

Re: Distal / polite

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"Bart Mathias" <mathias@xxxxxxxxxxx> wrote in message [news:GfLVe.10702\\$b37.4859@xxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:news:GfLVe.10702$b37.4859@xxxxxxxxxxx)

Ben Bullock wrote:

This is related to a new (recently merged) page on Wikipedia:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_honorifics

"Distal" is a fairly well-used term. I may have learned it from a Jordan textbook; I'm no longer sure. To my surprise, the word is referenced only once, in "distal deictic (-a)," in the index in Martin (RGoJ). But it has come in my mind to be essentially a name for the desumasutai, as opposed to the "intimate" datai.

The problem is for me I'm not sure what the difference between "distal" and "polite" is. I don't want to be accused of trashing things which I don't understand; is there something I should be aware of?

I can't be sure at the moment that I haven't somewhat redefined it in terms easy for myself to understand. It seems an appropriate term for a form of language designed to keep people at a distance.

I was much more bothered by "Verbs may be substituted by more polite ones." I can't get used to the idea that one verb can substitute another verb, and even if it could, what would it substitute that other verb *for*?

Do you have a suggestion for a rephrasing? At the moment, almost everything in the article from the top to before "Grammatical Overview" was written or rewritten by me, so it's probably my fault if the page doesn't make sense, and I'd like to fix it up. I also wrote a page

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/yokogaki_and_tategaki

and another user called Exploding Boy helped me get it into quite a good shape. It's nice if other people can come along and add or fix things on a page like that. On the other hand, Exploding Boy doesn't like my other new page

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning_kanji.

There were a number of things I would quibble about in the article, but nothing I'd be willing to edit.

It's amazing to me that a professor of Japanese linguistics doesn't feel willing to edit (even to correct the spelling of his own name) when some manga fans with fairly limited knowledge seem quite happy to come along and trash or remove things just because they can't understand them. Take a look at what happened to

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Japanese_titles

this morning, for example. I'd rather not do that to the current page, but I'm not sure what the difference with distal and polite is.

I was surprised by the statements that oc is informal for "yes" and formal is WKŠ. I think I'd have put WKŠ in the "you've got to be kidding" row, and moved oc to formal. (Of course, the equation with "yes" of any of these is only a rough estimate, and quibblable as well.)

In the main grammar section I was liking the discussion of †Å until he spoiled it with "a more basic concept of word (X tango) forms the atoms of sentences." Not atoms, *particles* like electrons and neutrons which go together to make up the atoms (words) which go together to make up the molecules (sentences). Might as well call the "s" in "dogs" or the "ly" in "quickly" "words."

So far I have been afraid to look at the section on the "copula."

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You never know what you're going to find. Some of the Japanese language pages are good and some of them are the opposite. Similarly to most of Wikipedia. Sometimes there are even duplicate pages and one of them is good and one is poor quality.