

ON THE ADJECTIVE IN KOREAN

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0. Introduction

Traditionally Korean adjectives are analyzed as stative verbs (Maling and Kim 1998, Lee 1997). Recently several linguists (Kim 1996, Kim 2002a and b) have reanalyzed them as reduced relative clauses. Since only predicative adjectives can be analyzed as reduced relative clauses, this entails there are no attributive adjectives in Korean. In this paper, however, I will show some evidence for the existence of attributive adjectives. In section 1, I will give a short overview of the properties of Korean adjectives which led some linguists to the idea that Korean adjectives in general are reduced relative clauses. In section 2, I will show some purely attributive adjectives in Korean. In section 3.

I will present Cinque's proposal for the two origins of adjectives in the extended nominal projection. Following this, I will give evidence that Korean adjectives can also have non-intersective meanings, thus qualifying as purely attributive. The final section will also show some adjectives that cannot be analyzed as reduced relative clauses but seem to be purely attributive adjectives.

1. Some properties of Korean adjectives

Korean is a rigid OV language. The verb always is in the final position.

- (1) hakseng-i chayk-ul ilknun-ta.¹
Students-Nom book-Acc read-Dcl
'the student is reading a book'

Predicative adjectives also occupy the sentence final position.

- (2) na-nun hayngbokha-ta.
I-Top happy-Dcl
'I am happy'

¹ Nom: nominative case, Acc: accusative case, Cop: copula, Dcl: declarative sentence marker, Aff: affix, Pst: past tense, Top: topic, Rel: relative clause marker.

The morpheme *-ta* indicates declarative force and attaches to the last word of the sentence which is in general the verb. Just by looking at examples like these, one could argue that Korean is a language without an overt copula. However this is not the case, as can be seen in examples with nouns in predicative position.

- (3) na-nun haksayng-i-ta.
I - Topstudent-Cop-Dcl
'I am a student'

The morpheme *i* represent the copula in Korean. Precisely because of the lack of the copula in (2), *hayngbokha* (happy) was analyzed as a stative verb. The same adjectives can be used attributively in front of the Noun, but in this case the morpheme *-n* has to be attached to them.

- (4) hayngbokha-n haksayng
happy-N student
'a happy student'

Additional evidence for the verbal character of these adjectives comes from their temporal behaviour. When describing a state in the past Korean adjectives take an additional morpheme representing aspect and past tense.

- (5) haengbokha-ess-ten² hakseng
happy -Pst-Ten student
'a student who was happy'

As the English translation suggests 'hayngbokhaessten' can be analyzed as a reduced relative clause. In Korean relative clauses apparently occupy the same position as the above attributive adjectives and employ the same morpheme *-n*.

- (6) norayhanu-n yeca
sing-Rel woman
'a woman who sings a song'
- (7) ece noreha-ess-ten yeca
yesterday sing -Pst-Rel woman
'a woman who sang a song yesterday'

Kim (1997) and Kim (2002a and b) note that the relativizer *-n* has the same form as the attributive marker in the cases above. This is claimed to be additional evidence that adjectives in attributive position are reduced relative clauses as the attributive marker is identical to the relativizer.

It is because of these facts that Korean adjectives have been considered to be stative verbs in reduced relative clauses. According to this analysis Korean does not

² *-ten* is an allomorph of *-n*.

have purely attributive adjectives. I will, however, show some evidence that Korean does have attributive adjectives.

2. *Non-predicative adjectives*

Given the fact that only predicative adjectives can be analysed as reduce relative clauses, the above hypothesis would predict that pure attributive adjectives do not exist in Korean. An attributive adjective can never function as the main predicate of a clause. A typical example in English is the adjective ‘former’.

- (8) a. a former president
b. *the president was former
c. *a president who was former

In the following section, I want to present a group of Korean adjectives which are purely attributive.

2.1. *Existence of non-predicative adjectives in Korean*

In Korean there is a closed group of nominal modifiers which show the same behaviour as the English adjective ‘former’. It consists of the following elements: *say* ‘new’, *hen* ‘old’, *cen* ‘former’ *ye* ‘ancient’, *sun* ‘pure’. They are found only in (prenominal) attributive position and can never constitute the predicate of the clause:

- (9) a. cen taytongreyng
former president
‘a former president’
b. *taytongreyng-i cen-ta.
President-Nom former-Dcl
‘the president was former’
- (10) a. say cip
new house
‘a new house’
b. *cip-I say-ta.
house-Nom new-Dcl
‘a/the house is new’

They are sometimes analysed as “adnominal modifiers”, or “attributive determinatives”³ since they constitute a closed class. But this is also true of class of

³ Some linguists (cfr. Kim 2002a) assume that Korean has a peculiar category of “attributive determinatives” which is a cover term for demonstratives, numerals, and pure attributive adjectives. Together with Mok (2002), I propose that we should not consider them to constitute the same category. As they can occur together in a specific order:

the exclusively attributive adjectives in English like ‘principal’, ‘former’, ‘alleged’, etc. Though the class is very small its members are always considered to be adjectives.

3. *Non-intersective adjectives*

Adjectives can usually have two different interpretations depending on their position internal to the DP. I want to present here some examples from English and Italian.

English

- (11) Peter is an **old** friend. (ambiguous)
 a. Peter is old. (intersective)
 b. The friendship is old. (non-intersective)
- (12) Olga is a **beautiful** dancer. (ambiguous)
 a. Olga is a dancer who is also a beautiful person. (intersective)
 b. Olga dances beautifully. (non-intersective)

Italian

- (13) Peter è un attore **grande**. (ambiguous)
 a. Peter is an actor and is big. (intersective)
 b. Peter is great as an actor. (non-intersective)
- (14) Un attaccante **buono** non farebbe mai una cosa del genere. (ambiguous)
 a. A good-hearted forward would never do such a thing. (intersective)
 b. A forward good at playing forward would never do such a thing. (non-intersective)

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- (i) a. ce say cha (Dem>A>N)
 that new car
 b. *say ce cha
 new that car
 ‘that new car’
- (ii) a. ce tu cha (Dem>Num>N)
 that two car
 b. *tu ce cha
 two that car
 ‘that two cars’
- (iii) ce tu say cha (Dem>Num>A>N)
 that two new car
 ‘that two new cars’

The examples above exhibit the order Dem>Num>A>N, which Cinque (2000, 2005) takes to be the universal order of merge of these elements.

Adjectives like *old* and *beautiful* in English (examples 11 and 12) as well as adjectives like *grande* and *buono* in Italian (examples 13 and 14) are ambiguous between an intersective and a non-intersective interpretation. With respect to these ambiguities, Cinque (1994, 2005b) proposes that these adjectives have two different origins: either sitting in specifiers of functional projections directly associated with the class of adjective (direct modification adjectives) or in a position higher up in the extended nominal projection that is reserved for reduced relative clauses (indirect modification adjectives).

Cinque proposes the following generalizations:

1. Indirect modification adjectives have the same readings of predicative adjectives in relative clause.
2. Direct modification adjectives have only the ‘adverbial’, non-intersective reading.
3. The APs which have a reduced relative clause source precede direct modification adjectives.
4. Only direct modification allows idiomatic interpretations.

3.1. *Non-intersective adjectives in Korean*

If all adjectives in Korean were to be analyzed as reduced relative clauses then Cinque’s generalisation would predict that they could only modify their nouns indirectly, having only an intersective interpretation. That this is not the case can be seen in the Korean equivalent of example (13), *Peter è un attore grande*:

- (15) Peter-nun **ku-n** payu-i-ta. (ambiguous)
 Peter-Top big-n actor-Cop-Dcl
 a. Peter is big/tall. (intersective)
 b. Peter is great as an actor. (non-intersective)

The adjective *ku-n* in example (15) is ambiguous between having an intersective and a non-intersective interpretation. In the intersective interpretation it has two possible meanings: tall and heavy/big.

- (16) a. Peter-nun [ki-ka **ku]-n payu-i-ta.
 Peter-Top height-Nom tall-N actor-Cop-Dcl
 ‘Concerning Peter, he is a tall actor.’
 b. Peter-nun [momcip-i **ku]-n payu-i-ta.
 Peter-Top body-Nom big-N actor-Cop-Dcl
 ‘Concerning Peter, he is a big actor.’****

If all Korean adjectives were to derive from a relative clause they should only have intersective interpretations. However, the adjective *ku-n* can have a non-intersective interpretation, independent of the existence of the suffix *-n*. Note, that

- (19) a. Peter-nun **nulku-n** chinku-i-ta. (only intersective)
 Peter-Top old-N friend-Cop-Dcl
 ‘Peter is an aged friend’
- b. Olga-nun **alumtau-n** dancer-i-ta. (only intersective)
 Olga-Top beautiful-N dancer-Cop-Dcl
 ‘Olga is a dancer and she is beautiful’
- c. **chakha-n** kongkeyksu-nun kulen il-ul celtay an han-ta.
 (only intersective)
 Good-hearted-N forward-Top such thing-Acc never Neg do-Dcl
 ‘A good-hearted forward would never do such a thing’
- (20) a. Peter-nun **olay-n** chinku-i-ta. (only non-intersective)
 Peter-Top longtime-N friend-Cop-Dcl
 ‘Peter is an old friend’
- b. *Peter-nun **olay-ess-ten** chinku-i-ta.
 Peter-Top longtime-Pst-Ten friend-Cop-Dcl
 ‘Peter is old, and he is a friend’
- c. Olga-nun **mesci-n** dancer-i-ta. (only non-intersective)
 Olga-Top wonderful-N dancer-Cop-Dcl
 ‘Olga is an wonderful dancer’
- d. ??Olga-nun **mesci-ess-ten** dancer-i-ta.
 Olga-Top wonderful-Pst-ten dancer-Cop-Dcl
- e. **cohu-n** kongkeyksu-nun kulen il-ul celtay an han-ta.
 (only non-intersective)
 good-nforward-Top such thing-Acc never Neg do-Dcl
 ‘A forward good at playing forward would never do such a thing’
- f. ***coh-ass-ten** kongkeyksu-nun kulen il-ul celtay an han-ta.
 good-Pst-ten forward-Top such thing-Acc never Neg do-Dcl

In Korean the relevant non-intersective meanings are expressed by means of the adjectives *olay-n* ‘longtime’, resp. *mesci-n* ‘wonderful’ and *cohu-n* ‘good’. As seen in the above cases they can be accompanied by the suffix *-n*. This is clear evidence that this suffix cannot be interpreted as a relative clause marker. Therefore, the presence of *-n* does not allow us to always analyse the adjective as a reduced relative clause.

Furthermore, one can establish also in Korean an unmarked order between intersective and non-intersective adjectives. This order becomes evident in the cases where we have two identical adjectives, one generated as a reduced relative clause

and the other in a functional projection. Then the first has to be the intersective one. Take the English and Italian examples in (21)⁵:

- (21) a. a beautiful beautiful dancer
 b. an old old friend
 c. un attaccante buono buono
 ‘a good good forward’

The interpretation of the adjectives ‘beautiful’, ‘old’ and ‘buono’ depend on their relative position. The adjective that is inserted in a structurally lower position has to be interpreted non-intersectively, while the intersective one is inserted in a higher position in a reduced relative clause. In the English case this results in the surface order intersective adjective – non-intersective adjective – noun, while in Italian we get the surface order noun – non-intersective adjective – intersective adjective⁶.

The same holds for the above Korean adjectives⁷:

- (22) a. **alumtau-n** **mesci-n** dancer
 beautiful-n wonderful dancer
 b. ??**mesci-n alumtau-n** dancer
 wonderful beautiful dancer
 ‘a beautiful beautiful dancer’
 c. **nulku-n** **olay-n** chinku
 aged longtime friend

⁵ Cinque (2005b) proposes the following order:
 English (Germanic): AP from reduced RC > “direct modification” AP > N > AP from reduced RC. Italian (Romance): “direct modification” AP > N > “direct modification” AP > AP from reduced RC.

⁶ See Cinque (2005b) for discussion.

⁷ In Korean, non-predicative adjectives always precede other types of adjectives (cfr. Note 3 – see Mok 2002):

- (i) a. yeppu-n say cip
 beautiful-N new house
 b. *say yeppu-n cip
 new beautiful-N house
 ‘a/the new beautiful house’
 (ii) a. wytayha-n cen tatongryung
 great-N former president
 b. *cen wytayha-n tatongryung
 former great-N president
 ‘a/the great former president’

Therefore, the hierarchy of Korean adjectives seems to be the following:
 Intersective APs > Non-intersective APs > Non-predicative APs > N

- ‘an old old friend’
- d. **??olay-n nulkun** chinku
 longtime aged friend
 ‘an old old friend’

As we see in example (22), we find a fixed order between the two types of adjectives. The intersective adjectives always precede the non-intersective ones. But also note, that both adjectives take the suffix *-n*. In the case of two reduced relative clauses in the form of adjectives we would not expect ordering restrictions. This is another reason to abandon a unified interpretation of the suffix *-n* as a relative clause marker.

3.2. Direct modification in Korean

In Korean, a pro-drop language, there is co-reference between a noun and an empty element of a relative clause that modifies it. In the following example we have the head noun *namca* (man) and a relative clause headed by an intransitive verb.

- (23) [e_i ece **ttena**]-n namca_i (e = empty category)
 [yesterday left]-Rel man
 ‘a/the man who left yesterday’

The same is true for adjectives that derive from a reduced relative clause:

- (24) [e_i **yeppun**]-n yeca_i
 [pretty]-N woman
 ‘a/the pretty woman’

(from Kim 2002a)

The noun *yeca* ‘woman’ and its modifying adjective *yeppu-n* ‘pretty’ can also appear in a subject-predicate relationship:

- (25) yeca-ka yeppu-ta.
 woman-Nom pretty-Dcl
 ‘a/the woman is pretty’

But in Korean there are also examples of AdjP–NP constructions (26), usually idiomatic expressions that do not allow for subject-predicate pairs (27).

- (26) a. **mukey-n** chimmuk
 heavy-N silence
 ‘an awkward silence’
 b. **sayppalga-n** kecinmal
 red-N lie
 ‘whopping lie’

- c. **kemu-n** ton
black-N money
'a black money'
- (27) a. *chimmuk-i **mukep-ta**.
silence-i heavy-Dcl
'a/the silence is awkward'
- b. *kecinmal-i **sayppalga-ta**.
lie -Nom red-Dcl
'a/the lie is whopping'
- c. *ton-i **kem-ta**.
money-Nom black-Dcl
'a/the money is black'

These examples show that the adjectives in (26) are not used predicatively and therefore cannot be analyzed as reduced relative clauses⁸. Further evidence comes from the following examples that show that the adjectives in question cannot employ the past morpheme *ess*:

- (28) a. ***muke-ess-ten** chimmuk
heavy-Pst-Ten silence
'an awkward silence'
- b. ***sayppalga-ss-ten** kecinmal
red-Pst-Ten lie
'whopping lie'
- c. ***kemmu-ess-ten** ton
black-Pst-Ten money
'a black money'

Hence, the adjective *ku-n* 'big' can be ambiguous in the following way⁹:

⁸ Cinque (2005b) proposes that idiomatic readings are only possible with direct modification Aps.

- (i) a. A white lie
b. ??A lie white and without malice
c. ??A lie which is white
- (ii) a. A red herring
b. ??A herring red in character
c. ??A herring (which) is red (on the intended meaning).

⁹ A similar example can be found in Serbian/ Croatian/ Bosnian. These languages have two types of adjectives: short-form and long-form adjectives. Syntactically both types can appear prenominal as in (i), but in predicate position, only the short-form adjectives can appear, as in (ii) (Cinque 2005b):

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