

## THE ACTUAL USE OF HONORIFICS IN JAPANESE: FOCUSING ON SRI LANKAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS.

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In linguistics, an honorific is a grammatical form that encodes the relative social status of the participants of the conversation. Honorifics involve changing the way one speaks as a result of the relationship between two people and the setting of the conversation. In Japanese language many honorifics can be found as a part of speech which shows the respect, and their use is mandatory in many social situations. Honorifics in Japanese used to emphasize social distance or disparity in rank, or to emphasize the social intimacy or similarity in rank. Japanese can be roughly separated into three levels of politeness: casual, polite, and honorific/humble. And the most important factor to remember is that the speaker always considers himself/herself to be at the lowest level. When non-native speakers learn Japanese language, it is impossible to avoid the honorific, because it is a very important way of expressing the politeness to the others in Japan. But, *honorifics* are one of the *difficult* parts of *Japanese* for *Japanese learners*. Furthermore, the complexity of the honorific system in Japanese constitutes a special difficulty for foreign learners, not only in terms of the range of expressions available, but also with regard to the underlying input features which determine selection and use. The purpose of this research is to find the actual use of honorifics of Sri Lankan university students. Researches have been done on honorific expressions targeting Japanese people in different angles. So far, there has been no research conducted regarding Japanese learners in Sri Lanka. Therefore a survey on honorific expressions was conducted mainly focusing on the university students who are learning Japanese at the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. In this research University students were divided into five categories. Those are (1) First year students, (2) Second year students, (3) Third year students, (4) Special Second year students and (5) Students who visited Japan. The major finding was the knowledge of the honorific expressions of the students who visited Japan was comparatively high than the other students. The results of the survey reveal the awareness and actual use of honorific expressions of the students who learn Japanese in the University level.

**Key Words:** Honorifics, awareness, actual usage

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