

A Constraint-based Approach to Korean Partial Honorific Agreement*

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1. Introduction

Korean honorific agreement is pragmatically constrained, requiring the consistency of honorific information between the subject and the head. The nominal honorific marker *-nim* attached to the subject and verbal affix *-si-* indicate that the speaker owes honor to the subject's referent. As a result, superficially, Korean honorific agreement is established by the co-existence or the co-absence of *-nim* and *-si-* ((1) is from Pollard and Sag 1994):

- (1) a. Kim sacang-i o-ass-ta.
 Kim President-NOM come-PAST-DECL
 'President Kim has come.'
- b. Kim sacang-nim-i o-si-ess-ta.
 Kim President-HON-NOM come-HON-PAST-DECL
- c. #Kim sacang-i o-si-ess-ta.
 Kim President-NOM come-HON-PAST-DECL
- d. #Kim sacang-nim-i o-ass-ta.
 Kim President-HON-NOM come-PAST-DECL

The absence of *-nim* and *-si* indicates that the speaker does not owe honor to the subject's referent as in (1b). The infelicity of (1c) and (1d) is caused by the inconsistency of the honorific information between the subject and the verb.

However, the verbal honorific affix *-si* is optional in the non-final conjunct of the verbal coordination construction as shown in (2).

- (2) Kim sacang-nim-i ilccik o-(si)-ko nuckey ka-si-ess-ta.
 Kim President-HON-NOM early come-(HON)-CONJ lat go-HON-PAST-DECL
 'President Kim came early and left late.'

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As observed in Cho and Sells (1994), non-finite verbs are not necessarily specified with honorific information. This observation may lead to the assumption that the non-finite verb in the first conjunct in (2) is exempt from honorific agreement. However, examples like (3) contradict this assumption:

- (3) #Kim sacang-nim-i ilccik ka-ko nay-ka nuckey ka-ass-ta.
 Kim President-HON-NOM early go-CONJ I-NOM late go-PAST-DECL
 'President Kim went early and I went late.'

In (3) the absence of the affix *-si-* in the non-finite verb *kako* makes the sentence infelicitous in contrast with the assumption above. That is, the non-finite verb is not always free from the honorific agreement constraint.

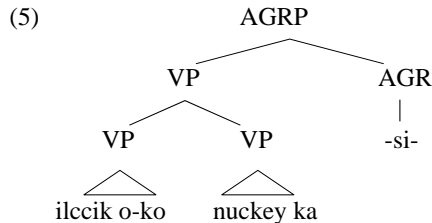
This paper examines two possible approaches: a 'syntactic phrasal affixation approach' and a 'constraint-based feature-sharing approach'. The syntactic approach will consider the omission of *-si-* in (2) as the result of the property of the phrasal affix *-si-*. On the other hand, the constraint-based approach will explain the optionality of *-si-* by depending on a constructional constraint of coordination constructions. This paper argues that, contrary to the syntactic approach, the honorific affix is not a phrasal affix. In addition, it is proposed that there are two different types of honorific encoding: morphological and constructional. Finally, it will be proposed that the non-final conjunct in (2) specifies a certain type of honorific information that is provided by the sharing of honorific information with the final conjunct; however, the honorific affix can be omitted from this non-final conjunct.

2. Syntactic Phrasal Affixation Analysis?

According to Yoon (1989, 1992), tense (e.g., *-ess*: PAST) and mood (e.g., *-ta*: DECL) in Korean should be analyzed as phrasal affixes.

- (4) Coordinate structures in Korean allow certain inflectional affixes to be missing in all but the final conjunct. In such cases, the information borne by the inflectional affixes on the final conjunct takes distributive scope over the unmarked non-final conjuncts.
 (Yoon 1992: 833).

Under Yoon's approach, the configurational c-command relation explains the partial occurrence of the inflectional affixes. If the same analysis applies to the verbal honorific affix *-si-*, it is then predicted that the first conjunct is under the distributive scope of the *-si-* in the final conjunct. For example, the omission of *-si-* in (2) can be accounted for by the syntactic construction in (5).



In the above structure, the honorific affix *-si-* has its own projection and takes distributive scope over the unmarked non-final conjunct as a phrasal affix.

Although the phrasal affixation possibility explains the partial honorific agreement in (2), it encounters problems when idiosyncratic verbs such as *cwumusi-* (sleep.hon) and *capswusi-* (eat.hon) are considered. A characteristic of these verbs is that the honorific affix *-si* cannot be separated from its base in any case. For instance, the non-honorific counterparts of these verbs are not forms omitting the honorific affix *-si-* but other suppletive forms as shown in (6).

- (6) a. *cwumu-si-ess-ta*: sleep-HON-PAST-DECL; **cwumu-ess-ta*
 ca-ass-ta: sleep-PAST-DECL; **ca-si-ess-ta*
 b. *capswu-si-ess-ta*: eat-HON-PAST-DECL; ?*capswu-ess-ta*¹
 mek-ess-ta: eat-PAST-DECL; **mek-usi-ess-ta*
 c. *tolla.ka-si-ess-ta*: die-HON-PAST-DECL; **tolla.ka-ass-ta*
 cwuk-ess-ta: die-PAST-DECL; **cwuk-si-ess-ta*

The non-honorific counterparts of *cwumusi-*, *capswusi-*, and *tolla.kasi-* are *ca-*, *mek-*, and *cwuk-*, respectively; not *cwumu-*, *capswu-*, or *tolla.ka-*. On the other hand, verb stems such as *ca-*, *mek-* and *cwuk-* are lexically specified with negative honorific information, and hence cannot be *ca-si-*, *mek-si-* or *cwuk-si-*. The *-si-* in the verbs in (6), in contrast with the *-si* morpheme in normal verbs, cannot be omitted in non-final conjuncts of the verbal coordinate construction.

- (7) Sensayng-nim-un ilccik *cwumu*-(*si*)-ko ilccik ilena-si-n-ta.
 Teacher-HON-TOP early get.up-HON-CONJ early sleep-HON-PRES-DC
 '(my) teacher goes to bed early and gets up early.'

The conjunct word, *cwumusiko*, in (7) never omits *-si-*. The omission not only results in an infelicitous word, but an ungrammatical one. A similar morphological property is observed in the Korean derivational affix such as passive morpheme *-i*.

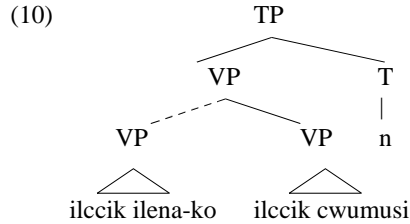
- (8) *mulikarak-i cal*-(*i*)-ko *kak-i-ess-ta*.
 hair-NOM cut-(PASS)-CONJ trim-(PASS)-PAST-DECL
 '(his) hair were cut and trimmed.'

The derivational passive affix, *-i-*, in (8) is obligatory in both conjuncts in contrast with the inflectional affix. This provides a hint for the analysis of *cwumusi-*. That is, *-si* in these idiosyncratic honorific words is not likely to be an inflectional affix, which Yoon (1992) treats as a phrasal affix.

Given the evidence above, it is more likely that *-si-* in (6) is not an inflectional affix, regardless of whether it is a derivational affix or just part of a lexeme. According to Yoon, only inflectional affixes are the phrasal affixes. Such a claim may be needed to block the ungrammatical sentence in (8) in which the derivational affix omits. As a result, if *-si* in (6) is not an inflectional affix, it may not occupy an independent syntactic node such as AGR. However, then, (9) below will be problematic for the phrasal affixation analysis.

¹ Many Korean native speakers seem to allow *capswuessta*. However, it maintains the honorific meaning.

- (9) Sensayng-nim-un ilccik ilena-ko ilccik cwumu.si-n-ta
 Teacher-HON-TOP early get.up-CONJ early sleep.hon-PRES-DECL
 '(My) teacher gets up early and goes to bed early'



As we observed already, *-si-* in the final conjunct in (9) cannot be a phrasal affix, which gives distributive scope to the first conjunct. That is, the only possible configurational syntactic structure of (9) may be that shown in (10). It is then predicted that the first conjunct cannot omit the honorific affix, but the example in (9) demonstrates that this prediction is incorrect.

The observation above suggests that the partial distribution of the honorific affix is not sufficiently explained by a phrasal affixation analysis. In the next section, instead, it will be proposed that the partial honorific agreement phenomenon results from both Korean morphological combination rules and constructional constraint, which requires the sharing of honorific information between conjuncts.

3. A Constraint-based HPSG approach

Contextual honorific information is encoded by the honorific affix *-si-*. For example, the existence of the honorific affix *-si-* indicates that the verb is specified with positive honorific information as shown in (11).

- (10) Lexical Honorific Encoding

PHON { ... -si.. }
 SUBJ { NP [CONTEXT : HON +] }
 CONTEXT | HON +

The feature structure in (11) is a rough sketch of the lexical entry of a verb with the honorific affix *-si-* (see the feature structure regime of Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar; Pollard and Sag 1994). The feature HON + is an abbreviation for the contextual information that the speaker owes honor to the referent of the subject.² What the feature structure in (11) declares is that a verb

² The feature HON + (or -) is an abbreviation of the feature CONTEXT |BACKGROUND |show-honor relation in which it is manifested that the referent of the subject is honored by the speaker.(i).

whose CONTEXT feature specifies positive honorific information, e.g., HON +, also subcategorizes for a subject which also has positive contextual honorific information.

However, negative honorific information, e.g., HON -, is not always provided by the absence of an honorific affix. For example, the first non-final conjunct in (2) cannot have negative honorific information even though it omits *-si-*. To explain this property, I propose the generalization in (12), as also observed in Cho and Sells (1994) and Kim (1994).

- (12) a. Tense morphemes (e.g., PAST, PRESENT etc.) always combine with a stem equipped with certain morphological honorific information.
 b. Non-finite verbs may omit morphological honorific information. Then, they do not resolve their honorific information in lexicon (i.e., HON +/-).

According to (12a), finite verbs always specify certain honorific information because of their morphological forms. As a consequence, it is predicted that the absence of *-si-* in finite verbs always signals the negative honorific fact that the speaker does not owe any honor to the referent of the subject.

What (12b) declares is, first, that the non-finite verb freely omits a honorific morpheme such as *-si-* or phonologically null affix \emptyset . In such a case, the honorific information of the non-finite verb is not resolved by its morphological form. For example, conjunct verbs without *-si-* may not resolve the honorific information for itself. The minimal unit with which the conjunctive particle *-ko* combines is a verb root. This morphological constraint leads to three different forms of conjunct verbs as given in (13).

- (13) a. o-si-ess-ko: come-HON-PAST-CONJ
 b. o-ass-ko: come-PAST-CONJ
 c. o-ko: come-CONJ

(13a) is a morphologically full-fledged verb. (13b) omits the honorific affix but not the tense affix, hence implying negative honorific information, i.e., HON-. (13c) omits both the honorific and tense affixes. According to (12), only finite verbs obligatorily specify their honorific information. In this sense, the non-finite verb in (13c) may appear not to resolve its honorific information on its own. This assumption appears true when the omission of *-si-* in (2) is considered; however, there are cases in which the non-finite verb without *-si-* should be analyzed as a verb with HON - rather than with HON +/-:

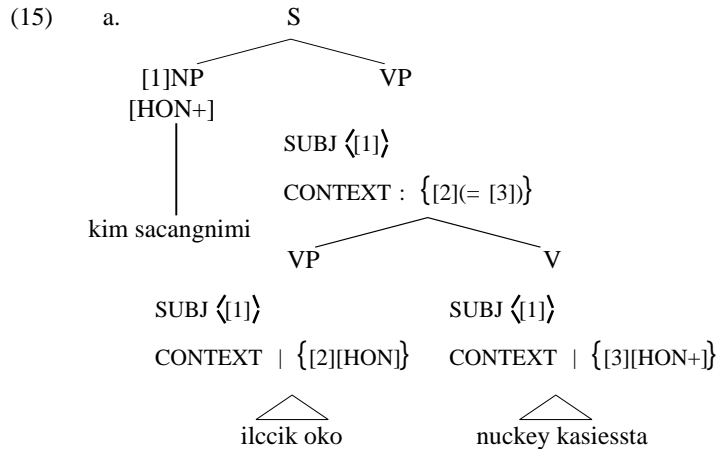
	RELATION owehonor
	HONORED the referent of the subject
speaker.(i) BACKGROUND	HONORER the speaker
	POLARITY 0(or 1)

For a detailed description of the feature structure (i), please refer to Pollard and Sag (1994: 92-95). In this paper, for simplicity, HON + (or -) will take the place of the feature structure in (i).

- (14) *nay-ka o-ko* *Lee sacang-nim-i* *ka-si-ess-ta.*
 I-NOM come-CONJ Lee President-HON-NOM go-HON-PAST-DECL
 ‘President Kim came and President Lee left.’

In Korean, the first person pronoun *na(y)* always implies non-honorific information. Consequently, the verb *oko* in (14) should be considered a verb that is morphologically specified with HON -. In this sense, the non-finite verb without *-si-* is specified with either HON - or unresolved honorific information.³

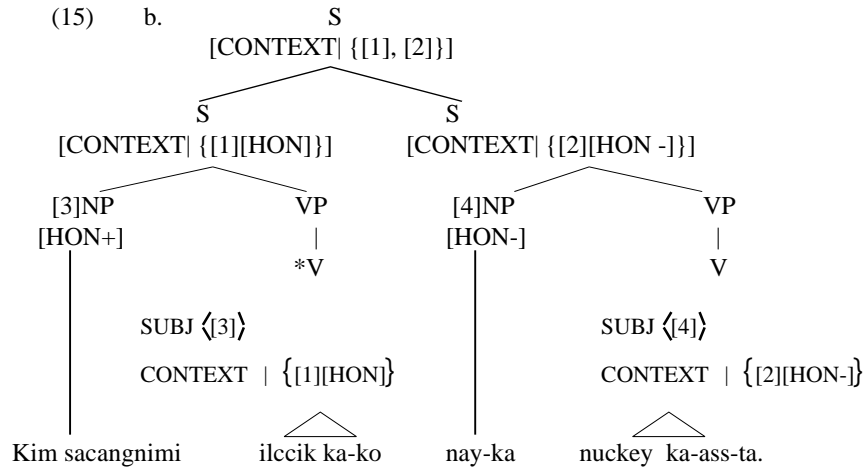
Returning to the main topic under discussion, the partial honorific agreement in (2), a question that remains is whether the morphologically underspecified honorific information of (13c) is resolved somehow. A hint can be drawn from the infelicitous sentence in (3) in section 1. What (3) shows is that non-finite verbs cannot be exempt from honorific agreement. (3) is infelicitous because the non-finite verb does not specify its own honorific information and hence cannot license the honorific information of the subject. However, then it is not clear how the non-finite verb without *-si-* in (2) results in a felicitous sentence. I propose that, in contrast to the first conjunct verb in (3), that in (2) receives honorific information by its feature-sharing of the honorific information with the final conjunct. A key difference between (2) and (3) is that the former consists of VP coordination whereas the latter is a case of S coordination. In addition, in (2) both conjuncts are marked with HON +. However, in (3) the first conjunct is marked with HON +, whereas the second conjunct with HON -. (15a) and (15b) illustrate how the observed differences result in the different judgments of felicity in (2) and (3), respectively.



In (15a), [2] standing for the contextual honorific information of the first conjunct verb is identical to that in [3], which stands for the honorific information of the final conjunct. They are identical because both [2] and [3] specify the same contextual honorific information for the same referent of a subject. Although the honorific information of the first conjunct in (2) is not

³ In fact, it may be assumed that the honorific information of the non-finite verb in (14) is not morphologically specified with HON -, but resolved somehow else. However, this possibility is rejected because the honorific information of the first conjunct should be different from that of the final conjunct as will be explained later.

provided by morphology, it is provided by the HON feature-sharing between two conjuncts. On the other hand, in (15b) the subjects refer to different referents. As a consequence, in (15b) the honorific information provided by [1] is distinct from that by [2]. In contrast with the first conjunct in (2), that in (3) is not affected by the last conjunct. Since the non-finite conjunct in (3) does not resolve its honorific information, it cannot license the subject with HON +.



This feature-sharing approach is based on the idea that the background information from the subject NP agrees with the background information from the verb (Pollard and Sag 1994). The honorific agreement principle is presented in (16).

(16) Korean Honorific Agreement Principle

The subject and the verb should specify the same honorific information in their CONTEXT feature.

verb

SUBJ { NP [CONTEXT : HON[1]] }

CONTEXT : { [HON[1]] }

The HON feature value of the verb is mostly provided by morphology. When the HON feature is not resolved by morphology, it is resolved by a feature-sharing process.

In contrast with the phrasal affixation approach, this approach does not come across the problem of idiosyncratic honorific words. Idiosyncratic honorific verbs differ from other verbs in that the honorific information of the verbs is provided by the lexemes rather than by inflectional morphology. For instance, the honorific verb lexeme *cwumusi-* in (6) manifests its honorific information as in (17a) whereas the non-honorific verb lexeme *ca-* in (6) as in (17b).

- (17) a. cwumusi-
verb
 SUBJ ⟨ NP | CONTEXT [HON+] ⟩
 CONTEXT | { [HON+] }
- b. ca-
verb
 SUBJ ⟨ NP | CONTEXT [HON-] ⟩
 CONTEXT | { [HON-] }

Regardless of whether they are affixed by other morphemes, the honorific information of the lexical entries in (17) is constant. As observed in section 2, the idiosyncratic words in (17) are syntactic atoms. The approach proposed in this paper does not depend on the syntactic position of the honorific affixes, but on the feature structures in the two conjuncts. This property of the feature-sharing approach provides an elegant explanation for the partial honorific agreement phenomenon. For example, the last conjunct in (9) will have the feature structure as in (17a). The first conjunct in (9) omits *-si-* and hence does not resolve its honorific information morphologically. However, in order to license its subject with HON +, it also needs to be marked with HON +. This honorific information is provided by its feature-sharing with the HON feature of the second conjunct. Thus, the feature-sharing approach equally applies to regular and idiosyncratic honorific verbs.

The analysis proposed in this paper depends on the feature-sharing between the HON features of two conjuncts. This analysis needs to be combined with the generalization of (12). For instance, the feature-sharing approach together with the generalization of (12) explains the infelicity of the sentence in (18).

- (18) #Kim sacang-nim-i ilccik o-si-ko nuckey ka-ass-ta.
 Kim President-HON-NOM early come-HON-CONJ late go-PAST-DECL
 'President Kim came early and left late.'

In (18) the first conjunct is morphologically marked with HON +. On the other hand, the second conjunct lacks the honorific affix *-si-*. The generalization in (12) provides the prediction that the second conjunct is marked with HON -, not with HON+/. The reason is that the tense marked verb always specifies certain honorific information in its morphological system. As a result, the final conjunct verb in (18) needs to be assumed to be affixed by a phonologically null affix \emptyset which specifies the honorific information of the verb as HON -. In this sense, (18) violates two independent rules: the honorific information of the last conjunct is not identical to that of the first conjunct; the last conjunct cannot subcategorize for the subject with HON +.

I have made several claims in this section. First, I have claimed that honorific agreement is constrained such that the honorific information of the subject should be licensed by that of the verb. Second, the omission of the honorific affix is caused by morphological combination. Finally, the morphologically unresolved honorific information in the non-final conjunct of the verbal coordination is resolved by the feature-sharing of honorific information between conjuncts.

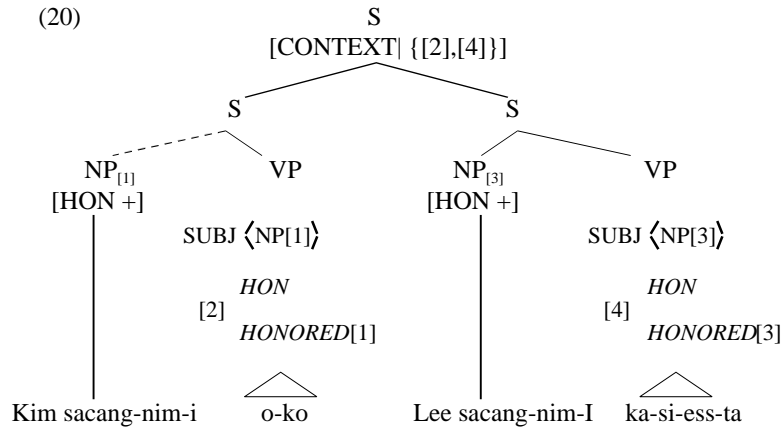
4. Honorific Agreement and Pragmatics

In previous section, it was shown that the honorific information of the non-finite verb without *-si-* is provided by its feature-sharing with the finite verb in the last conjunct. The following sentence in (19) may still raise problems for this approach, however.

- (19) ?_{OK}! Kim sacang-nim-i o-ko
 Kim President-HON-NOM come-CONJ
 Lee sacang-nim-i ka-si-ess-ta.
 Lee President-HON-NOM go-HON-PAST-DECL
 ‘President Kim came President Lee left.’

Many Korean native speakers allow the omission of the honorific morpheme in the first conjunct. If (19) is felicitous, the partial honorific agreement in (19) is not explained by the feature-sharing between the honorific information of two conjuncts, because the coordination construction consists of two S’s whose subjects refer to different referents.

As already observed, the verb should specify honorific information that is identical to that of the subject in order to license the honorific information of the subject. I propose that the honorific information of the first conjunct verb in (19) is provided by a pragmatic constraint. The tree structure of the S coordination in (19) is given in (20).



In (20) the first conjunct verb does not specify any morphological honorific information. In the second conjunct, the verb specifies HON +. The feature of HONORED specifies who is honored by the speaker. The value of the HONORED is [1] in the first conjunct whereas it is [2] in the second conjunct. Since the values of HONORED in [2] and [4] are different, index [2] is distinct from [4]. In section 3, it has been suggested that feature-sharing is possible between the HON features which specify honorific information about the same referent. Consequently, the underspecified honorific feature [2] is specified by neither morphology nor feature-sharing. Because of this, several Korean speakers consider the sentence in (19) to be infelicitous.

However, I assume that speakers who allow (19) use a pragmatic rule by which the first conjunct resolves its HON feature as positive. Such a pragmatic rule may be established by background discourse information such that the speaker owes honor to both *Kim sacangnim* and

Lee sacangnim. Owing to this kind of pragmatic rule, the value of the HON feature of the last conjunct should be identical to that of the first conjunct. The effect of this pragmatic constraint may resolve the honorific value of the first conjunct in (19) as positive like the final conjunct. In fact there is evidence that the felicity of (19) is dependent on such a pragmatic constraint:

- (21) ??Halape.nim-kkese o-ko
 Grandfather.hon-NOM come-(HON)-CONJ
 ape.nim-I ka-si-ess-ta.
 father.hon-NOM go-HON-PAST-DECL
 ‘Grandfather came and father left.’

Korean has two nominative cases: normal nominative case *i* (or *ka*) and honorific nominative case *-kkese*. When a subject is marked with the honorific nominative in addition to the honorific marker, it is assumed that the subject is more honored by speaker than a subject is with an honorific marker and normal nominative case. In (21) the degree of honor directed to the subject in the first conjunct is higher than that of the second conjunct. Most Korean speakers, including those who allow (19), reject (21). If the honorific information of the first conjunct in (19) is provided by some syntactic process or feature unification, the infelicity of (21) cannot be explained. However, the assumption of pragmatic constraint explains the infelicity of (21). That is, in (21) it is not maintained that the speaker owes equal degrees of honor to the referents of the subjects in two conjuncts. As a result, the honorific information of the last conjunct is not copied onto the first conjunct.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have suggested that partial honorific agreement is explained by the sharing of features containing honorific information in two conjuncts. This approach, in contrast to a syntactic alternative (e.g., phrasal affixation approach), avoids the problems presented by idiosyncratic honorific words. In addition, this paper shows that honorific information is not only provided through morphology, but also through a constructional constraint in which two features (e.g., HON) are identical. This constraint based approach explains partial honorific agreement without violation of the Lexical Integrity Principle, according to which “the syntax neither manipulates nor has access to the internal form of words” (Anderson 1992: 84).

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