Anaphoric inventories and bound variable interpretation: Evidence from Korean

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Background: The four-way distinction between R-expressions, overt pronouns, null pronouns, and reflexive anaphors is assumed to be universal.

**Reflexives/reciprocals**  
\(<{\text{Anaphor, -Pronominal}}>>

**Overt and null pronouns**  
\(<{\text{Anaphor, +Pronominal}}>>

 Binding constraints: an anaphor is bound in its local domain

(Ex.) John, hates himself,

*John, thinks that Mary hates himself,

 Binding constraints: a pronominal is free in its local domain

(Ex. *John, hates him,

 John, thinks [that Mary hates him,]

 Less clear distinction between reflexives and overt/null pronouns in Korean

caki 'self': a reflexive-like expression that can have a long-distance antecedent (O'Grady, 1987)

ku 'he' and its derivatives: an overt pronominal-like expression

**Research question:** Is the distinction truly universal? What is the interaction of universal and language-specific factors in pronominal/anaphoric inventories?

**Experiment 1:** Weak Crossover (WCO) in main clauses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prediction</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun (KU 'he'), pro in the subject position should not be bound by object (WCO effect); (1) should be bad.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun (KU 'he'), pro should be free in its local domain; (3) &amp; (4) should be bad or degraded.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexive (Caki 'self') should be bound by a (c-commanding) antecedent; (1) &amp; (2) should be bad or degraded.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Experiment 2:** WCO in relative clauses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prediction</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Object RCs should show degraded acceptability compared to subject RCs due to WCO effect.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object RCs with KU 'he', pro ('he'), Caki 'self' should be less acceptable than their corresponding subject RCs.</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Method:** 3x4 design, 28 Korean speakers, 24 sets of sentences, 1-5 rating scale (1: very strange, 5: very natural)

**Results:**

**Discussion**

Overt pronoun ku 'he'

Overt pronoun in the subject position can be bound by an object, contrary to English (Gordon & Hendrick, 1997).

The equally low acceptability of subject and object RCs with the overt pronoun suggests that this unacceptability is independent of WCO: the overt pronoun is not available for variable binding.

The deictic interpretation may be contextually possible but is unavailable in stimuli out of context (see Kang 1998 for development of ku 'he' from a demonstrative meaning 'that'). Overt pronouns in Korean behave like R-expressions.

**Conclusions**

In Korean, bound variable interpretation is distributed across reflexive-like element (caki 'self') and null pronominal forms (pro) with caki being a preferred form of bound variable.

Korean does not have true overt pronominals.

The Overt Pronoun Constraint (Montalbetti, 1984) restricting bound variable behavior to pro does not apply to Korean.

Variation in language particular anaphoric inventories is greater than is usually assumed.

Future study: On-line experiments are being prepared to examine the processing profiles of anaphoric inventories in Korean.