The sensory witness evidential –te in Korean shows that prior to the speech time the speaker either observed a described event/state directly if it occurs with PRES or observed the result of an event/state and inferred that the eventuality took place if it occurs with PAST in tense. However, the –te expression of a described eventuality with PRES can also get an inferential reading when it refers to a future eventuality in a topical future reference time based on the speaker’s observation of forecast or schedule, contra Chung (2007), as in (1) Obama-ka hankwuk-ey o-te-ra ‘[I read] Obama will come (or comes) to Korea.’

J. Lee (2010) offers a nice modal analysis of this typologically interesting evidential. But speakers of Korean feel a (visual) observational feature more distinctly than modal force. A separate epistemic modal morpheme –keyss is distinctly modal. If both elements co-occur in one sentence the certainty of the event involved admittedly decreases, as in (2) Pi-ka o-ass-keyss-te-ra ‘It might have rained, guessing from my observation’ because of the doubly modalized situation. Primarily, however, evidentials show information source. The perceiver of sensory observation involved in an evidential –te sentence is its speaker but if the –te sentence ends with the declarative reportative evidential –tay, which originates from a quotative complex clause, the perceiver switches to the reporter. If it ends with the interrogative ending, the perceiver switches to the hearer (Lim 2010), ([[[S]]]^*[[-tel]]^*[([[[S]]]^*)]=λc s^ has sensory evidence that S λw. S in w, ---}, thereby evidential claims are interpreted from the addressee’s perspective, though indexicals still from the speaker). In contrast, if the –te S ends with the interrogative reportative evidential –nyay, the perceiver of –te becomes the addressee of the question initially; the embedded –te question shifts the perspective to the addressee, but the final reportative shifts the perspective back to the speaker. Imperatives and propositives, involving deontic, cannot occur with –te. 1st person subject constraints due to volitional action (or psych-predicate) occur.

Interestingly, -te occurs in a self-directed wh-question such as (3) nay-ka ku chayk-ul etiye noh-ass-te-ra? ‘I put the book where?’ ([I perceived where I put it but I don’t remember where]’ Here the perceiver is the speaker, whereas a real question with –te, ending with –nya, shifts the perspective to the addressee, who becomes the perceiver in a delayed assertion in answer.

If –te occurs in a non-final clause with the sequential/causal connective –(u)ni, the PRES clause denotes sequential relation with the third person subject, as in (4) Ku-i-ka/*nay-ka ture o-te -ni coyonghi anc-te-ra ‘She/*I came in [as I observed], and (then) she sat quietly [as I observed],’ whereas the PAST clause denotes causal relation based on the internalized inferential result-experience as cause and the resulting consequence in the final clause with the first (and often third, but not second) person subject, (5) Nay-ka/*Ney-ka/??ku i-ka inhyeng-ul chi-ess –te –ni inhyeng-i ssureci-ess-ta ‘Because I/*you/??he hit the doll [as I experienced], it fell.’

Turning to acquisition, the reportative –tay is acquired as early as 2 of age in Korean (Lee 1990) and –te at 3. Papafragou et al (2007, 2010) report from their experiments that Korean children can hardly comprehend the meanings of the reportative evidential –tay and the assertion marker (their “evidential”) –e at 2 or 3, although they produce them well. But they admit that children can answer relevant questions. They regard this assertion marker –e as an evidential as well but it is certainly different from evidentials. It does not involve any
information source or channel. Because comprehension normally comes earlier than production, their experiments, though diversely conducted, might have been a barrier to a real picture. Early cases of the reportative –ta-y at 2 are mostly like a quotative, the subject typically being the source of the report. Sometimes they report someone’s action with the actor as the subject. They don’t use the reportative -ta-y as a hearsay. It must be a use by grown-ups. –te is acquired a little later at early 3. Consider:

(6) Appa, appa, pwuek-eyse pap naymsay-ka na-te-ra
dad dad kitchen-from boiled rice smell-NOM occur-TE-DEC
‘Dad, dad, there comes out the smell of boiled rice from the kitchen.’

CK 3 yrs 2 months and 10 days, coming out of the kitchen (direct smelling).

The declarative ending –ta is also different from –e or –ney in Korean. The assertion marker –e, acquired earliest before 2, may be claimed to be a zero-evidential (Willett 1988), contra Papafragou et al (2007). The declarative sentence ending –ta in children and colloquial Korean is different from the formal and simply assertive use; it shows how something expected and represented in the mind is met by a real fact in the world. There is a slight sense of welcome. In this sense, the surprise marker –ney seems to be closer to a mirative evidential and the declarative ending –ta also may be considered in this respect, but not the assertive –e.

(7) a. eps-ney eps-e
    (this sequence is natural but not the other way around)
    absent-NEY absent-ASSERT
‘(It) is not here [I find], (It) is not here [I assert].’

b. *eps-e eps-ney

Evidentials in Korean interact with each other, with epistemic modal, with connective, and with moods, showing their distinct features.

SELECTED REFERENCES