



## The Expression ‘Mendokusai’ and Nagi’s Attitude in Blue Lock: Episode Nagi

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**Abstract.** *This study investigates the linguistic expression mendokusai as used by the character Nagi Seishirou in the anime Blue Lock: Episode Nagi, examining how this phrase reflects his personal attitude and patterns of social behavior. Mendokusai, commonly found in Japanese youth language, conveys meanings such as “bothersome,” “annoying,” or “too much trouble,” and is often associated with a passive or indifferent tone. Adopting a pragmatics and sociolinguistics framework, this research analyzes the function of the expression within the character’s dialogue and its role in shaping Nagi’s identity as a so-called “lazy genius.” Employing a descriptive qualitative method, the study closely examines selected scenes in which Nagi uses mendokusai across different social and emotional contexts. The findings suggest that Nagi’s repeated use of the phrase is not merely habitual but a deliberate linguistic strategy that highlights his aversion to social expectations, preference for simplicity, and effortless self-assurance. This research demonstrates how the recurrence of a single expression can serve as a significant marker of character identity and behavior, especially in contemporary portrayals of Japanese youth.*

**Keywords:** Character identity; Mendokusai; Pragmatics

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini menyelidiki ungkapan linguistik mendokusai yang digunakan oleh tokoh Nagi Seishirou dalam anime Blue Lock: Episode Nagi, dengan meneliti bagaimana frasa ini mencerminkan sikap pribadi dan pola perilaku sosialnya. Mendokusai, yang umum ditemukan dalam bahasa anak muda Jepang, menyampaikan makna seperti "menjengkelkan," "menjengkelkan," atau "terlalu banyak masalah," dan sering dikaitkan dengan nada pasif atau acuh tak acuh. Dengan mengadopsi kerangka pragmatik dan sosiolinguistik, penelitian ini menganalisis fungsi ungkapan dalam dialog tokoh dan perannya dalam membentuk identitas Nagi sebagai apa yang disebut "jenius pemalas." Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif deskriptif, penelitian ini meneliti secara cermat beberapa adegan di mana Nagi menggunakan mendokusai dalam berbagai konteks sosial dan emosional. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan frasa tersebut secara berulang oleh Nagi bukan sekadar kebiasaan, tetapi strategi linguistik yang disengaja yang menonjolkan keengganannya terhadap ekspektasi sosial, preferensi terhadap kesederhanaan, dan rasa percaya diri yang mudah. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bagaimana pengulangan satu ekspresi dapat berfungsi sebagai penanda penting identitas dan perilaku karakter, terutama dalam penggambaran pemuda Jepang kontemporer.

**Kata kunci:** Identitas karakter; Mendokusai; Pragmatik

### 1. BACKGROUND

Language in fictional works, including anime, serves not only as a means of communication between characters but also as a tool for representing identity, attitudes, and specific social values. One intriguing linguistic expression worth analyzing is mendokusai, which frequently appears in conversations among Japanese teenagers. This expression carries meanings such as "troublesome" or "can't be bothered," and is often associated with a passive or indifferent attitude. In the anime Blue Lock: Episode Nagi, the character Nagi Seishirou

provides a compelling example through his consistent and noticeable use of *mendokusai* in various social situations.

This study addresses the issue of how *mendokusai* is used by Nagi Seishirou to represent his attitude and personality, and how this contributes to the construction of his character identity in the context of Japanese popular culture. The significance of this research lies in the need to deepen our understanding of the relationship between language choices and character formation in popular media, especially in representing the younger generation in Japan. Furthermore, this analysis contributes to the fields of pragmatics and sociolinguistics by demonstrating how the meaning of an expression is shaped by its social and emotional context.

The objective of this study is to analyze the function of *mendokusai* in Nagi Seishirou's dialogue and how its usage reflects his preference for simplicity, avoidance of social obligations, and calm self-confidence. This research adopts a descriptive qualitative approach with discourse analysis methods focusing on selected dialogue excerpts. Through this analysis, the study aims to illustrate how repeated linguistic expressions can serve as indicators of character identity and reflect socio-cultural tendencies in modern fictional representations.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Linguistic studies on Japanese expressions have widely explored how language reflects personal attitudes and cultural values. The expression *mendokusai* is commonly used in daily conversations, particularly among Japanese youth, and has drawn scholarly interest for its pragmatic and sociolinguistic implications. According to Maynard (2005), such expressions can indicate the emotional stance and personal values of the speaker within a specific context, making them suitable for pragmatic and sociolinguistic analysis.

From a pragmatic perspective, *mendokusai* can be viewed as a form of stance-taking, where the speaker positions themselves in relation to a situation or request (Du Bois, 2007). Within anime narratives, this expression also functions as a narrative strategy to reinforce character identity. Kinsui (2011), in his work on role language, explains that language choices in anime are often consistently employed to construct and emphasize specific character archetypes.

Empirical studies have also examined the role of repeated expressions in character development. For instance, Tanaka (2019) analyzed character catchphrases in *My Hero Academia* and found that repeated linguistic patterns contribute to the audience's perception of a character's personality. Similarly, Sugiura and Tanabe (2016) highlighted how informal expressions in anime reflect youth resistance to social norms in Japan.

In this context, Nagi Seishirou's use of *mendokusai* can be interpreted not merely as habitual speech but as a deliberate form of resistance and self-expression. Often labeled as a "lazy genius," Nagi exhibits a passive and disengaged demeanor while demonstrating high competence. His consistent use of *mendokusai* strengthens this stereotype and serves as a verbal marker of his social identity.

Building on these theoretical and empirical foundations, this study hypothesizes that the expression *mendokusai* in Nagi Seishirou's dialogue is not randomly used, but rather a linguistic representation of deliberate character design. It holds pragmatic and symbolic functions that shape audience perceptions of the character and the broader social themes embedded in *Blue Lock: Episode Nagi*.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This research applies a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the meaning and function of the expression *mendokusai* as used by the character Nagi Seishirou in the anime *Blue Lock: Episode Nagi*. The research design emphasizes discourse analysis through the lens of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, focusing on the relationship between language use and character identity construction.

The object of the study is the verbal expression *mendokusai*, specifically as it appears in Nagi Seishirou's dialogue. The primary data source consists of selected episodes of *Blue Lock: Episode Nagi* featuring relevant interactions and emotional or social contexts involving the character.

The main materials and tools employed in this study include:

- *Blue Lock: Episode Nagi* anime episodes (selected for relevant character interactions),
- Dialogue transcripts (manually transcribed and/or based on official subtitles),
- A notebook for data recording, and
- Supporting software such as VLC media player and text processing programs (Microsoft Word).

The research is non-laboratory-based and conducted digitally, relying on online access to anime materials and academic references. Data collection is carried out through observation and documentation methods. The researcher systematically observes Nagi's dialogue across selected episodes, documents every occurrence of the expression *mendokusai*, and categorizes each usage based on context (e.g., social interaction, emotional state, task rejection).

Operational definitions:

- Mendokusai: a Japanese expression indicating reluctance, unwillingness, or lack of enthusiasm; in this context, it serves as a marker of the character's attitude.
- Character identity: the personality traits, social attitudes, and values conveyed through a character's language in fictional media.

The data analysis follows three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The analysis applies pragmatic theories (such as speech context and implied meaning) and sociolinguistic frameworks (influence of social context on language use). Patterns, frequency, and consistency in the usage of mendokusai are examined to identify how the expression contributes to character development and narrative function.

#### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

##### **Contextual Use of Mendokusai in Nagi's Dialogue**

The expression mendokusai appears multiple times throughout Blue Lock: Episode Nagi, each occurring in a distinct social or emotional context.

**1. At the beginning of the film, Nagi expresses his general disinterest in life and future plans:**

"Mendokusai." (01:00) — When asked about his future, Nagi responds with indifference, showing a lack of direction and resistance toward thinking about responsibility.

Soon after, when Reo invites him to try playing football, Nagi's reply emphasizes his aversion to both physical activity and effort:

"Mendokusai. I don't like it. I don't like working." (02:08) — This scene reflects his initial mindset: avoiding tasks that require energy, discipline, or teamwork.

**2. The phrase is also used casually during narration of his daily life**

"Mendokusai." (03:34) — Nagi uses the word while describing his routines, reinforcing that his worldview revolves around minimal effort and simplicity.

**3. Even after scoring the winning goal and carrying his team to victory, he responds with:**

"Mendokusai." (36:55) — This ironic use highlights his emotional detachment from achievement, reinforcing that he values comfort over recognition.

**4. The expression appears again during an internal reflection:**

"Ugh, even thinking about it is so mendokusai" (41:18) — Here, Nagi questions why he has to try hard, signaling internal conflict between passive nature and rising expectations.

**5. A shift begins when he externalizes the word:**

“Dealing with weak people is mendokusai.” (42:15) — Now, mendokusai is not only about his own disinterest, but also projected as criticism toward others, reflecting a growing judgmental awareness.

**6. Later, a transformation:**

Turns out the opposing team isn't mendokusai... Nagi says they're actually cool. (57:25)  
“Playing soccer with Reo isn't mendokusai... it feels easy and comforting.” (1:12:10) — Nagi begins to reevaluate the meaning of effort, finding enjoyment and connection, indicating a shift in his identity.

**7. Finally, he returns to his isolation:**

“I haven't talked to anyone for a whole week. Dealing with people is just mendokusai(1:29:25)”

Nagi asked for a plant that isn't mendokusai. (1:29:32) — These lines emphasize his retreat from social interaction, but also show that his aversion to mendokusai is selective and complex.

**Pragmatic Function of *Mendokusai***

Pragmatically, mendokusai in Nagi's speech acts as an emotional distancing device. In early scenes, it functions to reject involvement in any activity that requires motivation or pressure. According to Du Bois (2007), such expressions are a form of stance-taking, allowing Nagi to position himself as passive, uninterested, and emotionally disengaged.

As the story progresses, mendokusai begins to carry different tones: sarcasm (after scoring), self-reflection (during inner conflict), and even re-evaluation (when he acknowledges something is “not mendokusai”). These shifts show that the phrase adapts based on his emotional growth.

**Development of the “Lazy Genius” Persona**

The use of mendokusai strengthens Nagi's portrayal as a “lazy genius” — someone with remarkable potential but no desire to try. Instead of excitement or passion, he opts for disinterest, making his talent seem effortless.

This persona becomes layered: it protects him from expectations, expresses mild defiance, and later, questions his own values. His change from seeing soccer as mendokusai to enjoying it shows internal evolution while maintaining his core reserved personality.

## **Role Language and Youth Identity**

Based on Kinsui's (2011) theory of *yakuwarigo*, Nagi's consistent use of *mendokusai* builds a unique role language that marks his identity as a laid-back, emotionally distant youth. This expression becomes part of his speech pattern, serving as a verbal shorthand for his worldview.

Furthermore, the film reflects a cultural narrative found in Japanese youth media: resistance to social conformity and expectations, as discussed by Sugiura & Tanabe (2016). Nagi's avoidance of effort, emotional investment, and socialization aligns with the portrayal of modern youth who prioritize individual comfort over societal demands.

## **Summary of Findings**

Through repeated use in varied contexts, *mendokusai* operates as more than a verbal habit. It functions as a strategic identity marker, signaling Nagi's emotional detachment, passive resistance, and eventual reevaluation of his values.

The findings suggest that in *Blue Lock: Episode Nagi*, the phrase *mendokusai* is a key linguistic tool in the character's development arc—shifting from emotional avoidance to subtle openness, while still preserving the authenticity of his reserved personality.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that the expression *mendokusai* used by the character Nagi Seishirou in the anime *Blue Lock: Episode Nagi* functions as more than a habitual verbal pattern. It serves as a strategic linguistic tool that contributes to the shaping and reinforcement of his character identity. Through the lenses of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, it is evident that the repeated use of *mendokusai* reflects Nagi's passive stance, resistance to social pressure, and tendency to avoid emotional involvement.

The expression operates as a verbal marker of Nagi's portrayal as a "lazy genius"—a figure who excels without overt ambition or enthusiasm. In this sense, language in fictional media such as anime plays a powerful role in constructing narrative and character identity, while also mirroring broader socio-cultural dynamics, particularly in the depiction of contemporary Japanese youth.

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