Towards understanding syntactic representation of honorification in Korean

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[Abstract]

One of the salient features of the Korean language is honorifics. There are two kinds of honorification; subject honorification and addressee honorification. The subject honorification is usually characterized by the co-occurrence of the nominal honorific suffix -nim along with the honorific nominative particle -kkeyse on the subject and the verbal honorific affix -(u)si on the predicate. The addressee honorification usually refers to the deferential and/or polite speech style sentence ending particles. While both the subject honorification and addressee honorification reflect discourse information syntactically, they show striking difference when it comes to embedding; the former can be embedded whereas the latter cannot. In this paper, I argue that this is due to the restriction on the encoding of politeness features in the grammar; they cannot occur in the embedded CP domain. The subject honorific feature is encoded in TP and gets checked off when there is an agree relation with the predicate while the politeness feature expressed by the addressee honorification is encoded in the CP domain, more specifically in the highest CP layer in the cartographic approach, and this CP cannot be embedded due to the restriction on the politeness feature.