Raising-to-Subject in Korean: Evidence from Honorific Agreement and NPI Licensing
Jinsun Choe
Hankuk University of Foreign Studies

This study investigates the availability of subject-to-subject raising in Korean by using the subject honorification properties as a diagnostic tool. An acceptability judgment task was conducted with Korean-speaking adults, and the results showed that participants accepted sentences in which raising is purported to have taken place.

Subject-to-subject raising is a movement operation in which the embedded subject raises to the matrix subject position, as in (1). Although it has been widely studied in languages like English, it has been a matter of controversy whether the same operation exists in Korean. Some scholars claim that raising-to-subject can take place in Korean (e.g., Um, 2010), as evidenced by the subject-verb honorific agreement in (2), in which grandfather agrees with the honorific marker -si- on the matrix verb -kathta. However, that very sentence was judged ungrammatical by other scholars (Choi, 1988; Um & Kim, 2009). Thus, the present study was conducted with naïve participants in order to assess these opposing claims and to address the question of whether raising movement is possible in Korean.

One hundred and seven Korean-speaking adults participated in a judgment task, in which they were asked to rate the acceptability of various sentences, using a 5-point Likert scale. Each participant was presented with a total of one hundred sentences (20 experimental items, 60 control items, 20 fillers, randomized). Experimental items were bi-clausal –kes kathta constructions, in which the subject of the embedded clause was always an honorable noun (mostly with the marker –nim), and they were divided into four conditions depending on the position (embedded vs. matrix) and presence (presence vs. absence) of the honorific marker –si, as in Table 1. To compare the acceptability of the experimental items, two types of control items were included: acceptable and unacceptable sentences.

The distributions of Likert scores per condition are presented in a diverging stacked bar chart in Figure 1. When compared with the results of the control items, all conditions in the experimental items show the pattern similar to that of acceptable sentences, rather than that of unacceptable sentences, reflected by responses primarily located in the ‘natural’ answer options. Furthermore, the results of one-sample t-tests conducted for each experimental condition revealed that the mean scores of each condition were significantly higher than a neutral score 3 (all ps < .05; Figure 2). In particular, it was observed that the mean scores of the experimental conditions were all significantly different from the mean rating of 1.46 which was for a subset of unacceptable sentences (control items) where a non-honorific subject clashes with the honorific marker on the verb. That is, participants treated experimental items differently from sentences containing honorific agreement errors.

In sum, participants were most likely to accept sentences in which the honorific marker -si- is triggered by the honorific subject noun phrase and occurs within the same embedded clause (cond. 2). However, they also showed a tendency to accept the use of -si- on the matrix predicate –kathta, even when there seems to be no honorific grammatical subject in the matrix clause (cond. 1 & cond. 3), suggesting that the honorific marker agrees with the honorific subject that has raised from the embedded clause to the matrix clause. Thus, these findings point to the possibility of raising movement in Korean, indicating that the embedded subject is able to move out of the clause to the matrix subject position to agree with the honorific marker on the matrix predicate.
(1)  a. Unraised: It seems that John is happy.
    b. Raising: John seems [to be happy].

(2)  a. Unraised: [halapeci-kkeyse
     grandfather-Hon.nom home-to go-Hon-Rel.pst kath-ta.
     ‘It seems that grandfather went home.’ (kes: nominalizer)
      grandfather-Hon home-to go-Hon-Rel.pst kath-usi-ta.
     ‘Grandfather seems to have gone home.’

Table 1. Experimental items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Position and Presence of the Honorific marker -si-</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Embedded</td>
<td>Matrix clause</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>[교수님께서 병원으로 가신 것] 같으시다</td>
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<tr>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>[교수님께서 병원으로 가신 것] 같다</td>
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Figure 1. Percentage of scores by condition

Figure 2. Mean scores of experimental items and control items