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# Language Stereotypes in Japanese Culture A Qualitative Analysis of “Elderly Man” Role Language in Translation

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## *Abstract*

In Japanese popular media, various associations are made between character types and speech styles, a concept known in Japanese linguistics as “role language”. This study consists of a qualitative analysis of five Japanese translations of Italian works of fiction, carried out by examining the speech style of each character. The aim of this paper is to investigate how language markers associated with the “elderly man” role language category are employed in Japanese translations of foreign works, and how their distribution compares with their use in native Japanese media.

*Keywords:* Japanese Linguistics, Literary Analysis, Role Language, Sociolinguistics, Translation Analysis

## *Introduction*

A relatively emerging area of study in the field of Japanese sociolinguistics seeks to investigate the way certain *character* images and stereotypes are associated with the use of specific syntactical, morphological, and lexical markers, mostly in the areas of fiction and popular culture. Kinsui Satoshi coined the term *yakuwarigo* 役割語 – translated into English as “role language” – to describe this phenomenon. Among the applications of Kinsui’s theory, considerable effort has been devoted to research the function of role language categories as a translation tool, albeit with a focus on English-to-Japanese language data.

This paper is meant to investigate how the language markers associated with the stereotype of the “elderly man” (*rōjingo* 老人語, “elderly male language”) are employed by translators, through a qualitative analysis of five Japanese translations of Italian literature. The first part is meant to provide a general overview of the different theoretical frameworks connected to the concept of role

language, from Kinsui's first definition to the related notions of "character language" (Kinsui and Yamakido 2015) and *character* (*kyarakutā* キャラクター) and *individuality* (*jinkaku* 人格; Kinsui 2022). Existing literature and case studies concerning role language as a translation tool will also be examined. The following section analyzes the language stereotype of *rōjingo*, both in terms of its defining linguistic elements and the character images that are associated with it. Sections four and five explain the methodology and describe the findings of this study. Finally, possible future developments and research questions regarding this field will be taken into consideration.

### 1. Role Language as an Expression of a "Virtual Reality"

Kinsui initially developed the concept of role language in 2000. A formal definition of the term is given as follows:

When upon hearing a certain use of language (distinguished by lexis, grammar, expressions, intonation, etc.), a listener or a reader can imagine a certain character image (distinguished by age, gender, occupation, social class, time period, appearance, personality, etc.), or when a certain character type can make the observer call to mind a use of language that said character would be likely to use, we call that use of language *yakuwarigo*. (Kinsui 2003, 205)<sup>1</sup>

What separates the concept of *yakuwarigo* from what is traditionally understood and classified as "register" – "a set of features of speech or writing characteristic of a particular type of linguistic activity or a particular group when engaging in it" (Matthews 2007, 339) – is that the various categories of role language do not reflect the actual language in use that can be observed in a particular context, or among members of a specific social group or class. For example, a speech style that acts as the signifier of the speaker's female identity – *onna kotoba* 女ことば (women's language) – has its roots in the language used by female students in the Meiji era (1868-1912), a speech style often referred to as "*teyo-dawa kotoba*" てよだわ言葉 (Kinsui 2014, 199), characterized by the use of the *-te* form to express requests, and the sentence ending particles *-yo* and *-wa*. It is therefore not representative of the language spoken by women in contemporary society. Certain categories, moreover, might also be associated with character images that are purely fictional – such as aliens, spirits, etc. – Kinsui describes the concept of *yakuwarigo* as a form of "virtual Japanese", created and sustained by Japanese fiction and popular culture.

Six major categories of role language can be identified: gender (which can be broken down into the two main subcategories of male and female language), age or generation, profession or social class, region or nationality, speech styles associated with a historical period, and finally a category that includes all varieties of *yakuwarigo* attributed to non-human (*jingai* 人外) characters (viii). Kinsui regards the standard dialect of Japanese (*hyōjungo* 標準語) as the foundation of all other classes and what determines the "degree of role language" (*yakuwarigo-do* 役割語度): this is the measure in which "a certain speech style (whether spoken or written) suggests a speaker with certain attributes" (2003, 67).<sup>2</sup> Written language, which forms the syntactical,

<sup>1</sup>“ある特定の言葉遣い（語彙・語法・言い回し・イントネーション等）を聞くと特定の人物像（年齢・性別・職業・階層・時代・容姿・風貌・性格等）を思い浮かべることができるとき、あるいはある特定の人物像を提示されると、その人物がいかにも使用しそうな言葉遣いを思い浮かべることができるとき、その言葉遣いを「役割語」と呼ぶ”。

<sup>2</sup>“ある話体（文体）が、特徴的な性質の話し手を想定させる”。

morphological, and lexical basis of a language, is to be assigned value 0, as it is not representative of any specific social or cultural group. It is followed by “public spoken language”, with value 0.5, as it expresses a particular context of discourse, although without using markers that signify the speaker’s own characteristic (such as gender, age, etc.). The third degree is “private spoken language” and has value 1, encompassing both male and female language: while specific types of *yakuwarigo* continue to exist in the realm of fiction regardless of how real-life language develops, some observable differences at the level of gender in contemporary Japanese society are consistent with language stereotypes (e.g., the use of the first-person pronouns *boku* 僕 and *ore* 俺 being typical of a male speaker). Finally, the remaining categories of role language are thought to have a value greater than 1.

The process through which the various categories of role language develop and become part of the shared cultural baggage of the speech community can be summarized by the following graph:

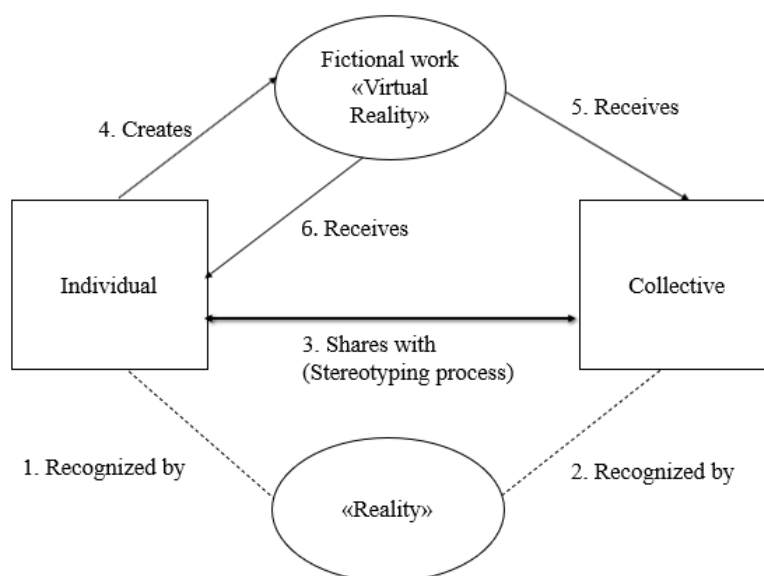


Fig. 1. Kinsu 2014, xiii

As seen in the above example regarding the female speech style, a connection between the use of certain linguistic features and a social group is recognized both at the individual and the collective level (1, 2). This shared knowledge contributes to the creation of a language stereotype (3), which, through the work(s) of influential author(s) (4), is passed down to the next generations and becomes part of the cultural baggage of the speech community (5, 6). In the cases of speech styles attributed to fictional character images, instead, it is possible to trace their origin not in sociolinguistic and dialectic variations of language, but in the stylistic choices of one or more authors, which then acquire the status of *yakuwarigo* through the process seen in 4-6.

*Yakuwarigo* categories exist and circulate in the “virtual reality” created by popular culture, especially in fiction works aimed at a younger audience or that are classified as “B-grade” entertainment. Kinsui (2003) notes that they are often allocated to the speech of either secondary or background characters. These characters do not require substantial time investment for the reader to understand their role in the narrative: in accordance with Brewer’s (1988) dual process model

of impression formation, he or she only needs to process information about said characters by relying on pre-existing knowledge regarding one or more sociocultural groups (category-based perception), and therefore they need to conform to the (linguistic) stereotypes the reader possesses. On the other hand, the protagonist of the story, through whose perspective and internal thoughts the reader experiences the narrative, will commonly speak standard Japanese, with a degree of role language of about “1 +  $\alpha$ ” (with  $\alpha$  representing their unique characteristics), in order for the receiver to psychologically associate with them (Kinsui 2003, 70-71).

### 1.1 Role Language, Character Language (kyarakutā-gengo) and “Individuality” (jinkaku)

Further advances in the field helped clarify the degree to which a certain fictional speech style used by a certain type of character can be classified as a form of role language. In the paper “Role Language and Character Language”, Kinsui and Yamakido (2015) argue that the more widely shared a certain association between a character image and a speech style is, the more likely it is for it to be granted the status of role language. Moreover, for this to happen, the character image in question must belong to a recognizable social group (which also includes supernatural creatures, science fiction artifacts and other archetypes commonly known among the speech community) and must exhibit secondary stereotypes associated with said type of role language (a character who speaks in a “rural” manner, for example, must also be portrayed as a stereotypical uneducated, unsophisticated, and naive “country bumpkin”). Any other peculiar manner of speech is to be classified as “character language” – of which role language is a subset. Following this definition, Kinsui and Yamakido recognize four types of character language:

- Type (i) – “Restricted Role Language”, whose knowledge is shared only among members of a specific community;
- Type (ii) – “Role Language Shifted Outside of Its Social or Cultural Groups”, employed by someone that is not its expected speaker;
- Type (iii) – “Regional Dialect Employed to Represent a Character’s Personality”, representing one or more traits that are not part of the associated regional stereotype;
- Type (iv) – “Unique Character Language”, which cannot be associated with any specific character image or stereotype.

By expanding on previous research<sup>3</sup> on the issue of “character”, Kinsui (2022) recently introduced his own concept of “individuality” (*jinkaku* 人格), which is to be distinguished from – but connected to – the concept of “character”, which is instead to be understood in terms of “category” or “attribute” (*zokusei* 属性).<sup>4</sup> Both *character* and *individuality* are the essential components of a *dramatis personae* (*tōjōjinbutsu* 登場人物, also referred by Kinsui as “individual” *indibijuaru* インデイビジュアル), that inhabits the story: *character* refers to the interconnected human attributes (physical, social, behavioral, psychological, etc.), while *individuality* is what guarantees the unicity of the *dramatis personae*’s self. It is through this *individuality* that the reader or listener is able to “identify” with the characters, experiencing their point of view and their internal time, and thus the story. While their *individuality* is fixed and ensures the consistency of their memories, feelings, desires, etc., the different aspects of

<sup>3</sup> See Miyamoto (2003), Ito’s (2005) concept of *kyara* キヤラ and Sadanobu’s (2020) definition of style (*sutairu* スタイル), *character* (*kyara* キヤラ), and *individuality* (*jinkaku* 人格).

<sup>4</sup> Here onward, *individuality* and *character* in italics refer to Kinsui’s interpretation of the terms.

their *character* are susceptible to change. It is then possible to recognize three classes of fictional characters, depending on how prominent their *individuality* is in the narrative:

- *First class*, or “protagonist class”: characters with whom the reader can easily identify, and through whose viewpoint the story unfolds. Because of these reasons, their speech style is expected to be close to standard Japanese.
- *Second class*: characters with strong personalities and considerable influence on the protagonist’s development. Their role in the story can be compared to the archetypes identified by Vogler (1998) in the recurring narrative structure of the “hero’s journey” (such as the Mentor, the Trickster, the Shadow, etc.). At the language level, since they require to leave a strong impression on the reader, it is not uncommon for their speech style to be some type of unique “character language”, although standard Japanese or categories of role language may still be employed.
- *Third class*: characters often without a name, who appear in few or selected scenes. As the *individuality* of characters in this class is not very prominent, and they are close to being a representation of a *character* attribute, their speech style will often be a type of role language that reflects said attribute.

In agreement with what was initially observed, Kinsui thus advances the idea that, through the use of role language and linguistic stereotypes, it is possible to convey a considerable amount of information to the reader, without consuming too much “narrative resource” (*monogatari shigen* 物語資源) – the medium through which the story is told (such as pages and characters count in a novel, screentime and sound in a movie, etc.). The more a certain *dramatis personae* is important to the story – and thus the more narrative resources they need to consume – the less likely it is for their speech style to be a type of role language.

### 1.2 Role Language as a Translation Tool

Since Kinsui’s first theorization of the concept of role language in the early 2000s, two collections of essays on the subject (Kinsui 2007, 2011) have been published, as well as a concise dictionary of role language markers (Kinsui 2014). Application of this theory has been carried out in different fields, such as cross-linguistics analysis, dialectology, or gender studies. In the field of translation studies, it is possible to identify two main branches: how role language should be translated into languages other than Japanese, or how role language is utilized in Japanese translations.

Regarding the latter, considerable research effort has been focused on investigating the role played by *yakuwarigo* in the translation of foreign dialects. Long and Asahi’s (1999) analysis of Japanese dubbing of American movies, while predating Kinsui’s theory, shows how both linguistic (such as the use of certain dialectic features) and non-linguistics (social class, ethnic group, etc.) markers in the original influence the translators’ choices in the target language. For example, features that Long and Asahi ascribe to the Tōhoku dialect (the first-person pronoun *ora*, the negative form in *-ne*, etc.) are often used to translate the African American Vernacular English (AAVE) variety spoken by black characters. Similarly, subsequent studies on Japanese translations of the eye dialect in *Gone with the Wind* appear to confirm these findings: both Hiramoto (2009) and Kumagai (2015) suggest that this speech style can be considered as a “pseudo” Tōhoku dialect, featuring elements borrowed from northeastern Japanese, thus contributing both to the stigmatization of Black characters in the text and to upholding the stereotype

of Tōhoku dialect speakers as ignorant, crude and of a lower social standing. However, these conclusions seem to imply that the average reader identifies these features as representative of real-life Tōhoku dialects. A more recent study by Trowell and Nambu (2021) was conducted to assess this hypothesis: a perception survey aimed at 111 Native Japanese speakers (aged 20-60) asked them to describe their impression of each character's speech. Only 20% or less of the respondents in each age bracket perceived these style features as being characteristic of Tōhoku dialects, with the majority perceiving them as representative of a "rural" type of speech. Therefore, it can be assumed that, regardless of the origin of these elements and their current usage in contemporary Japanese society, their role is to create an association not with an existing, real-life dialect, but with a category of role language – the "rural archetype".

Other types of role language have been analyzed according to their use in the translation of foreign media, fiction and non-fiction alike. Ōta's (2011) study on the translations of foreign athletes at the 2008 Beijing Olympics demonstrates how translators employ role language categories to connotate speech, depending on the context or the "character image" that can be associated with the speaker. For example, Usain Bolt's interviews were translated using more masculine-sounding language markers, such as the first-person pronouns *ore* or the ending particles *-ze* and *-zo*. Nakamura's (2013) analysis of feminine and masculine language in fiction shows a strong tendency of translating non-Japanese women's speech by using the previously mentioned "women's language" stereotype, regardless of the original register or their role in the story (in the case of fiction), while non-Japanese men's speech is translated using a friendly, casual style (characterized by the use of the emotive ending particle *-sa*), that is distinguished from the use of these features by Japanese men.

These studies seem to indicate a general trend of role language being used as part of a translation strategy to achieve a "domestication" effect. By the term "domestication", it is meant a type of translation that, while trying to maintain the denotative meaning(s) of the source text, prioritises accommodating the cultural needs and expectations of the target reader (Venuti, 2008). In this specific instance, it means attempting to replicate the speech style(s) that the average Japanese reader would expect determinate character images or stereotypes to use in determinate contexts. However, as Nakamura's analysis demonstrates, translations of foreign works appear to be more "conservative" and restricted in the type and range of role language categories that can be employed as part of the characters' speech.

## 2. *Rōjingo*

### 2.1 *The Roots of Rōjingo*

*Rōjingo* is one of the first types of role language identified by Kinsui. The following elements are considered to be the representative characteristics of *rōjingo* (Kinsui 2003, 5-7): the copula ending *-ja* in place of *-desu* or *-da*, the auxiliary verb *-oru* functioning as a progressive aspect marker (*-teoru*), the negative form ending *-n* instead of *-nai*, and the first-person pronoun *washi*. In addition, the use of the ending particles *-wai* and *-nō*, as well as of the vocative *-ya*, is also prevalent. The Dictionary of Modern Japanese Dialects (*Gendai Nihongo Hōgen Daijiten* 現代日本語方言大辞典; Hirayama *et al.* 1992, 35-37) shows how the distribution of the copula *-ja*, negative form *-n* and the auxiliary verb *-oru* in Japanese dialects roughly coincides with the boundary between Western and Eastern Japanese (Table 1), with some of the differences between the dialects – as it is the case for the negative form endings – branching out as early as the Nara (710-94) period.

	WESTERN JAPANESE	EASTERN JAPANESE
COPULA	<i>-ja, -ya</i>	<i>-da</i>
NEGATIVE FORM	<i>-n</i>	<i>-nai, -nee</i>
EXISTENTIAL VERBS	<i>-oru</i>	<i>-iru</i>
PROGRESSIVE ASPECT MARKER	<i>-teoru, -toru</i>	<i>-teiru, -teru</i>

Table 1

Kinsui advances that, while certain characteristics of Western Japanese (such as the copula *-ya* or the negative form ending in *-ben*) are not part of the speech patterns of *rōjin*-like characters, the roots of *rōjingo* are to be found in this variant – more specifically in the Kamigata (Kansai) dialect – and the position it occupied in the late Edo’s linguistic environment (Kinsui 2003, 27).

Satō (2002, 340) argues that the rigid social hierarchy established during the Edo period, which separated the rest of the non-aristocratic society into the four classes of warriors, farmers, artisans, and merchants (*shinōkōshō* 士農工商) was also reflected in the use of language by each class. Komatsu (1985) divides the formation of the Edo dialect into three main periods: during the first period, roughly between the Keichō (1596-1615) and the Meireki (1655-58) eras, it was adopted as part of the language of the warrior class, while different dialects continued to coexist in society at large. In the second period – around the Meiwa era (1764-72) – the Edo dialect started to be used as a common language also among the *chōnin* 町人 (“townsmen”, mostly merchants) class. The third and last phase, which has its peak in the Bunka/Bunsei era (1804-30), sees a process in which the Eastern dialect spoken by the lower class began to infiltrate the language of the upper classes. It is during the second period that, according to Komatsu, there was shift in the relationship between Kamigata and Eastern Japanese, no longer opposed as dialects, but as part of a hierarchy within the Edo language (1985, 90). Kinsui argues that, as the younger generation began naturally to adopt the emerging Edo dialect as part of their speech, the Kamigata dialect would begin to be associated with the older generation, whose manner of speech was more conservative (2003, 26).

Furuda’s (2012) research on the speech patterns of characters in the *Tōkaidō Yotsuya Kaidan* 東海道四谷怪談 (Ghost Story of Yotsuya in Tokaido) *kabuki* 歌舞伎 play, written by Tsuruya Nanboku IV in 1825, shows how *rōjingo* was already being used in works of fiction of the latter part of the early modern period: while the Edo dialect is spoken by commoners, Kamigata-like expressions are attributed to members of the warrior class, their wives and elderly men (and, of course, characters hailing from the Kamigata region). *Kokkeibon* 滑稽本,<sup>5</sup> such as *Ukiyoburo* 浮世風呂 (published from 1809 to 1813) by Shikitei Sanba, and *gesaku* 戯作<sup>6</sup> from the early Meiji, such as *Ushiya zōdan: Aguranabe* 牛店雑談 安愚楽鍋 (1871-72) by Kanagaki Robun (pseudonym of Nozaki Bunzō, 1829-94), displays other examples of this association (Kinsui 2003, 22-24). Entering the twentieth century, instances of *rōjingo* can be found in the emerging types and genres of popular media, such as the science-fiction works of Unno Jūza (1897-1949) and popular comic book series like *Tetsuwan Atomu* 鉄腕アトム or *Meitantei Konan* 名探偵コナン.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Kokkeibon* (lit. “comical book”) is a genre that began to flourish in the late Edo period, characterized mainly by the depiction of humorous situations involving commoners, and the use of a more dialogical, colloquial style.

<sup>6</sup> The term *gesaku* (lit. “playful composition”) refers to early-modern literary works written in a playful, mocking, or comical style, aimed at the general public.

<sup>7</sup> *Tetsuwan Atomu* (“Steel-Armed Atom”, also known as *Astro boy*) is a comic book series by Osamu Tezuka (1928-1989) about the adventures of an android with the appearance of a young boy, which originally ran from

## 2.2 Stereotypes Associated with Rōjingo

In order for a fictional character's speech style to be recognized as a type of role language, said character must not only possess the attributes of an easily recognizable social or cultural group, but also exhibits the stereotypes (and therefore a specific role in the story) associated with it. Elderly male characters' additional qualities include the possession of authority, expertise in a field, wisdom, or simply weakness or senility (Kinsui 2003, 10). These attributes determine the role these characters play in the narrative, which Kinsui narrows down to the following:

- a. An advisor who guides, teaches, and imparts training and wisdom to the main character.
- b. A personification of evil, who, through cunning and mysterious powers, distresses and tortures the main character [...]
- c. An individual who causes repeated misunderstanding and mistakes due to his senility, confusing the main character and those around him, and takes on the role of mediator [...] (46)<sup>8</sup>

These three roles can be compared to Vogler's (1998, 47-80) archetypes of the Mentor (a), the Shadow (b) and the Trickster (c), and thus it can be expected to find instances of *rōjingo* in the speech style of characters that can be classified as belonging to the third and second classes in Kinsui's (2022) framework. Characters that perform role (a) – and sometimes (b) as well – and have an older physical appearance are referred to as *hakase* 博士 – a term that can be interpreted with the meaning of “professor”, “doctor”, “scientist”, etc. – and their role language is regarded as a sub-type of *rōjingo* called *hakasego* 博士語 (“professor language”). Dr. Ochanomizu (*Ochanomizu-hakase* お茶の水博士), the head of the Japanese Ministry of Science and Astro Boy's adoptive father from *Tetsuwan Atomu* 鉄腕アトム (1952-68), can be mentioned as an example of this sub-category:

アトム きてくれ アトム わしじゃ お茶の水じゃ. (Tezuka 1999, 60)

*Atomu kite-kure Atomu washi-ja o-cha-no-mizu-ja.*

- ‘Vieni, Atomu. Sono io, Ochanomizu’.

- ‘Come, Atom. I am Ochanomizu’.

In comic books and popular media, it is sometimes possible to encounter instances of *rōjingo*-like speech by characters with a youthful, childlike – and often feminine – outward physical appearance. However, it is to be determined whether such cases should be regarded as expressions of “elderly man” role language, or rather as a type of character language, as they are mostly found in media aimed at a specific, restricted target audience.

## 3. Methodology

A qualitative approach was applied to the analyses of the Japanese translations of characters' dialogues in five Italian works of fiction: *Le avventure di Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi (1883),<sup>9</sup>

1952 to 1968. *Meitantei Konan* (*Detective Conan*) is a detective *manga* written by Gosho Aoyama (1963-) and first published in 1994, which has since then been adapted into different types of media.

<sup>8</sup> a. “主人公に知恵と教訓を授ける、教え、導く助言者

b. 悪知恵と不思議な力によって主人公を陥れ、苦しめる悪の化身「...」

c. 老耄ゆえの勘違いや失敗を繰り返し、主人公やその周辺の人物を混乱させ、時に和ませ、関係調整役として働く人物「...」.

<sup>9</sup> Translated by Ōoka Akira for Kōbunsha in 2016.



*Novelle fatte a macchina* by Giovanni Rodari (1973),<sup>10</sup> *Novelle per un anno* by Luigi Pirandello (1922),<sup>11</sup> *Ragazzi di vita* by Pier Paolo Pasolini (1955),<sup>12</sup> and *La compagnia dei celestini* by Stefano Benni (1992).<sup>13</sup> The sample was thus selected in order to have different text types represented in the data, including both literary works (*Ragazzi di vita*) and children's literature (*Novelle fatte a macchina*), stand-alone novels (*La compagnia dei celestini*) and collection of novellas (*Novelle per un anno*).

Following the theoretical framework introduced in sections 2 and 3, characters – and their speech styles – were analysed as possible examples of “elderly male” role language, depending on both of the below criteria:

Whether their character attributes, role in the story and associated stereotypes can be compared to those of the “elderly male” archetype found in Japanese popular media.

Whether their use of language shows at least one of the elements regarded as representative of *rōjingo*: first-person pronoun *washi*, negative form ending *-n*, copula *-ja*, progressive aspect marker *-teoru*, or *-toru*.

Regarding language markers, however, as both the negative form ending *-n* (Kinsui 2014, 214-15) and the copula *-ja* (105-06) have been observed as recurring in other role language categories (e.g., “rural” role language), at least one more other marker was required in order for a character's speech to be included in the data. Second-person pronoun use, as well as the presence of sentence-ending particles, were also considered in the analysis.

The total corpus consists of 21 590 characters, split among the five works in the following manner:

LE AVVENTURE DI PINOCCHIO	NOVELLE SCRITTE A MACCHINA	NOVELLE PER UN ANNO	RAGAZZI DI VITA	LA COMPAGNIA DEI CELESTINI
4719	6740	2717	759	6655

Table 2

#### 4. Results

For each translation, names of characters exhibiting potential qualities of the “elderly man” role language were listed up, with each column summarizing an aspect of their language use in terms of the categories mentioned in the previous section. Whenever a certain category of language could not be observed in a character's speech, the column was left blank. In the case of characters from *Novelle fatte a macchina* and *Novelle per un anno*, the title of the *novella* is included in parathesis after their name. Characters were also tentatively assigned a “character class” according to Kinsui's (2022) framework, depending on their role played in the narrative (1 = “protagonist” or “hero” class, point-of-view character; 2 = secondary, non-p.o.v. characters, but influential both to the protagonist's development and that of the plot; 3 = unnamed, background characters and characters with minor involvement in the narrative); those who show traits of two classes are indicated with a slash (/).

<sup>10</sup> Translated by Sekiguchi Eiko for Kōbunsha in 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Translated by Sekiguchi Eiko for Kōbunsha in 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Translated by Yonekawa Ryōfu for Kōdansha in 1999.

<sup>13</sup> Translated by Nakajima Hirō for Shūeisha in 1995.

## 4.1 Le avventure di Pinocchio

	CLASS	COPULA	NEGATIVE FORM ENDING	FIRST- PERSON PRONOUN	SECOND- PERSON PRONOUN	PROGRESSIVE ASPECT MARKER	ENDING PARTICLES
Geppetto	2	- <i>da</i>	- <i>n</i> , - <i>nai</i>	<i>washi</i>	<i>anta</i> , <i>omae</i>	- <i>toru</i> , - <i>teru</i>	- <i>zo</i> , - <i>sa</i>
Master Cherry	2/3	- <i>da</i>	- <i>n</i> , - <i>nai</i>	<i>washi</i>	<i>anta</i>	- <i>teiru</i>	- <i>zo</i> , - <i>sa</i> , - <i>dai</i>
Farmer (ch. XXI)	3	- <i>da</i>	- <i>n</i>	<i>washi</i>	<i>omae</i>	- <i>teiru</i>	- <i>zo</i>
Old man (ch. XXIX)	3	- <i>da</i>	- <i>nai</i>	<i>washi</i>	<i>omae</i>	- <i>teru</i>	- <i>sa</i>
Farmer Giangio (ch. XXX-VI)	3	- <i>da</i> , - <i>desu</i>	- <i>n</i>	<i>oira</i>	- <i>omaesan</i>	- <i>toru</i>	- <i>zo</i> , - <i>sa</i>

Table 3

The use of “elderly man” role language markers is limited to the speech style of secondary and tertiary characters, in agreement with the theoretical framework of section 2. While no instances of the copula *-ja* are found, Kinsui (2003) notes that the copula *-da* frequently occurs in the speech patterns of this type of characters, and thus it can be considered here as a potential marker of *rōjingo*.

The Japanese translation of Geppetto’s dialogue shows the highest frequency and number of *rōjingo*-like characteristics. His role in the story has qualities of (a)-type *rōjin*, as he often advises and admonishes Pinocchio, as well as (c). As his speech patterns are consistent throughout the text and his character attributes – in terms of age and behaviour – match the stereotypical attributes of the elderly man archetype, his dialogue can be regarded as an example of role language. The second-person pronoun *anta*, a contracted variant of *anata*, attributed both to him and the character of Master Cherry, also appears to have been employed as a marker to that effect. The use of *anata* as a second-person pronoun (originally indicating a direction far from the speaker) began to appear around the seventeenth century ca. The variant *anta* was initially found in the Kamigata dialect to address a speaker of higher rank, before gradually acquiring its more colloquial, contemporary use: in fictional works is often employed as part of female characters’ speech, but there can be found instances (such as the comic book series *Sazae-san* サザエさん) of it being used between middle-aged men who are not Kansai dialect speakers (Kinsui 2014, 22-24).

Other recurring elements in the speech styles of all characters are the emphatic sentence ending particle *-zo* and *-sa*. The particle *-sa* appears frequently as part of male characters’ speech, both in translation (Nakamura 2013) and in Japanese popular fiction, often when the listener is of equal or lower status (Kinsui 2014). *-zo* is similarly employed, with the only difference of being slightly more emphatic. Both characteristics should therefore be regarded as markers of the speaker’s gender rather than their age.

It is worth noticing how, while in the source text Master Cherry (1) and Geppetto (2) refer to one another with the courtesy pronoun *voi*, this aspect of their language use is not properly reflected in the target text, due to the overall informal tone enregistered by the *rōjingo* and masculine markers, the use of plain form and spoken language colloquialisms (e.g. the emphatic sentence ending particle *-yo* or the contracted variant of the possessive particle *-n*). This could

be possibly considered as an example of how role language categories are used in translation to achieve domestication, thus prioritizing what the average Japanese reader would expect in a certain context, or from a certain character type, over the register and tone of the source text.

- (1) で、ジエツペットさんよ、あんたの方はどういう風のふきまわしで、わしん  
 ところへやってきたんだい？ (Collodi 2016, 11)

*De, Jeppetto-san yo anta-no-hō-wa dōiu kaze-no fuki-mawashide, washi-n-toko-he yatte-kita-n-dai?*

- ‘Chi **vi ha potato** da me, compar Geppetto?’

- ‘But tell me, Mr. Geppetto, what circumstances brought you to my place?’

- (2) なに、足が勝手にわしを運んできちまつたのさ…てのは冗談で、あんたにた  
 のみがあるんだよ。(Ibidem)

*Nani, ashi-ga katte-ni washi-o hakonde-kichimatta-no-sa... teno-wa jōdan-de, anta-ni tanom-ga aru-n-da-yo.*

- ‘Le gambe. Sappiate, mastr’Antonio, che son venuto da **voi**, per **chiedervi** un favore’.

- ‘My legs brought me here... jokes aside, I have something to ask you’.

Lastly, the use of language attributed to Giano, the farmer that appears only in the last chapter and for whom Pinocchio work for some time, shows some elements of *rōjingo* as well, such as the progressive aspect marker *-teoru* and the negative form ending *-n*. However, as previously mentioned, *-n* can also be used to indicate a “rural” role language type. The first-person pronoun *oira*, derived from the assimilation of *ore* and the plural *-ra*, can be a marker for “Edo language” speech style or emphasize the masculine identity of the speaker, although implying a more playful or disobedient personality than average (Kinsui 2014, 35). These characteristics, therefore, suggest the attribution of a “rural” or “masculine” type of role language over *rōjingo*.

#### 4.2 Novelle scritte a macchina

	CLASS	COPULA	NEGATIVE FORM ENDING	FIRST-PERSON PRONOUN	SECOND-PERSON PRONOUN	PROGRESSIVE ASPECT MARKER	ENDING PARTICLES
Antonio ( <i>Vado via con i gatti</i> )	1	<i>-da,</i> <i>-desu</i>	<i>-nai</i>	<i>washi,</i> <i>watashi</i>	-	<i>-teiru,</i> <i>-teru</i>	<i>-zo</i>
Mambretti ( <i>Padrone e ragioniere</i> )	2	<i>-da</i>	<i>-nai</i>	<i>washi</i>	<i>omae,</i> <i>anata</i>	<i>-teru,</i> <i>-teoru</i>	<i>-zo</i>
Settemani ( <i>Padrone e ragioniere</i> )	2/3	<i>-da,</i> <i>-desu</i>		<i>washi</i>			<i>-zo</i>
Sior Todaro ( <i>Venezia da salvare</i> )	1/2	<i>-da</i>		<i>washi</i>	<i>omae</i>		<i>-zo</i>

The Deputy (Pianoforte Bill e il mistero degli spaventa- passeri)	2	-da	-n, -nai	wareware	omae	-teoru	-zo
Delivery men (I misteri di Ve- nezia)	3		-n	washi		-teru	
Mambretti (Il giardino del commenda- tore)	2	-da	-n	washi	kimi omae	-teoru	
Carletto (Strani casi sulla torre di pisa)	2	-da -desu	-nai	washi	anata	-teiru	
Admeto (Per chi filano le tre vecchie?)	1	-ja -da -desu	-n -nai	washi watashi	omae	-teoru	-zo, -wa

Table 4

The character of King Admeto in *Per chi filano le tre vecchie?* is the only one, in this second sample, whose speech style displays the full set of characteristics of *rōjingo*, with a rare instance of the use of the copula *-ja* (3). While there are no clear indicators in the source text of his possible age range – aside from the fact that both of his parents are still alive –, the archetypes of kings, judges, etc. and other men of authority have long been associated with this category of role language (Kinsui 2003), and therefore its use in this context should not be regarded as an instance of “type ii” character language:

- (3) わしを誰だと思っておる。王なのだぞ。わしの命は国家にとってあまりに要じゃ。(Rodari 2006, 153)

**Washi-o dare-da-to omotte-oru. Ō-na-no-da-zo. Washi-no inochi-wa kokka-ni totte amari-ni jūyō-ja.**

- ‘Sono o non sono il re? La mia vita è troppo importante per lo Stato’.

- ‘Who do you think I am? I am the king. My life is too important for the State’.

As the plot of the novella revolves around the King’s attempts at finding someone willing to die in his place, after the Parcae declared he has less than three days to live, Admetus is the likeliest candidate in the story to be classified as a “first class” character. According to the framework introduced in sections 1 and 1.1, the attribution of a language stereotype as the speech style of the main character would be unusual. However, Admetus’s dialogue shows some degree of linguistic variety throughout the story. When he visits his parents, his manner of speech shifts to a more neutral, slightly formal register closer to standard Japanese, characterized by the first-person pronoun *watashi*, the copula *-desu* and the use of honorifics forms such as *chichi-ue* and *haha-ue*.

- (4) 私がすべてを包み隠さずお願いできるのは、父上と母上しかいないのです。  
(155)

*Watashi-ga subete-o tsutusmi-kakusazu o-negai-dekiru-no-wa, chichi-ue-to haha-ue-shika inai-no-desu.*

- ‘Siete i soli a cui io possa chiedere tutto, col cuore in mano’.

- ‘Father and Mother are the only ones I can ask without hiding anything’.

A similar pattern can be observed in the speech style of Antonio, the protagonist of the opening novella. Antonio, a retired stationmaster, tired of being ignored by his family, turns into a cat to go to live among strays: in the end, he decides to turn back to his original form and rejoin his family. At the beginning of the story, he refers to himself using *washi* (5) and the translator seems to have attributed to him the use of the copula *-da* and the sentence ending particle *-zo*, all potential markers of *rōjingo*; after he has turned into a cat, however, the copula is changed to *-desu* and the first-person pronoun to *watashi* (6):

- (5) 懐かしいなあ。わしが昔、ガツララーテ駅で助役をやっていたころ… (7)

*Natsukashi-i nā. Washi-ga mukashi, Garrarāte-eki-de joyaku-o yatte-ita-koro...*

- ‘Mi ricordo quando ero capostazione aggiunto a Gallarate...’.

- ‘How nostalgic. It takes me back to when I used to work as an assistant stationmaster at the station of Gallarate...’.

- (6) ダニエラは私に、元のおじいちゃんの姿にもどってほしいというのですよ。  
(14)

*Daniera-wa watashi-ni, moto-no ojī-chan-no sugata-ni modotte-hoshi-i to-iu-no-desu-yo.*

- ‘[...] Daniela vorrebbe che io ritornassi ad essere il nonno’.

- ‘Daniela told me she wants me to go back to being her grandfather’.

This variation in the linguistic markers of “protagonist-class” characters’ speech appears to be in agreement with Kinsui’s (2022) framework of *character* (attributes) and *individuality* as the foundation of a *dramatis personae*: as the latter is what guarantees that their intentions, memories, feelings, etc. are coherent throughout the narrative, the former may change several times without a loss in the character’s consistency. Thus, it can be assumed that, as Admetus’ *character* shifts from “king” to “son” and Antonio’s from “human” to “non-human”, the use of different language markers was meant to reflect this change.

The remaining characters’ dialogues display a relatively sparser occurrence of *rōjingo* features. Given also the overall variety of traits and behaviours (e.g., both Mambrettis are the demanding employers of the protagonists in their respective stories; Sior Tōdaro is an insurance agent and strict family-man; Carletto sells souvenirs to tourists in Pisa, etc.), and lack of in-universe description of their age, none of them truly fulfil the stereotypical attributes of an “elderly man” archetype. The recurring attribution of the pronoun *washi* could be a possible strategy to differentiate their speech from that of other characters, and it should be therefore regarded as an instance of character language rather than role language.

4.3 *Novelle per un anno*

	CLASS	COPULA	NEGATIVE FORM ENDING	FIRST-PERSON PRONOUN	SECOND-PERSON PRONOUN	PROGRESSIVE ASPECT MARKER	ENDING PARTICLES
zi' Scarda ( <i>Ciaula scopre la luna</i> )	2/3	- <i>da</i>		<i>washi</i>			
Don Lolò ( <i>La giara</i> )	2	- <i>da</i>	- <i>n</i> , - <i>nai</i>	<i>washi</i>	<i>Omae</i>	- <i>teiru</i>	- <i>zo</i>
zi' Dima ( <i>La giara</i> )	½	- <i>da</i>	- <i>n</i> , - <i>nai</i>	<i>watashi</i>	<i>Omae</i>		- <i>sa</i>

Table 5

Compared to the previously analysed samples, the Japanese translation of *Novelle per un anno* shows an overall restricted use of role language markers, found in only six out of the fifteen novellas, and the majority of which act mostly as signifiers for the gender of the speaker.

In the opening novella, *Ciaula scopre la luna*, which takes place in the world of early-twentieth century Sicilian sulphur miners, in most of the characters' dialogue it is possible to identify typical elements of male role language (e.g., the imperative form; the ending particle *-zo*). Such is also the case for the character of Zi' Scarda – the oldest miner in the group and the one the protagonist Ciaula works directly under – although unique to him is the use of the first-person pronoun *washi*, in its plural form *washi-ra*:

- (7) さあ、服を脱いでこい。「…」今日、わたらのところに夜はめぐってこない  
と神がお決めになつたらしい。(Pirandello 2012, 11)

*Sā, fuku-o nuide-koi* [...] *Kyō, washi-ra-no tokoro-ni yoru-wa megutte-konai-to kami-ga o-kime-ni-natta rashi-i*

- 'Va', va' a rispogliarti [...] Oggi per noi il Signore non fa notte'.

- 'Go and take off your clothes [...] It seems that today the Lord decided that there will be not night for us'.

While his lack of lines and overall place in the story does not allow to observe the full extent of the “elderly man” role language characteristics, the extra-linguistic markers regarding his age and his unsymmetrical relationship with the protagonist that can be inferred from the text are ascribable to the *rojin* category, and thus the translator might have opted to underline these attributes through the use of *washi*.

In *La giara*, also set in rural Sicily, the central characters of Don Lollò Zirafa, the stingy and litigious owner of the olive fields, and zi' Dima, a local repairman, can also be classified as representing an “elderly man” type. The first demonstrates qualities analogous to the “tyrannical authority figure” stereotype and the second, beyond his physical appearance, is characterised by his expertise in a field. In the case of Don Lollo, this is partly reflected in his speech style:

- (8) そのパテを、わしに見せてくれないか。(61)

*Sono pate-o, washi-ni misete-kurenai-ka.*

- 'Fatemi vedere codesto masticce'.

- 'Show me that putty'.

- (9) *だが、パテで直ただけでは信用できん。(62)*

*Daga, pate-de naoshita-dake-de-wa shinyō-dekin.*

- ‘Col mastice solo però [...] non mi fido’.

- ‘However, I can't trust you to fix it just with putty’.

Zi' Dima, however, despite being described as a “vecchio sbilenco, dalle giunture storpie e nodose” (Pirandello 2013, 630), shows almost no defining characteristics of *rōjingo* in his dialogue – outside of a single instance of the negative form ending *-n*. This could be an intentional stylistic choice on the translator's part, driven to some extent by the need to distinguish the speech of the two main characters, and also by Zi' Dima's more heroic role in the story – which would explain the attribution of the more neutral first-person pronoun *watashi*.

#### 4.4 Ragazzi di vita

	CLASS	COPULA	NEGATIVE FORM ENDING	FIRST-PERSON PRONOUN	SECOND-PERSON PRONOUN	PROGRESSIVE ASPECT MARKER	ENDING PARTICLES
Sor Antonio	2	<i>-da</i>		<i>washi, watashi</i>	<i>omae-san</i>		<i>-sa, -yo</i>

Table 6

The only character whose speech style shows elements of *rōjingo* is Sor Antonio – an old man who convinces the protagonist Ricetto to steal some cauliflowers, and who later becomes his father-in-law. While, in terms of role and character attributes, he possesses qualities typical of the “elderly man” stereotype, these are hardly reflected in his manner of speech, which displays a relatively high degree of linguistic variety: the only major maker of *rōjingo* is the first-person pronoun *washi* (10) – which is sometimes replaced by *watashi* (11) –, the emphatic ending particle *-yo* is used in place of the more masculine-sounding *-zo*, and there are also instances of both *keigo* and phonological assimilation (12) (*meshi-agaru* > *meshagaru*). Therefore, his speech style cannot be considered as a true example of role language.

- (10) *お前さん、わしの甥はね、キヤベツひとつ、それもただのひとつだよ、それで六カ月、監獄にいれたんだよ。(Pasolini 1995, 199)*

*Omae-san, washi-no oi-wa ne, kyabetsu hitotsu, sore-mo tada-no-hitotsu da-yo, sore-de rokkagetsu, kangoku-ni irerareta-n-da-yo.*

- ‘A coso, ce lo sai che mi' nipote per un cavolo, ma uno de numero, s'è fatto sei mesi de priggione?’

- ‘Listen, my nephew spent six months in prison for one cabbage, just one cabbage’.

- (11) *わたしの友だちだよ、紹介しよう。(204)*

*Watashi-no tomo-dachi-da-yo, shōkai-shiyō.*

- ‘Te presento sti amichi mia, -’.

- ‘These are my friends, let me introduce them, -’.

(12) お前さんがた、何を召しやがるかな。(207)

*Omae-san-gata, nani-o meshagaru-kana.*

- ‘Che ve potemo offri? -’.

- ‘Would you like something to drink? -’.

Yonekawa’s translation overall appears to have employed certain role language markers in order to portray the dialect of the source text – resulting in them being sometimes attributed to a character type who is not part of their original associated social group: elements typical of informal male language (*otoko-kotoba* 男ことば) can be found in the speech style of both men (13) and women (14):

(13) おれはお前の金を盗みやしないさ、わかっぺいらあな、え?(133)

*Ore-wa omae-no kane-o nusumiya-shinai-sa, wakatte-irāna, e?*

- ‘[...] che te credi, mica te ‘i sto a rubbà, ce lo sai, sì’.

- ‘I’m not going to steal your money. Understood, uh?’

(14) お前の筆は役立たずかよ?(65)

*Omae-no fude-wa yaku-tatazu-ka-yo?*

- ‘Te va de intigne?’

- ‘What, your ‘brush’ doesn’t work?’

#### 4.5 La compagnia dei celestini

	CLASS	COPULA	NEGATIVE FORM ENDING	FIRST-PERSON PRONOUN	SEC-OND-PERSON PRONOUN	PRO-GRESSIVE ASPECT MARKER	ENDING PARTICLES
Alessio	2	- <i>da</i>	- <i>n</i>	<i>washi</i>	<i>omae</i>	- <i>toru</i>	- <i>wai</i> , - <i>zo</i>
Eraclitus	2/3	- <i>ja</i>	- <i>n</i>	<i>Washi</i>	<i>omae-san</i>	- <i>teoru</i> , <i>toru</i>	- <i>sa</i> , - <i>wai</i>
Zahutaloa	3	- <i>ja</i>	- <i>n</i>	<i>wareware</i>	<i>omae</i>	- <i>teoru</i> , <i>teiru</i>	- <i>zo</i>

Table 7

Benni’s novel, which follows the adventures of three orphans, features a large ensemble cast. Three highly marked examples of *rōjingo* can be seen in the dialogues of the mechanic Alessio (15), the zoologist Eraclitus (16) and the Aboriginal shaman Zahutaloa (17). While the latter two only appear in one chapter and therefore should be considered “third-class” characters, all three either assist the protagonists’ group with their knowledge (Eraclitus) and inventions (Alessio), or stereotypical depictions of wisdom and authority (Zahutaloa). The translator, therefore, might have opted to employ language markers typical of this role language category to meet the average Japanese reader’s cultural expectations. In Eraclitus’ case, both his appearance – “un vecchio biancobarbutto, vestito come gli esploratori dei fumetti” (Benni 2000, 127) –, and his role conform with the recurring stereotype of the “elderly scientist” in Japanese popular fiction, and thus it is possible to classify his speech style as an instance of the sub-category of *hakase-go*.



- (15) わしにはもう希望はないわい。(113)  
**Washi-ni-wa mō kibō-wa nai-wai.**  
 - ‘Non ho più speranze’.  
 - ‘I don’t have hope anymore’.
- (16) わしが研究を始めたばかりのころは、わしの同僚たちの多くもそんなことを言うようになったわい。(152)  
**Washi-ga kenkyū-o hajimeta-bakari-no koro-wa, washi-no dōryō-tachi-no ōku-mo sonna koto-o iu-totta-wai.**  
 - ‘[...] così dicevano anche diversi miei colleghi all’inizio dei miei studi’.  
 - ‘When I had just begun my research, many of my colleagues used to say so’.
- (17) われわれは今岩の下に座っておるが、これは大きな取っ手なのじゃ。(114)  
**Wareware-wa ima iwa-no shita-ni suwatte-oru-ga, kore-wa ōki-na totte-nano-ja.**  
 - ‘La roccia sotto cui siamo ora è la grande maniglia [...]’.  
 - ‘We are now sitting under a rock, but it is a big handle’.

#### 4.6 Summary of the Results

According to the data presented, the following conclusions can be made:

- The use of role language categories in translation largely contributes to a “domestication”. The closer the characters’ traits can be ascribed to a recurring character type in Japanese media, the more likely it is for them to be attributed the respective language stereotype, regardless of the register, tone and other linguistic features present in the source text. Complete sets of the language markers that make up *rōjingo* were found exactly in the speech styles of those characters who embody the qualities of the archetypes associated to them in Japanese – such as kings (Admetus) and scientists (Eraclitus). In the case of first-class characters, moreover, it was seen that, as their attribute changed, so did their manner of speech in the target text, even if no such change is found in the source text.
- The first-person pronoun *washi* was the marker that occurred most frequently, whether as part of a genuine instance of role language or when used as a type of character language to distinguish the speech of certain characters. This suggests that, among all the characteristics analysed, it has the highest connotative value.
- The text type, the genre, and the target audience also seem to influence the extent to which aspects of role language can be employed as part of the characters’ speech styles. Examples of “pure” instances of *rōjingo* are found in Benni and Rodari’s samples, both of which contain several fantastical and imaginary elements, and – more so in the case of Rodari – are primarily meant for a younger audience. On the other hand, more “literary” works, with a realistic and somber tone – as the case of *Novelle per un anno* – display considerably less range in the features and categories of role language that were used.

#### 5. Future Research

While this study suggested some possible trends in the use of *rōjingo* in translation, the size of the sample does not allow to make any definitive claims: a follow-up study, taking a quali-quantitative approach and a larger corpus, should be considered.

There already exists a relatively substantial amount of literature on the analysis of translations of non-Japanese dialects, although the focus has been almost exclusively on American English varieties: it could then be beneficial to investigate whether similar findings could be confirmed in the translations of dialects of other languages as well.

Teshigawara's (2004, 2021) research on voice qualities in Japanese animation and popular media offers a possible framework to understand how certain phonological elements can be regarded as potential role language markers. This approach could be also applied to translation analysis, by examining and comparing the types of voices found in Japanese dubbings of foreign media.

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# OSSERVATORIO

