

Abstract

The part of speech system is a well accepted linguistic categorical system. The traditional part of speech system is undoubtedly established from a long period of collective linguistic experiences. It is, however, also undeniable that the part of speech system is only an approximation of diverse behavioral patterns of words in real use.

When a (new) language is exposed to a modern linguistic framework, the framework often hinders an extensive observation of the language. The part of speech system used in Korea closely resembles the traditional western part of speech system in many ways. Although the Korean part of speech system is serving a valuable role in language description and education, linguists have been frequently raised questions regarding the system.

In this paper, we closely examine the linguistic properties of groups of words that behave quite distinguishably even though they are traditionally classified as a single part of speech, noun. The goal of the examination is to measure the degrees of four functional attributes of Korean nouns discovered by previous work: the four attributes are ADJECTIVAL, ADVERBIAL, PREDICATIVE and GRAMMATICAL. We show that these four attributes are measurable from the corpus evidences of the nouns, and these measures can be used to indicate the nounness of the nouns. For example, a Korean noun *uli* 'we' has a high degree of ADJECTIVAL attribute since it is very frequently used as a premodifier of other nouns. By contrast, *salam* 'human' is a typical noun which does not have any prominent functional attributes other than its typical nominal properties.

We conclude that the quantification of the result of a cautious investigation of corpus evidences is vital for a precise linguistic description.

¹ Yonsei University
e-mail: kihwang.lee@yonsei.ac.kr