

A Study on the tonal correspondences among Middle Korean, Kyungbuk Dialect and Kyungnam Dialect

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This study aims to quantify the degree of tonal correspondences among Middle Korean[MK], present Kyungbuk dialects[KB] and Kyungnam dialects[KN] at word level. It has been widely pointed out that the tonemes of MK and those of Present Kyungsang dialects (KS, embracing both KM and KN) correspond to each other in upside-down way. That is to say, the low tone of MK is equivalent to the high tone of KS, while the high tone of MK is to the low tone of KS. However, this explanation may work only for monosyllable noun stems, and has its limitations as the syllables of words get larger. For example, ‘LL’ of MK disyllable noun stems generally corresponds to ‘LH’ of KS, not to ‘HH’ as expected above. Moreover, it becomes a problem when discussing what the MK’s rising tone corresponds to for KN, since KN do not have a rising tone as a toneme, unlike MK and KB.¹ These facts lead to a conclusion that the tonal patterns realized at word level, not the tones realized in a single syllable, must be considered when discussing the tonal correspondences among MK, KB and KN.

As there are accumulated studies on the tonal correspondences among the three dialects (Choi Boram 2013, Ito Takayoshi 2015), the current study focuses on disyllable noun and verb stems. In the study Munkyeong represents KB, and Busan represents KN. Munkyeong is located in the northern west of Kyungbuk, while Busan is in the southern east of Kyungnam. Since the distance of the two regions is one of the longest within Kyungsang province, the dialectological differences of KB and KS can be highlighted. Meanwhile, 91 noun stems and 158 verb stems were selected for the analysis of usage from Kim Sungkyu (2015a), which had suggested the word list for the purpose of comparing MK and present Korean. The methodology adopted by this study follows the point of Maguire (2008) and Kim Sungkyu (2015b), both of which figure out the most superior pairs of correspondence and quantify the result.

	Correspondence Ratio	
	Noun	Verb
MK:KB	84.24%	59.09%
MK:KN	87.88%	58.77%
KB:KN	93.41%	90.84%

The table on the left side shows the brief result of the correspondence among the three dialects: the correspondence ratios of nouns are much higher than those of verbs, reaching more than 84% between any two of the three dialects. In terms of the disyllable noun stems, MK’s ‘LL’ is corresponding to KS’s ‘LH’. However, KS’s ‘LH’ is corresponding more to MK’s ‘LH’, rather than to MK’s ‘LL’, unlike the case of the disyllable noun stems. It leaves a question why the orderly correspondence of ‘LH:LL’ was diminished in the verbs. When it comes to the disyllable verb stems, the correspondence ratio between KB and KN (98.84%) is much higher than that between MK and KB, or that of MK and KN (both around 59%). Meanwhile, ‘LH-L’ of the disyllable verb stems, existing both in KB and KN, corresponds to MK’s ‘LH’ with very high probabilities (KB: 14.5/15=96.67%, KN: 14.14=100%). Those stems not only end with the ‘i’ sound, but also express the passivity in common.

¹ Disyllable words whose stems have a rising tone in MK appear as LHHL... in KN.