L2 acquisition of the imperfective aspect in Korean

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Introduction

• This study empirically investigates how L2 learners acquire the Korean imperfective aspectual marker – koşiss- in respect to verb type.

• The late development of the progressive in acquisition in comparison with the past tense (Lee and Kim, 2007).

• It is notoriously difficult for L2 learners to reach ultimate attainment in the domain of aspectual semantics (Jeon, 2011).

• The complication of the aspectual system in Korean
Aspectual system in Korean

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT IN KOREAN ASPECTUAL MARKERS

- $15C e is(i)$
  - Resultative (imperfective) $e iss$
  - Progressive imperfective $ko iss$
- The periphrastic durative $ko iss$ construction has been generally known as "progressive" (H-B. Choe, 1977; KD Lee, 1978; EJ Baek, 1986; NK Kim, 1986).
However, defining the –ko iss- as a progressive aspectual marker has caused a problem for the researchers who have tried to determine its grammatical category.

1. First, progressive marking –ko iss- is not obligatory in Korean since simple present tense also expresses the progressive meaning (H. Lee, 1991; Ahn, 1995; among others).

예) 철수는 밥을 먹고 있다. VS 철수는 밥을 먹는다.
2. The *ko iss* construction often signals “resultative” when combined with not only the verbs of the wear type (e.g., *ipta* ‘to wear’) and the contact type (e.g. *capta* ‘to hold’), but also verbs of the Achievement type and the Accomplishment type (Vendler, 1967).

예) 철수는 모자를 쓰고 있다.
영희는 가방을 들고 있다.
Another controversial issue of the Korean aspectual system is the so-called stative verbs in Korean that can be combined with the –ko iss-, whose aspectual meaning is claimed to be “resultative” (E. Lee, 2006; Ahn, 1995), which indicate the inception of a continuous state.

예) 알아다, 좋아하다, 사랑하다, 믿다...

나는 그 사람을 알고 있다 vs *I am knowing the person.

나는 그 남자를 사랑하고 있다 vs *I am loving him.

The aspectual marker –ko iss- -----> Imperfective
The two-component theory of aspect (Smith, 1991, 1997)

- There exists a tendency of combining different predicates depending on aspectual meanings of the construction –ko iss-.

- As such, the semantic type of individual verbs may or may not go with the aspectual meaning of the auxiliary verb construction.

- In this respect, Smith (1991, 1997) proposed “two-component theory”, which views that the meaning of aspect is determined by the interaction between two components of situation aspect (inherent lexical aspect) and viewpoint aspect (grammatical aspect).

- By the semantic types of the verbs, Vendler (1957) and Smith (1991) classify lexical aspect (also called the “situation aspect” into four types: state, activity, accomplishment, and achievement.
Table 1. Feature analysis of the four verb types (Smith, 1991)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation Aspect</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Punctual</th>
<th>Telic</th>
<th>Dynamic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Love, Have, Know</td>
<td>[-]</td>
<td>[-]</td>
<td>[-]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Run, Walk, Enjoy</td>
<td>[-]</td>
<td>[-]</td>
<td>[+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accomplishment</td>
<td>Build a bridge, Walk to school</td>
<td>[-]</td>
<td>[+]</td>
<td>[+]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement</td>
<td>Die, Hit the target, Win the game</td>
<td>[+ ]</td>
<td>[+]</td>
<td>[+ ]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Aspect Hypothesis  
(Andersen & Shirai, 1996)

(a) Progressive marking is acquired first with activity verbs because the inherent lexical aspect of the activity verbs is better compatible with the progressive meaning,  

walk [-punctual, -telic, +dynamic] + [action-in-progress]

(b) Overgeneralization of using progressive marking with stative verbs does not occur in the acquisition of aspect.  

know [-punctual, -telic, -dynamic] + [action in-progress]
Research questions

(1) When –ko iss- is combined with activity verbs or accomplishment verbs, with which verb type do learners more frequently produce the progressive meaning?

(2) Do learners know that when the so-called stative verbs occur with –ko iss-, they denote the resultative meaning?

(3) Do learners distinguish the progressive -ko iss- from the resultative -ko iss- depending on the context?
Hypothesis

• However, it is problematic to apply the Aspect Hypothesis to Korean because of language specific features of the Korean aspectual system.

• In this respect, I hypothesized that L2 acquisition of the Korean imperfective aspect will show language-specific developmental patterns, which are different from the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1996).
Previous studies on L2 acquisition of the aspect in Korean

• Shirai (1995) reported that L2 learners of Japanese used the past tense marker –ta predominantly on achievement verbs and the imperfective –te iru on activity verbs.

• Kim and Lee (2006) tested the Aspect Hypothesis in the L2 acquisition of Korean, focusing on the past tense –ess and the progressive –ko iss. The participants used the progressive –ko iss significantly less often than the past tense –ess.

• According to Kim and Lee, the progressive –ko iss occurs in the input less frequently, because action-in-progress reading can be expressed not only by the progressive –ko iss, but also by the simple present in Korean.
• **Lee and Kim (2007)** was to examine the L2 acquisition of Korean imperfectives, the progressive –*ko iss* and the resultative –*a iss* by English speakers.

• In the interpretation task, learners performed with the progressive –*ko iss* more accurately than with resultative –*ko iss* or –*a iss*, whereas in the production task, they did not show more accuracy with the progressive –*ko iss*.

• For the resultative –*a iss* and the progressive –*ko iss*, learners tend to perform better if the proficiency level increases, but this is not the case with the resultative –*ko iss*. 
• **Brown and Yeon (2010)** found that L2 learners of Korean acquire the progressive –*ko iss* with the *psych* verb at a late stage and even advanced learners struggled to fully acquire the meaning or they did not acquire it at all.

• In the case of put-on verb, learners acquired the action-in-progress reading first and they acquired resultative state meaning later.
The study done by Lee and Kim (2007) show that the results of the Interpretation task are different from those of the production task. It is needed to look into the details about the reasons for that. Is it because there are the alternative forms to express the progressive meaning in Korean?

Brown and Yeon (2011): They conclude that activity verbs are omitted more easily than accomplishment verbs. However, there is no convincing evidence, nor statistical results. Thus, we need to investigate more which type of verbs are combined frequently with the -ko iss construction.

As for methodology, the picture-based test should be used in order to give more vivid action-in progress since the –ko iss- construction denotes more vivid temporary action compared to the simple present tense.

I will adopt the picture-based cloze test (Lee and Kim, 2007), which provide distractors other than -ko iss and -a iss. In addition, the participants consist of both heritage learners and non-heritage learners evenly.
Experiment

• **Production task**: picture-based contextualized cloze test (Lee & Kim, 2007).

• The task consists of 25 target items (5 items per verb type) and 25 fillers.
Participants

1. 38 English-speaking learners of Korean (University of Hawaii at Manoa)
   (a) intermediate level (n=19),
   (b) advanced level (n=19).

2. 50 native speakers of Korean as a control group (currently living in Korea)
Overall results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
<th>Native</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequency (%)</td>
<td>33.26%</td>
<td>45.89%</td>
<td>71.28%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<Table 1. Frequency of using –ko iss->

Frequency of –ko iss- (%)
### Overall results (cont’d)

Table 2. Percentage score of –ko iss in terms of verb type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Accomplishment</th>
<th>Achievement1</th>
<th>Achievement 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>22.11</td>
<td>38.95</td>
<td>37.89</td>
<td>23.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>15.79</td>
<td>58.95</td>
<td>57.89</td>
<td>41.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>61.6</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall results (cont’d)

Table 3. Average score of –ko iss in terms of verb type:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Accomplishment</th>
<th>Achievement1</th>
<th>Achievement2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall results (cont’d)

<Table 3. Frequency (%) of the alternative in terms of verb type>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Accomplishment</th>
<th>Achievement1</th>
<th>Achievement2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>65.26</td>
<td>47.37</td>
<td>49.47</td>
<td>27.37</td>
<td>40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>72.63</td>
<td>35.79</td>
<td>30.53</td>
<td>24.21</td>
<td>25.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• **Results of 5 One-Way ANOVAs**

• One-Way ANOVA was conducted in order to ascertain how different L1-English learners behaved from native Korean speakers. The results of the One-Way ANOVA indicate that there were significant differences among the groups in terms of using the –ko iss construction with all verb types.
(1) When –ko iss- is combined with activity verbs or accomplishment verbs, with which verb type do learners more frequently produce the progressive meaning?

A1: All the levels show no big difference in mean average scores between activity verbs and accomplishment verbs.

A2: Paired samples t-tests confirmed that there is no statistically significant difference between two types because p-value of the two types from t-test are both bigger than 0.05.
Activity Vs. Accomplishment in Korean

- 한국어는 관사표시에 있어 무표적 언어이기 때문에 언어의 특성상 완성상황과 활동상황의 상성 특성을 모두 가지는 동사들이 많다. 이전의 여러 연구에서 완성상황에 분류되었다 잃다, 먹다, 쓰다 등의 동사들이 완성활동상황에 분류된다 (Lee YH, 2011).

가. 집을 1년동안 지었다. (Activity) *He built a house for a year.
나. 집을 1년만에 지었다. (Accomplish.) He built a house in a year.

- 이 부류의 동사들은 완성상황과 활동상황의 시간적 특성을 모두 지닌다. 이 부류에는 먹다, 읽다, (편지)쓰다, (집)짓다, 그리고, 만들다, (장갑)짜다, 외우다, 모으다, 내려오다, 타우다, 끝이다, 늘다, 줄다.

- Dowty (1979:61)도 지적하듯이 일부 영어동사도 ‘for’와 ‘in’ 양쪽 모두와 공기할 수가 있다.
  John painted a picture for an hour. (Activity)
  John painted a picture in an hour. (Accomplish.)
  He read a book for an hour. (Activity)
  He read a book in an hour. (Accomplish.)
Answers to R.Q. (cont’d)

(2) Do learners know that when the so-called stative verbs occur with –ko iss-, they denote the resultative meaning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>22.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>15.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>61.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<Table 6. Percentage score of states>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<Table 7. Mean average of states>

Results of 5 One-Way ANOVAs

One-Way ANOVA was conducted in order to ascertain how different L1-English learners behaved from native Korean speakers. The results of the One-Way ANOVA indicate that there were significant differences among the groups in terms of using the –ko iss construction with states.
In Korean, the so-called stative verbs can occur with the –ko iss construction. On the other hand, in English, all lexical aspectual classes can occur with the past tense, but stative verbs are incompatible with the progressive.

It is because these aspectual differences of two languages are related to the aspectual feature.
(3) Do learners distinguish the progressive -ko iss- from the resultative -ko iss- depending on the context?

**<Table 8. Percentage score of Achieve.1 & 2>**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Achievement1</th>
<th>Achievement 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>23.16%</td>
<td>44.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>41.05%</td>
<td>55.79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Alternative form of Achievement1 (-ess)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Achieve.1 (ess)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>27.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>24.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**<Table 9. Mean average and T-test result of Achieve. 1 & 2>**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Achievement1</th>
<th>Achievement 2</th>
<th>T-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>0.009 (&lt;0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>0.090 (&gt;0.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>0.000 (&lt;0.05)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. This study empirically investigates how L2 learners acquire the Korean imperfective aspectual marker –ko iss- in respect to verb type (i.e., activity, accomplishment, telic achievement, stative achievement).

2. The results show that there is no significant difference in the frequency of the progressive –ko iss- when -ko iss- is combined with activity verbs and accomplishment, and the frequency of the resultative –ko iss- with stative verbs is the lowest.

3. The reason why there is no significant difference in acquisition between activity and the accomplishment is due to the fact that many Korean verbs have both aspectual features of Activities and Accomplishment (Lee YH, 2011).
Conclusion (Cont’d)

4. The frequency of the resultative -ko iss- with stative verbs is the lowest. It is due to the difference in combination with lexical verb classes depending on individual languages. In English, stative verbs are incompatible with the progressive.

5. L2 learners perform better with the progressive -ko iss- than the resultative -ko iss- given the context. Yet, as proficiency level goes up, the learners’ performance improves both on the ongoing action context and the resultative state context.

6. As the proficiency level goes up, both L2 learners group and native group prefer the -ko iss construction although they aware that there are the alternative forms to express the progressive -ko iss and the resultative -ko iss.

7. These results support my hypothesis that L2 learners show language specific patterns in the acquisition of the Korean imperfective aspect, which is contrary to the Aspect Hypothesis (Andersen & Shirai, 1996).
Pedagogical implications

- How do L2 learners attain the ultimate goal of the area of aspect in Korean?

- All the difficulties on properly producing the aspectual marker – ko iss come from the language specific features of Korean.

- However, the performance improves as learners’ level go up. This suggest that positive input that is incompatible with their L1 grammar can help them acquire the aspect morphology.

- In Korean textbooks, I suggest introducing the -ko iss-construction as a general imperfective aspect, which denotes not only ‘action-in-progress’ with dynamic verbs but also ‘resultative’ state with achievement and stative verbs.


Jeong, E.-h. (2002). 'ko is'-kwusenguy mwunpephwaey tayhan phongsicek yenkwu [A diachronic study on the grammaticalization of 'ko is'-construction]. Cintanhakpo, 94, 167-203.


