Combining Honorific Markers
The Use of Sentence-internal -MASU forms

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The paper concentrates on one particular sentence in Japanese which includes two sentence-internal VPs, each of which could conceivably contain the TEINEI-GO "performative" (or "addressee") honorific marker -MASU. The author (referred to by his initials DRB in the main text) conducted a simple web-based pilot survey related to the sentence, and the results are discussed here.

INTRODUCTION

The complex and highly developed system for expressing varying degrees of politeness in the Japanese language has long been both a hot topic for debate among Japanese scholars (Coulmas, 1992; David, 2009; Mizutani & Mizutani, 1987; Niyekawa, 1991; Rahayu, 2013; Wenger, 1982) and oftentimes a tactical nightmare for second-language learners of the language. One of the most common methods for conveying politeness is the so-called performative honorific -MASU (or its "past tense" variant -MASHITA) marker, which alternates with the non -MASU plain form in verbs. Typically, this alternation occurs in sentence-final verbs, but this paper is concerned with a less frequent use of the -MASU marker, namely in verbs which are sentence-internal.

A number of years ago, when he had been in Japan only a short time, DRB ran across a book titled *Writing Letters in Japanese, a Study Aid for Foreign Learners of Japanese* (Inter-University Center for Japanese Studies, 1992), in which the authors discuss two cases of where the -MASU form can be found in sentence-internal position and give the following three samples of this use:

(1) a. *Sore ga* **sumimashitara**, . . .″
   "*When you have finished that,...*"
   b. *Go-shoukai* **itadakimashita** *Sugiyama-sensei ni wa mada o-me ni kakatteorimasen ga, sono uchi o-ukagai suru tsumori de orimasu.*
   "*I still haven't met Professor Sugiyama, whom you told me about, but I plan to visit her in the near future*".
   c. *Sate, watakushi wa sakushuu Mishigan daigaku de* **okonawaremashita** *gakkai no seki de chotto o-me ni kakatta mono de gozaimasu.*
   "*I am (a student) who met you briefly at an academic conference held at Michigan University last fall.*"

The bold-faced expressions *sumimashitara* "have finished", *go-shoukai itadakimashita* "met", and *okonawaremashita* "held" are all examples of the -MASU form (-MASHITARA and -MASHITA are variants of this form), and they are all sentence-internal. In these positions, they could also have occurred (and, in fact, often do occur) in the following "plain" non -MASU forms: *sundara, go-shoukai itadaita*, and *okonawareta*, respectively. Note that the sentences (1-b) and (1-c) both end with the -MASU form verbs *tsumori de orimasu* "plan" and *de gozaimasu* "am", respectively -- (1-a) is only a sentence fragment, and we do not know what form the final verb takes -- so that, even if the sentence-internal -MASU forms were not used, the sentences themselves as a whole would still be "polite".

The examples of sentence-internal -MASU forms given in (1-b) and (1-c) both occur as verbals which modify NPs. The perspicacious reader will have, however, no doubt noticed one interesting detail about these sample sentences. Each sentence contains an additional sentence-internal verbal that could conceivably, but does not in these cases, carry the -MASU marker, namely *o-ukagai suru* "visit" in (1-b) and *o-me ni kakatta* "met" in (1-c).

In the case of (1-b), the verbal *o-ukagai suru* "visit" is modifying *tsumori* "plan", and the *plan to do something* construction might be considered to be a set expression which normally contains a non-MASU verbal internally.

The VP *o-me ni kakatta* seen in (1-c), on the other hand, modifies *mono* "one/person (humble)", and, on the surface, the resulting NP differs little in construction from the *okonawaremashita gakkai*, "conference held" NP in the same sentence. One should ask, therefore, why the former (actually the second VP in the sentence) occurs in the regular non-MASU form, while the latter (the first VP) has the polite -MASU marker. This is what we want to look at here: whether the *o-me ni kakatta* can take the -MASU and, if it can, whether both sentence-internal verbals can occur with that politeness marker in the same sentence or clause.

PAST INVESTIGATION

First survey

A number of years ago, DRB conducted several surveys to examine the acceptability of the sentence-internal -MASU construction. For the most part, the questionnaires were paper-based, but the final one was web-based. Details of these surveys can be seen in Bogdan (1992 & 2002), but here we will concentrate on the first survey.

The questionnaire consisted of 21 sentences: all variants based on the sentence found in (1-c). Let us look at this sentence, slightly modified in (2).

(2) *Watakushi wa sakushuu Mishigan daigaku de okonawaremashita[1] gakkai no seki de chotto o-me ni kakatta[2] mono[3] de gozaimasu[4].*
"*I am (a/the student) who met you briefly at an academic conference held at Michigan University last fall.*"

First of all, as a minor change, notice that the *Sate* "Well" has been removed from the beginning of the sentence because it was suggested that it might seem a bit strange to have a sentence beginning with this taken out of a larger context, and also its presence or absence should not have a great effect on the overall level of politeness of the sentence. The resulting sentence now begins with the pronoun *Watakushi* "I".

Notice also that there are four underlined parts which are numbered. Each of these "slots" can be varied with respect to honorification. The first two slots are the two sentence-internal VPs in question, the third is the NP which is modified by the second VP, and the final is the sentence-final VP. The alternations in the first two slots would be between whether the VP contained the performative honorific -MASU or not. Thus the respondents would see either *okonawaremashita* or *okonawareta* in Slot1 and *o-me ni kakarimashita* or *o-me ni kakatta* in Slot2.

Slot3 provided an alternation between the humble *mono* "person/one" and the neutral (with regard to politeness) *gakusei* "student". In the fourth, and final, slot, the polite form of the copula *desu* "am" alternated with the hyperpolite (or hyper formal) *de gozaimasu* "am". The sentence-final verb could also conceivably be the neutral *da* copula, but the use of this form in such a letter was judged to be extremely unlikely, (discussed below) and its inclusion as an alternative would have required a doubling of the number of sentences to be judged in the survey.

In this way, having the two possible values for each of the four slots gives us 2 X 2 X 2 X 2 = 16 permutations. These 16 patterns form the first 16 sentences used in the original questionnaire.

Anyone familiar with Japanese will realize immediately that the four slots chosen are not the only positions in which politeness can be varied. For example, the *Watakushi* "I" could be replaced with the slightly less polite/formal *Watashi* (not "impolite", but slightly lower on the scale). As mentioned above, the final verb could be in the plain form, rather than the -MASU (*desu* in this case) form. However, the social-linguistic context of the sentence suggests that it is part of a formal letter--there are other formal expressions such as *sakushu* "last fall" and *no seki* "place?"-- and that the performative honorific is more natural here rather than the plain form. Futhermore, had this choice been included or the sentence-initial pronoun slot been added, the number of permutations would have doubled to 32 (or 64, if both had been included), and it was already difficult enough for the respondents to deal with 16 very similar sentences.

There were five sentences, in which different lexical items were substituted for the second VP, added to the 16 permutations, bringing the total number to 21 sentences. The respondents were asked to judge the acceptability of each sentence by marking it with an "X" or "O". 48 native speakers of Japanese, all elementary school teachers in southern Ehime Prefecture, responded to the questionnaire. Because the survey was conducted by mail, there was no way to determine how much time the respondents took to complete the survey. Also, demographics such as age, sex, and dialect were not taken into account. Unfortunately, the survey had to be put together and distributed hastily.

Table 1: Averages and Cumulative CP

S#	Pattern	Raw	%	CP	%AVG
[1]	2222	6	13	8	13
[9]	2221	8	17	7	21
[2]	1222	8	17		
[5]	2212	11	23		
[3]	2122	13	27		
[7]	2112	9	19	6	31
[11]	2121	11	23		
[13]	2211	11	23		
[10]	1221	15	31		
[6]	1212	20	42		
[4]	1122	22	46		
[15]	2111	14	29	5	36
[14]	1211	15	31		
[8]	1112	20	42		
[12]	1121	21	44		
[16]	1111	23	48	4	48

Table 2: Internal VP Patterns

S#	Pattern	Raw	%	AVG
[1]	2222	6	13	
[9]	2221	8	17	
[5]	2212	11	23	
[13]	2211	11	23	19
[3]	2122	13	27	
[11]	2121	11	23	
[7]	2112	9	19	
[15]	2111	14	29	24
[2]	1222	8	17	
[10]	1221	15	31	
[6]	1212	20	42	
[14]	1211	15	31	30
[4]	1122	22	46	
[12]	1121	21	44	
[8]	1112	20	42	
[16]	1111	23	48	45

First Survey Results

The most glaring result from the responses was that no single sentence of the 16 was deemed acceptable by even half of the teachers. The highest acceptability rating was earned by the sentence with the lowest cumulative honorification (CP), [#16]. 48 percent of respondents judged this sentence--in which each of the four slots had the member with the lower level of politeness--to be acceptable. On the other end of the spectrum, the sentence with all "polite" makers, [#1], received the lowest vote of confidence; only 13 percent found it acceptable. In looking for patterns, it seemed that the higher the cumulative politeness, the lower the acceptable rating the sentence received.

Table 1 shows this pattern to some degree. The **S#** indicates the order in which the sentence occurred on the questionnaire. The "pattern" in the **Pattern** column is supposed to represent the pattern of politeness markers in the sentence. A "2" represents the member of each pair with the higher level of politeness, and the "1", the one with the lower level. The actual number and percentages are found in the **Raw** and **%** columns, respectively.

The numbers found in the **CP** (Cumulative Politeness) column are simply the sums of the 1s and 2s in the pattern. This is just a very vague indicator of politeness--because the expressions in the slots contain different types of honorification markers--and should not be taken as an absolute value. It just gives idea of the relative number of honorification markers. The sentences in the table are ordered and grouped according to their relative numbers of markers, and the **%AVG** column shows the average of the acceptability for each

group. There is variance within the groupings and between members of different groups, but, viewed this way, the results seem to suggest a roughly inversely proportional relationship between cumulative honorification and the number of respondents finding the sentence acceptable, at least within this set of data.

The data in the second table, Table 2, are grouped according to the pattern formed by the first two slots: i.e., those with the sentence-internal VPs. Again, the overall pattern suggests an inverse relationship between cumulative politeness and acceptability, with "22" at the low end and "11" at the high end of acceptability. Sentence [3] most closely matches the original sentence found in the study guide, and, with 27 percent of the respondents judging it acceptable, it did receive a higher rating than the 17% received by Sentence [2], which has the reverse pattern of sentence-internal -MASU use. However, the other members of the "12" group all received higher ratings than their parallels in the "21" group--[10] vs. [11], [6] vs. [7], and [14] vs. [15]-- indicating that using the -MASU in the second internal VP is not only possible, but also may be preferable in some cases.

As far as having both internal VPs with -MASU, the acceptability average was the lowest of the four patterns, but, at 19%, it would still seem to be possible.

Other Data-gathering

While they will not be covered here, it bears mentioning that some tentative follow-up surveys were conducted after the original questionnaire: a couple with students from universities in Ehime and Miyagi Prefectures, and one with adults who were not in education, either as faculty or staff. In the case of this last questionnaire, DRB had access to a server at the university where he was working at the time and, using HTML and CGI scripting in Perl, was able to produce a web-based survey in which the participants were asked to rate the sentences using pull-down menus. The survey was conducted during a computer class for the general public and performed double duty; it gave the participants a chance to understand the mechanics behind Internet forms and it provided data for honorification analysis.

The 47 respondents rated the 16 sentences on a 5-point scale and then were asked to perform another task, in which they produced their own sentences using pull-down menus for the four slots discussed above. This sentence production task was added because it seemed to be a more natural way of eliciting data rather than having the respondents look at a slew of sentences and give them ratings. Over the years, the author has been asked to do the latter enough times to know that it is not a natural (or pleasant, for that matter) use of language. The optimal method for gathering linguistic data would be to examine spontaneous production, but, by all accounts, spontaneously produced utterances with sentences containing two or more sentence-internal VPs with the -MASU form do not seem to occur all that often. The author did examine a fairly comprehensive corpus of e-mails from university staff and found some examples of the construction, but the frequency was relatively low.

The results of the sentence production task were somewhat interesting, if inconclusive. No one produced the 2122 pattern--the one that corresponds with the original (1-c) sentence--and only one person

came up with the 1222 pattern which had the -MASU form reversed with the internal verbs. In the cases where only one of the internal VPs had the -MASU, and the other two slots were kept constant, the second VP won out every time except for once, and, in that instance--2121 and 1221--neither pattern was produced, resulting in a tie. With these respondents, therefore, the second sentence-internal VP was more often a candidate for honorification than the first VP.

The three patterns produced by the most people were, in order of their popularity, 2212, 1112, and 1212, at 32%, 21%, and 13%, respectively. Only 6% produced the 1111 pattern, the one with the lowest index of honorification. In the case of this production task, we did not see the same tendency for an inverse relationship between acceptability and cumulative honorification that was posited for the first survey.

Whether this discrepancy results from the nature of the respondents or the nature of the task remains to be determined.

PRESENT WORK

Background

The previous section briefly discusses the production task in a prior survey in which the respondents were asked to choose alternatives from a pull-down menu in order to produce a sentence based on the original example. While the idea of eliciting data in this manner is a valid one, there were some concerns about the way it was conducted, First of all, the task occurred on a webpage right after a set of the 16 similar sentences that the respondents had to judge acceptable or not. Also, it occurred in isolation without a discourse context. Remember that this was supposed to be a sentence found in a letter.

Accordingly, a new questionnaire was developed in order to provide a more natural context for the respondents to produce the sentence in. When the previous survey was made, DRB had access to a server at the university where he worked, which allowed him to create the webpage and a CGI script to process it. Because this is no longer possible at his present place of employment, he decided that Google Forms might provide an alternate method to accomplish something similar.

The form emulated a letter in order to provide a more natural context for producing the sentence. One limiting factor in using this method is that you can not have the pull-down menu "blanks" within the text itself; they have to be added as separate questions. Other than this, however, making the questionnaire was quite straightforward and easy. In addition to the four pull-down menus for the slots, a text box was included to allow the respondents to make comments about their choices, the text, or the questionnaire in general. They also were to provide the following demographic information: gender, the prefecture they were from, age, occupation, and length of employment. All items except for the Comments Box required responses. A screenshot of the questionnaire can be seen in Figure 1.

The respondents were staff members and former staff members of Ehime University who were in the same tennis group that DRB is a member of. This was intended to be a pilot survey and there was only a brief period to run the survey, but 20 people--15 men and 5 women-- were kind enough to take part.

下記の文章は、学生が教授に宛てた手紙の一例です。
下線部の内容について、当てはまると思うものを選んでください。
お手数をおかけしますが、ご協力をお願いします。
===

拝啓、

本格的な夏を迎え毎日蒸し暑い日々が続いておりますが、いかがお過ごしでいらっしゃいますか。

突然お手紙をさしあげる失礼をお許し下さい。私は昨秋○○市で [1]＿＿＿＿＿学会の席で[2] ＿＿＿＿＿[3] ＿＿＿＿＿[4]
＿＿＿＿＿。

その節は、有意義な御話を伺う機会を得ることができ、大変ありがたく存じております。特に、・・・につきましてはとても勉
強になりました。ぜひ、御教示をいただきたく、お手紙を書きました。

先生がまた○○についてご講演されるご予定がございましたら、是非拝聴させていただきたいと思っております。

今後ともよろしくご教示頂けますよう併せてお願い申し上げます。

時節柄、くれぐれもご自愛下さいますようお祈り申し上げます。

敬具

[1] *
＿＿＿＿＿＿＿ ⬍

[2] *
＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿ ⬍

[3] *
＿＿＿＿＿＿＿ ⬍

[4] *
＿＿＿＿＿＿＿ ⬍

コメント
上記の選択肢を選んだ理由などについてコメント・説明を頂けたら嬉しいです。

Figure 1: Questionnaire Screenshot

Results

The results from the questionnaire are organized in Tables 3, 4, and 5. This is a pilot study, and there were only 20 respondents, which essentially does not lend itself to a statistical analysis, but we can still see some interesting patterns in the choices, and it was the comments that were actually intended to be a major factor in developing a follow-up survey.

Table 3 presents the results with the Japanese romanized or translated, Table 4 organizes by frequency the patterns of the 15 who did not choose "Other" for any of the slots, and, finally, Table 5 gives the translations of the comments. This questionnaire allowed the respondents to choose "Other" for the four slots, and these choices are represented by the *s in the patterns in Table 3. Five of the 20 opted for that route, and fortunately some of them kindly gave their reasons in the Comments Box.

We see an interesting parallel with the earlier survey in that no one produced the 2122 pattern of the original sentence. In fact, nine (actually 10, if you count the 12*1 of #19) respondents preferred the use of the -MASU form in the second over the first of the two internal VPs. Comment C5 gives some very interesting reasoning for that choice: the judgement that it was the more important of the two VPs. Some

Table 3: Pilot Survey Results

	Comment	Pattern	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	From	Sex	Age
1	C1	1211	okonawareta	o-me ni kakarimashita	○○daigaku no gakusei	desu	Ehime	F	48
2		2212	okonawaremashita	o-me ni kakarimashita	○○daigaku no gakusei	de gozaimasu	Ehime	F	42
3		2111	okonawaremashita	o-me ni kakatta	○○daigaku no gakusei	desu	Ehime	F	37
4	C2	2*21	okonawaremashita	Other	mono	desu	Ehime	F	55
5	C3	2211	okonawaremashita	o-me ni kakarimashita	○○daigaku no gakusei	desu	Ehime	F	40
6		*122	Other	o-me ni kakatta	mono	de gozaimasu	Ehime	M	65
7	C4	**11	Other	Other	○○daigaku no gakusei	desu	Ehime	M	65
8		1212	okonawareta	o-me ni kakarimashita	○○daigaku no gakusei	de gozaimasu	Ehime	M	34
9		1211	okonawareta	o-me ni kakarimashita	○○daigaku no gakusei	desu	Hiroshima	M	33
10		1211	okonawareta	o-me ni kakarimashita	○○daigaku no gakusei	desu	Ehime	M	35
11	C5	12**	okonawareta	o-me ni kakarimashita	Other	Other	Hiroshima	M	25
12		1212	okonawareta	o-me ni kakarimashita	○○daigaku no gakusei	de gozaimasu	Okayama	M	23
13		1211	okonawareta	o-me ni kakarimashita	○○daigaku no gakusei	desu	Hiroshima	M	29
14		1111	okonawareta	o-me ni kakatta	○○daigaku no gakusei	desu	Ehime	M	60
15		1212	okonawareta	o-me ni kakarimashita	○○daigaku no gakusei	de gozaimasu	Hiroshima	M	45
16		1212	okonawareta	o-me ni kakarimashita	○○daigaku no gakusei	de gozaimasu	Hiroshima	M	45
17		1121	okonawareta	o-me ni kakatta	mono	desu	Ehime	M	26
18		1211	okonawareta	o-me ni kakarimashita	○○daigaku no gakusei	desu	Ehime	M	45
19	C6	12*1	okonawareta	o-me ni kakarimashita	Other	desu	Ehime	M	62
20		2212	okonawaremashita	o-me ni kakarimashita	○○daigaku no gakusei	de gozaimasu	Hiroshima	M	30

Table 4: Frequency

Pattern	Frequency
2212	2
2111	2
1212	4
1211	5
1121	1
1111	1

Table 5: Comments

C1	What about something like "kaisai-sareta" for [1] and "hajimete o-me ni kakatta" for [2]?
C2	I'm not so comfortable with the term "o-me ni kakaru"
C3	I chose phrases I normally hear.
C4	It was surprisingly difficult.
C5	For [3] and [4], I think the sender should identify themself clearly, using something like "I am Taro Aidai from Ehime University." In addition, with (1) and (2), I chose the more polite wording for (2) because it was the more important of the two.
C6	The "humble (using mono)" FirstName LastName from X University

comments also dovetailed concern in earlier work that the lexical items may be influencing the degree of honorification, and follow-up surveys could include different lexical choices in the options.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This quick and dirty survey provided some food for thought in designing future research methodology. Production as opposed to evaluation gives a more natural method for gathering linguistic data, at least in this case. As mentioned above, more flexibility in lexical items, in the form of options in the pull-down menus, will provide a means for examining how lexical choice might influence the degree of honorification allowed.

Five of the 20 respondents opted for the "Other" in at least one of the slots, making it difficult to compare their patterns with those of the others. This pilot survey, however, included that choice in the hopes that those making that choice would give reasons for it in the comments. It would be nice if there were a

way to require a person choosing "Other" to comment on it, but DRB has not yet been able to figure out a method for doing so in the form production process used this time.   That does not mean, however, that there is no way to accomplish this.

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