Case Assignment in the Clause on Adjuncts

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Case Assignment in the Clause on Adjuncts

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1.   Structural Case Marking on Adverbials

It is well-known that the domain of case assignment extends beyond the arguments of a predicate to a range of adverbials in some languages, including Korean. In this paper we concentrate on case-marked Duration/Frequency adverbials which are characterized as 'extensive measures' by Wechsler and Lee (1996).* In some languages, case-marked adverbials are in the accusative and provide a boundedness to an event (cf. Kuryłowicz (1964), Kiparsky (1998), Kratzer (2004)). However, in Korean, the D/F adverbials can show accusative or nominative, with no apparent difference in their temporal or aspectual semantic contribution.[1]

Maling, Jun and Kim (2001; MJK) propose the following for adverbial case marking (cf. Wechsler and Lee (1996, (23))):

(1)   On a Duration/Frequency adverbial:

    a.   ACC is the only possible case if the verb has an external argument;

    b.   ACC and NOM are both possible if the verb has no external argument (underlyingly);

    c.   NOM is the only possible case for 'simplex' psychological predicates or adjectival predicates such as *silh-ta* 'dislike' or *kwiyep-ta* 'be cute' (in contrast to *silh-e ha-ta* 'dislike', etc.).

This 'external argument' approach is intended to capture the case patterns in (2):

(2) a.   John-i   han.sikan tongan-*i/ul talli-ess-ta
      John-NOM 1.hour for-*NOM/ACC run-PAST-DECL
      'John ran for an hour'

    b.   pi-ka   han.sikan tongan-i/ul o-ass-ta
      rain-NOM 1.hour for-NOM/ACC come-PAST-DECL
      'It rained for one hour.'

    c.   i pang-un   nac tongan-i/*ul   etwup-ta
      this room-TOP day time for-NOM/*ACC dark-DECL
      'This room is dark during the day time.'

MJK account for the alternation in (2)b by first associating nominative with a predicate having (only) an internal argument, as (1)a might imply, followed by an optional process of 'externalization'. If the internal argument becomes externalized, the predicate will license accusative on its D/F adjunct (hence (2)b covers two circumstances). The predicate in (2)a takes an external argument, and so only ACC is licensed on the adverbial in the first place. Finally, in (2)c, the predicate is one that does not allow its internal argument to be externalized.

In this paper, we re-evaluate some of the evidence in MJK and offer an elaboration of the semantic properties which influence case on D/F adverbials. We begin with the observation of two main factors which influence adverbial case marking: whether the subject is animate or inanimate, and whether the verb is interpreted as an activity or as a pure stative. For the animacy property, we show that an adverbial is accusative in almost every example with an animate subject; only pure stative predicates allow a nominative modifier with an animate subject. With inanimate subjects, the property of the predicate as being an activity or a state comes more into focus. We argue that many predicates in Korean which appear to be stative are in fact activities of some kind, and we offer their acceptability in the Internally-Headed Relative Clause construction as corroborating evidence.

With regard to the notions of 'activity' and 'state', we will eventually suggest a slightly more refined distinction, appealing to the stage-/individual-level partition of predicate types (see Carlson (1977), Dowty (1979)). We show that the data support a distinction of stative predications over stages of individuals – these pattern like activities – from stative predications over individuals themselves.[2]

Our proposals here are inspired by the approach to (English) change of state verbs in McKoon and Macfarland (2000), who argue that speakers have a certain amount of flexibility as to how they present an event, exploiting choices among lexical items for communicative effect, sometimes perhaps deviating from an abstract grammatical ideal of the usage of a given predicate. However, we feel that there is a solid if subtle, semantic basis to the judgements that we report.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2 we present data which is problematic for the internal/external-argument approach, and in section 3 we offer two semantic generalizations, involving the animacy of the subject, and a notion of 'generalized activity'. In section 4 we present the semantic basis of the analysis: the classification of predicates into stage- and individual-level, and types of stative predicates, some of which are true only at intervals, and some at moments.

2. Predicates Lacking An External Argument

The idea of an external argument governing accusative case assignment has its roots in 'Burzio's Generalization' (Burzio (1986)), if not earlier, and it provides a good basis for the characterization of accusative arguments in Korean (e.g., Kim (1990, 211ff.)). However, on D/F adverbials, the semantic basis of case does not square well with the external/internal distinction.

Many unaccusative verbs allow either NOM or ACC on a D/F adverb, perhaps with some subtle different implication about the involvement of the subject:

(3) a. pi-ka   twu.sikan-i/ul   o-ass-ta
       rain-NOM 2.hours-NOM/ACC come-PAST-DECL
       'It rained for two hours.'

   b. hay-ka twu.sikan-i/ul   pichi-ess-ta
      sun   2.hours-NOM/ACC shine-PAST-DECL
      'The sun shone for two hours.'

These are analyzed by MJK as predicates with optional externalization of their internal argument. Essentially, this is a claim that all of the relevant predicates are ambiguous to some degree between unaccusative and unergative uses.[3] Some predicates, such as 'melt' (intransitive), are usually taken to be canonical unaccusatives, yet 'melt' in Korean favors accusative on an adverbial modifier:

(4) ku elum cokak-i han.sikan-?i/ul   nok-ass-ta
    that ice piece-NOM 1.hour-?NOM/ACC melt-PAST-DECL
    'That piece of ice melted for one hour.'

Incidentally, this example means that the ice melted for an hour, without necessarily melting away, regardless of the case on the adverbial; the case-marking does not give the adverbial a different interpretation with respect to the overall event.
   More unexpectedly on the externalization account, the verb *iss-* 'be' in many contexts favors accusative:

(5) noyey.tul-i ku sem-ey   ipayk.nyen-kan-??i/ul   iss-ess-ta
    slaves-NOM the island-LOC 200.years-period-NOM/ACC exist-PAST-DECL
    'Slaves were on the island for 200 years.'

(6) Rice-nun Seoul-ey   halwu tongan-*i/ul iss-ess-ta
    Rice-TOP Seoul-LOC 1.day for-*NOM/ACC exist-PAST-DECL
    'Rice stayed in Seoul for one day.'

   Although 'be' regularly allows an ACC adverbial, it is rather difficult to conceive of it as a predicate taking an external argument, for it patterns in other respects with predicates which are stative and clearly lack an external argument. For example, we can observe that the verb *iss-* (example (7)c) behaves just like a true stative predicate in terms of case alternation on the main verb as seen in (7):[4]

(7) a. ku salam-un   na-eykey cenhwaha-ci-*ka/lul anh-ass-ta
       the person-TOP I-DAT   phone-*NOM/ACC   not-PAST-DECL
       'The man didn't telephone me.'

   b. ku salam-tul-un   chincelha-ci-ka/lul anh-ass-ta
      the person-PLU-TOP kind-COMP-NOM/ACC not-PAST-DECL
      'The people were not kind.'

   c.   namca-nun ku sem-ey   iss-ci-ka/lul   anh-ass-ta
           man-TOP   the island-LOC exist-NOM/ACC not-PAST-DECL
           'Men were not in the island.'

Even with an inanimate subject, 'be' still takes an accusative adjunct:

(8) a.   ce san-un   i sem-ey   chen.nyentongan-*i/ul
           the mountain-TOP this island-LOC 1000.years for-*NOM/ACC
           kkomccakha-ci anh-ko   iss-ess-ta
           budging-COMP not-COMP exist-PAST-DECL
           'The mountain was on this island for 1000 years, without budging.'

     b.   ku umsik-i kocangnan nayngcangko-ey ithultongan-??i/ul
           that food   broken   fridge-LOC   two days for-??NOM/ACC
           iss-ess-ciman   kwaynchanh-ass-ta
           exist-PAST-though good-PAST-DECL
           'The food was in the broken fridge for two days, but it was still good.'

    The externalization-of-internal-argument account of MJK may be descriptively accurate (see also Wechsler and Lee (1996, 643–645)), but is not well-motivated semantically. We offer a slightly different approach in the next section.

3.   Semantic Generalizations

Here we clarify the two factors that directly influence adverbial case. MJK focussed on the internal/external argument distinction, and also recognized the relevance of stative vs. non-stative; we argue that the phenomena are brought into sharper relief in terms of animacy of the subject, and whether the predicate is truly stative or represents a very generalized notion of activity.

3.1.   Animacy

As is suggested by MJK's focus on whether the predicate has an external argument or not, the animacy of the subject affects adverbial case marking. In this subsection we present a variety of examples which illustrate this. If the predicate has an animate subject, adverbial case marking is almost always accusative, regardless of the basic meaning of the predicate.[5] The contrasts in (9) illustrate the effects of animacy:

(9) a.   haksayng-tul-i   twu pen-*?i/ul   o-ass-ta
           student-PLU-NOM two times-*?NOM/ACC come-PAST-DECL
           'Students came (here and left) twice.'

     b.   yecin-i   twu pen-i/*ul   o-ass-ta
           aftershock-NOM two times-NOM/*ACC come-PAST-DECL
           'Aftershocks came twice.'

    c.   pesu-ka achim-ey   twu pen-i/?ul   o-ass-ta
            bus-NOM morning-LOC two times-NOM/?ACC come-PAST-DECL
            'Buses came twice in the morning.'

The animate subject in (9)a allows an accusative adverbial, but the inanimate subject in (9)b does not. When the inanimate subject has more agent-like properties as in (9)c, it is possible to have an accusative adverbial, though nominative is preferred. This preference can be reversed when the inanimate subject is in an example with a less generic interpretation:

(10)   pesu-ka achim-ey   twu pen-??i/ul   o-ass-taka
              bus-NOM morning-LOC two times-?NOM/ACC come-PAST-DECL
              ka-ss-ciman nohchi-ko   mal-ass-e
              go-PAST-but miss-COMP end-PAST-DECL
              'Even though the bus came twice in the morning, I missed it.'

We can observe a similar effect in lexical passives. Even though transitive verbs take accusative modifiers, their lexical passives strongly prefer nominative, with inanimate subjects. MJK state that lexical predicates equally allow accusative, but for many examples, we feel that accusative is marginal at best:

(11) a.   ku chayk-i halwu naynay-??ka/lul ilk-hi-ess-ta
          the book   1.day long-??NOM/ACC read-PASS-PAST-DECL
          'The book was read all day long (by someone).'

      b.   ku mwun-i   halwu congil-??ka/ul   yel-li-ess-taka
          the door-NOM 1.day long-??NOM/ACC open-PASS-PAST-CONJ
          tat-hi-ess-ta
          close-PASS-PAST-DECL
          'The door was opened and closed all day long (for some reason).'

However, even with an inanimate subject, accusative case on the modifier is possible if the 'eventiveness' of the described state is made clear by the context. (12) provides more contextual support for an eventive interpretation:

(12)   ku chayk-i   halwu naynay-*ka/lul hancang-ssik chenchenhi
             the book-NOM 1.day long-*NOM/ACC page-by-page slowly
             ilk-hi-ess-ta
             read-PASS-PAST-DECL
             'The book was slowly read all day long page by page (by someone).'

    A strong contrast in case marking can be observed in examples with a stative predicate whose subject can be animate or inanimate:

(13) a. kongcwu-nun halwu-ka/lul   yeypp-ess-ta
          princess-TOP 1.day-NOM/ACC pretty-PAST-DECL
          'The princess was pretty for a day.'

    b. ce kkoch-un   halwu-ka/??lul   yeypp-ess-ta
        that flower-TOP 1.day-NOM/??ACC pretty-PAST-DECL
        'The flower was pretty for a day.'

    c. ku namwu-un ttak han kyeycel-i/*ul   yeypp-ess-ta
        this tree-NOM just one season-NOM/*ACC pretty-PAST-DECL
        'The tree was pretty for just one season.'

    d. ce cip-un   halwu tongan-i/*ul yeypp-ess-ta
        that house-TOP 1.day for-NOM/*ACC pretty-PAST-DECL
        'The house was pretty for a day.'

In the following examples with a stative predicate, there is a clear effect of the subject's animacy on case marking:

(14) a. Mary-nun sahul tongan-?i/ul   aph-ass-e
          Mary-TOP 3.days for-?NOM/ACC sick-PAST-DECL
          'Mary was sick for three days.'

    b. Mary-nun tali-ka   sahul tongan-i/??ul   aph-ass-e
        I-TOP   leg-NOM 3.days for-NOM/??ACC sick-PAST-DECL
        'Mary's leg hurt for three days.'

The predicate is the same, but the subject is animate in (14)a and inanimate (though inalienably possessed) in (14)b. The less likely the body part is to stand for the whole, the lower the acceptability of the accusative modifier:

(15)   ?*nay sonkalak-i sahul tongan-ul aph-ass-e
          my finger-ACC 3.days for-ACC sick-PAST-DECL
          'My finger hurt for three days days.'

MJK also list the 'semantically passive' predicates *pat-ta* 'receive', *tangha-ta* 'undergo', *mac-ta* (lit.) 'be hit'. These verbs all have animate subjects, leading us to expect that they will take accusative adverbials. The prediction is borne out:

(16) John-i   sang-ul yelepen-*i/ul   pat-ass-ta
      John-NOM award-ACC several times-*NOM/ACC receive-PAST-DECL
      'John received awards several times.'

(17) John-un   sensayngnim-kkey sey   pen-*i/ul
      John-TOP teacher-DAT(HON) three times-*NOM/ACC
      yatan mac-ass-ta
      be.scolded-PAST-DECL
      'John was scolded by the teacher three times.'

We do not believe that the subject has to be volitionally or intentionally involved, though being animate may imply this.[6] That is, it is animacy, not volitionality or intentionality, which correlates with accusative on the modifier.

While there are many examples with inanimate subjects which have accusative marking on an adverbial, there are very few with animate subjects and nominative. Such examples involve pure psychological predicates:

(18) na-nun yele hay tongan-i   ku salam-i/??ul   silh-ess-ta
     I-TOP   several years for-NOM that man-NOM/??ACC dislike-PAST-DECL
     'I disliked the man for several years.'

(19) na-nun yele hay tongan-i   ku salam-i/??ul   kuliw-ess-ta
     I-TOP   several years for-NOM that man-NOM/ACC miss-PAST-DECL
     'I missed the man for several years.'

These are truly stative predicates, whose properties we elaborate on below.

3.2.   Generalized Activities

Moving to the properties of the predicates themselves, we focus on the verb *iss-ta*, which we would expect to be a core unaccusative and perhaps stative predicate. We propose that *iss-ta* is a generalized activity predicate in Korean (cf. Martin (1992)). As a first approximation, we believe that the key for understanding the accusative adverbials is the generalized notion of 'activity', though we will clarify it below in terms of stage- vs. individual-level predicates. In English, there are verbs which intuitively have subjects which are animate, and perhaps volitional, which nevertheless allow inanimate subjects, in describing stative-like situations:

(20) a.   The food was sitting in the fridge for two days.

     b.   The clothes were lying all over the floor.

In Korean, both *iss-ta* 'exist' and *ha-ta* 'do' almost always take accusative modifiers – because they are both generalized activity predicates. While *ha-ta* is incompatible with nominative, *iss-ta* has some uses with nominative modifiers, in which case a pure stative interpretation results. For example, and in contrast to the several examples given above, 'to have (money)' seems to work like a stative even though it uses *iss-ta*:[7]

(21) na-nun ton-i   sam.nyen tongan-i/*ul manhi iss-ess-ciman . . .
     I-TOP   money-NOM 3.years for-NOM/*ACC much exist-PAST-but . . .
     'I had a lot of money for 3 years, but . . . '

The verb *sal-ta* ('live') is also an activity predicate in the relevant sense, although it is presumably unaccusative:

(22)   halwusali-nun halwu(-tongan)-ul sa-n-ta
       dayflies-TOP   1.day(-for)-ACC   live-PRES-DECL
       'Dayflies live for one day.'

Our claim about the notion of 'activity' and the categorization of predicates receives support from the possibilities in internally-headed relative clauses (IHRCs). The predicate inside an IHRC must denote an action or activity, and cannot be stative (see e.g., Chung and Kim (2002), Kim (2002)):

(23)   a.   ku-nun Rice-ka   talli-nun kes-ul   manna-ss-ta
            he-TOP Rice-NOM run-MOD thing-ACC meet-PAST-DECL
            'He met Rice, who was running.'

       b.   *ku-nun Rice-ka   ttokttokha-n kes-ul   manna-ss-ta
            he-TOP Rice-NOM smart-MOD   thing-ACC meet-PAST-DECL
            'He met Rice, who was smart.'

The verb *iss-* can naturally occur as the main predicate of the IHRC:

(24)   ku-nun Rice-ka   Seoul-ey iss-nun   kes-ul   manna-ss-ta
       he-TOP Rice-NOM Seoul-LOC exist-MOD thing-ACC meet-PAST-DECL
       'He met Rice, who was in Seoul.'

All of the predicates that we have identified above as having or at least allowing an activity interpretation are acceptable in IHRCs, including *iss-ta*.

(25)   a.   John-un [elum cokak-i han.sikan-ul nok-un   kes-ul]
            John-TOP [ice piece-NOM 1.hour-ACC   melt-MOD thing-ACC]
            mek-ess-ta
            eat-PAST-DECL
            'John ate the ice which melted for an hour.'

       b.   John-un [umsik-i   nayngcangko-ey iss-nun   kes-ul]
            John-TOP [food-NOM fridge-LOC   exist-MOD thing-ACC]
            mek-ess-ta
            eat-PAST-DECL
            'John ate the food which had been in the fridge.'

iss-ta in the sense of 'have' is different, and cannot appear in an IHRC:

(26)   *Tom-un John-eykey/i ton-i   manhi iss-nun   kes-ul
        Tom-TOP John-DAT/NOM money-NOM much exist-MOD thing-ACC
        manna-ss-ta
        meet-PAST-DECL
        '(intended) Tom met John, who has a lot of money.'

The IHRC data provides an independent test of the 'actitivity'-like meaning of the predicates in question.

3.3. Animate Subjects of Stative Predicates

We have considered examples above with different degrees of apparent stativity, and have shown the effect of the subject's animacy on the interpretation of the predicate. However, there are genuine examples of nominative adverbials with stative predicates, even in the presence of animate subjects; MJK's (27) contrasts with our (28) and illustrates an important point.
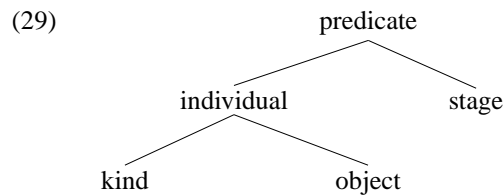
(27) ku malathon-senswu-nun chopan tongan-i/*ul   ppal-ass-ta.
      the marathoner-TOP   first.half for-NOM/ACC fast-PAST-DECL
      'The marathoner was fast in the first half.'

(28) ku malathon-senswu-nun chopan tongan-*i/ul   ppalli talli-ess-ta.
      the marathoner-TOP   first.half for-NOM/ACC fast   run-PAST-DECL
      'The marathoner ran fast in the first half.'

(27) indicates that animacy alone cannot license accusative if the predicate is stative. Intuitively, (27) describes a non-temporary property of the runner while (28) describes something about what the runner was doing. In the following section we try to provide some formal semantic substance to this intuition.

4. Stage- and Individual-Level Predications

4.1. Types of Predicate

The semantic generalizations that we have described above find at least a rationalization in the categorization of predicate-types due to Carlson (1977), the famous classification into stage- and individual-level predications:

(29)
```
                      predicate
                     /         \
              individual        stage
             /          \
          kind          object
```

Stages are time-slices of individuals, who might be lying under the table, or thinking, or simply being alive. Each individual has many stages; individuals themselves may be kinds (roses, mammals), or objects (women, tables). We will not concern ourselves here with the distinction between kinds and objects, and simply refer to the individual vs. stage partition.

Next, we need a finer-grained understanding of the types of predication involved in the examples that we are interested in. The following extended quote from Dowty (178–179) provides the relevant background:

... Carlson's stage-level predicates all seem to have truth conditions that are dependent on the state of the world at the current moment (or the "current" interval) in a relatively straightforward way. We have found ... what I believe are good reasons for believing that not only activities and definite change-of-state verbs but also the *sit-stand-lie* class should depend on an interval, rather than a moment .... Generic (or "habitual") predicates are, on Carlson's view of them, quite a different matter. Even when we predicate them of an individual at a particular time, it is not really a property that individual's current stage has at that moment that makes them true, but our "total experience" with previous stages of that individual ... . But note that classic stative predicates like *know* and *love* are like this as well. Though these are not derived from stage-level predicates of the language as are "habitual" predicates, it is here again our total experience with prior stages of an individual that somehow makes them true .... To the extent that an interval of time could be said to be "the" interval of their truth, it would seem to be ... only a large and vaguely defined interval including a vague number of past instances of the truth of certain stage-predicates, and presumably including a vague number of future instances of certain stage-predicates .... Therefore it is not surprising that our language should treat them as true of an individual (as opposed to its stages) at any moment within this vague interval .... As Quine might say, both habituals and statives like *know* and *love* express "dispositions" [which] indicate a *potential* for having stage-properties of a certain kind at some future or hypothetical time.

4.2. Our Proposal

Following this passage, Dowty proposes to categorize stative predicates as in (30):

(30)   Three types of stative predicate (Dowty (1979, 180)):

    a.   Interval statives (stage-level predicates true at an interval (but not a moment)), such as *lie*, *sit*;

    b.   Momentary stage-predicates (stage-level predicates true at a moment), such as *be on the table*, *be a hero*;

    c.   Individual-level statives (true at a moment), such as *know*, *love*.

According to Dowty, the last two types are true at a moment and are true at an interval if and only if they are true at all moments in that interval.

We make the plausible assumption that all non-stative transitive verbs are stage-level; such predicates take accusative (only) on both objects and D/F adjuncts. Assuming a connection between stage-level predicates and accusative case, we can generalize from transitive to intransitive verbs as well: the presence of accusative case on a D/F modifier correlates with a stage-level predication,

while nominative correlates with an individual-level predication. That is, nominative will suggest a dispositional property of an individual, while accusative will bring out the stage-level behavior of stages of the individual.

(31) a. Accusative: the sentence involves a stage-level predication.

b. Nominative: the sentence involves an individual-level predication.

While (31) refers to properties of the predicate, and this is the basis of the case-marking difference, the animacy of the subject plays a role as follows: it seems that any example with an animate subject strongly favors a stage-level interpretation. Needless to say, our approach assumes that many predicates are not intrinsically classified as being stage- or individual-level, and we feel this assumption is well-supported by the many examples given here (cf. McKoon and Macfarland (2000) on internally- vs. externally-caused change of state verbs in English).

(31) seems to be stated at the right level of abstraction, and the intent can be illustrated through a pair of examples from Kim and Maling (1993), who noted a scope difference due to the case marking on a frequency adverbial:

(32) a. khu-n   pakhwui-ka twu pen-ul   tol-ass-ta
    big-MOD wheel-NOM two times-ACC spin-PAST-DECL
    'The big wheel spun round two times.'
    (one complex event of one wheel spinning twice)

b. khu-n   pakhwui-ka twu pen-i   tol-ass-ta
    big-MOD wheel-NOM two times-NOM spin-PAST-DECL
    'The/a big wheel spun round two times.' OR
    'A big wheel spun round two times.'   (The latter involves different wheel-spinning events, and so, different wheels, possibly.)

Perhaps surprisingly, the nominative shows an ambiguity, having an interpretation (of different wheels) which the accusative version lacks. But we can immediately make sense of this if we take the view that the accusative adverbial applies to some participant in the event, while a nominative adverbial applies directly to the eventuality. In other words, accusative is part of what is predicated of the subject, even with an intransitive predicate, while nominative is not. Hence the examples in (32) can be schematized as in (33):

(33) a. A/the wheel [spun two times].   (accusative modifier)

b. [A wheel spinning] occurred two times.   (nominative modifier)

Some speakers feel that a plural marker (-*tul*) on the subject biases a stage-level predication, hence with the accusative adverbial:

(34)   khu-n   pakhwui-tul-i   twu pen-??i/ul   tol-ass-ta
    big-MOD wheel-PLU-NOM two times-??NOM/ACC spin-PAST-DECL
    'The/a big wheels spun round two times.'
    (one complex event of the same wheels spinning twice)

However, other examples show that the effect of *-tul* may not be uniform:

(35) hanul-eyse wupak-tul-i   twu pen-i/??ul   ttel-e ci-ess-ta
      sky-from   hail-PLU-NOM two times-NOM/??ACC fall down-PAST-DECL
      'Hail fell from the sky two times.'

The important feature of this example is that same hail cannot fall twice. We can relate this back to a contrast between (9)a and (36):

(9) a. haksayng-tul-i   twu pen-?*i/ul   o-ass-ta
         student-PLU-NOM two times-*?NOM/ACC come-PAST-DECL
         'Students came (here and left) twice.'

(36)   pi-ka   twu pen-i/??ul   o-ass-ta
         rain-NOM two times-NOM/??ACC come-PAST-DECL
         'It rained twice.'

With accusative, (36) would mean that the same rain rained twice, which is an unlikely interpretation. (9)a is consistent with the same students coming twice.

The 'dispositional' nature of nominative case is also illustrated by the contrast between (13)a and (37), where the latter example disfavors accusative:

(13) a. kongcwu-nun halwu-ka/lul   yeypp-ess-ta
          princess-TOP 1.day-NOM/ACC pretty-PAST-DECL
          'The princess was pretty only for a day.'

(37)   Mary-nun il ha-nun tongan-i/*ul   yeypp-ess-ta
          Mary-TOP work-PRES for-NOM/ACC pretty-PAST-DECL
          'Mary was pretty while working.'

The accusative on the modifier in (13)a suggests a temporary property of (the stage of) the princess, while 'making herself pretty while at work' is a dispositional property of Mary in (37), favoring nominative.

5. Conclusion

The broader idea in our proposal is that accusative marks something as part of a 'predicate' in a subject-predicate relation, while nominative is marking something about the whole eventuality. This means that accusative could never be the case on a subject – which is in fact the only reliable case/function (inverse) correlation in Korean.[8] A related possibility is that accusative requires delineating the subject into stages, while nominative does not. Either of these general suggestions would naturally explain why accusative is the case of objects – syntactic entities which are necessarily part of the 'predicate', and must appear in the presence of a subject. Based on these observations, we speculate that (38) captures the essence of the system of case assignment:

(38) a. Accusative: is predicated of an individual in the eventuality (or, 'is part of the predicate').

b. Nominative: is predicated over the whole eventuality, but does not partition up participants in the eventuality.

(38)a involves 'stage'-like predication, while (38)b does not.

In the passage quoted above from Dowty (1979), he observes that stage-level predicates are true of the moment or interval, in a way that individual-level predicates are not (these being more 'dispositional'). We can view the strong influence of animacy of the subject in the data discussed in section 3.1 as showing that animate subjects are (perceived to be) able to act as stages-of-individuals (see footnote 6); perhaps they are more topical in the sense of being the subject of a categorical, rather than a thetic judgement.

Notes

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[1]There may be subtle differences between Duration and Frequency adverbials, and also between bare Duration adverbials, or those suffixed with *-kan* ('period of time'), or with *tongan* ('during'); we ignore all such subtleties here.

[2]MJK do recognize the relevance of events vs. states in their paper (pp. 105–107), in particular the fact that pure statives take nominative on their adverbials.

[3]We are aware that careful studies have shown that some verbs may function either as unaccusatives or unergatives; such studies in turn raise the question of the semantic bases for such variation.

[4]The data here involve a case alternation inside a complex predicate, which is possible only with the negative verb *anh-ta* – if its preceding verb is stative – and with *siph-ta* ('want') – which is stative itself. We do not explore this particular case marking data further (but see Kim and Choi (2004)).

[5]The observation about animacy may explain in turn MJK's observation that the duration adverbial *phyengsayng* ('lifetime') only ever takes ACC.

[6]Van Valin and Wilkins (1996) propose that most transitive verbs take an Effector (a 'doer') as their first argument, not an Agent, and that the intuition of an agentive first argument is an implication due to the presence of an animate subject, as animacy implies volitionality, intentionality, etc.

[7]Martin (1992, 319ff.) notes that there are probably three core meanings for *iss-ta* – 'be', 'stay', and 'have'. Only the last one is truly stative. Interestingly, the honorific form is the suppletive *kyeysi-ta* for the first two meanings, but the regular *iss-usi-ta* for the 'have' meaning.

[8]That is, NOM is possible on both subjects and objects, and DAT on subjects and (indirect) objects.

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