

Theme session

Ethnosyntax: East and Southeast Asian Perspectives

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Cultural underpinnings of creative and conventionalized language use have been approached from a variety of perspectives, e.g. typology (Perkins 1992), semantics-pragmatics (Goddard and Wierzbicka 2013), cognitive linguistics (Kövecses 2006), and psycholinguistics (Slobin 1996). However, the relationship between grammar and culture, a most intriguing yet entangled research topic, has not been sufficiently investigated both qualitatively and quantitatively.

This theme session thus revisits the concept of ethnosyntax, the proposition that the grammar of a language is intimately linked to the culture of its speakers. The research framework of ethnosyntax was originally proposed by Anna Wierzbicka (1979) within her Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) framework but was later substantially expanded by Nick Enfield (Enfield 2002, 2015) to include a variety of analytical approaches beyond the NSM framework. The grammar-culture connection has since then been continually investigated, particularly in relation to social cognition, by typologically oriented linguists (Evans 2003). However, arguably due to the difficulty of empirically analyzing such connections, ethnosyntactic phenomena have not been a high profile research topic within the cognitive linguistic community for the past few decades.

Inspired by the recent trend in cultural linguistics (Sharifian 2017; cf. Palmer 1996), this theme session brings together recent cutting-edge research findings exploring the (broadly construed) grammar-culture connection based on East and Southeast Asian languages, including Japanese (Horie & Kim, Kataoka), Korean (Horie & Kim, Rhee) and Arta and other Negrito languages (Kimoto), and discusses the current state of the art as well as the prospect of ethnosyntactic approaches to the grammar-culture connection, with Professor Nick Enfield as the discussant.

Speakers and titles:

1. Kaoru Horie (Nagoya University) & Jungmin Kim (Reitaku University)
Negative politeness and the preference for nominalization strategies in Japanese: A contrastive study with Korean
2. Seongha Rhee (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)
When crudity steps into grammar: The case of Korean auxiliary verbs
3. Kuniyoshi Kataoka (Aichi University)
Discursive management of space/time and textual deictics in Japanese spatial narratives
4. Yukinori Kimoto (Hyogo Prefectural University)
Morphological manifestations of hunter-gatherer lifestyle: Word formations and ethno-semantics in Philippine Negrito languages
5. Nick Enfield (University of Sydney): Discussion