

The Passive Construction and Case in Korean

Author(s): Ki-Sun Hong

Proceedings of the Seventeenth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society: General Session and Parasession on The Grammar of Event Structure (1991), pp. 130-143

Please see “How to cite” in the online sidebar for full citation information.

Please contact BLS regarding any further use of this work. BLS retains copyright for both print and screen forms of the publication. BLS may be contacted via <http://linguistics.berkeley.edu/bls/>.

The Annual Proceedings of the Berkeley Linguistics Society is published online via [eLanguage](#), the Linguistic Society of America's digital publishing platform.

ilpule 'on purpose', *uitocekulo* 'intentionally', *capalcekulo* 'voluntarily'. Second, it may co-occur with *-lyeko* 'in order to' rationale clauses, since only a determinant can plan to bring about a situation in order to satisfy his own purpose. Third, a determinant may be the subject of such a predicate as *hwuhoiha-* 'repent', as we repent only what we are responsible for. Fourth, it may be the addressee in the sentences of the imperative or propositive mood. This is based on conversational implicature. It is not felicitous to order or propose to somebody to do something in the situation where they do not have any control. Fifth, it may be the cause of a coercive (e.g., *sikhi* 'force') or a manipulative predicate (e.g., *seltukha* 'persuade'), based on the same reasoning. Pragmatically, we can force or persuade somebody to do something, only when they are capable of it. Last, the determinant can be the subject of equi control predicates (e.g., *ha* 'try', *nolyekha* 'endeavor', *sitoha* 'attempt'), as it does not make any sense to try to do something when we are not in control.⁴

The notion of a determinant is related to animacy. First, due to its definition, an inert thing is hardly ever interpreted as a determinant (except as a causer in lexical causative sentences), compared to an animate being or a mobile thing. Second, Korean seems to have a preference condition which requires that a subject denoting an animate being or a mobile thing should not be interpreted as being controlled by some other determinant. We will see shortly that this condition is necessary to account for some CI passive sentences.

Hong (1991) argues that the semantic notion of a determinant is relevant to the NOM/ACC case alternation. Korean has two kinds of dyadic predicates denoting psychological process: one assigning ACC to its object, and the other assigning NOM, as (4) demonstrates.

(4) a. John-i Mary-lul cohaha-nta.
 nom acc like-indicative
 'John likes Mary.'

b. John-i Mary-ka coh-ta.
 nom nom be likable-indicative
 '(lit.) Mary is likable to John.'

Although the subjects of both predicates bear the experiencer thematic role, they are distinguished in the determinant relationship: the subject of (4a) is a potential determinant, whereas that of (4b) is not, as (5-6) demonstrate. In other words, *John* can bring about the situation expressed in (4a), whereas he does not have any control over the situation in (4b).

(5) a. John-i *uitocekulo* Mary-lul cohaha-nta.
 nom intentionally acc like-indicative
 '(lit.)John intentionally likes Mary.'

b. John-i [ku il-ul icu-lyeko] Mary-lul cohaha-nta.
 nom the event-acc forget-in order to acc like-indicative
 '(lit.) John likes Mary, in order to erase the event from the memory.'

c. John-i [Mary-lul cohaha-n] kes-ul hwuhoiha-nta.
 acc like-adjectival fact-acc repent-indicative
 'John repents that he has liked Mary.'

- d. Mary-lul cohaha-yela.
acc like-imperative
'(lit.) Like Mary.'
- e. nay-ka John-eykey [Mary-lul cohaha-lako] sikhi-ess-ta.
I-nom dat acc like-to force-past-indicative
'(lit.) I forced John to like Mary.'
- f. John-i Mary-lul cohaha-lyeko nolyekha-nta.
nom acc like-to try-indicative
'John tries to like Mary.'
- (6) a.*John-i *uitocekulo* Mary-ka coh-ta.
nom intentionally nom be likable-indicative
- b.*John-i [ku il-ul icu-lyeko] Mary-ka coh-ta.
nom the event-acc forget-in order to nom be likable-indicative
- c.*John-i [Mary-ka cohu-n] kes-ul hwuhoiha-nta.
nom nom be likable-adjectival fact-acc repent-indicative
- d.*Mary-ka cohu-la.
nom be likable-indicative
- e.*nay-ka John-eykey [Mary-ka cohu-lako] sikhi-ess-ta.
I-nom dat nom be likable-to force-past-indicative
- f.*John-i Mary-ka cohu-lyeko nolyekha-nta.
nom nom be likable-to try-indicative

Based on this observation, I have proposed that the ACC marked object is sanctioned only when the predicate selects for a subject which denotes a potential determinant. NOM is given by default (Kang 1986, Y. Kim 1990). This rule is, in fact, applicable not only to objects but any complement of the predicate, as we will see shortly. So the rule is generalized as in (7).

(7) Case marking rules in terms of a determinant:

- a. Accusative marked complements are sanctioned, only when there is a potential determinant argument which is "syntactically expressed (i.e., not suppressed (demoted))".⁵ Nominative case is given by default.
- b. An inert thing is hardly ever interpreted as a determinant. It is preferred that the subject denoting an animate being or a mobile thing should not be interpreted as being controlled by some other determinant.

In the next section, we will observe that the notion of a determinant explains a semantic difference between the two kinds of passives (K. Lee 1987, Klaiman 1988).⁶

(14) a. John-i kong-ul tenci-ess-ta.
 nom ball-acc throw-past-indicative
 'John threw a ball.'

b. kong-i John-eyuihaye tencie *ci-ess-ta*.
 ball-nom by throw CI-past-indicative
 'A ball was thrown by John.'

Unlike the HI passive, (15) demonstrates that the suppressed agent is interpreted as a potential determinant. Thus, the CI passive means that a sententially denoted situation may be intentionally brought about by the suppressed agent, and the subject cannot exert any power over the situation.

(15) a. chayksang-i John-eyuihaye *uitocekulo* mantule *ci-ess-ta*.
 desk-nom by intentionally make CI-past-indicative
 'A desk was made by John intentionally.'

b. chayksang-i John-eyuihaye [sikthak-ulo *ssu-lyeko*] mantule
 desk-nom by dining table-as use-in order to make
 ci-ess-ta.
 CI-past-indicative
 'A desk was made by John, in order to use it for a dining table.'

In sum, the CI passive construction has a non-determinant subject, whereas the HI passive construction either has a determinant subject or no determinant at all.⁷

4. Passive and Case

If our distinction of the two passive constructions in terms of a determinant is correct, we can predict various case facts as in (16), based on (7).

- (16) a. Either ACC or NOM will be possible in the HI passive, which is ambiguous, due to (7a).
 b. The CI passive can never have ACC marked complements due to (7a), as it does not have any determinant argument which is syntactically expressed: the agent is the only determinant, but it is suppressed.
 c. Even in the HI passive, no ACC marking will be possible with a subject denoting an inert thing, due to (7b) which dictates that an inert thing is hardly ever interpreted as a determinant.
 d. CI passive sentences will sound awkward with subjects denoting animate beings, due to (7b).⁸

All of these predictions are borne out. First, with such dyadic predicates as *catch*, *tear*, there is nothing much to say; the only syntactically expressed argument is marked NOM by default, in either passive construction. (17c), a CI passive with the subject denoting an animate being, sounds awkward as we predicted in (16d). In contrast, (18c), a CI passive with an inert subject, is perfect, as it does not violate (7b).

(21) a. *Mary-ka John-eyuihaye son-*ul* capa *ci-ess-ta*.
 nom by hand-acc catch CI-past-indicative

b. Mary-ka John-eyuihaye son-*i* capa *ci-ess-ta*.
 nom

Second, let us consider passives of (19b), which has an inert subject. The same account applies to the CI passive, shown in (23): its subject is not a determinant, so there can be no ACC marking, as (23a) demonstrates. With the HI passive, we find one difference from (20): a subject denoting an inert thing cannot sanction ACC marked complements, as in (22a). It is exactly as we predict in (16c): inert things are hardly ever interpreted as a determinant in Korean.

(22) a. *ku chayk-i John-eykey phyoci-*lul* ccic-*ki-ess-ta*.
 the book-nom dat title page-acc tear-HI-past-indicative
 'The title page of the book was torn by John.'

b. ku chayk-i John-eykey phyoci-*ka* ccic-*ki-ess-ta*.
 nom

(23) a. *ku chayk-i John-eyuihaye phyoci-*lul* ccice *ci-ess-ta*.
 the book-nom by title page-acc tear CI-past-indicative

b. ku chayk-i John-eyuihaye phyoci-*ka* ccice *ci-ess-ta*.
 nom

We get the same result, even in a construction with multiple adjuncts, as in (24). Either ACC or NOM marking is possible in the HI passive as in (25), due to its semantic ambiguity. In contrast, in the CI passive, only NOM marking is possible, as in (26).

(24) John-i Mary-*lul* son-*ul* olunccek-*ul* sonkalak-*ul* cap-*ass-ta*.
 nom acc hand-acc right one-acc finger-acc catch-past-indicative
 'John caught Mary by the fingers of the right hand.'

(25) a. Mary-ka John-eykey son-*ul* olunccek-*ul* sonkalak-*ul* cap-*hi-ess-ta*.
 nom dat hand-acc right one-acc finger-acc catch-HI-past-
 indicative

'Mary was caught by the fingers of the right hand by John.'

b. Mary-ka John-eykey son-*i* olunccek-*i* sonkalak-*i* cap-*hi-ess-ta*.
 nom nom nom

(26) a. *Mary-ka John-eyuihaye son-*ul* olunccek-*ul* sonkalak-*ul*
 nom by hand-acc right one-acc finger-acc
 capa *ci-ess-ta*.
 catch CI-past-indicative

b. Mary-ka John-eyuihaye son-*i* olunccek-*i* sonkalak-*i* capa *ci-ess-ta*.
 nom nom nom

Now, we can easily predict what will happen in a triadic predicate with a subject denoting an inert thing, as in (32a). Like (31b), (32b) will be ruled out, since no ACC marking is possible in the CI passive. However, unlike (31c), (32c) will be perfect, since it does not violate (7b).

(32) a. John-i ku sithak-ul sithakpo-lul tep-ess-ta.
 nom the table-acc table cloth-acc cover-past-indicative
 'John covered the table with the table cloth.'

b.*ku sithak-i John-eyuihaye sithakpo-lul tepe ci-ess-ta.
 the table-nom by table cloth-acc cover CI-past-indicative
 'The table was covered with the table cloth by John.'

c. ku sithak-i John-eyuihaye sithakpo-ka tepe ci-ess-ta.
 the table-nom by table cloth-nom cover CI-past-indicative

One last observation deserves a word. The suppressed agent is marked by *eykey* 'DAT' in the HI passive, and *eyuihaye* 'by' in the CI passive. I think that this is also relevant to the semantic notion of a determinant. DAT marks an agent which is a non-determinant, whereas 'by' marks one which is a potential determinant. That is why they show roughly complementary distribution (K. Lee 1987).¹¹ Also it is preferred that the host of 'by' should denote an animate being, due to (7b).

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have attempted to show that there is a primary semantic factor which distinguishes HI passives and CI passives, and that their distinct case patterns directly follow from this semantic difference.

Notes

*I am grateful to Joan Bresnan and Peter Sells for their valuable discussions and comments. I have also received valuable suggestions from Joan Maling, Jeong-Woon Park, and Tae-Hwa Yoon.

1. The two available notions which are closest to a determinant are the "responsibility relation" (Farkas 1988:36) and "control" (Dixon 1979). I do not adopt the first one, since I, unlike Farkas, do not consider that a determinant is always an initiator. I avoid using the second one, since it has been associated with only an actual determinant or a volitional entity in many works.

2. Hong (1991) demonstrates that a determinant is distinguished from the agentive thematic role.

3. In most cases, we can figure out which one is the "potential determinant" by using the tests. For instance, *John* is uncontroversially a determinant in a specific situation of (1a), when it is clearly marked by such an adverb as 'intentionally' which is one of our tests. When there is no such explicit marking as in (1b), we can apply our tests, as what will be done throughout this paper: if they work, *John* is a "potential determinant".

(1) a. John-i *uitocekulo* ttena-ass-ta.
 nom intentionally leave-past-indicative
 'John intentionally left.'

- b. John-i ttena-ass-ta.
 nom leave-past-indicative
 'John left.'

This way of interpretation does not work in such cases which have explicit expressions which are incompatible with any of our tests. 'Accidentally' or a specific modality marker, *ess*, cannot cooccur with 'intentionally'.

- (2) a. John-i wuyenhi changmun-ul kkaythuli-ess-ta.
 nom accidentally window-acc break-past-indicative
 'John accidentally broke the window.'

- b. John-un icy pal-ul mul-li-ess-ta.
 topic soon foot-acc bite-HI-speaker's bet-indicative
 'I bet that John's foot would be bitten soon.'

(T. Yoon, personal communication)

However, case facts require that *John* in (2) should be also interpreted as a potential determinant in some sense. I think that DeLancey's (1985:6) account, which was originally intended for a "potential agent", provides us with a way to include these cases as our potential determinant. He proposes that, even in these cases, the speaker imputes primary responsibility for the event to *John*. (2a) would be quite strange as a report of an event in which *John* has been pushed or thrown against the window by another external force. Thus, an entity, whether intentional or not, counts as a determinant ("agent" in DeLancey), when it and nothing else can be identified as the cause of the event. This way of interpretation, however, leaves us with no possible test, as it mainly relies on the speaker's discretion.

4. It is not the case that a predicate which selects for a determinant subject should pass all the tests. Depending on other factors, some predicates may pass only subsets of them. For example, *talm-* 'resemble' passes only tests from the 3rd to the 6th, and *po-* 'see' fails the 4th test. The former seems to be due to tense/aspect, and the latter due to a morphological blocking from having another lexical item (i.e., *po-* 'look at').

5. Hong (in progress) argues that a "potential determinant which is syntactically expressed" is always mapped onto a grammatical subject in Korean. Here, I avoid formulating the rule in terms of a subject, to simplify my argument. Also I try to minimize appeal to grammatical functions in this paper, if not crucial for my argument.

6. K. Lee (1987), from which the present paper gets much insight, claims that the HI passive denotes a "spontaneous" situation and its subject is considered to be "responsible" for the situation, whereas non-spontaneity and a "hidden agent" characterize the CI passive. This generalization works, insofar as we deal with HI passive sentences which are interpreted like a middle construction, and thereby cannot be expressed in terms of a CI passive as in (3).

- (3) wun-i yel-li-ess-ta.
 fortune-nom open-HI-past-indicative
 'We are in fortune's way.'

However, the three notions, i.e., spontaneity, responsibility, and lack of another agent, do not always point to the same thing. (4) demonstrates that responsibility

should be distinguished from the other two notions. The situation is not spontaneous, as the event was produced by an external agent (i.e., 'policeman'). But the subject, *John*, is still responsible for the situation, since we can say "John was intentionally caught by the policeman".

- (4) John-i swunkyeng-eykey cap-*hi*-ess-ta.
 nom policeman-by catch-passive-past-indicative
 'John was caught by the policeman.'

My notion of a determinant is intended to pick out the one who is "responsible" for the situation.

7. As Van Valin has pointed out (personal communication), we can have a passive form "V_{stem}+HI+CI".

- (5) John-i swukyeng-eyuihay phal-i cap-*hie* ci-ess-ta.
 nom policeman-by arm-nom catch-HI CI-past-indicative
 'John's arm was caught by the policeman.'

The meaning of this passive is the same as simple CI passive: the suppressed agent, but not the subject, is interpreted as a potential determinant, as the meaning of the head (i.e., CI) matters.

8. This preference condition depends on the meanings of predicates.

- (6) a. aki-ka emma-eyuihay anc-*hie* ci-ess-ta.
 baby-nom mother-by sit-causative CI-past-indicative
 'The baby was made to sit by his/her mother.'

- b. hwanca-ka kanhowen-eyuihay chimtay-ey nwup-*hie* ci-ess-ta.
 patient-nom nurse-by bed-in lie-causativeCI-past-indicative
 'The patient was made to lie in bed by a nurse.'

Although there are idiolectal differences, (6), where the causee of the lexical causative construction becomes the subject of the CI passive, sounds much better than (17c). This is exactly what we predict. The condition seems to be based on the semantic conflict between animate beings which are more likely interpreted as a determinant and the CI passive which does not allow a determinant subject. This semantic conflict does not arise in (6), as the causee is interpreted as having no controllability in the lexical causative construction (H.S. Lee 1985).

9. For arguments against the case agreement view which are mainly based on dative case, see Maling and S. Kim (1990). I agree that we need a broader principle which subsumes this apparent case agreement fact, which is beyond the scope of this paper.

10. This (i.e., an adjunct phrase being mapped onto the subject) actually suggests that the HI passive is not a passive in a strict sense (Klaiman 1988, Hong in progress).

11. We can find some cases where a suppressed agent is marked 'by' in the HI passive. This 'by' is different from that in the CI passive: the former does not mark a determinant, whereas the latter does. I think that its meaning is more like 'because of'.

- (7) John-i swunkyeng-eyuihaye son-ul cap-hi-ess-ta.
 nom policeman-by hand-acc catch-III-past-indicative
 'John's hand was caught by the policeman.'

References

- Burzio, L. 1986. *Italian Syntax*. Dordrecht: Reidel.
- DeLancey, S. 1985. Agentivity and syntax. *CLS* 21. 1-12.
- Dixon, R.M.W. 1979. Ergativity. *Language* 55-1. 59-138.
- Dowty, D. 1988. Thematic proto-roles, subject selection, and lexical semantic defaults. ms. Ohio State University.
- Farkas, D. 1988. On obligatory control. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 11. 27-58.
- Fodor, J. 1974. Like subject verbs and causal clauses in English. *Journal of Linguistics* 10. 95-110.
- Gerds, D. 1986. Causatives and passives in Korean: evidence for clause union without revaluation. *Relational Studies in Korean (Buffalo Working Papers in Linguistics)*, ed. by S.A. Chun. 98-185.
- Givon, T. 1975. Cause and control: on the semantics of inter-personal manipulation. *Syntax and Semantics* vol. 4, ed. by Kimball.
- Hong, K.S. 1991. An analysis of case alternation in Korean in terms of semantic control. paper presented at the LSA meeting. Chicago.
- Hong, K.S. (in progress) doctoral dissertation. Stanford University.
- Jackendoff, R. 1987. The status of thematic relations in linguistic theory. *LI* 18. 369-412.
- Kang, Y.S. 1986. *Korean Syntax and Universal Grammar*. doctoral dissertation. Harvard University.
- Kim, Y.J. 1990. *The Syntax and Semantics of Korean Case: the Interaction between Lexical and Syntactic Levels of Representation*. doctoral dissertation. Harvard University.
- Klaiman, M.H. 1988. Affectedness and control: a typology of voice systems. *Passive and Voice*, ed. by M. Shibatani. 25-83.
- Kroeger, P. 1991. Subjecthood and control in Tagalog. paper presented at the LSA meeting. Chicago.
- Lee, C. 1973. *Abstract Syntax and Korean with reference to English*. doctoral dissertation. Indiana University.
- Lee, C. 1991. Argument structure and psych-predicates. to appear in the *Proceedings of the 6th Japan-Korea Joint Conference on Formal Linguistics*.
- Lee, H.S. 1985. Causatives in Korean and the binding hierarchy. *CLS* 21. 138-153.
- Lee, K. 1987. The meanings of the two passives in Korean. *Language Research* 23. 185-201.
- Maling, J. 1989. Adverbials and structural case in Korean. *Harvard Studies in Korean Linguistics* 3, eds. by S. Kuno et al. 297-308.
- Maling, J. and S. Kim. 1990. The inalienable possession construction and case in Korean. *Proceedings of the 7th meeting of International Circle of Korean Linguistics*.
- Yoon, J. 1990. Theta theory and the grammar of inalienable possession constructions. *NELS* 20. 502-516.