

TENSE IN KOREAN

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0. This paper will be a sketchy description of some aspects of tense in Korean.¹ Tense and aspect are closely related and they usually occur together. But, whereas tense is obligatory, aspect is optional in a sentence. This is the case both in Korean and English, as shown below.

- (1) kər -əs' - ta kət -ko is' -əs' - ta ?* kət - ta
 walk Past Dec walk Prog Past Dec walk Dec
 ' (He) walked! ' (He) was walking! ' (He) walk!

English: He walked. He was walking. * He walk.

- (2) V -əs' - V -ko is' - [Tense] -
 Past Prog
 V -nin- V -ə is' - [Tense] -
 Pres Perf=Resultative

- { V -kes' -
 { V -il kəs-i-
 Fut

English: V-ed be V-ing
 V-(s) { [Tense]
 will V have V-en
 { [Tense]

In characterizing tense in Korean, I will use the term tense to denote any temporal ordering relative to speech time such as past, present and futurity.

In interaction between tense and aspect, temporal ordering is generally external to a situation, whereas aspect is internal to a situation.

The former is a relation between speech time, event time and reference time à la Reichenbach, while the latter is concerned with endpoints or processes in the given time contexts.

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1. Let me begin by presenting observations on tense markers. Compare between -əs'-əs'- and -əs'- first. The reduplicated form -əs'-əs'-² is used mainly for indicating the existence of past events. Consider the following.

(3) a. Insu-nin mikuk-e ka-as'-əs'-ta
'Insu has been to the U.S.'

b. na-nin sip-niən cən-e mikuk-e
o-as'əs'-ta
'I had the experience of coming to the U.S.
ten years ago.'

(3a) means that Insu's going to the United States occurred in the past and implies that Insu left the U.S. before speech time, and (3b) means that my coming to the United States occurred ten years ago independently of my current visit to the United States, implying that I left the United States after I came ten years ago. (3b) is a counterexample to Nam-Kil Kim's (1975) claim about 'not any longer' sense. The negative resultative state of the past event can occur any time, right after the event or before speech time. But the same event can occur at speech time again. The verb 'o-ta' (to come) suggests that I am in the United States at speech time.

Compare those with the following sentences having a single -əs'- form.

(4) a. Insu-nin mikuk-e ka-as'-ta
'Insu went to the U.S.'

b. na-nin sip-njən cən-e mikuk-e o -as'-ta
'I came to the U.S. ten years ago.'

However, (4a) and (4b) do not show the sense of 'ceasing' or 'suspension' of the resultative state of the past event. On the contrary, the resultative state of the past event is implied to continue to the present time. Therefore, the following difference in grammaticality arises.

(5) na-nin na-ij anæ-ril o -njən cən-puth cikim - k'aci
I Top of wife OM five years ago since now till
kesokhəsə sarəjha-jəs'-ta (or sarəjha-ko is'-ta)
continuously love Past Dec Prog

'I have loved (or have been loving) my wife continuously from five years ago until now.'

It must be noted, however, that the first element in the -əs'-əs'- form observes vowel harmony with the preceding vowel, alternating between -əs'- and -as'-

(6) *?na-nin na-ij anæ -ril o-njæn cæn-puthæ cikim-k'aci
kesokhæssə sarajha-jəs'-əs'-ta

The duplicated past form cannot occur with 'cikim-k'aci kesokhæssə' (continuously until now) because of its 'ceasing' sense. The sense of 'ceasing' was observed by an early Korean grammarian and also by Nahm (1978). The use of the duplicated form in the sense of the past of past as follows seems to be a late development and at best marginal.

(7) ? suni-ka Seoul-jæk - e tochak-ha-jəs'-il t'æ kicha-nin
SM station at Past when train Top
t'əna-as' -əs'-ta
depart Dec

'When Sooni arrived at Seoul Station, the train had left.'

The simple past form -əs'-, on the other hand, indicates the occurrence of a past event and implicates the continuation of its effect to the present. This continuation of effect is particularly obvious when the result state of the past event is prominent due to the nature of the verb involved. Consider.

(8) (na) kamki kəl-li -əs' - ta
I cold catch Passive Past Dec

'I've caught cold.'

When -əs'- occurs with a simple activity verb, however, the implicated effect is not so obvious. Instead, the speech participants maintain some sense of continued perception of the event. (In declaratives, the speaker is involved and in questions, the hearer is involved.) When -əs'- əs'- occurs with such an activity verb, there is some sense of discontinued perception of the event or the changed circumstances regarding the event. observe:

(9) a. Insu-ka noræha-jəs'-ta
SM sing Past Dec

'Insu sang'. (continuation of the situation)

b. Insu-ka noræha-jəs'-əs'-ta
SM sing Dec

'Insu sang, but....' (discontinuation of the situation)

(10) a. næ-ka kiro-khe malha-jəs'-ni?
SM so say Q

'Did I say so? (I don't think I did.)
(If I did, I must be responsible)'

b. næ-ka kiro-khe malha-jəs'-əs'-ni?

'Did I ever say so? (I might have forgotten. I did.)
(Anyway, the situation has changed.)'

- (11) a. Kim sɔnsu-nin cinan tɔhɔ t'ɔɔ-to kim
 champion Top last game time too gold
 medal-il t'a-əs'-ta
 medal OM win Past Dec
 'Kim, the champion, won a gold medal at the last game, too'.
 b. Kim sɔnsu-nin cinan tɔhɔ t'ɔɔ-to kim medal-il t'a-as'-əs'-ta
 'Kim, the champion, won a gold medal at the last game, too.
 (But it is an independent, by-gone matter. I say this as
 background information.)'

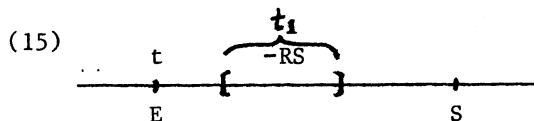
Next, observe the negated counterparts of these two forms.

- (12) na-nin sip-njan cən-e mikuk-e o-ci ani ha-jəs'-əs'-ta
 I Top ten years ago the U.S.to come not do Dec
 = ¬ (na-nin sip-njan cən-e mikuk-e o-as'-əs'-ta)
 'It is not the case that I came to the U.S. and then left ten years ago.'
 (13) na-nin sip-njan cən-e mikuk -e o -ci ani ha-jəs'-ta
 I Top ten years ago the U.S.to come not do Dec
 = ¬ (na-nin sip-njan cən-e mikuk-e o-as'-ta)

Negative sentences (12) and (13) appear to deny their positive counterparts respectively and the implicated senses are not detachable to be negated separately. In other words, the implicatures must be included in the meanings of the forms and therefore conventional. If implied senses prove to be truth-conditional, then they must be parts of the proper meanings of the tense forms under consideration.

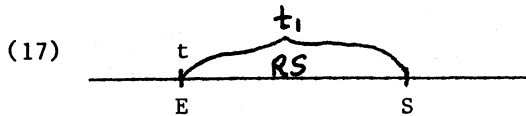
Tentatively, the meaning of the form -əs'-əs'- may be logically represented as (14) in its extensional meaning. (S=speech time, E=event time, t,t'=intervals of time, RS=result state of the event)

- (14) $\exists t [t \leq S \wedge AT(t, P)] \wedge \exists t_1 [t < t_1 \leq S \wedge AT(t_1, \neg RS)]$ (eg., P=Insu-ka mikuk-e ka-ta, RS=Insu-ka mikuk-e kais'-ta)



On the other hand, the single form -əs'- can be represented as follows:

- (16) $\exists t [t \leq S \wedge AT(t, P)] \wedge$
 Implicature: $\forall t_1 [t_1 \leq E] \wedge AT(t_1, RS)$ (eg., P=suni-ka mikuk-e ka-ta, RS=suni-ka mikuk-e ka is'-ta)



Thus, a universal reading is possible for such verbs as sakwi-ta with the simple past form -əs' and a durational modifier as follows:

- (18) na-nin ki jaca - wa i- njən ən - puthasakwi - əs' -ta
 I Top the woman with two year before from associate Past Dec
 'I have associated with her for two years.'

And such result-prominent verbs as talm-as'-ta, nilk-əs'-ta, palk-as'-ta indicate almost exclusively the resultative states even with the past form.

2. Next, let me turn to the topic of futurity. The futurity markers such as -kes' and -il kəs-i- are most controversial as to their grammatical categories. Martin (in preparation) is said to view -(i)l as an aspect marker, but I have treated them both as modals and tried to make distinction between them (cf. Lee 1973). They are also sometimes considered to belong in the category of tense. Anyway in this paper, I will discuss them with respect to futurity.

Both -kes' and -il kəs-i- can indicate futurity, but they differ in sense and use. Compare the two in the following examples.

- (19) amurəto pi-ka o -kes'-ta
 taking all things rain SM come Dec
 into consideration
 'It seems it will rain.'

- (20) pihəŋki-ka jecəŋ-təro t'əna -əs'-ki +tamune kot
 plane SM schedule as depart Past Nom because soon
 tochakha-l kəs-i-ta'
 arrive Dec
 'Because the plane departed as scheduled, it will arrive soon.'

Sentence (19) indicates futurity with the speaker's presumption based on his immediate, internal judgment. The -(i)l kəs-i- form, on the other hand, which might be syntactically, even if diachroically, related to the -kes' form (cf. Cook 1968), also has the futurity sense. Instead of the speaker's own internal presumptive modality of -kes', the -(i)l kəs-i- form represents futurity in a manner more 'aloof and detached', as my 1973 paper notes. This longer form represents a sense close to 'being scheduled or being supposed to occur.' The speaker's judgment for the use of this form is, or appears to be, based on more external, causal or mechanical grounds on which persons other than the speaker can also agree easily. Consider further.

- (21) samsip-njən twi-e ciku-ka phokpalha-l kəs-i-ta
 thirty year later Earth SM explode Dec
 '30 years later, the Earth will explode.'

Sentence (21) is natural, with the speaker's judgment based on external grounds for the physical event which will occur thirty years later, in the distant future. On the other hand, the following sentence with -kes'- sounds a little awkward at first, and we can assign only a forced interpretation on which the speaker makes a presumption concerning the event in its context. The context could be one in which he or she observes a model of the Earth which evinces the symptom of the explosion at the distance of thirty years, or one in which he or she as a specialist makes a presumption on the basis of immediate observation and his internal judgment.

- (22) (?) samsip-njon twi-e ciku-ka phokpalha-kes'-ta
 thirty years later Earth SM explode Dec
 'I presume the Earth will explode 30 years later.'

Though more objective than in the case of -kes'-, this longer form of futurity can also be used to indicate merely presumption as follows.

- (23) ki ai - ka o - as'-il kas-i-ta (cf. ki ai-ka o-as'-kes'-ta)
 the child SM come Past Dec
 'The child is supposed to have come.'

Its past form is possible but with a counter-factual sense as in (24).

- (24) næ-ka t'əna-l kas-i-as'-ta
 I SM depart Past Dec
 'I was supposed to depart (but I didn't).'

However, the -(i)l kas-i-form cannot occur with -kes- after the form because of the futurity sense in both forms as follows.

- (25) ?* næ-ka t'əna-l kas-i-kes'-ta
 I SM depart Dec

We have already observed the difference between the longer form -(i)l kas-i- and the shorter form -kes'- in terms of the speaker's commitment to presumptive modality; the shorter the form, the closer the meaning is to the speaker's internal frame of mind. A reduced form of the longer -(i)l kas-i- form, i.e., -(i)l ka-(j)- is closer to the speaker's internal frame of mind and is more presumptive than the longer form. In addition, the more reduced form -(i)l ke(-) is much closer to the speaker's mind showing only the speaker's intention and has become a sentential ending of promising. The reduced form -(i)l ka-(j)-, however, is not so speaker-internal as the -kes'- form.

3. Let me turn to some futurate present phenomena, but not the present tense itself. Consider the following.

- (26) John-in næil t'əna- n - ta
 Top tomorrow depart Pres Dec
 'John leaves tomorrow.'

- (32) a. *... o-as' ki cən-e ...
 b. *... o-kes'-ki cən-e ...

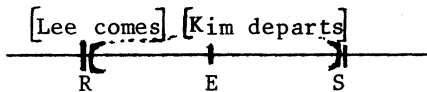
The nominalizer -ki is obligatory and the tense bearing pronominal marker -(i)n or -(i)l cannot come before cən-e as in *... o-n cən-e ... or *... o-l cən-e... -ki shows the sense of 'anticipation' and the event nominalized by -ki is simply anticipated at the time of the main sentence event.

The next temporal connective to be analyzed is -(i)n twi-e ('after'). Observe.

- (33) Kim-in Lee-ka o - n twi-e t'əna -as'-ta
 Top SM come Rel Past back at depart PastDec
 ' Kim departed after Lee came.' Rel=Relative marker

- (34) Lee-ka o - as' -ta
 SM come Past Dec
 ' Lee came.'

Sentence (33) entails sentence (34), unlike (30), with the past tense (or speech time present) in the main clause. The event represented by the embedded clause in (33) must precede the event represented by the main sentence. This is also the case when the tense of the main sentence is present or future.



Only the past tense relative marker is possible before twi-e and after the verb stem as in o-n twi-e, and the present or future tense relative marker is impossible as in *o-nin twi-e, *o-l twi-e. The reference time is viewed as past at the time of the event and the past relative marker shows up.

On the other hand, when we consider the relationship between -ki cən-e and -(i)n twi-e (33) cannot be transformed to the following or conversely:

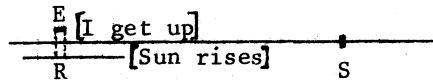
- (35) Lee-nin Kim-i t'əna-ki cən-e o - as' -ta
 Top SM depart Nom before come Pst Dec
 ' Lee came before Kim departed.'

since (35) does not entail 'Kim-i t'əna-as'-ta' (Kim departed).

Let me discuss the co-temporal connective -(i)l t'æ (-e) ('when'). It designates the intersection of the intervals specified by the connected clauses. Observe.

(36) na-nin h_æ-ka t'i -l t'æ(-e) irəna -as' - ta
 I Top Sun SM rise Rel time get up Past Dec

' I got up when the Sun was rising.'



The sentence is true if and only if the main clause event and the embedded reference event are true at the intersection of the intervals of the events. The main clause event could be a longer interval as follows:

(37) John-in Mary-ka paŋ -e tirə ka-as' - il t'æ(-e)
 Top SM room at in go Past when

phjənci-ril s'i - ko is'-əs' - ta
 letter OM write Prog Past Dec

' John was writing a letter when Mary entered the room.'

When the embedded event is co-temporal with the main clause event the connective -(i)l t'æ(-e) directly follows the verb stem of the embedded clause as in (36). When the embedded event corresponds to some completed accomplishment or achievement the past tense marker -as' must come after the verb stem and then -(i)l t'æ(-e) follows as in (37). The past relative marker -(i)n is not used as in in ?* ... ka-n t'æ(-e). Even though -(i)l is normally used to designate future, when it occurs with t'æ(-e) it simply bears some 'defining' function, which can be done by the present relative marker nin elsewhere. Thus we can find some typological contrast between Korean and Japanese with respect to this -(i)l marker; Japanese does not have any prenominal relative future marker before toki(-ni) as follows:

(38) a. ...hait - ta toki(-ni)
 enter Past time at

b. ...hai-ru toki(-ni)
 enter Pres time at

5. This paper tried to give truth conditions on some temporal expressions and related meanings in Korean. Certain meanings were not easy to define and it was not even clear whether they were truth-conditional or not. However, there were some clarifications of meanings made in this paper and further investigation must be made on the basis of these tentative results.

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