

Setting subject and the inferential cleft construction in Korean

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This article aims to develop a cognitive-functional analysis of the Korean inferential cleft construction (ICC) by identifying two motivations. It is demonstrated that the ICC must be understood as a mechanism to improve coherence and relevance in the text; it is first and foremost motivated to establish relationships between the preceding context and the event denoted by the subordinate clause headed by *kes*. By pointing out that attempts to ascertain concrete meanings of the ICC are bound to be futile, we argue that various meanings the ICC exhibits arise by mapping it onto the result phase of the epistemic cycle. The second motivation for the ICC is to put the proposition in the spotlight by indicating that the global circumstances, not the speaker, warrant judgment. Consequently, the speaker staves off the responsibility for her epistemic judgment.

Keywords: epistemic cycle, epistemic judgment, inferential cleft construction, reference point, setting subject, specificational copula

1. Introduction

This article aims to develop a cognitive-functional analysis of the Korean inferential cleft construction (ICC), illustrated in (1). The examples are intended to demonstrate many formal and semantic variations of the construction; they are not an exhaustive list of the usages of the ICC.¹ The ICC is defined as a gapless cleft construction that requires some types of inferential semantic properties, such as explanation, intention/suggestion, promise/command, and contrast.²

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1. The most natural interpretations of the ICC examples in (1) are with the adjectives provided within parentheses in English translations.
 2. The ICC is gapless in the sense that the *kes*-clause does not have a missing element.

(1) a. Explanation

(Ku-nun 44 sey-ttay congsinhyeng-ul senko pat-a
 he-TOP 44 years.old-at life.sentence-ACC sentence receive-CONN
 swukam-toy-n twi, 74 sey-uy nai-ey
 imprison-become-ADN after 74 years.old-GEN age-at
 sekpang-toy-ess-ta.) Him-i nemchi-ten
 release-become-PST-DCL strength-NOM full.of-RETR.ADN
 cwungnyen-i paykpal-uy noin-i toy-e
 middle.aged-NOM gray.hair-GEN old.person-NOM become-COMP
 tola-o-n kes-i-ta.
 return-come-ANT.ADN KES-COP-DCL

‘(After sentenced to life at 42, he was released at 72.) It is (apparent) that a middle-aged man full of strength returned as an old man.

(Magazine, 1999, Yonsei Balanced Corpus)

b. Intention/Suggestion

(Kulehtako setpwulli wusan-ul cosa-ha-l swu-to
 CONJ carelessly umbrella-ACC examine-do-PROS.ADN DN-also
 eps-nun il-i-ess-ta.) Cemwen-un hwaksilhan cungke-lul
 not-ADN affair-COP-PST-DCL clerk-TOP certain evidence-ACC
 palkyen-ha-l ttaykkaci mihayng-ha-ki-lo ha-yss-ten
 discover-do-PM until follow-do-NOMZ-INST do-PST-RETR.ADN
 kes-i-ta.
 KES-COP-DCL

‘(So, she/he could not carelessly examine the umbrella). It is (apparent) that the clerk has decided to secretly follow the person until she/he discovers firm evidence.’

(Essay, 1994, Yonsei Balanced Corpus)

c. Promise/Command

(Kukes-un saylowun yuhyeng-uy yuthophia-laya ha-n-ta.) Ku
 that.thing-TOP new type-GEN utopia-CONN do-PRS-DCL that
 silhyen-i yek yuthophia-lul nah-nun kes-i-ese-nun
 realization-NOM reverse utopia-ACC produce-ADN KES-COP-SEQ-TOP
 an-toy-nun kes-i-ta.
 NOT-become-SIM.ADN KES-COP-DCL

‘(That must be a new type of utopia.) It is (imperative) that its realization must not be a reverse utopia.’

(Academic, 1995, Yonsei Balanced Corpus)

d. Contrast

(Cikum changpakk-eynun ttayanin chwunsel-i nayly-e
 now outside.window-at out.of.season spring.snow-NOM fall-CONN
 machi hankyewul kathun phwungkyeng-ul caanay-ko iss-ta.)
 seems middle.of.winter like scenery-ACC exhibit-COMP exist-DCL
 Kulena cengnyeng pom-un ittang-ey wa iss-nun
 but really spring-TOP this.land-at come exist-SIM.ADN
 kes-i-ta.

KES-COP-DCL

‘(The scenery outside of the window seems like the middle of the winter
 due to the spring snow.) It is (by contrast obvious) that spring has come to
 this land. (Fiction, 2003, Yonsei Balanced Corpus)

Despite different observable variations, the ICC has the schematic structure of (2), where CLAUSE denotes a gapless clause. The bold-faced portion in (2) gives rise to a focus by being new information in a given situation. The ellipsis within brackets indicates a discourse context; the ICC requires a linguistic context, and it is either awkward or unacceptable if it is spoken or written without any preceding sentence.³

(2) (...) [**CLAUSE-n/-un/-nun**] kes-i-ta.

While the Korean ICC has drawn considerable attention from linguists, most of the research has been conducted by a small group of scholars working within the *Kwukeyhak* ‘Korean Language Studies’ tradition.⁴ A typical research method of these scholars is to provide a robust set of descriptions of a given phenomenon. Valuable as it may be, their work presents a lesser degree of relevance to contemporary linguistic theories and debates. Our analyses to be presented in this article are modest in the sense that we are not proposing an entirely new account. Instead, we shed light on the cognitive-functional motivation of these constructions by expanding the insights of the *Kwukeyhak* scholars.

The upshot of our proposal is as follows. First, the Korean ICC exhibits noticeable differences from other languages in both form and function, which is discussed in Section 2.1. Second, a uniform treatment of the Korean ICC poses a challenge because there are several types of irreconcilable meanings. Third, information structure must be taken into account in analyzing the Korean ICC because, as we argue, the Korean ICC is one example of utilizing a reference point that corresponds to a setting subject. The two terms—reference point and setting

3. The same observation is made by Kim and Sells (2011); Kim (2016), and Son (2023).

4. These scholars’ research is almost always written in Korean and published in Korea, making their work difficult for Western scholars to access.

subject—are the parlance of Cognitive Grammar (CG), and they will be explained in detail with their relevance to our discussion throughout this article. Fourth—the main component of our proposal—it is demonstrated that the ICC must be understood as a mechanism to improve coherence and relevance in the text; it is first and foremost motivated to establish relationships between the preceding context and the event denoted by the subordinate clause headed by *kes*. The two sentences in (1a), for instance, “hang together” (cohesion) without additional markers, where the ICC functions as an explanation of its preceding sentence.⁵ The second motivation for the ICC is to put the proposition in the spotlight by indicating that the global circumstances (setting), not the speaker, warrant the judgment. Consequently, the speaker staves off the responsibility for her epistemic judgment.⁶ For example, in the Korean ICC Example (1b), the clerk’s intention of secretly following someone is viewed from a generalized conceptualizer’s perspective, not from the speaker’s perspective. In doing so, the speaker avoids the spotlight, shifting responsibility to the unspecified circumstances. We further argue that various types of interpretations associated with the ICC are symptomatic of the general cognitive-functional principle of the epistemic mapping laid out in Langacker (2011). It is demonstrated that any attempt to sieve through for a concrete uniform meaning of the ICC is bound to fail.

The organization of this article is as follows. Section two provides the necessary background for this discussion: the ICC in other languages, Korean cleft constructions, and two CG notions—setting subject and reference point. Section three presents characteristic properties of the Korean ICC. Section four discusses the discursive properties of the ICC. In these sections, along with the literature review and the description of the ICC, we present our Cognitive Grammar (CG)-based analysis in an informal way. We then provide a more technical CG analysis of the ICC in Section five. Section six concludes this article by summarizing our findings and discussing some implications of our research.

2. Background

This section provides the necessary background to contextualize our analyses. In the first subsection, we discuss the ICC in languages other than Korean, which offers a glimpse into the general patterns of the ICC. The second subsection dis-

5. While our use of “cohesion” here is identical to that of Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) and Halliday’s (1985), it may be treated as the same concept as CG’s reference point (see Langacker, 1993, 2008).

6. Our view is based on Langacker’s (2011) position on the English *it ~ that* construction.

cusses three types of cleft constructions in Korean; as the ICC is a type of cleft construction, comparing and contrasting the ICC with other cleft constructions would offer an explanation of why the ICC does not belong to either of the other two types.⁷ Finally, we introduce two theoretical concepts adopted from CG-setting subject and reference point—in the third subsection, which serve as the central constructs in our analyses.

2.1 The ICC in other languages

Delahunty (2001) provides examples of the ICC from multiple languages; we introduce some of his original examples in (3–6).⁸

- (3) English
It was just that they saw, however foolish, a kind of life with her where they wouldn't be hassled and troubled. (Delahunty, 2001, p. 518)
- (4) Spanish
Es que Florencio está enamorado de una rana.
'It's that Florencio is in love with a frog.' (Delahunty, 2001, p. 518)
- (5) German
Es ist nicht so, daß wir bei Null anfangen hätten.
'It is not that we started from zero.' (Delahunty, 2001, p. 518)
- (6) Japanese
kaze o hiita no desu.
'It is that I have caught a cold.' (Delahunty, 2001, p. 518)

While the above examples exhibit a similar pattern, a closer examination reveals that some of the data presented above are unnatural, and languages differ in how the speaker expresses this inferential. Let us consider the example from Declerck (1992), shown in (7).

- (7) (He was shot in this house.) It is that he knew too much. .
(Declerck, 1992, p. 219)

7. The three types of the cleft construction are illustrated in Section 2.2.

8. Scholars call the construction by different names: "sentential focus cleft" (Horn, 1989), "inferential construction" (Delahunty, 1990 & 1995), "inferential cleft" (Lambrecht, 2001), or "*it is that*-construction" (Otake, 2002). We adopt the most widely-used term, "inferential cleft," in this article.

Examples like (7) are treated as fully acceptable by researchers like Declerck (1992). But as discussed by Koops (2007), most native speakers take (7) as unnatural, albeit grammatical. Koops's (2007, p. 213) corpus investigation shows that the English ICC rarely occurs in its base form. Instead, they almost always occur with negation, *just*, degree adverbs, epistemic modal, or in the *wh*-cleft construction. Unlike English, Japanese fully permits the unmarked ICC, as illustrated with additional examples in (8a–b). The ICC examples in (8) are given with the relevant contexts, but they may appear at the beginning of the discourse without being awkward or unnatural.⁹

- (8) a. (Daremo watashi-o dansu ni sasotte kure nakatta.) Watashi-wa amari
nobody me-ACC dance to invited (give) not.have I-TOP enough
kawaiku nai no da wa
be.pretty not NO COP END.FEM
'(Nobody has invited me to dance.) It is that I'm not pretty enough.
(Otake, 2002, p.144)
- b. (Ano oto-wa nan deshoo?) Are-wa jyouki kikansha-ga hashitte
that noise-TOP what will.be it-TOP steam locomotive-NOM running
iru n desu
exist NO COP
'(What is that noise?) It is a steam locomotive running.'
(Otake, 2002, p.144)

It is of the utmost importance that we carefully examine the behaviors of the ICC, language by language, before we pursue a uniform treatment of such constructions across languages.¹⁰ As will be discussed, our examination shows that Korean is less constrained than English because it permits the base form in the ICC. It is, however, more constrained than Japanese in that an explicit contextual characterization must be available when the base ICC form is utilized.¹¹ We will discuss the properties of the Korean ICC in more detail in Section 3.

9. Native speakers of Japanese accept (8a–b) as grammatical and natural sentences with or without the sentences in parentheses.

10. The issues of language-specific constraints are discussed by Bearth (1997, 1999), Delahunty and Gatzkiewicz (2000); Otake (2002); Kim and Sells (2011). While Kim and Sells (2011) focus on Korean, there are several issues yet to be resolved.

11. While Japanese and Korean behave differently, as one reviewer noted, Japanese ICCs may have some bearing on Korean ICCs. Some studies (Song, 1979; Y.-H. Park, 2002) suggest that the Korean ICC is historical calquing of the Japanese *no-da* construction. The differences between the two languages might have arisen due to certain factors, such as genre and register, in contact-induced grammaticalization. As language contact and Japanese ICCs are beyond the scope of this article, we will leave this issue for our future research.

2.2 Cleft constructions in Korean

We observe at least three types of cleft constructions in Korean, as illustrated in (9). All clefts in (9) possess the schematic nominal *kes*, which is glossed as KES for the sake of convenience.

- (9) a. Predicational cleft
 [Chelswu-ka ______i sa-n] kes-un] kacca_i-i-ta.
 C-NOM buy-ANT.ADN KES-TOP fake-COP-DCL
 ‘What Chelswu bought was fake.’
- b. Identificational cleft
 [I khemphyuthe]_i-ka palo [Chelswu-ka ______i sa-n]
 this computer-NOM exactly C-NOM buy-ANT.ADN
 kes-i-ta.
 KES-COP-DCL
 ‘This computer is exactly what Chelswu bought.’
- c. Inferential cleft
 Wuli-ka cengpo-lul cwulye-ka-nun ke-yey-yo.¹²
 we-NOM information-ACC reduce-AUX-SIM.ADN KES-COP-END
 ‘It is that we are reducing (the size of) the information.’
 (Year Unknown, Spoken, Yonsei Balanced Corpus)

The three types are similar in that they all occur with the copular construction. But the ICC is distinct from the first two because the cleft component is a complete clause in the ICC shown in (9c), whereas the cleft portions in (9a) and (9b) contain missing objects. The three examples are also different in their information structure (IS). Kim and Sells (2011, p.50) identify a different type of IS for each example. In the predicational cleft, as shown in (10a), the cleft component is associated with given information, while the pivot XP carries new information. The order is switched in the identificational cleft, as in (10b). In the ICC, no linguistically-coded component indicates given information; the whole clause that appears before *kes* conveys new information.¹³

12. *ke-yey-yo* is an allomorphic variation of *kes-i-ta*; it is more colloquial and polite than *kes-i-ta*.

13. For a detailed discussion, see Kim (2016).

- (10) a. Predicational cleft
 [[NP [s CLAUSE] *kes*]-TOP XP-COP-DCL]

 given new
- b. Identificational cleft
 XP-NOM [[NP [s CLAUSE] *kes*]-COP-DCL]

 new given
- c. Inferential cleft
 (adverbial) [[NP [s CLAUSE] *kes*]-COP-DCL]

 new

The bound morpheme *kes* is involved in all three types of cleft constructions. Though identifying its function is necessary to explicate clefts' properties fully, it is beyond the scope of this article. Following Park and Yeon (2023c), we assume that *kes* is a schematic nominal that needs to be grounded.¹⁴

2.3 Setting subject and reference point

We develop a Cognitive Grammar analysis of the Korean ICC, and for this, we introduce two notions germane to our analysis: setting subject and reference point.

2.3.1 Setting subject

Langacker provides an analysis of *setting* in various publications (Langacker, 1991, 2008, 2011, among others). The term refers to the background against which a situation is set. The prototypical setting is a spatial or temporal expanse. Langacker (2008, p. 355) states that “typical settings are things like rooms, buildings, and geographical regions, which are usually conceived as hosting events rather than participating in them.” Langacker (1991, p. 300) claims that “both spatial and temporal expanses lend themselves to construal as the setting” in (11) and (12), respectively. In these examples, *In Louisiana*, *at the beach*, *In July*, and *during the last two years* are construed as settings that host participants.

- (11) a. **In Louisiana**, a hurricane destroyed several small towns.
b. She saw many interesting people **at the beach**. (Langacker, 1991, p.300)

14. Park and Yeon (2023c) do not discuss the inferential cleft type, but their analysis would treat the *kes* in that instance as a schematic nominal. For a different approach to *kes*, please refer to Kim and Sells (2007).

- (12) a. **In July**, a major hurricane struck Louisiana.
 b. We have made a number of important discoveries **during the last two years**.
 (Langacker, 1991, p. 300)

A setting can be construed as a grammatical subject. The most obvious setting subject construction is illustrated in (13). Neither *Thursday* nor *Independence Hall* is a participant. Rather, the subject in (13a) is a temporal setting, whereas the subject in (13b) is a spatial setting.

- (13) a. **Thursday** saw yet another startling development.
 b. **Independence Hall** has witnessed many historic events.
 (Langacker, 1991, p. 346)

The notion of setting subject can be extended to an abstract setting. Langacker (2011) provides a detailed discussion of the impersonal *it* as an abstract setting subject, as shown in (14).

- (14) a. It's hard to wash a cat.
 b. It's embarrassing when you can't remember someone's name.
 c. It rained last night.
 (Langacker, 2011, p. 179)

Let us compare a participant subject with a setting subject using CG diagrams, as illustrated in Figure 1 for the examples in (15).

- (15) a. I admire John. (participant subject)
 b. It is hard to admire John. (setting subject)

In the (a) figure, the rectangle denotes a clause, and the two circles represent participants, i.e., subject and object. The dashed arrow denotes a relationship established between the two participants. Here, *tr* and *lm* stand for trajector and landmark, respectively. While trajector refers to a primary participant, landmark indicates a secondary participant. The bold-faced portions denote profiling, which means designating a conceptualization by means of a linguistic expression. A profiled relationship (dashed arrow) refers to a linguistically encoded relationship between two or more participants in a given scene.¹⁵

The (b) figure contrasts with the (a) figure in that the trajector status is shifted to the abstract setting, denoted by the vertical line. The (b) figure abstracts away from any particular viewer/speaker; as a result, "it portrays the setting as hosting the occurrences specified by the object nominal" (Langacker, 2008, pp. 389–390). Section 5 discusses the relevance of the setting subject to the ICC.

15. For example, in the utterance *I love Elle*, a relationship is profiled by the verb *love*. In this relationship, *I* is the primary participant (trajector) and *Elle* is the secondary participant (landmark).

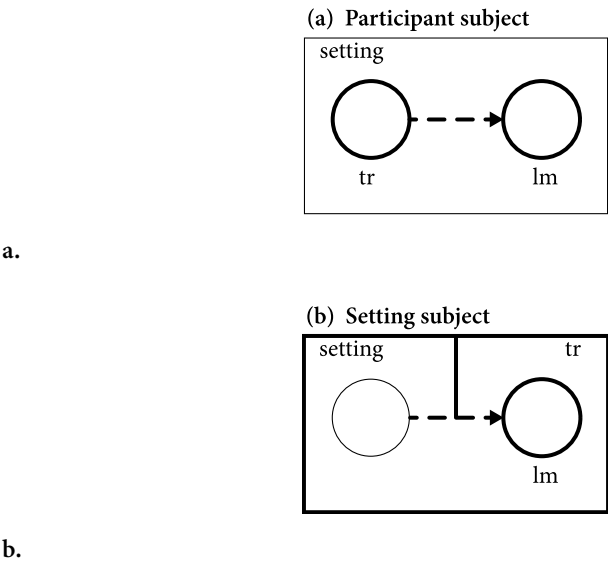


Figure 1. Participant subject vs. setting subject, adapted from Langacker (2008, p.389)

2.3.2 Reference point

Human beings have the basic cognitive ability to invoke the conception of one entity in order to make mental contact with another. The readily accessible entity with which the conceptualizer makes initial contact is called a reference-point, and the less accessible one contacted via the reference point is called a target. As a readily accessible entity for the conceptualizer, the reference point tends to be definite and episode- or hearer-old information.¹⁶ This reference-point ability has numerous linguistic manifestations, as shown in (16).

- (16) a. the car’s headlight (possession)
b. That book, we should have never bought. (topicalization)
c. That book, it never disappoints me. (left-dislocation)

The possessor in (16a) and *that book* in (16b–c) must be familiar to the hearer to be felicitous; therefore, they are associated with hearer-old information. It is worth noting that while the topic is a reference point in the sense that it is a familiar entity to the hearer, not all reference points are topics. For example, the possessor within the NP in (16a) serves as the reference point with respect to the head nominal, but it cannot be a topic.

16. For the distinction between episode/discourse-new vs. episode/discourse-old information, see Lee and Shimojo (2016).

The aspects of the reference point relation are shown schematically in Figure 2. In this figure, C stands for the conceptualizer, R for the reference-point, and D for the dominion. Dominion constitutes the possible set of targets that a given reference point can invoke. The dashed arrow is the mental path the conceptualizer follows to reach the target (T), which is the entity accessed via the reference point, and the bold circles represent profiled nominals.¹⁷ This figure shows the situation where the reference point has conceptual saliency, as notated by the bold circle for R. What the reference point relationship does in Figure 2 is to connect the two individually salient entities, where the first entity functions as a mental address for the second.

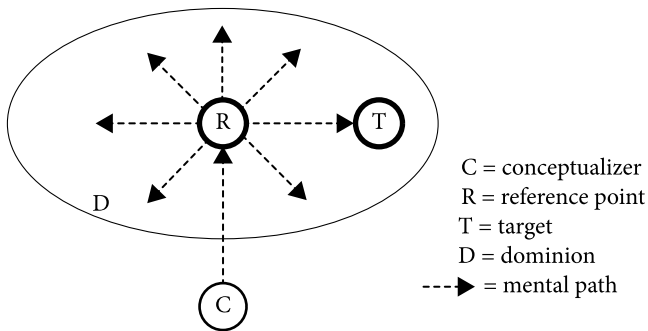


Figure 2. Reference-point illustrated, adapted from Langacker (2008, p. 84)

The left-most nominal, *Cheli*, in (17a–c), exhibits a property of reference point because it serves as a mental address for the inner clause notated by the brackets.

- (17) a. *Cheli-nun* [apeci-ka pwuca-y-a].
 C-TOP father-NOM rich.person-COP-END
 b. *Cheli-ka* [apeci-ka pwuca-y-a].
 C-NOM father-NOM rich.person-COP-END
 c. *Cheli*, [apeci-ka pwuca-y-a].
 C father-NOM rich.person-COP-END
 For (17a–c): ‘Cheli, (his) father is rich.’

As discussed in Section 5, we argue that the subject of the ICC is the setting subject that is not linguistically coded. This setting subject serves as a reference point with respect to the target—the whole *kes*-clause.

17. Profiling, notated by bold lines, means designating a conceptualization by means of a linguistic expression. A profiled relationship refers to a linguistically encoded relationship between participants in a given scene.

3. Characteristic properties of the Korean ICC

3.1 Two types of *-n kes-i-ta* and differences in genres

The ICC involves the expression *-n kes-i-ta* as a sentence ender. However, not all sentences ending with *-n kes-i-ta* are an ICC. Scholars, such as Shin (1993); N.-R. Park (2012), and Son (2023) describe at least two types of *-n kes-i-ta*, as illustrated in (18).¹⁸

- (18) a. I chayk-un wuli-ka ssu-n kes-i-ta.
 this book-TOP we-NOM write-ANT.ADN KES-COP-DCL
 ‘This is the book we wrote.’
 b. Ku-nun ku chayk-ul kkok ssu-ko siph-un
 that.person-TOP that book-ACC seriously write-COMP want-ADN
 kes-i-ta.
 KES-COP-DCL
 ‘It is that he seriously wants to write that book.’

(18a) contrasts with (18b); *kes* in (18a) is a pronominal that refers to ‘the book we wrote,’ whereas *kes* in (18b) is a part of the grammaticalized form *-n kes-i-ta*. One piece of evidence comes from the negated versions of (18), illustrated in (19). While the negated version of (18a), (19a), negates the proposition conveyed by the *kes*-clause, (19b) does not have the same type of reading or connotation. What (19b) infers is that the protagonist will write the book but maybe reluctantly; *kes-i ani-ta* in (19b) is not negating the inner clause but serves as a negative counterpart of *kes-i-ta*, which strongly indicates that *kes-i ta* (and *kes-i ani-ta*) needs to be treated as one unit.

- (19) a. I chayk-un wuli-ka ssu-n kes-i an-i-ta.
 this book-TOP we-NOM write-ANT.ADN KES-COP NEG-COP-DCL
 ‘This is not the book we wrote.’
 b. Ku-nun ku chayk-ul kkok ssu-ko siph-un kes-i
 that.person-TOP that book-ACC necessarily write-COMP want-ADN KES-COP
 an-i-ta.
 NEG-COP-DCL
 ‘It is that he does not necessarily want to write that book.’

18. Son (2022) identifies another type that shares properties with both (18a) and (18b). Son’s third type includes examples that exhibit a lesser degree of grammaticalization, where the copula and *kes* are separable.

Jeon (2005) discusses another type of *-n kes-i-ta* construction, illustrated by the bold-faced portion in (20). Though there are some overlapping properties between this type and the (18b) type, we treat (20) differently from (18b); (20) behaves like a *wh*-cleft sentence as indicated by the translation.

- (20) **Caymiss-nun kes-i,** mineysotha-nun yecenhi chwup-ta-nun
 interesting-ADN KES-NOM Minnesota-TOP still be.cold-COMP-SIM.ADN
 sasil-i-ya
 fact-COP-END
 ‘What’s interesting is Minnesota is still cold.’

It is also worth mentioning that *-n kes-i-ta* undergoes grammaticalization and its meaning is much more bleached in speech when compared to the written genre.¹⁹ This property has been discussed by Son (2023, p.221), who observes that the examples in (21) are distinct from the ones we have discussed thus far.²⁰ These examples do not fall within any category identified by scholars; both (21a) and (21b) can be uttered at the beginning of the discourse. The two examples slightly differ in their degree of semantic bleaching. While (21a) is interpreted as ‘some sort of reason/explanation,’ (21b) conveys a highly bleached meaning. The semantic bleaching of (21b) is evidenced by the possible omission of *-ke-y-ey-* (a shortened form of *kes-i y-ey-*). Example (21a) contrasts with (21b) since it does not show this level of bleaching, as indicated by the unacceptability of the shortened forms with the omission of *-n kes-i*.²¹ Regardless, both show that grammaticalization is taking place with *-n kes-i-ta*.

- (21) a. Nay ttal caney mit-ko {cwu-nun ke-y-a, *cwu-e,
 my daughter you trust-CONN give-SIM.ADN KES-COP-END give-END
 *cwu-ess-e}, al-ass-na?
 give-PST-END know-PST-Q
 ‘It is that I am giving you my daughter out of trust. Do you know (that)?’
 (Son, 2023, p.221)

19. As one reviewer points out, semantic bleaching is only concomitant or coextensive with grammaticalization; periphrastic constructions like the ICC exhibit morpho-syntactic and phonological changes in their grammaticalization. These types of changes are indeed observed in the ICC. For instance, if we replace *kes-i-ta* with the grammaticalized form *keyya* in the non-ICC Example (18a), the result is awkward, as in *?i chayk-un wuli-ka ssu-n keyya*. By contrast, the ICC in (18b) permits the *keyya* form as in *ku-nun ku chayk-ul kkok ssu-ko siph-un keyya*.

20. Unlike Son, other scholars, such as Y. Cho (2021) and J. Park (2022), provide a uniform treatment of *-n kes-i-ta* in both the spoken and written genres.

21. Different from Son, the shortened form *cwuess-e* is acceptable to us.

- b. Halmeni, phwuk cwumwusi-ko kkay-si-myen {toy-nun
 grandma, soundly sleep.HON-CONN wake-HON-then become-SIM.ADN
 ke-y-ey-yo, tway-yo}.
- KES-COP-END-POL become-POL
- ‘Grandma, it is that you should just sleep soundly and wake up.’
- (Son, 2023, p.221)

Son further describes that examples like (21) are primarily observed in speech.²² This is not surprising, considering that grammaticalization is observed in speech prior to its observation in writing. Our analysis focuses on the functions of semantically less-bleached examples.

3.2 Copular constructions

In English, all cleft constructions need the copula as the matrix verb. It is well known that there are three types of copular constructions in English (Heggie, 1988; Den Dikken, 2001; Heycock & Kroch, 2002; Mikkelsen, 2004, among others), as shown by the illustrative examples in (22).

- (22) a. Predicational
 This puppy is precious.
- b. Identificational
 John is Jack.
- c. Specificational
 (Who is the lead singer of BTS?) The lead singer is Jungkook.

While the post-copular expression predicates a property of the subject in (22a), both *John* and *Jack* have the same referent in (22b). In (22c), the subject provides a description (or characterization) of a referent, and the post-copular entity specifies the referent. Kim (2016) classifies Korean copular constructions into three types, as in (23). Though similar, Korean copular constructions have different grammatical and referential properties than English ones. Note that the pre-copula expression *kacca* ‘fake’ is a nominal, which is non-referential in (23a). While both the subject and the pre-copular nominal are referential in (23b), the subject is non-referential in (23c). The pre-copula argument is referential in this particular case, but it does not have to be.²³

22. There are other scholars who identified the meanings of *-n kes-i-ta* in the spoken genre. Please see M. Cho (2017); Kae (2019), and Y. Cho (2021) for details.

23. An example of non-referential pre-copular argument is illustrated in (i).

(i) Han Kang-i ssu-n kes-un sosel-i-ta.
 Han Kang-NOM write-ANT.ADN KES-TOP novel-COP-DCL
 ‘What Han Kang wrote is a novel.’

- (23) a. Predicational
 I pheyn-un kacca-i-ta.
 this pen-TOP fake-COP-DCL
 ‘This pen is fake.’
- b. Identificational
 Kim kyoswu-ka palo ku hakca-i-ta
 K professor-NOM exactly that scholar-COP-DCL
 ‘Professor Kim is exactly that scholar.’
- c. Specificational
 Chelswu-ka po-n kes-un Yenghi-i-ta
 C-NOM see-ANT.ADN KES-TOP Y-COP-DCL
 ‘What Cheswu saw is Yenghi.’

As discussed in Kim and Sells (2011, p.58), examples like (23c) exhibit canonical specificational properties. In their analysis, the *kes*-clause sets up a variable x , which is then satisfied by the pre-copular XP. The cleft has an exhaustive implicature and induces a contrastive reading; (among other people) *Yenghi* is the only value satisfying the variable.

3.3 Similarity to the specificational copula

The Korean ICC shares some properties with the specificational copular construction. Let us first consider the function of the variable set up by the *kes*-clause. In (24), the *kes*-clause licenses a variable x , which is construed as a setting subject. This subject also gives rise to a topic with respect to the ICC, making the ICC a focus. This type of topic is called a stage topic by Erteschik-Shir (2007), which indicates the spatio-temporal parameters of the sentence. As given information, the topic provides a contextually defined common ground shared between the ICC and its preceding sentence. The reading ‘It is (obvious) that Chelswu showed up’ is the outcome of the hearer’s effort to associate the ICC with its preceding sentence by maintaining the common ground invoked by the stage topic. The relationship between the ICC and topicality is fleshed out in Section 3.4. In addition, as will be clearer later, the reading becomes available through the mapping of the ICC onto the result phase of the epistemic cycle. Owing to that mapping, the ICC becomes naturally compatible with the adverbs, such as *obvious*, *apparent*, *imperative*, etc.

- (24) (Motwu-ka salaci-ess-ta.) Chelswu-ka nathana-n kes-i-ta.
 all-NOM disappear-PST-DCL C-NOM appear-ANT.ADN KES-COP-DCL
 ‘(Everybody disappeared.) It is (obvious) that Chelswu showed up.’

It is worth discussing Kim and Sells's (2011) approach to examples like (24). In their analysis, the *kes*-clause generates a variable x , which may be construed as a reason. One issue with this analysis is the existence of the variable x . Since the ICC is a whole clause without a gap in Kim and Sell's analysis, how the variable is licensed remains puzzling. In contrast, the variable can be licensed in our proposal because the sentence needs a topic.

The second problem is their assumption that the variable x is interpreted as a reason. As discussed in Section 4, the ICC is interpreted with diverse meanings. In Kim and Sell's approach, we may assign numerous but concrete values to the variable x , and the variable and its construal must exist before the valuation process. It is, however, difficult to pinpoint the evidence for this analysis; where are the concrete semantic values of the variable coming from?

Finally, Kim and Sells (2011) emphasize that the Korean ICC is fundamentally the same as the specificational copular construction in their variable assignment patterns. However, in their analysis, the variable is satisfied across the sentence boundaries, although it is assigned a value within a sentence in the specificational copular construction. Though we agree that the ICC and the specificational copula share several properties, Kim and Sells's treatment must be reconsidered.

Like the specificational copula, the ICC is interpreted as the only relevant information in the given context. For example, the ICC in (25) strongly implicates that there is no other reason for the speaker's feeling lucky other than the ICC itself.

- (25) (Kulena na-nun yeksi hayngwuna-i-ess-ta.) Kukos-eyse-to
 but I-TOP surely lucky.person-COP-PST-DCL that.place-at-even
 mit-ul swu eps-ul cengto-lo chincelha-n
 believe-PROS.ADN DN not.possible-PROS.ADN degree-as be.kind-ADN
 yeca-lul manna-ess-ten kes-i-ta.
 woman-ACC meet-PST-RETR.ADN KES-COP-DCL
 '(But I was a lucky person for sure.) It is (obvious) that I met an unbelievably
 kind woman even there.' (Fiction, 2002, Yonsei Balanced Corpus)

This behavior is similar to that of the specificational copula provided in (23c); it is implicated that *Yenghi* is the only person *Chelswu* actually saw, among several alternative candidates *Chelswu* could have seen. Because this is an implicature, it may be canceled, just like the implicature for the ICC in (25).

The ICC tends to be understood contrastively. The most natural reading of the ICC in (26 = 1d) is to interpret it contrastively, as indicated in the translation.²⁴

24. (24) and (25) may be interpreted contrastively as well, but the contrast shown in (26) is more prominent.

- (26) (Cikum changpakk-eynun ttayanin chwunseli nayly-e machi
 now outside.window-at out.of.season spring.snow fall-CONN seems
 hankyewul kathun phwungkyeng-ul caanay-ko iss-ta.) kulena
 middle.of.winter like scenery-ACC exhibit-CONN exist-DCL but
 cengnyeng pom-un ittang-ey wa iss-nun kes-i-ta.
 really spring-TOP this.land-at come exist-SIM.ADN KES-COP-DCL
 ‘(The scenery outside of the window seems like the middle of the winter due to
 the spring snow.) It is (by contrast obvious) that the spring has come to this
 land. (Fiction, 2003, Yonsei Balanced Corpus)

We argue that these two behaviors—exhaustive implicature and contrastive reading—are the expected consequence of the ICC’s nature as foci; as a focus, the ICC tends to be readily interpreted exhaustively and/or contrastively. We will revisit this issue in Section 5.

3.4 Topicality and subjectivity of the ICC

Another major issue concerning the ICC is identifying the subject and the topic of the construction. This section critically reviews two representative proposals concerning the ICC’s topicality and subjectivity, all made from the *Kwukehak* perspective and demonstrates the most successful treatments of said construction. The two proposals are Shin (1993) and N.-R. Park (2012), both published in the prominent journal—*The Journal of Korean Linguistics*. While Kim and Sells (2011) is another vital contribution to the current debate, it will not be included in this section because we provided some criticism of their work in the previous sections.

Shin (1993) takes on a generative linguistics viewpoint and posits the base structure shown in (27).²⁵ What she is arguing with (27) is that the ICC is a construction without an overtly realized topic and a subject. But the subject is coindexed with the *kes*-clause.

- (27) [_{TOP} e][[__{SUB} e]_i [CLAUSE *kes*]_i-i-ta]

Identifying the subject in the ICC is challenging, and it is reasonable to assume that the subject is not overtly realized. Example (28) illustrates that the first NP, *apeci* ‘father’ does not agree with the honorification marker *-si* included in *kes-i-si-ess-ta*, which indicates that the first NP cannot be the subject.²⁶

25. Shin’s proposal is partially based on Lim (1991).

26. One reviewer astutely pointed out that there is a historical reason for the unacceptability of (28) as well. The subject *apeci* ‘father’ was the subject of the lower-level clause, whereas the copula in *kes-i-ta* is the main clause predicate. The construction has undergone “syntactic upgrad-

- (28) *Apeci-ka cip-ey o-si-n kes-i-si-ess-ta.
 father-NOM home-to come-HON-ANT.ADN KES-COP-HON-PST-DCL
 Intended: 'It is that (my) father came home.'

The example of the ICC in (29a) is illustrated in (29b), where the whole clause is coindexed with the covert subject. In this sense, Shin treats the ICC similar to the identificational copula.

- (29) a. Yumyengha-n salam-i cem-ul chi-nun
 famous-ANT.ADN person-NOM fortune.telling-ACC do-SIM.ADN
 ke-y-ey-yo
 KES-COP-END-POL
 'It was that a famous person was doing fortune telling.'
 (Year Unknown, Spoken, Yonsei Balanced Corpus)
- b. [_{TOP} e]_i[[_{SUB} e]_i [yumyengha-n salam-i cem-ul chi-nun ke]_i-y-ey-yo

Attractive as Shin's analysis may be, there are two major issues with it. The first drawback of Shin (1993) is her treatment of the ICC as an identificational copular construction. Contra Shin's analysis, we have demonstrated that the ICC resembles the specificational copula in its syntactic and pragmatic behaviors. The first NP must be referential in the identificational copula construction, but the subject in (29b) is not referential. Second, under the assumption that every sentence needs a topic, Shin posits a covert topic, but her work does not fully explain how to identify the topic. In particular, she assumes an empty topic as a sentential topic, as opposed to a discourse topic. If so, identifying the topic becomes even more challenging because an empty topic needs to be identified within a sentence.²⁷

N.-R. Park (2012) overcomes Shin's weaknesses by proposing that the topic of the ICC is a discourse topic, not a sentential topic. The schematic structure proposed by N.-R. Park (2012) is provided in (30). N.-R. Park's proposal shows some improvement over Shin's in that the topic must be identified within a discourse and serves as a sentential topic. Unfortunately, however, N.-R. Park also treats the ICC as an identificational copular construction, where the first NP is equated to the clause nominalized by *kes*.

- (30) [_{TOP} NP]_i [[-n kes]_i-i-ta]

Another problem N.-R. Park encounters is the open interpretation of the topic. Since the topic of the ICC is a discourse topic, as opposed to a sentential topic,

ing" in grammaticalization (see Heine et al., 1991; Rhee, 2010). Thus, the main clause copula cannot be honorific-marked.

27. Shin (1993) does not rely on the notion of stage topic, which we adopt in this article.

any nominal can give rise to a topic for the ICC in N.-R. Park's system if given in a current or previous discourse. In other words, the topicality arises in an untethered fashion, which may not be informationally germane to the ICC. For this reason, N.-R. Park's proposal may face similar criticism to that which she casts about Shin's.

4. Discursive properties

Thus far, our discussion has focused on the structural and informational properties of the ICC. In this section, we discuss two discursive properties of the ICC. The first concerns its position in a discourse, and the second involves its meanings within a discourse context. The ICC cannot occur at the beginning of the discourse, as in (31). We use the # mark to indicate that the examples are grammatical but awkward without further context.

- (31) a. #Kyay-ka cikum mak tochakha-n kes-i-ya.
 that.person-NOM now just arrive-ANT.ADN KES-COP-END
 'It is that that person has just arrived.'
- b. #Haphil cha-ka han-myeng-to eps-nun kes-i-ya
 of.all.things car-NOM one-person-even not.exist-SIM.ADN KES-COP-END
 'It is of all things that nobody had a car.'

While examples like (31) may be found in storytelling for dramatic effect, they are indeed extremely rare in natural speech. This property is symptomatic of the ICC's all-focus nature, with seemingly no topic included. We already discussed similarities between the ICC and the specificational copula in Section 3.3. As Mikkelsen (2004, 2005) noted, the subject of the specificational copula canonically functions as the topic. However, the subjects in (31a) and (31b) are not overtly realized; they are setting subjects that give rise to topics. Speakers extend their interpretive context to the preceding sentence since the topic/subject is not linguistically coded. In this enhanced context, speakers attempt to make a coherent connection between the two sentences, treating the preceding sentence like an antecedent of the ICC. In that sense, we might call the ICC the extended specificational copula construction. Since speakers extend their interpretive context to the preceding sentence owing to the covert realization of the topic and subject, the ICC cannot occur at the beginning of the discourse; it requires a preceding sentence to which it needs to "anchor." Viewing the ICC from this perspective, we argue that the inferential readings available for the ICC are the consequence of its covertly realized setting subject coupled with its mapping onto the result phase, which is discussed in Section 5 in detail. Kim and Sells (2011) provide a similar

analysis to ours; they claim that the preceding sentence introduces the topic, and the ICC is a focus. We agree that the ICC is an all-focus clause, but precisely what the topic of the ICC is remains unexplained in Kim and Sells's proposal.

One might wonder about the acceptability of the seemingly overt topic, *Chelswu*, in (32). It should be noted that *Chelswu* is the topic of the inner clause, not the copular clause, as indicated in (33), which illustrates that the ICC does not have either an overtly realized subject or a topic.

- (32) (Chelswu-nun BMW-lul mol-ko tani-n-ta.) Chelswu-nun
 C-TOP BMW-ACC drive-CONN move.around-PRS-DCL C-TOP
 apeci-ka pwuca-i-n kes-i-ta.
 father-NOM rich-COP-ADN KES-COP-DCL
 '(Chelswu drives a BMW.) As for Chelswu, it is that (his) father is rich.'

- (33) The structure of the ICC in (32)
 [[Chelswu-nun apeci-ka pwuca-i]-n kes-i-ta.]

Another discursive property of the ICC concerns the meanings of the construction. As the Introduction indicates, the ICC is used with multiple meanings, such as explanation, intention, promise, and contrast. Many scholars have endeavored to classify the meanings of the ICC, as shown by representative samples such as Nam and Ko (1985); Im (1987); Hong (2006); Shin (1993); J. Ahn (1997); H. Ahn (2001), and Kim and Sells (2011). Some scholars, such as Jung (2016), argue that the primary function of the ICC is explaining something. While unified accounts should be sought where possible, there are differences among the available meanings of the ICC. Therefore, the view that all ICCs have the same concrete meaning is not tenable. Our position is that the various meanings of the ICC identified in the literature are merely symptomatic of their cognitive import. The expression *-un/nun kes-i-ta* in the ICC invokes a highly schematic conceptual structure, where the subject is the setting that corresponds to a reference point. A more technical analysis is provided in Section 5.

5. A cognitive linguistic turn

5.1 Information structure (IS) of the ICC

We have demonstrated that the ICC resembles the specificational copula, which exhibits the given-new split for the subject and the pre-copula complement. Kim and Sells (2011) make the same observation but don't provide definitions of topic

and focus, which leads to confusion about their use of topicality.²⁸ We adopt Park and Yeon's (2023a, b) Strawsonian definition of topic. Citing Erteschik-Shir (2007), they define topic as in (34). They also argue that every sentence needs a topic, an identical claim to Strawson's (1964).

- (34) a. The topic is what a statement is about.
 b. The topic is used to invoke "knowledge of an audience."
 c. The statement is assessed as putative information about its topic.

(Park & Yeon, 2023a, p.17)

Now let us consider a typical example of the ICC, shown in (35). The ICC (bold-faced portion) has neither an overt subject nor an overt topic. However, since every sentence needs a topic in our definition, it *must* have a topic. The prime candidate is a stage topic in terms of Erteschik-Shir (2007), which indicates the spatio-temporal parameters of the sentence.

- (35) (Samsengcenca-nun olhay motwu 11ek 5-chenman-kay-uy
 Samsung.electronics-TOP this.year total 1.1 billion 50-million-CLS-GEN
 128 meyka laym-ul mantul-Ø kyeyhoyk-i-ta.) **Myengsilsangpwuha-n**
 128 mega ram-ACC make-PROS.ADN plan-COP-DCL be.truthful-ADN
seykyeycek kiep-i toy-n kes-i-ta
 international company-NOM become-ANT.ADN KES-COP-DCL
 '(Samsung Electronics is planning to produce a total of 1.15 billion 128 mega-
 byte RAMs)
 It is (obvious) that it became the first and foremost international corporation.'
 (Newspaper, 2002, Yonsei Balanced Corpus)

As briefly discussed, it is challenging to identify the subject of the ICC in (35), but we argue that it must be a setting subject. The setting subject arises when a viewer/speaker is invoked in a generalized fashion; therefore, she becomes implicit and non-salient. In the ICC in (35), the speaker does not actively participate in a profiled relationship; she merely conveys the information as a backgrounded narrator, and the proposition invoked by the whole clause is put in the spotlight. Under this situation, the setting that hosts participants acquires subject status. The setting subject also gives rise to a topic because the setting is about the ICC. It is used to invoke "knowledge of an audience," and the ICC is assessed against the setting.

The nature of the generalized statement of the ICC is further evidenced by the made-up Example (36). While (36a) expresses the speaker's confidence about the Vikings winning the game, (36b) is understood as an objectified statement in

28. Kim and Sells (2011) also assume that a full clause can give rise to a topic. In our definition, topic is fundamentally a nominal, although it can also be spatio-temporal expansion—a stage topic.

which a generalized conceptualizer is invoked. Invoking a generalized conceptualizer implies that anyone in a position to judge would make the same assessment.

- (36) a. Na-nun mineysotha paikhing-i iki-n kes-ul
 I-TOP Minnesota Vikings-NOM win-ANT.ADN KES-ACC
 hwaksin-ha-n-ta.
 confident-do-PRS-DCL
 ‘I am confident that the Minnesota Vikings won the game.’
 b. Hwaksilhi, mineysotha paikhing-i iki-n kes-i-ta.
 obviously, Minnesota Vikings-NOM win-ANT.ADN KES-COP-DCL
 ‘It is obvious that the Minnesota Vikings won.’

We also discussed that the ICC gives rise to an all-focus sentence, the property of which naturally falls out in our analysis. Let us consider (37), which is an example of the specificational copula and demonstrates a case of Buring’s (2016) answer focus.²⁹ As the answer to the *wh*-question, the whole sentence gives rise to a focus in (37).

- (37) (Who is the lead singer of BTS?) The lead singer is Jungkook.

An answer focus holds a relation between a question and the focus value of the answer in the question-answer configuration. The *wh*-question in (37) makes multiple alternatives—all seven BTS members—contextually salient, while the answer relates to precisely one alternative. This is the property we identified for the ICC in Section 3.2. In our analysis, the ICC is the target of the reference point identical to the stage topic. A target is an entity assessed by a reference point, which affords potential access to many different targets. This set of potential targets naturally comprises a set of alternatives, generating a contrastive reading. In addition, the exhaustive implicature is engendered because a reference point solely accesses a target. The following subsection discusses how our proposal is technically implemented in CG.

5.2 The conceptual structure of the ICC

Moving from an impressionistic to a technical description, we offer Figure 3 as the basic structure of the ICC, which is a combined construct of the reference point and the setting subject constructions. Here, C stands for conceptualizer, R for reference point, T for target, and D for dominion. The diagram to the left of the >

29. An answer focus indicates a focus that appears as an answer for a *wh*-question. Buring (2016) identifies three types of foci: contrastive, elaboration, and answer. We do not discuss the other types—contrastive and elaboration—in this article.

symbol represents the previous (speech) usage event, and on the right, the diagram represents the current usage event. The two usage events occur in chronological order, but semantically, the current usage may be interpreted as a reason (or other meanings) for the previous event.³⁰ We assume that the relationships profiled in the previous and the current usage events involve two participants (transitive).³¹

In the current usage event, the inner rectangle represents a clausal landmark. The dotted lines in these diagrams denote correspondence relationships, which indicate that the entities connected by the line represent the same entity.

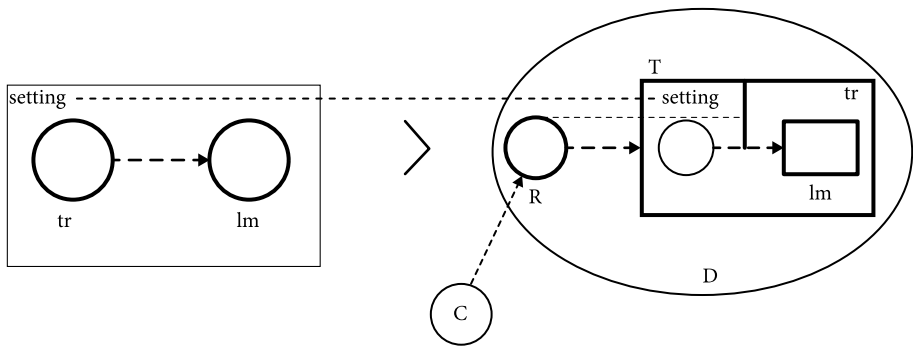


Figure 3. Inferential cleft construction

Let us now illustrate how the ICC is analyzed with the example in (38).

- (38) (Chelswu-ka Yenghuy-lul kuliweha-n-ta.) ku-ka acik Yenghuy-lul
 C-NOM Y-ACC miss-PRS-DCL that.person-NOM still Y-ACC
 salangha-nun kes-i-ta
 love-SIM.ADN KES-COP-DCL
 ‘(Chelswu misses Yenghuy.) It is (obvious) that he still loves her.’

The portion within the parentheses indicates the previous usage event, and the rest of the example shows the current usage event. The setting in the previous event corresponds to the setting in the current usage event, indicating that the two events share common ground.³² The landmark in the current usage event represents the ICC in (38), which is associated with an implicit subject denoted by the

30. These two diagrams combined form the current discourse space.

31. The ICC can be used with predicates that profile a one-participant relationship.

32. The setting in the preceding sentence is a spatiotemporal expanse.

circle.³³ This new clause—the target—invokes a reference point in the current usage event since every clause requires a topic. Within the target, the trajector status is shifted to the abstract setting (denoted by the vertical line), which corresponds to the setting in the previous usage event. The shift is motivated by highlighting the landmark while backgrounding the original trajector. The shifted trajector corresponds to the reference point; as a result, the setting itself gives rise to a topic. Here, abstract setting may be described as the relevant scope of awareness, i.e., “everything invoked by the conceptualizer as the basis for apprehending the proposition and making the epistemic judgment expressed by the predicate” (Langacker, 2008, p. 452). Viewing an abstract setting as the topic for the ICC is consistent with the acceptability of the overtly realized topical expression, *i sanghwang-un* ‘this situation’ used with the ICC, as shown in (39).

- (39) (...) I sanghwang-un ku-ka acik Yenghuy-lul salangha-nun
 this situation-TOP that.person-NOM still Y-ACC love-SIM.ADN
 kes-i-ta
 KES-COP-DCL
 ‘As for this situation, it is that he still loves Yenghuy.’

The setting in the current usage event is given information, and through this, the two usage events become relevant; therefore, the reading of “reason” arises in (38). The vital function of the ICC is then to make the current usage event relevant to the previous one. That said, not all readings are equally available for the ICC. The following subsection discusses why some readings are preferable to others when we make the two events relevant.

5.3 Epistemic control

In this section, we discuss the epistemic cycle and demonstrate that the interpretation of the ICC is a result of its mapping onto one particular phase of the cycle: the result phase. Langacker (2002, 2004, 2011) introduces the control cycle as part of a general cognitive model applicable to human experience, which is also relevant to the current discussion. The control cycle comprises four phases, and its manifestations continuously unfold at various levels, such as physical and mental. The four phases include baseline, potential, action, and result. Note that the potential phase breaks down into three successive stages here; formulation, assessment, and inclination. In the baseline stage, the actor controls an array of entities. In the potential phase, some target enters the actor’s field, which leads to the next phase

33. Note that the subject is implicit because, as a setting subject construction, the subject of the ICC has shifted to the global setting.

(action), where the actor has to deal with the target one way or another. The final phase is the result of a modified situation. Langacker describes each stage below. Here, C stands for conceptualizer, P for the target proposition, and D for the conceptualizer's current view of reality (her epistemic dominion).

In the formulation phase, P is merely present in C's field of awareness, as something that needs to be dealt with. Through assessment, C arrives at some sort of inclination in regard to P [...] With varying degrees of force, C inclines either toward accepting P as part of C's view of reality, or else rejecting it. Still, no definite decision has been made [...] In the result phase, P is already established in C's dominion. (Langacker, 2011, p.201)

Predicates pertaining to epistemic control described above can be impersonal, as shown in (40).³⁴

- (40) a. Formulation: It is {conceivable/plausible/possible/feasible/imaginable} that we could do it without getting caught.
 b. Assessment: It is {unclear/arguable/uncertain/unsure/undecided} whether mosquitoes have souls.
 c. Inclination: It {seems/appears/is doubtful/is likely/is dubious} that she has enough money to buy Microsoft.
 d. Result: It is {apparent/evident/obvious/certain/definite/true/undeniable} that Croatia is destined to be the world's next superpower.

(Modified from Langacker, 2011, p.202)

The examples in (40) characterize the epistemic status of the complement proposition without attributing the judgment to any particular conceptualizer; they invoke a generalized conceptualizer.

Turning back to the Korean ICC, it behaves similarly to the English impersonal construction because it also shows an epistemic status of a proposition. Unlike English, however, a bare ICC form is frequently observed in Korean; therefore, it is not always easy to ascertain the mapping between the ICC and its epistemic cycle. That said, there is a way to test which cycle is most appropriate for interpreting the ICC. In (41), an adverbial expression is added to the ICC for each cycle; the adverbials indicate the level of the epistemic cycle. To us, (41a–c) are unnatural or awkward, albeit grammatical. The only natural example is (41d), where the ICC is construed as the result phase.³⁵

34. Action predicates, such as *learn* and *discover*, are not compatible with the impersonal *it* because mental actions require sentient actors.

35. Adverbs are not required in the ICC, and most examples we encounter are used without the help of adverbs. The adverbs are used here for the purpose of testing.

- (41) a. Formulation: #Kkoch-i hwalyehakey phi-ess-ta. amato
flower-NOM profusely bloom-PST-DCL probably
pom-i o-n kes-i-ta.
spring-NOM come-ANT.ADN KES-COP-DCL
Literal: ‘Flowers bloomed profusely. Probably, it is that
spring has come.’
- b. Assessment: #Kkoch-i hwalyehakey phi-ess-ta.
flower-NOM profusely bloom-PST-DCL
pwulhwaksilhakeyto pom-i o-n
unsurely spring-NOM come-ANT.ADN
kes-i-ta
KES-COP-DCL
Literal: ‘Flowers bloomed profusely. Unsurely, it is that
spring has come.’
- c. Inclination: #Kkoch-i hwalyehakey phi-ess-ta. kanungkheyto,
flower-NOM profusely bloom-PST-DCL likely
pom-i o-n kes-i-ta.
spring-NOM come-ANT.ADN KES-COP-DCL
Literal: ‘Flowers bloomed profusely. Likely, it is that spring
has come.’
- d. Result: Kkoch-i hwalyehakey phi-ess-ta. myengpaykhakey
flower-NOM profusely bloom-PST-DCL obviously
pom-i o-n kes-i-ta.
spring-NOM come-ANT.ADN KES-COP-DCL
Literal: ‘Flowers bloomed profusely. Obviously, it is that
spring has come.’

It seems that the default construal of the ICC is to map it onto the result phase of the epistemic cycle; it is most natural to interpret it with the English translation, such as “it is evident/obvious that...” It is worth noting that the concept of result phase can be applied to the examples we have discussed thus far. The examples we discussed in (1) are all interpreted with the result phase reading with adverbials such as *apparent*, *obvious*, and *imperative*, though they are not linguistically coded.

While almost all scholars we mentioned in this article attempt to identify the concrete meanings of the ICC, we suggest that such an effort is futile because we can increase the list of meanings by adding newly identified meanings of the ICC based on novel data. Instead, we propose that various meanings of the ICC are the consequences of said epistemic mapping. Even the dichotomous broader categorization—explanation and intention—is too specific to capture the meanings of the ICC. Kim and Sells (2011) also identify the meanings of the ICC as cause, rea-

son, explanation, consequence, conclusion, and condition, among others. But is there a way to capture the general behavior of these meanings without losing the characteristics possessed by the ICC? In our view, all of these meanings are symptomatic of the result phase of the epistemic cycle. Since the proposition is already established in the conceptualizer's dominion in the result phase, the situation described by the proposition is modified to become stable. The stable relationship is then most naturally expressed with an impersonal construction like the ICC, where the subject is backgrounded to highlight the proposition itself. In sum, we emphasized that the ICC invokes a generalized conceptualizer by shifting the trajector status to the abstract setting. Then, why does this shift happen? It happens due to the new construal of the situation in a generalized fashion by defocusing the conceptualizer. Our observation is on par with Langacker's claim concerning the English impersonals. Langacker (2011, p. 211) claims that "*it*-impersonals shift primary focal prominence to the field and therefore highlight the role of the relevant scope of awareness [...] in bringing about the inclination toward accepting P[roposition] as real." As a consequence, the speaker remains off-stage, leading to "shift[ed] responsibility to the unspecified circumstances on the basis of which any conceptualizer would arrive at the same assessment" (Langacker, 2011, p. 203). In this regard, the ICC behaves similarly to the English impersonal construction. In the ICC, the trajector is backgrounded and defocused. By doing so, the conceptualizer can stave off the responsibility for her epistemic judgment; she does not have to be responsible for her judgment. The ICC also generates epistemic judgment by mapping it onto the result phase of the epistemic cycle. This mapping is available solely based on the context, without the help of overtly realized adverbials, though adverbs may guide the mapping.

6. Conclusion

This article was a modest attempt to analyze the Korean ICC construction from a different perspective than the extant research. There exists a substantial amount of research conducted in the *Kwukeyhak* tradition. Kim and Sells (2011) also provides a cogent formal linguistic analysis. Though there is no denying that the previous researchers' efforts are valuable, none of the approaches are satisfactory for two reasons. First, almost all aforementioned researchers emphasize the relevance of topicality to the ICC but do not provide a precise definition of topic in Korean. Most researchers agree that the ICC behaves like an all-focus sentence, but how this sentential focus is associated with the topic is rarely explored.³⁶ This oversight






36. Kim and Sells (2011) are an exception here; they examine the association.










has often led to misunderstandings of their analyses or incomplete outcomes. In this article, we demonstrated that adopting the definition of topic presented in Park and Yeon (2023a, b) sheds light on the relevance of the information structure to the ICC. Our analysis presents that the ICC is a construction that does not have an overt topic or subject, and its abstract setting acquires the trajector (subject) status. The setting subject corresponds to the reference point invoked by the ICC, where the reference point is a topic. As given information, the topic–setting subject–allows the ICC to “hang together” with the preceding sentence. This mechanism demonstrates how the interlocutor interprets the ICC relevant to the preceding sentence. Second, most researchers’ questions do not concern the motivation of the ICC. Unlike the previous researchers, we demonstrated that the ICC arises due to the shifted trajector. By backgrounding the trajector (or subject), the conceptualizer can stave off the responsibility for her epistemic judgment. For this reason, we emphasize the importance of discussing the ICC in relation to the epistemic cycle. The various meanings of the ICC arise from mapping the ICC onto the result phase of the epistemic cycle. Our research outcome suggests that all other attempts that try to ascertain concrete meanings of the ICC are bound to be futile.




The abbreviations used in this article are as follows

ACC	Accusative	KES	<i>kes</i> the schematic nominal
ADN	Adnominalizer	LOC	Locative
ADVZ	Adverbializer	NEG	Negation
ANT.ADN	Anterior Adnominalizer	NO	Japanese <i>no</i>
CONJ	Conjunction	NOM	Nominative
CONN	Connective Ending	NOMZ	Nominalizer
COMP	Complementizer	PROS.ADN	Prospective Adnominalizer
COP	Copula	POL	Politeness
DCL	Declarative	PRS	Present
DN	Dependent Noun	PST	Past
END	Sentence ender	Q	Question
END.FEM	Ender used by the female	RETR.ADN	Retrospective Adnominalizer
HON	Honorific	SEQ	Sequential
ICC	Inferential cleft construction	SIM.ADN	Simultaneous Adnominalizer
INST	Instrumental	TOP	Topic
IS	Information Structure		

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