

On Two Kinds of Negative Concord Items in Korean

Lyn Tieu and Jungmin Kang

University of Connecticut

1. Introduction

A common assumption about negation-sensitive elements such as *amwu-N-to* in Korean (1) is that they are negative polarity items (NPIs), with a meaning similar to the English *any* (Sells & Kim, 2006; Kim, 1999; Lee, 1995 among many others). But as *any*-type NPIs, they have some rather idiosyncratic properties. For example, they are only licensed by negation; typical NPI licensors (e.g., polar questions, antecedents of conditionals) do not appear to license them. These items also appear to exhibit wide scope with respect to negation, unlike NPI *any*, which is interpreted as an existential in the scope of negation. Moreover, they require clausemate negation, unlike *any*. One might think to characterize these items instead as run-of-the-mill negative concord items (NCIs). In this respect, it is insightful to consider the following differences that have been noted between NPIs and NCIs:

(1) John-un amwu-kes-to sa-ci anh-ass-ta
John-TOP amwu-thing-TO buy-CI NEG-PERF-DECL
'John didn't buy anything/John bought nothing'

(2)		NPI	NCI
a.	Ability to be modified by expressions like <i>almost</i>	No	Yes
b.	Ability to be used as an elliptical answer	No	Yes
c.	Ability to appear in non-negative contexts	Yes	No
d.	Ability to be licensed by a higher clause negation	Yes	No
e.	Participation in indeterminate system ¹	No	Yes

(Watanabe 2004; Sano et al., 2008, among others)

Given the NPI/NCI distinctions in (2), *amwu-N-to* would be better viewed as a run-of-the-mill NCI rather than as an idiosyncratic NPI. In this paper, we present data pertaining to yet another (similar) negation-sensitive element, *etten-N-to*, which would seem to fit in neither the NPI nor the NCI column in (2). Given the distribution of *amwu-N-to* and *etten-N-to*, we suggest that the binary characterization in (2) is insufficient to capture the full range of negation-sensitive elements (at least for Korean), and more specifically that there are two kinds of NCIs in Korean, with different morphosyntactic properties.

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¹ We follow Gill et al.'s (2006) definition of indeterminate-based quantification, according to which an indeterminate pronoun associates with an operator-like element to form a quantificational expression.

2. Data

We take as the object of study apparent quantificational elements such as *etten*. *Etten-N* is used as a *wh*-indefinite in *wh*-questions (3) and as an existential quantifier in declaratives (4).

- (3) John-i etten-chayk-ul ilk-ess-ni?
 John-NOM etten-book-ACC read-PERF-Q
 ‘Which book did John read?’

- (4) ecey John-i etten-salam-ul manna-ss-ta
 yesterday John-NOM some-person-ACC meet-PERF-DECL
 ‘John met someone yesterday’

Additionally, and of particular interest here, *etten* can appear with the (*even*-like) focus particle *-to*, in which case it constitutes a negation-sensitive element (*etten-N-to*); that is, when *-to* is appended, *etten* requires (clausemate) negation (5).

- (5) John-un etten-kes-to sa-ci anh-ass-ta
 John-TOP etten-thing-TO buy-CI NEG-PERF-DECL
 ‘John didn’t buy anything’

Amwu-N-to is likewise a negation-sensitive element (as in (1)), but unlike *etten* does not appear as a *wh*-indefinite (6) or existential quantifier (7).

- (6) *John-i amwu-chayk-ul ilk-ess-ni?
 John-NOM amwu-book-ACC read-PERF-Q
 Intended meaning: ‘Which book did John read?’

- (7) *ecey John-i amwu-salam-ul manna-ss-ta
 yesterday John-NOM amwu-person-ACC meet-PERF-DECL
 Intended meaning: ‘John met someone yesterday’

As negation-sensitive elements with the particle *-to*, both *etten-N-to* and *amwu-N-to* can appear in either subject (8) or object (9) position; in either case however, negation is required. Moreover, this negation must be in the same clause (10).

- (8) a. John-un {etten/amwu}-kes-to sa-ci anh-ass-ta
 John-TOP etten/amwu-thing-TO buy-CI NEG-PERF-DECL
 ‘John didn’t buy anything/John bought nothing’

- b. *John-un {etten/amwu}-kes-to sa-ass-ta
 John-TOP etten/amwu-thing-TO buy-PERF-DECL

- (9) a. {etten-salam/amwu}-to o-ci anh-ass-ta.
 etten-person/amwu-TO come-CI NEG-PERF-DECL
 ‘No one came’

- b. *{etten-salam/amwu}-to wa-ss-ta
 etten-person/amwu-TO come-PERF-DECL

- (10) *Bill-un John-i {etten/amwu}-kes-to sa-ss-ta-ko malha-ci anh-ass-ta
 Bill-TOP John-NOM etten/amwu-thing-TO buy-PERF-DECL-COMP say-CI NEG-PERF-DECL
 ‘Bill didn’t say that John bought anything’

Finally, both also require clausemate negation to be licensed in questions, i.e. both are only good in negative questions:

- (11) a. *{*etten-salam/amwu*}-to wa-ss-ni?
 etten-person/amwu-TO come-PERF-Q
- b. {*etten-salam/amwu*}-to o-ci anh-ass-ni?
 etten-person/amwu-TO come-CI NEG-PERF-Q
 ‘Didn’t anybody come?’

The similarities exemplified in (8) through (11) aside, there are also a number of differences in the behaviour of *etten-N-to* and *amwu-N-to*. First, *amwu-N-to* but not *etten-N-to* can form a (negative) fragment answer:

- (12) Q: mwues-ul po-ass-ni? A: **etten/amwu-kes-to*
 what-ACC see-PERF-Q *etten/amwu-thing-TO*
 ‘What did you see?’ ‘Nothing’

Second, *amwu-N-to* but not *etten-N-to* can be modified by *keyu* ‘almost’ (Sells & Kim, 2006; Lee, 1995; Lee, 1996; Lee, 2001):²

- (13) John-un keyu {**etten/amwu*}-kes-to mek-ci anh-ass-ta
 John-TOP almost *etten/amwu-thing-TO* eat-CI NEG-PERF-DECL
 ‘John ate almost nothing’

Third, lexically negative predicates, in which negation is generally restricted to the predicate, license *amwu-N-to* (Chung & Park, 1998), but appear to be degraded with *etten*:

- (14) John-un {?**etten/amwu*}-kes-to molu-n-ta
 John-TOP *etten/amwu-thing-TO* not.know-MOOD-DECL
 ‘John knows nothing’

With the properties listed above in mind, we add *amwu-N-to* and *etten-N-to* to the schema in (2), yielding the following:

² More specifically, modifying *etten-N-to* with *keyu* ‘almost’ cannot yield the meaning in (13). Strictly speaking however, it does seem possible to modify *etten-N-to* in very particular contexts. For example, imagine a scenario in which John attends a party where the host has prepared many different foods, most of which contain milk. John is vegan and thus can hardly eat any of the food items at the party. In such a context, it appears the following is acceptable:

- (i) John-un keyu etten umsik-to mek-ci mos-ha-yss-ta
 John-TOP almost etten food-TO eat-CI cannot-DO-PERF-DECL
 Intended meaning: ‘John could eat almost none of the food’

The intuition is that this use of *keyu etten* is possible because there is a specific or salient set of food items in the context. Thus it seems the discourse context must provide some salient set for modified *etten* to quantify over, not so different from the existential presupposition triggered by the use of *wh*-existentials. We do not at present have an analysis for this data, but see fn. 6 for what is likely the same issue resurfacing in the context of lexical negation data.

(15)		NPI	NCI	<i>amwu</i> -N- <i>to</i>	<i>etten</i> -N- <i>to</i>
	a. Ability to be modified by expressions like <i>almost</i>	No	Yes	Yes	No
	b. Ability to be used as an elliptical answer	No	Yes	Yes	No
	c. Ability to appear in non-negative contexts	Yes	No	No	No
	d. Ability to be licensed by a higher clause negation	Yes	No	No	No
	e. Participation in indeterminate system	No	Yes	No	Yes

Thus negation-sensitive elements in Korean do not behave uniformly; moreover neither *amwu*-N-*to* nor *etten*-N-*to* pattern perfectly with typical NPIs or NCIs.

3. Proposal

3.1. Accounting for the Korean Facts

We propose that there are two types of NCIs in Korean, aligning either with *amwu*-N-*to* or with *etten*-N-*to*. We derive their diverging properties by appealing to their particular morphosyntactic features.³ Assume that Agree is driven by the need to value features (cf. Pesetsky & Torrego, 2007; Bošković, 2009b, 2011; Wurmbrand, 2011, to appear; Smith, 2012). *Amwu*-type NCIs can be seen as bearing an unvalued, interpretable Neg feature [*i*Neg:___], while *etten*-type NCIs bear an unvalued, uninterpretable Neg feature [*u*Neg:___]. The unvalued Neg feature on these NCIs results in their requirement to be ‘licensed’ by negation. Assume further that a negative head in Korean bears either a valued interpretable Neg feature [*i*Neg: *val*] or a valued uninterpretable Neg feature [*u*Neg: *val*].⁴ With the possible feature specifications in (16) and (17), let us now reconsider the differences between *etten*-N-*to* and *amwu*-N-*to*.

- (16) a. *amwu*-N-*to*: [*i*Neg:___]
 b. *etten*-N-*to*: [*u*Neg:___]

- (17) a. Negation: [*i*Neg: *val*]
 b. Negation: [*u*Neg: *val*]

Consider first *wh*-use (data repeated in (18)). According to our assumptions, *etten* differs from *amwu* in that it does not bear an interpretable [*i*Neg] feature; it is thus not semantically negative and unlike *amwu*, is compatible with use as a *wh*-indefinite.

- (18) John-*i* **amwu*/*etten*-*chayk*-*ul* *ilk*-*ess*-*ni*?
 John-NOM *amwu*/*etten*-*book*-ACC read-PERF-Q
 ‘Which book did John read?’

Note that unlike *amwu*, even when occurring with the *-to* particle, *etten* appears to trigger an existential presupposition;⁵ it is odd when uttered out of the blue, or when the context fails to provide a salient or expected individual or set of individuals over which to quantify:

- (19) Context: Mary has been invited to a party and arrives before anyone else. She has no idea who else is on the guest list and thus has no expectations as to who she should see at the party. She thinks to herself:
- acik { **etten*-*salam*/*amwu* }-*to* o-*ci* *anh*-*ass*-*ne*
 yet *etten*-*person*/*amwu*-*to* come-CI NEG-PERF-DECL
 ‘No one’s come yet’

³ See Bošković (2009a) for arguments that Serbo-Croatian also exhibits two kinds of NCIs (*i*-/ni-NCIs).

⁴ Bošković (2009a) proposes that negation in Serbo-Croatian can likewise be valued differently.

⁵ See AnderBois (2009) for arguments that *wh*-phrases trigger existential presuppositions.

Next, consider negative fragment answers (12), repeated below. We adopt Bošković (2009a)'s explanation of parallel facts in Serbo-Croatian. Ellipsis requires that what is elided be semantically identical to the antecedent (Merchant, 2001); in (12), the antecedent to the elided phrase is not negative, and therefore what is elided cannot be semantically negative.

- (12) Q: mwues-ul po-ass-ni? A: *etten/amwu-kes-to
 what-ACC see-PERF-Q etten/amwu-thing-TO
 'What did you see?' 'Nothing'

Since the answer contains an NCI however, it must also contain a negative head to license the NCI. The only way to satisfy both requirements is for the negative head to bear an uninterpretable [*uNeg*] feature. Given that *etten-N-to* bears [*uNeg*:__], if what is elided contains a negative head with [*uNeg*:*val*], there is no way to derive a negative answer. In contrast, we derive a negative answer with *amwu-N-to*, whose interpretable [*iNeg*:__] feature gets valued by [*uNeg*:*val*] of the negative head.

- (20) Antecedent: what [did you see t]
 Target: amwu_[iNeg:__]-kes-to [~~I did not~~_[uNeg:val] see t]
 *etten_[uNeg:__]-kes-to [~~I did not~~_[uNeg:val] see t]

Next, consider the *almost*-modification facts in (13), repeated below. If *amwu-N-to*, with its [*iNeg*] feature and obligatory wide scope over negation, is actually a negative universal quantifier, we expect it to be modifiable by *almost* (cf. Carlson, 1981, among others). In contrast, the existential *etten-N-to* should not be modifiable by *almost*.

- (13) John-un keuy { *etten/amwu }-kes-to mek-ci anh-ass-ta
 John-TOP almost etten/amwu-thing-TO eat-CI NEG-PERF-DECL
 'John ate almost nothing'

As for the lexical negation facts in (14), repeated below, we assume that lexical negation in Korean projects a NegP (cf. Chung 2007). Like negative heads, lexical negation can bear either a valued interpretable Neg feature [*iNeg*:*val*] or a valued uninterpretable Neg feature [*uNeg*:*val*]. At this point, we must stipulate that only the lexical negation with [*uNeg*:*val*] can co-occur with NCIs. If this is the case, then only *amwu-N-to* can co-occur with lexical negation, since only it has an [*iNeg*] feature.⁶

⁶ We leave aside a further complication here, namely that it seems certain restricted contexts may allow licensing by lexical negation. We observe the contrast between (i) and (ii):

- (i) Context: The police are investigating a recent suspicious accident. John wants to protect Mary, and says:

Mary-nun ku il-ey tayhay etten kes-to molu-n-ta
 Mary-TOP that accident about etten-thing-TO not.know-MOOD-DECL
 'Mary doesn't know anything about the accident'

- (ii) Context: Mary is a young child. People are accusing her of having committed a crime. John says:

Mary-nun { *etten/amwu }-kes-to molu-nun elin ai-i-ta
 Mary-TOP etten/amwu-thing-TO not.know-REL young kid-BE-DECL
 Intended meaning: 'Mary is just a little child who doesn't know anything'

In (i), the police are specifically seeking knowledge about the accident, and the statement appears to deny that Mary has that knowledge which is being sought; in other words, there is some salient set of knowledge that is being quantified over with *etten*. On the other hand, *etten* is out in (ii) because there is no expectation about some set of knowledge that Mary (as a young child) should have; the sentence with *amwu* can only mean that Mary lacks knowledge more generally. Thus there is no specific or salient set of knowledge in the context, and *etten-N-to* is impossible. Again it appears that the use of *etten* in this context is conditioned by there being some presupposed set over which to quantify, present in (i) but absent in (ii).

- (27) Ivan nije rekao da je Marija pojela išta/*ništa
 Ivan NEG.is said that is Maria eaten anything/nothing
 ‘Ivan didn’t say that Maria ate almost anything/nothing.’

Diverging from the pattern in Korean however, we observe that lexical negation in Serbo-Croatian can only co-occur with *i*-NCIs. We suggest this is due to the following difference between Korean and Serbo-Croatian: unlike the case of Korean, lexical negation in Serbo-Croatian does not project a NegP. Since there is no NegP below FocP, the NCI cannot be spelled out as a *ni*-NCI, since there is no Spec-Head agreement with any Spec,NegP.

- (28) ništa *(ni)je nemoguće
 nothing NEG.is impossible
 ‘Nothing is impossible’

- (29) *išta (ni)je nemoguće
 anything NEG.is impossible
 ‘Anything is impossible’

- (30) nemoguće je da *niko/iko može to da postigne
 impossible is that no one/anyone can.3.SG it.ACC that achieve.3.SG.PRES
 ‘It is impossible for anyone to achieve that’

Given the complexity of negation-sensitive elements in both Korean and Serbo-Croatian, we suggest that diversifying the classificatory system of negation-sensitive items will better capture possible patterns of such items across languages.

4. Conclusion

We have examined a range of data that forces a revision in the classificatory system of negation-sensitive elements in Korean. Given previous depictions of the NPI/NCI distinction, we have suggested that *amwu*-N-*to* is better analyzed as an NCI. But given various distinctions between *amwu*-N-*to* and *etten*-N-*to*, we must expand our classification of NCIs in Korean; there are (at least) two kinds of NCIs in Korean. We have rooted the differences between them in their morphosyntactic features and how these interact with negation in the language. Future work includes identifying the precise semantic differences between *etten*- and *amwu*-type quantificational elements, as it appears there may be some presuppositional or specificity-related restrictions on the use of *etten*-N-*to* that do not hold on the use of *amwu*-N-*to*.

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