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On accentless words in South Kyungsang Korean

The purpose of the current study is to investigate whether there are accentless words in South Kyungsang (SK) Korean (which is generally assumed to be a pitch accent language) as in other pitch accent languages like Japanese. In the examination of SK Korean words, we will show that SK Korean has an accentless word class with monosyllabic, disyllabic, and trisyllabic words. In Japanese, a pitch accent is determined by a H tone which is immediately followed by a L tone (H*+L). Unaccented words do not show this kind of pitch fall even when a suffix is attached to the previous base word as shown in (1).

(1) Japanese Accented vs. Unaccented Class (Haraguchi 1999)

- a. kaki+ga 'fence' nominative. b. kaki+ga 'persimmon' nominative.
L H L L H H

The word in (1a) is considered final-accented since the word witnesses a pitch fall once the suffix [ga] is added. On the other hand, the word in (1b) is accentless since there is no pitch fall even when the suffix [ga] is added. SK Korean native words those in (2a) and (2b), which lack a pitch fall within the noun base, seem to show similar behavior like the Japanese words in (1a) and (1b). This is seen by the SK Korean data in (2) where the nominative case marker [i] is added to nouns that do not have a pitch fall.

(2) Tone Patterns of SK Korean Words

- a. pa.ram+i 'wind' nom. b. sa.ram+i 'human' nom.
L H L L H H

There seems to be a similarity between the data (1) and the data (2). That is, the SK Korean word in (2a) shows similar tone pattern with the Japanese word in (1a). The SK Korean word in (2a) seems to be final accented on the base noun given the presence of a pitch fall on the nominative suffix [i]. The SK word in (2b) also resembles the Japanese word in (1b) in that it seems to be unaccented on the base noun with no pitch fall on the suffix [i]. The data in (2) suggest that SK Korean is not just a pitch accent language but it has accentless class words. In this presentation we will provide more evidence that SK Korean has accentless words through an examination of SK Korean monosyllabic, disyllabic, and trisyllabic data.