Two classes of ‘anyone’: A contrastive analysis of amwu and nwukwu in Korean
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This paper investigates two Korean expressions, amwu-to and nwukwu-to, which are seen to be roughly equivalent in meaning to the English word anyone (although nwukwu-to has several other senses). Some (such as Park et al. 2021) have analyzed both of these expressions to be Negative Sensitive Items (NSIs) and others (such as Tieu & Kang 2014) have claimed that they both belong to the even more restricted class of Negative Concord Items (NCIs), but nwukwu-to has a much wider distribution – not being an NCI, an NSI, or an NPI. In closely examining their distribution and interpretations, we demonstrate that they are more distinct from each other than previously assumed. Their contrastive properties include differences in syntactic category, position in the clause, and dependency with regard to the particle -to, in addition to the aforementioned negation restrictions. They additionally will be shown to differ in their interpretations in certain contexts.

Prefiguring our analysis here, we will wind up claiming that the differences between them are attributable to the fact that amwu (as an NSI/NCI) must be interpreted in the scope of NEG to check a Neg Feature and is characterized as an “absolute non-existential quantifier” (in contrast with Giannakidou’s 2008 “dependent existential quantifier”). For its part, nwukwu can be interpreted either inside or outside of the scope of NEG, and is characterized as an “existentially quantified head noun”. After briefly comparing and contrasting the distribution of amwu-to and nwukwu-to, the paper will turn to some additional evidence for treating the two expressions differently. Following this, we will examine the status of the postposition -to that accompanies amwu and nwukwu and then account for their interpretive differences with reference to their scope relations with negation. (1) shows that amwu and nwukwu are sometimes interchangeable. One might speculate from this that they occupy the same syntactic position, but this would be inaccurate.

(1) John-un amwu/nwukwu-to mot po-ass.ta. ‘John didn’t see anyone.’
John-TOP amwu/who-TO not see-PAST.DECL

Closer examination shows their distribution to be quite different. (2) shows that amwu alternates with other determiners and may precede a noun, but nwukwu cannot. (3) shows that nwukwu can be preceded by a determiner such as etten ‘some’, but amwu cannot. In (4), we see that nwukwu can be modified (and preceded by) a relative clause, but amwu cannot. We conclude from this that amwu has the structure in (5a) and nwukwu that in (5b).

(2) John-un etten/amwu/*nwukwu salam-to mot po-ass.ta. ‘John didn’t see anyone.’
John-TOP some/amwu/*who person-TO not see-PAST.DECL
(3) John-un etten nwukwu-to/*amwu-to mot po-ass.ta. ‘John didn’t see anyone.’
John-TOP some who-TO/amwu-TO not see-PAST.DECL
(4) [nay-ka senthaykhaka-n] nwukwu-to/*amwu-to na-lul senthaykhaki anh-ass.ta.
I-NOM choose-REL who-TO/amwu-TO I-ACC choose not-PAST.DECL
‘No one who I chose chose me.’ [even someone who I chose didn’t choose me]

(5) a. [DP amwu [NP Ø/salam]]
   b. [DP Ø/etten [NP nwukwu]]

In addition, another difference between amwu and nwukwu lies in their dependency on -to and negation. (6a) and (6b) show that while nwukwu can occur with either the NOM case marker -ka or the particle -to, amwu requires -to and cannot be followed only by -ka. (6c) and (6d) show, respectively, that nwukwu-to does not require sentential negation, but that amwu-to does.

(6a) nwukwu-{to/ka} John-ul an cohahanta. ‘No one does like John.’ OR
   TO/NOM John-ACC not likes
   b. amwu-{to/*ka} John-ul an cohahanta. ONLY ‘No one does like John.’
c. nwukwu-to John-ul cohahanta. ‘Someone likes John.’
d. *amwu-to John-ul cohahanta.

Given that -to is seen to alternate with the NOM case marker -ka in (6a), it is important to determine the status of -to generally. The data in (7) show that -to is neither a semantic postposition nor a grammatical case marker, each of these having a distinct distributional profile. (7a) and (7b) show that case markers (e.g., -nun) cannot cooccur with discourse particles (e.g., -mun) – one or the other may appear as a postposition, not both. (7c) and (7d) next show that semantic postpositions (e.g., -eykey) and case markers (e.g., -lul) are mutually exclusive. In contrast, (7e) shows that semantic postpositions (e.g., -eykey) and discourse particles (e.g., -mun) are not in complementary distribution. If the three classes of postpositions are hierarchically ordered and adjacent classes may not cooccur as shown in (8), then the grammaticality of the data in (7) is explained.
a. Harry-lul-(*nun) senmwul-ul an cwu-ess.ta. ‘I didn’t give Harry a gift’

b. Harry-(*lul)-nun senmwul-ul an cwu-ess.ta. ‘Speaking of Harry, I didn’t give him a gift.’

c. Harry-eykey-(*lul) senmwul-ul an cwu-ess.ta. ‘I didn’t give a gift to Harry.’

d. Harry-(*eykey)-lul senmwul-ul an cwu-ess.ta. ‘I didn’t give Harry a gift.’

e. Harry-eykey-nun senmwul-ul an cwu-ess.ta. ‘Speaking of Harry, I didn’t give a gift to him.’

With the hierarchy and distribution of postpositions, it is clear that -to is of the same class as -nun (i.e., a discourse particle). It cannot appear with a case marker (e.g., -lul), as in (9a). It can appear with a semantic postposition (e.g., -eykey), as in (9c) and (9d).

Turning back to interpretations available for amwu and nwukwu, we see that they exhibit a contrast with respect to scope of NEG, such that amwu-to induces only a narrow scope reading (Neg＞∃), suggesting that it is always in the scope of NEG, while nwukwu-to can have either narrow scope (Neg＞∃) or wide scope (∃＞Neg) readings as shown in (10). These facts suggest that amwu can have a valued [Neg] feature and that when it does it selects the postposition -to. In order for this [Neg] feature to be checked, amwu must be in the scope of NEG at LF. Due to this, amwu can only appear in NSI/NCI contexts and is an “absolute non-existential quantifier”. In contrast, nwukwu does not carry any inherent [Neg] feature, and thus can be either within the scope of NEG or outside of it. As a simple “existential quantifier”, it can also be, in Giannakidou’s (2008) terms, a “dependent existential quantifier” and involve indefinite/specific readings as shown in (11).

We conclude from these facts that (i) amwu is a determiner which can take a null noun head referring to a person (parallel to Choi 2011), while nwukwu is a noun referring to a person per se, (ii) the particle -to has the same distribution as the topic or focus postposition -(n)un, and (iii) amwu is “absolute non-existential quantifier” which is only licit under negation, whereas nwukwu is an “existential quantifier” that can induce indefinite/specific readings as attested in (11).

References


