

t-Palatalization and Hypercorrection in the Korean Central Dialect*

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1 Introduction

t-palatalization in Korean is the phenomenon whereby [t], [t^h], and [t'] before [i] or [y] changed to [tʃ], [tʃ^h], and [tʃ'], respectively¹. The origin and propagation of this phenomenon was based on the consonantal system of late Middle Korean (the 15th century – the 16th century). There was no palatal phoneme in the consonantal system of the Korean central dialect² in late Middle Korean, even though there were a few palatal allophones before i or y. So alveolar /ts/ changed to palatal /tʃ/ and *t*-palatalization took place to fill the empty position of the palatal in the consonantal system. *t*-palatalization took place at the same time or at a later period than the change of alveolar /ts/ to palatal /tʃ/ in the consonantal system (Kim 1985).

Many scholars have claimed that *t*-palatalization took place in the central dialect around the turn of the 17th to the 18th century³, influenced by southern dialects, namely the Kyungsang dialect or the Culla dialect, and completed in the end of the 18th century. This dating of *t*-palatalization was based on written materials in Hangul (the Korean writing system) and the

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¹ Various phenomena which related to palatals took place between the 16th and the 19th centuries in Korean: /ts/ > /tʃ/, *t*-palatalization, *k*-palatalization, *h*-palatalization, *n*-deletion, and *n*-insertion before [i] or [y]; and Off-Glide *y*-insertion in the nucleus vowel of the syllable preceding [i] or [y].

² The consonantal system in the 16th century central dialect:

labial alveolar palatal velar laryngeal

p	t, ts	k	
p ^h	t ^h , ts ^h	k ^h	
p'	t, ts'	k'	
	s z		h
	s'		

m n ŋ

l

³ K.M. Lee (1977), C.G. Kwak (1980).

testimony of Hee Yu (1773-1837) in *Unmunji* (Yu 1824), which states: "[ti.hwa] was distinguished from [tʃi.hwa] in the days of the great great grandfather of his teacher, Tong-Yu, Chung (1744-1808)".

But, if we carefully investigate the data published in the second half of the 17th century, we can find words in which *t*-palatalization applied. The appearance of these words at that time did not coincide with the testimony in *Unmunji*. Therefore, the beginning period of *t*-palatalization might have been different, in which case its spreading process could be more definitively clarified if we were to give careful consideration to the correspondence between writings and sounds, and reinterpret the testimony in *Unmunji* on the basis of data exhibiting *t*-palatalization.

At this point, I will: 1) investigate the correspondence between writing types and their sounds in the historical data, 2) apply the concept of hyper-correction of *t*-palatalization to the sound change which was reflected in one kind of writing type, and 3) shed light on the dynamic pattern of the phonological change which was found in the development of *t*-palatalization in the Korean central dialect.

2 Writing Types and their Phonetic Realizations

The following examples show two kinds of writing types related to *t*-palatalization:

(1) a. examples of {ti} > {tʃi}⁴

{om.ki.ti} > {om.ki.tʃi} (F, III, 27a) 'to move',

{tyə.ki} > {tʃy.ki} (F, V, 16a) 'a little'

b. examples of {tʃi} > {ti}

{ka.tʃi.myən} > {ka.ti.myən} (F, I, 23a) 'to have',

{tʃyuy} > {tyuy} (F, I, 9b) 'the monk'

As one can see, writing type (1a) demonstrates *t*-palatalization, which is the change from [t] to [tʃ] before [i] or [y]. Conversely, (1b) demonstrates the opposite change in the writing: the appearance of {t} in place of {tʃ} before [i] or [y] in the historical materials. Many scholars consider these writing

⁴ In example (1), curly brackets ({}) stand for writings, not pronunciations.

Capital letters represent the books which are listed on the last page of this paper, Roman numerals represent volume numbers of these books, and numbers such as '23a' represent the pages on which the datum occurs. Thus, in '23a,' 'a' would represent the front page, which 'b' would represent the back page.

type errors which writers could have committed after the widespread propagation of *t*-palatalization.

But such a claim for (1b) must be modified, because the historical materials show (1b) in the same or earlier period than many Korean linguists claim that *t*-palatalization began. In addition, there were no or few writings of the type (1b) at the end of the 18th century, which was claimed to be the period in which the phenomenon took place in all words of the central dialect. In fact, the writings similar to (1b) also appear in the case of [k] before [i] or [y] from the second half of the 18th century documents. The writings of example (2) below relate to *k*-palatalization in the same way that the writing type of (1b) relates to *t*-palatalization. The following examples demonstrate sound changes which can currently be seen in the central dialect:

(2) examples of [tʃi] > [ki]

tʃit > kit (H, IX, 15a) 'a feather'

tʃi.sʌy > ki.ya (I, 398a) 'a tile of the roof'

tʃi > k^hi (I, 386a) 'a rudder'

tʃim.tʃ^hiy > kim. tʃ^hiy (> kim. tʃ^hi) (J, 67a) 'kimchi (a Korean dish)'

Example (2) shows that {tʃ} changed to {k} before [i] or [y] in the same way as example (1b) did. This change in writing demonstrates the sound change that occurred in the central dialect, i.e., the sound change of palatal [tʃ] to velar [k] before [i] or [y]. This phenomenon was caused by the conscious rejection of speakers of *k*-palatalization, because they considered words in which *k*-palatalization applied rustic⁵. If so, there is no reason why (1b) should be approached differently from (2), because there would be no difference between writing types (1b) and (2), except that while (2) survives in the current central dialect, (1b) does not. In addition, if we consider the fact that (1b) occurred at the same period that (1a) began to appear, and the fact that (2) occurred in a situation where *k*-palatalization hardly or never occurred in the central dialect, (1b) should also be interpreted in the same light as (2): speakers' conscious rejection of *t*-palatalization, not writers' errors caused by the spreading of *t*-palatalization. In this respect, I will consider (1b) to be the writing type in which the actual sound changes are reflected.

Thus, our claim is supported by the Yukcin dialect, spoken in the most northeastern area of Korea, and which is the most conservative dialect of Korean (Kwak 1994). This dialect, in which *t*-palatalization partially applied,

⁵ All words in which *k*-palatalization occurred were abolished from the standard form in Korean. But the type of (2) partially acquired the qualification of the standard Korean, for example, 'kimchi' (the Korean side dish), 'kit' (the wing), etc.

provides us with the evidence that writing type (1b) reflected the change at the phonetic level, as shown in (3) (T.G. Kim 1986).

(3) examples of [tʃi] > [ti]

tʃyək.t'a > tyək.t'a 'to write'

tʃyuy > tyuy 'a monk'

tʃ^hi.pu > t^hi.pu 'a housekeeping notebook'

tʃ^hay.ho.tʃi > tʃ^hay.ho.ti 'a kind of paper'

ən.tʃ^hy ə.sal.ta > ən.t^hy ə.sal.ta, 'to live depending on someone'

Examples in (3) show that the original [tʃ] in the Yukcin dialect changed to [t] before [i] or [y] at the phonetic level. These sound changes are the same as those reflected in writing type (1b). Therefore, our claim that writing type (1b) reflects the sound change is supported by the examples in (3).

In current Korean society, *k*-palatalization, *h*-palatalization, umlaut phenomena, word-medial *n*-deletion, etc., are markers of rural speech that are similar to those of the lower class. So Koreans in general classify the words in which palatalizations applied under the heading of *sat^huri*. *Sat^huri* is the term that is used to ridicule speakers who use words that are not part of the Seoul dialect or standard Korean. Therefore, *sat^huri* is the term that includes the socio-linguistic sense, contrasted to the Seoul dialect or standard Korean⁶.

Related to the Korean attitude, P.G. Lee (1972) provides us with an interesting report. In January of 1972, Professor Lee did a fieldwork study in the Yungduk area, which is located in the eastmost (seaside) part of Kyung-sang Province. Professor Lee reports that the adoption of *k*-palatalization was different between the Sangwon village and the Mulphyun village in the Yungduk area. While Mulphyun speakers, descendants of fishermen, always use the words in which *k*-palatalization applied, Sangwon speakers, the descendants of the Yangban (high class), never use *k*-palatalization forms⁷.

Professor Lee explains the linguistic differentiation of these two villages by means of socio-cultural forces of Korean traditional society (e.g. educational forces, economic forces, folkway, etc.). In other words, such a linguistic differentiation comes from the social awareness of Sangwon speakers,

⁶Koreans in general tend to think that the Seoul dialect equals standard Korean. This results from giving the feature [+privilege] to the Seoul dialect.

⁷In the Chosun dynasty, social classes had been differentiated into four classes: the high class (Yangban), the middle class (Cungin), the low class (Phyungmin), and the lowest class (Chunmin).

who try to regard themselves in the same light as speakers of the Seoul dialect, and subsequently try to differentiate themselves from speakers of the rural dialects or the lower class groups. The social attitude that the speakers in the Sangwon area show against *k*-palatalization is not considered to be different from that of the speakers in the central dialect against *t*-palatalization which was taking place at that time, influenced by southern dialects. In this respect, example (2) above can be considered a hypercorrection of *k*-palatalization.

If so, it would be fair to approach *t*-palatalization of the early modern central dialect in the same way. *t*-palatalization is not different from *k*-palatalization, except while the latter did not take place, the former was completed in the central dialect. In addition, the fact that (1b) had appeared at the beginning period of *t*-palatalization allows us to infer that this phenomenon, or words in which this phenomenon applied, might also be considered the marker of the rural dialects or the lower class groups, and then subsequently be rejected by the central dialect speakers. With this sociolinguistic attitude in mind, I will consider writing type (1b) to be a hypercorrection of *t*-palatalization, in which the phonological change of [tʃi] into [ti] is reflected.

t-palatalization and its hypercorrection both began to appear in the second half of the 17th century in the central dialect. The difference between the two phenomena is their distribution in the phonological word. The data show that *t*-palatalization appeared in non-initial syllables morpheme-internally, and hypercorrection mainly appeared in initial syllables of words⁸.

(4) a. examples of *t*-palatalization: ti > tʃi

(pʌy.pi.ril)syən.tyəŋ > (pʌy.pi.ril.)syən.tʃyəŋ, (A, 13b) 'even if'

a.roŋ.ti.ta > a.roŋ.tʃi.ta (A, 34b) 'to be colorful'

kol.tin.k^hal > kol.tʃin.k^hal (E, II, 17a) 'to be hollow'

⁸When comparing the years in which *t*-palatalization and its hypercorrection first appeared in historical materials, one can conclude that *t*-palatalization and its hypercorrection appeared earlier in the Culla dialect than they did in the Kyungsang dialect. But the data from both these dialects show that examples of hypercorrection appeared in the same period or earlier than those of *t*-palatalization:

	<i>t</i> -palatalization	hypercorrection
Kyungsang dialect	1603	1567
Culla dialect	1562	1562

- (4) b. examples of hypercorrection: tʃi > ti
 tʃi.tal > ti.tal (E, II, 34a) 'a kind of farming tool'
 tʃi.kə.ta > ti.kə.ta (D, II, 22a) 'to lose'
 tʃ^hi.ta > t^hi.ta (E, II, 38b) 'to put in (season)'
 tʃyo.h[]y > tyo.h[]y, (B, 13a) 'a paper'

Based on these data, *t*-palatalization must have begun at least around the second half of the 17th century from non-initial syllables, and hypercorrection must have taken place in initial syllables at almost the same time.

But this inference brings up a new problem: these appearances of *t*-palatalization in written materials would not then coincide with the testimony in *Unmunji*. This discrepancy is presumably caused by the difference between *t*-palatalization, *change from below*, and its hypercorrection, *change from above* (Labov 1972). Even though *t*-palatalization was taking place in non-initial syllables, speakers in Seoul, influenced by southern dialects, did not recognize that *t*-palatalization had occurred. If so, speakers must have thought that they were not using words in which *t*-palatalization applied, regardless of the fact that *t*-palatalization was in progress in non-initial syllables. This difference between objective fact and subjective awareness explains the discrepancy between *t*-palatalization in progress and the testimony in *Unmunji*.

3 The Process of *t*-Palatalization and its Hypercorrection

As I referred to above, *t*-palatalization occurred in non-initial syllables morpheme-internally, while its hypercorrection mainly occurred syllable-initially in materials from the second half of the 17th century. In materials from the first half of the 18th century, these two phenomena began to occur more than ever. And hypercorrection occurred more than *t*-palatalization, not only in onsets of initial syllables, but also in onsets of non-initial syllables. At this point, the two phenomena also occurred at the boundaries between lexical morphemes and functional morphemes, as seen in (5) below:

- (5) a. *t*-palatalization at the morphological boundary: ti > tʃi
 hyət.k' i.t^hi > hyət.k'i.tʃ^hi (F, I, 25b)
 hyət.k'[]t^h: 'the blade of the tongue', -i: 'nominative case marker'

b. hypercorrection at the morphological boundary: tʃi > ti

an.tʃ^hi.ra > an.t^hi.ra (F, VII, 14b)

an tʃ-: 'to sit down', -hi-: 'causative suffix', -ra: 'imperative ending'

ma.tʃ^hi.ti > ma.t^hi.ti (F, I, 4b)

ma tʃ - : 'to be right', -hi-: 'causative suffix', -ti: 'negative ending'

Materials in the middle of the 18th century show that *t*-palatalization had been extended to all environments, even though words to which this phenomenon had not applied still appeared frequently in onsets of non-initial syllables or at morphological boundaries. But these materials show only a few examples of hypercorrection. The fact that while the former examples became greater, the latter examples became fewer, informs us that the former was gradually extending, but the latter was diminishing. Thus, we can conclude that *t*-palatalization was losing its function as the marker of the rural dialects or the lower class groups. Related to this process of *t*-palatalization and its hypercorrection, we can now understand why hypercorrections of *k*-palatalization, as demonstrated in example (2), began to appear in this period.

Speakers seemed for the first time to have recognized that speakers of the central dialect considered *k*-palatalization the marker of the southern dialects. So, at this time, examples such as (2) began to appear for the first time. But this was caused by the speakers' rejection of *k*-palatalization, in spite of the fact that *k*-palatalization did not occur in the central dialect. If so, this would not be parallel to hypercorrection which interacted with *t*-palatalization in the central dialect. Even though *k*-palatalization never occurred in the central dialect at that time, speakers knew that *k*-palatalization was taking place in southern dialects⁹; thus they considered *k*-palatalization to be the marker of the southern dialects. So speakers hypercorrected palatal [tʃ] into velar [k] before [i] or [y]. Therefore, speakers began to hypercorrect *k*-palatalization instead of *k*-palatalization. In the second half of the 18th century, while hypercorrection of *t*-palatalization greatly lessened, hypercorrection of *k*-palatalization began to appear.

t-palatalization gradually extended by means of interactions of *t*-palatalization and hypercorrection. The relative tendency seems to be explained by the speakers' attitudes towards phonological change, i.e. speakers were extending *t*-palatalization, which is *change from below*, and rejecting the usage of words in which *t*-palatalization applied above the level of con-

⁹ At this time, *k*-palatalization could have been partially occurring to the extent that speakers would have been able to recognize it in the central dialect, even if materials do not show examples of *k*-palatalization.

sciousness. But it seems that they gradually extended *t*-palatalization by choosing words containing *t*-palatalization over those containing hypercorrection, in order to fill the empty palatal position of the consonantal system. In this process of the propagation of *t*-palatalization, the fact that the appearance of words with hypercorrections gradually lessened, signifies that *t*-palatalization was thought of less and less as the marker of the rural dialects or the lower class groups. Therefore, from the middle of the 18th century, *t*-palatalization continually extended, but hypercorrection suddenly lessened.

By the end of the 18th century, words in which *t*-palatalization applied were common, while hypercorrection hardly appeared. In addition, hypercorrection of *k*-palatalization continually appeared. In this respect, *t*-palatalization was almost completed by the turn of the 18th century to the 19th century.

4 The Process of Phonological Change

If speakers considered *t*-palatalization to be the marker of the rural dialects or the lower class groups, they would have at first tried not to use words where *t*-palatalization had applied. At the same time, they more than likely would have tried to turn back to the original forms for words in which *t*-palatalization had already applied. But at this stage, hypercorrection might not have yet appeared, because the speakers might not have hypercorrected the words which originally had had palatal [tʃ]. Therefore one can infer that hypercorrection appeared in the next stage.

After the period in which *t*-palatalization had spread to the extent that it could be recognized by speakers, these speakers might have confused the original [tʃ], which was not palatalized, with the [tʃ], which palatalized before [i] or [y]. At this stage, they might have hypercorrected even the original palatal [tʃ] into the alveolar [t], even though the segment originally was palatal, not palatalized. Here, we can infer that *t*-palatalization had begun earlier than the period in which hypercorrection appeared.

We need to focus on the fact that the hypercorrected words were not borrowed from the southern dialects, because hypercorrection resulted in speakers' rejection of words which had characteristics of the southern dialects. Furthermore, we cannot claim that hypercorrected words were formed by analogy, because hypercorrection was based not only on its similarity with *t*-palatalization, but also on its difference from *t*-palatalization, because hypercorrection occurred above the level of consciousness of the speakers who tried to reject the words in which *t*-palatalization applied.

Speakers took advantage of the paradigmatic relation of phonemes that alternated between the *palatal* /tʃ/ and the *non-palatal* /t/ before [i] or [y] on the one hand; and the syntagmatic relation with the phoneme that triggered the alternation on the other hand, namely the *palatal* /tʃ/ + /i/ or /y/ or the *non-palatal* /t/ + /i/ or /y/. Here the input and the output of these two phenomena were decided by means of the paradigmatic relation, and the environment that triggered the paradigmatic alternation was conditioned by means of the syntagmatic relation. The two rules of *t*-palatalization and its hypercorrection generalized throughout the processes of these analyses.

In fact, if our discussion is limited only to *t*-palatalization, we cannot decide whether the sound change had taken place by means of lexical diffusion by borrowing or analogy or by means of a rule. But if we put *t*-palatalization and hypercorrection together in our discussion, we would then be able to conclude that this sound change took place by means of a rule internalized to speakers.

The abovementioned hypercorrection is *change from above*. Even though *t*-palatalization was influenced by the southern dialects, hypercorrection was based on the central dialect. The speakers changed the original palatal [tʃ] into the alveolar [t] in the central dialect, because they sensed that the [tʃ] before [i] or [y] was palatalized, in spite of the fact that the target segment was not palatalized, but an original palatal. Therefore, one cannot claim that hypercorrection of *t*-palatalization was the result of borrowing or lexical analogy. Instead, one could claim that speakers knew about the rule of *t*-palatalization and took advantage of this rule during the process in which they were hypercorrecting the original palatal. Therefore, hypercorrection gives us the evidence that the *t*-palatalization rule existed in the speakers' consciousness, i.e., the interaction of these two phenomena informs us that a rule of sound change existed in the speakers' consciousness as psychological reality.

We would like to claim that speakers had these two rules from the stage of *t*-palatalization in which hypercorrection first appeared. So, in the process of the propagation of these two competing rules, speakers either gradually selected one of these two rules, and applied it to words, or gradually selected words to which it had already applied. Therefore, if the period of this propagation was a very long one, the other rule could have been in a competing relation with this rule.

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Selected Materials

- A: *kyung.min.phyun.un.hae* (vol. 1, 1656), A book which teaches Korean people the right customs.
- B: *U.rok.hae* (vol. 1, 1669), A book which translates Chinese words into Korean.
- C: *No.kul.tae.un.hae* (vols. 1-2, 1670), A textbook for Chinese conversation (2nd ed.).

- D: *Pak.thong.sa.un.hae* (vols. 1-3, 1677), A textbook for Chinese conversation (2nd ed.).
- E: *Yuk.u.yu.hae* (vols. 1-2, 1699), The book which translates Chinese words into Korean.
- F: *O.ryun.jun.pi.un.hae* (vols. 1-7, 1721), The biographies of Ryun-Jun, O and Ryun-Pi, O.
- G: *Tong.mun.yu.hae* (vols. 1-2, 1748), A book which translates Chinese words into Korean.
- H: *Sam.Yuk.chong.hae* (vols. 1-10, 1774), A textbook of Mongolian vocabulary (the 2nd ed.).
- I: *Han.chung.mun.kam* (vols. 1-15, 18c?), The dictionary of Manchurian.
- J: *Chung.u.no.kul.tae* (vols. 1-8, 1765), A textbook for Manchurian conversation (2nd ed.).
- K: *Jung.kan.no.kul.tae.un.hae* (vols. 1-2, 1795), A textbook for Chinese conversation (4th ed.).

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