



# Against a Distributed Morphology Analysis of Korean Negative Imperatives

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# Introduction

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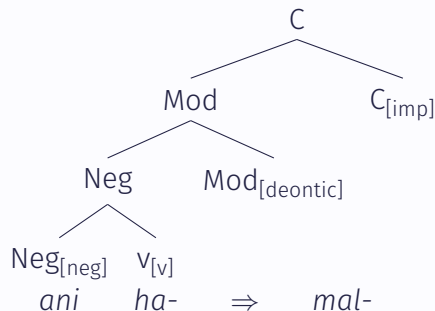
## Korean Negative Imperatives

It is well known that Korean has two types of negation — short form *an* and long form *ani* — yet it employs a third type, *mal*, in negative imperatives (i.e., prohibitives).

- (1)
- a. \*Hakkyo-ey *an* ka-la!  
school-to NEG go-IMP
  - b. \*Hakkyo-ey ka-ci *ani* ha-yela!  
school-to go-NMLZ NEG do-IMP
  - c. Hakkyo-ey ka-ci *mal*-ala!  
school-to go-NMLZ MAL-IMP  
'Don't go to school!'

# A Distributed Morphology Analysis

One of the most widely accepted account of this phenomenon is Han and Lee's (2007) Distributed Morphology (DM) analysis. They argue *mal-* is a spell-out of “long negation *ani* + *ha-*” in the context of deontic modality.



## Aims of This Study

I argue against a DM analysis of Korean negative imperatives.

- DM approaches to Korean negative imperatives make a strong prediction: plain negation *an(i)* and *mal-* should be in complementary distribution. I show that this not the case; they are in fact interchangeable in certain contexts.
- This suggests that the restriction on *an(i)* and the occurrence of *mal-* are governed by independent components of the grammar.
- For the former, I demonstrate that Han's (2001) syntactic account extends straightforwardly to Korean data. For the latter, I propose that *mal-* functions as a negation of *irrealis*.

## DM Analyses: Han and Lee (2007) and Choi (2024)

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# Background Assumptions

## The Syntax of Negation

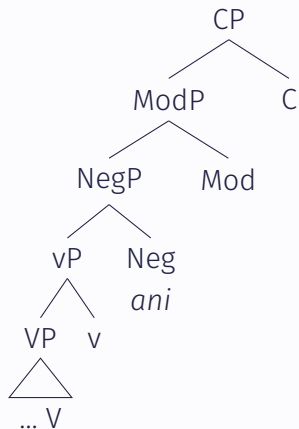
Long negation projects NegP, which is supported by the fact that long negation requires the light verb *ha-* to carry inflections, similar to the English *do*-support. Short negation starts out as left-adjunct of vP but cliticizes to v, similar to Neg-cliticization in Romance (Cinque 1999).

## The Syntax of Imperatives

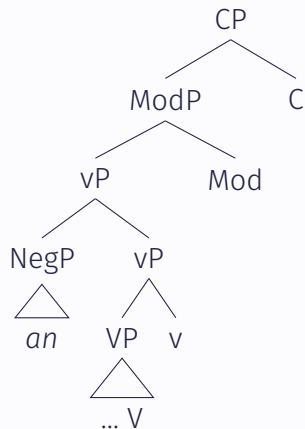
Imperatives include a projection of (deontic) modality but lack a TP layer (Zanuttini 1991; Han 2000).

# Background Assumptions

## Long Negative Imperatives



## Short Negative Imperatives





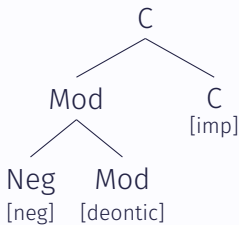
## DM Assumptions

Han and Lee (2007) remain agnostic on the issue of V-raising in Korean (Han, Lidz, et al. 2007). What matters for their purposes is that the syntax yields a morphological object that can undergo operations such as reordering, v-insertion, Fusion, and Vocabulary Insertion.

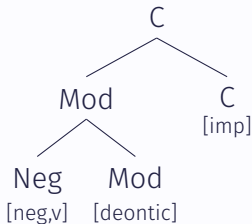
1. In the environment of [deontic], **Fusion** applies to Neg and v.
2. Vocabulary Insertion is controlled by the **Subset Principle**: for a feature bundle of a given node, the vocabulary item that has the greatest number of matching features and/or contextual conditions is inserted.

# Deriving the Verbal Complex in Long Negative Imperatives<sup>1</sup>

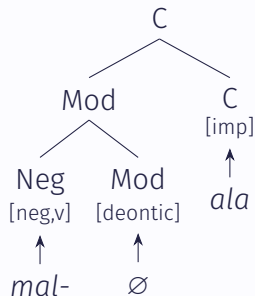
## Output of Syntax



## v-insertion & Fusion



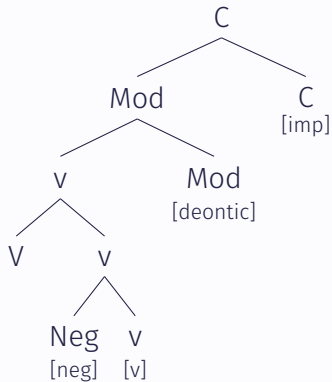
## Vocabulary Insertion



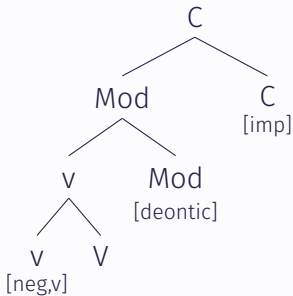
<sup>1</sup>For long negative imperatives, V moves up only to v, and Neg moves all the way up to C, deriving two distinct morphological objects. Only the latter is represented here.

# Deriving the Verbal Complex in Short Negative Imperatives

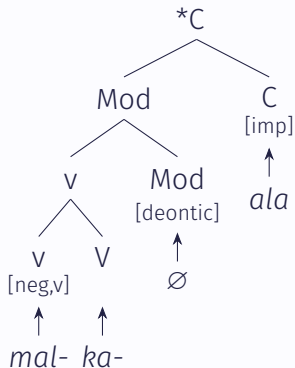
## Output of Syntax



## Reordering, v-insertion & Fusion

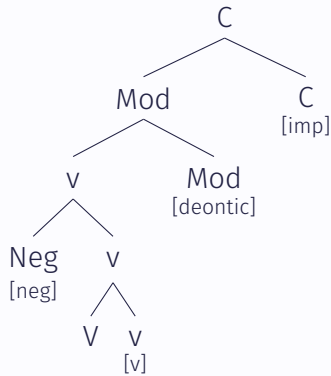


## Vocabulary Insertion



# Ruling Out Short Negative Imperatives

## Output of Syntax



Han and Lee (2007) argue that short negative imperatives are ruled out because the morphological object contains two verbal elements — *mal-* and the lexical verb. Choi (2024) challenges this view, showing that Korean permits a range of verbal complexes with multiple verbal elements (e.g., serial verb constructions). He instead proposes that, in short negative imperatives, Neg-v Fusion fails because v is no longer a terminal node.

## Insights and Predictions of DM Analyses

Although the details differ, the core insight shared by these DM analyses is clear: plain negation  $an(i)$  and  $mal-$  seem to be in complementary distribution.

This is indeed one of the stronger predictions they make: since  $mal-$  is a spell-out of  $[neg,v]$  in deontic contexts, it is precisely in those contexts where  $an(i)$  is predicted to be absent.

## On the Distribution of *mal-*

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- (2) a. Siwu-nun hakkyo-ey *an* ka-aya ha-n-ta.  
Siwu-TOP school-to NEG go-COMP should-PRES-DECL
- b. Siwu-nun hakkyo-ey ka-ci *ani* ha-yeya ha-n-ta.  
Siwu-TOP school-to go-NMLZ NEG do-COMP should-PRES-DECL
- c. Siwu-nun hakkyo-ey ka-ci *mal*-aya ha-n-ta.  
Siwu-TOP school-to go-NMLZ MAL-COMP should-PRES-DECL  
'Siwu should not go to school.'

## Embedded Clauses of Volitional Verbs<sup>2</sup>

- (3) a. Siwu-nun Mina-ka *an* ttena-ki-lul pala-n-ta.  
Siwu-TOP Mina-NOM NEG leave-NMLZ-ACC want-PRES-DECL
- b. Siwu-nun Mina-ka ttena-ci *ani* ha-ki-lul pala-n-ta.  
Siwu-TOP Mina-NOM leave-NMLZ NEG do-NMLZ-ACC want-PRES-DECL
- c. Siwu-nun Mina-ka ttena-ci *mal*-ki-lul pala-n-ta.  
Siwu-TOP Mina-NOM leave-NMLZ MAL-NMLZ-ACC want-PRES-DECL  
'Siwu wants Mina to not go to school.'

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<sup>2</sup>To account for these data, Han and Lee (2007) assume that some volitional verbs and complementizers may have two selectional properties. However, this raises the question of why such an optionality in selection exists.



## Embedded Clauses of Directive Verbs

- (4)
- a. \*Siwu-ka Mina-eykey *an* ttena-la-ko tangpwuha-yess-ta.  
Siwu-NOM Mina-to NEG leave-IMP-COMP ask-PST-DECL
  - b. \*Siwu-ka Mina-eykey ttena-ci *ani* ha-la-ko  
Siwu-NOM Mina-to leave-NMLZ NEG do-IMP-COMP  
tangpwuha-yess-ta.  
ask-PST-DECL
  - c. Siwu-ka Mina-eykey ttena-ci *mal*-la-ko tangpwuha-yess-ta.  
Siwu-NOM Mina-to leave-NMLZ MAL-IMP-COMP ask-PST-DECL  
'Siwu asked Mina not to leave.'

## Conditional Wishes

- (5)
- a. Nayil-un       pi-ka       *an*   wa-ass-umyen.  
tomorrow-TOP rain-NOM NEG come-PST-COND
  - b. Nayil-un       pi-ka       o-ci       *ani* ha-yess-umyen.  
tomorrow-TOP rain-NOM come-NMLZ NEG do-PST-COND
  - c. Nayil-un       pi-ka       o-ci       *mal*-ass-umyen.  
tomorrow-TOP rain-NOM come-NMLZ MAL-PST-COND  
'(Lit.) If it didn't rain tomorrow...'

## Polar Disjunctives (1)

- (6) a. Siwu-nun hakkyo-ey ka-lci    *an*   ka-lci    kominha-n-ta.  
Siwu-TOP school-to go-COMP NEG go-COMP contemplate-PRES-DECL
- b. Siwu-nun hakkyo-ey ka-lci    ka-ci    *ani*   ha-lci  
Siwu-TOP school-to go-COMP go-NMLZ NEG do-COMP  
kominha-n-ta.  
contemplate-PRES-DECL
- c. Siwu-nun hakkyo-ey ka-lci    *mal*-lci    kominha-n-ta.  
Siwu-TOP school-to go-COMP MAL-COMP contemplate-PRES-DECL  
'Siwu is contemplating whether he should go to school or not.'

## Polar Disjunctives (2)

Polar disjunctives with *mal-* in the second disjunct are highly productive in Korean. Han and Lee (2007) acknowledge their existence but treat them as idiomatic; I argue against this view, citing their overwhelming productivity.

Examples of this sort appear not to require deontic modality:

- (7) a. Na-nun ne-ka ka-kena *mal*-kena sangkwan an ha-n-ta.  
I-TOP you-NOM go-or MAL-or concern NEG do-PRES-DECL  
'I don't care if you go or not.'
- b. Siwu-ka hakkyo-ey ka-lci *mal*-lci nay-ka ettehkey al-a?  
Siwu-NOM school-to go-COMP MAL-COMP I-NOM how know-Q  
'How would I know if Siwu will go to school or not?'

- (8)
- a. \*Hakkyo-ey *an* ka-ca.  
school-to NEG go-EXH
  - b. \*Hakkyo-ey ka-ci *ani* ha-ca.  
school-to go-NMLZ NEG do-EXH
  - c. Hakkyo-ey ka-ci *mal*-ca.  
school-to go-NMLZ MAL-EXH  
'Let's not go to school.'

- (9) a. Hakkyo-ey *an* ka-ma.  
school-to NEG go-PROM
- b. Hakkyo-ey ka-ci *ani* ha-ma.  
school-to go-NMLZ NEG do-PROM
- c. \*Hakkyo-ey ka-ci *mal*-uma.  
school-to go-NMLZ MAL-PROM  
'I won't go to school.'

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<sup>3</sup>Choi (2024) concludes from this set of data that what characterizes the occurrence of *mal*- is not deontic modality, but a person feature [+2] (Zanuttini et al. 2012). However, his analysis builds on the assumption that plain negation and *mal*- are in complementary distribution.

## Interim Summary

Environment	plain negation <i>an(i)</i>	<i>mal-</i>
Imperatives	✗	✓
Exhortatives	✗	✓
Embedded Clauses of Directive Verbs	✗	✓
Embedded Clauses of Volitional Verbs	✓	✓
Obligation Contexts	✓	✓
Conditional Wishes	✓	✓
Polar Disjunctives	✓	✓
Promissives	✓	✗

## A Twofold Solution

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### ✓ *mal-*

- Negation of *irrealis*
- Conditional wishes & polar disjunctives
- Cross-linguistic & historical data

### ✗ *an(i)*

- Syntactic account (Han 2001)
- Basically imperatives: embedded clauses of directive verbs
- Child corpus (Han and Lee 2007)

## From Irrealis to Realis: Conditional Wishes

- (10) a. Ecey      pi-ka      *an*   wa-ass-umyen.  
yesterday rain-NOM NEG come-PST-COND
- b. Ecey      pi-ka      o-ci      *ani*   ha-yess-umyen.  
yesterday rain-NOM come-NMLZ NEG do-PST-COND
- c. \*Ecey      pi-ka      o-ci      *mal*-ass-umyen.  
yesterday rain-NOM come-NMLZ MAL-PST-COND  
'(Lit.) If it hadn't rained yesterday...'

## From Irrealis to Realis: Polar Disjunctives

- (11) a. Na-nun Siwu-ka ka-ass-nunci *an* ka-ass-nunci a-n-ta.  
I-TOP Siwu-NOM go-PST-COMP NEG go-PST-COMP know-PRES-DECL
- b. Na-nun Siwu-ka ka-ass-nunci ka-ci *ani* ha-yess-nunci  
I-TOP Siwu-NOM go-PST-COMP go-NMLZ NEG do-PST-COMP  
a-n-ta.  
know-PRES-DECL
- c. \*Na-nun Siwu-ka ka-ass-nunci *mal*-ass-nunci a-n-ta.  
I-TOP Siwu-NOM go-PST-COMP MAL-PST-COMP know-PRES-DECL  
'I know if Siwu went (to school) or not.'

I argue that *mal-* is lexically specified for use in *irrealis* contexts, whereas *an(i)* is unspecified with respect to the *realis/irrealis* distinction. This captures the distribution of *mal-* in (1)-(8) as well as the contrasts between (5) and (10), and (6) and (11).

The idea of *irrealis* negation is not new; for instance, *mi* in Modern Greek — unlike plain negation *dhen* — is known to be restricted to nonveridical contexts (Chatzopoulou 2019).

From a historical perspective, J. Y. Park (2010) shows that *mal-* likely grammaticalized from a middle verb meaning ‘stop’. Her findings support the current proposal, as the development of *mal-* as *irrealis* negation can now be understood as the loss of its presuppositional content:

$$(12) \quad \llbracket mal \rrbracket = \lambda P \lambda x \lambda t: \exists t' [t' \prec t \wedge P(x)(t')]. \forall t'' [t \leq t'' \rightarrow \neg P(x)(t'')]$$

Prohibitive markers derived from ‘stop’-type verbs are well attested cross-linguistically, e.g., in Kru, Seychelles Creole, and Welsh (van der Auwera 2006).

## Basically Imperatives: Embedded Clauses of Directive Verbs

- (4)
- a. \*Siwu-ka Mina-eykey *an* ttena-**la**-ko tangpwuha-yess-ta.  
Siwu-NOM Mina-to NEG leave-IMP-COMP ask-PST-DECL
  - b. \*Siwu-ka Mina-eykey ttena-ci *ani* ha-**la**-ko  
Siwu-NOM Mina-to leave-NMLZ NEG do-IMP-COMP  
tangpwuha-yess-ta.  
ask-PST-DECL
  - c. Siwu-ka Mina-eykey ttena-ci *mal*-**la**-ko tangpwuha-yess-ta.  
Siwu-NOM Mina-to leave-NMLZ MAL-IMP-COMP ask-PST-DECL  
'Siwu asked Mina not to leave.'

## Basically Imperatives: Embedded Clauses of Directive Verbs

- (4') a. Na-nun Mina-eykey *an* ttena-l kes-ul tangpwuha-yess-ta.  
I-TOP Mina-to NEG leave-REL thing-ACC ask-PST-DECL
- b. Na-nun Mina-eykey ttena-ci *ani* ha-l kes-ul  
I-TOP Mina-to leave-NMLZ NEG do-REL thing-ACC  
tangpwuha-yess-ta.  
ask-PST-DECL
- c. Na-nun Mina-eykey ttena-ci *mal*-l kes-ul tangpwuha-yess-ta.  
I-TOP Mina-to leave-NMLZ MAL-REL thing-ACC ask-PST-DECL  
'I asked Mina not to leave.'

## A Syntactic Account: Han (2001)

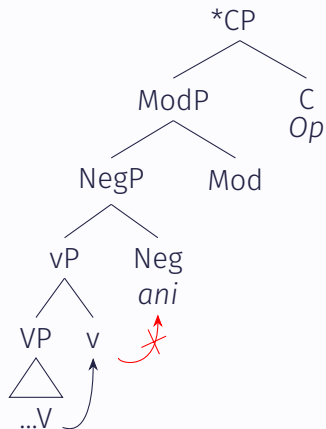
In fact, it is well known that many languages (e.g., Italian, Modern Greek, and Spanish) lack negative imperatives (Zeijlstra 2006). Building on the intuition that illocutionary force cannot be negated, Han (2001) argues that negative imperatives are unavailable in some languages because the syntax derives a structure in which the directive force operator *Op* falls under the scope of negation.

1. *Op* is located in C.
2. When *Op* encodes directive force, the verb must overtly move to C.

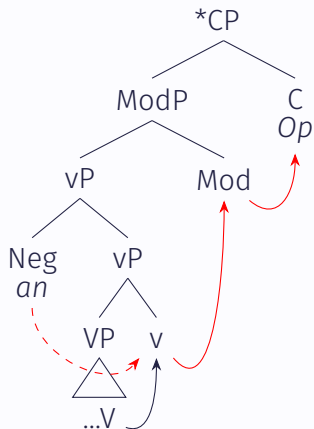


# Ruling Out Negative Imperatives in Korean

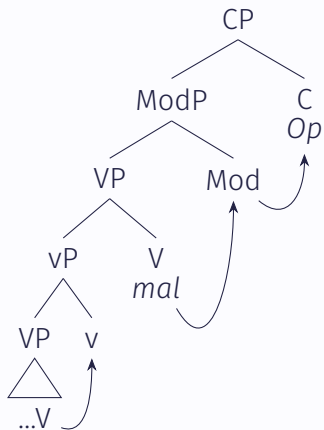
## Long Negative Imperatives



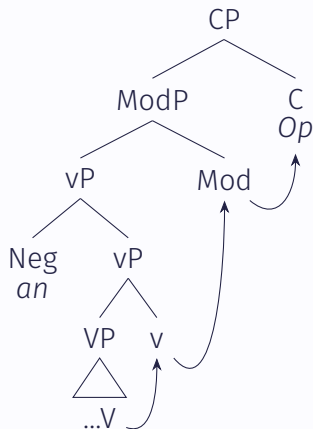
## Short Negative Imperatives



## Negative Imperatives with *mal-*



## Short Negative Imperatives (For Children)



Interestingly, child corpus studies report that Korean children sometimes produce negative imperatives with short negation. Han's (2001) syntactic account straightforwardly explains this pattern, given that children around the same age are also known to occasionally fail cliticization of *an* to the verb.

## Summary

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## Summary

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- Han and Lee (2007) and Choi's (2024) DM approach to Korean negative imperatives is too strong as it predicts that plain negation *an(i)* and *mal-* are in complementary distribution.
- However, *an(i)* and *mal-* are in fact interchangeable in a number of contexts.
- I propose that the distribution *mal-* follows if it is a negation of *irrealis*, which is supported by historical and cross-linguistic data.
- I show that Han's (2001) syntactic account correctly rules out negative imperatives while also capturing the patterns from child corpus.

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