Licensing Korean Negative Sensitive Items outside the scope of negation

This paper claims that the licensing of Korean NSIs which is carried out outside the scope of negation should be construed as a syntactic phenomenon which is captured by the percolation of the [+NEG] feature coupled with the concept of minimal domain and extended projection (Grimshaw 1991). Supported by the fact that the clause-boundedness of Korean NSI licensing itself, which has been construed as the main characterization of Korean NSI licensing, does not guarantee the licit licensing of Korean NSIs, this paper argues that Korean NSIs are licensed within the minimal domain of the extended projection of the head containing [+NEG]. This analysis also expects to bring a positive answer to how Korean NSIs are licensed without being in the scope of negation (Chung and Park 1998, Sells 2001, 2006, Sells and Kim 2006), so the licensing of Korean NSIs has nothing to do with the semantic scope of negation unlike English NSIs which should be licensed within the scope of negation.

The syntactic configuration of the licensing of Korean NSIs has long been described as being subject to the clause-mate condition (Choe 1998, Chung and Park 1998, Kuno 1998) which requires that Korean NSIs must be licensed by a licenser within the same clause as given in (1). Various theoretical approaches have been proposed to explain the clause-boundedness of Korean NSI licensing (Ahn 1991, Chung and Park 1998, Lee 1996, Sohn 1995, 2004, Suh 1990, Sells 2001, 2006, Sells and Kim 2006), relying upon either the primitive syntactic relations such as c-command and government, or the new functional category such as NegP. Nevertheless, the major failings of the previous account can be summarized as twofold. First, the previous accounts fail to capture the discrepancy between the syntactic licensing and the semantic interpretation of Korean NSIs: the former takes place outside the scope of negation, but the latter should be done inside the scope of negation. Second, the locality between a NSI and negation appears to be actually stricter than a simple requirement, since only direct arguments or adjuncts of a licenser are subject to NSI licensing in Korean evidenced by the fact that a NSI cannot be even embedded within the complement of a licenser. The analysis of Sells (2001, 2006, also Sells and Kim 2006) in (2) proposing that Korean NSIs are licensed by the clausal feature [+NEG] is appealing in that it satisfyingly explains that the licensing of Korean NSIs is a syntax matter in which Korean NSIs are licensed outside the scope of negation. Nevertheless, the issue of how the stricter locality between a NSI and its licenser is able to be represented still remains unaddressed.

To address the two main issues involving in the licensing of Korean NSIs, this paper argues that Korean NSIs are licensed within the minimal domain of the extended projection of the head containing [+NEG] as given in (4). The assumption is threefold. First, the scopal correlation between a NSI and negation is determined at S-structure. Second, negation where the [+NEG] feature originated from is part of the extended projection of a verb, so the whole verbal negation as well as the extended projection of the verb is specified with [+NEG] by the percolation of [+NEG]. Third, head movement is not the only way to obtain the extended minimal domain, but the extended minimal domain is also able to be realized in a somewhat phonological manner, such as phonological merger of the extended projections.

The illustration in (5) shows how the notions of (1-4) are coordinated with each other. In (5), given the assumption that the whole verbal negation an ilk ‘not read’ comprised of the negative and the main verb is characterized as [+NEG], both TP and vP are also specified with [+NEG] as the extended projection of the verb. Assuming that the subject and the object raise to SpTP and SpvP respectively, both the subject and the object are now included within the minimal domain of the negation and the extended projection of the V. Accordingly, both the subject and the object are licitly licensed by [+NEG]. Note that the raised subject and object are still outside the scope of the verbal negation given the assumption that the scopal interaction between a NSI and negation is determined at S-structure.

The licensing mechanism for Korean NSIs based on the concept of minimal domain and extended projection nicely captures the locality between a NSI and its licenser which cannot be appropriately explained in the clause-mate condition. Since the NSI embedded within the complement of the negative predicate does not belong to the immediate dependent of the head with [+NEG], a NSI fails to be embedded even within the complement of the verbal negation. Not only does the current analysis account for the stricter locality of Korean NSI licensing, but also it is also expected to address the discrepancy between the syntactic licensing and the semantic interpretation of Korean NSIs: the licensing of Korean NSIs is a solely syntactic phenomenon targeting S-structure, and this explains how Korean NSIs are licensed outside the scope of negation.
(1) Clause-Mate Condition
NSIs in Korean must be licensed by clause-mate negation.

(2) Minimal Domain
The Minimal Domain of $\alpha$, or $\text{MinD}(\alpha)$, is the set of categories immediately contained or immediately dominated by (extended) projections of the head $\alpha$, excluding projections of $\alpha$.

(3) [+NEG] Feature Percolation
The [+NEG] feature percolates from the head containing [+NEG] to its minimal domain.

(4) Licensing condition for Korean NSI
Korean NSIs are licensed within the minimal domain of the extended projection of the head containing [+NEG], where the head with [+NEG] is part of the extended projection of a verb.

(5) a. Amwuto chayk-ul an ilk-ess-taz
anybody book-Acc Neg read-Past-Decl
‘Nobody read a book.’

b. CP
   TP
   T
   vP
   vP
   amwuto
   T
   vP
   v
   chayk-ul
   ilk

(6) Extended Minimal Domain
The MinD of a chain formed by adjoining the head $Y^0$ to the head $X^0$ is the union of $\text{MinD}(Y^0)$ and $\text{MinD}(X^0)$, excluding projections of $Y^0$. (Hornstein et al. 2005:150)

Selected References


