

Evidence for an Accentless Class in South Kyungsang Korean

While traditionally South Kyungsang (SK) Korean has been viewed as a tone language, recent research (Lee 2005, Kubozono 2007, 2008) helps to establish SK Korean as a pitch-accent language. Based on this research, accent in SK Korean can be viewed as similar to accent in standard Japanese in that accent is located on the high tone syllable that is immediately before the pitch fall. Since words in SK Korean can have only one pitch fall, the syllable with the rightmost high tone in the word is considered (and perceived) as the accented syllable. One issue that arises in the study of SK pitch-accent is whether there is a class of words that can be considered as accentless like in Japanese. The essential characteristic of accentless words in Japanese is that they do not have a pitch fall even when a suffix is added. Compare, for example, the Japanese word in (1) with that in (2) taken from Haraguchi (1999).

- (1) kaki-ga ‘fence (nom.)’ (2) kaki-ga ‘persimmon (nom.)’
LH L LH H

The word in (2) is accentless since there is no pitch fall even when the suffix is added. On the other hand, the word in (1) is considered final-accented since the word witnesses a pitch fall once a suffix is added. SK words like those in (1) and (2) lacking a pitch fall within the noun base all seem to behave like the final accented words in (1) rather than the accentless words in (2). This is seen by the SK data in (3) where the nominative case marker is added to nouns that do not have a pitch fall. (E = schwa, I = barred-i)

- (3) a. kErIm-i b. puk’urum-i c. namutari-ka
LH L L HH L L HHH L
‘fertilizer (nom.)’ ‘shyness (nom.)’ ‘woodbridge (nom.)’

While the SK words in (3) all resemble (1) in that they seem to be final accented on the base noun, another interpretation of the (unsuffixed) nouns in (3) is that they are accentless like the example in (2) but that the nominative suffix in SK requires the presence of a pitch fall. Our contention is that the SK nominal forms in (3) are all accentless and that the falling tone on the suffix reflects a property of that particular suffix and not that the base nouns in (3) are final accented.

Evidence that the SK nominal forms in (3) are accentless comes from the pitch patterns found with the suffix -cErEm ‘like’. Consider the data in (4) (where the period indicates a syllable boundary).

- (4) a. sa.ra sa.ra-cE.rEm b. maN.a.ci maN.a.ci-cE.rEm
 H L H L L L L H L L H L L L
 ‘dish’ ‘like a dish’ ‘colt’ ‘like a colt’

Both unaffixed nouns in (4), [sara] and [maNaci], have penultimate accent since the penultimate syllable is the location of the rightmost high tone (immediately before the pitch fall). The suffixing of -cErEm as shown in (4) does not seem in any way to affect the accent: the suffix surfaces with low tone. Now consider the data in (5) which show the same nominal forms as in (3) but with the suffix -cErEm shown rather the nominative.

- (5) a. kE.rIm-cE.rEm b. pu.k’u.rum-cE.rEm c. na.mu.ta.ri-cE.rEm
 L H H L L H H H L L H HH H L
 ‘like fertilizer’ ‘like shyness’ ‘like woodbridge’

In comparing the suffixal forms in (4) with those in (5) we notice an interesting difference. With the base nouns in (4) which have penultimate accent (given the location of the pitch fall) the suffixing of -cErEm seems to have no effect on the accent location. The suffixal forms in (4) still have the accent located on the penultimate syllable of the base noun. On the other hand, if one looks at the suffixal forms in (5), it is clear that the accent is on the first syllable of the suffix since that is the location of the rightmost high tone (immediately before the pitch fall). Notice that the suffix -cErEm in (5) is different than the nominative suffix in (3) in that the nominative suffix never has a high tone. How then can we explain why the suffix -cErEm has a high tone in (5) but a low tone in (4)? Our contention is that this is understandable if the base nouns in (5) are accentless and that -cErEm is an accented suffix with the underlying pitch pattern HL. If -cErEm attaches to a noun that is already accented, as in the examples in (4), the suffixes loses its accentuation surfacing with low tone since in SK there cannot be two pitch falls (i.e. two accents) within a single prosodic word. On the other hand, the underlying accentuation of -cErEm is realized in (5) because the nouns that they attach to in (5) are accentless; they do not have a pitch fall. Consequently, the suffix -cErEm in (5) surfaces with its underlying accent since the noun that it attaches to has no accent. Further evidence for this comes from the accentuation of loanwords in SK. Kubozono (2007) has observed that loanwords in SK are always accented. As an example, consider the Japanese loanword [o.poN] ‘tray’ that has the tone pattern LH in SK. When -cErEm is added to this noun to form [opoN-cErEm] the tone pattern is LHLL with low tones on the suffix (not LHHL, as may be expected based on (5)). This strongly argues that the words in (5) are indeed accentless and that -cErEm is an accented suffix that surfaces as such when attached to accentless nouns. Consequently, we maintain the SK Korean is not only a pitch accent language, but it has a class of nouns that is accentless.