

The Syntax and Interpretation of Korean Semantically Defective *kes* as an Instance of Deep NP Anaphora

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ABSTRACT

In Korean, the dependent noun *kes*, meaning “thing” in English, is widely used in different structures. It is typically used as a semantically contentful generic non-human noun projection, acting as a relative clause (RC) head NP in RC constructions or playing a generic-stance noun-like role in the conventional complement clause–noun head construction, where it constitutes an instance of deep anaphora. It is also used like a function word devoid of semantic content; in such cases, it also acts as an instance of deep NP anaphora whose semantic content is, at the interpretational/construal stage, inherited from a relevant element in the structural context where it occurs. In this study, we argue that the latter use of *kes* is found in constructions such as internally-headed RCs and cleft structures. The main argument presented here is that structurally, only one kind of *kes* is represented as an instance of deep anaphora; however, it can be used either as a content noun or a semantically defective function-word-like noun.

Keywords: *kes*, stance noun, internally-headed RC, cleft, deep NP anaphora

1. Introduction

‘Kes’ roughly translated into English “thing” is apparently used as a generic dependent/bound noun denoting a non-human entity, as in (1a). In addition, it is also realized in different syntactic constructions, deviating from its use as a content noun, as in (1b)–(1d):

- (1) a. ‘Kes’ as a content noun in relative clause (RC) head position:

Totwuk-un [[pro hwumchi-n] kes]-ul phokhes-ey swumki-ess-ta.
thief-TOP steal-REL.PRF kes-ACC pocket-in hide-PST-DCL
‘The thief hid in her pocket the thing that he stole.’

- b. ‘Kes’ as a generic stance noun in complement clause plus noun head:

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Cheli-nun [[totwuk-i tomangka-nun] kes]-ul
 C.-TOP thief-NOM run.away-REL.IMPRF kes-ACC
 al-ess-ta.
 know-PST-DCL

‘Cheli knew that the thief was running away.’

- c. ‘Kes’ as forming an internally headed RC (IHRC) construction:

Cheli-nun [[totwuk-i tomangka-nun] kes]-ul cap-ess-ta.
 C.-TOP thief-NOM run.away-REL.IMPRF kes-ACC catch-PST-DCL
 ‘Cheli caught the thief running away.’

- d. ‘Kes’ as forming a cleft structure:

[[Unhayng-eyse tomangka-nun] kes]-un totwuk-i-ess-ta.
 bank-from run.away-REL.IMPRF kes-TOP thief-COP-PST-DCL
 ‘It was the thief that ran away.’

‘Kes’ in (1a) as a dependent/bound content noun is undoubtedly realized as a relative clause (RC) head NP. On top of its canonical use in (1a), ‘kes’ in (1b)-(1d) is used like a content noun-like or grammatical/functional element in such constructions as conventionally dubbed ‘complement clause – noun head’ structure in (1b), internally headed RC structure in (1c), and cleft structure in (1d).

Several scholars recently attempt to characterize ‘kes’ in (1a)-(1d) in different ways. Mun (2012) analyzes ‘kes’ in (1a) as a dependent noun, that in (1b) as a nominalizer, and that in (1c) either as a dependent noun or as a nominalizer. Lee (2020) characterizes ‘kes’ in (1c) and (1d) as an expletive or pleonastic. Yeon and Park (2021) identify ‘kes’ in (1a) as a semantically contentful bound noun and that in (1b)-(1d) as a schematic noun in the sense of the cognitive grammar framework advanced by Langacker (2008).

We depart from the recent works on ‘kes’, proposing that ‘kes’ in (1a-d) is an instance of deep NP anaphora¹⁾ whose interpretation is determined syntactico-semantically. Since we assert that this use of ‘kes’ in (1b-d) has grammatically developed from its use as a semantically contentful dependent/bound noun in (1a),

1) The term anaphora used in this paper is different from the term “anaphor” that refers to a reflexive or reciprocal subject to BC (A). It means a linguistic phenomenon where “a word or phrase refers to another word or phrase mentioned earlier in a text and replaces it” as defined in <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>. This definition is in fact obviously fitting to the so-called surface vs. deep anaphora distinction (Hankamer and Sag, 1976). Since ‘kes’ as a topic of this paper is to be analyzed as an instance of deep NP anaphora, ‘kes’ is interpreted in the way that Korean null pronominals postulated as ‘pro’ and English pronouns are at the interpretational/construal component.

we can ultimately provide a unified and coherent analysis for ‘kes’ in Korean.

The paper is organized as follows. The next four sections investigate the four homophonous forms of ‘kes’ in the four different constructions in (1a)-(1d) one by one. Moving section by section from section 2 to section 5, we will see that ‘kes’ has undergone one step further of grammaticalization, exhibiting a more development of semantic bleach and functional property. Section 6 wraps up with a conclusion.

2. ‘Kes’ as a Content Noun

In (1a), repeated below, ‘kes’ as a content noun meaning “thing” in English serves as a relative clause (RC) head noun (phrase).

- (1) a. [Totwuk-un [[pro hwumchi-n] kes]-ul phokhes-ey swumki-ess-ta.
 thief-TOP steal-REL.PRF kes-ACC pocket-in hide-PST-DCL
 ‘The thief hid in her pocket the thing that he stole.’

As generally assumed for English RCs, the RC head NP ‘kes’ and the preceding RC in Korean have the following schematic structure where the former is in predicate modification relation with the latter.

- (2) [_{NP} [_{RC}] [_{RC head NP} ‘kes’]]

Evidence for ‘kes’ in this construction as a content noun can be found in its modification independently of an RC, as follows:

- (3) [Totwuk-un [[pro hwumchi-n] (ku) (pissan) kes]-ul
 thief-TOP steal-REL.PRF the expensive kes-ACC
 phokhes-ey swumki-ess-ta.
 pocket-in hide-PST-DCL
 ‘The thief hid in her pocket the/that thing that he stole.’

As in (3), ‘kes’ as an RC head NP can be modified either by an AP or the demonstrative/definite determiner ‘ku’.

Since ‘kes’ in this construction means ‘thing,’ it serves as an instance of

anaphora. For example, ‘kes’ in (1a) can specifically refer to anything that the thief stole, like money, watch, gold ring, etc. As its referent is not recovered in the sentence where it occurs, it is an instance of not surface but deep anaphora.

The fact that ‘kes’ in (1a) is a content noun projection has a consequence on the interpretation of the preceding RC. As generally acknowledged, a RC is characterized as having a gap inside it. In (1a), the Korean RC is also assumed to have a gap in the object position of the transitive verb ‘hwumchi-’ [steal]. Baker (1995) proposes that the English RC construction like ‘the student that I saw yesterday’ is interpreted as “the student such that I saw that student yesterday” by filling in the gap with the RC head NP. In the same fashion, the RC construction in (1a) is interpreted as “the thing such that the thief hid the/that thing in his pocket.” The point made here is that the RC construction (i.e., the RC plus the RC head NP) is not interpreted as an open proposition but a closed/complete proposition.²⁾

3. ‘Kes’ as a Generic Stance Noun in the Complement Clause-noun Structure

We now turn to ‘kes’ in (1b), repeated below:

- (1) b. Cheli-nun [[totwuk-i tomangka-nun] kes]-ul
 C.-TOP thief-NOM run.away-REL.IMPRF kes-ACC
 al-ess-ta.
 know-PST-DCL
 ‘Cheli knew that the thief was running away.’

We suggest that ‘kes’ in this construction is analogous to its counterpart stance nouns in English in the frame of (4); as a catch-all term, the Korean ‘kes’ is a generic stance noun that structurally takes as its complement the ‘(NU)N’ clause.

- (4) . . . the fact/ idea/ point/ belief/ view/ conviction/ assertion/ statement/
 argument/ proposition/ theory/ hypothesis, etc. that . . .

2) An open proposition is a proposition one (or more) of whose argument positions is not occupied by a constant or variable bound in the same proposition.

According to Biber et al. (1999), stance is the expression of a speaker's/writer's 'personal feelings, attitudes, value judgments or assessments' (p. 966) towards a proposition.

Kim (2003) (also Kim (1984)) notes that a particular type of stance is determined by a matrix verb that selects the '(NU)N'-clause plus 'kes' combination. Like 'al-' [know], 'hwuhoyha-' [regret], 'nukki-' [feel/sense], 'nwunchichay-' [notice], 'kkayatat-' [realize], 'palkyenha-' [discover], 'alkess-' [come] [to realize], etc. have the '(NU)N'-clause trigger the presupposition or factivity; the denotation of the '(NU)N'-clause is presupposed to be true in the actual world. With these verbs, the generic stance noun 'kes' is construed as its English counterpart "fact" of a particular stance type. In Korean, since 'kes' can also be replaced by 'sasil' [fact], it can be analyzed as an instance of deep NP anaphora.³⁾ Thus, in the interpretational/construal stage, the more versatile generic stance noun 'kes' can be replaced or reconstructed by the more specific kind of stance noun 'sasil' [fact], which is semantically compatible with the matrix verb that selects it.

On top of a factive proposition, 'kes' can also denote a non-factive proposition as a complement of matrix verbs like 'mit-' [believe], as follows:⁴⁾

- (5) Kallilio-nun [[cikwu-ka twungku-n] kes]-ul mit-ess-ta
 Galileo-TOP earth-NOM round-REL kes-ACC believe-PST-DCL
 'Galileo believed that the Earth was round.'

In this case, the meaning of the '(NU)N'-complement clause is presumed to be true not just in the matrix subject's belief worlds, but also in the speaker's knowledge worlds. We can also analyze 'kes' at hand as an instance of deep NP anaphora; the generic stance noun projection is substituted for by the more specific kind of stance NP 'myengcey' [non-factive proposition] at the interpretational/construal stage.

Furthermore, the 'NUN'-clause plus 'kes' structure is selected by so-called direct perception verbs like 'po-' [see] and 'tut-' [hear] in Korean, as follows:

3) In his recent analysis of stance nouns followed by CPs in English, Moulton (2015) argues that stance nouns do not have head complement structure with the following CPs, as conventionally assumed. Instead, stance nouns are in predicate modification relation with the following CPs. If this is the case, stance nouns are categorially not just an N but an NP. We follow Moulton (2015), taking 'kes' preceded by the '(NU)N' clause to be an NP.

4) One reviewer of this journal claims that the 'kes' complement clause selected by 'mit-' as in (5) is only factive, but the -tako' complement clause selected by it is only non-factive. This claim is different from the one made by such scholars as Kim (2003).

(6) John-un [[totwuk-i tomangka-nun] kes]-ul po-ess-ta
 J.-TOP thief-NOM run.away-REL.IMPRF kes-ACC see-PST-DCL
 ‘John saw the event of the thief running away.’

(7) John-un [[totwuk-i pang-eyse nao-nun] kes]-ul
 J.-TOP thief-NOM room-from come.out-REL.IMPRF kes]-ACC
 tut-ess-ta
 hear-PST-DCL
 ‘The thief was coming out of the room and John heard it.’

In English, direct perception verbs are not syntactically realized using the frame “the N that . . .”, but using the frame “the event of . . .” as well as the bare verb complement. Crucially, Kim (2003, section 2.2) notes that in Korean, the event denoted by the ‘NUN’-complement plus ‘kes’ can only be co-temporaneous with the matrix event. We can thus analyze this type of ‘kes’ as an instance of deep NP anaphora; the generic stance noun projection is replaced by the more specific kind of contentful stance NP ‘saken’ [event] at the interpretational/construal stage.

In summary, ‘kes’ in the ‘NUN’-clause plus ‘kes’ combination is analyzed as an instance of deep NP anaphora, which is replaced by a more specific kind of contentful stance noun projection at the interpretational/construal stage. In this sense, ‘kes’ is not entirely a function word, in that it is to be replaced by the corresponding content stance noun. Yeon and Park (2021) also observe that in the following example, ‘kes’ that is replaced by the stance noun ‘sasil’ meaning “fact” can be modified by the demonstrative/definite marker ‘ku’.⁵⁾

(8) Na-nun [Swuni-ka cinancwu sihem-eyse tapanci-lul
 I-TOP Swuni-NOM last week exam-in answer.sheet-ACC
 ceychwulhaci anh-un] (ku) kes(=sasil)-ul ecey alassta.
 hand.in not.do-REL the kes-ACC yesterday knew
 ‘I found out yesterday (the) (fact) that Swuni didn’t hand in her answer sheet in last week’s exam.’

5) Yeon and Park (2021) claim that (8) is acceptable when ‘ku kes’ is preceded by the intensifier ‘paro’ [very] and the adjective ‘hwangtanghan’ [embarrassing]. Concurring with one reviewer of this journal, however, we claim that (8) with ‘ku kes’ additionally modified by ‘hwangtanghan’ and ‘palo’ is substantially degraded.

4. ‘Kes’ in an Internally Headed Relative Construction

We now turn to ‘kes’ in an internal headed RC construction in (1c), repeated below.⁶⁾

- (1) c. Cheli-nun [[totwuk-i tomangka-nun] kes]-ul
 C.-TOP thief-NOM run.away-REL.IMPRF kes-ACC
 cap-ess-ta.
 catch-PST-DCL
 ‘Cheli caught the thief running away.’

This construction is similar to the RC construction in (1a), but the RC head NP ‘totwuk’ occurs inside RC, therefore the RC construction being dubbed as an internally headed relative construction (IHRC) (Hoshi 1995; Jhang (1994); Chung (1999)). ‘Kes’ in (1c) apparently resembles a RC head NP, but it cannot act as such an NP since ‘kes’ as a RC head NP only denotes “thing” but that in (1c) denotes a human entity ‘totwuk.’

Rather than viewing ‘kes’ in (1c) as a RC head NP, following the intuition by Chung (1999) and Kim (2003) we suggest that ‘kes’ in (1c) is a generic stance noun. Chung (1999) in fact argues that the sentence (1c) has the following more detailed structure, where ‘kes’ as a generic stance noun is selected by the implicit higher perception verb like ‘po-’ [see] and the matrix null object is referentially associated with the RC internal head.

- (9) Cheli-nun [[totwuk-il tomangka-nun] kes]-ul (poko)
 C.-TOP thief-NOM run.away-REL.IMPRF kes-ACC seeing
 pro₁ cap-ess-ta.
 catch-PST-DCL
 ‘Cheli caught the thief(, seeing him) running away.’

Kim (2003) also notes the connection of the IHRC to the direction perception complement clause (DPCC) in (6) and (7). The IHRC in (10), the DPCC in (11), and the factive complement in (12) occur inside the embedded clause selected by an intension verb like ‘sangsangha-’ [imagine]. The IHRC in (10) and the DPCC

6) As indicated in (1c), the RC-internal head NP is underlined for reference.

in (11) differ sharply from the factive complement in (12) in terms of presuppositionality.

- (10) John-un [Bill-i [[koyangi-ka]¹ kilka-eyse camca-nun
 J.-TOP [B.-NOM [cat-NOM road.side-in sleep-REL.IMPRF
 [kes]¹]-ul kkawul-nun kes]-ul sangsangha-ess-ta.⁷⁾
 kes]-ACC wake.up-REL.IMPRF kes]-ACC imagine-PST-DCL
 ‘John imagined that a cat was sleeping on the side of a road and Bill woke
 up it (= the cat).’

- (11) John-un [Bill-i [koyangi-ka kilka-eyse camca-nun
 J.-TOP [B.-NOM [cat-NOM road.side-in sleep-REL.IMPRF
 kes]-ul ciki-e po-nun kes]-ul
 kes]-ACC watch-COMP see-REL.IMPRF kes]-ACC
 sangsangha-ess-ta.
 imagine-PST-DCL
 ‘John imagined that a cat was sleeping on the side of a road and Bill was
 watching it (=the situation).’

- (12) John-un [Bill-i [Mary-ka ppang-ul mantu-nun
 J.-TOP [B.-NOM [M.-NOM bread-ACC make-REL.IMPRF
 kes]-ul nwunchichay-n kes]-ul sangsangha-ess-ta.
 kes]-ACC notice-REL.PRF kes]-ACC imagine-PST-DCL
 ‘John imagined that Mary was making bread and Bill was noticing it.’
 modified from Kim (2023, (24)-(26))

Unlike (12) where the factive complement takes the widest scope, (10) and (11) do not presuppose the truth of the IHRC or the DPCC in the context of the embedding intensional verb.

Likewise, as noted by Mun (2013: 24), when the ‘NUN’-clause plus ‘kes’ combination comes with a direct perception verb ‘palkyenha-’ [notice], the sentence like (13) is ambiguously interpreted; the combination at hand is interpreted either as a DPCC or an IHRC.

7) The RC-internal head NP in this sentence is ‘koyangi’ [cat], which is interpretively associated with the instance of local deep NP anaphora ‘kes’.

- (13) pro [[ce melli-se pesu-ka o-nun] kes]-ul
over.there distance-in bus-NOM come-NUN kes-ACC
palkyenha-yss-ta.
notice-PST-DCL
'I noticed a bus coming in the distance.'

The analogy of an IHRC to a DPCC leads us to propose that just like 'kes' as a generic stance noun in the DPCC that serves the role of an instance of deep NP anaphora replaced by the specific kind of stance noun, 'kes' in the IHRC also serves the role of deep NP anaphora substituted for by the RC-internal head NP at the interpretational/construal stage. According to this proposal, the instance of deep NP anaphora 'kes' in IHRCs is interpretively associated with the RC-internal head NP, for example, via co-indexing, thus (1c) converting into (14):

- (14) Cheli-nun [[totwuk-i¹ tomangka-nun] [kes]¹]-ul
C.-TOP thief-NOM run.away-REL.IMPRF kes-ACC
cap-ess-ta.
catch-PST-DCL
'Cheli caught the thief running away.'

Some readers may ask whether the structure like (14) invites a violation of Binding Condition (C). But it is not obvious whether the instance of deep NP anaphora 'kes' in (14) is referentially associated with the RC-internal head NP. Since the 'NUN'-clause plus 'kes' combination in (14) is also interpreted as an IHRC, as well as a DPCC as in (9), its interpretation as an IHRC seems to arise as a last resort.⁸⁾ In other words, the instance of deep NP anaphora 'kes' in (14) is construed as a RC-internal head NP not in syntax but at the interpretational/construal

8) One reviewer of this journal raises the long-standing puzzle regarding Korean IHRCs: why they are allowed with some restricted set of higher verbs. For example, when 'manna-' [meet] instead of 'cap-' [catch] occurs in (14), the sentence in (i) is unacceptable.

- (i) *Cheli-nun [[totwuk-i¹ tomangka-nun] [kes]¹]-ul manna-ess-ta.
C.-TOP thief-NOM run.away-REL.IMPRF kes-ACC meet-PST-DCL
'Cheli met the thief running away.'

The unacceptability of (i) follows from the analysis proposed in the text. Unlike 'cap-' involving direct perception as represented in (9) using 'po-' [see], 'manna-' does not involve direct perception. To reiterate, the prerequisite for 'kes' in IHRCs to associate interpretively with an RC-internal head NP is that it also needs to be interpreted like 'kes' in a DPCC, which involves direct perception.

component. Since the instance of deep NP anaphora ‘kes’ in (14) is not assigned any referential co-index with the RC-internal head NP in syntax (therefore, in (14) the superscript rather than the subscript as a conventional device for referential index is used, following Safir (1987)), it would not invite a BC (C) violation.

In English, the instance of NP/N’ anaphora is ‘one.’ One advantage of analyzing ‘kes’ in the IHRC as an instance of deep NP anaphora is that it can capture a “split-antecedent” phenomenon effectively:

- (15) Cinho-ka [_{RC} [sonye-ka] [sonyen-lul] ccocha ka-ko
 Cinho-NOM girl-NOM boy-ACC chase go-be.ing-REL
 iss-nun] kes-ul] (twul-ta) capassta.
 (two-both) caught
 (=modified from (7), M.-J. Kim (2004))

In (15), ‘kes’ can refer to both ‘sonye’ [girl] and ‘sonyen’ [boy], as well as to either of them. Its role as interpretively linking to the two separate antecedents at the interpretational/construal component follows from its anaphoricity.⁹⁾

It is worth noting that ‘kes’ as an instance of deep NP anaphora in the IHRC is devoid of semantic content; it only inherits interpretive content from its RC-internal head NP antecedent. Since it has grammaticalized into a function word, at the same time getting semantically bleached, it cannot be modified by the demonstrative/definite marker ‘ku’ as follows:

- (16) Cheli-nun [[totwuk-i tomangka-nun] (*ku) kes]-ul

9) Lee (2020) notes that ‘kes’ and the RC-internal head NP are subject to a certain kind of locality restriction, drawing on the following example:

- (i) *Ku-nun cosatan-i sako tangsi-ey swul-ul¹ masi-ko iss-te-n
 he-TOP investigation.team-NOM time-at liquor-ACC drinking was-REL.PRF
 sasil-ul² palkhi-n kes-ul^{*1/2} tasi masyessta.
 fact-ACC reveal-REL.PRF kes-ACC again drank
 (lit. ‘He drank liquor again such that the investigation team revealed that he had been drinking it at the time of the accident.’)

In this example, ‘kes’ needs to be interpretively associated not with the distant (more embedded) ‘swul’ [liquor], but with the more local ‘sasil’ [fact].

But what can rule out the example like (i) may not be the locality restriction but the semantics proposed for IHRCs by Kim (2003); according to her, “the set of eventualities denoted by the ‘(NU)-N’ clause plus ‘kes’ intersects with the set of eventualities denoted by the embedding clause.” When ‘kes’ in (i) is interpretively associated with ‘swul’ in the doubly embedded clause, the semantics for IHRCs is not met.

C.-TOP thief-NOM run.away-REL.IMPRF that/the kes]-ACC
 cap-ess-ta.
 catch-PST-DCL
 ‘Cheli caught the thief running away.’

However, Park (2019) casts doubt on the existence of IHRCs in Korean, paying particular attention to the following sentences:

- (17) a. [[pro soppye kulhi-n] (ku) ke-eytaka] pap-ul
 beef.bone boil-REL.PRF the kes-in rice-ACC
 mala mekessta.
 roll ate
 ‘I ate rice put in boiled beef bone soup’.
- b. [pro chang pakk phwungkyeng-ul kuli-n
 window outside scenery-ACC paint-REL.RRF
 (ku) kes-i] yeypputa.
 the kes-NOM beautiful
 ‘The painting of the scenery outside the window is beautiful.’
- c. [[pro chayk sukhaynha-n] (ku) ke] eti-iss-e?
 book scan-REL.PRF the kes where.is-INF
 ‘Where is the scan of the book?’

(taken from Park 2019: 111)

The peculiar aspect of these sentences is that ‘kes’ in them is placed in subject position and it is not interpreted as a DPCC. Besides, as noted by Yeon and Park (2021: 143), in these sentences ‘kes’ can be modified by the demonstrative/definite marker.¹⁰ Furthermore, unlike ‘kes’ in the IHRC, the same form in these sentences does not inherit its interpretive content from its apparent RC-internal relative head NP; rather, it denotes the thing that results from the event or action described by the preceding ‘-N’ (rather than ‘NUN’) clause. Based on these structural and interpretational characteristics of ‘kes’ in (17a-c), we suggest that ‘kes’ in these sentences is a content noun as in (1a) whose interpretation is determined discourse-contextually. For example, ‘kes’ in (17a)-(17c) means “soup,” “painting,”

10) One reviewer of this journal, however, claims that (17a-c) when ‘kes’ are modified by ‘ku’ is unacceptable. We note that examples such as (17a-c) with ‘ku’ modifying ‘kukes’ are subject to speaker variation in acceptability.

and “scan,” respectively.

In summary, ‘kes’ in IHRCs of Korean is derivative from its use in DPCCs. ‘Kes’ in DPCCs takes the deep NP anaphora strategy in the interpretational/construal stage, being interpreted as “event/situation/stage.” This ‘kes’ can be reanalyzed as an instance of deep NP anaphora now interpretively associated with the RC-internal relative head NP on the urge of the matrix verb that follows it. We have also seen some counter-examples that resist an IHRC analysis and suggested that ‘kes’ in these examples are better analyzed as a content noun found in the canonical RC construction like (1a).

5. ‘Kes’ as Forming a Cleft Clause

We finally turn to ‘kes’ that forms a cleft structure as in (1d), repeated below.

- (1) d. [[Unhayng-eysə tomanɡka-nun] kes]-un totwuk-i-ess-ta.
 bank-from run.away-REL.IMPRF kes]-TOP thief-COP-PST-DCL
 ‘It was the thief that ran away.’

‘Kes’ that forms a cleft structure in (1d) (more exactly speaking, the ‘(NU)-N’-clause plus ‘kes’ combination) is apparently similar to ‘kes’ as a RC head NP in (1a), but the former is distinguished from the latter, since the ‘NUN’ clause plus ‘kes’ combination in (1d) is not interpreted as “the thing that ran away” where ‘kes’ means “thing.”

Granted that ‘kes’ in the cleft construction like (1d) cannot be a RC head NP, we alternatively propose that on a par with ‘kes’ in IHRCs, ‘kes’ in this construction is also an instance of deep NP anaphora. Though they are commonly an instance of deep NP anaphora, the two types of ‘kes’ in clefts and IHRCs differ in interpretation. While ‘kes’ as an instance of deep NP anaphora in IHRCs is interpretively associated with the overt form of RC-internal head NP, ‘kes’ as representing the same kind of deep anaphora in the cleft structure is interpretively associated with a gap; for example, what serves as a gap in the cleft structure of (1d) is the one in subject position. The interpretational consequence that this line of analysis has on the ‘NUN’ clause plus ‘kes’ combination is that the combination at hand ends up as being not a full proposition but an open proposition. Since ‘kes’ in the cleft clause is interpretively associated with a cleft clause-internal gap, the

signature property of the ‘NUN’ clause plus ‘kes’ combination is that unlike the relative construction in (1a), it is interpreted as an open proposition, which needs to be syntactico-semantically provided with an element that can fill in a cleft clause-internal gap. Obviously, what constitutes such an element in the cleft construction is the cleft pivot ‘totwuk’ in front of the copula in (1d).¹¹⁾

This analysis of ‘kes’ in the cleft structure as referring to a cleft clause-internal gap has other consequences than the interpretation of the cleft clause as an open proposition. First, in the same way as ‘kes’ in IHRCs, ‘kes’ in cleft clauses cannot be modified by the demonstrative/definite marker, as in (18).

- (18) [[Unhayng-eyse tomangka-nun] (*ku) kes]-un
 bank-from run.away-REL.IMPRF kes-TOP
 totwuk-i-ess-ta.
 thief-COP-PST-DCL
 ‘It was the thief that ran away.’

Remember that in IHRCs, ‘kes’ serves as an instance of deep NP anaphora without any inherent semantic meaning. Its interpretation is solely derived from the RC-internal head NP. As ‘kes’ has evolved into a functional word, it has lost its original semantic content. Consequently, it cannot be combined with the demonstrative/definite marker ‘ku’ for modification. In the parallel fashion, ‘kes’ in the cleft structure also only inherits semantic content from the cleft clause-internal gap;¹²⁾ however, unlike the RC-internal head NP in IHRCs, the cleft clause-internal gap has nothing to semantically inherit to ‘kes.’

Second, as noted by Wee (2016: 111), the Korean cleft clause cannot act as a subject of a predicate in the non-cleft construction, as in (19):

- (19) (Minswu-ka ecey etten yeca-lul mannass-nuntey,)

11) We assume that the Korean cleft construction is derived as in (i), where the cleft pivot constituent is extracted from the cleft clause (structurally identical to that in clause-initial position) that undergoes clausal ellipsis. (see also Sohn 2011 for the similar proposal).

(i) [_{cleft clause}]-(n)un [_{cleft pivot}] [_{cleft clause t}]-i-ta.
 ↑ _____

12) Lee (2020) argues that ‘kes’ in Korean IHRCs and clefts is an expletive or pleonastic, analogous to its counterpart ‘there’ or ‘it’ in English. We concur with Lee (2020) that ‘kes’ is devoid of semantic content, but depart from him to suppose that it is a function word that serves as an instance of deep NP anaphora whose semantic content is determined contextually.

Minswu-NOM yesterday a certain woman-ACC saw-CIRCUM
 ‘(I heard that Minsoo saw a girl yesterday,’
 *[[Minswu-ka ecey manna-n] ke-n] koyngcanghi
 Minswu-NOM yesterday see-REL.PRF kes-TOP very
 yeypputa.
 pretty
 ‘The girl that Minsoo saw yesterday is very pretty.’

Wee (2016: 111)

The ungrammaticality of the cleft construction in (19) is attributed to the fact that the cleft structure in subject position in (19) cannot serve as a referring expression, since ‘kes’ in this clause refers to a gap, thereby leaving one part of the clause unspecified; this clause does not refer to anything, but only has the grammatical role of needing to have the gap in it filled in by the following cleft pivot.

Of course, the cleft clause in (19) can be re-analyzed as the ordinary relative clause. In this case, ‘ke(s)’ is a RC head NP referring to “thing” like “doll,” like the form in (1a). Thus, as in (20), the now relative construction in subject position can enter into proper predication relation.

- (20) [[Minswu-ka ecey manna-n] ke-n] koyngcanghi
 Minswu-NOM yesterday see-REL.PRF kes-TOP very
 yeypputa.
 pretty
 ‘What Minsoo saw yesterday is very pretty.’

Third, as noted by Choi (2011: 33) and Kim (2016: 99), the Korean cleft clause cannot be inverted, failing to occur as a complement as in (21b).

- (21) a. [[Chelswu-ka manna-n] kes-un] ku yeca-i-ta.
 Chelswu-NOM see-REL.PRF kes-TOP the/that woman-DCP-DCL
 b. *Ku yeca-nun [Chelswu-ka manna-n kes]-i-ta.

(Choi 2011: 33)

The Korean cleft clause is apparently similar in structure to the English Pseudocleft construction as in (22), but the latter allows the pseudocleft clause to

occur as a complement of a copula.

- (22) a. What he wanted to buy is a Fiat.
b. A Fiat is what he wanted to buy.¹³⁾

We argue that the contrast between (21b) and (22b) follows since the Korean cleft clause as an open proposition (where one part of the clause denoting such a proposition is unbound/unspecified) cannot function as a nominal predicate of the copula. By contrast, the English pseudocleft clause has the structure of a free relative clause. In the same way as in English, in Korean the apparent cleft clause in (23) is analyzed as a relative clause; thus, it can be inverted.

- (23) Ku inhyeng-un [[Chelswu-ka sa-n] (ku)
 that/the doll-TOP Chelswu-NOM buy-REL.PRF the
 kes]-i-ta.
 kes-COP-DCL
 ‘That doll is what Chelswu bought.’

Like ‘kes’ in relative clauses, ‘kes’ can also be modified by the demonstrative/definite marker ‘ku.’

6. Conclusion

In this study, the pervasive and diverse usage of the noun ‘kes’ in Korean, which translates to “thing” in English, has been thoroughly explored. This investigation has unveiled the inherent versatility of ‘kes’ as a linguistic entity, demonstrating its

13) In English, ‘who’ is markedly used as forming a pseudocleft clause as in (i):

- (i) Alice was who John was talking to. (from Sportiche et al. (2014))

In this case, ‘who’ serves as the head of the free relative clause.

It is also tempting to assimilate the Korean cleft clause to the English ‘that’ clause in the cleft construction, since they cannot occur as the complement of the copula. One outstanding difference between them is, however, that unlike the Korean cleft clause, the English cleft clause cannot occupy the subject position. Descriptively, the English cleft ‘that’ clause always needs to be realized together with its associate ‘it.’

- (ii) a. It is a Fiat that he wanted to buy.
 b. *That he wanted to buy is a Fiat.
 c. *A Fiat is that he wanted to buy.

capacity to serve as an instance of deep anaphora. Within this framework, ‘kes’ assumes pivotal roles in linguistic structures, notably functioning as a relative clause (RC) head NP in RC constructions and also serving a stance noun-like role in conventional ‘complement clause - noun head’ constructions. In these contexts, ‘kes’ acts as an instance of deep anaphora, intricately linked to its contentful meaning.

Moreover, the multifunctionality of ‘kes’ extends beyond its contentful roles, as it also operates as a function word devoid of inherent semantic content. This particular usage highlights its capacity also as a form of deep NP anaphora, reliant upon contextual cues and drawing its interpretative and construal significance from the surrounding structural elements. This intricate duality of ‘kes’ — its ability to transition between content noun and semantically-deficient function word-like noun — constitutes a key focus of this exploration. An essential facet of the latter usage revolves around the nuanced observation that ‘kes’ finds pronounced expression within constructions such as internally-headed RC and cleft structures. Through a detailed analysis of these linguistic structures, this paper substantiates the argument that, despite the apparent dual functionality, ‘kes’ fundamentally embodies a consistent form as an instance of deep anaphora in Korean.

Conclusively, this exploration underscores the fluid and adaptive nature of ‘kes’ within Korean syntax, emphasizing that while its manifestations vary, it structurally retains a consistent identity as a versatile instance of deep anaphora. Its adaptability to assume diverse linguistic roles, functioning either as a content noun carrying substantive meaning or as a function word with limited semantic content, illuminates the intricate dynamics of language in Korean.

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