Pre-verbal Negation in Korean Serial Verb Constructions

This paper concerns itself with pre-verbal negation in Korean serial verb constructions (henceforth, SVCs). In the pre-verbal negation pattern in Korean SVCs, the negative marker *an* can take scope over either over the entire unit of both the first verb (V1) and the second verb (V2), or over only V1. In addition, the pre-verbal negation in the first conjunct of a coordinate structure can apply over only the first conjunct.

In this paper, it is argued that, although they are seemingly identical to each other in the pattern of [V1-e V2], Korean SVCs which consist of two lexical (zero-level) verbs need to be distinguished from bi-VP coordinate constructions in which two VPs are symmetrically conjoined. The claim that Korean [V1-e V2] constructions can be analyzed as either SVCs or bi-VP coordinate constructions is based on the similar distinction between SVCs and coordinate structures in other serializing languages, such as the Kwa languages of West Africa and the Caribbean Creoles.

Several proposals have been introduced in order to account for the structures of Korean SVCs. A symmetrical VP coordinate structure is assumed in Jo (1990), while a VP-complementation structure is postulated in Yi (1997). However, the restriction on the distribution of the negative marker in pre-verbal negation weakens the credibility of those structures of Korean SVCs. The negative marker *an* in pre-verbal negation can adjoin only to a verb and negate the verb itself. Thus, it cannot occur immediately before any XP.

In addition, the claim that Korean SVCs consist of two zero-level verbs is further supported by several phenomena in Korean SVCs such as adverb modification and the scope of negation. Even if we assume that the negative marker takes scope over only the lower verb (V1) in pre-verbal negation, the adverb modification to the higher verb (V2) is impossible. Semantic infelicity provides strong evidence for the claim that the scope of negation in pre-verbal negation is limited to the verb itself.

It is also claimed that two-verb constructions with adverbial insertion are interpreted as bi-clausal. For these, the scopal behavior in pre-verbal negation is crucially referred, since those constructions exhibit only one reading in which V1 is independently negated. Accordingly, a pause can be inserted between [Neg V1] and an adverbial expression because they can be analyzed as bi-VP constructions.

Other types of evidence for the bi-VP analysis come from the licensing of NPIs, passivization, a falling tone carried by V1, and a pause which follows V1. The major tone-group boundary corresponds to the constituent break marked by a falling tone and a pause. It is argued that this is also the case in the bi-VP constructions and therefore that NPIs cannot be licensed in two-verb combinations with adverbial insertion and the passive morpheme must be put in both V1 and V2.

To sum up, the ambiguity of pre-verbal negation in Korean [V1-e V2] constructions is thus reduced to the dual status of those constructions as either SVCs or bi-VP coordinate constructions.
REFERENCES