The Role of Role Language in Japanese Language Education

A Study on the Involvement of Role Language in the Japanese-as-a-Foreign-Language Education at Stockholm University

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Abstract

The present study investigates the potential necessity of role language in the Japanese-as-a-foreign-language education at Stockholm University, as well as if this potential necessity corresponds to the university’s current curriculum and teachers’ opinions regarding various aspects of role language and Japanese education. To analyze this, the answers from two questionnaires, one for students and one for teachers at the Japanese department of Stockholm University, were cross-examined. The findings of this study indicate that students of Japanese would benefit from being taught role language as a part of the Japanese education, based on their extramural activities, interests and role language proficiency among other aspects. The current curriculum did not correspond with these findings as it does not include role language as part of the Japanese-as-a-foreign-language courses. Both students and teachers were positive regarding role language being included in Japanese education, yet most teachers had not taught role language in a lesson, indicating that their opinion does not correspond fully with the students’ potential necessity of role language.

Keywords
Role language, Japanese education, Stockholm University, Japanese linguistics, Sociolinguistics.
Acknowledgements

I would like to first thank my supervisor, Mitsuyo Kuwano Lidén, for helping me from start to finish with this study. I am deeply grateful for her kind support, and how she was always positive and encouraging. Without her professional advice, this study would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank my fellow classmates who helped me by giving me feedback on the questionnaires. Thanks to their feedback, I was able to improve the questionnaire before distributing it.

Finally, I want to thank the administrative staff for helping me distribute the questionnaire, and giving me information about the Japanese courses. Additionally, I appreciate both the staff and the students of the Japanese department participating in the study by doing the questionnaire, despite being busy with their own work or studies.
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Convention

In this paper, when converting Japanese to English, the Hepburn system is used. Particles は, へ, を are written as wa, e, o. Long vowels are written with a circumflex. Terms are written in the following order: English (Japanese character/pronunciation). For expressing Japanese pronunciation, italic letters are used except for people’s names.

Additionally, the English translations are done by the author except for already translated texts. If there is an English translation in the original text, the original translation will be used.
1 Introduction

Japanese fiction such as anime, manga, movies have become popular all over the world. Additionally, recent improvement of internet technology has also helped many people get a chance to come across Japanese fiction despite not being in Japan. In fact, according to a survey carried out by the Japan Foundation, one of the most popular reasons that learners are learning Japanese is because they are interested in Japanese anime, manga and J-pop (Japan foundation 2013). Considering this, many Japanese learners are likely to come in contact with Japanese fictional work in their lifetime no matter whether they are inside or outside of Japan.

Role language (役割語/yakuwarigo) studies is a relatively new field of study in Japanese linguistics, which deals with the use of particular speech styles in fiction, and how these speech styles are connected to certain character traits. These speech styles involve specific first-person pronouns, sentence endings and expressions among other features (Kinsui 2003, 205). From Kinsui’s (2003) studies of role language, it is made clear that Japanese speech styles in fiction differ from speech styles in reality. Therefore, Japanese learners who are interested in fiction would have to learn to understand Japanese used in fiction as well as Japanese used in reality. Considering the circumstances of a Japanese learner today, role language might be an important part of the Japanese that they encounter.

On the other hand, although role language is often considered to be something positive that can help students increase their proficiency (Jung 2011; Kinsui 2011b; Matsumoto and Okamoto 2003), it is also considered by some as a phenomenon that creates stereotypes (Furukawa 2014; Kinsui 2003; Nakamura 2007; Teshigawara and Kinsui 2011). These stereotypes can be connected to traits such as gender, race, and nationality. Sweden ranked 5th on the gender equality index 2017 (World Economic Forum 2017), and there is even a tendency to change gendered language in Swedish to become gender neutral (Lindqvist 2007). Furthermore, Sweden has a far more multicultural population than Japan. Considering this, knowing how Japanese learners, as well as Japanese educators, think about role language should be considered valuable information in Japanese as a foreign language (JFL) education at Stockholm University.

There has been quite extensive research carried out regarding role language as a phenomenon in Japanese fiction, much of which has been done by Satoshi Kinsui, however, the body of research on role language in the light of JFL education is still comparatively small.
Thus, this paper seeks to contribute by investigating the necessity of role language in JFL education at Stockholm University.

1.1 Purpose of study

This dissertation aims to examine the potential necessity of role language in the JFL education at Stockholm University. The reason for examining this is because role language is considered to have a strong connection with today’s Japanese learners, who often come in contact with Japanese fiction such as anime, manga and J-pop. Additionally, expressing one’s own personality and identity by using role language is naturally done by native Japanese people, although when interacting with Japanese learners, they frequently use the first-person pronoun *watashi* even though there are many other first-person pronouns such as *ore, boku, atashi*, which suggests their knowledge of role language is insufficient for expressing their identity fully in Japanese. If considering role language as a tool for communicative Japanese and not only as language which is used in fiction, the role of role language in JFL education could be considered highly diversified. Despite this, not many studies of role language in the JFL education field have been carried out. Therefore, I hope to stir the conventional JFL education by investigating the potential necessity of role language in JFL education through this paper.

Furthermore, role language is not a major part of conventional JFL education, and some studies (Kinsui 2011b; Siegal and Okamoto 2003) indicate that teachers sometimes oppose (or feel uncomfortable) teaching role language, partially due to the discriminatory aspects of role language, but also because it tends to be considered unimportant. Therefore, to what extent the current curriculum and the opinion of teachers at the Japanese department at Stockholm University correspond with the potential necessity of role language will also be determined.

The research questions are as follows below:

1) What is the potential necessity of role language for students of Japanese as a foreign language at Stockholm University?

2) To what extent does the opinion of teachers of the Japanese department at Stockholm University, as well as the current involvement of role language in Japanese as a foreign language education, correspond to the findings of research question 1?

Finally, through this paper, I hope to contribute to the fulfillment of the JFL education at Stockholm University, but since the scope of this study is relatively small, I hope it will spark an interest leading to more extensive research.
1.2 Role language

Firstly, the term role language will be clarified. According to Kinsui (2003, 205), ‘role language’ is when you are able to imagine a specific figure (age, gender, occupation, class, period, appearance, feature, personality etc.) by listening to some specific speech style (vocabulary, wording, turn of phrase, intonation etc.) or you can imagine a speech style which the person would use when shown some specific figure. Furthermore, Kinsui (2003, 205) claims the important index of role language in Japanese is the usage of at least personal pronouns, expressions or sentence endings. In Japanese, many more personal pronouns exist than in English and many other languages. For example, when you talk about yourself, ‘I’ is the only option in English, but in Japanese on the other hand, as Kinsui (2003, 206) points out, “watashi, atashi, boku, ore, oira, asshi, washi, sessha” are some of the many first-person pronouns. And depending on which pronoun is used, the listener or reader can imagine what kind of personality, gender, or age the speaker is or which time-period he/she is from. So, in other words, he explains role language as a stereotype in linguistics (Kinsui 2003, 35).

This stereotypical knowledge of role language is something all native Japanese people have, but the question is how this knowledge is created. Kinsui (2003, 44–45) explains this is created when Japanese people are children. There are large amounts of fiction people come across when they are children, for example, fairytales, manga, TV programs for children, anime, drama and such. Through these media, Japanese children are imprinted the knowledge of role language unconsciously by continuingly encountering it. In fact, his research group examined the development of recognition of role language toward children. And they found that 3-year-old children did not have proper recognition of gendered role language, but 5-year-old children could do it perfectly (Kinsui 2011b, 36–37).

There are many different types of role language, and as stated earlier, characters and speech styles are connected in fiction. It is difficult to look through every type of role language in this paper, so only some of the ones most commonly used in fiction will be brought up. These are 1) elderly people’s language (老人語/rôjingo)/doctor language (博士語/hakasego), 2) samurai language (武士ことば/bushi kotoba), 3) male language (男ことば/otoko kotoba), 4) female language (女ことば/onna kotoba), 5) young rich lady language (お嬢様ことば/ojôsama kotoba), 6) aruyo language (アルヨ言葉/aruyo kotoba).

Elderly people’s language is role language used by elderly people in Japanese fiction. According to Kinsui (2003, 10), doctor language, the role language which is used for doctors in fiction, is also part of elderly people’s language, since the doctor language is limitedly used
for only elderly doctors. Some major traits of elderly people’s language/doctor language is the use of *washi* as the first-person pronoun, and –*ja* at the end of the sentence.

1) Elderly people’s language, doctor language:

   *kanojo no bajji wa washi no ie no tsukue no ue ja yo.*

   (Her badge is on my desk in my home)

   *(Mētante kōan, volume 28, p.2)*

Kinsui (2003, 46) says the people who speak elderly people’s language/doctor language in fiction can be divided into 3 types. First, a person who teaches and supports the main character and gives knowledge and precept, second, a person who is evil and makes the main character suffer by cunning and strange power, third, a person who often misunderstands, makes mistakes because of the oldness, and confuses the main character and people surrounding him/her, but softens the situation and helps other characters with their relations to each other.

Kinsui (2003, 11) says elderly people’s language/doctor language is mostly used in manga, SF drama for children and such, however, it is not used in novels or realistic dramas for adults.

Another type of role language is samurai language which is used by samurai and ninja. The main traits of this speech style are using *sessha* for the first person pronoun and –*gozaru* at the end of the sentence.

2) Samurai language:

   ‘*Himura kenshin*, sore ga *sessha* no ima no namae de *gozaru*.’

   (‘Kenshin Himura,’ that is my current name.)

   *(Rurouni kenshin, volume 1, p.54)*

Akizuki (2015, 64) presumes the sentence ending -*gozaru* was used in reality around the early modern period by elderly people. And in the fiction at that time, -*gozaru* was connected to the image of elderly people, and there is also involvement of the image of elderly people who have knowledge and were arrogant. But the image has changed with time to royal and well-mannered characters. Akizuki (2015, 60–64) says that around the *Meiji*¹ to the *Shōwa*² period, the usage of -*gozaru* was no longer used in reality, but it was used in fiction where its image had changed

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¹ *Meiji* period is 1868–1912
² *Shōwa* period is 1926–1989
from arrogance to royalty, and the usage of -gozaru was taken over to samurai and ninja and is currently used as role language in fiction.

Thirdly, male language and female language are common types of role language often seen in fiction. Male language and female language have many different traits compared with other role language, and they are not limited to fiction, but are used in reality as well, although not to the same extent as in fiction (Kinsui 2011b, 36). Table 1-1 shows examples of traits of male language and female language. These are characterized by first-person pronouns and sentence endings.

Table 1-1 Examples of traits of male language and female language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>First-person pronouns</th>
<th>Male language</th>
<th>Female language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ore, boku, watashi, oira</td>
<td>watashi, atashi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) Male language:

**ore Tsumura ni sonna koto iwareru oboenai zo.**

(I do not have any reason to be told such a thing by you)

(Rokubanme no sayoko, p.142)

4) Female language:

**sore - watashi mo kita koto aru kedo, motto betsu no hanashi datta wa.**

(That – I have also heard about it, but it was a different story.)

(Rokubanme no sayoko, p.71)

Nakamura (2007, 38–39) points out that there is a clear difference in usage between female language and male language in Japanese. According to her, female language can be used to express general Japanese women, but when using male language, it expresses not general men, but brings up traits such as simplicity, violence and aggression. Thus, male language is not limited to expressing one’s gender, but has other connotations as well.

Additionally, there is role language called young rich lady language. This role is characterized as a young female who lives in a big gorgeous house and have many maids or butlers who follow her. The traits of the speech style are expressed by –te(yo), verb+wa, noun+daldesu+wa, verb (+masu) +no and the first-person pronoun used is watakushi or
atakushi (Kinsui 2003, 130). Additionally, when they laugh, they laugh ho ho ho... instead of ha ha ha... (Kinsui 2003, 133).

5) Young rich lady language:

*hidoi desuwa Bidô sonna iikatatte arimasen wayo.*

(Bidô, you are so mean, how could you say like that.)

Finally, in Japanese fiction, there are particular speech styles for foreign characters. There are several, but *aruyo* language is the best known in this category. *Aruyo* language is role language for Chinese people only found in fiction. The traits of this speech style are –aru, or –aruyo in the end of the predicate, as well as when ordering or asking someone, –yoroshi(i) is used at the end of the predicate verb, and particles are often skipped (Kinsui 2003, 177–178).

6) *Aruyo* language:

*bussôna yononaka aruna.*

(It is a dangerous world.)

According to Kinsui (2003, 187–196) this *aruyo* language originally comes from a pidgin that was used in the Yokohama area. In fact, there is a book about this pidgin language, but this book is not a serious linguistic book, and its purpose was comedy (Kinsui 2003, 189).

Kinsui (2003, 180) notes that Chinese characters in manga and animation normally have some stereotypical visual and personality traits included in their character. According to him, the common visual traits are to have a thin mustache, wearing Chinese hat and clothes, the hair style is Manchu pigtail, extremely fat sometimes (considered coming from an image of fatness meaning richness in China before), and the personal traits are having a suspicious atmosphere, having illegal jobs, being calculating, stingy, foolish or cowardly (Kinsui 2003, 180). Kinsui (2003, 181) notes that more modern fictional works have additional stereotypes such as kung fu users, therefore, these stereotypical traits are not always clear. Nishino (2014, 188) points out, however, that the fatness trait does not apply to female characters. According to her, Chinese female characters that use *aruyo* language are commonly given bright and active personalities, mostly wearing their hairs in buns, and their looks are cute/beautiful (Nishino 2014, 188).
So far, the role language brought up in the examples have all been from Japanese, however, it should be mentioned that role language exists not only in Japanese but also in other languages. Yamaguchi (2007) brings up role language in English. He says to express the character as, for example, a baby, there are cases when it is expressed by using a particular pronunciation style in English. As an example, he shows a conversation in the animation Tweety which has a baby bird character in it. In the animation Tweety says “I thought I taw a puttytat. I did. I did taw (or tee) a puttytat” instead of “I thought I saw pussycat. I did. I did see a pussycat” (Yamaguchi 2007, 19–20). This is not the only way of creating role language in English, hence, apart from pronunciation, non-standard language spelling and dialects are also used to create role language in English. Although, Yamaguchi (2007, 21) mentions role language in English is more difficult to create compared to Japanese, in which role language can be created easily by using various personal pronouns and sentence endings.

Role language involves many aspects, although, in this paper I will define role language as particular speech styles which express characters’ traits in fiction, and the use of first-person pronouns to express one’s personality and identity in actual conversation.

1.3 Japanese education at Stockholm University
Stockholm University offers several courses in Japanese, from elementary level to advanced level, including a master course. Apart from the language proficiency courses Japanese I-V, there are also courses in Academic Japanese, Manga studies, and Japanese history among others. During the data collection period (Spring semester 2018), only Japanese II and IV, as well as the Japanese Bachelor’s Course, were being taught. Furthermore, the Japanese II and IV courses consist of several smaller courses which focus on grammar, language use, oral proficiency, written proficiency, reading proficiency and kanji.

According to the course syllabus (Stockholm University 2016), Japanese II is for elementary level students and the aim is for students to gain basic proficiency in the Japanese language including reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Another aim of this course is for students to be able to use appropriate language according to context and social situation regarding formal and informal language. The grading criteria for the grammar and language use courses state that students should be able to understand basic Japanese grammar, use Japanese in a communicative way and be able to have a conversation solely in Japanese.

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3 Japanese II students have finished one semester of full-time studies, Japanese IV three semesters of full-time studies, and the Japanese Bachelor’s Course students five semesters of full-time studies.
The aim of Japanese IV is for students to develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking to an upper-intermediate level. They should be able to read and translate various types of Japanese texts at an upper-intermediate level, and they should be able to analyze social as well as professional spoken language. They should also be able to communicate at an upper-intermediate level in various social situations and about different topics (Stockholm University 2017a).

Finally, the Japanese Bachelor’s Course consists of two parts, one is an academic writing course where students learn to conduct quality research (although not in Japanese), the other part is writing the Bachelor’s thesis. Rather than improving students’ Japanese proficiency, the aim is for students to be able to gather and evaluate relevant information in order to solve a research problem (Stockholm University 2017b).

As a final remark, the contents in the course information and course syllabi are described in general terms and do not specify what is to be taught, but refers to for example oral proficiency and at which level students should be able to perform, which means teachers are free to decide what they consider to be a part of each level. Thus, for example, if the curriculum states that students at Japanese IV should possess upper-intermediate level speaking skills, some teachers might consider role language to be included in upper-intermediate proficiency while other teachers do not.
2 Literature Review

2.1 Role language studies

2.1.1 The concept of role language
When looking at the field of role language studies, Satoshi Kinsui is the leading researcher since he is the one who coined the role language concept. He says that the concept of role language came to his mind around 1996. In the beginning, he was researching the historical transition of the Japanese existence expression (存在表現/sonzai hyōgen) and he had trouble with the strange usage of the verb oru. Originally, oru had the function of making condescending expressions and elderly people’s language, but he wondered whether anyone uses it to show arrogance. Additionally, he wondered whether anyone suddenly starts using elderly people’s language once they became old. Through his research, he then found the concept of role language (Kinsui 2003, 223).

As stated in chapter 1.2, according to Kinsui (2003, 205), the most important indices of role language in Japanese are personal pronouns (or expressions, such as proper names, replacing personal pronouns) and sentence endings. And he stresses that especially first-person pronouns are important. Second-person pronouns can also be role language, but it is more difficult to use as role language than first-person pronouns since they tend to be dependent on the relation between speaker and hearer, and thus change easily (Kinsui 2003, 205–206).

As other components of role language, Kinsui (2003, 207) mentions interjections, laughing voice, accent, intonation, talking speed and fluency. But these are secondary to first-person pronouns and sentence endings, which is why the definition of role language used in this paper is concerned only with first-person pronouns and sentence endings.

2.1.2 Gendered language
One of the most common types of role language that can be seen in fictional work is female language and male language. Momoko Nakamura (2007) researches gendered language in Japanese.

Nakamura (2007) says that in Japanese society, women’s speech styles are discussed and often criticized. For example, if women do not use proper female language, people consider it

4 Oru means ‘to exist’ in English
as “Japanese is in disarray”\textsuperscript{5} (Nakamura 2007, 11). Nakamura (2007, 14–15) suggests looking at Japanese as consisting of language resources. This means that if one wants to express something like a man, one chooses male language regardless of whether one is a man or a woman. In other words, when expressing something, the words and speech styles are used as resources of language. The reason women’s atypical use of said language resources cause people to react negatively is because they are using resources usually reserved for other groups (males for example). She says for young boys there is a first-person pronoun \textit{boku}, but for young girls there are no first-person pronouns which suit their identity (Nakamura 2007, 152). So, this situation would appear to force girls to change suddenly to become more adult-like by using the first-person pronoun \textit{watashi} which tends to be used by adults. However, when visiting an elementary school, she noted that none of the students used the gendered separated first-person pronouns such as \textit{boku} for boys and \textit{watashi} for girls. Instead, girls used ‘\textit{washi, boku, uchi, and sometimes ore}’ and boys used ‘\textit{ore, oira, ora}’ (Nakamura 2007, 162). By this point, she explains that “the disarray of Japanese”\textsuperscript{6} is not women or girls trying to use disarrayed Japanese, it’s just because of the lack of language resources for women, and they are trying to create their own identity by borrowing language resources from other role language.

As mentioned earlier, Swedish society is considered to have one of the highest levels of equality between men and women in the world, and considering that a gender neutral personal pronoun has been added to the language (Lindqvist 2007), there is a possibility that gendered language could be considered something negative. Nakamura (2007) on the other hand, does not suggest removing gendered language from Japanese, but to make it possible for both genders to utilize the same language resources. Therefore, investigating what the learners think about gendered language, and how they think about learning it is considered an important factor when investigating the potential necessity of role language in Sweden.

\subsection*{2.1.3 Studies on role language and translation}

Role language and translation studies have a strong connection, so there are several studies available.

Firstly, Hye-Seon Jung (2007) compares role language between Japanese and Korean. She looks at several manga which are written in Japanese and in Korean, and through comparing the same content between them, she tries to analyze each language’s traits of role language and the difference of role language between them (Jung 2007, 73). In her analysis, she found 3

\textsuperscript{5} Japanese original text: 日本語が乱れている / \textit{nihongo ga midareteiru}

\textsuperscript{6} Japanese original text: 日本語の乱れ / \textit{nihongo no midare}
things. First, the image that comes from characters’ speech styles are not the same in Japanese and Korean. Second, in Japanese role language, the traits of gender tend to easily appear, and in Korean, the traits of age tend to easily appear. Third, in both Japanese and Korean, regional dialects are important indices to imagine the character figure and work well as a factor of role language (Jung 2007, 79).

Secondly, she tries to find out if there are any differences in recognition toward role language in their native languages between Japanese native speakers and Korean native speakers, as well as the general role language proficiency of (advanced level) Korean Japanese learners compared to that of Japanese native speakers (Jung 2007, 79). To examine this, she held a few role language tests for Japanese and Korean native speakers. She found that, first, compared to Korean native speakers, Japanese native speakers scored higher in the role language test, and Japanese speakers’ mutual understanding of role language is higher than that of the Korean speakers. Second, native speakers of Korean did not appear to have role language (in Korean) imprinted as strongly as native Japanese native speakers (in Japanese). Third, Korean Japanese learners strongly tend to understand Japanese role language by language structures such as sentence-ending-particles, and if there is role language which does not have these characteristic traits, they do not have a clear strategy for understanding it (Jung 2007, 87).

Finally, Jung (2007, 87–92) analyzes the recognition of regional dialects between Japan and South Korea. And she found that the image of some specific regional dialects in Japan and South Korea sometimes have a complex mutual image. And Jung (2007, 92) considers that by using the image of regional dialects from specific areas in Japan and South Korea, it can reduce the gap of translation.

Thus, it is clear that knowledge about role language is necessary when translating to and from Japanese. Since non-natives do not get role language imprinted at an early age like Japanese people do, studying it is important for being able to make authentic translations. Jung’s (2007) findings, however, indicate that even advanced level students have not learned enough about role language to have a clear strategy for translating it.

**2.1.4 Studies criticizing role language**

Role language is useful especially when one creates fiction without pictures, such as novels, because if the creator uses role language for some character, they can introduce the character without spending too much time explaining what kind of person that character is. For example, if the character speaks using –*nayo, –wa, –wane* etc., the reader can understand that the character is female. Not only novels, but also anime and manga which include pictures can
benefit from role language too, it makes it easier for viewers and readers to understand and perceive the character traits with the help of role language. However, role language has been criticized by several researchers, and this criticism will be explored in this section.

Furukawa (2014) criticizes role language from a gender perspective. She points out that there are differences between western translation and Japanese translation from the viewpoint of gender. In western society, feminist translators have attempted to develop women’s social position in the translation field (Furukawa 2014, 22). For example, some translators have attempted to emphasize women’s existence in society by grammatical functions in their translation work, and some translators have tried to modify discourse if the original work used sexist words (Furukawa 2014, 26–29). In Japan on the other hand, the translation and gender issues have not been discussed to the same extent as in western society. And in the Japanese translation field, the tradition of female language, which has been used frequently to emphasize womanliness (女らしさonnarashisa), has remained. She claims this situation is reproducing gender ideology (Furukawa 2014, 25–26). In other words, by using women’s language in the translations, people start thinking that is how women should talk in society and make it a prerequisite to be seen as a woman. Furukawa (2014, 31) suggests relieving women from these consequences by encouraging translators to refrain from using women’s language frequently in order to fit female characters in the original text, but she also stresses that this does not mean that women should be translated using male language. For example, if a non-Japanese female person is translated, translators should not use female language just because she happens to be a woman. Finally, Furukawa (2014, 33–34) says that Japanese women get used to stereotypical women’s language which is used in novels and translated novels, and they might not have noticed that it makes them regulate their own speech style and behavior.

According to Nakamura (2007, 54–59) the use of Japanese regional dialects and standard Japanese in translation reinforces negative stereotypes. To begin with, she says there is a difference in social status between standard Japanese and regional dialects (Nakamura 2007, 56–57). She says the difference originates from when regional dialect speakers were forced to speak standard Japanese. Even after world war 2, the use of regional dialects was encouraged again, but since regional dialects were considered inferior to standard Japanese for a long time, people’s sense of value toward standard Japanese and regional dialects did not change easily. So, people kept considering standard Japanese being educated middle class people’s Japanese, and regional dialects being uneducated low class people’s Japanese (Nakamura 2007, 56–57). Nakamura (2007, 57–58) points out that the speech styles of white people and black people in foreign fiction’s Japanese translations are related to standard Japanese and regional dialects.
Because in Japanese translations, standard Japanese tends to be used for white people’s speech, and regional dialects for black people’s speech. Thus, she claims that in translation, this kind of role language reinforces discrimination (Nakamura 2007, 59).

Finally, in role language, there are factors that create discrimination toward different nationalities by stereotypical speech styles. Kinsui (2003, 203) points out that aruyo language which is used for expressing Chinese characters had been used with prejudice. As mentioned earlier, the relationship between Japan and China changed around the Meiji period. Before the opium war, Japanese people respected Chinese people, although China losing the Opium war made Japanese people change their view of China. Additionally, by winning the Sino-Japanese war, Japan and China’s power position changed, and that situation created an atmosphere where Japanese people looked down on Chinese people (Kinsui 2003, 196). Kinsui (2003, 200–201) shows the manga Norakuro buyûden in which Chinese soldiers were depicted as pigs, and used aruyo language, and fixed as a weak army. He explains these are reflecting how Japanese people looked at Chinese people at that time (Kinsui 2003, 202). As a conclusion, Kinsui (2003, 202–203) says role language is used in fiction, and normally it can be seen in manga, anime, stories children would encounter, and the repeating of role language imprints and reinforces stereotypes, so it is important to consider that role language has a discriminatory aspect as well.

These criticisms of role language mean that there is a possibility of students not feeling comfortable learning about it, which makes teaching it more challenging. In addition, if students do not want to learn about it due to its perceived negative aspects, the teachers might avoid teaching it.

2.2 Japanese teaching studies

2.2.1 Teaching speech styles and culture in Japanese education

Role language is strongly connected with speech styles, and looking at speech styles in Japanese education, especially gendered speech styles should be considered. Siegal and Okamoto (2003) show how to deal with such speech styles in Japanese education. They claim the textbooks which are popular in the US contain stereotypical gender roles. For example, when it comes to the characters in textbooks, women tend to be in subordinate positions such as secretaries and housewives, which is the norm of the female gender role, while men have important positions such as professors and supervisors. This is further strengthened by the emphasizing of speech styles for men and women. Women speak politely, while men speak more casually (Ide and Yoshida 1999, 474). Siegal and Okamoto (2003, 53) claim that this emphasis on speech styles
might make learners think that they must follow the gendered speech styles even though in reality, male and female speech styles are not so different. Additionally, it might also hinder students from expressing their own character, since they would feel obliged to speak according to the gendered speech patterns.

Additionally, they carry out questionnaires about teaching female language and male language to Japanese teachers. And the results showed there are many opinions depending on the teacher. For example, some teachers do not teach female language and male language since current real Japanese do not have a large gender difference, and some teachers introduce them by role playing etc. And some teachers say some female learners were reluctant to use female language and even if the learners have knowledge of them, some of them avoid using them (Siegal and Okamoto 2003, 56–57).

Furthermore, Siegal and Okamoto (2003, 59–61) suggest several ideas how to introduce gendered speech styles in the Japanese-as-a-foreign-language classroom in a realistic way. They also stress the importance of informing students about the variations in gendered speech styles, and that they might not always be followed. They conclude that textbooks are using speech styles in a stereotypical way, and that the textbooks are maintaining, and even encouraging an oppressive system that could inhibit language learning for some students. This is something they suggest changing. Instead of forcing it on the students, they propose that teachers inform students about gendered speech styles in a way so that they know it is not something they must learn to use, but is an optional part of the language.

Matsumoto and Okamoto (2003) look at Japanese textbooks for JFL learners. They mention that in the textbooks, indirect and vague expressions, humbleness and self-abasing etc. are often emphasized as Japanese communication styles which image comes from homogeneity, group-orientedness and hierarchy (Matsumoto and Okamoto 2003, 28–29). Although, Matsumoto and Okamoto (2003, 31–33) point out that these types of expressions are depending on the speaker’s situation, and additionally they have the possibility to emphasize Japanese culture as an exotic culture for leaners.

Furthermore, Matsumoto and Okamoto (2003, 35) mention that in JFL textbooks, formal speech styles are prioritized over informal speech styles. Interviews with native-Japanese-speaker college students showed that a lack of informal speech styles disturb fostering friendship, thus they conclude that emphasizing the teaching of formal Japanese has a risk of disturbing the development of JFL learners’ pragmatic competence (Matsumoto and Okamoto 2003, 35).
Finally, Matsumoto and Okamoto (2003, 38) bring up the issue of almost only standard Japanese being used and not so much focus on a variety of regional dialects in the textbooks. They criticize that in the five textbooks they investigate, there is no explanation why standard Japanese is used in the textbooks except for one of them, and even in that textbook the explanation is not suitable since it describes it as a variety of Japanese that is used by educated people, and everywhere in Japan regardless of age, gender or occupation (Matsumoto and Okamoto 2003, 38). They criticize it because a variety of regional dialects exist in Japan and standard Japanese was created through a language policy by the Meiji government which forced regional dialect speakers to speak standard Japanese, so it is not accepted by all Japanese people (Matsumoto and Okamoto 2003, 38–42). They suggest that when JFL learners go to Japan, introducing some regional dialects would be beneficial for them (Matsumoto and Okamoto 2003, 42).

As a conclusion, Matsumoto and Okamoto (2003, 43) criticize the situation of simplistic introducing of Japanese speech styles and culture in textbooks, because it might mislead learners’ recognition toward Japanese language and culture, and additionally, they consider whether it might prevent development of sociolinguistic competence. Finally, Matsumoto and Okamoto (2003, 43) stress that teaching diversity of language is not only for higher level learners but it would also work for beginner level learners.

2.2.2 Priorities in JFL education

In today’s Japanese language education, role language is not highly prioritized (Kinsui 2011b). Although, Arita (2009) suggests that there is a necessity for review of the Japanese education style which generally tends to prioritize practical use. According to Arita (2009), this education style originally comes from Harold E. Palmer (1877–1949) who created an oral method for English language education. In his method, he prioritized communication skill more than learning English as knowledge, but because of the anti US atmosphere around that time (before world war 2), his method didn’t become popular (Arita 2009, 28–30). Although in the Japanese education field, Naoe Naganuma was inspired by Palmer’s method since Palmer’s theory which prioritized practical use had a similarity to his own teaching methods, and thus he established a new method, inspired by Palmer, during world war 2 (Arita 2009, 32).

Considering today’s environment, Arita (2009, 35) claims Japanese education that prioritizes practical use has risks since it involves just accepting the regulation of current language and culture, and rejects and ignores deviant behavior and creation of new language and culture. As an example, she mentions the regulation of female language and male language
(Arita 2009, 35). If female learners use male first-person pronouns, when one teaches from practical use theory, the teacher would regard it as ‘wrong’ and Arita (2009, 35) considers this as negative. Furthermore, Arita (2009, 36) claims prioritizing practical use for learners who might not use Japanese regularly in the future would be pointless without considering their purpose for learning the language.

## 2.3 Role language in Japanese education

There are not many studies reflecting role language in JFL education, although several researchers (Jung 2011; Kinsui 2011b; Onzuka 2011; Shukuri 2015) who research role language in Japanese education have a positive opinion toward including role language in JFL education.

### 2.3.1 Living Japanese and role language in JFL education

Chiyo Onzuka (2011) researches role language in Japanese education. She looks at Japanese textbooks published in South Korea, and she notes that female language and male language are used more in the textbooks than by Japanese native speakers (Onzuka 2011, 51–69). In her paper, she points out the issue of genderless speech styles in the textbooks. What she means is even if gendered speech styles are not often used in real life, if they are removed from textbooks, it would make learners even more confused since it makes it more difficult to understand the traits of characters in the conversation, especially for young students who are familiar with pop culture (Onzuka 2011, 56). She even claims that to make learners understand character traits in written Japanese, role language is necessary from beginner level (Onzuka 2011, 60).

Furthermore, she notes that not all Japanese learners can study Japanese through real social life in Japan. For example, leaners who study Japanese outside of Japan need to study Japanese mainly through the textbooks (Onzuka 2011, 60). She says the role of textbooks is to lighten the burden of study and show a standard frame which can be applied to advance the studies for the future (Onzuka 2011, 60). For this purpose, there are cases which deal with unlikely conversation such as ‘is this a pencil?’ ‘no, it isn’t, it’s a pen’. She calls this virtual reality for applied development and claims textbooks cannot play a role as textbooks if they cannot play the setting of a female character in a virtual world, even if women in reality do not speak female language as much as before (Onzuka 2011, 60–61).

Additionally, Onzuka (2011, 66) claims that looking at Japanese as “Japanese that is actually being used (actual Japanese) = living Japanese” in the atmosphere of communicative Japanese education is risky. For example, youth language (若者言葉/wakamono kotoba) might be considered “living Japanese” in this circumstance, but if learners use it without considering
the situation it could create an unfavorable situation. Onzuka (2011, 67) says that teaching this kind of actual Japanese just because it is used in reality is irresponsible, especially when considering learners who study Japanese outside of Japan. And at places like university, communication is not the only purpose for studying Japanese. Some learners might need to understand literary works and scenarios etc. in which case Japanese teachers need to be professionals to teach Japanese to help learners understand symbolic functions too (Onzuka 2011, 67). Onzuka (2011, 67) considers true “living Japanese” to be something to be considered and used according to the situation, conversation partner, purpose of studying JFL, and finally the students’ life goals.

2.3.2 Teaching role language for translation

Jung (2011) investigates the improvement of quality of translation between Japanese and Korean. She says that Japanese education nowadays often focuses on communication but not so much on role language, which is used frequently in Japanese subculture such as animation, manga, movies etc. This is the case despite the different media being used as tools for studying Japanese (Jung 2011, 71). Therefore, Jung (2011, 71) says it is unclear whether Japanese learners can understand role language properly. Especially for learners who are studying translation, role language is important to understand and to be able to use. As an experiment, she held seminars about role language for South Korean students taking a Japanese-Korean translation practice course at a Japanese university in order to analyze role language acquisition. To assess the effectiveness of teaching role language, after the seminars, she made students discuss professional translations as well as their own translations. Through this experiment, Jung (2011, 88) got the following results: 1) Learners did not become fully proficient using all aspects of role language but started to be able to use final particles such as –kai, –nou, –nen, –zo. 2) Through discussion between learners, learners became aware of various aspects of role language and thought out a method or a way for translation. Therefore, this can be expected to be applied more concretely to Japanese-Korean translation. 3) Learners started being aware of the traits of Japanese which have many role language elements, for example, when translating from Korean to Japanese, learners focused on elements that did not appear in the original Korean sentences.

Through these activities, she claims these kinds of activities regarding role language can contribute to improving the quality of Japanese-Korean translation. Through Jung’s (2011) examination, one can know even advanced level students have difficulties translating because of role language. Especially the quiz about role language that she held in the beginning of the
role language practice, shows leaners’ low understanding of role language (Native Japanese speakers scored 100%, compared to 56.5% among Japanese leaners).

2.3.3 Importance of Role Language in JFL education

Kinsui (2011b) also writes about role language in JFL education. He claims there is a tendency, which he opposes, to consider role language not necessary in JFL education and the curriculum in Japanese teachers’ education. For example, he says that when he holds lectures for Japanese teacher students, they often ask him to teach them something practical rather than role language (Kinsui 2011b, 35). Kinsui (2011b, 36) says that this tendency originates from role language being considered “far from everyday speech and peculiar or unrealistic styles”. Although, he says “real Japanese” is not what actual Japanese people know, by showing examples of language which skips –ra in the potential verb form in spoken Japanese (ら抜き言葉/ranuki kotoba) for example mireru instead of mirareru, tabereru instead of taberareru. He says that to what extent these are used in real Japanese is not something ordinary Japanese people except sociolinguistic researchers would know. Although, role language is a part of knowledge that ordinary Japanese people have. Even if role language is not used in actual spoken conversation to the same extent as in fiction, Japanese people know role language as knowledge from their experiences.

Furthermore, Kinsui (2011b, 38–39) says native Japanese speakers have knowledge such as characters of speakers, utterance situation, variety of language depending on the person, and role language is also included in this knowledge. He says the importance of learning role language is not to learn individual elderly people’s language, young rich lady’s language etc. but rather to learn the variety of Japanese. He says Japanese learners are also one type of characters and the Japanese that they speak is also role language categorized as ‘Japanese for Japanese learners’, so if they use Japanese that is out of their character, they might risk making a suspicious impression and cause misunderstandings. From this point of view, Kinsui (2011b, 39–40) suggests that Japanese teachers should help to create the learners’ characters.

Additionally, Kinsui (2011b, 39) talks about “quotations from the utterance of others” in natural conversation in daily life. He introduces a Chinese woman who is a Japanese teacher in Beijing. He says her Japanese is fluent, but when she conveyed what her son said by quotation, she did not use role language suitable for a child (幼児語/yōjīgo), which made it sound unnatural in the end. Thus, he shows by this example, role language is not only fiction, but also used in natural Japanese utterances, and claims role language is a part of “natural Japanese”.
In conclusion, Kinsui (2011b, 39–40) says if teaching role language in a trivialized way as strange Japanese which can be found in fiction such as manga and anime, it would not be necessary to teach role language in beginner and intermediate levels of JFL education. What he thinks is necessary regarding role language in JFL education is for students to know that all Japanese contains traits related to roles, and teachers should support creating learners’ own characters.

2.3.4 Role language in textbooks and awareness of role language

Yukiko Shukuri (2015, 63) investigates how role language is used in Japanese teaching materials, as well as Russian JFL learners’ proficiency in four different kinds of role language. She does this by analyzing textbooks, looking at how frequently role language is used, and she also measured students’ awareness of role language through a questionnaire.

Shukuri (2015, 64) analyzes Japanese textbooks which are widely used in Japanese education in Russia. She points out that in those textbooks, role language such as usage of first-person pronouns and sentence endings are not properly explained. In addition, female sentence ending expressions were used frequently in intermediate level textbooks as well as in the JLPT (Japanese Language Proficiency Test) exam (Shukuri 2015, 64–65). Furthermore, she examines the awareness of role language by comparing Russian native speakers who study Japanese and native Japanese people (Shukuri 2015, 65–66). As a result, she found that even though some Russian learners have the same impression toward a character as a native Japanese speaker has, they tend to choose the wrong role language (Shukuri 2015, 66).

Finally, the questionnaire revealed that there is no correlation between how long a student has been learning Japanese, or how frequently the student uses Japanese outside the classroom, and the student’s proficiency in role language (Shukuri 2015, 66).
3 Methodology

The data used in this study was gathered using questionnaires, one for students and one for teachers. The data from the student questionnaire was analyzed to determine the potential necessity of role language based on: 1) the purpose of studying Japanese at university, 2) to what extent the students come in contact with Japanese fiction outside of university, 3) students’ role language proficiency, 4) students’ ability to express their identity by using role language, and 5) the students’ interest and opinion toward role language. To measure to what extent the findings correspond with the current JFL course curriculum and teachers’ opinion regarding role language, the student data was cross-examined with the teacher data on the following points: 1) the purpose of studying Japanese at university, 2) teachers’ perception of the relation between role language and students, 3) teachers’ opinion regarding students’ proficiency using role language, and 4) teachers’ general opinion toward role language. Furthermore, it will be compared to the data regarding the current involvement of role language in the JFL education at Stockholm University, some gathered from the actual course syllabi, and some from the questionnaires. The reason for this is because the course syllabi available at the Stockholm University website were general and did not state anything specific about role language. Therefore, to find out to what extent the current JFL education includes role language, both teachers and students were asked questions about the involvement of role language in the current JFL education at Stockholm University. The answers to these questions were then used to examine the correspondence between the potential necessity of role language in JFL education and the current curriculum.

3.1 Questionnaires

The questionnaires were made using Stockholm University’s own survey program, Survey & Report. Both the student and teacher data were gathered in the spring term of 2018 between March 23rd and April 7th. The questionnaires were anonymous.

The student questionnaire consisted of 37 questions regarding general information such as age and gender, as well as the five areas mentioned in the previous section. There was also a test included to measure students’ knowledge regarding role language. Additionally, the teacher questionnaire consisted of 34 questions, most of which matched the student questionnaire since they were to be cross-examined, although, questions not suitable for teachers, such as the role language proficiency test, were not included. These questionnaires
were influenced by Siegal and Okamoto (2003), Matsumoto and Okamoto (2003) and Kinsui (2013).

3.2 Participants
Since the target of this study was JFL students at Stockholm University, all students who were active studying JFL at the time of data collection were asked to participate. This included students taking the courses Japanese II, IV or the Japanese Bachelor’s Course. This resulted in students of beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels. The number of students registered on each course were: Japanese II, 74; Japanese IV, 26; and the Japanese Bachelor’s Course, 14 students. In total, 36 students answered the questionnaire, out of which 19 were at beginner level, 11 intermediate level, and 6 advanced level. It should be noted, however, that some of the beginner and intermediate students had studied Japanese for several years prior to their university studies, but these students were still included in the beginner and intermediate groups since this study is concerned with university studies only. Furthermore, the age range for each group was, beginner; 19–49 years of age, intermediate; 20–29 years of age, advanced; 21–29 years of age.

Additionally, the teacher questionnaire was sent to all 12 teachers in the Japanese department of Stockholm University, out of which six teachers answered the questionnaire. Among these six, one teacher had no experience teaching Japanese, but had taught subjects closely related to JFL such as history and culture. Especially culture is relevant since it is found in both the curriculum of some JFL courses at Stockholm University and it is also brought up in some JFL research (Matsumoto and Okamoto 2003; Siegal and Okamoto 2003). Furthermore, 2 out of the teachers who had experience in teaching Japanese had been teaching for 1–2 years, and the remaining 3 had taught for 10–30 years and the teacher who teaches culture/history had several years of experience. The questionnaire was constructed in a way so that teachers who had no experience teaching JFL did not have to answer questions that were specific to JFL education and it was also constructed so that teaching length did not matter.
4 Results and analysis

This chapter has the following structure: in section 4.1, what kind of role language education is held in Stockholm University will be viewed from both the student and teacher data. In section 4.2, results and analysis of the student questionnaire will be presented according to the structure mentioned in chapter 3. Finally, in section 4.3, results and analysis of the teacher questionnaire will be examined. This analysis will also be carried out in the order specified in chapter 3.

4.1 Current teaching of role language at Stockholm University

In this section, data from the student and teacher questionnaires, related to the involvement of role language in current JFL education at Stockholm University, will be presented.

Firstly, looking at the student data, Figure 4-1 shows to what extent\textsuperscript{7} students have been taught role language at university, half of the students answered that they have studied role language, but the other half of the students had not studied it at all. Additionally, only one student answered that he/she had studied it in depth. When sorting the answers by level (beginner, intermediate and advanced), 13 out of 19 beginner students had not studied role language at university, and as for the intermediate students, 6 out of 11 had studied it. All of the advanced students had experience studying role language at university.

\textsuperscript{7} Respondents could choose between ‘in depth,’ ‘the basics,’ and ‘not at all.’ These terms were not specified for respondents, which means that they might have understood these terms differently.
On the other hand, the teacher data for the question about if they have taught role language in a university lesson (including only mentioning it briefly) showed that only 1 out of 6 teachers had taught role language in a lesson. Thus, this indicates that not many teachers teach role language in their lessons. Furthermore, the teacher who answered that he/she had taught role language was asked about why he/she taught role language. He/she answered that role language had been taught in order for students to understand a reading text that was about gendered language. Accordingly, this shows that role language is not planned as a part of the curriculum but relies on teachers’ own initiative. Thus, based on the student and teacher data, it appears role language is not taught as a mandatory part of the Japanese courses, but as something extra if the teacher deems it relevant.

Expressing one’s own character and identity by using first-person pronouns is also a part of role language so both students and teachers were asked about to what extent they had taught, or learned about, the nuance of first-person pronouns too. Most students, 25 out of 36, answered that they had learned the basics, and only 3 students had learned about it in depth, all of whom were studying at intermediate level or higher. 8 students answered that they had not learned about it at all, although 7 of those students were at beginner level while 1 student was at intermediate level. Looking at the teacher data, 2 teachers answered that they have experience of teaching the nuance of first-person pronouns, however, neither of these teachers had taught it in depth. This agrees with the student data, where most students had learned the basics only, so although some teachers have introduced it in class, it does not appear to be a mandatory part for teachers to include in the courses.

Additionally, students who answered that they have learned role language at university were asked what role language they had been taught about. All students had learned about female language, and 17 out of 18 students had learned about male language. No other role language seems to have been covered thoroughly. Also, according to the teacher data, the teacher who had experience teaching role language answered that he/she had taught male language and female language only. Therefore, role language taught at Stockholm University appears to be mainly gendered language.

In addition, students who answered that they have been taught role language at university were asked in which course it was taught. Most students answered that they learned it in a regular language proficiency course. Although, some students answered that they learned about it in a history course or in a culture course. As found in several studies (Matsumoto and Okamoto 2003; Siegal and Okamoto 2003), culture and role language are closely related, which means that it is not limited to be taught in language proficiency classes only. The teacher who
had experience teaching role language, however, stated that he/she did so in a text reading course. Thus, it appears it is not decided in what kind of classes it should be taught.

Furthermore, students were also asked if they have done any translation activities at university. The majority (30 out of 36 students) answered ‘yes’. Additionally, the students who answered ‘yes’ were asked to what extent they have been taught how to translate role language at university. Over half of the students (16 out of 30) answered ‘not at all’ and only 3 students answered that they had learned about it ‘in depth’ and the remaining 11 students answered that they had learned ‘the basics’. These results were further divided by level, but no major differences in how much they had been taught about it were observed.

Teachers were asked if they had experience teaching Japanese translation, and 2 teachers answered ‘yes’, and they were then further asked to what extent they teach role language when teaching translation. 1 teacher had taught it in depth but the other teacher had not taught it at all. Since both teachers had taught all levels of learners, these results further suggest that the curriculum does not include role language as a part of translation activities at Stockholm University, but it is the teacher that decides whether it is relevant for students or not. Thus, both the teacher and student data show that translation of role language is sometimes taught, and sometimes it is not. Therefore, role language is not a mandatory part of the curriculum regarding translation activities, but similarly to role language being taught in general, it is something extra that may or may not be included.

### 4.2 Student questionnaire

#### 4.2.1 The purpose of studying Japanese at university

In order to analyze the necessity of role language education at Stockholm University, it is necessary to analyze the students’ purpose of studying Japanese at university, because if their purpose is something connected to role language, it may affect the potential necessity of role language education. Hence, consuming fiction of any kind was considered connected to role language, and communicating with Japanese people was considered to also be connected to role language, but not to the same extent as fiction. The remaining options were considered to not be connected to role language.

Students were asked about their goals of their studies, as well as what kind of lessons they expect when studying Japanese at university level.
Figure 4-2 shows communicating with Japanese people was the most popular reason for studying Japanese, finding a job connected to Japanese the second, and working in Japan was the third most popular choice. Reading manga and watching anime, as well as other activities that might require knowledge of role language, apart from communicating with Japanese people, were not highly prioritized. It should be noted that students were only allowed to choose one answer, but some commented that they wanted to do all of the above. Additionally, it is not unlikely that the students considered their future careers when answering this question since some comments mentioned plans to become professional translators and other work opportunities in Japan. Therefore, free-time activities like watching anime or TV series, reading novels or manga etc. might not be prioritized highly.

Figure 4-3 Student expectations regarding Japanese lessons at university
As can be seen in Figure 4-3, improving one’s communication skill was the highest expectation for learning Japanese at university. This data links to the question about what students want to use Japanese for, where students stated that communicating with Japanese people was the most important to them. The second most common answer was to deepen one’s knowledge of Japanese itself. As for improving one’s communication skill, there might not be a strong connection to role language, however, when deepening the knowledge of Japanese itself, role language could be considered important.

### 4.2.2 To what extent the students come in contact with Japanese fiction outside of university

Role language is used the most frequently in fiction, therefore, to what extent students encounter Japanese fiction outside university may affect the potential necessity of role language in JFL education. To analyze this, students were asked about whether they use Japanese outside university, and if so, what they use it for. In addition, they were also asked how often they do those activities and how much time they spend on them.

33 out of 36 students answered that they are using Japanese outside university, and these 33 students were therefore asked about what they use it for.

![Figure 4-4 Students’ use of Japanese outside university](image)

Figure 4-4 shows watching Japanese animation, TV series, movies etc. and listening to Japanese music were the most common, followed by reading Japanese novels, manga etc. and playing Japanese video games. Here we find that all students chose at least one activity related to role language (fiction or music). Furthermore, the four most common uses of Japanese outside
university are connected to role language. Thus, Japanese fiction occupies a large part of the Japanese used by students outside university.

Additionally, the students were asked how often they do the activities they stated in the previous question, and 16 students chose almost every day, 15 chose a few times a week, and only 2 chose a few times per month. Furthermore, the students were asked how much time they spend on those activities, and the majority, 28 out of 33, answered that they spend around one hour or more, while the remaining 5 answered that they spend around 30 minutes or less. Thus, most students frequently encounter Japanese outside of university, which means they also have the possibility to encounter role language frequently.

4.2.3 Students’ role language proficiency

Students’ role language proficiency was tested to determine their ability to understand various nuances in fiction. If their score was low, there is a possibility that students do not understand what kind of traits different characters in fiction have, which means there is a risk that they do not fully understand what they are reading. In that case, the potential necessity of role language education could be considered to be high from the perspective of Japanese reading proficiency. However, if the students scored high, then it could be considered that their understanding is already high enough, making the potential necessity low.

First, students who encounter Japanese fiction outside university were asked if they recognize the differences between Japanese in fiction and Japanese in reality. The majority of students, 23 out of 33, answered ‘yes’.

In addition, the students were asked if they have difficulties understanding Japanese because of the difference between Japanese in fiction and Japanese used by native Japanese people. 14 out of 23 students answered that they do not find it difficult, while the remaining 9 students answered that they find it difficult to at least some extent.

Furthermore, to measure students’ understanding of role language, a test consisting of two parts was included in the questionnaire. The tests were from the Kokusai koryû kikin website (Kinsui 2013).8 The results were then divided into three groups, beginner, intermediate and advanced. Students were informed that they did not have to answer if they were unsure. An unanswered question counted the same as an incorrect answer.

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8 This test was originally used to demonstrate what role language is, but in this study it was used to measure students’ basic role language ability.
In part 1, students were given a sentence that included role language and a list of six characters. They were then asked to choose which character from the list the role language suited the best.\(^9\)

Figure 4-5 shows the beginners scored lower than the intermediate and advanced students in total on the first task, although between intermediate and advanced students the difference was not significant (4\%). All groups scored high on rich lady and young boy role language, but the countryside person and Japanese person from western Japan role language proved more difficult. The beginners also had difficulties with the elderly person and samurai role language, although the intermediate and advanced students had little trouble with those.

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\(^9\) See appendix 1.
Students’ results for the role language test part 2

In the second part of the test, they were given pictures of 5 characters with different traits, and students were asked to choose appropriate role language from a list for each character.\(^\text{10}\)

Looking at Figure 4-6, in part 2, all groups scored higher than in part 1 of the test. There does not appear to be a relation between the level of learner and the test score in this part. Shukuri (2015, 66) did not find any correlation between how long students have studied and their proficiency in role language either. Therefore, the results from part 2 would appear to support her findings, since the intermediate students even managed to score slightly higher than the advanced students, and the beginners only scored slightly lower than the rest. However, as noted above, there was a clear difference between levels in part 1.

4.2.4 Students’ ability to express their identity by using role language

Role language is not only used in fiction, but it can also be used as a tool to create one’s character and identity. If students want to express their own character/identity, knowledge of role language can be useful. Therefore, if students want to but are not able to express their identity well, the necessity of role language education could be considered high.

To analyze, students’ ability to express their identity by using role language, questions regarding which first-person pronoun they use when speaking Japanese and why they use that first-person pronoun were asked. The reason they were only asked about first-person pronouns is partially because the questionnaire was already long, and further questions might have

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\(^{10}\) See appendix 1.
discouraged students from completing the questionnaire, but also because the small scope of this study did not allow for more data.

Figure 4-7 shows the first-person pronoun *watashi* was the most commonly used among students. And according to Figure 4-8, nearly half of the students stated it was because they had learned to talk like that in the lesson/textbooks while most of the other students answered that they feel that first-person pronoun suits their character the best. This means that almost half of the students do not consider their own identity when choosing which first-person pronoun to use.

Since first-person pronouns are deeply connected to gender,\(^{11}\) the results were further divided by gender. As for the male students, 8 answered that they use ‘*watashi*’, 3 use ‘*boku*’, and 6 chose ‘other’. The students who chose ‘other’ commented that they use ‘*ore*’ as their first-person pronoun except for 1 student who did not state which first-person pronoun he uses. Also, some students commented that they are switching their first-person pronouns depending on who they are talking to, and 1 student wrote that he has changed first-person pronouns as he got older. Next, looking at the female students, 15 use *watashi*, and 4 use *atashi*. Compared to the male students, female students are more limited to choose other first-person pronouns besides *watashi* (Nakamura 2007, 152), which is reflected in these results.

Additionally, students were asked whether they consider it important to express their personal character and identity in the language that they study. All students considered it important to express their personal character and identity to at least some extent, and 29 out of 36 students considered it quite or very important.

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\(^{11}\) See table 1-1
4.2.5 The students’ interest and opinion toward role language

Students’ interest in role language, as well as activities related to role language, are also investigated to assess the potential needs of role language teaching in the JFL education environment. If many students are interested, the potential necessity would be deemed high, but if students are largely uninterested it would not be as high.

To analyze students’ interest toward role language, questions about to what extent they are interested in producing Japanese fiction, as well as how interested they are in translating authentic Japanese texts were asked. They were also asked what they think about various aspects of the difference between Japanese used in fiction and Japanese used in reality. Only students who answered that they use Japanese outside university, and further recognized that there is a difference between Japanese in fiction and Japanese used by Japanese native speakers were requested to answer this question. For this question, students were given four statements regarding the difference between the Japanese used in fiction and the Japanese used in reality.

For the first statement regarding the difference between Japanese in fiction and in reality, ‘it is interesting’, 22 out of 23 students answered that they agree (to at least some extent), and only 1 student answered that he/she disagreed to some extent. For the second statement ‘I want to study/learn more about it’, 21 students answered that they agree, and only 2 students answered that they disagree. For the third statement, ‘I want to try using it’, 14 students answered that they agree, and 9 students answered that they disagree. For the final statement, ‘it is not relevant for me’, the majority, 17 students, answered that they disagree. Considering these results, their interests toward role language appears to be high, and only 1 student agreed fully with the statement.

Additionally, role language is deeply connected to fiction and translation (Kinsui 2003; Jung 2007, 2011), and if the students consider producing fiction in Japanese and translating Japanese, the potential necessity of learning role language could be considered high. Therefore, questions about to what extent they are interested in producing fiction and translating authentic Japanese texts were asked.

Over half of the students, 21 out of 36, answered that they are interested in producing Japanese fiction to some extent and a little less than half, 15 students, stated that they are not interested. Most, 32, students answered that they are interested in translating authentic Japanese texts and the remaining 4 students were not interested.

Furthermore, students’ opinion toward role language was investigated by asking questions about whether they think role language should be taught in Japanese classes at
university, and how highly they would prioritize role language compared to other areas of language learning.

If role language should be taught in university lessons or not was asked directly, and as can be seen in Figure 4-9 ‘yes’ and ‘I don’t know’ were the most common, both 17 out of 36 students, and only 2 students answered ‘no’.

For the question about how highly role language learning is prioritized among other parts of JFL education, the majority of students 15 out of 17 students chose ‘lower than other areas’, and only 2 students answered ‘the same level as other areas’. This shows that students do not consider role language as something that should be prioritized highly in JFL education at university.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, role language has been criticized in some research, therefore, how students perceive the criticized side of role language is considered an important factor to consider regarding role language in the JFL education at Stockholm University. The opinion toward role language was investigated by asking students what they think about role language being fixed (for example, women use female language, men use male language, old people use elderly people’s language etc.).
For this question, multiple answers were allowed, so students could choose as many answers as they wanted.

Figure 4-10 shows the most common answer was ‘it is good because it is fun to see different ways of styles’, and ‘it is good because we can easily understand a character’s traits immediately by the speech style’ was also common. At least 23 out of 36 students answered either of the two most common answers. These answers reveal that students think of the stereotypical side of role language mainly as a positive factor. Although considering that the third most common answer, with 15 students, was ‘it is not good because it might create stereotypes’, it appears students are not unaware of the negative aspects brought up by previous research (Furukawa 2014; Kinsui 2003; Nakamura 2007).

Some comments toward this question include 1 student saying there are good parts and bad parts regarding the stereotypical side of role language. Another student, wrote that it is good, but makes the language more difficult. There was also an opinion that although there might be negative aspects such as homophobia and stereotypical gender roles linked to role language, “speech styles are more the symptom rather than the cause of harmful ideologies.” Also, considering that this question allows multiple answers, many students, 10 of the 15 that answered negatively, perceive both positive and negative sides of role language that creates stereotypes.
Furthermore, students were asked directly how they feel about learning to understand and to use gendered role language. Figure 4-11 shows that 23 out of 36 students answered, ‘I want to learn to both understand and use gendered speech styles’, while the remaining 13 chose ‘I want to learn to understand but I don’t want to use gendered speech styles’ and no one chose ‘I don’t want to learn about it at all’. When asked for their opinion why they think so, some students perceive Japanese gendered speech styles as a trait/part of Japanese, and also, some students stated that they think gendered speech styles should not be forced, but instead the speaker should be free to use whichever speech style he/she wants to use, which is very similar to what some researchers also suggest (Nakamura 2007; Siegal and Okamoto 2003). However, some comments suggest that gendered speech styles are necessary in order to avoid misunderstandings. For example, one student stated that since he spoke mostly to women, he has been told that his speech style resembles that of a woman, making him sound feminine or gay. Thus, even if it is actual Japanese, if the speaker does not consider the usage, it can create unfavorable situations and misunderstandings (Kinsui 2011b, 38–39; Onzuka 2011, 66). The student in question also stated that he would like to be able to choose how to portray himself, suggesting that the feminine way he speaks is not an active choice of his. Something else several students commented on was that the language becomes richer and more nuanced, making it more interesting, and 1 student wrote that it is necessary to be able to both understand and use gendered speech styles since he/she wants to work with translation in the future.
Finally, Figure 4-12 shows the 17 students who answered that they think role language should be taught at university were asked what kind of role language they think should be taught. The most common answer, 12 students, was role language which helps them understand fiction better. The second most common answer, 8 students, was role language which helps them express their personal character/identity. 5 students answered that every kind of role language should be taught. Considering these results, the students who think role language should be taught at university seem to be more concerned about its usefulness rather than possibilities of it being discriminatory.

4.3 Teacher questionnaire

Some questions in the teacher questionnaire allowed multiple answers, out of which some questions allowed no more than two or three answers. The reason for limiting the answers was to avoid the answers becoming too spread out, especially for questions that only had 4–5 alternatives.

4.3.1 The purpose of studying Japanese at university

What teachers believe students want to do the most by learning Japanese was asked, and the results agreed with the student data. The most common answer, 4 out of 6, was communicating with Japanese people. Additionally, teachers were asked what they believe should be prioritized when teaching Japanese at university. ‘lessons for improving students’ Japanese communication skill’ was the most common answer. Again, the results correspond with the
student data. This shows that students and teachers share opinions regarding JFL education, and teachers appear to be aware of students’ purpose of studying Japanese.

4.3.2 Teachers’ perception of the relation between role language and students
Teachers were asked what they believe students use Japanese for outside university. The intention of this question was to determine what teachers believe are the most common extramural learning opportunities, hence they could choose no more than three alternatives. The most common answer was ‘watching Japanese animation, TV series, movies etc.’ and the second most common answer was ‘playing Japanese video games,’ which is similar to what the students answered.

Additionally, for the questions regarding students’ interests in role language related activities, the teachers did not think students have a great interest in producing Japanese fiction, despite most students stating they are interested in it, which shows the teachers are not entirely certain about students’ interest in activities related to role language. However, all teachers answered that they believe students are interested in translating authentic Japanese texts to at least some extent, which is similar to what the students answered.

Teachers were further asked about whether they think role language poses difficulties for students. 4 out of 6 teachers answered that they believe students have difficulties understanding Japanese because of role language, with the beginner students having the most difficulties, and the advanced students the least. However, the 4 teachers who answered that they believe students find it difficult all answered that they believe students still find role language interesting despite the difficulties it brings. Thus, while the teacher answers did not agree with how students think regarding the difficulty of role language, the teachers were aware of students finding role language interesting.

4.3.3 Teachers’ opinion regarding students’ proficiency using role language
The teachers were first asked what first-person pronoun their students are using in informal speech. This question was asked distinguishing level and students’ gender (teachers only had to answer for levels he/she had experience teaching). All teachers who had taught beginner male students answered that their students use watashi, 2 out of 3 answered the intermediate male students use watashi and 1 answered they use boku, and 3 teachers answered the advanced male students use watashi and 1 answered they use boku. For the female students, all teachers answered the students use watashi regardless of level. In addition, teachers were asked whether
they think it is important to be able to express one’s personal character in the language one is learning. 4 out of 6 teachers answered that it is important to at least some extent.

Furthermore, the teachers who answered the former questions were asked why they think most of those students use that/those first-person pronoun(s). For all levels of students, ‘because students learned to talk like that in the lesson/textbooks’ was by far the most common answer, but for the intermediate and advanced levels, 1 teacher chose ‘because students feel like that suits their gender’. 1 teacher also commented that students at intermediate and advanced levels also sometimes choose their first-person pronoun to suit not only their gender, but their character as well. Thus, looking at the teacher data, the textbooks and lessons appear to be the most common way for students to decide which first-person pronoun to use, which is similar to what the student data suggested.

### 4.3.4 Teachers’ general opinion toward role language

Firstly, what the teachers think about the stereotypical side of role language will be examined. When asked about their opinion on role language being fixed the most common answer was ‘it is good because we can easily understand a character’s traits immediately by the speech style’. Only 1 teacher answered ‘it is not good because it might create stereotypes’, which suggests that the criticism that role language could create or maintain negative stereotypes is not a major issue for the teachers at Stockholm University. However, 1 teacher commented that there are both positives and negatives related to role language, and that it is heavily dependent on the situation, which is why he/she finds it difficult to answer whether it is good or bad and why he/she feels that way, which is similar to what many students answered.

Secondly, teachers were asked to what extent they think gendered language should be taught. 2 teachers thought students should be taught to both use and understand gendered language, 3 teachers thought it is enough as long as students understand it, and 1 teacher answered that he/she does not want to teach gendered language at all. Comments included opinions that it depends on what kind of course it is and that it depends on how interested students are, if they are interested, they should be taught to use it as well, but if not, it is enough to just understand it. Most students on the other hand wanted to be able to both use and understand gendered language.

When asked directly if they think role language should be taught in Japanese classes at university level, 2 teachers answered ‘yes’, and 1 teacher answered ‘no’. The remaining 3 teachers answered, ‘I don’t know’, which is very similar to what the students answered. The 2 teachers who answered ‘yes’ were further asked about how highly role language should be
prioritized in comparison to other areas of language teaching such as grammar, pronunciation etc. 1 teacher answered that it should be prioritized ‘the same as other areas’, and the other teacher answered ‘lower than other areas’. Due to the small amount of data it is difficult to compare it to the student answers in this case, although the general trend in the student data was that role language should be considered lower than other areas.

4.4 Discussion
Firstly, to determine the potential necessity of role language for students, students’ purpose for studying Japanese, their extramural activities involving Japanese, their test results, their ability to express their identity, and their opinion regarding role language in general will be examined. The results will then be cross-examined with the current curriculum and the answers from the teacher questionnaire to determine to what extent the current curriculum and teacher opinions correspond with the determined potential necessity established through investigating the student data.

Students answered that communicating with Japanese people was their main purpose for studying Japanese. As stated in section 4.2.1, if only considering students’ purpose for learning Japanese, there may not be a strong necessity for learning role language. However, when expressing one’s identity in Japanese, it is common for people to use a first-person pronoun that they consider suits their character. This means that when communicating in Japanese, some aspects of role language are important if one wants to sound natural. Kinsui (2011b, 39) also claims that role language is sometimes necessary for natural conversation in Japanese, especially when quoting others with different traits (for example if an adult quotes a child, the adult should use child language to sound natural). Therefore, since students’ main purpose of study is to communicate with Japanese people, there might be a need for role language in certain situations that would arise naturally in conversation.

Students’ expectations regarding university lessons showed that many students expect to be able to deepen their knowledge of Japanese itself. Role language is a part of Japanese, and is a trait that is not strongly visible in other languages, so if they are expecting to improve their knowledge of Japanese, learning the concept of role language is also important. Kinsui (2011b, 38–39) points out that learning role language in JFL education is important for learning a wide variety of Japanese. Since the students at Stockholm University have high expectations to deepen their knowledge of Japanese, learning the difference in language between fiction and reality and various forms of Japanese should be considered useful and important for their studies.
Taking the connection between students and Japanese fiction into account, the data showed Japanese fiction is a big part of their connection with Japanese. Onzuka (2011, 60) points out that not all Japanese learners can learn Japanese from real social situations. And as the data showed, the students at Stockholm University could be considered to be in this situation since the majority of students use Japanese for activities such as manga, anime and novels rather than using Japanese in their social life. Therefore, since many students regularly encounter Japanese fiction in their extramural learning, teaching role language at Stockholm University could help them learn Japanese outside of classes.

Furthermore, Kinsui’s (2013) test that was used in the student questionnaire, and questions regarding students’ recognition of role language, showed that students had quite high understanding of certain role language, such as gendered language, especially among intermediate and advanced students. Although, considering the large number of students encountering fiction outside of university, their knowledge of various other types of role language such as countryside person, Japanese person from western Japan seemed low for all levels, and beginners also scored low on elderly person and samurai. More than half of the students did not consider role language in fiction difficult, but a little less than half of them did feel role language is difficult to at least some extent. Since they spend so much time on fiction in their free time, learning more about role language could help them understand the fiction better, and they could become more conscious of subtle nuances in Japanese. Knowing a wide variety of Japanese, such as dialects and various kinds of role language, is also beneficial for students’ sociolinguistic competence (Matsumoto and Okamoto 2003, 43), therefore, learning about more than only gendered speech styles could also prove beneficial.

Regarding being able to express one’s personal character and identity in the language one is learning, all students considered it important to at least some extent. As for students’ use of first-person pronouns, almost half of the students do not take their own personal character into account when they choose what first-person pronoun to use, despite this being strongly linked to one’s identity. Instead, many students are choosing their first-person pronouns based on what they learn in their textbooks and lessons. These results indicate that students might not have enough knowledge of role language regarding first-person pronouns for expressing their character and identity. Kinsui (2011b, 39–40) claims supporting learners creating their own character is important, and through it, students’ expression skill in Japanese will deepen. He also stresses that it is important to not trivialize the teaching of role language by introducing it as strange Japanese that is only found in fiction. Thus, by teaching the nuance of different first-
person pronouns early, students can start creating their own character as they learn the language, and thereby successfully express their identity through Japanese.

Furthermore, the results show that students’ interest in role language is high (no matter whether they want to use it or not), which further suggests there is reason to include it in the curriculum at Stockholm University. Nearly all students were interested in translating authentic Japanese texts, and some students stated that they want to work with translation. Jung (2011) points out that learning role language improves students’ quality of translation, and since so many are interested in translation, learning about role language would be beneficial since it would improve the authenticity of students’ translations. Therefore, role language potentially has a direct connection to some students’ future occupation.

Many students thought role language should be taught in university level classes, but there were also many who were unsure, which suggests that students do not know enough to determine whether it is of importance or not. Nearly all students considered role language less important than other areas, however, one student commented that he/she believes JFL students in general are interested in different speech styles in fiction, and even if it is not used in everyday speech in reality, learning role language is a good way of learning Japanese and is good motivation. Therefore, although students do not consider role language to be as important as other areas of Japanese, most students still want it to be included in JFL courses at university. And potentially role language could also work as a way of increasing motivation.

Moreover, regarding the criticism of role language, some students thought that role language might create stereotypes, however, the general opinion regarding role language was overwhelmingly positive. Students appear to see role language as a part of Japanese, and instead of being forced to use the language traditionally used by, for example, one’s gender, they thought everybody should be allowed to choose whichever role language he/she wants. This way of thinking closely resembles Nakamura’s (2007) suggestion to look at role language as language resources, which means that one should not be bound to use role language associated with one’s gender, but instead anyone should be able to use any role language that may suit the situation. Learning about role language could therefore be useful since if they want to create their own way of expressing their identity through Japanese without adhering to traditional ways of using role language, they might need more than only a few types of role language to choose between.

As Arita (2009, 35) mentions, today’s Japanese education is focused on mostly practical use. This can also be seen in the JFL course curriculum at Stockholm University where the course syllabi states that the aim is to improve students’ practical language ability and
This focus on practical use is not only true for Japanese II students, but also for the Japanese IV students who will soon be studying at an advanced level. According to Onzuka (2011), it is not advisable to consider only Japanese that is actually being used as “living Japanese”. She further points out that communication should not be the only purpose of study at universities. Although most students’ purpose of studying Japanese was not strongly related to role language, their extramural activities did involve role language. Therefore, the current curriculum corresponds with students’ purpose of study, but does not appear to take into account their activities involving Japanese outside university. Furthermore, since all students found role language to be interesting to at least some extent, and nearly all students wanted to learn more about it, it would seem appropriate to include it in the curriculum. Arita (2009) claims that it is pointless to teach only practical language use if the leaners might not use Japanese in the future. Not all students intend to move to Japan, and some of them might not have the opportunity to use Japanese on a daily basis since they live in Sweden. Therefore, teaching students about various aspects of Japanese should also be considered relevant.

The teachers appeared to be aware of students’ purpose of studying Japanese, as well as their extramural use of Japanese. Despite this, however, only 1 teacher had taught role language in a university lesson, and most students had not been taught role language at university. Role language is an important factor for students to be able to express their identity properly, as well as to be able to fully appreciate fiction. When asked about in what kind of courses they had learned about/taught role language, students stated that they had learned it in culture, history and regular language proficiency courses, while the teacher who had experience teaching it stated that he/she had done it in a text reading course. Hence, it appears role language is not regularly taught in any one course, and as it stands, the current JFL education at Stockholm University does not appear to be adapted for students’ needs from the perspective of role language.

All teachers believed students are interested in translation, but only 1 teacher had experience teaching role language as a part of a translation activity. The student data confirmed this as many students answered that they have not been taught about role language when doing translation activities at Stockholm University. Furthermore, teachers believed that students think role language makes Japanese difficult, but that they still find it interesting. Although teachers’ and students’ answers differed in that students did not consider role language difficult while teachers thought their students did find it difficult, students did have some difficulties

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12 See chapter 1.3
with certain role language in the test, which shows that the teachers are aware of students’ role language ability. They were also aware of students being interested in role language, despite difficulties.

Furthermore, all students considered it important to be able to express their identity in the language they are learning, and most teachers agreed. However, students stated that they had only learned the basics regarding the nuance of different first-person pronouns. Furthermore, only 2 teachers had taught the nuance of first-person pronouns, and they had only taught the basics. Therefore, if students are to be able to express their identity properly, they need to be taught more in depth about how to use different first-person pronouns. Interestingly, only 1 teacher stated that he/she had taught role language, which could be interpreted as one of the teachers who had taught first-person pronoun nuances not considering first-person pronouns as a part of role language.

Both in the student group and in the teacher group, there were many who answered that they did not know whether role language should be taught at university level. This may indicate that perhaps neither teachers nor students know enough about role language to know whether it should be taught or not. There were however only a few respondents in either group who answered that it should not be taught, while many supported the idea of role language being taught at university. 1 out of 2 teachers and the majority of students considered role language to be at a lower level of importance compared to other areas of JFL, which shows that neither students nor teachers see it as necessary for learning Japanese. On the other hand, both teachers and students consider role language to be something positive since it helps understand characters’ traits immediately by their speech styles, which suggests that while they do not prioritize it as highly as other areas, they see it as something useful. A little less than half of the students and one of the teachers also answered that role language has the risk of creating stereotypes, but it appears this is a secondary concern since the same students also answered that role language is something positive. Therefore, it seems neither teachers nor students see the criticism of role language as particularly problematic.
5 Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation was to answer the following questions:

1) What is the potential necessity of role language for students of Japanese as a foreign language at Stockholm University?

2) To what extent does the opinion of teachers of the Japanese department at Stockholm University, as well as the current involvement of role language in Japanese as a foreign language education, correspond to the findings of research question 1?

To answer these questions, students and teachers at the Japanese department were asked to answer questionnaires. The students’ questionnaire answers were then examined to determine the potential necessity of role language, and finally the results were compared to the current curriculum and the teachers’ questionnaire answers.

As for the first research question, students’ purpose of studying Japanese at university (to communicate with native Japanese people) is related to role language since students thought expressing their identity in Japanese is important. And their extramural learning habits and interests showed that they encounter role language regularly outside classes. For example, they frequently encounter fiction in their everyday life, and many students were interested in Japanese linguistics and Japanese translation. Furthermore, even though there is some criticism toward role language, most students considered it as a part of Japanese and the opinion toward role language was mainly positive. Although many students thought that role language should be included in JFL courses, there were many who were not sure, which indicates that they might not consider themselves qualified enough to give a straight answer.

Additionally, as indicated by the test results, students’ knowledge of role language appears to be limited to mainly gendered language which connects to what is currently being taught at Stockholm University. Moreover, even though many students think it is important to express their character/identity in the foreign language they are learning, many decide on a first-person pronoun without considering this, despite first-person pronouns being important for expressing one’s identity. This might indicate that students are not sufficiently aware of the nuance difference between different first-person pronouns in Japanese.

Thus, based on students’ extramural use of Japanese, their positive attitude toward role language, and the results from the test, the fact that many students were not sure whether it should be taught or not, students would benefit from learning more about role language. However, as Siegal and Okamoto (2003) suggest, students should be taught about gendered
speech styles, but at the same time be informed that it is something optional. Thus, students who consider expressing their identity in Japanese as something important, or students who consider a career in translation or fiction writing, should learn to understand as well as use role language, but other students should only have to learn to understand it.

As for to what extent the teacher questionnaire answers and the current curriculum corresponds with students regarding the necessity of role language, the teachers answered similarly to the students for the most part. Half of the teachers answered that they were uncertain whether it should be taught or not. This is also reflected by the fact that most of the teachers had not taught role language at all. The teachers considered it important to be able to express one’s identity in the foreign language that one is learning, but not as much as the students did. The majority did consider it important to some extent, but only one teacher considered it very important. However, teachers do seem aware of students’ interest in role language and activities such as watching anime and playing video games, which involve a great deal of role language. They also appear to be aware of students’ purpose of study, to communicate with native Japanese people, which also involves role language to some extent.

Both teachers and students view role language in JFL education positively for the most part. Yet, despite the teachers appearing to be aware of students’ interests being strongly linked to role language, most of the teachers had not tried teaching it to their students. This kind of phenomenon is similar to what Kinsui (2011b) experienced when teaching teacher students and he was asked to teach them something “useful” instead of role language. Thus, teachers say that they see role language as something positive, but since most of them do not teach it, they do not appear to fully correspond with students regarding the potential necessity of role language.

As for the current course syllabi for the Japanese courses at Stockholm University, practical use is prioritized. This corresponds with students’ purpose of studying Japanese, although, since the student data also indicates that role language is necessary in many cases, the current syllabi does not correspond fully with the findings regarding the potential necessity of role language. Thus, although role language is not a part of the syllabi, including it in the curriculum would correspond better to the students’ situation and interests.

To conclude, this study indicates that students of Japanese at Stockholm university would benefit from learning about role language. Furthermore, it has shown that the current Japanese curriculum does not appear to sufficiently include role language to accommodate students’ needs. Although, the difference in opinion between teachers and students regarding the potential necessity of role language in JFL education at Stockholm University was small.
Due to the small scope of this study, there were several aspects that were not examined. For example, the role language test given to the students was very small, and not enough to truly evaluate students’ understanding of role language. Moreover, when students were asked about expressing their identity in Japanese, only their use of first-person pronouns was investigated. A more thorough study would also have included their use of sentence endings, which is another important part of role language and expressing one’s identity. Furthermore, when asked about which first-person pronoun they use, students were not given a specific scenario, for example, depending on who one is talking to, the use of first-person pronouns may change. Finally, this is a study limited to the JFL education at Stockholm University, and it would be interesting to carry out a larger study including several universities to determine whether the results observed in the present study are unique for Stockholm University, or if they can be observed in other universities too.
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Appendix 1

Student questionnaire

My name is Megumi Kitano, and I am writing a thesis for my Master’s degree in Asian studies. I am researching the teaching of ‘Role language (役割語/yakuwarigo)’ at Stockholm university. I would be thankful if you could help me by answering this questionnaire. It is estimated to take 10-15 minutes. The thesis will be published on Diva, but the survey is anonymous, and the data will only be used for the purpose of this study. If you have any questions, please contact me through telephone or E-mail.

1. How old are you?

2. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female
   - Other

3. How long have you been studying Japanese?

4. What level of Japanese are you studying right now?
   - Beginner (up to 2 terms of full-time studies)
   - Intermediate (3-4 terms of full-time studies)
   - Advanced (5 or more terms of full-time studies)

5. What do you want to do the most by learning Japanese? (Please check only one)
   - Communicating with Japanese people
   - Studying abroad in Japan
   - Working in Japan
   - Finding job something connected to Japanese
   - Traveling to Japan
   - Reading Japanese articles
   - Reading Japanese manga, novels etc.
   - Watching Japanese anime, TV series, movies etc.
   - Other

6. Are you interested in producing Japanese fiction (manga, anime, novels, TV-series, movies, video games (including smartphone applications)) in Japanese as a hobby or an occupation? (Not only visual art but including story)
   - Very much
   - Quite a lot
   - A little
   - Not so much
   - Not at all
7. To what extent are you interested in translating authentic Japanese texts?
   - Very much
   - Quite a lot
   - A little
   - Not so much
   - Not at all

8. Do you use Japanese for anything outside of your university studies?
   - Yes
   - No

9. What are you using Japanese for outside your university studies? (Please check all answers that apply)
   - Reading Japanese articles on the internet
   - Reading Japanese novels, manga etc.
   - Watching Japanese animation, TV series, movies etc.
   - Listening to Japanese music
   - Playing Japanese video games (including smartphone applications)
   - Meeting Japanese people (friends, family, coworkers etc.)
   - Talking with Japanese people through the internet

10. How often do you do that/those activities?
    - Almost every day
    - A few times a week
    - Once per week
    - A few times per month
    - Once per month

11. How much time do you spend on that/those activities per time?
    - Over 2 hours
    - Around 1 hour
    - Around 30 minutes
    - Less than 30 minutes

12. Do you think the Japanese found in fiction (manga, anime, novels, video games etc.) is different compared to the Japanese used by Japanese native speakers?
    - Yes
    - No
    - I don’t know

13. In what way is the language used differently in fiction? (Please check all that apply)
    - The first-person pronouns are used differently
    - The sentence endings are used differently
    - The accent/intonation is different
    - Other
14. Have you ever felt like the difference between Japanese in fiction and in reality makes it difficult to understand Japanese?
   - Very much
   - To some extent
   - Not so much
   - Not at all

15. Below are four statements regarding the difference between Japanese in fiction and in reality, please state to what extent you agree with each statement.

   It is interesting
   - I agree
   - I agree to some extent
   - I disagree slightly
   - I disagree

   I want to study/learn more about it
   - I agree
   - I agree to some extent
   - I disagree slightly
   - I disagree

   I want to try using it
   - I agree
   - I agree to some extent
   - I disagree slightly
   - I disagree

   It is not relevant for me
   - I agree
   - I agree to some extent
   - I disagree slightly
   - I disagree

16. Which Japanese first-person pronoun do you use when you talk about yourself? (In informal speech)\(^{13}\)
   - わたし (watashi)
   - わたくし (watakushi)
   - あたし (atashi)
   - ぼく (boku)
   - Other

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\(^{13}\) It should be noted that the questionnaire sent to students did not include the pronunciation in roman letters since all students were at a level where they are already able to read hiragana and katakana. The pronunciation is given here, throughout the appendix, for the convenience of the reader.
17. Why do you use that first-person pronoun? 
   - Because I learned to talk like that in the lesson/textbooks
   - Because I feel like that suits my gender
   - Because I feel like that suits my character the best
   - Other

18. To what extent have you studied the nuance of different first-person pronouns at university? 
   - In depth
   - The basics
   - Not at all

19. When learning a foreign language, do you think it is important to be able to express your personal character and identity in the language you are learning? 
   - Very much
   - Quite a lot
   - A little
   - Not so much
   - Not at all

In Japanese, there are many different speech styles that are connected to certain traits, especially in manga, anime, movies and novels. For example, a female character would use a speech style that females use, a male character would use a speech style that males use, elderly people use speech styles that elderly people would use.
Below is a small test regarding speech styles. Please try to answer all questions, but if you are unsure, it’s OK to leave it empty.

20. Please choose which speech style fits which character\textsuperscript{14} 

おお、そうじゃ、わしがしっておるんじゃ。
(oo, sôja, washi ga shitte orunja)

あら、そうよ、わたくしがしっておりますわ。
(ara, sôyo, watakushi ga shitte orimasuwa)

うん、そうだよ、ぼくがしってるよ。
(un, sôdayo, boku ga shitte ruyo)

なんだ、なんだ、おらしってるだ。
(nda, nda, ora shitte ruda)

そや、わしがしってまっせー。
(soya, washi ga shitte massê)

うむ、さよう、せっしゃがぞんじております。
(umu, sayô, sessha ga zonjite orimasuru)

\textsuperscript{14} All sentences utilize different role language, but the meaning is the same. English translation: ‘Yes, that’s right, I know about it’.
21. Please choose which speech style fits which character in the picture\textsuperscript{15}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>c</th>
<th>d</th>
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**オレは、このまちが だいすきだぜ。**
(ore wa, kono machi ga daisuki daze)

**わたしは、このまちが だいすきなのよ。**
(watashi wa, kono machi ga daisuki nanoyo)

**わしは、このまちが だいすきなんじゃ。**
(washi wa, kono machi ga daisuki nanja)

**ぼくは、このまちが だいすきさ。**
(boku wa kono machi ga daisuki sa)

**わたくしは、このまちが だいすきだわ。**
(watakushi wa, kono machi ga daisuki dawa)

As you could see in the test, some speech styles differ a great deal from standard Japanese, especially first-person pronouns and sentence endings.

Next, please answer a few questions regarding your personal habits and opinions surrounding your Japanese education. Please choose from the answers below.

22. What do you think about characters and the speech styles being fixed in Japanese fiction? (For example, men use speech style for men, women use speech style for women, elderly people use speech style for elderly people etc.) Please choose all that apply.

- It is good because it is fun to see different ways of styles
- It is good because we can easily understand a character’s traits immediately by the speech style
- It is necessary because it is a part of Japanese culture
- It is not necessary because it is different from the way Japanese people actually talk
- It is not good because it is difficult to understand
- It is not good because it might create stereotypes
- Other

23. In Sweden, there is a tendency to reduce gender discrimination. For example, making the new word Hen (he/she) from separate words Han (he) and Hon (she). What is your attitude toward this?

- Han and hon should be changed to hen
- Hen should be used when referring to someone when gender is unknown
- There is no need to change the language
- Other

\textsuperscript{15} All sentences utilize different role language, but the meaning is the same. English translation: ‘I like this town’.
24. Japanese is a language that is normally considered to have a big difference between genders. How do you feel about learning to understand and to use the speech styles that create this gap between the genders? (Please motivate your answer in the comment box.)
   - I want to learn to both understand and use gendered speech styles
   - I want to learn to understand but I don’t want to use gendered speech styles
   - I don’t want to learn about it at all

   Why do you think so?

25. What kind of lessons do you expect when learning Japanese at university level? (Please choose max 2 that apply the best)
   - Lessons for improving my Japanese communication skill
   - Lessons to deepen my knowledge of Japanese itself (linguistics for example)
   - Lessons for improving my Japanese skill to better understand my interests (culture, history, politics, economy, art etc.)
   - Lessons for improving my ability to use Japanese for academic purposes

26. To what extent have you been taught speech styles in fiction at university?
   - In depth
   - The basics
   - Not at all

27. What have you been taught about? (Please check all that apply)
   - Male speech style
   - Female speech style
   - Rich lady’s speech style
   - Elderly people’s speech style
   - Country side people’s speech style
   - Samurai speech style
   - Chinese people’s speech style
   - Other

28. In what kind of course did you learn it? (For example, regular language proficiency course, translation course, literature course etc.)

29. Do you think that fictional speech styles should be taught in Japanese classes at university level?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I don’t know

30. How highly would you prioritize learning fictional speech styles in comparison to other areas of language learning such as grammar, expressions, pronunciation etc. at university?
   - Higher than other areas
   - The same level as other areas
   - Lower than other areas
31. What kind of fictional speech styles do you think should be taught in the lessons? (Please choose all that apply)
   - Everything which relates to fictional speech styles
   - Fiction speech styles which help you express your personal character (identity)
   - Fiction speech styles which help you understand fiction better
   - Fiction speech styles which are gender neutral
   - Fictional speech styles which are not discriminatory
   - Other

32. At what level do you think teachers should teach speech styles?
   - From beginner (up to 2 terms of full-time studies)
   - From intermediate (3-4 terms of full-time studies)
   - From advanced (5 or more terms of full-time studies)
   - Other

33. How do you think fictional speech styles should be taught, in regular classes such as the ones included in regular language proficiency courses or in more specialized classes?
   - In regular classes
   - Mainly in translation classes
   - Mainly in literature classes
   - In special lessons outside the base curriculum

34. How often do you think they should teach fictional speech styles?
   - Constantly
   - A few times per semester
   - At least once per semester
   - Other

35. Have you done any Japanese translation activities at university as a part of one of your courses?
   - Yes
   - No

36. In the university translation activities, to what extent were you taught how to translate Japanese fictional speech styles and first-person pronouns?
   - In depth
   - The basics
   - Not at all

37. Do you think learning how to use fictional speech styles and first-person pronouns should be included in translation activities in Japanese courses at university?
   - Yes
   - No

Thank you for participating!

If you have any questions, please contact me through telephone or E-mail.
Megumi Kitano, Master student in Asian Studies at Stockholm University
Appendix 2

Teacher questionnaire

My name is Megumi Kitano, and I am writing a thesis for my Master’s degree in Asian studies. I am researching the teaching of ‘Role language (役割語/yakuwarigo)’ at Stockholm university. I would be thankful if you could help me by answering this questionnaire. It is estimated to take 10-15 minutes. You may write your free answers in either English or Japanese in the text boxes. The thesis will be published on Diva, but the survey is anonymous, and the data will only be used for the purpose of this study. If you have any questions, please contact me through telephone or E-mail.

1. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female
   - Other

2. How long have you been teaching Japanese?

3. Is Japanese your native language?
   - Yes
   - No

4. What levels of Japanese leaners have you taught? (Check all answers that apply)
   - Beginner (up to 2 terms of full-time studies)
   - Intermediate (3-4 terms of full-time studies)
   - Advanced (5 or more terms of full-time studies)
   - Other

5. What do you think students in general want to do the most by learning Japanese? (Please check max three answers that apply the best)
   - Communicating with Japanese people
   - Studying abroad in Japan
   - Working in Japan
   - Finding job something connected to Japanese
   - Traveling to Japan
   - Reading Japanese articles
   - Reading Japanese manga, novels etc.
   - Watching Japanese anime, TV series, movies etc.
   - Other
6. To what extent do you think your students in general (regardless of their levels) are interested in producing Japanese fiction (manga, anime, novels, TV-series, movies, video games (including smartphone applications)) in Japanese as a hobby or an occupation? (Not only visual art but including story)
   - Very much
   - Quite a lot
   - A little
   - Not so much
   - Not at all

7. To what extent do you think your students in general (regardless of their levels) are interested in translating authentic Japanese texts?
   - Very much
   - Quite a lot
   - A little
   - Not so much
   - Not at all

8. What do you believe your students in general are using Japanese for outside of university the most? (Please check max three answers that apply the best)
   - Reading Japanese articles on the internet
   - Reading Japanese novels, manga etc.
   - Watching Japanese animation, TV series, movies etc.
   - Listening to Japanese music
   - Playing Japanese video games (including smartphone applications)
   - Meeting Japanese people (friends, family, coworkers etc.)
   - Talking with Japanese people through the internet

In Japanese, there are many different speech styles that are connected to certain traits, especially in fiction such as manga, movies and novels even though the speech styles are not used so much in reality. For example, 女ことば (Female language) and 男ことば (Male language) can express a certain gender just by speech style. Additionally, there are elderly people’s language (老人語), Samurai people’s language (侍ことば/武士ことば) etc. which can express certain traits of characters by speech style, and these are called role language (役割語/yakuwarigo).

Please answer the following questions regarding role language.

9. How do you recognize the difference between speech styles in fiction and in reality? (Please check all that apply)
   - The first-person pronouns are used differently
   - The sentence endings are used differently
   - The accent/intonation is different
   - Other
10. Do you think the different role language makes it (more) difficult for students to understand content/story?
Beginner (up to 2 terms of full-time studies)
- Yes, very difficult
- Yes, quite difficult
- Not so difficult
- No, not at all
- I have never taught this level

Intermediate (3-4 terms of full-time studies)
- Yes, very difficult
- Yes, quite difficult
- Not so difficult
- No, not at all
- I have never taught this level

Advanced (5 or more terms of full-time studies)
- Yes, very difficult
- Yes, quite difficult
- Not so difficult
- No, not at all
- I have never taught this level

11. Even though it is difficult, do you think your students are still interested in learning about those speech styles?
- Yes
- No
- Other

12. Which Japanese first-person pronoun do your male students use the most, in informal speech, when they talk about themselves?
Beginner (up to 2 terms of full-time studies)
- わたし (watashi)
- わたくし (watakushi)
- あたし (atashi)
- ぼく (boku)
- おれ (ore)
- Other
- I have never taught this level

Intermediate (3-4 terms of full-time studies)
- わたし (watashi)
- わたくし (watakushi)
- あたし (atashi)
- ぼく (boku)
- おれ (ore)
- Other
- I have never taught this level
Advanced (5 or more terms of full-time studies)
-わたし (watashi)
-わたくし (watakushi)
-あたし (atashi)
-ぼく (boku)
-おれ (ore)
-Other
-I have never taught this level

13. Which Japanese first-person pronoun do your female students use the most, in informal speech, when they talk about themselves?
Beginner (up to 2 terms of full-time studies)
-わたし (watashi)
-わたくし (watakushi)
-あたし (atashi)
-ぼく (boku)
-おれ (ore)
-Other
-I have never taught this level

Intermediate (3-4 terms of full-time studies)
-わたし (watashi)
-わたくし (watakushi)
-あたし (atashi)
-ぼく (boku)
-おれ (ore)
-Other
-I have never taught this level

Advanced (5 or more terms of full-time studies)
-わたし (watashi)
-わたくし (watakushi)
-あたし (atashi)
-ぼく (boku)
-おれ (ore)
-Other
-I have never taught this level

14. Why do you think most of those students use that/those first-person pronoun(s)?
Beginner level (up to 2 terms of full-time studies)
-Because students learned to talk like that in the lesson/textbooks
-Because students feel like that suits their gender
-Because students feel like that suits their character the best
-Other
-I have never taught this level
Intermediate level (3-4 terms of full-time studies)
- Because students learned to talk like that in the lesson/textbooks
- Because students feel like that suits their gender
- Because students feel like that suits their character the best
- Other
- I have never taught this level

Advanced level (5 or more terms of full-time studies)
- Because students learned to talk like that in the lesson/textbooks
- Because students feel like that suits their gender
- Because students feel like that suits their character the best
- Other
- I have never taught this level

15. To what extent have you taught the nuance of different first-person pronouns in your lessons?
Beginner level (up to 2 terms of full-time studies)
- In depth
- The basics
- Not at all
- I have never taught this level

Intermediate level (3-4 terms of full-time studies)
- In depth
- The basics
- Not at all
- I have never taught this level

Advanced level (5 or more terms of full-time studies)
- In depth
- The basics
- Not at all
- I have never taught this level

16. When learning a foreign language, do you think it is important to be able to express your personal character and identity in the language you are learning?
- Very much
- Quite a lot
- A little
- Not so much
- Not at all
17. What do you think about characters and the speech styles being fixed in Japanese fiction? (For example, men use speech style for men, women use speech style for women, elderly people use speech style for elderly people etc.) Please choose all that apply.
- It is good because it is fun to see different ways of styles
- It is good because we can easily understand a character’s traits immediately by the speech style
- It is necessary because it is a part of Japanese culture
- It is not necessary because it is different from the way Japanese people actually talk
- It is not good because it is difficult to understand
- It is not good because it might create stereotypes
- Other

18. In Sweden, there is a tendency to reduce gender discrimination. For example, making the new word Hen (he/she) from separate words Han (he) and Hon (she). What is your attitude toward this?
- Han and hon should be changed to hen
- Hen should be used when referring to someone when gender is unknown
- There is no need to change the language
- Other

19. Japanese is a language that is normally considered to have a big difference between genders. How do you feel about teaching students to understand and to use the speech styles that create this gap between the genders? (Please motivate your answer in the comment box.)
- Students should be taught to be able to both use and understand gendered speech styles
- Students should be taught to be able to understand, but not necessarily use, gendered speech styles
- I don’t want to teach gendered speech styles

Why do you think so?

20. What kind of lessons should be prioritized when teaching Japanese at university level? (Please choose max 2 that apply the best)
- Lessons for improving students’ Japanese communication skill
- Lessons for to deepen students’ knowledge of Japanese itself (linguistics for example)
- Lessons for improving students’ Japanese skill to better understand their interests (culture, history, politics, economy, art etc.)
- Lessons for improving students’ ability to use Japanese for academic purposes

21. Have you ever taught role language in a university lesson, including only mentioning it briefly?
- Yes
- No

22. Why did you teach role language? (Please choose all that apply)
- Since it was in the curriculum
- Since students asked questions
- Since role language was used in the textbooks
- Since I thought it was an important part of the Japanese language
- Other
23. What kind of role language did you teach at that time? (Please check all that apply)
   - Male speech style
   - Female speech style
   - Rich lady’s speech style
   - Elderly people’s speech style
   - Country side people’s speech style
   - Samurai speech style
   - Chinese people’s speech style
   - Other

24. In what kind of course(s) did you teach it? (For example, regular language proficiency course, translation course, literature course etc.)

25. Do you think that role language should be taught in Japanese classes at university level?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I don’t know

26. How highly would you prioritize teaching role language in comparison to other areas of language learning such as grammar, expressions, pronunciation etc.?
   - Higher than other areas
   - The same level as other areas
   - Lower than other areas

27. What kind of role language do you think should be taught in the lessons? (Please choose all that apply)
   - Everything which relates to role language
   - Role language which helps students express their personal character (identity)
   - Role language which helps students understand fiction better
   - Role language which is gender neutral
   - Role language which isn’t discriminatory
   - Other

28. What level would be the most appropriate to introduce role language?
   - Beginner (up to 2 terms of full-time studies)
   - Intermediate (3-4 terms of full-time studies)
   - Advanced (5 or more terms of full-time studies)
   - Other

29. Why do you think that level is suitable to start learning about role language?

30. How do you think role language should be taught, in regular classes such as the ones included in regular language proficiency courses or in more specialized classes?
   - In regular classes
   - Mainly in translation classes
   - Mainly in literature classes
   - In special lessons outside the base curriculum
31. How often do you think teachers should teach role language?
- Constantly
- A few times per semester
- At least once per semester
- Other

32. Have you ever taught, or are you teaching, Japanese translation activities at university as a part of any of your courses?
- Yes
- No

33. In the translation activities, to what extent do you teach students to translate role language?
- In depth
- The basics
- Not at all

34. Do you think learning how to use fictional speech styles and first-person pronouns should be included in translation activities in Japanese courses at university?
- Yes
- No

Thank you for participating!

If you have any questions, please contact me through telephone or E-mail.
Megumi Kitano, Master student in Asian Studies at Stockholm University