FOCUS IN KOREAN DOUBLE NOMINATIVE CONSTRUCTION

PHENOMENON Double (Identical) Case Marking is one of the most remarkable and widely studied phenomena in Korean (and Japanese). There are two major types of Double Case Marking Constructions in Korean: Double Nominative Construction (DNC) as in (1a) and Double Accusative Construction (DAC) as in (1b), between which this study focuses on the former. More interestingly, three or more NOM-looking DPs are allowed in one simple sentence as illustrated in (2). For this reason, this kind of construction is also called Multiple Nominative Construction, which sounds more plausible. However, the first two NOM-looking DPs and the rest show different distributions. Sentences in (2) are only possible, when the third and fourth nominals get focused.

PUZZLE There are some potential questions about the claim that the third (and the fourth) occurrence of NOM-looking DP is obligatory focus: If the third NP also bears –i/ka as the preceding nominative ones do, how could we be sure if it’s focus? How normal nominative DP and focused items have identically-looking morphological markings ‘-i/-ka’? I argue that this morphological realization of NOM is analyzed as focus marker, distinctively from nominative case marker, although they have the same form. The underlined nominals in (3) can hardly be analyzed as nominative DPs. They undoubtedly have locative or temporal meaning, and it’s very hard to think they are selected by the predicates. In other words, the underlined nominals seem to be adjuncts. Under Yoon’s (2007) analysis on DNC, adjunct-like phrases like these are also subjects, namely Major Subjects, which are not arguments of the predicates. Although he is not explicit about this, under his analysis we would have to say ‘-i/-ka’ is a case marker. However, it’s not clear how a non-argument gets nominative case. It is not only for –i/ka that a case marking is alternatively used as focus marker, but for the accusative marker –(l)ul. In (4-5), the bold-faced markers introduce focus, just as –i/ka does in (3). Data in (3-5) justify the claim that –i/ka can be regarded as focus marker in some cases.

OBSERVATION There are some differences between the first two NOM-looking DPs and the rest. First, they show difference in Wh-question formation as illustrated in (6-7). Example in (6) cannot have normal Wh-question reading as in (ii). It only has negatively biased interpretation like (i). However, when the same NOM Wh-phrase occurs in the third place as in (7), the second reading is possible. Second, adverbs are distributed differently in relation to the NOM-looking DPs. According to Alexiadou (2002), always is a VP-adverb, being adjoined to vP or VP. From the contrasts among sentences in (8), we can presumably say that ‘eye’ is inside vP, whereas ‘Mary’ and ‘daughter’ are outside of it. In the same manner, fortunately, frankly and certainly show different distributions. They can be placed either sentence-initially or between the first and the second nominals. Following Alexiadou (2002), these adverbs are to be adjoined to CP or TP. Based on her assumption, if these adverbs are not allowed in the third or fourth place in DNC, that would mean there is some kind of borderline between the second and the third NOM-marked nominals. Another piece of evidence is from Szabolcsi’s (1981) exhaustivity test. If a sentence including two conjuncts a and b, and the sentence does not entail a sentence which includes only one of the conjuncts, the latter sentence is exhaustive. (10a) does not entail (10b). That means the last NOM-marked nominal bears exhaustivity. In other words, what is presupposed is that Mary’s daughter’s eyes are pretty (the fact), and what is asserted is that it is only her eyes that is pretty (exhaustivity).

PROPOSAL I argue that the first and the second occurrences of NOM are nominative case-markings, and the third (and the fourth) NOM-looking nominal is focus. Most native speakers I consult with say that in (2a) eye bears some kind of prominent pitch accent on it. Phonological prominence is not a sufficient piece of evidence for the claim that the element has focus, but it gives us at least a clue, if the high pitch accent is obligatory. Moreover, adverb placement test shows us there is some syntactic border between the second and the third NOM-marked nominals, and exhaustivity test proves that third (and fourth) NOM-marked nominal bears exhaustive reading, which is a major characteristic of focus. This is the reason I choose the term ‘Double’ Nominative Construction instead of ‘Multiple’ Nominative Construction.
(1) a. Mary-ka nwun-i yeypu-ta  
   M-NOM eye-NOM pretty-DECL 
   ‘Mary’s eyes are pretty’ 

   b. John-i Mary-lul son-ul cap-ass-ta  
   J-NOM M-ACC hand-ACC grab-PAST-DECL 
   ‘John grabbed Mary’s hand’ 

(2) a. Mary-ka ttal-i nwun-i yeypu-ta  
   M-NOM daughter-NOM eye-NOM pretty-DECL 
   ‘Mary’s daughter’s eyes are pretty’ 

   b. Mary-ka ttal-i nwun-i saykkal-i yeypu-ta  
   M-NOM daughter-NOM eye-NOM color-NOM pretty-DECL 
   ‘Mary’s daughter’s eyes are pretty in color’ 

(3) a. i siktang-i pwulkoki-ka masiss-ta  
   This restaurant-NOM BBQ-NOM delicious-DECL 
   ‘At this restaurant, BBQ is delicious’ 

   b. yelem-i Hawaii-ka kwankwangkayk-i nemchyena-n-ta  
   summer-NOM Hawaii-NOM tourist-NOM overflow-PRES-DECL 
   ‘In the summer, Hawaii is full of tourists’ 

(4) a. Mary-ka Jenny-eykey chaykul cvu-ess-ta  
   M-NOM J-DAT book-ACC give-PAST-DECL 
   ‘It was Jenny to whom Mary gave a book’ 

   b. Mary-ka Jenny-lul chaykul cvu-ess-ta  
   M-NOM J-ACC book-ACC give-PAST-DECL 
   ‘It was school where Mary went to’ 

(5) a. Mary-ka hakkyo-ey ka-ss-ta  
   M-NOM book-ACC give-PAST-DECL 
   ‘It was school where Mary went to’ 

   b. Mary-ka hakkyo-ey ka-ss-ta  
   M-NOM book-ACC give-PAST-DECL 
   ‘It was school where Mary went to’ 

(6) a. Mary-ka eti-ka yeypu-ni?  
   M-NOM where/which.part-NOM pretty-Q 
   (i) ‘(lit.) I don’t understand what makes you think Mary is pretty. (She’s not pretty.)’ 
   (ii) ‘Which part of Mary is pretty?’ 

(7) a. Mary-ka ttal-i eti-ka yeypu-ni?  
   M-NOM daughter-NOM where/which.part-NOM pretty-Q 
   (i) ‘(lit.) I don’t understand what makes you think Mary’s daughter is pretty.’ 
   (ii) ‘Which part of Mary’s daughter is pretty?’ 

(8) a. *Hangsang Mary-ka ttal-i nwun-i philoha-ta 
   Always M-NOM daughter-NOM eye-NOM tired-DECL 
   ‘Always (lit.) Mary’s daughter is tired’ 

   b. *Mary-ka hangsang ttal-i nwun-i philoha-ta  
   M-NOM always daughter-NOM eye-NOM tired-DECL 
   ‘Always (lit.) Mary’s daughter is tired’ 

   c. Mary-ka ttal-i hangsang nwun-i philoha-ta  
   M-NOM daughter-NOM always eye-NOM tired-DECL 
   ‘Always (lit.) Mary’s daughter is tired’ 

   d. Mary-ka ttal-i nwun-i hangsang philoha-ta  
   M-NOM daughter-NOM eye-NOM always tired-DECL 
   ‘Always (lit.) Mary’s daughter is tired’ 

(9) a. Tahaynghi/solcikhi/pwunmyenghi Mary-ka ttal-i nwun-i yeypu-ta  
   Fortunately/frankly/certainly M-NOM daughter-NOM eye-NOM pretty-DECL 
   ‘Fortunately (lit.) Mary’s daughter is pretty’ 

   b. Mary-ka tahaynghi/solcikhi/pwunmyenghi ttal-i nwun-i yeypu-ta  
   M-NOM fortunately/frankly/certainly daughter-NOM eye-NOM pretty-DECL 
   ‘Fortunately (lit.) Mary’s daughter is pretty’ 

   c. *Mary-ka ttal-i tahaynghi/solcikhi/pwunmyenghi nwun-i yeypu-ta  
   M-NOM Daughter-NOM fortunately/frankly/certainly eye-NOM pretty-DECL 
   ‘Fortunately (lit.) Mary’s daughter is pretty’ 

   d. *Mary-ka ttal-i nwun-i tahaynghi/solcikhi/pwunmyenghi yeypu-ta  
   M-NOM daughter-NOM eye-NOM fortunately/frankly/certainly pretty-DECL 
   ‘Fortunately (lit.) Mary’s daughter is pretty’ 

(10) a. Mary-ka ttal-i [kho-wa nwun]-i yeypu-ta  
   M-NOM daughter-NOM nose-CONJ eye-NOM pretty-DECL 
   ‘Mary’s nose is pretty’ 

   b. Mary-ka ttal-i [nwun]-i yeypu-ta  
   M-NOM daughter-NOM eye-NOM pretty-DECL 
   ‘Mary’s eye is pretty’