

Verb Formation in Korean¹

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In this paper, I will discuss the formation of verbs in Korean. Like nouns, verbs are formed by derivation and compounding. Verbs involve inflection, however, because the verb in Korean cannot be an independent word without inflectional suffixes.

Bloomfield (1933:224) points out the two types of formation: word formation (word derivation, word compounding, and word inflection) and stem formation (stem derivation, stem compounding, and stem inflection). The former produces free forms and the latter produces bound forms. In *plays*, *player*, and *playground*, for example, there is a free form *play*. Thus, English illustrates the *word formation* type. In contrast, German has *stem formation*. Consider the following examples:

- (1) lachen 'to laugh'
- lach-e 'I laugh'
- lach-t 'he laughs'
- lach-te 'he laughed'
- ge-lach-t 'laughed (participle)'
- Lach-er 'laughter'
- Lach-krampf 'laughing-spasm'

In (1), we find a bound form *lach*. Since Korean is similar to German, the bound form *mek* appears in the following examples:

- (2) mek-ta 'to eat'
- mek-uni, mek-ese, mek-ko 'eat-Inf Suffix'
- mek-i 'food'
- mek-ki 'eating'

1. Derivation

As with nouns, derivation in verbs involves affixes and has the following structure:

- (3) (Y) X (Z)
- (X: Noun or Verb Root, Y: Prefix, Z: Suffix)

1. This is a slightly revised version of 2.2 in my dissertation.

Like nominal prefixes, verbal prefixes in Korean do not change lexical category. Consider the following examples:

- (4) *cis-*: *cis-nwuluta* 'to press down strongly'
 strongly-press down
si-/say-:² *si-phelehta* 'to be deeply blue'
 deeply-be blue
 say-ppalkahta 'to be deeply red'
 deeply-be red
toy-: *toy-kalta* 'to plow again'
 again-plow
tey-: *tey-salmta* 'to boil half'
 half-boil
taka-: *taka-ancta* 'to sit toward'
 toward-sit
yes-: *yes-tutta* 'to overhear'
 secretly-hear

In (3), suffixes include causative (*-i*, *-hi*, *-ki*, *-li*, *-wu*, *-kwu*, *-chwu*) and passive (*-i*, *-hi*, *-ki*, *-li*). Since these suffixes cannot occur simultaneously in the verbal structure, verb roots can necessarily choose only one suffix. As an exception to this, a few verbs take double causative suffixes. For example, *caywuta* 'to cause to sleep' is formed from *ca-i-wu-ta*. Suffixes besides the causative and passive are:

- (5) *-talaha(ta)*: *noph-talaha(ta)* 'to be high'
 be high-Verb Suf
-kapa(ta): *cha-kapa(ta)* 'to be cold'
 be cold-Verb Suf
-(u)p(ta): *kuli-p(ta)* 'to miss'
 miss-Verb Suf

These verbal suffixes are added to verb roots. In *ttele-ttuli(ta)* 'to fall down' and *neme-ttuli(ta)* 'to knock down,' however, the emphatic suffix *-ttuli* can be added to a form with *-a/e*, which is a so-called verbal adverbial ending. As H.-P. Choi (1955/1983:362) points out, this means that *-ttulita* was historically used as an independent word. But the form has now become a derivational suffix which lacks independence.

2. *si-* is connected with forms having so-called dark vowels, whereas *say-* is connected with forms having so-called light vowels.

Certain verbal suffixes change nouns into verbs. This means that like nominal suffixes, verbal suffixes can also determine the lexical category. Consider the following examples:

- (6) -lop(ta): sulki (N)-lop(ta) 'to be wise'
 wisdom-Verb Suf
 -sulep(ta): kekceng (N)-sulep(ta) 'to be worried'
 worry-Verb Suf
 -tap(ta): salam (N)-tap(ta) 'to be humane'
 man-Verb Suf
 -ap/ep(ta): potul (N)-ap(ta) 'to be soft'
 soft-Verb Suf
 kancil (N)-ep(ta) 'to feel a tickle'³
 tickling-Verb Suf

2. Compounding

As with nouns, there are two kinds of compounds for verbs: sub-compounds and co-compounds. They are composed of two verb roots. Consider the following examples:

- (7) a. ttwi:-nolta 'to romp'
 run-play
 may:-talta 'to hang'
 hang-hang
 kwut:-seyta 'to be strong'
 be hard-be strong
 b. o-kata 'to come and go'
 come-go
 ye-tatta 'to open and close'
 open-close
 olu-naylita 'to rise and fall'
 rise-fall

Compared to noun compounds, it is difficult to tell whether the examples in (7a) are sub-compounds or co-compounds. We assume that they are sub-compounds because the right-hand forms determine the meaning of the compounds. For example, *cith-phwuluta* means 'to be deep blue,' not 'to be deep and blue.'

3. It has a problem that such forms as *potul* and *kancil* are nouns. However, I treat them as nouns in terms of lexical category in Korean (Noun, Verb, and Postposition).

Finally, while the examples in (8a) have a second stage with *-ase/ese*, those in (8b) do not. In order to make a paradigm, Kang should also assume the second stage in (8b), as in the following:

(11) *ota kata* → (*c-konase kata*) → *o-kose kata*
→ *o-ko kata* → *o-kata*

The example in (11) shows that Kang's analysis is inconsistent. Given the above facts, his claim that verb compounds are derived from verbs with adverbial suffixes is not adequate.

3. Inflection

Verbal forms in Korean display a very complicated structure. Since Korean is a highly agglutinating language, a number of derivational and inflectional affixes can be added to a verb root. But the affixes cannot be arbitrarily put together into a verbal structure; they have a regular fixed order. Consider the following example:

(12) *mek-(i)-(si)-(ess)-(keyss)-(sup)-(ni)-ta*
Root-Causative-Subject Honorific-Tense-Modal
-Hearer Honorific-Mood-Final

The example in (12) is affixed by one derivational (*mek-i* 'to cause to eat') and a series of inflectional suffixes. Since inflectional suffixes must always follow the serial order in (12), other orders are not permissible. For example, **-ess-si-keyss-sup-ni-ta* is ungrammatical. At the same time, the example above illustrates that the only obligatory elements are the verb root and the final inflectional suffix. In other words, the verb root must always occur with the final inflectional suffix. Thus, no verb roots are complete words because they are all bound forms.

The verb stem consists of a verb root and one or more optional derivational affixes. In (12), *mek-i* is composed of a verb root *mek-* 'to eat' and a causative suffix *-i*. As in the above example, a number of inflectional suffixes may occur between a verb stem and a final suffix: subject honorific, tense, modal, hearer honorific, and mood in that order. According to Y.-K. Ko (1989), inflectional suffixes such as subject honorific, tense, modal, hearer honorific, and mood are called the pre-final ending, whereas the final suffix is called the final ending.

We now briefly introduce inflectional suffixes. The honorific suffix *-si* depends on the speaker's relationship to the referent. The suffix is used to express the speaker's deference toward the subject referent.

The tense suffix is *-ass/ess*. The suffixes *-ass/ess* and *-ass+ess/ess-ess* are usually the past and the past-past, respectively. The nonoccurrence of *-ass/ess* indicates the nonpast.

The modal suffix *-keyss* expresses the intention (or volition) and circumstantial presumption, conjecture, or supposition on the part of the speaker in declaratives and of the hearer in interrogatives. The modal suffixes *-(u)li* and *-(u)l* indicate probability or predictability. The former occurs in the finite constructions, whereas the latter occurs in adjectival constructions.

The honorific suffix *-(su)p* indicates the speaker-addressee relationship. This suffix occurs only in deferential speech.

The suffix *-ni* indicates indicative mood. Other mood suffixes are: retrospective *-ti*, prospective *-(u)li*, subjunctive or requestive *-si*, and suspensive or suppositive *-ci*.

The final suffix determines finite (performative), nominal, adjectival, adverbial, or conjunctive structures. In the major finite constructions, the clause suffix shows various speech levels, as in the following table:

(13) SPEECH LEVEL	DECLARATIVE	INTERROGATIVE
Deferential	<i>-(su)p-ni-ta</i>	<i>-(su)p-ni-kka</i>
Polite	<i>-ayo/eyo</i>	<i>-ayo/eyo</i>
Blunt	<i>-(s)o</i>	<i>-(s)o</i>
Familiar	<i>-ney</i>	<i>-na/nunka</i>
Intimate	<i>-a/e</i>	<i>-a/e</i>
Plain	<i>-(n)-ta</i>	<i>-ni/nunya</i>
SPEECH LEVEL	IMPERATIVE	PROPOSITIVE
Deferential	<i>-(u)p-si-o</i>	<i>-(u)p-si-ta</i>
Polite	<i>-ayo/eyo</i>	<i>-ayo/eyo</i>
Blunt	<i>-(u)o</i>	<i>xxx</i>
Familiar	<i>-key</i>	<i>-sey</i>
Intimate	<i>-a/e</i>	<i>-a/e</i>
Plain	<i>-ala/ela</i>	<i>-ca</i>

In (13), only the deference level includes all hearer (addressee) honorific, mood, and final suffixes, while the other speech levels do not include all of them.

It has been said that derivation and inflection have the following differences:

- (14) a. Derivation may change the lexical category, and inflection never changes it.
b. Derivation precedes inflection.
c. While derivation is unproductive and irregular, inflection is productive and regular.

Derivational and inflectional processes in Korean verbal constructions exhibit different properties as well.

First, derivational suffixes such as causative or passive have lexical exceptions. For example, *mekta* 'to eat' has a causative form *mek-i-ta*, whereas *tutta* 'to hear' does not have a causative form. Derivational suffixes do not necessarily exhibit lexical regularity. In contrast, although they are optional, inflectional suffixes appear regular and fixed.

Second, while derivational suffixes can change a word's subcategory, inflectional ones cannot. For example, the causative suffix *-i* changes an intransitive verb *cwukta* 'to die' into a transitive verb *cwuk-i-ta* and the passive suffix *-li* changes the transitive verb *tutta* 'to hear' into the intransitive verb *tul-li-ta*.

Selkirk (1982) suggests that only derivational suffixes can be heads. The suffix *-i* in (12) is a head because it changes a simple verb into a causative verb. In contrast, since inflectional suffixes do not change lexical categories, they are not heads.

Finally, derivation and inflection differ with respect to phonological phenomena such as tensification and umlaut. While tensification takes place in inflection, it does not appear in derivation. Consider the following examples:

- (15) a. *an-ta* [t']
 embrace-Final
 b. *an-ci* [c']
 embrace-Final
 c. *an-keyss* [k']
 embrace-Modal
 d. *an-sup* [s']
 embrace-Hearer Hon

The initial obstruents of inflectional suffixes become tense after final nasal sounds of verb stems. This tensification can be formulated as follows:

- (16) [-son] → [+tense] / [+nas]vs + ____
(VS: Verb Stem)

In contrast, tensification is not found in the following example with the same phonological environment:

- (17) an-ki [g]
embrace-Caus/Pass

Since the derivational causative or passive suffix *-ki* is attached to the verb stem, tensification does not take place in the above example. Thus, the occurrence and nonoccurrence of tensification illustrates a difference between inflection and derivation.

Umlaut also distinguishes derivation from inflection. Consider the following examples:

- (18) a. an-ki-ta [æŋ]
embrace-Caus/Pass-Final
b. an-ki *[æŋ], [aŋ]
embrace-ing

In (18a), /a/ casually or dialectally becomes [æ] before front vowels. In this case, however, the difference between derivation and inflection plays an important role in determining whether umlaut applies. Umlaut occurs only before the causative or passive suffix. Thus, umlaut takes place in derivation, but it does not in inflection.

So far, we have seen that derivation and inflection in Korean verbal structure show differences in terms of lexical exceptions, subcategorization, and phonological facts. Now, we consider differences in the inflectional suffixes *-si-ass/ess-keyss-sup-ni-ta*. First of all, boundaries are clear in *-si-ass/ess-keyss*, whereas they are difficult to distinguish in *-sup-ni-ta*. Although the latter contains hearer honorific and mood suffixes, they are often considered one constituent together with *-ta*.

Second, while *-si-ass/ess-keyss* is optional, *-sup-ni-ta* contains the obligatory element *-ta*. Moreover, the former portion always retains *-si*, *-ass/ess*, and *-keyss*, and is not changed by speech levels. As shown in (13), however, the latter portion has various inflectional variants depending on speech levels.

Third, the nominal inflectional suffixes *-(u)m* and *-ki* can occur with *-si-ass/ess-keyss*. However, they cannot appear with *-sup-ni-ta*. Consider the following examples:

- (19) a. *po-ass-keyss-um, ki*
b. *po-ass-um, ki*
c. *po-keyss-um, ki*
d. **po-p-ni-ta-m, ki*
e. **po-p-ni-m, ki*
f. **po-p-um, ki*

Finally, although Korean has no clear stress, stress in normal speech is placed on the first part. Consider the following examples:

- (20) a. *mek-less-eyo*
b. *mek-!keyss-sup-ni-ta*
(!: Stress)

The examples in (20) show that *-si-ass/ess-keyss* and *-sup-ni-ta* differ with regard to stress placement.

So far, we have seen that there are differences between *-si-ass/ess-keyss* and *-sup-ni-ta*. An interesting phenomenon is found in *-ass/ess-keyss* and *-sup-ni-ta*. Cooccurrence restrictions affect these inflectional suffixes. Korean has two kinds of verbs: action verbs and non-action (description) verbs. Different kinds of inflectional suffixes are determined by the verb type. Consider the following examples:

- (21) a. *ilk-nunta* 'read (present)'
ka-nta 'go (present)'
b. *coh-ta* 'be good (present)'

In (21), action verbs choose *-nunta/nta*, and non-action verbs *-ta*. However, after *-ass/ess* or *-keyss*, only *-ta* is possible. Consider the following examples:

- (22) a. *ilk-ess-ta* (**ilk-ess-nunta*)
ilk-keyss-ta (**ilk-keyss-nunta*)
b. *coh-ass-ta*
coh-keyss-ta

The examples in (22) indicate that the verb roots do not play a role in choosing *-nunta* and *-ta*. If the verb root in (22a) determined the inflectional suffix, then *-nunta* would have to appear in (22a). So it is claimed that *-ass/ess* or *-keyss* only cooccurs with *-ta*.

This cooccurrence restriction is found in the inflectional suffixes in question. Consider the following examples:

- (23) a. ilk-nunya
b. coh-unya⁴

The examples in (23) show that an action verb takes *-nunya* and a non-action *-unya*. However, this distinction is not present in the following examples:

- (24) a. ilk-ess-nunya
ilk-keyss-nunya
b. coh-ass-nunya (*coh-ass-unya)
coh-keyss-nunya (*coh-keyss-unya)

The examples in (24) demonstrate no distinction between action and non-action verb roots. After the roots are affixed with *-ass/ess* or *-keyss*, only *-nunya* is possible. Comparison of the examples in (22) and (24) reveals that the non-action verb is no longer marked distinctively after suffixation with *-ass/ess* or *-keyss*. Thus, we can say that *-ass/ess* or *-keyss* always cooccurs with the inflectional suffix *-nunya*.

Cooccurrence restrictions also appear in the inflectional suffix of exclamation, as in the following:

- (25) a. ilk-nunkwuna
b. coh-kwuna

4. *-unya* has an alternation *-nya*. The distinction of *-unya* and *-nya* follows a phonological condition. Consider the following examples:

- (i) a. coh-unya
be good-Q
b. nappu-nya
be bad-Q

While *-unya* is placed after verb forms ending in consonants, *-nya* is placed after verb forms ending in vowels.

While action verbs choose *-nunkwuna*, non-action verbs choose *-kwuna*. However, the difference disappears after *-ass/ess* or *-keyss*, as in the following:

- (26) a. *ilk-ess-kwuna* (**ilk-ess-nunkwuna*)
 ilk-keyss-kwuna (**ilk-keyss-nunkwuna*)
 b. *coh-ass-kwuna*
 coh-keyss-kwuna

The examples in (26) also show that there is a cooccurrence restriction between *-ass/ess* or *-keyss* and *-kwuna*.

The honorific *-si* appears to be a kind of inflectional suffix because it is very productive. For example, *-si* is always included in honorific forms. Moreover, *-si* does not change subcategorization. However, *-si* is different from normal inflectional suffixes. First, *-si* does not show the same kinds of cooccurrence restrictions. Consider the following examples:

- (27) a. *ilk-usi-nta*, *coh-usi-ta*
 b. *ilk-usi-nunya*, *coh-usi-nya*
 c. *ilk-usi-nunkwuna*, *coh-usi-kwuna*

Unlike *-ass/ess* or *-keyss*, *-si* does not affect the choice of inflectional suffixes. Although *-si* is put together with a verb root, inflectional suffixes are still governed by verb types. So *-si* differs from *-ass/ess* or *-keyss*.

Second, other inflectional suffixes are omissible in coordinate sentences, whereas *-si* may not be omitted in coordinate structures. Consider the following sentences:

- (28) a. *Salam-i po-i-ess-ko*
 man-Nom see-Pass-Past-Final
 solli-ka tul-li-ess-ta.
 sound-Nom hear-Pass-Past-Final
 'A man was seen and sound was heard.'
 a'. *Salam-i po-i- \emptyset -ko solli-ka tul-li-ess-ta.*
 b. *Apeci-ka sinmwun-ul po-si-ko*
 father-Nom newspaper-Acc see-Hon-Conj
 emeni-ka chayk-ul ilk-usi-p-ni-ta.
 mother-Nom book-Acc read-Hon-Hon-Mood-Final
 'Father sees a newspaper and mother reads
 a book.'
 b'. **Apeci-ka sinmwun-ul po- \emptyset -ko emeni-ka chayk-ul*
 ilk-usi-p-ni-ta.

(28a) is a complete and full sentence; (28a') omits the tense suffix *-ess*. This shows that the normal inflectional suffixes can be omitted in Korean verbal structure. In contrast, (28b) contains *-si*. When *-si* is omitted in (28b'), the result is very unnatural and unacceptable. If *-si* is an inflectional suffix, then (28b') should be acceptable, but it is not. This demonstrates that *-si* differs from other inflectional suffixes in terms of omissibility.

Third, *-si* is peculiar with respect to negative and progressive constructions. Consider the following sentences:

- (29) a. John-i chayk-ul ilk-ess-ta.
 John-Nom book-Acc read-Past-Final
 'John read a book.'
 b. John-i chayk-ul ilk-ci aniha-yess-ta.
 John-Nom book-Acc read-not-Past-Final
 'John did not read a book.'
 c. John-i chayk-ul ilk-ko iss-ess-ta.
 John-Nom book-Acc read-ing-Past-Final
 'John was reading a book.'

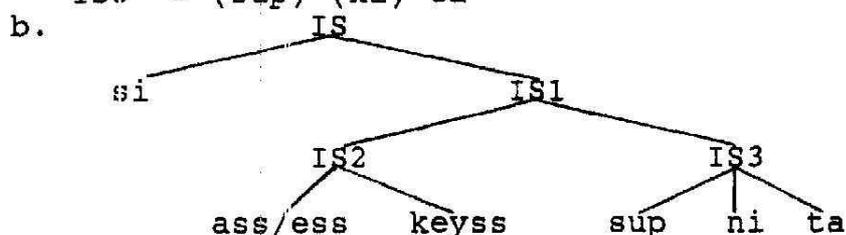
In (29b) and (29c), the negative form *-ci anihata* 'do not' and the progressive form *-ko iss-ta* 'be -ing' are placed before the inflectional suffixes. Consider the following examples with *-si*:

- (30) a. Apenim-i chayk-ul ilk-usi-ess-ta.
 father-Nom book-Acc read-Hon-Past-Final
 'Father read a book.'
 b. Apenim-i chayk-ul ilk-usi-ci ani ha-si-ess-ta.
 read-Hon-not-Hon-Past-Final
 'Father did not read a book.'
 c. Apenim-i chayk-ul ilk-usi-ko kyeysi-ess-ta
 read-Hon-ing-Past-Final
 'Father was reading a book.'

In (29), inflectional suffixes are located after negative or progressive forms. However, *-usi* in (30) can occur before negative or progressive forms. This demonstrates that the honorific suffix *-si* also differs in terms of negative or progressive formation.

So far, we have seen that the honorific suffix *-si* differs from other inflectional suffixes with regard to cooccurrence restrictions, coordinate structures, and negative or progressive structures. These differences between *-si* and other inflectional suffixes, and between *-ass/ess-keyss* and *-sup-ni-ta* can be represented in the following hierarchical structure:

- (31) a. I(nflectional) S(uffix) → (si) + IS1
 IS1 → IS2 + IS3
 IS2 → (ass/ess) (keyss)
 IS3 → (sup) (ni) ta



4. Summary

This paper has shown verb formation in Korean. Verbs are composed by derivation and compounding, but they also undergo inflection. These processes are illustrated as follows:

- (32) a. Derivation: (Y) X (Z)
 b. Compounding: Y X (Sub-compound)
 X X (Co-compound)
 c. Inflection: IS → si + IS1
 IS1 → IS2 + IS3
 IS2 → (ass/ess) (keyss)
 IS3 → (sup) (ni) Final Ending

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