

THE DISCOURSE PARTICLE *-yo* IN KOREAN: ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CLAUSAL ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract: *The goal of this paper is to demonstrate the pragmatic and syntactic traits of the sentence-final particle -yo in Korean. Such properties of this particle overlap with those of discourse particles in other languages such as Romanian, West Flemish, etc. Based on the common properties between the two particles, the syntax of the latter is carried over to the former. That is, Speech Act Phrase shell is on top of CP hosting the discourse particle -yo. This analysis correctly predicts the banned occurrences of -yo in embedded clauses.*

Keywords: *discourse particle, Speech Act Phrase, politeness, Korean*

1. Introduction

Korean has a sentence-final particle *-yo* in its lexical inventory. In the traditional grammar of the Korean language, the discourse function of this particle is known to express politeness towards the addressee by the speaker. However, the syntactic aspect of this particle has thus far remained unexplained in the literature. In this paper, I argue that the particle in question lies outside the conventional domain of clause, namely CP and that it occupies the head of a functional projection higher than CP, which is identified as Speech Act Phrase (Haegeman and Hill 2013). From this analysis, it will straightforwardly follow that the distribution of *-yo* is restricted to the main clause. (Haegeman and Hill 2013; Hill 2007; Miyagawa 2012).

This paper is organized as follows. In section 2, I demonstrate the syntactic and pragmatic traits of the *-yo* particle. In section 3, I argue that *-yo* is a discourse particle in Korean in that it shares some properties of ‘discourse particles’ in languages such as Romanian and West Flemish. In section 4, I lay out the theoretical cornerstone which the proposed analysis will be based upon. I then propose that Korean clausal architecture involves Speech Act Phrase and this domain accommodates the particle *-yo*. Section 5 addresses the issue concerning the unembeddability of *-yo*. Section 6 concludes the paper.

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2. Properties of -yo

This section illustrates the syntactic and pragmatic properties of -yo: (i) the syntactic distribution of -yo, (ii) its discourse effect, and (iii) its interaction with vocatives.

Let us begin by discussing the syntactic distribution of -yo focusing on its occurrences in the context of jussive clauses.¹ The term ‘jussive clause’ refers to three types of clauses in Korean: imperatives, promissives, and exhortatives (see Zanuttini et al. 2012 and references therein). Each clause type is identified by a designated clause-typing particle, the typical way of marking clause type in the language. Imperatives end in *-la*, promissives in *-ma*, and exhortatives in *-ca*. Representative examples are given in (1).²

- (1) a. Inho-ka cip-ey ka-**la**.
 Inho-NOM home-to go-IMP
 ‘Inho go home.’ (*Inho* = speaker)
- b. Emma-ka cip-eyka-**ma**.
 mother-NOM home-to go-PROM
 ‘Mommy will go home.’ (*mommy* = addressee)
- c. Inho-lang emma-ka cip-ey ka-**ca**.
 Inho-and mother-NOM home-to go-EXH
 ‘Inho and mommy will go home.’ (*mommy* = speaker, *Inho* = addressee)

The particle -yo typically occurs sentence-finally, as in (2).³ Crucially, in the presence of -yo, the jussive particles cannot be present in the same clause, irrespective of the relative morpheme order between -yo and the jussive particles, as in (3). Even in the absence of the overt jussive particle, the clause type can be identified without difficulty.

¹ Though -yo can also occur with the other clause types such as declaratives and interrogatives, I concentrate on jussive clauses mainly for the space reason. However, this practical choice is reasonable in that the discourse effect of -yo—the speaker-addressee relationship to be discussed below—is easily revealed if examined in the context of jussive clauses. Jussive clauses, being deontic, clearly indicates the relationship between interlocutors (Tsujimura 1978). Though the discussion is limited to jussive clauses, most of the arguments employed in this paper can be replicated for declaratives and interrogatives.

² The abbreviations used in this paper: DECL = Declarative; EXH = Exhortative; HON = Honorific; HUM = Humble; IMP = Imperative; NOM = Nominative, PST = Past; POL = Polite; PROM = Promissive; SUB = Subordinator; VOC = Vocative

³ It is known that the distribution of -yo is not restricted to the sentence-final position, as in (i): provided a sentence-final occurrence of -yo is present, -yo can also occur in a single or in multiple sentence-medial positions. This distributional restriction suggests the possibility of postulating some sort of licensing mechanism between sentence-final -yo and sentence-medial -yo. Though the nature of how to license sentence-medial -yo remains to be clarified, the interested reader is referred to author (in prep).

- (i) Ppalli-(yo) cip-ey ka-*(yo).
 quickly-POL home-to go-POL
 ‘Go home quickly.’

- (2) a. Inho-ka cip-ey ka-**yo**.
 Inho-NOM home-to go-POL
 ‘Inho go home.’
- b. Emma-ka cip-ey ka-**yo**.
 mother-NOM home-to go-POL
 ‘Mommy will go home.’
- c. Inho-lang emma-ka cip-ey ka-**yo**.
 Inho-and mother-NOM home-to go-POL
 ‘Inho and mommy will go home.’
- (3) a. *Cip-ey ka-**{la/ma/ca}**-**yo**.
 home-to go-IMP/PROM/EXH-POL
- b. *Cip-ey ka-**yo**-**{la/ma/ca}**.
 home-to go-POL-IMP/PROM/EXH

Given that *-yo* and the jussive particles are in complementary distribution and clause-types can be recovered when a jussive particle is absent and *-yo* is present, it is tempting to conclude that *-yo* and the jussive particles compete for the same syntactic position.

However, I rule out this possibility for the following reason. Language acquisition data are instructive in that children produce a string of jussive particle and *-yo* at some point in acquisition, as in (4). This is disallowed in adult utterances.

- (4) a. Mek-**ca-yo**.
 eat-EXH-POL
 ‘Let’s eat.’
- b. Ka-**ca-yo**.
 go-EXH-POL
 ‘Let’s go.’
- (Yim 2012:fn.5)

I assume that the clause-typing particle occupies the same syntactic position in all clause-types, presumably the head of ForceP (Rizzi 1997) (or CP) in syntax (cf. Zanuttini et al. 2012 for jussive clauses). The data in (4) then lead to the conclusion that the position of *-yo* is outside ForceP, the locus for the exhortative particle *-ca*. This suggests that *-yo* does not compete with the jussive particle for the same syntactic position. The fact that the jussive particle cannot occur in the presence of *-yo*, I assume, is a matter of PF. That is, in the presence of the particle *-yo*, the jussive particle is active in syntax marking the clause-type while its overt realization is suppressed at PF. Alternatively, *-yo* might spell-out more than one functional head, a possibility which can be implemented by making use of morphological merger, spanning, or phrasal spell-out. I leave this issue left for future research.

Second, let us turn to the discourse effect associated with *-yo*. The particle *-yo* serves the purpose of expressing politeness towards the addressee. The utterances in (1), with the specific markers of clause type, are felicitous only when the speaker is socially superior to or at the same level as the addressee. For instance, the utterances are acceptable when uttered by a teacher to his or her student, or between friends. By contrast, if the speaker is inferior to the addressee, the utterances in (1) become unacceptable. In this context, the

sentences in (2) with the sentence-final particle *-yo* are felicitous. This pragmatic effect is also reflected in the forms of the pronominal subjects in imperatives and promissives, as discussed below.

- (5) a. **Ney-ka/*Tangsin-i** cip-ey ka-**la**.
 you-NOM/you.HON-NOM home-to go-IMP
 ‘Go home.’
- b. **Nay-ka/*Cey-ka** cip-ey ka-**ma**.
 I-NOM/I.HUM-NOM home-to go-PROM
 ‘I will go home.’

In addition to the regular DP subjects in (1), (2) and (4), jussive clauses may take pronominal subjects. Personal pronouns in Korean can surface in different forms depending on the speaker-addressee relationship. Interestingly, in an imperative ending in *-la* the regular form of second person pronoun is required, as in (5)a; in a promissive ending in *-ma* the regular form of first person pronoun is required, as in (5)b. By contrast, in imperatives and promissives with sentence-final *-yo*, the honorific form of second person pronoun, as in (6)a, and the humble form of first person pronoun, as in (6)b, are needed.

- (6) a. **Tangsin-i/*Ney-ka** cip-ey ka-**yo**.
 you.HON-NOM/you-NOM home-to go-POL
 ‘Go home.’
- b. **Cey-ka/*Nay-ka** cip-ey ka-**yo**.
 I.HUM-NOM/I-NOM home-to go-POL
 ‘I will go home.’

The contrasts between (5) and (6) clearly exemplify the reported discourse effect of *-yo*.

Moreover, this discourse effect always scopes out any other operators. (7) makes the point with sentential negation.

- (7) **Cey-ka/*Nay-ka** cip-ey **an(i)** ka-**yo**.
 I.HUM-NOM/I-NOM home-to NEG go-POL
 ‘I will not go home.’

(7) illustrates that the sentential negation does not negate the speaker-addressee relationship encoded by *-yo*. In (7) the form of the pronominal subject in (6) remains the same and the sentence still ends with *-yo*.

Finally, *-yo* closely interacts with vocatives and this interaction is constrained by the speaker-addressee relationship (cf. Hill 2007). Korean has a vocative particle, *-(y)a*, whose surface form is phonologically conditioned. The vocative particle can also be phonologically null, in which case a noun without an overt vocative particle can function as a vocative. Crucially, the realization of vocative particle is closely tied with the discourse information regarding the relationship between discourse participants. The overt vocative particle indicates that the speaker is superior to or at the same level as the addressee,

exactly the same relationship exemplified in (1), in which *-yo* is not available. By contrast, the covert vocative particle typically encodes the relationship compatible with *-yo* in (2).⁴

The full paradigm involving an overt vocative illustrates the point:

- (8) a. Inho-**ya**, Inho-ka cip-ey ka-**la**.
 Inho-VOC Inho-NOM home-to go-IMP
 ‘Inho, Inho go home.’
- b. Inho-**ya**, Hami-ka cip-ey ka-**ma**.
 Inho-VOC grandma-NOM home-to go-PROM
 ‘Inho, grandmawill go home.’
- c. Inho-**ya**, halmi-lang Inho-ka cip-ey ka-**ca**.
 Inho-VOC grandma-and Inho-NOM home-to go-EXH
 ‘Inho, grandma and Inho will go home.’
- (9) a. Halmeni(*-**ya**), halmeni-kkeyse cip-ey ka-sie⁵-**yo**.
 grandmother-VOC grandma-HON home-to go-HON-POL
 ‘Grandmother, go home.’
- b. Halmeni(*-**ya**), Inho-ka cip-ey ka-**yo**.
 grandmother-VOC Inho-NOM home-to go-POL
 ‘Grandmother, I will go home.’
- c. Halmeni(*-**ya**), halmi-lang Inho-ka cip-ey ka-**yo**.
 grandmother-VOC grandma-and Inho-NOM home-to go-POL
 ‘Grandmother, grandma and Inho will go home.’

The examples in (8) are felicitous as long as the speaker is superior to (e.g., as a grandmother of *Inho*) or at the same level as (e.g., as a friend of *Inho*) the addressee. In contrast, the examples in (9) are felicitous when the addressee is superior to the speaker (e.g., as a grandmother of the speaker).

To summarize, the following properties of *-yo* have been identified. First, *-yo* is outside ForceP. Second, *-yo* expresses the speaker’s politeness towards the addressee. Finally, *-yo* interacts with vocative particle depending on the rapport between the discourse interlocutors. In the next section, I argue that *-yo* constitutes an instance of discourse particle in the sense of Haegeman and Hill (2013).

3. *-Yo as a Discourse Particle*

In a pioneering work by Haegeman and Hill (2013), discourse particles in languages such as Romanian and West Flemish are reported to have the properties listed in (10) (See Haegeman and Hill (2013: section 18.2 and 18.3 for more details):

⁴ The covert vocative particle is in fact ambiguous with respect to the two speaker-addressee relationships under discussion. That is, the vocative particles in (8) can remain silent. Note that the overt vocative particle is never compatible with the *-yo* particle in (9).

⁵ This morpheme is a verbal suffix marking subject honorification. Note that the subject is marked by honorific nominative Case marker *-kkeyse*.

- (10) a. Some discourse particles convey such pragmatic information as “the speaker’s relation to the speech event and to the interlocutor” (p. 371).
b. Discourse particles scope out negation.
c. Some discourse particles are sensitive to clause-typing and thus may be compatible with some clause-types but not with others.
d. Some discourse particles may require a specific type of ForceP as its complement.
e. Some discourse particles display inflection.
f. Some discourse particles indicate illocutionary force.
g. Discourse particles are subject to rigid ordering restrictions.
h. Some discourse particles interact with vocatives in terms of their distribution and inflection.
i. Some discourse particles manifest syntactic agreement with the addressee.

As implied by the qualification ‘some’ in the above statements, discourse particles are not expected to display all the above properties. In Romanian, for instance, (10)e is a property of verb-based particles, but not of adverb-based particles.

Of interest to us is that all the properties of *-yo* identified in section 0 are included in the properties of discourse particles in Romanian and West Flemish. Below are the overlapping traits:

- (11) a. *-Yo* indicates the relationship between the discourse participants (cf. (10)a).
b. *-Yo* outscopes sentential negation (cf. (10)b).
c. *-Yo* interacts with the vocative in terms of their distribution (cf. (10)h).
d. The interaction between *-yo* and the vocative is conditioned by (11)a (cf.(10)i).

Having established the status of *-yo* as a discourse particle on the basis of its properties shared with other discourse particles as inventorised in Haegeman and Hill (2013), I will elaborate a syntactic analysis of *-yo* in the next section.

4. *Speech Act Phrase and -yo*

Recent generative work of discourse particles from the cartographic perspective has formulated proposals for ‘syntacticizing’ discourse information along the lines of Cinque and Rizzi (2010). Among others, Haegeman and Hill (2013), Hill (2007), Miyagawa (2012), and Speas and Tenny (2003) have argued that it is necessary to posit a functional layer above ForceP. Updating Speas and Tenny (2003), Haegeman and Hill (2013) propose that Speech Act Phrase⁶ selects ForceP, and can be decomposed into two functional layers: speech act phrase (saP) and Speech Act Phrase (SAP).⁷ This is illustrated in (12) (see Haegeman and Hill 2013:(16)).

⁶ The notion of Speech Act Phrase can be traced back to Ross’ (1970) performative hypothesis. See Speas and Tenny (2003), however, for criticism of the initial syntactic implementations of Speech Act Phrase.

⁷ The split Speech Act Phrase shell is motivated based on the resemblance between saP/SAP shell and

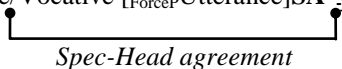
- (12) [_{saP} Speaker sa° [_{SAP} Addressee/Vocative SA° [_{ForceP} Utterance]]]⁸

The above structure allows us to account for the distribution of the particle *-yo* in Korean. In (12) ForceP, the locus of clause-typing particle, is not the highest projection. The Speech Act shell dominates ForceP and provides the required space for the insertion of *-yo*. As a first approximation, let us assume that *-yo* is inserted in SA° (see below for further discussion). This way, *-yo* is distinct from the clause-typing particles, in line with its identification as a discourse particle (see Haegeman and Hill 2013:18.4.1).

Furthermore, a straightforward account follows for how the interaction between the vocative particle and *-yo* is subject to the speaker-addressee relationship (see (8) and (9)).

SA° and the vocative enter a syntactic agreement relationship in a Spec-Head configuration, as schematized in (13) (Haegeman and Hill 2013; Hill 2007; cf. Miyagawa 2012). Given this, the SA° head surfaces as *-yo* when the Addressee argument in its specifier bears a pragmatic-feature for politeness; otherwise, it is realized as null.

Summing up our discussion so far, the structure of the clause with sentence-final *-yo* in Korean is summarized in (13).

- (13) [_{saP} Speaker [_{SAP} Addressee/Vocative [_{ForceP} Utterance]SA°_{-yo}]sa°]
- 
- Spec-Head agreement*

In (13) I assume that the head-finality property of the Korean language comes from the assumption of head-final phrase structure, but alternative approaches along the lines of Kayne's (1994) antisymmetry model are conceivable. Similarly, agreement between SA° and the vocative, which I characterize in terms of the Spec-Head relation, could also be restated in terms of *c*-command, as in Miyagawa (2012). What is crucial for the analysis is that positing Speech Act Phrase allows us to capture both the pragmatic and the syntactic patterns of *-yo* particle in Korean.⁹

5. Unembeddability of *-yo*-final clauses

A welcome corollary follows from the present proposal that *-yo* instantiates SA°. Discourse particles are known to have 'root' or 'main clause' property (Haegeman and Hill 2013, Hill 2007, Miyagawa 2012, among others). Discourse particles are restricted to root, but not embedded, clauses. This restriction also holds for *-yo*. Unlike jussive clauses marked by a jussive particle, as in (14)a, jussive clauses with sentence-final *-yo* cannot be

vP/VP shell (Hill 2007).

⁸ Both saP and SAP shells are further decomposed in Haegeman and Hill (2013). At this point I will assume a single layer of saP/SAP for the Korean data under discussion.

⁹ The proposed analysis suggests that SA° is the functional head hosting *-yo* in fragment answers, which remained unidentified in Yim (2012).

embedded, as in (14)b. (14)b is ungrammatical due to the presence of *-yo* attached to the embedded clause, whichever jussive clause is intended.

- (14) a. Halmeni-ka Mina-eykey [cip-ey ka{-**la**/**ma**/**ca**}-ko¹⁰]
 grandmother-NOM Mina-to home-to go{-IMP/-PROM/-EXH}-SUB
 malhay-ss-ta.
 say-PST-DECL
-la: ‘Grandmother told Mina to go home.’
-ma: ‘Grandmother promised Mina that he will go home.’
-ca: ‘Grandmother exhorted Mina to go home together.’
- b. *Inho-ka halmeni-kkey [cip-ey ka-sie-**yo**-ko] malhay-ss-ta.
 Inho-NOM Mina-to.HON home-to go-HON-POL-SUB say-PST-DECL

This is a natural outcome given that discourse particles including *-yo* are main clause phenomena. The embedded clause of the grammatical version of (14)b without *-yo* would thus lack Speech Act Phrase but only ForceP selected by *-ko*.

6. Concluding remarks

In this paper, I have argued that the sentence-final particle *-yo* in Korean is an instance of discourse particle in the sense of Haegeman and Hill (2013). I have proposed that clauses with sentence-final *-yo* project Speech Act Phrase on top of ForceP. This straightforwardly captures the syntactic and pragmatic properties born by this particle. Also, this analysis of *-yo* correctly predicts the fact that the particle is restricted to main clauses.

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¹⁰ I follow Bhatt and Yoon (1991) in assuming that *-ko* is distinct from clause-typing head, Force, and serves as a ‘subordinator’. See also Rizzi (1997:note 6).

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