

## Is Korean stress word-level or phrase-level?

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The nature of stress or accent in Korean has been controversial. Lee, H.-B. (1989), Lee, H.-Y. (1990) and Song (2005) argue that Korean words have stress on the first or the second syllable depending on syllable weight while de Jong (1994), Jun (1995, 2005) and Lim (2001) argue that Korean stress is not a word-level but a phrase-level stress assigned to the initial syllable in a prosodic phrase.

In this paper, I discuss whether Korean stress is word-level or phrasal-level from the phonological viewpoint. I present three arguments for the idea that Korean stress is word-level as well as phrasal-level. First, Korean has lengthening of the first syllable when the word is emphasized, as shown in (1) (Sohn 1999: 196).

- (1) a. cə.gi ‘over there’ → cə::gi ‘way over there’  
b. k’ok ‘for sure’ → k’o::k ‘by all means’

Assuming that emphatic lengthening occurs on the stressed syllable cross-linguistically (e.g. *very* [ve::ri] *really* [ri::əli] and *completely* [kəmpi::tli] in English), then lengthening of the word-initial syllable shows word-initial stress in Korean.

Second, Cho and Inkelas (1994: 51) give the Korean data in (2) as examples of optional emphatic speech gemination.

- (2) a. ap’a → app’a ‘dad’      b. apha → appha ‘be sick’

If gemination universally occurs on the consonant immediately after the stressed vowel (e.g. *tutto* ‘all’; *fuliggine* ‘spot, soot’ in Italian), emphatic gemination in Korean supports the idea that Korean has word-initial stress.

Third, I reconsider the (accentual) phrase-initial strength in Korean (Jun 1995, 2005, cf. Ko 1999) from compound and phrasal stress phenomena. It is common that the primary stress in a word is weakened (to the secondary stress) in a compound (e.g. *kitchen* + *towel* = *kitchen towel*; *sha’kai* ‘society’ + *se’ido* ‘system’ = *shakai-se’ido* ‘social system’ (Japanese). It is also the case that the primary stress in a head word is weakened in a phrase or a sentence (e.g. *order* → *ordered sushi*; *no’mu* ‘drink’ → *bi’iru nomeba* ‘if you drink beer’). Thus, it is not surprising if the word-stress is not strong enough to be perceived as prominent when it is positioned in the phrase-initial position (because Korean is a head-final language).

In sum, the phonological arguments show that Korean stress is both word-level and phrase-level. We can argue that word-level stress is projected to phrase-level stress, which is also in the initial position in the unit.

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