

On the Similarities and Differences between Progressive and Stative Constructions

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1 Introduction: As is well-known, the *-ko iss-* form in Korean is ambiguous between the progressive reading and the stative reading. For instance, (1) is ambiguous between (2a-b). In fact, in this paper I propose that there are six different types of *-ko iss* constructions, which follows from the fact that (i) *-ko* is ambiguous between a perfective and imperfective marker, (ii) when *iss* denotes ‘hold’, it optionally takes a Theme argument, and (iii) furthermore, ‘hold’-denoting *iss* is optionally selected by a light verb.

(1) Tom-i moca-lul ssu-ko iss-ø-ta.

Tom-Nom cap-Acc put on-KO ISS-Pres-Ind

(2) a. Tom is putting on a cap.

b. Tom holds the resultative state of putting on a cap (=Tom wears a cap).

2 Ambiguity of *Ko*: I propose that *-ko* is an aspectual marker, being interpreted as either [-perfective] or [+perfective]: it has a [α perfective] feature, and α can be either ‘+’ or ‘-’. This ambiguity arises from the fact that *-ko*, when it is used as a coordinator, is ambiguous between ‘and then’ and ‘and simultaneously’. For instance, (3) is ambiguous between (4a) and (4b). I claim that the two different usages of the coordinator *-ko* have been grammaticalized as an aspectual marker: the ‘and then’ usage as a perfective marker and the ‘and simultaneously’ one as an imperfective marker. Precisely speaking, the *ko*_[-perfective]-phrase denotes an in-progress state, whereas the *ko*_[+perfective]-phrase denotes that it is a complete event in its own but it is a part of a bigger event. So both the perfective *ko*-phrase and the imperfective *ko*-phrase share the property that they denote a part of a bigger event. The only difference between them lies in whether or not they denote a bounded event.

(3) Tom-i nolay-lul pwulu-ko, Mary-ka chwum-ul chwu-ess-ta

Tom-Nom song-Acc sing-KO Mary-Nom dance-Acc dance-Past-Ind

(4) a. Tom sang a song, and then Mary danced.

b. While Tom sang a song, Mary danced

3 Ambiguity of *iss*: Just like *-ko*, *iss* is ambiguous. The original meaning of *iss* is ‘exist’. In (5), for instance, *iss* denotes ‘exist’ and *iss_{exist}* is a two-place predicate, assigning Theme and Locative. *Iss* has many other meanings. It can denote ‘hold’. For example, (6a) is construed as ‘Tom holds the state of being gentle’. Let us refer to this type of *iss* as *iss_{hold1}*. *Iss_{hold1}* assigns two theta-roles: Theme and state. But it can co-occur with a light verb. If the *iss*-phrase is selected by *v*, as in (7a-b), the subject is assigned a Theme role from *-iss* and then an Agent role from *v*. This is analogous to the fact that English copula can co-occur with *v*. (8a) can be analyzed as (8b), where there is a light verb that assigns Agent.

(5) Sakwa-ka thakca-wui-ey iss-ø-ta.

Apple-Nom table-upon-at ISS-Present-Ind ‘Apples are on the table’

(6) a. Tom-i yamcenhi iss-ø-ta.

Tom-Nom gently ISS-Present-Ind ‘(lit) Tom holds the state of being gentle’

b. [CP [TP Tom-i_(Theme) [VP Tom-i_(Theme) [v' yamcenhi iss] ø]-ta]

(7) a. Yamcenhi iss-e!

Gently ISS-Imp ‘Stay gentle’

b. [CP [TP pro_(Agent, Theme) [VP pro_(Agent, Theme) [pro_(Theme) yamcenhi iss] v] ø]-e]

(8) a. Tom is being nice.

b. [TP Tom_(Agent, Theme) T [VP Tom_(Agent, Theme) v [be Tom_(Theme) nice]]]

Parsons (1990) proposes that progressive event is a kind of state. More precisely, *-ing* denotes an in-progress state of event. According to Parsons, state requires the predicate *Hold* for interpretation, and hence the in-progress state requires the predicate *Hold* as well, as shown in (10a-b).

(9) a. Tom is happy.

b. For some s: Happy(s) & Theme(s, Tom) & Hold(s, Now)

(10) a. Tom is singing.

b. For some e: Singing(e) & Agent(e, Tom) & Hold(e's In-Progress state, Now)

In English the predicate *Hold* is accommodated at LF, but in Korean there is an overt verb that denotes

‘hold(s)’. I propose that *iss* can denote ‘hold(s)’. Let us refer to this type as *iss_{hold2}*. This type of *iss* differs from *iss_{hold1}* in that it does not assign a Theme role: that is, it takes state as its sole argument.

4 Proposal: We are now in a position to explain why (1) gives the progressive reading. *iss_{hold2}* denotes ‘hold(s)’, and the imperfective *ko*-phrase denotes an in-progress state. Thus, (1) is construed as (11).

(11) For some e: Putting on(e) & Agent(e, Tom) & Theme(e, a cap) & Hold(e’s In-Progress state, now)

Let us now turn to the perfective *ko*-construction. As mentioned above, *iss_{hold1}* takes state and Theme as its arguments, and in (6a) the state-denoting expression is an AdvP. I propose that it can also take as its complement a state-denoting *ko*-phrase. The perfective *ko*-phrase can denote a resultative state if its complement vP is telic, and hence it can be the complement of *iss_{hold1}* if it takes a telic event as its complement. I propose that if the perfective *ko*-phrase is merged with *iss_{hold1}*, the stative construction is generated: (1) yields a stative reading if it is represented as (12), where *Tom* is base-generated as the Agent of the putting-on event, and then assigned one more theta-role—the Theme of the resultant state—via raising to SPEC-*iss*. This is based on the assumption that movement into a theta-position is possible (Hornstein 2000). In this approach, the stative reading is permitted when (i) *-ko* is perfective and (ii) the embedded Agent moves to the Theme argument position of the matrix predicate.

(12) [_{VP} Tom-i_{Theme & Agent} [_{ko-P} [_{VP} Tom-i_{Agent} [_{VP} moca-lul ssu] v_(Agent)] KO_[+perfective]] *iss*_(Theme)]

To sum up, the progressive reading is generated if the *ko*_[-perfective]-phrase is merged with *iss_{hold2}*, while the stative reading is produced if the *ko*_[+perfective]-phrase is merged with *iss_{hold1}*.

Let us consider why (13) does not permit the stative reading. The stative reading is possible if the agent of the *ko*-phrase can be the Theme of the resultant state. In (13) *Tom* cannot play a Theme role in the resultant state ‘a letter written’. So the sentence fails to yield a stative reading. Let us turn to (14), where *Tom* does not appear to play a role in the resultant state of ‘the door opened’. But suppose that an elevator door closes automatically unless someone keeps the open button pressed. In this situation *Tom* can play an Agentive role in the resultative state of ‘the door opened’ when *iss_{hold2}* co-occurs with a light verb, as shown in (15). So (14) can give a stative reading. In short, the stative reading is permitted if the external argument of the *ko*-phrase can be either Theme or Agent of the resultant state.

(13) Tom-i pyenci-lul ssu-ko iss-ø-ta.
Tom-Nom letter-Acc write-KO ISS-Pres-Ind
‘Tom is writing a letter’

(14) Tom-i mwun-ul yel-ko iss-ø-ta.
Tom-Nom door-Acc open-KO ISS-Pres-Ind
‘Tom is opening the door’ OR ‘Tom opened the door and keeps it open’

(15) [_{VP} Tom-i_{Agent & Agent} [_{VP} [_{Tom-i}_{Agent} pyenci-lul ssu]-ko_[+perfective]] *iss_{hold2}*] v]

5 Six Types of -*ko* *Iss*: *-ko* can be either perfective or imperfective, *iss* can be either *iss_{hold1}* or *iss_{hold2}*, and v can be either absent or present. If this is so, it is logically possible that there are eight *-ko iss* constructions. I propose that (16a-f) are empirically attested, but (16g-h) are not; *iss_{hold1}* does not take a *ko*_[-perfective]-phrase as its complement. The progressive reading and the stative reading of (1) are represented as (16a-b), respectively, and the stative reading of (14) is represented as (16c). In addition, (17-19) are instances of (16d-f), respectively. To conclude, there are six types of *-ko iss* construction.

(16) a. [_{VP} [_{Sub} ...]-ko_[-perfective] *iss_{hold2}*] b. [_{VP} Sub_i [_{t_i} ...]-ko_[+perfective] *iss_{hold1}*]
c. [_{VP} Sub_i [_{VP} [_{t_i} ...]-ko_[+perfective] *iss_{hold2}*] v] d. [_{VP} Sub_i [_{VP} [_{t_i} ...]-ko_[-perfective] *iss_{hold2}*] v]
e. [_{VP} [_{Sub} ...]-ko_[+perfective] *iss_{hold2}*] f. [_{VP} Sub_i [_{VP} [_{t_i} ...]-ko_[+perfective] *iss_{hold1}*] v]
g. * [_{VP} Sub_i [_{VP} [_{t_i} ...]-ko_[-perfective] *iss_{hold1}*]] h. * [_{VP} Sub_i [_{VP} [_{t_i} ...]-ko_[-perfective] *iss_{hold1}*] v]

(17) I pwun tongan wus-ko iss-e
Two minutes for smile-KO ISS-Imp
‘(Lit) Be smiling for two minutes’

(18) Tom-i (cikum kkaci) pyenci-lul yel cang-ul ssu-ko iss-ø-ta.
Tom-Nom (now until) letter-Acc ten Classifier-Acc write-KO ISS-Pres-Ind
‘John has written 10 letters, (and expectedly continues to do so)

(19) Moca-lul ssu-ko iss-e!
Cap-Acc put on-KO ISS-Imp
‘Maintain the resultative state of putting on a cap!’