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A CONTRA-LINGUISTIC STUDY OF NEGATION IN KOREAN AND ENGLISH

Abstract. Negation is frequently found in every language, and many logicians or linguists have been carrying out research on it. Their investigations are, however, mostly confined to the languages of Europe. Although some of them pay attention to non-European languages, we can hardly find research on negation in Korean. In this paper, we carry out contra-linguistic analysis of four aspects of negation in Korean and English. First, we compare the expressions of negative elements in Korean and English sentences. Second, we contrast the types of negation in Korean with those of English. Third, we draw a distinction between Korean and English in what decides the scope of negation. Finally, we contrast the answers to questions which contain negative elements.

Keywords: contra-linguistics, English, Korean, negation, yes-no question.

1. Introduction

Negation is a process that turns parts of a statement into its opposite. (Blanco and Moldovan, 2011: 228) Negation is a linguistic, cognitive, and intellectual phenomenon. Ubiquitous and richly diverse in its manifestations, it is fundamentally important to all human thought. (Lawler, 2007: 1) Negation is such an important part of thinking and the speech act that many linguists, logicians, and psychologists have been carrying out research on it. Some significant contributions to research on it have been made by Dikken (2006), Schwarz and Bhatt (2006),

Swart (2006), Bernini and Ramat (1992), and Haspelmath (1993). Their investigations are, however, mostly confined to the languages of Europe. Although some others like Kahrel (1996) pay attention to languages in the areas outside of Europe, they focus on non-European languages besides Korean.

Similar to any other language, Korean has a number of ways to express negation. Some of them are similar to those of non-European languages, while others are different from them. The difference between them causes some difficulties to foreigners who learn Korean and to Koreans who learn a foreign language. Therefore, we are going to investigate the difference and apply our research result to teaching Korean or foreign languages, which will help learners to overcome the difficulties and make their learning more effective.

Furthermore, it becomes more significant to conduct a detailed study of similarity and difference in expressions of negation in different languages with rapid development of language processors. Especially, the clarification of the difference in expressions of negation between input language and output language will improve the quality of the machine translation system.

We think that readers can easily understand negation in the Korean language, which may be less familiar in comparison with English, which is an international language. So our research subject includes not just Korean but also English.

In this paper, we carry out contra-linguistic analysis of four aspects of negation in Korean and English. First, we compare the expression of negative elements in Korean and English sentences. Second, we contrast the types of negation in Korean with those of English. Third, we draw a distinction between Korean and English in what decides the scope of negation. Finally, we contrast the answers to questions which contain negative elements.

2. Contrast between Korean and English in the expression of negative elements

Languages generally have ways to express negation, that is, something that corresponds to the first-order logic connective \neg . (Swart, 2006: 199) In most linguistic and logical frameworks it is generally assumed that all negative sentences are analyzable in terms of an abstract negative element added to a positive sentence. (Kahrel, 1996: 2)

In English negative sentences, the abstract negative element is “not”. This is illustrated by the following extract from Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2009).

NEGATIVE STATEMENTS

Negative statements are made in two main ways:

1. If the statement contains an auxiliary verb, such as **is** or **have**, you usually add **not** or its contracted form **n’t**.

She is not leaving. OR She isn’t leaving.

Am and **may** do not allow **n’t**. **Will**, **shall**, and **can** have special contracted forms: **won’t**, **shan’t**, **can’t**.

The same rules apply when you make a question negative.

Are they in the garden? Aren’t they in the garden?

Will he get the job? Won’t he get the job?

2. If the statement has no auxiliary verb, you need to make the negative using a form of **do** + **not/n’t**. Make sure that the main verb is in its basic form.

She likes swimming. She doesn’t like swimming. NOT She doesn’t likes swimming.

I saw a ship. I didn’t see a ship. NOT I didn’t saw a ship.

The same grammatical function as the English word “not” is performed by the negative adverb “*안(an)/아니(ani)*”, “*못(mot)*” or the negative adverbs “*아니다(anida)*”, “*않다(antha)*”, “*못하다(mothada)*”, “*말다(malda)*” in Korean sentences.

- (1) a. 영희는 학교에 안 갔다.
yŏnghŭinŭn hakkyoe an katta.
Yong Hui to the school not went
Yong Hui did not go to the school.
- b. 영희는 학교에 가지 않는다.
yŏnghŭinŭn hakkyoe kaji annŭnda.
Yong Hui to the school go does not
Yong Hui does not go to the school.
- c. 학교는 그리 넓지 않다.
hakkyoenŭn kŭri nŏppji antha.
The school so big is not
The school is not so big.

The negative meaning is expressed by the negative adverb “*안(an)*” in (1a), the verb “*않다(antha)*” in (1b), and the adjective “*않다(antha)*” in (1c). Here a question may be raised. Is the Korean negative word “*않다(antha)*” a verb or an adjective? It becomes a verb when it follows

and denies a verb in a sentence. But it becomes an adjective when it follows and denies an adjective in a sentence. It is because one important criterion for classification of Korean verbs and adjectives is morphologic peculiarity. In other words, a word is a verb if the ending postposition “는다(nūnda)/ㄴ다(nda)” may come after it. And a word is an adjective if the ending postposition “다(ta)” may come after it. For those who are not fully aware of Korean grammar, an ending postposition is a Korean grammatical particle which is the last part of the predicate and indicates the end of the sentence.

- (2) a. 나는 책을 읽는다. (verb)
 nanūn chaegŭl ingnūnda.
 I a book read
 I read a book.
- b. 이 꽃은 대단히 아름답다. (adjective)
 i kkochūn taedani arūmdapta.
 This flower very is beautiful.
 This flower is very beautiful.

That is why the Korean word “않는다(*annūnda*)” in (1a) is a verb which negates the action “go” while the Korean word “않다(*antha*)” in (1c) is an adjective which negates the property “big”.

In English, negation is marked by words (e.g. no, never) or affixes (e.g., -n’t, un-). (Blanco and Moldovan, 2011: 228) as well as “not”. Kahrel (1996) focuses on negative sentences which do not include the word “not”.

This study will be concerned with the analysis of negative sentences which in English are expressed by negative indefinite forms such as *no N*, *none of the N*, *nobody* and *nothing*. (Kahrel, 1996: 1)

The other English words besides “not” which have a negative meaning include “no”, “none”, “no one, nobody”, “nothing”, “nowhere”, “few/little”, “never”, “seldom/rarely”, “no longer”, “hardly/ scarcely”, “neither/ nor” and so on. (Eastwood, 2002: 18) Such negative words cannot be found in Korean. Herein lies another considerable difference between Korean and English in expression of negative elements.

The negative meanings of these English words are not expressed by a single word but by means of combination of a negative word and an interrogative pronoun or an adverb of degree in Korean sentences, which is illustrated by the following English-Korean translation.

- (3) a. I am afraid of nothing.

나는 아무것도 두렵지 않다.
 nanün amugöttto duryöpji anatha.
 I anything afraid am not

- b. I can find him nowhere.

나는 그를 어디에서도 찾을 수 없다.
 Nanün kürül ödiesödo chajülsu öptta.
 I him anywhere find can't

- c. He hardly smiles.

그는 좀처럼 웃지 않는다.
 künün jomchöröm ujji annūnda.
 He often smiles does not

“Nothing” in (3a) is translated into the Korean word combination “아무것도...않다 (*amuköttto...antha*)”, “nowhere” in (3b) into “어디에서도...러 수 없다 (*ödiesödo...lsu öptta*)” and “hardly” in (3c) into “좀처럼... 않는다 (*jomchöröm ...annūnda*)”. It is because Korean, unlike English, does not have negative synthetic forms such as *nothing*. (Kahrel, 1996: 1)

Due to the differences in the expression of negative elements, Korean and English have a different typology of negation.

3. Contrast between Korean and English in the types of negation

Negation can be classified according to different criteria in Korean and English.

Dik (fc.) distinguishes four semantic types of negation in English: predicate negation, predication negation, propositional negation and illocutionary negation. (Dahrel, 1996: 18)

Predicate negation is confined to the predicate itself. In English, this type of negation is usually expressed morphologically, as in the following examples:

- a. unintelligent
- b. meaningless
- c. non-constructive (Kahrel, 1996: 18)

According to Dik, predication negation is characterized as the objective statement of the non-occurrence of some state of affair whereas propositional negation is seen as the subjective denial of the truth of a proposition. In English the distinction between these two types of negation is achieved by prosodic means and therefore it is not immediately apparent in the written language.

Illocutionary negation in Dik's sense of the term is confined to negative performatives such as the following:

- a. I do not order you to leave.
- b. I do not promise to come to the party. (Dahrel, 1996: 22)

The criterion for this semantic classification of negation is at what level of clause structure a sentence involves a negative operator.

The difference between Korean and English in the types of negation is revealed most clearly in the term negation. Kahrel (1996) mentions as follows:

The languages of Europe differ considerably from those in other areas of the world in regard to the expression of term negation. Constructions used in Europe are seldom found outside of it; and term negation types prevailing outside of Europe hardly occur in it.

The analysis of European languages would lead one to expect that all languages have negative synthetic forms such as nothing; yet, as we shall see, this is not the case. While English, apart from nothing, also has the form 'not anything', in other languages term negation can only be rendered a verbal negator and an indefinite pronoun. (Dahrel, 1996: 1)

Whereas Korean has no term negation, it has other types of negation which cannot be found in English. Negation in Korean is classified according to the expression of the negative operator. As mentioned in Section 2, there are various expressions of negation in Korean such as “안(*an*)/아니(*ani*)”, “아니다(*anida*)”, “않다(*antha*)”, “못(*mot*)”, “못하다(*mothada*)” and “말다(*malda*)”. These expressions have different nuances of meaning, which differentiate types of negation. According to the nuances of meaning, Negation in Korean is classified into three types: simple negation, ability negation and action negation.

Simple negation is made by adding a Korean negative operator “안(*an*)/아니(*ani*)”, “아니다(*anida*)” or “않다(*antha*)” to a positive sentence. It means that “doing not”, “being not” or “having not” is the will or nature of the subject of the sentence.

- (5) a. 남수는 어제 고향으로 갔다. (positive sentence)
 Nam Sunŭn ōje kohyangŭro kata
 Nam Su yesterday to his hometown went
 Nam Su went to his hometown yesterday.
- b. 남수는 어제 고향으로 안 갔다.
 Nam Sunŭn ōje kohyangŭro an kata
 Nam Su yesterday to his hometown didn't go
 Nam Su didn't go to his hometown yesterday.

- c. 남수는 어제 고향으로 가지 않았다.

Namsunŭn ōje kohyangŭro kaji *anatta* (past tense of
않다(*anta*))

Nam Su yesterday to his hometown didn't go

Nam Su didn't go to his hometown yesterday.

The sentences (5b, 5c) are simple negation and they negate the meaning of the sentence (5a).

They are different in that the sentences (5b) uses the negative adverb “안(*an*)”, whereas the sentences (5c) use the verb “않다(*anta*)”.

In making a negative sentence, the usage of the verb “않다(*anta*)” is possible in every case but the usage of the negative adverb “안(*an*)” is limited. Generally, the negative adverb “안(*an*)” is not proper in the sentences, the predicate of which is an adjective, a substantive, or a verb made by adding the Korean suffix “하다(*hada*)” to a noun. It is not proper in the sentences with long predicate, either.

- (6)a. 우리는 그를 안 본받겠다. (Non-standard)

Urinŭn kŭrŭl *an* ponbakketta.

- b. 순희는 대학에 안 입학했다. (Non-standard)

Sunhŭinŭn taehage *an* iphakhatta.

- c. 서해바다는 동해바다처럼 안 새파랗다. (Non-standard)

Sŏhaebadanŭn tonghaebadachŏrŏm *an* saeparatha.

- d. 옥이는 안 최우등생이다. (Non-standard)

Oginŭn *an* choeudŭngsaengida.

Generally, the above sentences are incorrect because they include the negative adverb “안(*an*)”. They become correct and possible negative sentences when the negative adverb “안(*an*)” is replaced with the negative verb “않다(*anta*)” or “아니다(*anida*)”.

- (7) a. 우리는 그를 본받지 않겠다.

Urinŭn kŭrŭl ponbajji *ankhetta* (future tense of 않다(*anta*)).

We him follow will not

We will not follow his example.

- b. 순희는 대학에 입학하지 않았다.

Sunhŭinŭn taehage iphakhaji *anatta* (past tense of 않다(*anta*)).

Sun Hui university enter did not

Sun Hui didn't enter the university.

- c. 서해바다는 동해바다처럼 새파랄지 않다.
 Sŏhaebadanŭn tonghaebadachŏrŏm saepharachi *antha*.
 Korean west sea as the Korean east sea blue is not
 The Korean west sea is not so blue as the Korean east sea.
- d. 순희는 최우등생이 아니다.
 Sunhŭinŭn choeudŭngsaengi *anida*.
 Sun Hui honor pupil is not
 Sun Hui is not an honor pupil.

Some Korean linguists call a negative sentence like (7d) “object negation”. In such sentences the predicate consists of a substantive. In this sentence (7d) the Korean adjective “*anida*” is added to the “*옥이는 최우등생이다 (oginŭn choeudŭngsaengida)*.” So it negates the fact that Sun Hui is an honor pupil. But after all, it is not the negation of ability or action, and thus it belongs to simple negation.

Ability negation is made by adding the negative adverb “*못(mot)*” or the negative element like “*못하다(mothada)*” to a positive sentence. It means that a certain action is impossible to perform not because of the will of the subject of the action but because of his inability or some other reasons.

- (8) a. 철수는 고향에 갔다.
 Chŏlsunŭn kohyange katta.
 Chol Su to hometown went
 Chol Su went to his hometown.
- b. 철수는 고향에 못갔다.
 Chŏlsunŭn kohyange *mot*katta.
 Chol Su to hometown couldn’t go
 Chol Su couldn’t go to his hometown.
- c. 철수는 고향에 가지 못했다.
 Chŏlsunŭn kohyange kaji *mothatta*.
 Chol Su to hometown go couldn’t
 Chol Su couldn’t go to his hometown.

The sentences (8b, 8c) are the ability negation of the sentence (8a). The sentence (8b) uses the negative adverb and the sentence (8c) uses the verb like simple negation. In ability negation, too, the usage of the negative verb “*못하다(mothada)*” is proper in every case but the usage of the negative adverb “*못(mot)*” is limited.

- (9) a. 옥이는 못 공부했다. (Non-standard)
 Oginŭn *mot* kongbuhætta.
 b. 순이는 철이를 못 본받았다. (Non-standard)
 Suninŭn chŏrirŭl *mot* ponbadatta.
 c. 이 길은 못 평탄하다. (Non-standard)
 I kirŭn *mot*phyŏngthanada

The sentences (9) are incorrect because they include the negative adverb. In this case, it is more proper to use the negative element “못하다 (*mothada*)”.

- (10) a. 옥순이는 공부하지 못했다.
 Ogsuninŭn kongbuhaji *mothatta* (past tense of 못하다(*mothada*)).
 Ok Sun study didn't/couldn't
 Ok Sun didn't/couldn't study.
 b. 순영이는 철수를 본받지 못했다.
 Sunyonginŭn chorirŭl ponbajji *mothatta*.
 Sun Yong Chol Su follow didn't/couldn't
 Sun Yong didn't/couldn't follow Chol Su's examples.
 c. 이 길은 평탄하지 못하다.
 I kirŭn phyŏngthanaji *mothada*.
 This road even surface has not
 This road has not an even surface.

The word “못하다(*mothada*)” in the sentences (10a, 10b) is a verb but “못하다(*mothada*)” in the sentence (10c) is an adjective. The Korean negative word “못하다” becomes a verb when it follows and denies a verb in a sentence. But it becomes an adjective when it follows and denies an adjective in a sentence.

Putting all accounts together, the main difference in the components of simple negation and ability negation lies in the difference between the negative adverbs “안(*an*)” and “못(*mot*)”. The negative adverb “안(*an*)” indicates that an action is not performed because of the will or nature of its subject and negative adverb “못(*mot*)” implies that an action is not performed because of the subject's inability or some other reason.

- (12) a. 나는 그것을 못하는것이 아니라 안한다.
 nanŭn kŏgokŭl **mothanŭngösi** anira **anhanda**.
 I it cannot but don't
 It's not that I can't do it but I don't do it.

- b. 나는 그것을 안하는것이 아니라 못한다.

Nanŭn kŭgokŭl **an**hanŭngösi anira **moth**anda.

I it don't but cannot

It's not that I don't do it but I can't do it.

The sentence(12a) means "It's not that I can't do it but I don't do it because I don't want it." and the sentence (12b) implies "It's not that I don't do it but I can't do it because it's impossible for me though I want to do it."

The meaning difference between the negative adverbs "안(*an*)" and "못(*mot*)" in Korean is not exposed clearly in English.

- (13) a. 나는 숙제를 하지 않았다.

Nanŭn sukjerŭl haji **an**atta.

I homework do did not

I didn't do my homework.

- b. 나는 숙제를 하지 못했다.

Nanŭn sukjerŭl haji **moth**atta.

I homework do didn't

I didn't do my homework.

The English translation of both sentences (13a, 13b) is usually "I didn't do my homework.". It shows that it's not expressed clearly whether the speaker didn't do his homework according to his will or he couldn't do it because of certain subjective or objective conditions. It doesn't distinguish the meaning difference between the negative adverbs "안(*an*)" and "못(*mot*)" in Korean.

In the translation of Korean into English, some other expressive means must be used in order to convey clearly the meaning difference of the negative adverbs "안(*an*)" and "못(*mot*)". So the example sentence (13b) must be translated into English like this – "I couldn't do my homework." or "I wasn't able to do my homework." – to show its exact meaning.

The act negation sentence is made by means of the Korean negative verb "말다(*malda*)". It is a kind of negative sentence by which a speaker asks (tells) the listener not to do a certain action or suggest to the listener that they do a certain action together.

The simple negation and ability negation are applicable to a declarative sentence and an interrogative sentence but not applicable to an imperative sentence. On the contrary, the act negation is applied to an imperative sentence.

- (13) a. 너는 영화관에 가지 말아라.
 Nŏnŭn yŏnghwagwane kaji *marara* (imperative form
 of “말다(*malda*)”).
 you to the cinema go don't
 Don't go to the cinema.
- b. 우리 래일 해수욕장에 가지 말자.
 Uri raeil haesuyokjjange kaji *malja* (imperative form
 of “말다(*malda*)”).
 We tomorrow to the beach go let's not
 Let's not go to the beach tomorrow.

The imperative sentence that shows the act negation as in the above examples is rendered into the negative imperative sentence in English; that is, “말라(*mala*)” is expressed by “Don't” and “말자(*malja*)” is expressed by “Let's not”.

- (13) a. Don't go to the cinema.
 b. Let's not go to the beach tomorrow.

As mentioned above, Korean has simple negation, ability negation, and action negation which cannot be found in English, whereas it has no term negation.

4. Contrast between Korean and English in the elements determining the scope of negation

First, it is a common phenomenon in Korean and English that the scope of negation is changed according to the context or situation.

- (14) 자연보호를 위해서 이 산에 들어가지 마시오
 “Jayŏnbohorŭl wihaesŏ i sane tŭrŏgaji masio”.
 Nature preservation for this mountain climb don't
 “Don't climb this mountain for nature preservation.”

The sentence (14) is an action negation sentence. In this sentence, the scope of the action negation expressed by the verb “말다(*malda*)” is ambiguous, and therefore, a listener or reader finds it difficult to grasp the meaning of the sentence correctly apart from a particular context or situation. The first possible meaning of the sentence is that you *must not climb this mountain* to protect nature, whereas the second possible meaning is that you must climb this mountain *not for nature preservation* but some other purposes.

In other words, in the first sense of the sentence the action of “climb this mountain” is negated, and in the second sense of the sentence the action of “preserve nature” is negated. The English version of the sentence (14) is “Don’t climb this mountain for nature preservation.”, in which the scope of negation is also changed according to the context or the situation.

Second, the scope of negation in Korean and English also depends upon intonation or pause.

- (16) 영옥이는 버스로 평양에 가지 않았다.
 Yŏngoginŭn ppŏsŭro phyŏngyange kaji anatta. (past tense
 of 않다(*antha*))
 Yong Ok by bus to Pyongyang go didn’t
 Yong Ok didn’t go to Pyongyang by bus.

The above sentence is also an equivocal sentence that connotes two meanings. The sentence itself is ambiguous because it is not clear whether the negative verb “않았다(*antha*)” negates the action of “going by bus” or the action of “going to Pyongyang”. The meaning of negation in this sentence is determined by intonation, that is, to what part of the sentence a speaker gives pause. If “Yong Ok” is followed by a pause in the sentence like “Yŏngoginŭn/(pause) ppŏsŭro phyŏngyange kaji anatta.”, it means that the action of “ppŏsŭro kada” (go by bus) is negated. In this case, the sentence implies that Yong Ok went to Pyongyang not by bus but by other means of transport such as car or train. On the other hand, if “ppŏsŭro” is followed by a pause in the sentence like “Yŏngoginŭn ppŏsŭro/(pause) phyŏngyange kaji anatta.”, it means that the action of “phyŏngyange kada” (go to Pyongyang) is negated. So the sentence uttered as above implies that Yong Ok went by bus not to Pyongyang but some other place.

In English too, the scope of negation is changed according to intonation.

The focus is usually more difficult to identify than the scope, especially without knowing the stress or intonation. With only taking into account single words, there are four possible focuses (wavy underline) for Your children don’t hate school. Each of them encodes different meanings:

- Your children don’t hate school; some children hate school, but not yours.
- Your children don’t hate school; some of your relatives hate school, but not your children.
- Your children don’t hate school; your children do not hate school, but they harbor a negative attitude towards school.
- Your children don’t hate school; your children hate something, but they do not hate school. (Blanco & Moldovan, 2011: 230)

Third, in Korean, unlike English, the scope of negation is changed according to *To* (a Korean grammatical particle or a postposition), for example, according to what kind of *To* is added to the subject behind it.

- (17) a. *순희는 버스로 가지 않았다.*
 Sunhŭi^{nŭn} ppŏsŭro kaji anatta.
 Subject+*To* by bus go didn't
- b. *순희가 버스로 가지 않았다.*
 Sunhŭi^{ga} ppŏsŭro kaji anatta.
 Subject+*To* by bus go didn't

In the above sentences, the subject of the first sentence is followed by postposition “*는(nŭn)*”, and the subject of the second sentence is followed by postposition “*가(ga)*”. From an informative viewpoint, “*순희는(Sun-Huinun)*” is old information and “*버스로 가지 않았다(ppŏsŭro kaji anatta)*” is new in the sentence (17a) and vice versa in the sentence (17b). In the sentence (17a) the object of negation is not “*순희(Sunhŭi)*” but “*버스(ppŏsŭ)*”, which means that Sun Hui went not by bus but by other means of transport. In the sentence (17b) the object of negation is not “*버스(ppŏsŭ)*” but “*순희(Sunhŭi)*”, which means that it is not SunHui but someone else who went by bus.

However, in English, the scope of negation is determined by the position of “not”. The English version of the example (17) is as follows;

- (17) a. Sun Hui went there **not** by bus.
 b. Sun Hui **didn't** go there by bus. / It is Sun Hui that didn't go there by bus.

As seen above, the scope of negation in a sentence is determined by various kinds of *To* (postpositions) in Korean, whereas it is shown by the position of “not” in English.

5. Contrast between Korean and English in the answers to a negative interrogative

Korean and English are different in the way of answering a negative interrogative sentence.

As for an interrogative sentence in Korean, there are two kinds i.e. wh-questions and yes-no questions.

A wh-question is an interrogative sentence that has a question word. The answer to the question is, generally, about the question word in the sentence.

- (18) a. 영남이는 언제 대학에 입학했습니까?
Yŏngnamiga ōnje taehage iphakhaessŭmnikka?
Yong Nam when university entered?
When did Yong Nam enter university?

그는 지난해에 대학에 입학했습니다.
Kŭnŭn jinanhaee taehage iphakhassumnida.
He last year university entered.
He entered university last year.
- b. 누가 이 책을 빌려왔습니까?
Nuga i chaegŭl pilyŏwatssŭmnikka?
Who this book borrowed?
Who borrowed this book?

영남이가 빌려왔습니다.
Yŏngnamiga pilyŏwatssŭmnida.
Yong Nam borrowed
Yong Nam borrowed.
- c. 순희는 지금 어디에 있습니까?
Sunhŭinŭn jigum ōdie itssŭmnikka?
Sun Hui now where is?
Where is Sun Hui now?

그는 지금 도서관에 있습니다.
Kŭnŭn jigum tosŏgwane itssŭmnida.
She now in the library is
She is in the library now.

There is no difference between Korean and English in the answer to wh-questions.

But, in case of a yes-no question, there is no question word in the Korean sentence. So the answer is the judgment about the truth of the whole sentence and usually, it begins with “예(*ye*)” or “아니(*ani*)”. If there is a word showing negation in a yes-no question, the answer is different in Korean and English.

- (19) 너는 어제 학교에 가지 않았었니?
nŏnŭn ōje hakkyoe kaji anattanni
You yesterday to school go didn't?
Didn't you go to school yesterday?

In English the answer to such a question is “Yes, I did” if the hearer went to school, and “No, I didn't” if he didn't go.

The answer **no** agrees that the negative is true. The answer **yes** means that the positive is true.

Haven't they repaired it yet? ~ No, it's an awful nuisance.

~ Yes, they did it yesterday.

(Eastwood, 2002: 36)

But it is different in Korean. In Korean the answer to the above question is “아니, 갔었습니다 (No, I did.)”, if the hearer went to school, or “예, 가지 않았습니다 (Yes, I didn't.)”, if he didn't go to the school. In other words, the answer **no** denies that the negative is true. The answer **yes** agrees that the negative is true. From the perspective of functional grammar, the answer **no** is a propositional negation in Korean whereas it is predication negation in English.

It shows that the mode of answering the negative interrogative sentence in English is contrary to Korean language.

On the other hand, in the case of a negative question about an action that has not happened yet, the answer is different. The following sentence is an example for more specific explanation.

(20) 학교에 가지 않겠습니까?

Hakkyoe kaji ankhessŭmnikka?

to school go will not?

This negative interrogative sentence can be taken three ways depending on the particular context or situation. It may mean that an asking person suggests to the hearer that they go to school together, or tells him to go to school, or asks him if he really won't go to school.

In the case that the interrogative sentence (20) carries the meaning of suggestion or imperative in Korean language, it is usually expressed not by a negative interrogative sentence but an affirmative one in English.

(20) 학교에 가지 않겠습니까?

Hakkyoe kaji ankhessŭmnikka?

a: Shall we go to school?

b: Go to school, won't you?

The English translation (20a) is for the case that the Korean sentence (20) implies suggestion and the English sentence (21b) corresponds to the imperative in Korean.

However, if the Korean sentence (20) uses the negative adverb “못(*mot*)” instead of “안(*an*)”, the meaning is changed.

- (21) a. 학교에 가지 않겠습니까?
Hakkyoe kaji ankhessŭmnikka?
to school go will not?
- b. 학교에 가지 못하겠습니까?
Hakkyoe kaji mothagessŭmnikka?
to school go will not?

The sentence (21a), as seen above in the sentence (20), carries the meaning of suggestion, imperative, and confirmation. But the sentence (21b) means imperative or confirmation. Unlike sentence (21a), the sentence (21b) does not mean suggestion, and in terms of imperative, it has a stronger meaning than the sentence (21a).

A negative interrogation sentence (like 21b) that uses the negative adverb “못(*mot*)+verb?” to show the meaning of imperative is proper when the listener is the speaker’s junior or subordinate. So in normal Korean linguistic culture, the expression “학교에 가지 못하겠니? (hakkyoe kaji mothagenni?)” is used more often than an expression like “학교에 가지 못하겠습니까? (Hakkyoe kaji mothagessŭmnikka?)”.

In Korean the degree of imperative meaning shown by the negative adverb “안(*an*)” and “못(*mot*)” is different, but in English, this meaning is expressed by almost the same sentence as (20b). Korean language can express the detailed difference in the degree of imperative, which is one aspect of its advantages.

6. Conclusion

Korean has some peculiarities in expressions of negative elements, types of negation, elements deciding the scope of negation, and the answers to questions which contain negative elements.

In Korean the negative elements are expressed by words such as “안(*an*)/아니(*ani*)”, “아니다(*anida*)”, “않다(*antha*)”, “못(*mot*)”, “못하다(*mothada*)” and “말다(*malda*)”. These expressions have different nuances of meaning, which differentiate types of negation. According to the nuances of meaning, negation in Korean is classified into three types: simple negation, ability negation, and action negation. Simple negation shows that a certain activity is not done due to the will of its subject and ability negation means that a certain action is impossible to perform because of his inability or some other reasons. Action negation means that a speaker suggests to a hearer that they shouldn’t do a certain activity, or it tells him not to do it.

And Korean does not have term negation because it does not have negative synthetic forms such as *nothing* unlike English. In Korean, *To* (a Korean grammatical particle or a postposition) plays a key role in determining the scope of negation while the position of “not” is important in English. And the short answers “Yes/No” to negative yes-no questions play a different role in Korean and English.

Besides these peculiarities, there are some other problems relating to negation in Korean including double negation.

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