

Mick Spillane

Linguistics

The question whether the subject stays in its thematic position within the VP or it moves to Spec_{CP} TP is difficult to answer in free word order languages such as Korean. Here, we present linguistic evidence that, in Korean, the subject must move to Spec_{CP} TP in sentences with the subject-object-verb word order, but it may stay within the VP in sentences with the object-subject-verb word order.

To study, we make the following two basic assumptions:

(1) Assumption 1: Other things being equal, sentences having an instance of scrambling are more difficult to process than those without that instance of scrambling.

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Assumption 2: The canonical positions for the so-called VP adverbs are within the VP. When VP adverbs are outside the VP, they have gone through scrambling.

Korean adverbs can be divided into three broad classes if you consider their syntactic distribution: (i) adverbs that in beginning are merged with a projection of a verb (i.e., *VP adverbs*); (ii) adverbs that in beginning are merged with a projection of a tense (i.e., *TP adverbs*); and (iii) adverbs that are at starting merged with a projection of a modal (i.e., *MP adverbs*). In , there are schematics of canon positions of these adverbs where A represents an adverb.

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(2) [_{CP} [_{MP} (MP-A) [_{TP} (TP-A) Subj (TP-A) [_{VP} (VP-A) Obj (VP-A) V] T] M] C]

VP adverbs are made up of manner and resultative adverbs such as *haya*, which means ‘fast’ and *kongoni*, which means ‘into pieces.’ Their canonical positions within VP are c-commanded by negative morpheme in short negation sentences such as (3), where the negative morpheme is seen between a verb stem and a tense morpheme. Therefore, VP adverbs tends to be focus of negation, hence, (3) is interpreted as ‘I ran not fast’ (i.e., ‘I ran slowly’).

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(3) [_{VP} haya hasir]-ana-katta
fast run-neg-past
‘(I) did not run fast.’

TP adverbs include time and aspectual adverbs such as *pinoo*, which means ‘yesterday’ and *asiba*, ‘frequently.’ Their canonical positions within TP are outside the c-command domain of the negative morpheme in short negation sentences. Thus, in a short negation sentence in (4a), the verb ‘run’ is negated and not the adverb ‘yesterday.’ TP adverbs can be target of negation in long negation sentences with *wakenai*, which means ‘it is not the case’ and takes a TP as its complement. Therefore, preferred reading of (4b) is ‘the time when I ran was not yesterday.’

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(4) a. [_{TP} pinoo][_{VP} hasir]-ana-katta
yesterday run-neg-past

‘(I) did not run yesterday.’

b. [_{TP} pinoo[_{VP} hasir]-ta]-wakenai
yesterday run-past-it.is.not.the.case
‘It is not the case that (I) ran yesterday.’

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If taking the structure shown in (2), for sentences with VP adverb, subject-adverb-object-verb (SAOV) and subject-object-adverb-verb (SOAV) are canon word orders, then adverb-subject-object-verb (ASOV) is a noncanon derived word order involving adverb scrambling.

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