A profile-frame semantic contrast in the Korean [X-ko iss-ta] construction

Chongwon Park
University of Minnesota Duluth

This presentation examines ambiguity observed in the Korean [X-ko iss-ta] construction demonstrated in (1). As illustrated, the construction can have either a present progressive or a resultant state interpretation.

(1)   Cheli-ka   cangkap-ul kki-**ko**   **iss**-ta.
       C-Nom   gloves-Acc wear-Conn   be-Decl
       'Meaning A: Cheli has his gloves on.'
       'Meaning B: Cheli is putting on the gloves.'

I argue that this type of ambiguity is systematically explained by profile-frame semantic contrast, which overcomes some weaknesses left in the existing literature on the same topic. The specific theory I adopt is Croft's (2012) two-dimensional space framework, where two orthogonal dimensions – time and qualitative states – are posited to explain verbal aspectual properties. More specifically, I claim that the existence of natural endpoint of the event in (1) leads to two different types of construals. Since the event is telic, a result state exists on the q state dimension (q-bounded). When the result state is profiled, Meaning A is obtained. Although Meaning B shares the same base content as Meaning A, there is a difference. While there is a result state defined on the q dimension for Meaning B as well, it is not part of the event profile. What is profiled for Meaning B is instead a transitional phase, which naturally leads to a progressive meaning.

My analyses overcome some problems left in previous proposals. For example, Kim (2011) proposes two licensing conditions to explain the ambiguity of the [X-ko iss-ta] construction in Korean. That is, the construction selects a nonstative event that includes a culmination point to have a progressive meaning. To be interpreted as resultant state, the eventuality must reach a culmination point and this property holds at the consequence stage too. Kim's proposal faces several empirical and theoretical difficulties. Empirically, it cannot explain the unacceptability of (2), where the nonstative achievement verb *cwuk* 'die' is used in the [X-ko iss-ta] construction. Conversely, the construction can select a stative that does not include a culmination point in Korean as shown in (3).

(2)   *Ku   noin-i   cwuk-**ko**   **iss-ta**.
        That old.man-Nom   die-Conn   be-Decl
       'The old man is dying.'
(3)   Yenghi-ka   khu-**ko**   **iss-ta**.
       Y-Nom   tall-Conn   be-Decl
       'Yenghi is getting taller.'

These are explained without positing unmotivated licensing conditions. (2) is not acceptable is due to the difficulty of profiling the transition phase. Though a transition phase exists, the phase is viewed as a short moment, at least to Korean speakers. As a result, profiling the phase with extended duration to refer to a progressive event is hard to achieve. By contrast, profiling the transition phrase in (3) is a conceptually viable option for the speaker, because the stative *khu* 'tall' presupposes the extended growing process. Theoretically, Kim's two licensing conditions are defined disjointly, downplaying the fact that the two different interpretations, as shown in (1), are coming from the same conceptual content with the same aspectual property. These problems are not raised in my frame semantic analysis, where the different interpretations are explained based on different types of construals maintaining the same conceptual base.

References

Croft, William. 2012. *Aspect and Causal Structure*. Oxford University Press.
Kim, Jong-Bok. 2011. Ambiguities in the Korean -KO ISS-TA imperfective construction. *Korean Journal of Linguistics* 36.4, 863-885.