

Distributions of *-i/ka* and *-ul/lul*: Not Case Markers but Delimiters

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The particles *-i/ka* and *-ul/lul* in Korean, which are generally assumed to be nominative and accusative case markers, respectively, occur not only in argument positions but also in a variety of non-argument positions (O’Grady 1991, Kim & Sells 2010, Sin-SI 2014, Hong-KS 2017, Lee 2017, Park 2019, etc.). Almost all previous analyses assume that they are ambiguous between case markers and non-case markers and/or that they have different meanings. However, no previous analyses have been successful in providing objective criteria for the distinctions between case markers and non-case markers and for the meaning differences between the two particles. Although some analyses argue that the particles are not case markers at all, they have failed to account for the fact that only *-i/ka* can occur after the subject and only *-ul/lul* after the object.

Under the view that neither of the two assumptions above are correct, we will provide a unified analysis of all the occurrences of *-i/ka* and *-ul/lul*, regardless of whether they are in argument positions or not: the former can occur only in a stative context and the latter only in a dynamic context. We will see that the subject is inherently stative. As for the predicate, although the most important factor for determining its stativity is the lexical properties of its head, other factors such as animacy (of the subject) and negation are also in effect. We argue that predicates can be divided into three groups: agentive dynamic predicates (A), non-agentive dynamic predicates (B) and stative predicates (C). Group A predicates engender only a dynamic context and Group C predicates engender only a stative context. If we are on the right track, only *-ul/lul* will occur in the VP containing a Group A predicate and only *-i/ka* in the VP containing a Group C predicate, which will be borne out. On the other hand, Group B predicates will engender not only a dynamic context but also a stative context. Although all of them can engender a dynamic context because they are basically (non-agentive) dynamic predicates, they can also engender a stative context when the eventuality concerned can be construed as stative. The eventuality can be construed more readily as stative when there are involved more factors that increase the degree of stativity or decrease the degree of dynamicity.

We are following the arguments in Chae (2020: Section 4.2) that *-i/ka* and *-ul/lul* are not case markers and that they have the same meaning. We can account for their occurrences only when we assume that they are not case markers. Most of all, they can be attached even to pure adverbs such as manner adverbs (e.g., *ppalli* ‘fast’) and adverbs of quantification (e.g., *manhi* ‘many, much’) (Sen-WY 1994: 49-50, Im-HP 2007: 432, 578-9, Kim 2009: 91, Sin-SI 2014: 73-4, Cho & Whitman 2020: 157). However, our approach is different from Chae (2020) in that we argue that they are two delimiters that stand in a special relation rather than two allomorphs of a delimiter. We assume that they are delimiters that share the meaning of “(unique) designation/specification.” They have the same meaning because they stand in the relation of “context-dependent lexical variants,” which can be defined as pairs of lexical items that have the same (truth-conditional) meaning but occur in different contexts.

In addition to the pairs of negative polarity items and their positive counterparts, Korean has other pairs of lexical variants. For example, the postposition *-kkey* ‘to’ can only be attached to

a host to whom the speaker wants to pay his respect. On the other hand, the postposition *-eykey/hanthey* ‘to’ is attached to a non-honorific host. In addition, the honorific words *yensey* ‘age,’ *cinci* ‘meal,’ *malssum* ‘words,’ *cwumwusi-* ‘to sleep,’ *yeccwup-* ‘to ask’ and *tuli-* ‘to give’ have the following non-honorific variants: *nai* ‘age,’ *pap* ‘meal,’ *mal* ‘words,’ *ca-* ‘to sleep,’ *mwut-* ‘to ask’ and *cwu-* ‘to give,’ respectively.

Just like these pairs of lexical variants, *-i/ka* and *-ul/lul* occur in different contexts, as will be shown. The former is a lexical item that can occur in a stative context and the latter in a dynamic context. Although they can occur in the same place in some cases, this is not because they have such a property themselves but because the environment they occur can be either stative or dynamic. We will further see that *-i/ka* has (wrongly) been analyzed as a nominative marker because the subject position is inherently stative and that *-ul/lul* as an accusative marker because the object is always in a dynamic context. In our analysis, *-i/ka* and *-ul/lul* do not directly contribute to determining the preceding element as a subject or an object, but reflect the stativity/dynamicity of the context.

We hope our analysis sheds light on the analysis of the corresponding particles in other (agglutinative) languages such as Japanese, Mongolian and Turkish (cf. Blake 2001, Malchukov & Spencer 2008). We need to pay attention to the fact that the Nom case marker is basically \emptyset in Altaic and Uralic languages (Ko-YK 2020: 428), which is in line with our analysis that *-i/ka* and *-ul/lul* are not case markers in Korean.

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