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On the Locality Condition for Korean Subject Honorific Suppletion*

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1 Introduction

This paper argues that the condition for subject honorific suppletion found in Korean predicate morphology is adjacency between the root and the head of the subject agreement phrase (henceforth, AgrsP). Agrs, realized as a regular subject honorific suffix *-(u)si*, conditions root suppletion when a suppletive stem is available for the root in subject-honorific contexts. Auxiliary verb constructions cast doubt on an adjacency-based analysis, since the root and the regular honorific suffix are seemingly not adjacent. Building on the Generalized Reduplication framework (Harris and Halle 2005; Arregi and Nevins 2012, 2018, 2022), I show that the observed pattern results from metathesis in Morphology, such that the root and Agrs remain adjacent in the syntactic structure.

2 Basic Ingredients: Subject Honorification

This section outlines the mechanism of regular subject honorification in Korean.

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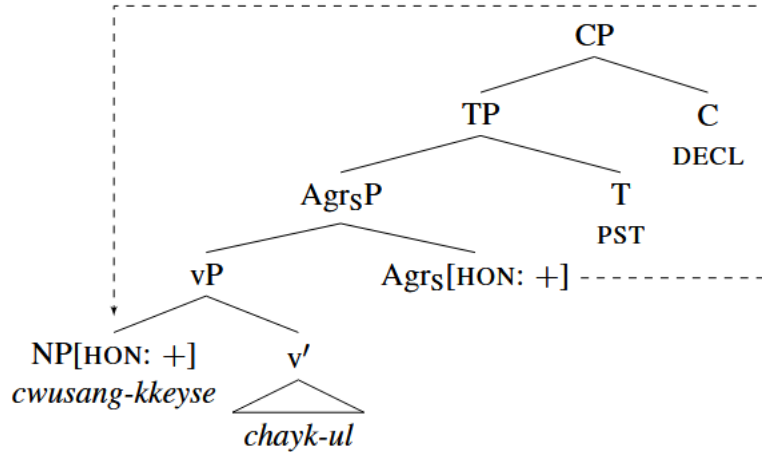
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Subject honorification encodes a social hierarchy between the speaker and the addressee, such that the speaker treats the addressee as socially superior. In predicate morphology, this hierarchy can be expressed in two ways: regular honorification and suppletive honorification. As the terminology suggests, regular honorification is instantiated by the regular honorific *-(u)si*. When the subject of a sentence is considered high in a given context, *-(u)si* appears in predicate morphology, as illustrated in (1b).¹

- (1) a. *Ai-ka chayk-ul ilk-ess-ta.*
 child-NOM book-ACC read-PST-DECL
 ‘The child read a book.’
 b. *Cwusang-kkeyse chayk-ul ilk-usi-ess-ta.*
 his.majesty-NOM.HON book-ACC read-HON_S-PST-DECL
 ‘His majesty read a book.’

The current paper assumes that the regular honorific *-(u)si* is the exponent of *Agr_S* bearing a positive value for [HON: ____] (Jou 2024). When the probe on *Agr_S* finds the subject within its c-command domain, it agrees with the subject’s HON value, as shown in (2a). *Agr_S* is then realized as *-(u)si* or a null exponent by the vocabulary entry (3), depending on its HON value, as shown in (2b).^{2,3}

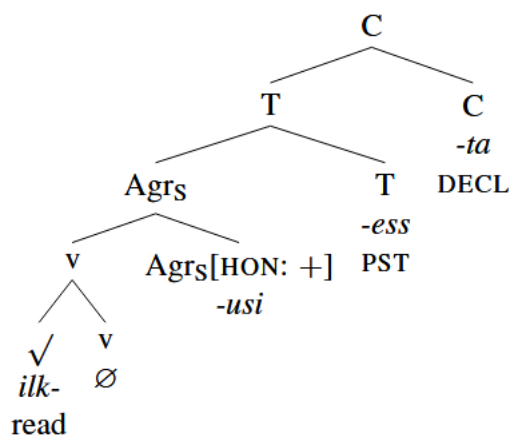
- (2) a. The mechanism of subject honorification (modified from Jou 2024)



¹ Abbreviations: ACC = accusative; AUX = auxiliary; CAUS = causative; DAT = dative; DECL = declarative; HON = honorific; HON_S = subject honorific; NOM = nominative; PASS = passive; PST = past.

² Jou (2024) assumes that *Agr_S[HON: +]* is exponed as *-(u)si* when it is positioned to the left of tensed T. She proposes this analysis to account for indirect object honorification in terms of the same *Agr_S[HON: +]*.

³ I present only the complex head in a given syntactic structure to save space when full structural representation is not required. Readers can nevertheless reconstruct the syntactic structure from the internal composition of the complex head, which fully encodes the relevant syntactic relations.

b. Complex head after head movement and VI⁴

- (3) a. $(u)si \leftrightarrow \text{Agrs}[\text{HON: } +]$
 b. $\emptyset \leftrightarrow \text{Agrs}[\text{HON: } -]$

With this background in place, we now turn to suppletive subject honorification and examine how it is developing in terms of contextual allomorphy.

3 Adjacency-Based Locality Condition for Suppletive Honorification

When developing a theory of allomorphy, it is crucial to correctly analyze its conditioning environment. Specifically, the adjacency relation between the conditioned and conditioning nodes is not a trivial matter. Korean suppletive honorific constructions exemplify one such case. In this section, I will present basic suppletive honorification data, outline the two camps in the Distributed Morphology framework that compete over the root-Agrs adjacency, and argue for the adjacency-based approach by showing that the root suppletion does not occur when another morpheme intervenes between the root and Agrs.

Suppletive subject honorification (henceforth, suppletive honorification) manifests itself in predicate morphology through suppletive stems. This strategy is available for only a limited number of roots. Examples of such verbs include $\sqrt{\text{EAT}}$, $\sqrt{\text{SLEEP}}$, $\sqrt{\text{EXIST}}$, etc. While regular honorification is realized by simply adding the regular honorific morpheme $-(u)si$ after the stem, suppletive honorification involves a change in the root itself. Thus, $\sqrt{\text{EAT}}$ is not exponed as the elsewhere *mek-* ‘eat,’ in subject honorific contexts; rather, it is realized as the allomorphic *capswusi-* ‘eat.HONS,’ as illustrated by the contrast between (4a) and (4b). Crucially, combining the elsewhere stem with the regular honorific is ungrammatical, or at least highly marked, as shown in (4b’).

- (4) a. *Ai-ka sakwa-lul mek-ess-ta.*
 child-NOM apple-ACC eat-PST-DECL

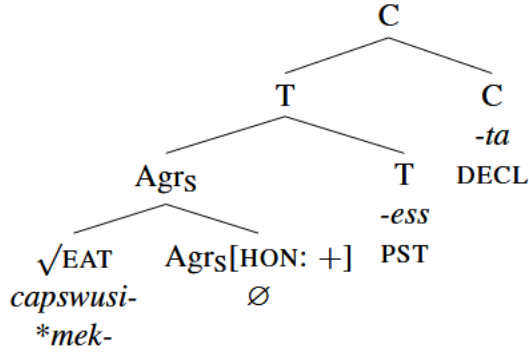
⁴ Since there are no instances of a pronounced *v* in the remainder of this paper, I will abbreviate a complex *v* consisting of a root and *v* as the root itself, unless otherwise specified. Thus, $[\sqrt{\text{READ}} \ v]_v \rightarrow \sqrt{\text{READ}}$

- ‘The child ate an apple.’
 b. *Cwusang-kkeyse sakwa-lul capswusi-ess-ta.*
 his.majesty-NOM.HON apple-ACC eat.HONS-PST-DECL
 ‘His majesty ate an apple.’
 b’ **Cwusang-kkeyse sakwa-lul mek-usi-ess-ta.*
 his.majesty-NOM.HON apple-ACC eat-HONS-PST-DECL

Building on the mechanism of regular honorification explained in Section 2, I propose that the VI rules shown in (5) account for the observed data. When $\text{Agrs}[\text{HON}: +]$ is adjacent to the root within the same complex head, it triggers root suppletion, as shown in (5a), rather than the elsewhere form *mek-* in (5b). The suppletive stem, in turn, conditions the allomorphy of $\text{Agrs}[\text{HON}: +]$, as stated in (5c), during Vocabulary Insertion.⁵ The resulting complex head is shown in (6).

- (5) a. $\sqrt{\text{EAT}} \leftrightarrow \text{capswusi-} / \text{ } ____ \text{Agrs}[\text{HON}: +]$
 b. $\sqrt{\text{EAT}} \leftrightarrow \text{mek-}$
 c. $\text{Agrs}[\text{HON}: +] \leftrightarrow \emptyset / \{ \text{capswusi-}, \text{kweysi-}, \text{cwumwusi-} \dots \}$

(6)



While most of the researchers agree that the suppletive honorification, like regular honorification, involves $\text{Agrs}[\text{HON}: +]$, there are two competing perspectives on how the contextual allomorphy triggering root suppletion should be analyzed: adjacency-based approaches (Koopman 2005; Chung 2009; Kim and Chung 2015) and non-adjacency-based approaches (Choi & Harley 2019; Shim 2024). The former maintain that suppletive honorification is conditioned by adjacency between the root and Agrs , whereas the latter argue that such adjacency is not required.

This paper adopts the adjacency-based approach based on evidence from causative and passive constructions in Korean. In these constructions, suppletive honorification is not permitted, as shown in (7b) and (8b), respectively. Given that $\text{Agrs}[\text{HON}: +]$ is the locus of regular honorification, Agrs and the root are not adjacent in these contexts due to intervening causative or passive morphemes. Consequently, the data indicate that adjacency is a necessary condition for suppletive honorification. The evidence presented here provides a strong counterargument to non-adjacency-based approaches, which will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.

⁵ One might wonder why the *-si* segment in each suppletive stem is not analyzed as a regular honorific suffix, given that all such stems contain a segment resembling the regular honorific *-si* (the variant after vowel-final stems). We will return to this issue in Section 4, where we discuss the honorification patterns in auxiliary verb constructions.

(7) Causative construction

- a. *Cwusang-kkeyse koyangi-eykey pap-ul mek-i-si-ess-ta.*
 his.majesty-NOM.HON cat-DAT meal-ACC eat-CAUS-HON_S-PST-DECL
 ‘His majesty fed a cat (lit. his majesty made a cat eat food).’
- b. **Cwusang-kkeyse koyangi-eykey pap-ul capswusi-i-si-ess-ta.*
 his.majesty-NOM.HON cat-DAT meal-ACC eat.HON_S-CAUS-HON_S-PST-DECL

(8) Passive construction

- a. *Cwusang-kkeyse koymwul-eykey mek-hi-si-ess-ta.*
 his.majesty-NOM.HON monster-DAT eat-PASS-HON_S-PST-DECL
 ‘His majesty was eaten by a monster.’
- b. **Cwusang-kkeyse koymwul-eykey capswusi-hi-si-ess-ta.*
 his.majesty-NOM.HON monster-DAT eat.HON_S-PASS-HON_S-PST-DECL

While the causative and passive constructions provide compelling evidence for adjacency-based analyses, another construction in Korean poses a serious challenge to them: auxiliary verb constructions. Choi and Harley (2019) argue that suppletive honorification in such constructions can be triggered by Agr_S[HON: +] even when it is not adjacent to the conditioned root, as long as both are contained within the same complex head. Although their approach fails to account for the causative and passive constructions, auxiliary verb constructions must nevertheless be addressed in order to maintain an adjacency-based analysis. In the next section, I will briefly review why auxiliary verb constructions are problematic for adjacency-based approaches and show how they can be reconciled with such approaches by adopting the Generalized Reduplication framework.

4 Metathesis Analysis of Honorific Suppletion in Auxiliary Verb Construction

In this section, I discuss the subject honorification pattern in auxiliary verb constructions and argue that the ostensible non-adjacency between the root and Agr_S is the result of a post-syntactic operation. That is, the root and Agr_S are adjacent to each other in the output of the syntax. Building on the framework of Generalized Reduplication (Harris and Halle 2005; Arregi and Nevins 2012, 2018, 2022), I put forth an analysis that supports adjacency-based approaches, while showing that the non-adjacency-based approaches suffer from an overgeneration problem. To this end, I first present the subject honorific pattern in auxiliary verb constructions and explain why it poses a challenge for adjacency-based approaches. I then show how this pattern has motivated non-adjacency-based approaches. We will see, however, that such approaches are not viable due to their serious overgeneration problem. Finally, I argue that the Generalized Reduplication framework can account for the pattern at issue without abandoning the adjacency-based allomorphy condition developed in Section 3.

Auxiliary verb constructions, as one type of complex predicate constructions, consist of two verbal components: a lexical verb and an auxiliary verb. The lexical verb, which is semantically main, is morphologically minimal in that it lacks any inflectional morphemes other than the final

-a/e (henceforth, *-E*),⁶ which itself lacks semantic or syntactic content. The auxiliary verb, by contrast, modifies the manner or aspect of the event denoted by the lexical verb. Although the auxiliary verb is etymologically a lexical verb, it is semantically and syntactically defective in auxiliary use: it modifies only the manner or aspect of the lexical predicate and lacks the argument structure associated with its non-auxiliary use (Sohn 2001). For instance, *po-* ‘see’ contributes an experiential or attemptive meaning when used as an auxiliary verb, as shown in (9b). In this case, the original lexical meaning is absent, and the verb is not interpreted as denoting an act of seeing. Other examples of such auxiliaries include: the sustensive *twu/noh-* ‘to put/put,’ the benefactive *cwu* ‘to give,’ the terminative *pe-li-* ‘throw away,’ etc.

- (9) a. *po-* as a lexical verb: to see
Ai-ka ku chayk-ul po-ass-ta.
 child-NOM that book-ACC see-PST-DECL
 ‘The child saw a chipmunk.’
 b. *po-* as an auxiliary verb: experiential/attemptive
Ai-ka ku chayk-ul ilk-e po-ass-ta.
 child-nom that book-ACC read-e aux-PST-DECL
 ‘The child tried to read the book/The child has experience reading the book.’

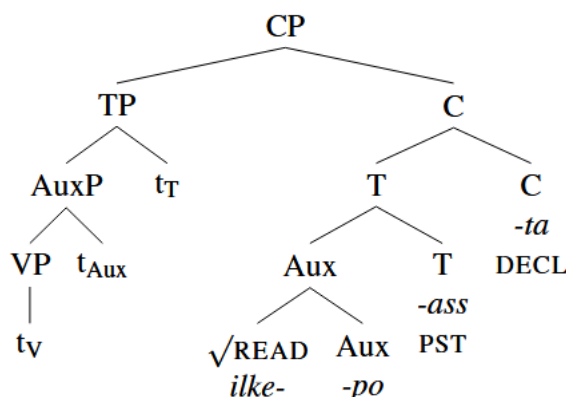
I assume that auxiliary verb constructions are formed via head movement (Lee 1992). Under this assumption, the lexical verb and the auxiliary verb are contained within a single complex head, with the auxiliary verb occupying a suffixal position. To reflect this, I represent the lexical verb and the auxiliary verb as connected by a dash within a single complex head. From this point on, I refer to them as the root and the auxiliary, respectively. (10) illustrates the representation of the example of the auxiliary verb construction (9b).

- (10) *Ai-ka ku chayk-ul ilke-po-ass-ta.*
 child-nom that book-ACC read-AUX-PST-DECL
 ‘The child tried to read the book/The child has experience reading the book.’

The tree in (11) illustrates how an auxiliary verb construction is derived via head movement.

⁶ Following Lee (1992) and Choi and Harley (2019), I assume that *-E* is a dummy suffix introduced post-syntactically for morphological well-formedness. Since it introduces neither semantic nor syntactic information, I assume that it does not occupy any syntactic head. Consistent with this assumption, I will treat *-E* as the final part of the exponent immediately preceding auxiliaries. Readers may assume that *-E* is inserted at the end of the morphological component. It is intriguing why *-E* must be inserted in auxiliary verb constructions, but I will leave this issue aside, as it lies beyond the scope of the present paper.

(11) The syntactic structure of auxiliary verb construction



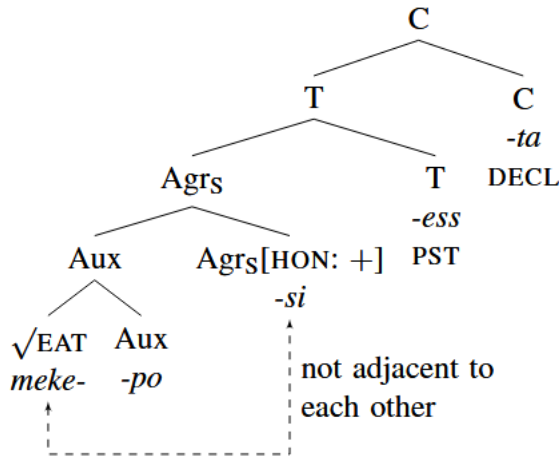
Within auxiliary verb constructions, inflectional suffixes do not precede the auxiliary verb; this generalization also holds for honorific morphology. The regular honorific suffix *-(u)si* appears only to the right of the auxiliary, not to its left, as shown in (12a). Consequently, the regular honorific suffix never appears immediately adjacent to the root. Placing it directly after the root results in ungrammaticality as shown in (12b). Given that the regular honorific suffix is the exponent of $\text{Agrs}[\text{HON: +}]$, this distribution suggests that $\text{Agrs}[\text{HON: +}]$ is not adjacent to the root in auxiliary verb constructions.

- (12) a. *Cwusang-kkeyse ku chayk-ul ilke-po-si-ess-ta.*
 his.majesty-NOM.HON that book-ACC read-AUX-HONs-PST-DECL
 'His majesty tried to read the book/His majesty has experience reading the book.'
- b. **Cwusang-kkeyse ku chayk-ul ilk-usie-po-ass-ta.*
 his.majesty-NOM.HON that book-ACC read-AUX-HONs-PST-DECL

At this point, we have two pieces of the puzzle. First, as shown in Section 3, suppletive honorification occurs when $\text{Agrs}[\text{HON: +}]$ is adjacent to a root that has a suppletive honorific stem. Second, the pattern of regular honorification in auxiliary verb constructions indicates that $\text{Agrs}[\text{HON: +}]$ is not immediately adjacent to the root, but rather follows the auxiliary.

Taken together, these observations yield the following prediction: suppletive honorification should never occur in auxiliary verb constructions, since $\text{Agrs}[\text{HON: +}]$ is not adjacent to the root, and therefore fails to satisfy the adjacency-based condition on allomorphy, as schematized in (13).

- (13) The internal structure of the complex head in an auxiliary verb construction (to be revised)



However, the actual data indicate that something is missing in our analysis. In fact, the honorific suppletion on the root is not only permitted but obligatory, as shown in (14a). Using the elsewhere stem *mek-* ‘to eat’ in this context is ungrammatical, or at least highly marked, as shown in (14b). (14a) further shows that the subject honorific morpheme after the auxiliary becomes optional, unlike in the regular honorification case shown previously in (12).

- (14) a. *Cwusang-kkeyse sakwa-lul capswusie-po-(si)-ess-ta.*
 his.majesty-NOM.HON apple-ACC eat.HONS-see-HONS-PST-DECL
 ‘His majesty tried to eat an apple/His majesty has experience eating an apple.’
 b. **Cwusang-kkeyse sakwa-lul meke-po-si-ess-ta.*
 his.majesty-NOM.HON apple-ACC eat-see-HONS-PST-DECL

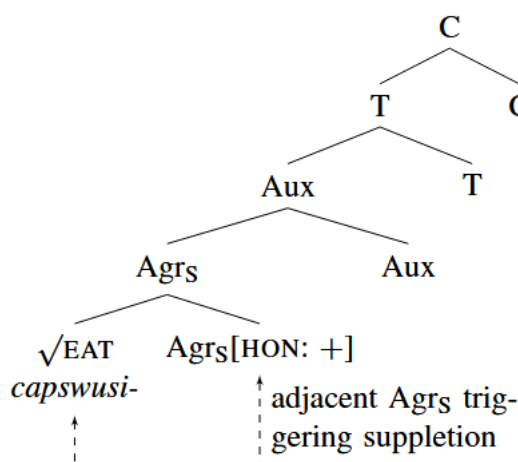
The suppletive honorification observed here poses a significant challenge to adjacency-based approaches. The regular honorification pattern shows that $\text{Agrs}[\text{HON: +}]$ and the root are not adjacent to each other. Yet the suppletive honorification pattern indicates that root suppletion must nevertheless occur despite this apparent non-adjacency. The dilemma that any adjacency-based approach must address is therefore the following: an adjacency-based suppletion seemingly triggered by a non-adjacent morpheme. The direction of further amendment is thus clear: one must either abandon a strictly adjacency-based locality condition, or maintain it by arguing that the root and $\text{Agrs}[\text{HON: +}]$ are in fact adjacent in the syntax, with $\text{Agrs}[\text{HON: +}]$ subsequently dislocated from its base-generated position prior to Vocabulary Insertion.

Non-adjacency-based approaches pursue the first option: Among them, Choi and Harley (2019) extended the locality condition for suppletive honorification from strictly adjacent nodes to nodes contained within the same complex head, regardless of adjacency. Adopting Bobaljik’s (2012) Complex Head Accessibility Domain and assuming that the subject honorific is positioned to the right of the auxiliary, they argue that the locus of regular honorification can condition root suppletion within the same complex head. Applied to the structure in (13), this analysis predicts that $\text{Agrs}[\text{HON: +}]$ can trigger suppletive honorification of the root even when it is not adjacent to it, provided that both are part of the same complex head.

However, as discussed in Section 3, the non-adjacency-based approach suffers from an overgeneration problem in causative and passive constructions. If Agr_S[HON: +] can trigger suppletion of a non-adjacent root within a complex head, we would expect root suppletion to occur in causative and passive contexts as well, since the root and Agr_S[HON: +] are likewise contained in the same complex head. As shown in Section 3, this prediction is not borne out: suppletive honorification is never observed in these contexts. A non-adjacency-based approach is therefore not a viable option.

Instead, I propose that the second option provides a more adequate account of the observed honorific suppletion pattern. On this view, suppletive honorification is still triggered by root-Agr_S adjacency. Specifically, Agr_SP merges above VP, rather than above AuxP, such that the root and Agr_S are adjacent in the output of the syntax, as shown in (15). Agr_S[HON: +] is thus initially positioned immediately to the right of the lexical root, triggering suppletive honorification. Subsequently, Agr_S[HON: +] is dislocated from this position to the immediate right of the auxiliary.

(15)



The current analysis of a dislocated Agr_S[HON: +] explains the obligatory suppletive honorification on the root. A question then naturally arises: why does Agr[sub: hon +] have to be dislocated? Without an answer to this question, the current analysis would amount to an arbitrary stipulation and lack explanatory power. I propose that Agr_S[HON: +] is dislocated in order to satisfy the morphotactics of the language. On this view, the proposed dislocation is not an ad hoc device introduced solely to account for the observed data; rather, it is an attempt to situate the pattern within a broader system of morphotactic well-formedness.

To this end, I adopt the framework of Generalized Reduplication (Harris and Halle 2005; Arregi and Nevins 2012, 2018, 2022), which establishes a direct connection between morpheme dislocation and morphotactic constraints. Within this framework, post-syntactic morpheme reordering may be triggered by a morphotactic constraint that operates across the language. Metathesis is one such morphological repair operation. If a sequence of morphemes AB is disfavored by a morphotactic constraint in a given language, a metathesis applies to reverse their order to BA, thereby yielding a morphologically well-formed output.

(16) Metathesis in the GR formalism (Arregi and Nevins 2018)

$$[A > B] \rightarrow ABAB \rightarrow BA$$

Generalized Reduplication may apply multiple times as long as the relevant morphotactic deficiency persists. Arregi and Nevins (2018) show that multiple instances of metathesis may occur if a single application does not fully resolve the violated constraint.

To illustrate, suppose a language has a morphological constraint (17a) stating that a morpheme A cannot precede another morpheme B within a single complex head. If yet another morpheme of the same category, B, exists in the same complex head, as shown in (17b), two instances of metathesis occur to satisfy the constraint (17a). The initial metathesis yields the order BAB, in which A still precedes B. The output, therefore, continues to violate the constraint. Consequently, a second metathesis applies to fully repair the surface form, resulting in the order BBA. At this point, A no longer precedes any instances of B, and no further metathesis occurs.

(17) a. $*[\dots AB \dots]_{X^0}$

b. Structural Description: $[AB_1B_2]_{X^0}$

c. Structural change:

- Metathesis 1: $[A > B_1] B_2 \rightarrow AB_1AB_2 \rightarrow B_1AB_2$
- Metathesis 2: $B_1 [A > B_2] \rightarrow B_1AB_2AB_2 \rightarrow B_1B_2A$

Then, a question naturally follows: what is the exact nature of the morphotactic constraint operating in the current cases? I propose that the Derivation inside Inflection constraint (Arregi and Nevins 2018) is responsible for the dislocation of Agrs[HON: +] from its base-generated position in this case. This constraint requires derivational suffixes to be closer to the root than inflectional suffixes.

(18) DERIVATION INSIDE INFLECTION (Arregi and Nevins 2018: 626)

Derivation should be linearly between the root and inflection.

This constraint has repeatedly been identified as cross-linguistically robust by multiple scholars (Greenberg 1963; Bybee 1985; Dressler et al. 1987). Arregi and Nevins (2018) report supporting evidence from genetically unrelated languages such as English, Spanish, and Georgian. Adopting this idea, Agrs[HON: +], as an inflectional morpheme, is not permitted to be closer to the root than the auxiliary verb, which is a derivational suffix. This requirement is formalized as the constraint in (19). Once a complex head is formed via head movement, the entire complex head is transferred to Morphology and evaluated with respect to (19). If the constraint is violated, metathesis applies to dislocate Agrs[HON: +], and the resulting output is fed back for further evaluation. The operation ceases once the output satisfies the constraint.

(19) No Agrs prior to Aux

$$*[\dots \text{Agrs Aux} \dots]_{X^0}$$

Now, let us see how the evaluation process is carried out in detail. I will illustrate the derivation of an honorific-suppletion form, *capswusie-po-si-ess-ta*, shown in (20) and repeated from (14a).

(21) The output of syntax
[$\sqrt{\text{EAT}}$ Agrs[HON: +] Aux T C]_C

(22) Order of post-syntactic operations
a. Vocabulary Insertion < Metathesis
b. Metathesis < Vocabulary Insertion

A metathesis then applies to satisfy the constraint in (19), because Agr_S[HON: +] precedes Aux. Interestingly, this derivation yields a suppletive honorification pattern in which the regular honorific suffix following the auxiliary is null. The derived form is independently well-formed, since this pattern is attested. However, we must also account for the other pattern, in which the regular honorific suffix *-(u)si* is realized after the auxiliary.

(23) a. VI: $\sqrt{\text{EAT}}$ Agr_s Aux T C
 capswusi- $\emptyset$ *-po* *-ass* *-ta*
 b. Metathesis: *capswusi-* [$\emptyset$ > < *-po*] *-ass* *-ta*
 → *capswusi-* $\emptyset$ *-po* $\emptyset$ ~~*-po*~~ *-ass* *-ta*
 → *capswusie-* *-po* $\emptyset$ *-ass* *-ta*

- (24) a. $\sqrt{\text{EAT}} \leftrightarrow$ *capswusi-*/ ____ Agr_S[HON: +]
 b. $\sqrt{\text{EAT}} \leftrightarrow$ *mek-*
 c. Agr_S[HON: +] $\leftrightarrow \emptyset / \{ \textit{capswusi-}, \textit{kyeysi-}, \textit{cwumwusi-} \dots \}$

⁷ But see Arregi and Nevins (2018) for discussion of cases in which constituency must be taken into consideration.

timing relative to metathesis: suppletion of both morphemes or no suppletion at all. This follows from the fact that both suppletive processes are defined in terms of adjacency. if the root and Agrs[HON: +] are adjacent at Vocabulary Insertion, both morphemes undergo suppletion. By contrast, if metathesis applies first, the two are no longer adjacent at Vocabulary Insertion, and no suppletion is triggered, as illustrated in (26). In this case, both the root and Agrs[HON: +] are realized as their elsewhere forms, which is not the desired outcome.

- (26) a. Metathesis:
- | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|
| $\sqrt{\text{EAT}}$ | Agrs | Aux | T | C |
| $\rightarrow \sqrt{\text{EAT}}$ | [Agrs > < Aux] | | T | C |
| $\rightarrow \sqrt{\text{EAT}}$ | Agrs Aux | Agrs Aux | T | C |
| $\rightarrow \sqrt{\text{EAT}}$ | Aux | Agrs | T | C |
- b. VI:
- | | | | | |
|----------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| * <i>meke-</i> | <i>po-</i> | <i>-si</i> | <i>-ess</i> | <i>-ta</i> |
|----------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|

In order to account for the other pattern, I further propose that metathesis may occur either before or after Vocabulary Insertion in Agrs in the sequence of post-syntactic operations. This treatment makes two outcomes possible simultaneously: root suppletion and the realization of the regular honorific suffix *-(u)si* after Aux. The former is possible because Agrs[HON: +] remains adjacent to the root at the point of Vocabulary Insertion, as shown in (27a). Subsequently, metathesis applies prior to Vocabulary Insertion in the remaining nodes, dislocating Agrs[HON: +] first, as shown in (27b). When the remaining nodes undergo Vocabulary Insertion, Agrs[HON: +] is no longer adjacent to the root and therefore does not satisfy the suppletion condition (24c). As a result, the elsewhere *-(u)si* is inserted instead, as shown in (27c).

- (27) a. VI in $\sqrt{\text{ }}$:
- | | | | | |
|---------------------|------|-----|---|---|
| $\sqrt{\text{EAT}}$ | Agrs | Aux | T | C |
| <i>capswusi-</i> | Agrs | Aux | T | C |
- b. Metathesis:
- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|
| <i>capswusi-</i> | [Agrs > < Aux] | | T | C |
| $\rightarrow$ <i>capswusi-</i> | Agrs Aux | Agrs Aux | T | C |
| $\rightarrow$ <i>capswusi-</i> | Aux | Agrs | T | C |
- c. VI in the remaining nodes
- | | | | | |
|-------------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| <i>capswusie-</i> | <i>-po</i> | <i>-si</i> | <i>-ess</i> | <i>-ta</i> |
|-------------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|

Before we wrap up, it is worth recalling why the final segment of suppletive stems should not be treated as separable, despite its resemblance to the regular honorific suffix *-(u)si*. Auxiliary verb constructions provide crucial evidence for this conclusion.⁸

Under the adjacency-based approach adopted here, Agrs[HON: +] is dislocated away from the root in auxiliary verb constructions. If the stem-final *-si*-like segment were identical to the regular honorific suffix, suppletive stems should be able to surface without it in this environment. While such separation may appear possible for $\sqrt{\text{EAT}}$, as shown in (28a), it is categorically ruled out for $\sqrt{\text{SLEEP}}$, another root with a suppletive honorific stem, as shown in (28b). This contrast indicates that the stem-final segment of suppletive stems cannot be uniformly identified with the regular honorific *-(u)si*.

- (28) a. *capsue-po-(si)-ess-ta*
eat.HONS-AUX-HONS-PST-DECL

⁸ For arguments from the non-adjacency-based approach, see Choi and Harley (2019).

- ‘tried to eat/have experience eating (honorific)’
 b. **cwumwue-po-(si)-ess-ta*
 sleep.HONs-AUX-HONs-PST-DECL
 ‘tried to sleep/have experience sleeping (honorific)’

Finally, I noted that metathesis may apply multiple times if a single application does not fully resolve the morphological deficiency imposed by constraint (19). Such a mechanism is required because multiple auxiliaries may stack within a single auxiliary verb construction, as shown in (29). Here, the attemptive *-po* and the benefactive *-cwu* both modify the manner of the action denoted by the root $\sqrt{\text{EAT}}$.

- (29) *capswusie-poa-cwu-ess-ta*
 eat-AUX-AUX-PST-DECL
 ‘tried to eat something for someone’s favor’

Our working hypothesis assumes that AgrsP is merged above VP, which means that AgrsP is lower than all the AuxPs, which makes Agrs placed to the left of all the auxiliaries within the complex head, as shown in (30).

- (30) [$\sqrt{\text{Agrs}}$ Aux₁ Aux₂ T C]_C

Consequently, a single application of metathesis (31b) leaves the dislocated Agrs to the left of the second auxiliary *-cwu*, still violating the morphotactic constraint in (19). An additional metathesis therefore applies, pushing Agrs further to the right until it no longer precedes any auxiliary within the complex head, as illustrated in (31c)⁹.

- (31) a. VI in $\sqrt{\text{Agrs}}$: *capswusi-* Agrs Aux₁ Aux₂ T C
 b. Metathesis 1: *capswusi-* [Agrs > < Aux₁] Aux₂ T C
 → *capswusi-* Agrs Aux₁ Agrs ~~Aux₁~~ Aux₂ T C
 → *capswusi-* Aux₁ Agrs Aux₂ T C
 c. Metathesis 2: *capswusi-* Aux₁ [Agrs > < Aux₂] T C
 → *capswusi-* Aux₁ Agrs Aux₂ Agrs ~~Aux₂~~ T C
 → *capswusi-* Aux₁ Aux₂ Agrs T C
 d. VI in the *capswusie-* *-poa* *-cwu* *-si* *-ess* *-ta*
 remaining nodes

In this section, we have derived the two patterns of suppletive honorification found in auxiliary verb constructions. The apparent distance between the root and the regular honorific suffix to the right of the auxiliary verb is a result of post-syntactic metathesis. The root and Agrs[HON: +] are adjacent in the output of syntax, and this adjacency guarantees that honorific suppletion obligatorily applies to the root.

The optionality of subject honorification to the right of the auxiliary verb is accounted for in terms of the relative ordering of two post-syntactic operations: metathesis and Vocabulary

⁹ For reasons of space, I present only the case in which metathesis precedes the VI in Agrs.

Insertion. While the obligatory suppletive honorification of the root shows that Vocabulary Insertion in the root must precede all instances of metathesis, Agr_S may optionally undergo Vocabulary Insertion after metathesis. This optional delay bleeds the allomorphy condition for Agr_S[HON: +], resulting in the elsewhere realization *-(u)si*.

5 Conclusion

In this paper, I argued that suppletive honorification in Korean should be analyzed as being conditioned by adjacency between the root and Agr_S in a given syntactic structure. While suppletive honorification is uniformly triggered by root-Agr_S adjacency, apparent cases of root-Agr_S non-adjacency pose a challenge for adjacency-based approaches. I argued that this non-adjacency does not directly reflect the syntactic structure; rather, it results from a post-syntactic operation of metathesis. This metathesis is triggered by a morphotactic constraint requiring derivational suffixes to be closer to the root than inflectional suffixes. In the cases examined here, this constraint requires Agr_S to be dislocated, since it precedes the auxiliary, which is a derivational suffix. A complex head produced by an application of metathesis is subsequently fed into morphotactic evaluation, and additional instances of metathesis may apply if the resulting complex head continues to violate the relevant morphotactic constraint.

The current analysis yields an interesting prediction concerning the position of the regular honorific suffix *-(u)si* in historical varieties of Korean. Given that auxiliary verbs are etymologically lexical verbs, auxiliary verb constructions are plausibly the result of grammaticalization. The analysis, therefore, predicts that, during a stage in which auxiliary verb constructions had not yet fully grammaticalized, regular honorification could surface immediately to the right of the root, since the auxiliary would not yet form a single complex head with the lexical verb. If this conjecture is on the right track, Agr_S may remain in its base-generated position in such stages. However, this issue lies beyond the scope of the present paper and is left for future research.

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