Obligatoriness and optionality in Korean subject honorification

1. Introduction In this study, I argue that subject honorification (SH) is best analyzed as a syntactic operation. Applying the framework of the Generalized Head Movement (GHM, Arregi and Pietraszko (2021a,b)) to the obligatory and optional SH pattern in Korean long-form negation (LFN), I will show that LFN should be considered evidence for syntactic SH, contra the post-syntactic analysis of Choi and Harley (2019).

(1) *cwusang-kkeyse* *ka-(*si)-ess-ta.*
king.HON-NOM.HON go-**HON$_S$**-PST-DECL
'The king went.'

Korean SH is a grammatical way to convey that the speaker regards the subject of an utterance socially higher than themselves. There are two ways to do this in terms of predicates: regular honorification (RegH) and suppletive honorification (SupH). RegH is done by suffixing the predicate with SH ***-(u)si***, as in (1).

(2) a. ***cwumwusi****-ess-ta.*
sleep.HON$_S$-PST-DECL
'slept (honorific).'

b. * ***ca-si****-ess-ta.*
sleep-**HON$_S$**-PST-DECL
'slept (honorific).'

SupH is realized by a SupH stem. For instance, when SH is marked on to the root 'sleep,' a SupH stem ***cwumwusi-*** is inserted instead of the regular stem ***ca-*** and SH ***-(u)si***, as in (2a). Having RegH is ungrammatical if the root has a SupH stem, as in (2b).

2. SH in LFN Long-form negation (LFN) is one of the two sentential negations in Korean. When a predicate is long-form negated, it consists of two verbal parts: a negated non-finite main verb and a finite negation supported by ***ha-*** 'do,' (***ha***-support) as in (3).

(3) a. *ka-**si**-ci* *ani-**ha**-**si**-ess-ta.*
go-**HON$_S$**-ci not-**do**-**HON$_S$**-PST-DECL
'did not go (honorific).'

b. ***cwumwusi****-ci* *ani-**ha**-**si**-ess-ta.*
sleep.HON$_S$-CI not-**do**-**HON$_S$**-DECL
'did not sleep (honorific).'

(3) further shows that SH can be marked both on the main predicate and the negation. SH can be optionally omitted. In the case of RegH, SH can be omitted from either the main predicate or the negation, but not both. In the case of SupH, only SH on the negation can be omitted, but that on the main verb is obligatory. Table 1 summarizes this observation.

RegH	'did not go'	SupH	'did not sleep'
*ka-**si**-ci*	*ani-ha-**si**-*	***cwumwusi****-ci*	*ani-ha-**si**-*
*ka-**si**-ci*	*ani-ha-*	***cwumwusi****-ci*	*ani-ha-*
ka-ci	*ani-ha-**si***	**ca-ci*	*ani-ha-**si**-*
**ka-ci*	*ani-ha-*	**ca-ci*	*ani-ha-*

Table 1: Optionality of SH in LFN

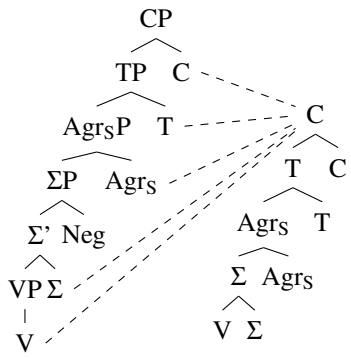
3. Syntactic analysis of *ha*-support Following Arregi and Pietraszko (2021a,b), I analyze that LFN is characterized by two processes: *Split-by-Intervention* and *Orphan Assignment* (OA). The insertion of defective pronunciations in orphan nodes of complex heads further explains ***ha***-support and the observed optional SH pattern, as shown below.

I also assume that SH is a syntactic agreement realized by Agr$_S$ node with [+Hon] feature copied from the subject NP, following Jou (2024). Agr$_S$[+Hon] is subject to the insertion of SH ***-(u)si*** for RegH, by (4e), or conditions the insertion of SupH stem for SupH through Vocabulary Insertion (VI, Halle and Marantz 1993), by (4b) and (4d).

(4) Vocabulary items

a. V[$\sqrt{}$GO] $\leftrightarrow$ *ka-*
b. V[$\sqrt{}$SLEEP] $\leftrightarrow$ ***cwumwusi-*** / __ Agr$_S$[HON:+]
c. V[$\sqrt{}$SLEEP] $\leftrightarrow$ *ca-*
d. Agr$_S$[HON:+] $\leftrightarrow$ $\varnothing$ / $\underbrace{\{cwumwusi\text{-}, kyeysi\text{-}, tusi\text{-}, ...\}}_{\textbf{Suppletive SH stems}}$ __
e. Agr$_S$[HON:+] $\leftrightarrow$ ***-(u)si***
f. Agr$_S$[HON:−] $\leftrightarrow$ $\varnothing$

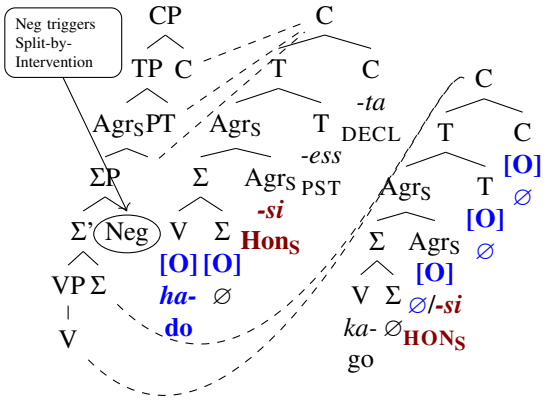
(5)



The first puzzle to solve is the structure of LFN. The structure of LFN is important since it served as central evidence for post-syntactic SH in Choi and Harley (2019). They analyze that ***ha-*** support feeds SH in LFN. Since they assume post-syntactic ***ha-*** support, it is natural to consider SH a post-syntactic process.

GHM, however, opens the door to SH as a syntactic operation by providing a way to analyze ***ha-***support and, ultimately, SH as syntactic processes. A complex head is not necessarily pronounced at the top of the head chain but at one of the associated syntactic terminals, as seen in (5). Then, the complex head splits into two structurally identical complex heads if a specifier intervenes between associated nodes by *Split-by-Intervention*, as seen in (6). I assume Neg as Spec,ΣP (Laka 1990). The position of the specifier determines the boundary of the split. Thus, the complex head splits between Σ and Agr_S.

(6)



Then, any head not associated with its original position in the structure is assigned orphan status marked with **[O]** in (6) by *Orphan assignment* (OA). The important characteristic of orphan nodes is that they get defective pronunciations instead of full pronunciations normally inserted otherwise. Defective pronunciations vary across different heads. In the case of V**[O]**, ***ha-*** is inserted as a defective pronunciation. Thus, ***ha-*** 'do' of ***ha-*** is derived from the same V as the lower predicate, which exists from the syntax. Thus, LFN is not necessarily crucial evidence supporting the post-syntactic SH. Further, GHM analysis explains why SH can be marked both on the the higher and the lower complex head. This is because each complex head contains Agr_S and can be subject to the insertion of SH. However, two issues still need to be addressed: optionality in SH.

4. Optional SH is a defective pronunciation. Like ***ha-***support, the optional SH pattern is explained by a defective pronunciation of Agr_S**[O]**. Simply speaking, its defective pronunciation is ∅.

However, while the defective pronunciation ***ha-*** is the only available vocabulary item for V**[O]**, Agr_S**[O]** can optionally have the full pronunciation, ***-(u)si***. This kind of optionality is supported by optionality between the finite and the non-finite form of the verb found in Danish and Norwegian predicate clefts (Platzack 2012; Arregi and Pietraszko 2021b). Thus, we can derive the first and the third pattern in Table 1, based on (6). To derive the second pattern, I further hypothesize that Agr_SP is base-generated at a position either higher or lower than ΣP. Thus, when Agr_SP is base-generated lower than ΣP, OA applies to Agr_S in the negation, and we can derive the second pattern.

Finally, the obligatory honorific suppletion in SupH is characterized by Agr_S always present in the main predicate. Since its orphan status does not have anything to do with its ability to condition suppletion, we can correctly derive the obligatory suppletion pattern summarized on the right-hand column of Table 1.

Abbreviations

DECL declarative
HON honorific
NOM nominative
PST past

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