On Syntactic Complex Verbs in Japanese and Korean

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1. Introduction

In this paper, we investigate whether the Korean complex verb *sicakhata* (시작하다), ‘start’, has the similar properties as the Japanese syntactic complex verb with the same meaning, *hajimeru* (始める). In particular, we propose that although Korean complex verbs where *V₂* is *sicakhata* bear properties similar to the Japanese syntactic complex verb *hajimeru* in the sense that the three tests discussed below can be applied to *V₁* in Korean complex verbs, the verb *sicakhata* differs from *hajimeru* in terms of c-selection of the complement. While *sicakhata* takes a verbal noun phrase (VNP) as its complement, *hajimeru* takes a projection *vP*.

Kageyama (1993) argues that there are at least three ways to distinguish SCVs from LCVs by focusing on the differences in syntactic structure; these are shown in (2), (3), and (4). First, let us look at the test that substitutes *soo su* ‘do so’; conjugated here as *soo si*.

(2) Substitution with *soo su*¹

a. Taroo-ga ki-o kiri-taosi-ta.
   Taroo-NOM tree-ACC cut-topple-Past
   ‘Taroo cut down the tree.’

b.*Hanako-mo *soo si*-taosi-ta.
   Hanako-also so do-topple-Past
   ‘Lit., Hanako also started to do so.’

c. Taroo-ga naki-hajime-ta.
   Taroo-NOM cry-start-Past
   ‘Taroo began to cry.’

d. Hanako-mo *soo si*-hajime-ta.
   Hanako-also so do-start-Past
   ‘Hanako also began to do so.’

The phrases (2a) and (2b) show examples of LCVs, whereas (2c) and (2d) show SCVs. In the case of LCVs, as is seen in (2b), it is difficult to substitute *soo su* for *V₁* since *V₁* as an LCV does

(2013), LCVs project a single maximal projection, *vP*, comprising a *V₁* and *V₂* complex. In contrast, SCVs have the form of their maximal projection (Saito 2013). Their syntactic structures are shown in (1).

(1) a. LCVs
   
   \[
   \begin{array}{c}
   vP \\
   V' P \\
   V P \\
   V_1 \\
   V_2
   \end{array}
   \]

b. SCVs
   
   \[
   \begin{array}{c}
   vP_2 \\
   V' P_2 \\
   V P_2 \\
   V_2
   \end{array}
   \]

While *sicakhata* takes a verbal noun phrase (VNP) as its complement, *hajimeru* takes a projection *vP*.

2. Complex Verbs in Japanese

2.1 Nature of Syntactic Complex Verbs

In this section, we give an overview of the difference between syntactic complex verbs (SCV) and lexical complex verbs (LCV) in Japanese. According to Kageyama (1993) and Saito
not project vP, as shown in (1a). In contrast, SCVs can be replaced, as seen in (2d) because both V₁ and V₂ project vP, as is illustrated in (1b).

Second, the substitution of Sino-Japanese verbs for V₁ can be used to examine whether complex verbs are LCVs or SCVs. This test is applied to the whole set of words, rather than to parts of the set, as shown in (3).

(3) Substitution with Sino-Japanese verbs
   a. Taroo-ga ki-o kiri-taosi-ta.
      Taroo-NOM tree-ACC cut-topple-Past
      ‘Taroo cut down the tree.’
   b. *Taroo-ga ki-o bassai si-taosi-ta.
      T-NOM tree-ACC logdo-topple-Past
      ‘Lit., Taroo cut down the tree.’
   c. Taroo-ga naki-hajime-ta.
      Taroo-NOM cry-start-Past
      ‘Taroo began to cry.’
   d. Taroo-ga gookyuu si-hajime-ta.
      Taroo-NOM crying do-start-Past
      ‘Taroo began to cry.’

Phrases (3a) and (3b) are examples of LCVs. In contrast, (3c) and (3d) are SCVs. It is inappropriate to substitute Sino-Japanese verbs for V₁ because LCVs are pairs of single words V₁ and V₂, as seen in (1a). In contrast, V₁ in SCVs can be replaced as in (3d) since V₁ projects its maximal projection, namely, VP₁, which is distinct from VP₂.

The third test to distinguish LCVs from SCVs is to adjoin an honorific expression to V₁ by using o-V-ni naru ‘V-Hon.’ According to Kishimoto (2007), the subject-honorification mechanism in Japanese SCVs is accounted for by means of a spec-head agreement. More concisely, subject honorification is allowed only when the verb with a subject honorific marker agrees with its argument, a person worthy of respect, with the feature [+honorific], as explained in (4).

(4) Subject honorification in Japanese

\[
\text{TARGET} \xrightarrow{[+\text{honorific}]} \text{VP} \xrightarrow{\text{V}} \text{vP}
\]

Assuming that Kishimoto’s (2007) account is correct, it is predicted that applying honorification to only V₁ in LCVs will be unacceptable because they will no longer bear a single vP; however, since SCVs do bear two vPs, as shown in (1b), they can accept honorification. This is, in fact, what happens. An example of this for an LCV is shown in (5).

(5) a. Ito-sensei-ga ki-o kiri-taosi-ta.
    Dr. I-NOM tree-ACC cut-topple-Past
    b. *…… o-kiri-ni-nari taosi-ta.
    cut-HON topple-Past
    c. …… o-kiri-taosi-ni-nat-ta.
    cut-topple-HON-Past
    ‘Dr. Ito cut down the tree.’

In (5b), it is shown that subject honorific marking is not limited to only V₁, but extends to the whole LCV kiri-taosi, as in (5c), because LCVs bear only a single VP-shell structure, as presented in (1a). In contrast to LCVs, SCVs bear two-layered vPs, as illustrated in (1b). Therefore, since there are two different positions base-generated for the subjects; namely, a Spec of vP₁ and a Spec of vP₂, SCVs such as V₁-hajimeru bear two different syntactic structures.
(6) a. Ito-sensei-ga bentoo-o tabe-hajime.ta  
   Dr. I-NOM boxed lunch-ACC eat-start-Past 
b.  ·····  o-tabe-ni-nari hajime.ta.  
   eat-HON start-Past 
c.  ····· o-tabe-hajime-ni-nat.ta.  
   eat-start-HON-Past 
   ‘Dr. Ito started to eat a boxed lunch.’

Subject honorification in (6b) and (6c) is appropriately legitimized for the following reasons. In (6b), the lexical subject is originated from the Spec of vP₁, so that the honorific marker is attached to the stem of the downstairs verb, tabe ‘eat.’ In (6c), however, the subject is base-generated in the Spec of vP₂. Therefore, the honorific marker is attached to the stem of the whole verb, tabe-hajime ‘eat-start.’

3. Complex Verbs in Korean

In this section, we give an overview of studies of Korean complex verbs. There are similarities and differences between Japanese complex verbs and Korean complex verbs. The properties of LCVs and SCVs in Korean are discussed in that order.

3.1 LCVs in Korean

According to Wada (2011), there are Korean LCVs that bear properties similar to those of Japanese LCVs in that V₁ directly attaches to V₂, as shown in (7).

(7) a.  olu-nayli-ta  
   ascend-descend-Decl  
   ‘To do up-down’  
b.  ttwi-nol-ta  
   jump-play-Decl  
   ‘To bum around’  
   (Wada 2011:84)

In (7a) and (7b), for example, V₂ is attached to the stem of V₁. In this way, it is broadly accepted that some Korean LCVs are similar to Japanese LCVs.

3.2 SCVs in Korean

The case is different for SCVs in Korean. Following Tsukamoto’s (2012) suggestion, it is appropriate to argue that Korean has few SCVs similar to those in Japanese. Instead, the events denoted by the Japanese SCVs are rephrased in expressions other than complex verbs. Examples (8a), (9a), and (10a) are Korean, while (8b), (9b), and (10b) are the Japanese equivalents.

(8) a. Yenghui-ka tosirak-ul  
   Yenghui-NOM boxed lunch-ACC  
   mek-nun-kes-ul  ic -ess-ta.  
   eat-Rel-NMNZ-ACC forget-Past-Decl.  
   ‘Yenghui forgot to eat a boxed lunch.’
   b. Taroo-ga bentoo-o tabe-wasure-ta.  
   T-NOM b.l.-ACC eat-forget-Past  
   ‘Taroo forgot to eat a boxed lunch.’

   Y-NOM b.l.-ACC all eat-Past-Decl.  
   ‘Yenghui ate a boxed lunch completely.’
   b. Taroo-ga bentoo-o tabe-oe-ta.  
   T-NOM b.l.-ACC eat-finish-Past  
   ‘Taroo finished eating a boxed lunch.’

(10) a. Yenghui-ka tosirak-ul kyeysok  
   Y-NOM b.l.-ACC successively  
   mek-ess-ta.  
   eat-Past-Decl.  
   ‘Yenghui continued to eat a boxed lunch.’
   b. Taroo-ga bentoo-o tabe-tuzuke-ta.  
   T-NOM b.l.-ACC eat-continue-Past  
   ‘Taroo continued to eat a boxed lunch.’
than the complex verb *mek-icnunta* ‘eat-forget,’ is used to express the same meaning as the Japanese *tabe-wasureru* ‘forget to eat something.’ To denote the events expressed in Japanese as (9b) and (10b), the respective Korean denotations (9a) and (10a) indicate the events by using adverbs such as *ta* ‘all’ and *kyesok* ‘successively,’ rather than by using complex verbs.

From the above, Tsukamoto (2012) concludes that there are no longer SCVs in Korean.

3.3. Some Intriguing Properties of *Sicakhata*

With respect to Tsukamoto’s (2012) descriptions of Korean complex verbs, Baek (2005) states that *sicakhata* ‘start’ expresses the events inferred from an inchoative reading by attaching *sicakhata* to *V*₁, in the same way that *hajimeru* ‘start’ does in Japanese, as shown in (11):


‘Yenghui began to cry.’

In (11), *sicakhata* is attached to *wul-ki*, which means ‘cry-suffix, but not the stem of *V*₁, *wul’.

With respect to the suffix *ki*, Ito (2012) argues that *ki* serves two functions as a suffix in Korean: it turns verbs into gerunds or verbal nouns, and it turns verbs into nouns. In this paper, we adopt the latter proposal for the following reasons. When the suffix *ki* is used for nominalization of a verb, the verb to which *ki* is attached is not expected to assign an accusative case to its complement because Korean nouns cannot assign an accusative case to their complement. However, verbal nouns can do so because they retain the nature of verbs. Notably, a verb stem with the suffix *ki* can assign an accusative case to its complement when the verb is the complement of *sicakhata*, as shown in (12).


‘Yenghui started to eat a boxed lunch.’

It is sufficient to consider the suffix *ki* attached to the stem of the verb *mek* as creating a verbal noun, rather than as nominalizing the verb. Furthermore, it is considered that Korean complex verbs such as *mekki sicakhata* resemble Japanese SCVs such as *tabe hajimeru* in the sense that *V*₂ is attached to verbs (or verbal nouns). This raises a question. Is there a configuration between verbal nouns and *sicakhata* as *V*₂, in the same way as for Japanese SCVs where *V*₂ is *hajimeru*?

4. Hypothesis

4.1 Working Hypothesis

To clarify the question of the previous section, we consider the following working hypothesis.

(13) Korean complex verbs where *V*₂ is *sicakhata* have the same properties as Japanese SCVs where *V*₂ is *hajimeru*.

4.2 Prediction

If (13) is correct, then the three tests shown in (2), (3), and (5) and (6) will succeed for Korean complex verbs where *V*₂ is *sicakhata*. Stated another way, the substitution with *kuleykey hata* ‘do so,’ the substitution with Sino-Korean verbs, and subject honorification, will be applicable to Korean complex verbs where *V*₂ is *sicakhata*.
5. Result and Discussion

In this section, we investigate the results of applying the three tests to \( V_1 \) in Korean complex verbs. First, let us look at the substitution with *kuleykey hata* in Korean.

(14) a. Yenghui-ka tosirak-ul
   Yenghui-NOM boxed lunch-ACC
   mek-ki sicakh-ess-ta.
   eat-suffix start-Past-Decl.
   ‘Yenghui started to eat a boxed lunch.’
b. Kuliko, Chelswu-to kuleykey
   And, Chelswu-also so
   ha-ki sicakh-ess-ta.
   do-suffix start-Past-Decl
   ‘And, Chelswu also started to do so.’

In (14b), *tosirakul mek* in *tosirakul mekki* is expressed as *kuleykey ha* from *kuleykey hata*. It means that the test regarding the substitution of \( V_1 \) for *kuleykey hata* succeeds when applied to Korean complex verbs where \( V_2 \) is *sicakhata*.

The second test is the substitution for Sino-Korean verbs.

(15) a. Yenghui-ka namwu-lul calu-ki
   Yenghui-NOM tree-ACC cut-suffix
   sicakh-ess-ta.
   start-Past-Decl
   ‘Yenghui started to cut the tree.’
b. Yenghui-ka pemok-ha-ki
   Yenghui-NOM logging-do-suffix
   sicakh-ess-ta.
   start-Past-Decl
   ‘Yenghui started logging.’

As in (15b), it is shown that \( V_1 \) can be substituted with Sino-Korean verbs. In other words, *namwu-lul caluta* in (15a) is restated as *ki-o kiru* ‘cut the tree’ in Japanese, and *pelmokhata* in (15b) can be rephrased as *batuboku suru* ‘cut the tree’ in Japanese.

This suggests that there is a configuration between \( V_1 \) and \( V_2 \) because the two tests noted above, the substitution of \( V_1 \) with *kuleykey hata* and the substitution of \( V_1 \) with Sino-Korean verbs succeed for Korean complex verbs where \( V_2 \) is *sicakhata*. We next consider whether *sicakhata* c-selects \( vP \) as its complement in the way that *hajimeru* c-selects \( vP \) as its complement. To make progress on this question, we consider subject honorification as the third test.

Before looking at the result of a subject-honorification test, we give an overview of several previous studies on the subject-honorification mechanism in Korean. It is well-known that there is a bound morpheme, *(u)si*, which acts as a suffix attached to verb stems to represent honorific meanings in Korean. In addition, we assume here that there is subject-verb honorific agreement in Korean (see Choi 2003, Kim 2010, among others, for more about this assumption). For example, Choi (2003) postulates that an agreement projection AgrP occurs above VP when *(u)si* occurs in a head of the AgrP. In this paper, although this issue is extensively discussed in relation to the subject-honorification mechanism in Korean, we tentatively assume that AgrP in studies of Korean concerning subject honorification is identical to \( vP \) in studies of Japanese concerning subject honorification. This is because both AgrP in Korean and \( vP \) in Japanese are situated above VP and create spec-head agreement. Therefore, we assume that the subject honorific suffix *(u)si* occupies a head of \( vP \).

If the working hypothesis presented in (13) is correct, then *(u)si* can be attached not only to the stem of \( V_2 \) but also to a stem of \( V_1 \). Now, consider (16), in which the honorific suffix *(u)si*
is used as the third test.

(16) Lee-sensayng-nim-i namwu-lul
Lee-teacher-HON-NOM tree-ACC
a. calu-ki sicakha-si-ess-ta
    cut-suffix start-HON-Past-Decl
    \((V_1\text{-suffix }V_2\text{-HON})\)
b. *calu-ki-si sicakh-ess-ta
    \((V_1\text{-suffix-HON }V_2)\)
c. *calu-si-ki sicakh-ess-ta
    \((V_1\text{-HON-suffix }V_2)\)

‘Dr. Lee started to cut down the tree.’

The suffix \((u)si\) can follow \(V_2\) when it is \textit{sicakha}, as shown in (16a). However, contrary to the prediction, \((u)si\) is never attached to \(V_1\) \textit{caluta} (‘cut’), as illustrated in (16b) and (16c). These mean that Korean complex verbs where \(V_2\) is \textit{sicakha} are not identical to SCVs in Japanese. If they were the same syntactic structure, then they would necessarily show the same results on the three tests. However, Korean complex verbs behave differently from Japanese SCVs with respect to subject honorification, as shown by the tests in (16b) and (16c). Consequently, we propose the following for the syntactic structure of Korean complex verbs where \(V_2\) is \textit{sicakha}, using the same sentence as in (16).

\begin{equation}
\begin{tikzpicture}
\node (NP) at (0,0) {NP};
\node (TP) at (1,0) {TP};
\node (T) at (2,0) {T \text{-ta}};
\node (C) at (3,0) {C};
\node (VP_1) at (0,-1) {VP_1 \text{-ess}};
\node (NP_2) at (1,-1) {NP_2};
\node (T') at (2,-1) {T' \text{-ta}};
\node (NP_1) at (3,-1) {NP_1};
\node (VNP) at (4,-1) {VNP};
\node (VP_2) at (5,-1) {VP_2 \text{-si}};
\node (VN) at (6,-1) {VN \text{ sicakha}};
\node (v_1) at (4,-2) {v_1 \text{-ki}};
\node (v_2) at (5,-2) {v_2 \text{-ess}};
\node (v_3) at (6,-2) {v_3 \text{-ta}};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{equation}

While \textit{hajimeru} takes \(vP\) to its complement, \textit{sicakha} takes a \(VNP\) to its complement, as presented in (17). Hence, the working hypothesis presented in (13) is rejected because c-selection regarding the complement is different between \textit{hajimeru} and \textit{sicakha}.

6. Consequence and Implications

In this paper, we have presented a new syntactic structure for complex verbs where \(V_2\) is \textit{sicakha} in Korean, comparing this with SCVs in Japanese. Korean complex verbs where \(V_2\) is \textit{sicakha} bear properties similar to Japanese SCVs in that two tests, the substitution with \textit{kuleykey hata} and the substitution with Sino-Korean verbs, succeed for \(V_1\) in Korean complex verbs, as mentioned in (14) and (15). However, \textit{sicakha} differs from \textit{hajimeru} in terms of c-selection: \textit{sicakha} takes a \(VNP\) to its complement, while \textit{hajimeru} takes a \(vP\) to its complement. This result suggests that even though the tests to distinguish between LCVs and SCVs succeed for \(V_1\), this does not mean that Korean complex verbs as discussed here correspond to Japanese SCVs. In other words, these tests may indicate that there is a configuration between \(V_1\) and \(V_2\), but it does not make sense to regard the complex predicates that pass the tests as SCVs, even when there is a configuration. As is the case with previous studies, these three tests have been used to examine whether or not complex predicates are SCVs. Here, in the case of Korean complex verbs such as \(V\text{-sicakha}\), while Tsukamoto (2012) argues that there are few SCVs in Korean, Beak (2005) argues that Korean complex verbs where \(V_2\) is \textit{sicakha} are identical to Japanese SCVs where \(V_2\) is \textit{hajimeru}. Our consequence in this paper implies that Tsukamoto’s proposal could be more adequate than Beak’s (2005) one.
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Endnotes
1 NOM = Nominative, ACC = Accusative, Rel = Relative, NMNZ = Nominalizer, Decl = Declarative, HON = Honorific
2 Tsukamoto (2012) regards the suffix ki as turning verbs into nouns.
3 Unlike sicakhata, other verbs cannot directly take a V₁ that is attached to a suffix ki for the complement, as seen in (i):
(i) Taroo-ka tosirak-ul
   Taroo-NOM boxed lunch-ACC
   a.*mek-ki ic-ess-ta
   eat-suffix forget-Past-Decl.
   b.*mek-ki kkuthn-ess-ta
   eat-suffix finish-Past-Decl.
   c.*mek-ki kesokh-ess-ta
   eat-suffix continue-Past-Decl.

References