

The Interaction of Resultative and Progressive Constructions in Korean

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the syntax and semantics of Korean *-ko/e iss-* constructions, focusing on the distinction between progressive (PG) and resultant state (RS) readings. Tracing the historical development from Middle Korean *-ko/e is-*, this study demonstrates how grammaticalization led to the modern flexibility of *-ko/e iss-* in expressing both progressive and resultative meanings. Syntactic diagnostics, including adverb insertion, selectional restrictions, and negation, indicate that *iss-* in both PG and RS readings functions as an auxiliary rather than as a main verb. The RS reading is argued to arise not from the auxiliary *iss-* but from the verbal connectives *-ko*(sequentiality) and *-e*(completion). The thematic shift of the subject from Agent to Patient/Undergoer is analyzed within a VoiceP framework, consistent with cross-linguistic patterns in resultative constructions. Rejecting Ogihara's (2020) thematic-role-driven temporal alignment, this study argues that aspectual interpretations in Korean emerge compositionally from predicate types and verbal connectives, thereby supporting a lexical-syntactic approach grounded in event semantics.

Keywords: *-ko/e iss-*, progressive, resultant state, resultative, verbal connective, theta role

1. Introduction

Korean auxiliary *-ko/e iss-* ‘-ing be’ yields progressive (PG) or resultant state (RS) reading,¹⁾ contingent on the type of thematic role that the subject argument bears, as noted by Ogihara and Park (2019) for Japanese and Korean. In (1), when the subject bears the Agent thematic role, the sentence gives rise to a PG reading. With this interpretation, *-ko iss-* functions as the Korean equivalent of the English progressive form *be V-ing*. However, when its referent is wearing a hat after having put it on, the subject assumes a Patient or Undergoer role, resulting in a RS interpretation. In the latter case, the form *ko/e iss-* (‘-ing be’) is understood not as

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marking progressive aspect, but as indicating resultative aspect.²⁾ The arrow (→) in (1) represents ‘if··then’.

- (1) Nay tongsayng-i moca-lul ssu-ko iss-∅-ta.
내 동생이 모자를 쓰고 있다.
my brother-NOM hat-ACC put.on-CON be-PRS-DCL
‘My younger sibling is putting on a hat.’ (Agent → Progressive (PG))
‘My younger sibling has put on a hat (and is still wearing it).’
(Patient/Undergoer → Resultant State (RS))

Its variant form *ko/e iss-* ‘-ing be’, which denoted either the progressive, continuous, or resultative aspect in 15th-century Middle Korean and continued to do so until the 1940s, is now used exclusively to express the continuous or resultative aspect. When the subject of this form is a Patient or Undergoer as in (2), it gives rise to a RS reading.

- (2) Namwu-ka nemeci-e iss-∅-ta.
나무가 넘어져 있다. (Undergoer/Theme → Resultant State (RS))
tree-NOM fall-CON be-PRS-DCL
‘The tree has fallen and (and it is down.)’

Unlike in Korean, the English progressive form *be V-ing* consistently yields a progressive reading, regardless of whether the subject has an Agent or an Patient/Undergoer role, as illustrated in (3) and (4).³⁾

1) In his analysis of the English perfect system, Parsons (1990) describes the resultant state (RS) of an event as the enduring state that arises from the event’s culmination. Once the event has taken place, this state persists permanently, unaffected by any subsequent changes in the world. In contrast, the target state (TS) of an event, such as a ball being on the roof after being thrown, is caused by the prior event, but temporary and cancellable.

2) This paper adopts three types of aspect, outlined as follows: (i) The progressive marks actions that are ongoing or incomplete at a specific moment in time; (ii) The continuous, like the progressive, highlights the uninterrupted nature of a state or action over a period of time and is often used interchangeably with the progressive; in this paper, however, the term is used to refer specifically to cases where it combines with stative verbs rather than eventive ones; (iii) The resultative emphasizes the outcome or result of an action rather than its duration or ongoing nature.

The progressive arises with dynamic or eventive verbs, while the continuous can occur with both stative and dynamic/eventive verbs. In (1) and (2), when *-ko/e iss-* expresses the resultant state rather than the dynamic event, it marks resultative—not progressive—aspect. Of the three categories, the continuous is clearly the most general, as it can encompass both the progressive and the resultative aspects (see Park (2003)).

3) In English, the resultant state of a Patient/Undergoer is not expressed through the progressive but

- (3) Mary is closing the door. (Agent → PG)
 (4) The door is closing. (Patient/Undergoer → PG)

Ogihara and Park (2019), and especially Ogihara (2020), raise a very important question: why do the apparently similar progressive forms in Japanese/Korean and English yield different readings? To answer this, Ogihara (2020) proposes that in (5a) of Japanese, the progressive form *-te iru-* (and in Korean, *-ko/e iss-*) with a RS reading targets the time at which the subject holds a thematic role, rather than the event time itself. Specifically, the Patient/Undergoer argument bears a resultant state at a time immediately following the event. In contrast, when the subject is Agentive, the Agent subject's event argument must coincide with the ongoing event time, leading to a PG reading as in (5b).

- (5) a. Mado-ga age-te iru.
 window-NOM open-TE IRU
 'The window is opened.'
 b. Taro-ga hashi-te iru.
 Taro-NOM run-TE IRU
 'Taro is running.'

According to Ogihara, however, English treats the progressive (*be V-ing*) as tracking the temporal trace or duration of the event itself, independent of thematic roles. Ogihara's proposal thus reorients the analysis of progressive forms by emphasizing the role of thematic structure in Japanese/Korean, while showing that event-based semantics must integrate both modal reasoning for English (cf. Dowty (1979) and Portner (1998)) and role-sensitive timing for Japanese and Korean.

While Ogihara's proposal offers a compelling explanation for the observed interpretive differences between progressive constructions in Japanese/Korean and English, it operates primarily at a conceptual level within the framework of event semantics. Crucially, it does not delve into the lexical or syntactico-semantic

rather through the passive construction, as in (i), highlighting that various grammatical categories—such as the progressive, the resultative, the passive, and the perfect—can encode the resultant state of an event cross-linguistically.

- (i) The door is closed.

We will revisit this issue of cross-linguistic variation in expressing the resultant state of an event later in the discussion.

2. Historical Development of -KO/E ISS-

The modern Korean constructions *-ko/e iss-* can be traced back to their almost identical forms *-ko/e is-* in 15th-century Middle Korean, as illustrated in (6a-d) [taken from 『SekPoSangCel』, published in 1447].

(7) The peculiarity of -KO/E as part of -KO/E IS- in 15th century:

a. tyoha-n hyang phiwu-ko is-keni.

‘As you are burning fragrant incense,’

b. ney icye salam-ay mom-al tukha-ko pwuthye-lul masn-a is-nani.

‘Now you have gained a human body and are meeting the Buddha.’

c. nwun-ul cangsang spal-a is-tela

‘(pro) were giving a long, sharp stare.’

d. kongcak-ay mos pis katha-n phul-ul pwi-e ka-kenul

‘They were cutting grass, which was the color of a peacock’s neck.’

(Koo et al. 2016: 306)

Since our focus is on verbal complexes composed of *-ko/e* and *is-*, their transcriptions into contemporary Korean are as follows:

- | | | | |
|--------|---------------------|------------------------|-----------|
| (8) a. | phiwu-ko iss-uni | ‘be burning (incense)’ | 피우고 있으니 |
| b. | mannak-ko iss-uni | ‘be meeting’ | 만나고 있으니 |
| c. | ssoa po-ko iss-tela | ‘be staring’ | 쏘아 보고 있더라 |
| d. | pey-e ka-nuntey | ‘be cutting’ | 베어 가는데 |

Note that in Middle Korean, -E IS- was more commonly used than *-ko is-*, as seen in the shift from the Middle Korean *-e is-* in (7b) and (7c) to the contemporary Korean *-ko iss-* in (8b) and (8c).

This is confirmed in Park’s (2011: 302) remark of the two forms in Middle Korean. According to him, the *-ko is-* construction in Middle Korean did not appear frequently, and almost all of its occurrences denoted the resultant state. In contrast, *-e is-* of continuous aspect appeared with much higher frequency and combined broadly with transitive verbs, intransitive verbs, and adjectives. Its semantic functions were also diverse, spanning resultative aspect as well as continuative/progressive aspect.⁴⁾ Meanwhile, Koo et al. (2016: 306) note that in Middle Korean, the *-ko is/isi-* construction also appeared with progressive aspect.

According to Jeong's (2004) diachronic study of the two forms as well, the Korean construction *-ko is-* originally expressed resultative, stative, and iterative continuance in Middle and early Modern Korean. These meanings typically applied to transitive verbs and denoted actions or states persisting over long durations. At that stage, the construction did not express progressive aspect (i.e., ongoing actions over short durations) and was not used with intransitive verbs. By the 18th and 19th centuries, however, ambiguous uses began to appear that simultaneously conveyed both resultative and progressive interpretations, indicating the early stages of grammaticalization, a shift toward a new grammatical function. It was not until the late 19th to early 20th centuries that a clear progressive usage emerged, particularly becoming more evident during Korea's modernization period (post-1950s). Over time, the originally resultative *-ko is-* construction evolved into the progressive *-ko iss-* form found in contemporary Korean, a diachronic change that Jeong (2004) analyzes within the framework of grammaticalization theory.

Now turning to the English progressive form, it has evolved significantly over time. In Old English, progressives used prepositional phrases, as in (9a). Middle English introduced the *a-* prefix from *on*, seen in (9b). By Early Modern English, the gerund form without the prefix as in (9c) became standard. This development reflects a grammaticalization process where locative/PP expressions turned into aspect markers.

(9) a. He wæs on huntunge.⁵ (Old English)

4) As mentioned in footnote 1, the continuous aspect expresses the state of a subject that is continuing the action, while the progressive aspect expresses the dynamic quality of actions that are in progress. In English, for instance, *Tom is reading* can express dynamic activity: "Tom is reading a book", i.e. right now (progressive aspect), or Tom's current state: "Tom is reading for a degree", i.e. Tom is a student (continuous aspect). In Korean, by contrast, *-KO ISS-* is more flexible in combining with stative verbs, allowing for a continuous aspect reading more readily.

In contrast, the resultative aspect describes a state that exists as the outcome of a completed action, often emphasizing that this state has been reached and is in effect. In English, the *to be* verb followed by the homophonous perfect/passive participle (e.g., *was closed*) marks this resulting state, and adverbs like *already* further highlight that the action leading to this state has been completed and its result is present as noted by Nedjalkov (2001). Meanwhile, some scholars view the passive as a resultative voice or aspect. Particularly, Beedham (1982) argues that, due to their semantic similarity, both the passive and the perfect belong to the resultative aspect rather than to distinct categories of voice or tense, as also adopted by Tobin (1993).

5) The prepositional construction, which serves as the historical origin of the English progressive form, can be compared to the modificational + noun progressive construction in Korean, as illustrated in (i). This Korean construction is restricted to the progressive aspect, combining only with dynamic verbs, like its English counterpart. A notable peculiarity of this construction is that it involves a bi-clausal structure, as noted by Manzini (2025) for the progressive form in an Italian dialect.

- b. He was a-hunting. (Middle English)
 c. He was hunting. (Early Modern English: 15th-17th c.)

As its historical development shows, the English progressive semantically introduces an in-progress state (IP-state), indicating that an event is ongoing at a reference time (the past in (9a-c)), regardless of whether the event ultimately culminates. Thus, the English progressive only highlights the temporary, incomplete, or dynamic nature of actions by asserting that the IP-state holds.

3. The syntax of *-ko/e iss-*

Now returning to present-day Korean, this section focuses on the syntax of *-ko/e iss-*, specifically examining whether *iss-* functions as an auxiliary/functional or a main verb, and whether it involves a complement or adjunct structure with *-ko/e*. As Chae (2018) argues, the insertion of a manner adverb between *-ko/e* and *iss-*, as shown in (9a-b), serves as a useful diagnostic for determining the syntactic status of ISS- (* before RS reading in (10a-b) indicates the lack of such a reading).

- (10) a. Mia-ka say os-ul ip-KO coyonghi ISS-ess-ta.
 미아가 새 옷을 입고 조용히 있었다.
 Mia-NOM new clothes-ACC wear-X quietly Y-PST-DCL
 ‘Mia stays (here/there) quietly, wearing her new clothes.’
 *PG reading; RS reading
- b. Mia-ka ku chayk-ul ilk-KO coyonghi ISS-ess-ta.
 미아가 그 책을 읽고 조용히 있었다.
 Mia-NOM that book-ACC read-X quietly Y-PST-DCL
 ‘Mia read the book, and then stays (here) quietly.’
 *PG reading; *RS reading; a sequence of two separate events

The verb *ip-* ‘put on’ in (10a) is lexically an accomplishment verb, while *ilk-* ‘read’ in (10b) is lexically an activity verb. When these verbs combine with *-ko iss-*, they

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- (i) ku-ka sanyangha-nun cwung-i-ta
 he-NOM hunt-MOD middle-COP-DCL
 ‘He is in the middle of hunting.’

allow for a PG reading. However, when a manner adverb is inserted between *-ko* and *iss-*, the expected PG reading is not allowed. Since the manner verb in this position necessarily modifies the following verb *-iss*, it is analyzed not as a main verb, but as an auxiliary. This suggests that the *-ko iss-* construction with a PG reading, historically derived from *-ko is-* with a RS reading, has grammaticalized into a restructured combination (i.e., *-ko* plus *iss-*), with *iss-* functioning as an auxiliary or functional verb. In this grammaticalized form, adverbial intervention between *-ko* and *iss-* is no longer permitted. As will be discussed in more details below, *-ko* as part of *-ko iss-* can convey meanings such as ‘and’ or sequentiality, giving rise to a RS interpretation as in (10a). Over time, however, as *-ko iss-* has come to express a PG reading, its original semantics have been bleached, and the construction now primarily denotes simultaneous ongoing action in the case of the progressive. Meanwhile, (10b) yields neither a progressive (PG) nor a resultant state (RS) reading, as the main verb is an activity verb. This blocks the RS interpretation, which is contingent on the telic Aktionsart or lexical aspect of the main verb that *-ko iss-* combines with. Since the main verb is a non-telic activity verb, *-ko* in (10b) functions as a conjunction linking the two verbs, yielding an interpretation of two sequential or consecutive events.

The next question that arises is whether *iss-* in *-ko iss-* with a resultative state reading also functions as an auxiliary verb. Chae (2018) and Kim (2025) each recently argues that it does not; rather, *iss-* in this case is a main verb. It is important to note that there is a homophonous *iss-* meaning ‘exist/stay,’ which clearly functions as a main verb. We argue, however, that *-ko* in the RS reading is not part of a main verb construction. One piece of evidence supporting the analysis of *iss-* in *-ko iss-* as an auxiliary verb comes from selectional restrictions.

- (11) a. *ku-ka uyca-ey kyeysook [anc-KO ISS]-ess-ta.
 *그가 의자에 계속 [앉고 있]었다. *RS/*PG
 he-NOM chair-on continuously sit-KO ISS-PST-DCL
 ‘He was sitting down on the chair continuously.’ (Song, 2018: 67)
- b. *ku-ka chimtay-ey kyeysook [nwup-KO ISS]-ess-ta.
 *그가 침대에 계속 [눕고 있]었다. *RS/*PG
 he-NOM bed-on continuously lie-KO ISS-PST-DCL
 ‘He was lying down on the bed continuously.’

The *-ko iss-* form of *anc-* ‘sit (down)’ in (11a) and *nwup-* ‘lie down’ in (11b) does

not convey a resultant state or continuity, even when combined with the adverb *kyesok* ‘continuously’. Instead, it represents a fixed phase of an action or process, thereby yielding a PG reading. The RS reading is available for these verbs only with the \neg *iss-* form, as shown in (12a) and (12b). This type of categorial (C) or semantic (S) selection applies specifically to constructions where *iss-* functions as an auxiliary verb.

- (12) a. ku-ka uyca-ey kyeysok [anc-E ISS]essta.
 그가 의자에 계속 [앉아 있]었다. √RS
 ‘He is sitting down on the chair continuously.’
- b. ku-ka chimtay-ey kyeysok [nwup-E ISS]-ess-ta.
 그가 침대에 계속 [누워 있]었다. √RS
 ‘He is lying down on the bed continuously.’

However, this C-selectional restriction does not apply when *iss-* is used as a main verb, as shown in (13) and (14). To ensure the main verb interpretation of *iss-*, the duration adverb *kyeysok* ‘continuously’ in (13) and the manner adverb *phyenanhi* ‘comfortably’ in (14) are included.

- (13) a. kuka uyca-ey anc-KO kyeysok iss-essta. quasi-RS
 continuously
 그가 의자에 앉고 계속 있었다. vs. (10a)
 ‘He sat down on the chair and stayed continuously.’
- b. ku-ka chimtay-ey nwup-KO kyeysok iss-ess-ta. quasi-RS
 그가 침대에 눕고 계속 있었다. vs. (10b)
 ‘He lied down on the bed and stayed continuously.’
- (14) a. ku-ka uyca-ey anc-KO phyenanhi iss-essta. quasi-RS
 comfortably
 그가 의자에 앉고 편안히 있었다. vs. (10a)
 ‘He sat down on the chair and stayed comfortably.’
- b. ku-ka chimtay-ey nwup-KO phyenanhi iss-ess-ta. quasi-RS
 그가 침대에 눕고 편안히 있었다. vs. (10b)
 ‘He lied down on the bed and stayed comfortably.’

Unlike those in (11a-b), the examples in (13a-b) and (14a-b) are grammatical. The fact that the selectional restriction applies in (11a-b) but not in (13a-b) and (14a-b)

provides compelling evidence that *iss-* in *-ko iss-* with a RS reading functions not as a main verb but as an auxiliary verb. In (13a-b) and (14a-b), the duration adverb and the manner adverb after *-ko* and before *-iss* make the verb *-iss* a main verb. The selectional restriction does not apply to these cases. By contrast, the selectional restriction *does* apply in (11a-b), where the verb *iss-* is not a main verb but an auxiliary verb.

Further supporting evidence for *iss-* with a RS reading as an auxiliary verb comes from its behavior in negation. In Korean, there are two types of sentential negation: pre-verbal negation using *an(i)* ‘not,’ which appears before a main verb, and post-verbal negation using the negative auxiliary verb *anh-* ‘do not,’ which follows either a main verb or an auxiliary verb. (15a) and (16a) by default yield a RS reading, but they can also yield a PG reading when the animal subject is dressed or depicted as a human. In these cases, *iss-* in *-ko iss-* must be negated by the negative auxiliary verb, as shown in (15b) and (16b), but not by the pre-verbal negation, as shown in (15c) and (16c). This clearly indicates that *ISS-* in (16a) and (16b) functions not as a main verb but as an auxiliary verb.

- (15) a. ayngmwusay-ka cakun moca-lul ssu-KO ISS-ta.
 parrot-NOM small hat-ACC wear-KO ISS-DCL
 앵무새가 작은 모자를 쓰고 있다.
 b. ayngmwusay-ka cakun moca-lul ssu-KO ISS-ci anh-ta.
 -CI not.do
 ‘The parrot is not wearing a small hat’.
 c. ayngmwusay-ka cakun moca-lul ssu-ko (yamcenhi) an iss-ta.
 still not
 ‘The parrot, wearing a small hat, is not sitting still.’
- (16) a. khokkili-ka cangsik-ul twulu-KO ISS-ta.
 코끼리가 장식을 두르고 있다.
 elephant-NOM decoration-ACC wear-KO ISS-DCL
 b. khokkili-ka cangsik-ul twulu-KO ISS-ci anh-ta.
 -CI not.do
 ‘The elephant is not wearing decorations.’
 c. khokkili-ka cangsik-ul twulu-KO (cemcanhkey) an iss-ta.
 calmly not
 ‘The elephant, adorned with decorations, is not sitting calmly.’

Park (2003) and Chae (2020) argue that the Korean grammatical construction *-ko iss-* doesn't always indicate a resultant state, especially when it combines with stative verbs in (18a-b) and (18h) or negative auxiliary verb phrases in (16g). Instead, in these instances, *-ko iss-* conveys a continuous aspect (broader than the progressive aspect), highlighting the ongoing or temporary persistence of a state rather than an action in progress. Here, the emphasis is on the state's continued existence or maintenance.

In contrast, *-ko iss-* used to express a resultant state focuses on the current state that exists as the outcome of a completed action, rather than the continued state or process itself. Therefore, our following discussion of the resultant state will center on achievement verbs (18c-d) and accomplishment verbs (18e-f), which are both telic (meaning they have a natural end-point) but differ in the duration it takes for their events to be completed.

According to Nam (2019: 89), in contrast, *-e iss-* combines with four types of verbs, as shown in (19). While it tends to appear with telic intransitive verbs (primarily with passive verbs in (19b)), its capacity to convey a continuous aspect also allows it to express a continuous, non-culminating state when combined with non-telic stative verbs, as in (19d).

(19) *-e iss-* (only used for RS reading):

- a. 'stand'-type verbs: *se-*, *nwup-*, *anc-*.
- b. 'be placed'-type verbs: *nohi-*, *kathi-*, *keli-*, *kkii-*
- c. 'be located'-type verbs: *sokha-*, *swum-*, *ttu-*
- d. 'live'-type verbs: *sal*, *memwulu-*, *nam-*

Nam (2019: 89)

We now focus on the central question: Where does the RS reading of *-ko/e iss-* originate? We propose that the RS reading arises from the verbal connectives *-ko* or *-e* that form part of the *-ko/e iss-* construction. Thus, identifying the grammatical functions of these verbal connectives is essential.

Suh (1988: 217) offers a detailed account of these connectives in non-*-ko/e iss-* contexts, arguing that the verbal connective *-ko* in V_1 -*ko* V_2 conveys a sense of sequentiality between two events, while maintaining the independence of both the preceding event (V_1) and the following event (V_2). Since *-ko* functions as a coordinate conjunction, it allows both events to stand on equal footing without one event being subordinated to the other. Importantly, *-ko* leaves the event of V_1 incomplete, which creates a semantic bridge to the subsequent event (V_2). This

incompleteness of V₁ facilitates the sequential flow between the two clauses.⁶⁾

In contrast, the verbal connective *-e* in V₁-E V₂ creates a stronger semantic connection between the events of V₁ and V₂ by completing the event of V₁ before linking it to V₂. Because *-e* cannot function as a coordinate conjunction, it does not preserve the independence between the two events. Instead, it establishes a tighter integration by signaling that the event of V₁ has reached completion, thereby enabling the progression to V₂. Thus, while *-ko* connects through incompleteness and sequentiality, *-e* connects through the completion of the preceding event.

For instance, in (20), the verbal connective *-ko* expresses sequentiality between two independent events: 'eat and sleep'. Like English *and* or *after*, *-ko* preserves the autonomy of each event and signals that the first action (eating) remains semantically incomplete, creating a bridge to the following event (sleeping). In contrast, in (21), the connective *-e* (*-a* because of vowel harmony) conveys completion of the first event (going to the library) before moving to the second event (studying). Unlike *-ko*, *-e* does not coordinate two independent events but tightly links them, with the first event fully completed before the second begins. Thus, *-ko* emphasizes sequentiality with incompleteness, while *-e* signals completion and tighter event integration.

(20) Sequentiality/consecutivity (similar to English 'and' or 'after'):

cheli-ka pap-ul mek-KO cam-ul ca-nta.

철이가 밥을 먹고 잠을 잔다.

Cheli-NOM food-ACC eat-KO sleep-ACC sleep-DCL

'Cheli ate food and went to sleep.'

(21) completion: (akin to English perfect '-ed/en')

wuli-nun tosekwan-ey ka-A kongpwu-lul ha-yss-ta.

우리는 도서관에 가 공부를 했다.

we-TOP library-to go-E study-ACC do-PST-DCL

'We went to a library and studied.'

However, through grammaticalization, *-ko*, originally marking event sequentiality, and *-e*, originally indicating completion of the preceding event, have lost much of their original semantic content. As a result, in non-*ko/e iss-* contexts, both can also express simultaneity (similar to English 'while'), as seen in (22) and (23). The use of *-ko/e iss-* in these cases is to express not inner but outer progressive aspect.

6) Suh (1988: 217) goes on to note that when followed by *-se* (derived from *-si-* + *-e*), *-ko* (now *-ko-se*) denotes a completion of the first event. See the next paragraph for the discussion of *-e*.

- (22) a. ku-nun selyu-lul phyelchi-KO selmyeng-ul sicakha-yss-ta.
 그는 서류를 펼치고 설명을 시작했다.
 he-TOP document-ACC unfold-KO explanation-ACC start-PST-DCL
 ‘He started explaining (while) unfolding the document.’
- b. Cheli-nun kokay-lul swuki-KO amwu mal-to haci anhassta.
 철이는 고개를 숙이고 아무 말도 하지 않았다.
 ‘Cheli didn’t say anything (while) lowering his head.’
- c. haksayngtul-i chayk-ul tul-KO kyosil-lo tulekanta.
 학생들이 책을 들고 교실로 들어간다.
 ‘Students entered the classroom (while) carrying books.’
- d. emma-ka ai-lul an-KO cip-ulo tulewass-ta.
 엄마가 아이를 안고 집으로 들어왔다.
 ‘Mom came into the house (while) holding a baby.’
- (23) a. ku-nun nwu-E chayk-ul ilk-ess-ta.
 그는 누워 책을 읽었다.
 he-TOP lie-E book-ACC read-PST-DCL
 ‘He read a book while lying down.’
- b. ku-nun anc-A TV-lul po-ass-ta.
 그는 앉아 TV를 보았다.
 he-TOP sit-A TV-ACC watch-PST-DCL
 ‘He watched TV while sitting.’

Crucially, even in these cases, *-ko* and *-e* still tend to retain a subtle sense of event sequentiality or completion, indicating that the first event precedes the second in some way.⁷⁾

Returning to *-ko/e iss-*, what is a source of RS reading as well as PG reading of *-ko/e iss-*, as schematized in (24):

(24) V(Event)--*ko/e iss-ta*

Building on Radden and Dirven’s (2007) “viewing frame” metaphor, Hong (2013) characterizes the progressive aspect as viewing a train (i.e., an event) from inside, offering a restricted, ongoing perspective, in contrast to viewing it from above, which

7) One reviewer points out that if one was standing and reading a book, then lay down because his legs hurt, and continued reading in that position, It’s still appropriate to say (23a). I agree with the reviewer’s observation.

provides a maximal, complete perspective. This aligns with Comrie’s (1976) classical view that the progressive highlights the internal temporal structure of an event. Applying this metaphor, we propose that the verbal connective *-ko* with a PS reading reflects a speaker’s restricted viewpoint on an ongoing situation. In contrast, the verbal connective *-ko/e* with a RS reading reflects a speaker’s restricted viewpoint on a completed event, where the focus shifts to the resulting state that persists.

For example, the Korean verbal complex *ip-ko iss-* in (25) yields two readings, PG and RS readings.

- (25) Cheli-ka syech-lul ip-KO ISS-ta
 Cheli-NOM shirt-ACC put on-DCL
 a. is putting on (PG reading)
 b. is wearing (RS reading)

The internal temporal structure of the event expressed by the verbal complex *-ko iss-* unfolds in three stages of progression, as shown below:

- (26) (i) Stage I: Preparatory phase (putting on) <— PG
 (ii) Stage II: Culmination point (A shirt is now worn)
 (iii) Stage III: Consequent state (wearing) <— RS

-ko in *-ko iss-* can cover both Stage I and Stage III, but not Stage II (the culmination point). More specifically, the PG reading arises when *-ko* expresses simultaneity, with the speaker focusing on Stage I, while the RS reading emerges when *-ko* conveys sequentiality, with the focus on Stage III. In contrast, *-e iss-* is limited to Stage III, and the English *be V-ing* form is restricted to Stage I.

We now turn to the next question: Why does the theta role of the subject shift between the PG and RS readings? (cf. Chae, 2020; Kim, 2025; Ogihara, 2020). For example, in (27) the PG reading arises when the subject has an Agentive thematic role. In contrast, the RS reading emerges when the subject may not be the doer of the event ‘put on’. The younger sibling, for instance, may not have put on the hat himself — rather, their parent may have put it on him — and he is now simply wearing it. In this case, the subject takes on a Patient or Undergoer role.

- (27) Nay tongsayng-i moca-lul ssu-ko iss-∅-ta.
 내 동생이 모자를 쓰고 있다.

my brother-NOM hat-ACC put.on-CON be-PRS-DCL

‘My younger sibling is putting on a hat.’

Agent → PG

‘My younger sibling has put on a hat (and is still wearing it).’

Patient/Undergoer → RS

The change in theta role observed in *-ko iss-* constructions may stem from the theta role assigned by the auxiliary verb *iss-* itself. As argued by Kim (2025), while *iss-* of PG reading is a raising-type auxiliary, *iss-* of RS reading can be analyzed as a control-type auxiliary that influences the subject’s thematic role. This helps explain why the RS reading allows a Patient/Undergoer subject, while the PG reading requires an Agent subject. However, the analysis of RS-yielding *iss-* as a control-type auxiliary verb is challenged by the sentential idiom test in (28)–(30) and the scope test in (31). The sentences in (28a), (29a), and (30a) contain sentential idioms. When these are embedded with *-ko iss-* in (28b) and (29b), and with *-e iss-* in (30b), they still retain their idiomatic readings. However, when these idioms are embedded under genuine control verbs or coordinated with a non-idiomatic verb phrase in (28c), (29c), and (30c), their idiomatic readings are lost.

(28) a. nuktay-ka yang-uy thal-ul ss-ess-ta.

wolf-NOM sheep-GEN skin-ACC wear-PST-DCL

늑대가 양의 털을 썼다.

b. nuktay-ka yang-uy thal-ul ssu-KO ISS-ta.

늑대가 양의 털을 쓰고 있다.

(i) literal: ‘The wolf put on a sheep’s skin.’

(ii) idiomatic: ‘Evil cloaks itself in virtue.’

c. nuktay-ka yang-uy thal-ul ssulye-KO wulpwucic-ta.

howl-DCL

늑대가 양의 털을 쓰고 울부짖는다.

‘A wolf howls, wearing a sheep’s skin.’

(29) a. twayci-ka mok-ey cincwu mokkal-i-lul tal-ass-ta.

pig-NOM neck-on pearl necklace-ACC put.on-PST-DCL

돼지가 목에 진주 목걸이를 달았다.

b. twayci-ka mok-ey cincwu mokkal-i-lul tal-KO ISS-ta.

돼지가 목에 진주 목걸이를 달고 있다.

(i) literal: ‘The pig put on a pearl necklace around its neck.’

(ii) idiomatic: ‘Foolishness dresses itself in finery/Ignorance wastes value.’

c. twayci-ka mok-ey cincwu mukkeli-lul tal-ko kkwulkkwukeli-nta.
 돼지가 목에 진주 목걸이를 달고 꿀꿀거린다.
 ‘A pig oinks wearing a pearl necklace.’

(30) a. mwul-i ollawa-ass-ta.
 water-NOM rise-PST-DCL

물이 올랐다.

b. mwul-i ollawa-A ISS-ta.

물이 올라와 있다.

(i) literal: ‘The water has risen.’

(ii) idiomatic: ‘(The ingredients) are currently in their prime state.’

c. mwuli ollaw-A hulu-nta.

flow-PRE

물이 올라와 흐른다.

‘The water has risen and flowed.’

The second counter-argument against analyzing ISS- with a RS reading as a control-type auxiliary comes from scope lowering. In (31a-b), the universal quantifier in subject position can take scope either over or under the RS operator formed by the verbal complex *-ko/e iss-*. This pattern also clearly indicates that *iss-* in *-ko/e iss-* functions not as a control verb, but as a raising verb.

(31) a. motun koyangi-ka pangwul-ul tal-KO ISS-ta.
 all cat-NOM bell-ACC wear-KO ISS-ta.

‘All the cats are wearing a bell.’

‘ALL > RS operator ; RS operator > ALL’

(i) ‘For each cat, it is in a state of having a bell on.’

(ii) ‘There is a resulting state in which all the cats are wearing a bell.’

b. motun koyangi-ka nwup-E ISS-ta.

all cat-NOM lie down-E ISS-DCL

‘All the cat are lying down.’

‘ALL > RS operator ; RS operator > ALL’

(i) For each cat, it is in a state of lying down.

(ii) There is a resulting state in which all the cats are lying down.

Assuming that like *iss-* of PG reading, *iss-* of RS reading is a raising-type auxiliary/functional verb, we propose that a theta role shift occurs within the complement of *iss-*, not within the domain of *iss-*. To account for this shift, it is essential to examine how theta roles are assigned to external arguments, specifically the subject of a clause. Following the lead of Kratzer (1996), we adopt the view that external arguments such as agents or causers are not introduced by the verb itself but by a separate syntactic projection known as VoiceP. In this framework, the verb supplies the internal argument(s) and the core event structure, while the external argument is introduced by the functional head Voice, which carries the semantic contribution of agentivity or causation.

Kratzer's key insight is that theta roles are not fully specified in the verb's lexical entry. Instead, they are assigned through the interaction between the verb's meaning and the syntactic heads that combine with it. The internal argument (e.g., Theme) comes from the verb, while the external argument (e.g., Agent) comes from Voice. This separation allows for a more compositional and flexible account of argument structure.

Meanwhile, in passive constructions, the absence of the external argument corresponds to the absence or modification of the Voice head, without altering the verb's inherent meaning. Kratzer's model has been highly influential, offering a syntactic foundation for understanding how arguments are introduced and how variations such as passives, causatives, and agentless constructions emerge naturally within the same system.

Following Kratzer's seminal ideas on argument realization, we propose that in *-KO ISS-* constructions with a RS reading, it is also the Voice head that determines the theta role of the external argument. Building on the observation that the verbal inflection yielding a RS reading often co-occurs with a passive morpheme — as in English *The window is closed* — or with a perfect participle — as in *He is gone* — we suggest that *-KO/E*, which marks event sequentiality or completion, functions as an indirect passive marker, which is in fact attested in Japanese indirect passive constructions like (32):

- (32) Hanako-ga [tonari-no gakusei-n ipiano-o asa-made
 Hanako-NOM neighbor-GEN student-by piano-ACC morning-until
 hik]-are-ta.
 play-PASS-PST
 'Hanako was affected by the neighboring student's playing the piano until

morning.’

This morpheme *-KO/E* can thus be paraphrased on par with *-(r)are* in Japanese indirect passive constructions in (32) as conveying the meaning “be affected by,”⁸⁾ indicating that the subject undergoes a change of state rather than acting as an Agent.

The RS reading of *-KO/E* in *-KO/E ISS-* expresses a current state resulting from a completed action. In this reading, the external argument assumes a PATIENT or UNDERGOER role, as the construction describes the state that immediately follows the prior event — an interpretation shaped by the sequentiality or completion encoded in *-KO/E*. This syntactic configuration emerges when *-KO/E* RS merges with the Voice head, as shown in (33).

- (33) [_{AspP} [_{VoiceP} PATIENT/UNDERGOER . . . Voice+*KO_{RS}/E_{RS}*] ISS]
 KO/E_{RS} = event sequentiality/complement

By contrast, when *-KO_{PG}* combines with Voice, Voice serves as the Agent role assigner in conjunction with eventive verb phrases, as illustrated in (34).

- (34) [_{AspP} [_{VoiceP} AGENT . . . Voice+*KO_{PG}*] ISS]
 KO_{PG} = on/in (or while)

It is reasonable to conclude that the selectional restriction observed in Korean arises from the system outlined in (33) and (34). As previously shown in examples (11) and (12), certain verbs with a RS interpretation must occur with *-ko/e_{RS}*, while others that yield a PG reading must occur with *-ko_{PG}*. In other words, these verbs are constrained by selectional restrictions grounded in their lexical aspect. Verbs interpreted with an RS reading carry a [+telic] feature, whereas those associated with a PG reading exhibit a [+durative] feature. This lexical aspect-driven restriction is attributed to the inherent lexical properties of the morpheme *-ko* realized in the Voice head.

Before leaving this section, a brief remark is necessary from the cross-linguistic

8) One crucial difference between *-ko* with a RS reading and the *-(r)are* form of Japanese indirect passives is that the doer/Agent of the main verb phrase is syntactically suppressed in the former but overtly realized in the latter. This observation also challenges the analysis that treats *iss-* with a RS reading as a control-type auxiliary verb involving a PRO embedded subject.

perspectives of resultative constructions discussed in Nedjalkov (2001). The Korean –KO/E ISS– constructions exhibit core features that closely align with typological patterns of resultative constructions found across languages, while also displaying unique properties shaped by Korean’s morphosyntactic system. Cross-linguistically, resultatives express a state that arises from a completed action, distinct from progressives (which focus on ongoing actions) and from statives (which describe states without prior causation). In Korean, –KO ISS– and –E ISS– constructions reflect this typology but blur certain boundaries in line with broader patterns of polysemy observed in languages such as Japanese, Chinese, and Lithuanian.⁹⁾

The Korean *-ko iss-* construction is particularly notable for its dual capacity to express both PG and RS readings (as well as continuous reading). This mirrors cross-linguistic cases where a single form serves multiple/polysemous aspectual meanings. For instance, Japanese *-te iru* and Chinese *-zhe* similarly convey both ongoing actions and resultant states, with disambiguation depending on verbal lexical semantics and context. In Korean, the progressive reading typically arises with eventive (i.e., activity/accomplishment/achievement) verbs, where *-ko iss-* highlights the internal temporal unfolding of an event (Stage I). By contrast, the resultative reading emerges when the construction is used with achievement or

9) Nedjalkov (2001) identifies several typological types of resultatives: (i) Object-oriented (Patient) resultatives, where the subject is the patient of the action (e.g., *The window is opened*); (ii) Subject-oriented resultatives, where the subject undergoes a state change (e.g., *He is fallen*); and (iii) Agent-oriented resultatives, where the subject retains the Agent role but reflects a change affecting them (e.g., *He is wearing a cap*). Korean *-ko iss-* appears to correspond to the second and third types, while *-e iss-* aligns with the first and second types.

A noteworthy point in Nedjalkov’s (2001) discussion of resultatives is that A-resultatives are typically derived from transitive verbs where the resulting state primarily affects the Agent rather than the Patient or object. Semantically, A-resultatives are closely related to S-resultatives, as both often describe a change in the Agent’s or subject’s own state or possession. The lexical base for A-resultatives is highly restricted in terms of the Aktionsart of the verb; only specific semantic classes of verbs — many of which overlap with those listed in (16) above — are capable of giving rise to this type of resultative meaning.

- (i). Verbs meaning ‘to take’, ‘to lose’, ‘to receive’ (e.g., *to take something*).
- (ii). Verbs meaning ‘to put on (clothes)’ (e.g., *to wear*).
- (iii). Verbs of motion involving body parts (e.g., *to lower one’s head*).
- (iv). Verbs of action upon body parts (e.g., *to break one’s leg*).
- (v). Verbs of affinity, contact, or attachment (e.g., *to surround, to follow*).
- (vi) Verbs meaning ‘to eat’, ‘to drink’ (implying ingestive contact).
- (vii). Verbs of mental acquisition (e.g., *to see, to learn, to remember*).
- (viii). Fixed verbal collocations where verb and object form a semantic unit (e.g., *to make a mistake, to win a victory*).

accomplishment verbs, where the speaker focuses on the consequent state (Stage III) rather than the action itself.

The *-e iss-* construction in Korean is more semantically constrained, aligning with typological patterns of pure resultative forms found in languages like Archi or the passive-perfect system in Lithuanian. It marks the completion of an event and focuses solely on the resulting state, without compatibility with progressive readings. This reflects the common cross-linguistic pattern where resultative constructions, particularly those using stative auxiliaries like *iss-* ('to be/exist'), develop to signal the current state of a completed event, occasionally evolving into perfect-like or past tense constructions.¹⁰⁾

A striking cross-linguistic observation is that in Korean, as in other languages such as Japanese, Chinese, Mongolian, etc., the theta role of the subject can shift between the PG and RS readings. In the progressive, the subject is typically Agentive, while in the resultative state, the same construction allows the subject to bear a Patient or Undergoer role.¹¹⁾ This mirrors developments in such languages, where resultative constructions enable such shifts, often signaling deeper processes of grammaticalization.

Another key parallel is the role of verbal connectives (*-ko* vs. *-e*) in shaping the aspectual reading. The Korean *-ko* preserves a trace of sequentiality or simultaneity, akin to coordinate structures in languages with serial verb constructions. In contrast, *-E* functions more like a marker of completion or anteriority, similar to resultative linkers in languages with tighter event integration.

Finally, Korean aligns with cross-linguistic tendencies in prohibiting Agentive subjects in resultative constructions: just as in Nivkh, Chukchi, and Japanese, Korean resultatives generally exclude overt agents, reinforcing the notion that P(atient)-resultatives suppress agency and highlight state.

In sum, Korean *-ko/e iss-* constructions fit neatly within the typology of

10) It is well acknowledged that in Korean, the past tense marker *-ess/ass* is historically derived from *-ess/ass iss-* through coalescence. See also Chae (2020), among others, for the observation that verbs allowing a RS reading with *-ko iss-* can be interpreted synonymously with verbs bearing the apparent past tense marker.

11) In several other languages, shifts in subject theta roles accompany differences between progressive and resultative constructions. In German, the *am*-progressive yields an Agentive reading, while resultative passives assign a Patient role. In English, subjects alternate between Agent (*is putting on*) and Patient (*is wearing*) roles, as seen in pairs like *The door is shutting* vs. *The door is shut*. Lithuanian distinguishes resultative and perfect forms, but both allow subject role shifts depending on context. In Archi, resultative constructions (converb + auxiliary) typically assign an Undergoer role. In Hindi, the same participial forms serve both perfect and resultative functions, with subjects interpreted as Agentive in the former and Patient in the latter.

resultatives, showing polysemy, subject theta role shifts, and morphosyntactic alignment with both progressive and resultant state systems cross-linguistically.

5. The Correlation between a Subject Argument's Thematic Role and the Availability of a PG or RS Reading

In sum, Korean *-ko/e iss-* constructions fit neatly within the typology of resultatives, showing polysemy, subject theta role shifts, and morphosyntactic alignment with both progressive and resultant state systems cross-linguistically.

One of the key innovations in Ogihara's (2020) account of the correlation between the thematic role of a subject argument and the availability of a PG or RS (or target state) reading is the proposal that the temporal trace (i.e., duration) of an event is, in principle, independent of the temporal argument associated with a thematic role (relation) that requires an event argument. This insight necessitates a constraint on how the temporal argument of certain thematic roles relates to the temporal extension of the relevant event.

Based on this proposal, Ogihara further assumes that when an entity x is the Agent of an event e , the temporal argument of the Agent role must be identical to the temporal extension of the event. This is formalized as (35):

(35) Semantic Constraint on Agent Thematic Role (Ogihara 2020: 111):

For any world w , time interval t , individual x , and event e , if $\text{agent}(w, t, x, e)$ holds, then $\text{time}(e) = t$.

This constraint ensures that the time argument t of the Agent role is identical to the temporal extension of the event e .

In contrast, the Target State (for us, Resultant State)¹²⁾ thematic role requires that its temporal argument associated with an event e immediately follows the temporal trace of e . That is, an entity x bears the Target State role associated with e only after e has concluded. Ogihara formalizes this in (36):

(36) Semantic Constraint on Target State Thematic Role (Ogihara 2020: 111):

12) For Ogihara, a Theme subject bears the Target State role associated with an event e at a time that immediately follows the temporal trace of e .

For any individual x , event e , world w , and intervals t_1 and t_2 , if both target state(w, t_1, x, e) and time(e) = t_2 hold, then t_2 must abut t_1 .

The temporal argument t_1 of the Target State must immediately follow the temporal extension t_2 of the event. Since the time argument of Target State predicates is abutted by the temporal extension of their triggering event, this means that the triggering event must necessarily be located in the past when the Target State holds at the utterance time.

As discussed in the previous section, we have identified two distinct types of $-ko$: the progressive $-ko$ and the resultant state $-ko/e$. In contrast, *iss-* has a single function, indicating the existence/continuation of either an in-progress event or a resultant state. This distinction leads to the claim that the correlation between the thematic role of a subject argument and the availability of either a PG or RS reading in Korean $-ko/e$ *iss-* constructions arises from the lexical, syntactic, and semantic properties of the connectives $-ko/e$.

Kim (2011) presents the semantics of the Korean progressive $-ko$ as follows, in line with Parsons' (1990) event-semantic analysis of English progressives and perfects.

$$(37) [[-ko_{PG}]] = \lambda P_{\langle i,t \rangle} . \lambda s . \lambda t . \lambda w . \exists e [\tau(e) < t \ \& \ P(e)(w) = 1 \ \& \ \text{In-progress}(e) = s \ \& \ t \subseteq \tau(s)]$$

This progressive operator ($-ko_{PG}$) takes as its input a predicate P of eventualities. It returns a function from a situation s , a time interval t , and a world w . This function asserts the existence of an event e such that the runtime of e precedes the time interval t , P holds of e in world w , and the in-progress phase of e corresponds to situation s . Additionally, the reference time interval t is included within the temporal span of the in-progress situation s .

However, given that the Korean progressive reading is sensitive to the type of the input predicate, we revise Kim's proposal slightly, as follows:

$$(38) [[-ko_{PG}]] = \lambda P_{(i,t)}^{\text{Eventive}} . \lambda s . \lambda t . \lambda w . [\text{Eventive}(P) \ \& \ \exists e [\tau(e) < t \ \& \ P(e)(w) = 1 \ \& \ \text{In-progress}(e) = s \ \& \ t \subseteq \tau(s)]]$$

$[[-ko_p]]$ also takes as its input a predicate P of eventualities. This predicate P is required to be eventive, as indicated by the condition Eventive(P). The operator

returns a function from a situation s , a time interval t , and a world w , such that there exists an event e whose runtime precedes t , for which P holds of e in world w , and whose in-progress phase corresponds to situation s . Furthermore, the reference time interval t must be included within the temporal span of the in-progress situation s .

Kim (2011) also defines the semantics of the Korean resultant state $-ko$ as follows. Kim argues that the resultant state (for her, R-state) $-ko$ encodes both the null perfect aspect and the meaning of ‘keep’:

$$(39) \llbracket [-ko_{RS}] \rrbracket = \lambda R_{\langle s, \langle i, t \rangle \rangle} . \lambda x . \lambda s'' . \lambda t . \exists s' [R(s')(t) = 1 \ \& \ \text{keep}(x)(s')(s'') \ \& \ t \subseteq \tau(s'')]$$

$\llbracket [-ko_{RS}] \rrbracket$ takes a predicate R and returns a function from an individual x , a situation s'' , and a time interval t . It asserts that there exists a situation s' such that R holds in s' at time t , and within s' , the individual x stands in the ‘keep’ relation. Additionally, the time interval t is contained within the temporal trace of s'' .¹³

We also revise the formula in (39) to make it sensitive to predicate type, restricting the input predicate to those denoting eventualities of either (i) accomplishment or (ii) achievement. As argued above, the ‘perfect aspect’ meaning of $-ko_{RS}$ arises from the notion of sequentiality, which reflects its original use as a coordinate connective.

$$(40) \llbracket [-ko_{RS}] \rrbracket = \lambda P_{\langle i, t \rangle}^{TEL} . \lambda s . \lambda t . \lambda w . [\text{Telic}(P) \ \& \ \exists e [\tau(e) < t \ \& \ P(e)(w) = 1 \ \& \ \text{Resultant-state}(e) = s \ \& \ t \subseteq \tau(s)]]$$

$\llbracket [-ko_{RS}] \rrbracket$ takes as its input a telic predicate P of type $\langle i, t \rangle$, as indicated by $TEL(ic)$ and the condition $\text{Telic}(P)$. It returns a function from a situation s , a time interval t , and a world w . This function asserts that there exists an event e such that the runtime of e precedes the time interval t , P holds of e in world w , and the resultant state of e is identical to situation s . Furthermore, the reference time interval t is contained within the temporal span of the resultant state s .

Since $iss-$ takes as its input either $-ko_P$ in (38) or $-ko_{RS}$ in (40), it can be defined as follows:

13) s' is the event situation where the event predicate holds and the action occurs. s'' is the evaluation situation whose temporal trace must include the evaluation time.

(41) $[[iss-]] =$

$$\lambda P. \lambda s. \lambda t. \lambda w. [\text{AspClass}(P) \ \& \ \exists e[\tau(e) < t \ \& \ P(e)(w) = 1 \ \& \ \text{StateSelector}(e) = s \ \& \ t \subseteq \tau(s)]]$$

(AspClass(P) selects the correct class: Eventive or Telic, while StateSelector(e) selects the correct state: In-progress or Resultant-state).

This function takes a predicate P , a state s , a time interval t , and a world w as its arguments. It asserts that the predicate P belongs to a particular aspectual class, determined by $\text{AspClass}(P)$. It existentially quantifies over an event e such that the runtime of e precedes t , $P(e)$ holds in w , and the relevant state associated with e (selected by StateSelector) is s . Finally, it ensures that the time interval t is included within the temporal trace of the state s .

While Ogihara’s (2020) proposal that the temporal argument of certain thematic roles (such as Agent or Target State) must align with the temporal extension of the relevant event provides a principled account for the availability of progressive and resultant state readings in some languages like Japanese, such a mechanism is not necessary for explaining the Korean *-ko iss-* constructions. The availability of PG or RS readings in these constructions arises not from the temporal alignment of thematic roles but from the inherent lexical, syntactic, and semantic properties of the connective *-ko/e* itself. As shown up to now, Korean *-ko* exhibits two distinct functions: as a progressive marker selecting eventive predicates and as a resultant state marker selecting telic predicates. The *iss-* morpheme uniformly takes as its input either the progressive *-ko* or the resultant state *-ko/e* without reference to thematic roles like Agent or Target (or Resultant) State. The different interpretations emerge from the aspectual class of the embedded predicate and the associated state introduced by *-ko*, which is selected by *iss-*. This system directly accounts for the PG or RS aspectual interpretations without appealing to role-specific temporal constraints. Thus, Ogihara’s thematic-role-driven temporal alignment is not empirically necessary for the Korean facts and can be dispensed with in favor of a compositional analysis based on predicate type and lexical aspect.

Before leaving this section, we rehearse Ogihara (2020), who represents the meaning of the English progressive aspect (*be -ing*) using event semantics and modal logic.

(42) $[[be -ing]] = \lambda \phi. \lambda t. \lambda w. \exists e': t \subseteq \text{TIME}(e') \ \& \ \phi(e')(w) \ \&$

$$[\forall w' \in \text{BEST_English}(\phi', \phi, M, O, w, t) \ \exists e [\text{TIME}(e) \not\prec t \ \& \ \phi(e)(w')]]$$

This formula states that there exists an event whose runtime includes the reference

time and which instantiates the relevant property in the actual world. Additionally, in all the *best* or most typical future continuations (or inertia worlds, which is attributed to Dowty's (1978) proposal), there is an event of the same type that extends beyond the reference time. This captures the idea that the English progressive conveys both an ongoing event at the reference time and the potential for its continuation in expected circumstances.

Ramchand (2018), however, takes a quotational semantics approach to English progressive and perfect systems.¹⁴ Ramchand argues that the meaning of the *-ing* participle is better understood not through explicitly intensional analyses but by framing it in terms of event concepts, as evidenced by the very early acquisition of the *-ing* participle in child language. These concepts arise from the use of lexical items that convey partial descriptions of events, independent of specific times and places, and through the construction of what she calls Identifying States. An Identifying State is a stative situation that offers perceptual or cognitive evidence of an ongoing event without committing to its completion or temporal location. This state forms the basis of the progressive meaning (e.g., *Mary is crossing*) by providing a conceptual snapshot that allows us to infer the larger event in progress. In Ramchand's (2018) analysis, the denotation of an *-ing* particle is defined as follows, with the auxiliary *be* semantically vacuous:

$$(43) \llbracket u_V\text{-ing} \rrbracket = \lambda e[\text{State}(e) \wedge \text{ID-State}(e, \llbracket u_V \rrbracket)]$$

The *-ing* participle represents a state *e* that both qualifies as a State and serves as an Identifying (ID)-State for the event described by the linguistic content of a verb (u_V). This state provides perceptual or cognitive evidence for the event in progress. The *-ing* form refers to this evidential state, not to the full event itself. Essentially, Ramchand assigns the source of progressive meaning to the verbal inflection *-ing*, which parallels our analysis of *-ko* in *-ko iss-* as the element responsible for expressing progressive or resultant state meaning.

14) Quotational semantics developed in Ramchand (2008, 2014) is a framework for understanding meaning in natural language where words and phrases are treated as symbolic entities—triples of phonology, syntax, and abstract event-related semantics—before being anchored to specific times, places, and contexts. Meaning arises in stages: lexical items first encode abstract event properties without temporal or worldly reference, then are deployed or 'quoted' by a speaker within an utterance event to convey a situation. This approach highlights the role of the speaker and context in meaning, treating utterances as demonstrations or deployments of symbolic content, rather than directly linking words to truth conditions from the outset.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we have examined the syntax and semantics of Korean *-ko/e iss-* constructions, focusing on their ability to yield either PG or RS readings. By tracing the historical development of *-ko/e iss-* from Middle Korean *-ko/e is-*, we have shown that the construction at issue has emerged through grammaticalization, acquiring the flexibility to express both in-progress events and resultant states. Syntactic evidence from adverb insertion, selectional restrictions, and negation patterns has demonstrated that ISS- of both PG and RS readings functions as an auxiliary or functional verb in both PG and RS readings, rather than as a main verb.

Crucially, we have argued that the RS reading does not arise from the auxiliary *-iss* itself but from the lexical and semantic properties of the verbal connectives *-ko* and *-e*, which encode event sequentiality and completion, respectively. The availability of PG or RS interpretations is shown to depend not on the temporal alignment of thematic roles, as proposed by Ogihara (2020), but on the aspectual class of the embedded predicate and the state introduced by these connectives. The observed shift in the subject's thematic role — from Agent in the PG reading to Patient or Undergoer in the RS reading — has been analyzed within a VoiceP framework, which accounts for the external argument independently of the verbal core.

By situating the Korean data within a broader cross-linguistic perspective, this paper has shown that Korean *-KO/E ISS-* constructions align with typological patterns of resultative constructions, including polysemy, Agent suppression, and theta role flexibility. This supports a compositional, lexical-syntactic approach grounded in event semantics.

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