Anachronistic Anarchy: A Linguistic Character Analysis of
Shinichiro Watanabe's *Samurai Champloo*

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Bio:

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Abstract:

This research explores the stereotypes prevalent within the Japanese anime *Samurai Champloo,* while building on current role language theory and expanding my own unpublished research. Modeled after Mie Hiramoto's study, "*Hey, you're a girl?* and gendered expressions in the popular anime, *Cowboy Bebop,*" (2013), the focus centralizes on the usage of linguistic tokens, such as expletives, imperatives, tag-questions, and hedging, and their contributions to character personality, design, and development. Arguably, the non-normative language used allows for the success of the anachronistic setting as the origins of such speech exist in reality. Mugen, Jin, and Fuu, the three main characters, fall into gendered and stereotypical roles as governed by their language usage; Mugen embodies the tough-guy anti-hero, Jin exudes the loyal samurai, and Fuu exemplifies the role of the dependent female.

Introduction

"This work of fiction is not an accurate historical portrayal. Like we care.
Now shut up and enjoy the show" (Kobayashi, Sasaki, Mitsugi, Goto, & Watanabe, 2006).

Hip-hop and samurai have nothing in common, except for occasional bouts of break-dancing. At least this is true in the world of *Samurai Champloo* (*SC*), a Japanese *anime* series that hit the United States over the cable/satellite broadcasting network [adult swim] in 2006, showcasing an interesting blend of hip beats and no-nonsense samurai attitude (Samurai Champloo). But how is it in any way "realistic" or "accessible" to the audience, especially after such a bold opening statement? What aspects of language create and perpetuate stereotypes? Furthermore, how do linguistic stereotypes function within a work of fiction? Role language theory explores the linguistic and anthropological aspects of language and offers an explanation of the reality of fiction.

Role Language Theory

Role language theory is best described as "an emerging field of research in Japanese linguistics [that examines] the association between types of characters portrayed and their spoken language features in fiction" (Teshigawara & Kinsui, 2011, p. 37). Mihoko Teshigawara and Satoshi Kinsui (2011) argue that role language theory ultimately perpetuates stereotypes:

> [T]he origin of role language can often be traced back to the actual spoken language, except for purely imaginary varieties. From actual language usage, individuals acquire knowledge about the relationship between a particular variety of the language and its speakers, then categorise and reinforce this knowledge. What is important here is that this kind of knowledge does not remain with a particular individual; rather it disseminates among people and is shared by the community. When such conditions are met, role language becomes established as a linguistic stereotype and an effective communication

tool. Role language will then begin circulating in fiction, which now becomes a means

for the audience to acquire knowledge about role language. In this way, once established,

role language self-perpetuates in fiction, regardless of reality. (p. 40)

Observations of everyday language and the ways in which it is used form the basis of

exaggerated speech styles within animated films. These speech styles are then attributed to

characters or character groups that often mirror the real-life 'character' observations, whether the

characters are true representations or not. Hiramoto (2013) reaffirms this notion within her own

studies of *anime*, stating:

When scripted, characters' speech styles are often framed by their given ideological roles.

That is, through their speech styles, characters in scripted speech are commonly made

with subgroups to which they belong according to certain expectations based on linguistic

ideology (e.g., age, gender, socioeconomic status, regional affiliation, etc.). Thus, the

characters often carry out stereotypical linguistic variations in order to represent their

given roles and traits. (pp. 51-52)

Arguably, directors and script writers endeavor to create a believable character, an individual

who seems real despite an animated existence. Even when translated, the characters of *SC* fall

into the role language cycle, as they represent certain groups within Japanese society.

Interestingly, the Japanese character stereotypes exist even within the English dub.

Data, Methodology, and *Samurai Champloo*

Shinichiro Watanabe, *SC*'s director, spoke briefly about his inspiration for the series,

"[In] Samurai Champloo, I combined two completely different elements, a traditional samurai

story and trendy hip-hop music with the hope that it would be an exciting and interesting story"

(J. Wong, personal communication, November 10, 2013). *SC* follows the adventures of three

young protagonists, Mugen, Jin, and Fuu, after a chance meeting throws them together and they

join in an effort to find the samurai who smells of sunflowers (Kobayashi, Sasaki, Mitsugi, Goto,

& Watanabe, 2006). Visibly, the characters portray different ideologies through their overall

character design (See Samurai Champloo Wallpaper at

http://www.samuraichamploo.com/visualarchive/wallpaper/09/wp09.jpg). Fuu's pink kimono

and messy up-do indicate a youthful, fresh sense of style that reflects her age. Mugen's sharp,

angular features and inked limbs exhibit toughness while Jin's glasses add an aspect of

intelligence. Whereas character design establishes the initial personality, the following analysis

will demonstrate how individual speech sets the overall tone for character role and development.

The textual analysis follows standards similar to those Hiramoto used in her study of

Cowboy Bebop (2013) by examining meaningful aspects of character speech through the

occurrence of typically gendered linguistic tokens, including expletives, tag-questions,

imperatives, and hedging. All of the textual data for this study came from an analysis of the

series' subtitles gathered from the English dub, whereas Hiramoto's study compares the

linguistic tokens found in the transcribed Japanese and English versions of *Cowboy Bebop*.

While Hiramoto discusses hedging and imperatives in detail, the lack of hedging within *SC* (33

tokens for the entire series), and the variety of contexts in which these occur, fail to provide any

substantial evidence.

Similarly, imperatives, which are abundant throughout the series, prove difficult to

explain without examining their use in the original Japanese script. Understandably, the

imperatives used in *SC* exist as a necessary piece of the action genre. 768 imperatives littered the

series, averaging to nearly 30 commands per episode, nearly one order per minute. Grammatical

forms marking conversational aspects common to Japanese such as politeness, gender, and social

ranking are often erased in the process of translation, especially when translated to English. A translation from the Japanese textbook, *Nihongo Chuujyoukyuu Sougou: Kitto Umaku Ikimasuyo*, admits that men use a combination of the three main forms of *meirei* (orders) while women often use more polite forms, even though social norms typically govern when and where certain forms are used or allowed (Naito & Takahashi, 2009, p. 124). A major example of this would be seen in examples of verb conjugation, which exposes gendered speech. The verb *suru* (to do), for example, becomes *shiro* to exhibit a masculine order, and transforms into *shinasai* to exhibit politeness; the latter form exists predominantly in female speech and business settings (Naito & Takahashi, 2009, p. 124).

For the sake of simplicity, the focus of this paper will be limited to two linguistic features, expletives and tag-questions. Expletives are measured by their intensity – weak, strong, and mild – rather than context. Strong expletives (SEs) include: *fuck*, *bitch*, *damn*, *shit*, *bastard*, and *badass*; mild expletives (MEs) include: *hell*, *ass*, *son of a . . .* , and *piss*; while weak expletives (WEs) include: *crap*, *moron*, *jerk*, and *heck*. When the expletive *son of a . . .* is followed with a strong expletive, such as *bitch*, it is no longer classified as a mild expletive, but shifts to a strong one. Therefore, *son of a . . .* strictly refers to this incomplete phrase; although no specific expletive is used, it still takes the place of an expletive and functions as one in context (See Table 1). Following Hiramoto (2013, pp. 67-68), tag-questions are classified into four types: mitigating, challenging, epistemic, and monologue. All tags were noted for their function. See Table 2.

Linguistic Findings

Mugen

Not only does Mugen's use of profanity account for nearly half of that used in the show (49.8%), he used nearly 56% of all the SEs that occurred in *SC* (70 out of 136 for the entire series). The terms "all" and "all characters" refer to every character who appears in SC, including the main and minor characters. This tendency unveils a very important aspect about his personality: Mugen does not submit to Japanese societal norms. Mugen's unfiltered speech, better described as *baka shokuji*, or "stupidly honest," echoes the voice of his *honne*, or true self, instead of the euphemisms expressed through *tatemae*, the public self, which protect group harmony (Arudou, 2011). In other words, rather than conform to the common practice of public restraint, Mugen rebels verbally. This unfiltered speech casts him as an unrefined, antagonistic punk.

Mugen continues to validate his toughness through frequent jabs at authority. A little over 25% of the tag-questions used in *SC* occur in Mugen's speech. Approximately 72% (36 out of 49 tag-questions) challenge those around him, which comprises close to 17% of the questions he asked in the series (36 out of 216). These tag-questions frequently occur in situations where Mugen feels it is necessary to instigate a fight:

[After Mugen helps himself to a meal.]

Gang member: Don't you know who we are?

              We're the Nagatomi Gang!

Mugen: Then don't be such tightwads.

              You ARE yakuza, *aren't you*? (Kobayashi, Sasaki, Mitsugi, Goto, & Watanabe, 2006).

Although he may be outnumbered, he believes he can win a fight single-handedly against the

Japanese mafia. While this displays one instance of his fearlessness, it also exhibits his sense of

confidence and simultaneously strengthens his macho image.

Jin

Conversely, Jin's lack of speech detracts from his masculine role of samurai. He speaks

significantly less than his companions, approximately 43% less than Mugen and 59% less than

Fuu, with a total of 3,516 words used throughout the entire series. Overall, this averages

approximately 135 words per episode. Ironically, Jin's silence reflects the duties of a warrior

more than the manly ideologies associated with the samurai.

Within *Code of the Samurai: A Modern Translation of the Bushido Shoshinsu*, Yuzan

Daidoji, Thomas Cleary, and Oscar Ratti (1999) highlight the duties of the samurai as originally

written by Taira Shigesuke during the early Edo Period. Inferably, Jin's lack of speech displays

his desire to avoid frivolity and conflict, as "[he understands] the weight and significance of

every word by profession [and does] not engage in futile arguments" (Daidoji, Cleary, & Ratti,

1999, p. 4). Unlike Mugen, Jin protects the harmony of the group by refraining from saying

anything unnecessary, but also protects himself in the process, as arguments could lead to a fight

or death. He thinks of the physical effects of speech rather than the social ones. He curses only

twice (both SEs), of which one betrays his sense of loyalty.

[While standing up for a helpless citizen.]

Jin: To serve your lord and do his bidding…

Is that honor?

Yagyu Bodyguard: Of course it is.

Jin: Even if that lord

is a piece of shit nobody? (Kobayashi, Sasaki, Mitsugi, Goto, & Watanabe, 2006). Although Jin abides by the samurai code, he questions what exactly a samurai's loyalty entails. Furthermore, it troubles him that other samurai do not hold themselves to higher standards. In this instance, the expletive conveys his sense of frustration while unveiling his dedication to the samurai ideal.

Jin's use of tag-questions further displays his knowledge of the samurai code of honor while alluding to his understanding of the more ambiguous gender roles associated with the warrior. Jin never challenged his speaking partner(s) through the use of tag-questions (0 tokens out of 6 Total). Jin's six tag-questions were divided equally among mitigating and epistemic tags. Both comprised approximately 3.1% of total questions asked (3 out of 97 tokens). Statistically, Jin's questions functioned as efforts to soften criticism or investigate, respectively. Yet, these questions often served as a polite form of mockery, especially when interacting with Mugen.

[After Mugen returns injured from a street fight.]

Jin: You ran into the street killer,

didn't you? (Kobayashi, Sasaki, Mitsugi, Goto, & Watanabe, 2006).

When directed at Mugen, these tags amplify Jin's sense of supreme knowledge; he politely reminds Mugen that he (Jin) had said it was a bad idea to go after a crazed street killer. Although mitigating tag-questions usually occur more frequently in female speech (Hiramoto, 2013, p. 68), in this instance the tag serves a masculine purpose: reminding Mugen that Jin is ultimately the smarter samurai. Nevertheless, the tag still marks an effeminate undertone within the politeness of Jin's speech, and further "describe 'feminine' samurai as the apotheosis of civilization" (Mason, 2011, p. 72).

Fuu

Out of the three main characters, Fuu speaks the most, saying 8,635 words throughout the series, approximately 29% more than Mugen and 59% more than Jin, which averages about 332 words per episode. Quantity alone dictates Fuu's role as feminine. Fuu's talkative nature adheres to the common stereotype that women speak more than men, even though it has been noted that men and women speak approximately the same amount of words per day (Mehl, Vazire, Ramírez-Esparza, Slatcher, & Pennebaker, 2007, p. 82). Fuu notably speaks more than her male companions, but the quantity emulates her role of leader in the group. Because she was the one to recruit Mugen and Jin as her bodyguards during her search for the Sunflower Samurai, her tendency to chat reflects an "interpreted obligation" or "right" to speak (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p. 476).

Fuu defends her leadership role through assertive speech. Expletives comprise less than 0.4% of her speech (27 WEs, 1 ME, 3 SEs; 31 total); however, they encompass nearly 36% of all WEs used in the series (27 out of 76 tokens). Susan E. Hughes notes that, "Women are said (and expected) to be more polite, more correct, and to aim for more standard forms than men," and that "expletives and taboo forms [are] no exception to this female/male differentiation" (1992, p. 292). Expletives challenge the femininity of Fuu's speech. Using expletives and making her speech more masculine, Fuu blends in with her companions, becoming one of the boys – with two strong men as companions and no martial arts training, expletives replace her physical strength and prove that she is equal.

The boyish aspects of Fuu's speech are softened through her use of questions, possibly as a means to remind her companions that she is female. She asks 25% of the questions within the series, and only 6% more than Mugen; however, the ways in which Fuu directs her questions is notably different than the other lead characters. Rather than challenge her speaking partner(s)

like Mugen, Fuu chooses to mitigate. More importantly, these tags often occur in chains as a distraction from the growing list of criticisms.

[Reminding her companions of their agreement.]

Fuu: Geez… You two owe me

Your lives, *remember*?

I'm not gonna have you two

break your promise to me, *got it*?

Until we find the samurai

Who smells of sunflowers,

 …a ban on fighting

is in effect, *understand*? (Kobayashi, Sasaki, Mitsugi, Goto, & Watanabe, 2006).

Fuu attempts to use tag-questions to counter the more masculine aspects of her speech, so she will be seen as a woman. By balancing the more masculine aspects of her speech (e.g., using expletives) with those that are associated with femininity (e.g., using questions), she means to protect herself. While discussing Japanese women's speech, Janet S. Smith (1992) observes:

A woman may choose to use the same 'power' forms of verbs, pronouns, and so forth as male counterparts . . . . Or, she may use female speech forms, including honorifics, without adjustment, and risk being perceived as lacking in authority. Neither choice is, of course, sociolinguistically appropriate in the fullest sense. (p. 61)

Speaking like a man will keep her safe from her male companions, while playing the female allows her to blend into the societal roles governing her sex.

Role Language Cycle: Stereotype Findings

Mugen

Straightforward, proud, and street smart, Mugen commands attention. Mugen embodies the unbridled determination necessary for success. Depicted as a lean bodied youth with unruly hair and multiple tattoos, Mugen's character design screams trouble.

The navy blue bands encircling Mugen's wrists and ankles are more than just decorative body art. Mugen's tattoos resemble shackles, which allude to his bad police record. Prior to joining Jin and Fuu, Mugen was arrested by the government after he was caught pirating a sugar shipment from Satsuma (Kobayashi, Sasaki, Mitsugi, Goto, & Watanabe, 2006). The tattoos were most likely given to him as a form of punishment, as tattooing was a visible means of "[distinguishing] criminals and social outcasts during the [feudal era]" (Yamada, 2009, p. 321). The cuffs inked on Mugen's wrists and ankles symbolize his separation from Japanese society. Mugen's short red *haori* (over shirt) and shorts display these permanent markings for everyone to see, purposely exposing his past to the world around him.

Mugen's open display cannot be mistaken as a form of public service. Rather, it serves as a form of rebellion against the society in which he never belonged. While interviewing traditional tattoo artists in Japan, Mieko Yamada observes:

> According to the two traditional tattoo masters, tattoos were also considered as a flower in the shade or hidden beauty. Hence, the tattoos were not supposed to be revealed in public . . . . Historical and social meanings are intertwined for the idea of Japanese tattoos as hidden art. (Yamada, 2009, p. 330)

Rather than try to hide his past from the world around him by wearing a more common form of clothing, such as a *yukata* or *hakama*, Mugen chooses to display himself proudly to the world, regardless of the effects the marks may have on his social life.

Arguably, Mugen was never a part of "Japanese" society to begin with. Shortly after his first appearance, Mugen proclaims, "I hail from the Ryukyu islands," what is today known as Okinawa Prefecture, and it is later mentioned that he spent most of his life on a small island known for harboring criminals (Kobayashi, Sasaki, Mitsugi, Goto, & Watanabe, 2006). Within the article "History and Okinawans," Mitsugu Sakihara (2009) discusses the back-and-forth independence of Okinawa and notes:

> From the tenth century onward, the central authority in Kyoto gradually declined and paid less and less attention to the Southern Islands. In contrast was the emergence of local political power in Okinawa, as evidenced by the brisk castle-building activities of the tenth century and the appearance in 1187 of King Shunten, Okinawa's first historical ruler. Two hundred years later, in 1372, Ryukyu established a tributary trade relationship with Ming China, and later, trade was expanded to Southeast Asia. Ryukyu enjoyed prosperity as a maritime trading nation while Japan remained under the rule of the weak Muromachi shogunate and in the turmoils of civil war. However, shortly after Japan was under the strong central authority established by the Tokugawa shogunate in 1603, Ryukyu was forcibly brought within Japan's sphere by the military action taken by the Shimazu daimyo of Satsuma in 1609. For the next three centuries, as a vassal of the Shimazu daimyo (who himself was a vassal of the Tokugawa shogun), Ryukyu was a part of Tokugawa Japan, yet retained its own "king." (Mitsugu Sakihara, 2009, p. 135)

With the above in mind, during *SC*, the Ryukyu Islands, although considered Japanese, were still perceived as somewhat foreign due to historical relations with China (Sakihara, 2009, p. 135). This simultaneous existence extends to the islands' people, gifting Mugen with dual roles in Japanese society. His Ryukyuan origins, like his tattoos, permanently mark his "otherness" and

threaten Japanese people. Yet, he is able to communicate and interact with those around him through the same language, and despite his uncivilized nature, similar customs. Mugen encapsulates *champloo*, the Okinawan word for "mixed," in the sense that he is both Japanese and not-Japanese (Ahlstrom, n.d.).

Jin

Jin not only serves as Mugen's foil in speech but in appearance as well. Reserved, loyal, and respectful, Jin encapsulates the soul of a samurai. Contrary to Mugen, he dresses conservatively in a traditional blue and grey *hakuma* and *kimono*. He also carries a traditional *katana* worn at the waist.

Jin's character design, much like his speech, reflects the ways in which a warrior must present himself to the world. In *Empowering the Would-be Warrior: Bushido and the Gendered Bodies of the Japanese Nation*, Michele M. Mason compares different discourses on *bushido* throughout recent history (2011). The names of these Japanese figures appear with given name first, followed by surname. The *bushido's* careful attention to his physical appearance symbolizes his never-ending preparedness for battle and death associated with war. The beginning of the Edo Period in 1603 marked a notable change in samurai duty; with a unified Japan, nation-wide war was no longer an imminent threat, and the samurai were demoted with a new caste system (Daidoji, Cleary, & Ratti, 1999). Additionally, Mason notes the beliefs of Yukio Mishima through the quote, "through the discipline and refinement of a man's outward appearance . . . a sharply dressed and groomed man thus proves that he has succeeded in accepting, even embracing, death," especially when battle is unnecessary (2011, p. 79). But what separates a samurai from other well-groomed men, and what makes him different from women? Inazo Nitobe, Yukio Mishima, and Nisohachi Hyodo, three scholars known for their discussions

regarding *bushido*, admit that a lack of war effectively effeminizes the samurai and agree that masculinity stems from a return to the more masculine concepts of samurai philosophy, considerably their preoccupation with death (Mason, 2011, pp. 74, 79, 83). As a trained warrior, Jin treats every encounter as if it will be his last.

Fuu

Fresh, determined, and naive, Fuu depicts the ideal heroine. Dressed in a pink kimono decorated by faint sakura flowers – even her nails are decorated by the same flower design – she exudes girly-girl. Contrary to her cuteness, Fuu plays a rather complex role within *SC*.

Interestingly enough, Fuu's complexity stems from her position as the daughter of a samurai. Nitobe (2002, p. 122) writes, "Bushido being a teaching primarily intended for the masculine sex, the virtues it prized in woman were naturally far from being distinctly feminine." She even carries a fuchsia dagger adorned with *kawaii* straps – a trending fashion craze in Japan – in the event she will need to protect her womanhood (Nitobe, 2002, p. 123). Assuredly, Fuu's bright, girly way of dress reflects her desire to be feminine.

However, the colors and pattern on her kimono distract from her tomboyish speech and flat figure. Unlike the full-figured women in Shinichiro Watanabe's *Cowboy Bebop* (Hiramoto, 2013), Fuu's lack of curves depicts her as childish, unattractive, or when paired with her speech, boyish. Furthermore, the abundance of pink also deems her less credible than her companions when social convention already accepts her as unequal – educating and protecting her so that she may educate future generations of samurai as a mother (Nitobe, 2002, pp. 123, 130). Fuu straddles an androgynous line physically and linguistically, damned whether she expresses her female independence or accepts social norms.

<div align="center">**Discussion**</div>

Mugen's dual roles in society and invincibility market him as the ideal hip-hop esthetic. During a discussion with a famous hip-hop artist in Japan, Dawn-Elissa Fischer notes that *haafu* and *daburu* individuals – Japanese citizens of mixed heritage who overcome the prejudice of Japanese society – are equated to heroes in the hip-hop world (2009, p. 147). Fischer even quotes the artist as saying, "To struggle and be successful is the story of Hiphop" (2009, p. 147). Although Watanabe may have created the show as a simple means of entertainment, hoping that three individuals would find the middle ground between Japanese and hip-hop culture, Mugen rises to the foreground as the main focus. The combination of Mugen's tough-guy character design and overtly masculine language fit the ideology of a former prisoner and native of the not-so-Japanese Ryukyu Islands. Mugen lives up to the expectation of his given name. Mugen, which translates into "infinite," alludes to his invincibility in battle, spoken toughness, and resilience that ultimately "iconize the hero as tougher than [his] enemies" (Hiramoto, 2010, p. 251). Mugen becomes the hip-hop and *champloo* ideal.

Jin functions as the control variable within the group. Out of the three main characters, he functions not only as a main character but transcends into the setting of the story, arguably adding an important aspect of time. His neutral, polite, and reserved speech echo the undertones of *bushido* predominant in Edo Period Japan. Furthermore, during the time period, Jin's social status and sex enable society to embrace his more androgynous qualities, including his speech. Jin is "a gentler race of [man, unsoldierlike and almost feminine in appearance and behavior]," which ironically replaces the outdated "primitive masculinity" represented by his foil, Mugen (Mason, 2011, pp. 76-77). The evolving discourse on *bushido* breathes life into Jin, and his tame character gives Mugen and Fuu ground to develop.

Although Fuu takes a leadership role, the factor of sex in Edo Period Japan hinders her recognition and acceptance in a typically male role. Despite her attempts to soften her appearance or speech, society deems her as undeveloped, neither male nor female, girl or woman. Without her, Mugen and Jin would not know about the sunflower samurai, nor would the journey have started, but still the script writes her into the role of "*naijo*, or inner help" (Nitobe, 2002, p. 126). While less obvious in English, arguably, Fuu represents the struggles of Japanese women finding their voice, including the opposition to Japanese Women's Language (JWL). Miyako Inoue describes the evolution of JWL during the late 19th century within "Gender, Language, and Modernity: Toward an Effective History of Japanese Women's Language" (2002). At one point, Inoue noted that schoolgirls' speech could not be recognized as women's language because it "originated from speech associated [with] the daughters of low-ranking samurai families" and "could not be (re)signified as women's language unless the discursive and disciplinary space of 'the modern Japanese woman' existed" (2002, p. 406). She further notes that it was Japanese men, authors such as Kosugi Tengai, who replicated observed schoolgirl's speech in domestic novels, which women eventually copied in letters to one another, rewriting Japanese Women's Speech (Inoue, 2002, p. 408). Men wrote the voice of women, women rewrote that voice, and this voice is reflected within *SC*. Fuu, like many teenagers, wants to be accepted by society and recognized as an adult, more importantly a citizen, nearly 200 years before women found their voice in Japan. She establishes her identity by playing around with the social roles governing her lifestyle.

Conclusion

While undeniably different in their respective roles, Mugen, Jin, and Fuu each represent an aspect of Watanabe's ideal social *champloo*. Mugen represents the strength found in

globalization and the mixing of cultures, and with his tough speech, becomes invincible. Jin

marks a combination of *bushido* ideals, and mixes the old and the new, reflecting societal change

in Japanese society. Fuu exemplifies the androgynous role of females in Japan and voices the

injustice of the double standard. Aside from the colorful characters, groovy hip-hop, and

archetypal storyline, *SC* captures its audience through the concept of possibility and overcoming

boundaries. Undeniably, the world of *SC* provides us entertainment in which "we can observe

with fascination a world where samurai wear glasses, breakdancing is a form of kendo, and

swordfights are set to hardcore and beat-heavy hip-hop music – all the while marveling at how

supposed incompatibility gives way to harmony" (Fitzgerald, 2008, p. 171). *SC* is more than the

result of a hip-hop-meets-samurai entertainment experiment. *SC* critiques the futility of

opposition to foreign ideas, globalization, and human difference while asking the audience to

contemplate normality.

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Table and Figures

Table 1. Expletive Usage in *Samurai Champloo*

Expletive Usage in *Samurai Champloo*					
	Mugen	Jin	Fuu	Minor Characters*	All Characters**
Weak Expletive (WE)					
Crap	11	0	2		20
Heck	0	0	8		15
Jerk	0	0	16		31
Moron	4	0	1		10
WE Total	**15**	**0**	**27**	**34**	**76**
Mild Expletive (ME)					
Ass	6	0	0		10
Hell	32	0	1		45
Piss	7	0	0		8
Son of a . . .	6	0	0		8
ME Total	**51**	**0**	**1**	**19**	**71**
Strong Expletive (SE)					
Badass	4	0	0		4
Bastard	24	0	0		34
Bitch	14	0	0		21
Damn	23	1	3		56
Fuck	0	0	0		2
Shit	5	1	0		9
SE Total	**70**	**2**	**3**	**51**	**126**
*Minor characters were grouped together, as the majority changed with each episode.					
**All Characters includes major and minor character tokens, indicating the total occurrences.					

Table 2. Tag-question Examples

Mitigating: Softens criticism or conflict	Challenging: Initiates conflict	Epistemic: Discerns more information	Monologue: Talking to oneself (Hiramoto, 2013, p. 67)
[Trying to change the subject by shifting blame.] Fuu: Hey! You haven't forgotten your promise to me, *have you*?	[While taking food from the Japanese mafia.] Mugen: Then don't be such tightwads. You ARE yakuza, *aren't you?*	[Trying to learn more about the people linked to the sunflower samurai.] Fuu: Say, you mentioned earlier that you came here with your father, *didn't you*?	[Debating what to cut off for payment.] Ryujiro: Well, now, what'll it be? Your nose, *maybe*?

(Kobayashi, Sasaki, Mitsugi, Goto, & Watanabe, 2006)