Indexing Fluidity in the Honorific Systems in Korean and Japanese
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[Abstract]

The use of honorifica in Korean and Japanese is generally dictated by social factors such as age, socioeconomic status, gender and so forth (e.g., Sohn 1999, Kim-Renaud 2009, Kuno 1987, Shibatani 1990). Honorifica are marked by a well-defined repertoire of linguistic elements, including address-terms, specialized vocabulary, suffixes, and verbal endings. Depending on the relationship between the interlocutors, an honorific form is chosen over the other available forms. Recently, researchers have questioned whether the choice the speaker makes is wholly dependent on the relative status or some other factors play a role in the selection process (Strauss and Eun 2005, Dunn 2005, Lee and Cho 2013). This study focuses on the honorifica productively encoded by the verbal endings of Korean and Japanese, and notes that continual shifts between these speech levels i.e., Honorific/Non-honorific alterations, are observed in the course of a single speech situation, indicating it is the speaker who is making a conscious choice within the large grammatically confined discourse. Based on the analyses of authentic conversations, we propose a comparative analysis of Korean and Japanese in order to identify the types of discourse factors (e.g. empathy vs. social distance and public vs. personal presentation of self)