1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE AIM

The aim of this dissertation is to find a practical method that would help analysts working on East-Asian languages to understand how the grammar of their target language works. The method should provide an efficient way of discovering what the basic distinctions are as well as have the potential for deeper studies in a later stage of analysis. The approach needs to be functional, language independent and practically applicable for fieldwork purposes.[1]

The emphasis is on functionality because this research orientation seeks to understand how languages work as systems. We use clauses in order to achieve our communicative purposes. A functionally inspired approach acknowledges this by taking into account the immediate context, the clause as a whole, and even the whole communicative situation. The goal is not just to describe sentence-forming structures, but to discover how the structures function in the overall system.

"Language independent" means that the method is not geared to any particular language but should be generally applicable. Originally, the motivation for this study comes from Korean and Mandarin Chinese. These are the languages that exemplify the problems and illustrate the proposed method. My hope is, however, to find an approach that works, not only for them but also for other languages in East Asia. By carrying out similar analyses both in Korean and in Chinese, I have wanted to test the framework with two typologically different languages. By analyzing an agglutinative SOV language and an isolating (basically) SVO language, it has been possible to address a broader range of questions than otherwise would have been the case. Needless to say, not all problems are equally relevant in both of them. Nor are the challenges they present exactly the same. A method that works with both types of languages has a chance of working in other East-Asian languages as well.

Besides Korean and Chinese, my interest is directed to the bigger East-Asian linguistic area, especially to the many minority languages spoken in the People´s Republic of China. Representing both SOV and SVO word-order types, several of these minority languages exhibit phenomena similar to those found in Korean and Chinese, such as topic-comment structures, verb serialization, extensive NP ellipsis,

etc. Not surprisingly, less is known and less has been published about their grammar than about the big national languages. With fieldwork situations in mind, I set out to find methods for investigating what the language-specific notions and categories are. Simulating an analytical process that starts from charting texts, I proceed to investigate how syntax, semantics and discourse interact with each other in different levels of language.

Among the existing grammatical models, a theory that meets the above requirements is the Role and Reference Grammar (RRG) as developed by Foley and Van Valin (1984), Van Valin (1993 ed.) and Van Valin and LaPolla (1997). RRG is functionally oriented and seeks to understand how syntax interacts with semantics and pragmatics. It provides a comprehensive theory for each level of language including predicate semantics, clause structure, complex sentences and discourse phenomena. The concepts it employs are developed to represent universal distinctions. Moreover, one of the explicit goals of RRG is to present a framework field linguists could use for writing grammars. Consequently, my question boils down to: What would be a good way to apply the RRG theory in a fieldwork situation to an East-Asian language? This dissertation is an attempt towards an answer to that question.

1.2. THE SCOPE

Because "grammar" is a vast topic, it has been necessary to restrict the scope of the study to the most central issues. My focus is on the basic questions one encounters in early stages of language analysis. The specific problems addressed include: How can verbs be classified into relevant categories that explain their behavior? What is a good way to account for grammatical relations? How can the antecedent of omitted NPs and pronouns be correctly identified? In other words, what are the main components of the reference-tracking system?

1.3. THE PROBLEM

When investigating East-Asian languages, one is likely to encounter phenomena which do not receive attention in theories that have been predominantly applied to other types of languages. A student of Korean or Chinese can notice this as he or she reads descriptions of these languages which are often written in traditional, structuralist, or Chomskyan frameworks. These approaches operate with some basic grammatical concepts that have their origins in Indo-European languages like Latin and Greek. Hence, it is not surprising that they do not always seem to capture

what are crucial distinctions in East-Asian languages. Redefining the concepts for different languages may also be problematic. Furthermore, these theories do not focus on issues like verb serialization, topic-comment sentences, or zero pronouns which are typical East-Asian phenomena. Frequently, the student must seek more light in articles representing a variety of linguistic schools. However, even more modern approaches to grammar share some of the basic assumptions about language that are problematic in Korean and Chinese.

In my search for a good approach to East-Asian syntax, I have become increasingly aware of the need of a unified theory. Without one, we are in a situation where some phenomena may be captured by one theory, whereas others are better accounted for by another. However, differences in focus and scope make it difficult to see how the answers can be integrated. Also, different theories operate with different terms, or they use the same term but define it differently. At the same time, there may be fundamental disagreements in basic assumptions. My conviction is that there is no such thing as a theory-independent description of a language. The sense of a term is closely tied to a theory, or else it becomes unclear what the sense is.

Facing less well known languages in East Asia, the need for an adequate theoretical framework is even more pronounced. Fewer helps are available than in big national languages, and previous grammatical descriptions may be rather sketchy. Naturally, there could also be special challenges waiting to be discovered and analyzed by a pioneering linguist.

Problems like these have motivated this dissertation. In the first half I discuss problems dealing with common grammatical concepts and their application to East-Asian languages. In the second half I use the RRG model to resolve problems raised in the first half.

1.4. THE STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

Before entering the theoretical part of this study, chapter 2 is aimed at giving background for the issues to be discussed. First, there is a discussion of some general problems in developing linguistic theories, such as the difficulty of producing clear-cut categories or the need to observe both the immediate and the larger context. After this, the state of Korean and Chinese linguistics is discussed briefly. For those unfamiliar with either one of these languages, there is also a brief introduction to their basic typological features.

The theoretical considerations start in chapter 3 with an examination of earlier approaches to Korean and Chinese grammar. Included are traditional grammar,

structural linguistics, early generative grammar à la Chomsky, and case grammar. Due to differences in linguistic tradition, traditional grammar is considered only from a Korean perspective. Structuralism, on the other hand, has not been a major stream in Korean linguistics and is taken up from a Chinese point of view alone. Generative and case grammar approaches are considered for both languages. Except for case grammar, which is not a full grammar, the discussion is organized according to the following levels: predicate level, clause level, and discourse level. The focus is on how the different frameworks account for predicate classification, grammatical relations, and basic discourse structuring. On each level, Korean and Chinese are contrasted with English. This is meant to give an overview of some of the basic assumptions in different models as well as some basic notions which may be language-specific and not universally applicable. The main points in these findings are summarized in table form at the end of each section.

In chapter 4, the attention turns to the question how Role and Reference Grammar could solve problems pointed out in the previous chapter. For each issue, there is first a discussion of principles and theoretical background. Then the kind of practical application I am suggesting is exemplified with an example text from Korean and Chinese respectively. Further illustrations are given from two other texts from each language, and, when there are no suitable examples in the texts, from other sources like grammars of these languages. The presentation starts from identifying sentence and clause breaks in a text. When this has been done at least tentatively, one can make initial classifications of predicates, describe the semantic structure of the clauses, and verify or correct initial decisions. Then the attention turns to grammatical relations, to the basic reference-tracking mechanisms in discourse and, finally, to how to accommodate topics. At this point my presentation stops. In real life the process is likely to continue towards deeper understanding of each level.

The examination of RRG as applied to East-Asian languages is concluded with notes on Japanese. The section gives a brief comparison of Korean and Japanese and the applicability of the approach in Japanese. Chapter 5 summarizes the results and the conclusions. The additional texts used in the analysis with glosses and translations appear in the appendix.

The Korean texts and examples represent the language form and orthography of the Republic of Korea (South Korea). In the analysis of the Korean data, I have drawn on the grammar of Sohn (1994), besides relying on mother-tongue speakers as language consultants. The Chinese texts and examples represent modern Mandarin, or *Pǔtōnghuà*, as it is spoken in the People's Republic of China. When analyzing Chinese, I am indebted to Li and Thompson (1989) in addition to my Chinese teachers. Examples taken from various sources have been adapted to make

them consistent with each other. All transliterations of Korean are in the Yale system, those of Chinese are given with *pīnyīn*, and those of Japanese follow the Hepburn system. The only exceptions are some bibliographical references: the names of those publishing in English have been retained in the form that is used in the publication. Authors with the particularly frequently occurring surname Lee (variant spellings Li and Yi) are cited with their full name in the text.