

The Shift in the Use of Keigo by Migrant Care workers on TikTok Social Media

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Abstract

Honorifics are one of the causes of stress for migrant care workers in Japan. To alleviate stress, they play TikTok, a social media platform widely used to upload videos of conversations between care workers and the elderly. From the videos, this study scrutinized how language was used between care workers and the elderly in communicating. This research explored video displays on TikTok based on the use of language in conversation services between care workers and elders based on culturally based concepts around the usage of Japanese honorifics in constructing social identities. The data were obtained from 35 TikTok accounts used through an online survey. The data, in the form of videos on TikTok social media, showed language use between care workers and the elderly, and were then analyzed using a sociolinguistic framework. Findings have shown that in the communication, the care workers manipulated honorifics (*keigo*). The results of data analysis show that in the TikTok videos, there is a language shift from *keigo* form (*sonkeigo* 'respect form', *kenjōgo* 'humble form') to *teineigo* 'polite form' and even shifted to *futsuutai* 'plain form'. This shift in honorifics is influenced by changes in (1) social position, regard (2) power, and intertwined, but the major (3) age, and (4) formality. The results of this research can educate migrant care workers in selecting a language appropriate to social factors to create a good relationship between care workers and the elderly in delivering services to the elderly in-home care.

Keywords: TikTok social media, manipulating honorifics, shifting honorifics, migrant care workers

1. Introduction

TikTok, a popular social media platform, has been underutilized by educators due to its unique opportunities and challenges (Faltsek et al., 2023; Stoddard et al., 2024). Through TikTok, internet influencers convey messages expected to influence the audience (Sharabati et al., 2022; Ettisa, 2023). TikTok is valuable for gauging public sentiment on critical health concerns like global warming in China (Yunpeng Sun et al., 2024). TikTok is a popular platform for sharing health-related information, accessible contraception content (Rachel E. Stoddard et al., 2024), and medical information on dissociative identity disorder (Munoz et al., 2024). TikTok content can also show unique activities, for example, "What I Eat in a Day" (#WhatIEatInADay), in which a creator documents the food they ate over the assumed span of a single day (Heather, 2023). TikTok broadcasts of the activities of migrant care workers in Japanese home care have the aim of being entertainment to relieve work fatigue, apart from that because of the cuteness of the relationship between care workers and the elderly. From this show, there is something unique, namely the manipulation of Japanese honorifics by care workers (non-native Japanese) towards the elderly (native Japanese).

Honorifics in Japanese are called *keigo*. Sino-Japanese composite meaning "language" or "speech" and "to respect, to honour." It is sometimes translated as "polite language" in English. It mainly refers to honorifics (Wetzel, 1994; Kabaya, 2009; Rahayu, 2013; Maruki, 2022). The Japanese honorific system uses addressee and referent honorifics for addressees (*taisha-keigo*) and the person being talked about (*sozai-keigo*), with referent honorifics used by lower-status individuals, influenced by context and hierarchical relationships (Okamoto, 2011). *Keigo* is the core of Japanese polite expressions in the sociolinguistics framework (Ide, 1982). Since the 1990s, sociolinguistic research has incorporated ego into honorific language writings, emphasizing politeness and respect in communication. Sociolinguistics can analyze the phenomenon of *keigo* use because the use of *keigo* is associated with social factors studied in sociolinguistics. Using *keigo* will change based on speech partners, places, situations, positions, and others (Maruki, 2022). In addition, *keigo* is used based on age, a position

as a superior or older sibling, and proximity factor (Suzuki, 1998; Kabaya, 2009; Deckert & Vickers, 2021).

Honorifics are not strictly necessary to express polite attitudes or deference (Pizziconi, 2011). In Okinawan society, it is found that the traditional honor system (strict use of honorifics) has changed to suit modern life (Arakaki, 2023). In Okinawa society, it was found that the traditional honorific system (use of strict honorifics) has changed to fit modern life (Arakaki, 2023). The implementation of this theory is not absolute because there is a shift in position. (Non-)propositional irony in Japanese – Impoliteness behind honorifics concludes that non-propositional irony can be achieved by violating normative expectations, using unnecessary honorifics, incorporating impolite expressions, or repeating others' honorifics, which can either exalt or downgrade the speaker (Obana & Haugh, 2021). Based on an understanding of the use of *keigo*, care workers should use *keigo* when communicating with the elderly. In reality, care workers tend to shift to *keigo*, even though based on social factors, *keigo* language should be used in services for the elderly.

The question that arises is how manipulating honorifics is shown in the use of care workers' language toward the elderly in TikTok broadcasts. Based on the theory of honorifics related to social factors, based on differences in age and position, care workers should use *sonkeigo* (respect form) towards the elderly. However, care workers tend to manipulate, indicated by a shift from ego to plain form. The difficulty of applying *keigo* based on the study above, needs to be analyzed in depth so that the difficult effect of *keigo* does not become an obstacle to communication. The shift in the use of *keigo* is a keyword in this study to show that *futsuutai* or plain form, a non-respectful and non-formal language, can be applied to communication between care workers and the elderly. How *keigo* use shifts in conversations between care workers and the elderly and how *keigo* is misused and how to respond when care workers misuse *keigo* needs to be analyzed. The results of this research will especially contribute to migrant care workers from Indonesia in providing services using polite language to the elderly so that communication can run well. Apart from that, it can provide input to sending institutions to provide learning about *keigo* related to situational factors by paying attention to Japanese culture in the communication aspect.

2. Literature Review

2.1 TikTok Social Media

Social media is an electronic communication that allows individuals to form online communities through networking sites and microblogging. Popular platforms include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and WeChat. These platforms have become integral to various aspects of life, including shopping, education, and business. What is conveyed in TikTok impressions is called memes. Memes on TikTok are often underestimated, but the platform is more than just a medium; it mediates and facilitates short video production, becoming a culture (Holland, 2020; Zulli & Zulli, 2022; Tanjung, 2024).

However, it is important to be cautious of potential dangers, such as incorrect education, false advertising, privacy invasion, and the influence of harmful blogs on young people (Zhang, 2022). Public health organizations use influencers to raise awareness about health concerns. Climate change is a growing concern among young people, leading to the creation of climate change-related news and calamities on TikTok (Yunpeng et al., 2024).

TikTok, launched in China in 2016, gained popularity during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Studies show TikTok's educational value in creating interactive digital environments, positively impacting students' motivation, engagement, and interaction (Gu et al., 2022; Fiallos and Figueroa, 2023; López-Carril et al., 2024; Yunpeng et al., 2024). In 2017, TikTok emerged as a social media platform that gained immense popularity and generated a lot of discussion. In 2018, TikTok made itself available in the US following a merger with Musically, another app for lip-syncing. TikTok boasts 800 million active global users and 100 million US users each month, making it the ninth most popular platform of the 2010s (Zulli & Zulli, 2022; Mansoor Iqbal, 2024). TikTok videos featuring personal experiences of depression and anxiety are more engaging than health professionals' videos, potentially leading to self-diagnosis. Strategic efforts and digital health literacy are needed (Litty Samuel & Katelynn Kuijpers, 2024).

2.2 Japanese Honorifics

Studies on honorifics in Japan have revealed some common applications of honorific forms previously thought to have "secondary" connotations. Hatsutaroo Ooishi (1986 [1975]:65 ff.) is a Japanese linguist, and he lists the following: reverence (*agame* あがめ), respect (*sonchoo* 尊重), distance (*hedate* へだて), formality (*aratamari* あらたまり), dignity (*igen* 威厳), grace/good manners (*hin'i* 品性), irony (*hiniku* 皮肉), contempt/disdain (*keibetsu* 軽蔑), and endearment (*shin'ai* 親愛). Others refer to "speech-beautifying" (*bika* 美化) or "nasty politeness" (*inginburei* 慇懃無礼) or "polite hypocrisy." Affective and social connotations are thus included in the spectrum of "secondary meanings." They are seen as "derivative" from an initial meaning of true deference and justified as the result of historical developments or pragmatic inferences. But they are parasitic on an always "coded" deferential meaning (Pizziconi, 2011).

Honorifics, grammar-based language devices, are often seen as symbols of respect for higher positions. However, they can convey meanings other than social ranks, such as affective stances. Deferential forms indicate power dynamics in business discourse and subordination in gendered discourse. Understanding that honorifics can convey meanings other

than social ranks is crucial, as believing they express respectful purposes can be overattributed or misunderstood (Wetzel, 1994; Pizziconi, 2004; Makiko, 2006; Maruki, 2022). Linguistic markers are analyzed lexically and grammatically honorific language (*keigo*). The following is an explanation of the honorific languages *keigo* (*sonkeigo*, *kenjōgo*, *teineigo* including over *teineigo*).

Table 1. Keigo Markers

Language Variation	Language Markers	Explanation of Language Variation	
K E I G O	<i>Sonkeigo</i>	[<i>o/go-ni narimasu</i>][<i>o/go -kudasai</i>]	Language used to honor the speech partner/person who is the subject of conversation by exalting his actions or conditions.
	<i>Kenjōgo</i>	[<i>reru · rareru</i>]	Language used to demean speakers' actions or conditions to respect the speech partner/person who is the subject of conversation.
	<i>Teineigo</i>	[<i>irasshaimasu</i>] [<i>meshiagarimasu</i>] and others (special forms)	The language used in formal situations (<i>Teineigo</i> has definite markers of copula <i>desu</i> and <i>~masu</i> . While the over <i>teineigo</i> has markers such as <i>de gozaimasu</i>).

Suzuki (1998) stated that *sonkeigo* is: 尊敬語は、上役の人、上司、先輩、初対面の人、年齢の上の人、お客様に対して、その動作や状態などに、敬意を表す言葉づかいです。 *Sonkeigo wa, joutakunohito, joushi, senpai, shotaimenohito, nenreinouenohito, okyakusama ni taishite, sonodousa ya joutai nado ni, keii o arawasu kotobazukai desu.* *Sonkeigo* is respectful language to express respect for people in higher positions, superiors, seniors, people meeting for the first time, and customers.

Based on the definition of *sonkeigo* 'language to elevate other people' above, it is clear that the most important thing in expressing respectful language is the speaker's awareness as O1 of his position towards the speech partner/O2 or it could also be towards the person who is the subject of conversation/O3. The use of this pattern as a marker for the *sonkeigo* form can be found in the following sentence:

- 1) 先生は辞書を買われます。
Sensei wa jisho o kawaremasu (SON)*.
 'The teacher/lecturer will **buy** a dictionary.'
 SON=*Sonkeigo*

The *-rareru* pattern in the verb *kawaremasu* 'to buy' is a change from the verb *kaimasu*. This verb is used to honor the sensei 'teacher/lecturer' by elevating the actions carried out by the sensei 'teacher/lecturer' through the verb you. This pattern as a *sonkeigo* marker can be changed to the *o/go + Vrenyoukei + ni naru* pattern with the same goal, namely to respect the speaker and the person who is the subject of conversation. So, if the sentence above is changed to the pattern *o/go + Vrenyoukei + ni naru* it will become:

- 2) 先生は辞書をお買いになります。
Sensei wa jisho o okaininarimasu. (SON)
 'The teacher/lecturer **buys** a dictionary'

The patterns *sonkeigo -rareru* and *o/go + Vrenyoukei + ni naru* apply to certain verbs. For verbs that already have a change in lexical form (which already have their own vocabulary in the form of *sonkeigo*) they cannot be changed to the forms *-rareru* and *o/go + Vrenyoukei + ni naru*.

While *Kenjōgo* is *shugo o hikumeru to iu seikaku o motsu no ga kenjōgo desu* '*kenjōgo* is an attitude of condescension to the subject (Kikuchi, 1996). The purpose of someone expressing language in the *kenjōgo* variety 'language for being humble' is to respect the speaker or person who is the subject of conversation. The difference between *sonkeigo* and *kenjōgo* is that the language used in *sonkeigo* is language to elevate other people, while the language used in *kenjōgo* is humble language. The purpose of *sonkeigo* and *kenjōgo* is the same: to respect the speaker or person who is the subject of conversation (Wetzel, 1994; Pizziconi, 2004; Kuraesin, 2021).

One of the characteristics of *kenjōgo* expressions is the choice of vocabulary as in the example speech below (Makino et al., 2002: 204).

- 3) きょう 結婚式の 写真をはいけんしました。
Kinou kekkonshiki no shashin o haikenshimashita. (KEN)*
 'Yesterday I saw photos of the wedding celebration.'
- 4) 私はアメリカ からまいりました。
Watakushi wa amerika kara mairimashita. (KEN)
 'I come from America.'
 KEN=*Kenjōgo*

The vocabulary words *haikenshimashita* 'see' and *mairimashita* 'come' are lexical (verb) markers of *kenjōgo*. This verb is used to demean the speaker (the speaker's actions) to respect the speaker.

Lastly is *teineigo*. The form of *teineigo* 'polite form' or in Japanese is explained as *bunzentai o teineina kanjinisuru* 'a sentence that as a whole shows polite language' (Kaneko, 2010). This form is characterized by *masu* and *desu*. (David, 2009) calls the form of *teineigo* 'polite form' formal language. *Masu* is an ending for verbs and functions as a formal expression marker. Changes in *masu* also vary, for example according to the past tense marker it becomes *mashita*. *Masu* can also change into *masen* (negative *teineigo* marker in the future) and *masen deshita* (negative *teineigo* marker in the past tense). The relationship of the various *teineigo* can be seen in the following chart.

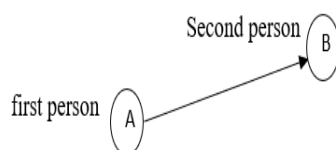


Figure 1. The Relationship of *Teineigo*
(Bunkachou, 1985)

2.3 Manipulating Honorific

In *keigo* theory, the use of *keigo* (honorific language) in service situations for the elderly is one of the stress triggers for workers in Japan (Asis & Carandang, 2020). However, those honorifics are not strictly necessary to express polite attitudes or differences and may be interpreted in at least two ways, one of which may be problematic given some arguments made in past research on Japanese (Pizziconi, 2011). In Okinawa society, it was found that the traditional honorific system (use of strict honorifics) has changed to fit modern life (Arakaki, 2023). Kabaya, 2009) uses the term *ningenkankei* 'relationship between participants' in communication to indicate which party needs to be given honorific language, either *sonkeigo*, *kenjōgo*, *teineigo*, or *futsuutai*. Based on the *keigo* theory, it is related to service communication between care workers and the elderly, so as service providers and age differences, care workers should use *keigo* to respect the elderly. The implementation of this theory is not absolute because there is a shift in position. The shift in language variations from honorific to plain form occurs due to changes in distance, power, place and conversation topics (Ghasani, 2021; Kukreti & Patel, 2020; Yakpo, 2020).

Keigo shifts are carried out for certain reasons. Hotel staff use plain forms when dealing with complaints from customers to be easy to hear, demonstrating awareness of guest concerns, and expediting complaint processing (Kadwa & Alshenqeeti, 2020). In the tourism domain, tour guides shift from *keigo* language to plain form due to shifts in social factors (Andriyani et al., 2019), with the following conversation example.

- 5) *Beach Boy* :すごい、ちゃんとできたよ。
*Sugoi, chanto dekitayo. (FUT)**
 'Great. It can be done well, yes'.
 Japanese tourist : まだだめ。
Mada dame.
 'Still not yet'.
 FUT=*Futsuutai*

Beach boy uses plain form which is shown by the use of the word "*dekita*" and ending with the suffix "*yo*". In these conditions it is impossible for beach boys to use the form of respect term (*dekita* → *dekimashita*) because of practical factors when beach boys teach surfing on Bali beaches. The implementation of manipulating honorifics in the form of a *keigo* shift that is asymmetrical to the *keigo* theory associated with *Keigo* as a Hospitality Language under certain conditions, is not considered a *keigo* implementation error.

Based on the results of the literature review above, it shows that *keigo* as the respectful language of the Japanese spoken community is very strong in the context of the use of service language (hospitality language). Hierarchically, speakers use *sonkeigo*, *kenjōgo*, *teineigo*, to show respect for their speech partners. The age and power differences that occur in home care (the hierarchy between care workers (servants) and the elderly (who are served) in this research will show the uniqueness of *keigo* implementation where there will be shifts based on social factors.

3. Research Methods

3.1 Study Desain

This research is exploratory and qualitative and refers to an interpretive paradigm. Researchers obtained natural narratives and conversations from care workers uploaded to TikTok's social media. The analysis focuses on the use of *keigo* based on distance, power, place and conversation topics. This research uses the social media TikTok because this social media can analyze *an sich* conversation (what it is) which can show the naturalness of the data in this sociolinguistic analysis. Conversation participants indicated that the implementation of the *keigo* concept should be demonstrated by care workers for the elderly, considering that the Japanese *keigo* concept is very strong in the language of service (hospitality language). From 35 TikTok videos, researchers analyzed their perspective understanding of *keigo* by communicating via the send message facility in the TikTok application. From send message 35 videos. Researchers received 17 responses from care workers who own the TikTok account.

3.2 Study Area

Researchers have selected 35 TikTok videos on the following basis:

- 1) Show the conversation participants, namely care workers and the elderly.
- 2) There is a conversation that shows signs of *keigo* and *futsuutai* (*futsuugo*).
- 3) Conversations that show the existence of contextual factors that can be identified based on social factors.

Based on the area care workers of 35 TikTok account owners, researchers succeeded in getting area care workers from migrants, namely from Indonesia, Vietnam and Myanmar. Of the 35 videos, 17 respondents responded to the questionnaire regarding understanding the use of *keigo* based on social factors. From TikTok, you can also inventory their places of work, namely in the Ibaraki, Osaka, Niigata, Saitama, Chiba, Hokkaido, Tokyo, and Maebashi areas.

3.3 Study Participants

Participants in this research are care workers and the elderly who interact in communication. Care workers work in home care (*roojin home*) with a special specific worker visa with a residence permit period of more than 3 years. Workers must be at least 20 years old with Japanese language skills of at least JLPT N4.

3.4 Data Collection

Data collection was carried out between June 2023 until March 2024. On TikTok social media, 35 care worker accounts were found in Japan. Determining whether the account belongs to care workers is by watching the video content related to care workers in Japan. The 35 care worker video displays were selected again based on the theme of care worker activities. The theme of care worker activities is categorized into two types: activities that show conversations between care workers and the elderly and videos that do not show conversations between care workers and the elderly. The following is a video display of care workers resulting from a screen shoot on TikTok social media.

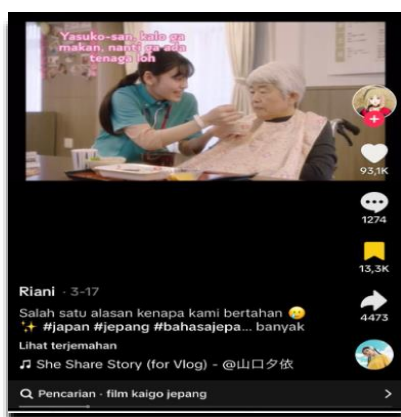


Figure 2. Conversation Videos

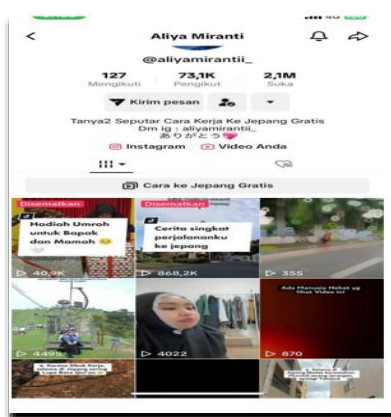


Figure 3. Video of Care Workers Activities

Figure 2 is a video display of care workers which shows conversation activities between care workers and the elderly, while Figure 3 is a video of care workers which shows daily activities without any conversation. In the video above, Figure 2 can be used as research data, while Figure 3 is not included in the data to be analyzed. Of the 41 videos uploaded by care workers, only 35 video views can be used as research data because these 35 videos show communication interactions in various languages. TikTok videos of communication actors (Care workers and the elderly) are displayed with various views.

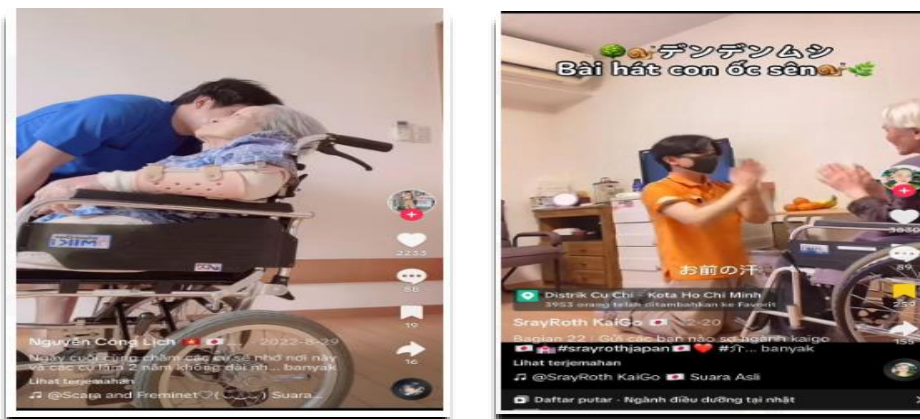


Figure 4. Showing the Faces of Care Workers and the Elderly

The figure is an example of a TikTok video showing the faces of care workers and the elderly when care workers record their conversations. Meanwhile, the following figure shows the faces of care workers without showing the faces of the elderly when recording their communications.



Figure 5. Showing the faces of care workers and covering the faces of the elderly

In certain displays, conversations between care workers and the elderly are displayed using certain icons as follows.



Figure 6. Display with icons

3.5 Research Context

This research is part of research 2.0, where social media acts as a space for scientific research or scientific inquiry. In this article TikTok is used as a data collection process. In this case, the immigrant community in Japan created the TikTok account. This TikTok community shares experiences in caring for each other.

3.6 Research Design

This research uses an interpretive approach in qualitative research. Qualitative research methods involve nonstatistical and nonnumerical data collection, analysis, and production of evidence (Tracy, 2010; Crowther & Lauesen, 2017). This research data is qualitative in nature, namely analyzing the expressions/speech of immigrant care workers shown on TikTok social media. The language used is *an sich*/unmade so that this sociolinguistic research is very natural. The study of the nature of phenomena, which includes their qualities, different manifestations, the context in which they appear or the perspectives from which they can be perceived, is the definition of qualitative research (Busetto et al., 2020).

3.7 Data Sources

The following are TikTok links summarized from 3 countries: Vietnam, Indonesia and Myanmar.

Table 2. List of TikTok Links and The Country

No	TikTok Link	Country:
1	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNuXQqeH/	Vietnam
2	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNuXgn2A/	Vietnam
3	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNuXxJVD/	Vietnam
4	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNuXxV7A/	Vietnam
5	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNuXxtyD/	Vietnam
6	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNu4RAo3/	Vietnam
7	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNu4rK7r/	Vietnam
8	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNu4eVo2/	Vietnam
9	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNu4NcRC/	Vietnam
10	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNuXKVBBr/	Vietnam
11	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNu4kB28/	Vietnam
12	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNuXTNhv/	Vietnam
13	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNuXEngY/	Vietnam
14	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNuXwKuD/	Vietnam
15	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNuXwu31/	Vietnam
16	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNu41rp3/	Vietnam
17	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSN9WeuoC/	Vietnam
18	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSN3PNkyw/	Vietnam
19	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSN9u5NUw/	Vietnam
20	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNgG9Bm7/	Vietnam
21	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNu46MPo/	Vietnam
22	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNugv4RS/	Vietnam
23	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNHJv9mb/	Indonesia
24	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNGB2hBn/	Indonesia
25	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNHGJedV/	Indonesia
26	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNu4RRXn/	Indonesia
27	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNu4Bbeu/	Indonesia
28	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNu4rpv6/	Indonesia
29	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSN9H5wv8/	Indonesia
30	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSN9WMa4m/	Indonesia
31	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNGWLGQK/	Indonesia
32	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSNoGFQV7/	Myanmar
33	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSFuDPEcB/	Indonesia
34	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSFuUkDDM/	Indonesia
35	https://vt.TikTok.com/ZSFuUjBvx/	Indonesia

On 35 TikTok social media accounts, researchers also sent a questionnaire containing an understanding of *keigo* and social background. Of the 35 accounts, there were 17 accounts as respondents who answered questions via send messages on the TikTok application with the respondent data as follows.

Table 3. Socio-demographic characteristics of migrant care workers.

Characteristics	Total		Use of <i>Keigo</i> in Work Environment		
	n	%	Always	Sometimes	Do not use
Sex					
Male	9	52,95	2	5	2
Female	8	47,06	6	2	
Nationality					
Vietnam	7	41,18	3	3	1
Indonesia	6	35,29	4	2	
Myanmar	4	23,53	1	3	
Length of stay in Japan (years)					

<5	8	47,06	5	3	1
5-10	5	29,41	1	3	
>10	4	23,53		4	
Japanese speaking proficiency					
Beginner	3	17,65		3	
Intermediate	12	70,59	7	5	
Native Level	2	11,76		2	

3.8 Data Analysis

Data collection was carried out by watching videos showing the activities of care workers in providing services to the elderly. Next, the videos were selected based on what care workers said and the responses given by the elderly based on linguistic and non-linguistic markers. Linguistic markers are used to analyze language varieties, while non-linguistic markers are used to analyze aspects of communication that underlie the use of language varieties. Linguistic markers are analyzed lexically and grammatically from plain form (*futsuutai*) and honorific language (*keigo*).

4. Results

This research supports the results of research (Asis & Carandang, 2020) which states that one of the triggers for stress in care workers is communication in Japanese, especially in understanding honorific forms. As an outlet for stress and entertainment, care workers played TikTok and uploaded care workers' activities with the elderly. Another reason for care workers to upload videos of conversations between care workers and the elderly is to convey a message to migrants who are interested in working in Japan by understanding the working situation as in the TikTok broadcast. The problem is that some care workers do not request permission to upload conversation videos. To anticipate this, care workers cover the elderly's faces so that their identity is unknown.

Observing conversations between care workers through exploring TikTok social media, based on the results of data analysis, it shows that there is manipulating honorific language by shifting language which shows an asymmetrical pattern with the concept of *keigo*, namely the language used by care workers is in plain form (*futsuutai*), while the elderly use plain form (*futsuutai*), *futsuutai* and *teineigo*. Care workers do not directly use plain forms, but carry out strategies by opening conversations using *sonkeigo* 'respect form', *kenjōgo* 'humble form', and *teineigo* 'formal form'. Shifts in the use of plain form and *keigo* (*sonkeigo*, *kenjōgo*, and *teineigo*) occur based on the position of the expression (opener, content, closing of the conversation), conversation theme, and conversational formality.

The relationship between care workers and the elderly shows a hierarchical relationship based on power. Based on their role, the elderly have higher power than care workers. Care workers as servants and the elderly as people who receive services. Another thing that determines the power of the elderly is that the elderly pay care workers for the results of their work. Based on this hierarchical relationship, when linked to the concept of honorific language (*keigo*), care workers will use a variety of honorific language (*keigo*) consisting of respectful language (*sonkeigo*), humble language (*kenjōgo*), and formal forms (*teineigo*) to respect the elderly.

The research results show a shift in the use of the *keigo* language variety to *futsuutai* due to the influence of meeting intensity, distance, and conversation themes.

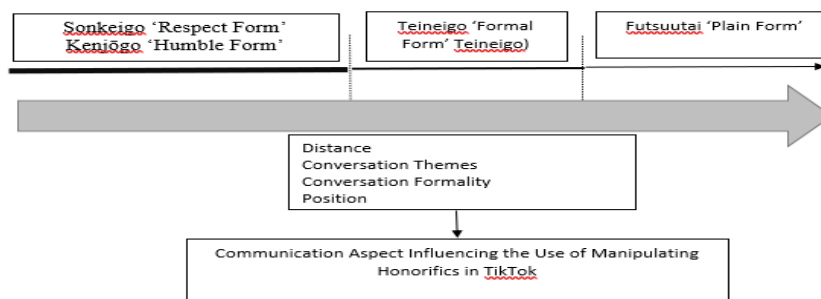


Figure 7. Concept of Manipulating Honorifics Migrant Care Workers in TikTok

5. Discussions

After exploring TikTok social media in conversations between care workers and the elderly, it was concluded that there was manipulation of honorifics by care workers with certain goals. This manipulation is shown by a shift in speech from conversations between care workers and the elderly which is influenced by social status. The shift is marked by honorific language markers (*keigo*) consisting of *sonkeigo*, *kenjōgo*, *teineigo* to plain form (*futsuutai*). From these markers, we will analyze the shift in the use of *keigo* by migrant care workers on TikTok social media. The following is an analysis of language variation markers based on speech equipped with the context of the speech.

Account: @hoai_thuu1996 Country: Vietnam	Elderly : Woman Care workers : Woman Theme : <i>Daijina shashin</i> (important photo)
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- 6) *Kaigo* : *Nee, kono shashin wa mae wa agemashitane.* (TEI)
Demone 28 nichi wa watashi wa betonamu e kaeru nanode zenbu moraimasu.(TEI)
- Care workers : ‘Sometime ago I **gave** you this photo. Since, on the 28th, I went back to Vietnam, I **asked for** all the photos **back**’.
- Obaasan* : *Iie iie, ichi mai motte.*(FUT)
Grandma : ‘No, only **bring** 1 sheet.’
Kaigo : *ichimai?* (FUT)
Care workers : ‘1 sheet?’
Obaasan : *So* (FUT)
Grandma : ‘yes’
Kaigo : *nande, zenbu zenbu* (FUT)
Care workers : ‘Why, want all.’
Obaasan : *iie iie watashi no naku naru, daiji daiji* (FUT)
Grandma : ‘no no, I’ll lose it, this is important, important.’
Kaigo : *nande daiji?* (FUT)
Care workers : ‘Why is it important?’
Obaasan : *Anata nakunaru.* (FUT)
Grandma : ‘I **lost** you’.
Kaigo : *Inakunattara minna ni mainichi misemasuka?* (TEI)
Care workers : ‘If I wasn’t there, would this photo **be shown** to my friends every day?’
Obaasan : *un, mainichi miteru.* (FUT)
Grandma : ‘yes, I **see** it every day’
Kaigo : *Hontō, ureshiyo.* (FUT)
Care workers : ‘That’s right, **so happy**’

This conversation has two markers: the polite language form (*teineigo*) and the plain form (*futsuutai*). Polite language is characterized by sentence endings in the form *-mashita* and *-masu* in the words *agemashita* (to have given) and *moraimasu* (to receive). The care worker conveyed the polite form when opening a conversation to convey the care worker's wishes regarding returning the photo that had been given to the grandmother. The grandmother responded to this opening sentence in the form of *teineigo* in the form of *futsuutai* containing a question sentence, namely *ichimai?* (one sheet?).

But in the middle of the conversation *Kaigo* shifted back to *teineigo* 'polite form' marked by the words *misemasu+ka* when asking. This shows that when asking a question and needing an affirmative answer, the *teineigo* form is used.

In the content of the conversation with the theme of *daijina shashin*, the conversation flows with *futsuutai* markers or regular forms without any respectful language markers. Care workers manipulate honorifics, especially *teineigo* 'formal language', shifting to *futsuutai* 'plain form'.

In the data above, the formal form marked with the suffixes *-mashita* and *-masu* is used by care workers to convey wishes or requests. In the following data, the formal form is used when care workers invite elderly people to do things that care workers tell them to do. The following are examples of invitation sentences delivered by female and male care workers.

Account : hongjp96 Country: Vietnam	Elderly: Woman Care workers: Woman dan Man Theme: told her to eat and brush her teeth
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- 7) *Kaigo* (woman) *Kimura san, ohirugohan deshō* (TEI). *Shokudou ni ikimashouka.*(TEI)
Care worker : ‘Madam Kimura. **It's time for lunch. Let's go** to the dining room.’
Obaasan (*Tsunazuita*)
Grandma (nodded)
- 8) *Kaigo* (man) : *Sooji san, ha migaki ni ikimashouka.*(TEI)
Care workers : ‘Mrs. Sooji, **let's** brush our teeth.’
Obaasan (*Tsunazuita*)
Grandma : (nodded)

Data 7) and 8) show formal forms of indirect command sentences. Formal forms of indirect command sentences are marked by the use of the copula *deshou* and *-mashou* (followed by the question marker "ka"). In the speech of care worker 7) the noun form *sonkeigo* or respect term is also used, marked with the prefix "o" followed by the word *hirugohan* → *ohirugohan* 'lunch'. Grandma responded to the care worker's instructions with the body language 'nod', which means she will do what the care worker tells her to do. This data example is symmetrical to the *keigo* concept where care workers use the *keigo* form to respect the elderly. This is different from the following conversation, where the care worker uses plain form in the following command form speech.

Account: Country: Vietnam	Elderly : Woman Care workers : Woman Theme : menyuruh ganti baju
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- 9) *Kaigo* : *Kawaine* (sambil mengelus baju Elderly), *fuku kigaete*. (FUT)
 Care workers: 'It's funny (while stroking Elderly's clothes), let's **change** clothes.'
Obaasan: **Doko?**(FUT)
 Grandma: 'Where to?'

Care workers give orders to the elderly using direct plain form sentence markers. The plain form of command sentences is marked with the form *~te* (in the word *kigaete* 'change'). Grandma also responded with plain form sentences, namely using the question word *doko* 'where' without being closed by the copula *desu*. Even though the care worker uses plain form in her commands, the grandmother still responds well. Manipulating care workers in this case responded well to the elderly.

In other data, researchers found data when care workers told the elderly to do something using direct sentences with the marker *-kudasai*. In the following conversation, there is a strategy that care workers use when they are going to send an elderly person, namely by opening the conversation using a formal form.

Account: Riani Country: Indonesia	Elderly : Woman Care workers : Woman Theme : menyuruh.
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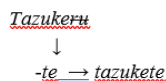
- 10) *Kaigo* : Yukkuri **suwarimashou**. (*kurumaisu ni suwaru*)
 Care workers : 'Sit slowly, okay?.' (sitting in a wheelchair)
Obaasan : (*damattesuwari, ashi o oroshite kurumaisu o idoufuka*)
 Grandma : '(stay still, while lowering your legs and the wheelchair cannot move).'
Kaigo : (*obaasan no ashi o mochiagenagara*) *Yasuko san, ashi o agete*.(FUT)
 Care worker: (while lifting Grandma's legs) 'Madam Yasuko, would you **please move** your legs?.'

The *yukkuri suwarimashou* sentence is a formal indirect command sentence marked by the closing sentence *~mashou*. This opening command sentence is then manipulated by the care worker by shifting it to a plain form command sentence with the marker *~te* (as in data 10). The following data shows the opposite order, namely orders from the elderly to care workers.

Account: Meisari Panjaitan Country: Indonesia	Elderly: Woman Care workers: Woman Theme: Ask for help
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- 11) *Obaasan* : **Tazukete.Tazukete**. (FUT)
 (yonaka ni obaasan ga tazukete tanonde sakenda)
 Grandma : 'Help! help.' (In the middle of the night a grandmother screamed for help).'
Kaigo : *Minna mada neterukara chotto*.(FUT)
Sakki toire ikitai yuteta deshou. (TEI)
 Care worker : 'The others are **still sleeping**, you know. I already accompanied you to the toilet, right?
Obaasan : *Nani?* (FUT)
 Grandma : 'What?'
Kaigo : *Sakki toire ikitai yuteta deshou*.(TEI)
 Care worker : 'I already accompanied you to the toilet, right.'
Obaasan : **Itayo**. (FUT)
 Grandma : 'Yes, **that was**.'
Kaigo : *Un (Obaasan no te o nigirinagara ochitsukaseteageta)*
 Care worker : (I held my grandmother's hand and calmed her down)

This is different from care workers who use *teineigo* markers when giving orders. Grandma uses plain form when asking for help. In the conversation above, the grandmother asked to use the word *tazukete*. *Tazukete* is a *-te* form of verb which comes from the word *tazukeru* with the following changes.



When compared with the use of the *-te* form as a marker for command sentences in data no. 11), namely *-te kudasai*, the *-te kudasai* form spoken by care workers is more polite than the *-te* form in the word *tazukete* spoken by grandmothers. Even though grandmothers use regular forms of words and there is no level of politeness and formality, care workers use polite forms marked with the suffix *-deshou* to respond to grandmother's words. The closeness between care workers and the elderly can also be analyzed through conversations between care workers and the elderly, as in the following example.

Account: Jalah Country: Indonesia	Elderly: Woman Care workers: Man Theme: Tells about the desire to get married
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- 12) *Kaigo* : Obaasan, **genki?** (FUT)
 Care workers: ‘Grandma, are you in **good health?**’
Obaasan : *genki dayo, ton ton ton*
 (*Kaigo no te o tatakinagara*)
 Grandma : I’m healthy, tap tap tap
 (While patting the care workers' hands)
Kaigo : *Obaasan, kekkon shitai to donna hito to **kekkon shimasuka.*** (TEI)
 Care workers : ‘Grandma, (I) want to get married, what kind of a person whom I should **get married?**’
Obaasan : **Dare?** (FUT)
 Grandma : ‘Who?’
Kaigo : *Watashi, kekkon shitai to donna hito to **kekkon shimasuka.***
 Care workers : ‘I, want to get married, what kind of a person whom I should **get married??**’
Obaasan : *Mazu, kokoro ga yasashii **hito.***(FUT)
 Grandma : ‘First, with a kind hearted **person.**’
Kaigo : *Yasashii hito to **kekkon suru?*** (FUT)
 Care workers : ‘**Marry** a good person?’
Obaasan : un (FUT)
 Grandma : ‘

Care workers opened this conversation with the greeting *obaachan, genki?*. *-chan* is a call addressed to a partner who is close and younger than the speaker. In Indonesia there is the *Shinchan* anime film. The call *chan* in the name *shinchan* indicates a call to an alternative and cute small child. In the data above, care workers call grandmothers with *obaachan* to show the closeness between care workers and grandmothers. What's more, the call is followed by the question word *genki?* How are you?. The use of the word *genki* without starting with *o-* also means that the question of how are you is directed at someone close, younger than the greeter, and in a non-formal context. It's different if the greeting is addressed to people who have just met or to people older than the age of the greeter, then the expression how are you using the word *ogenki desuka?*. The word *genki* begins with the prefix *o-* and at the end of the copula *desu* and is followed by the question word *ka*. From the greetings in the data above it is clear that this conversation was opened with an informal greeting.

Next, the care workers entered into the core of the conversation by asking about their desire to get married with the phrase *kekkon shitai to donna hito to kekkon shimasuka*. The *shimasu* sentence ending marker indicates bringing care workers into the core of the conversation using the *teineigo* (polite language) marker. This *teineigo* or polite language utterance was responded to by the grandmother in plain form. Plain form or *futsuutai* is shown in grandmother's speech without ending with the copula *desu* on the words *dare* and *hito*. The question word *dare* is pronounced with an ascending intonation without being followed by *desuka* (*desu = teineigo* marker and *ka* is the question word marker). Also after the word *hito*, without *desu*.

What's unique is that care workers change their *teineigo* form of speech to *futsuutai* at the end of the conversation. Fi at

the end of the conversation the care workers repeat the grandmother's sentence as a form of affirmation *Yasashii hito to kekkon suru?*. The word *suru* in Japanese is a word that is used to form the word in front of it into a verb. *Kekkon* means marriage, a category of nouns that are converted into verbs by attaching the word *suru* (*kekkon suru*). From this conversation, it can be seen that there is a shift from *futsuutai* to *teinego* and back to the form of *futsuutai*.

Likewise in the following conversation. Even though the theme is not formal, female care workers still use *teineigo* form to respond to conversations from grandmothers who use plain form. But in the expression for themselves, care workers use plain form.

Account: Pooh ちゃん Country: Indonesia	Elderly : Woman Care workers : Woman Theme : Healthy wishes until marriage.
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- 13) *Obaasan* : *Anata wa kekkon suru made genki de irerukana.*(FUT)
 Grandma : ‘You, until you get married, be always healthy, okay?’
Kaigo : *Hai, Ganbarimasu.* (TEI)
 Care workers : ‘Yes, cheer up.’
Obaasan : *Watashi ga* (FUT)
 Grandma : ‘Me too’
Kaigo : *Sou dane, Genki..Genki shite kudasai. Genki de tsuzukete kudasai.* (TEI)
Kekkon to kodomo iru made. (FUT)
 Care workers : ‘Of course, yes. Be healthy...always be healthy...**stay healthy.**’
 ‘Until you get married and have children.’
Obaasan : *Sou dana* (FUT)
 Grandma : ‘Yes, yes’

The plain form marker expressed by the grandmother is found in the word *ireru* which ends in the word *kana* which indicates a rhetorical form. Meanwhile, care workers respond in the form of *teinego* or polite language marked with the word *ganbarimasu*. Also in the expression telling grandmother to always be healthy, *genki de tsuzukete kudasai* ‘stay healthy’. The word *-kudasai* shows the *teineigo* form with the meaning of ordering. But care workers shift the form of *teineigo* to plain form when saying, *kekkon to kodomo iru made*; until they get married and have children. This sentence is addressed to you so that care workers do not use politeness or *teineigo*.

The *sonkeigo* form, which is characterized by the use of the word *meshi agari kudasai*, is shown by a female care worker telling her grandmother to eat tomatoes. *Meshi agatte kudasai* is a special form of the marking verb *sonkeigo*. Care workers raise the verb eat directed at grandmothers as an expression of respect when giving orders.

Account: Carot Country: Vietnam	Elderly: Woman Care workers: Woman Theme: Ordered to eat tomatoes.
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- 14) *Kaigo* : *Douzo meshi agari kudasai.*(TEI) (*Tomato ageru*).
 Care workers: ‘Please **eat,**’ (Give tomatoes)
Obaasan : *Itadakimasu* (KEN)
 Grandma : ‘Enjoy your meal.’
Kaigo : *Oishii?*(FUT)
 Care workers: ‘Delicious?’
Obaasan : *Oishiiyo* (FUT)
 Grandma : ‘It's delicious, you know’

The *sonkeigo meshi agari kudasai* form that care workers use when inviting grandmothers to eat is a form used to elevate grandmother's position. The *sonkeigo* form shifts to a plain form when the care workers ask the grandmother with the word *osihii?*.

Meanwhile, the *kenjōgo* form or humble form to respect other people can be observed when care workers ask the elderly to imitate the gymnastic movements demonstrated by care workers when leading afternoon exercises.

- 15) Kaigo : *Hai, minasama* (SON)
Gogo no taisho sorosoro hajimesasete itadakitai (SON) *to omoimasu.*
Yoroshiku onegaitashimasu.(KEN)

Care workers: ‘**Ladies and gentlemen**, we will start our exercise this afternoon. **Please.**’

Care workers use the word *minasama*, the suffix *-sama* is placed after the word *mina*. This term of address is more respectful than *minasan* (*-san*). After greeting, care workers use *kenjōgo* or humble language with the phrase *hajimesasete itadakitai to omoimasu*. The *-saseru + itadakitai* pattern shows the *kenjōgo* form and the sentence closes with the word *to omoimasu* as a refiner of the expression. And care workers closed the initial conversation with the expression *yoroshiku onegaitashimasu* which means request/ask for help. Because this is done during afternoon exercise, *yoroshiku onegaitashimasu* has the meaning that care workers ask the elderly to pay attention and imitate the exercise instructions that are exemplified. Conversation starters are characterized by the *kenjōgo* or low form, after the care worker enters the exercise movement, the sentence shifts to *teinego* and it is also possible to use the plain form.

6. Conclusion

Social media platforms are used by people from all walks of life for information, films, and forums, and have grown to be an integral part of our lives. Influencers, also called meme machines, are drawn to social media sites like TikTok and profit from views, likes, comments, and shares. This trend has created a new source of revenue prospects for non-talented fame. Among migrant care workers who work to serve the elderly in Japanese home care, TikTok is one of the social media they use to broadcast their daily life in serving the elderly. TikTok is entertainment for them to relieve fatigue at work. This research has analyzed conversations between care workers and the elderly by exploring TikTok and finding the presence of manipulating honorifics through shifts in respectful language or *keigo*. It can be concluded that the shift from *keigo* to plain form does not indicate any communication problems. This is proven by the elderly's response when conversing with care workers. Language shifts are caused by proximity, conversation themes, formality and position. From the conversation format, it can be seen that when opening a conversation, care workers tend to use *teineigo* 'formal language' and then shift to *futsuutai* 'plain form'.

With the TikTok social media, TikTokers can upload videos according to the rules set by TikTok management. However, if uploading a video interferes someone's work and privacy conditions, there should be rules from home care management regarding video viewing while the care worker is working. Even though in the video, the elderly appear comfortable communicating with care workers, privacy principles should still be respected. It is the duty of sending migrant care workers from their country of origin to convey work and communication ethics.

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Authors contributions

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No additional data are available.

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