Suru, Ha(ta), and Verb Incorporation

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Insoo Kim (1993) Su, ha(ta), and verb incorporation Linguistics, vol 1. This paper pursues three major goals; i) The element X which occurs right before Ha/Suru is not uniformly a noun, ii) The θ-role assignment for the light verb is not exotic (Grimshaw and Mester, 1988), iii) If we analyze X+ha/suru Construction as a case of Verb Incorporation (VI), we can account for the puzzle of the θ-role assignment without the Argument Transfer Theory.

The current thesis defends the claims mentioned above by observing similarities between the verbs which trigger VI and the light verbs: i) Both don’t allow a tensed X as their complement, ii) Ha/Suru does not violate the Condition on VI (Li, 1990), iii) Ha/Suru does not violate the Head Movement Constraint (Li, 1990).

An immediate theoretical consequence is that my proposal can also explain some related V-V Compounding processes such as [Movement verb] + [Movement verb] as an instance of VI, i.e., \( kele(V) + kata(V) \) 'walk and be somewhere'. In sum, I claim a VI approach which suggests the element X preceding 'light' ha/suru is a verb.

1. Argument Transfer Theory

The term 'light verb' is used when we refer to a verb which subcategorizes and case marks a direct object NP, without assigning a θ-role. Grimshaw and Mester (1988) claim that the Japanese verb 'suru' is a light verb and all other Japanese verbs are heavy and take only θ-opaque objects. The Korean verb ha(-ta) shows a lot of similarities with the Japanese verb suru. As in the case
of suru, ha- can assign Case to its object.

    top with table-sharing-acc HA-past-decl.
    'John shared the table with Bill.'

    top with table-sharing HA-past-decl.
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(2) a. John-wa Bill-to AISEKI-o shita.
    top with table sharing-acc suru-past
    'John shared the table with Bill.'

b. John-wa Bill-to AISEKI shita.
    top with table sharing suru-past
    'John shared the table with Bill.'

Sentences in (1) represent the Korean examples and those in (2) are taken from Grimshaw and Mester(1988, 206) for Japanese. If we compare (1a) and (2a), both sentences contain an NP case-marked by the verb, ha- and suru respectively. If we compare (1b) and (2b), the formerly case-marked NP appear without any case-marking.

Grimshaw and Mester (1988) suggest three tests for θ-transparency/opacity as follows:

i) Whereas θ-opaque NPs can freely be topicalized, θ-transparent NPs resist topicalization.
ii) Only opaque NPs can relativize.
iii) Only opaque NPs allow modification by elements like numerals.

i) Topicalization

(3) a. John-un Mary-lul salang-ul ha-n-ta.
    top acc love-acc HA-prs-decl
    'John loves Mary.'

b. Mary-nun John-i salang-ul ha-n-ta.
    top nom love-acc HA-prs-decl