Summary and Keywords

The syntax of Korean is characterized by several signature properties. One signature property is head-finality. Word order variations and restrictions obey head-finality. Korean also possesses wh in-situ as well as internally headed relative clauses, as is typical of a head-final language. Another major signature property is dependent-marking. Korean has systematic case-marking on nominal dependents and very little, if any, head-marking. Case-marking and related issues, such as multiple case constructions, case alternations, case stacking, case-marker ellipsis, and case-marking on adjuncts, are front and center properties of Korean syntax as viewed from the dependent-marking perspective. Research on these aspects of Korean has contributed to the theoretical understanding of case and grammatical relations in linguistic theory. Korean is also characterized by agglutinative morphosyntax. Many issues in Korean syntax straddle the morphology-syntax boundary. Korean morphosyntax constitutes a fertile testing ground for ongoing debates about the relationship between morphology and syntax in domains such as coordination, deverbal nominalizations (mixed category constructions), copula, and other denominal constructions. Head-finality and agglutinative morphosyntax intersect in domains such as complex/serial verb and auxiliary verb constructions. Negation, which is a type of auxiliary verb construction, and the related phenomena of negative polarity licensing, offer important evidence for crosslinguistic understanding of these phenomena. Finally, there is an aspect of Korean syntax that reflects areal contact. Lexical and grammatical borrowing, topic prominence, pervasive occurrence of null arguments and ellipsis, as well as a complex system of anaphoric expressions, resulted from sustained contact with neighboring Sino-Tibetan languages.

Keywords: head-finality, dependent-marking, case-marking, morphosyntax, topic prominence, null arguments, language contact

1. Principles of Coverage

The topics that are discussed in this article are necessarily selective. For someone interested in comprehensive coverage, descriptively more complete resources and grammars are listed in the Further Reading section. The guiding principles behind the particular selection of topics assembled in this article are the following. First, topics that are illustra-
tive of the signature properties of Korean have been chosen. Secondly, topics on which there is a critical mass of theoretically informed research, especially within the generative tradition, have been chosen. Thirdly, syntactic phenomena in Korean that are deemed to be typologically rare or interesting have been selected for coverage. In general, only the most representative works that are accessible to readers both in and outside of Korea are included, though it was unavoidable to list some works written in Korean if they were deemed important enough.

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews topics that are related to the rigid head-final character of the Korean language. Section 3 focuses on topics related to the dependent-marking character of Korean. The topics discussed in Section 4 relate in some way to the agglutinative morphosyntax of the language, while in Section 5, properties of Korean that seem to reflect sustained areal contact with Topic-Prominent languages are discussed.

2. Head-Final Language

2.1 Head-Finality and Word Order

Korean is overwhelmingly head-final in its syntax. It is considered an SOV language, but is far more rigidly head-final than many other languages classified loosely as having a basic SOV order. Constituents bearing various grammatical relations (Subject, Direct Object, Indirect Object, Possessor), as well as complement clauses, precede the head (a verb or a noun) in both matrix and subordinate domains. It has Postpositions (called Particles in the Korean linguistic tradition) rather than Prepositions. Clausal and nominal modifiers, including relative clauses, precede their heads.

2.1.1 Scrambling, Configurationality, and Word Order

However, as long as word order respects head-finality, Korean has relatively free word order among dependents that precede the head. Scrambling, which refers to the phenomenon of word order variation of clausal and nominal dependents, is quite unrestricted. Scrambling is possible in both matrix and embedded domains, and both local (cf. 1b) and long-distance scrambling (cf. 2) are attested.

(1)

| a. Cheli-ka Mary-eykey ton-ul ponay-ss-ta |
| C-nom M-dat money-acc send-pst-decl |

| b. Ton-ul Cheli-ka Mary-eykey ponay-ss-ta |
| money-acc C-nom M-dat send-pst-decl |

‘Cheli sent Mary money.’

(2)
Most early generative accounts of scrambling in Korean build on the analysis of Japanese scrambling put forth in Saito (1985) and Hoji (1985) and take scrambling to be an instance of A-bar movement from a canonical structure in which the dependents are arranged in a hierarchical S-IO-DO-V order. H.-S. Han (1987) provided arguments for a hierarchical, or configurational, analysis of Korean syntax, which undergirds the movement analysis of scrambling. The question of whether languages like Korean have a configurational syntactic structure is also addressed in Whitman (1986). Subsequent research on scrambling focused on the properties of the movement operation involved in scrambling, inspired by Mahajan (1990) and Webelhuth (1992), as well as by Saito’s (1992) claim that while local Scrambling in Japanese is A or A-bar movement, long-distance scrambling can only be A-bar movement. J.-M. Yoon (1990A) argued that unlike Japanese, long distance Scrambling in Korean may display behavior typical of A-movement in some instances, and tried to relate this claim to other properties of Korean, such as the presence of multiple nominative construction and subject-to-object raising out of finite CPs.

The widely accepted analysis of scrambling as untriggered movement (Saito, 1985) became problematic for key theoretical assumptions of early Minimalism (Chomsky, 1995), which effectively banned untriggered movement. Naturally, this theoretical turn led to attempts to reframe the apparent optionality of scrambling as feature-driven movement (see Miyagawa, 1997; Bošković & Takahashi, 1998 on Japanese, for different proposals regarding the trigger of scrambling). In an interesting turn, Y.-S. Lee (1993) argued that scrambling is obligatory and case-driven, despite appearances to the contrary. Lee also took issue with the common assumption that scrambling operates on a canonically ordered base structure, and proposed that all orders, including canonical orders, are derived by scrambling, with case-marking being the driving force behind the movement. Though H. Ko’s (2007) analysis of scrambling is couched in Minimalist terms, she does not address the problem of optionality. Instead, she seeks to explicate some constraints on scrambling through the theory of cyclic linearization of syntactic structure (H. Ko, 2005A). An incremental, left-to-right analysis of scrambling couched within the Dynamic Syntax framework is the topic of Kempson and Kiaer (2010).

Syntactic analyses of Scrambling do not usually address information-structural differences among different word orders. An influential analysis of the effects of word order variation on informational structural notions like topic and focus is H.-W. Choi (1996), which is couched in the Lexical-Functional Grammar framework. A different non-transformational approach to scrambling is developed in work by J.-B. Kim and colleagues in the Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar framework (Kim & Choi, 2004). They take local scrambling to be base-generated, while long distance scrambling is analyzed through mechanisms used to model filler-gap dependencies.
2.1.2 Postposing

The supposition that there is no scrambling of dependents to the right of the head/verb seems to be counter-exemplified by Postposing (aka Right Dislocation, RD), illustrated below.

(3)

Cheli-ka Mary-eykey ponay-sst-ta ton-ul
C-nom M-dat send-pst-decl money-acc
‘Cheli sent Mary some money.’

While (3) has been analyzed as involving rightward movement/scrambling by H.-S. Choe (1987), several facts militate against a rightward movement analysis. First, the putative movement does not abide by the Right Roof Constraint (Ross, 1967), which is known to constrain rightward movement. Secondly, it is restricted to root domains, unlike leftward scrambling, which occurs in both embedded and matrix domains. Finally, prosodic evidence indicates that the right-dislocated constituent belongs to a separate clause from the preceding material. Specifically, in RD with yes-no questions, there must be two rising intonational peaks associated respectively with the right edge of the verb and the right-dislocated constituent. All of these facts favor an analysis of RD as a paratactic combination of two clauses with leftward scrambling of the dislocated constituent followed by ellipsis of the remainder of the second clause that is identical to the preceding clause. Such an analysis was put forth in Tanaka (2001) for Japanese and is applicable to Korean as well. Against this background, H. Ko (2015) attempts to revive the rightward movement analysis for at least some instances of RD.

2.1.3 Quantifier Floating

Word order variation is also attested in nominal domains. For example, possessors and other nominal modifiers can commute in terms of word order. However, there is relatively little work on free word order in the nominal domain. Instead, researchers have focused on various ways in which noun classifier constructions can be expressed syntactically. H. Ko’s (2007) cyclic linearization-based theory addresses some issues of word order variation in the nominal domain, including restrictions on floated quantifiers/classifiers. D.-H. An (2014) also discusses certain restrictions on word order among constituents in the nominal domain.

While the relation between NP-internal and NP-external (aka floated) classifiers is typically dealt with by movement in transformational approaches, non-transformational approaches posit that the two are separately base-generated. B.-M. Kang’s (2002) analysis of floating quantifiers as base-generated adverbial modifiers is an important work couched in this tradition. J.-B. Kim (2013) is another analysis that espouses the base-generation of floated/NP-external quantifiers/classifiers as adverbials. Though couched within the transformational approach, H. Ko (2005A, 2007) proposes a hybrid approach where floated quantifiers can be either base-generated as adnominal modifiers or as adverbial
modifiers. The relationship between floated quantifiers, case-marking and the grammatical relations of the NPs that they are construed with is addressed in Gerdts (1987).

2.2 Wh-Questions

2.2.1 Wh-In Situ and Locality

As is common in SOV languages, there is no obligatory movement of interrogative phrases (wh-phrases) to the front of clauses. Wh-phrases may be fronted optionally, but this is achieved through Scrambling. Therefore, interrogative clauses do not differ from declarative clauses in their internal syntax, except for the marking of clause type on the verb. And while some (A. H.-O. Kim, 1988) have viewed the in-situ wh-phrase as occupying a designated, preverbal Focus position, there is little evidence for the existence of such a position in Korean.

There is much work on wh-questions (S.-W. Kim, 1991 and D. Chung, 1996 being representative early works). Most of this work is based on the foundational work by Huang (1982) on wh in-situ in Chinese. Korean is similar to Chinese in that argumental wh in-situ can occur inside islands and take scope out of them. And like Chinese, it has a more restricted distribution for adjunct wh’s, which cannot occur inside islands. A number of researchers have investigated the locality constraints on the interpretation of wh in-situ, which Huang (1982) analyzed as constraints on the covert movement of wh in-situ. Huang (1982) reasoned that unlike overt movement, covert movement of argumental wh’s is not interrupted by island constraints.

However, this proposal leaves the asymmetry between overt and covert movement unexplained. The asymmetry is the motivation for J.-W. Choe (1987), who sought to explain the apparent lack of movement locality for wh in-situ by positing an island-observing movement of a larger constituent containing the wh-in-situ, that is, **LF Pied Piping**. Another influential work on locality constraints on the covert movement of wh in-situ is Beck and Kim (1997), who identify configurations they claim diagnose and constrain LF wh-movement. Subsequent works of note on what has come to be called the **Intervention Effect** are Y.-S. Choi (2007) and Tomioka (2007), the latter of which views it as pragmatic, rather than as a constraint on the syntax-semantics mapping. A work that attempts to address the more stringent locality of adjunct wh in-situ is H. Ko (2005B), which proposes a high base-generation site for adjunct wh phrases. A non-transformational account of wh scope is found in Pollard and Yoo (1998).

2.2.2 Wh-Island Condition

While Korean is similar to Chinese with regard to the selective locality effects on argument vs. adjunct wh in-situ, it differs from Chinese in having an obligatory interrogative clause-type suffix that delimits the scope of wh phrases. This has led to analyses of wh in-situ that capitalize on the licensing relation between the scope markers in an interrogative clause and in-situ wh-phrases (S.-W. Kim, 1991; D. Chung, 1996).
One debate related to the presence of scope markers revolves around the status of the Wh-Island Condition in Korean. If the scope of a wh-phrase is signaled by an interrogative Comp, a wh phrase inside an embedded interrogative Complement clause should not be able to scope out of it, yielding the Wh-Island effect. However, the status of the Wh-Island Condition in Korean has been a matter of debate, with researchers in disagreement about the facts and analyses. A similar debate exists in Japanese (Watanabe, 1992; Hirotani, 2005). Recognizing the illusive nature of the judgments, Kitagawa and colleagues (Kitagawa & Fodor, 2003; Kitagawa & Hirose, 2012) investigated the issue experimentally and claimed that the Wh-Island effect does not obtain in Japanese but that various non-syntactic factors such as prosody and default parsing preferences may conspire to yield the preference for narrow scope in most cases, giving rise to the appearance of the Wh-Island effect. J.-M. Yoon (2011A) conducted experimental work on Wh-Islands in Korean and came to a similar conclusion. She argued that there is a preference for embedded scope, but that it reflects non-syntactic factors. A more systematic experimental investigation by B.-Y. Kim (2015; see also Kim & Goodall, 2016) also found a preference for embedded scope among both native speakers and heritage Korean speakers, though the issue of whether the effect reflects a grammatical constraint or something else, such as processing difficulty, is not addressed by the authors.

2.3 Relative Clauses

2.3.1 Types of Relative Clauses

As for relative clauses (RCs), both Internally headed Relative Clauses (IHRC) and Externally headed Relative Clauses (EHRC) can be found in Korean. The existence of the former is another characteristic of head-final SOV languages, as is well-known.


2.3.2 Locality in EHRCs

In EHRCs, the RC comes before the head noun it modifies, as is expected of a head-final language. The structure and derivation of EHRCs has been a favorite topic of investigation since the beginning of generative grammar (I.-S. Yang, 1972; D.-W. Yang, 1973). Among the topics investigated is the nature of the dependency between the gap in the RC and the head noun. While movement analyses have been posited (J.-I. Han, 1992; Kaplan & Whitman, 1995), the challenge for such analyses comes from the fact that there are RCs where the dependency between the gap and the head noun is not constrained by movement locality. Focusing on such RCs, Na and Huck (1993) explored the overall semantic-pragmatic factors involved in the licensing of RCs in Korean, including such island-violating RCs, and conclude that the gap does not result from movement. An interesting take on island-violating gaps in these “Double” RCs is that of Han and Kim (2004), who propose that the violation of movement locality is only apparent, since there
is an alternative source for such RCs that does not violate movement locality. Such RCs have been dubbed “grammatical illusions,” and play a pivotal role in current debates about whether grammatical principles can be reduced to extra-grammatical constraints (Phillips, Wagers, & Lau, 2011). However, Han and Kim’s (2004) analysis has been criticized on the basis of empirical and theoretical difficulties in subsequent works (I. Kim, 2013; J.-M. Yoon, 2011B). These works advocate a discourse-functional and/or processing perspective on island phenomena in Korean, essentially denying the relevance of island constraints in Korean syntax.

2.3.3 Accessibility Hierarchy and Gapless RCs

Another research topic on Korean RCs concerns the Accessibility Hierarchy (AH, Keenan & Comrie, 1977). Relativization (in EHRC in particular) reaches quite far down the AH in Korean, yielding RCs that appear to lack gaps linked to the external head. Such Gapless (also called Pseudo) RCs have been studied by J.-H. Yoon (1993), J.-B. Kim (1998), and J.-Y. Cha (2005), among others.

The AH has been investigated in the realm of processing and acquisition as well. The so-called Subject Preference, which names the tendency for a gap in an RC to be preferentially parsed as a subject gap, has been studied experimentally using a variety of techniques by Kwon, Gordon, Lee, Kluender, and Polinsky (2010). O’Grady, Lee, and Choo (2003) is a widely cited article on this topic that focuses on second-language learners. See also Kim and O’Grady (2016).

2.4 Other Unbounded Dependency Constructions

Since Chomsky (1977), it has been customary to view constructions displaying potentially unbounded filler-gap dependencies as belonging to a single family, collectively known as Wh-movement Constructions or Unbounded Dependency Constructions (UDCs). In addition to movement-derived wh-questions and RCs containing gaps, other candidates for UDCs in Korean include focus fronting, scrambling (cf. Section 2.1), comparative constructions, and varieties of clefts. The syntax and semantics of Comparative Constructions in Korean is the topic of Giannakidou and S. Yoon (2011). Cleft Constructions have received a fair amount of attention in recent years as well. Various aspects of clefts and related issues such as different types of kes-nominalizations as well as the relation between clefts and various ellipsis constructions (such as Sluicing) are addressed in works such as S.-E. Jhang (1994), B.-S. Kang (2006), M.-K. Park (2001), and J.-B. Kim (2016A), among many others.

3. Dependent-Marking Language

A distinctive signature of Korean syntax is pervasive Dependent Marking (Nichols, 1986). Korean has systematic Case-Marking on nominal dependents of both verbs and nouns. The dependent-marking repertoire of nominal dependents extends beyond case-marking to encompass formatives that express various types of topic and focus. In the lit-
erature, these formatives are called **Delimiters**, following the pioneering work of I.-S. Yang (1972, 1973) on this topic.

The system of dependent marking is not limited to nominal dependents of a predicate. Verbal and clausal complements as well as adjunct modifiers carry distinctive markings indicating the type of dependency they enter into. Thus, serialization of bare verbs or clausal/verbal linkage without dependent marking is not attested productively in contemporary Korean. However, unlike the system of markers on nominals (called **Particles** in descriptive traditions), there is no established term for the verbal and clausal endings, though the term **Complementizer** is used in some analyses (Cho & Sells, 1995) and seems appropriate as the designation for the class of verbal and clausal linking endings (Lee, Madigan, & Park, 2016 adopts this usage).

### 3.1 Case-Marking

The case system of Korean is rich and intricate, and a number of interesting case-related phenomena are found. Morphologically, case-markers are clitic-like, and are realized at the right margin of noun phrases. For this reason, traditional grammars treat case-markers as syntactically independent words rather than as morphological inflections, and categorize them as instantiating the lexical category of **Particles**. Case-markers in turn can be divided into those that express **Grammatical** (or **Structural**) case (Nominative, Accusative, Genitive, and perhaps Dative) and those that express **Semantic** (or **Inherent** or **Lexical**) case (different types of locatives, for example). Korean has a nominative-accusative case alignment for its core grammatical cases, though there are certain dyadic predicates that occur with non-nominative (Dative or Locative) subjects and nominative-marked objects, which looks similar to ergative alignment.

An important theoretical debate in generative grammar concerns the mechanisms of case-assignment. Mainstream generative accounts of case-marking in the Principles-and-Parameters approach (Chomsky, 1981) and Minimalist Syntax (Chomsky, 2000, 2001) hypothesize that case-marking is mediated by a local relationship (called Government or *Agree*) between a head and a nearby noun phrase. It is also assumed that this relationship is *bi-unique*. That is, a given head case-marks a single noun phrase, and a noun phrase is assigned its case by a unique case-assigning head. The assigned case may be shared among constituents of a noun phrase (such as determiners and adjectives) through Case Concord, but this type of case sharing does not pose a challenge to the bi-uniqueness assumption. These tenets underlying case-assignment are taken to be universal, subject only to limited variation (though Baker, 2015, posits a system with much more variation).

The Korean case system poses challenges for widely accepted assumptions about case-marking. In particular, the bi-uniqueness assumption is apparently challenged by the existence of Multiple (Identical) Case Constructions, such as the **Multiple Nominative** (MNC, cf. 4a) and the **Multiple Accusative Constructions** (MAC, cf. 4b), where more than one nominal can carry nominative or accusative case in a simple clause.
Genitive can also be marked on more than one dependent in a noun phrase.

A different challenge for the bi-uniqueness assumption comes from Case Alternations, where nominals can bear alternating cases without accompanying alternations on the form of the predicate, indicating that they may enter into a case-licensing relation with more than one head. Not only can case-marking on a nominal alternate, sometimes it is possible for more than one case-marker to be realized on a nominal, yielding Case Stacking, which similarly challenges the bi-uniqueness assumption. And though not directly related to the bi-uniqueness assumption, Case-marked adverbials in Korean have been highlighted in work by Joan Maling and Soowon Kim (Kim & Maling, 1993, 1998), where they showed that adverbials in Korean carry grammatical rather than semantic case, which is a crosslinguistic rarity.

3.1.1 Theoretical Accounts of Case-Marking

Y.-S. Kang (1985) is an early and comprehensive account of case-marking in Korean couched loosely within the Government and Binding framework, but with some language-specific provisions. Kang proposes that accusative in Korean is assigned to NPs (including nominal adverbials) that are sister to [-stative] verbs, while nominative is assigned subsequently to all case-less NPs, as a default case. The system of case-marking has ordering built in, since accusative must be assigned prior to the default nominative case, unlike standard assumptions about case-marking in the Government-Binding framework where ordering is not countenanced.

Y.-J. Kim (1990) refined Kang’s notion of stativity, which is claimed to be relevant for acc-marking, by adding agentivity as another feature involved in the determination of acc-case. However, she retained the assumption that nominative is a default case. Like Kang, Kim proposed a sequential case-marking mechanism for grammatical cases. Accusative is assigned first to internal arguments of non-stative/non-agentive verbs, followed by accusative case agreement (which is the mechanism responsible for case-sharing in Multiple Accusative Constructions in her analysis), which in turn is followed by accusative assignment to adjuncts. Finally, default nominative case assignment places case on the remaining case-less nominals. In her system, accusative is maximally different from nominative, since there are three different ways in which accusative can be assigned to a nominal, as opposed to a single way in which nominative is licensed.
K.-S. Hong (1991) offers a lexicalist account of acc-marking based on the “macro-roles” of arguments, where an argument that bears the macro-role of Determinee in the presence of a co-argument bearing the Determinant role is assigned acc-case. For nominative, she retains the assumption that it is assigned by default to arguments that are not assigned acc-case, albeit only for nominals that realize arguments of a verb, because case-marking is defined on argument structures in her system. Therefore, Hong’s account is not able to deal with adverbal case or with multiple identical case constructions, where nominative and accusative show up on nominals that are not direct arguments of a verb. Macro-role based algorithms of case-assignment are also proposed in works couched in the Role and Reference Grammar tradition (B.-S. Yang, 1994; K.-S. Park, 1995). However, unlike Hong, K.-S. Park (1995) also deals with grammatical case on non-arguments through the bifurcation of Semantic versus Pragmatic Case. Essentially, nominative and accusative that show up on non-arguments realize pragmatic case, while those on arguments realize semantic case.

Developed within the framework of Categorial Grammar, O’Grady (1991) is one of the most comprehensive accounts of case phenomena in Korean. While the coverage is impressive, the overall goal, which is to provide a uniform account of all instantiations of a given case, is a bit too ambitious, in light of works such as Y.-J. Kim (1990) that argue for distinct modes of accusative case assignment.

J.-B. Kim and his colleagues (Kim & Choi, 2004) have developed accounts of the Korean case system within the framework of Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar. HPSG is a lexicalist theory like LFG, within which Hong’s account of case-marking was developed, but the innovation in Kim’s approach is to take the grammatical cases to be properties of constructions. The idea is that case is not assigned by designated heads, nor determined in argument structure, but arises as properties of particular constructions (or configurations). This innovation allows him to overcome the challenges that faced earlier lexicalist theories of Korean case (such as K.-S. Hong’s) which were unable to give a natural account of case-marking on non-arguments (adverbials, Major Subjects, etc.)

There is no attempt to link case-marking directly with Grammatical Relations (GRs) in any of the above works. However, working within the framework of Relational Grammar (RG), where GRs figure as primitives of the theory, C. Youn (1989) proposes that case-marking is related to GR’s, albeit in an indirect and derivational manner. In his account, multiple identical case constructions arise through derivational mechanisms of case spread/sharing, though he distinguishes between two types of MNCs. Case spreading becomes relevant only when an MNC is derived by Possessor Raising. In MNCs that cannot be so derived, the particle homophonous with the nom-marker is claimed to mark focus, an idea that has been picked up and defended by others (Schütze, 2001; Vermeulen, 2005, etc.)

3.1.2 Case Stacking and Case Alternations

An original contribution of Gerdts and Youn (1988) is the analysis of Case Stacking (cf. 5b), where more than one case-marker shows up on a nominal. The construction occurs somewhat marginally and in restricted registers, but has great theoretical significance.
(5)

a. Cheli-hanthey mwuncey-ka manh-a
   C-data  problem-nom  a.lot-decl
   ‘Cheli has a lot of problems.’

b. (Yenghi-ka  ani-ko)  Cheli-hanthey-ka mwuncey-ka manh-a
   (Y-nom  neg.cop-comp  C-dat-nom  problems-nom  a.lot-decl
   ‘It is Cheli (not Yenghi) who has a lot of problems.’

The authors analyze case stacking through the derivational mechanics of GR-changing and assumptions about the spell-out of case-markers, where either a lexical or grammatical case or both can be realized in languages like Korean. It is the last option that yields case stacking.

Case stacking also figures prominently in J. Yoon’s (1996A) analysis of various types of Case Alternations in Korean and other languages. He takes case stacking to constitute evidence against the bi-uniqueness assumption of case-assignment and proposes an alternative theory that allows multiple case-assignment to noun phrases in restricted circumstances. Bejar and Massam (1999) also argue for the necessity of multiple case assignment. By contrast, Schütze (2001) takes issue with J. Yoon’s (1996A) interpretation (as well as that of Gerdts & Youn, 1988, on which J. Yoon, 1996A, is based) of case stacking and proposes that the stacked case-marker is not a case-marker but a homophonous, non-case-marking Delimiter, a fine-tuning of ideas put forth earlier that maintained that some nom-marked NPs in MNCs are not marked for case but for focus (C. Youn, 1989). J. Yoon (2004) is a comprehensive critique of Schütze’s (2001) analysis. Levin (2017) is the latest contribution to the debate surrounding case stacking, in which case stacking is argued to involve multiple case assignment. Levin (2017) works out his analysis in a Dependent Case framework (Marantz, 1991; Baker & Vinokurova, 2010; Baker, 2015) and takes case stacking to be evidence for this approach to case-marking.

Case Alternation on arguments is not surprising if it is accompanied by changes (such as voice marking or finiteness marking) on the case-licensing head. What is interesting is that case alternations on dependents unaccompanied by changes on the licensing head are attested in Korean. A representative example is the alternation of nominative and accusative on an embedded subject in the Subject-to-Object Raising (SOR) construction, where, unlike in English and other languages, an embedded subject of a clause alternates between nominative and accusative without any change in the finiteness of the embedded verb, as shown in (6) below.

(6)

   Na-nun  Yenghi-ka/lul  ttoktokha-ta-ko  sayngkakhan-ta
   I-top     Y-nom/acc   smart-decl-comp  think-decl
   ‘I think Yenghi is smart.’
A similar alternation of accusative and nominative is found with objects of the **V-ko siph-ta construction** (Kim & Maling, 1998).

(7)

Na-nun hankwuk-yenkwa-ka/lul po-ko siph-ta  
I-top Korean-movies-nom/acc watch-comp want-decl  
‘I want to watch Korean movies.’

Another well-known alternation involves the case-marking of nominal possessors, which can be marked genitive (as **Internal Possessor**) or nominative/accusative (as **External Possessor** in MNC or MAC), again without any change on the nouns (cf. 8a, b).

(8)

a. Cheli-uy/ka apeci-ka pwuca-i-si-ta  
   C-gen/nom father-nom rich-cop-sbj hon-decl  
   ‘Cheli’s father is rich.’

b. Na-nun Cheli-uy/lul ppyam-ul tayli-ess-ta  
   I-top C-gen/acc cheek-acc hit-pst-decl  
   ‘I slapped Cheli on the cheek.’

While earlier analyses of such alternations posited a derivational relationship between the two alternants, many recent accounts, even those couched in derivational frameworks, do not posit a direct derivational relationship between the two. For example, while it was fashionable to derive External Possessor Constructions from Internal Possessor Constructions by Possessor Raising (S.-A. Chun, 1985; H.-S. Choe, 1986; C. Youn, 1989, etc.), there are numerous difficulties facing such analyses (J. Yoon, 2015). Likewise, there are difficulties with viewing the acc-marked embedded subject in the SOR construction as resulting from the direct raising of the nom-marked, embedded subject. K.-S. Hong (1990) views SOR as involving a base-generated acc-marked NP that functions as a topic with respect to the embedded clause. A novel movement analysis is proposed in J. Yoon (2007), who takes the raised object to be related to an embedded **Major Subject** position rather than the embedded subject position, developing J.-M. Yoon’s (1989A) proposal that the embedded complement of an SOR verb is a Multiple Nominative Construction. J.-M. Yoon (2015) attributes the similarities between SOR and MNCs not to a shared structure, but similar profiles that the two constructions present with respect to processing factors.

### 3.1.3 Case-Marked Adverbials

In an important series of works (Kim & Maling, 1993, 1998), Soowon Kim and Joan Maling highlighted the significance of **Case-marked Adverbials** in Korean. The reason that this relatively obscure phenomenon has interested researchers is that while nominal adverbs can be case-marked in many languages, very few languages show case alternations on case-marked adverbials. Kim and Maling’s research laid the groundwork for subsequent work on adverbial case-marking in that it identified, albeit in a preliminary way, the
class of nominal adverbials that can be case-marked (duration and frequency adverbials, mostly) and the conditions that govern the alternation of grammatical cases on adverbials. It also offered an analysis of case-alternating adverbials in Korean couched within a general theory of case assignment (Yip, Maling, & Jackendoff, 1987). Wechsler and Lee (1996) is an important work that characterizes the class of case-marked adverbials in semantic terms, as those that function as Situation Delimiters. Kim and Sells (2010) is the most complete account of adverbial case in Korean so far, in which the role of animacy and definiteness in the licensing of adverbial case is highlighted.

Despite the progress made in these works, a challenge for research on adverbial case-marking is the subtle nature of critical judgments on which theoretical claims are built. This naturally calls for a more systematic method of obtaining judgments. Jun, Maling, and Kim (2001) is an early attempt at adopting experimental methodology to investigate variations in judgments. Adverbial case-marking is a topic on which the recent experimental turn in syntax could pay dividends.

### 3.1.4 Case-Markers and Topic/Focus Interpretation

There is an ongoing debate on whether the nominal particles in Korean (as well as Japanese) that express grammatical cases (nominative, accusative) are (i) pure case-markers, (ii) markers that optionally conflate syntactic (i.e., case-marking) and information-structural properties such as topic and focus, or (iii) pairs of homophonous particles each of which exclusively expresses syntactic (case-marking) or information-structural properties (topic/focus).

The debate is grounded in the observation that certain contexts and constructions force, or strongly favor, a case-marked nominal to be interpreted as focused (H.-B. Im, 1972; Kuno, 1973). However, another ground for the debate is the bi-uniqueness condition. In theories that restrict case-marking to a bi-unique relation between the case-marking head and the case-bearing nominal, a non-case analysis of certain types of non-canonical case-marking (as in K.-S. Park, 1995) becomes theoretically attractive. To date, the most fully worked out proposal for a non-case analysis of certain instances of grammatical case-markers in Korean is by Schütze (2001), who argues that all instances of stacked grammatical cases are markers of pragmatic functions, as are the unstacked grammatical case-markers on the Major Subject of the MNCs and the accusative marker on the raised nominal in Subject-to-Object Raising constructions. J. Yoon (2004, 2009, 2015) refutes this analysis, claiming that the grammatical markers in these constructions instantiate genuine case. Levin (2017) is another defense of the case-marker analysis of stacked particles.

### 3.1.5 Case-Marker Ellipsis

A final topic within case-marking that has received attention in recent work is the optional realization of case-markers, called Case-Marker Ellipsis (CME) or Case-Marker Drop. Because case-markers in Korean are not suffixes but clitic-like elements, they can be omitted from the nominal bases to which they are attached. The grammatical function of a nominal without overt case-marking is determined by configuration, by word order, and
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by reference to information expressed by overt case-markers on other nominals in the relevant domain. The earliest transformational analyses of CME adopted a literal ellipsis analysis that deleted the case-markers that had been assigned to the nominals, which explains why the phenomenon is called CME.

A challenge for the deletion analysis is the divergent distribution and interpretation of nominals with and without case-markers, something that is a problem for the deletion analysis, since phonological deletion should have no impact on syntactic and semantic properties established prior to deletion. Besides extra-grammatical factors such as style and phonological weight, grammatical factors such as focus-marking and word order also regulate CME. Therefore, Hanjung Lee, in a series of papers (H. Lee, 2006, 2010, 2011, etc.), takes the view that CME is a phenomenon akin to Differential Case-Marking (Aissen, 2003) in other languages. Under this view, zero-marking is a distinctive form of case-marking rather than the result of deletion of a case-marker, and zero case stands in paradigmatic contrast to overt case. It is natural, therefore, that zero versus overt-marking can express opposing features (such as contrastive focus). Realizing the context-dependent and variable nature of CME, Lee has employed corpus-based and experimental methodologies to identify a number of distinct factors that affect CME, stressing that more than one factor must be invoked in a comprehensive account of CME. Kwon and Zribi-Hertz (2008), on the other hand, propose that only a single factor—Focus Structure Visibility—is sufficient to account for all instances of CME. H. Lee (2015) is a critical assessment of their analysis.

3.2 Agreement

3.2.1 Subject Honorification

While Korean has systematic dependent marking, there are few reliable examples of head-marking. There is no obligatory Agreement between subjects and verbs in terms of person, number, gender, or noun class (phi-features). Nor do possessors agree with head nouns in terms of features, even optionally. A possible instance of head-marking is found in Subject Honorification (SH), where predicates co-occurring with subjects denoting honorific referents are optionally marked with the suffix -(u)si-. Unlike Middle Korean, there is no comparable honorification for objects in contemporary Korean (Brown, 2015).

Whether SH should be viewed as syntactic agreement is a matter of debate. Interestingly, a similar debate exists in Japanese, with Boeckx and Niinuma (2004) taking honorification to be syntactic agreement and Bobaljik and Yatsuhiro (2006) taking the opposing view. Traditional and early generative treatments view SH as syntactic agreement, controlled by a [+honorific] subject nominal. However, there are well-known problems that challenge this view. The first problem is that SH marking on the predicate is optional (J.-W. Choe, 2004). Predicates without SH-marking can co-occur with honorific subjects, which is a problem if SH instantiates agreement.

(9)
A second problem is that non-subjects can seemingly function as the controller of SH in some cases (S.-K. Yun, 1993; J.-W. Choe, 2004; Kim & Sells, 2007).

(10)

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{Apenim-uy} & \text{somay-ka} & \text{ccalp-usi-eyo} \\
\text{Father-gen} & \text{sleeve-nom} & \text{short-sbj hon-decl} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘The sleeves of father’s shirt are short.’

Thirdly, nominals that cannot be viewed as honorific (wh-phrases) can co-occur with SH on the predicate. In a related phenomenon known as Indirect Honorification (Brown, 2015), which is spreading quickly among the younger generation, a [−honorific] subject that is contextually associated with an addressee that the speaker wants to honor can control SH. Indirect honorification is another indication that the fundamental generalization behind SH may not be syntactic. An example of indirect honorification is shown in (11).

(11)

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{Khephi-ka} & \text{nao-si-ess-supni-ta} \\
\text{Coffee-nom} & \text{come.out-sbj.hon-perf-pol-decl} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘(Addressing the customer), coffee (that you ordered) is ready.’

For these and other reasons, many scholars do not consider SH to be an instantiation of syntactic agreement (J.-W. Choe, 2004; Kim & Sells, 2007; Brown, 2011). K.-Y. Choi (2010) is an attempt to defend an agreement analysis of SH that addresses some of the objections raised in these works.

3.2.2 Plural Copying

Another type of grammatical marking that possibly cross-references features of subjects on the predicate domain is the **Copied Plural-marker** (CPM) -tul (which is identical to the inherent nominal plural-marker). CPM is not technically an instance of head-marking, since it can show up optionally on any constituent within a predicate phrase that is in construction with a plural subject, even on multiple constituents. This is exemplified in the constructed example below.

(12)

\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{Nehi-tul} & \text{pang-eyse-(tul)} & \text{coyonghi-(tul)} & \text{iss-ela-(tul)} \\
\text{You-pl} & \text{room-loc-(cpm)} & \text{quietly-(cpm)} & \text{stay-imp-(cpm)} \\
\end{array}
\]

‘You (all) stay quietly in the room.’

Though CPM is optional, it is usually taken to be controlled by the plural feature of a subject. This is what makes it a possible instance of syntactic agreement (S.-C. Song, 1975).
However, besides its “ubiquitous” (S.-C. Song, 1975) or “spurious” (Y. Kim, 1994) distribution, there are problems with viewing CPM as a manifestation of syntactic number agreement controlled by a plural subject (J. Kiaer, 2010). Sentences with and without CPM differ regarding pluractionality and/or distributivity (H.-G. Lee, 1992; Y. Kim, 1994; J.-J. Song, 1997; S.-Y. Park, 2006, etc.). Another important fact that militates against viewing CPM as syntactic agreement controlled by the plural feature of subjects is that there are constructions (such as Gapping and/or Right Node Raising) where CPM can occur on constituents in (the shared) predicate even when the subjects of each conjunct are singular (D. Chung, 2004).

(13)

Yenghi-nun pang-eyse kuliko Tongswu-nun kesil-eyse kongpwu-lul
Y-top room-loc and T-top living room-loc study-acc
yelsimhi-tul ha-ko iss-ess-ta
diligently-cpm do-comp aux-pst-decl

‘Yenghi and Tongswu were studying in her room and in the living room, respectively.’

Examples like (13) make sense given the frequent observation that CPM is related to distributive interpretations. That is, even though the subjects of the coordinated sentences in (13) are singular, CPM on the adverb in the shared version of the structure can signal distributivity, since there is more than one event described by the sentence.

3.2.3 Nominal Plural-Marking

The optionality of CPM in the predicate domain and the range of its interpretive properties are not surprising in view of the fact that Number/Plural-marking is not obligatory on count nouns in Korean either. Like CPM, optional plural-marking on nominals indicates more than just plurality, and interacts with properties such as definiteness and specificity (J. Kiaer, 2010). Kwon and Zribi-Hertz (2004) take the optionality of plural-marking to imply that number is not a nominal inflectional category in Korean and draw out some interesting consequences.

Besides optionality, there is an on-going debate on whether the count-mass distinction exists in Korean (B.-M. Kang, 1994; C. Kim, 2005; Kwon & Zribi-Hertz, 2004). The question is inspired in part by Chierchia (1998), who claimed that Korean belongs to a type of language that lack the count-mass distinction and that such languages instead use a rich system of Nominal Classifiers to individuate entities in the denotation domain of nominals. For Korean, the debate has largely been settled in favor of the view that it possesses both the Count-Mass distinction and a classifier system (C. Kim, 2005).

Hwang and Lardiere (2013) is an important work that examines the L2 acquisition of Korean plural-marking by speakers of languages with a less complicated but obligatory plural-marking (English).
4. Agglutinative Morphosyntax

This section focuses on some properties of Korean that reflect facets of the language’s transparent, agglutinative, morphosyntactic signature. Needless to say, the agglutinative morphosyntactic signature of the language is intertwined with its other signatures, such as strict head-finality, as well as with a facet that reflects contact with neighboring languages. Nevertheless, a common thread that runs through the topics covered here seems to be the particular agglutinative morphosyntactic signature of the language. The coverage of topics will be from the perspective of syntax and morphology rather than semantics and/or pragmatics, meaning that the focus will be on properties of formal expression rather than about the content and use of the formatives involved in the structural articulation of the features. That is why it makes sense to start with morphotactics.

4.1 Morphotactics—Syntax or Morphology?

Morphemes that realize grammatical (functional morphosyntactic) features appear in a strictly ordered sequence following the predicate bases, though a few functional morphemes can come before the base (Negation, for example). The morphemes that attach to nominal bases are different from those attaching to predicative (native stock verbal and adjectival) bases in their properties. This is so because in contemporary Korean, nominal bases are free forms, and most of the grammatical morphemes that attach to the base are clitic-like (J. Yoon, 1995). For this reason, they have been analyzed as belonging to a part of speech called Particles in traditional grammar that is distinct from the part of speech of the nominal base. By contrast, the functional morphemes attaching to bound predicative bases are affix-like, and hence have not been viewed as instantiating autonomous syntactic categories.

The differential treatment of functional morphemes on nominal and predicative bases reflects traditional, and largely lexicalist, assumptions about the relation between morphology and syntax. These assumptions are not universally accepted in many varieties of contemporary generative grammar, where autonomous syntactic categories need not correspond to fully formed “words.” The functional category called T (or INFL), which is often realized morphologically as a bound affix, is a well-known example. In this type of approach, morphotactics is sometimes determined by syntax.

The first comprehensive discussion of the ordering of nominal functional morphemes (such as those expressing lexical and grammatical case-marking, topic, and focus) in generative grammar is I.-S. Yang (1972). Calling the morphemes Delimiters, Yang proposed that there are three classes of sequentially ordered Delimiters that can follow a nominal base. The ordering among Delimiters was described through PS-rules in his analysis. In other words, nominal morphotactics for Yang was a matter of syntax.

In an influential paper, Cho and Sells (1995) (see also Sells, 1995) provided both a comprehensive revised description of the ordering among nominal functional morphemes and a theoretical analysis in which the functional morphemes were taken to be attached to

For the verbal functional morphemes, such as those marking Tense/Aspect and Mood, many generative accounts have analyzed them as autonomous syntactic categories, despite the fact that they are morphologically suffixes (Ahn & Yoon, 1989). J.-M. Yoon (1990B) provides an argument for the syntactic independence of many verbal functional morphemes based on patterns of coordination.

Under accounts that take the bound nominal and verbal functional morphemes to be autonomous syntactic categories, the mechanism by which the morphemes and their bases become part of a “word” needs to be posited. Here, the debate has been whether Head Movement (Baker, 1988; Pollock, 1989) is the mechanism that brings the morphemes together into a word. Based on coordination evidence, J. Yoon (1994) posits that affixes and their bases do not form a complex head derived by Head Movement, while D.-I. Cho (1994) argues in favor of Head Movement. D. Chung (2011) provides an argument from ellipsis and movement for the lack of Head Movement in Korean morphosyntax. Han, Lidz, and Musolino (2007) argue that both options exist and that speakers may optionally posit Head Movement.

4.2 Verbal Functional Categories

The remainder of this section will briefly discuss syntactic issues surrounding selected verbal functional categories, without any pretension to be comprehensive. A representative verbal complex containing the relevant functional categories/morphemes is given below.

\[(14)\]

\begin{align*}
\text{Cap-hi-si-ess-ni?} \\
\text{catch-pass-sbj-hon-past-Q[pl.lvl]} \\
\text{‘Were (they) caught?’ (pl.lvl = plain speech level)}
\end{align*}

The morphotactics of verbal functional morphemes is determined in part by inherent morphological properties of the component morphemes. Native stock verbal and adjectival bases are bound and cannot surface without morphemes that turn them into free forms (“words”). However, not all functional morphemes can bring about this change. Affixation of some morphemes (called Pre-final Endings in traditional grammar, exemplified by -hi-, -si-, -ess- in 14 above) fails to turn bound bases into free forms. There is a class of closing suffixes (called Final Endings) that can make the verbal complex a free form (the morpheme -ni in 14 above). The free-standing inflected verb can in turn be embedded, marked by the morpheme -ko, which has been taken to instantiate the category Comp,
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but argued in Bhatt and Yoon (1992) to be a pure Subordinator, one of the features lexicalized in Comp in other languages. Besides -ko, there are other morphemes that can attach to fully inflected verbs. Because these attach to free forms, these are called Sentence-Final Particles (SFP).

Since the inherent morphological properties of suffixes establish the ordering V > Pre-final Ending(s) > Final Ending > SFP, there seems to be little need to invoke syntax to explain verbal functional morphotactics. However, in derivational syntactic frameworks, the ordering has been taken to be a matter determined by syntax, perhaps reflecting a fixed universal hierarchy of functional categories (Cinque, 1999). In what follows we will discuss the functional morphemes from the most peripheral to those closest to the verbal base.

4.2.1 Speech Level and Mood

The class of Final Endings encompasses morphemes that express Clause/Speech Act type (called Mood) and addressee-oriented honorifics (called Speech Levels). In derivational syntactic frameworks, these are analyzed as instantiating the syntactic functional category Mood, though there is no universal consensus on the nomenclature. This is in part because addressee honorifics have been studied primarily from sociolinguistic and pragmatic perspectives. In early generative work (S.-C. Chang, 1973), however, Speech Level morphemes were analyzed as higher “performative” verbs. Subsequent work has largely shied away from adopting this perspective. An important theoretical work on the syntactic and semantic analysis of Mood that revives some insights from earlier generative work is Zanuttini, Pak, and Portner (2012).

4.2.2 Tense and Aspect

The class of Pre-final Endings is relatively large. Tense/Aspect morphemes occur rightmost among them. In syntactic approaches to verbal morphotactics, the morphemes are taken to realize the syntactic functional category of Tense and/or Aspect. The argument for the syntactic independence of these morphemes comes from coordination (J.-M. Yoon, 1990B; J. Yoon, 1994) and other constituency tests (D. Chung, 2011).

A debate regarding the category T is related to the issue of whether the surface subject in Korean occupies the Specifier of TP (high subject position) or occurs in a lower position (Specifier of vP), on the assumption that the base and surface positions of subjects may differ (McCloskey, 1997). Because both of the hypothesized subject positions occur on the left edge of clauses in a strictly head-final language like Korean, establishing the position of subjects is less straightforward than in head-initial languages. Based on coordination evidence, J.-M. Yoon (1990B) and J. Yoon (1994) argued that the surface subject can remain in SpvP. Others (D. Chung, 2005) disagree with this interpretation of coordination. For Japanese, Miyagawa (2001) argues that the higher subject position can be occupied by a scrambled object that undergoes A-scrambling, in which case the subject may stay in the low subject position. Facts that Miyagawa (2001) took to support his analysis can be
replicated in Korean. Therefore, it is possible that another way to determine the position of subjects is through scrambling.

And though it is not an issue of syntax per se, an ongoing debate exists on whether Korean has tense as well as aspect, because the formative -ess- can be interpreted as marking either tense or aspect, in addition to the fact that the morpheme can be doubled, yielding -ess-ess- sequences (S.-O. Sohn, 1995; E. Lee, 2008; H.-S. Lee, 1991, etc.).

4.2.3 Subject Honorification

The SH morpheme precedes Tense/Aspect suffixes in the verbal complex. For researchers who view SH as an instantiation of syntactic agreement (see Section 3.2.1), this suffix realizes the functional category Agr, which heads AgrP. The difficulties with viewing SH as an instantiation of syntactic agreement have already been discussed. Neither does the coordination test establish SH as an independent head.

4.2.4 Passive and Causative

The functional morphemes closest to the verbal base are those that express voice alternatives, such as Passive and Causative (cf. 14). Suffixally expressed passive and causative are unproductive, with severe restrictions on verbs that can take these suffixes (see J. Yeon, 2015, for an overview). And though periphrastic structures that express passive (V-e ci-) and causative (V-key ha-) are more productive than the morphological counterparts, they have not fully grammaticalized to become constructions that exclusively mark passive or causative. A range of different though related meanings can be expressed by these constructs.

An early debate centered on whether the morphological (lexical) and periphrastic versions of a given voice, in particular causative, share a common underlying structure (I.-S. Yang, 1974, 1976 vs. Shibatani, 1973, 1975). The debate was resolved in favor of the position that maintained that they are not synonymous. The differential marking of the causee in causative constructions has been another topic of research (H.-S. Lee, 1985). The partial overlap between morphemes that express passive and causative is a perennial topic of interest as well (see K. Kim, 2011, for a recent treatment). J.-J. Song (2015) provides an overview of issues concerning causatives from a typological perspective.

4.3 Auxiliary and Serial Verb Constructions

While many functional categories/features are expressed by a single morpheme occupying a particular slot of an inflected verb, not all grammatical properties have affixal exponence. Grammatical categories such as Voice, Aspect, Negation, and Modality are most commonly expressed periphrastically.

Periphrastic exponence typically involves an auxiliary that selects a (possibly inflected) verbal base marked with a designated linking ending, which we will gloss as Comp following Cho and Sells (1995). Combinations of auxiliaries are possible as well. Representative examples are given below.
(15)

a. Mary-ka pap-ul mek-ko iss-ess-ta (Aspect)
   M-nom meal-acc eat-comp be-pst-decl
   ‘Mary was eating her meal.’

b. Mary-ka pap-ul mek-ci anh-ass-ta (Negation)
   M-nom meal-acc eat-comp neg-pst-decl
   ‘Mary was not eating her meal.’

c. Mary-ka pap-ul mek-ess-na po-ta (Modality)
   M-nom meal-acc eat-pst-comp seem-decl
   ‘It seems that Mary ate her meal.’

d. Mary-ka pap-ul mek-ko iss-ci anh-ass-na po-ta
   M-nom meal-acc eat-comp be-comp neg-pst-comp seem-decl
   ‘It doesn’t seem that Mary was eating her meal.’

The structure of auxiliary verb constructions has received attention, especially in mono-stratal syntactic frameworks. An emerging consensus is that the auxiliary verb constructions are base-generated complex predicates, where two verbs form a complex verb, but not through morphological means such as compounding (Sells, 1994, 1998; C. Chung, 1998; E.-J. Yoo, 2002; J.-B. Kim, 2016b). However, since the complex predicate possesses features of its component verbs, mechanisms to model Argument Inheritance, as well as the inheritance of other features (such as stativity, which is responsible for the case alternation on the object of the V-ko siph-ta construction), are posited in these approaches (Bratt, 1996; E.-Y. Yoo, 2002). Though the complex predicate analysis may be correct for some auxiliary constructions, the fact that some auxiliaries (such as the negative auxiliary) may combine with conjoined verb phrases or larger constituents indicates that not all auxiliary constructions should be viewed this way.

Argument/feature inheritance analyses are extended to other types of syntactically formed complex predicates, including the so-called Serial Verb Constructions (V-e V), which can contain lexical, not functional/auxiliary, verbs as its component predicates (T.-G. Chung, 1993; Chung & Kim, 2008).

(16)
In derivational approaches, both auxiliary and Serial Verb Constructions are taken to involve phrasal complementation. Argument inheritance and case alternations are modeled through movement of objects, while complex predicate status is modeled through Head Movement (S. Lee, 1992). Argument inheritance is also attested in Verbal Noun Constructions, which are discussed in Section 5.

4.4 Coordination

Korean possesses several types of coordination and disjunction, with differences between nominal and verbal (predicative) coordinations. Syndetic coordination typically involves a dedicated conjunctive morpheme attached to non-final conjuncts, with the final conjunct carrying grammatical morphemes that mark the properties of the entire coordinate structure.

(17)

a. John-kwa (kuliko) Mary-ka tochakhay-ss-ta  
   J-conj (and) M-nom arrive-pst-decl  
   ‘John and (then) Mary arrived.’

b. John-un ttena-(ss)-ko (kuliko) Mary-nun tochakhay-ss-ta  
   J-top leave-(pst)-conj (and) M-top arrive-pst-decl  
   ‘John left and May arrived.’

In (17a), a nominal coordination, the final conjunct carries case-marking information that applies to the entire coordination, while in (17b), a verbal coordination, the final conjunct carries clause type marking, as well as tense (when tense is missing from the first conjunct). The analytic conjunctor (kuliko) is redundant in (17a, b), though it is not felt to be redundant in elliptical/reduced coordinations such as Right Node Raising. Analytic coordinators can optionally occur between conjuncts. This pattern holds in disjunction as well.

As can be seen in (17a, b), the typical pattern of coordination in Korean is unbalanced, in the sense of Johannessen (1998), because the constituent conjuncts are not marked symmetrically for the features of the coordinate structure. Nevertheless, an influential analysis of coordination patterns views (17b) as instantiating a balanced coordination of vP (or TP), with the morphemes that appear on the final conjunct (Tense, Mood) combining with the conjoined constituent syntactically, despite the fact the morphemes attach to the final
word/head of the final conjunct (J.-M. Yoon, 1990B; J. Yoon, 1994; see Takano, 2004, for a similar analysis of Japanese). This type of analysis is extendible to (17a). J. Yoon (1994) provides extensive evidence that tensed and untensed initial conjuncts differ in syntactic category (TP vs. vP), a fact which undergirds the balanced coordination analysis of (17b).

Subsequent work took issue with this analysis, however. E.-Y. Yi (1998) argues that V-ko constituents are not conjuncts but adjuncts. Since the final conjunct is the unique head, it is not surprising on this analysis why the functional morphemes occur only on the final conjunct. While J. Yoon (1997) and Kwon and Polinsky (2008) acknowledge that V-ko forms can be parsed as adjuncts in some cases, they argue that subordinate and coordinate V-ko structures can be distinguished. D. Chung (2005) argues that tensed and tenseless initial conjuncts don’t differ syntactically as claimed by J. Yoon (1994), and develops a tense interpretation algorithm that works in the absence of specified tense formative in the non-final conjunct. Lee and Tonhauser (2010) develop another alternative for the temporal interpretation of tenseless conjuncts.

Another type of asymmetry found in coordination has to do with the Coordinate Structure Constraint (CSC), which can be violated in some V-ko structures (J. Yoon, 1994, 1997). A pragmatic account of CSC violations is the theme of Kubota and Lee (2015).

Finally, there is a growing body of research on different types of elliptical coordinations. Gapping and/or Right Node Raising (cf. 13 in Section 3.2.2) are dealt with in works such as Ahn and Cho (2006), D. Chung (2004), S.-W. Ha (2008), and M.-K. Park (2005). Yoon and Lee (2005) argue for a deletion analysis of some types of NP coordination that looks like constituent coordination on the surface.

### 4.5 Negation and Negative Polarity

#### 4.5.1 Negation

Negation has attracted a fair amount of attention in Korean syntax. There are two ways to negate a proposition, using either Short Form Negation (SFN) or Long Form Negation (LFN), exemplified below.

(18)

a. Cheli-ka pap-ul an-mck-ess-ta (SFN)
   C-nom meal-acc neg-eat-pst-decl
   ‘Cheli did not have his meal.’

b. Cheli-ka pap-ul mek-ci anh-ass-ta (LFN)
   C-nom meal-acc eat-comp neg-pst-decl
   ‘Cheli did not have his meal.’

The negative auxiliary anh- that occurs in LFN results historically from the contraction of the negative adverb ani and the pleonastic verb stem ha- (Martin, 1992). The status of an (equivalently, mos, ‘cannot’) in SFN is controversial. Some treat it as a prefix (J.-B. Kim,
2000), while others view it as forming a syntactic complex head with the verb (Sells, 1998). In derivational accounts (Ahn & Yoon, 1989; H.-D. Ahn, 1991; Hagstrom, 2002, etc.), it is viewed as the head of a syntactically projected NegP, to which the verb raises by Head Movement and forms a word. In addition, some derivational approaches posit that the underlying structures of SFN and LFN are similar, with surface differences arising from different combinations of movements (Hagstrom, 2002). This is a view that echoes the earlier debate on whether the underlying structures of SFN and LFN are identical (S.-C. Song, 1982).

The question of whether and how SFN and LFN differ has been grounded in part on the interpretive scope of negation in the two constructions. In general, it is held that while SFN can scope over quantified objects, it does not do so easily over subjects, while for LFN, wide scope over both the subject and object are possible (Hagstrom, 1997). However, there is much variability in speaker judgments, making any definitive conclusion elusive (with inter-speaker variation confirmed in the experimental study of Han et al., 2007; see also Kuno, 1980, and S.-C. Song, 1982). Scope is not the only way to determine whether the two types of negation are similar. SFN is lexically restricted, while LFN is not, since while all verbs allow LFN, many do not allow SFN (Lee & Ramsey, 2000; Yeon & Brown, 2011). Yet another difference between the two is that while LFN can scope over conjoined VPs and larger constituents, SFN cannot.

Syntactically, LFN seems to have a structure where the negative auxiliary combines with different levels of (extended) verbal projections, and does not always form a complex predicate with the verb it negates (Sells, 2001). This is similar to the position defended by S.-C. Song (1982) in the previous debate on the underlying source of SFN and LFN, where he argued that the syntactic underlying structures of the two are different.

Negative imperatives (V-ci mal-) are analyzed in Han and Lee (2007), based on derivational assumptions and an articulated functional hierarchical structure of clauses.

4.5.2 Negative Polarity Items

Negative Polarity Items (NPIs) and related issues have exercised the minds of several researchers. The topics investigated include the typology of NPIs (S. Nam, 1994; K.-W. Sohn, 1995; C. Lee, 1996, etc.), and issues surrounding the syntactic and semantic licensing of NPIs, such as the scope of negation and NPI (Chung & Park, 1998; Sells & Kim, 2006), locality in the licensing of NPIs, and the Intervention Effect that NPIs can induce (Beck & Kim, 1997). Representative types of NPIs (indicated in bold) are given in (19) below.

(19)
Of particular relevance is the finding that Korean NPIs outscope negation, rather than being licensed under the scope of negation. This explains in part why Subject NPIs are possible even with SFN, which cannot usually scope over quantified Subjects. Even lexically negative predicates (such as *eps-ta, ‘not have’), which can never scope over quantified Subjects, are possible with Subject NPIs. However, given that NPIs are constrained by the Intervention Effect, NPIs in Korean must immediately outscope negation (Sells, 2001; J.-H. Hwang, 2008). Even in the absence of intervening QPs, NPIs are in general licensed by clause-mate negation, unlike languages such as English. This too, is understandable if it is the NPI that outscopes negation and not vice versa, as an NPI in an embedded clause cannot outscope negation in a higher clause.

### 4.6 Mixed Categories

Agglutinative exponence is found not only with functional morphemes expressing typical morphosyntactic properties, but also with those that derive deverbal nominalizations (gerunds) and denominal predicates. Since these categories need to be distinguished from words created by category-changing derivational morphology, they are sometimes called Mixed Categories (Malouf, 1998; Bresnan, 1997, etc.) or Dual Lexical Categories (Lapointe, 1993). The formatives *-um and *-ki attach to verbal bases to create different types of syntactic nominalizations, while the dependents of the base verb retain their properties as verbal dependents. The copula (*-i-ta) and a handful of similar formatives (e.g., *-tap-ta, *-kath-ta) attach to nominal bases to create predicates but where the dependents of the nominal bases retain their adnominal markings (H.-B. Im, 1989; C.-K. Shi, 1994).
H.-S. Yoon (1989) and J. Yoon (1996B) offer an analysis of different types of syntactic deverbal nominalizations by assuming that the nominalizing suffix instantiates a syntactically independent head that attaches at the right margin of different types of verbal constituents as an (Ad)-Phrasal Suffix. Under this type of approach, there is no such thing as a mixed category, but simply a surface juxtaposition of two distinct unmixed categories. This type of analysis runs counter to lexicalist tenets about the relationship between morphology and syntax which are adopted in mono-stratal approaches. This has prompted Chung et al. (2001) to pursue a mixed category analysis of nominalizations under lexicalist tenets.

Based on some purported gaps in the morphotactics of a word containing the copula, Cho and Sells (1995) and Sells (1995) argue that the copula is an affix that is lexically attached to its host. This entails that the base plus the copula is a word. However, like the “word” that instantiates a deverbal nominalization, the surface “word” constituted of the base plus the copula exhibits mixed category (nominal inside-verbal outside) properties. Kim, Sells, and Westcoat (2004) provide an analysis of the mixed category behavior of the copula through the mechanism of Lexical Sharing (Westcoat, 2002), while J. Yoon (2003, 2005) defends a syntactic analysis where the copula projects as an autonomous syntactic category, separate from its host.

5. Properties Attributable to Language Contact

The focus of this section is aspects of Korean syntax that reflect a sustained history of language contact with the neighboring languages, in particular Chinese. The history of contact has resulted in the borrowing of functional grammatical formulates and structures that have shaped certain aspects of the language. The usual caveat applies here. The aspects picked for coverage reflect more than just contact, but the legacy of language contact seems to be the dominant factor behind them, and that is why they are treated in this section.

5.1 Nominal Classifiers

Strict head-finality of syntax and morphology, pervasive dependent-marking, and agglutinative morphosyntax are not traits shared by Korean and the neighboring Sino-Tibetan languages (Chinese), with which it has been in sustained contact, as evidenced by the high proportion of Sino-Korean vocabulary items in the language. However, there are as-
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pects of Korean syntax that are better understood if viewed from the perspective of contact with Chinese. The syntax of nominal classifiers is a case in point. While there are quantificational modifiers of native origin, most nominal classifiers have been borrowed from Chinese. The extent to which the borrowings have been integrated into the language is revealed by the fact that numerals that co-occur with Sino-Korean classifiers can be of native origin (H.-M. Sohn, 2001), even though a parallel system of native and Sino-Korean numerals exists in the language.

5.2 Topic and Focus

Li and Thompson (1976) proposed a typology of languages in terms of Topic versus Subject Prominence. As properties of Topic Prominence, Li and Thompson (1976) list the pervasive occurrence of topic constructions, including topics that are not related to argument positions of verbs, topic chains, and frequent use of null arguments, among others. These are properties that are common in Chinese and also found in Korean, as noted by Li and Thompson (1976). However, unlike Chinese, Korean is assumed to possess a robust case-marking system for GRs such as subjects and objects. For this reason, Li and Thompson (1976) view Korean as both Topic and Subject-prominent. By contrast, H.-M. Sohn (1980) maintained that Korean is only Topic/Theme-prominent, with the bulk of his argument predicated on empirical and theoretical difficulties of deriving a topic sentence from a more basic subject-based sentence.

Topic Prominence is related to the contemporary generative idea that languages may differ in terms of whether they require the structural expression of discourse functions such as topic and focus rather than argumental or grammatical functions such as subject and object in a clause. This is the idea behind the Discourse Configurationality Parameter (Kiss, 1995). Unlike the Topic Prominence idea of Li and Thompson (1976), the parameter is concerned with the structural expression of focus as well as topic.

Korean can be viewed as having a dedicated, perhaps obligatory (if H.-M. Sohn, 1980, is to be believed), position for topics in clause structure, but it is not clear that a similar position exists for focus, as in languages like Hungarian, though A. H.-O. Kim (1988) and H.-S. Choe (1995) think otherwise. Focus is expressed through a variety of means, such as prosody, word order, and special constructions. So Korean may be discourse-configurational with respect to topic but not focus.

The question of how many distinct types of topics should be posited has been debated, with most researchers since Kuno (1973) distinguishing between Thematic and Contrastive Topics (C. Lee, 1999), a distinction that also correlates with difference in structural positions occupied by the different types of topics. A related question has to do with the nature of the particle -nun, specifically, whether it always marks topic or sometimes functions as a marker of contrastive focus. Y.-C. Jun (2015) provides an overview of these and other issues. Another issue related to the function of -nun concerns the question of whether case-markers (in particular, the nominative case-marker -ka) can also mark topics (Schütze, 2001), an issue dealt with in Section 3.1.
The structure and derivation of topic constructions has been debated in the literature: are topic constructions derived by movement or base-generated (D.-W. Yang, 1973, H.-M. Sohn, 1980; Na & Huck, 1993)? Are all topic constructions derived the same way? Are Korean-style topic constructions related to other structures, such as relative clauses (Kuno & Li, 1976)? The debate on the locality constraints in various unbounded dependency constructions touched on in Section 2 engages these questions in part. H.-M. Sohn (1980), following Li and Thompson (1976), argues that the basic clause structure of Korean involves the structural articulation of Topic-Comment rather than Subject-Predicate, and hence that topic constructions are not derived from other structures.

Finally, the pervasive occurrence of null arguments has been linked to Topic Prominence. Null arguments occur freely in both subject and object positions and are not licensed by a rich agreement on verbs, unlike other languages with null arguments. Null arguments are discussed in Section 5.3, which focuses on the system of anaphoric expressions in Korean.

5.3 Anaphora and Null Arguments

Korean boasts a rich repertoire of anaphoric expressions that encode both grammatical (person, gender, animacy) and pragmatic features (honorification, logophoricity). The reflexive pronoun system of the language, which is largely Sino-Korean in origin (though there are some native stock items as well), is well known for its complexity and has been the topic of productive theoretical and experimental investigations (D.-W. Yang, 1983; H.-B. Im, 1987; O’Grady, 1987; J.-M. Yoon, 1989B; B.-M. Kang, 1998; Kim & Yoon, 2009; Han & Storoshenko, 2012, to name a few). In particular, the focus has been on long-distance anaphors and their properties. First- and second-language acquisition of the complex anaphor system has also received much attention (Kim, Montrul, & Yoon, 2009, 2010), on the assumption that crosslinguistic variation in anaphor binding is an example par excellence of parameters (D.-W. Yang, 1983; Manzini & Wexler, 1987).

The question of whether Korean possesses overt third-person lexical pronouns has been a matter of controversy, as the putative pronouns are identical to, or derived from, the system of demonstrative pronouns (K. Choi, 2013). Compared to reflexives, there is relatively little research on overt pronouns and their distributional and interpretive properties. As part of a language that possesses both overt and null proforms, the possible complementary distribution of the two in the context of quantificational antecedents, investigated under the rubric of the Overt Pronoun Constraint (OPC, Montalbetti, 1984), is one topic of interest, though the question of whether OPC holds in Korean is unsettled, with S. Hong (1985) and N.-K. Kang (2000) claiming to find OPC effects but M-Y Kang (1988) and Koak (2008) failing to find them.

Compared to overt pronouns, there is more research on null arguments. The term “null argument,” rather than “null pronoun,” will be used, since the exact identity of the null argument is a matter of debate. Null arguments in Korean have the signature properties of the East Asian system, since they can occur without being licensed by “rich” agreement and can occupy a variety of positions, including the Subject, Object, Indirect Object,
and Possessor positions. Huang (1984) is an influential early analysis of null arguments in Chinese, which are similar to those in Korean. In his analysis, null arguments are licensed by being bound by (null) Topics or by c-commanding matrix clause arguments (Huang, 1989). However, the distribution of Korean null arguments cannot be captured by the system in Huang (1984, 1989), as Cole (1987) notes. This has paved the way for an innovative analysis of null arguments (in particular, null objects) as resulting from VP ellipsis (Otani & Whitman, 1991), that is, ellipsis of VP after V-raising takes place so that the verb escapes ellipsis (Goldberg, 2005). Note that Otani and Whitman’s (1991) proposal is predicated on the existence of V-Raising in Korean, a matter on which there is controversy. Hoji (1998) and S.-W. Kim (1999) reject the VP ellipsis analysis but reach different conclusions, with Hoji (1998) taking the null object to be a null pronoun (pro), while S.-W. Kim (1999) takes it to result from NP ellipsis. This latter idea, now dubbed Argument Ellipsis, has emerged as an influential analysis of null arguments in East Asian languages (Saito, 2007; Takahashi, 2008), though there is still an ongoing debate about whether Argument Ellipsis suffices as the sole mechanism of licensing of null arguments in Korean (Ahn & Cho, 2009; W.-S. Lee, 2011, etc.). The Argument Ellipsis analysis links null argument phenomena to the general study of ellipsis phenomena, which will now be discussed.

## 5.4 Fragments and Ellipsis

Though they are not attributable straightforwardly to language contact, a large variety of constituent types in Korean can undergo ellipsis. Relevant work on ellipsis that arises in the context of coordination, such as Gapping and/or Right Node Raising, was introduced in Section 4.4. Work on the possible role of ellipsis in licensing null arguments in the previous section has also been mentioned. Ellipsis has also been posited in relation to Postposing/Right Dislocation and Sluicing (see Sections 2.1 and 2.4, respectively, for references).

Additionally, Fragment Answers and Sentence Fragments have been viewed as instan­tiating ellipsis. Morgan (1989) is an influential early study that argued that there are two types of fragments in Korean, those that are base-generated and those derived through ellipsis from sentential sources. The two options continue to serve as bookends for the subsequent debate on this topic (Ahn & Cho, 2011; Choi & Yoon, 2009; B.-S. Park, 2005, 2013, etc.).

## 5.5 Verbal Nouns

Another area where contact with the Chinese languages is visible is the Lexicon, where a large number of words are of Sino-Korean origin, often supplanting indigenous lexical items. The relevance of this fact for syntax is that the categorization of these borrowings is not straightforward. Descriptive grammars often posit a category of Verbal Nouns that are neither verb-like nor noun-like. Verbal Nouns are argument-bearing like verbs but have the morphological and syntactic distribution typical of nouns (cf. 21b). When they function as predicates, they require special morphosyntactic support (in the form of Light
Verbs, such as *ha*- shown in (21a). The arguments of the Verbal Noun in a Light Verb Construction are marked as verbal, not nominal, dependents.

(21)

a. Cheli-ka thongsalon-ul yelsimhi yenkwu-lul hay-ss-ta  
   C-nom syntax-acc diligently research-acc do-pst-decl  
   ‘Cheli worked diligently on syntax.’

b. Cheli-uy thongsalon-uy yenkwu-ka manhi cwumok-toyn-ta  
   C-gen syntax-gen research-nom a.lot focus-pass-decl  
   ‘Cheli’s research on syntax is being noted (these days).’

However, Verbal Nouns seem capable of licensing their arguments in some other contexts as well (H.-R. Chae, 1996).

Verbal Nouns in Japanese were highlighted in the influential work of Grimshaw and Mester (1988), which focuses on the locality issue in the realization of arguments of VNs as well as the properties of Light Verbs that make non-local realization of arguments possible. Important works on VNs and related issues in Korean include H.-D. Ahn (1991), H.-R. Chae (1996), J.-S. Jun (2003), Park and Yoon (2003), and C.-W. Park (2013).

Further Reading

Reference Grammars, Textbooks, and Handbooks


Technical Treatises on Korean Syntax


**Journals and Conference Proceedings**


*Linguistic Research (Ene yenkwu)*. Institute for the Study of Language and Information. Kyunghee University.

*Studies in Generative Grammar (Sayngseng mwunpep yenkwu)*. Korean Generative Grammar Circle.

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