

# METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES OF DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION IN A DISCOURSE BASED STUDY ON THE SYSTEM OF THEME IN KOREAN

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This paper discusses methodological issues of data analysis and interpretation that arose in the present author's discourse based study that investigates the system of THEME in Korean. After a brief introduction of the background and theoretical framework of the study and a critical review of existing studies on Theme in Korean, it discusses in detail methodological issues concerning data, unit of analysis, clause delimitation and Theme identification method. A model of the system of THEME in Korean is presented towards the end of the paper. A detailed discussion of the model, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

KEYWORDS: data analysis, data interpretation, Theme, Korean, translation

## 1 INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Since around the mid-20th century, linguists in the British, American and European (especially the Prague School) traditions have gradually become interested in discourse as an object of study. As part of that interest, they have begun studying the concept of Theme. However, they have interpreted the concept in various ways and proposed different approaches to its study. For instance, Mathesius, who first conceptualised the notion of Theme in 1939, proposed that Theme is a combination of known information and the speaker's point of departure, while Halliday (e.g. Halliday 1967 & 1977) regards each of the functions as separate (cf. Fries 1981). Different suggestions have been made with respect to the method of Theme identification within the same language (cf. clause-initial position (Halliday 1994) vs. pre-process method (Berry 1996) in English). Such differences of opinion surrounding the study of Theme are also conspicuous within Korean linguistics. In addition, the heavy influence of the American schools of linguistics on Korean linguistics has made the study of Theme even more confusing and difficult, as recognized by Seong (1985).

Drawing on Halliday's systemic functional linguistic (SFL) theory, the present author undertook a discourse based study on the system of THEME in Korean as part of her PhD research and identified several problems with the existing studies of Korean Theme and provided suggestions to solve these problems. The corpus-based study was

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<sup>1</sup> This paper, which is part of the present author's PhD thesis (Kim 2007a), was presented at the European Systemic Functional Linguistics Conference held by Universität des Saarlandes in 2007.

undertaken with the specific purpose of applying the findings for translation and translation teaching, as will be explained in Section 2. The main focus of this paper is the methodological issues of data analysis and interpretation that arose in the study. Following a brief account of the background of the study, it will briefly introduce the theoretical framework of the study and critically review existing studies on Theme in Korean. Then it will discuss in detail methodological issues concerning data, unit of analysis, clause delimitation and Theme identification method and how they were addressed and why. A model of the system of THEME in Korean will be presented towards the end of the paper. A detailed discussion of the model, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

## 2 BACKGROUND

The present author's study (Kim 2007a) on which this paper is based was motivated by a small-scale pilot study that she undertook in 2003. The main question of the pilot study was how text analysis based on Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) can be used as a tool for student translators. In an effort to answer the question, Korean translations of an English text undertaken by 14 student translators were analysed and errors were categorized into different metafunctions: experiential, logical, interpersonal and textual. The pilot study found that this method of translation error analysis is a very efficient one for providing systematic meaning-based explanations for translation errors or issues, which would, otherwise, be labelled simply as "inaccurate" or "unnatural". (For details see Kim 2003 or Kim 2007b.)

However, in spite of the findings that shed light on the practical application of SFG-based text analysis for translation, the study had a number of methodological limitations. The most significant of these was the absence of a description of the Korean language from a systemic functional point of view. Largely due to the dominant influence of American linguistic schools, few attempts have been made to explore the Korean language from a systemic and/or functional point of view. Recently a few text linguists who are mainly influenced by the Prague School have started to attempt a function-based approach to Korean. For instance, Lee, who wrote her PhD about "Thema-Rhema-Strukturen in Deutschen und Koreanischen", deals with the issue of the Theme/Rheme structure of Korean (1994) and with text structure through the analysis of thematic progression (2004). The gradual emergence of text linguistics in the Korean linguistic field is a very encouraging development. However, no existing study has yet suggested a systemic description of Theme/Rheme in Korean from a paradigmatic perspective.

Faced with limited resources, the present author chose to explore the textual metafunction of Korean in a follow-up project. The reason for choosing the textual metafunction in particular was that, while the majority of translation errors or issues that belong to either the ideational or the interpersonal metafunction can be relatively easily explained without a systemic functional description of the Korean language, the same cannot be said for those translation issues that belong to the textual metafunction. In other words, it still remains obscure to explain different textual effects caused by different translation choices without a proper understanding of how Theme is realized in both languages.

### 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework that the study draws on is systemic functional linguistic (SFL) theory, which was devised by Michael Halliday and continued to be developed into a fully-fledged theory of language by Halliday himself and other SFL scholars, such as Ruqaiya Hasan, Jim Martin and Christian Matthiessen, to name a few of the most influential systemic functional theorists.

SFL theory has a strong social orientation, as it was influenced by Firth's model of language in the initial conceptual period. Firth (1957) adopted the notions of context of situation and context of culture, which are fundamental concepts of SFL, from Malinowski (1935) and incorporated them into his linguistic model. Malinowski was an anthropologist who studied the culture of people living on the Trobriand Islands in Papua New Guinea; his main contributions to anthropology and the study of culture were his field work methodology and his functional theory (but not in the linguistic sense), with an emphasis on context. When he was translating some of the texts that he collected from his field work, he realized that his translations would not make sense to his target English-speaking readers due to the lack of their understanding of the contexts of the situation and the culture.

This socially oriented approach to language has influenced a number of language-related disciplines, including the teaching of English both as a mother tongue and as a second or foreign language (Halliday, McIntosh & Stevens 1964; Halliday 1978; Hasan & Perrett 1994; Burns & Coffin 2001; Feez 1998/2002; Byrnes 2006); language typology (Caffarel et al 2004); language development (Halliday 1975; Painter 1984, 1991, 1999); stylistics (Hasan 1985) and translation studies (Catford 1965; House 1977/1997; Hatim & Mason 1990; 1997; Bell 1991; Baker 1992; Munday 1997, 2001; Trosborg 2002; Teich 1999, 2003; Steiner 2002, 2004), to name just a few.

#### 3.1 HALLIDAY'S MODEL OF LANGUAGE

Following Halliday, systemic functional linguists regard language as a meaning-making resource, through which people interact with each other in given situational and cultural contexts. They are centrally interested in how language is used to construe meaning. Therefore, language is understood in relation to its global as well as local contexts (Halliday 1985). This fundamental view of language is expressed through several strata or levels in SFL theory as the diagram below, adopted from Matthiessen (1995: 6), demonstrates:

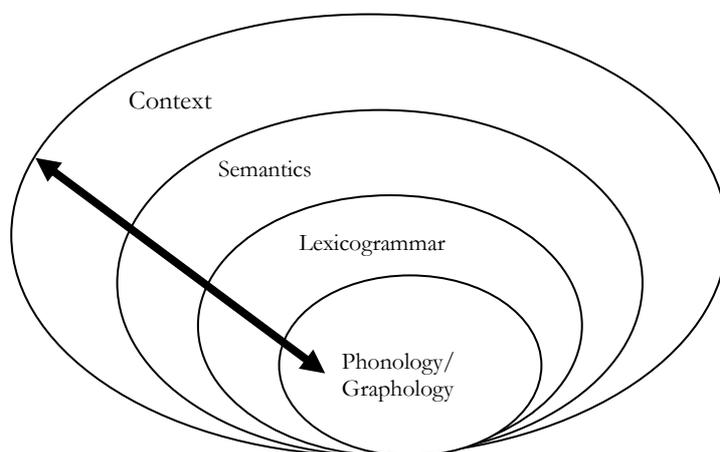


Figure 1: Levels of language

The levels or strata assumed are context, which includes both context of situation and context of culture, discourse semantics, lexicogrammar and phonology/graphology. Matthiessen explains the model as follows:

Language bridges from cultural meanings (social hierarchies and role relationships, social processes, and so on) to sound (or writing) and it does this by moving from higher orders of abstraction to lower ones. The linguistic system is organized into three levels or strata – semantics (the system of meaning), lexicogrammar (the system of wording), and phonology (the system of sounds; or graphology in writing). Each level is a resource at a particular order of abstraction and the levels are related by realization. (Matthiessen 1995: 3)

It is hypothesized in SFL that except for the level of context, the other three levels are systems within language. They are ordered in symbolic abstraction of the subsystems of language. That is, semantics is expressed (realized) by lexicogrammar and lexicogrammar is expressed by phonology. As the present paper is mainly concerned with meaning and wording, the two concepts, semantics and lexicogrammar are introduced in more detail.

**Semantics:** Resource for meaning. This level is the gateway to the linguistic system; for instance, it enables us to act by means of meaning, i.e. by adopting semantic strategies, and it enables us to reflect on the world by turning it into meaning, i.e. by semanticizing it. The stratal role of semantics is thus that of an interface – an interface between systems that lie outside language and systems at the stratum of lexicogrammar. Since meaning is interpreted as a resource, it is a functional/ rhetorical/ communicative phenomenon rather than a formal/ philosophical one and this is reflected in two ways in the conception of

semantics: (i) it is multifunctional: it is not concerned only with representational meaning; and (ii) it is a semantics of text (discourse), not only of propositions. The latter follows from the observation that text (rather than words or sentences) is the process of communication.

**Lexicogrammar:** Resource for wording meanings, i.e. for realizing (expressing) them by means of structures and 'words' (more strictly, grammatical and lexical items), or wordings. Lexicogrammar includes lexis (vocabulary) as well as grammar in one unified system; lexis is interpreted as the most specific (delicate) part of grammar. Grammar includes morphology as well as syntax; the two are not stratally distinct. (Matthiessen 1995: 5)

It can be said that a higher level provides a context for its lower levels or that a higher level cannot exist without its lower levels. For instance, unless a word is expressed in a spoken or written form, we cannot talk about grammar. Unless an utterance is made at the level of the clause, we cannot create a text or discourse at the semantic level.

### 3.2 THE CORRELATION BETWEEN GRAMMAR, SEMANTICS AND CONTEXT

Based on the stratal model of language, there is a strong correlation between grammar, semantics and context. Before explaining the correlation, it is necessary to explain more core concepts of systemic functional grammar (SFG). Firstly, the term '**systemic**' in systemic functional is different from 'systematic' because "the fundamental concept in the grammar is that of the 'system'" (Halliday 1976: 3) and the name of SFG is indicative of its significant theoretical orientation towards paradigm rather than syntagm. Halliday explains:

A system is a set of options with an entry condition: that is to say, a set of things of which one must be chosen, together with a statement of the conditions under which the choice is available. (Halliday 1976: 3)

This is one of the two possible ways, syntagmatic and paradigmatic, of organizing a linguistic theory as pointed out by de Saussure. A syntagmatic way presents relations between an item and others in a structure or sequence (i.e. relationship between an item and others that can come before and after it), while a paradigmatic way presents relations between an item and others in a system of options or choices.

There are three main systems, each of which represents a bundle of choices: TRANSITIVITY, MOOD, and THEME (see Halliday & Matthiessen 2004). The significance of "system" in SFG is explained by Halliday (1994:15):

One of the things that distinguish systemic grammar is that it gives priority to *paradigmatic* relations: it interprets language not as a set of structures but as a network of SYSTEMS, or interrelated sets of options for making meaning. Such options are not defined by reference to structure; they are purely abstract features, and structure comes in as the means whereby they are put into effect, or 'realized'. (My emphasis)

The underlying paradigmatic perspective explains the fundamental approach of SFG in describing a language:

... language has been called 'a system of systems' ... To put the same thing in more systemic terms: a language is a very large network of interrelated sets of options, within which each set taken by itself is very small. (Halliday 1981:14)

The other concept that ought to be introduced is that of multi-dimensional interpretation of meaning. As a theory for understanding meanings in text or discourse, SFG is primarily concerned with analyzing different modes of meanings of texts. Halliday (1979) hypothesizes that there are three distinct modes of meaning, each engendered by a distinct metafunction: ideational, which is divided into experiential and logical, interpersonal and textual. Ideational meaning represents our experience of the world. Interpersonal meaning is concerned with interaction, enacting the relationship between the speaker and the listener and personal attitude. Textual meaning expresses how the ideational and interpersonal meanings are organized into a coherent linear whole as a flow of information.

Halliday suggests that these modes of meaning can be related to both context and lexicogrammar. Each abstract mode of meaning or metafunction is realized through a particular system, such as TRANSITIVITY, MOOD and THEME. At the same time, these modes of meaning are associated with the situational aspects of register (Halliday 1978, 1994). Halliday's register theory basically suggests that there are three aspects in any situation that have linguistic consequences and they are field, tenor and mode. Field refers to the focus of our activity (i.e. what is going on); tenor refers to the way the speaker relates to other people (e.g. a status in relation to power); and mode refers to the communication channel (e.g. speech or writing). (For details see Martin 1992 Chapter 7, Eggins 2004 Chapter 4.)

This correlation can be presented as a diagram, as in Figure 2:

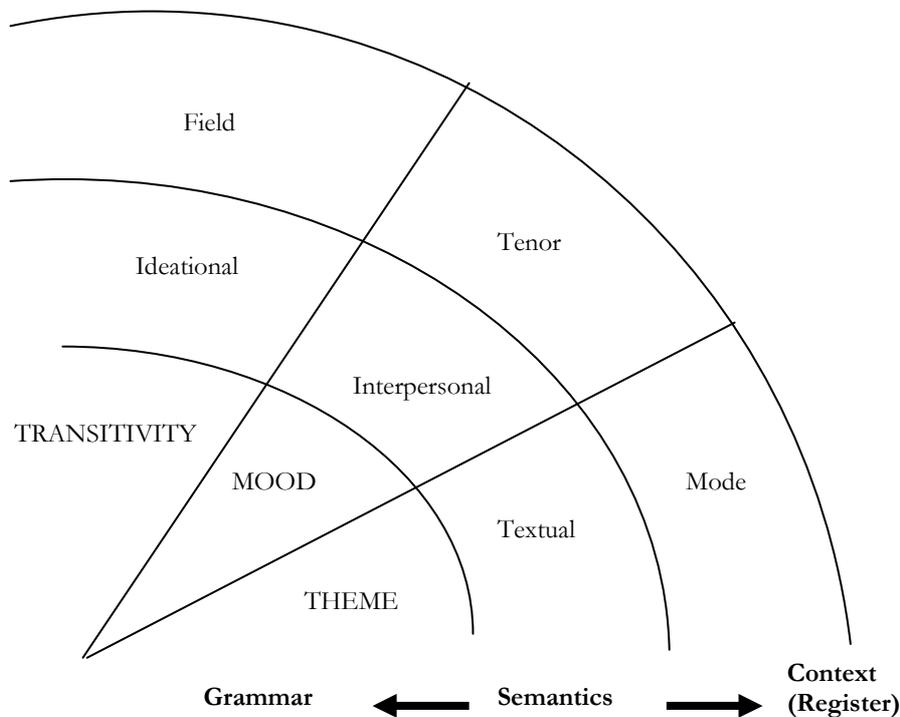


Figure 2: Grammar, semantics and context

Ideational meaning is realized through the TRANSITIVITY system in association with the field of the text; interpersonal meaning is realized through the MOOD system in association with the tenor of the text; and textual meaning is realized through the THEME system in association with the mode of the text. Martin emphasizes the importance of the correlation as follows:

This correlation between register categories and functional components in the grammar is very important. It is this that enables systemists to predict on the basis of context not just what choices a speaker is likely to make, but which areas of the grammar are at stake. Conversely it allows us to look at particular grammatical choices and to understand the contribution they are making to the contextual meaning of a sentence. *This makes it possible for systemic linguists to argue on the basis of grammatical evidence about the nature of field, mode and tenor at the same time as it gives them a way of explaining why language has the shape it does in terms of the way in which people use it to live.* (Martin 2001: 154, my emphasis)

The correlation is also highly important in translating. For instance, in order to produce a translation that functions in the same way as its source text, translators

should be able to analyze the source text at the levels of grammar, semantics and register and “legitimately manipulate” (House 2001: 141) the source text at all these levels using his or her cultural and linguistic knowledge.

### 3.3 UNDERLYING ASSUMPTION

Even though the study drew on SFL theory, it was not an automatic assumption that Korean also has the system of THEME. The study adopted a cautious assumption, following Matthiessen’s suggestion:

It is important not to assume that a given language has a Theme system for assigning an element the status of Theme. The more cautious assumption is that a given language will have strategies for guiding the addressee in his/her interpretation of a clause as a message by relating it to the method for developing text. (Matthiessen 1995: 587)

A theoretical reason for this suggestion can be found in the distinction between theory and description in SFL. Halliday says:

Description is, however, not theory. All description, whether generative or not, is related to General Linguistic theory; specifically to that part of General Linguistic theory which accounts for how language works. The different types of description are bodies of method which derive from, and are answerable to, that theory. Each has its place in linguistics, and it is a pity to deny the value of textual description (which is appropriate, for example, in “stylistics”, the linguistic study of literature) just because certain of the methods used in description are found to be inadequate. (Halliday 1961: 241)

What the study intended to do was not to suggest a general theory of human language, but rather to describe textual aspects of one particular language, Korean, using SFL theory, with the specific purpose of applying the description for translation. Therefore, it assumed that Korean would have some resources that orient the reader of the clause and make the text a coherent whole, and that these resources might show consistent patterns.

## 4 KOREAN THEME STUDY: ISSUES AND SUGGESTIONS

This section will identify the major issues in the earlier studies of Korean Theme and make suggestions to address them drawing on Halliday’s systemic functional linguistic theory. To begin with, it might be useful to outline briefly how the study of Korean grammar has been developed before getting into a detailed discussion of studies on Theme in Korean.

According to Lee and Chae (1999: 42), the study of Korean grammar had a very late start. In 1443, when the Korean alphabet system called **Hunminjeongeum**, which means ‘correct sounds to instruct people’ (Taylor & Taylor 1995: 211), was created by King Sejong and his royal commission consisting of young scholars, the study of

phonology was conducted vigorously. However, the study of morphology or syntax started only close to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The early grammar books were written by foreign missionaries: *Grammaire Coreenne* by Ridel in 1881 and *An Introduction to the Korean Spoken Language* by Underwood in 1890. The first grammar book written by a Korean scholar was *Taybantaycen* by Cwu Si Kyeng in 1910, following which there were some major grammar books, such as *Wulimbalbon* by Choy Hyen Bay in 1937. After the end of the Japanese colonial period in 1948, the study of Korean language history was at the centre of the Korean linguists' interests. In the late 1960s, transformational grammar was introduced and an unprecedented number of modern Korean grammar books started to be published and most of them were theses by Korean scholars who completed their degrees in American universities (Lee & Chae 1999: 42-45). The strong influence of the American schools of linguistics continues but an increasing interest in discourse study and corpus-based linguistics gives rise to a need for another theoretical framework that can explain linguistic features that have not been able to be explained by transformational grammar (Kim 1978, Lee 1994).

This brief outline of the development of the study of Korean grammar provides a good starting point from which we can untangle the issues related to the study of Theme in Korean linguistics. A few scholars have reviewed the study of Korean Theme and raised concerns and questions (Seong 1985, Nam 1985, Seo 1990), which can be divided into three main categories: the concept of Theme, the functions of Theme and the method of Theme realization. Specific issues and problems of each category will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

#### 4.1 THE CONCEPT OF THEME

Among the many questions raised in relation to Korean Theme study, the fundamental question seems to be about the concept of Theme: whether the notion of Theme should be understood as a concept of discourse or as a concept of grammar (Seong 1985: 66). Seong argues that Theme should be fundamentally a concept of discourse study and cannot be accepted as a concept of grammar:

국어의 주제 논의에서 무엇보다도 선행되어야 할 것은 주제를 보는 관점이다. ... 국어의 주제는 순수 담화 개념의 주제여야 한다. 문법 또는 통사 개념의 주제, 특히 기저 주제의 상정이 그리 큰 설득력 있는 것이 못 됨을 대략 더듬어 보았다. 사실상 국어에서 기저 주제의 상정은 종래의 중주어 구조에 대한 대안으로 제기되었던 것이지만, 결과적으로는 그 장점을 찾아 보기 어렵다. 만약 종래의 상위 주어를 대부분 주제로 간주하게 된다면, 이것은 단순한 명칭상의 교체에 불과한 것이 되고 말 터이므로 그것도 그리 의미있는 것이 못 된다. 담화상의 개념이라고 해서, 문법 개념에 수용할 수 없는 것은 아니겠으나, 거기에서 우리가 얻는 것이 무엇인가 깊이 새겨 보아야 할 것이다. (*ibid.*:82-83, my emphasis)

In a discussion of Theme in Korean, what should be considered before anything else is a perspective to view the Theme. ... The Theme in Korean should be a concept of pure discourse. I have argued that a concept of *grammar or syntax*, especially a suggestion that the Theme is part of basic sentence structure, is not

very convincing. In fact, the suggestion that Theme is part of basic sentence structure has been made as an alternative to earlier studies of double subject structure but its benefits are hard to find. If we regard most of the Subjects as Themes, it is a simple replacement of names and therefore is not very meaningful. *Although it is not impossible to incorporate a concept of discourse study into the framework of grammar, we have to deeply contemplate what benefits we would get from the approach.* (ibid.: 82-83, my translation and my emphasis)

The above quotation, especially the emphasized part, reveals the fact that grammar is understood as syntax exclusively and has not been approached in relation to discourse study. It is not surprising when considering the heavy influence of transformational grammar for the last half century, as explained above. The disconnection between grammar and discourse is the first issue to be resolved in the study of Theme in Korean. Kim insists that “an attitude to apply the Subject-Predicate sentence structure unilaterally to explain all features of the sentence should be resisted” (1978: 38, my translation). Lee also identifies the narrow approach to Korean grammar as the main reason for unsatisfactory results in the study of Theme in Korean:

지금까지의 국어 문법 연구가 주로 통사론의 범위 내에서 이루어져 온 결과, 어떠한 언어 현상을 고찰하는 데 있어서 그 설명의 차원을 달리 해야만 할 현상에 대해서도 통사론의 틀 내에서 바라보게 됨으로써, 이에 대한 설명이 만족스럽지 못한 상태에서 늘 국어학의 과제로 남아 있곤 했다. 그 대표적인 예의 하나가 바로 국어의 ‘주제-평언’에 대한 연구이다. (Lee 1994:319)

Korean grammar study has so far been conducted mainly within the boundary of syntax. Even though there are certain linguistics features that should be accounted for from a different perspective, Korean linguists have attempted to explain them within the framework of syntax. Consequently, such explanations are far from satisfactory but remain as a challenge for Korean linguistics. A good example is the study of ‘Theme-Rheme’ in Korean. (Lee 1994: 319, my translation)

In SFL theory, the study of grammar investigates mainly the meaning-making resources of language at the clause level, while a study of semantics explores text (both written and spoken) in order to analyze meaning from a multi-dimensional point of view. Therefore, grammar is a foundational study that supports semantics and is enhanced by it, as explained earlier. Text is a unit of semantics just as the clause is one of grammar. The very link between grammar and semantics gives rise to a need to analyze the clause in different domains of semantics, namely ideational, interpersonal and textual. Theme is a primary element at the clause level in interpreting textual meaning of a text. Based on this approach, it becomes clear that Theme is a concept of grammar which is important to understand or analyze a text at the semantic level.

As discussed above, systemic functional grammar analyzes the clause into three simultaneous strands of meaning, one for each metafunction operating within the clause — ideational, interpersonal and textual. In this way, the clause is not viewed from one perspective but is viewed from three different points of view, which enables

us to interpret the dynamic, multi-dimensional meaning of the clause. This dynamic way of interpretation leads to a richer and more detailed analysis of discourse. That is another important reason for connecting grammar to discourse study in SFL and may well serve as an answer to the question raised above by Seong.

#### 4.2 THE FUNCTIONS OF THEME

Having categorized Theme as a concept of grammar that is needed for the analysis of a text or discourse, we must review the functions of Theme at the clause and text levels. A list of some characteristics of Theme discussed among Korean linguists includes aboutness, word order, known (or retrievable) information and definiteness (Seong 1985: 68-71). These characteristics represent two aspects of Theme, its functions and realization, and therefore should not be contained altogether within the general category of “characteristics”. This is very important because the functions of Theme are theoretically interpretative and the interpretation should remain the same in the description of different languages. However, Theme may well be realized differently from one language to another. Therefore, we will tease out these characteristics claimed so far into the functions of Theme and its realization and discuss the features of each category one by one.

Mathesius (1939) defined Theme as “that which is known or at least obvious in the given situation and from which the speaker proceeds” (in Firbas 1964: 268). His definition is a combination of two concepts: known or given information and the speaker’s point of departure. Even though Halliday was influenced by work within the Prague school when he incorporated the notion of Theme into the systemic functional model in the 1960s, he regards the two concepts as separate because the information carried in the Theme position is not necessarily always known information. He suggests a different system, called INFORMATION, that is concerned with the information value: New and Given. (For details see Halliday & Matthiessen 2003: 87-94.) Fries refers to the approach of Mathesius or the Prague school in a broader sense as a ‘combining’ approach and that of Halliday as a ‘separating’ approach (Fries 1983). However, in Korean linguistics, the different approaches are not sufficiently recognized, and the combining approach is generally accepted. It is suggested in this paper that the separating approach is more suitable for describing the Korean THEME system because there are a number of clauses that do not have known information as Theme, as evident in the analysis of the data of the corpus. In addition, Korean does express Theme differently depending on the information value of Theme as will be explained in Section 6.3.

Halliday’s notion of Theme needs to be explained. The functions of Theme at the clause level are explained in two editions of *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (Halliday 1994; Halliday & Matthiessen 2004):

1. The Theme is the element which serves as the point of departure of the message; it is that with which the clause is concerned (Halliday 1994: 37);
2. Within that configuration (of Theme and Rheme), the Theme is the starting-point for the message; it is the ground from which the clause takes off (Halliday 1994: 38);

3. It (the Theme) is that which locates and orients the clause within its context (Halliday & Matthiessen 2004: 64).

These metaphoric explanations can be summed up as two primary functions of Theme: topic and orientation at the clause level. Therefore, the notion of topic in the topic and comments analysis (Chafe 1976) is a much narrower concept than the notion of Theme and these two functional labels cannot be used interchangeably.

#### 4.3 THE REALIZATION OF THEME

Many linguists have presented different arguments about how Theme is realized in Korean. Even though it is a widely held view that the postpositional particle *un/nun* is the Topic or Theme marker in Korean (Li & Thomson 1976, Lim 1972, Shin 1975), there are other arguments. For instance, Sohn (1980) insists that the sentence initial position is a more important property than the Theme marker. On the other hand, Lee (1994) maintains that the Theme is placed at the beginning of the clause and comes with *un/nun* in Korean. In summary, two ways of Theme realization have been put forward in Korean, postposition particle *un/nun* and initial position. Both features were observed in the texts collected for the corpus used in the study. As with *wa* in Japanese, *un/nun* was indeed most frequently observed at the clause initial-position, as 31% of the clauses in the corpus (see Section 5) had a nominal group that ends with *un/nun* at the clause-initial position. However, there were other elements that were placed at the beginning of the clause and function as Theme. In addition, a number of clauses talked about something that had been introduced in the preceding clause phenomena but it was ellipsed. In such cases, the elliptical element did function as Theme. These were major elements that were positioned clause-initially and seemingly functioned as Theme. They are summarized in Table 1:

Table 1: Clause-initial elements

	Elliptical	<i>un/nun</i>	<i>i/ka</i>	Others	Total
No of clauses	213	169	64	91	537
Percentage	40%	31%	12%	17%	100%

The majority of the clauses started with a nominal group that ended with a postposition, *un/nun* (31%) or *i/ka* (12%). *Un/nun* was most commonly used at the beginning of texts and paragraphs and for the topics of expounding texts, which confirms the view that *un/nun* has the function of topicalization. The Theme with *un/nun* tends to carry information that has been introduced previously or assumed within the context. It tended to have the experiential function of participant that was conflated with the Subject of the clause. However, there were exceptions: some of them did not have any experiential function; others were conflated with the Complement. They required a deeper analysis in relation to thematic development of the text.

*I/ka* was the second-most frequent particle that was used with a participant at the beginning of the clause. It was often used when information was newly introduced as

participant or it was treated as newsworthy information. The participant came with *to* when the meaning of “also” was added and with *man* when the meaning of “only” was added. However, some of elements marked by *i/ka* did not seem to function as Theme, which also needed a deeper analysis in relation to thematic development of the text (see Section 6.4).

The elliptical Subject functioned as Theme in 40% of the clauses in the corpus, which was the largest portion. It is a significant finding for the study because the elliptical Themes that are commonly used in Korean have to be recovered when translating from Korean into English. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the functions of the elliptical Themes in Korean for translation. Again, however, there were a few cases where the elliptical Subject did not seem to function as Theme.

In 17% of the clauses, something that was different from the elements discussed above was placed in the clause initial position and seems to function as Theme, including circumstances, some of which were marked by *un/nun*. Such cases were analysed as carefully as the common phenomena in order to obtain a deeper understanding of textual strategies of orienting the reader at the clause as well as the text levels in Korean.

## 5 DATA

The primary focus of the study was on the system of THEME, which represents a set of choices available for constructing textual meanings. In order to explore the THEME system in Korean, the study took a corpus-based approach. The corpus used in the study comprised 537 clauses from 17 short texts construing three different text types. Table 2 summarizes the data by socio-semantic function of text.

Table 2: The corpus by socio-semiotic type of text

Socio-semiotic type	No. of Texts	No. of Cl. complexes	No. of Clauses
Expounding	7	119	205
Reporting	7	98	169
Recreating	3	118	163
Total	17	335	537

As shown in Table 2, the corpus consisted of texts that have a socio-semiotic function of expounding, reporting or recreating. According to the text typology diagram developed by Matthiessen and Teruya (Matthiessen et al forthcoming) based on the context-based text typology (see Figure 3), these texts are typically delivered in written mode.



generally believed to carry high quality texts. Secondly, the selected recreating texts deploy a minimum degree of complexity of logical relations between clauses. For instance, the recreating texts chosen for the study are written mostly in clause simplexes, while most Korean novels are written with complicated logical relations expressed within a clause complex. This enables maximum concentration on textual metafunction issues without interference from issues related to other metafunctional issues. For the same reason, all the texts in the study deploy declarative clauses except 5 clauses (see Section 5.4.2). Thirdly, since the function of expounding texts is to explain a particular phenomenon, the representation of which is naturally chosen as Theme, such texts enable efficient observation of Theme patterns.

## 6 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

### 6.1 UNIT OF ANALYSIS

The clause was chosen as the unit of analysis in the corpus-based study. There were reasons for choosing the clause rather than the clause complex (or sentence) as the unit of analysis.<sup>2</sup> The primary reason for the choice was to follow methodological principles for systemic functional text analysis consistently throughout the study so that a systematic comparison between English and Korean can be made. In SFG, the clause is the most fundamental unit of grammar — the “gateway” to the semantic system, where three different meanings, ideational (as representation), interpersonal (as exchange) and textual (as message), are combined to construe a multi-functional pattern of meaning (Halliday 1994: 34). Butt et al (2000: 33) state that: “In all human languages so far studied, the clause is the fundamental meaning structure in our linguistic communication with each other.” In addition, it is assumed in the study that, in the activity of translation, the clause maintains the same status as the fundamental meaning unit because translating is a meaning-driven, meaning-oriented human activity that involves two different languages.

The second reason for choosing the clause was that the clause is a more efficient unit for observing patterns of Theme in Korean because firstly it is not uncommon that a number of clauses are combined into a clause complex with complicated logical relations and secondly, in such cases, what is being talked about in each clause may not necessarily be the same, as shown in Example 1 below. The clause complex boundary is signified by triple bars (| | |) and the clause boundary by double bars (| |).

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<sup>2</sup> The clause and sentence are the highest units in the grammatical constituent hierarchy and the word group, word and morpheme are lower units in the hierarchy. The main differences between clause and sentence in English are that the sentence always starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop and it consists of one or more clauses. However, the first feature of a sentence is applied only to written text and it is not the case in spoken text, which is treated as an equally important source as written text for exploring a language. Therefore, in order to use terminology that can be applied to both written and spoken language, systemic functionalists use the term clause complex rather than sentence.

(1) *Example*

**지방 사람들의 옷차림은** 대부분 흰옷 일색이었던 반면| |

***cipang salamtuluy oschalim-un***

*taypwupwun guynos ilsaykiessten panmyen* | |

**The clothes of people in the provinces** were most white but | |

**서울에는** 여러 종류의 사람들이 살고 있어| |

***sewuley-nun*** *yele conglynwuy salamtuli salko isse* | |

**in Seoul** variety of people lived and so | |

**옷차림도** 매우 다양했다. | | |

***oschalim-to*** *maynu tayanghayssta.* | | |

**(their) clothes** also very varied. | | |

This clause complex consists of three clauses. The first clause provides information that contrasts with the information in the second and third clauses. The first clause talks about *the clothes of people in the provinces*, the second clause picks up the information, *in Seoul*, that is contrasted with *in the provinces*, which is part of what the first clause talks about and the clause provides a reason for the variety of clothes of people in Seoul. The last clause picks up *clothes* to maintain the overall topic that the whole clause complex talks about. In cases like Example 1, it is necessary to identify what the Theme is in the clause as each clause has a different starting point. If the unit of analysis is the clause complex, it is hard to do so. Accordingly, the clausal analysis enables deeper and more detailed analysis of the text than the analysis at clause complex level.

In Korean language studies, the clause has not been treated as the main grammatical unit that is the gateway to semantics. Instead, in most Korean grammar studies, the sentence (*muncang*) has been used as a grammatical unit, that is characterized as follows:

국내 문법서의 통어론에서 정의되고 있는 ‘문장’이란 대체로 다음과 같다. 이야기의 기본 단위는 문장이고, 이는 그 자체로서 통일성을 가지며, 계층적으로 긴밀하게 구성되어 있는 독립된 언어 형식이고, 주어와 서술어 또는 그것을 이루는 낱말이나 문법 요소들이 일정한 순서로 어울려서 일정한 뜻을 드러내는 구조라고 하고 있다. (Lee 2002: 346-7)

The sentence (*muncang*) that is defined in the syntax part of Korean grammar books is as follows. The basic unit of a story is the sentence. It has a united feature within itself and an independent language form that is a tight, hierarchical structure. It consists of subject(s) and predicate(s) and other words and grammatical elements that are related to the subject(s) and predicate(s) in a certain order to reveal certain meaning. (Lee 2002: 346-7, my translation)

Lee makes the criticism that the “sentence does not include real linguistic units sufficiently from both theoretical and actual points of view when we examine actual linguistic units which are used in our everyday life and grammar books which describe

those linguistic units” (Lee 2002: 343). On the grounds of the ambiguity of “independence” and limitations of explaining sentences that naturally occur but do not have either a subject or a predicate, she strongly suggests that the *utterance* should be the unit of discourse study. According to her argument, the sentence, as defined above, is the grammatical unit that relies on structure and grammaticality and is not realized yet – i.e. it belongs to an abstract and potential system that is to be used. On the other hand, the utterance is the embodiment of a communication process which aims to deliver a message. She classifies utterances into simple utterance, complex utterance, expanded utterance, elliptical utterance, minor utterance, which, according to her explanation, seem to basically mean clause simplex, clause complex with embedded clauses, clause complex with dependent clauses, elliptical clause and minor clause, with the latter typically functioning as, for instance, calls or greetings.

Her criticism well reveals the limitations of artificially constructed sentences (mainly clause simplexes) as the unit of grammatical and discourse analysis and highlights a need to include even elliptical and minor clauses in Korean language studies. It is a critical point that should be considered in any discourse-based language study. The inclusion of elliptical clauses is particularly important as they are predominantly used not only in spoken discourse but also in written text. However, in spite of the criticisms that she makes, the unit of analysis used in her papers seems to be exactly the same as the sentence, namely an orthographic unit ending with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark (cf. Lee 2002, 2004). This unit of analysis is then not very much different from earlier studies except that she uses authentic texts. If the utterance were used as the unit of analysis, it would be similar to the clause, as the classification of utterance she presents can be well explained using the clause as unit as shown above. Therefore, in relation to the present analysis, the clause is more suitable than the utterance, particularly because the study is mainly concerned with written texts rather than spoken texts.

## 6.2 CLAUSE DELIMITATION

So far Korean grammar books have not provided a detailed account of the features of clause but have merely mentioned them in passing. They often list kinds of clauses but have not provided any systemic (i.e. paradigmatic) account of relations between clauses or any useful guidance for clause delimitation in ways that are needed for text analysis studies like the present one. Consequently, the study has relied on methods that have been used in systemic functional descriptions of English.

The main guiding reference was *Working with Functional Grammar* (Martin et al 1997: 4-6). There are three methods suggested for use in dividing up a text into clauses: approaching the text from an ideational perspective, an interpersonal perspective and a textual perspective. For the study, the ideational method was adopted because it is a more straightforward method than the other two for the analysis of Korean texts. The compulsory requirement for a clause in this method is that the clause has to have a verb or verbal group that functions as process because from this perspective the clause is a unit that represents an experience. This method is also compatible with the definition of a clause in Korean provided by Lee:

The clause may be defined as an endocentric construction which consists of a predicate as its head and one or more other elements preceding the head as its expansion. The predicate, which is the only obligatory element within the clause structure, consists of a full verb or a verbal phrase inflected with a final or non-final inflectional ending. (Lee 1989: 148)

Based on the ideational approach to determining clauses, the study applied the following procedure:

1. Divide a text into clause complexes (sentences);
2. Identify verbal groups functioning as process;
3. Delimit each verbal group and whatever is associated with it as the clause.

The initial steps involved the division of a text into clause complexes and the identification of verbal groups that function as process. Then the clause complexes were divided into clauses by grouping each process with whatever was associated with it experientially (i.e. participants — who did what to whom, and circumstances — where, when, how, why etc.). This method is proposed for the analysis of the English language. Naturally, its application to the analysis of Korean texts demanded the resolution of a number of issues which are related to linguistic features specific to Korean. The features of Korean that were taken into careful consideration in delimiting clauses will be discussed in Section 6.3.

Embedded clauses, which are rank-shifted clauses that function as part of a clause constituent, were marked off with double square brackets [ [ ] ] but were excluded from the analysis in the study because they do not have the status of ranking clause, unlike dependent or independent clauses. For example, when a whole clause is a qualifier of a noun group that functions as Subject, it is an embedded clause.

(2) *Example*

신애는 [[동생이 믿을 수 있는]] 의사를 만나 | | 마음이 놓였다. | | |  
*sinae-nun* [[*tongsayngi mithul swu issnun*]] *uyasalul manna* | | *mawumi nohyessta* | | |  
 Sinae was relieved | | because Tongsayng had met a doctor [[who Tongsayng could trust]] | | |

In the above Example 2, the clause complex consists of three clauses and they are in two different relations. The clause within the square brackets functions as a constituent within the first clause in Korean or the second clause in English as it functions as the modifier of a *doctor*.

However, such a clause as the clause beginning with *because*, which is referred to as an adverbial clause (and is treated as being embedded in some grammatical theories), is not treated as embedded but as a dependent clause enhancing the first clause in that it provides a reason. This treatment is preferred in systemic functional grammar as it is a more discourse-oriented approach. (For a detailed account, see Matthiessen & Thompson 1988.) The study followed the systemic functional method consistently for the analysis of the texts in the corpus.

Some of the clauses that were treated as embedded in the corpus seemed to be elaborating dependent clauses rather than qualifying embedded clauses. Due to a lack of

resources to rely on to distinguish one from the other, the study was not able to make a distinction between the two and therefore treated them all as embedded clauses.

### 6.3 KOREAN LANGUAGE FEATURES CONSIDERED IN CLAUSE DELIMITATION

#### 6.3.1 Compound verbs

As a typical agglutinative language, Korean has verbal stems that can “agglutinate with each other to form long series of compound verbals” (Sohn 1994: 7). Because of this phenomenon, the Korean language tends to construct events “into minute pieces for verbal expressions” (Sohn, 1999: 267), by serial-verbs such as 묻어 두다 *mwute twuess* (*buried and left*) in Example 3 below or auxiliary verbs such as 라고 합니다 *lato hapnita* (*is said*) in Example 5. Although Korean linguists have made different claims and arguments about definitions and categories of such verbs, they seem to agree that such a verb represents a single event (Se 1990: 233-276). This leads to an assumption that those verbs share the same participants and the same circumstances. Based on this assumption, the study tested whether a verbal group is a compound verb that represents one single event or whether it consists of two (or more) processes that represent separate events, by inserting between the processes other experiential elements, such as a circumstance. If a circumstance is able to be placed between the verbal elements and sense is maintained, it was determined that each verbal element belonged to a separate clause. On the other hand, if sense is not maintained, it was determined that it was a serial verb and was part of a single clause. In other words, a clause with a serial verb has been analyzed as one clause in the study. Here are some examples of the serial verb structure from the corpus:

(3) *Example*

언제나 바닥에 숯을 묻어 두었는데,  
*enceyna patake swuchul mwute twuess-nunte*  
always **buried and left** charcoal under the ground and

(4) *Example*

그러나 일반 서민들은 무명과 베로 옷을 해 입었는데,  
*kulena ilpan semintul-un mwumyengkwa peylo osul hay ipess-nunte,*  
However, ordinary people **made and wore** clothes made of cotton and hemp  
and

The main difference between the serial verb and the auxiliary verb is that the auxiliary verb includes a verb that cannot stand alone. For instance, an auxiliary verb *hapnita* (honorific) or *banta* (non-honorific) comes after a verbal group plus a specific suffix *-tag*. The auxiliary verb does not represent any event or experience as process but just adds a feature of evidentiality.

(5) *Example*  
 온순하게 길들여졌다고 합니다.  
*onsnunhake kiltulyeeyes-tako hapnita.*  
 (dogs) **are said** that (they) were tamed to be gentle.

(6) *Example*  
 물맛이 꿀처럼 달았다고 한다.  
*mwulmas-i kkwulchelem talas-tako hanta.*  
 the taste of water **is said** that it was as sweet as honey

As shown in Examples 5 and 6, verbal groups *-tago hapnita* or *hanta* indicate the nature of evidence for a given statement. A clause with such an auxiliary was analysed not as two clauses but one.

### 6.3.2 Elliptical verbs

Korean allows clausal elements that are predictable from the discourse context or situation to be omitted and this is a widespread phenomenon (Sohn 1999: 291). The phenomenon is not limited to nominal construction but occurs also with verbal constructions. In Example 7, the clause complex is divided into three clauses as the ellipsed verb *said* is recoverable, because *said* is often elliptical when there is a verbal group ending with *-ta* followed by *mye*, a conjunctive suffix ('and' or 'as').

(7) *Example*  
 그러면 6자회담이 쉽게 풀릴 수 있다  
*Kulemen 6cahoitam-i swipkey phwullil swu issta.*  
 then the six-party talks can move on smoothly

며  
*mye*  
 (said) and

미국의 보다 적극적인 조치를 촉구했습니다.  
*mikwukny pota cekkukcekin cochilul chokkwubyssunpita.*  
 urged more active moves of US.

## 6.4 IDENTIFICATION OF THEME IN KOREAN

While it was straightforward to determine interpersonal and textual Themes, it was not so simple to identify ideational Themes mainly due to the frequent occurrence of elliptical Subjects in clauses within clause complexes. Therefore, ideational Themes were analyzed in two stages: firstly, all the clause simplexes that had an explicit Subject were analyzed and then all the other clauses were analyzed based on the findings of the initial analysis. The findings of each stage are presented separately in the following sections.

#### 6.4.1 Initial analysis

Table 3 shows the numbers of clauses simplexes in the texts included in the corpus. The total number of clause simplexes with an explicit Subject was 147, which accounts for 27% of 537 clauses analyzed for the study, while the total number of clause simplexes with an elliptical Subject was 48, which accounts for 9% of the total clauses analyzed.

Table 3: Number of clause simplexes in the texts in the corpus

<b>Text type</b>	<b>Text no.</b>	<b>With explicit Subject</b>	<b>With elliptical Subject</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Expounding</b>	T1	10	3	13
	T2	12	0	12
	T3	5	2	7
	T4	7	0	7
	T5	1	1	2
	T6	16	1	17
	T7	2	0	2
	<b>Sub-totals</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Reporting</b>	T8	6	1	7
	T9	11	3	14
	T10	0	0	0
	T11	10	7	17
	T12	4	5	9
	T13	8	2	10
	T14	2	1	3
	<b>Sub-totals</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Recreating</b>	T15	23	5	28
	T16	14	9	23
	T17	16	8	24
	<b>Sub-totals</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>75</b>
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>195</b>

The procedure that was followed when analyzing the data displayed in Table 3 involved two steps. Firstly, the elements that were placed at the clause-initial position of each clause simplex were identified. The clause-initial position is claimed to carry textual importance in many languages, for example, English, French, German, Chinese and Japanese, to name a few. Therefore it was hypothesized that the clause-initial

position would have the same textual significance in Korean. In the clause simplexes, there were largely three kinds of element observed at the beginning of the clauses. The first type of clause-initial element is a nominal group that has the role of a participant serving as Subject. The largest number of clauses (82%) had this type of element in the initial position. The second type was a nominal group that has the role of a circumstance and this type was observed in 16% of the clauses. The third type was a nominal group that does not have any experiential role as a participant or circumstance in the transitivity structure of the clause but serves purely to provide the topic of the clause (e.g. 코끼리는 코가 길다 (*elephant-nun trunk-ka long is*) *The elephant has a long trunk.*) and this type was observed in 2% of the clauses. The types of clause-initial elements are summarized in Table 4:

Table 4: Major types of clause-initial elements in Subject-explicit clause simplexes

	Subject/Participant	Circumstance/ Adjunct	Absolute topic
No. of clauses	121	23	3
Percentage	82%	16%	2%

The second step in the procedure was to further divide the three fundamental types into 7 sub-types according to the different postpositional particles employed. Table 5 shows the sub-types and percentages of clauses for each.

Table 5: Sub-types of clause-initial elements in clause simplexes

	Participant/Subject			Circumstance/Adjunct		Absolute topic
	+ <i>un/nun</i>	+ <i>i/ka</i>	+ <i>to</i>	+ <i>un/nun</i>	- <i>un/nun</i>	
No of clauses	83	26	12	11	12	3
Percentage	56%	18%	8%	7%	8%	2%

Among the participants serving as the Subject, 56% were marked by *un/nun*, 18% by *i/ka* and 8% by *to*. Among the circumstantial initial elements, half of them were marked by *un/nun* (+*un/nun*) while the others were not marked by *un/nun* (-*un/nun*). Table 6 presents the number of clauses in each sub-type in each text.

Table 6: Clause-initial elements of clause simplexes of each text (Unit: no of clauses)

	Participant/Subject			Circumstance		Absolute topic	Total
	+ <i>un/nun</i>	+ <i>i/ka</i>	+ <i>to</i>	+ <i>un/nun</i>	- <i>un/nun</i>		
T1	7	1	2				10
T2	8	1	1		1	1	12

T3	4						4
T4	3		2		1	1	7
T5				1			1
T6	10	2	1	2		1	16
T7	2						2
T8	3	2			1		6
T9	9				2		11
T10							0
T11	1	2	2	4	2		11
T12	4						4
T13	4	1	1		2		8
T14		2					2
T15	11	8	2	1	1		23
T16	3	7		2	2		14
T17	14		1	1			16
<b>Totals</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>147</b>

After the clause-initial elements were sorted out, some major questions needed to be asked: firstly, whether or not the clause-initial elements function to orient the reader to what unfolds in the clause and, secondly, if they do, how these elements function differently from one another. Therefore, as the third step in the procedure, the corpus was reanalyzed to double check whether or not the clause-initial elements functioned as Theme. It turned out that, while most of the clause-initial elements functioned as Theme as is the case in English, nominal groups marked by *i/ka* did not always function as Theme. Out of 26 initial elements marked by *i/ka*, five of them provided information about the elliptical Theme and therefore were part of Rheme. For instance, 물기가 (*mwulki-ka*) *moisture* is the Subject of the second clause in Example 8 but the clause is actually concerned with the *pebble* introduced in the Rheme of the previous clause and basically says that the pebble was now dry.

(8) *Example*

Theme(s)	Rheme
문득, <i>mwuntuk</i> , Suddenly, (the boy)	[[소녀가 던진]] 조약돌을 내려다보았다. [[ <i>sonyeka tencin</i> ]] <i>coyaktolul nayhyetapoassta</i> . looked down at the pebble [[that the girl threw to him]].
	물기가 겹혀 있었다. <i>mwulki-ka kethye issessta</i> .

(the pebble)	The moisture was gone.
소년은 <i>sonyen-un</i> The boy	조약들을 집어 <i>coyanketolum cipe</i> picked it up and
(the boy)	주머니에 넣었다. <i>cwumeniey sebessta.</i> put it in his pocket.

In such a case, it is hard to argue that 물기가 (*mwulki-ka*) moisture is the Theme just because it is positioned at the beginning of the clause. It is more reasonable to analyze the clause as having an elliptical Theme, which can be easily recovered from the context. This is because the second clause in Example 8 does not start with a new Theme but is a continuation of the preceding discourse, specifically talking about the pebble, which was introduced in the Rheme position of the preceding clause. Accordingly, Table 5 has to be revised as Table 7 below:

Table 7: Theme patterns of Subject-present clause simplexes

	Elliptical	Participant/Subject			Circumstance		Absolute topic
		+ <i>un/nun</i>	+ <i>i/ka</i>	+ <i>to</i>	+ <i>un/nun</i>	- <i>un/nun</i>	
No. of clauses	5	83	21	12	11	12	3
%	3%	56%	14%	8%	7%	8%	2%

Still, the most typical nominal group that functions as Theme in clause simplexes with an explicit Subject is the clause-initial element marked by *un/nun* (56%). This evidence supports to a certain degree the widely accepted proposition that Theme is marked by *un/nun* in Korean. However, the proposition does not explain the rest of the cases (44%), in which a number of different elements function as Theme. All of them function as Theme but they are different from one another.

#### 6.4.2 Extended analysis

Based on the results of the initial analysis, all the other clauses were analyzed except for some minor or interrogative clauses, which were excluded from the analysis as the scope of the study is limited to the investigation of Theme in declarative clauses. The summary of the clause numbers of each text is shown in Table 8 below:

Table 8: Number of clauses of each text by clause type

Text Type	Text No.	Declarative			Minor	Interrog. Imper.	Total	Total analyzed
		Clause Simplex	Cl.Complex					
			Depend't	Main				

Expounding	T1	13	5	17	0	0	35	35
	T2	12	9	9	0	0	30	31
	T3	7	10	14	0	3	34	31
	T4	7	2	12	0	1	22	21
	T5	2	7	7	0	0	16	16
	T6	17	13	30	0	0	60	60
	T7	2	3	6	0	0	11	11
	<b>Sub-totals</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>205</b>
Reporting	T8	7	6	8	0	0	21	21
	T9	14	3	9	0	0	26	26
	T10	0	6	15	0	0	21	21
	T11	17	3	12	0	0	32	32
	T12	9	2	8	0	0	19	19
	T13	10	3	11	0	0	24	24
	T14	3	6	17	0	0	26	26
	<b>Sub-totals</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>169</b>
Recreating	T15	28	9	19	0	0	56	56
	T16	23	9	27	1	0	60	59
	T17	24	6	18	0	0	48	48
	<b>Sub-totals</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>163</b>
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>542</b>	<b>537</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>99</b>

As shown above, 537 clauses were analyzed out of 542 clauses in total. The excluded clauses include 1 minor clause, 3 interrogative clauses and 1 imperative clause.

As the analysis at this stage involved a number of elliptical clauses, one more step needed to be added before the three initial analysis steps, namely recovering elliptical Subjects. This additional step is based on one of the findings of the initial analysis, especially that in 79% of clause simplexes, the Subject, mostly marked by *un/nun* (57%) but occasionally marked by *i/ka* (14%) or *to* (8%), functioned as Theme. Once elliptical Subjects were recovered, the same process of analysis was repeated as in the initial stage. Special attention was given to when the Subjects were marked by *i/ka*, as in some instances such elements did not function as Theme as explained above. The results are presented in Table 9:

Table 9: Theme patterns of the total clauses

	Elliptical	Participant/Subject			Circumstance		Comple- ment	Absolute topic	Total
		+ <i>un/nun</i>	+ <i>i/ka</i>	+ <i>to</i>	+ <i>un/nun</i>	- <i>un/nun</i>			
T1	16	10	2	6	0	0	0	1	35
T2	13	10	3	1	1	1	0	2	31
T3	12	8	6	0	0	1	4	0	31
T4	5	8	2	3	1	1	0	1	21
T5	12	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	16
T6	17	24	4	6	5	2	2	0	60
T7	4	6	0	0	1	0	0	0	11
T8	11	5	3	0	0	2	0	0	21
T9	10	12	0	0	0	4	0	0	26
T10	15	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	21
T11	11	7	8	0	4	2	0	0	32
T12	8	6	2	0	1	0	0	2	19
T13	5	10	4	1	0	4	0	0	24
T14	13	9	4	0	0	0	0	0	26
T15	23	17	9	1	2	4	0	0	56
T16	26	8	11	1	8	5	0	0	59
T17	12	23	4	2	5	1	1	0	48
<b>Totals</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>537</b>
%	40%	32%	12%	4%	5%	5%	1%	1%	100%

The most dominant pattern shown in the extended analysis was elliptical Theme, which accounts for 40% (see Figure 4). While the Subject marked by *un/nun* functions as Theme in 57% of clause simplexes with explicit Subjects, it has the same thematic function in only 32% of clauses when the analysis was extended to the whole corpus.

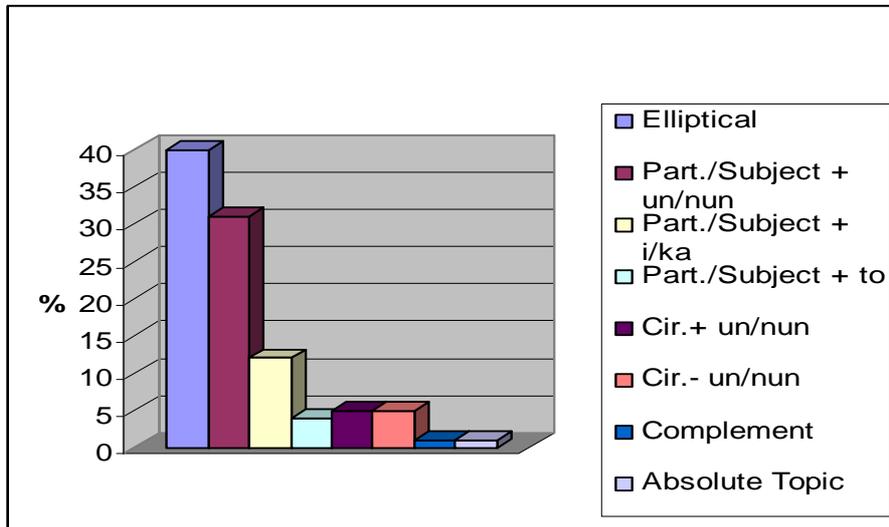


Figure 4: Theme patterns of the total clauses

7 A MODEL OF THE SYSTEM OF THEME IN KOREAN

Having described the different patterns of Theme and analyzed how the Theme in Korean functions differently depending on how it is realized, the study proposes a model of the system of THEME in Korean, as shown in Figure 5:

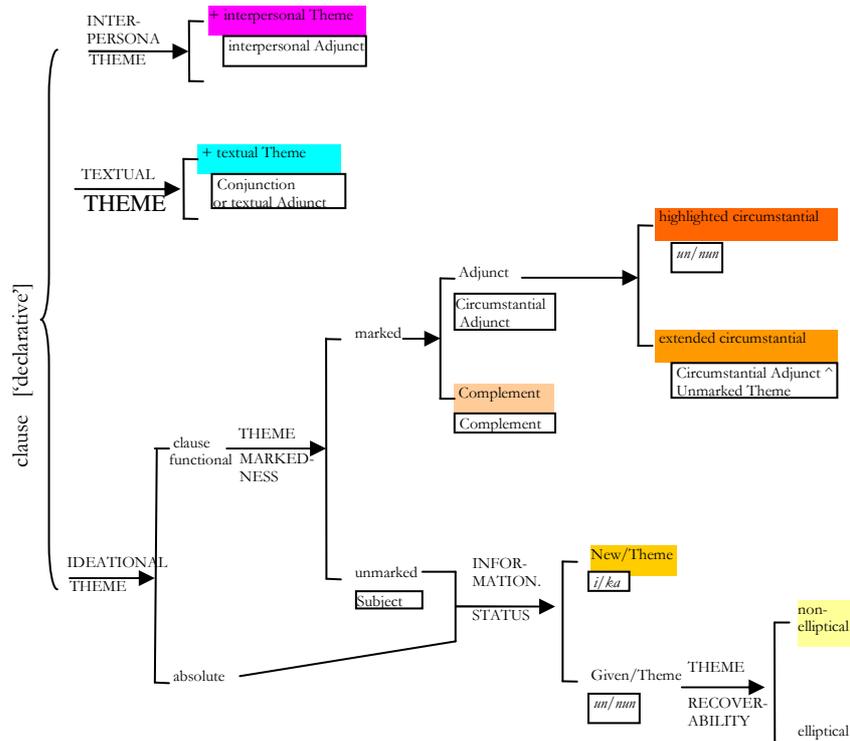


Figure 5: The system of THEME in Korean

The entry condition for the system proposed here is a declarative clause. Firstly, the clause may have an interpersonal Theme and/or a textual Theme in addition to an ideational Theme. INTERPERSONAL THEME and TEXTUAL THEME simply give options of expressing such Themes at the beginning of the clause before the Subject. Interpersonal Theme is usually realized by an interpersonal Adjunct and textual Theme by a conjunction or conjunctive Adjunct.

IDEATIONAL THEME offers two kinds of Themes. The majority of Themes have an experiential function but there are Themes that do not have any experiential function but serve just as Theme, which are called absolute Themes.<sup>3</sup> When the Theme has an experiential function, it is a marked or unmarked Theme depending on what experiential function it has. The most typical type of experiential Theme is a participant that is conflated with the Subject. Therefore, when the Theme functions as circumstance or participant conflated with the Complement, it is marked.

<sup>3</sup> Chinese has the same phenomenon of absolute Theme. For details see Halliday and McDonald (2004).

When a circumstance functions as Theme, it may be marked by *un/nun* as a way of highlighting it. When it is not marked by *un/nun*, it still has a thematic status but one less significant than that marked by *un/nun*. Thus in this case, the Theme should be extended to the Subject of the clause, whether it is present or elliptical. When a Complement functions as Theme, it may or may not be marked by *un/nun*.

The unmarked Theme and absolute Theme are divided into Given/Theme and New/Theme depending on the status of information assigned to the Theme. Given/Theme is marked by *un/nun* while New/Theme is marked by *i/ka*. The Given/Theme tends to be elliptical when it is recoverable either because it has been introduced in the preceding discourse or is obvious within the context. It is usually explicit in the topic sentence of the paragraph.

## 8 CONCLUSION

This paper discussed the methodological issues of data analysis and interpretation in a corpus-based study on the system of THEME in Korean, the first attempt to untangle the tangled tread issues of Korean Theme by investigating what strategies are used in Korean to orient the reader about the message in the clause and text based on SFL theory. It can be viewed as a process of putting together suggestions or findings from earlier studies of Korean Theme or postpositional particles, *un/nun* and *i/ka*, within the big framework of the system of THEME. First of all it provided a global account of the theoretical framework of SFL along with a brief introduction of the motivation of the study. It then sorted out the confusing issues surrounding Theme study into three categories: the concept of Theme, the functions of Theme and the realization of Theme; reviewed existing studies relevant to each category and made suggestions about questions raised within Korean linguistics by interpreting them from a systemic functional point of view. Following the critical review, it explained the corpus used in the study and discussed methodological issues that arose and how they were resolved. Finally, a model of the system of THEME in Korean was presented with a brief account of functions of different Themes.

This study clearly showed that a study of Theme must be carried out with a close and consistent analysis of the relationship between grammar (clause) and semantics (text/discourse). The relationship should be considered when analyzing data and modeling a system network from a descriptivist point of view. If the relationship had not been considered, the study might not have paid sufficient attention to the importance of absolute Theme in Korean and different textual functions between two postpositions, *un/nun* and *i/ka*, as discussed in detail in Section 6.4. Being motivated by questions about translation, the study has also benefited from the phenomenon of translation. It is hoped that this meaningful dialogue between language description and translation continues to enrich both fields and also serves to provide useful resources for other related areas.

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