The Double Functions of Korean Benefactive Suffix

Introduction. This paper provides new evidence that the benefactive suffix -(e)cwu in Korean serves two different functions in syntax. Depending on whether it heads an applicative phrase or functions as a co-head of v, -(e)cwu exhibits distinct behaviors with respect to argument licensing, types of compatible roots, and the interaction with causative morphology.

Puzzle. Korean benefactive suffix -(e)cwu can appear either after the verb (1), or a causative suffix (2):

(1) Yenghi-ka tongsayng-ekey ppang-ul kwu-*cwu-ess-ta.
   Yenghi-Nom brother-Dat bread-Acc bake-*BEN-Past-Decl
   ‘Yenghi baked bread for brother.’

(2) Yenghi-ka ai-ekey os-ul ip-hi-(cwu)-ess-ta.
   Yenghi-Nom child-Dat clothes-Acc wear-LEX.CAUS-(BEN)-Past-Decl
   ‘Yenghi dressed the child (for the child’s benefit).’

However, (1) and (2) behave differently in the omissibility of the benefactive suffix. (1) becomes ungrammatical without -(e)cwu. In contrast, leaving out -(e)cwu in (2) merely results in the modification of the semantics – that is, the benefactive interpretation disappears.

Note that the contrast in (1)-(2) is not due to the presence/absence of the causative suffix. (3), which involves a lexical causative suffix, patterns with (1), rather than (2):

(3) Yenghi-ka tongsayng-ekey lamyen-ul kkul-i-cwu-ess-ta.
   Yenghi-Nom brother-Dat noodle-Acc boil-LEX.CAUS-*BEN-Past-Decl
   ‘Yenghi cooked noodle for brother.’

The question, then, is: what is the source of the disjunction between (1)/(3) and (2)?

Proposal. I argue that the contrast in the grammaticality between (1)/(3) and (2) is due to the distinct syntactic functions of the relevant benefactive suffix. Specifically, in (1) and (3) -(e)cwu projects its own maximal Appl projection, as in (4). The ApplP is in turn selected for by Voice, which hosts an external argument (Kratzer 1994). In contrast, in (2) the terminal node v is split into two pieces (i.e., the verbalizing v with the causative feature and -(e)cwu with the benefactive feature), as in (5) – a phenomenon known as “fission” (Noyer 1997, Halle 1997) within Distributed Morphology.

(4) & (5)

Evidence. The two roles of -(e)cwu depicted in (4)-(5) are evidenced by the ability to introduce its own argument. In (4) the relationship between Appl and the Beneficiary is obligatory, since Appl is a functional category introducing an applied argument (Pylkkänen 2002). The fact that the simple transitive counter part of (1) in (6) is acceptable, whereas (1) is allowed only when the dative argument and -(e)cwu co-occur, shows that the dative argument in (1) is a Beneficiary introduced by Appl as in (4).

(6) Yenghi-ka ppang-ul kwu-ess-ta.
   Yenghi-Nom bread-Acc bake-Past-Decl
   ‘Yenghi baked bread.’

On the other hand, in (5) -(e)cwu is not responsible for introducing the Possessor argument because it is
an internal argument of the root. This is why in (2), leaving out -(e)cwu does not incur ungrammaticality.

**Consequences.** The present proposal makes several predictions. **#1** First, according to (4), Korean Appl is a high applicative (Pylkkänen 2002), located higher than the verbalizing layer. High applicatives are cross-linguistically attested to be compatible with unergative roots (Pylkkänen 2002). This prediction is borne out in (7), where -(e)cwu is required in the presence of a dative Beneficiary argument:

(7) Yenghi-ka Chelswu-ekey wus/nolayha-*((ecwu)-ess-ta.

Yenghi-Nom Chelswu-Dat smile/sing-*((APPL)-Past-Decl

‘Yenghi smiled/sang for Chelswu.’

**#2** On the other hand, ditransitive roots, which require two internal arguments, are predicted to be associated with the structure in (5), not (4). In other words, when -(e)cwu occurs with a ditransitive root, it is expected to be optional like (2). This is confirmed in (8):

(8) Yenghi-ka Chelswu-ekey pyenci-lul ponay-(ecwu)-ess-ta.

Yenghi-Nom Chelswu-Dat letter-Acc send-(BEN)-Past-Decl

‘Yenghi sent Chelswu a letter.’

**Extension.** This proposal can be extended to account for the interaction of -(e)cwu and Korean productive causative -keyha. It is known that -keyha is Voice-selecting (Jung 2013). That is, in a productive causative construction, the whole VoiceP structure in (4) is selected for by -keyha as a complement. This predicts that when -(e)cwu is followed, thus is scoped over, by -keyha like (9), -(e)cwu functions as the Appl head as in (4). In that case, -(e)cwu must be present with the Beneficiary argument, as is shown in (9):


mother-Nom Yenghi-Dat brother-Dat bread-Acc bake-*((APPL)-SYN,CAUS-Past-Decl

‘Mother made Yenghi bake bread for brother.’

In contrast, when -(e)cwu follows -keyha like (10), it adds a permissive interpretation and is omissible.


mother-Nom Yenghi-Dat bread-Acc bake-SYN,CAUS-(BEN)-Past-Decl

‘Mother let Yenghi bake bread.’

This is expected if -(e)cwu in (10) is the co-head of vSYN,CAUS, similar to (5). This way -(e)cwu, together with -keyha, can select for the inner caused event (i.e., VoiceP) in (10). (11) is ungrammatical, where a separate Beneficiary is added to (10), hypothesizing that -(cwu) is an Appl:


mother-Nom brother-Dat Yenghi-Dat bread-Acc bake-SYN,CAUS-APPL-Past-Decl

Intended: ‘Mother, for brother, made Yenghi bake bread.’

The ungrammatical confirms the fact that -(e)cwu in (10) is indeed the co-head of v, not an Appl head.

**Typology.** Interestingly, Turkish has a similar usage of co-heads. In Turkish, unlike Korean, reduplicating the causative suffix produces a permissive causative. Note that the reduplicated causative in (12) does not introduce a new argument, just like its Korean counterpart in (10):

(12) Can-ı çahış-tr-(t)-ma-dı-m. [Turkish]

Can-Acc work-CAUS-(CAUS)-Neg-Past-1sg

‘I didn’t let Can work.’

Turkish causative in (12) supports the present analysis of -(e)cwu in (5). Since reduplication targets the root level, it suggests that Korean -(e)cwu in (10)/(5) is a head, rather than is adjoined to vCAUS as a phrase.

**Conclusions.** This paper has shown that Korean benefactive suffix -(e)cwu has a double life as an applicative head or as a co-head of v. The results of this study imply that the distributions of the benefactive -(e)cwu in Korean are determined by syntactic conditions.