Tiered honorification in E. Indo-Aryan: A [HON]-less proposal[1]

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SALT34
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[1]Many thanks to Omri Doron, Adam Albright, Yash Sinha, Norvin Richards, Kai von Fintel, Viola Schmitt, and the lovely FASAL14 audience for their guidance.

Introduction

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2HH	*apni*	*apna-ra*	*-en*
3NH	*śe*	*ta-ra*	*-ē*
3H	*tini*	*tã-ra*	*-en*
Maithili	SG	PL	Agreement
2NH	*tō*	*tõ-səb*	*-e/-ē*
2H	*tō*	*tõ-səb*	*-əh*
2MH	*əhã*	*əhã-seb/-lokein*	*-i*
2HH	*əpne*	*əpne-səb*	*-i*
3NH	*u, o*	*u səb, o səb*	*-0/-əik*
3H	*u*	*u səb*	*-əith*

e.g. Alok 2020: syntactic features for 3-tier systems.

- NH: [–high, –hon]
- H: [–high, +hon]
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Today: Following typological generalizations advanced by Wang (2023), we explore an [HON]-less analysis for tiered politeness systems.

Roadmap

Theoretical backdrop: a [HON]-less approach to honorifics

1. Taboos: grammatical reflexes of negative politeness
2. Taboo-compliant recruits: plural, 3rd person, non-referrers
3. Deriving honorification systems: Taboos » MP!

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Application to tiered systems

4. *Ditto* with repluralization as a caveat

What does a polite person do?

Avoidance forms the core of polite behaviors:

- indirect eye contact,
- distancing oneself,
- hedging,
- circumlocution,
- being vague/imprecise, ...

Formalized as negative politeness (Brown & Levinson 1987: 61): respecting "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction— i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition".

What does a polite grammar want?

People avoid for politeness reasons. Within the confines of a grammar that does not encode [HON], this social need is manifested as avoiding reference.

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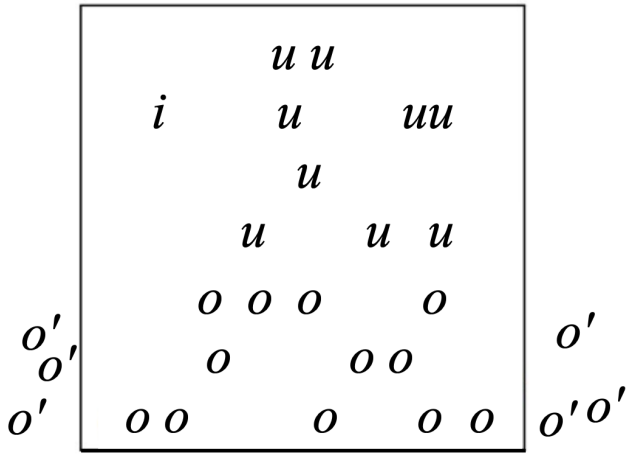
What does a grammar use to calculate the avoidance of reference? For pronouns:

1. who they point to in the discourse
   person presuppositions, motivated by semantic markedness (Sauerland 2008);
2. whether they point to a unique entity
   (non-)atomicity, independently needed for capturing distinctions such as mass-count, collective-distributive, expressions like *together*, *each*).

How does a polite grammar avoid? Person

Assumed ontology of persons:


u u
i u uu
u
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o o o o
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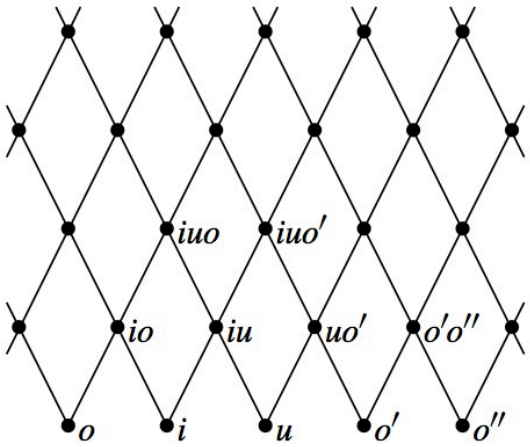
How does a polite grammar avoid? Atomicity

Avoiding unique reference is also good enough.
Assumed ontology of plural persons:



Plural pronouns are formed by adding 'others', o'; this also captures their associative interpretations.

A plural set "anonymizes" the singular respected referent.

We assume a pragmatic maxim preferring non-atomic reference (3). (4) are its preferences.

(3) Taboo of Atomicity (ToA):
In respect contexts, use a form that refers to non-atomic entities.

(4) a. $\{u\} \ll \{u + o' + o'' + ...\}$
2nd « 2nd plural
b. $\{o\} \ll \{o + o' + o'' + ...\}$
3rd « 3rd plural

Why not just one Taboo?

In respect contexts, use the form that carries as few presuppositions as possible.

However, targeting *any* presuppositional cline overgenerates:

- 2PL pronouns can be associative (e.g. Daniels 2000; Moravcsik 2003). If associativity is handled via presupposition (e.g. Dayal 2014), making 2PL forms *not* presuppositionally poor.

  (5) Addressing a plurality:
  - a. I need silence from you. (successful iff all addressees are silent)
  - b. I need you to buy me a sofa. (successful if 1 sofa was bought)

- Gender. In languages with a MASC-FEM distinction, the former is presupposition-poor (Bobaljik & Zocca 2011, Sauerland 2008) (6). But, MASC is never recruited for respected females (Wang's puzzle in §6.1).

  (6)
  - a. Froggy is a waiter, and Anne is <a waiter> too.
  - b. #Anne is a waitress, and Froggy is <a waitress> too.

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a. $[\![1]\!] = \lambda x_e : x \text{ is the speaker } \& \ x \text{ is discourse-salient } . \ x$
b. $[\![2]\!] = \lambda x_e : x \text{ is the hearer } \& \ x \text{ is discourse-salient } . \ x$
c. $[\![3]\!] = \lambda x_e : x \text{ is discourse-salient } . \ x$
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(7c,d) are good recruits for honorification: they are less/not burdened with person presuppositions, making ToP happy.

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(8) $[\![\textsc{assoc}]\!] = \lambda x_e \lambda X_{<e,t>} : \forall z \ [z \leq X \rightarrow z \sim_c x] \ \& \ x \leq X \ . \ \bigoplus X$

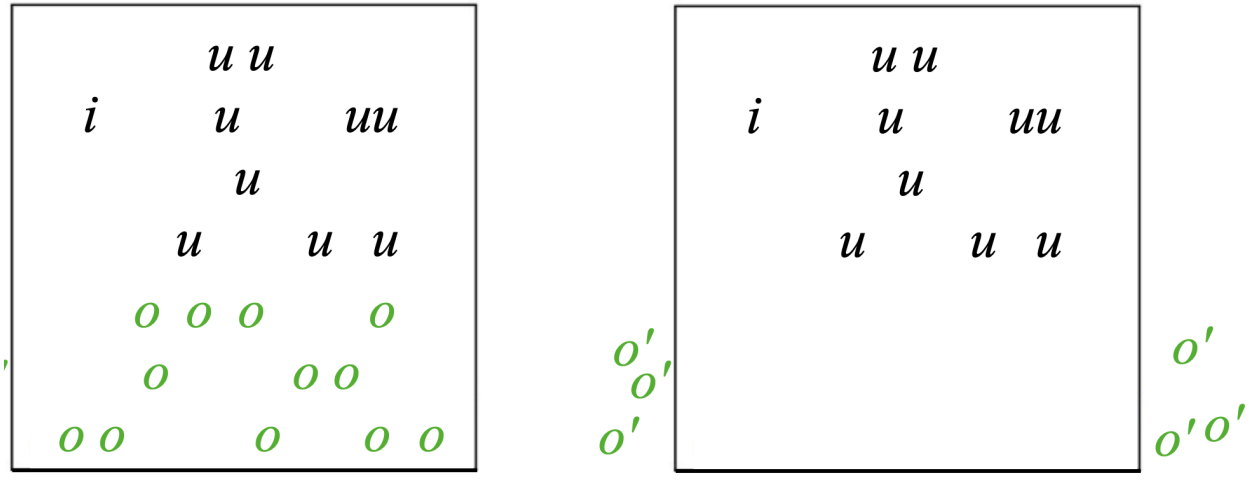
(9) $[\![\text{2-}\textsc{assoc}]\!] = \lambda X_{<e,t>} : \forall z \ [z \leq X \rightarrow z \sim_c \text{hearer}] \ \& \ \text{hearer} \leq X \ . \ \bigoplus X$

(10) $[\![\text{3-}\textsc{assoc}]\!] = \lambda X_{<e,t>} : \forall z \ [z \leq X \rightarrow z \sim_c \text{disc-salient entity}] \ . \ \bigoplus X$

(9), (10) are good recruits for honorification: since they carry associativity presuppositions, they refer to non-atomicities, making ToA happy.

A polite grammar avoids

Don't refer! / *ToP*: honorific recruitments of 3rd; impersonal



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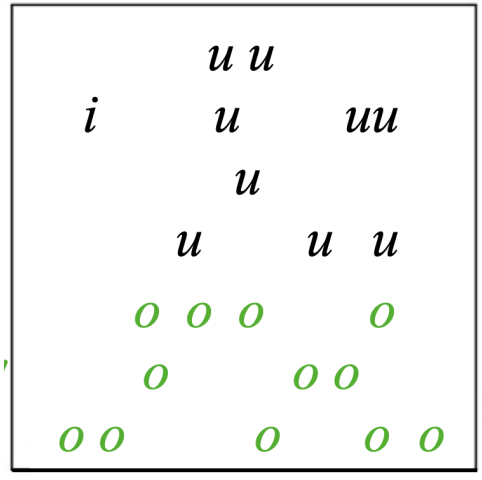

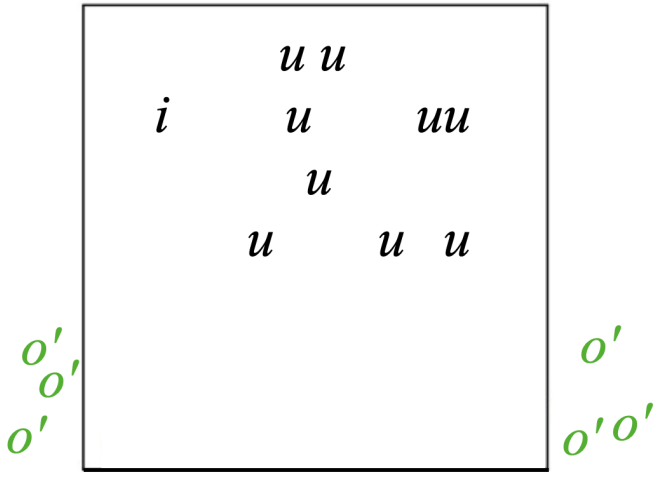

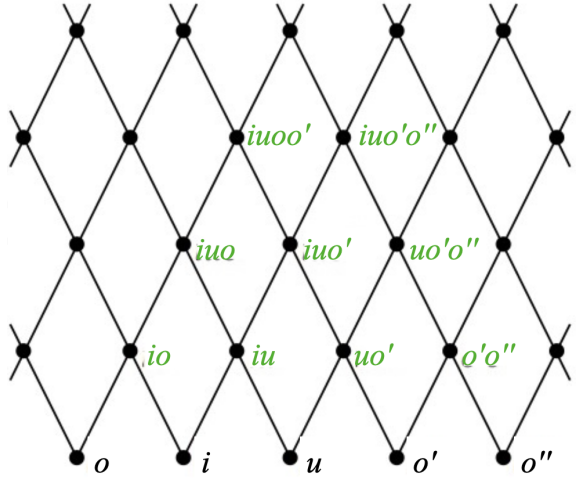

Don't refer uniquely! / *ToA*: honorific recruitment of plural

A polite grammar avoids (unique) reference

The predicted pools of feature values available for honorific recruitment:

(11) $\{u\} \ll \{o\} \ll \{o'\}$
2nd « 3rd « non-referring

(12) $\{u\} \ll \{u + o' + o'' + ...\}$
2nd « 2nd plural

(13) $\{o\} \ll \{o + o' + o'' + ...\}$
3rd « 3rd plural

Evidently, a polite grammar avoids (unique) reference

Happily, these predictions are borne out, with robust typological asymmetries.

(14) $\{u\} \ll \{o\} \ll \{o'\}$ — Italian 3SG *Lei* for 2SG.H
2nd « 3rd « non-referring — W. Apache impersonal *ko-* for 3SG.H
*2 for 3.H

(15) $\{u\} \ll \{u + o' + o'' + ...\}$ — French 2PL *vous* for 2SG.H
2nd « 2nd plural — Wolaytta 2PL *ʔinté* for 2SG.H

(16) $\{o\} \ll \{o + o' + o'' + ...\}$ — Malayalam 3PL *avar* for 3SG.H
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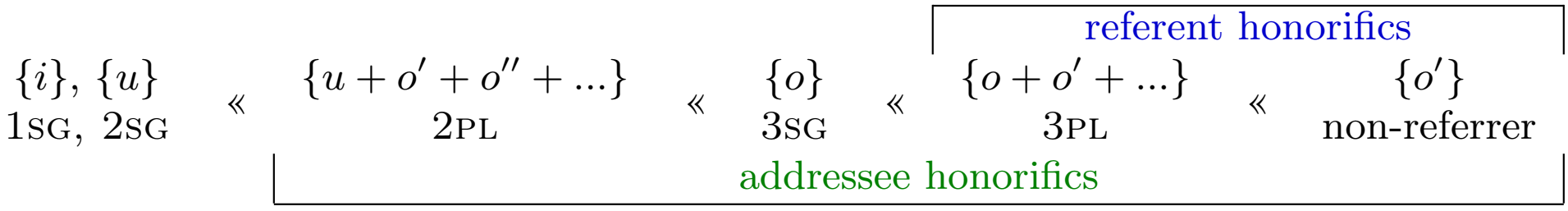
Despite Indo-Aryan's tiered system, it is not a counterexample. I'll show that all Indo-Aryan honorifics swim only in these pools.

Predictions on multiple recruitment

Putting everything onto a single cline:



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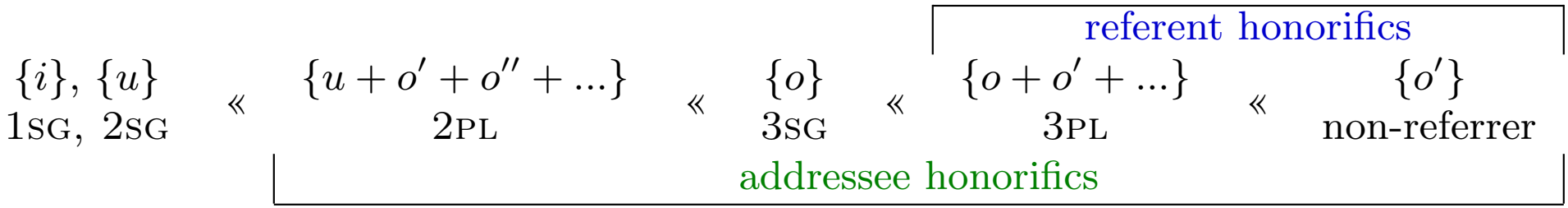
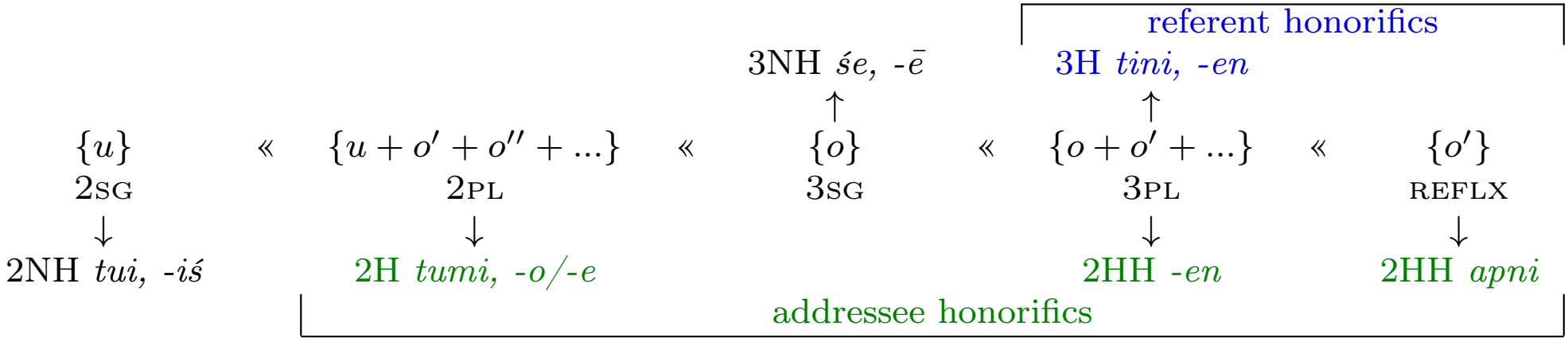


We predict that:

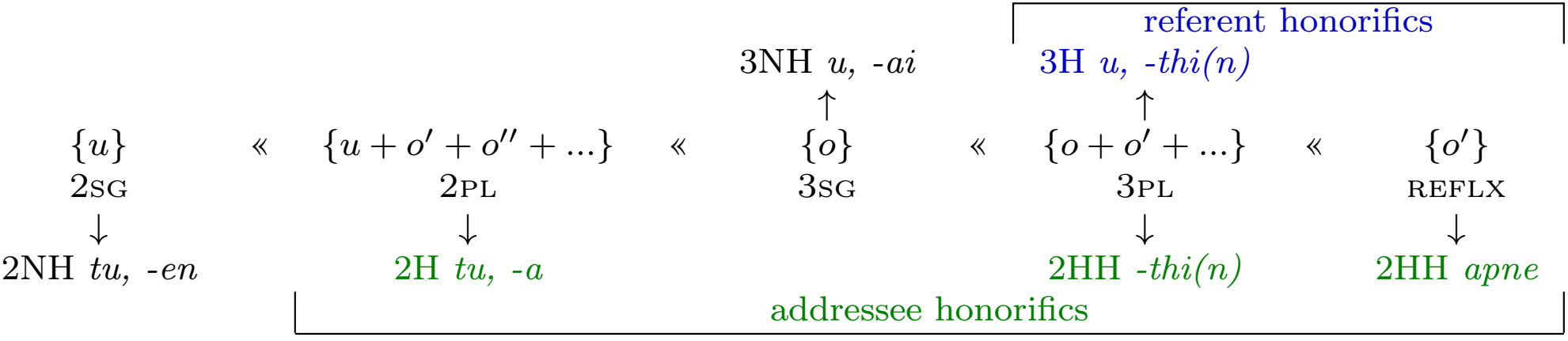
- some resources are more honorific (=less referentially constrained) than others;
- the pool for addressee honorifics is larger than the pool for referent honorifics.

Predictions borne out: E. Indo-Aryan (Chatterji 1926)

Bangla: singular pronouns and person agreement (David 2015)



Magahi: singular pronouns and person agreement (Alok 2020)



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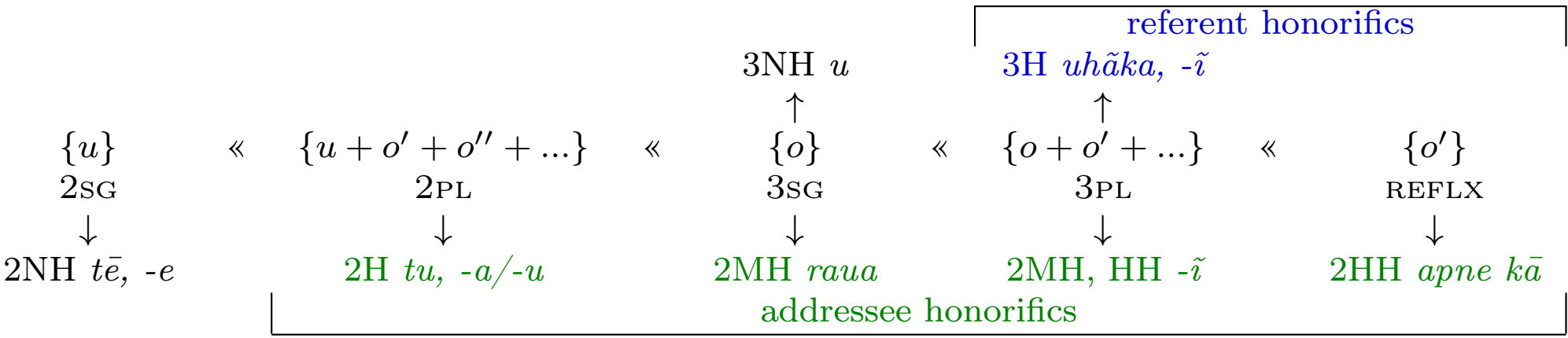

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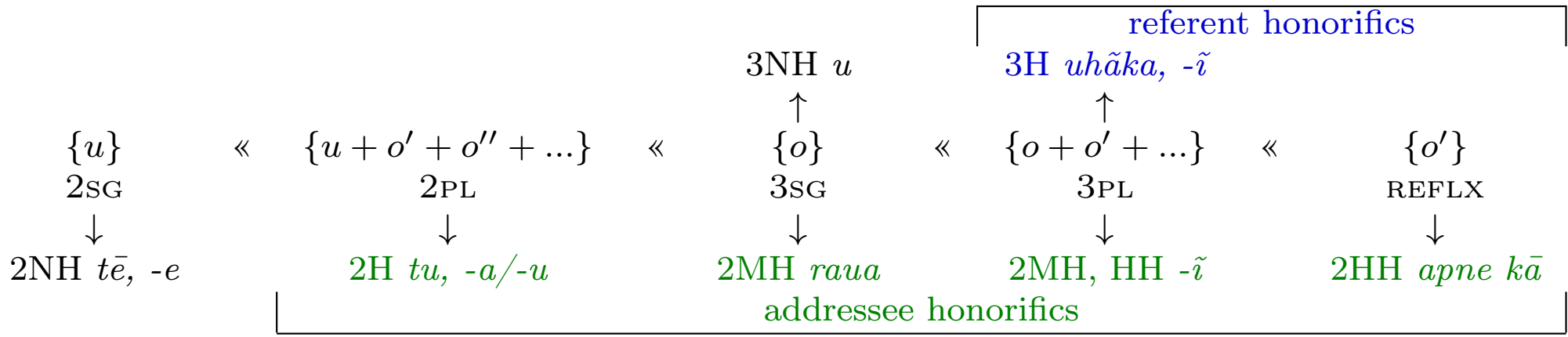

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Relative ranking of tiers tracks referentiality: The higher the tier, the less referential to *u* it was.

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Number/person were recruited for the honorific pronouns and agreement, to the extent that there are now only "honorific" distinctions.

Aren't these synchronic "honorific" distinctions evincing [HON]?

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Two claims I push for a completely [HON]-less view:

- Ranking of pragmatic maxims;
- What repluralization can do.

Pragmatic maxims

Inventory of maxims:

(17) Maximize Presupposition! (Heim 2011)
Choose the strongest presupposition compatible with what is assumed in the conversation.

(18) Taboo on Person (ToP):
In respect contexts, use the form that carries as few person presuppositions as possible.

(19) Taboo of Atomicity (ToA):
In respect contexts, use a form that refers to non-atomic entities.

In normal contexts, MP! is not flouted: MP! » ToP/ToA.
Singular address is only possible with a 2SG form.

In respect contexts, MP! is flouted in favor of the Taboos:
ToA » MP!, or ToP » MP! Mismatches become possible.

Back to Bangla: Repluralization

All plural pronouns share *-ra*...

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the associative morpheme (Haldar, p.c.)

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Ram-{PL/ASSOC}
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(21) ama-r boi-{gulo/*ra}
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Plural pronouns are associative: for a mixed-tier group, the tier associates to the most salient addressee. They are not additive: they do not require all members of the plural group to be of the same social tier.

Repluralization: after the plural was recruited for singular honorification, new plurals were innovated by suffixing *-ra*.

Repluralization and the pragmatic calculus

De-pluralization, or [HON]-ification, never happened. e.g. the stem used for the second person H tier, *tum-*, **was and is** plural.

Bangla has two 2PL forms: *tumi; tomra*.

- *tum-* is plural; *-ra* is transparently the associative morpheme.
- *tomra* is "doubly" plural.

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In respect contexts language-wide, the relevant ranking is ToA » MP!:

1. addressing a singular is only possible with a 2PL form;
2. addressing a plural is only possible with a 2PL form.

   But which 2PL form for which case?

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What is assumed: atomic address in respect context.
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MP! applies	π	π-ASSOC
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Even though MP! is outranked, it still has effects on the pragmatic calculus.

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- ToA eliminates forms which refer to atomic entities;
- MP! eliminates forms which refer to 3rd persons;
- Between *tumi*/*tomra*, MP! eliminates the form which is least atomic (*tomra*, since it is doubly plural). This leaves *tumi*.

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- ToA eliminates forms which refer to atomic entities;
- MP! eliminates forms which refer to 3rd persons;
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Comparison to French

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2PL	*vous*
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For atomic address in respect context:

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- MP! eliminates forms which refer to 3rd persons;
- MP! would've eliminated forms which are not atomic (but this doesn't happen, as it results in ineffability: only 1 form left).

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(22) **Avez** **vous** le livre?
have.PRES.**2PL** **2PL** the book
'Do you (SG/PL HON) have the book?' (would've results in ambiguity)

NH and HH tiers

What is assumed: address in respect context.
Taboo on Person » Maximize Presupposition!.

NH and HH tiers

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tabula rasa	π	π-ASSOC
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- MP! chooses between *apni*/*apnara* depending on the assumed atomicity of the addressee.

In the NH tiers, MP! is highest-ranked. No mismatches are allowed.

Bangla summary

Repluralization produced more recruits for the pragmatic calculus.

- Former plurals (*e.g.* *tum-*) are non-atomic and hence honorific according to ToA » MP!;
- Innovated plurals X-ra (*e.g.* *tom-ra*) are also non-atomic.
- Where *-ra* combined with a former plural, resulting forms are twice-non-atomic.

	π	π+ASSOC
2SG	*tui*	*to-ra*
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- Verbal agreement still tracks original phi-features...

	π	π+ASSOC	Agreement
2SG	*tui*	*to-ra*	*-iś*
2PL	*tumi*	*tom-ra*	*-o/-e*
ANAPH	*apni*	*apna-ra*	*-en*
3SG	*śe*	*ta-ra*	*-ē*
3PL	*tini*	*tā-ra*	*-en*

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- Where *-ra* combined with a former plural, resulting forms are twice-non-atomic.
- Verbal agreement still tracks original phi-features... not the innovations.

	π	π+ASSOC	Agreement
2SG	*tui*	*to-ra*	
2PL	*tumi*	*tom-ra*	
ANAPH	*apni*	*apna-ra*	-$^*X$
3SG	*śe*	*ta-ra*	
3PL	*tini*	*tā-ra*	

Summary

Previous analyses give the following picture, where [HON] is needed to explain the synchrony:

Diachrony	X	X+ASSOC
2SG	*tui*	*to-ra*
2PL	*tumi*	*tom-ra*
ANAPH	*apni*	*apna-ra*
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Synchrony	SG	PL
2NH	*tui*	*to-ra*
2H	*tumi*	*tom-ra*
2HH	*apni*	*apna-ra*
3NH	*śe*	*ta-ra*
3H	*tini*	*tã-ra*

Summary

I argued for a [HON]-less picture, where the synchrony is directly informed by the diachrony.

Synchrony	π	π+ASSOC
2SG	*tui*	*to-ra*
2PL	*tumi*	*tom-ra*
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Interpretation	SG	PL
2NH	*tui*	*to-ra*
2H	*tumi*	*tom-ra*
2HH	*apni*	*apna-ra*
3NH	*śe*	*ta-ra*
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Conclusion: "No such thing as a referral bonus"

The diachronic claim is lean, formalizing the common intuition that avoidance behaviors are the core of polite behavior by drawing on existing ingredients:

i. *Presuppositional clines*
ii. *Atomicity*
iii. *Negative politeness*

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The synchronic claim is lean, playing off the diachrony:

iv. *Repluralization*
v. *Ranking of pragmatic maxims*, which are needed to explain honorific inferences in any language.

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The synchronic claim is lean, playing off the diachrony:

iv. *Repluralization*

v. *Ranking of pragmatic maxims*, which are needed to explain honorific inferences in any language.

E. Indo-Aryan is consistent with a [HON]-less analysis, only:

- *Multiple recruitments* occurred, so that a tiered system resulted.
- *Repluralization* occurred, which created some twice-non-atomic forms.

thanks for
listening!

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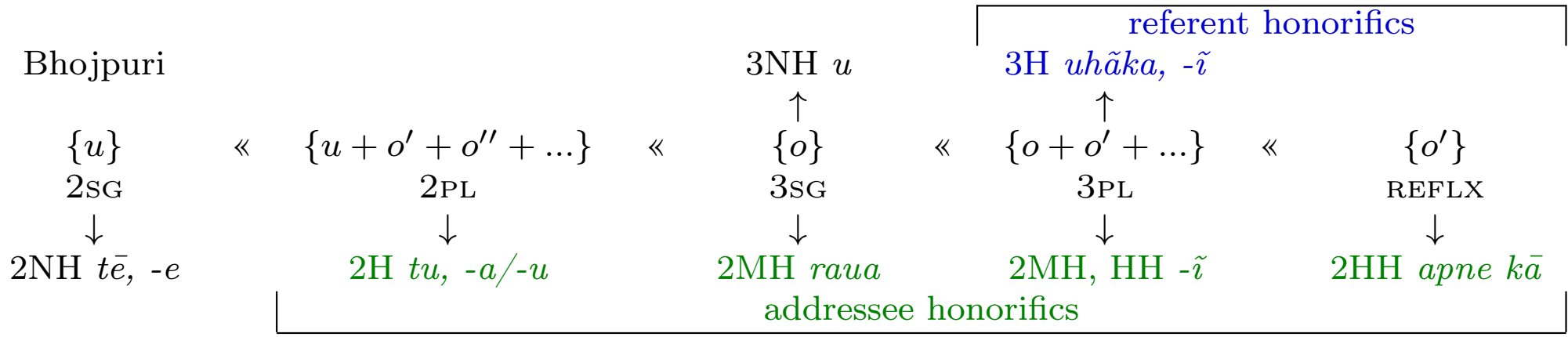
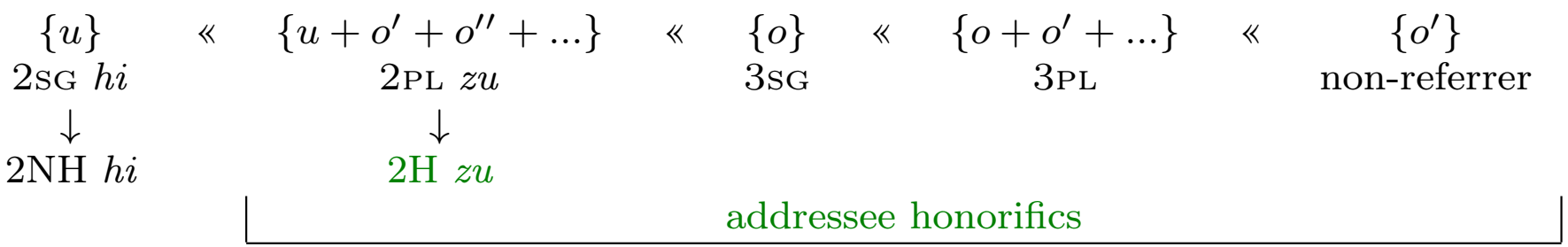
Multiple recruitments and predictions about repluralization

Claim: tiered repluralization only arises where >1 recruitments create distinct honorific tiers, *i.e.* within E. Indo-Aryan:



Otherwise: tiered repluralization doesn't arise. Basque:



Counterexample: Hindi (Yash Sinha's work).

Puzzle: How does the Basque repluralization arise?

3rd and 4th as presupposition-less

3rd person ($\{o\}$) can refer to 1st/2nd person: "imposters"
(Harbour 2016, Sauerland 2008, Podobryaev 2017)

(23) a. (at a conference) **The authors** / **We** will now announce the prize.
b. (to younger brother) **Sis** is coming to get you.

(24) a. (to boyfriend) I give this rose to **my one and only** / **you**.
b. (to relative) I won't offend **Grandpappa** / **you** again.

Impersonals ($\{o'\}$) can refer to any person, being the most presuppositionless:

(25) a. **One** should not walk on the grass.
b. Über das gelb kann **man** sicher streiten.
about the yellow can one certainly argue
'One can certainly argue about the yellow.'
c. Marie et toi et moi, **on** est gentils.
Marie and you and me IMP COP.3SG nice.MASC-PL
'Marie and you and I, we are nice.'

Honorific non-referrers: impersonals

Ainu uses the impersonal pronoun *an* (26) as an honorific pronoun (27).

(26) **An** omap pon menoko ne ruwe ne.
INDEF love be.young woman COP PART
'She is a young woman whom <u>people</u> like.'

(27) **An** nu no.oka, ...
INDEF ask IMPF
'As you (HON) are asking, ...'
Lit.: 'As <u>someone</u> is asking, ...' (Refsing 1986: 219-22)

Use of impersonals for honorification is also found in:

Location	Family	Language(s)
Africa	Cushitic	Kambaata
	Khoisan	Khwe
Mongolia	Mongolic	Mongolian
USA	Caddoan	Caddo
	Athabaskan-Eyak	Navajo, W. Apache
	Germanic	Yiddish