

# A Comparative Look at the Mandarin Chinese and Korean Negative Imperatives and Negation

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## **Abstract**

Key Words: Mandarin Chinese, Korean, negative imperative, NegP, HMC

Cross-linguistically, imperatives cannot be negated in all languages. In Italian, Spanish and Modern Greek, instead of negating imperatives, they use subjunctive or infinitives to express negative imperatives (cf. Han 2001). Korean and Mandarin Chinese are two distinct languages which allow the negative form of imperatives: Korean possesses two types of negation constructions, the short-form negation (SFN hereafter) and the long-form negation (LFN hereafter), but in face with the force of deontic modality like imperative, it only accepts *mal*-;p Mandarin Chinese is known for its insufficiency and it possesses negators like, “*bú yào*” and “*bié*” .

In recent years, the universal concept of NegP hypothesis has raised debates cross-linguistically. In Mandarin Chinese, Cheng and Li (1991), Chiu (1993), Xu (1997), Hsieh (2001) proposed that there should be a NegP in Mandarin Chinese; in Korean, Zanuttini (1991), Ahn (1991), and Kim (2000) proposed that there should be NegP.

In the first part of this thesis I observe the commonalities and differences between Korean and Mandarin Chinese and expect to find characters in at least two languages in negative imperative. In the second part of this thesis I propose that there is no NegP in both Mandarin Chinese and Korean. This study utilizes the Head Movement Constraint theory by Chomsky (1986) to raise the question of the necessity if NegP in both languages. The research is conducted under the framework of Minimalist Program.

## **I Introduction**

### **1.1 The Notion of Imperative and NegP**

Imperative sentences are sentences carrying an illocutionary force, which is used when the addresser imposes an obligation on the addressee to finish the task (cf. Portner 2004). According to Han (1999), there are seven different illocutionary forces: “order”, “suggestion”, “permission”, “threat”, “wish”, “instruction”, and “warning”.

In the past, scholars have been using the approach of pragmatics or semantics to explain imperative, as they believe it as the result of pragmatic reasoning and interpretation based on the discourse of context (Bolinger, 1977; Huntley, 1984; and Wilson & Sperber, 1988). However, recent studies did show that many languages have special morphosyntactic forms that indicate the force of imperative (Han 2001).

(1) German

*Schreib es du heute!*  
Write-2sg.IMP it you today!  
'You write it today!'

(2) Korean

*Cemsim-ul mek-e-la!*  
Lunch-Acc eat IMP  
'Eat lunch!'

According to Han, imperatives cannot be negated in every language. In Italian, Modern Greek and Spanish, negative commands are demonstrated in subjunctive or infinitive verb forms. Mandarin Chinese and Korean are two languages that allow for negative imperatives:

(3) Mandarin Chinese

不要 坐下!  
bú yào zuò xià  
NEG sit down  
'Don't sit down!'

(4) Korean

*Hakkyo-ey ka-ci mal-ala!*  
school-to go-COMP NEG-IMP  
'Don't go to school!'

Following the split-INFL hypothesis (Pollock 19889), several functional categories have been postulated between TP and VP (Belletti 1990, Ouhalla 1991, and Chomsky 1991), and NegP can be one of them. The function of the NegP is to provide a generalized account of negation in all natural languages.

In terms of the Mandarin Chinese negative particles, there are two: “*bù*” and “*mei*”. Previous studies have been debating whether the NegP hypothesis in Mandarin Chinese is tenable or not. Chao (1968), Li and Thompson (1981), and Ernst (1995) are proponents for the analysis of adverb, questioning the existence of NegP; Cheng and Li (1991), Chiu (1993), Xu (1997), Hsieh (2001), and Hsiao (2002) are the proponents for the NegP. In Korean, SFN “*an*” and the LFN “*ani + ha*” are the two typical negation particles. Previous studies proposed the two negatives to be different in their positions and functions. Zanuttini (1991), Ahn (1991) and YW Kim (2000) proposed that there should be a NegP in Korean and whereas Choi (1991) and TS Kim (1995), SW Kim (1995) propose there shouldn't have a NegP.

In the second chapter, I will compare the negative imperatives in Mandarin Chinese and Korean. I will do this by demonstrating some empirical evidence found in the two languages and discuss their commonalities and differences. In the third chapter, I will argue that there is no necessity of NegP in Mandarin Chinese and Korean.

## **1.2 Motivation and Research methods**

The **motivation** arises from the blocking effects imposed by the NegP in the middle of the movement of DP from the VP to Spec of TP or CP in Mandarin Chinese. In Korean, the SFN performs differently in their scope of negation on the verb phrase in a sentence. In this paper, I will argue that there is no need for NegP in both Mandarin Chinese and Korean. I will elucidate the commonalities and differences of the two languages by collecting empirical evidence of the two languages and aim to

find similarities in at least two very distinctive languages. In the literature, however, it has been debated that NegP should be available in negative imperatives in Indo-European languages (Zanuttini 1997, Mei Li 1999, Han 2001, Jen Ting 2006). I will demonstrate that at least in Mandarin Chinese and Korean, there is no NegP. The **research method** of the argument is by analyzing previous literature and finding evidence in them that denotes questionable existence of NegP. I will adopt the theory of Head Movement Constraint and Universal Grammar in my arguments.

### 1.3 Literature Review

#### 1.3.1 Jen Ting (2006)

Jen Ting asserted that if the bipartite negation in Romance can have a NegP, then under the similar circumstance, Chinese and the pronominal particle “*suǒ*” may not allow to have a NegP. He acclaims that since *suǒ* acts like a proclitic, as it appears right before the negators “*bù*” or “*méi*”, it can violate HMC due to the NegP in the middle. Since *suǒ* cannot occur after the two negators, Ting asserted that there should not be a NegP in Chinese.

- (5) a. Zhāng sān suǒ bú ài chuān de yī fú  
 Zhāng sān SUO not like wear DE clothes  
 ‘the clothes that Zhangsan does not like to wear’
- b. \*Zhāng sān bú suǒ ài chuān de yī fú  
 Zhāng sān not SUO like wear De clothes

#### 1.3.2 Kim (2002)

Kim acclaimed that SFN *-an* is a verbal affix affixed on a verb morphologically before it is derived syntactically. He discussed about the neg-scope between the SFN and LFN and found that there is still ambiguity in both types of negations. He claims that in Korean, LFN can have a scope over the entire sentence while SFN can only

negate the verb attached to it. Thus, Kim doubts the feasibility of NegP in Korean.

### 1.3.3 Conclusion

From the references mentioned above, we can see that in both Mandarin Chinese and Korean, there were authors using different methods to prove that there are no NegP in two languages.

## II Comparing Mandarin Chinese and Korean negative imperatives

In this section, the thesis will find various different and common characters in Mandarin Chinese and Korean to enable better understanding of the negative imperatives of the two languages.

### 2.1 Morphological indication

Mandarin Chinese has been poor in morphological indication, while Indo-European languages have no problem in exhibiting tense and aspect morphologically (Zanuttini, 1997). Han, 1999 claims that imperatives are sentences with their main verbs in the form of imperative mood. They can also be realized by the demonstration of distinct clause types. In Mandarin Chinese, there are negators “*bié*” and “*bú yào*” in negative imperatives; in Korean, there is a sentence-final particles “*-la*” that marks the imperative mood and they also have the special form “*mal-*” The following are the illustration of the two languages; example in (7) is from M Pak, 2006.

(6) Mandarin Chinese

你 不要 吃!

nǐ bú yào chī

2sg. NEG eat

‘You, don’t eat!’

(7) Korean

*Inho, Mek-ci mal- a- la !*

Inho Eat-NOM NEG-a-IMP

‘Inho, Do not eat!’

As we can see from the examples above, in (6) Mandarin Chinese isn’t endowed with morphological indications as Korean does. The sentence frame looks just like any declarative sentence and the negator “*bú yào*” denotes prohibition in this sentence. However, “*bú yào*” can also act as a modal that denotes unwillingness of the addresser:

- (8) 我 不要 洗澡!  
wǒ bú yào xǐ zǎo  
I NEG. Modal take a bath  
‘I don’t want to take a bath!’

From (8), we can see that the negator “*bú yào*” is not an exclusive force indicator in Mandarin Chinese, while Korean does use the morpheme “*-la*” specifically in indicating imperative force. Hence, whether there are morphological indications is a significant difference between the two languages.

## 2.2 Embedded clause

Previous literature shows that imperative is a unique clause type that cannot be embedded (Rivero 1994, Platzack & Rosengren 1998). They believe any matrix clause can express the illocutionary force, but after the same clause is embedded, it loses the force. The following are the examples in Mandarin Chinese:

- (9) a. 你 不要 一直 講話!  
nǐ bú yào yì zhí jiǎng huà  
You NEG keep talk  
‘Don’t keep talking!’  
b. 我 請你 不要 一直 講話  
wǒ qǐng nǐ bú yào yì zhí jiǎng huà

I ask you NEG keep talk

‘I ask you to not keep talking.’

According to the investigation conducted by Han (1998), many languages have imperative indicative morpheme when they are matrix clauses. Interestingly they use subjunctive or infinitival when the matrix clauses are embedded. The example (10) is from Han (1998) (I’ll use Spanish here as example, but due to the incompatibility of negation in Spanish imperatives, I’ll use the positive imperative as an example)

(10) Spanish

a. *Dad me el libro!*  
give-2sg.IMP me the book  
‘Give me the book!’

b. *Pido que me deis el libro.*  
ask that me give-2sg.Subj the book  
‘I ask that you give me the book.’

However, according to Han, there is embedded clause in Korean negative imperatives. A very unique characteristic is that Korean possesses the illocutionary force even after the imperative matrix clauses are embedded. The following examples are from Han (2006).

(11) a. *Inho-nun hakkyo-ey ka-ci mal-aya ha-n-ta*  
Inho-Top school to go-CI NEG-COMP should-DEC  
‘Inho should not go to school.’

b. *Inho-nun Yumi-ka hakkyo-ey ka-ci mal-ki-lul pala-n-ta*  
Inho-Top Yumi Nom school-to go-CI NEG-NMZ-ACC want-PRES-DEC  
‘Inho wants Yumi to not go to school.’

Still, the sentence final indicator “-*ta*” shows that (11a), (11b) are both sentences with declarative sentence mood. The “-*mal*” may appear because of the deontic modal

“*ha*”. Han didn’t make further assertive implication about the phenomena. Although the situation is still disputable, I believe Korean should still be in the same category as most of the languages. I conclude the section by proposing that both languages lose illocutionary force when they are in embedded forms.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

In this section, I compare the two languages in two perspectives: the morphological expression and the cases of embedded forms. I found that the two languages have the difference in the way they express illocutionary force. On the other hand, though in Korean there are negative imperatives allowed in embedded forms, it loses illocutionary force as the distinct sentence final particle is “*-ta*” rather than the imperative force indicator “*-la*”, which is a sign of conformity to UG.

## **III Questioning the hypothesis of NegP in Mandarin Chinese and Korean**

In this section, I will demonstrate previous literature on the discussion whether there should be a NegP or not, respectively on Mandarin Chinese and Korean. The evidence I approach to is not from negative imperatives. Since the feasibility of NegP should be applied to all forms of a language, if not, the hypothesis is incomplete and questionable.

### **3.1 NegP in Mandarin Chinese**

Of the previous studies, there were authors claiming that the negative particles in Mandarin Chinese “*bù*” and “*méi*” are adverbs in VP and there were some other claiming that there are NegP, and the two negators are respectively in the Spec and Head of NegP. Hsieh (2001) proclaims that in Mandarin Chinese, “*bù*” is a constituent negation and thus by the studies done by Pollock (1989) and many other studies, “*bù*” should not be the head of NegP, while “*méi*” in “*méi yǒu*” is a clausal negation so it should be the head of NegP. Hsieh approached this by using the ‘Presupposition’-denial cases to prove her statement semantically. However, the





(15) a. 什麼 我 都 不 想 做  
 shén me wǒ dōu bù xiǎng zuò

Anything I all don't want to do

b. 我 什麼 都 不 想 做

wǒ shén me dōu bù xiǎng zuò

I anything all don't want to do

c. 我 都 不 想 做 什麼

wǒ dōu bù xiǎng zuò shén me

I all don't want to do anything

'I don't want to do anything.'

From the examples (15a), we can see that the NPI has moved across the Head of NegP(*bù*) and moved in Spec of CP, which neglected the blocking effect the intervening Neg Head may bring about. The example (15b) signals the very same notion. The movement of the NPI can be illustrated as follows:

(16) a. [CP shén me<sub>i</sub> [C' [C $\emptyset$ ] [TP wǒ<sub>i</sub> [T' [T dōu]<sub>i</sub> [AspP [Asp  $\emptyset$ ] [NegP [Neg *bù*] [vP [v xiǎng]<sub>i</sub> [VP [V zuò] [DP *t* <sub>i</sub>]]]]]]]]]

b. [FP [F $\emptyset$ ] [TopP wǒ<sub>i</sub> [Top' [Top  $\emptyset$ ] [FocusP shén me<sub>i</sub> [Focus' [Focus $\emptyset$ ] [TP [T dōu]<sub>i</sub> [AspP [Asp $\emptyset$ ] [NegP [Neg *bù*] [v xiǎng]<sub>i</sub> [VP [V zuò] [DP *t* <sub>i</sub>]]]]]]]]]

In the skeletal form shown above, *shén me* has the original position in DP of VP, in (16a) it moves across Negator “*bù*” and takes the Spec of CP. In (16b), in order to give the raising NPI a position without interfering the trace of *wǒ* moving from Spec of vP into Spec of TP, we use the Split-CP projection form. Another example in Mandarin Chinese, though as contrived as it seems, is still acceptable in Mandarin Chinese:

(17) a. 哪個 便當 不是 他點的?

nǎ ge biàn dāng bú shì tā diǎn de

Which lunch box is not he ordered

‘Which lunch box is not what he ordered?’

- b. [CP *nǎ ge biàn dāng* *i*[C{WH}][TP[T $\emptyset$ ][NegP[Neg *bú*][vP[v *shì*][VP *tā*[V *diǎn*[DP *de*[QP *na ge biàn dāng t i*]]]]]]]

In(17a), the quantifier “*nǎ ge*” denotes interrogative force, which selects “*biàn dāng*” as its complement and merge as a QP; it is initially merged as the complement of the verb “*diǎn*”(de acts as a Nominalizer in Mandarin Chinese and it usually combines with verb phrases.) but it ultimately moves to the Spec of CP due to the Q feature in C. The movement traverses the head of NegP but is not blocked as it should be.

In this section, I collect three different cases of sentences in Mandarin Chinese and adopt the theory of HMC to prove that the hypothesis of a NegP in the language is questionable. In the first evidence I adopt the DP *suǒ* investigated by Jen Ting to question the Neg head theory of Hsieh. I propose that both *bù* and *méi* are not head of NegP. In the second evidence, I use the acceptability of NPI *shén me* to indicate that if the negation *bù* really head the NegP, the movement should not be accepted in Mandarin Chinese. Thus, there should not be a NegP. In the third evidence the quantifier phrase has to move from its original position to the Spec of CP due to the attraction of the Q feature in C. The movement clearly moves across the Negation *bù* without being blocked. With the three evidences, I question the hypothesis of a NegP in Mandarin Chinese.

### 3.2 NegP in Korean

According to T.S Kim (2002), the Korean negation forms and their aspects have been discussed many times in the previous literature Song (1966, 88), Kim (1967), Lee (1970a & b), Cho (1975), Han (1987), Yoon (1990), Ahn (1991), Jung (1992), Kim (1996), Hong (1998), most recently Choe (2000, 2001). The two negation types

used in Korean is an unquestionable fact: the SFN“-*an*” and the LFN “-*ani*”. The following is the sentence “It didn’t rain” in the two forms:

(18) a. pi- ka     **an**     o-ess-ta.

rain-Nom   **not**     come-Pst-Dec

‘It didn't rain.’

b. pi-     ka o     ci     **ani** ha-ess-ta.

rain-Nom come Comp **not** do-Pst-Dec

‘It didn't rain.’

(T.S, Kim, 2002)

As the examples show it, *an* in SFN immediately attached before the verb phrase after it. *ani*, on the other hand, occurs after the main verb followed by the light verb *ha-*, which functions like the do-support as in English, carrying verbal inflections after it. There were numerous discussions about the underlying structure from which the two negators originally derived. Most linguists agree that the two negators derived from the very same structure but still have arguments on their synonymity. They are mostly argued to have different scope on their c-commanded verb phrase.

(19) a. John-un     modwu-lul     manna ci     **ani** ha-ess-ta. (LFN)

John-Nom everyone-Acc meet Comp not do-Pst-Dec

‘It is not the case that John met everyone.’

b. John-un     modwu-lul     **an** manna-ess-ta. (SFN)

John-Nom everyone-Acc not meet-Pst-Dec

‘John did not meet everyone.’

According to most of the Korean linguists, the two sentences show different scope abilities as LFN has a scope over the entire sentence, whereas SFN can only negate the verb right after it. From the example (19a), we can find another interesting clue which proves that Korean has a different pattern of NPIL than most of the other languages, e.g. English., in which they should have the negation before the NPI. For

this reason, Choe (2001) claimed that the two negations should have different forms and derivational process. In form (19a), which is in the case of the LFN, *ani* originally merges with negated element  $\gamma$  in VP, then moves to the Spec of NegP that is above TP, and finally it merges with the inflected verb *ha-ess-ta*, and then it is finally realized as *ani-ha-ess-ta*. In form (19b), the SFN starts in the VP and it merges with the negated element  $\gamma$  in VP, then it moves to the NegP under TP and cliticizes with the inflected verb *manna-ess ta*, and finally realized as *an- manna-ess ta*.

(20) a. [[TP SUB [T' [... *ti*γ ...]VP *ha-ess-ta*]T' ]TP *ani*]NegP → *ani ha-ess-ta*

b. [[[[... *tj*γ... *ti* ]VP *an j*]NegP *meki-ess-ta*]T' ]TP → *an mek-ess-ta* (Choe, 2001)

However, according to Kim, there are cases when LFN and SFN coexist in a single sentence. So the fact may put Choe's hypothesis questionable.

(21) Chelswu-ka pap-ul **an** mek ci **ani** ha-ess-ta

Chelswu-Nom rice-Acc not eat Comp not do-Pst-Dec

'It is not the case that Chelswu did not eat the rice.'

Moreover, when SFN is used to negate several verbs, if it occurs in front of the first verb, it can only assign scope to its attached verb and cannot negate the following verbs after the first verb. If SFN wants to negate every verb, it has to be attached in front of every verbs, as demonstrated in (22).

(22) a. ku-nun **an** mek-ko **an** nol-ko **an** ca-ass-ta

he-Top not eat-and not play-and not sleep-Pst-Dec

'He did not eat, play, and sleep.'

b. ku-nun **an** mek-ko nol-ko ca-ass-ta

he-Top **not** eat-and play-and sleep-Pst-Dec

'He played and slept without eating.' (TS.Kim, 2002)

As exemplified above, (22b) denotes differently comparing with (22a). In (22a), the sentence has three verbs being negated and in (22b), only the verb "eat" is negated,

indicating that *-an* can only have scope over the verb right after it, not the following verbs.

#### **IV Conclusion**

In this paper, I compare the commonalities and differences of the two languages Mandarin Chinese and Korean through the observation of language material and offer evidence found by previous authors to debate the necessity of a NegP in both languages. In Chinese I use the blocking effect of Neg head in the middle of the moving particles to prove that there shouldn't be a NegP in Mandarin Chinese. In Korean, I use the evidence found by Kim and Choe to debate the ability for a NegP to allow for two different kinds of NegP projections in a single sentence. I conclude the paper with the claim that there shouldn't be a NegP in the two languages.

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# 比較華文與韓文否定祈使句和否定用法

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這篇論文主要探討華文以及韓文在否定祈使句上面語料的異同，並否認在這兩種語言有否定片語的必要。在華文方面，我會使用中心語移位限制理論作為證明華文沒有否定片語的理論架構；在韓文，短否定詞和長否定詞的句法樹狀位置是備受爭議的，(Choe,2001) 認為長否定詞的否定片語在樹狀結構上處於時態片語之上，短否定詞是在時態片語之下；然而韓文是可以接受兩種否定詞在同一個句子的，這時韓國的否定片語存在與否便會出現疑竇。