

15 The syntax of overmarking and *kes* in child Korean

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Overmarking

Overmarking errors occur in early child syntax when the child adds an element that is absent in well-formed adult speech. The examples below are from English (1–2), Japanese (3), and Korean (4):

- (1) Jenny did left with Daddy. (R 2:4; Mayer, Erreich & Valian, 1978: 2)
- (2) Whose is that is? (E 1:10–2:6; Hurford, 1975)
- (3) [gohan tabeteru no butasan]_{NP}
rice is eating NO piggy
'the the piggy that is eating rice' (Nagisa 3:2; Murasugi, 1991: 14)
- (4) Accessi otopai tha-nun ke soli ya.
man motorbike ride-ADNOM KES sound is
'It's the sound of a man riding a motorbike.' (Polam 2:3; Y-J. Kim, 1987:20)

In English (1) tense is marked both on auxiliary *do* and the lexical verb. In (2), *is* occurs in two positions. In (3), the functional element *no* is realized in a relative clause, even though adult Japanese has no overt functional morpheme in this position. In (4), the 'bound noun' *kes* is likewise realized in a relative clause, even though no morpheme appears in this position in adult Korean. The pattern in (4) was first noticed by Kim (1987) and studied extensively by K.-O. Lee (1991; see also Lee, Lust & Whitman, 1991).

Overmarking errors are interesting from the standpoint of the controversy over the status of functional or closed-class elements in early grammar (Radford, 1990; Whitman, Lee & Lust, 1991, and much subsequent literature). Overmarking indicates that functional categories are present in the grammar of the child who produces them: overmarking does not occur with lexical categories; that is, children do not produce overmarking errors such as (5):

- (5) a. *Jenny Jenny left.
b. *Jenny left left.

Furthermore, since the overmarking patterns do not occur in caregiver speech, the child's basis for producing these patterns must come from some source other than the input. Most interesting, though, is the fact that overmarking errors are not random. The positions corresponding to *did* in (1), *is* in (2) *no* in (3), and *ke* (= adult *kes*) in (4) correspond to overt function words or morphemes in many languages, and, more abstractly, to positions occupied by functional categories in many theories of grammatical competence. But not all functional categories are subject to overmarking. In the earliest work on overmarking in the 1970s, researchers noticed that certain types of overmarking errors do not occur. For example, Maratsos and Kuczaj (1978) report that overmarking errors such as (6) do not occur:

- (6) *He did could go. (Maratsos & Kuczaj, 1978: 343):

The contrast between (1) and the non-occurring (6) is crucial. Since Emonds (1976), modals and auxiliary *do* in English have been generally supposed to be generated in the same functional category position, analyzed as INFL or TENSE in generative frameworks. On this view, (1) has the following structure:

- (7) Jenny [_{INFL} [PAST]] [_{VP} [_V left [PAST]] with Daddy].

In (1 = 7), overmarking results from realizing the feature [PAST] both in INFL and on the lexical verb. Both of these positions are independently motivated in the grammar; the 'error' in the child output consists in realizing the [PAST] feature twice. In (6), in contrast, the grammar does not provide separate positions for *did* and *could*; and overmarkings like (6) do not occur. This shows that overmarking does not result from simple doubling of functional words or morphemes, or insertion of functional morphemes in random positions in a 'non-adult' grammar. The following generalization characterizes the contexts where overmarking occurs:

- (8) Overmarking results from giving phonetic expression to a feature or category present, but not phonetically expressed, in the adult grammar.

In (1), the tense feature [PAST] is generated in INFL but expressed only on the lexical verb in adult grammar. Overmarking results from realizing it in both places. In (2), the verb *be* is generated in VP and moved to the left of the subject. Adult grammar gives phonetic expression or 'spells out' only the moved verb; overmarking results from spelling out the verb in the position where it originates and in the position it is moved to. I will show in this paper that overmarking in (3) and (4) is quite similar to (1 and 2): it results from spelling out a functional category present, but not phonetically realized in this particular position in adult Korean and Japanese.

***Kes* in child Korean**

In Korean traditional grammar, *kes* is classified as a ‘bound noun’ or a ‘formal noun’ (*hyŏngshik ch’eŏn* or *kkol imjassi*; see Hyŏn-bae Choe, 1971: 158–60). It cannot appear alone:

- (9) a. *(Ney) kkes i-ta.
 (my) KES be-DEC
 ‘(It) is mine.’
 b. Na nun *(ku) kes ul po-ass-ta.
 I TOP (that) KES ACC see-PAST-DEC
 I saw that.’

Kes has no independent reference. In Korean–English dictionaries, it is conventionally glossed as ‘a one, the one’ (Martin, Lee & Chang, 1967: 103), and ‘the fact that’ (*ibid.*) when the category preceding it is a clause:

- (10) Ipkwu ka tathici anhnun kes ul hwakinha-n-ta.
 Entrance NOM closed not fact ACC make.certain-PRES-DEC
 ‘(Pro) makes certain of the fact that the entrance is not closed.’

Kes is common in early child Korean. It occurs frequently in the Jiwon corpus in the CHILDES database (CHILDES, 2005) and in the extensive natural speech data collected by K.-O. Lee (1991):

- (11) Yeki appa kke. (Jiwon 2:0)
 here daddy KES
 ‘Here’s Daddy’s.’
 (12) Masiss-nun ke (SP 1:11; Lee 1991)
 tasty-ADNOM KES
 ‘A tasty one.’
 (13) a. Mother: I ke nwukwu kke ya?
 This KES who KES Q
 ‘Whose is this?’
 b. Jiwon: Hammeni kke. (Jiwon 2:0)
 Grandma KES
 ‘Grandma’s.’

The above examples show that children master the salient aspects of the phonology, morphology, and syntax of *kes* very early. In colloquial Korean, *kes* is normally pronounced /ke/ [kə], /key/ [ke] before the nominative particle *i*. Following possessor NPs, the initial consonant of *kes* is reinforced /kk/ [k’], as in (11) and (13b), but the initial consonant is realized as a plain unaspirated /k/ (usually realized as voiced [g]) after the final vowel of the

demonstrative as in (13b). *Kes* is preceded by the adnominal form of verbs and adjectives, as in (12).

Kes following a subordinate clause is reported in early child speech by Young-Joo Kim (1987, 1989, 1997) and K.-O. Lee (1991).

- (14) [[Mok-ey ke-nun] ke] ya? (SP 1:11; Lee, 1991)
neck-on hang-pres KES be Q
'Is it what you hang on your neck?'

Young-Joo Kim first reported the occurrence of *kes* in two non-adultlike patterns in early child Korean (Kim, 1987). The first involves *kes* occurring between the relative clause and the head noun it modifies, as in (4). (15–16) are additional examples from Lee (1991). The parenthesized star (*) indicates that the relevant pattern is ill-formed in adult Korean.

- (15) [[swume iss-nun] (*)ke] maykhu (JB 3:4 Lee, 1991)
hiding is-ADNOM KES microphone
'the microphone that is hiding'
- (16) Kuliko [[[appa ssu-nun (*)ke] ankyeng] un... (SK 3:10 Lee, 1991) and papa wear- ADNOM KES glasses TOPIC
'And as for the glasses that papa wears...'

The second pattern involves *kes* occurring between an adjective and the noun it modifies:

- (17) [[[Yele-n] (*)ke] cha] tha-ko ka-n-ta. (SK 2:1 Lee, 1991)
this.like-ADNOM KES car ride-ing go-PRES-DEC
'(Y)ou ride in the car like this.'
- (18) [[[Tta-n] (*)ke] chayk] Tongswu cwe-la. (HM 2:3 Lee, 1991)
different-ADNOM KES book Dongsoo give-IMP
'Give me the other book, Dongsoo.'

Lee, Lust & Whitman (1990), Whitman, Lee, and Lust (1991), and Lee (1991) argue that data like (15–18) falsify the claim that functional categories are absent in early child Korean. Based on examples like (14), where *kes* heads a free relative, they hypothesize that *kes* is acquired early as complementizer, that is, a functional category introducing a subordinate clause in child Korean. They argue that *kes* is realized as an overt complementizer in relative clauses like 16, which they assign the structure in (19).

- (19) Kuniko [_{NP} [_{CP} [_{IP} appa ssu-nun] ke] ankyeng] un... (SK 3:8 Lee, 1991) then papa wear-ADNOM KES glasses TOP
'And the glasses that papa wears..'

Since adult Korean does not realize an overt complementizer in relative clauses, this analysis makes (4) and (15–18) clear cases of overmarking, in the sense of (8).¹

The syntactic status of *kes*

Young-Joo Kim (1993, 1997) produces two convincing arguments against the analysis of *kes* as a complementizer in examples like (4) and (15–18). First, Kim points out that while *kes* does not have independent reference, it shares this property with English *one*, which can appear as a pronominal head in a close paraphrase of (14):

(20) Is it the one you hang on your neck?

Second, and most crucially, Kim points out that overmarked *kes* pattern occurs in a number of contexts where it cannot plausibly be analyzed as a complementizer. We have already seen examples of this type in (17–18), where *kes* appears between an adjectival modifier and the noun it modifies. In order to maintain the claim that *kes* is a complementizer in these examples, pronominal adjectival modifiers would have to be analyzed as relative clauses. Such an analysis would be unattractive enough, but Kim provides further data showing that the relative clause analysis is completely untenable. Examples like (21), where *kes* is preceded by a demonstrative, and (22), where *kes* is preceded by a nominal possessor, cannot possibly be analyzed as complex NPs. Both of these patterns are unacceptable in adult Korean.

(21) [I (*)ke pihayngki] nun? (J 2:6 Kim, 1993: 33)
This KES airplane TOP
'What about this airplane?'

(22) I ke [enni (*)ke pang-eyse hay-ss-e. (H 2:3 Kim, 1993: 33)
this KES sister KES room-in do-PAST-DEC
'I did this one in sister's room.'

The next question is, if overmarked *kes* is not a complementizer, what is it? Kim (1987) took the position that *kes* is a nominal head. Kim (1993) maintains this analysis, but in discussing examples like (14), specifically the analogy with English *one* as in (20), she characterizes *kes* as a 'pronominal head' (1993: 32). The difference between 'nominal head' and 'pronominal head' may seem to be slight, but in fact it is crucial to understanding the status of *kes*.

First, let us consider the consequences of analyzing overmarked *kes* as a garden variety noun. Lee, Lust, and Whitman (1991) point out that this analysis is

¹ This analysis is closely modeled on the analysis of Japanese *no* in (3), which Murasugi (1991) argues is also a complementizer, unrealized in adult relative clauses.

problematic in early child Korean examples like (23–24) below, where *kes* heads an internally headed relative clause. Internally headed relative clauses are a pattern where the semantic head of the relative clause appears internal to the relative clause itself. Unlike the examples of *kes* overmarking, the internally headed relative clauses in (23–24) are structurally possible patterns in adult Korean as well.²

- (23) [[emma ka panci kki-nun] ke] (JP 3:0 Lee, 1991)
 mama NOM ring wear-ADNOM KES
 ‘the ring that mama wears-’
- (24) Emma [[pap mek-ul] kes] cwe. (JB 3:4 Lee, 1991)
 Mama rice eat-ADNOM KES give
 ‘Mama, give me the rice that I am going to eat.’

If *kes* were a lexical noun and the structural head of the relative clauses in (23–24), it would bind the internal head (‘ring’ in (23), ‘rice’ in (24)), resulting in what is known as a Condition C violation (Chomsky, 1981), a situation where the antecedent for a pronoun appears lower in the structure than the pronoun itself. Kim (1993: 32) responds to this objection by appealing to the analysis of internally headed relative clauses in Watanabe (1992). According to this analysis, internally headed relative clauses are derived by movement of an ‘invisible’ or unpronounced *wh*-operator, on a par with *wh*-in-situ questions. Kim suggests that since the internal head is not bound in the domain of this operator, it does not violate Condition C on the formulation of Chomsky (1986b).

There are two problems with this analysis. First, Shimoyama (1999) shows convincingly that internally headed relative clauses do not involve operator movement at any level of representation. Second, even under Watanabe’s (1992) analysis, the extracted item is not the internal head, but an operator moved from the specifier of the internal head. The trace or variable occupies this specifier position, and the internal head remains free to be bound by an external head with the same reference. The result would still be a Condition C violation, and this is why, not just in child and adult Korean, but across languages, ‘double-headed’ relative clauses, with both internal and external coreferent heads, simply do not occur. But this is precisely the structure entailed by Kim’s nominal head analysis of *kes*.

The second issue has to do with the internal structure of examples like (15–18) if the projection headed by *kes* is analyzed as an NP. Kim (1993) argues that this is a structure of nominal apposition. Kim correctly points out that some of the data in Lee (1991) do appear to involve an appositive structure:

² Although internally headed relative clauses occur in adult Korean (M.-J.Kim, 2004), there appear to be significant differences from the pattern in early child Korean. Adult Korean internally headed relative clauses tend to be indefinite, but the early child Korean examples in Lee (1991), like (23–24), are primarily definite.

- (25) [Paywu-nun kes] [ku kes] epse-yo. (EK 3:5 Lee, 1991)
 learn-ADNOM KES that KES not.exist-POL
 'I don't have that one, the one (I) learned.'

The property of an appositive structure is that neither component restricts the denotation of the other; either component by itself suffices to compose an appropriate utterance in the discourse context. This is the case in (26):

- (26) a. [Paywu-nun kes] epse-yo.
 'I don't have the one (I) learned.'
 b. [Ku kes] epse-yo.
 'I don't have that one.'

But it is not the case in many other examples of overmarked *kes*, including the examples in (15–18). In these examples, the material before *kes* clearly serves to restrict the denotation of the head noun. Consider the following example in Kim (1993):

- (27) Mother: Nwukwu mul ankyeng i-ya?
 Who water goggle be-Q
 'Whose swimming goggles are (these)?'
 Child: Nay (*)ke mul ankyeng. (C 2:0 Kim, 1993: 33)
 My KES water goggle
 'My swimming goggles.'

In contrast to (26), it is not the case that either component of the child's answer by itself suffices as a felicitous answer:

- (28) Mother: Nwukwu mul ankyeng i-ya?
 Who water goggles be-q
 'Whose swimming goggles?'
 Child: a. Nay ke
 'Mine'
 b. # Mul ankyeng.
 'swimming goggles'

In the child's answer, the first part, [*nay ke*] 'mine', is clearly being used to restrict the denotation of the second part, *mul ankyeng* 'swimming goggles'. The second part by itself would be an inadequate answer. It might be argued that the child has not yet learned what constitutes an adequate answer to a question like (27), but this would clearly be wrong: (27) is a perfectly natural exchange except for the child's non-adult use of *kes*; it is natural because *nay kes* 'mine' serves as a restrictive modifier of the nominal head of the expression.

Let us now turn to the second alternative analysis of *kes* noted above, as a pronominal element. As we noted there, 'nominal' and pronominal' seem to

have been used almost interchangeably in the discussion of this overmarking pattern, but they entail very different analyses.

The pronoun as determiner analysis

Since Postal (1969) it has been widely argued that pronouns and determiners belong to the same category. This line of thinking is further developed by Elbourne (2001), who argues for a close relationship between the English determiners *the* and *a* and the pronouns *it* and *one*. On this view, for example, *the* and *it* are both instances of the same lexical item, belonging to the category D(eterminer); *the* surfaces when overt material follows the determiner, otherwise *it*:

- (29) a. Robin bought [_{DP} the [_{NP} book]].
 b. Robin bought [_{DP} it [_{NP} e]].

Under the pronoun-as-determiner analysis, simple pronouns such as *it* in (29b) are instances of NP ellipsis (Jackendoff, 1971). Kim (2004) applies the pronoun-as-determiner approach to analyze *kes* in adult Korean internally headed relative clauses as an e-type pronoun:

- (30) Chelswu nun [_{DP} [totwuk I tomangka-nun] **kes**] ul cap-ass-ta.
 Chelswu top thief nom flee-adnom KES acc catch-past-dec
 ‘Chelswu caught a/the thief who was running away.’

In (30), *kes* heads the determiner phrase containing the internally headed relative clause. It is not a maximal projection, and thus does not bear a referential index, obviating the problem with condition C discussed above. The pronoun-as-determiner analysis of *kes* also extends naturally to NP ellipsis contexts such as (12), which are well-formed in both child and adult Korean, and represent the first productions of *kes* in early child Korean:

- (31) [_{DP} appa [_D [**ke** [_{NP} e]]]] (=10)
 papa KES
 ‘papa’s’

The same analysis extends to *kes* preceded by an adjectival modifier or demonstrative in adult and child Korean:

- (32) a. [_{DP} khu-n [_D [**kes** [_{NP} e]]]]
 big-adnom KES
 ‘a/the big one’
 b. [_{DP} i [_D [**kes** [_{NP} e]]]]
 this KES
 ‘this one’

We are now in a position to explain the precise status of non-adult patterns such as (4) and (15–18). *Kes* in the NP ellipsis pattern of (31) is acquired very early (as is the corresponding pattern in English; see Cazden, 1968). But children learning Korean must learn that a determiner is realized overtly in Korean only when the following NP is empty. Before learning this language-particular feature of Korean, children may allow the overmarked *kes* pattern with the structure in (33).

- (33) [_{DP} Yele-n [_D **[ke** [_{NP} cha]]]] (=17)
 this .like-ADNOM KES car
 ‘a/ the car like this.’

The *kes* overmarking pattern is exactly comparable to early child English patterns like (34a), where the child uses a determiner form which is restricted in the adult grammar to contexts followed by an empty NP (34b).

- (34) a. Doggie bit me [_{DP} mine [_{NP} boot]]. (Adam Stage II; Brown, 1973: 337)
 b. This is [_{DP} mine [_{NP} e]]]

Conclusion

This paper described a pattern of overmarking in early child Korean involving the functional element *kes*. I argued that *kes* in the pattern under discussion is best analyzed as a member of the category D(eterminer) in adult and child Korean. In adult Korean, *kes* is restricted to contexts where it is not followed by an overt NP (like *mine* and *yours* in English. Before learning this language-particular feature of Korean, children may produce the overmarking pattern in (4), (15–18), and (21–22). Understood this way, *kes* overmarking falls within the definition in (8): it results from giving phonetic form to a category (D) that is not phonetically realized in the specific context by adult speakers. *Kes* overmarking is thus an instance of expression of a functional category in child grammar where it is absent in adult grammar, supporting the view that children have early knowledge of the syntax of functional categories.

Two issues remain to be addressed. The first is the relation between determiner *kes* and complementizer *kes*, as in (10). Crosslinguistically it is common for the same lexical item to serve as determiner and complementizer, as with English *that* or German *das/dass*. *Kes* exemplifies the same pattern.

The second issue is the semantics of *kes*. *Kes* is semantically vacuous in comparison to determiners such as *the* and *a* in English. In part this is a consequence of the language-particular fact that *kes* is bound: it must co-occur with overt material to its left in the specifier of the determiner phrase; this material specifies the referential properties of the entire nominal expression.

In this respect *kes* is comparable to English possessive 's, also analyzed by Abney (1987) as a determiner.

However, it is possible that *kes* in early child Korean is not as semantically transparent as in the adult grammar. It is noteworthy that in all of the examples of overmarked *kes* such as (4, 15–18, 21–22), the nominal expression containing *kes* is glossed as definite. Although this must remain a topic for future research, it would be worthwhile to investigate the possibility that overmarked *kes* is used by the child not just to express a functional category that is silent in the adult grammar, but to express that category, a determiner, as a marker of definiteness.