

Revisiting the Genitive Relative Construction in Korean:

Real GRC?

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1. Introduction

"Genitive Relative Construction" (GRC) is the traditional term for relative constructions, such as the (b) examples below, which appear to contain a genitive subject instead of the usual nominative subject.

- (1) a. [ku sinsa-ka ip-un] os-i telepta
the gentleman-NOM wear-REL clothes-NOM be dirty
'the clothes that the gentleman is wearing are dirty.'
- b. ku sinsa-uy ip-un os-i telepta
GEN
- (2) a. [nay-ka sal-ten] kohyang
I-NOM live (ASP) REL native village
'the native village in which I was living'
- b. na-uy sal-ten kohyang
GEN

The term GRC implies that there is an exact correlation between the (a) and (b) examples in (1) and (2), in the sense that (b) is semantically equivalent to (a), or perhaps even derived from (a).¹ This phenomenon may have been noticed by many Korean

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¹ In brief, GRCs are assumed to result from a sort of *ka-uy* conversion, as mentioned by Yoon (1991).

scholars implicitly, but seems to have been first explicitly introduced by authors such as Yang (1987), Kang (1988) and Yoon (1991).² This reluctance of authors to discuss GRCs might be thought to be due to the very subtle grammaticality judgments associated with this construction as mentioned by Yoon (1991: note 3), but I believe the real reason for this reluctance to be that GRCs do not exist. Instead, I will argue that a genitive NP followed by a relative clause can be coindexed with an empty pronominal ("pro") in the relative clause relatively freely depending on the context.

In this paper, I will discuss some problems with the aforementioned approaches, and try to solve them by providing an alternative analysis of GRCs within the HPSG framework.


2. The Background of the Introduction of GRC

Yang (1987) and Kang (1988) introduced GRCs as an "escape hatch" for certain cases of movement out of double relative clauses in Korean. Double relative clauses, which have two relative heads, as illustrated in (3), have usually been considered to violate island constraints.

² Yoon (1991) differs from the other two authors in that, to avoid the problem of case marking, he proposes that the genitive NP in GRCs is base-generated instead of arising from movement. However, all three share the fundamental assumption that GRCs exist.

- (3) *[[[t_1 t_j po-n] os,-i] tele-un] ku $sinsa_i$]
 see-PAST-REL clothes-NOM be dirty-REL the gentleman
 'Lit. the gentleman_i that the clothes, that t_1 saw t_j are dirty'

On standard transformational analyses, (3) has the following structure:

- (4) [[[[t_1 ...]IP₁]CP₁...]NP]IP₂ O₁]CP₂ NP₁]


In (4), the trace in the inner relative clause is related to the coindexed empty operator and so it violates subadjacency.

However, there are many double relative constructions which are often judged to be grammatical, such as the following.

- (5) [[[[t_1 t_j ip-un] os,-i] tele-un] ku $sinsa_i$]
 wear-REL clothes-NOM be dirty-REL the gentleman
 'Lit.the gentleman_i [that the clothes, [that t_1 wear t_j] are dirty]'

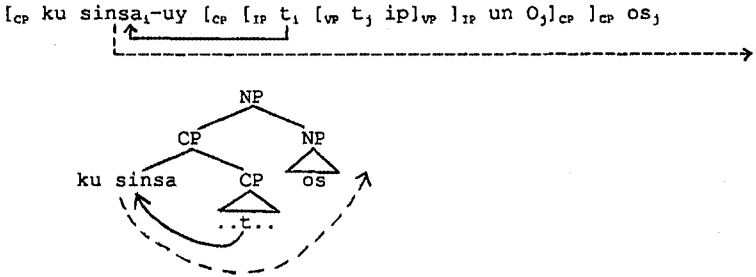
Example (5) would appear to have exactly the same structure as (3), namely (4). Thus it too must violate subadjacency. But it is still grammatical.³

To solve this problem, Yang (1987) and Kang (1988) suggest that (5) is derived from (1b), which in turn is derived from (1a). That is, they use the construction (1b) as an "escape hatch" to make the movement possible in (5). More specifically, Yang (1987) proposes that *ku sinsa* is CP adjoined as illustrated in (6a), so

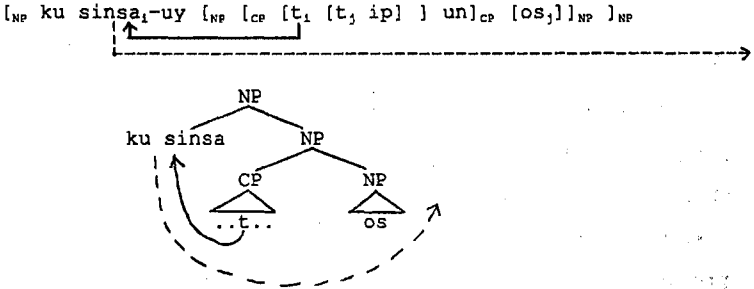
³ For this reason, linguists like Choe (1985), following the claims of Kuno (1973) and Saito (1985) that Japanese relativization does not involve Move alpha, concludes that Korean relativization does not observe the island constraints. Instead she suggests, following Huang (1982)'s analysis of Chinese, that Korean relativization involves Move alpha at LF, a level in which island constraints are not observed in general.

the later movement of *ku sinsa* out of the embedding NP in the double relative construction is possible without violating subadjacency. Kang (1988), as illustrated in (6b), proposes that *ku sinsa* is NP adjoined, with the other arguments being the same.⁴

(6)a. D.W. Yang (1987) -- CP adjoined



b. M.Y. Kang (1988) -- NP adjoined



⁴ In this respect, Kang differs from Chomsky (1986), who prohibits NP adjunction to an NP. In addition to the difference of the position of adjunction, there is another difference between Yang's and Kang's approaches. That is, whereas Yang (1987) proposes movement of an empty operator in Korean relativization, Kang (1988) suggests movement of the head noun, following Vergnaud (1974). Yang's approach is much more in line with mainstream transformational analyses since Chomsky's "On Wh-Movement" (1977).

explanation for double relative constructions. Consider the following datum, which is from Kang (1988) himself.

- (8) * [_{CP} [_{CP} [_{CP} t₁ t_j ip-un]_{CP} os_j-i] saenghwalcengdo-lul
 wear-REL clothes-NOM living-standard-ACC
 cwawuha-nun]_{CP} sinsa₁]
 determine-REL gentleman
 'Lit. the gentleman₁ [that the clothes_j [that t₁ wear t_j]
 determines the living standard]'

The GRC hypothesis wrongly predicts that (8) should be grammatical. To solve this problem, comparing (8) with (5), Kang employs the notion of "event" from Higginbotham (1985), together with the assumption that if the matrix clause contains an independent event, then the movement out of the inner relative clause is impossible. In addition, he assumes that most predicates have independent events, whereas adjectives (stative verbs in my terminology) do not. Based on these assumptions, Kang concludes that (8) is ungrammatical, since the predicate *saenghwalcengdo-lul cwawuha-* 'determine the living standard' constitutes an independent event and so the higher CP functions as a bounding node blocking movement out of the lower CP. On the other hand, (5) is grammatical, since the simple adjective (again stative verb in my terminology) *tele-* 'be dirty' does not constitute an independent event.

If this is so, then what about the following GRC sentence?

- (9) [[[[t₁ t_j ip-un] os_j-i] salamtul-uy nwun-ul
 wear-REL clothes-NOM people-GEN eye-ACC
 kkul-nun] sinsa₁]
 attract-REL gentleman
 'Lit. the gentleman₁ [that the clothes_j [that t₁ wear t_j]
 attract people's eyes']

inalienability of the relative heads".⁶ Both of these constraints are used to explain the grammaticality of the constructions in (11).

- (11) a. John-uy ip-un os
 GEN wear-REL clothes
 'the clothes that John wears'
- a'.*John-uy po-n os
 see-PAST-REL
- b. John-uy pwuleci-n son
 GEN be broken-REL hand
 'Lit. the hand that John is broken'
- b'.*John-uy pwuleci-n chayksangtali
 leg of the desk

According to Yang (1987) and Yoon (1991), (11a') is ungrammatical because the verb *po-* 'see', unlike the verb *ip-* 'wear' in (11a), does not describe the characteristic property of its head NP *os* 'clothes'. In other words, the characteristic property of *os* 'clothes' is not to be seen but to be worn. And, on the relevant reading, (11b') is ungrammatical because the head NP *chayksangtali* 'leg of the desk' is not an inalienable part of the genitive NP 'John' (in this respect, they seem to regard *os* 'clothes' as an

⁶ In addition, Yoon (1991) posits the following constraints:

- (i) The relative head nouns in GRCs cannot have specifiers.
- (ii) The genitive noun phrase in GRCs must be either generic or definite.
- (iii) The acceptability of a GRC is dependent on properties of the predicate of the relative construction.
- (iv) The legitimacy of the genitive noun phrases in GRCs is dependent on the thematic role of the noun phrase.

All of these constraints can be derived from one or two constraints I will give later in this paper, if we reject the GRC hypothesis that a genitive NP followed by a relative clause is the subject of the relative clause.

- (13) a. ku ai-uy khiwu-n pwumo
 the child-GEN raise-REL parent
 'the parent who raised the child'
- b. na-uy mossalkekwu-nun chinkwutul
 I-GEN tease-REL friends
 'the friends who are teasing me'
- c. na-uy panhangha-nun atul
 I-GEN defy-REL son
 'the son who defies me (NP[dat] in Korean)'
- d. na-uy salangha-nun hananim
 I-GEN love-REL God
 'God whom I love' or 'God who loves me'
- e. na-uy mescikey ci-un cip
 I-GEN nicely build-REL house
 'my house which somebody built nicely'
 or 'the house which I built nicely'

In fact Kang (1988) and Yoon (1991) recognize that genitive NPs can correspond to objects in relative clauses, though they treat such cases as exceptional. But the exceptional cases are much more widespread than they recognize. In (13c), the genitive NP is related to the indirect object; and (13d) and (13e) are ambiguous about where the genitive NPs "come from". Furthermore, in (13e), the genitive NP bears no grammatical relation to the relative clause in the preferred reading. And it is possible for all of the constructions in (13) to have corresponding double relative clauses as shown (14).

- (14)
- a. [[t_i t_j khiwu-n] pwumo_i-ka cwuk-un] ku ai,
 raise-REL parent-NOM die-REL the child
 'Lit. the child_j [that the parent_i [that t_i raised t_j] died]'
- b. [[t_i t_j mossalkekwu-nun] chinkwutul_i-i motwu isahaypeli-n] na,
 tease-REL friends-NOM all move-REL I
 'Lit. I_j [that the friends_i [that t_i teased t_j] all moved away]'

- c. [[t₁ t_j panhangha-nun] atul₁-i cip-ul nakapeli-n] na_j
 defy-REL son-NOM home-ACC leave-REL I
 'Lit. I_j [that the son₁ [that t₁ defied t_j] left home]'
- d. [[t₁ t_j salangha-nun] hananim₁-i teisang concayha-cian-un] na_j
 love-REL God-NOM any more exist-not-REL I
 'Lit. I_j [that God_j [that t₁ love t_j] does not exist any more]' or
 [[t₁ t_j salangha-nun] hananim₁-i teisang concayha-cian-un] na_j
 love-REL God-NOM any more exist-not-REL I
 'Lit. I_j [that God₁ [that t₁ love t_j] does not exist any more]'
- e. [[(someone) t₁ mescikey ci-un] cip₁-i pwulthapeli-n] na
 nicely build-REL house-NOM be burnt down-REL I
 'Lit. I [that the house₁ [that someone built t₁ nicely] is burnt
 down]' or
 [[t₁ t_j mescikey ci-un] cip₁-i pwulthapeli-n] na_j
 nicely build-REL house-NOM be burnt down-REL I
 'Lit. I_j [that the house₁ [that t₁ built t_j nicely] is burnt down]'

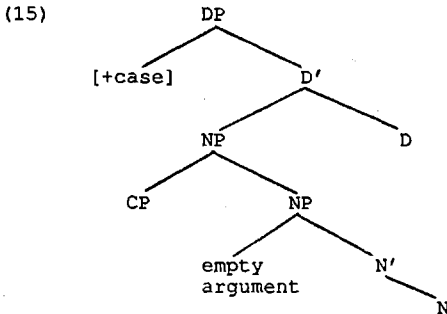
3.4. Theoretical Problems with GRC Analyses

The adjunction approaches of Yang (1987) and Kang (1988) also have some theory-internal problems. First, there is no relevant genitive case assigner, since in the standard NP analysis only the specifier and complement positions of N are assigned genitive case. Second, there is a violation of case theory, since the chain containing the genitive noun phrase and its trace has two cases, [+NOM] and [+GEN].

Pointing out these problems, another advocate of the GRC hypothesis, Yoon (1991), suggests the base generation approach illustrated in (15).

Following Abney (1987), Yoon (1991) proposes that the genitive NP in GRCs is base-generated in the SPEC of D where [+GEN] is assigned by AGR in D. He further assumes that the genitive NP and

the empty argument of the head noun form a chain.⁸ The genitive NP getting case in the D-structure position inherits (or shares) its theta role from the empty argument.



This approach also has a couple of problems. First, it is not clear where the empty argument, which like the genitive NP is base-generated, gets its theta role. The inference from the position of the empty argument (i.e., it is in the internal argument position) leads us to conclude that it gets its theta role from the head N. But it is more appropriate for the empty argument to get its theta role from the CP which is the relative clause (or more strictly speaking, from the V in the CP).

The second problem is that with this approach, we cannot explain the scrambling between a genitive NP and a relative clause

⁸ Traditionally a chain consists of an argument and its traces. That is, chains arise from movement. So it is questionable whether the genitive NP, which is base-generated, and the empty argument of the head noun, which is also base-generated, can form a chain.

as in (16).⁹

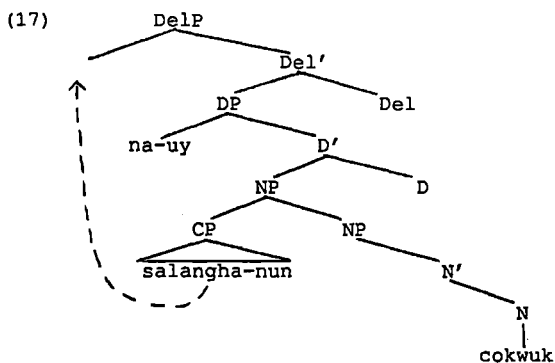
- (16)a. [John-i yenphil-lo ssu-n] pyenci
NOM pencil-with write-REL letter
'the letter which John wrote with a pencil'
a'. *[yenphil-lo ssu-n] John-i pyenci
- b. John-uy [yenphil-lo ssu-n] pyenci
GEN pencil-with write-REL letter
'the letter which John wrote with a pencil'
b'. [yenphil-lo ssu-n] John-uy pyenci
- c. na-uy [salangha-nun] cokwuk
I-GEN love-REL native contury
'the native contury which I love'
c'. [salangha-nun] na-uy cokwuk

As we can see in (16a'), when the NP is nominative, the scrambling is impossible; but it is genitive, the scrambling is possible.

However, if we read Yoon's (1990) dissertation carefully, we can infer that the scrambling in the example constructions like (16b' and c') can be explained. He posits a Del(imiter) Phrase above DP in (15) as illustrated in (17). And the SPEC of this DelP functions as a landing site for scrambling. Thus the scrambling in the example construction (16c') can be explained in his structure, since the scrambling occurs between just two constituents.

However, what about a more general structure like (18), where the scrambling occurs between three constituents, i.e., the scrambling occurs in six different grammatical ways as shown in (19)?

⁹ The adjunction approaches of Yang (1987) and Kang (1988) do not explain this scrambling phenomenon either. According to Gil (1987), this scrambling phenomenon is also observed in Japanese NPs.



(18) John-uy [salangha-nun] ku yeca
 GEN love-REL the woman
 'the woman whom John loves'

- (19) a. John-uy [salangha-nun] ku yeca
 b. John-uy ku [salangha-nun] yeca
 c. [salangha-nun] John-uy ku yeca
 d. [salangha-nun] ku John-uy yeca
 e. ku John-uy [salangha-nun] yeca
 f. ku [salangha-nun] John-uy yeca¹⁰

Yoon cannot solve this problem unless he posits another unmotivated phrase above DelP.

On the basis of the array of arguments presented in this section, it would appear that we have no choice but to reject the GRC hypothesis. In the next section, I develop an alternative analysis which addresses all the problems with the GRC analyses discussed above.

¹⁰ In (d), (e) and (f), in addition to the given reading, there may be another reading which means 'the woman whom that John (not this John) loves'.

4. A New Analysis and its Implementation in HPSG

I propose that there is in fact no distinct GRC construction. In other words, a genitive NP before a relative clause has no grammatical relation to the subject position or any other position of the relative clause. What I assume instead is that a genitive NP followed by a relative clause may happen to be coindexed with a pro (phonetically empty pronominal argument) in the relative clause, depending on the context. To make my explanation explicit, let us assume the following general structure for so-called GRCs.

(20) NP[gen] [...e_i...e_j...Vt]_{RC} N'

If we suppose for example that the verb within the relative clause is transitive, there may be two empty categories (the subject and the object). And, here, the head noun will typically be coindexed with one of the empty categories in the relative clause. Then, the genitive NP will be coindexed with the other empty category, which is a pro. So if the head noun is coindexed with e_j (the object in the relative clause), the genitive NP will be coindexed with e_i (the subject), and on the other hand, if the head noun is coindexed with e_i (the subject), then the genitive NP will be coindexed with e_j (the object). Thus so-called GRCs correspond to the former case. My point is that GRCs are just a special case of the general structure in (20), with the specific (if any) coindexing determined

by context.¹¹ That is why it is so difficult to capture general constraints on the acceptability of GRCs.

One more thing we must not fail to notice is that every genitive NP followed by a relative clause plus a head NP has the possessive reading with respect to the head NP.¹² In this respect, I assume that the structure under discussion is one in which a relative clause is inserted between a genitive NP and a head NP. This in turn leads us to predict that scrambling between the genitive NP and the relative clause is possible, as was shown in (16).

If we reject the GRC hypothesis and follow the approach just suggested, we can characterize the construction under discussion in terms of just two constraints.

One is Kuno (1976)'s functional constraint (21):

(21) A relative clause must be a statement about its head noun.

This is a constraint not only on the structure under discussion but also on relative clauses in general. With this constraint, we can explain the unacceptability of (8) on the ground that the relative

¹¹ Thus there may be cases in which the genitive NP is not coindexed with any empty category in the relative clause, as shown (13e).

¹² Here, the term "possessive reading" is used in a broad sense, not in a narrow sense in which something "belongs to" something or something is an "inalienable part" of something. My term "possessive reading" includes all the possible readings available when a genitive NP is followed by an NP without an intervening relative clause.

clause in (8) *ip-un os-i saenghwalcengdo-lul cwawuha-nun* 'the clothes that are worn determines the living standard' is not a statement about the gentleman but about persons in general.

The second constraint is related to a processing effect.

(22) In a structure which has a genitive NP followed by a relative clause, the relative clause must be heavy enough (at least two syllables, and the longer it is, the more acceptable it is).

If a relative clause is short (here, one syllable), it may sound incomplete as a clause. So language users are likely to think that the relative clause (strictly speaking, the verb in the relative clause) should have overt arguments such as a subject NP or an object NP instead of the genitive NP. Thus the structure with a genitive NP followed by a relative clause which consists of one syllable sounds odd to many people. With this constraint, we can explain the ill-formedness of (11a'). If the relative clause becomes longer by adding some adverbs, the construction is grammatical as in (23).

(11a') *John-uy po-n os
 GEN see-PAST-REL clothes

(23) John-uy ecey po-n os
 yesterday see-PAST-REL

And interestingly enough, as discussed in footnote 9, (11b') is grammatical, contrary to the prediction of the GRC hypothesis. This is because we need not interpret *John* as the subject of

pwuleci- 'be broken', although it does have a possessive reading to the head NP *chayksangtali* 'leg of the desk'.

From the arguments we have developed so far, we may summarize our observations and assumptions as follows.

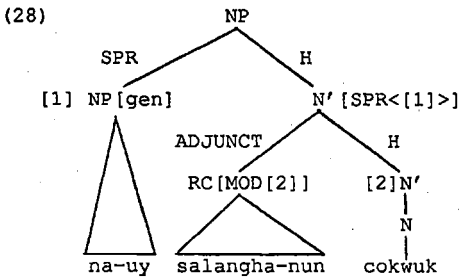
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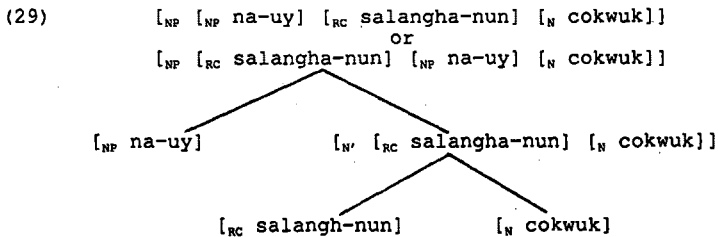
- a. GRCs do not exist.
- b. A genitive NP always has the possessive reading with respect to the head NP.
- c. A genitive NP followed by a relative clause can be coindexed with a *pro* in the relative clause.¹³
- d. There are two constraints on the construction of a genitive NP plus a relative clause plus a head NP.
 - (i) A relative clause must be a statement about its head noun.
 - (ii) The relative clause must be heavy enough (at least two syllables, and the longer it is, the more acceptable it is).
- e. Scrambling between a genitive NP and the following RC is possible.

This new approach to the facts under discussion can be formalized within the HPSG framework (Pollard and Sag, in press), in at least two ways.

¹³ This assumption is not without problems. That is, the problem arises whether a *pro* coindexed with the genitive NP can be replaced by its corresponding explicit pronoun. This substitution in the constructions under discussion is bad in most cases. To solve this problem, I assume following J. Yoon (this volume) that *pro* and overt pronouns do not have exactly the same distribution.

An alternative HPSG analysis would adopt the word order domain approach suggested by Reape (1990). This approach rejects phrase structure as the basis of word order. Instead, it projects word order domains, allowing them to consist of elements which are -- in terms of the syntactic derivation -- not sisters and therefore couldn't be ordered with regard to each other in a strictly phrase-structure based approach, so that "sequence union" of domains may operate. The sequence union operation is a linear ordering operation informally defined as follows: When a nonhead expression and a head expression combine, parts of each expression can be intercalated as long as the precedence relations in both nonhead and head expression remain the same, i.e., as long as the LP statement holds. If we apply this sequence union operation to the example syntax tree shown in (28), we will have the domain tree of (29) which shows how scrambling occurs, i.e., the sequence union of the NP[gen] and N' word order domain allows us to have both *na-uy salangha-nun cokwuk* and *salangha-nun na-uy cokwuk* as outputs. We can apply this approach to the construction discussed, since the lexical head is in the final position and the LP statement applies to every domain.

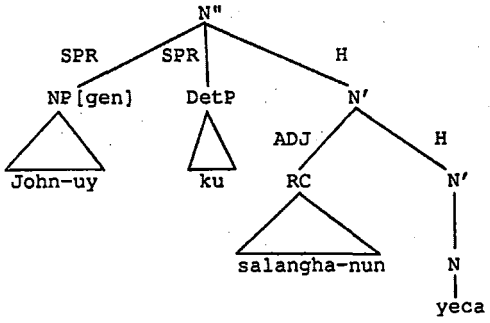




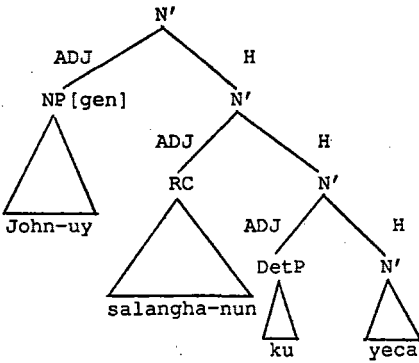
LP statement: X < lexical head

We have seen so far how the problem of scrambling, which is solved in none of Yoon (1991)'s, Yang (1987)'s, or Kang (1988)'s approaches, can be solved within the HPSG framework. In (17), however, it was shown that the problem of scrambling in the example construction could be solved by positing a Del(limiter) Phrase above DP, as in Yoon (1990). The remaining problem there concerned more general structure like (18), where the scrambling occurs between three constituents as in (19). In the HPSG framework, however, we can solve this problem either of the same two ways described above. To get a flat structure, we need only one more daughter node in (25), i.e., determiner phrases would also be treated as adjuncts. Alternatively, to apply the word domain approach, we need only to have structures in which the heads are in the final positions at each level of the structure. The number of possible structures seems to be four as follows, depending on whether the possessive NP and the determiner phrase are treated as an adjunct or an specifier respectively.

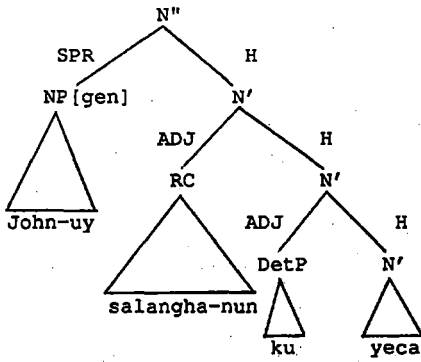
(30) $X'' \rightarrow Y''^*, X'$
 SPR HEAD



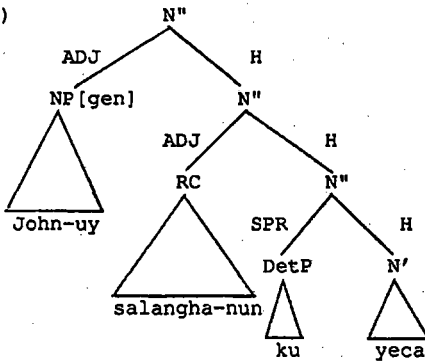
(31)



(32)



(33)



For the present, it seems difficult to determine which one of these four structures is to be preferred. To answer this question, it will be necessary to investigate more general NP structures. I leave this question for future study.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I provided an analysis of so-called GRCs. I examined the approaches to this construction and concluded that GRCs do not exist as a distinct construction and that what have been analyzed as GRCs are just special cases of the general NP structure I developed.

And given the problems of the previous approaches, especially the problem of scrambling, I have shown that the HPSG framework, with or without the word domain approach, offers promising alternatives.

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