

Syntactic affixes in Korean and their relationship with clitics: A typological investigation

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There are so-called ‘syntactic affixes’ in Korean, lying between morphology and syntax. They behave like regular affixes in some ways, such as showing phonological dependency on the stem, but the ‘stems’ are usually phrases, making them syntactic (cf. Im 1989; Shi 1998: 18–19; Lee 2006; Shi 2015: 66–67). This challenging concept overlaps in many aspects with a more familiar linguistic concept, the clitic, as clitics also exhibit phonological dependence on their hosts and are syntactically related to a level higher than words. Whether the idea of ‘syntactic affix’ is necessary, and if it is needed, how common it is cross-linguistically is doubtful.

We first investigate how alike ‘syntactic affixes’ are to clitics and discover that ‘syntactic affixes’ exhibit similar properties according to criteria proposed by Zwicky & Pullum (1983), suggesting they have the status of clitics. On the other hand, we examine syntactic affixes and other canonical clitics to see if they undergo or trigger syntactic movement. From this syntactic perspective, clitics are divided into four types: Serbian/Croatian Wackernagel clitics as Type 1, both undergoing and triggering movement; Romance pronominal clitics as Type 2, only undergoing movement; Finnish Wackernagel clitics as Type 3, only triggering movement; ‘syntactic affixes’ as Type 4, not involved in movement. We assume this division shows clitic’s status between word and affix, and these types can be positioned on a continuum as shown in Figure 1 (cf. Aikhenvald 2002). In conclusion, ‘syntactic affix’ is only a subcategory of clitic but is still valid to describe Type 4, as different types of clitics reflect their mixed properties between words and affixes differently.

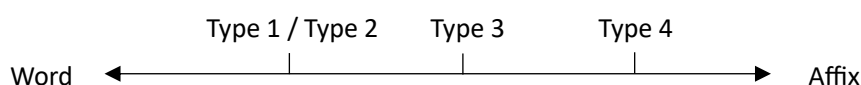


Figure 1: The word-affix continuum

Furthermore, a cross-linguistically unique type of clitic, which can be copied to every phrase’s edge, is found in Korean, as shown in (1). This type may be classified as Type 5; however, how to position them on the continuum needs further research.

- (1) *nehuy=tul ese=tul nol-ala=tul.*
2PL=PL quickly=PL play-IMP.IFRM=PL
‘You guys quickly play!’

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