

Raising-to-Subject in Korean: Evidence from Honorific Agreement and NPI Licensing

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1 Introduction

Subject-to-subject raising patterns are of great interest in linguistics, though there is significant controversy as to whether Korean exhibits this pattern. The present study investigates the availability of subject-to-subject raising in Korean by using subject honorification and licensing of negative polarity items (NPIs) as diagnostics, and finds that in acceptability judgment tasks, participants accept raising sentences in Korean, contrary to reports in the literature. I conclude that Korean does indeed have raising-to-subject.

The outline of the paper is as follows. Section 1 introduces raising constructions in English and in Korean. Section 2 presents a review of previous studies on the *-kes kathta* construction, a purported raising pattern in Korean. Sections 3 and 4 describe two experiments, acceptability judgment tasks conducted with native Korean-speaking adults. Lastly, Section 5 discusses the findings and concludes the paper.

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However, it is not easy to choose one syntactic representation over the other as there is no overt change in word order even if raising were to take place, providing a reason for controversy about whether raising movement exists in Korean.

3 Previous Studies

Some scholars claim that subject-to-subject raising can take place in Korean, as evidenced by the subject-verb honorification agreement in (4b), in which *halapeci* ‘grandfather’ agrees with the honorific marker *-si-* on the matrix verb (e.g., Um 2010):

- (4) a. Unraised: [[halapeci-kkeyse cip-ey ka-si-n] kes]
 grandfather-HON.NOM home-LOC go-HON-REL.PST NML
 kath-ta.
 seem-DECL
 ‘It seems that my grandfather went home.’
- b. Raised: **halapeci-kkeyse** [[*t*] cip-ey ka-si-n] kes]
 grandfather-HON home-LOC go-**hon**-REL.PST NML
 kath-**usi**-ta.
 seem-**HON**-DECL
 ‘**My grandfather** seems to have gone home.’

However, this very sentence in (4b) was judged ungrammatical by other scholars (Choi 1988; Um & Kim 2009).

Recently, Choe (2016) used the NPI clause-mate condition (5) to investigate whether Korean exhibits subject-to-subject raising.

- (5) NPI clause-mate condition (Choe 1988):
 NPIs and negative morphemes must co-occur within the same clause.

In an acceptability judgment task with 172 native Korean-speaking adults, Choe used the following three types of sentences in (6) as experimental sentences.

- (6) a. amwuto John-ul cohaha-ci anh-nun kes kath-ta.
 anyone John-ACC like-COMP NEG-REL.PRES NML seem-DECL
 ‘It seems that nobody likes John.’
 (Lit.) ‘It seems that anybody does not like John.’

b. amwuto John-ul cohaha-nun kes kath-ci anh-ta.
 anyone John-ACC like-REL.PRES NML seem-COMP NEG-DECL
 ‘Nobody seems to like John.’
 (Lit.) ‘Anybody does not seem to like John.’

c. John-i amwuto cohaha-nun kes kath-ci anh-ta.
 John-NOM anyone like-REL.PRES NML seem-COMP NEG-DECL
 ‘John does not seem to like anybody.’

As expected, participants readily accepted the sentence in (6a), in which the NPI *amwuto* ‘anyone’ and the negative morpheme *anh-* occur together in the embedded clause. However, for sentences in which negation is in the matrix clause as in (6b) and (6c), participants found those sentences more acceptable where the NPI is the subject (6b), rather than the object (6c) in the embedded clause. This indicates that the embedded subject has raised to the matrix subject position in order to be licensed by the negator in the same clause, suggesting that *-kes kathta* constructions involve raising and that there is indeed subject-to-subject raising in Korean.

4 Experiment 1 (Choe 2017)

4.1 Participants

A total number of 107 native Korean-speaking adults participated in the experiment. They were undergraduate or graduate students at a university in Seoul, Korea. Participants received course credit or financial compensation for their time.

4.2 Procedure

Each item (sentence) was paired with a 5-point Likert scale. The participants were presented with a written questionnaire and were asked to provide acceptability ratings for each Korean sentence, using a 1-5 scale (1=very unnatural, 2=somewhat unnatural, 3= neutral, 4=somewhat natural, 5=very natural). They were instructed not to go back to the previous sentence because their first intuitive response was required. There was no time limit, but it took them approximately 20-30 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

4.3 Materials

Each participant was presented with a total of one hundred sentences which consisted of twenty experimental items, sixty control items and twenty

fillers. Experimental items were bi-clausal *-kes kathta* constructions, in which the subject of the embedded clause was always an honorable noun (with the subject honorific marker *-kkeyse*), 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. They were distributed across four lists in a Latin square design.

Cond	Position & Presence of the Honorific marker <i>-si-</i>		Example 'It seems [that my grandfather went home]'
	Embedded clause	Matrix clause	
1	+	+	[할아버지께서 집에 가신 것] 같으시다 [NP... V- HON] seem- HON
2	+	-	[할아버지께서 집에 가신 것] 같다 [NP... V- HON] seem
3	-	+	[할아버지께서 집에 간 것] 같으시다 [NP... V] seem- HON
4	-	-	[할아버지께서 집에 간 것] 같다. [NP... V] seem

Table 1. Experimental items in Experiment 1

To compare the acceptability of the experimental items, two types of control items were included: thirty uncontroversially acceptable sentences and thirty uncontroversially unacceptable sentences. Among unacceptable sentences, five items contained honorific agreement errors, as in (7).

- (7) *sonyen-i hakkyo-ey ka-si-ess-ta
 boy-NOM school-LOC go-HON-PST-DECL
 'A boy went (+HON) to school.'

4.4 Results

As shown in Figure 1, all experimental conditions show patterns similar to that of acceptable sentences, with resonances primarily located in the 'natural' answer options.

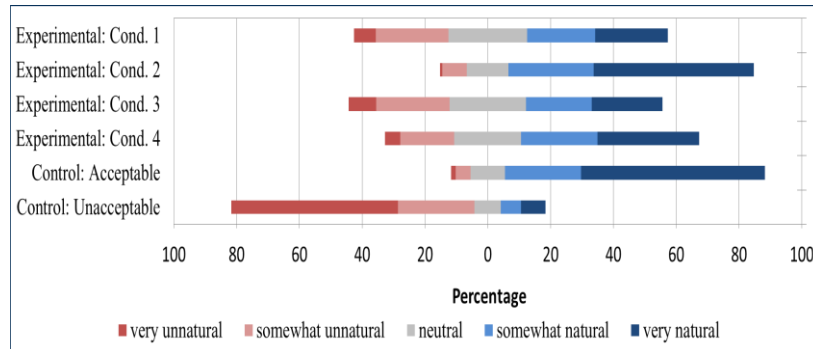


Figure 1. Distribution of Likert scores per condition

Let us now look at Figure 2 below which shows the mean ratings of experimental items compared against those of control items. Participants were most likely to accept sentences in which the honorific marker *-si-* is triggered by the honorific subject NP and occurs within the same embedded clause (condition 2). However, they also accepted the use of *-si-* on the matrix predicate *-katha*, even when there is no honorific grammatical subject in the matrix clause (condition 1 and condition 3), suggesting that the embedded honorific subject NP has raised to the matrix clause.

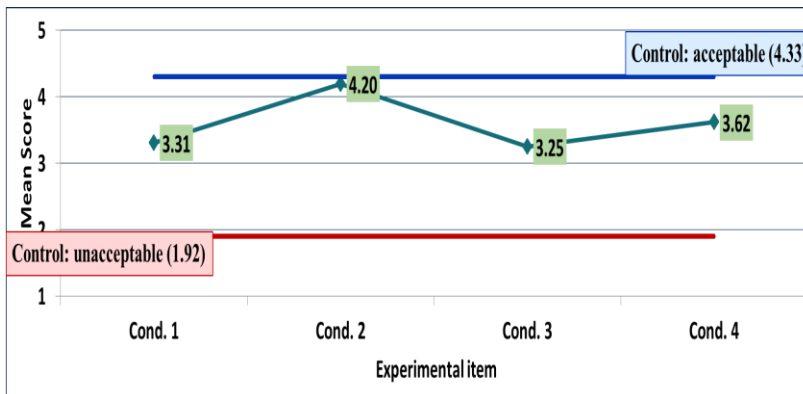


Figure 2. Mean ratings of experimental and control items

Furthermore, the mean ratings of the experimental conditions were all significantly different from that of 1.46 for unacceptable sentences where a non-honorific subject clashes with the honorific marker on the verb, as in (7) (all $ps < .001$).

5 Experiment 2

5.1 Participants

A total number of twenty-five native Korean-speaking adults were recruited for Experiment 2. They were undergraduate or graduate students at a university in Seoul, Korea, and none of them participated in Experiment 1. Participants received course credit or financial compensation for their time.

5.2 Procedure

The procedure of the experiment was the same as employed in Experiment 1.

5.3 Materials

Each participant was presented with a total of one hundred sentence which comprised of twelve experimental items and eighty-eight fillers. As shown in Table 2, two diagnostics were used, one involving honorific agreement (Conditions 1 & 2) and the other involving NPIs (Conditions 3 & 4). For each diagnostic, there were two types: raised and unraised sentences.

Cond.	Diagnostic	Type	Example
1	Honorific agreement	Raised	할아버지께서 [[t] 집에 가신 것] 같으시다 'My grandfather seems to have gone home.' NP [[t]... V-HON] seem-HON
2		Unraised	[할아버지께서 집에 가신 것] 같다 'It seems that my grandfather went home.' [NP... V-HON] seem
3	NPI licensing	Raised	아무도 [[t] 존을 좋아하는 것] 같지 않다 (Lit.) 'Anybody does not seem to like John.' NPI [[t]... V] seem-NEG
4		Unraised	[아무도 존을 좋아하지 않는 것] 같다 (Lit.) 'It seems that anybody does not like John.' [NPI... V-NEG] seem

Table 2. Experimental items in Experiment 2

5.4 Results

Figure 3 illustrates the mean scores for each condition. As expected, participants were likely to accept the purported raising constructions that satisfy subject honorification and NPI licensing, although raising sentences

on the NPI licensing conditions were judged to be more acceptable than those on the honorific agreement condition.

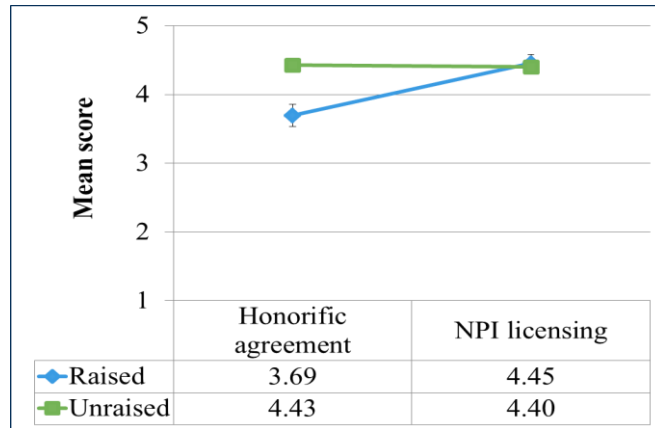


Figure 3. Mean ratings per condition

For raised sentences, there was a significant correlation between the mean scores for honorific agreement and NPI licensing conditions ($r = .63$, $p = .001$), suggesting that people who accept raised sentences involving honorific agreement tend to rate sentences involving NPI licensing as more acceptable.

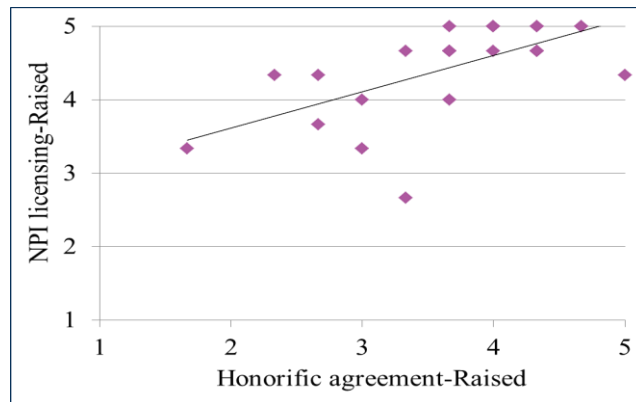


Figure 4. Correlation between two Raised conditions

6 Discussion

Subject-to-subject raising is a movement operation in which the embedded subject raises to the matrix subject position. Although it has been widely studied in languages like English, it has been a matter of controversy whether the same operation exists in Korean. Thus, the present study was conducted with naïve participants in order to assess the opposing claims in the literature and to address the question of whether raising movement is possible in Korean.

The results of the two acceptability judgment tasks revealed Korean-speaking adults' tendency to accept bi-clausal *-kes kathta* constructions (i) in which the honorific marker occurs on the matrix predicate *kathta* 'seem', and (ii) in which the negative morpheme appears in the matrix clause. These findings point to the possibility of subject-to-subject raising movement, indicating that the embedded subject is able to move out of the clause to the matrix subject position (i) to agree with the honorific marker on the matrix predicate (to satisfy honorific agreement) or (ii) to be licensed by the negative morpheme in the matrix clause (to satisfy the NPI licensing condition). What can be concluded from these results is that Korean does indeed have subject-to-subject raising, and the findings of the present study also open the door to further study related patterns involving raising, such as raising-to-object constructions and to compare the two constructions as well.

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