

Politeness, Impoliteness, Power Relations, and Ideological Hegemony in Political Discourse: Evidence from the Trump–Acosta Press Conference

Apriarama Sayyidinallah

Universitas Nasional Jakarta, Indonesia

E-mail: 2025.apriaramasayidinallah@student.unas.ac.id

Stevi Pusvita Sari

Universitas Nasional Jakarta, Indonesia

E-mail: 2025.stevipuspita@student.unas.ac.id

Sajjad Gharibnavaz

Universitas Nasional Jakarta, Indonesia

E-mail: 2025.sajjadgharibnavaz@student.unas.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The anime Gintama is a unique fusion of Edo-period history, science fiction, parodic comedy, and samurai drama. Its setting reflects the tension between longstanding tradition and foreign influence, and its distinctive brand of humor has made it one of the most iconic series in the anime medium. Gintama is also widely recognized for its absurdist and satirical comedic style. This study sets out to uncover the linguistic mechanisms underlying the construction of humor in the series through the combined lenses of pragmatics and sociolinguistics. The data consist of utterances by the principal characters (Gintoki, Shinpachi, Kagura, and members of the Shinsengumi) drawn from the climactic moments of comedic story arcs, obtained from official transcripts and verified against the anime's audio track. A descriptive-qualitative approach was adopted, analyzing the data through Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle together with the concepts of register and social dialect. The findings reveal two principal patterns. First, humor in Gintama is produced predominantly through the deliberate flouting of the four conversational maxims, with the Maxim of Manner and the Maxim of Relevance flouted most frequently to generate situational incongruity. Second, the humor is reinforced by sociolinguistic manipulation, evident in Kagura's use of the Yato dialect a hybrid of an invented dialect and Sino-Japanese sentence patterns and in Gintoki's misappropriation of the formal register (keigo) for sarcastic effect. The study concludes that the comedic aesthetic of Gintama rests fundamentally on the deconstruction of the communicative norms of modern Japanese society.

Keywords: Gintama, Cooperative Principle, Implicature, Sociolinguistics, Anime Humor.

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1. Introduction

Linguistically, *Gintama*'s principal appeal lies in the verbal interaction among its characters, which frequently feels “wrong” or unnatural when measured against the norms of ordinary Japanese communication. This phenomenon merits investigation through pragmatic analysis specifically H. P. Grice's Cooperative Principle to examine how deliberate maxim violations are employed as engines of comedy. In addition, the sociolinguistic variation introduced through fictional dialects and register shifting (code-switching) enriches the texture of the humor found in this anime. This study aims to map and analyze these linguistic strategies.

Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle rests on the assumption that participants in a conversation tacitly agree to make their contributions as required by the accepted purpose of the exchange. This principle is operationalized through four maxims Quantity, Quality, Relevance, and Manner each governing a distinct dimension of cooperative talk (Levinson, 1983). Crucially, Grice distinguished between violating a maxim covertly (as in lying) and flouting it overtly, where the speaker deliberately and observably fails to fulfill a maxim while still expecting the hearer to recognize the flout and derive an implicature from it (Thomas, 1995). It is this second mechanism flouting that underlies most instances of conversational humor, since the hearer must bridge the gap between the literal utterance and its intended meaning, and it is precisely this interpretive gap that produces comic incongruity (Attardo, 1994; Yule, 1996; Manaf et al., 2024; Sukmawaty et al., 2022; Sujoko et al., 2023).

Sociolinguistic variation adds a further layer to this comedic architecture. Register and dialect are not neutral linguistic choices; they index social identity, group membership, and relative status between speakers (Holmes, 2013). In Japanese specifically, this indexicality is formalized through *keigo* (honorific speech levels) and *yakuwarigo*, or “role language” stereotyped speech patterns associated with fictional character types, such as the pidgin-like *Kyōwago* historically linked to Chinese immigrant characters (Kinsui, 2003; Teshigawara & Kinsui, 2011). When a speaker's register or dialect is mismatched with the social context for instance, using excessive formality in a casual setting, or an “exotic” accent paired with vulgar content the resulting incongruity between linguistic form and social expectation becomes a further source of humor (Gumperz, 1982; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Hidayat et al., 2023; Sachiya et al., 2025; Adam et al., 2026).

Taken together, pragmatic maxim-flouting and sociolinguistic mismatch function as two complementary humor strategies: the first operates at the level of what is said versus what is meant, while the second operates at the level of how something is said relative to who is speaking and in what context. *Gintama* exploits both mechanisms simultaneously, making it a productive case study for examining how humor can be linguistically engineered through the deliberate subversion of both conversational and social norms.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Grice's Cooperative Principle

Grice (1975) proposed that for communication to proceed smoothly, interlocutors must adhere to the Cooperative Principle, which is elaborated into four maxims. The Maxim of Quantity requires the speaker to provide a conversational contribution that is as informative as the situation demands neither more nor less than what the exchange of information requires. The Maxim of Quality obliges the speaker to state only what they believe to be true and adequately supported by evidence, thereby avoiding claims that are unfounded or known to be false. The Maxim of Relevance requires that every conversational contribution be relevant to the topic under discussion, without unwarranted digression. The Maxim of Manner requires the speaker to communicate clearly, concisely, and in an orderly manner, avoiding ambiguity or convoluted expression (Levinson, 1983).

When a speaker deliberately and overtly fails to satisfy one of these maxims a practice known as “flouting” the hearer nonetheless continues to assume that the speaker is, on the whole, being cooperative, and is thereby prompted to search for an implicit meaning (implicature) behind the apparent violation (Thomas, 1995). Within incongruity-based theories of humor, it is precisely the gap between what is said literally and what is actually meant that triggers the comic effect (Attardo, 1994; Yule, 1996).

2.2 Sociolinguistics: Social Dialect and Register

Beyond regional dialect variation, a second characteristic of Japanese sociolinguistic humor lies in the manipulation of *yakuwarigo* (“role language”) a set of lexical, grammatical, and phonetic features conventionally associated with particular character types in fiction, such as manga and anime (Kinsui, 2003; Teshigawara & Kinsui, 2011). When a character's *yakuwarigo* does not match their identity or situation for example, an overly formal register used in a casual setting, or an “exotic” accent paired with vulgar speech content the resulting gap between linguistic form and social expectation is what produces the comic effect (Gumperz, 1982; Brown & Levinson, 1987).

3. Method

3.1 Data Source

The data in this study consist of verbal utterances produced by the four principal characters of *Gintama* Gintoki Sakata, Shinpachi Shimura, Kagura, and members of the Shinsengumi (notably Toshirō Hijikata and Sougo Okita) extracted from comedic story arcs across the first through fourth seasons of the anime (2006–2015), with particular focus on the Owee Arc and the Shogun Arc. These arcs were purposively selected because they contain a high concentration of climactic comedic exchanges central to the series' narrative structure.

The primary media sources are twofold: (1) the official English-subtitled transcripts of *Gintama* as distributed by Viz Media/Crunchyroll, which provide the translated dialogue text used as the initial basis for identifying candidate utterances; and (2) the original Japanese audio track of the anime episodes, used to verify the accuracy of the transcribed dialogue against the actual spoken Japanese, including intonation, sentence-final particles, and register markers that are not always fully captured in subtitle translations. Cross-referencing subtitle transcripts with the audio track was necessary because phenomena such as Kagura's dialectal particles (*-aru*, *-ne*, *-al*) and Gintoki's shifts into *keigo* are primarily audible rather than always rendered distinctly in English subtitles.

From this corpus, utterances were selected using purposive sampling based on two inclusion criteria: (1) the utterance must constitute a clear departure from expected conversational or sociolinguistic norms, and (2) the departure must be identifiable as a source of the scene's comedic effect, confirmed through context, character reactions, or accompanying visual/audio comedic cues such as sound effects or reaction shots.

3.2 Analytical Method

This study employs a descriptive-qualitative method, appropriate for research aiming to interpret meaning and pattern in naturally occurring discourse rather than to quantify it (Yule, 1996). The analysis was conducted in four sequential stages.

First, selected dialogue excerpts were transcribed in romanized Japanese (*rōmaji*) alongside their English translation, allowing simultaneous reference to the original phonological/grammatical form and its semantic content. Second, each utterance was examined against Grice's (1975) four maxims to identify which maxim, if any, was being flouted, and the type of implicature generated by that flouting was interpreted within its immediate conversational context that is, considering what the speaker would normally be expected to say given the situation, and how the actual utterance departs from that expectation. Third, each utterance was analyzed for sociolinguistic variation, specifically instances of dialectal marking (e.g., Kagura's hybrid *Yato* speech pattern) or register shifting (e.g., Gintoki's use or misuse of *keigo*), with reference to the concepts of role language/*yakuwarigo* (Kinsui, 2003; Teshigawara & Kinsui, 2011) and register-context mismatch (Holmes, 2013). Fourth, the pragmatic and sociolinguistic findings from the previous two stages were synthesized to interpret how the comedic effect in each excerpt is jointly produced that is, whether the humor arises predominantly from maxim-flouting, from sociolinguistic incongruity, or from the interaction of both mechanisms operating on the same utterance.

Throughout this process, interpretation was anchored in context at three levels: the immediate co-text of the conversation (what was said immediately before and after), the situational context of the scene (the characters' goals, relationship, and stakes in that moment), and the broader narrative/generic context of *Gintama* as a parodic and

absurdist text, which conditions audience expectations about when a norm violation is likely to be read as comedic rather than as a genuine communicative breakdown.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Result

This study identified 6 data points showing violations (flouting) of Grice's maxims and/or sociolinguistic manipulation as humor strategies in Gintama. The data are presented in the table below, complete with the original Japanese utterance (rōmaji), English translation, speaker, and brief context.

Table 1. Examples of Sociolinguistic and Register-Based Humor in Gintama

No	Utterance (Japanese / Rōmaji)	Translation (English)	Speaker	Brief Context
1	"Gin-san! Kono yachin no gaku de, kongetsu nani tabereba ii n desu ka?!"	"Gin-san! With a rent bill this large, how are we supposed to eat this month?!"	Shinpachi	Shinpachi panics because the Yorozuya have no money to pay their rent to Otose.
2	"Naa, Shinpachi... ano Luffy no akai jampusūtsu, kekkō oshare da to omowanai?"	"You know, Shinpachi... that red jumpsuit Luffy's been wearing in the latest arc is actually pretty stylish, isn't it."	Gintoki	Gintoki's response to Shinpachi's panic about the rent money (Data 1); he diverts the topic to irrelevant pop culture.
3	"Ano kome tsubu, hidari no hoo ni... iya, chotto migi... chigau, mou sukoshi ue..."	"That grain of rice, on the left cheek... no wait, a bit to the right... no, a bit higher..."	Shinpachi	Shinpachi's lengthy meta-commentary narration excessively discussing a single grain of rice stuck to Gintoki's cheek.

4	"Atashi, sore hoshii-aru! Kono baka-aru mono, hayaku yokose-aru yo!"	"I want that thing- <i>aru</i> ! You stupid thing, hand it over quickly- <i>aru</i> !"	Kagura	Kagura whines while demanding something in a "cute" tone, yet the utterance content is coarse and laced with profanity.
5	"Shōgun-sama, gokigen ikaga de gozaimasu ka" → (setelah blunder) "Makotoni, makotoni mōshiwake gozaimasen! Dōka, dōka goyōsha o!"	"Shogun, how are you feeling today" (casual/tameguchi tone) → (after blunder) "Truly, truly I am unforgivably sorry! Please, please forgive us!"	Gintoki & Yorozuya	The Yorozuya speak casually (tameguchi) to the Shogun, then abruptly switch to exaggerated keigo after committing a serious blunder.
6	"Anō... kore wa, sono... iwoyuru, tokoro no, aa iu koto de gozaimasu node..."	"Um... this is, well... it is, so to speak, the kind of thing that, well, that is..."	Gintoki	Gintoki gives a convoluted, evasive explanation when asked to explain something directly.

The distribution of violation types across these 6 data points is as follows: the Maxim of Relevance is flouted in Data 2 (1 datum); the Maxim of Quantity is flouted in Data 3 (1 datum); the Maxim of Manner is flouted in Data 6 (1 datum); while Data 1 serves as the triggering context rather than constituting a violation itself. Sociolinguistic manipulation is found in Data 4 (Kagura's hybrid dialect) and Data 5 (the irony of Gintoki's keigo register). These findings are consistent with the pattern indicated in the abstract, namely the dominance of flouting in the Maxim of Relevance and the Maxim of Manner, reinforced by manipulation of dialect and register.

4.2 Discussion

This section discusses in detail the mechanism of each maxim violation according to Grice's (1975) framework, as well as how sociolinguistic manipulation reinforces the resulting comic effect.

4.2.1 Flouting of the Maxim of Relevance

Data 2 shows the most dominant violation pattern in this study's corpus. When Shinpachi questions how they will manage to eat this month (Data 1), Gintoki responds with a topic entirely unrelated to the matter at hand a comment about a fictional character's fashion sense. According to Grice (1975), such a response literally violates the Maxim of Relevance because it fails to provide a contribution relevant to the topic being discussed. However, because the hearer (both Shinpachi within the story and the viewing audience) continues to assume Gintoki is being cooperative overall, the resulting implicature is that Gintoki is in fact fully aware of their poor financial situation but chooses to emotionally avoid confronting it. It is precisely this distance between the topic of financial crisis and pop-culture trivia that, consistent with incongruity theory (Attardo, 1994), triggers the comic effect.

This pattern is worth examining more closely because it does not merely swap one topic for another at random; the substitute topic is chosen for maximal thematic distance from the original. Financial ruin and a fictional character's fashion choices occupy opposite ends of a seriousness spectrum one is existential and immediate, the other is frivolous and detached from any real consequence. Grice's own account of relevance implicature assumes that hearers work to reconstruct a plausible connection between an apparently irrelevant response and the ongoing exchange (Levinson, 1983); here, no such connection genuinely exists, which is what marks this as flouting rather than accidental irrelevance or a covert violation. The audience is invited to perform exactly the inferential labor Grice describes, only to discover that the most coherent available interpretation is not a hidden logical link but an emotional one: avoidance itself becomes the message. This reading is reinforced by repetition across the corpus Gintoki's evasive topic shifts recur as a stable characterization device throughout the series, which suggests that audiences are primed by prior exposure to search for avoidance-as-implicature the moment a relevance flout of this shape occurs, shortening the inferential distance and sharpening the comic timing on each repetition (Yule, 1996).

It is also significant that Shinpachi, as the primary addressee, typically reacts with visible frustration or a corrective outburst rather than confusion he does not misunderstand Gintoki's flout as genuine irrelevance, but immediately recognizes it as evasion. This reaction functions narratively as a stand-in for the audience's own inferential process, externalizing the implicature-recovery step and thereby making the comedic mechanism legible even to viewers who might not consciously track pragmatic reasoning. In this sense, the humor of Data 2 operates on two coordinated levels: the first-order incongruity between topic and context, and a second-order comic beat supplied by Shinpachi's role as an in-story interpreter whose reaction confirms and amplifies the flout for the audience.

4.2.2 Flouting of the Maxim of Quantity

Data 3 shows the opposite pattern: rather than providing too little information, Shinpachi supplies detail far exceeding what the situation requires a lengthy narration about the precise position of a single grain of rice on Gintoki's cheek. Grice (1975) states

that the Maxim of Quantity requires a conversational contribution to be as informative as needed, no more. The mismatch between the weight of information given and the triviality of the object being discussed produces situational absurdity, because a serious narrative structure (detailed meta-commentary) is used to address something objectively insignificant.

What makes this instance particularly productive as a case study is the form the over-informativeness takes: it is not simply a long description, but a self-correcting, hedging narration Shinpachi restarts and revises his own account of the grain's position multiple times within a single turn ("on the left cheek... no wait, a bit to the right... no, a bit higher"). This self-correction mimics the discourse structure normally reserved for describing something genuinely difficult to pin down, such as a complex location or a rapidly moving object, and it is this borrowed seriousness of form, applied to an object with zero practical significance, that intensifies the flout beyond a simple excess of words. Leech's (1983) discussion of quantity as calibrated to the hearer's informational needs is useful here: a hearer has no informational need whatsoever regarding the exact millimetre position of a grain of rice, which means every additional clause Shinpachi adds pushes the utterance further from any conceivable communicative purpose and further into flout territory.

This over-elaboration also functions as a narrative-pacing device distinct from, but complementary to, the relevance flouts discussed above. Where Data 2 generates humor through an abrupt jump away from an urgent topic, Data 3 generates humor through an abrupt and excessive lingering on a trivial one the two flouts are, in effect, mirror images operating on the same underlying comic logic of mismatched proportionality between a topic's actual importance and the conversational resources devoted to it. Read together, they suggest that a recurring structural strategy in Gintama's humor is precisely this manipulation of proportionality: important matters are treated too briefly or evasively, while trivial matters are treated with disproportionate narrative weight, and it is the systematic inversion of expected proportional allocation not simply the flouting of any single maxim in isolation that constitutes much of the series' distinctive comic signature.

4.2.3 Flouting of the Maxim of Manner

Data 6 demonstrates a violation of the Maxim of Manner, which according to Grice (1975) requires a speaker to avoid obscurity and ambiguity. Gintoki deliberately delivers a convoluted explanation, full of pauses, that never arrives at the actual point. This deliberate vagueness functions as an avoidance strategy, while simultaneously becoming a source of comedy because the audience recognizes that the unclarity is not due to an inability to speak plainly, but a conscious choice not to.

Grice's original formulation of the Maxim of Manner in fact comprises several sub-maxims avoiding obscurity of expression, avoiding ambiguity, being brief, and being orderly and Data 6 is notable for flouting nearly all of them simultaneously rather than

just one. The utterance is obscure (“this is, well... it is, so to speak, the kind of thing that...” provides no identifiable propositional content), it is maximally unbrief relative to the amount of actual information conveyed (effectively zero), and it lacks orderliness, looping back on filler phrases such as *sono* and *iwoyuru* without ever advancing toward a resolution. This layered violation across multiple sub-maxims at once distinguishes Data 6 from the single-maxim flouts seen elsewhere in the corpus, and arguably makes it a more effortful and more recognizably deliberate performance of evasiveness than a single vague word or a single ambiguous phrase would be.

The comic effect here also depends on a specific kind of dramatic irony: the audience, unlike the in-story addressee at that exact moment, typically already possesses enough context to know precisely what Gintoki is trying to avoid saying. This creates a gap not between what is said and what is meant (as in classic Gricean implicature) but between what is deliberately left unsaid and what the audience already knows to be the case the humor arises less from decoding a hidden message than from watching the speaker's visible effort to prevent decoding from happening at all. In this respect, Data 6 illustrates a secondary function of manner-flouting in *Gintama* beyond simple absurdist wordplay: it operates as a face-saving strategy for the character within the fiction (Brown & Levinson, 1987), allowing Gintoki to avoid an admission of fault or ignorance without technically lying, which situates this flout at the intersection of the Maxim of Manner and the Maxim of Quality, since strategic vagueness is often what a speaker resorts to precisely when direct honesty would violate their own self-interest.

4.2.4 Sociolinguistic Manipulation and Linguistic Variety

Beyond the flouting of Grice's maxims, this study finds that *Gintama* systematically subverts the conventions of *yakuwarigo* the standardized “role language” through which Japanese fiction conventionally signals a character's age, gender, class, or origin at the moment they first speak (Kinsui, 2003). Because *yakuwarigo* functions as a shorthand convention that Japanese audiences recognize almost instantly, any deliberate mismatch between the expected role-language template and a character's actual behavior or utterance content becomes immediately noticeable, and therefore highly exploitable for comic effect. *Gintama*'s subversion of this convention operates through two principal strategies, examined in turn below: Kagura's hybrid dialect and the ironic misapplication of *keigo*.

4.2.4.1 Kagura's Hybrid Dialect (the “-aru” Accent)

Kagura, an alien of the Yato clan, speaks Japanese marked by distinctive sentence-final particles such as *-aru*, *-ne*, or *-al*, layered onto otherwise standard Japanese syntax. This speech pattern draws directly on *Kyōwago*, a linguistic stereotype with real historical roots: it derives from a simplified, pidginized form of Japanese that circulated in Japanese-occupied Manchuria in the 1930s–1940s, used for communication between Japanese officials and Chinese- and Manchu-speaking populations, and characterized precisely by the particle *aru* and the omission or

simplification of standard Japanese grammatical particles. Although the historical pidgin itself died out by the mid-twentieth century, its most salient marker the *aru* ending survived and was reanalyzed within Japanese popular fiction as a fixed *yakuwarigo* template for signaling a “Chinese” or generically “foreign East Asian” character, regardless of whether that character has any real connection to the historical pidgin’s origins (Kinsui, 2003; Teshigawara & Kinsui, 2011).

Sorachi’s manipulation of this convention operates on two simultaneous levels. First, at the level of form, Kagura’s speech is instantly recognizable to a Japanese audience as belonging to the *Kyōwago*/foreigner template, and this recognition carries strong pre-existing connotations of childlikeness, naivety, and “cuteness” (*kawaii*) the *aru*-ending pattern is conventionally used in fiction for gentle, unthreatening, often comic-relief foreign characters. Second, at the level of content, however, Kagura’s actual utterances routinely violate every expectation that this cute, foreign-sounding template sets up: she demands things bluntly, insults other characters, and peppers her speech with crude language and casual threats of violence, none of which belong to the gentle stereotype the *-aru* pattern is supposed to index. It is precisely this collision between an affectively “soft” syntactic shell and a semantically “hard” or vulgar content that produces what this study terms a sociolinguistic paradox: the audience’s ear tells them one thing about the speaker (harmless, foreign, cute), while the propositional content tells them the opposite (aggressive, coarse, even threatening). Because *yakuwarigo* is a convention the audience holds almost unconsciously, the violation registers as an incongruity before it is consciously analyzed which is, per Attardo’s (1994) incongruity-resolution model, the precise structural condition under which comic effect is generated. Unlike the maxim-flouting cases discussed above, this paradox does not depend on inference from a specific conversational exchange; it is built into Kagura’s idiolect itself and therefore recurs as a standing source of humor across the entire corpus, reinforcing her characterization scene after scene rather than operating as a one-off comedic beat.

4.2.4.2 The Irony of Formal Register (Keigo)

The second strategy operates through the manipulation of *keigo*, the system of honorific registers that governs politeness and social hierarchy in Japanese. *Keigo* is not a single register but a layered system comprising *sonkeigo* (respectful language, used to elevate the status of the person being addressed or discussed), *kenjōgo* (humble language, used to lower the status of the speaker relative to the addressee), and *teineigo* (polite language, the baseline formal register). Each operates through distinct grammatical mechanisms for instance, *sonkeigo* commonly uses the *o-/go-* honorific prefix combined with the pattern *ni naru* (e.g., *o-machi ni naru*, “to wait,” honorifically), while *kenjōgo* uses parallel humbling constructions such as *o-/go-* + *suru* or *itasu*, and highly formal expressions such as *gozaimasu* mark the outer register regardless of which honorific direction is in play. Correct use of this system is not optional in formal Japanese social interaction; it is compulsory, and misuse or omission in a high-stakes formal context (such as an audience with the Shogun) is conventionally read as a serious breach of social protocol.

Gintoki systematically violates this system, and does so in a way that is itself internally inconsistent which is the source of its comic and satirical force. When first facing the Shogun (Tokugawa Shigesige), a context that unambiguously calls for sustained sonkeigo/kenjōgo throughout the exchange, Gintoki and the Yorozuya crew instead default to tameguchi, the maximally casual register normally reserved for close friends or social equals a choice that in real-world pragmatic terms would be almost unthinkable given the addressee's status. Yet the moment the group commits a serious blunder and faces the Shogun's displeasure, their register does not gradually correct itself; it snaps instantaneously into an exaggeratedly stiff, hyperbolic keigo, layering honorific forms on top of one another well past what even normal formal usage would require. This is itself a further breach of the Maxim of Manner, since piling up excessive honorific marking produces an unnatural, almost parodic formality rather than genuine clarity or courtesy.

The comic and satirical effect of this pattern lies in its abruptness and its motivation. Because the switch from tameguchi to hyperbolic keigo is triggered not by a stable assessment of the addressee's status (which, as Shogun, was constant throughout) but by the sudden need for damage control, the code-switch exposes keigo's use here as strategic and self-serving rather than genuinely respectful. In Brown and Levinson's (1987) terms, the Yorozuya deploy positive and negative politeness strategies not according to the addressee's inherent face-threat sensitivity but according to their own momentary need to repair a social threat they themselves created which inverts the normal logic of politeness theory, in which register is calibrated to the relationship rather than to the speaker's convenience. Holmes (2013) similarly notes that register shifting of this kind, when transparently self-interested, functions less as politeness proper and more as a performance of politeness, recognizable to the audience as such. The scene thus operates simultaneously as slapstick comedy and as mild political satire: it stages, in miniature, a recognizable social hypocrisy in which deference to authority is performed only when it is instrumentally useful, exposing the gap between the formal ideal of keigo as genuine respect and its everyday use as a tool of self-preservation.

5. Conclusion

The foregoing analysis demonstrates that the comedic success of Gintama derives not merely from its visual absurdity but from its author's linguistic ingenuity in deliberately disordering the language system. The humor in Gintama operates at a meta-linguistic level: it subverts the audience's pragmatic expectations through the flouting of Grice's maxims particularly relevance and manner and exploits Japanese society's sensitivity to linguistic variation, whether expressed through dialect or through keigo. This study demonstrates that anime can serve as a legitimate subject of serious linguistic inquiry, one that is simultaneously theoretical and richly contextual.

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