

# Clitic Analyses of Korean “Little Words”

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**ABSTRACT** In Korean, there are many little words that can best be analyzed as clitics: The copula *i-* and the adjectival *ha-*, as well as some nominal and verbal particles. Among others, the clitic analysis of adjectival *ha-* leads to a unified account of light predicate constructions.

## I. Introduction

“Clitics” are grammatical units which have some properties of inflectional morphology and some of independent words. The existence of clitics is widely attested in the languages of the world ([1]). Even though Korean has many “little words” which show clitic-like properties, not enough attention has been paid to the possibility that these units might actually be clitics. They have usually been analyzed as various types of simple affixes. However, it is clear that they have some properties of independent words, at least from a syntactic point of view.

In this paper, I will show that there are many little words in Korean that should be analyzed as clitics: some (nominal and verbal) particles, the copula *i-* (‘to be’), the “adjectival” *ha-* (‘to do/be’), and others. We will focus on the analysis of adjectival *ha-*. The existence of these clitics will also lead to the conclusion that we need to distinguish between “Phonological Words” and “Syntactic Words.”

## II. Clitics: Theoretical Background

Clitics are those elements which have some properties of affixes and words. However, they are different from affixes and words. [2] and [3] provide some criteria for distinguishing clitics from inflectional affixes, and [4] provides some tests/criteria to distinguish clitics from (independent) words. When contrasted with independent words, clitics have some of the properties of affixes (especially inflectional affixes), and when contrasted with clitics, words have some of the properties of syntactic phrases.

## III. Clitic Analyses of “Particles”

As for Korean nominal particles, [5] initiates the argument that Nom/Acc

case markers are clitics, as well as the “delimiter” *-man* (‘only’). I have shown in [6] that ordinary postpositions (“adverbial case markers”) and delimiters are clitics even though Nom/Acc/Gen case markers are not regular clitics. I proposed the following morphotactic structure for Korean nominals:

- (1) Stem - Der Suffix - Infl Suffix - Clitic 1 - Clitic 2 - Edge Affix  
 (2) *sənsəŋ* -nim -tɨl -eke -man -i  
 teacher Honor Pl to only Nom (‘only to the teachers’)  
 Stem Der Suf Infl Suf Cl C2 Edge Af

In example (2) postposition *-eke* and delimiter *-man* are analyzed as two different kinds of clitics. As for verbal particles, [7] assumes that the Quotative, Discourse Suffix and Plural markers are clear cases of clitics.

#### IV. Clitic Analyses of Verbs in [NP + V] Forms

The Korean Copula *-i* can also be analyzed as a clitic ([8]). It can be shown that it is neither a derivational/inflectional affix nor an independent word:

- (3) a. *i kəs -in [kɨ saram -i coh-a-ha-nin] chək-i -ta.*  
 this thing Top that person Nom like Mod book Cop Dec  
 ‘This a book that the person likes.’  
 b. *chək-i -∅ -ta/ chək-i-əss-ta/ chək-i-kess-ta*  
 book Cop Pres Dec Past Future

If it is a derivational affix, we must say that the relative clause in (3a) modifies a verb (*chək-i-ta*) rather than a noun (*chək*). In (3b) tense markers occur in between the copula and the declarative ending. If it is an inflectional affix, we must assume either that a noun (*chək*) can have a verbal affix (a tense marker) or that an affix (i.e. the copula) can have its own affixes. The copula is not an independent word either because i) it cannot stand alone (e.g., as an answer to a question), ii) no words can be inserted between it and the NP preceding it, and iii) it alone cannot be repeated in a sentence.

There are many different types of *ha-* (‘to do’) in Korean: the verbal *ha-*, the “adjectival/stative verbal” *ha-* and the derivational *ha-*. Each type has its own morphological status as a word, an affix or something else. I will show that the adjectival *ha-* can best be analyzed as a clitic. Traditionally this *ha-* has been treated as a derivational affix.

First of all, let us consider the distributional and/or morphotactic properties of the three types of *ha-* ([9]):

- (4) a. John-i yəŋə -lɪl [koŋpu ha-n -ta].  
 Nom English Acc study do Pres Dec ('John studies English.')
- b. koŋpu-tɪl ha-n-ta (-tɪl: Subject Plural Marker).  
 c. koŋpu-man/nɪn/to ha-n-ta (-man: 'only'; -nɪn: Contr; -to: 'also').  
 d. koŋpu-lɪl ha-n-ta (-lɪl: Acc).  
 e. koŋpu (acu) cal ha-n-ta (acu: 'really/very'; cal: 'well').
- (5) a. John-in [kəŋkaŋ-ha -ta].  
 Topic health do/be Dec ('John is healthy.')
- b. kəŋkaŋ-tɪl-ha-ta.  
 c. kəŋkaŋ-man/in/to-ha-ta (-in: Contr).  
 d. \*kəŋkaŋ-i/ɪl-ha-ta (-i: Nom; -ɪl: Acc).  
 e. \*kəŋkaŋ acu -ha-ta.
- (6) a. John-i sənsəŋnim-ɪl [phi-ha-n -ta].  
 Nom teacher Acc avoid Pres Dec ('John avoids his teacher.')
- b. \* phi-tɪl-ha-n-ta.  
 c. \* phi-man/nɪn/to-ha-n-ta.  
 d. \* phi-ka/lɪl-ha-n-ta.  
 e. \* phi acu/cal -ha-n-ta.

It is evident that the verbal *ha-* in (4) is an independent word and that the derivational *ha-* in (6) is an affix. Various kinds of little words and adverbs can be inserted between the verbal noun *kəŋkaŋ* and *ha-* in (4), but none of them can be added in between the element *phi-* and *ha-* in (6). On the other hand, only the Plural Subject Marker *-tɪl* and delimiters *-man/(n)ɪn/to* can be inserted between the (adjectival) noun *kəŋkaŋ* and the adjectival *ha-* in (5). The Nom/Acc case markers and adverbs are not allowed.

Now, focusing on the adjectival *ha-* in (5),

- (7) a. [John-i Mary-lɪl coh-a-ha-nɪn] tɪs-ha-ta.  
 Nom Acc like Mod seems Dec  
 'John seems to like Mary.'
- b. kəŋkaŋ-ha -∅-ta/ kəŋkaŋ-ha-yəss-ta/ kəŋkaŋ-ha-kess-ta.  
 health do/bo Pres Past Future
- (8) a. kəŋkaŋ-tɪl -ha-ta/ kəŋkaŋ-man-ha-ta.  
 health SPlur only

we can see, just as in the case of copula *-i* above, that the complex *tɪs-ha-ta* can be preceded by a relative clause (7a) (hence, not a derivational ending), and tense markers can occur after *ha-* (7b) (hence, not an inflectional ending). Notice that *tɪs* in (7a) is a noun even though it is "defective" in its distribution. These data show that the *ha-* here is not an affix. In addition, the examples in (8) show that *ha-* occurs after the

Plural Subject Marker *-tʃ* and the delimiter *-man*, which are known to be typical clitics. Notice that clitics can follow other clitics, but derivational and inflectional affixes cannot follow clitics. The adjectival *ha-* is not an independent word, either. It does not show the properties of regular words.

Some might argue against our position that adjectival *ha-* is neither an affix nor a word, based on the following data:

- (9) \*John-*in* [nam -i incəŋ-ha -n<sup>in</sup>] kəŋkəŋ -ha -ta.  
 Top others Nom acknowledge Mod health do/be Dec  
 (Intended to mean 'John 'is healthy/has health, as others acknowledge.')
- (10) a. John-*in* kəŋkəŋ -ha -ki -n<sup>in</sup> ha-pnita.  
 Top health do/be Nominal Constr do Dec  
 '(I accept that) John is healthy.'
- b. k<sup>i</sup> san -i nop- ki -n<sup>in</sup> ha-pnita.  
 that mountain Nom high Nominal Constr do Dec  
 '(I admit that) the mountain is high.'

In sentence (9), noun *kəŋkəŋ* is modified by a relative clause, and yet the sentence is ungrammatical. Hence our argument based on sentence (7a) does not seem to hold. In sentence (10a), *ha-* in *kəŋkəŋ-ha-* seems to be repeated in the sentence. If this is true, it shows that *ha-* is an independent word.

However, there is an independent reason behind the ungrammaticality of sentence (9). Sentence (9), but not sentence (7a), is an example of a "light adjective construction," which requires a "predicate noun" that cannot be modified ([9]). Notice that *kəŋkəŋ* is a (adjectival) predicate noun but *tʃs* is not a predicate noun. In sentence (10a), the second *ha-* is not an adjectival *ha-*, but a pro-predicate. It repeats the whole unit of *kəŋkəŋ-ha-* rather than *ha-* alone, as shown in (10b). Therefore, we can maintain our original arguments about the clitic-hood of the adjectival *ha-*.

Now, we have established that the adjectival *ha-* is a clitic. It is an independent word from a syntactic point of view (i.e. a Syntactic Word). One of the most significant results of this analysis is that we can account for the light verb construction (LVC) in (4) and the construction in (5) (a "light adjective construction") as the same phenomenon of the "light predicate construction." Both *ha-* have the same properties of being "light" in the sense that they are thematically incomplete. Sentence (4) exemplifies a typical LVC, where the subject and the object are (originally) the complements of the verbal noun *kəŋpu* rather than that of verb *ha-*. That is, the verb's arguments are "transferred" from the verbal noun ([10]). We can see the same phenomenon of lightness in the construction of sentence (5). The thematic role of Patient/Theme is assigned to the subject by the adjectival predicate noun (PN). In this construction, different predicate

nouns impose different selectional restrictions on the subject.

If we assume that the *ha-* in (5) is a derivational ending and hence [PN + *ha*] is a single word, we need to account for the single phenomenon of lightness with reference to two different mechanisms. However, in our approach, the verbal *ha-* and the adjectival *ha-* are both independent syntactic words even though the latter is not independent phonologically.

I think more verbal elements in the [NP/XP + V] format can be analyzed as clitics in Korean. Some elements in the [V + V] format might also be analyzed as clitics. I will leave these issues for future research.

## V. Morphological Status and the Lexicon

In view of the research in this paper, I argue, first, that the morphological status of (lexical) entries should be specified in the lexicon. Those lexical entries can be derivational/inflectional affixes, (various kinds of) clitics, or independent words. Second, cognates with different morphological statuses should be treated as different (lexical) entries (e.g., independent word *ha-*, clitic *ha-*, and derivational *ha-*).

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