HEROES AND VILLAINS IN JAPANESE MANGA: A DISSECTION OF ROLE LANGUAGE

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HEROES AND VILLAINS IN JAPANESE MANGA: A DISSECTION OF ROLE LANGUAGE

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To all the students in the world who are breaking barriers and going out of their comfort zone to find their true selves
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**A note concerning romanization.**

This thesis adopts the traditional Hepburn system of Japanese Romanization which shows a long vowel a, e, i, o, or u with a macron.
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SUMMARY

This thesis works on the notion of role language of two teenage boy hero-in-training protagonists from two popular Japanese manga, *Demon Slayer* and *My Hero Academia*, as well as two of their many villain antagonists. Role language, *yakuwarigo* in Japanese (Kinsui 2003), is a style of language found in works of fiction such as *manga* that convey certain traits of a speaker, such as age, gender and class. Many of the current studies focus on female language. Given the lack of male language research and a misconception that male language is only rough and aggressive from a speech elements perspective, I examine the relationships between status language used by protagonists and their characters. In particular, I investigate whether or not there is diversity of gender expressions in their dialogue and soliloquy. With the help of a linguistic parser called *Co-Chu*, using data extracted from the *manga* such as interactional particles (IP), one of my two findings includes the discovery of multiple functions of the IP *na* in both dialogue and soliloquy: the negative imperative form, “*Ki ni suru na!*” (Don’t worry!) and self-encouragement in soliloquy, as in “*Naku na.*” (Don’t cry). The other is the villains have more character development than just aggressive males; they use their language to identify as gender nonconforming. Finally, this thesis also discusses various styles, first-person pronouns, and speech elements such as question word usage and hesitation.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

“Diversity is not about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another’s uniqueness.” ---Ola Joseph

This quote perfectly describes what I am after in my own life since as an African-American female, I want more people to recognize my stepping out of the box to excel in Japanese language studies (as there tends to be more Whites and East Asians that study the language). However, this recognition of diversity is something that Japanese manga (comics) tends to lack, unfortunately. Although some elements of manga emulate the breadth of differences within Japanese society, the same cannot always be said for the characters’ linguistic choices which are often predictably gendered. However, some manga such as the two discussed in my research might enjoy great popularity because their characters do not cleave to conventional gender expression.

This brings me to providing a brief overview of the larger social context of moving away from conventional gender expression and moving towards evolving masculine roles in Japan. Throughout history, males of the baby boomer generation (dankai no sedai) in Japan have played the household breadwinners at least until retirement. Once they retire from their companies, however, they have more free time on their hands and with their wives must “find a new balance between togetherness and
separateness” (Moore, 2017, p. 10). Their sons had a different struggle, however; otherwise known as the ‘freeter’ generation, young people who had less stable and long-term employment than their fathers. This led to relationship issues in their lives; Cook writes, ‘male freeters often have difficulty maintaining long-term romantic relations and transitioning from dating to marriage, in part because of their irregular employment status and low breadwinning ability’ (2014, p. 2). The ‘freeter’ generation’s sons, millennials/Generation Y, experienced a struggle much different that: the influence of ‘herbivore masculinity.’ To be concise, Charlebois writes that “the pursuit of a professional career is not a central component of herbivore masculinity…their limited disposable income is spent on body-grooming related products” (2017, p. 171). Allotting extensive time for one’s hygiene regimen tends to be seen as a feminine activity. Unlike their predecessors, millennials are non-competitive when it comes to the professional realm.

Through tracing the ways that economic roles (production aspect of society) for men and thus their related gendered household role, I speculate as to how fiction authors such as mangaka might be reflecting this evolution by offering new versions of Japan's heroic and villainous masculinity in their works. Although not every aspect of manga emulates real life, mangaka (manga illustrators) of late are making an effort to make their creative works relatable to their underrepresented audiences, i.e. the LBTGQ
community. It is true that both types of characters show off their seemingly masculine strength in battles to meet their agendas, but their gender expressions nowadays are evolving to more diverse ones. This is important to the evolution of Japanese society which has historically been based on homogeneity and exclusion.

What I will investigate in this paper is how such gender expressions set them apart from the rest and the narrow role that society prescribes to them; this thesis sets out to do that. In this thesis, the two manga that will be analyzed are Koyoharu Gotouge’s Demon Slayer (鬼滅の刃 Kimetsu no Yaiba) and Kōhei Horikoshi’s My Hero Academia (僕のヒーローアカデミア Boku no Hīrō Akademia). The male protagonists in these manga live in different eras but their overarching goals are the same: to become strong enough to help those around them. And of course, every hero needs a bad guy; in this case, either a demon or a villain so I make it a point to give them characterization as well. I have chosen to focus on shōnen manga (boys’ comics) which are typically characterized by high action and humorous storylines that feature male protagonists and antagonists because in comparison to female language, male language has not nearly been analyzed as much as the former in Japanese linguistics, and manga is no exception. I will explore how certain linguistic elements, when used by mangaka to illustrate a plenitude of distinct male characters, create a richness and complexity of gender expression that appeals to Japanese readers and Japanese learners alike.
1.1 General Use of Role Language Reflected in Japanese Linguistics

To start, role language (yakuwarigo) is defined as a style of language, usually used in both in real life and fictional stories, that conveys certain traits about its speaker such as age, gender, and class. Satoshi Kinsui, a Japanese linguist and professor at Osaka University, first proposed the concept in 2003. His 2017 book, *Virtual Japanese: Enigmas of Role Language*, makes major contributions to this field; one is the analysis of aru-yo language used by Chinese people in Japan in manga/anime. The grammatical format of this structure includes: a) the use of aru, which is one of the ‘to-be’ verb for inanimate objects, (or negative nai) immediately following the base form of an adjective and b) use of yoroshī after the base form of a verb as a request or command form. The net effect of this linguistic structure when used by Chinese manga/anime characters upon the Japanese reader, is one of awkward Japanese usage resulting in a superior sense of humor or pathos towards those minority characters, compared to encountering Japanese characters who more typically default to the ‘proper’ linguistic form. In this way, language in popular culture stories can be used to sketch out crude stereotypes in the form of predictable or problematic character expression. The following is an example from his book:

1) *Yasui aru-yo, hayaku kau yoroshi*
   cheap exist-PARTICLE soon buy good
It’s cheap. You had better buy it now.’
(after Kinsui, 2017:132)

Kinsui (2017) writes, “the kinds of characters speaking aru-yo role language were confined to suspicious or comical adult males” and “from the late 1970s to 1980s, the character types….shifted to young women dressed in traditional Chinese costumes (e.g. Shampō in Ranma 1/2 and Tsururin Tsun in Dr. Slump)” (p. 132). It is important to note that these types of characters are not main characters but rather given special roles so their role language is used to develop the story effectively (Teshigawara and Kinsui, 2011, p. 40).

Yakuwarigo is also defined as “sets of spoken language features and phonetic characteristics, associated with particular character types” (2017, p. 125-126). In addition to the Chinese people in Japan character type, there is also that of the schoolgirl or the ojōsama (young lady). As discussed by Teshigawara and Kinsui (2011), they speak what is known as teyodawa language. Characteristics of teyodawa language include: a) te(yo) ending (as in the below excerpt), b) final particle wa following the base form of a verb; 3) wa following a copula (clause-final ending) da or desu. Similar to male language, this type of female language has a cumulative effect of making a character come across as elegant, elite, and ultrafeminine. The following examples are from their article which from extracted from Sōseki Natsume’s Wagahai wa Neko dearu (1905):
'Anata taihen iro ga warukut-*teyo... ’ (‘Your color looks very bad…’)
‘Ara goshujin datte, myō nanone. Oshishō san *dawa... ’(‘Oh, my master? That.
sounds strange. Mine is a mistress [of the two-stringed harp]…’)
(after Teshigawara and Kinsui, 2011:49)

Comparable to male language, this type of female language has also been
disappearing in reality, but in continues to exist in popular culture. However, the
language styles is seen as more flexible, since their choices range from traditional
female language to male language, all depending on the genre and character type.

Even in comics, girls as young as high school age can be seen using male language.

Teshigawara and Kinsui write that this can be considered as “an example of a new
identity created by shifting existing language resources” (2011, p. 50).

Okamoto writes, “linguistic gender norms have been actively constructed in
Japanese society” (2010, p. 680) but even if there are actual people who seem to fit
these character types, they may demonstrate a less consistent range of gender
expression in real life; thus making their fictional utterances in manga, for example,
easily recognizable in Japanese culture. Role language enlists the combination of
various first-person particles (watashi, atashi, washi, boku, ore), various sentence-final
particles/interactional particles (ne, yo, kashira, wa, na, zo, ze) and various verb endings
in either the polite (desu/-masu) or the casual form (da form). This is found in many
fictional works such as manga, anime and novels in Japanese. However, one of the
problems it poses is translation since the usage of role language seems to be teaching stereotypical images of certain characters, although they do not speak in that manner.

The example below is based off the introduction in Kinsui’s *Virtual Japanese* (2017, p. 125). It looks at a few sample variations of a phrase meaning ‘Yes, I know that’. The hypothetical speakers of (2a), (2b), and (2c) are a boy, a noblewoman and an elderly man, respectively:

2) a. Sō da yo, boku ga shit-teru no sa
   yes-COPULA I NOM know-ASPECT-PARTICLE

   b. Sō desu wa yo, watakushi ga zonjite orimasu wa
   yes-COPULA-PARTICLE I NOM know-ASPECT-PARTICLE

   c. Sō ja, washi ga shitte oru
   yes-COPULA I NOM know-ASPECT

In the above examples, each respective sentence contains two independent clauses with a combination of the copula, first-person pronoun, nominal and verb. Verb aspect form and sentence-final particle correspond to each of the portrayed *character types*; thus just seeing one of the above sentences gives the hearer an idea of what kind of character is speaking. In example (2a), the first-person pronoun *boku* is used which is a major giveaway that a male is talking. As for example (2b), the first-person pronoun *watakushi* is used and the clauses end in the polite -*masu* form, showing that the speaker
is probably in a formal setting and/or belongs to a higher social class. What gives this
the feminine touch is the usage of the particle *wa* (with a rising pitch), which is
primarily used by women. Finally in example (2c), the first-person pronoun used is
*washi*, which is commonly used by elderly men. Additionally, rather than copula
(clause-final) endings *da* or *desu wa*, *ja* is used, which is exclusively used by elderly
men. But in English, the words, “Yes, I know” is standard English and can be said by
anyone, which is why the Japanese-to-English translation is quite incomplete.

The above elements are parts of speech style, another important element of
role language. Briefly returning to the style concept of *desu/-masu* form, a relating
element worth mentioning is that of *soto* vs. *uchi*. Respectively, the terms are translated
from Japanese as outside and inside. *Soto* evokes unfamiliarity, distance, exclusion,
uncertainty, and lack of control while *uchi* evokes notions of familiarity, close proximity,
inclusion, certainty and control (Cook, 2018, p. 636). When *soto* is used, the
interlocutors are ending their utterances with *desu/-masu* (formal style) while the *uchi*
interlocutors uses sentence endings of *da* or no endings whatsoever. I bring up the topic
of *soto* vs. *uchi* because it is important to note that one of the hero-in-training
protagonists has a teacher who is socially higher ranked than him, he uses *desu/-masu*
form when speaking with his teacher, even if he feels close to him. (For more
information on the usage of *soto* vs. *uchi* in a real-life application, see part a in
1.2 Gender and Interactional Particles

Within role language research, there have been studies of women’s language (josēgo) conducted in the past (Okamoto 2010, Okamoto 2013, Itakura & Tsui, 2004, Sturtz Sreetharan 2004); however, as Sturtz Sreetharan (2004) points out “we know virtually nothing about the practices Japanese men use to construct their masculinity” (p. 82). Female language in modern Japanese undoubtedly has more speech variants that can define societal roles moreso than male language but males can use as many as three words for the 1st person (boku, ore, and washi (if the man is older)) and they can also use a variety of the so-called sentence-final particles such as na, zo, and ze. Since there are male protagonists in these two manga, I will be analyzing both for male language (dansēgo), specifically role language (yakuwarigo). The speech variants that I have mentioned above can be found in Table 1 entitled, “Example features of josēgo and dansēgo.” The table below is a version that I have modified with the same name originally found in Okamoto’s article “Language, Gender and Sexuality.”
Table 1 - Example features of *josēgo* and *dansēgo* - modified by the author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Linguistic features</th>
<th><em>Josēgo</em></th>
<th><em>Dansēgo</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First person pronouns</td>
<td><em>atashi</em></td>
<td><em>boku, ore, washi</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second person pronouns</td>
<td><em>anata</em></td>
<td><em>kimi, anata</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence-final particles</td>
<td>wa, wa yo, wa ne, kashira</td>
<td><em>ze, zo</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorifics</td>
<td>women’s use &gt; men’s use</td>
<td>men’s use &lt; women’s use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directives</td>
<td>gerundive (e.g. <em>Itte ‘Please go’</em>) or with honorific (e.g. <em>Itte kudasaru? ‘Would you go’</em>)</td>
<td>imperative (e.g. <em>Ike ‘go’</em>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stylistic features</td>
<td>gentle, polite, refined</td>
<td>direct, forceful, rough</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Male language uses fewer polite forms and a couple of main aspects of their conversation style are a) ‘speaker-oriented’ interrogation and b) telling stories about themselves and/or expressing their personal expertise on topics, neither of which women do in the Japanese language (Itakura & Tsui, 2004, p. 225). Itakura and Tsui also go on to say that the speakers’ gender plays a central role in determining
relationships in Japanese culture. (For more information on their studies, see part b in ENDNOTES.)

A result that occurred from their studies reflects Japanese people’s societal conversation knowledge: Japanese men and women within Japanese society can easily articulate ideas of stereotypes of what is and is not masculine. Okamoto writes that *josēgo* is defined as language that is gentle, polite, and reserved while *dansēgo* is defined as using rough and vulgar language (2017, p. 696). Another aspect found in both *manga* are young male protagonists and antagonists, which according to theories of Conversation Analysis, Sturtz Sreetharan writes “the youngest men attempt to create authority and conversational unassailability” (2004, p. 82). Young male characters in *manga* and *anime* are written to sound controlling, exerting this type of conversational authority and unassailability through dialog with others. However, because the two *mangaka* are exceptionally skilled at creating memorable young heroes and villains, I predict that the language of Tanjirō’s and Izuku’s, (the protagonists in *Demon Slayer* and *My Hero Academia*, respectively) as well as the language from at least one of the demons of each manga may not match up to either of the statements made earlier by Okamoto and Sturtz Sreetharan. Thus, a systematic analysis by using quantitative and qualitative analysis has been conducted.

One way to attain conversational unassailability in the Japanese language is
through what is known as clause-final speech (otherwise known as a copula). Sturtz Sreetharan writes, “the exchange of clause-final speech levels is typically taken as a sign that interlocutors are of unequal social status” (2006, p. 70). It might be used in gendered ways, in the relational context of status hierarchies (including a speaker's sex in addition to relative age, social position, and other situational factors), suggesting the comparative power of a speaking character over other characters, to Japanese readers.

The first is formal style, which has sentence endings of desu/-masu and is used by those of lower social status to those of higher social status. One type of formal style is known as kenjōgo. Translated in English as ‘humble language’, it is a kind of formal Japanese language used when someone is talking about oneself and the things that they do. (More on kenjōgo’s usage will be elaborated on in the Discussion.) The second is casual style, which is used from those of higher social status to those lower social status as well as between friends and family and can contain an utterance ending of da or no ending whatsoever. Generally, when authority is created in the Japanese language, the casual form is used by the person in a group setting who wants to seem superior and the receiver of that is to respond in the formal-style speech. Unlike English where these types of speech styles are non-existent, in Japanese, interlocutors are constantly switching between the two speech styles in various situations. In Matsumoto’s words, “the Japanese language ‘does not provide a neutral choice in which the information
conveyed is restricted to the propositional information…” (1989, p. 214). This non-reciprocal exchange of speech style is asserts that interlocutors are of unequal social status. This can be accomplished mainly through *interactional particles* (IPs), also traditionally known as sentence-final particles.

IPs in Japanese are short words that belong at the end of an utterance but do not always occur at the end of the sentence and instead Masuda (2009, p. 335) among others refer to them as interactional particles, which can occur “at almost any point in an utterance” and that the main function of these words is to show interaction with conversation participants. These IPs help the speaker to engage the hearer in conversation, thus adding an extra dimension to them. Both terms are used in this thesis.

Masuda and Yamamoto, who examined both male and female characters in *shōjo manga* (girls’ comics), propose the usage of IPs and their frequencies among the two genders. Figure 1 (Masuda & Yamamoto, forthcoming) details the usage of interactional particles and their frequencies among the two genders. Circled in yellow are the particles *na, ne, ka,* and *yo,* which are particles that anyone can use. Off to the far left circled in pink are particles *wa* and *kashira,* which are used by females. Off to the far right circled in blue are particles *zo* and *ze,* which are used by males. [see Figure 1]
IPs *na, yo ze, and zo* are discussed critically in the Study section of this thesis where closer quantitative and qualitative analysis will also be provided. Ogi summarizes these definitions in Chapter 8 of her 2017 volume with the help of a table and I have written English translations of them with the particles’ rough translations in parentheses. IP *ka*, however, is irrelevant to gender and is not found in the table below but is also discussed since it is a prominent IP in my research.

Table 2 - Summary of the Functions of Four Interactional Particles (Ogi, 2017, p. 119) modified by the author

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marker (Interactional Particle)</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Example with English translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>Ne, Ka, Yo</td>
<td>V-(prohibition) nayo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-tense</td>
<td>No, Na</td>
<td>V-(command form) yo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V-(command form) yo</td>
<td><em>Yona</em></td>
<td>More masculine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Na</em></td>
<td><em>Zo/Ze</em></td>
<td>More feminine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 – Gender Usage of Interactional Particles in *Manga* (Masuda and Yamamoto forthcoming) modified and translated by the author
Table 2 - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Na</th>
<th>Na signals the speaker’s incorporative attitude of aligning with the hearer with regard to the content and feeling conveyed in the utterance. It further denotes the speaker’s attitude of sharing camaraderie with the hearer.</th>
<th>Tarō wa uta ga umai na. Taro sings well, (huh!).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yo</td>
<td>Yo signals the speaker’s monopolistic attitude of ensuring that the hearer understands the content and feeling conveyed in the utterance.</td>
<td>Tarō wa uta ga umai yo. Taro sings well, (I tell you).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ze</td>
<td>Ze signals the speaker’s monopolistic attitude of enhancing the hearer’s understanding of the speaker’s belief that the content and feeling conveyed in the utterance should be shared with the hearer.</td>
<td>Tarō wa uta ga umai ze. (Hey) Taro sings well!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zo</td>
<td>Zo signals the speaker’s monopolistic attitude of urging the hearer to understand an implied message in connection with the given context.</td>
<td>Tarō wa uta ga umai zo. Taro sings well, (damn it!).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Na* is the most important of these particles for my research so I will discuss its usages. Not only is it used by both genders, but it is a good example of a particle that distinguishes unequal social status. Ogi (2014) explores the differences between IPs *ne* and *na* and specifically what connections it has with the speaker’s gender, age and social
status (p. 72). Ogi furthermore claims that “the use of *na* does not directly indicate the speaker’s biographical characteristics” (2014, p. 72). Ogi’s 2017 book, especially chapter 5, however, explores the idea of how ‘both *ne* and *na* deliver the speaker’s attitude’ and ‘the speaker’s wish is that the hearer will understand the content and feeling conveyed in the utterance is important feature of *ne* and *na* (p. 38). Izuhara (1996) also points out that *na* can appear in soliloquy (i.e. utterances of one’s thoughts without addressing) and dialogue (i.e. communication with another person is intended). Importantly, she argues that *na* in soliloquy is used by both gender, which is core meaning of na, while na in dialogue, which is often used by male, is derived and pragmatic meaning (p. 77-78). In the data tables in Section 2.2, the IP occurrences are separated by dialogue and soliloquy. IPs are present in not only a person’s dialogues but a person’s thoughts as well. This is because what occurs in soliloquy may help to reveal aspects about a character that dialogue may not.

Continuing with other instances that IP *na* appears in, it is one that tends to be used more by men when speaking in the negative imperative form (more on this in the paragraph after next). Ogi (2014; 2017) writes that when men are speaking, tagging the IP *na* makes it known that the hearer is socially equal to or lower than the speaker. There are two main usages of IP *na* in the Japanese language. The first usage is when talking to oneself (and if someone is around, a reply is not really expected). This example
comes from Volume 1 Chapter 1; Tanjirō, the young demon-battling protagonist whose masculine character is both courageous and kind, says “Saburo jisan kazoku o nakushite hitorigurashi dakara sabishīnna darō na” (I bet it’s lonely for Old Man Saburo since he lost his family and lives alone). To use deshō na (polite form of darō na) would be unnatural since when talking to oneself, polite forms are never used. It is important to note that between the two usages of both the placement of IP na in a sentence (at the very end) and what types of verbs it appears after (casual, short-form verbs) are identical.

The second usage of particle na is associated with male language usage and it is known as a negative imperative form. This is formed by taking a verb in the dictionary form (i.e. taberu ‘to eat’) and following it with na. (Therefore, taberu na translates to ‘don’t eat.’) The IP na tends to be preferred more by men when speaking with a rough, aggressive tone. A good example (that also comes from Volume 1, Chapter 1) would be if a male speaker such as Tanjirō says “Oni nanka ni naru na!” (Don’t turn into a demon!) to his sister, Nezuko. The standard way that that statement can be said is “Oni nanka ni naranaide!” The former statement is a direct, emotional, and urgent way to say this, and, as mentioned earlier, is associated with male language in Japanese.
1.3 Gendered Speaking Style of Fictional Male Characters in Japanese

Studies of *manga* characters’ speech tend to undertheorize how *manga* allows for male characters to use a range of gender expression because this is hardly seen in real life. Mentioned earlier, *manga* has some aspects that reflect real life of Japanese society but as males do not have much variety in their speech in comparison to females; this tends to be translated into *manga* unfortunately, which is a faulty representation of males’ lingustical characteristics. Like men in Japanese society, males in *shōnen manga* also have soft sides to them and do not always come off as aggressive; there are other instances in their lives like periods of mourning or desperation and their softer sides can be seen. *Manga* are indeed exciting fantasy works, but real life also has some fantastical elements such as magic, so it is crucial to not overlook these as they make *manga* what they are.

Going with the fact that both elements of role language reflect real life but are simultaneously different is what makes the *manga* world comical, but from an educational standpoint, discretion is to be used by Japanese language learners in not imitating everything that is said in *manga* dialogue for fear that they will be ridiculed for speaking like *manga* characters. Although analysis of English translation of these *manga* is beyond the scope of this research, and as mentioned earlier, English translation is another realm that abuses role languages since there is only one ‘I’.
Although the previous studies I have highlighted here have made many advancements in the realm of conversational studies in Japanese linguistics, there are some limitations to them, one of which is the language of fictional characters such as demons and villains. Needless to say they do not exist in real life, but these characters have human-like qualities and their language is based off human language and I am unaware of any research that details the speech of them and why they use the rough and vulgar language they use.
CHAPTER 2. STUDY

The research done in this thesis addresses the following two questions: first, how do the protagonists in both manga defy the male stereotype of taking over the conversation? Both Tanjirō and Izuku defy masculine ways of speaking; there are some instances where their language qualities lose the masculine touch, particularly their inquisitiveness. I looked into their frequently used IPs, their speech styles (both qualitatively and quantitatively) in their soliloquy and dialogue, special elements in their speech as well as first-person pronouns. The second and final question is how does the language that demons and villains use define their complex set of morals and personalities over this long serial format? Demons and villains are not just demons and villains since characters in manga characters tend to reflect people in real life, so the language they use must give them a deeper foundational role than that of evildoers. The previous statement concurs with what I cited earlier from Teshigawara and Kinsui on page 14 about how these types of characters (evildoers) are given special roles so their role language is used to develop the story effectively (2011, p. 40). I also looked into their speech style, IPs, speech elements such as verb endings and finally, first-person pronouns. Through answering these questions, I hope to make highlight some breakthroughs in these two manga that will, even if only a little, will alter the male language realm of Japanese linguistics role language research.
2.1 Data (Manga Synopses) and Methodology

2.1.1 Manga Synopses

With the manga mentioned in this thesis, linguistical aspects analyzed in this paper are closely tied with its background. With that said, I will go into depicting the synopses of both manga, starting with Demon Slayer:

In Taisho-era Japan (1912-1926), Demon Slayer is centered around 13-year-old protagonist Tanjirō Kamado, who is a kindhearted boy who makes a living selling charcoal. However, his peaceful life is shattered when a Demon slaughters his entire family. His little sister, Nezuko, is the only survivor, but she has been transformed into a Demon herself. Tanjirō sets out on a dangerous journey to find a way to return his sister to normal and destroy the Demon who ruined his life. The surprise appearance of another individual named Giyu Tomioka might provide some answers…but Tanjirō needs to be able to stop Giyu from killing his sister first. (Kimetsu no Yaiba Wiki, n.d.)

For the purposes of this research, the two villains discussed are Susamaru and the Temple Demon. Susamaru, a former female human turned demon who has a feminine appearance, seems to be gender nonconforming (possibly genderqueer). She is also known as “Temari Demon.” Temari is a traditional Japanese handball game that many little girls often enjoy; in the manga, mari function as a weapon, and Susamaru can be
seen throwing handballs at Tanjirō. She is affiliated with main antagonist of the series, Muzan Kibutsuji, who is otherwise known as the Demon King. The second demon, the Temple Demon is the first known by Tanjirō to have taken a human’s life. He is muscular and possesses visible fangs and sharp nails. He seems to have a traditionally male gender expression and has a goal of devouring humans.

The *My Hero Academia* synopsis is as follows:

Set in the 21st century, a then four-year-old protagonist Izuku Midoriya breaks down when bullied by his classmates who had unique special powers. Izuku, identical to his hero mentor, All Might, is a rare case where he was born ‘Quirk-less’, or with absolutely no unique powers. Fast forward to the present, he is now a 15-year-old high school student faced with pursuing his dream, that of becoming a great hero like the legendary All Might. To do this he applies and is accepted to a hero training high school known as U.A. High School. (*My Hero Academia Wiki, n.d.*)

The three of the many villains from the *manga* used in this research are known as Tomura Shigaraki, Kurogiri, and Nōmu. Tomura is the main antagonist of the *manga,* and he is the leader of what is known as the League of Villains. He, like the Temple Demon, seems to have a traditionally male gender expression. Kurogiri’s name in Japanese literally means “black fog”, which is his appearance in the *manga.* He is
another main antagonist in the series whose goal is to protect Tomura. Kurogiri, like Susamaru, seems to be gender non-conforming and has no defined physical appearance from neither gender. Finally, Nōmu are since-deceased individuals whose bodies are extremely altered to hold multiple Quirks. The name ‘Nōmu’ in Japanese literally translates to ‘no brain.’ (Interestingly enough, Kurogiri is also a Nōmu.)

2.1.2 Methodology

I have used Co-Chu (Komori, et al. 2020), which was developed as a tool by researchers in Japan to facilitate the process of converting data collected into an easy-to-analyze format for linguistic parsing. Co-Chu (https://co-chu.org) is a free text-analysis corpus analyzer formatted in Japanese and it was developed to investigate characteristics of natural Japanese conversation through original text file importation, editing and morphological analysis. The first step is to ‘build’ the corpus, so in my case, that means to input the raw data in Japanese from the manga into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Afterwards is building a corpus in the Co-Chu website is selected to import the data into, which is completed by the user selecting a file from their computer and labelling columns. The edit step follows this, in which users can choose within Co-Chu to conduct morphological analysis, collocation analysis or both. Morphological analysis pertains to the types of terms that are analyzed such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc. Collocation analysis pertains to frequencies of terms. The final step is that of
analysis, where one can customize types of data to view, such as metadata filters, search parameters and output settings to be modified that best suit the user’s purpose. For this research, I have worked with these parameters of morphological and collocation analysis.

The data is extracted from the first three volumes of *Demon Slayer* (25 chapters total) as well as all seven chapters in Volume 1 and nine selected chapters from Volumes 2 and 3 of *My Hero Academia* (16 chapters total), thus why the data amount for *My Hero Academia* is smaller. All characters shown in the first three volumes of *Demon Slayer* have had their lines notated into Excel but in the interests of time, for *Demon Slayer* I focus on the protagonist, Tanjirō Kamado and two of the main demons, Susamaru and the Temple Demon. For *My Hero Academia*, lines from the protagonist, Izuku Midoriya (or ‘Deku’, as he is known in the *manga*) and three villains, Kurogiri, Tomura, and Nōmu from selected chapters were entered into Excel but due to time limitations, only data from the former two is used. Since the data comes from *manga*, most of the text in the spreadsheets comes from speech bubbles. Since the data found here is known as spoken words (*hanashi kotoba* in Japanese) and includes slang, contracted phrases, elongated words as well as onomatopoeia, these are not registered by McCab (an open-source text segmentation library) that *Co-Chu* uses as a dictionary. They are unable to parse text that is not seen much in spoken Standard Japanese, so
lines containing these elements have been manually tagged and corrected so that Co-Chu can recognize it. One example comes from Volume 2 Chapter 13, when Izuku says “Sososososō kana?” (Is that right, I wonder?). He has a habit of hesitation in his speech; hesitation is known as yodomi in Japanese. Therefore, I tagged this statement in Excel and those like it as yodomi so that Co-Chu will recognize the multiple so’s in succession. Additionally, lines that are uttered in the imperative form (phrases that end in na) in Japanese are highlighted in red for further analysis. However, when phrases end in na (as detailed in the final paragraph of Section 1.2), they can have one of two connotations. The first meaning can be someone talking to oneself while the other can be a negative imperative form, usually preceded by a short-form verb. So that Co-Chu can tell the difference, I added another type of tag to note the difference between the two.

There are five columns of the spreadsheet which are as follows: a) mode (which defines whether the line was spoken or an inner thought), b) speaker name, c) style, d) line as it is found in the manga and e) line analysis. Column e is the most crucial as far as the corpus analysis is concerned because said column is where annotation methods are used, such as brackets for character’s names and enclosing onomatopoeic words, hanashi kotoba & yodomi in parentheses and vertical bars.

### 2.2 Analysis of Demon Slayer
2.2.1 Interactional Particles Findings: Tanjirō

The interactional particles analysis begins with Tanjirō’s and the two demons’ style analysis. His interrogative language is a topic of importance. With the help of colleagues, using Co-Chu, we compiled frequency tables of Tanjirō’s top two most-used sentence final/interactional particles in all three volumes of the manga from both his dialogue and his soliloquy (Table 1).

Table 3 - Tanjirō’s Use of Interactional Particles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialogue. i.e. communication with another person is intended.</th>
<th>Soliloquy, i.e. utterances of one’s thoughts without addressing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Frequency (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>ka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>na</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>yo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>zo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>kana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>ne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>sa(a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>yone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen in Table 3 above, across all three volumes, his most-used particle is particle *ka*. *Ka* is normally used by both genders in *desu/-masu* style as a question marker at the end of an utterance and in casual style, *ka* is hardly used and rising pitch signals that the utterance is a question. As far as Japanese male language is concerned, *ka* is often used along with a short form-verb or particle *no* to ask a question (and before particle *no* is a short-form verb) in dialogue. One example can be found in Volume 2, Chapter 13 when he is talking to a crow and asks: “*Mō tsugi ni iku no ka?*” (We’re already moving to the next [town]?). Along the lines of Japanese interrogative sentences, another important word that is sometimes found is *naze* (*why*?). In soliloquy, Tanjirō is often seen using the question word *naze* as in “*Naze ugoku nda kono mari*?” (Why is this ball moving?) and “*Naze ore ni mukatteru nda*?” (Why is [the boar] coming towards me?)”, both quotes from Volume 2, Chapter 16. These utterances occurred in soliloquy are noteworthy due to the unique nature of manga, not spoken conversation. Additionally in soliloquy, he asks multiple questions to himself especially in fighting situations. In fact, Masuda’s (2022) *manga* corpus development and analysis research project revealed that the interrogative phrase *naze* appears in one of the most frequent adverbs category, being uttered 11 times. Tanjirō contributes to this frequent use of *naze*, which is not a typical word used in manga (Masuda, 2022). So, what does this say about him as a person? In conversation, it is saying that he is quite the inquisitive type; rather
than just spewing out a bunch of declarative and exclamatory statements, he inquires about those around him as well as the situations at hand. From a gender aspect and from a Japanese reader’s point of view, this inquisitive quality is more female-like since he is chiming equally with the other party. *Naze* will be visited once more in the Discussion section.

### 2.2.2 Interactional Particle Findings: Demons

Turning to the demons, Susamaru and the Temple Demon and their particles, one aspect to note about the demons’ language is the interactional particles that they use, specifically, Susamaru. As a reminder, Susamaru is a former female human turned demon. She is a gender nonconforming demon with a feminine physical appearance. The Temple Demon seems to have a traditionally male gender expression.

**Table 4 - Susamaru’s and the Temple Demon’s Frequently Used Interaction Particles: Dialogue**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Susamaru</th>
<th></th>
<th>Temple Demon</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Frequency (%)</td>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Frequency (%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. nō</td>
<td>7 (58.3%)</td>
<td>1. zo</td>
<td>3 (30%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. zo</td>
<td>2 (16.7%)</td>
<td>2. na</td>
<td>3 (30%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen in Table 4 above, Susamaru’s most frequently appearing interactional particle is particle *nō*. According to Kinsui’s (2014) edits in his role language dictionary and states that *nō* as an IP is used in the popular culture world to give off the image of an elderly person. (p. 153) She is also seen ending her utterances in Volume 2 Chapter 16 with *janō*, *ja*, and *zo*, one example being in reference to Tanjirō: “Mimi ni kazari no onigari wa omae *janō*!” (You with the earrings, you’re the demon hunter!). The former two of these three IPs are typical of older men in manga and anime while the final one is typical male language of used in Japanese society. But what is the purpose of her using language of an elderly man versus a younger man? At least by using *janō* and *ja* these particles reflect more of an effort to get agreement from others (which is more feminine) than to dominate the conversation (more masculine). If Susamaru were to use female language, she would most certainly be an outlier from the other demons since her physical appearance is female-like. It is important in Japanese society to act on one accord so in efforts to be less of an outlier she attempts to

Table 4 - continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>2 (16.7%)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>2 (20%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>kanō</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>ka</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>yo</em></td>
<td>1 (8.3%)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td><em>kayo</em></td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td><em>(nē)yo</em></td>
<td>1 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>12 (100)</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
assimilate with the other demons, most of whom are middle-aged or older males.

Turning to the Temple Demon, his most uttered IPs are zo and na. Both IPs are found heavily in male language, especially na when used in the dialogue. Now I predict that he is the typical villain that replicates an aggressive male in Japanese society; I will discuss more of his linguistical qualities in the Discussion.

2.3 Analysis of My Hero Academia

2.3.1 Interactional Particle Findings: Izuku

Concerning the IP findings of Izuku, IPs yo, na and ka are the top three in both his dialogue but in reverse order in his soliloquy. Unlike the villains below, he uses an equal number of IPs between the two. An interesting concept about Izuku is that he thinks a lot throughout the manga, with most of his thoughts in the form of questions. It can be said that he is just as inquisitive as Tanjirō is but from a more inward perspective while Tanjirō does his questioning out loud.

Table 5 - Izuku’s Use of Interactional Particles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
<th>Soliloquy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IP</td>
<td>Frequency (%)</td>
<td>IP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>yo</td>
<td>12 (37.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Briefly focusing on IP *na* in dialogue, Izuku uses the IP not through just self-addressed statements but through the negative imperative form as well, as in when telling someone not to do a particular action. For example, in Volume 1 Chapter 1, he shouts: “Sō *sa. Mawari no iu koto nante ki ni suru na!” (That’s right! Don’t worry about what others say!). *Na* in this context is found after a casual form verb (non-*masu* form). In soliloquy in the same volume and chapter, he thinks ‘*Naku na!*’ (Don’t cry!) to himself. Both protagonists use *na* in soliloquy for self-directed command or self-encouragement. To reiterate from Section 1.2, this observation echoes what Izuhara (1996) writes that for *na* to be used in soliloquy is the core meaning of *na*” (p. 76-77).

The soliloquy use of *na* seems to be more important to these two young heroes whereas it is not used at all by the protagonists. This inference applies that by keeping his

<p>| | | | | |</p>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td><em>ka</em></td>
<td>7 (21.9%)</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td><em>na</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td><em>na</em></td>
<td>5 (15.63%)</td>
<td>3.</td>
<td><em>yo</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td><em>wa</em></td>
<td>2 (6.25%)</td>
<td>4.</td>
<td><em>zo</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td><em>kke</em></td>
<td>1 (3.11%)</td>
<td>5.</td>
<td><em>sa</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td><em>kana</em></td>
<td>2 (6.25%)</td>
<td>6.</td>
<td><em>ze</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td><em>yone</em></td>
<td>2 (6.25%)</td>
<td>7.</td>
<td><em>kana(a)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td><em>yona</em></td>
<td>1 (3.11%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32 (100%)</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>20 (100%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
thoughts to himself, he remains reserved in terms of personality, much like a female in Japanese society would, but by talking to himself, he is getting stronger and wiser.

2.3.2 Interactional Particles Findings: Villains

As a reminder of the two villains’ gender in *My Hero Academia*, Tomura seems to have a traditionally male gender expression while Kurogiri seems to be gender nonconforming with an undefined physical appearance from neither gender. The villains in *My Hero Academia* make a sharp contrast in terms with the use of IPs and style. As seen in Table 6 below, throughout the *manga* examined in this study, Kurogiri, who speaks formally, only uses two, while Tomura uses as many as 10 different IPs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Tomura Shigaraki’s and Kurogiri’s Use of Interactional Particles</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IP</strong></td>
<td><strong>Frequency (%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>ka</strong></td>
<td>6 (26.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>na(a)</strong></td>
<td>5 (21.73%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>yo</strong></td>
<td>3 (13.02%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>ne</strong></td>
<td>2 (8.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <strong>ze</strong></td>
<td>2 (8.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <strong>sa</strong></td>
<td>1 (4.35%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 - continued

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td><em>mono</em></td>
<td>1 (4.35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td><em>zo</em></td>
<td>1 (4.35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td><em>kai</em></td>
<td>1 (4.35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td><em>nayo</em></td>
<td>1 (4.35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>23 (100%)</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kurogiri primarily speaks in the formal style (*desu/-masu* form). He uses *IP yo* in the following ways in Volume 2 Chapter 14: *Sasemasen yo*. (I will not let you [do it].) while using *ka* in the following manner within the same volume and chapter:

“Honrai naraba koko ni ōru maitō ga irassharu hazu desu ga nanika henkō ga atta no deshō *ka*?” (Under normal circumstances, All Might would be here but was there some sort of change?). His polite, reserved way of speaking is quite feminine which is abnormal to a typical villain’s way of speaking. Looking at Tomura Shigaraki’s *IP* and style usage, his top two frequently used *IPs* are *ka* and *na*. He exclusively speaks in the casual form throughout the *manga*. An example using *IP ka* is in Volume 2 Chapter 16:

“*Sono ‘kosei’ja...shūdan to no chōki kessen wa muiteinai ka?”* (That ‘Quirk’…isn’t it more suited for some sort of long-drawn-out war?) He utters three more lines directly after that which all end in *ka* in dialogue. The manner in which he questions circumstances out loud which is the exact opposite of the male protagonists’ way of
interrogating themselves.

To touch on Tomura’s use of particle *na* briefly, in Volume 2 Chapter 16, he uses the elongated form, *nā* as in “Kakkoī *nā*, Kakkoī *nā!*” (That’s cool, that’s cool!!) as well as in Volume 3 Chapter 19, “Sugoi *nā*, saikin no kodomo wa” (The kids these days are amazing). Finally in Volume 2 Chapter 11 when calling out to his underling Nōmu, he also uses IP *nā* in the way that Masuda (2009, p. 335) among others refer to them, which is to indicate an interaction opportunity for conversation participants: “*Nā, dō naru to omou? Hēwa no shōchō ga viran ni korosareta*” (Hey, what do you think will happen if the Symbol of Peace [All Might] gets killed by us villains?).” This usage of *na* is comparable to if a female were to use *ne* at the beginning of a sentence but *na* has a rougher nuance.
CHAPTER 3. DISCUSSION

3.1 Discussion of Demon Slayer

This section covers both Tanjirō’s and the demons’ style usage. The qualitative analysis discusses of Tanjirō’s spoken language throughout the three volumes. The question word *naze* is used an extensive amount (11 times), as well as the inquiring IP *ka* (34 times), thus hinting at Tanjirō’s inquisitive quality. It is true that this form of asking a question is more direct than if he were to end his interrogative statement with a short-form verb alone, but the fact that he asks many questions makes him stand out from the status quo and uses what Okamoto (2010) refers to as a “female speaker’s other-oriented style”, thus giving Tanjirō the notion of language versatility that imitates Japanese females.

However, there are a few times in which he asks questions without the use of particle *ka*; one instance from Volume 1, Tanjirō exclaims, “*Urokodaki-san wo shitteiru!?*” (You know Mr. Urokodaki!?) ; another is found in Volume 2 where Tanjirō inquires of Tamayo, “*Ka-karada wo ijitta?*” (You made changes to your body?) These two utterances are the most typical way to ask a question in casual-form Japanese, but they are atypical of Tanjirō’s language in the first three volumes of the *manga*. Transitioning from interrogative form to imperative form (known as *mērēkē* in
Japanese), the imperative form of verbs is used quite a lot in *Demon Slayer*. So much so that, according to Yamamoto’s (2022) article “Analysis of Grammatical Features in Japanese Anime Scripts,” in 26 episodes of the *Demon Slayer* anime, the words *yamero* (‘stop’), *koi* (‘come’) and *ganbare* (‘do your best’) were used 32, 25 and 21 times, respectively (p. 7). Yamamoto continues (I have translated Yamamoto’s words from Japanese to English), “[The imperative form] is not only something used towards an opponent (in battle), but it is also used in reference towards oneself like ‘do your best’ and ‘calm down’” (2022, p.7).

Tanjirō, much like Izuku, also uses the imperative form, but in the negative and with IP *na* attached. One instance of this is found in Volume 1 Chapter 6, where he is temporarily frozen in fear trying to force himself to save a swordsman being chased by a demon, he mutters to himself: “*Hirumu na!*” (Don’t falter!). When males use commands in Japanese, they are often found using the rough imperative form rather than the polite *te*-form; therefore, when a female speaker says such, it is off-putting since their language is known to be more reserved and polite. For instance, if one were to say, “Come back here!” rather than saying “*Kocchi ni modotte,*” they would say “*Kocchi ni modore!*” (Tanjirō actually says the latter statement in Volume 2, Chapter 12.) Tanjirō is no exception to this tendency, but a few times he does select the polite *te*-form when commanding a task out of someone. In Volume 3 Chapter 24, Tanjirō
orders out of a juvenile pair of siblings: “Kizu wo miseite” (Show me the bruise).” Also found in Volume 3, Chapter 25, he addresses Tamayo’s kitten: “Arigatō, ki wo tsukete” (Thanks, be careful).

Some overall style findings for the villains are as follows: Susamaru exclusively speaks in the short-form style, meaning there is no formality in her speech. She often makes assessment comments meaning her style is also descriptive; she uses adjectives like urusai (annoying), omoshiroi (interesting), tanoshī (fun), and ō (good). It is also worth mentioning that she laughs a lot, but more so in an evil, cackling manner, despite her female appearance in kimono. In Volume 2 Chapter 15 she vocalizes a ‘ufufufu’ laugh while in Chapter 16, she jests: “Kyahaha (Q), hitori koroshita” (Mwahaha, I killed one). (‘Q’ in parentheses indicates a geminate sound indicated by a small tsu in Japanese.)

In contrast, the Temple Demon’s language use closely reflects a yakuza, an organized group of Japanese crime gangsters so hostile/belligerent and confrontational. He often speaks in the casual style, meaning he has zero formality in his speech.

Continuing with the demons’ language, an aspect of Susamaru’s language is the usage of present progressive form endings. She ends her sentences with the verb suffix form -iru changed to -oru, in Volume 2, Chapter 16: Nanika inteoru. (He [Tanjirō] is saying something.) This -oru ending is, according to Kinsui’s (2014)
Japanese role language dictionary, there are two definitions (from which I translated to English). The first is elderly people’s language: “As its use in Edo-period language increased, it came to be recognized as conservative elderly people’s language in Edo-period Kansai dialect and those types of situations led it to be inferred that it is a kind of elderly people’s role language” (p. 63). The second is humble language: “-Oru is a synonym of -iru. In standard language, it is mostly not used other than the three [humble language suffix] forms, ‘-ori’, ‘orimasu’ and ‘orareru’” (p. 62). Kenjōgo, as a refresher, is a type of formal Japanese language when someone is talking about oneself and the things that they do (this can also be seen in examples (2b) and (2c) I used in the introduction that dictate a noblewoman’s and elderly man’s language, respectively).

With that said, what does this say about her role in the manga? In combination with her usage of ending her utterances with particle nō [see Figure 2], for one, she is a female demon, but her language does not reflect that of a traditional female identity. In essence, this is an occurrence of gender reversal, or she could be genderqueer.
Gilbert and Itō examine gender nonconforming characters in *anime* and wrote that, “these characters use masculine and feminine language while maintaining feminine looks and mannerisms for constructing their gender non-conforming identity” as well as “these gender non-conforming characters tend to be portrayed as morally ambiguous, nonhuman, or villains” (2020, p. 43). To unpack these two quotes critically, villains who make their appearance not conform to just one gender do not have to be bound by society’s rules on what they say villains should be. It seems that Susamaru’s and Kurogiri’s thought processes, unlike their superiors, Muzan Kibutsuji and Tomura, respectively, are more concerned with their individual abilities and powers rather than the irrelevance of overall gender identity. Many of the demons in *Demon Slayer* are
inherently male in the sense that they are rough and macho; therefore, Susamaru’s male language usage is reflective of the collectivist principle found in Japanese society: trying to fit and blend in with the larger group. This can also be seen with her name as well. Her name ends with the suffix -maru which is commonly found in Japanese male names. (In fact, I mistook her for a male demon upon initially reading the manga.)

Turning to the Temple Demon and his language, unlike that of Susamaru, emulates that of a male, albeit the more aggressive type. There are two different elements of his language that I will discuss: a) the change in pronunciation of the negative short-form verb ending -nai, and b) the usage of IP zo. Regarding part a), the Temple Demon pronounces -nai ending verbs with an elongated -nē instead (not to be confused with most frequently used interactional particle ne in conversation). Using examples found in Volume 1 Chapter 2, he first exclaims, “Ore no esaba wo arashitara yurusanē zo” (I won't forgive you if you ruin my feeding ground). [see Figure 3] Then, a little later on he continues with “Ni-do wa yararenē yo” (I can’t do it again).
The verbs used in these examples are *yurusanē* and *yararenē*, respectively. These could otherwise be said as *yurusanai* and *yararenai* but the -nē ending is in essence, a lazy way of pronouncing it. When one is angry (which the Temple Demon is) they are rash and are careless of their actions, much less of their speech so this linguistic aspect sort of gives him a male sass to his character. Continuing to part b) that pertains to zo. As a reminder from Ogi’s (2017) table in Section 1.2, the IP zo, when used in Japanese, “signals the speaker’s monopolistic attitude of urging the hearer to understand an implied message in connection with the given context” (p. 119). Reusing one of the sentences in part a), “Ore no esaba wo arashitara yurusanē zo” (I won't...
forgive you if you ruin my feeding ground), this indicates his strong monopolistic attitude. The Temple Demon is attempting to make known to Tanjirō, in this case, that he will not be forgiven if he ruins the Demon’s feeding ground. Another one of his lines is “Sā, kubi wo oru zo” (I’m going to break your neck). Once more, his intention is quite forcefully stated that he is going to break Tanjirō’s neck. Both statements could have been articulated without IP zo, but they simply would not have been as convincing.

To tie things together, it can be said that the Temple Demon emulates a powerful man who is authoritative and threatening, like a yakuza.

3.2 Discussion of My Hero Academia

Moving on to some overall style findings for Izuku, one includes his formality. He is a high school student, so when he is not speaking with his peers or his mother, he is speaking in the formal style (desu/-masu) to those holding more authority than him such as his teachers, his mentor (All Might) and the school nurse. In comparison to Tanjirō, Izuku speaks in the formal style much more but when interacting with villains, he as well as Tanjirō both speak in the casual form. One aspect about Izuku’s speech is that is habit or hesitation of stuttering (yodomi in Japanese). This occurs repeatedly throughout the manga in the selected chapters examined in the first volume. Although he eventually says what he wants to say, this hesitation shows that he is nervous or unsure about his speech, a characteristic opposite of a man whose language is supposed
to dominate the conversation. Males who use their language to take over the conversation speak with conviction and Izuku rarely does. I also would like to discuss his first-person pronoun usage. Izuku exclusively uses boku rather than ore throughout the manga. Boku is used primarily by men and is gentler and softer sounding in comparison to ore. It is also used in closer relationships; he is often seen using this pronoun when talking to his mother and his mentor, All Might. This is replicative of josêgo in which women utilize methods of trying to connect to the speaker.

Switching gears to the villains, Kurogiri exhibits the most interesting language use between the two in My Hero Academia as well among all four across both manga. Kurogiri speaks mainly in formal speech of Japanese, which no typical villain does. There are even some lines in Chapter 14 of Volume 2 where he briefly uses kenjôgo, as seen on the following page: “Hajimemashite, wareware wa viran rengô. Senetsu nagara...kono tabi hûrû no sôkutsu yûê kôkô ni hairasete itadaita no wa...” (How do you do? We are the League of Villains. With your permission, we will now enter the hero’s base that is U.A. High School at this time). [see Figure 4] Some identifiable aspects of his kenjôgo usage are: a) for the first-person plural pronoun, instead of using watashitachi he uses wareware. Additionally, rather than using the verb hairimasu (‘to enter’ in -masu form), he instead uses the verb hairasete itadakimasu, which is formed by combining hairu (‘to enter’ in dictionary form) and -sasete itadakimasu. (Note that
the literal translation of -sasete itadakimasu is ‘I humbly receive your permission to do [something].’

Unlike his partner Tomura, he does not use the -nai verb ending form changed to -nē. These linguistical choices give Kurogiri a more sophisticated look and distances him from the rest of the villains. It can also be said that his language sounds a bit like the noblewoman found back in the introduction. He compares to Susamaru due to his existence as a non-gender conforming character who chooses linguistic qualities of a particular gender.

Tomura, however, is the typical villain: he speaks in casual form (da or no ending), refers to himself using first-person pronoun ore, uses -nai verb ending form.

Figure 4 – Kurogiri announces the League of Villains’ presence using kenjōgo: “Hajimemashite, wareware wa viran rengō. Senetsu nagara…kono tabi hīrō no sōkutsu yūē kōkō ni hairasete itadaita no wa…” (p. 135 Shūeisha © 2015)
changed to -nē and his usage of IPs ze and zo, two particles that characterize rough and vulgar language. Since I have already discussed IP zo, I will move on to ze. To reiterate once more from Ogi’s (2017, p.119) table in Section 1.2, ze ‘signals the speaker’s monopolistic attitude of enhancing the hearer’s understanding of the speaker’s belief that the content and feeling conveyed in the utterance should be shared with the hearer’.

Two quoted examples where Tomura uses ze are found in Volume 3, Chapter 19. The first of which: “Sugoi nā, saikin no kodomo wa. Hazukashiku natteru ze, viran rengō…!” (The kids these days are amazing. We [The League of Villains] are getting embarrassed!). [see Figure 5]

![Figure 5 – [LH side bubble] Tomura Shigaraki remarks, “Sugoi nā, saikin no kodomo wa…Hazukashiku natteru ze, viran rengō…!” (p. 130 Shūeisha © 2015)
The second quoted example of Tomura’s is (in reference to Izuku): “Jimi-na yatsu. Aitsu ga ore ni omoikkiri naguri kakarō toshita ze?” (You simpleton. Were you planning to swing at me with all your might?). In the first example, Tomura wants the students fighting him to know that they’re doing well (probably in comparison to kids in the olden days). And in the second example, Tomura says that to get Izuku to realize that his idea of trying to punch him forcefully may not be the best idea, so he should probably attempt another move. Both statements can be said without ze but they would not give off that villainous, arrogant attitude, which is necessary to get his point across. Tomura compares to the Temple Demon due to his efforts of always making himself loud and clear. Both villains have a need to lead the conversation, again which is archetypal of male language.
CHAPTER 4. CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have discussed how, in *shōnen manga*, the protagonists Tanjirō and Izuku use various Japanese linguistical aspects to defy the male stereotype of taking over the conversation as well as the demons and villains use said aspects to define their complex set of morals and personalities such as interactional particles *ka* to show their female-like inquisitiveness: Tanjirō does his outwardly whereas Izuku does his inwardly. Being in touch with their feminine sides through deliberation ultimately prepares them to be better heroes. The two heroes-in-training can be compared with the “freeter” generation mentioned above in that care for who they are on the inside makes them more feminine. The villains on the other hand, Susamaru and Kurogiri are gender-nonconforming villains; Susamaru with a feminine physical appearance who uses older male language and Kurogiri using noblewoman language but has an undefined physical appearance from neither gender. The Temple Demon and Tomura use language that is closer to an aggressive male in Japanese, comparable to that of *yakuza*.

The current study has examined selected chapters in one of the manga where the villains of interest appear. A further study should examine all chapters of Volumes 2 and 3 of *My Hero Academia*. Furthermore, it will be interesting to examine if the language status of the hero-in-training protagonists will change in the last three volumes, as they grow to be true heroes.
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Data Sources


ENDNOTES

a) This becomes complicated because, particularly American learners of the Japanese language tend to have the mindset that everyone is their friend, so these types of learners may mistake the teacher using *uchi* language as one of familiarity and close proximity when they should be comprehending it as a sense of control. Thus, when a teacher is speaking to one of their students in *uchi* the student should not reciprocate such speaking style and use *desu-masu* instead.

b) The data in Itakura & Tsui’s 2004 research focused on two dimensions of conversational dominance between eight mixed-gender dyads of Japanese university students: the first being “sequential dominance” which deals with taking turns while the other is “participatory dominance” which is deals with both parties chiming in equally. Through quantitative analysis of sequential dominance, in one of the eight dyads there was significant female dominance but for participatory dominance, in two of the eight dyads, two of the male participants consistently displayed a strong sense of self-orientation. These types of findings have appeared repeatedly in Japanese conversational studies but the other way around (where females control the conversation) has yet to be proven.