Korean object honorification as syntactic agreement

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Abstract: Honorification has been considered as (a) simply an expressive construction (e.g., Kim & Sells 2007), (b) a syntactically-governed but morphologically implemented phenomenon (e.g., Choi & Harley 2019), or (c) purely syntactic agreement (e.g., Boeckx & Niinuma 2004). I introduce verbal suppletion in Korean with object honorification to better understand the phenomenon. The observation made here is in favor of an agreement-based approach to honorification. It also implies the possibility of taking honorificity as one of the ϕ-features (Corbett 2006).

1 Introduction

The phenomenon

(1) a. Sarah-ka Jino-eykey sakwa-lul [**mek-ye-cwu /**
Sarah-NOM Jino-DAT apple-ACC [eat-CAUS-LV /
***mek-ye-tuli**]-ess-ta
*eat-CAUS-LV.HON]-PST-DECL
'Sarah made Jino eat an apple.'

b. Sarah-ka halapeci-kkey sakwa-lul [***mek-ye-cwu /**
Sarah-NOM grandfather-DAT.HON apple-ACC [*eat-CAUS-LV /
mek-ye-tuli]-ess-ta
eat-CAUS-LV.HON]-PST-DECL
'Sarah made grandfather eat an apple.'

'Grandfather' is lexically [+HON]; a proper noun is lexcially [-HON]

Key observation

- Verb suppletion triggered by an indirect object but not the direct object
- Verb suppletion only targeting the light verb and not the main verb
- Verb suppletion conditioned by controllers that are [+HON]

Why is this surprising?

- Verb suppletion has been accounted for mostly by locality constraints (e.g., Node Adjacency Hypothesis, Span Adjacency Hypothesis)
- Suppletion conditioned by a feature beyond the local domain is not predicted
- The feature that triggers suppletion is [+HON] feature

Proposal

- Object honorification as a purely syntactic agreement
- Implication of taking honorificity as one of the ϕ-feature (e.g., Corbett 2006)

Roadmap

1. Introduction: Basic facts about verb suppletion and the current phenomenon
2. Honorification in Korean
3. Locality constraints on verbal suppletion
4. Puzzle
5. Analysis
6. (Bonus: Alternative analyses)

2 Honorifics in Korean

2.1 Honorifying suffixes

- Two ways to honorify the referent of the subject (Kim & Sells 2007):
  (a) Honorifying word: *-nim*
  (b) Honorifying case marker: *-kkeyse*

- Honorifying verbal suffix *-si*
  - Verbal suffix *-si* is obligatory whenever the subject is [+HON]
  - Cases where the subject is [+HON]:
    (a) Lexically [HON]
    (b) Noun affixed with *-nim* or *kkeyse*

(2) Examples of subject honorification agreement
  a. Lexically [+HON]

     halapeci-(nim)-{i/kkeyse} o-*(si)-ess-ta
     grandfather-(HON)-{NOM/NOM.HON} come-*(HON)-PST-DECL

     'Grandfather came.'
  b. Honorifying word/suffix

     phansa-(nim)-kkeyse o-*(si)-ess-ta
     judge-(HON)-NOM.HON come-HON-PST-DECL

     'The judge came.' (Speaker expressing honor/politeness to the 'judge')

2.2 Verbal suppletion

Subject honorification

- Verbal suppletion in subject honorification (Choi & Harley 2019; Song et al. 2019)
  - 'eat': *mek-* ~ *capswu-* / *tu-*
  - 'sleep': *ca-* ~ *cwumwu-*
  - 'die': *cwuk-* ~ *tolakasi-*

(3) Examples in verbal suppletion in subject honorification (Chung 2009: 544)
  a. Sarah-ka sakwa-lul {meku / *capswu}-(*si)-ess-ta
     Sarah-NOM.HON apple-ACC {eat / *eat.HON}-(*HON)-PST-DECL
     'Sarah ate an apple.'
  b. apeci-kkeyse sakwa-lul {*meku / capswu}-si-ess-ta
     father-NOM.HON apple-ACC {*eat / eat.HON}-HON-PST-DECL
     'Father ate an apple.'

Direct object honorification

- Verbal suppletion in direct object honorification
  - 'meet': *manna-* ~ *poy-*
  - 'bring': *teli-* ~ *mosi-*

(4) Verb suppletion in direct object honorification (Song et al. 2019: 56)
  a. John-i ai-lul {manna / *poye}-ss-ta
     John-NOM child-ACC {meet / *meet.HON}-PST-DECL
     'John met the child.'
  b. John-i sensayng-nim-ul {*manna / poye}-ss-ta
     John-NOM teacher-ACC {*meet / meet.HON}-PST-DECL
     'John met the teacher.'

Indirect object honorification

- Verbal suppletion in indirect object honorification
  - 'give': *cwu-* ~ *tuli-*
  - 'ask': *mwut-* ~ *yeccwup-*

(5) Verb suppletion in indirect object honorification (Song et al. 2019: 56)
  a. John-i ai-eykey senmwul-ul {cwu / *tuli}-ess-ta
     John-NOM child-DAT present-ACC {give / *give.HON}-PST-DECL
     'John gave a present to the child.'
  b. John-i sensayng-nim-eykey senmwul-ul {*cwu /
     John-NOM teacher-HON-DAT present-ACC {give /
     tuli}-ess-ta
     *give.HON}-PST-DECL
     'John gave a present to the teacher.'

3 Puzzle

The current data...

- Includes a light verb (LV), and a passive (PASS) and a causative marker (CAUS)
- Demonstrates a NEW observation where:
  Light verb but not the main verb undergoes alternation!

3.1 Three types of verbs for object honorification

- ✓ indicates that the verb must undergo alternation for object honorification
- ✗ indicates the verb does not undergo alternation; there is no verb available for suppletion

Type A: Main verb ✗ / Light verb ✗

- When DO is [+HON]
  - 'hit': *ttayli-* ~ *ttayli-*
- When IO is [+HON]
  - 'step on': *palp-hi* (step.on-PASS) ~ *palp-hi*

Type B: Main verb ✓ / Light verb ✗ (Section 2.2)

- When DO is [+HON]
  - 'meet': *manna-* ~ *poy-*
- When IO is [+HON]
  - 'ask': *mwut-* ~ *yeccwup-*

Type C: Main verb ✗ / Light verb ✓ (NEW OBSERVATION)

- When DO is [+HON]
  - 'help': *towa-cwu-* (help-LV) ~ *towa-tuli-* (help-LV.HON)
  - 'make someone laugh': *wus-kye-cwu-* (laugh-CAUS-LV) ~ *wus-kye-tuli* (laugh-CAUS-LV.HON)
- When IO is [+HON]
  - 'hand in': *kenney-cwu* (hand.in-LV) ~ *kenney-tuli-* (hand.in-LV.HON)
  - 'make someone eat': *mek-ye-cwu* (eat-CAUS-LV) ~ *eat*-CAUS-LV.HON

3.2 Examples of Type C

(6) 'Help'

a. Sarah-ka Jino-lul [**to / towa-cwu** / ***towa-tuli**]-ess-ta
Sarah-NOM Jino-ACC [help / help-LV / *help-LV.HON]-PST-DECL
'Sarah helped Jino.'

b. Sarah-ka halapeci-lul [?**to** / ***towa-cwu** /
Sarah-NOM grandfather-ACC [?help / *help-LV /
towa-tuli]-ess-ta
help-LV.HON]-PST-DECL
'Sarah helped grandfather.'

(7) 'Laugh' (causative)

a. Sarah-ka Juno-lul [**wus-ki / wus-kye-cwu** /
Sarah-NOM Juno-ACC [laugh-CAUS / laugh-CAUS-LV /
***wus-kye-tuli**]-ess-ta
*laugh-CAUS-LV.HON]-PST-DECL
'Sarah made Juno laugh.'

b. Sarah-ka halapeci-lul [?**wus-ki** / ***wus-kye-cwu** /
Sarah-NOM grandfather-ACC [?laugh-CAUS / *laugh-CAUS-LV /
wus-kye-tuli]-ess-ta
laugh-CAUS-LV.HON]-PST-DECL
'Sarah made grandfather laugh.'

(8) 'Hand in' (passive)

a. Sarah-ka Jino-eykey swuken-ul [**kenney / kenney-cwu** /
Sarah-NOM Jino-DAT towel-ACC [pass.over / pass.over-LV /
***kenney-tuli**]-ass/ess-ta
pass.over-LV.HON]-PST-DECL
'Sarah handed in the towel to Jino.'

b. Sarah-ka halapeci-kkey swuken-ul [?**kenney** / ***kenney-cwu** /
Sarah-NOM grandfather-DAT.HON towel-ACC [?hand.in / hand.in-LV /
kenney-tuli]-ass/ess-ta
hand.in-LV.HON]-PST-DECL
'Sarah handed in the towel to (her) grandfather.'

(9) 'Eat' (causative)

a. Sarah-ka Jino-eykey sakwa-lul [**mek-i / mek-ye-cwu** /
Sarah-NOM Jino-DAT apple-ACC [eat-CAUS / eat-CAUS-LV /
***mek-ye-tuli**]-ess-ta
*eat-CAUS-LV.HON]-PST-DECL
'Sarah made Jino eat an apple.'

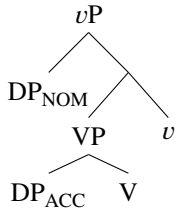
b. Sarah-ka halapeci-kkey sakwa-lul [?**mek-i** / ***mek-ye-cwu**
Sarah-NOM grandfather-DAT.HON apple-ACC [?eat-CAUS / *eat-CAUS-LV
/ mek-ye-tuli]-ess-ta
/ eat-CAUS-LV.HON]-PST-DECL
'Sarah made grandfather eat an apple.'

4 Analysis

4.1 Assumptions on the structure

Single object

(10) Tree diagram for structure with a single object



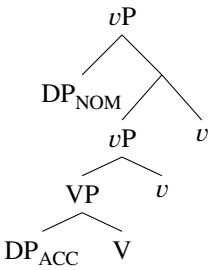
(11) 'Help' (DO [+HON])

Sarah-ka halapeci-lul [***towa-cwu / towa-tuli**]-ess-ta
Sarah-NOM grandfather-ACC [*help-LV / help-LV.HON]-PST-DECL

'Sarah helped grandfather.'

Single object (causative)

(12) Tree diagram for structure with a single object (causative)
(Harley's (2008) analysis on Japanese causatives)

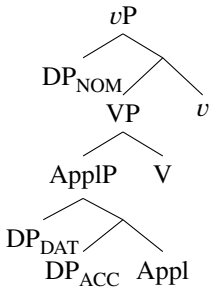


- The main verb is positioned at the head V
The CAUS is at the lower *v*P head; the LV is located at the higher *v* head

(13) Sarah-ka halapeci-lul [***wus-kye-cwu** /
Sarah-NOM grandfather-ACC [*laugh-CAUS-LV /
wus-kye-tuli]-ess-ta
laugh-CAUS-LV.HON]-PST-DECL
'Sarah made grandfather laugh.'

Double object

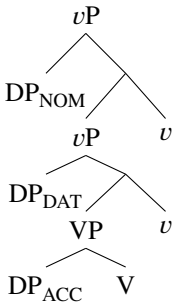
(14) Tree diagram for structure with double objects



(15) Sarah-ka halapeci-kkey swuken-ul [***kenney-cwu /**
Sarah-NOM grandfather-DAT.HON towel-ACC [hand.in-LV /
kenney-tuli]-ass/ess-ta
hand.in-LV.HON]-PST-DECL
'Sarah handed in the towel to (her) grandfather.'

Double object (causative)

(16) Tree diagram for structure with double objects (causative)



(17) Sarah-ka halapeci-kkey sakwa-lul [***mek-ye-cwu /**
Sarah-NOM grandfather-DAT.HON apple-ACC [*eat-CAUS-LV /
mek-ye-tuli]-ess-ta
eat-CAUS-LV.HON]-PST-DECL
'Sarah made grandfather eat an apple.'

4.2 Proposal

Key observation

- Verb suppletion triggered by an indirect object but not the direct object
- Verb suppletion only targeting the light verb and not the main verb
- Verb suppletion conditioned by controllers that are [+HON]

Object honorification as syntactic agreement

- Agreement: Systematic covariance between a semantic or formal property of one element and a formal property of another (Steele 1978: 610), and such a semantic or formal property includes person, number, and gender featuers (also known as ϕ-features)
- Agree: A syntactic operation taking place between a probe P and a goal G, between which a featural matching relation holds

Taking [+HON] as ϕ-feature

- The validity of taking taking [+HON] as ϕ-feature: Empirical support
  - Subject-verb honorification agreement in Korean (3)
  - Japanese object honorification agreement (18)
  - Allocutive (addressee) agreement in Korean (19)

(18) Object honorification in Japanese (Boeckx & Niinuma 2004: 456)

a. Hanako-ga Tanaka sensei-ni Mary-o go-syookai-si-ta
Hanaka-NOM Tanaka professor-DAT Mary-ACC HON-introduce-HON-PST
'Hanako introduced Mary to Professor Tanaka.'

b. Hanako-ga Mary-ni Tanaka sensei-o
Hanako-NOM Mary-DAT Tanaka professor-ACC
(go)-syookai-(si)-ta
(HON)-introduce-(HON)-PST
'Hanako introduced Professor Tanaka to Mary.'

(19) Allocutive (addressee) agreement in Korean (Kim 2019: 2)

a. (Talking to a customer (expressing politeness))
kokayk-nim-kkeyse o-chung-ey [*issu /
customer-HON-NOM.HON five-floor-at [*exist /
kyey]-*(si)-eyo
exist.HON]-*(HON)-DECL.POLITE
'The customer is on the fifth floor.'

b. (Talking to a customer (expressing politeness))
namsengpok-i o-chung-ey [issu / *kyey]-**si**-eyo
men's.wear-NOM five-floor-at [exist / *exist.HON]-**AL**-DECL.POLITE
'Men's wear is on the fifth floor.'

(20) (Contextual) feature value and honorific agreement in Mait (Corbett 2006: 137)

a. tohar bāp aelthun
your.MID$_h$ON father.HON came.3$_{hon.2_m id_h on}$
'Your (mid-honorific) father (honorific) came.'

- Languages which have agreement in respect include Muna (Austronesian), Maithili (Indo-Iranian), Tamil, and Bavarian German (Corbett, 2006)
- Taking honorificity as ϕ-feature has also been proposed in other studies (e.g., Magahi (Baker & Alok 2019))

[BONUS]

Agreement and ϕ-feature

- The validity of agreement targeted to a specific feature
  - If C is a relativized probe that bears [uPART] and [uADDR], and
  - if a 2nd person subject bears both these features, but a 1st person bears [uPART] only
  - Interaction with a 2nd person object takes place to satisfy [ADDR] under Cyclic Agree (Béjar, 2003)

(21) The 1/2 asymmetry in Nez Perce (Deal 2015: 6)

a. ke-m kaa pro_{subj} cewcew-téetum pro_{obj}
C-2 then PRO.2SG telephone-TAM PRO.1SG
'When you call me'

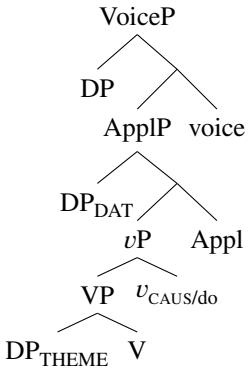
b. ke-m-ex kaa pro_{subj} cewcew-téetu pro_{obj}
C-2-1 then PRO.1SG telephone-TAM PRO.22SG
'When I call you'

- This shows that fine-grained value of feature is important for agreement. The same analogy can be made to [+/-HON] feature

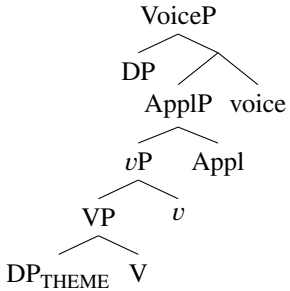
Causative and dative structure

- Causative/Applicative structure

(22) Causative/Applicative structure in Korean 1 (Jung 2014)

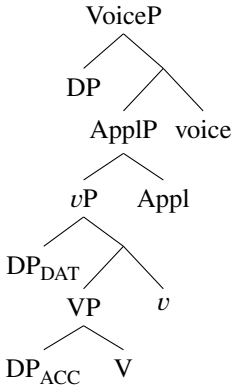


(23) Causative/Applicative structure in Korean 2 (Jung 2014)

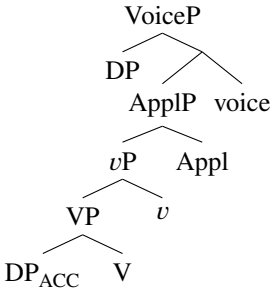


Revised proposal

(24) Proposal: Double object



(25) Proposal: Single object



5 Bonus: Alternative analyses

Locality constraints

- Verbal suppletion is predicted under strict conditions: local constraints
- The extent of locality for the conditioning environment varies
  1. Linear distance (Embick 2000, 2010)
  2. Structural node
     - Node Adjacency Hypothesis (Bobaljik 2012; Bobaljik & Harley 2017)
  3. Structural span/domain
     - Structural Node Adjacency Hypothesis (Merchant 2015)
     - Domain-based Approach (Moskal & Smith 2016; Smith et al. 2018)

5.1 Node Adjacency Hypothesis

- The context that conditions allomorphy or suppletion is constrained by structural locality (Bobaljik, 2012; Bobaljik & Harley, 2017)
- The triggerer of the rule should not be too "far" away to allow morphological rules to be applied (26)

(26) Locality constraint by node adjacency (Bobaljik 2012: 13)
  a. $\alpha \ldots]_{X^0} \ldots \beta$
  b. $^*\alpha \ldots]_{XP} \ldots \beta$
  - β cannot condition allomorph selection of head α if β is separated from α by the maximal projection boundary
  - The structural distance between β and α matters

(27) Hiaki 'kill' (Bobaljik & Harley 2017: 145)
  a. Aapo/Vempo uka koowi-ta **me'a**-k
  3SG/3PL the.SG pig-ACC.SG kill.SG-PRF
  'He/They killed the pig.'
  b. Aapo/Vempo ume kowi-m **sua**-k
  3SG/3PL the.PL pig-PL kill.PL-PRF
  'He/They killed the pigs.'

Number feature of the direct object causes verbal suppletion

(28) Kolyma Yukaghir 'give' (Maslova 2002: 353-354)
  a. met tet-in pušnina-lek **kej**-te-me
  I you-DAT fur-PRED give-FUT-OF:1SG
  'I will give you some fur.'

  b. tāt tintaN adil-Nin tude mašl'uø-gele **tadī**-m
  CA that boy-DAT his daughter-ACC give-TR:3SG
  'Then he gave his daughter to that boy.'

Person feature of the indirect object causes verbal suppletion

5.2 Span Adjacency Hypothesis

- 'Span' is a sequence of head complement in a single projection (Svenonius, 2012)
- Allomorphy can be explained along this line (e.g., Merchant 2015; Moskal 2015; Smith et al. 2018)

(29) Span Adjacency Hypothesis (Merchant 2015: 394)
Allomorphy is conditioned only by an adjacency span

(30) Spanning Insertion Hypothesis (Merchant: 288)
  a. Formal notion of span
  Let T be an ordered n-tuple of terminal nodes $\langle t_1, ..., t_n \rangle$ such that for all $t \in T, t = t_1$ or t is an element of the extended projection of t_1.
    - For all $k = 1...n, t_k$ is a span. (Every node is a trivial span.)
    - For any $n > 0$, if t_k is a span, then $\langle t_k, ..., t_{k+n} \rangle$ is a span.
  b. A span and only a span can be targeted for Vocabulary Insertion

- Example: Greek verb insertion conditioned by both Voice^0 and Aspect^0
These two features are structurally distant from the root verb

(31) Greek 'tie' (Merchant 2015: 285)
  a. $\sqrt{\text{TIE}} \rightarrow$ 6e / ____ Voice Aspect[+perf]
  b. $\sqrt{\text{TIE}} \rightarrow$ 6en

- Environment for suppletion is conditioned by morphosyntactic features of Aspect, disintct from Voice feature
- Predicts correct suppletion even when the triggerer, Aspect, is intervened by Voice
- Allows more room than the Node Adjacency Hypothesis in that the domain of span allows nodes that are not immediately adjacent to the root to condition allomorphy

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