

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

## Abstract

Japanese SUBJECT and OBJECT HONORIFICS are of interest from several perspectives, in particular from the viewpoint of morphology. In this paper I argue 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 in Honorifics. Japanese Honorifics have recently been considered a form of Chomsky (2000)'s AGREE (Niinuma, 2003, and Boeckx and Niinuma, 2004). (cf. Bobaljik and Yatsushiro, 2004) I introduce some unnoticed data that bears on this issue and argue that Japanese Honorifics show properties associated with EXPRESSIVE DERIVATIONS (Beard, 1995). 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.

## 1. The domain of honorifics in Japanese

Japanese Subject and Object Honorifics are used to display the attitude of speakers and subjects, respectively; SUBJECT HONORIFICS, display a speaker's evaluation of the subject; so-called OBJECT HONORIFICS (Harada, 1976) display the speaker-subject's attitude towards a discourse participant. It's unlikely that the term Object Honorific is appropriate in Harada (1976)'s sense; an issue I return to below. NON-SUBJECT HONORIFICS (Kuno, 1987 and Hamano, 1993) has been suggested, but SUBJECT HUMBLING, is the designation I argue to be most explanatory, below. This term directly reflects the translation of the Japanese term, *kenjō-go*, literally: 'humble words', while covering the relevant phenomena.

Aspects shared by both Subject Honorification and Subject Humbling is that a prefix *o-* attaches to the underlying verb form and a light-verb, *nar-u* 'become' for subject honorifics, or *sur-u* 'do' for subject humbling, is used. Additionally, for both forms the productive default 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 honorifics. They are grafted on to the language through conscious effort at an age when the native Japanese speaker is thought to understand the hierarchal characteristics of the society.

Example (1), below, shows the two types of honorific forms; 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 respectively the productive forms for Subject Honorifics and Subject Humbling. Examples (2) a. and b. demonstrates that suppletive forms mandatorily block the productive forms in both types.

## 2. The prefix *o-*

Since both Subject Honorification and Subject Humbling display the prefix *o-* in the productive form, the presumption has been that the prefix itself is honorific (Bobaljik and Yatsushiro, 2004, Boeckx and Niinuma, 2004, Niinuma, 2003, Hamano, 1993, and Harada, 1976). Native prefixes are exceedingly rare in Japanese. Head-final and agglutinating, Japanese is a very strong suffixing language. Many prefixes, however, have been borrowed from Chinese, a typologically distinct language, e.g., *fu-* ‘un-, in-, not’, *mi-* ‘not yet’ and *sai-* ‘re-, again’.

The prefix *o-* occurs in (semi-)grammaticalized expressions which seem to have little to do with honorifics; 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 jocularly or irony found in these examples.

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

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

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

An additional usage of the prefix is clearly sarcastic. Martin (1975) 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 geminate, a “corrupted” form of the prefix *o-*.

The 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.

### 3. Blocking in Subject Honorification and Humbling

One of the most relevant morphological phenomena in terms of the structural imperatives it imposes on structure is found for both Subject Honorifics and Humbling, the blocking of productive default forms by a suppletion/Euphemisms. I want to divide the “blocking” into two separate types: absolute blocking in which a native Japanese suppletive verb specified for the relevant feature blocks the default form. In such cases, blocking is deterministic; it must occur.

An additional type, call it “weak blocking”, usually consists of a EUPHEMISM (Martin, 1975), typically a Sino-Japanese word (*kango*) which uses the morphology of the productive forms *o-* V-*ni naru* ‘Subject Honorific’/ *o-*V *suru* ‘Subject Humbling’. An example from Subject Humbling is *go-kaishaku shimasu* ‘humbly borrow’. Note this uses the prefix and light verb associated with the Subject Humbling default; the allomorphic prefix *go-* is used in place of *o-* for Sino-Japanese lexemes. Crucially, this form does not block the productive default form *o-kari shimasu* ‘humbly borrow’ and is therefore not blocking in the sense I want to reserve:

COMPETITION BLOCKING [*is*, author] 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* blocks *\*goed*, the product of a terminal head derived from a root and abstract morpheme, failure to do so results in ungrammaticality. Competition must be for insertion in 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:

**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>

<sup>1</sup> Subject Honorific defaults occur in free variation with the copula *da*, usually in its polite form *desu*, replacing *-ni naru*. The Subject Honorific *o-yomi-ni naru* and *o-yomi desu* are usually in free-variation, excepting Euphemisms. There are aspectual properties that the copula does not express, as one might expect. The Euphemisms select for one of the variants.

So 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 may be used. Euphemisms also may block defaults, but this is not absolute as seen. It can be said that a suppletive is a ‘strong’ blocker of defaults, but defaults and Euphemisms may co-exist, making them a ‘weak’ blocker, not a necessary participant in Competition Blocking:

**Table 2: Subject Humbling and Blocking**

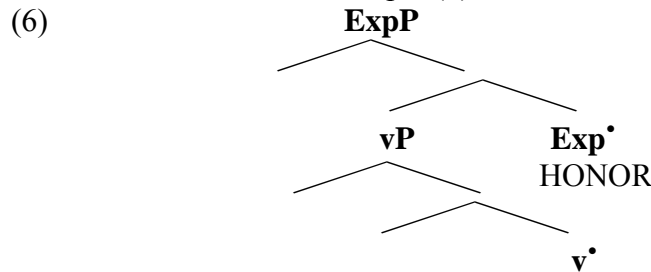
Basic Verb	Default	Suppletive	Euphemism
<i>i-ru</i> ‘be- <sub>EXISTENTIAL</sub> ’	* <i>o-i su-ru</i>	<i>or-u</i>	Ø
<i>ik-u</i> ‘go’	* <i>o-iki su-ru</i>	<i>mair-u</i>	Ø
<i>i-u</i> ‘say’	* <i>o-ii suru</i>	<i>mōs-u</i>	Ø
<i>kari-ru</i> ‘borrow’	<i>o-kari suru</i>	Ø	<i>go-haishaku suru</i>
<i>mi-ru</i>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

In the blocking pattern for Subject Humbling, we find a default and a Euphemism equally acceptable for *kari-ru* ‘borrow’. 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. Note also the near one-to-one relationship of suppletive blocking for both Subject Honorification and Subject Humbling in Tables 1 and 2. This is indicative of the crucial role played by subjects; in both Honorification and Humbling, subjects must be +human.

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

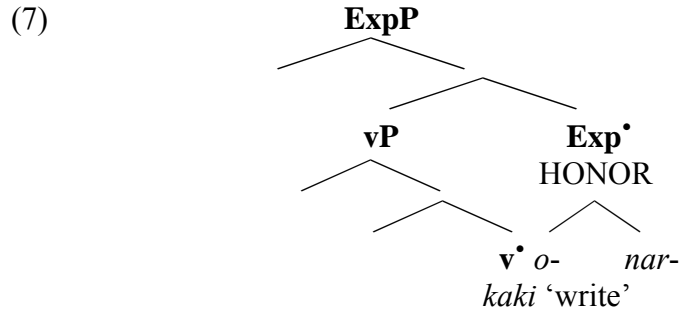
As noted since Harada (1976: 501) a subject SOCIALLY SUPERIOR TO THE SPEAKER (SSS) determines the felicity of Subject Honorifics. Like Subject Humbling, Subject Honorifics must be predicated of human subjects. Niinuma (2003) considers a feature [+human] the feature responsible for Agree in subjects and objects, but such Agree is always optional. This paper is decidedly anti-agreement and the reader is referred to Bobaljik and Yatsuhiko (2004) for a detailed discussion of problems with the Agree analysis, in particular, 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):

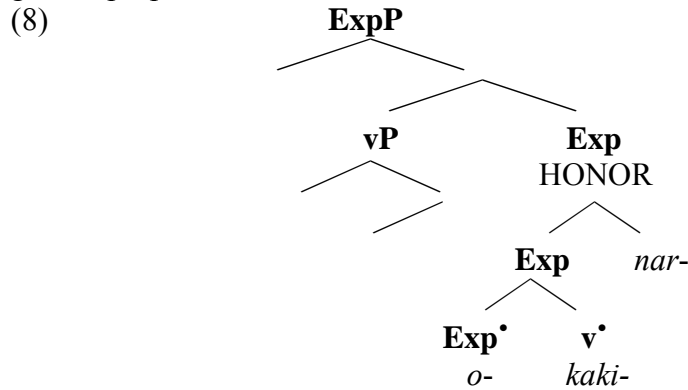


The default form at PF consists of three morphemes, the prefix *o-*, the light-verb *nar-u* and a ‘postposition’ *-ni*. The terminal head Exp undergoes FISSION (Halle and Marantz, 1993, Noyer, 1997, and Halle, 1997), a morphological mechanism which divides one

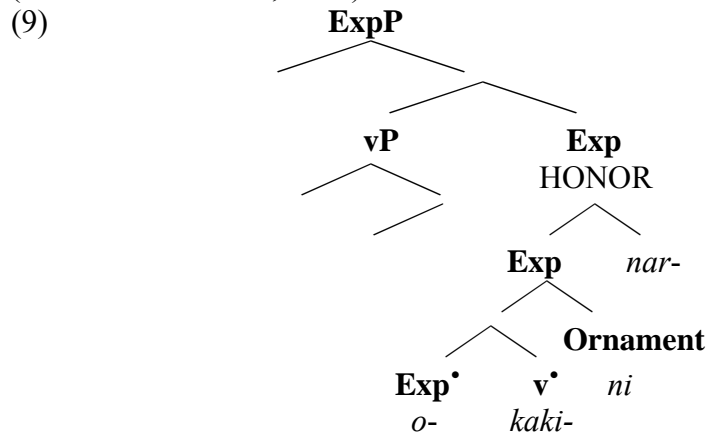
terminal node into two terminal nodes. In the nodes the prefix and the light-verb are inserted at Spell-Out, shown in example (7) for the eventual output *o-kaki-ni nar-u* ‘(an honored person) deigns to write’:



The prefix *o-* attaches to its complement *v* by MORPHOLOGICAL MERGER (MM) (Marantz, 1984; Bobaljik, 1995; and Embick and Noyer, 2001). Since this occurs at PF, broadly construed, 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:



The case-marker *-ni* is the case-marker that the verb *nar-u* ‘assigns’ to internal arguments and not totally unmotivated, but there are no nouns present. I treat it as a DISSOCIATED NODE (Embick and Noyer, 1997: 15), “an ornamental morpheme” not present at Narrow Syntax, but “added to a structure under specified conditions at PF” (ibid.). (See also McFadden, 2006):



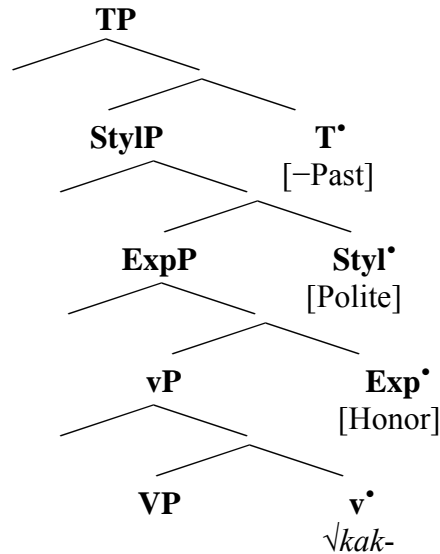
Crucially the morpheme *-ni* has no interpretable features that require its presence at Narrow Syntax. In this manner the Subject Honorific is generated post-syntactically at Spell-out:

(10) O-kaki-ni nar-

<sup>PREF</sup>-write-<sup>HONOR</sup>  
'deign to write'

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

(11)



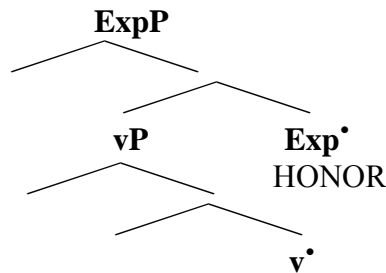
After Spell-Out, the utterance becomes as follows:

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

<sup>PREF</sup>-write-<sup>HON-POL-NON-PAST</sup>  
'(An honorable person) deigns to write.'

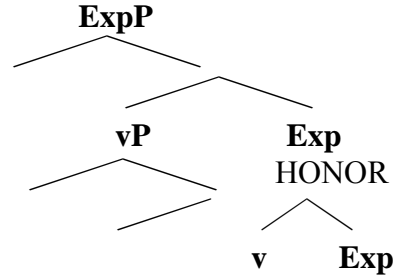
Blocking of the default form by a suppletive is syntactically identical as the default. (see example (11), above) The difference is due to the morphological Spell-Out. Example (13) shows the relevant syntactic features:

(13)

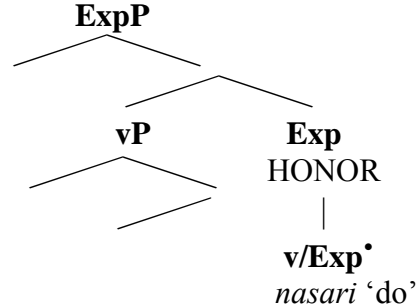


Rather than fission, the monomorphemic suppletive requires insertion into a single terminal head. This is created via MM between complements feeding FUSION between sisters:

(14) a.



b.



MM of the Japanese functional heads of *v* yields the felicitous utterance in example (14):

(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 constraints. 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, HIGH and LOW APPLICATIVES (Pylkkänen, 2002), many phonologically null. The one inviolable constraint on so-called Object Honorification is on the subject position, which must be +Human. I demonstrate some of the problems for this terminology and, along the way, for an 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-issshō-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-PEEL HUM-PAST</sub>

‘I peeled the tangerine skin.’

Such examples have led Harada (1976) 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-SEE-HUM-PAST</sub>

‘This morning I saw the teacher’s wife.’

b. \*Kesa sensei-no inu-o o-mikake-shi-ta. (ibid: 93)

this morning teacher-<sub>GEN</sub> wife-<sub>ACC</sub> <sub>PREF-see-HUM-PAST</sub>

‘This morning I saw the teacher’s wife.’

(20) a. Sensei-no o-taku-o o-tōri shi-masi-ta

‘I passed the teacher’s house.’

b. \*Sensei-no daigaku-o o-tōri shi-masi-ta

teacher-<sub>GEN</sub> <sub>PREF-university</sub> <sub>PREF-PASS HON-POL-PAST</sub>

‘I passed the teacher’s house.’

One must also wonder what explanation Agree can offer for the unacceptability of the b. examples. Additional examples that are decidedly non-benefactive are the commonly heard apologies:

(21) a. O-mat-ase-shi-mashi-ta

<sub>PREF-wait-cause</sub> <sub>HON-POL-PAST</sub>

‘(I’m sorry I) made you wait.’

b. O-sawag-ase shi-mashi-ta

<sub>PREF-be noisy-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. Since the morphology of Honorification and Humbling is completely optional, a more tempered approach that explains the pragmatic occasions it may be used, as well as, the syntax and morphological realization appears more promising.

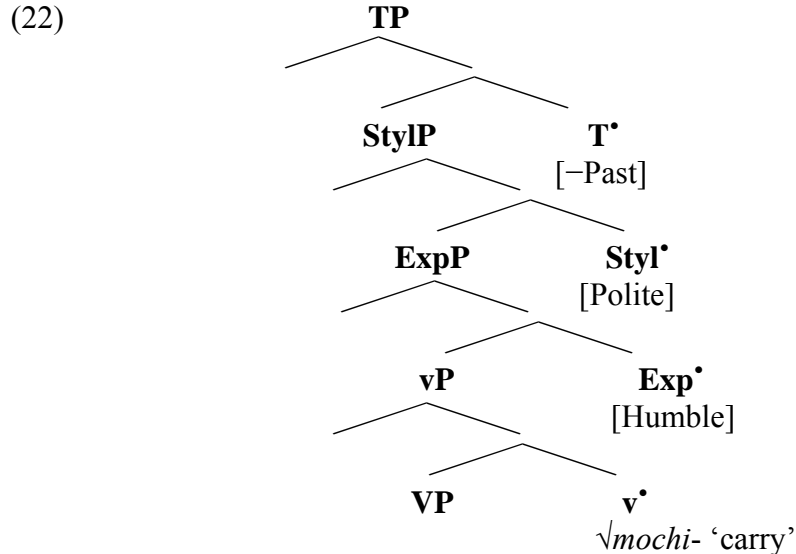
She observes that their morphology is essentially deictic, used to replace the impoverished pronominal system of Japanese. Additionally, “immediacy of the involvement of [*the deictic non-subject*, author]...and non-threatening nature of [*the subject’s*, author] action” (ibid: 86) are “key [*pragmatic*, author] concepts” for understanding Subject Humbling. “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 rather bereft of syntactic issues by non-Subject Honorification. This



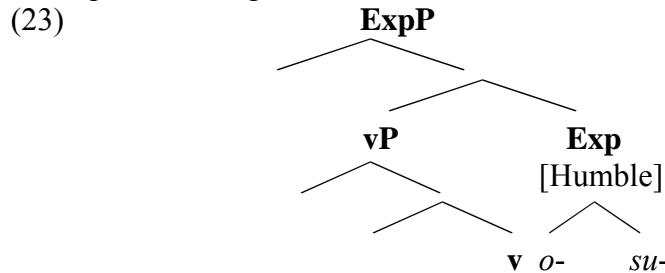
seems to be a more acceptable state of affairs if we accept the Expressive Derivation analysis, but given that “benefit for the SSS” is an untenable principle for Object Honorification, I propose that eliminating empty nouns that are not syntactically necessary to saturate a verb’s selectional restrictions, e.g., possessors and high applicatives, and recognizing that the +Human subject is in a relation of humility to the deictic morphology, a discourse participant, the term Subject Humbling is the appropriate generalization.

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

I propose essentially the same analysis for Subject Humbling as proposed above for Subject Honorification, above. The difference results from the abstract feature HUMBLE for Subject Humbling. Syntax produces the following structure prior to Spell-Out at PF:

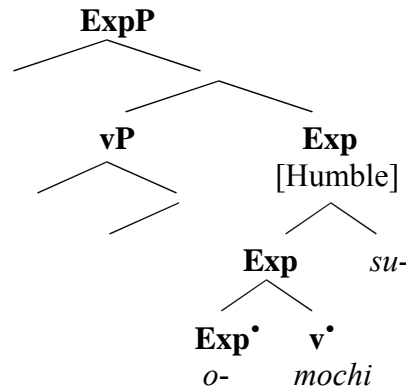


Late-insertion again involves fission of the terminal node Exp to create two terminal nodes for the prefix and light-verb:



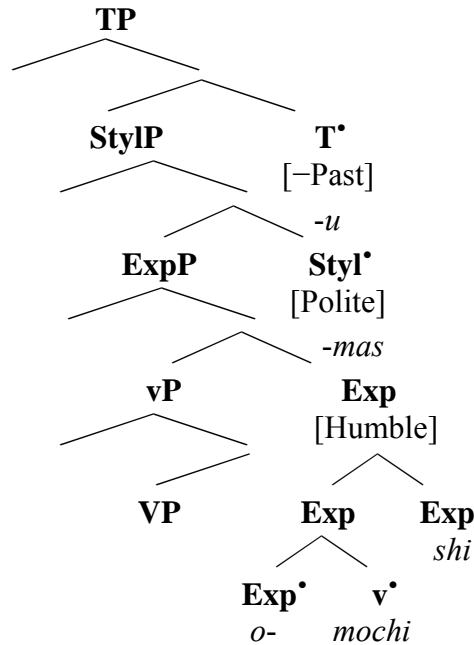
MM of *v* with the prefix provides the proper environment for affixation:

(24)



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

(25)



## 7. Other issue: Verb-raising and Suppletive forms in the Default

In an important argument against Boeckx and Niinuma (2004)'s Agree analysis, Bobaljik and Yatsushiro (2004) 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.'

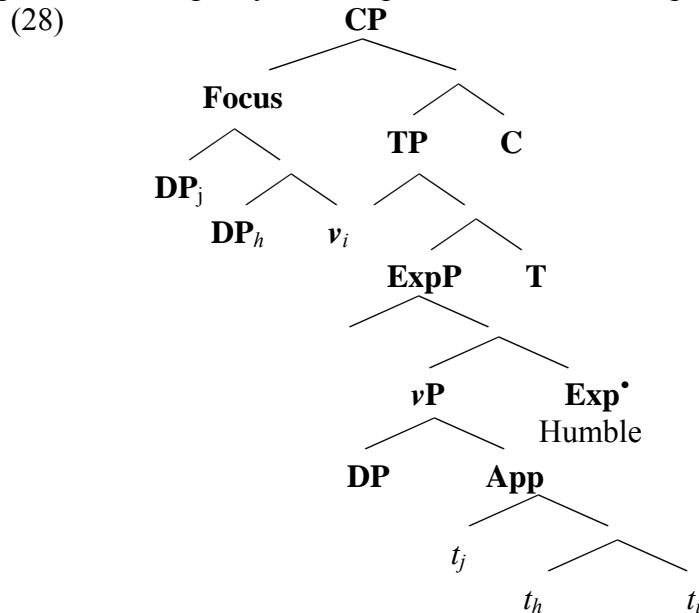
b. Jirō-ni shashin-o mise-sae Tarō-ga shita.

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, 2005, 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  
 ‘Taro showed Jiro the photos.’  
 b. *Sensei-ni shashin-o o-mise-sae watashi-ga shi-mashi-ta.*  
 I-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 narrow 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, focusing only on the Spell-Out of verbal morphology in the paper:



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. The derivation of Late Insertion/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 (2005). 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, here, *yomi* ‘read’, is insightfully discussed in (Bobaljik, 1995: 57). 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, as we saw was possible for Subject Humbling above, 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 a systematic failure of the light-verb *nar-u* ‘become’ to participate in anaphor; compare this with the main verb *nar-u*, in Harada’s example shown below:

- (30) a. Kyôju-ni nari-mashi-ta-ka? Ee, nari-mashi-ta.  
 professor-<sub>ESS</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 nar-imashi-ta-ka? \*Ee, nar-imashi-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.’

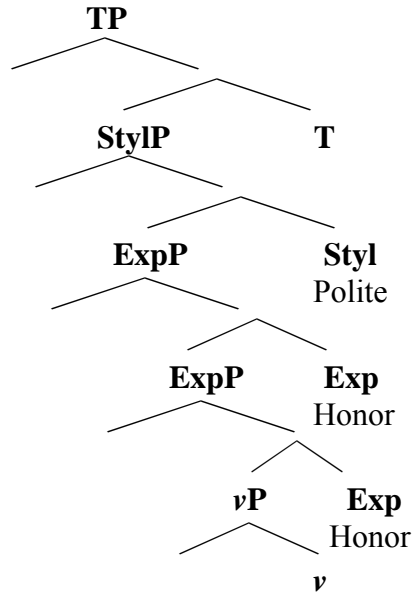
The conclusion is that the Subject Honorific light-verb, *nar-u* ‘become’, is defective in this respect.

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 form. What I consider of interest is the fact that recursion is a common aspect of Expressive Derivations:

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

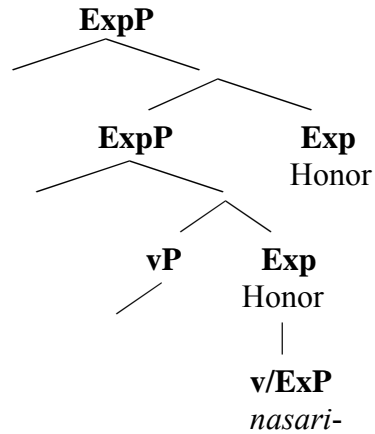
The Spell-Out of recursion I claim is as follows:

(33)



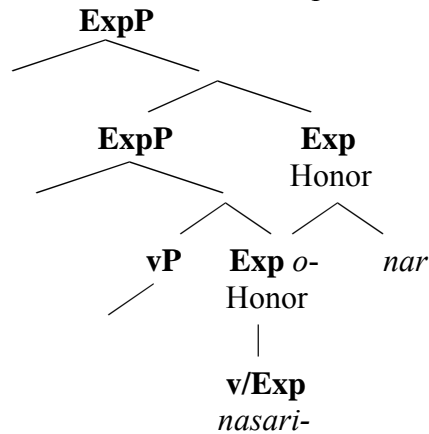
To insert the suppletive it form must first undergo fusion of  $v$  with embedded Exp:

(34)



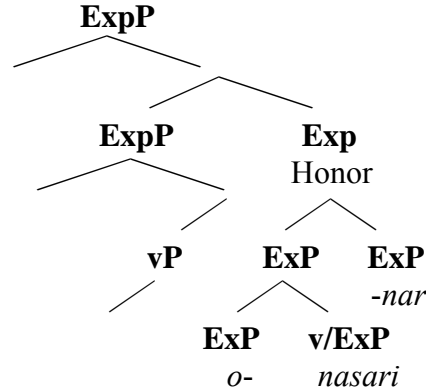
The higher Exp undergoes Fission to insert the prefix and light-verb:

(35)



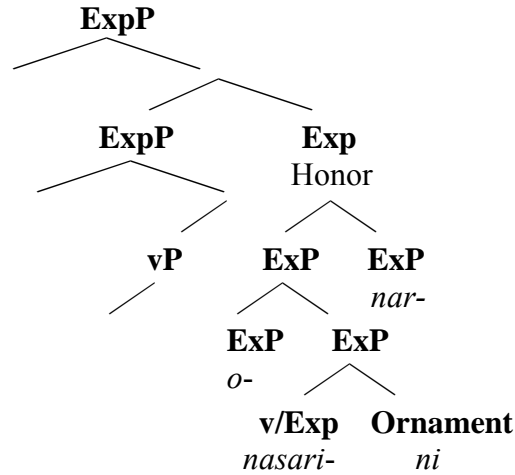
The fused head suppletion undergoes MM to create the proper relation for affixation:

(38)



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

(39)



Addition of the functional phrases StylP and TP result in the recursive example show in example (32) b. and 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 Honorifics represent a unique challenge for morphology; while displaying complex morphological phenomenon, such as blocking, they are governed by pragmatic principles. This is not unexpected if they are considered Expressive Derivations, as suggested above. To account for the blocking I have provided an analysis that takes advantage of the Distributed Morphology principles of fission and fusion. To account for the optionality, semantic elasticity of the prefix *o-*, and the deictic and recursive properties the claim that they are expressive in their use seems most promising. Additionally, I have suggested, because of the variety of syntactic positions that an Object Honorification analysis must account for, that a re-analysis as Subject Humbling is most sustainable; partly because the subject position is the single syntactic constrain required for their felicitous use.

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