

With all due respect? The use of local honorifics among three generations of Osaka women

Anna Strycharz (University of Edinburgh)

Osaka Japanese (OJ) is one of the most often discussed varieties of Japanese among recent scholarly publications. It has been noticed that, unlike many other dialects of Japanese, OJ has not been eradicated and is still seen as a sign of local pride (e.g. Miyake, 1995; Kunihiro, Inoue, & Long, 1999; Onoe, Kasai, & Wakaichi, 2000). One of the issues discussed in the context of dialect contact and standardisation is the OJ honorific system. There seems to be alternation in the use of OJ honorifics and Standard Japanese (SJ) honorifics in the speech of OJ users. Some descriptive work has been done on the subject, but there is a need for more detailed and systematic analysis of naturally occurring interactions, especially with regards to possible change in progress.

The work done so far on OJ honorifics touches on their interactive role e.g. in service encounters (Okamoto 1998) or among friends (SturtzSreetharan 2008); there has also been some prescriptive analysis of OJ honorific system (Onoe 2000; Palter & Slotsve 2005; Sanada et. al 2006). There seems to be, however, a lack of a systematic approach to the social and interactional functions of local honorifics (especially with regards to the incoming SJ variants). In addition, none of the work so far addresses the issue of change occurring in the use of local honorifics across generations.

This paper focusses on one of the local referent honorific suffixes: *-haru*, and analyses its use on two levels: (i) the patterns of use of local honorifics and differences across generations, and (ii) the interactional and social pragmatic function of the local honorific as opposed to non-honorific and SJ forms, and. The data set comes from recorded conversations of 12 women born and raised in Osaka, divided into three age groups. The set consists of more than 800 clauses containing a referent, whether any referent honorific was used or not. Sentences with reference to oneself were not included, as they do not provide opportunity for the use of referent honorific.

The analysis focusses on the patterns of use of local honorifics with regards to the conventional roles of honorifics described in the literature so far: (i) the formality of the situation, (ii) the indexing of respect towards the referent and (iii) the signifying of ingroup- or outgroupness.

Through a close analysis of local, standard and non-honorific forms used in conversations I show the interactional functions of local referent honorific in relation to the other forms. I argue that the function of local honorifics is dynamic and highly context-dependent, and different than the one of SJ referent honorifics. I also show how its use differs across generations. There seems to be a visible change in progress in the use of local honorifics, and the space for their use among the youngest speakers is very narrow.