Speech act phrases in Korean nominal structures
Soo-Hwan Lee, New York University

Proposal. According to Speas & Tenny (2003) and Miyagawa (2012), speech act phrases (SAPs) are present in the clausal domain. Here, I argue that SAPs are also present in the nominal domain. Adopting Ritter & Wiltshire (2018, 2019), I demonstrate that the locus for politeness-related features in Korean nominals are encoded in the nominal SAP instead of the clausal SAP. From a broader scope, I propose that Korean nominals are not limited in size: they are SAPs instead of NPs which abstract away from alternative analyses suggested by Chierchia (1998), Bošković (2012), and Bruening et al. (2018). Just as the fine layers of clauses encode politeness, the fine layers of nominals are capable of encoding politeness.

Feature geometry & SAPs. Harley & Ritter (2002) point out that a fully specified Referring Expression (RE) consists of a Participant node and an Individuation node. Here, I propose that the Participant node corresponds to an sa/SAP. They both encode a well-defined interaction between the speaker and the addressee.

(1) RE

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{PART} \\
\text{speaker} \quad \text{hearer}
\end{array} \quad \leftrightarrow \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{sa/SAP} \\
\text{speaker} \quad \text{hearer} \quad \text{SA}
\end{array}
\]

Adopting sa/SAPs, we account for the presence or the absence of politeness in Korean first person pronouns and pronoun-noun constructions. According to Potts (2005) and Lee & Kim (2018), expressions like ce(y) and cehuy in (2) and (3) hold onto a conventional implicature relevant to politeness (+> The speaker is socially inferior to or distant from the addressee). This suggests that the morphological alternations of na~ce and wuli~cehuy are conditioned by the interaction between the two participants, namely the speaker and the addressee:

(2) a. nay-ka  b. eey-ka  c. wuli-ka  d. cehuy-ka
   1st.sg-NOM 1st.sg.POL-NOM 1st.pl-NOM 1st.pl.POL-NOM
   ‘1st.sg.’   ‘1st.sg.’ (Polite) ‘1st.pl.’   ‘1st.pl.’ (Polite)

(3) a. wuli hayngpokhan enehak-tul-i  b. cehuy hayngpokhan enehak-tul-i
   1st.pl.happy linguist-PL-NOM 1st.pl.POL happy linguist-PL-NOM
   ‘We happy linguists’   ‘We happy linguists’ (Polite)

Clauses & nominals. Abney (1987) draws a structural parallelism between the clausal and nominal syntax. Speaking in favor of this approach, I argue that they both project sa/SAPs. This allows us to do away with what seemingly looks like optional agreement in Korean:

(4) a. wuli-ka  wa-ss-e-yo
   1st.pl.-NOM come-PST-DEF-POL
   ‘We came.’ [Politeness: DP/NP (X), CP (\(\checkmark\))]

b. cehuy-ka  wa-ss-e-yo
   1st.pl.POL-NOM come-PST-DEF-POL
   ‘We came.’ [Politeness: DP/NP (\(\checkmark\)), CP (\(\checkmark\))]

Instead of analyzing (4a) and (4b) as outcomes of optional agreement, I argue that there are two independent SAPs conditioning the presence or the absence of politeness: one for the nominal spine and the other for the clausal spine. They each give rise to their individual status of politeness.

SAPs instead of agreement. According to Wiltschko (2019), Korean second person pronouns (or paranouns in her terms) do not trigger agreement, since they are not composed of contrastive phi-features. This proposal gains support when we observe certain constructions in Korean which cannot be explained through syntactic agreement:
Kim-i Lee-ka ce-uy chinkwul po-ass-tako sayngkak-hay-yo
Kim-NOM Lee-NOM 1st.sg.POL-GEN friend-ACC see-PST-C think-do-POL
‘Kim thinks that Lee saw my friend.’ (Polite)

Kim-i Lee-ka cehuy enehakca-tul-ul coha-han-tako mal-hay-yo
Kim-NOM Lee-NOM 1st.pl.POL linguist-PL-ACC like-do-C say-do-POL
‘Kim says that Lee likes us linguists.’ (Polite)

In (5), ce in the embedded clause is not in agreement relation with -yo in the matrix clause. Nevertheless, the sentence final -yo surfaces. In (6), cehuy in the embedded pronoun-noun construction (PNC) is not in agreement relation with -yo in the matrix clause. Nonetheless, well-formedness results. These examples speak in favor of the idea that the realization of politeness is not dependent on agreement, but rather on SAPs.

Proposal. Nominal structures sensitive to politeness are SAPs instead of bare NPs. [1] Adopting Harley & Ritter’s (2002) feature geometry, I demonstrated that the Participant node for Referring Expressions corresponds specifically to nominal SAPs. [2] In light of Abney (1987), I drew parallelism between the clausal and the nominal domains by asserting that they both project SAPs. [3] I pointed out that politeness mismatches between the nominal and the clausal domains are not easily resolvable by syntactic agreement, but rather by multiple SAPs. Here, I do leave open the possibility that Korean nominals are DP-less contra Wiltschko (2019). Given the plethora of evidence suggesting that Korean lacks DPs (Chierchia (1998), Bošković (2012), and Bruening et al. (2018)), I propose that stacking SAPs above NPs or nominals smaller than a DP is possible: