

Three Aspects of Negation in Korean

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Sells, Peter. 2001. Three Aspects of Negation in Korean. *Journal of Linguistic Studies* 6, 1–15. Korean has three forms that express negation: short-form negation, long-form negation and inherently lexical verbs. The goal of this paper is to argue that there are three separate notions related to the expression and interpretation of negation in Korean, which must be kept separate. They are the notions of a negative clause, of the surface c-command domain of a negative element, and of the semantic scope of a negative element. The main arguments derive from the interactions of the negative-sensitive adverb *yekan* with different forms of negation, and of the interaction of examples with both *yekan* and a negative-sensitive item like *awmu-to* ('anyone'). (Stanford University)

1. Introduction

This paper is concerned mainly with syntactic aspects of negation in Korean, and with the lack of isomorphism between surface syntactic position and the semantic scope of negation.¹ Negation is typically expressed by one of the items in (1):

- (1) Negative Items
 - a. Long-Form Negation, e.g., *cap-ci anh-ass-ta* 'did not grasp'
 - b. Short-Form Negation, e.g., *an cap-ass-ta* 'did not grasp'
 - c. Lexically negative verbs: *eps-ta* 'not exist', *molu-ta* 'not know'.

My main purpose here is to show that there are three separate structural notions that must be recognized, regarding the expression and interpretation of these types of negation in Korean, and none of which can be reduced to any of the others:

- (2) Structural Notions of Negation
 - a. The surface form of negation (SFN \neq LFN).
 - b. The notion of a 'syntactically negative clause'.
 - c. The semantic scope of negation (in the interpretation of a clause).

¹I am grateful to Jong-Bok Kim and Miok Pak for assistance with some of the examples here, and to Shin-Sook Kim for similar assistance as well as very useful comments on the pre-final draft. My interest in *yekan* (section 3) was re-awakened by Cho (2001).

There are three main sections in this short paper. In section 2, I discuss the structures of Short-Form Negation (SFN) and Long-Form Negation (LFN), showing that the two types of negation are different in surface structure, that is, have different syntactic properties, illustrating with examples involving complex predicates. In section 3, I present data involving the negative-sensitive item *yekan* which further corroborate the differences between the two types of negation. Section 4 provides evidence for the independence of (2)b and (2)c: data involving *yekan* interacting with negative polarity items is presented which clearly shows that there are separate syntactic (licensing) and semantic (scope) conditions on the distribution of those negative polarity items.

I believe that the observations in this paper get us as far as the need to recognize the three notions in (2): but any large conclusions are somewhat provisional, in the sense that not everything here yet receives a fully adequate explanation.

2. The Phrase Structure of Negation

SFN involves the negative adverb *an*, while LFN involves a different construction, with the negative verb *anh-ta* taking a content verb as its complement. The two are often treated as having a common source, with *anh-ta* supposedly formed from an independent negative morpheme (either *an* or *ani*) and a ‘dummy’ verb *ha-ta*. This is perhaps plausible for a form like *ilk-ci mos ha-ta* (‘cannot read’), but much less so for the less transparent *ilk-ci anh-ta* (‘does not read’)—in fact, there is no known phonological derivation (in Korean) that will derive *anh-ta* from *ani ha-ta* (see Sells (1995, 305)).

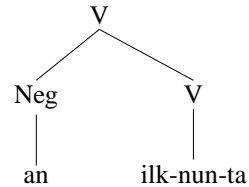
Focussing less on the surface form and more on the syntactic and semantic properties of negation, much recent work has assumed a single source for at least SFN and LFN, in terms of the Government-Binding Theory (and later Minimalist) functional projection of NegP. The idea for NegP in Korean seems to originate in Ahn and Yoon (1989); for a survey of several related proposals see Kim (2000, 60ff.). My purpose in this section is to show that SFN and LFN have different surface syntactic command domains, and therefore the “*an*” part of each of them cannot be located in an identical syntactic position, somewhere within a NegP.

For analyses which take the surface facts of negation more at face value, it is perhaps tempting to treat SFN as a prefix, as it is marked by *an* (or *mos*) appearing directly in front of the negated verb. The prefixal account is presented in its most convincing form by Kim (1999) (see also Kim (2000)). However, I think there are reasons to be skeptical of it, and I will continue to assume that SFN must be treated as a combining with a syntactic word—a V^0 —to create a syntactically complex V^0 .²

²If SFN *an* is a prefix, that would in fact strengthen one argument here, namely that SFN and LFN have very different surface forms.

Under these assumptions, (3) represents the syntactic structure of *an ilk-nun-ta* ('is not reading'):

(3) Short-Form Negation



That is, (3) involves the syntactic combination of two words, giving a complex element also of bar-level 0. Evidence for this analysis comes from various sources, including the lack of morpho-phonological evidence for a putative prefix status for SFN, and more crucially from the facts of negation with complex predicates (see Sells (1994), Sells (1998b)), which are summarized in this section. One apparent argument for a prefixal account is the fact that SFN is not syntactically iterable: **an an ilk-nun-ta* is ungrammatical. This can be explained on an account that adopts (3) by the fact that such a doubly negated form is blocked by the non-negated form (see Sells (1998a)).

The data from complex predicates is simply illustrated. Let us consider the complex predicates in (4), drawn from a wide range of possible candidates in Korean.

- (4) a. ilk-e po-ta
 read-COMP try-DECL
 'try to read'
- b. ilk-e cwu-ta
 read-COMP give-DECL
 'give the favor of reading'
- c. ilk-ko siph-ta
 read-COMP want-DECL
 'want to read'

Labelling the verbs V_1 and V_2 from left to right, so that V_1 is *ilk-* with some complementizing suffix, and V_2 is the verb which selects for V_1 , it can be noted that it is not possible to negate V_2 by placing SFN immediately in front of it (see Sells (1991), Sells (1998b)).

(5) Negating V₂: immediately preverbal SFN

- a. *ilk-e an po-ta
read-COMP NEG try-DECL
'not try to read'
- b. *ilk-e an cwu-ta
read-COMP NEG give-DECL
'not give the favor of reading'
- c. *ilk-ko an siph-ta
read-COMP NEG want-DECL
'not want to read'

This suggests that negation somehow cannot interrupt a complex predicate. It is important to notice, though, that it is not the case that V₂ cannot be negated; long form negation is always possible:

(6) Negating V₂: LFN

- a. ilk-e po-ci anh-ta
read-COMP try-COMP NEG-DECL
'not try to read'
- b. ilk-e cwu-ci anh-ta
read-COMP give-COMP NEG-DECL
'not give the favor of reading'
- c. ilk-ko siph-ci anh-ta
read-COMP want-COMP NEG-DECL
'not want to read'

Moreover, examples like those in (5) do have grammatical variants, but with the short form negation in front of V₁, as shown in (7), even though the scope of negation includes V₂. The ungrammatical examples in (5) become grammatical if the short form negation is placed in front of the whole complex.

(7) Negation of V₂: SFN preceding V₁

- a. an ilk-e po-ta
NEG read-COMP try-DECL
'not try to read'
- b. an ilk-e cwu-ta
NEG read-COMP give-DECL
'not give the favor of reading'

- c. an ilk-ko siph-ta
 NEG read-COMP want-DECL
 ‘not want to read’

Strictly speaking, in these examples, there is of course an ambiguity of the attachment of negation: is it just V_1 that is negated, or is it the constituent which consists of the two verbs? There are no restrictions on negating V_1 (unlike V_2). In general, it is possible for negation preceding V_1 to take scope over the whole complex predicate (in the analysis of Sells (1998b), as a complement of V_2), or just over V_1 , though in a given example one interpretation may be preferred over the other. The examples in (8) and (9) illustrate these possibilities. (8) has unambiguous negation scope over ‘want’:³

- (8) na-nun [Swuna-lul po-ko siph-un mankhum-ina] Mira-lul
 I-TOP Swuna-ACC see-COMP want-PRENOM extent-as Mira-ACC
 an po-ko siph-ta
 NEG see-COMP want-DECL
 ‘I don’t want to see Mira as much as I want to see Swuna.’

(9) has unambiguous negation scope under ‘want’, just over V_1 :

- (9) na-nun ku namca-lul kyelkho tasi an manna-ko siph-ta
 I-TOP that man-ACC ever again not meet-COMP want-DECL
 ‘I want to never meet the man again.’ (... He was so awful!)

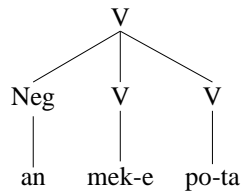
This leads us to the following general conclusions about negation in complex predicates.

- (10) In a V_1 - V_2 complex predicate:
 a. Short form negation of V_1 immediately precedes V_1 .
 b. Short form negation of V_2 immediately precedes V_1 .

Sells (1998b) argues that (10)b shows that SFN and V_1 both combine in the same structure, as selected dependents of V_2 : every verb can optionally select for a negative adverb, which will be the SFN of that verb. As this selection is syntactic, the construction of SFN and the verb will be syntactic. Consequently, SFN of V_2 is as shown in (11):

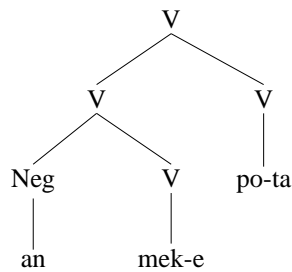
³My thanks to David Beaver for discussion of what kinds of examples were necessary to make this point, and to Shin-Sook Kim for constructing the Korean examples.

(11) Negating V₂:



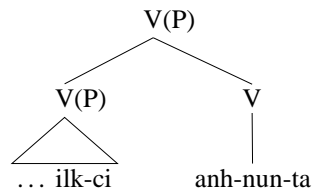
On the other hand, if only V₁ is negated, then it will select for the negative adverb, combine with it, and then V₂ will combine with that syntactically complex constituent, as shown in (12).

(12) Negating V₁:



In contrast to SFN, LFN is a construction where the negative verb *anh-ta* takes a verbal complement, as part of a kind of complex predicate, as shown in (13):

(13) Long-Form Negation



LFN shows more flexibility than SFN in its semantic scope, and it is likely that this is in part due to LFN being able to take a V⁰ complement, or a VP complement (it may even take an S complement; see Sells (2001)).

3. The Construction with *yekan*

In the analysis developed above, SFN is a sister of the verb that it negates, and therefore cannot c-command out of the (immediately) containing V⁰. In contrast LFN is itself a verb which takes a verbal complement, and which can therefore

c-command arbitrarily large parts of the structure (the parts schematized by ‘...’ in (13)).

This crucial distinction between SFN and LFN is corroborated by the behavior of the adverb *yekan*, which shows that the phrase structure has to have the articulation just given, in order for the relevant constraints to be storable. This adverb *yekan* literally means ‘commonly’, but can only be used in conjunction with a negative, to mean ‘uncommonly’ in a positive sense (see Cho (2001)). Although it needs to cooccur with a negative in the same clause, the word immediately following *yekan* may not be negative itself,⁴ as seen in the contrast in (14)a/b. In fact, *yekan* cannot form a constituent with a negative element.⁵

- (14) a. *yekan coh-ci anh-ta*
 commonly good-COMP NEG-DECL
 ‘is uncommonly good’
- b. **yekan an coh-ta*
 commonly NEG good-DECL
- c. *yekan papo-ka ani-ta*
 commonly fool-NOM NEG.COP-DECL
 ‘is uncommonly foolish’

The fact that (14)c is acceptable shows that the licenser of *yekan* is not just the negative verb *anh-ta*, but rather any overtly negative morpheme in the appropriate structural relationship. That relationship seems to be surface c-command. Clearly *yekan* in (14)b can only combine with *an coh-ta*, which is a constituent which is itself negative, and in which negation cannot c-command *yekan*.

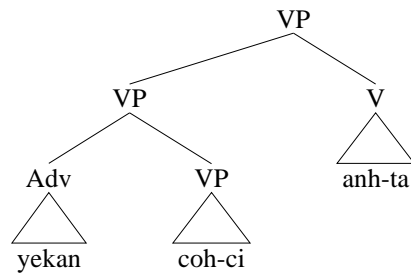
The structures of (14)a/b are shown below. The constraint that *yekan* imposes is that it must combine with a predicative constituent which is not negative, yet be in the scope of a negative. This forces the structure shown in (15)a, with the LFN verb *anh-ta*, which may take a VP complement. I assume that *yekan* is a regular adverb, which adjoins to any constituent (VP in this case).⁶

⁴This generalization, from Sells (1994), only fails to hold in the fixed expression ... *yekan ani-ta*, a predicate indicating some extraordinary property of its subject.

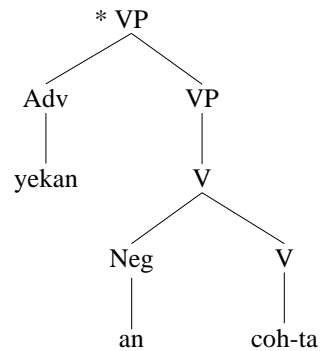
⁵*yekan* may also appear in Rhetorical Questions (see Cho (2001)), a fact ignored here.

⁶Even if different bar-levels were assigned in the structures given in this section, the structural relationships between each element would be the same, and the argument would remain unchanged: LFN can c-command *yekan*, but SFN cannot.

(15) a.



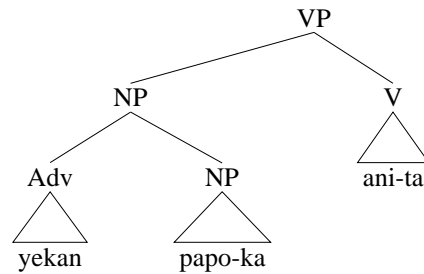
b.



On a more general level, the contrast in (14)a/b indicates that SFN and LFN are not merely innocuous variants of some identical underlying form, or that they simply mark 'negative sentences'.

For (14)c, the structure appears to be that shown in (16).

(16)



Even though *papo-ka* is nominal, it has a predicative meaning that *yekan* can modify, and the complex NP is in the c-command domain of *ani-ta*.⁷

⁷In the analyses of Kim (1999) and Cho (2001), the differences between SFN and LFN are encoded by assigning the LFN verb *anh-ta* the feature [+aux], and various grammatical possibilities are sensitive to this feature, rather than surface c-command relations. The acceptability of (14)c means that the negative copula *ani-ta* must also be treated as an auxiliary.

With this background in mind, consider now the following sets of examples, based on Cho (2001):

- (17) a. *Marcia-ka yekan cal an ttwi-n-ta
 Marcia-NOM commonly well NEG run-PROG-DECL
- b. Marcia-ka yekan cal ttwi-ci anh-nun-ta
 Marcia-NOM commonly well run-COMP NEG-PROG-DECL

Here *yekan* modifies *cal*, and this constituent is c-commanded by LFN, but not SFN. In contrast to *anh-ta*, inherently negative verbs like *eps-ta* do not have the ability to license *yekan*:

- (18) a. *Sue-ka yekan ton-i eps-ta
 Sue-NOM commonly money-NOM not.exist-DECL
 ‘Sue has much money.’
- b. Sue-ka yekan ton-i manh-ci anh-ta
 Sue-NOM commonly money-NOM much-COMP NEG-DECL
 ‘Sue has uncommonly much money.’

(18)a appears to show that the inherently negative verb fails to license *yekan*, while LFN in (18)b is a successful licenser. The relative position of *yekan* and *ton-i* does not matter for the unacceptability of (18)a: (19) has a different order, but is still bad.

- (19) *Sue-ka ton-i yekan eps-ta
 Sue-NOM money-NOM commonly not.exist-DECL

However, it is likely that the unacceptability of (18)a is due to the failure of *yekan* to combine with an appropriately scalar constituent: in (18)b it will combine with *ton-i manh-ci* ‘be much money’, but there is no relevant scalar constituent in (18)a. Even if we provide such a potential constituent, using the adverb *manhi*, the example is still ungrammatical, with an inherently negative verb:

- (20) *Sue-ka yekan ton-i manhi eps-ta
 Sue-NOM commonly money-NOM much not.exist-DECL

Of course, all of the ungrammatical examples in this section are grammatical if *yekan* is removed.

Other evidence perhaps that *eps-ta* cannot license *yekan* comes from constructions like (21):

- (21) kep-i eps-ta
 fear-NOM not.exist-DECL
 ‘be fearless’

Such a construction cannot directly combine with *yekan*, but it can if LFN is added in to the structure:

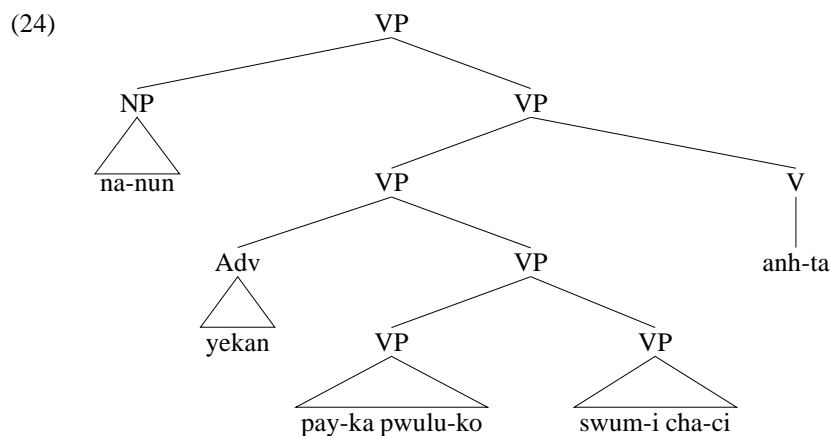
- (22) a. **yekan* *kep-i eps-ta*
 commonly fear not.exist-DECL
 ‘?be uncommonly fearless’
- b. *yekan* *kep-i eps-ci anh-ta*
 commonly fear-NOM not.exist-COMP NEG-DECL
 ‘be uncommonly fearless’

All of the ungrammatical examples here show that an inherently negative verb like *eps-ta* cannot license *yekan*, even if the right c-command conditions hold.

Finally, it is worth noting that *yekan* does not have to be ‘close’ in any linear sense to the negation that cooccurs with it, as shown by (23).

- (23) *na-nun yekan* [*pay-ka pwulu-ko*] [*swum-i*
 I-TOP commonly [stomach-NOM be.full-CONJ] [breath-NOM
cha-ci] *anh-ta*
 gasp-COMP] NEG-decl
 ‘As for me, my stomach is extremely full and my breath is extremely short.’

If *yekan* has to be immediately in the scope of a negative element, the relevant structure of (23) is that shown in (24).



This example illustrates how both *yekan* and *anh-ta* may take phrasal scope syntactically (cf. (13) for the structure of LFN).

In summary, the generalizations about *yekan* are as follows:

- (25) a. *yekan* is never licensed by inherently negative verbs such as *eps-ta*
 b. *yekan* forms a constituent with the predicative constituent that it modifies
 c. the entire constituent containing *yekan* must be c-commanded by the negative element, usually LFN

So, these facts show that the negative adverb *an* is generated in a position structurally lower than the position where the negative verb *anh-ta* is generated: thus, the two appear to have a different underlying structure. The surface position of negation is not necessarily isomorphic to semantic scope, a matter taken up in the next section.

The fact that inherently negative verbs like *eps-ta* do not license *yekan*—even though they presumably could c-command the constituent containing *yekan*—suggests that there might be some [+neg] feature that is associated with (at least) LFN but not inherently negative verb. However, when it comes to licensing canonical negative polarity items, this can be accomplished by any type of negation, including inherently negative verbs. This matter is also taken up in the next section.

4. Syntactic Licensing and Semantic Scope

Above, I have shown that inherently negative verbs and SFN cannot license *yekan*, and for SFN I attributed this to the fact that an SFN marker like *an* does not c-command any element of the clause other than the verb (or verbs) which it is sister to. Now, for other kinds of items sensitive to negation, such as those in (26), any kind of negative form is sufficient as a licenser:

- (26) Negative Sensitive Items (NSIs)
- a. *amwu-to* ‘anyone’, *amwu kes-to* ‘anything’, *amwu tey-to* ‘anywhere’, etc. The particle *-to* means ‘even’.
- b. NP+*pakkey* ‘other than’; cf. *pakk* ‘outside’ + *-ey* (dative marker). With negation, this forms a construction with the meaning of ‘only’.

For *amwu*-NPs, the primary interpretation is as negative polarity items, like the negative polarity use of *any* in English. NP-*pakkey* plus negation has the meaning of ‘only’. For example, illustrating with *amwu-to*, all of the subjects in (27) are interpreted within the scope of negation:

- (27) a. *amwu-to ton-i eps-ta*
 anyone-even money-NOM not.exist-DECL
 ‘No one has money.’

- b. amwu-to ku chayk-ul an ilk-ess-ta
 anyone-even that book-ACC NEG read-PAST-DECL
 ‘No one read that book.’
- c. amwu-to ku chayk-ul ilk-ci anh-ass-ta
 anyone-even that book-ACC read-COMP NEG-PAST-DECL
 ‘No one read that book.’

Even though there is no evidence that *an* in (27)b c-commands the subject, and even though the inherently negative verb in (27)a and SFN in (27)b cannot license *yekan*, they can perfectly well license a negative polarity interpretation for *amwu-to* in the subject position.

Now in English, the negative sensitive item *any* has both Negative Polarity and a Free Choice interpretations. I will refer to these interpretations as ‘NPI’ and ‘FC’ respectively. The FC interpretation in Korean is also possible in certain circumstances for the NSIs in (26)a (for full discussion, see Sells (2001)).

We have seen above that LFN licenses *yekan* by c-commanding it. However, the interaction of LFN and *yekan* seems to put an upper limit on the scope of negation, for a negative sensitive item in the subject position of an example with *yekan* does not get an NPI interpretation, but rather it gets an FC interpretation.

Consider first the familiar pattern in (28): only LFN licenses *yekan*.

- (28) a. *Marcia-ka yekan an yeppu-ta
 Marcia-NOM commonly NEG pretty-DECL
- b. Marcia-ka yekan yeppu-ci anh-ta
 Marcia-NOM commonly pretty-COMP NEG-DECL
 ‘Marcia is uncommonly pretty.’

Now we replace *Marcia-ka* by *amwu yeca-to* (‘any woman’). SFN is still not possible, but LFN is (in (29)b); but, negation does not scope semantically over the subject, which therefore receives the FC interpretation.⁸ If *yekan* is removed, as in (29)c, negation scopes over the subject, which receives an NPI interpretation.

- (29) a. *amwu.yeca-to yekan an yeppu-ta
 any.woman-even commonly NEG pretty-DECL
- b. amwu yeca-to yekan yeppu-ci anh-ta
 any woman-even commonly pretty-COMP NEG-DECL
 ‘Every woman is uncommonly pretty.’

⁸Some speakers of Korean find (29)b unacceptable; for these speakers *amwu yeca-to* should receive an NPI interpretation, but this is not possible as *yekan* limits the scope of negation.

- c. amwu yeca-to yeppu-ci anh-ta
 any woman-even pretty-COMP NEG-DECL
 ‘No woman is pretty.’

Specifically, the Free Choice interpretation for the NPI *amwu yeca-to* can be rendered ‘No matter which woman you pick, that woman is extremely/unusually pretty’, and it therefore implicates that no woman is just ordinarily pretty. To reiterate, negation combines with *yekan* to give the usual interpretation for that construction, but in so doing, negation is not able to take scope over the NPI to give a true NPI interpretation, which would be ‘No woman is unusually pretty.’ A similar effect is seen in (30):

- (30) amwuto yekan pappu-ci anh-ass-ta
 anyone commonly busy-COMP NEG-DECL
 ‘Everyone was extremely busy.’ (No one was just a little bit busy.)

These ‘scope-shrinking’ effects can also be found in examples combining both types of NSI from (26) (see Sells (2001)).

Regardless of the actual semantic scope of negation, NSIs are licensed only in clauses that are syntactically negative (headed by any of the three negation types in (1), and so we have the generalizations in (31):

- (31) Distribution of Negative Sensitive Items
- a. An NSI that is syntactically licensed in a negative clause, and is in the scope of negation: interpreted as a true NPI.
 - b. An NSI that is syntactically licensed in a negative clause, but is not in the scope of negation: interpreted as Free-Choice.
 - c. An NSI that is not syntactically licensed in a negative clause: ungrammatical.

Based on these observations, Sells (2001) argues that an NSI must first be properly syntactically licensed. This is accomplished if the NSI is in a clause containing one of the negative elements in (1) roughly, the NSI should be commanded by a negative element, where command is essentially the clause-mate relation (see Langacker (1969)). This is a purely formal syntactic licensing property, independent of both the morpho-syntactic form and the semantic interpretation of negation. Even more strongly than the facts of *yekan* described above, this makes it highly unlikely the popular idea of positing a NegP in Korean syntax to account for both the licensing of NSIs and the scope of negation could ever be made to work. Rather, for the licensing, there must be some purely formal feature [negative] which can be a property of clauses, such that an NSI can know whether it is in a [negative] clause or not.

5. Conclusion

We are led then, to recognize different ways in which negation may be present in a clause, repeated here from (2):

- (2) Structural Notions of Negation
- a. The surface form of negation (SFN \neq LFN).
 - b. The notion of a ‘syntactically negative clause’.
 - c. The semantic scope of negation (in the interpretation of a clause).

The surface form of negation is relevant for true c-command relations, which determine the licensing of *yekan*; any form of negation may indicate a syntactically negative clause, and license an NSI, regardless of whether the negative element c-commands the NSI or not; and finally, even if a negative element syntactically licenses an NSI, that NSI may or may not be in the semantic scope of negation (which is also not necessarily isomorphic to the c-command domain of negation).

In terms of semantic scope, any negative element can take wide scope (as seen in (27)), but it need not: for instance, for many (but not all) speakers, the scope of SFN does not include the subject if the subject is a regular quantifier (i.e., not an NSI):

- (32) manhun salam-i Seoul-ey an ka-ss-ta
many people-NOM Seoul-to NEG go-PAST-DECL
‘Many people did not go to Seoul.’ (many > neg)

Finally, in some cases, even long-form negation cannot take wide scope (as in the scope ‘shrinking’ examples above with *yekan*).

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