Interactional functions of demonstratives in Korean and Japanese discourse

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Korean and Japanese demonstratives express a three-way exophoric (spatio-temporal deixis) distinction. The basic morphemes comprise three elements: in Korean, i ‘this’, ku ‘that’, and ce ‘that over there’, and in Japanese, ko- ‘this’, so- ‘that’, and a- ‘that over there’. The choice of one form over the other in exophoric use is determined by the relative distance of an entity from the speaker and/or the addressee. It is generally assumed that distal demonstratives have the endophoric (anaphoric and cataphoric) function of indicating shared knowledge between interlocutors (Lakoff, 1974; Prince, 1992, Diessel 1999). However, most studies are based on languages with a binary demonstrative system (e.g., English). In the case of languages that have a three-way system like Korean and Japanese, it is not the proximal, but the medial and distal demonstratives that are generally used to create a mutual reference between interlocutors. In Japanese, the distal a-series is used in contrast with the addressee-proximal so-series, used as anaphor, whereas in Korean the medial demonstrative ku is used for both functions. The different uses of the endophoric function in Korean and Japanese are crucial to understanding their discourse function, in that the referential meaning of a demonstrative maintains a close relationship with its discourse function (Lakoff, 1974; Schiffrin, 1987; Hopper & Traugott, 1993/2003).

Taking into consideration the referential function of Korean and Japanese demonstratives in established research, this study will explore how traditional approaches to demonstratives, which take the static proximal/distal distinction and rely only upon the relative distance from the speaker, can be extended to fit more dynamic and interactive perspectives Korean and Japanese discourse. Applying dynamic and interactional frameworks, such as ‘involvement’ (Tannen, 1989), ‘indexical framework’ (Hanks, 1990, 1992), the notion of ‘sphere’ (Laury, 1997; Enfield, 2003), and the concept of Focus (Strauss, 2002), this study will illustrate that there is a close relationship between interactional functions and the speaker’s choice of one demonstrative over another. It will also suggest that the interactional meaning comes about through various sources, including psychological closeness/distance, contexts, and sociolinguistic aspects such as the uchi and soto relationship and the conventionalized politeness strategy appropriate to each language, and also various derivational forms of demonstratives and (non-canonical) word order. I hope that this comparative study will also provide an interesting sociolinguistic perspective in the use of Korean and Japanese demonstratives.
Ok-sim Kim is a doctoral student of Korean Linguistics (ABD) at EALL since the spring of 2012, received her M.A in Japanese linguistics from University of Hawaiʻi at Manoa in 2007. Her study focuses on important features found in Korean and Japanese discourse, such as discourse markers, demonstratives, and reactive tokens (back-channeling), and she conducts a comparative study between the two languages.

The nominal expressions in Lhasa Tibetan

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This study provides a detailed description of the syntactic distribution and semantic interpretations of bare nouns and numeral phrases in Lhasa Tibetan (LT). LT is generally considered as the most widely spoken form of Tibetan languages. In this study, we find that bare nouns can freely appear in argument position and can receive a kind interpretation, a generic interpretation and a definite interpretation when occurring with kind-level predicates, generic sentences and episodic sentences respectively. We also find that numeral phrases in LT are used as predicates, restrictors of demonstrative element/quantifier, and indefinite arguments. They also allow long-distance scope and island-escaping ability but lack anaphoric use. Building on Chierchia (1998), Dayal (2004, 2012), and Jiang (2012), I argue that there is no need to assume a Determiner Phrase (DP), which does not have overt component in the grammar of LT, in order to explain the behaviors of its nominal arguments.

Yunchuan Chen is a PhD student in the Japanese Program in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures. His research interests include the syntax of Japanese and Sino-Tibetan languages and the generative approaches to L2 acquisition.

The talk is open to the public, and light refreshments will be served.
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