

## Typological profile of the Korean language

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**Abstract** With nearly 77 million speakers on the globe, Korean is the 17<sup>th</sup> largest language. In terms of Korean language variation, officially, there are two standard varieties of dialects. One is Seoul dialect in South Korea, while another is Phyong'yang dialect in North Korea. This paper mainly investigates Seoul dialect in South Korea from 6 typological perspectives: (1) basic word order; (2) subject, case, alignment and verb agreement; (3) transitivity; (4) relative clause; (5) noun classifier system and (6) serial verbs.

**Keywords** Korean, typological profile, word order, subject, case, agreement, transitivity, relative clause, classifiers, serial verbs

### 1 Introduction

Ranked the 17<sup>th</sup> among more than 3,000 existing languages<sup>1</sup>, Korean has nearly 77 million speakers on the globe with approximately 48 million in South Korea and 23 million in North Korea. In addition to that, another sizable number of speakers reside in countries like China with about 2 million (mainly provinces bordering North Korea), the United States (1.9 million) and Japan with over 700,000. Outside the Korean peninsula, moreover, countries like Singapore, Thailand, Guam as well as Paraguay, ect. are also with a small number of Korean speakers.<sup>2</sup> In terms of Korean language variation, officially, there are two standard varieties of dialects. One is Seoul dialect in South Korea, while another is Phyong'yang dialect in North Korea.

In this paper, the former official dialect will be analyzed from 6 typological perspectives: (1) basic word order; (2) subject, case, alignment and verb agreement; (3) transitivity; (4) relative clause; (5) noun classifier system and (6) serial verbs. Some of the data is collected from a native 26-year-old Korean from Busan, Korea via an interview.

### 2 Basic word order

In this section, the basic word order in Korean will be discussed from both sentential and phrasal levels. The sentence level basically displays a word order of SOV(subject, object and verb/adjective); within phrases the word order is said to be AN (adjective noun), GN (genitive noun) and NP<sub>O</sub> (noun postposition).

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<sup>1</sup> Mikael Parkvall. 2017. *Världens 100 största språk 2007 (The World's 100 Largest Languages in 2007)*, *Nationalencyklopedin*. Sweden.

<sup>2</sup> Lewis, M. Paul, Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2016. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Nineteenth edition*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International.

## 2.1 Word order at the sentence level

The neutral word order in both main and embedded clauses in Korean is said to be SOV, which means all modifiers should precede their head elements.

- (1) Choi-ka            dab-eul            an-da.  
 choi-NOM    answer-ACC    know-PRS  
 ‘Choi knows the answer.’
- (2) Kang-i            saeroun    chaek-eul    gajigo-isseossda.  
 kang-NOM    new            book-ACC    have-PST  
 ‘Kang had a new book.’
- (3) geu namja-ka    gong-eul    chy-eossda.  
 the man-NOM    ball-ACC    hit-PST  
 ‘The man hit the ball.’

As can be seen from the sentences (1), (2) and (3), the nominative case NPs usually serve as subjects and accusative case NPs are objects. Due to this well-developed role-marking system, these sentences above are with topicalized or focused nominal NPs. Thus, Korean is always a subject-initial language even if the case-marking particles are omitted (see sentence (4)), where the first NP must be interpreted as the subject and the second nominative construction must be understood as the complement or object.

- (4) kiho    ku    yeca    manna-ssta (Song, 2005:103)  
 keeho    that woman meet-PST  
 ‘Keeho met the woman.’  
 →\*yeca ku kiho manna-ssta

## 2.2 Word order within phrases

Since Korean is a head-final language, modifying elements always precede the modified expressions. In Korean, the basic orders of AN/NA, GN/NG and P<sub>R</sub>N/NP<sub>O</sub> are partially different from English (SVO language).

In terms of the order of AN/NA, from sentences (5) to (8), it can clearly be seen that Korean has AN order, where nouns follow adjectives.

- (5) sae    chaek  
 new    book  
 ‘a new book’

(6) malssengk kwuleki  
naughty child  
'a naughty child'

(7) jageun namja  
small man  
'a small man'

(8) joeun adeul  
good son  
'a good son'

Sentences in (9) to (12) shed light on the basic order of GN in Korean, where genitives precede nouns with a genitive marker *-uy/-ey*.

(9) Seohyuni-uy chaek  
seohyun-GEN book  
'Seohyun's book'

(10) John-uy thayto  
John-GEN attitude  
'John's attitude'

(11) ecey-(ey) nalssi  
yesterday-GEN weather  
'yesterday's weather'

(12) Choi-uy cha  
Choi-GEN car  
'Choi's car'

In the interest of the order of  $P_R N/NP_O$ , Korean shows a different pattern from English.  $NP_O$  (adpositions come after nouns) can be found in Korean, as shown in sentences from (13) to (16).

(13) yek eyse  
railway.station at  
'at railway station'

(14) tosekwan eyse  
library in  
'in the library'

(15) Jun-eul hako  
 jun-ACC with  
 ‘with Jun’

(16) pyengwon ey  
 hospital to  
 ‘to the hospital’

Collectively considered, Korean is an SOV language with fixed orders within phrases – AN, GN, NP<sub>O</sub>.

### 2.3 Greenberg’s Correlation (1963)

According to the basic order typology in Greenberg’s Correlation, subjects dominantly precede objects in declarative sentences (Universal 1), which is entirely true in Korean SOV language.

Regarding the universal 4 --- “languages with normal SOV order are postpositional”(Greenberg, 1963) --- Korean agrees with this correlation with the order of NP<sub>O</sub>, as exemplified in 2.2 (13) to (16). Since Korean is postpositional, it enables the genitives always come before the governing nouns(GN), according to Greenberg’s universal 2 (In the language with postposition, the genitive almost always precedes the governing noun).

Thus, it is evident that Korean subject-initial and head-final construction, along with the order where genitive follows governing nouns, allows adjectives to precede nouns (AN) in sentences (5) to (8). This is also examined by Greenberg as the 5<sup>th</sup> universal: “If a language has dominant SOV order and the genitive follows the governing noun, then the adjective likewise follows the noun.” (Greenberg, 1963)

In summary, the facts about Korean basic word order found in previous sections completely agree with Greenberg’s Correlation in terms of SOV, AN, GN and NP<sub>O</sub>.

## 3 Subject

Subjects in Korean are generally expressed by nouns or NPs with subject particles or modifying particles. In a single-subject sentence, case-marking particles can directly give us clue about which element is subject. However, in a multiple-subject sentence (see 3.2), nominal constructions can be topicalized as sentential subjects, which are considered as topics. Along with single-subject or multiple-subject sentences, Korean also witnesses a widespread use of subjectless sentences.

### 3.1 Single-subject sentence

Since Korean is known as a subject-initial SOV language, in a single-subject sentence therefore subject occurs in the leftmost position in a single-subject sentence.

- (17) hoeui-ka            9 si        e    sijak-doenda  
 conference-NOM 9 o'clock at begins-PRS  
 'The conference begins at nine.'
- (18) kiho-ka        hwanjir-eul    chiryo-haessda.  
 keeho-NOM    patient-ACC    cure-PST  
 'Keeho cured the patient.'
- (19) geu namja-ka    gong-eul    chy-eosssda.  
 the man-NOM    ball-ACC    hit-PST  
 'The man hit the ball.'
- (20) Jun-i        eoje        geuui yeodongsaeng gwa hakgyo-eul    gass-eosssda.  
 jun-NOM yesterday his    sister            with school-ACC    go-PST  
 'Jun went to school with his sister yesterday.'

According to Keenan (1976), one of the properties of known subject can be found in Korean single-subject sentences, which is the autonomous reference --- subject must be identifiable at the moment of speaking (Keenan, 1976).

- (21) Kiho-ka        caki-lul        cohahan-ta.  
 keeho-NOM    self-ACC    like-PRS  
 'Keeho likes himself.'
- (22) \*caki-ka Kiho-lul cohahan-ta.  
 self-NOM keeho-ACC like-PRS  
 'Himself likes Keeho.'

As can be seen in sentence (21), the reference of the subject can be determined independently at the moment of utterance. In contrast, the subject *caki-ka* in sentence (22) is not autonomous in reference. That means subjects can control reflexives when reflexives follow subjects but not when they precede subjects.

### 3.2 Multiple-subject sentence

Along with single-subject sentence, multiple subject constructions in Korean are expressed via the manifestation of multiple nominative-marked NPs, as illustrated in sentence (23) and (24).

- (23) apenim-i        khi-ka            kusi-ta. (Park, 2010: 207)  
 father-NOM    height-NOM    be. tall-PRS  
 'Father is tall.'

- (24) *Kiho-ka* *nwun-i* *hana-ka* *khu-ta*.  
 keeho-NOM eye-NOM one-NOM be.big-PRS  
 ‘Keeho has one big eye.’

Although *apenim-i* and *Kiho-ka* in (23) and (24) are nominative-marked, they cannot be the subjects of a predicate verb or adjective. They are called topics of sentence since these NPs take the following clause as a whole as their predicates. Similar patterns also can be found in Japanese and Mandarin (Kumashiro and Langacker, 2003). In this case, subject normally identifies what the speaker is talking about.

### 3.3 Subjectless sentence

Contextually, understood subject can be omitted in Korean conversations. The most widespread ones are in the situations such as apology, thanking, greeting and congratulation, etc. Sentence (25) demonstrates the omission of subject in daily conversations where the subjects do exist contextually and semantically even though they are not uttered.

- (25) A: *eti* *kasey-yo?*  
 where go-POL  
 ‘Where are (you) going?’  
 B: *pyengwen ey com* *ka-yo*  
 hospital to just go-POL  
 ‘(I) am going to the hospital.’

## 4 Case

Korean is a case-marked language. Noun phrases in a sentence are clearly identified through case-marking particles. These particles directly attach to the end of preceding NPs. Since verb-agreement is less dominant in Korean (see 5 Verb agreement), the relation marking strategy --- case marking, is the most dominant way to identify nominals that have unique grammatical relation between S and O.

- (26) *geu namja-ka* *gong-eul* *chy-eossta*.  
 the man-NOM ball-ACC hit-PST  
 ‘The man hit the ball.’

- (27) *ku ai-ka* *wul-essta*.  
 that child-NOM cry-PST  
 ‘The child cried.’

In terms of the type of cases on subject and object, as shown in sentences (26) and (27), *namja* is the agent of the transitive verb *chy*, while *ai* is the subject of the

intransitive verb *wul*. Therefore, Korean is a Nominative/Accusative language. The nominative particle *-i* or *-ka* is normally used to mark the subject NPs, while *-lul/-eul* basically is used for the object NPs.

More evidence can be found in sentences (28) and (29), where *say* is in an intransitive sentence as a subject, *Kiho* as an agent in a transitive clause.

(28) *ku say-ka cwuk-essta.*  
 the bird-NOM die-PST  
 ‘The bird died.’

(29) *Kiho-ka ku say-lul cwuky-essta.*  
 keeho-NOM the bird-ACC die-PST  
 ‘Keeho killed the bird.’

In addition to the indications of syntactic functions, those that mainly demonstrate semantic functions of nominals are locative and dative (*-eykey/-ey(se)/-kkey/hanthey*), instrumental and directional (*-(u)lo*) cases as well as genitive case (*-ey/-uy*). Take sentences from (30) to (31) for example.

(30) *yenghi-ka mayyil yel si ey sicang ey ka nta.*  
 yonghee-NOM everyday ten hour at market to go-PRS  
 ‘Yonghee goes to the market at 10’oclock every day.’

(31) *yenghi-ka kicha lo pusan ey ka-ssta.*  
 yonghee-NOM train by Pusan to go-PST  
 ‘Yonghee went to Pusan by train.’

(Song, 2005:115-116)

(32) *Seohyuni-uy chaek*  
 Seohyun-GEN book  
 ‘Seohyun’s book’

In sentence (30), *-ey sicang* ‘at market’ is a prominent example of dative case marked phrase where *-ey* serves as a marker of dative. Another case marker in sentence (31) *-lo* signals instrumental case marked on *kicha* ‘train’. Moreover, apparently, *-uy* is used as a genitive marker.

## 5 Verb agreement

Unlike most of Indo-European languages, Korean is considered to be one of those languages that do not conjugate verbs using agreement with the subject. Additionally, Korean does not have agreement affixes in terms of person, number and gender.

- (33) na-neun sagwa hangae-reul meong-neunda. (1P, singular)  
 I-NOM apple an-ACC eat-PRS  
 ‘I eat an apple.’
- (34) neo-neun sagwa hangae-reul meong-neunda. (2P, singular/plural)  
 uou-NOM apple an-ACC eat-PRS  
 ‘You eat an apple.’
- (35) geu-neun sagwa hangae-reul meong-neunda. (3P, singular)  
 he-NOM apple an-ACC eat-PRS  
 ‘He eats an apple.’
- (36) geudeul-eun sagwa hangae-reul meong-neunda. (3P, plural)  
 they-NOM apple an-ACC eat-PRS  
 ‘They eat an apple.’
- (37) geunyeo-neun sagwa hangae-reul meong-neunda. (3P, singular)  
 she-NOM apple an-ACC eat-PRS  
 ‘She eats an apple.’
- (38) geunyeo-neun sagwa-reul meong-neunda. (3P, singular)  
 she-NOM apples-ACC eat-PRS  
 ‘She eats apples.’

It is worth noting from the sentence (33) to sentence (36) that Korean lacks the verb-agreement with subject in the light of person and number. When comparing sentence (35) and (37), we can clearly see that agreement does not reference gender. Furthermore, compared to sentence (37), sentence (38) shows the same format of *meong neunda* ‘eat-PRS’.

However, the verbs in Korean are inflected for honorifics and the subject honorification is a major characteristic of this verbal inflection. Thus, when the speaker has decided that a given noun is something toward respect or deference, he or she must use an appropriate verb by adding the infix *-si-* or *-eusi-*. For instance:

- (39) sensayng-nim-i ka-si-essta  
 teacher-HON-NOM go-HON-PST  
 ‘The teacher went’
- (40) koyangi-ka ka-(\*si-)essta  
 cat-NOM go-(\*HON-)PST  
 ‘The cat went’

Compared to the phrase in (40) where *koyangi* is a non-honorific noun, *sensayng-nim* ‘teacher’ in (39) is a honorific noun which shows the deference to the



teacher. Therefore, the verb marked by *-si-* agrees with its antecedent. Nevertheless, according to many previous accounts, strictly speaking, there is no agreement between subject and verb in this case since there are no common canonical subject-verb agreement features.

## 6 Transitivity

In Korean grammar, it is generally assumed that the objects of transitive verbs are marked with accusative particle (*lul*), forming a canonical transitive NOM-ACC/TOP-ACC pattern, where a transference of an action from an agent to a patient occurs. With regard to this, we claim that sentences (41) and (42) distinctively show high transitivity.

(41) Inho-ka Nami eykey sakwa-lul cwu-esseyo  
 inho-TOP nami to apple-ACC give-PST  
 ‘Inho gave an apple to Nami.’

(42) ku swunkyeng-i totwuk-ul cap-asseyo  
 the police-NOM thief-ACC caught-PST  
 ‘That policeman caught a thief.’

(Sohn, 2001:288)

However, some intransitive verbs, such as *kata* ‘go’ and *ketta* ‘walk’, can also take object-like arguments marked with accusative case. Even though these complements are used with intransitive verbs, they are supposed to be objects with accusative markers as illustrated in sentences (43), (44) and (45).

(43) hakkyo-lul kan-ta  
 school-ACC go-PRS  
 ‘(He) goes to school.’

(44) kil-ul ket-ta  
 road-ACC walk-PRS  
 ‘to walk the street’

(45) Inho-ka pamkil-ul kel-esseyo (Sohn, 2001:288)  
 inho-TOP night.road-ACC walk-PST  
 ‘Inho walked (along) the night road.’

Obviously, the intransitive verbs can transitively occur with a noun phrase marked with an accusative particle, whereas the degree of transitivity of the latter examples (sentences from (43) to (45)) is lower than those canonical patterns.

In terms of the sentences in (46) and (47), they can be expressed by DAT-NOM pattern, which decreases the transitivity. The possessor here is *yenswu* and the

possessee is *chinkwu* ‘friend’ and *ton* ‘money’.

(46) Yengswu-eykey chinkwu-ka i-sseyo  
 yengswu-DAT friend-NOM exist-PRS  
 ‘Yengswu has a friend.’

(47) Yengswu-eykey ton-i philyohayyo  
 yengswu-DAT money-NOM need-PRS  
 ‘Yengswu needs money.’

Another model of low transitivity can be found in the construction where the object-like complements of transitive adjectives are marked with nominative particles. With regard to this, we assume that two argument constructions (TOP-NOM/NOM-NOM pattern) like sentences (48) and (49) signal transitivity, but a much lower one. Moreover, accusative construction cannot be used in sentences like (48) and (49). For example:

(48) na-nun kay-ka musew eyo  
 I-TOP dog-NOM afraid of  
 ‘I am afraid of dogs.’

(49) Mia-ka cha-ka i-sseyo  
 mia-NOM car-NOM exist-PRS  
 ‘Mia has a car.’

(Sohn, 2001:288)

In a nutshell, the nominal, accusative and dative case marking patterns help show the transitivity of sentences. Moreover, as the transitivity decreases, the patterns transfer from the NOM-ACC pattern to DAT-NOM pattern and even to NOM-NOM pattern.

## 6.1 Components of transitivity

Hopper and Thompson (1980) have observed that there are 10 parameters of transitivity, claiming transitivity is a continuum in a wide range of languages. This can be supported by Korean data as well.

### 6.1.1 Participants and kinesis

As illustrated in sentences (41) and (42), there are 2 participants where higher transitivity occurs than sentences (43) and (44) with only 1 participant.

Since actions can be transferred from one participant to another while states cannot, transitivity in sentences (41) and (42) where the objects of transitive verbs are marked with accusative particles is higher than that in sentence (48) where the objects

of transitive adjectives are marked with nominative particles especially when ACC pattern cannot be used in (48).

### 6.1.2 Aspect and punctuality

In Korean, *-ko iss-* construction is usually a progressive aspect marker. As in sentence (50), the auxiliary verb construction *-ko iss-* consists of *-ko* ‘and’ and the existential verb *iss-* ‘to exist’. Semantically, it implies that someone or something is in operation, which is less effectively transferred.

- (50) Henry-ka cip ey ka ko issta. (Kim, 2014:1)  
 henry-NOM home at go and exist  
 ‘Henry is going home.’

In terms of the perfective aspect in Korean, the marker *-ess* is “known as either ‘past’ or ‘perfective’ (determined by the conditions where they occur)”. (Kim, 2007)

- (51) ku saram-i chayk-ul ilk-essta  
 that person-NOM book-ACC read-PST  
 ‘That person read a book.’

According to Hopper and Thompson (1980), imperfective aspect is non-telic and perfective aspect is telic. More specifically, an action viewed from its endpoint is more transferred than one without an endpoint. Therefore, sentence (51) has higher transitivity than sentence (50).

In the interest of punctuality, if the verb itself has no apparent transitional phase, then it has more marked effect on Object, as shown in sentence (52).

- (52) geu namja-ka gong-eul chy-eossta.  
 the man-NOM ball-ACC hit-PST  
 ‘The man hit the ball.’

In sentence (53), however, *nallassda* ‘carried’ represents an inherently ongoing event, which is less effectively transferred compared to the verb *chyeossta* ‘hit’.

- (53) geu namja-ka gong-eul nalla ssda.  
 the man-NOM ball-ACC carry-PST  
 ‘The man carried the ball.’

### 6.1.3 Volitionality and affirmation

The effect on object in sentence (54) is more obvious than that in sentence (55) because the subject *naneun* ‘I-NOM’ is acting purposefully although both the objects *ileum* ‘name’ are marked by accusative case.

(54) na-neun ileum-eul ss-eosda  
 I-TOP name-ACC write-PST  
 ‘I wrote the name.’

(55) na-neun ileum-eul ij-eosda  
 I-TOP name-ACC forget-PST  
 ‘I forgot the name.’

It is worth noting that affirmative actions are more transferred than negative actions, when comparing sentence (54) and (56).

(56) na-neun ileum-eul sseu-jianh-assda  
 I-TOP name-ACC write-NEG-PST  
 ‘I did not write the name.’

#### 6.1.4 Mode

In Korean, an action that is presented as occurring in a non-real world is less effective than one whose occurrence is asserted as corresponding directly with a real event. With regard to this, sentence (57) shows high transitivity than sentence (58).

(57) Mina-ka nolay-lul pwulul-da  
 Mina-NOM song-ACC sing-PRS  
 ‘Mina sings.’

(58) Mina-ka nolay-lul pwulul-swu-issta  
 Mina-NOM song-ACC sing-POSSIBILITY-exist  
 ‘Mina may sing.’

#### 6.1.5 Affectedness of O

In Korean, a distinction is made in case marking according to whether the patient is totally or partially affected. The marking for the wholly affected patient is basically the accusative and locative markers indicate the action takes place partially. Consider the following examples:

(59) kongwen eyse ttwi-essta  
 park at run-PST  
 ‘ran in the park’

(60) kongwen-ul ttwi-essta  
 park-ACC run-PST  
 ‘ran (along) the park’

*eyse* ‘at, in’ is locative case marker indicates the action in (59) is perceived as partial while in (60) the *kongwen* ‘park’ marked by ACC is understood as more total. That means accusative NPs have high affectedness on object.

## 6.2 Transivization and detransitivization

In Korean, causative and passive suffixes are used to change the grammatical relations between transitivity and intransitivity. The causative suffix serves to shift intransitive verbs to transitive verbs (sentence (61) and (62)) hence increasing valency, whereas the passive suffix changes transitive verbs into intransitive verbs (sentence (63)) hence decreasing valency.

(61) John-i        anc-assta  
 John-NOM sit.down-PST  
 ‘John sat down.’

(62) Mary-ka    John-ul    anchi-ussta  
 marry-NOM john-ACC sit down-PST  
 ‘Mary made John sit down.’

(63) John-i     cha-lul    ssit-ussta  
 john-NOM car-ACC wash-PST  
 ‘John washed the car.’  
 →cha-ka    ssitki-ussta  
 car-NOM wash-PST  
 ‘The car was washed.’

(Kim, 2006:72)

It is clear that the causative suffix *-hi* can be considered as a transitivizer. If it is attached to an intransitive verb, the intransitive verb becomes transitive. The passive suffix *-ki*, on the other hand, can serve as intransitivizer. When it is attached to a transitive verb, the transitive verb becomes intransitive.

In addition to the passive suffixal verbs, reflexive verbs with suffix *-ci* are commonly interpreted with detransitivizing function, as exemplified in sentences (64) and (65). The infix *-ci-* marked on the verb *palkhye* ‘reveal’ indicates that the transitivity of the sentence is lowered.

(64) kyungchal-i    cinsang-ul    palkhi-essta  
 police-NOM truth-ACC reveal-PST  
 ‘The police revealed the truth.’

(65) cinsang-i    kyungchal ey uyhay    palkhye-ci-essta  
 truth-NOM police    by        reveal-REFL-PST  
 ‘The truth was revealed by the police.’

## 7 Relative clause

This sections deals with the RC (relative clause) constructions in Korean. 3 aspects will be analyzed in terms of word order of the RC, strategies of relativization and accessibility hierarchy.

### 7.1 Word order of the relative clause

As is known, the basic word order in Korean is said to be SOV (subject, object and verb/adjective), and according to the universals discussed in section 2, all modifiers should precede their head elements. With regard to these 2 ideas, Korean has a prenominal word order of relative clause (RC-N). This point can be exemplified in sentences (66) to (67).

(66) [yenghi-ka ilk-nun] chayk-un acwu elyewe  
 yonghee-NOM read-REL book-TOP very difficult  
 ‘The book that Yonghee reads (or is reading) is very difficult.’

(67) [yenghi-ka ilk-ul] chayk-un acwu elyewe  
 yonghee-NOM read-REL book-TOP very difficult  
 ‘The book that Yonghee will read (or is likely to read) is very difficult.’

(68) [yenghi-ka ilk-un] chayk-un acwu elyewe  
 yonghee-NOM read-REL book-TOP very difficult  
 ‘The book that Yonghee read is very difficult.’

(69) kiho-ka [acwu yeppu-n] yeca ai lang chwum-ul chwueyo  
 keeho-NOM very pretty-REL female child with dance-ACC dance  
 ‘Keeho is dancing with a girl who is very pretty.’

(70) \*[acwu yeppu] yeca ai  
 very pretty female child  
 ‘very pretty girl’

(Song, 2005:77-78)

From sentences (66) to (68) we can clearly see that the relative clauses precede NPs that they modify, and interestingly the verbs in the relative clauses are given relative clause markers like *-nun*, *-un* and *-ul*. These markers are perceived as tense distinctions between past (*-un*) and non-past (*-nun* and *-ul*). Therefore, the specific word order of verb-involved relative clause in Korean should be [(S)OV-REL]-NP.

Another feature of relative clause in Korean is that the adjectives can never directly modify NPs, unlike in English, unless they are marked by relative clause suffixes. Thus, adjectives in Korean are said to be another type of relative clause. Similarly, they are marked by the particle *-n*. Take sentence (69) for instance. [*acwu*

*yeyppu n]* *yeca ai* means ‘very pretty girl’ only when *yeyppu* is augmented by *-n* (non-past tense), which means *acwu yeyppu yeca ai* is grammatically unacceptable (sentence (70)). Thus, the relative clauses which are generated by predicate adjectives have a specific word order: [(ADV)A-REL]-NP.

## 7.2 Strategies of relativization

Since there is no overt indication of the role of the head within the relative clause, Korean uses gap-type strategy to relativize NPs. In sentences (1) to (4) there are no relative pronouns like ‘who’, ‘which’, ‘that’, etc. or pronominal pronouns available in the relative clauses. That means that wh-movement and pronominalization do not occur in Korean. Moreover, the NPs that are coreferential to the head nouns are omitted with the accusative and locative case markers, as illustrated in sentences as follows:

(71) [nay-ka manna-n] yeca

I-NOM meet-REL woman

‘the woman whom I met’

(72) [ney-ka ka-n] kukcang

you-NOM go-REL theatre

‘the theatre you went to’

(73) [wuli tongsayng-i kongpuha-nun] hakkyo

our brother-NOM study-REL school

‘the school at which my younger brother studies’

(Sohn, 2001:310-311)

In sentence (71), the coreferential noun *yeca lul* (woman-ACC) ‘whom’ is omitted in the relative clause *nay ka mannan* ‘the woman whom I met’. In addition to that, the relative clause in sentence (72) lacks *kukcang-lo* (theatre-LOC) ‘to which’ between *ney* and *kakan*. Moreover, the meaning of ‘at which’ is also omitted in sentence (73). Hence, without using relative pronouns or pronominal pronouns, Korean applies gap-type strategy to relativize head NPs by giving suffixes to relative clauses. This finding is also consistent with the generalization that gapping is overwhelmingly dominant type in prenominal relative clause.

In addition, Korean also has head-internal type RCs, which can be seen from the example (74). In this case, the RC relativizes the object *kes-ul* (ball-ACC).

(74) Ai-ka [kon-i nalaka-nun] kes-ul cap-assta

child-NOM air-NOM fly-REL ball-ACC catch-pst

‘The child caught the ball that was flying through the air.’

Furthermore, according to example (75), Korean RC displays a pronoun

retention strategy. With regard to (75), possessors can only be modified when a pronoun *caki* is retained. That means possessee is retained in possessive form, highlighting the possessor's presence.

- (75) [wuli pan ey caki pumonim-i tolakasi-n] haksayng-i manhayo  
 our class in self parents-NOM pass.away-REL student-NOM many  
 'Our class has many students whose parents passed away.'  
 (Song, 2005:140)

Therefore, Korean applies gap-type strategy, internal-head strategy and pronoun retention strategy in terms of relativization.

### 7.3 Accessibility hierarchy

In the interest of accessibility hierarchy: subject > direct object > non-direct object > possessor, Korean is in accordance with this generalization. The sentences below illustrate that relative clauses can be formed for subjects, direct objects and non-direct objects.

- (76) John-i wucheykwuk-eyse Mary-eykey phyenci-lul ponay-ssta  
 john-NOM post office-LOC mary-DAT letter-ACC send-PST  
 'At the post office, John sent a letter to Mary.'

- (77) [wucheykwuk-eyse Mary-eykey phyenci-lul ponay-n] salam  
 post office-LOC mary-DAT letter-ACC send-REL person  
 'the person who sent a letter to Mary at the post office'

- (78) [John-i wucheykwuk-eyse Mary-eykey ponay-n] phyenci  
 john-NOM post office-LOC mary-DAT send-REL letter  
 'the letter which John sent to Mary at the post office'

- (79) [John-i wucheykwuk-eyse phyenci-lul ponay-n] salam  
 john-NOM post office-LOC letter-ACC send-REL person  
 'the person to whom John sent a letter at the post office'

Sentence (77) distinctively shows that relative clauses can be formed on the given position of subject on the hierarchy, where *salam* refers to 'John'. When it comes to the direct object, the relativization is also applicable as in sentence (78). *phyenci* 'letter' is the direct object of the verb *ponay* 'send', and it can be relativized by the prenominal relative clause. Furthermore, sentence (79) indicates that the role of the heads (*salam* and *wucheykwuk*) within the embedded clause is that of non-direct object. These heads are modified by prenominal relative clauses as well.

In summary, Korean follows the generalization that if a language has relativization, it must be able to relativize subjects. Moreover, in Korean, the gap-type



strategy is applied to a continuous segment of the accessibility hierarchy.

Considering example (75), some may claim that Korean can also relativize on possessors. It is grammatical to have this construction but possessors can be only modified when a pronoun *caki* is retained. That means possessee is retained in possessive form, highlighting the possessor's presence. Therefore, we believe the accessibility hierarchy also applies on the position of possessor.

In a nutshell, the accessibility hierarchy in Korean is subject > direct object > non-direct object > possessor.

## 8 Numeral classifier system

With an extensive Numeral Classifier (NC) system, Korean is one of the classifier languages. Generally, NC constructions consist of 2 types of word order: Noun+Numeral+NC and Numeral+NC+GEN+Noun (in sentences (80) and (81) respectively). The former type is more commonly used than the latter one.

(80) Noun+Numeral+NC

(a) haksayng tases myeng  
students five NC  
'five students'

(b) kay twu mali  
dogs two NC  
'two dogs'

(81) Numeral+NC+GEN+Noun

(a) tases myeng-uy haksayng  
five NC-GEN students  
'five students'

(b) twu mali-uy kay  
two NC-GEN kay  
'two dogs'

Any countable noun can be used in both types of constructions. More importantly, according to the structures of both types, Korean NC always occurs after a numeral. In addition, in Korean, NC is semantically related to the nature of nouns or denotes the inherent properties of nouns like *myeng* in sentences (80a) and (81a) is for human characteristics and *mali* in sentences (80b) and (81b) is for animal characteristics.

In addition to numerals, quantifiers like *yele* 'many', *yakkan* 'a few', and *myech* 'how many' can also appear in such constructions. Take sentences (82) and (83) for instance.

(82) *chayk yele kwen*  
 books many NC  
 ‘many books’

(83) *yele kwen-uy chayk*  
 many NC-GEN books  
 ‘many books’

The 2 examples above show that quantifiers like *yele* ‘many’ can be applied in the same pattern as numerals. Here *kwen* as a NC indicates the property of inanimate entities. Moreover, in Korean, numerals are often used without NC and the genitive markers, as in sentence (84). However, this application is unnatural when non-human nouns are involved, in particular when the number is more than 9 as in sentence (85).

(84) *twu haksayng*  
 two students  
 ‘two students’

(85) ??*sumu cha*  
 twenty cars  
 ‘twenty cars’

When the type of [Noun+Numeral+NC] appears in a clause with a nominative or accusative marked NC, [Noun] and [Numeral+NC] are separable due to quantifier floating, as illustrated in sentence (86) and (87).

(86) *haksayng-i ceki sey myeng-i o-nta* (Sohn, 2001:353)  
 student-NOM there three NC-NOM come-PROG  
 ‘Three students are coming over there.’

(87) *say-lul onul twu mali-lul cap-assta*  
 bird-ACC today two NC-ACC catch-PST  
 ‘(I) caught two birds today.’

In sentence (86), syntactically *haksayng-i* and *sey myeng-i* are separate since the NC *myeng* is marked by the nominative case *-i*. Similarly, in sentence (87) *mali-lul* is marked by the accusative case *-lul*, which triggers the quantifier raising.

In a nutshell, Korean as a NC language allows NC only appears next to a numeral or quantifier by using 2 common types of constructions, Noun+Numeral+NC and Numeral+NC+GEN+Noun. Only when nominative or accusative particles are attached to NCs, [Noun] and [Numeral+NC] can be separable because of quantifier floating. Moreover, NC semantically categorizes the referent of a noun in animacy or other inherent property in Korean.

## 9 Serial verb construction

Using serial verb construction to describe a situation which is conceptualized as a single event is a very productive linguistic strategy in Korean. In other words, the construction consists of more than 1 verb but expresses immediately consecutive or simultaneous actions.

### 9.1 Subject-sharing

The verbs in serial verb construction are usually marked by the phonological particle *-e*. Examples are illustrated as follows.

(88) *sayngsen-ul kwu-e mek-essta*  
 fish-ACC roast-SVC eat-PST  
 ‘(I) roasted the fish and ate it.’

(89) *chayk-ul senpan wuy-ey enc-e twu-essta*  
 book-ACC shelf top-LOC place-SVC put-PST  
 ‘(I) placed the book on the shelf.’

(Sohn, 2001:265)

In sentence (88), *kwu-e* ‘roast-SVC’ and *mek-essta* ‘eat-PST’ are immediately consecutive actions and share the same subject *sayngsen-ul* ‘fish-ACC’. While in sentence (89), *enc-e* ‘place-SVC’ and *twu-essta* ‘put-PST’ take place simultaneously and also share the same subject *chayk-ul* (book-ACC).

Syntactically, the serial verb sentences can only bear 1 subject in Korean, therefore when we insert another subject ahead of the unmarked verb, we will get an ungrammatical sentence like in sentence (90).

(90) \**sayngsen-ul kwu-e nay-ka mek-essta*  
 fish-ACC roast-SVC I-NOM eat-PST  
 ‘I roasted the fish and ate it.’

Specifically, when we insert the omitted subject *nay-ka* (I-NOM) ‘I’, the sentence becomes ungrammatical.

Furthermore, Korean even allows more than 2 verbs in a serial verb construction, as exemplified in sentence (91). There are 3 verb constructions in sentence (91), *ki-e* (crawl-SVC) and *tul-e* (enter-SVC) are marked by *-e*, indicating they form a serial verb construction with the main verb *w-assta* (come-PST) sharing a single grammatical subject *ai-ka* (child-NOM).

(91) *ai-ka pang ey ki-e tul-e w-assta* (Sohn, 2001:267)  
 child-NOM room to crawl-SVC enter-SVC come-PST  
 ‘The child crawled into the room.’

## 9.2 Tense, aspect and agreement

According to the examples (88) and (89) above, it is worth noting that each SVC sentence has only 1 tense and only head-final verbs in the above sentences can be marked by tense markers. That means, tense marking on V-SVC is not allowed because the tense of the sentence takes the whole sentence as its domain. For example, in sentence (92), when the verb *kwu* ‘roast’ is marked as *kwu-essta* (roast-PST), the whole sentence becomes ungrammatical.

- (92) \*sayngsen-ul kwu-essta mek-essta  
 fish-ACC roast-PST eat-PST  
 ‘(I) roasted the fish and ate it.’

In addition, honorification also appears only on the final verbs where honorifics are attached to the final verbs indicating the agreement with the subject.

- (93) sensayng-nim-kkeyse John-ul tolli-(\*si)-e ponay-si-essta  
 teacher-HON-NOM john-ACC turn-HON-SVC send-HON-PST  
 ‘The teacher sent John back.’

Sentence (93) shows that only the syntactic head *ponay* ‘send’ can bear the honorification and the verb *toll* ‘turn’ is allowed to have honorification with the shared subject *sensayng-nim* (teacher-HON) ‘teacher’.

## 9.3 Negation

The negation particle *ani* takes scope above the whole verb constructions, mostly 2 verbs, or only the first verb. Korean negation particle *ani* also cannot separate the 2 verb constructions. Take sentences (94) and (95) for example.

- (94) John-i sakwa-lul ani kkak-e mek-essta.  
 john-NOM apple-ACC NEG peel-SVC eat-PST  
 (i) ‘It is not the case that John peeled and ate an apple.’  
 (ii) ‘John ate the apple without peeling it.’

- (95) \*John-i sakwa-lul kkak-e ani mek-essta.  
 john NOM apple-ACC peel-SVC NEG eat- PST  
 ‘John peeled the apple but did not eat it.’

(Pyouon, 2011:7)

If *ani* ‘not’ takes scope above both verbs *kkak* ‘peel’ and *mek* ‘eat’, reading (i) is generated. Otherwise, reading (ii) is perceived. Both readings require the negation particle precedes the serial verb construction in sentence (94). Moreover, sentence (95) demonstrates that *ani* ‘not’ cannot appear between the 2 verbs *kkak-e* (peel-SVC) and

*mek-essta* (eat- PST).

## 9.4 Classification of SVC

SVCs, by their composition, falls into 2 broad groups: symmetrical verbs from an open class and asymmetrical verbs from a closed class. In this section, the classification of SVC in Korean will be studied. In addition, serial verbs can be contiguous or non-contiguous, which will also be looked at in this part.

### 9.4.1 Symmetrical and asymmetrical

Symmetrical SVCs with members that come from an open class tend to be lexicalized, whereas asymmetrical constructions where limited verbs like motion and posture verbs are used tend to be grammaticalized.

Sentences (88) and (89) are prominent examples of symmetrical SVCs. *kwu-e* (roast-SVC), *mek-essta* (eat-PST) and *enc-e* (place-SVC), *twu-essta* (put-PST) are verbs from unrestricted classes. However, sentence (96) indicates asymmetrical SVCs.

- (96) a. John-i (pang-ey) tul-e ka-ssta.  
 john-NOM (room-LOC) move.into-SVC go-PST  
 ‘John went into the room.’  
 b. John-i (pang-ey) tul-e o-assta.  
 john-NOM (room-LOC) move.into-SVC come-PST  
 ‘John came into the room.’

(Pyouun, 2011:10)

As can be seen from above, the verb *tul* ‘move into’ is from the closed class which modifies the verbs *ka* ‘go’ and *o* ‘come’ of the open class. More importantly, *tul* is a motion verb indicating the meaning of moving into someplace. With respect to this, sentence (96) shows the asymmetrical property of SVCs in Korean.

### 9.4.2 Contiguity

In Korean, SVCs allow verbs to be next to each other or another constituent to go in between verbs. With regard to the examples in previous sections, most of the SVCs in Korean show contiguity of components where serial verbs appear next to each other in a sentence. However, if the first verb denotes the direction causing the second motion, the non-contiguity of components take place, as exemplified below.

- (97) \*Mia-ka John-ul ccoh-e ppali nay-essta.  
 mia-NOM john-ACC chase-SVC fast take.out-PST  
 ‘Mia drove John out fast.’

(Kyung, 2009:7)

The SVC in sentence (96) is incongruous because an adverbial element *ppali* ‘fast’ is inserted between *ccoh* ‘chase’ and *nay* ‘take out’.

## 10 Conclusion

This paper mainly investigate 6 typological perspectives of the Korean language in terms of (1) basic word order; (2) subject, case, alignment and verb agreement; (3) transitivity; (4) relative clause; (5) noun classifier system and (6) serial verbs.

As an SOV language, Korean has fixed word orders at phrase level: AN, GN, NP<sub>o</sub>, which largely agrees with Greenberg’s Correlation (Greenberg, 1963). Subjects in single-subject or multiple-subject sentences are marked by nominative case *-i/-ka*, while objects are marked by accusative case *-lul/eul*. Korean also witnesses a widespread use of subjectless sentences where subjects can be contextually omitted. In addition to nominative and accusative cases, other cases including locative and dative (*-eykey/-ey(se)/-kkey/hanthey*), instrumental and directional (*-(u)lo*) cases as well as genitive case (*-ey/-uy*) are commonly used to indicate syntactic functions. Unlike most of Indo-European languages, Korean does not conjugate verbs using agreement with subjects in terms of number or gender. However, it shows honorification by using infix *-si-* or *-eusi-*.

In light of transitivity, the nominal, accusative and dative case marking patterns help show the transitivity of sentences. Moreover, as the transitivity decreases, the patterns transfer from the NOM-ACC pattern to DAT-NOM pattern and even to NOM-NOM pattern.

Further more, Korean has a prenominal word order of relative clause (RC-N). It applies gap-type strategy, internal-head strategy and pronoun retention strategy in terms of relativization. Korean is also in accordance with the generalization of accessibility hierarchy: subject > direct object > non-direct object > possessor.

Moreover, Korean as a NC language allows NC only appears next to a numeral or quantifier by using 2 common types of constructions, Noun+Numeral+NC and Numeral+NC+GEN+Noun.

Last but not least, Korean allows SVC where verbs share the subject, tense and aspect. Honorification appears on the head-final verb. Negation should precede all the verbs to take a cope above them. Additionally, SVCs in Korean provide evidence for the symmetrical, asymmetrical and contiguity properties of SVCs.

**Abbreviation**

ACC	accusative
AN	adjective noun
DAT	dative
GEN	genitive
GN	genitive noun
HON	honorifics
LOC	locative
NA	noun adjective
NC	numeral classifier
NEG	negation
NG	noun genitive
NOM	nominative
NP	noun phrase
NP <sub>O</sub>	noun postposition
P <sub>R</sub> N	preposition noun
POL	polite
PROG	progressive
PRS	present
PST	past
RC	relative clause
REL	relative
SOV	subject, object, verb/adjective
SVC	serial verb construction
SVO	subject, verb, object
TOP	topic

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