The well-formed condition for Korean noun incorporation

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Available online 16 September 2014

Abstract

In this paper, I aim to discuss the Korean noun incorporation phenomenon. I demonstrate that Korean noun incorporation occurs at the D-structure, syntactically obeying the Head Movement Constraint (HMC) of Travis [14] and Chomsky[7] and Baker [6] and semantically obeying the Theme-Only Constraint (TOC). For the discussion, I first identify the structure of 'hæ-tot-i' sunrise-type words, thereby showing that before derivation occurs by adding the nominalizing affix '-i', compounding 'hæ' sun and 'tot-' to rise should first occur syntactically. Based on empirical data, this argument is strong enough to convince us that noun incorporation is a syntactic word formation process. Based on the syntactic structure of the noun incorporation identified, I show that every noun that goes through syntactic noun incorporation should have the thematic role of 'theme', which has been captured as the Theme-Only Constraint. Thus, the syntactic HMC and semantic TOC form a general well-formed condition to effect optimal noun incorporation in Korean.
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Keywords: Head movement constraint (HMC); Korean noun incorporation; Theme-only constraint; Well-formed condition

Introduction

Noun incorporation is unknown in Indo-European languages. In English, there are many Object + Verb compounds (e.g., 'birdwatching', 'babysitting', and 'fingerprinting'). However, the Object + Verb structure is not the case of the verb incorporating the object of the sentence. When these verbs are used transitively, they take other objects: "I have to babysit my aunt's kid" or "I'll fingerprint the suspect." When the verbs do not have an internal argument, they are intransitive: "When I go birdwatching, all I see are mosquitoes". In other words,

'birdwatching' does not mean that you necessarily see the 'bird' incorporating into the verb.

Unlike English, Korean has many incorporated nouns with the structure [N + VSTEM + AN1(-i)].The following are some examples of such words.

(1)

a. hæ-tot-i
   sun-rise-AN
   'sunrise'
	b. mul-pat-i
	   water-receive-AN
	   '(a) gutter'

c. haru-sal-i
   a day-live-AN
   '(a) dayfly'
	d. kutu-tak-i
	   shoe-shine-AN
	   '(a) shoe-shine boy'

e. koki-cap-i
   fish-catch-AN
   'fishing'
	f. kamok-sal-i
	   prison-live-AN
	   'living-in-prison'

For convenience's sake, we will call the words above 'hæ-tot-i' sunrise-type words. Concerning the formation process of such words, there might be two analyses: (1) $[[N + V_{STEM}] + A_N(-i)]$ and (2) $[N + [V_{STEM} + A_N(-i)]]$. In this paper, I will first show which of these analyses is more plausible, and then, based on the confirmed word formation process of 'hæ-tot-i' *sunrise-type* words, I will discuss the main concern of this paper, which will be termed the well-formed condition of Korean noun incorporation. It will be shown that the well-formed condition consists of syntactic and semantic constraints that restrict the process of noun incorporation.

Incorporation structure and constraints

As illustrated above, the possible structures for 'hæ-tot-i' *sunrise*-type words are as follows:

(2)
a. $[[N + V_{STEM}] + A_N(-i)]$
b. $[N + [V_{STEM} + A_N(-i)]]$

(2a) shows that the verb-noun compound occurs prior to the addition of the nominalizing affix $A_N(-i)$, while in (2b), the compound occurs after the derivation of $[V_{STEM} + A_N(-i)]$. The reason that both structures have been controversially assumed for 'hæ-tot-i' *sunrise-type* words is that neither the $[N + V_{STEM}]_V$ structure of 'hæ-tot-i' *sunrise-type* words (e.g., 'hæ-tot', 'mul-pat', and 'haru-sal') in (1) nor the $[V_{STEM} + A_N(-i)]_N$ structure of *sunrise*-type words (e.g., 'tot-i', 'sal-i', 'ʤap-i', and 'pat-i') is used as an independent word[2] in modern Korean. For this reason, some have assumed (2a), while others have assumed (2b). In this paper, I will argue that the structure in (2a) is correct. To make a case for the structure in (2a), we will consider the problems with (2b).

Some linguists accept the (2b) structure for the following reasons. First, even though it is true that there is no compound with the $[N + V]_V$ structure (e.g., 'hæ-tot') or with the $[V + A_N(-i)]_N$ structure (e.g., $[sal + -i]_N$) in Korean, nominals with the (2b) structure are observed more frequently than those with the (2a) structure when they combine with other nominals in word formation. In other words, although certain word forms (e.g., 'sal-i' *living* and 'ʤap-i' *catching*) are not used as independent words[3], they frequently can combine with other nouns to form a bigger compound. As shown below, (3) and (4) provide some more examples of this usage.

(3)

a. məsɨm-sal-i
   farmhand-live-A_N
   'living as a farmhand'

b. kwiyaŋ-sal-i
   exile-live-A_N
   'living in exile'

c. ok-sal-i
   prison-live-A_N
   'living in a prison'

d. ʧəka-sal-i
   wife's home-live-AN
   'living in a wife's home'

e. haru-sal-i
   a day-live-A_N
   '(a) dayfly'

(4)

a. mal[4]-cap-i
   mal[4]-catch-A_N
   'a person who measures
   grain by mal'

b. param-cap-i
   wind-catch-A_N
   '(a) cheerleader
   '(person)'

c. son-cap-i
   hand-catch-A_N
   '(a) handle'

d. kal-cap-i
   sword-catch-A_N
   '(a) swordsman'

We will now consider the characteristics of 'sal-i' *living* and 'ʤap-i' *catching* in (3) and (4), respectively, in more detail.

Lee [9] analyse words in (3) and (4) as compound nouns and considers 'sal-i' *living* and 'cap-i' *catching* as nouns. If he is correct, 'sal-i' *living* and 'ʤap-i' *catching* are derived nominals that are produced by adding the nominalizing affix '-i'. In addition, both of these derived nominals should be able to form bigger derivatives or compounds by combining with other nominalizing affixes or nouns, or they should be able to stand independently, as with the examples below in (5) and (6). However, the data in (7) and (8) show that this capacity to combine or stand alone does not always occur.

(5)

a. $[[mol]_V + [-i]A_N]_N$
   chase + A_N
   'chasing'

b. $[[p^hul]_V + [-i]A_N]_N$
   solve + A_N
   'solving'

c. $[[nol]_V + [-i]A_N]_N$
   play + A_N
   'playing'