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REANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE FOR/AGAINST AGRP IN KOREAN

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Abstract: This article deals with the controversial issue of AgrP in Korean within the Minimalist Program. Some linguists maintain that there is AgrP in Korean, while others not. In this article I review the evidence for and against the existence of AgrP in Korean, and then show that some pieces of evidence for the AgrP are misleading, and some against the AgrP can actually be reanalyzed to form stronger evidence for the existence of AgrP in Korean.

1. Introduction

Influenced by Chomsky (1992) and Pollock (1989), some scholars have insisted that there are functional categories, such as AgrP and NegP in Korean, while others have argued against the existence of such functional categories. In this paper, I will explore both perspectives on AgrP of Korean by reinterpreting the arguments offered by each side, and will argue for AgrP in Korean.

2. An Argument Against AgrP in Korean

J. Yun (1990), among others, argues against the existence of the functional category, AgrP, in Korean by maintaining that the supporting arguments for the AgrP are not strong enough to confirm the existence of the AgrP in Korean. The following are her arguments against the AgrP in Korean.

(1) a. [abənim -kkesə¹ noræ -ril ha -si] ko [əmənim -kkesə chum-il chu -si] -n -ta
Father-H.Subj. song-Obj. do-Hon² and Mother -H.Subj. dancing-Obj. do-Hon -Pres -DECL.
'Father sings a song and Mother performs dancing.'

b.?? [abənim -kkesə noræ-ril ha] ko [əmənim -kkesə chum-il chu] -si³ -n -ta
Father-H.Subj. song-Obj. do and Mother -H.Subj. dancing-Obj. dance -Hon -Pres.-DECL
'Father sings a song and Mother performs dancing.'

c. [JW-ka noræ-ril ha] ko [abənim -kkesə chum-il chu] -si -n -ta
JW-Subj. song-Obj. do and Father-H.Subj. dancing-Obj. dance -Hon -Pres.-DECL
'JW sings a song and Father performs dancing.'

(1a) might show that coordinate conjunction is possible between projections of Agr which are seemingly functioning as a syntactic head.⁴ If Agr is a syntactic head in conjunction, however, then we cannot explain why (1b) is awkward. That is, if '-si' is an Agr, and if '[abənim -kkesə noræ -ril ha-]' and '[əmənim -kkesə chum-il chu-]' form a coordinate-conjunction construction.

then the interpretation of the Agr ‘-si’ being applicable to both coordinate conjuncts should be possible. But, (1b) shows that this is not the case. In addition, if the interpretation in which the Agr ‘-si’ is connected with both conjuncts were possible, then (1c) should be judged ungrammatical because the subject, *JW*, which does not have honorific feature when compared with the other subject ‘abŏnim’, (honorific) *Father*, does have the interpretation of being honorified. However, this is against what is predicted again. Therefore, based on the arguments above, J. Yun (1990) concludes that we cannot admit Agr as an independent syntactic category in Korean.

3. Arguments for AgrP in Korean

According to J. R. Yun (1990)⁵, among others, Agr and Tense in Korean are syntactically separable in the negative construction, the ‘kiri ha-’ substitution construction, and the nominalization construction; this forms good evidence for the existence of AgrP in Korean. Let’s consider his arguments in detail.

Split of Agr and Tense in Negative Construction If the honorific marker ‘-si’ were a realization of Agr in Korean (Han 1987, Choi 1986), that would indicate that the Agr element ‘-si’ for honorific expressions and the Tense element ‘-at’ for past tense are separable with the negative marker ‘an-’ for *not* being placed in between.

- (2) a. JW -ka ochi an -at -ta (ani -ha -iŏt -ta)⁶
 JW -Subj. come not -Past -DECL (not -do -Past -DECL)
 ‘JW did not come.’
- b. abŏnim -kkesŏ o -si -chi an -at -ta (ani -ha -iŏt -ta)
 Father -H.Subj. come -Hon not -Past -DECL (not -do -Past -DECL)
 ‘Father did not come.’

Based on this evidence, J. R. Yun (1990) insists that the INFL node of Korean should be split into Agr and Tense.

Split of Agr and Tense in ‘kiri ha-’ Substitution Construction In the following Korean sentences, ‘kiri ha-’ of (3b) substitutes for ‘noræ-ril ha-’ *sing(do) a song* of (3a).

- (3) a. JW -ka noræ -ril ha - iŏt -ta.
 JW -Subj. song -Obj. do -Past -DECL
 ‘JW sang a song.’
- b. Tom -do kiri ha - iŏt -ta
 Tom -Subj. the same do -Past -DECL
 ‘Tom did the same.’ = (‘Tom sang a song, too.’)

Based on the observation above, J.R. Yun (1990) extends his argument to sentences including the honorific marker ‘-si’, maintaining that ‘kiri ha-’ substitution is still observable. Consider the following:

- (4) a. əmənim -kkesə noræ -ril ha -si -ət -ta
 Mother -H.Subj. song -Obj. do -**Hon** -Past -DECL
 'Mother sang a song.'
- b. abənim -kkesə -do kiri ha -iət -ta
 Father -H.Subj.-also the same do -**Past** -DECL
 'Father did the same.'

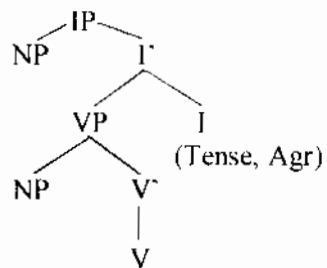
According to J.R. Yun (1990), 'kiri ha-' of (4b) replaces 'noræ-ril ha-si' *song-Obj. do-Hon-*, and again this is another piece of strong evidence for the split of Agr and Tense in Korean.

Split of Agr and Tense in Nominalization Constructions J.R. Yun (1990)'s third piece of evidence for the existence of Agr as an independent syntactic category is derived from the following data. Consider⁷:

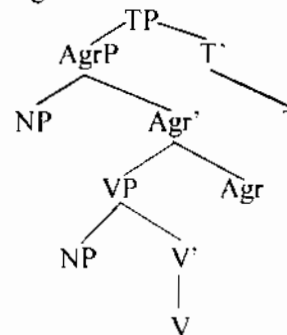
- (5) a. JW -ui məri -ui api -m
 JW -Poss. head -Poss. pain -Nominalizer
 'JW's headache'
- b. ** JW -ui məri -ui api -ət -i⁸m
 JW -Poss. head -Poss. pain -**Past** -Nominalizer
 'JW's previous headache'
- c. abənim -ui məri -ui api -si -m
 Father -Poss. head -Poss. pain -**Hon** -Nominalizer
 'Father's headache'

As we can see from the data in (5b), a Tense element such as '-ət' is not allowed to appear in a nominalization construction, while an Agr element such as '-si' can appear as is shown in (5c). Therefore, in order to explain this difference, J.R. Yun (1990) maintains that the traditionally assumed INFL should be modified to be split into two different syntactical nodes such as Agr and Tense. The following diagrams will show the difference of the before- and after- structure concerning this issue.

- (6) a. INFL-based Structure



- b. Split Agr/Tense Structure



4. Reanalysis of evidence for/against the AgrP in Korean

In this section, I will re-interpret the evidence which has been offered for and against the existence of Agr in Korean. As we will see in the following discussion, some pieces of evidence have been misinterpreted and some do not constitute evidence.

Reinterpretation of the evidence for the AgrP in Korean One of J.R. Yun's (1990) arguments for the AgrP in Korean is based on the observation of the following sentence in which the Agr element '-si', a subject honorific marker, and the Tense element '-(i)ət' for past tense are separated. (2b) is repeated as (7). Consider:

- (7) abənim -kkesə o -si -chi an -at -ta (= ani ha -iət -ta)
 Father -H.Subj. come -Hon -NM* not -Past -DECL (= not do -Past -DECL)
 'Father did not come.' (*NM: negative verbal marker)

However, this argument is problematic because of the following datum.

- (8) abənim -kkesə o-chi ani -si -ət -ta (= ani ha -si -ət -ta)
 Father -H.Subj. come-NM not -Hon -Past -DECL (= not do -Hon -Past -DECL)
 'Father did not come.'

(8) shows that in the negative construction, it is not necessarily required for Agr and Tense to be separated (compare (8) with (7)). In other words, though it is true for Agr and Tense to be able to separate in Korean, that fact does not necessarily mean that Agr and Tense of Korean are syntactically individual categories. That is, just as we could insist, based on the observation of (7), that Agr and Tense in Korean should be separate categories, while treating with the case of (8) as an exception, so could we maintain, following (8), that Agr and Tense in Korean are not separable, while dealing with (7) as an exception, or as something like cliticization.

The second argument of J.R. Yun (1990) is that 'kiri ha-' can substitute for the phrase including the agreement element '-si' while leaving the tense element behind. (9) is a repeat of (4).

- (9) a. əmənim -kkesə norə -ril ha -si -ət -ta
 Mother -H.Subj. song -Obj. do -Hon -Past -DEC
 'Mother sang a song.'
- b. abənim -kkesə -do kiri ha -iət -ta
 Father -H.Subj. -also the same do -Past -DECL
 'Father did the same.'

However, this argument again becomes problematic when we think of the following example in which the Agr element, '-si' and the Tense element, '-ət', still appear together after the 'kiri ha-' substitution. Consider (10).

- (10) abənim -kkesədo kiri ha -**si** -ət -ta
 Father -H.Subj.-also the same do -**Hon -Past** -DECL
 'Father also did the same.'

In addition, (10) sounds more natural in conversation than (9b). We have another example telling the same story. Consider:

- (11) a. əmənim -kkesə jaŋ -e ka -**si** -chi an -**at** -ta
 Mother -H.Subj. market -to go -**Hon -NM** not -**Past** -DECL
 'Mother didn't go the market.'
- b. abənim -kkesə -do kiri ha -**iət** -ta
 Father -H.Subj -also the same do -**Past** -DECL
- c. abənim -kkesə -do kiri ha -**si** -ət -ta
 Father -H.Subj -also the same do -**Hon -Past** -DECL

In (11a), 'jaŋ-e ka-si-chi an-', *market-to go-Hon not-*, includes the Agr element '-si-'. Therefore, if this phrase were replaced with 'kiri ha-', then, according to J.R. Yun(1990), the Agr element 'si-' should not appear in the resulting structure, and this expectation is satisfied in (11b). However, as in (10), we have another more natural 'kiri ha-' construction, (11c), which includes the honorific marker, that is, an Agr element, '-si'. These findings lead us to the conclusion that it seems very difficult, or at least not convincing enough, to maintain, based on the 'kiri ha-' substitution construction, that the Agr and the Tense should be syntactically separated in Korean.

The third argument of J.R. Yun (1990) for Agr in Korean is based on the observation of the split of Agr and Tense in nominalization constructions.

Concerning their behavior in a sentence and in a nominalization, there is an interesting contrast. In Korean, unlike English and some other Indo-European languages, Tense seems to be a more prominent element of the traditional INFL, and Agr seems to be on Tense in a sentence. This inference can be supported by the following data showing that a sentence with the INFL [+Tense,-Agr] sounds more natural than that with the INFL [-Tense, +Agr]. Consider the following data.

- (12) a. əmənim -kkesə noræ -ril ha -**si** -ət -ta
 Mother -H.Subj. song -Obj. do -**Hon -Past** -DECL.
 'Mother sang a song.' <+Tense,+Agr>
- b.(?) əmənim -kkesə noræ -ril ha -**iət** -ta
 <+Tense,-Agr>
- c.** əmənim -kkesə noræ-ril ha -**si** -ta
 <-Tense,+Agr>

In (12), the subject ‘*ömönim*’ *Mother* is attached to the honorific subject marker ‘-kkesə’ which requires another honorific marker to appear in the predicate. In (12a), this is realized as the honorific marker ‘-si’ in a verb. Sometimes this requirement, however, is not satisfied. (12b) is an example in which the verb stands alone without an honorific marker matching with the honorific subject marker ‘-kkesə’. However, this sentence is not as ungrammatical as (12c) in which a verb stands with the Agr in the predicate, but without the Tense. I believe the difference in grammaticality of the two sentences such as (12b) and (12c) is strong evidence for the prominence of Tense and the dependence of Agr on Tense in Korean. When we think of Agr and Tense in a nominalization construction, however, the situation becomes quite the opposite. As we could see in (4 a,b,c), unlike the Tense element such as ‘-ət’ for past tense, an Agr element like the honorific marker ‘-si’ can appear in a nominalization construction. (13) is a repeat of (4).

- (13) a. JW -ui məri -ui api -m
 JW -Poss. head -Poss. pain -Nominalizer
 ‘JW’s headache’
- b.** JW -ui məri -ui api -ət -im
 JW -Poss. head -Poss. pain -Past -Nominalizer
 ‘JW’s previous headache’
- c. abönim -ui məri -ui api -si -m
 Father -Poss. head -Poss. pain -Hon -Nominalizer
 ‘Father’s headache’
- d.** abönim -ui məri -ui api -si -ət -im
 Father -Poss. head -Poss. pain -Hon -Past -Nominalizer
 ‘Father’s previous headache’

If Agr and Tense are two sub-labels of INFL, and if the appearance of Agr is completely dependent on the appearance of Tense in Korean, then Agr should not be expected to appear where there is no Tense. However, (13c) shows that this is not true. On the contrary, (13c) shows that Agr appears where there is no Tense. Thus, based on this observation, we can conclude that Agr and Tense should be separated syntactically.

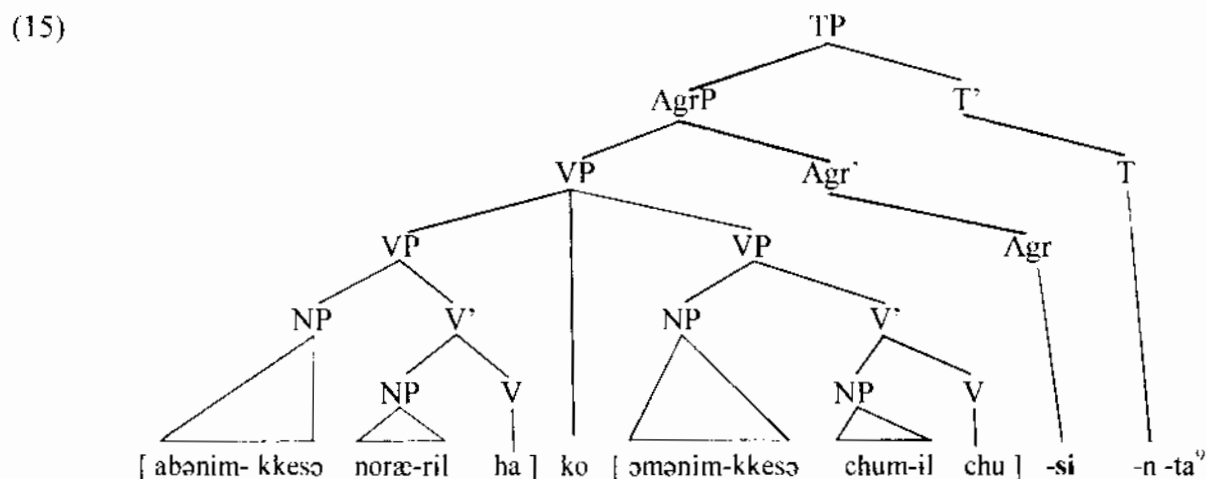
To summarize, the former two arguments among the three which are offered by J.R. Yun (1990) for the existence of the AgrP in Korean are not strong enough to confirm the functional category at all, while only the third argument can be good evidence for Agr’s being a syntactically independent category in Korean.

Reanalysis of the evidence against the AgrP in Korean In order for AgrP to gain its foundation as a syntactically independent category in Korean, it is necessary to explain the counter-arguments offered by J. Yun (1990). J. Yun’s (1990) argument was that coordinate conjunction, in which the Agr element is interpreted to be connected with both conjuncts, is impossible. Consider the data suggested by J. Yun (1990) again. (14) is a repeat of (1)

- (14) a. [abənim -kkesə noræ -ril ha -si] ko [əmənim -kkesə chum -il chu -si] -n -ta
 Father-H.Subj. song-Obj. do -Hon and Mother-Subj. dancing-Obj. do-Hon -Pres.-DECL
 'Father sings a song and Mother performs dancing.'
- b.?? [abənim -kkesə noræ -ril ha] ko [əmənim -kkesə chum -il chu] -si -n -ta
 Father-H.Subj. song-Obj. do and Mother-Subj. dancing-Obj. dance -Hon-Pres.-DECL
 'Father sings a song and Mother performs dancing.'
- c. [JW -ka noræ -ril ha] ko [abənim -kkesə chum -il chu] -si -n -ta
 JW-Subj. song-Obj. do and Father-Subj. dancing-Obj. dance -Hon -Pres.-DECL
 'JW sings a song and Father performs dancing.'

As we have discussed before, (14a) might show that two AgrP's are coordinate conjunction. However, the AgrP assumption cannot explain the awkwardness of (14b) in which the Agr '-si' for honorific purpose is expected to dominate both conjuncts not only configurationally but also semantically. In addition, the Agr assumption mistakenly leads us to predict that (14c) is ungrammatical because within this assumption, the Agr '-si' should be expected to be connected with the first subject 'JW' which does not have any honorific feature. Based on this evidence, J. Yun (1990) argues against the AgrP in Korean. However, her evidence against Agr needs reinterpreting.

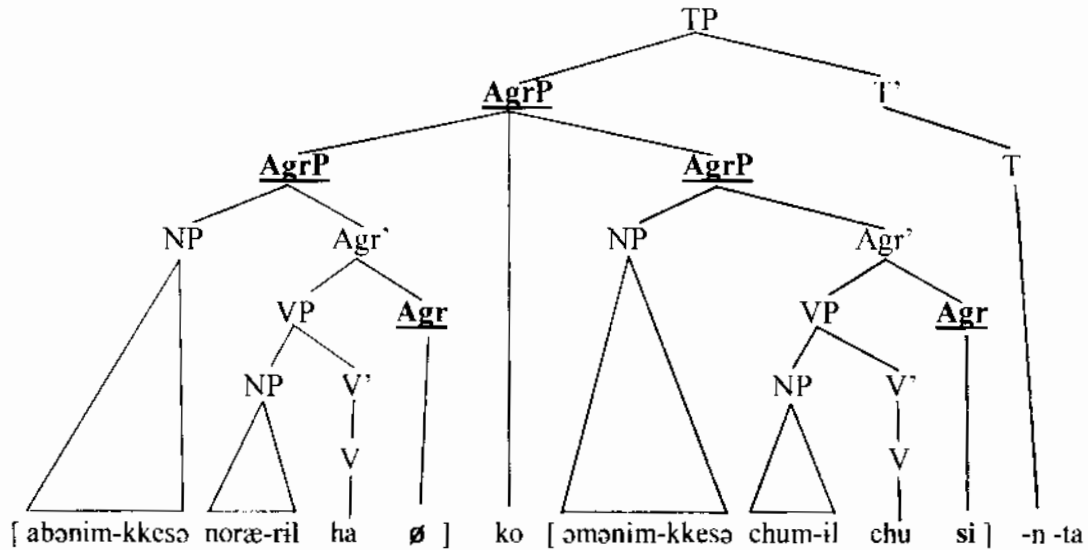
According to J. Yun (1990), (14b) is assumed have the following structure under the Agr hypothesis.



If this structure is correct, then we cannot explain why (14b) is awkward, and why (14c) is grammatical. Therefore, the Agr hypothesis cannot be accepted as J. Yun (1990) intends.

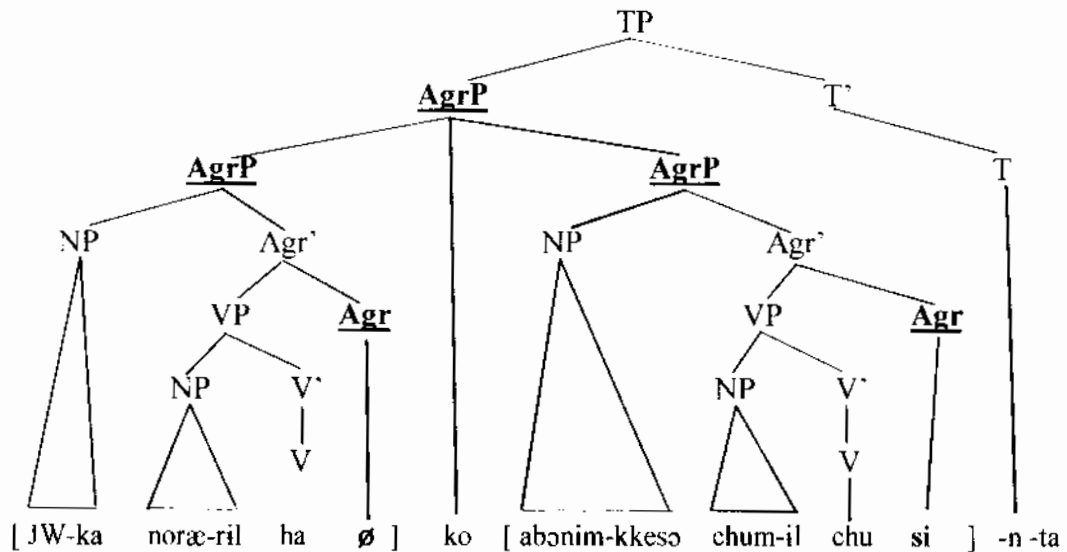
However, there is an important fact we cannot skip. That is, J. Yun's (1990) argument works only under the VP-internal subject hypothesis. If we accept that Nominative Case in Korean is checked by Agr (Han 1987, Choi 1986), then the minimal maximal (surface) structure including the two subjects can't be the VP's, but AgrP's. That is to say, coordinate conjunction in (14b) and (14c) should occur between AgrP's, not between VP's. If that is the case, then, we can explain why (14b) is awkward, and why (14c) is grammatical. This will be a completely different explanation from J. Yun (1990). Let's consider the structure of (14b) under the new approach.

(16)



As we can clearly see from the structure (16), the reason why (14b) is awkward is because the first Agr element '-si' for honorific purpose which should match with the honorific feature of the first subject, *abonim* *Father*, is not realized, and the reason why (14c) is grammatical is because the Agr '-si', an honorific marker appearing in the predicate of the first conjunct, is not realized in order to match with the plain or [-honorific] first subject *JW*. (17) is the structure of (14c).

(17)



To summarize the discussion so far, the evidence (1=14) which has been suggested by Yun (1990) for arguing against the existence of AgrP in Korean is reinterpreted to become strong supporting evidence for the AgrP in Korean.

5. Conclusion

Since Chomsky (1991) and Pollock (1989), functional categories such as AgrP, NegP, MP, etc. in Korean have been the center of hot discussion. In this paper, I reviewed the evidence for and against the existence of AgrP in Korean. By reinterpreting the evidence offered by both sides, I found stronger evidence for the AgrP in Korean. I have shown some pieces of evidence for the AgrP are not plausible, and some pieces of evidence against the AgrP can be reinterpreted to become stronger evidence for the AgrP in Korean.

NOTES

1. '-kkesǎ' is an honorific subject marker, while '-ka' which we have in (1c) is a plain subject marker.

2. 'Hon' indicates an honorific marker. I assume that the appearance of an honorific marker is a realization of Agreement between the subject and its predicate in Korean. '-kkesǎ' is an honorific subject marker and '-si' is an honorific marker of the predicate. Whenever there appears an honorific subject marker '-kkesǎ', the honorific marker '-si' is expected in the predicate.

3. To form a coordinate conjunction structure, two or more conjuncts should have the same category. If we follow Baker's (1988) Mirror Principle, the two conjuncts should be dominated by AgrP, a maximal projection of the Agr '-si', which will again be dominated by the TP.

4. The Korean sentence structure will be $[_{TP} [_{AgrP} [_{VP} [_{DP} \text{ab}\alpha\text{nim-kkes}\alpha] [_{V'} [_{DP} \text{nor}\alpha\text{-ri}] [_{V} \text{ha}]]]] [_{Agr'} [_{Agr} \text{-si}]]]_{Agr} \text{-ko} [_{AgrP} [_{VP} [_{DP} \alpha\text{m}\alpha\text{nim-kkes}\alpha] [_{V'} [_{DP} \text{chum-i}] [_{V} \text{chu}]]]] [_{Agr'} [_{Agr} \text{-si}]]]_{AgrP}]_{AgrP} [_{T'} [_{T} \text{-n-ta}]]]_{TP}$ if we admit the AgrP in Korean. Thus, the structure of (1a) will be like the following:

$[_{TP} [_{AgrP} [_{AgrP} [_{VP} [_{DP} \text{ab}\alpha\text{nim-kkes}\alpha] [_{V'} [_{DP} \text{nor}\alpha\text{-ri}] [_{V} \text{ha}]]]] [_{Agr'} [_{Agr} \text{-si}]]]_{Agr} \text{-ko} [_{AgrP} [_{VP} [_{DP} \alpha\text{m}\alpha\text{nim-kkes}\alpha] [_{V'} [_{DP} \text{chum-i}] [_{V} \text{chu}]]]] [_{Agr'} [_{Agr} \text{-si}]]]_{AgrP}]_{AgrP} [_{T'} [_{T} \text{-n-ta}]]]_{TP}$

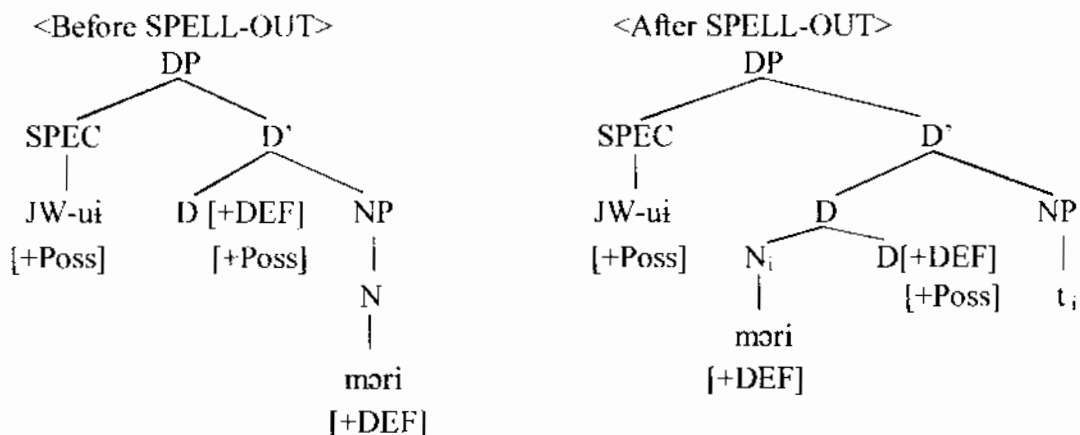
This structure will be repeated more in detail in section 4.

5. The two main authors whose opposite perspectives on the AgrP in Korean I am discussing in this paper, have the same surname 'Yun'. So, in order to distinguish between the two authors, I will also specify their first names, such as J. Yun (1990) and J.R. Yun (1990).

6. Korean has two ways negate. One is called "a short-form negation" and the other "a long-form negation". There is no difference in meaning caused by usage of one over the other except that the latter is more often used in a formal dialogue.

7. The structure of DP and features of each functional categories inside the DP within the Minimalist Program is still controversial. The following structure I suggest for the DP in Korean needs more refinement.

- a. JW-*ui* *məri* *John's head*
 JW-Poss head



Except the features of [+Def] and [+Poss] I assume in the structure above, the list of possible features available inside DP might include [\pm Plural], [\pm Animate], [\pm Male], etc. The following are the English examples which need those features.

- b. *that man* c. *those men* d. *the creature's kidney* e. **the rock's kidney*
 [-Pl] [-Pl] [+Pl] [+Pl] [+Animate] [+Animate] [-Animate] [-Animate]

Korean DP examples such as (5b) and (5c) which are repeated in the following will include more complicated structures inside and procedures to check each functional feature will be more complicated than the explanation offered for (5a). The study, however, is beyond the discussion here, so that I will leave the issue open. In this paper, it is enough to identify the fact that unlike the Agr element '-*si*', the Tense element cannot appear in the Korean Nominal construction.

- (5 b) ** JW -*ui* *məri -ui* *api -ot -im*
 JW -Poss. head -Poss. pain -**Past** -Nominalizer
 'JW's previous headache'

- (5c) *abanim -ui* *məri -ui* *api -si -m*
 Father -Poss. head -Poss. pain -**Hon** -Nominalizer
 'Father's headache'

8. The vowel 'i' in front of the nominalizer '-m' is inserted just for the ease of pronunciation. In actuality, the vowel 'i' is the most unmarked, and so most easily inserted in Korean pronunciation.

9. The MP, Modality Phrase, is assumed to be the root of the configuration of Korean. However, I will ignore the detailed structure of Korean here.

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