

Syntax of Internally Headed Relative Clauses in Korean

There are two different relative clause constructions that allow apparently the same interpretation in Korean; Externally Headed Relative Clauses (EHRCs) as in (1a) and Internally Headed Relative Clauses (IHRCs) as shown in (1b).

- (1) a. kyengchal=i[[____ tomangka]-nun totwuk]=ul cap-ass-ta. (EHRC)
 police=NOM run.away-ADN thief=ACC catch-PST-DEC
- b. kyengchal=i[[totwuk-i tomangka]-nun kes]=ul cap-ass-ta. (IHRC)
 police=NOM thief=nom run.away-ADN kes=ACC catch-PST-DEC
 ‘The police caught (a/the) thief who was running away.’

While both relative clauses in (1a, b) share the same interpretation, we can observe structural dissimilarities between them. In (1a), there is a subject gap in the relative clause preceding the embedded predicate *tomangka-* ‘run away’ which is suffixed by the adnominal ending *-nun*. This relative clause modifies the following head noun *totwuk* ‘thief’. The head noun of the EHRC is marked with accusative case by the matrix predicate *cap-* ‘catch’. So, *totwuk* in (1a) heads the complex NP object of the matrix predicate *cap-* and at the same time is interpreted as the subject of the embedded predicate *tomangka-*. In contrast, in (1b), there is no gap in either the relative clause or matrix clause; both embedding and embedded clauses contain overtly realized arguments in all the expected positions. Interestingly, we see an additional element, the so-called bound noun *kes*, sometimes glossed as ‘thing, one’ at the position where the head noun appears in the EHRC. *Kes* is assigned the accusative case by the matrix predicate. But the “semantic” head of the IHRC is internal to it, the relative clause subject *totwuk* ‘thief’. In other words, the complex NP in (1b) is interpreted as being a kind of thief.

Among many studies, Kim (2004, 2007) proposes an E-type pronoun analysis based on Shimoyama’s (1999) analysis. Chung and Kim (2003) assert that IHRC is not sensitive to tense information and Kim (2004) also argues that IHRC cannot bear tense phrase and its maximal phrase can be AspectP saying the tense of the IHRC should be in the same timeline with its matrix clause. In addition, she proposes that *kes* following an IHRC is an N-level pronominal.

The analysis proposed in this paper is based on Erlewine and Gould’s (2014, 2016) Copy-chain analysis of IHRCs. They examined native speakers’ interpretation of Japanese IHRCs with quantifiers. The result was not accounted for by previous approaches, however Erlewine and Gould’s approach could predict such interpretation. This study will bring counterexamples against previous syntactic analyses of IHRC in Korean. These will show that IHRCs can have their own tense which is separate from the matrix clause. In addition, the syntactic status of obligatory bound morpheme *kes* will be discussed providing counterevidence against Kim’s (2004) N-level pronominal analysis. I will show that relative clauses with an internal head can be headed not only by the specifier *ku*, but by the clearly pronominal head *ku kes* ‘that one’ as in (2).

- (2) Na=nun [[Tom=i tosekwan-eyse chayk=ul taychwulha]-n ku kes]=ul ilk-epo-ass-ta.
 I=top T.=nom library-from book=acc check.out-adn the kes=acc read-see-pst-dec
 ‘I tried reading the book that Tom checked out from the library.’

I show that this type of pattern is a subtype of what Erlewine and Gould call Doubly Headed Relative Clauses, and I suggest that relative clauses of this type have distinct semantic properties.

References

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