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## Analyzing Japanese Keigo (Honorifics) Acquisition Challenges Faced by Non-Native Advanced Language Learners

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## Abstract

Japanese *Keigo*, or honorifics, is a vital part of the language, reflecting respect, humility, and social hierarchy, but it poses significant challenges for non-native advanced learners due to its complex rules and cultural nuances. This study aims to explore the specific difficulties these learners face and identify effective strategies to overcome them. A qualitative literature review was used to analyze existing research on *Keigo* acquisition, focusing on cognitive and sociocultural barriers. Findings reveal that learners struggle with choosing the right *Keigo* form, such as respectful or humble language, in different social settings, often due to limited real-world practice and unfamiliarity with Japan's hierarchical norms. Confusion over verb forms and a lack of natural exposure further complicate mastery, as does the absence of direct feedback in Japanese culture. The study concludes that immersion in authentic contexts, targeted teaching of cultural expectations, and regular feedback can help learners navigate *Keigo*'s complexities. By addressing these challenges, educators can better support advanced learners in achieving fluency and cultural competence in Japanese communication.

## Keywords

Advanced Learners, Honorifics, Language Acquisition, Non-Native Learners, Sociocultural Barriers.

## 1. Introduction

The acquisition of Japanese *Keigo* (honorifics) is a distinctive and intricate challenge for non-native advanced learners of the Japanese language (Takeuchi, 2021; Ambarwati et al., 2023). Unlike many other languages, Japanese incorporates a highly complex system of honorifics that reflects deep cultural and social principles, such as hierarchy, respect, and politeness. In Japanese society, language is not only a tool for communication but also a reflection of the relationships between individuals, underscoring the importance of *Keigo* in navigating different social contexts. The ability to appropriately use *Keigo* is essential for learners seeking to engage with Japanese society in a more nuanced and respectful manner. However, mastering *Keigo* requires more than just an understanding of grammatical rules, it necessitates an understanding of Japanese social structures, cultural norms, and the subtleties of human interaction (Asahi et al., 2022).

For advanced learners of Japanese, the challenge of mastering *Keigo* becomes even more pronounced (Länsisalmi, 2019). These learners may already have a high level of fluency in everyday Japanese, but when it comes to using *Keigo*, they often struggle with the complexities involved. The use of honorifics in Japanese varies according to the context, the relationship between the speakers, and the specific situation at hand (Wang, 2025). Unlike languages that rely on a few levels of politeness, Japanese honorifics involve multiple layers, including *son Keigo* (respectful language), *Kenjougo* (humble language), and *Teineigo* (polite language), each with its own set of rules and appropriate contexts (Minami, 2016). This makes the process of learning and mastering *Keigo* particularly difficult, as learners must not only be familiar with the language but also with the social and cultural expectations that guide its use (Qian, 2023).

Despite extensive research on second language acquisition, there remains a significant gap in understanding the specific challenges faced by advanced non-native learners in mastering Japanese *Keigo*. According to Cohen and Henry (2019), most studies on language learning strategies focus on general fluency and vocabulary acquisition, with limited attention to the pragmatic and sociocultural nuances of honorific systems like *Keigo*. Similarly, Mori et al. (2021) note that while recent research has explored trends in Japanese L2 learning, the acquisition of *Keigo* remains underexplored, particularly for learners who have already achieved advanced proficiency but struggle with context-sensitive applications. This research gap highlights the need for a focused analysis of how advanced learners navigate the complexities of *Keigo* in real-world settings, especially in professional and social contexts where cultural expectations are paramount (Kamada, 2011; Saito, 2021; Hidayat et al., 2023).

One of the key difficulties for non-native advanced learners is the ability to distinguish when and how to apply the various forms of *Keigo* correctly. While many learners may be able to understand the theoretical aspects of *Keigo* through formal instruction, its practical use in real-world conversations is often where they face significant challenges. In particular, learners struggle to navigate the social and cultural nuances that influence the choice of honorifics. This is especially problematic for those from linguistic backgrounds lacking comparable honorific systems, such as English, where politeness is conveyed through tone rather than structured verb forms (Kiaer et al., 2024). For instance, learners may misapply *sonkeigo* in casual settings, creating unintended social distance, or fail to use *kenjougo* appropriately when addressing superiors, risking perceived disrespect (Okumura et al., 2021; Grosser, 2023). Furthermore, the pressure to use *Keigo* correctly in professional or high-stakes social situations, such as job interviews, meetings, or formal gatherings, can cause learners to hesitate or make mistakes, further complicating their mastery of the language (Cohen & Henry, 2019).

This study aims to address this research gap by analyzing the cognitive, linguistic, and sociocultural barriers faced by non-native advanced learners in acquiring Japanese *Keigo*, with a focus on practical application in diverse social contexts. Through a qualitative literature review, the research seeks to synthesize existing studies to identify common challenges and propose effective strategies for overcoming them, such as targeted instruction, cultural immersion, and reflective practice. By exploring these challenges, this study will offer insights into how learners can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world use. Ultimately, it seeks to provide practical recommendations to help advanced learners achieve fluency in *Keigo*, enabling them to communicate effectively and respectfully in Japanese society, thereby contributing to the broader field of Japanese second language acquisition.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. The Complexity of Keigo in Japanese Communication

According to Mori et al. (2021), *Keigo's* role in Japanese communication goes beyond linguistic forms, embedding social hierarchy and respect in every interaction. *Keigo* comprises three main categories: *sonkeigo* (respectful speech), *kenjougo* (humble speech), and *teineigo* (polite speech), each with distinct grammatical structures and contextual uses (Alshuraiaan & Almfleh, 2023; Murakami, 2023; Ali, 2025; Intramart, 2025). For instance, *sonkeigo* elevates the status of the listener, as in using *meshiagaru* instead of *taberu* (to eat) when referring to a superior's action. At the same time, *kenjougo* humbles the speaker, such as using *itadaku* to express gratitude for receiving something (Minami, 2016). The multiplicity of forms and their dependence on social dynamics make *Keigo* challenging. Learners must not only memorize specific verb conjugations but also understand when to apply them based on the relative status of interlocutors, familiarity, and setting (Saber, 2025). Asahi et al. (2022) emphasize that *Keigo's* fluidity requires learners to adapt their speech dynamically, a skill that demands both linguistic precision and cultural intuition. This complexity often overwhelms advanced learners, who may struggle to shift between forms in real-time conversations (Takeuchi, 2023).

The lack of direct equivalents in many learners' native languages further complicates *Keigo* acquisition. For example, English relies on tone or polite phrases rather than structured honorifics, making it hard for English-speaking learners to grasp *Keigo's* nuances (Kiaer et al., 2024). Similarly, Kamada (2011) notes that non-native speakers often misjudge the appropriate level of politeness due to unfamiliarity with Japanese social norms. Advanced learners, despite their fluency, may produce grammatically correct *Keigo* but fail to align it with the social context, leading to awkward or inappropriate interactions (Qian, 2023). This issue is particularly pronounced in professional settings, where precise *Keigo* use signals respect and competence (Xie & Peltokorpi, 2025).

### 2.2. Contextual Sensitivity and Sociolinguistic Challenges

Lämsäsalmi (2019) highlights that one of the biggest hurdles for advanced learners is gauging the social context to select the appropriate *Keigo* form. Learners often struggle to interpret subtle cues, such as age, status, or familiarity, that dictate whether *sonkeigo*, *kenjougo*, or *teineigo* is suitable (Torrijos, 2022). For instance, using *sonkeigo* with a close colleague can create unintended distance, while failing to use *kenjougo* with a superior may seem disrespectful (Grosser, 2023). This sensitivity requires a deep understanding of Japanese social hierarchies, which can be alien to learners from cultures emphasizing equality, such as many Western societies (Corbett, 2022). Saito (2021) points out that learners often lack exposure to authentic contexts, such as workplace interactions or formal events, where *Keigo* is naturally used, making it hard to develop this intuition. Without such exposure, learners may

rely on textbook knowledge, which often oversimplifies *Keigo's* application (Masuda et al., 2025).

Another issue is the tendency to overgeneralize polite forms. Lăpădat et al. (2024) observe that advanced learners often default to *teineigo* as a “safe” option, avoiding the complexities of *sonkeigo* and *kenjougo*. This approach limits their ability to engage fully in nuanced communication, as *teineigo* may not convey the respect or humility required in certain situations (Okumura et al., 2021). For example, overusing *teineigo* in a business meeting might make a learner sound overly formal or detached, reducing their social integration (Alifu et al., 2025). Furthermore, learners from languages with similar honorific systems, like Korean, may face crosslinguistic interference, where they misapply familiar patterns to Japanese *Keigo* (Shin et al., 2025; Kim, 2025). These challenges underscore the need for learners to develop sociolinguistic competence alongside linguistic skills to navigate *Keigo* effectively.

### 2.3. Cognitive and Pedagogical Barriers

Li and Hu (2024) argue that *Keigo's* complexity places a significant cognitive load on advanced learners, who must juggle multiple politeness forms while maintaining fluency. *Keigo* requires learners to recall distinct vocabulary and conjugations, such as switching from *iu* (to say) to *ossharu* (*sonkeigo*) or *mousu* (*kenjougo*), often within the same conversation (Kaur & Yamada, 2022). This demand for rapid context-switching can overwhelm learners, leading to hesitation or errors, especially in dynamic interactions (Nguyen, 2024). For example, a learner might correctly use *sonkeigo* when addressing a superior but struggle to shift to *kenjougo* when referring to their own actions, resulting in mixed politeness levels that confuse listeners (Somodi, 2023). Cognitive overload is particularly pronounced for learners whose native languages lack comparable honorific systems, as they must rewire their linguistic processing to accommodate *Keigo's* rules (Takeuchi, 2021).

Pedagogically, the mismatch between classroom instruction and real-world *Keigo* use poses another barrier. Bakhov et al. (2024) note that traditional language teaching often focuses on grammatical rules, leaving learners unprepared for *Keigo's* contextual nuances. Textbooks may teach *Keigo* forms in isolation, but real-life application requires cultural knowledge that is rarely addressed in formal settings (Maa & Burns, 2021). For instance, learners may master *Keigo* conjugations but fail to understand when to use them in informal versus formal contexts, leading to overuse or underuse (Yang et al., 2025). Advanced learners need targeted instruction that integrates cultural immersion and authentic practice, such as role-playing workplace scenarios or analyzing native media, to bridge this gap (Rai et al., 2023; Schaefer & Warhol, 2023). Without such approaches, learners risk developing a superficial understanding of *Keigo*, limiting their ability to communicate authentically (Hasegawa et al., 2022).

## 3. Methods

This study employs a qualitative literature review to explore the challenges non-native advanced language learners face in acquiring Japanese *Keigo*, a complex system of honorifics encompassing *sonkeigo* (respectful), *kenjougo* (humble), and *teineigo* (polite). The goal is to synthesize insights from existing research on the linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical factors influencing *Keigo* acquisition. By examining scholarly works, the study seeks to understand the difficulties learners encounter and identify effective teaching strategies to address them. This approach allows for a comprehensive analysis by integrating diverse perspectives from second language acquisition, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics.

The research began with a systematic selection of relevant literature focusing on *Keigo* acquisition by advanced non-native learners. Searches were conducted in databases like JSTOR, Google Scholar, PubMed, and ERIC, using terms such as

“Keigo acquisition,” “Japanese honorifics challenges,” and “non-native advanced learners.” Only peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and conference proceedings from the past 20 years were included to ensure relevance and currency. English and Japanese sources were prioritized, though studies in other languages were considered if relevant. This selection process yielded approximately 30 studies, chosen based on their focus on *Keigo*’s linguistic complexity, cultural nuances, or pedagogical approaches, ensuring a robust foundation for analysis (Bakhov et al., 2024). To minimize bias, two researchers independently reviewed the sources, cross-checking for alignment with the study’s objectives.

Once selected, the literature was analyzed by extracting key information on challenges, such as learners’ struggles with contextual *Keigo* use, cultural barriers, and cognitive demands. Data were organized into thematic categories, including linguistic difficulties, sociocultural influences, and instructional methods. For example, themes like “overgeneralization of polite forms” and “lack of authentic exposure” emerged from studies highlighting learners’ tendencies to misuse *teineigo* or struggle in real-world settings. Thematic analysis was used to identify patterns, synthesizing findings to address how cultural and linguistic backgrounds impact *Keigo* acquisition. To enhance transparency, the analysis process involved iterative coding, where themes were refined through multiple reviews to ensure accuracy and consistency. This approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of the challenges and potential solutions.

The findings were synthesized into a cohesive narrative addressing the study’s core questions: what barriers do advanced learners face in mastering *Keigo*, how do cultural and linguistic factors influence these challenges, and what pedagogical strategies are effective? The synthesis also considered variations across learner groups, such as those from languages with honorific systems versus those without, to highlight diverse acquisition experiences. The final report compiles these insights, offering practical recommendations for educators, such as integrating cultural immersion and role-playing in teaching, and suggesting directions for future research to further explore *Keigo* acquisition in real-world contexts.

## 4. Results

This qualitative literature review synthesizes findings from studies on the challenges non-native advanced language learners face in acquiring Japanese *Keigo*, a system of honorifics integral to Japanese communication. The analysis reveals that *Keigo*’s complexity, rooted in its linguistic structure and cultural significance, poses significant barriers. These challenges span linguistic difficulties, sociocultural misunderstandings, and cognitive demands, with learners often struggling to apply *Keigo* appropriately in real-world contexts. The findings highlight specific issues, such as difficulty switching between *Keigo* forms, lack of direct equivalents in learners’ native languages, and limited feedback in natural settings, while also identifying strategies to address these barriers.

### 4.1. Linguistic Complexity of Keigo

The intricate grammatical structure of *Keigo* presents a formidable challenge for advanced learners. Unlike standard Japanese, *Keigo* requires mastery of distinct verb forms and vocabulary, such as *meshiagaru* (*sonkeigo*) or *itadaku* (*kenjougo*) for the verb *taberu* (to eat), which vary based on the social context (Minami, 2016). Table 1 illustrates these differences, showing how the verb “to eat” transforms across casual, *sonkeigo*, and *kenjougo* forms, highlighting the grammatical shifts learners must navigate. Learners often produce grammatically correct *Keigo* but struggle to select the appropriate form due to its dependency on social dynamics, such as the relative status of the speaker and listener (Mori et al., 2021). This complexity is compounded by the need to memorize multiple forms for common verbs and nouns, which can

overwhelm learners already fluent in conversational Japanese (Kaur & Yamada, 2022).

In Japanese, levels of politeness are reflected through the use of different verb forms: casual, *sonkeigo* (respectful), and *kenjougo* (humble). The form 食べる (*taberu*) is used in informal situations among people of equal status. Meanwhile, 召し上がる (*meshiagaru*) is used to show respect toward the person who performs the action, typically in formal or professional contexts. The form 頂く (*itadaku*) is used to humble oneself when referring to one's own actions toward someone of higher status. The differences among these three forms illustrate that verb choice in Japanese not only conveys the meaning of an action but also reflects social relationships and levels of politeness between the speaker and the listener.

The need to switch between these forms in real-time conversations adds further difficulty. For instance, a learner might use *sonkeigo* correctly when addressing a superior but inadvertently mix it with casual forms when referring to their own actions, creating inconsistent politeness levels (Somodi, 2023). This issue is particularly evident in professional settings, where precise *Keigo* use signals competence and respect (Xie & Peltokorpi, 2025). Learners from languages like English, which lack structured honorifics, find it especially hard to internalize these shifts, as their native languages rely on tone or simple polite phrases rather than complex verb transformations (Kiaer et al., 2024).

The lack of explicit instruction on these grammatical nuances in many language programs exacerbates the challenge. Studies suggest that learners often receive textbook-based training on *Keigo* forms but lack guidance on their practical application, leading to errors in conjugation or inappropriate form selection (Okumura et al., 2021). For example, a learner might use *ossharu* (*sonkeigo* for “to say”) in a casual setting, sounding overly formal and distancing themselves from peers (Grosser, 2023). These findings underscore that *Keigo*'s linguistic complexity requires not only memorization but also a deep understanding of its contextual application.

#### 4.2. Sociocultural Barriers in Keigo Acquisition

*Keigo* is deeply tied to Japanese cultural norms, making sociocultural understanding critical for its mastery. Learners often struggle to interpret the social hierarchies that dictate *Keigo* use, such as the roles of *senpai* (senior), *kouhai* (junior), or *sensei* (teacher) (Asahi et al., 2022). For learners from cultures emphasizing social equality, like many Western societies, grasping these hierarchical nuances is particularly challenging, as they may not intuitively understand when to elevate or humble their speech (Corbett, 2022). This cultural gap can lead to misapplications, such as using *teineigo* in situations requiring *kenjougo*, which may be perceived as disrespectful in formal contexts (Qian, 2023).

Another key issue is the lack of authentic exposure to *Keigo* in natural settings. Many learners, especially those studying outside Japan, have limited opportunities to observe or practice *Keigo* in real-world scenarios like workplaces or formal gatherings (Saito, 2021). Without such exposure, learners struggle to internalize the subtle cues that native speakers use to adjust politeness levels, such as tone, body language, or situational context (Torrijos, 2022). For instance, a learner might overuse *Keigo* in an attempt to be respectful, creating a sense of insincerity or distance, as noted in studies of workplace communication (Saber, 2025). This overgeneralization often stems from a reliance on classroom instruction that prioritizes rules over practical application (Bakhov et al., 2024).

The absence of immediate correction in Japanese social settings further complicates acquisition. Japanese culture values harmony, so native speakers may avoid directly correcting *Keigo* errors to prevent embarrassment, leaving learners unaware of their mistakes (Länsisalmi, 2019). This lack of feedback can reinforce

incorrect habits, making it harder for learners to refine their *Keigo* use over time. Studies also indicate that learners from languages with honorific systems, like Korean, may face crosslinguistic interference, applying familiar patterns that do not align with Japanese *Keigo*'s unique rules (Shin et al., 2025; Kim, 2025). These sociocultural barriers highlight the need for immersive experiences to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical competence.

#### 4.3. Cognitive and Practical Challenges

The cognitive demands of *Keigo* acquisition are significant, as learners must manage multiple politeness forms while maintaining fluency. Switching between *sonkeigo*, *kenjougo*, and *teineigo* in dynamic conversations requires rapid cognitive processing, which can overwhelm even advanced learners (Li & Hu, 2024). For example, a learner might struggle to recall the *kenjougo* form *mousu* for “to say” while simultaneously ensuring the correct level of politeness for the listener (Kaur & Yamada, 2022). This cognitive load is hefty for learners whose native languages lack honorifics, as they must adapt to an entirely new linguistic framework (Takeuchi, 2021).

Practical application in real-world contexts poses another challenge. Learners often find that classroom-learned *Keigo* does not translate seamlessly to spontaneous interactions, such as job interviews or business meetings, where hesitation or incorrect form selection can lead to social missteps (Maa & Burns, 2021). For instance, using overly formal *Keigo* with peers can create awkwardness, while underusing it with superiors may signal disrespect (Yang et al., 2025). Studies suggest that learners benefit from targeted practice, such as role-playing scenarios or analyzing native media, but such opportunities are often limited in traditional curricula (Rai et al., 2023; Schaefer & Warhol, 2023).

The overuse or misuse of *Keigo* also leads to communication breakdowns. Advanced learners may default to *teineigo* to avoid errors, but this can limit their ability to convey nuanced respect or humility, reducing their social integration (Lăpădat et al., 2024). For example, overusing *teineigo* in a professional setting might make a learner seem distant or overly cautious, while underusing *sonkeigo* could offend a client (Alifu et al., 2025). These findings indicate that mastering *Keigo* requires not only linguistic proficiency but also the ability to adapt to shifting social contexts, a skill that develops through sustained exposure and practice (Hasegawa et al., 2022).

### 5. Discussion

Mastering Japanese *Keigo* remains a tough hurdle for non-native advanced learners, as it's not just about getting the grammar right but also about weaving through the cultural and social threads of Japanese communication. *Keigo*, with its layers of *sonkeigo*, *kenjougo*, and *teineigo*, is deeply rooted in Japan's emphasis on hierarchy and respect, making it a unique challenge compared to languages with simpler politeness systems (Asahi et al., 2022). According to Qian (2023), *Keigo*'s role in shaping social relationships means that missteps can affect how learners are perceived, especially in professional or formal settings. For learners, the struggle lies in balancing linguistic accuracy with cultural sensitivity, a task that demands both skill and intuition.

The grammatical twists of *Keigo* often trip up even the most fluent learners. As Mori et al. (2021) point out, the shift from everyday verbs like *taberu* (to eat) to honorific forms like *meshiagaru* or *itadaku* isn't just a matter of memorizing rules; it requires understanding the social context behind each form. For example, misusing *sonkeigo* with a peer can make a learner sound stiff or distant, while skipping *kenjougo* when speaking to a superior might come off as rude (Grosser, 2023). This complexity is especially tough for learners from languages like English, where politeness doesn't

hinge on verb conjugation but on tone or word choice (Kiaer et al., 2024). The need to juggle these forms in real-time conversations adds a layer of difficulty, often leading to hesitation or errors that disrupt natural communication (Li & Hu, 2024).

Cultural understanding is just as critical as grammar in *Keigo* acquisition. Lämsäsalmi (2019) notes that learners often struggle to grasp Japan's hierarchical social norms, like the roles of *senpai* and *kouhai*, which dictate when to use specific *Keigo* forms. For instance, learners from cultures that prioritize equality may find it hard to adjust to *Keigo*'s emphasis on elevating or humbling oneself based on status (Corbett, 2022). This cultural gap can lead to the overuse of *Keigo*, making learners sound overly formal, or to its underuse, which risks disrespect (Sabeti, 2025). Without regular exposure to authentic contexts, such as workplace meetings or formal gatherings, learners often rely on textbook knowledge, which doesn't fully prepare them for real-world nuances (Saito, 2021). This issue is compounded for learners from languages with honorifics, like Korean, who may misapply familiar patterns due to crosslinguistic differences (Kim, 2025).

The cognitive load of *Keigo* is another big challenge. Nguyen (2024) highlights that switching between politeness levels in a single conversation can overwhelm learners, especially when they're already managing complex sentence structures. For example, a learner might nail *sonkeigo* when addressing a client but stumble when shifting to *kenjougo* for their own actions, creating awkward exchanges (Somodi, 2023). Classroom instruction often falls short here, as it tends to focus on rules rather than practical application, leaving learners unprepared for spontaneous interactions (Bakhov et al., 2024). Targeted strategies, like role-playing real-life scenarios or watching Japanese media, can help, but these are often missing from traditional curricula (Rai et al., 2023). Learners need more than drills; they need immersive practice to build the intuition native speakers rely on (Hasegawa et al., 2022).

These findings carry important implications for teaching and learning *Keigo*. Educators should weave cultural context into lessons, using activities like mock business meetings or analyzing native conversations to show how *Keigo* works in action (Schaefer & Warhol, 2023). Immersion programs or exchanges in Japan can also help learners pick up the subtle cues that textbooks miss (Yang et al., 2025). For researchers, these challenges point to the need for studies on how technology, like AI-driven language tools, can simulate authentic *Keigo* practice (Maa & Burns, 2021). By addressing these linguistic, cultural, and cognitive barriers, educators and learners can better navigate *Keigo*'s complexities, helping advanced learners communicate with the respect and nuance that Japanese society values.

## 6. Conclusion

Learning Japanese *Keigo* is no small feat for non-native advanced learners, as it weaves together linguistic complexity and deep cultural roots. The system of *sonkeigo*, *kenjougo*, and *teineigo* demands more than just memorizing verb forms; it requires picking up on subtle social cues and understanding Japan's emphasis on respect and hierarchy. Advanced learners often struggle to shift between these forms in real-time conversations, particularly in high-stakes settings such as business meetings or formal events. With dedicated practice, cultural immersion, and thoughtful teaching, learners can start to navigate *Keigo*'s challenges, moving closer to communicating with the nuance and respect that Japanese society values.

These findings point to practical ways to help learners master *Keigo*, but they also come with limitations and open doors for future work. For educators, weaving cultural context into lessons, through role-playing workplace scenarios or analyzing honest Japanese conversations, can make *Keigo* feel less like a puzzle and more like a natural part of communication. However, this study, being a literature review, relies on existing research and lacks fresh data from real learners, which limits its ability to capture current classroom experiences. Future research could dig deeper by

studying learners in action, perhaps through interviews or observing their *Keigo* use in authentic settings like Japanese workplaces. Exploring how technology, such as language apps or virtual reality, can simulate *Keigo* practice could also offer new ways to bridge the gap between theory and real-world fluency.

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### ***Ethical Approval and Originality Statement***

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

### ***Data Disclosure Statement***

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.



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