

The Syntax of Coordinating Particles in Korean

The present paper presents a novel account of coordination involving coordinating particles such as *to* ‘also’ and *(i)na* ‘or’ in Korean. Analysis of coordinating phrases in Korean has been controversial. For example, Johannessen (1996) proposes the following structure for a disjunction phrase such as *John-ina Mary-na Susan* ‘John, (or) Mary or Susan’:

(1) [_{CoP} [_{Co'} [_{CoP} [_{Co'} John [_{Co} ina] Mary [_{Co} na]] Susan]

There are several problems with a structure such as (1). First, it assumes a right-branching specifier, which is either non-existent or extremely rare, if any. Secondly, if the disjunction particle appears at the end of the phrase, it means some kind of conjunction as follows:

(2) John-INA Mary-NA hasimhaki-nun machankaciita. Park (2008)
 -NA -NA being.stupid-Top same

‘John and Mary and possibly others are the same in their stupidity.’

It is not clear how *(i)na* means disjunction in one condition and conjunction in another.

Thirdly, coordinators such as *(i)na* and *to* cannot be omitted between conjuncts unlike in English, in which case coordinators except the one between the final two conjuncts are optional as in *John (and) Mary (and) Susan *(and) Peter*. Moreover, in the case of *to* and conjunctive *(i)na*, identical particles must follow each DP, the phenomenon of which is called conjunction doubling, (cf. (2) (for *(i)na*)):

(3) John-TO Mary-TO Susan-TO o.ass.ta.
 -also -also -also came

‘John, Mary, Susan and at least one other person married someone respectively.’

As far as I know, no existing accounts have successfully explained why the same number of coordinators as that of DPs is necessary in coordination such as (2) and (3).

The last problem is concerned with difference between Japanese and Korean. It has been known that when *ka*, a disjunction particle, merges with a *wh*-element in Japanese, an existential quantifier follows, such as *dare-ka* (who-or) ‘someone’. However, in Korean, if the disjunction particle, *(i)na*, follows a *wh*-element, a free choice is generated.

These problems can be straightforwardly explained once we assume that the structure of coordination consists of two projections: Coordination Phrase (CoP) and Focus Phrase (FocP), and the particles we hear may not be real coordinators (i.e. not carrying semantic functions), but simply agreement reflexes. For example, (1) and (2) are represented respectively as follows:

(4) [_{FocP} [_{CoP} [_{DP} John]-INA [_{Co'} [_{DP} Mary] *t_k*]] [_{Foc} \emptyset_k]]

(5) [_{FocP} [_{DP} John]_{*i*}-INA [_{DP} Mary]_{*j*}-NA [_{CoP} *t_i t_j* [_{Co'} [_{DP} somebody] *t_k*]] [_{Foc} *na_k*]]

Detail explanations aside, what the analysis amounts to is *(i)na* in disjunction phrase such as (1) is an agreement reflex as a result of Agree with Foc⁰ and disjunction itself is phonologically null, whereas *(i)na* in (2) is not only an agreement reflex but also functions as conjunction head. Thus, (1) and (2) have semantically distinctive heads, hence, different meanings.

Moreover, following Saito and Murasugi (1990), complement ellipsis applies in (5). Thus, ‘somebody’ is not pronounced, but it remains at LF, which is why the interpretation of (2) (and (3)) is always non-exhaustive in that there is also some other referent who satisfies the predicate. (Note that the form would result in *John-ina Mary-na na*, but the Obligatory Contour Principle (OCP) applies there, deleting one of the two consecutive *nas* (cf. Yip (1988) for the OCP)). This analysis also explains the single conjunct use of *to* as in *John-ina oassta*. ‘John also came.’

A few important consequences follow. First, the combination of a *wh*-item and a coordinating particle such as *(i)na* is no longer a mystery. *Wh*-items themselves can denote existential quantifiers because the disjunction is phonologically null in Korean, whereas *WH* with *(i)na* means something different from an existential quantifier, because *(i)na* does not represent disjunction. Moreover, typologically, there are languages where disjunction appears on a *wh*-phrase in *wh*-questions such as Sinhala and old Japanese. Korean is one of them.

[Selected references]

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