Grammatical Coding of Information Structure in Korean: a Role & Reference Grammar (RRG) Account

by

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THE YALE SYSTEM OF KOREAN ROMANIZATION

Yale romanization has been adopted for transcribing Korean examples in this dissertatio

Vowels				Consonants		
Korean	Yale	Phonemic		Korean	Yale	Phonemic
ㅏ	a	/a/		ㅂ	p	/p/
ㅑ	ya	/ya/		ㅍ	ph	/pʰ/
ㅓ	e	/ə/		ㅃ	pp	/p'/
ㅕ	ye	/yə/		ㄷ	t	/t/
ㅗ	o	/o/		ㅌ	th	/tʰ/
ㅛ	yo	/yo/		ㄸ	tt	/t'/
ㅜ	wu	/u/		ㅅ	s	/s/
ㅠ	yu	/yu/		ㅆ	ss	/s'/
ㅡ	u	/ɨ/		ㅈ	c	/č/
ㅣ	i	/i/		ㅊ	ch	/čʰ/
ㅟ	wi	/wi/		ㅉ	cc	/č'/
ㅔ	ey	/e/		ㄱ	k	/k/
ㅖ	yey	/ye/		ㅋ	kh	/kʰ/
ㅞ	wey	/we/		ㄲ	kk	/k'/
ㅚ	oy	/œ/		ㅁ	m	/m/
ㅐ	ay	/æ/		ㄴ	n	/n/
ㅒ	yay	/yæ/		ㅇ	o	/ŋ/
ㅙ	way	/wæ/		ㄹ	l	/l/
ㅝ	we	/wə/		ㅎ	h	/h/
ㅘ	wa	/wa/				
ㅢ	uy	/ɨy/				

Abbreviation: An asterisk [*] indicates that the sentence is clearly ungrammatical, and the symbol [#] shows the sentence is grammatical but it is clearly inappropriate in the discourse context in question. A question mark [?] or [??] is used to indicate the awkwardness of the sentence due to either grammatical constraints or discourse-pragmatic constraints.

Following abbreviations are used throughout this thesis.

ABL   ablative
ABS   absolutive
ACC   accusative
ADJ   adjective
ADV   adverb
AFD   actual focus domain
ALL   allative
ARG   argument
AUH   actor-undergoer hierarchy
an   (preverbal) nuclear (V^0) negation particle
CAU   causative
CL   classifier
CLM   clausal linkage marker
CNCL   context neutral case linking
CONN   continuative
CSCL   context sensitive case linking
DAC   double accusative construction
DAT   dative case
DEC   declarative
DN   deverbal nominal
DNC   double nominative construction
eykey   semantic(ally motivated syntactic) dative case marker
ERG   ergative
EXC   exclamatory sentence final marker
IF   illocutionary force
INST   instrument
IPV   immediately preverbal position
ka   semantic(ally motivated syntactic) nominative case marker -ka/-i
KA   pragmatic(ally motivated syntactic) neutral focus maker
LS   logical structure
lul   semantic(ally motivated syntactic) accusative case marker -lul/-ul
LUL   pragmatic(ally motivated syntactic) neutral focus marker
NEG   negative

NFS	narrow focus structure
NOM	nominative
NP	noun phrase
NUC	nucleus
NUN	pragmatic(ally motivated syntactic) neutral topic maker
LDP	left-detached position
LOC	locative case
MIU	minimal information unit
MNC	multiple nominative construction
MAC	multiple accusative construction
Msg	masculine singular
Mpl	masculine plural
PASS	passive
PFD	potential focus domain
PrCS	pre-core slot
PRES	present
PROG	progressive
PFS	predicate focus structure
PRED	predicate
PRT	partitive
PSA	privileged syntactic argument (subject)
PST	past
PSTP	past prefect
PU	pragmatic unit
PURP	purposive
Q	question marker/quantifier
SFS	sentence focus marker
SFM	sentence final marker
FAH	Focality accessability hierarchy
uy	semantic(ally motivated syntactic) genitive case
VOC	vocative

Abstract

Information structure is a grammatical component which concerns with the relationship between a speaker's assumptions and the formal structure of sentence grammar. The study is based on the observation that the structure of a sentence reflects in systematic and theoretically interesting ways a speaker's assumptions about the hearer's state of knowledge and consciousness at the time of an utterance. The fundamental claim I made in this dissertation is that, in Korean, not only is the topic maker *nun*, but also the NOM *ka/i*, and ACC *lul/ul* are used for the purpose of encoding different types of focus structures (predicate, sentence, and narrow focus structure). Besides these morphological markers, there are other ways of encoding information structure: for instance, specific focus constructions (clefting, or quantifier float), word order coding (immediately preverbal position for the unmarked narrow-focused element), phonological coding (a focal accent) and so forth.

The presentation of the research takes on the following organization. Chapter 1 introduces a list of information coding systems; case-shifting (or case alternations) from semantic case to pragmatic case markers (NUN, KA, or LUL), word order change, HA 'do' constructions, and quantifier float (QF). Chapter 2 summarizes the basic features of Role & Reference Grammar (RRG). Chapter 3 deals exclusively with 'Two Case Layers" hypothesis. I argue that in order to explain fully the Korean case marking system two independent case layers (semantic and pragmatic case in this order) are needed. In chapter 4, I investigate the Korean GEN construction in relation to types of focus structure. I claim that a GEN-marked NP is eligible for being a 'minimal information unit' (phrase)' if it is case-shifted to NOM-

/ACC-marked NP. In chapter 5, I apply the 'Two Case Layers' hypothesis to other kinds of case-shifting or case-stacking sentences. In chapter 6, I deal with HA 'do' constructions in connection to focus structure. Finally, in chapter 7, I give a focus structure-based account of Korean quantifer-float (QF) constructions. QF constructions are used when the numeral information (quantifier) is focused (in the scope of the actual focus domain).

Chapter 1

Introduction

I   Objectives and outlines

This dissertation aims to investigate 'information structure'[1] in Korean in terms of Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997). This is a study concerned with the relationship between the structures of sentences (as parts of a grammatical coding system) and the linguistic or extra-linguistic contexts in which sentences are used as units of propositional information (Lambrecht 1994). It intends to show how information structure independently, but systematically, correlates with other grammatical systems such as morphosyntactic constituents.[2] It will be argued that in Korean information structure is encoded in the sentence in many different ways: for instance, morphological coding (topic marker NUN or focus markers KA and LUL), specific focus constructions (clefting or quantifier floating), word order, and so forth. It will be claimed that in order to understand fully the case-marking system of Korean, information structure (or pragmatics) should be treated as one of its vital parts.

Let us start with a short story. Imagine you are at a small grocery store in Korea, and you want to buy a cigarette there. You would, assuming you could speak Korean, probably

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[1] The definition and justification of this term is provided in chapter 2 within an RRG framework, and in particular that of Lambrecht (1994).

[2] Cross-linguistically, there are at least three kinds of pragmatic coding systems as Bart (1990) mentions; (1) morphological coding, (2) word order coding, and (3) phonological coding. What is intriguing in this connection is the fact that languages vary a great deal with respect to how the information structure is encoded by grammatical (morphosyntactic) structures. In regard to Korean, this dissertation will cover (1) and (2), but (3) will not be dealt with very much.

tell to the clerk: "*tambay cwusseyo*" 'give (me) a cigarette'. Now imagine that the clerk gave

you a lighter instead of a cigarette, apparently not recognizing what you said. Then it would

be most likely the case that you would say "TAMBAY-LUL cwuseyyo" 'give (me) A CIGARETTE'

with the ACC case marker and the focal accent on the NP. As a matter of fact, in real

everyday conversation, it would be awkward if the first sentence *tambay cwusseyo* were

uttered with the ACC case marker *-lul*, not to mention the focal accent on it. Why is this the

case?

To use another example, imagine an elementary school class where a teacher is

questioning *Chelswu*, and he, though not being such a brilliant student, responds to the

question. Here, the scope of the nuclear (V^0) negation particle *an*, equal to the Actual Focus

Domain (AFD)[3], spans only over the final verbs.

(1) Q: Teacher: Chelswu-ya! kkokkili(-uy)   kho-ka   KI-NI   an   KI-NI?
                 C.-VOC   elephants(-GEN) nose-NOM   long-Q NEG long-Q
                 'Chelswu! Are elephants' noses long or not?'

   A: Chelswu: a.# Khokkili-**ka**   kho-**ka**   an   KIL-EYO.
                    elephants-NOM   nose-NOM   NEG long-DEC
                    'Elephants' noses are not long.'

              b. Khokkili(-uy)   kho-**nun**   an   KIL-EYO.
                    elephants(-GEN) nose-TOP   NEG long-DEC
                    'As for elephants' noses', they are not long.'

(1Q) is an 'alternative question' where what should fall in the AFD is the final verb *ki-ni an*

ki-ni 'long or not (long)'. Thus, for both the speaker and the addressee, all the information

of the sentence except for *ki-ni an ki-ni* 'long or not (long)' is taken for granted. Given this

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[3]Chapter 2, a synopsis of RRG, provides definitions of all the relevant notions employed in this chapter.

is the case, considering the two responses in (1), the MNC (Multiple Nominative Construction) in (1Aa) is not felicitous in this context, whereas the topic construction in (1Ab) fits well into the context. Then, we must ask why?

For better or worse, Korean has been categorized as one of the 'free word-order' languages. I do not disagree with this categorization in a syntactic sense. I would though strongly disagree with the idea in another sense, namely the focus structures of the sentence. Consider the following two question-answer pairs.

(2)   Q: Chelswu-ka   pang-eyse   MWUET(-UL)   ha-ni?
             C.-NOM   room-LOC   what-ACC   do-Q
             'What is Chelswu doing in his room?'

        A: a.# KONGPWU-LUL   pang-eyse   ha-yo.
               study-ACC   room-LOC   do-DEC
               '(He) is studying in (his) room.'

          b. Pang-eyse   KONGPWU-LUL   ha-yo.
               room-LOC   study-ACC   do-DEC
               '(He) is studying in (his) room.'

(2Q) is a *wh*-question sentence, where the *wh*-word *mwuet* 'what' is inherently focal (Van Valin & LaPolla 1977) and in the scope of the AFD in this narrow focus sentence (NFS). Now, the acceptability difference between the two responses (2Aa) and (2Ab) shows that when the focused NP *kongpwu* 'study' precedes the non-focal (topic) NP *pang-eyse* 'room-LOC' in that particular word order, then it is unacceptable; but if the focal NP *kongpwu* 'study' precedes the non-focal NP *pang-eyse*, which is closer to the immediately preverbal (IPV) position, then it fits well into this context.

Moreover, let us take a look at a case-marking pattern in Korean. Many a sentence

shows a case-shifting from one form to another for various reasons which will be come clearer later. For instance, the genitive-marked NP *khokkili* 'elephant' in (3) below may be shifted to a KA-marked NP, rendering it an MNC (Multiple Nominative Construction). Likewise, the genitive-marked NP *tosi* 'city' in (4) may be shifted to a LUL-marked NP, rendering it an MAC (Multiple Accusative Construction).[4]

(3)   GEN → KA
        khokkili-uy/**ka**   kho-**ka**   kil-ta.
        elephant-GEN/NOM   nose-NOM   be.long-DEC
        'Elephant's nose is long.'

(4)   GEN → LUL
        Cekkwun-i   tosi-uy/-**lul**   kongkeyk-**lul**   sicakha-ess-ta.
        enemy-NOM   city-GEN/ACC   attack-ACC   begin-PST-DEC
        'The enemy started attacking the city.'

In a similar vein, the dative marked NP *Swunhi* may be shifted to KA and LUL marked NPs, rendering it an MNC in (5) and an MAC in (6) respectively. Details aside, the dative-marked NP *Swunhi* in the 'psych-verb' *mwusep-* 'fear' is shifted to the KA in (5). Thus, the dative-marked recipient NP *Yenghi* in the *give*-type sentence in (6a) has case-shifted to a LUL-marked NP. Finally, the dative-marked causee NP *aitul* 'children' is case-shifted to a LUL-marked NP in (6b).

(5)   DAT → KA

---

[4]In this dissertation, the terms like an MNC, and an MAC will be preferably employed rather than the notions like a Double Nominative Construction (DNC), or a Double Accusative Construction (DAC) in order to cover a broader range of areas.

a. Swunhi-eykey/-**ka**   kay-**ka**   mwusewe-ss-ta. (Yang 1994)
   S.-DAT/NOM   dog-NOM   fear-PST-DEC
   'Soonhi feared the dog.'

(6)   DAT → LUL
   a. Chelswu-ka   Yenghi-hantay/-**lul**   kkot-**ul**   cwu-ess-ta.
      C.-NOM   Y.-DAT/-ACC   flower-ACC   give-PST-DEC
      'Chelswu gave Yenghi a flower.'

   b. Emeni-ka   ai-tul-eykey/-**ul**   pap-**ul**   mek-i-ess-ta.
      mother-NOM child-PL-DAT/-ACC   rice-ACC   eat-CAU-PST-DEC
      'A mother fed the (cooked) rice to the children.'

This trend continues for other semantic case-marked NPs, although not all cases sanction the above case-shifting. For instance, in (7) below, the locative-marked NP *Seoul* is shifted to a KA-marked NP, rendering it an MNC. Also, in (8), the ablative-marked NP *phwungsen* 'balloon' is shifted to a KA-marked NP again rendering it an MNC.[5]

(7)   LOC → KA
       Seoul-ey/-**i**   pi-**ka**   nayli-n-ta.
       Seoul-LOC/-NOM   rain-NOM   fall-PRES-DEC
       'It rains in Seoul.'

(8)   Ablative (source) → KA

---

[5]Of course, there are other cases where the above-mentioned case-shifting from semantic to pragmatic cases is prohibited such as the instrument in (1) and the alienable possession sentence in (2). These are the kinds of sentences that I will account for in this dissertation in terms of focus structure as well as the FAH (Focality Accessibility Hierarchy) and the 'semantic bleeding'.

(1)   Chelswu-ka   changmwun-ul   tol-lo/*-lul   kkay-ess-ta.
       C.-NOM   window-ACC   rock-with/-ACC   break-PST-DEC
       'Chelswu broke the window with a rock.'
(2)   Chelswu-ka   Yenghi-uy/*-ul   cha-lul   sa-ess-ta.
       C.-NOM   Y.-GEN/-ACC   car-ACC   buy-PST-DEC
       'Chelswu bought Yenghi's car.'

Phwungsen-eyse/-**i**   palam-**i**   ppa-ci-ess-ta
balloon-from/-NOM   air-NOM   leak-PASS-PST-DEC
'Air leaked out from the balloon.'

The HA 'do' construction (or Light Verb Construction) demonstrates another type of shifting with respect to the DN (Deverbal Nominal). The sentence in (9a) is a HA 'do' construction where the undergoer (theme) *swuhak* 'math' is incorporated into the DN *kongpwu* 'study' (Noun Incorporation). In contrast, as seen in (9b), the incorporated NP *swuhak* 'math' is shifted to a LUL-marked NP, rendering it an MAC.

(9)   a.   Chelswu-ka   [swuhak-kongpwu]-lul   ha-n-ta.
           C.-NOM   [math-study]-ACC   do-PRES-DEC
           'Chelswu studies math.'

     b.   Chelswu-ka   swuhak-**ul**   kongpwu-**lul**   ha-n-ta.
           C.-NOM   math-ACC   study-ACC   do-PRES-DEC
           'Chelswu studies math.'

So-called Case Stacking as in (10) below could be construed as another variant of the above-mentioned case-shifting pattern: that is, it could be a composite of one type of case (semantic case) and an other type of case (pragmatic case).[6] For instance, the semantic locative case maker *-ey* in (10) is stacked beside the pragmatic neutral focus marker LUL.

(10)   LOC → LOC-LUL stacking
       John-i   tulek-ey-(lu)l   cim-ul   sil-ess-ta.

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[6]The two notions: 'semantic(ally motivated syntactic) case' and 'pragmatic(ally motivated syntactic) case' are the two most important keywords in this dissertation. The definitions of and justifications for these two case types will be provided in chapter 3.4.2.

J.-NOM   truck-LOC-ACC   luggage-ACC   load-PST-DEC
'John loaded luggage on trucks.'

As the last type of example, let us take into consideration the following quantifier-float

(QF) sentences in (11) below.

(11) Q: Haksayng-tul-i   myech-myeng(-i)   o-ass-ni?
            student-PL-NOM   how.many-CL(-NOM)   come-PST-Q
            'How many students came in?'

      A: a. Haksayng-tul-i   twu-myeng(-i) o-ass-ta.
              student-PL-NOM   two-CL-NOM   come-PST-DEC
              'Two students came in.'

          b.# Twu-myeng-uy   haksayng(-i)   o-ass-ta.
              two-CL-GEN   student-NOM   come-PST-DEC
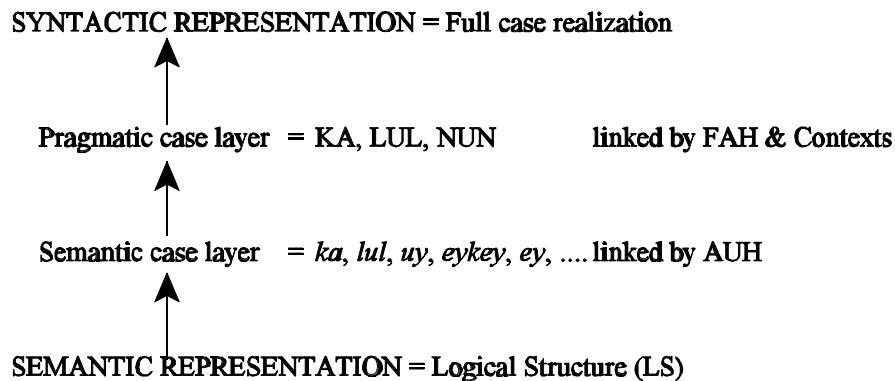   'Two students came in.'

(11a) is a *wh*-question where the information that is requested (and thus focused) is

numerical: 'how many'. Two different types of quantifier constructions are employed to

respond to the question. Of these two, however, the quantifer floating (QF) construction in

(11Aa), where the Q, *twu-meyng* 'two-CL' is floated over the host noun *haksayng* 'student'

to the IPV, is felicitous; but the plain genitive-marked Q construction in (11A´) *twu-meyng-uy*

'two-CL-GEN' is not acceptable in this context.[7]

It will be argued in this dissertation that in order to account fully for Korean case

marking, it will be necessary to have two independently-motivated case layers, semantic and

pragmatic case, in this order: the former is linked onto the syntactic representation in terms

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[7]Though, it will be clearer later in chapter 7, what I claim here is that QF is a kind of focus construction which is used when the Q is in the scope of the AFD.
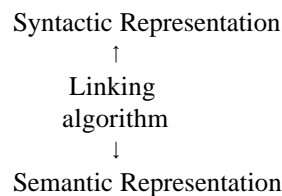
of the Actor-Undergoer Hierarchy (AUH) and the latter is linked in terms of the 'Focality

Accessibility Hierarchy (FAH) & Contexts' in accordance to the focus structure (topic-

/focalization) diagrammed in figure 1 below.

Figure 1:   Korean Case Linking Algorithm: 'Two Case Layers' Hypothesis[8]

SYNTACTIC REPRESENTATION = Full case realization

↑

Pragmatic case layer = KA, LUL, NUN   linked by FAH & Contexts

↑

Semantic case layer   = *ka, lul, uy, eykey, ey*, ... linked by AUH

↑

SEMANTIC REPRESENTATION = Logical Structure (LS)

One very important matter to indicate concerning figure 1 is that the use of the

nominative *-ka/-i* and accusative *-lul/-ul* in Korean is rather bi-functional; that is, they can be

used for two independently-motivated grammatical relations.[9] Importantly though, they are

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[8]It must be pointed out that in RRG (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997) the Linking Algorithm starts from the LS of the verb and is linked to the syntactic representation either in a bottom-up (semantics → syntax) or a top-down (syntax → semantics) fashion. Partly due to the focus of this dissertation, I will only concentrate on the first type of the linking algorithm (semantics → syntax). In addition, the general structure of the RRG-based theory of grammar is as follows (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997: 21):

Syntactic Representation
↑
Linking
algorithm
↓
Semantic Representation

[9]Based on this bi-functional nature, henceforth, I will utilize *-ka* (syntactic subject, or PSA in RRG terms) and *-lul* (syntactic object, or the second macrorole in RRG terms) for the semantic cases, and KA and LUL for

formally identical and can never be stacked in their surface forms. However, there are many

cases where the existence of these two can be demonstrated.

This dissertation will proceed as follows. Chapter 2 introduces the basic features of

RRG while pointing out the importance, and independence of the focus structure projection.

Chapter 3 proposes the 'Two Case Layers' hypothesis, which principally says that in order

to fully understand the case-marking system, in Korean, not only are there semantic cases

(based on the AUH), but there are also pragmatic cases (based on the FAH and discourse

contexts) and in this order (i.e. the semantic cases are linked, first, and the pragmatic cases,

second, onto the syntactic representation). Moreover, in the order of priority, the latter

(pragmatic case) is categorized as a type of the morphological coding system of the topic-

/focalization. Chapter 4 investigates the genitive constructions in relation to focus structure,

which intends to show how the 'Two Case Layers' hypothesis can systematically handle the

multiple nominative, and accusative constructions which have in common their genitive

counterparts. That is, it will be contended there that the case shifting from *uy* GEN (semantic

case) to KA or LUL (pragmatic cases) is a kinds of focalization. Chapter 5 applies this

hypothesis to other kinds of case-shifting and case-stacking (topic-/focalization) examples

except the genitive. It is claimed that there is a fundamental difference between case-shifting

(or alternation) and case-stacking in terms of semantic and pragmatic implications; namely,

the former may have both pragmatic (focus or topic) and semantic (locative [+global],

affectedness, accomplishment etc.) implications, whereas the latter have only pragmatic

implications (focus, topic). Chapter 6 deals with HA 'do' construction and the (post-verbal

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the focus markers.

negation) light verb construction (LVC) *-ci an-h* 'NEG-do'. It will be argued that the well-known MAC such as *swuhak-ul kongpwu-lul* 'math-ACC study-ACC' is (case-)shifted from their noun-incorporation (or the genitive) counterpart because of focus structure. Chapter 7 investigates the Korean quantifier float (QF) construction. I argue there that QF is a special kind of focus construction, which is used when the numeral information (quantifier) is focused (in the scope of the AFD).