouns present. I treat it as a DISSOCIATED NODE (Embick and Noyer, 2007), "an ornamental morpheme" not present at Narrow Syntax, but "added to a structure under specified conditions at PF" (ibid.):

(9)



Crucially, the morpheme *-ni* has no interpretable features for syntax, but is a pure PF phenomenon:

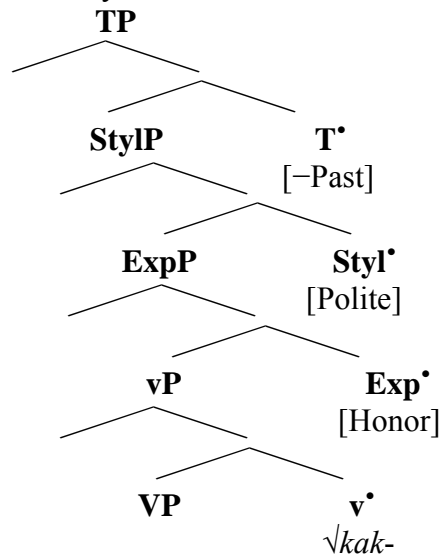
(10) O-kaki-ni nar-

PREF-write-DISSMORPH-HONOR

‘deign to write’

Further insertion of the functional heads of VP creates a grammatical utterance. Among these functional heads is a speech-level, addressee-oriented morpheme *mas-* which occurs as complement of TP. This functional morphology occurs in a STYLE PHRASE (StylP), which contains a (+/-) POLITE feature. While discourse-oriented morphemes are generally found above tense-markers (Cinque, 1999: 76), the position of this morpheme in Japanese is consistent with Cinque (1999: 154)’s analysis of similar morphology in Korean. A complete utterance using the morphology of example (10) would have the following Narrow Syntax:

(11)



Spell-Out yields the utterance below:

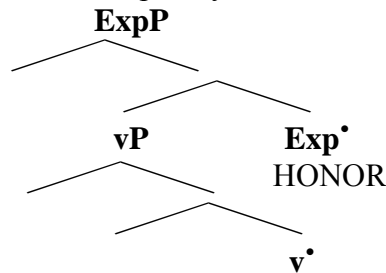
(12) O-kaki-ni nari-mas-u

PREF-write-DISSMORPH-HON-POL-NON-PAST

‘(An honorable person) deigns to write.’

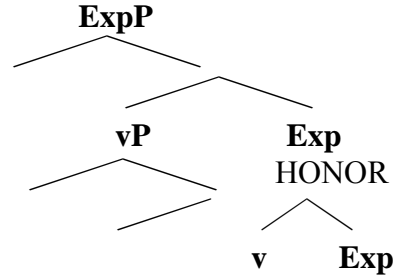
Blocking of the default form by a suppletion is syntactically identical to the default. (See example (11), above) The difference is found at the level of morphological Spell-Out. Example (13) repeats the relevant morpho-syntactic structure for Subject Honorification:

(13)

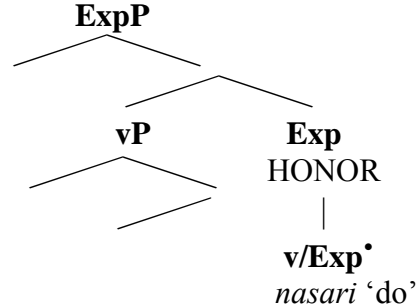


Rather than fission, the monomorphemic suppletive requires insertion into a single terminal head. This is created via MM between complements feeding FUSION, a terminal node requiring the sister relationship, shown in (14) a. and b.:

(14) a.



b.



Further MM of the functional heads Styl and T yields the felicitous utterance of example (15):

(15) Nasari-mas-u.

do-SUPP-POL-NON-PAST

(An honored person) deigns to do (something)

Pragmatics for Subject Honorifics are straightforward; as noted by Harada (1976), when the subject is an SSS, the use of Subject Honorifics is optional, determined by the evaluation of the speaker.

## 5. Subject Humbling

Subject Humbling is much more constrained in its usage so I begin with some pragmatic observations. The traditional designation Object Honorification is misleading, at best. It seems to imply the reverse of Subject Honorification; whenever an object, i.e., an internal argument is SSS, Object Honorification can be optionally used by a speaker. Since Japanese freely allows empty DPs ambiguities are natural, but “objects”, in Harada (1976)’s analysis would have to minimally include, direct objects, indirect objects, possessors of direct objects, and HIGH and LOW APPLICATIVES (Pylkkänen, 2002), most phonologically null. The one inviolable syntactic constraint on so-called Object Honorification is on the subject position, which must be +Human. I exemplify some of the problems for this terminology and, along the way, for the Agree analysis:

(16) Nimotsu-o o-mochi shi-mas-u.

luggage-ACC PREF-carry-HUM-POL-NON-PAST

‘(I’ll) carry (your) luggage.’

This is explained by assuming that the SSS is present as an empty DP that is the possessor of *nimotsu* ‘luggage’. Consider intransitive verbs that participate:

(17) Go-issō-ni o-suwari itashi-mash-ō-ka

PREF-together PREF-sit HUM-POL-COHORT-Q

‘Shall (I) sit (with you)?’ (Hamano, 1993: 85)

For the intransitive verb *suwar-u* ‘sit’, one could posit an empty DP as high applicative and maintain a weak Object Honorification analysis. The same analysis could apply to example (18):

- (18) Mikan-no kawa-o o-muki shi-ta.  
 tangerine-<sub>GEN</sub> skin <sub>PREF</sub>-peel <sub>HUM-PAST</sub>  
 ‘(I humbly) peeled (the) tangerine skin (for you).’

Such examples have led Harada (1976: 526) to claim that the pragmatic condition on Object Honorification is that such events must benefit a SSS. This, however, does not apply to the data, below:

- (19) a. Kesa sensei-no oku-sama-o o-mikake-shi-ta.  
 this morning teacher-<sub>GEN</sub> wife-<sub>ACC</sub> <sub>PREF</sub>-see-<sub>HUM-PAST</sub>  
 ‘This morning I (humbly) saw the teacher’s wife.’  
 b. \*Kesa sensei-no inu-o o-mikake-shi-ta. (ibid: 93)  
 this morning teacher-<sub>GEN</sub> dog-<sub>ACC</sub> <sub>PREF</sub>-see-<sub>HUM-PAST</sub>  
 ‘This morning (humbly) I saw the teacher’s dog.’  
 (20) a. Sensei-no o-taku-o o-tōri shi-masi-ta.  
 teacher-<sub>GEN</sub> <sub>PREF</sub>-house <sub>PREF</sub>-pass-<sub>HON-POL-PAST</sub>  
 ‘I (humbly) passed the teacher’s house.’  
 b. \*Sensei-no daigaku-o o-tōri shi-masi-ta  
 teacher-<sub>GEN</sub> university <sub>PREF</sub>-pass-<sub>HON-POL-PAST</sub>  
 ‘I (humbly) passed the teacher’s university.’

One must also wonder what explanation Agree can offer for the unacceptability of the b. examples above. Why does ‘wife’, but not ‘dog’ participate in an Agree relation; ‘house’ but not ‘university’? Additional examples that are decidedly non-benefactive are the commonly heard apologies:

- (21) a. O-mat-ase-shi-mashi-ta  
<sub>PREF</sub>-wait-<sub>CAUSE</sub> <sub>HUM-POL-PAST</sub>  
 ‘(I’m sorry I) made you wait.’  
 b. O-sawag-ase shi-mashi-ta  
<sub>PREF</sub>-be noisy-<sub>CAUSE</sub> <sub>HUM-POL-PAST</sub>  
 ‘(I’m sorry I) caused a fuss.’

Niinuma (2004: 6) writes:

I am concerned with the syntactic nature of honorification, not with extra-linguistic factors, such as the social status of the speaker/hearer or the utterance context.

It seems, however, that such an approach to Subject Humbling, unfortunately, can never capture all the relevant phenomena, as examples (19) and (20) starkly display.

Hamano (1993) takes the reverse approach, calling the phenomenon NON-SUBJECT HONORIFICATION and relying on pragmatic “principles” alone for her analysis. She observes that their morphology is essentially deictic, used because of the impoverished pronominal system of Japanese<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, “immediacy of the involvement of [*the deictic non-subject*, author]...and non-threatening nature of [*the subject’s*, author] action” (ibid: 86) are “key [*pragmatic*, author] concepts” for understanding Subject Humbling.

<sup>2</sup> Japanese does not have a pronominal system in the Indo-European sense, but rather DP place-holders. For each person there is a wide choice of place-holders and case and number do not belong to Japanese “pronouns”.

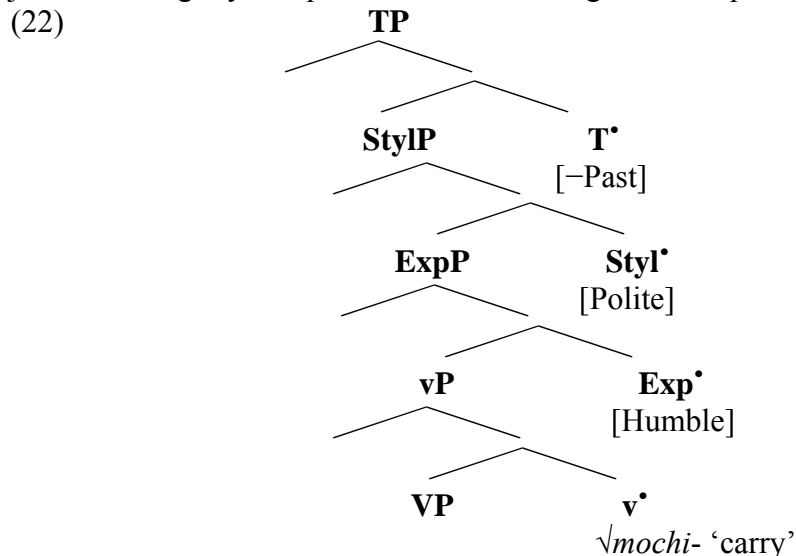


“Certain objects act as projection of ‘self’” (ibid: 100) and can belong to a Subject Humbling event, e.g., *house* vs. *university* in example (20) and *wife* vs. *dog*, in example (19). So one is left with what can only be considered pragmatic mysteries by non-Subject Honorification. This seems to be a more acceptable state of affairs if we accept an Expressive Derivation analysis.

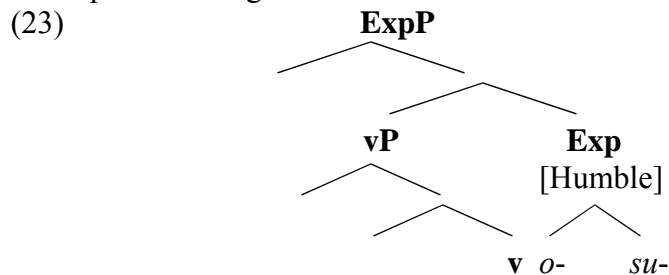
Given that “benefit for the SSS” is an untenable principle for Object Honorification; an approach that does not overly rely on empty nouns that are not syntactically necessary to saturate the selection properties of a verb, e.g., possessors and high applicatives seems preferable. Recognizing that the +human subject, a discourse participant, is in a relation of humility to the deictic morphology, the term Subject Humbling seems the appropriate generalization. Since the morphology of Honorification and Humbling is completely optional, an approach that crucially explains its syntax and morphological realization when it occurs appears more viable.

## 6. Syntax and Late-insertion of Subject Humbling

I propose essentially the same analysis for Subject Humbling as proposed for Subject Honorification, above. The difference results from the abstract feature HUMBLE in  $\text{Exp}^\circ$  for Subject Humbling. Syntax produces the following structure prior to Spell-Out at PF:

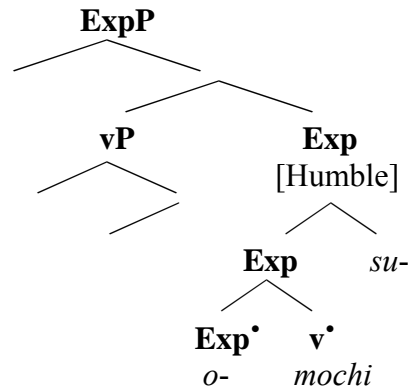


Late-insertion again involves fission of the terminal node  $\text{Exp}^\circ$  to create two terminal nodes for the prefix and light-verb:



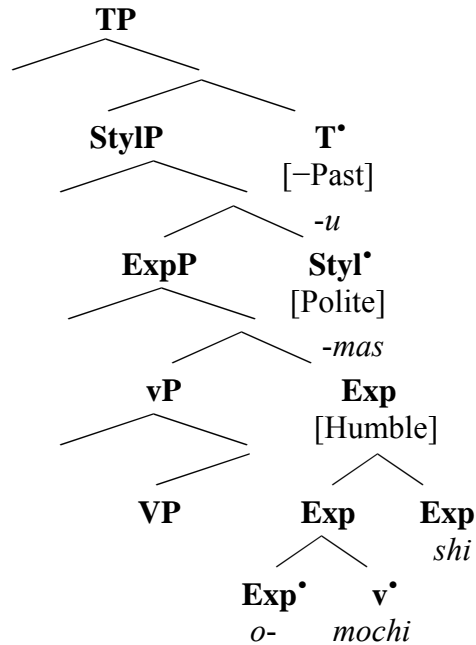
MM of  $v$  with the prefix provides the proper environment for affixation:

(24)



Complete Spell-Out of the functional heads of *v* results in example (25):

(25)



### 7. Other issue: Verb-raising and suppletive forms embedded in the default

In an important argument against Boeckx and Niinuma (2004)'s Agree analysis, Bobaljik and Yatsushiro (2006) note that the light-verb *su-ru* 'do' in Subject Humbling undergoes VERB-RAISING (Hoji, Miyagawa and Tada, 1993). A crucial observation made by Hoji *et al* is that direct internal arguments must raise together with the focused verb stem. For ditransitive verbs the base sentence is (26) a., a possible example of verb-raising is shown in b.:

(26) a. Tarō-wa Jirō-ni shashin-o mise-ta

Taro-<sub>TOP</sub> Jiro-<sub>DAT</sub> photos-<sub>ACC</sub> show-<sub>PAST</sub>  
'Taro showed Jiro the photos.'

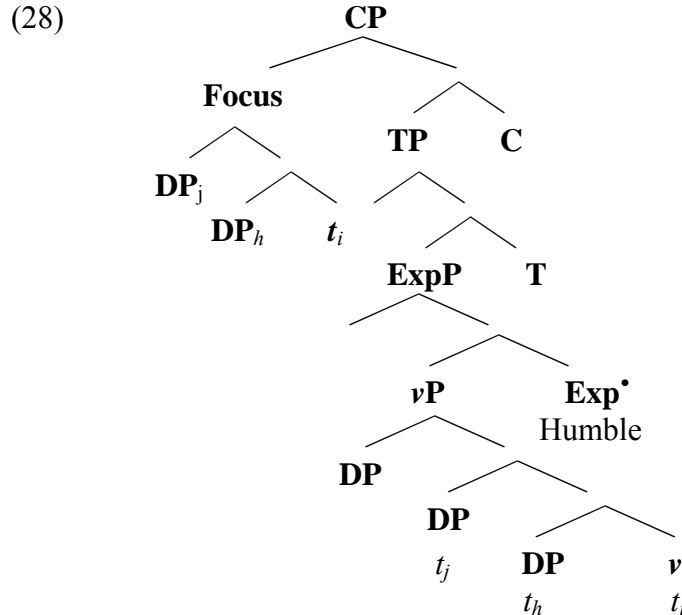
b. Jirō-ni shashin-o mise-sae Tarō-ga shita.

Jiro-<sub>DAT</sub> photos-<sub>ACC</sub> show-<sub>FOCUS</sub> Taro-<sub>NOM</sub> do-<sub>PAST</sub>  
'Even show Jiro photos, Taro did.'

Verb-raising equally applies to Subject Humbling, supporting the claim that the constructions Subject Honorification and Humbling consist of light-verbs (see Harada, 1976 and Bobaljik and Yatsushiro, 2006, cf. Boeckx and Niinuma, 2004):

- (27) a. Watashi-wa sensei-ni shashin-o o-mise-shi-mashi-ta  
 I-TOP teacher-DAT photos-ACC PREF-show-HUM-DO-POLITE-PAST  
 ‘I showed the teacher the photos.’  
 b. Sensei-ni shashin-o o-mise-sae watashi-ga shi-mashi-ta.  
 teacher-DAT photos-ACC PREF-show-FOCUS I-NOM do-HUM-POLITE-PAST  
 ‘Even show the teacher photos, I humbly did.’

Assume that the ditransitive verb is a Low Applicative representing a type of possession transfer between the applicative and direct internal object, perhaps metaphorical. (See Pylkkänen, 2002) In terms of syntax, internal arguments are dislocated via MOVE to a specifier position in order to be focused; assume it is Spec/CP. Below I am not concerned with the internal structure of DPs and their feature bundles or their precise landing-sites, but focus only on the Spell-Out of verbal morphology:



Crucially, for Spell-Out, the complement of  $\text{Exp}^*$ ,  $v$ , is still present as a trace and the fission/MM analysis of prefixal affixation is not affected by dislocation. Spell-Out proceeds as in examples (23) and (24), resulting in the prefix being attached correctly to the dislocated  $v$ .

There are negative implications derived for the Agree analysis by Bobaljik and Yatsushiro (2006). Of more interest for the present analysis is that in contrast to Subject Humbling, no verb-raising occurs in Subject Honorification. Subject Honorification can be focused *in situ*, as noted by Harada (1976), shown in example (29):

- (29) Zasshi-o o-yomi-ni-sae nat-ta.  
 magazine-ACC PREF-read-DISSMORPH-FOCUS-become-HON-PAST  
 ‘(Someone) deigned to even read a magazine.’

Following Shibatani (1990: 335), who considers focus particles adverbial, their failure to disrupt MM between the prefix *o-* and verbs is insightfully discussed in (Bobaljik, 1995: 57). (See also Embick and Noyer, 2001) A POST-CYCLIC MERGE analysis of adjuncts (e.g., Epstein, et al: 1998) provides an explicit explanation for the phenomenon. Movement of

the focused elements, possible for Subject Humbling, is not possible, as Harada (1976) notes:

- (29) \*Zasshi-o o-yomi-ni-sae sensei-ga nat-ta.  
 magazine-<sub>ACC</sub> PREF-read-<sub>DISSMORP-FOCUS</sub> teacher-<sub>NOM</sub> become-<sub>HON-PAST</sub>  
 ‘Even read a magazine, the teacher deigned to do.’

Harada (1976: 525) notes the failure of the light-verb *nar-u* ‘become’ to participate in anaphoric deletion; compare this with the main verb *nar-u*, in Harada’s example, below:

- (30) a. Kyôju-ni nari-mashi-ta-ka? Ee, nari-mashi-ta.  
 professor-<sub>ESSIVE</sub> become-<sub>POL-PAST-Q</sub>. yes become-<sub>POL-PAST</sub>  
 ‘Did (he) become a professor?’ ‘Yes, he did.’  
 b. Kono hon-o o-yomi-ni nari-mashi-ta-ka? \*Ee, nari-mashi-ta.  
 this book-<sub>ACC</sub> PREF-read-<sub>HON-POL-PAST-Q</sub>. yes do-<sub>HON-POL-PAST</sub>  
 ‘Did (someone) deign to read the book?’ ‘Yes, he did.’

Compare this with the use of *su-ru* ‘do’ as a light-verb in Subject Honorific suppletive forms:

- (31) Shokiji-o meshiagari-sae sensei-ga shi-ta.  
 meal-<sub>ACC</sub> eat-<sub>SUPP-HONOR-FOCUS</sub> teacher-<sub>NOM</sub> do-<sub>PAST</sub>  
 ‘Even eat a meal, the teacher deigned to do.’

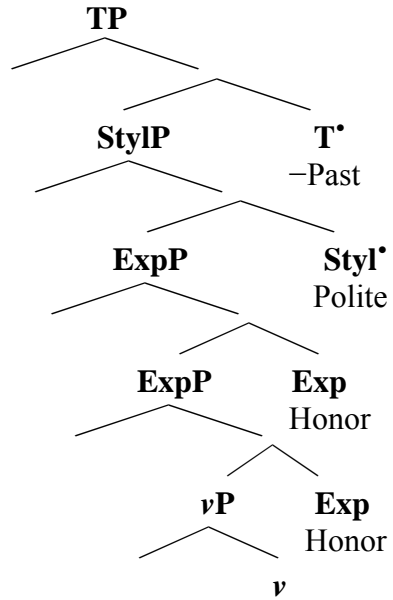
The conclusion is that the Subject Honorific light-verb, *nar-u* ‘become’, is does not participate in anaphoric phenomenon.

A final aspect of Subject Honorification/Humbling I address in this paper is the feature recursion that allows suppletive forms to participate in the default. Note that recursion is a common property of Expressive Derivations (Beard, 1995):

- (32) a. Nasari-mas-u.  
 do-<sub>HON-POL-NON-PAST</sub>  
 ‘(Someone) deigns to do (it).’  
 b. O-nasari-ni nari-mas-u.  
 PREF-do-<sub>DISSMORPH</sub> become-<sub>HON-HON-POL-NON-PAST</sub>  
 ‘(Someone) deigns to do (it).’

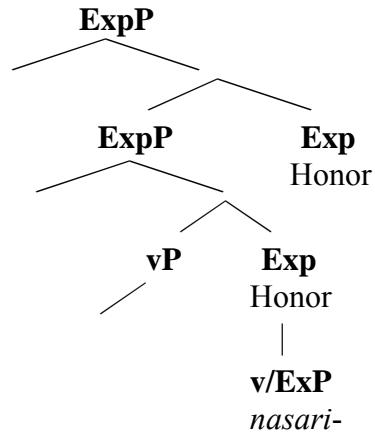
The Narrow Syntax of feature recursion is as follows:

(33)



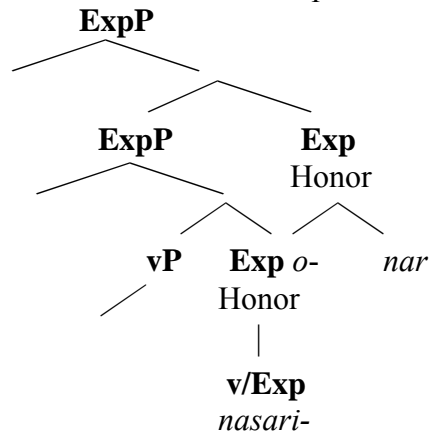
To insert the suppletive form it must first undergo fusion of  $v$  with the embedded Exp:

(34)



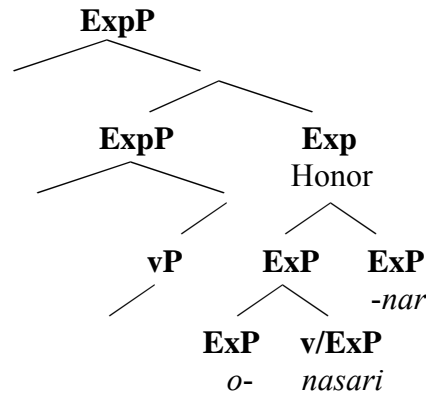
The higher Exp undergoes Fission to insert the prefix and light-verb:

(35)



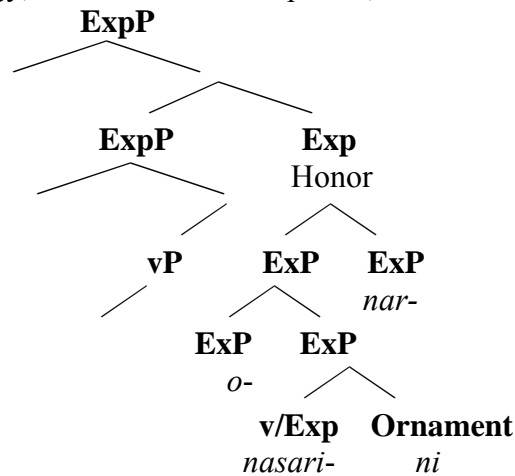
The fused head for suppletion undergoes MM to create the proper relation for affixation of the prefix *o-*, provided by the higher Exp and its feature Honor:

(38)



Ornamental morphology, the dissociated morph *-ni*, is added below:

(39)



Addition of the functional phrases StylP and TP result in the feature recursive example of (32) b., repeated here:

(40) O-nasari-ni nari-mas-u.

<sup>PREF</sup>-do-DISSMORPH become-HON-HON-POL-NON-PAST  
'(Someone) deigns to do (it).'

## 8. Summary

Japanese verbal Honorifics represent a unique challenge for morphology; while displaying clearly morphologically-governed phenomena such as blocking, they are constrained by pragmatic principles. This is not unexpected if they are considered Expressive Derivations, optional morphology whose interpretation is determined pragmatically. Because of the optionality and semantic elasticity of the prefix *o-*, and the deictic and recursive properties of the verbal morphology, this claim is motivated.

To account for blocking in Honorifics, I have provided an analysis that takes advantage of the Distributed Morphology principles of fission and fusion. I have suggested that because of the variety of syntactic positions that an Object Honorification analysis must account for, their re-analysis as Subject Humbling is more sustainable; the subject position is the single syntactically-constrained position required for felicitous use.

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