

NEGATION IN KOREAN: A SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS*

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1. Introduction

The structure of negation in the Korean language has been the subject of much research in linguistics and there is a long-standing debate about its underlying syntactic structure. Linguists recognize two distinct constructions expressing negation in Korean, Short Form (SF) and Long Form (LF). SF negation is realized by prefixing *an-* to the verbal phrase, as in (1); *an-* is the sole element that distinguishes a SF negative sentence from an affirmative sentence.

- (1) Short Form (SF) → SBJ OBJ *an*-V

Eunji-ga pap-ul *an*-mek-ess-ta.
Eunji-NOM rice-ACC NEG-eat-PAST-DECL
'Eunji didn't eat the rice.'

LF negation is more complex and involves three essential elements, as in (2). In LF negation, the particle *-ci* is suffixed to the verb stem, followed by the independent negative marker *ani*, and an inflected form of the verb *ha* 'do' appears in sentence-final position.

- (2) Long Form (LF) → SBJ OBJ V-*ci ani ha*-

Eunji-ga pap-ul mek-*ci ani ha*-ess-ta.
Eunji-NOM rice-ACC eat-*ci* NEG do-PAST-DECL
'Eunji didn't eat the rice.'

The basic structural difference between these two negative constructions is that SF negation employs a single bound morpheme, whereas LF negation is phrasal; semantically, the two are synonymous.

In this paper I examine the structure of negation in Korean, a verb-final language. I present proposals by Yoon (1990), Kim (2002), and Han *et al.* (2005), which show different interpretations of the negative element *an(i)*. Assuming Kim's (2002) proposal for two positions of negation, in which *an(i)* functions adverbially, I then argue that a single underlying structure without a NegP projection explains both syntactic and semantic differences and accounts for all types of negation in Korean.

* I would like to thank Dr. H. C. Wolfart and Dr. J. Ghomeshi for their guidance and critique. The following abbreviations are used for the data: SBJ = subject, OBJ = object, V = verb, NOM = nominative, ACC = accusative, NEG = negative, PAST = past tense, DECL = declarative, PART = particle, LOC = locative, IMP = imperative.

2. Previous Proposals

One of the key issues in the debate about the underlying structure of SF and LF negation concerns the presence of a NegP projection and the status of the negative marker *an(i)*. Connected to this issue is the question of negative verbs and whether or not they pattern in the same way as the negative marker.

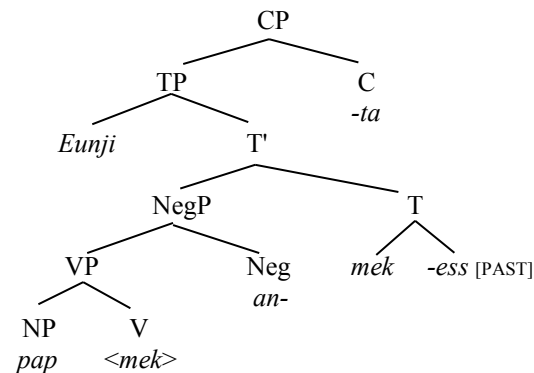
Three different proposals that have been put forward are those of Yoon (1990), Kim (2002), and Han *et al.* (2005). Yoon proposes that the negative marker *an(i)* is the head of NegP in both SF and LF. Han *et al.* analyze the negative marker differently, suggesting it is an adjunct in SF and the head of a NegP projection in LF. In Kim's proposal, the negative marker functions as an adverbial adjunct but appears in different positions for SF and LF negation.

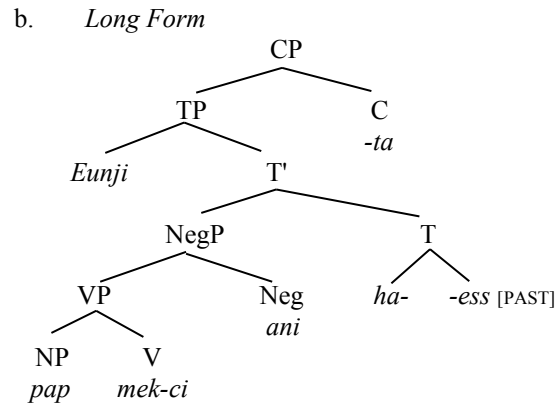
2.1 Yoon (1990)

In his analysis, Yoon presents a single structure with a NegP projection. He suggests that in both SF and LF negation, the negative element *an-/ani* appears as the head of NegP, and assumes that verb movement is optional. Under Minimalist assumptions (Chomsky 1995, 1998, 2000), Yoon suggests that if the verb moves from V to T, as in (3a), the result is SF negation. This movement is triggered in order for feature-checking to take place and to achieve correct linear order. If there is no movement, *ha-* is generated under T in order to check tense (and *-ci* attaches to the verb under V).

It is interesting to note that, in Yoon's analysis, SF negation appears to be similar to negation in French – a strong feature on the main verb triggers movement past the head of NegP. On the other hand, LF negation is similar to English negation in that the main verb stays within VP and *ha-'do'* support is needed for feature-checking to take place.

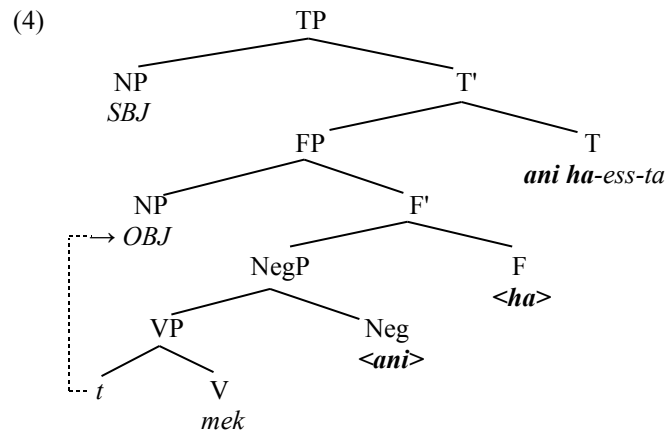
(3) a. *Short Form*





2.2 Han *et al.* (2005)

Han *et al.* put forward a proposal with two different interpretations of *an(i)*. First of all, they state that “[t]he obligatory *ha*-support in sentences with long negation indicates that long negation is a head that projects a negation phrase (NegP) and blocks verb-raising.” (Han *et al.* 2005:19) As in (4), there is cliticization of *ani* to *ha-* (under F)¹ and this unit raises to T (in order to check tense). Han *et al.* (2005:47) liken this movement to French – when a sentence contains an auxiliary and a main verb, the auxiliary verb (not the main verb) raises because it is closer to T and, thus, follows the principle of economy.



Although they do not discuss the attachment of the particle *-ci*, a necessary element in LF negation, Han *et al.* briefly mention that LF obligatorily requires *-ci* which, when it attaches to the verb, may prevent the verb from

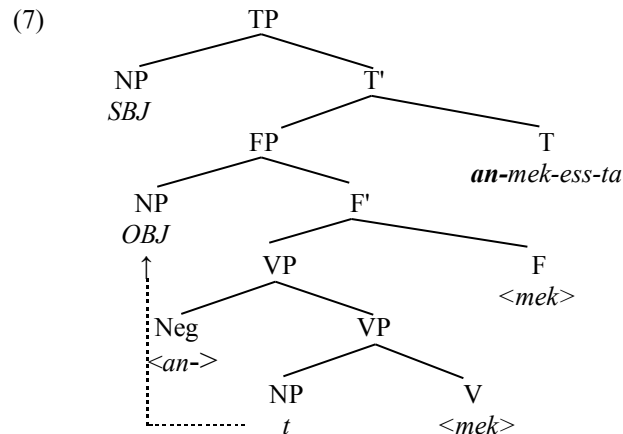
¹ Han *et al.* introduce a functional phrase (FP), which pertains to their discussion of object movement. As it is not directly related to my discussion of negation, I do not expand on their argument for FP.

supporting other inflectional affixes. This explains why the verb cannot move past the Neg head to T and accounts for the necessary insertion of *ha*.

In SF negation, *an-* forms a tight unit with the verb. This tight relationship is supported by data with adverbs, shown in (5) and (6). Adverbs such as *cal* 'well' and *ppali* 'quickly' cannot intervene between *an-* and the verb.

- (5) a. Eunji-ga pap-ul **cal** *an*-mek-ess-ta.
Eunji-NOM rice-ACC well NEG-eat-PAST-DECL
- b. * Eunji-ga pap-ul *an-* **cal** mek-ess-ta
Eunji-NOM rice-ACC NEG well eat-PAST-DECL
'Eunji didn't eat the rice well.'
- (6) a. Eunji-ga pap-ul **ppali** *an*-mek-ess-ta.
Eunji-NOM rice-ACC quickly NEG-eat-PAST-DECL
- b. * Eunji-ga pap-ul *an-* **ppali** mek-ess-ta.
Eunji-NOM rice-ACC NEG quickly eat-PAST-DECL
'Eunji didn't eat the rice quickly.'

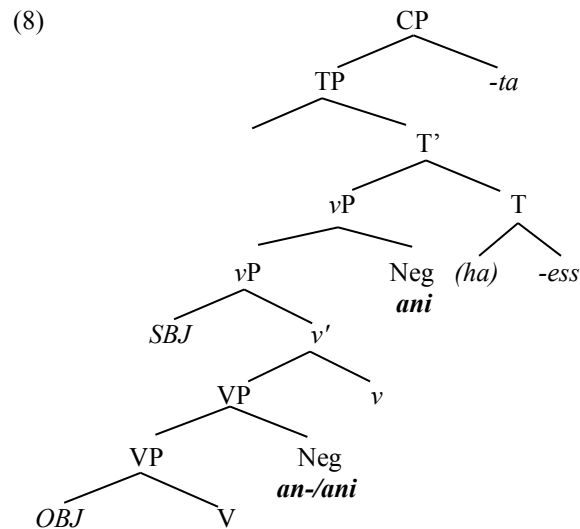
Therefore, Han *et al.* suggest that, as a prefixal bound morpheme, *an-* cannot head an independent syntactic projection and "that short negation has a different syntactic status from long negation, being a specifier or an adjunct." (Han *et al.* 2005:19) As we see in (7), they adjoin *an-* to VP. This argument for SF as an adjunct is rather unusual because it is common for other bound morphemes (e.g. tense, aspect) to head their own syntactic projection.



2.3 Kim (2002)

The third proposal is that of Kim (2002). Her structure, given in (8), introduces two positions of negation, and the negative marker *an(i)* appears as an adverbial

adjunct in both SF and LF negation.



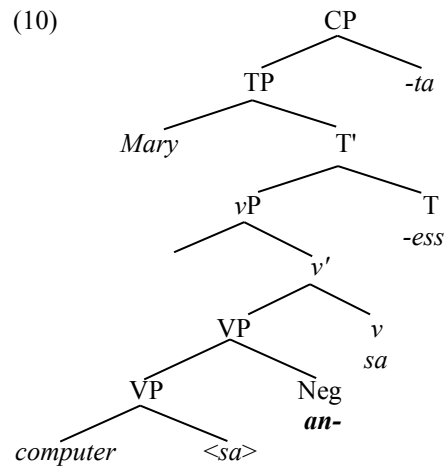
Kim claims that two positions of negation are semantically motivated, stating that the “two semantic negations are mapped onto different syntactic positions in Korean: vP-adjoined *ani* is sentential and VP-adjoined *ani* is constituent, negating a constituent of VP including VP.” (Kim 2002:590) This claim is in line with Martin (1992) who, in his grammar of Korean, says that LF negation is sentential and implies greater scope than SF negation, which negates just the verb phrase.

In her analysis, Kim adopts Chomsky's (1995, 1998) notion of feature-checking and the principles Merge, Agree and Move. Highlighting the fact that all verbs in Korean must be suffixed by tense or the particle *-ci/-ki*, she suggests that verbs carry a feature [+PRED] and must be within the domain of tense for feature-checking to take place.

Furthermore, when *ani* is VP adjoined, Kim puts *ha-* under *v*. This appears inconsistent with her analysis; she most consistently places *ha-* under T. However, I will show that evidence from double negation supports Kim's analysis.

Kim's analysis of SF negation, shown in (9) and (10), shows that in SF the verb moves out of V to the head of vP; as the head of vP, the verb is within the domain of tense and the feature [+PRED] gets checked. The diagram in (10) shows constituent negation.

- (9) Mary-man computer-lul *an-sa-ess-ta*.
 Mary-only computer-ACC NEG-buy-PAST-DECL
 'It was only Mary who did not buy a computer.'

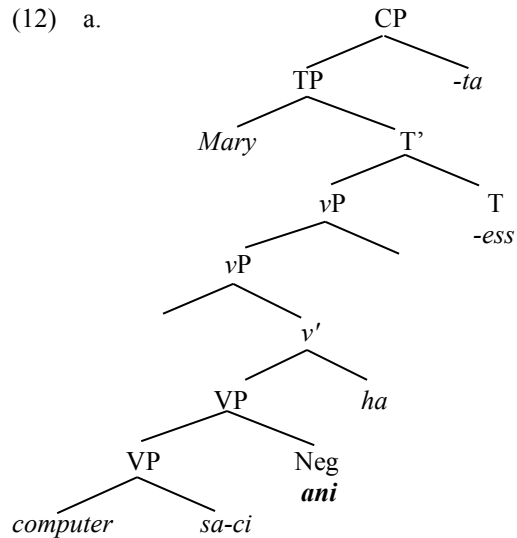


In LF negation, as in (11) and (12), the verb remains *in situ* and the particle *-ci* merges and checks the [+PRED] feature. Under Kim's analysis, *-ci* does not have its own projection and, thus, I assume the attachment of *-ci* is associated with the morphology of the verb. Kim does indicate that “[t]he particle *ci* has to be attached to a verb, [but] it is flexible when the attachment occurs.” (Kim 2002:591)

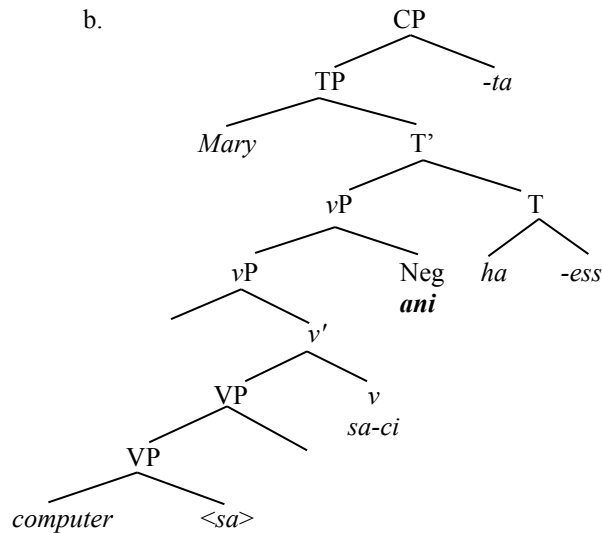
The example in (11) illustrates that LF negation creates ambiguity. Thus, Kim suggests that in LF, *ani* may adjoin either to VP or vP, which creates two possibilities for the attachment of *-ci*: i) when *ani* is VP-adjoined, *-ci* attaches to the verb under V, resulting in constituent negation, as in (12a), and ii) when *ani* adjoins to vP, *-ci* may attach to the verb under V or the verb moves to v and *-ci* attaches there, resulting in sentential negation, as in (12b). These two options account for the ambiguity in LF negation.

- (11) Mary-man computer-lul sa-*ci* ani ha-ess-ta.
 Mary-only computer-ACC buy-PART NEG do-PAST-DECL
 a. 'It was only Mary who did not buy a computer.'
 b. 'It was not the case that only Mary bought a computer.'

(12) a.



b.



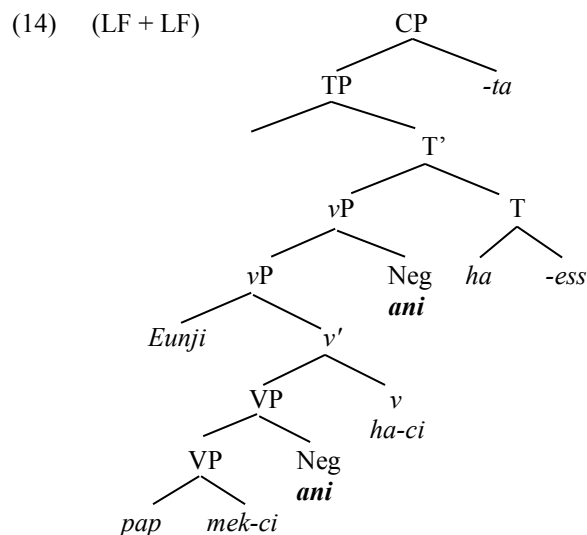
Kim's interpretation accounts not only for syntactic differences in negation, but also the semantic notion of scope that Yoon does not address. It is not clear how Yoon's (1990) analysis accounts for the difference between constituent and sentential negation; the NegP appears too high in Yoon's structure to be able to account for this. Han *et al.* (2005) also briefly address scope in their analysis of SF and LF negation. Consequently, this leaves the analyses by Kim (2002) and Han *et al.* (2005) to consider.

I now turn to double negation in Korean to provide evidence in favour of one analysis over the other.

3. Double Negation²

In addition to scope differences, double negation in Korean provides reason to believe that SF negation is in a position distinct from LF negation. The sentence in (13), with double LF negation, shows both sentential and constituent negation and fits neatly into Kim's (2002) structure in (14). In this example, *-ci* attaches to the verb under V, *ani* is adjoined to VP, and *ha-* is generated in *v*.³ Recall Kim's claim that *-ci* is flexible in where it attaches. This flexibility permits the attachment of *-ci* to *ha-*, which requires LF negation again and *ani* adjoins to *vP*; *ha-* is generated in T and supports any inflection that may occur in the sentence.

- (13) Eunji-ga pap-ul mek-ci ani ha-ci ani ha-ess-ta.
 Eunji-NOM rice-ACC eat-PART NEG do-PART NEG do-PAST-DECL
 'Eunji didn't not eat rice.' (= 'Eunji ate rice.')



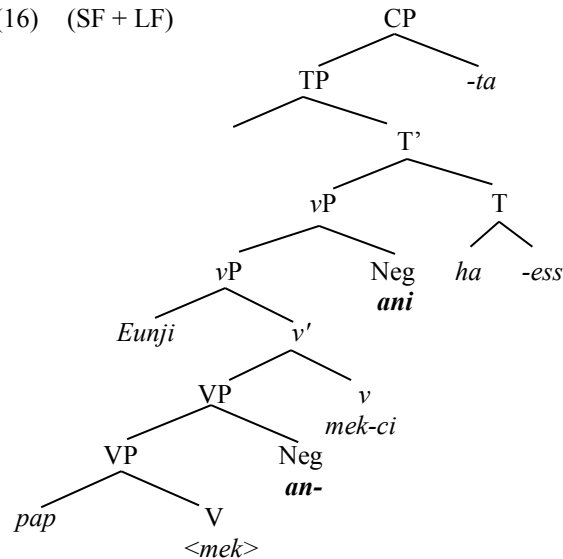
It is also possible for double negation to incorporate both SF and LF negation, as in (15). Therefore, double negation provides evidence to suggest that *an* in SF is in a position distinct from *ani* in LF. As shown in (16), when SF and LF co-occur, the main verb moves to *v* to achieve the correct linear order for SF negation; *-ci* merges with the verb at this point, which requires LF negation; *ani* adjoins to *vP*, and *ha-* is generated under T to support inflection.

2 Martin (1992:321) states that, in Korean, double negatives produce a positive reading, as well as "a strong positive ('of course') or a reaffirmation ('to be sure')". He adds that double negatives are more commonly formed with stative than active verbs and that the combination of verbs determines the strength of negativity.

3 This supports Kim's claim that *ha-* is under *v* in certain contexts.

- (15) Eunji-ga pap-ul *an-mek-ci ani* ha-ess-ta.
 Eunji-NOM rice-ACC NEG-eat-PART NEG do-PAST-DECL
 'Eunji didn't not eat rice.' (= 'Eunji ate rice.')

- (16) (SF + LF)



Although the analysis by Han *et al.* (2005) accounts for double negation with SF and LF, it does not support double LF negation based on the assumption that functional projections such as NegP do not iterate. Therefore, I rule out Han *et al.*'s interpretation in favour of Kim's analysis. This implies that Korean does not have a functional phrase for negation.

Favouring Kim (2002), I now look at lexical negation and consider whether or not Kim's interpretation adequately accounts for inherently negative verbs.

4. Lexical Negation

In addition to the negative element *an(i)*, Korean also has a number of negative verbs.

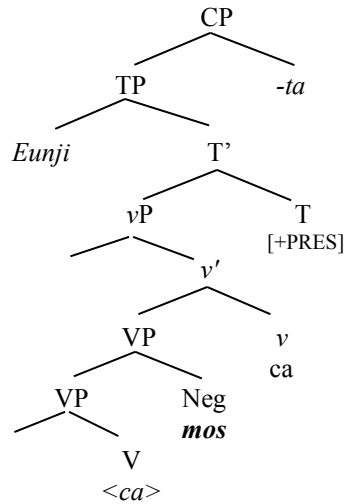
4.1 Negative Auxiliary *mos*

The negative auxiliary *mos* carries the meaning 'cannot, definitely does not', denoting a lack of ability or control. As the examples in (17) show, *mos* has the same distribution as the negative marker *an-/ani*, appearing in both SF and LF.

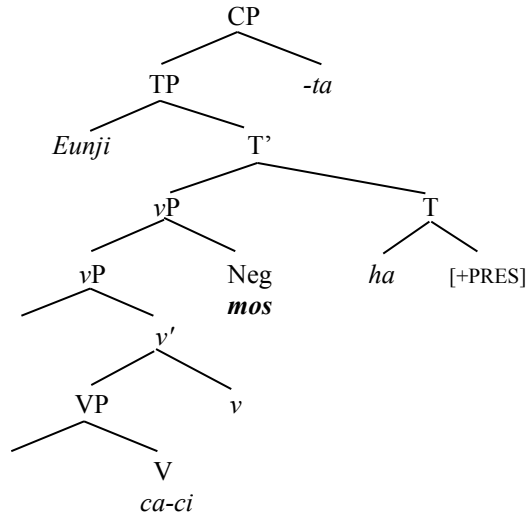
- (17) a. Eunji-ga *mos* ca-ta.
 Eunji-NOM can't sleep-DECL

- b. Eunji-ga ca-ci mos ha-ta.
 Eunji-NOM sleep-PART can't do-DECL
 'Eunji can't sleep.'

(18) a. *Short Form*



b. *Long Form*



According to Whitman (2005), a co-occurrence restriction exists between *an(i)* and *mos*. The data in (19) show that these two negative elements cannot co-occur in SF or LF negation; although the sentence in (d) is acceptable, it is questionable and considered awkward by most native speakers. This strengthens the argument that *mos* has the same distribution as *an(i)* and adjoins either to VP

(for SF) or vP (for LF).

- (19) a. * Eunji-ga hakkyo-ey *mos an-ka-ess-ta*.
Eunji-NOM school-LOC cannot NEG-go-PAST-DECL
- b. * Eunji-ga hakkyo-ey *an- mos ka-ess-ta*.
Eunji-NOM school-LOC NEG-cannot go-PAST-DECL
- c. * Eunji-ga hakkyo-ey *an-ka-ci mos ha-ess-ta*.
Eunji-NOM school-LOC NEG-go-PART cannot do-PAST-DECL
- d. ? Eunji-ga hakkyo-ey *mos ka-ci ani ha-ess-ta*.
Eunji-NOM school-LOC cannot go-PART NEG do-PAST-DECL
'It is not the case that Eunji couldn't go to school.'

4.2 Pure Negative Verbs

Another set of negative verbs are what John Payne (1985) refers to as 'pure negative verbs'. In Korean, pure negative verbs include:

- i. *ani-ta* 'to not be' – the negative form of the copula *i-ta* 'to be'
- ii. *eps-ta* 'to not exist, be located, possess' – the negative form of the existential verb *iss-ta*
- iii. *mol-ta* 'to not know' – the negative form of *al-ta* 'to know'

It appears that pure negative verbs function differently than the negative marker *an(i)* and the negative auxiliary *mos*. The primary feature is that they can be inflected for tense, mood, and honorifics.⁴

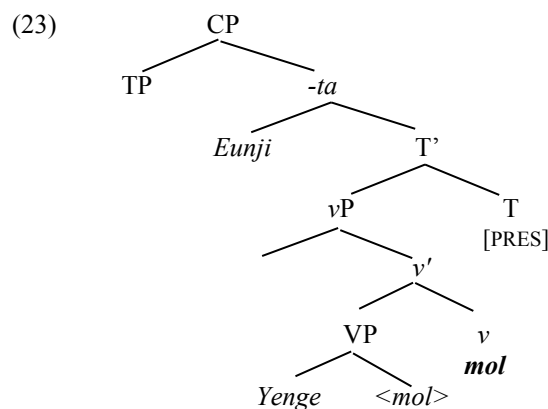
- (20) a. Eunji-nun haksayng-i *ani-ta*.
Eunji-TOP student-NOM NEG-DECL
- b. * Eunji-nun haksayng-i *ani-ci ani ha-ta*.
Eunji-NOM student-NOM NEG-PART NEG do-DECL
'Eunji is not a student.'
- (21) a. Chayksang-e chayk-i *eps-ta*.
table-LOC book-NOM NEG-DECL
- b. * Chayksang-e chayk-i *eps-ci ani ha-ta*.
table-LOC book-NOM NEG-PART NEG do-DECL
'There is not a book on the table.'

4 For example, each of the verbs in (20)-(22) can appear in a higher form, taking one of two endings: *-yo* or *sum-ni-ta*. In its polite form, the verb *eps-ta* in (21) appears as *eps-sum-ni-ta*. It maintains the meaning 'there is not...', but is used in situations where respect and politeness are required. Similarly, when inflected for past tense, these verbs carry the ending *-ess*; the past tense, polite form of the sentence in (22) would be *Eunji-ga Yenge-rul mol-ess-e-yo*, which means 'Eunji did not know English.'

- (22) a. Eunji-ga Yenge-rul *mol*-ta.
 Eunji-NOM English-ACC not know-DECL
- b. * Eunji-ga Yenge-rul *mol-ci ani* ha-ta.
 Eunji-NOM English-ACC not know-ci NEG do-DECL
 'Eunji does not know English.'

The ungrammaticality of the (b) examples in (20)-(22) show that pure negative verbs cannot co-occur with the negative marker *an(i)*. However, there is nothing syntactic in the analysis presented to rule out this co-occurrence and so it appears to be a lexical property of these verbs – being inherently negative, *ani-ta*, *eps-ta* and *mol-ta* cannot co-occur with a negative marker.

The question remains as to the structural position of Korean pure negative verbs. I propose that they can be treated as main verbs, but carry a [+NEG] feature that blocks the presence of another negative marker. With this in mind, I make two suggestions; using the sentence in (22a) I propose the structure in (23):



As main verbs, inherently negative verbs are base-generated in V and move to *v* to be within the domain of T for feature-checking to take place. Whether these verbs move further to T is still uncertain and more data is needed to verify all co-occurrence possibilities or restrictions. However, if they are treated in the same way as other main verbs, they would likely remain under *v*.

4.3 Negative Imperatives

A third type of lexical negation is the negative imperative. Like many languages, Korean has a special form of negation that is used in imperative clauses – the inherently negative verb *mal-* 'to avoid, desist'. *Mal-* always appears in sentence-final position, it does not inflect for tense, and is optionally suffixed by the imperative particle *-la*.⁵

5 Note that it is optional for the imperative particle *-la* to be suffixed to *mal-*. It is possible to shorten the imperative in (24a) to *Ka-ci ma!*, a very informal, direct form.

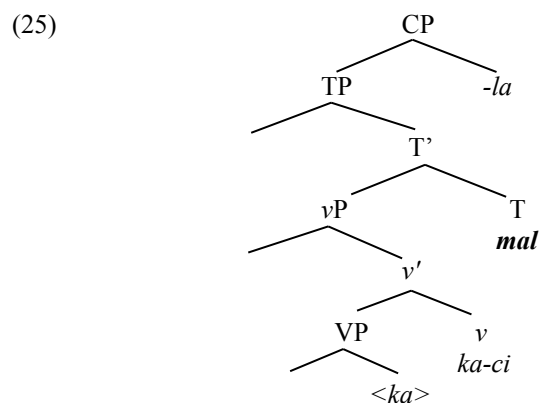
- (24) a. *Ka-ci mal-e-la!*
 go-PART NEG-e-IMP
- b. * *Ka mal-e-la!*
 go NEG-e-IMP
- c. * *Mal-ka-la!*
 NEG-go-IMP
- d. * *Ka-ci mal ha-la!*
 go-PART NEG do-IMP
 'Don't go!

In personal communication with a near-native speaker of Korean, it has become clear that *mal-* is simply a negative verb and it is the way in which *mal-* is conjugated that indicates whether or not it functions as a negative imperative. In other words, to function as a negative imperative, *mal-* is syntactically bound and must follow an active verb suffixed with *-ci*. The ungrammaticality of (24b,c) illustrate these restrictions.

The question as to whether or not the *-ci* on the verb is the same particle as in LF negation is debatable. Lee (1993) points out that there are various forms of *-ci* used in different constructions.⁶ The fact that *mal* cannot appear with *ha-* (as in 24d) suggests that the *-ci* particle suffixed to the verb in the negative imperative is one required by the imperative construction, not by negation. In other words, if LF negation requires *-ci* to be suffixed to the verb, we would expect *ha-* to appear post-verbally. However, the ungrammaticality of (24d) suggests that *mal* is in complementary distribution with *ha-*, which then raises the question as to the status of *-ci* in negative imperative constructions.

If *mal* functions differently than pure negative verbs, but is not simply a negative marker such as *ani*, where is it positioned syntactically? I have determined that, as a negative imperative, *mal-* must co-occur with a *V+ci* unit. Therefore, it cannot originate under *V* since the main verb occupies this position. In addition, *mal* does not inflect for tense, but can be suffixed by the imperative particle *-la*. Assuming elements such as adverbs cannot intervene between *-ci* and *mal-*, I suggest that *mal-* is generated under *T*, as in (25). The verb moves to *v*, to be within the domain of tense, at which point *-ci* attaches to the verb and forms the *V+ci* unit required by negative imperatives.

6 According to Lee (1993:15), the particle *-ci* is “used when the speaker believes in the truth of [a] proposition and also believes or expects that the addressee will agree with him.” This particle can appear in three different environments: (i) a matrix sentence; (ii) an embedded clause; and (iii) LF negation. In this paper, I focus on the *-ci* used in LF negation.



5. Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I have considered the proposals of Yoon (1990), Han *et al.* (2005), and Kim (2002) with respect to Korean SF and LF negation. Based on evidence from double negation and scope interactions, I argue that Kim's single structure with two positions of negation is most convincing as it accounts for both semantic and syntactic phenomena. What is most significant about Kim's proposal is the claim that the negative marker in Korean does not head its own functional projection.

In terms of lexical negation, I claim that the negative auxiliary *mos* patterns in the same way as the negative marker *an(i)* and, thus, can be generated under VP or vP. Furthermore, I show that a lexical property of pure negative verbs forces a co-occurrence restriction with the negative marker *an(i)*, and suggest that as main verbs, pure negative verbs are base-generated under V and move to *v* (or possibly T) for feature-checking to take place. Finally, I point out that the verb *mal* must co-occur with a V+*ci* unit in order to function as a negative imperative. As a syntactically bound element, I propose that *mal* originates under T, but leave this open for discussion.

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