Research Article

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The unembeddability of imperatives in Korean: Two different types of imperative morphology†

Abstract: This article presents additional data in support of the fact that imperatives cannot be embedded in Korean. It demonstrates that the language employs two different types of imperative morphology: one that occurs in main clauses and the other that occurs in embedded environments, and that their occurrence is mutually exclusive. That being the case, the main imperative morphology is a *bona fide* illocutionary force marker that is syntactically encoded in the main clauses only, whereas the embedded imperative morphology simply serves as a clause-type indicator with no illocutionary force.

Keywords: imperative, unembeddable, clause type, speech act projection, Korean

1 Introduction

Han (1998: 113–4) argues that imperatives cannot be embedded in Korean (see also Sadock and Zwicky 1985, Rivero and Terzi 1995, among many others), as shown in (1) below (from Han 1998: 187).

(1) a. *Ppalli   o-**ala**.*
       quickly   come-IMP
       "Come quickly."
    b. **Na-nun   Mary-eykey   ppalli   o-**ala**-ko   myenglyenghassta.*
       I-TOP   Mary-to   quickly   come-IMP-C   ordered
       "I ordered Mary to come quickly."

Han claims that the sharp contrast in grammaticality between (1a) and (1b) attests to the fact that the imperative is unembeddable in the language.

However, the unembeddability of Korean imperatives is complicated by the fact that it is possible that another similar particle occurs in embedded clauses, as demonstrated in (2) (taken from Portner (2007: 13) with minor romanization modifications; the grammaticality judgment is attributed to Miok Pak).

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(2) *Inho-ka   Sooni-eykey   cip-ey   ka-**la**-ko   malhayssta*.
  Inho-NOM   Sooni-to   home-to   go-IMP-C   said
  "Inho said to Sooni to go home."

The imperative particles *-ala* in (1) and *-la* in (2) look alike but are not identical. More interestingly, the *-la* can appear in the main clause (as well as in the embedded clause), as shown in (3) below.

(3) a. *Kukes-ul   sa-**la**.*
      it-ACC   buy-IMP
      "Buy it."
  b. *Ce-A-nun   Celin-eykey   kukes-ul   sa-**la**-ko   myenglyenghassta.*
      Ce-A-TOP   Celin-to   it-ACC   buy-IMP-C   ordered
      "Ce-A ordered Celin to buy it."

This leads some linguists to the conclusion that Korean allows embedded imperatives (see, e.g., Platzack 2007, Portner 2007, Pak 2008, Lee 2012, and Lee and Park 2014, among others). In this article, I argue that the language at stake employs two different types of imperative particles: specifically, *-(a)la* is a *bona fide* imperative particle that may only occur in main clauses, while *-(u)la* simply serves as a clause-type marker that may only appear in embedded clauses. This constitutes substantive support for the fact that imperatives are unembeddable in the language.

2 Two different types of imperative morphology

2.1 *-(a)la* vs *-(u)la*

Let us consider the sentences given in (4):

(4) a. *Kukes-ul   kam-{-**ala**/`*`-**ula**}.*
      it-ACC   wind-IMP
      "Wind it up."
  b. *Ce-A-nun   Celin-eykey   kukes-ul   kam-{-**ula**/`*`-**ala**}-ko   myenglyenghassta.*
      Ce-A-TOP   Celin-to   it-ACC   wind-IMP-C   ordered
      "Ce-A ordered Celin to wind it up."
  c. *kukes-ul   kam-{-**ula**/`*`-**ala**}-nun   myenglyeng*
      it-ACC   wind-IMP-C   order
      "the order that (you should) wind it up."

The examples in (4) show that *-ula* and *-ala* have a mutually exclusive distribution: In (4a), only *-ala* can occur in roots.[1] In (4b), *-ula* is embeddable whereas *-ala* is not. And in (4c), only *-ula* is possible in

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[1] The *-(u)la* sentence is only acceptable as "absolute sentence" in the sense of Im (1983).

complementation. This stark contrast in distribution demonstrates that the language under consideration draws a definite distinction between main and embedded contexts for imperatives. As summarized in (5), *-(a)la* only appears in main clauses, whereas *-(u)la* only appears in embedded contexts.[2]

(5)	Embedded	Main[3]
	-(u)la	*-(a)la*

2.2 Special imperative particles only for roots

Having attested that *-(a)la* is the root imperative marker, while *-(u)la* is the embedded imperative marker, let us now examine some further evidence in favor of the unembeddability of Korean imperatives.

Other than *-(a)la*, Korean employs special imperative morphology that only follows certain verbs; for example, the particles *-nela* and *-kela*. Consider the sentences in (6) below:

(6) a.   *Ili   o-**nela**.*
         here   come-IMP
         "Come over here."
     b.   *Celi   ka-**kela**.*
         there   go-IMP
         "Go over there."

It is interesting to note that *-nela* combines with *o-* "come" only: that is, it does not follow any other verb than that verb. In the same vein, *-kela* has such a narrow distribution: it combines a limited set of verbs such as *ka-* "go." Of particular importance is that neither of these imperative particles is embeddable, as illustrated in (7) below:

(7) a.   **Ce-A-nun   Celin-eykey   ili   o-**nela**-ko   myenglyenghassta.*
         Ce-A-TOP   Celin-to   here   come-IMP-C   ordered
         "Ce-A ordered Celin to come over here."
     b.   **Ce-A-nun   Celin-eykey   celi   ka-**kela**-ko   myenglyenghassta.*
         Ce-A-TOP   Celin-to   there   go-IMP-C   ordered
         "Ce-A ordered Celin to go over there."
     c.   *Ce-A-nun   Celin-eykey   {o-/ka-}-**la**-ko   myenglyenghassta.*

As demonstrated in (7a) and (7b), the particles under consideration cannot be embedded, and in order to embed them, they would need to be replaced by the embedded imperative particle *-(u)la*, as demonstrated in (7c). This strongly confirms the fact that there are two different types of imperative marker that are subject to embeddability in Korean.

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2 Deletion of *a* in *-(a)la* and insertion of *u* in *-(u)la* are phonologically conditioned – the presence and absence of coda consonant. And *-(a)la* can be alternated with *-(e)la* as in *mek-**ela*** "Eat (it)."
3 Portner et al. (2018) make a similar proposal independently.

The imperative particle *-lyem* is also unusual. As shown in (8) below, it is used to make a soft command or order to an addressee who is younger than the speaker.

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(8) a. *Cokum   te   cham-ko   kitali-**lyem**.*
        a.bit   more   endure-and   wait-ɪᴍᴘ
        "Be a bit more patient and wait."
    b. *Cal   swiess-uni   yelsimhi   kongpwuha-**lyem**.*
        well   rested-because   hard   study-ɪᴍᴘ
        "Since you have had a good rest, work hard."

What is interesting about *-lyem* is that the soft imperative cannot be embedded, as demonstrated in (9a) and (9b), and that in order to embed it, once again, the *-(u)la* particle should be used, as illustrated in (9c) and (9d).

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(9) a. **Ce-A-nun   Celin-eykey   cokum   te   cham-ko   kitali-**lyem**-ko   myenglyenghassta.*
       Ce-A-ᴛᴏᴘ   Celin-to   a.bit   more   endure-and   wait-ɪᴍᴘ-C   ordered
       "Ce-A ordered Celin to be a bit more patient and wait."
    b. **Ce-A-nun   Celin-eykey cal   swiess-uni   yelsimhi   kongpwuha-**lyem**-ko myenglyenghassta.*
       Ce-A-ᴛᴏᴘ   Celin-to   well   rested-because hard   study-ɪᴍᴘ-C   ordered
       "Ce-A ordered Celin to work hard since you had a good rest."
    c. *Ce-A-nun   Celin-eykey   cokum   te   cham-ko   kitali-**la**-ko   myenglyenghassta.*
       Ce-A-ᴛᴏᴘ   Celin-to   a.bit   more   endure-and   wait-ɪᴍᴘ-C   ordered
       "Ce-A ordered Celin to be a bit more patient and wait."
    d. *Ce-A-nun   Celin-eykey cal   swiess-uni   yelsimhi   kongpwuha-**la**-ko   myenglyenghassta.*
       Ce-A-ᴛᴏᴘ   Celin-to   well   rested-because hard   study-ɪᴍᴘ-C   ordered
       "Ce-A ordered Celin to work hard since you had a good rest."

Note that special imperative particles such as *-nela/-kela/-lyem* only occur in main clauses, that is to say, they are not embeddable.[4]

It should be noted that apparently, as noted in fn. 1, *-(u)la* can also occur in a root context. It is controversial whether the so-called "indirect imperatives" which have no addressee are a true form of imperative. Im (1983) refers to "*-(u)la* root imperative" such as (10a) as "absolute sentence" (*celtaymwun*), and he argues that it behaves differently from a normal root imperative (see Im 1983 for detail). One of the most striking differences between the two types of imperatives is that, as illustrated in (10), in case of *-(u)la* indirect imperative (10a), the first-person reflexive is licit. By way of contrast, in case of *-(a)la* direct imperative (10b), the first person is illicit.

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4 As for *-lyem*, it should be noted that Pak (2008) takes an inconsistent position: she argues that while classified traditionally as a permissive particle, *-lyem* should be an imperative marker (p. 123 fn. 7). However, based on the fact of the unembeddability observed in (9a) above, she relegates the particle under discussion to "permissives as a subtype of imperatives" (p. 146). This is so because she and her collaborators (Portner et al. 2018) argue against the embeddability of imperatives in Korean.

(10)   a.   *Na   casin-ul   chac-**ula**.*
              I   self-acc   find-IMP
              "Find my own self." (OK as a book title)
        b.   **Na   casin-ul   chac-ala.*
              I   self-acc   find-IMP
              Lit. "Find my own self."

This fact can be explained straightforwardly by the fact that the *-(u)la* indirect imperative has no illocutionary force, since it has no addressee to perform the order or command in the working discourse.

The fact that an *-(u)la* indirect imperative has no addressee can be well understood under Se 1985. Se analyzes *-ala* as a complex: *-**a** + -l + -a*. According to his analysis, the (boldfaced) *-a* morpheme marks the presence of addressee. That being the case, the fact is straightforwardly explained that *-(u)la* indirect imperatives have no addressee. Due to the lack of *-a* addressee-marking, *-(u)la* indirect imperatives can only be used as "absolute sentence" as in a book title or strike slogan. In embedded contexts, they only function to "type" the embedded clause to which *-(u)la* attaches.

3 Theoretical implications

Thus far, we have attested that *-(a)la/-nela/-kela/-lyem* only occur in main clauses – that is, they are unembeddable – whereas *-(u)la* appears in embedded contexts, as summarized in (11) below.

(11)   Embedded   Main
            -(u)la   *-(a)la/-nela/-kela/-lyem*

This fact, illustrated in (11), can be explained straightforwardly if it is assumed that *-(a)la/-nela/-kela/-lyem* make up the *bona fide* imperative morphology that bears directive illocutionary force (Han 1998), while *-(u)la* is simply a clause-type marker with no illocutionary force. Suppose that the main imperative morphology is an illocutionary force indicator of imperatives, which is syntactically encoded in the discourse-related domain of the clause, Speech Act Phrase (SAP), as illustrated in (12) below (see Haegeman 2014, Haegeman and Hill 2010, Pak 2008, Speas 2004, Speas and Tenny 2003, and Tenny 2006, among others).

(12)
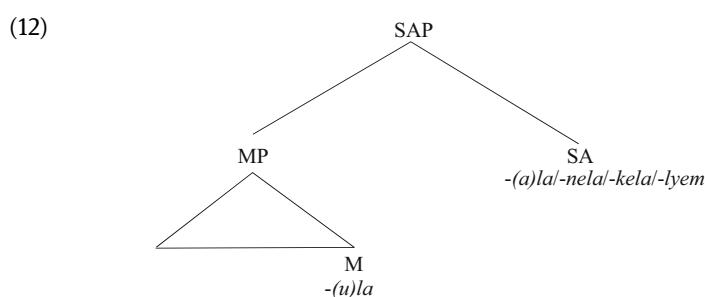
SAP can best be understood as a syntactic projection that is involved with the performative acts and that encodes the directive illocutionary force of imperatives. In this view, the *-(a)la/-nela/-kela/-lyem* particles

are exponents of the SA head. It is reasonable to assume that the *-a* morpheme in *-(a)la* that indicates the presence of addressee is associated with SAP.

By way of contrast, the embedded imperative morphology only marks the clause-type of the embedded clause in which it appears: *-(u)la* indicates that the event of the embedded sentence is not realized at the referent time (i.e., the event time of its matrix clause), and that it can occur in the future with respect to the referent time. In this view, *-(u)la* simply refers to "the modality of unrealized interpretation" (Han 1998) and, that being the case, it is reasonable to conclude that it is not associated with the discourse pragmatic domain of clausal structures like SAP: hence, it can be assumed to be an exponent of the Mood head below SAP (Lee 2015, Whitman 1990).

One of the most important advantages of the present analysis is that it accounts for the unembeddability of *-(a)la/-nela/-kela/-lyem* that reside on SAP. Such unembeddability follows in a straightforward manner from Ross's (1970) analysis of "implicit performatives," which states:

(13)   Every declarative sentence has **one and only one** performative sentence as its **highest clause** (Ross 1970:252, emphasis mine).

Of particular interest is that the implicit performative structure, equivalent to SAP under the present analysis, only occurs in the "highest" or root clause; that is, it is unembeddable. That being the case, the Speech Act projection is the only possible locus for the main imperative morphology. Note also that from the fact that SAP is only available in root clauses, it follows that direct exponents of that head, such as *-(a)la/-nela/-kela/-lyem*, cannot appear in embedded clauses.

To sum up, Korean employs two different types of imperative morphology: *-(a)la/-nela/-kela/-lyem* for root imperatives and *-(u)la* for embedded imperatives. Only the main imperative particles have directive illocutionary force, and consequently, they comprise a direct morphological realization of the Speech Act head that is only present in a root clause. The embedded imperative particle has no illocutionary force, and only labels the clause-type of the clause in which it appears; hence, it resides below performative SAP.

An anonymous reviewer asks about the propositive marker *-ca*. A full discussion of it is beyond the scope of the article. I conjecture a possible extension of the current view to propositives. Just like imperatives, there are two different types of propositives in the language. First of all, *-psita* "let's[formal]," *-sey* "let's[familiar]," and *-cakkwuna* "let's[intimate]" never occur in embedded clauses. That being the case, they are associated with SAP. However, *-ca* seems to be problematic since it can occur both in main and in embedded clauses. My assumption is that the propositive particle in question accidentally has the same form for both cases. That is, there are two different *-ca*'s: One is an SA head and the other is Mood only. I leave this for future research.

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