Applicative selecting causatives: Evidence from Korean

The Korean voice morpheme -i (henceforth, -I morpheme), which surfaces variously as -i, -hi, -li, -ki, is well known for its unusual distribution: it marks seemingly opposite contexts, causatives (1a) and passives (1b) (e.g., Lee 1986). The most elaborated previous analysis views the morpheme in both (1a) and (1b) as a realization of v\_CAUSE (Kang 1997). In this paper, I show that this yields incorrect results, and propose a more straightforward analysis. Assuming Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz 1993), I argue that the -I morpheme can be inserted into causatives and passives post-syntactically due to a shared syntactic property: a high applicative complement structure where a dative DP is an applied argument (2). The proposed analysis not only sheds new light on possible types of complement of causatives, but also yields interesting correspondences between structures and theta roles: an applicative structure is a new type of complement of causatives, and it introduces a non-agentive external argument.

Pylkkänen (2002) argues that causatives can vary in their complements. One type is a verb-selecting (VS) causative that chooses VP without an external argument as a complement. The other is a phase-selecting (PS) causative that chooses a constituent with an external argument (e.g., VoiceP) as a complement. An agent-oriented adverb can modify the complement of a PS causative but not that of a VS causative. A high applicative can be embedded under a PS causative but not under a VS causative.

I demonstrate that Korean causatives belong to neither selecting type. I argue that Korean causatives select a high applicative (ApplP) as a complement. ApplP denotes a relation between an individual and an event, and introduces a non-agentive external argument (Pylkkänen, 2002).

Major support for the proposed analysis comes from the fact that (i) the embedded clauses of causatives and passives pattern the same, and (ii) they pattern differently from complements of both selecting types. The first fact (i) suggests that the -I morpheme as a v\_CAUSE type head (Kang 1997) is not adequate, since this fails to capture the fact in (i). The second fact (ii), together with (i), supports the proposed analysis shown in (2). Unlike a VS type, causatives and passives have a thematic subject of the embedded event, namely a dative DP (1) (e.g., Kim 2005; Son 2006). Unlike the embedded argument of a PS type, the dative DP is not a fully-fledged agent. It cannot bind the reflexive pronoun caki ‘self’ that requires a semantic subject antecedent (3) (Shibatani 1973; Park 2005): it also cannot be modified by an agent-oriented adverb ‘on purpose’ (4) (e.g., Song 1993; Baek 1997). Thus, the dative DP in (1) is licensed by Appl (2) that relates a non-agentive argument in its specifier to an event VP.

A high applicative analysis unifies the distribution of the Korean -I morpheme. Notably, a high applicative is a new type of complement of causatives that was absent in Pylkkänen’s (2002) classification. This finding yields an intriguing syntactic composition of theta roles: Appl introduces a non-agentive external argument, which merges below Voice that introduces an agentive external argument. The proposed analysis also paves the way for morphological syncretism by supporting the view that the syncretism is due to syntax, not semantics (Embick 1997). The analysis also provides new insights into causative/experiencer have in English, which shows striking similarities to the -I morpheme.
(1) a. Suni-ka Minsu-eykey chayk-lul ilk-hi-ess-ta  
Suni-NOM Minsu-DAT book-ACC read-I-PAST-DEC  
‘Suni made Minsu read the book.’  
b. Suni-ka Minsu-eykey son-lul cap-hi-ess-ta  
Minsu-NOM Minsu-DAT hand-ACC hold-I-PAST-DEC  
‘Suni_1 got her_1 hand held by Minsu.’  

(2)  
VoiceP  
   
ApplP Voice  
   -I  
DPDAT  
   
V PP ApP  
   
DPACC V  

(3) a. Suni₁-ka Minsu₂-eykey caki₁⁻₂-uy chayk-lul ilk-hi-ess-ta  
Suni-NOM Minsu-DAT self-GEN book-ACC read-I-PAST-DEC  
‘Suni₁ made Minsu₂ read her₁/*his₂ book.’  
b. Suni₁-ka Minsu₂-eykey caki₁⁻₂-uy pang-eyse son-ul cap-hi-ess-ta  
Suni-NOM Minsu-DAT self-GEN room-in hand-ACC hold-I-PAST-DEC  
‘Suni₁ got her hand held by Minsu₂ in her₁/*his₂ room.’  

(4) a. Suni₁-ka Minsu₂-eykey chayk-lul ilpwule₁⁻₂ ilk-hi-ess-ta  
Suni-NOM Minsu-DAT book-ACC on purpose read-I-PAST-DEC  
‘Suni₁ made Minsu₂ read the book on purpose₁⁻₂.’ (Suni’s intention, not Minsu’s)  
b. Suni₁-ka Minsu₂-eykey son-ul ilpwule₁⁻₂ cap-hi-ess-ta  
Suni-NOM Minsu-DAT hand-ACC on purpose hold-I-PAST-DEC  
‘Suni₁ got her hand held by Minsu₂ on purpose₁⁻₂.’ (Suni’s intention, not Minsu’s)  