

Thematic structure in Korean noun phrases
Peter Sells, University of York

This talk will report on a preliminary investigation of the nature and distribution of different kinds of dependents within the Korean noun phrase. It is known that clearly deverbal nouns often inherit the argument structure of their source, while other nouns which are underived, or derived in different ways, also sometimes appear to have arguments (Levin & Rappaport 1988, Partee 1989, Barker 2011). Some nouns in English naturally take complements, such as *writer (of thrillers)*, while surprisingly, others do not: *novelist (*of thrillers)*. Relational nouns such as ‘brother’ or ‘friend’ or even ‘sleeve’ intuitively have an (implicit) argument, which could be overtly expressed by a genitive phrase.

In Korean, nouns created involving Sino-Korean bound morphemes may also show something similar (cf. Ono 2016 on parallel Japanese examples). Looking first at simple constructions which seem to involve compounding, the noun *cak-ka* straightforwardly takes what appears to be a semantic dependent in the compound (1b). Yet the noun *ce-ca* does not, in the compound (2b), even though the same dependent can be expressed in a phrase marked with the genitive *uy* (2c):

- (1) a. *cak-ka* ‘writer, creator’
b. *tonghwa-cak-ka* ‘fairy tale writer’
- (2) a. *ce-ca* ‘writer’
b. **tonghwa-ce-ca* **‘fairy tale writer’*
c. (ku) *tonghwa uy ce-ca* ‘writer of (that) fairy tale’

(2c) raises the issue of whether *ku tonghwa* is a relational or thematic dependent of the noun – if it is, why is the compound (2b) ill-formed? – or whether it is a ‘genitive’ or ‘possessive’ dependent (Barker 2011), licensed in a different way. Given that Korean also appears to allow ‘genitive-drop’ in some circumstances (An 2014), it is not straightforward to decide whether unmarked prenominal modifiers instantiate a true compound or some phrasal syntactic structure (as in (3)):

- (3) *sako chalyang (uy) wuncen-ca*
crashed.car (GEN) drive-person ‘the driver of a car which crashed’

The analysis must be able to make such distinctions regarding the structure of the relevant examples, as well as be able to identify the semantic or licensing relationship between the noun and its dependent(s).

References

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