



Causatives and Inchoatives in Korean: A Unified Account

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I. Introduction

Causative alternation: the same verb stem alternates between:

- Causative: NP₁ Vt(+affix) NP₂ construction
- Inchoative: NP₂ Vi(+affix) construction

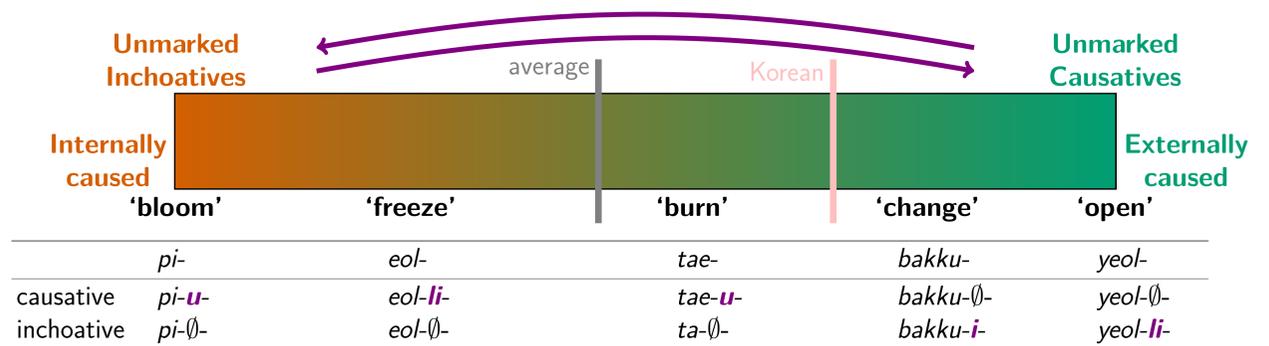
where NP₁ is the causer and NP₂ undergoes a change of state due to that causer.

- (1) a. *Alice broke the glass.* (causative)
b. *The glass broke.* (inchoative)

Systematic semantic and morphological connections between Korean causatives and inchoatives. However, have so far been analyzed separately or only in partial pairings ([5]; cf. [8], [1]).

IV. Externally-caused vs. internally-caused (spontaneous) change of state verbs

A typological study [4]: connects marked vs. unmarked form with marked vs. unmarked causal properties (see also [6] and [7]).



Questions & Hypotheses

1. What causative and inchoative constructions are available in Korean? When is each used?

- **0-inchoative** paired with **i-causative**
- **0-causative** paired with **i-inchoative**
- Shared morphemes (-∅, -i) that mirror each other
- Choice between the two based on the canonical properties of the events denoted by the verb stem

2. Is a unified account possible?

- Yes; the **-i** morpheme indicates relative markedness of causatives and inchoatives (cf. [3]).

II. Observations

In Korean, either the causative form or the inchoative form is morphologically marked (whereas its associated inchoative/causative form is bare), depending on the verb type.

(2) **0-inchoative, i-causative**

- a. *hosu-ga eol-eoss-da.*
lake-NOM freeze-PAST-DEC.
The lake froze.
- b. *Alice-ga mul-ul eol-li-eoss-da.*
Alice-NOM water-ACC freeze-CAUS-PAST-DEC.
Alice froze the (glass of) water.

(3) **0-causative, i-inchoative**

- a. *Alice-ga moon-ul yeol-eoss-da.*
Alice-NOM door-ACC open-PAST-DEC.
Alice opened the door.
- b. *moon-i yeol-li-eoss-da.*
door-NOM open-INCHO-PAST-DEC.
The door opened.

The affixes on causatives and inchoatives are identical: **-i** and its allomorphs (cf. [5]).

Table 1. Two types of Korean causatives and inchoatives

| | Verb class 1 | Verb class 2 |
|------------|--------------|--------------|
| Causative | -i | -∅ |
| Inchoative | -∅ | -i |

III. Previous work

Focuses on the 0-causative and the 2 types of inchoatives; different syntactic structures posited for the latter ([5], cf. [1]).

- 0-inchoatives: no VoiceP; just bare vP
[vP [DP₁ v' [v root]]]
- i-inchoatives: VoiceP with defective Voice head, marked with -[external argument]
[VoiceP [DP₂(∅) Voice' [Voice vP [DP₁ v']]]]

No mention of *i-causatives*.

No parallels drawn between causatives and inchoatives.

V. A unified semantic analysis of the Korean causative/inchoative suffix **-i**

The suffix **-i** can be given a unified meaning: **set complementation operation (SC)**, applied to a given domain of base.

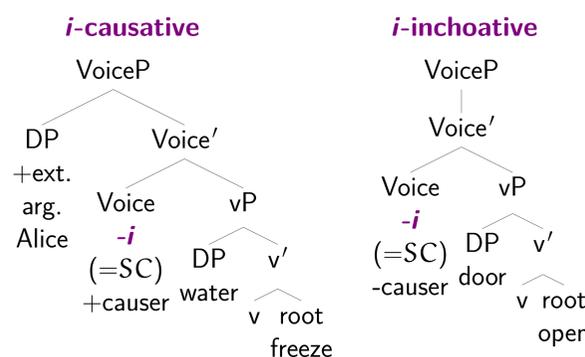
Table 2. Sample derivations of causative/inchoative 'freeze' and 'open'

| Class 1: Verb stem refers to spontaneously occurring events | Class 2: Verb stem refers to events with external causers |
|--|--|
| 0-inchoative [[_{vP} freeze lake]] := λv(FREEZE-LAKE(v)) - CAUSE-FREEZE-LAKE(v)) | 0-causative [[_{vP} open door]] := λv(CAUSE-OPEN-DOOR(v)) |
| i-causative [[_{vP} freeze lake] + <i>li</i>] = ([[_{vP} freeze lake]]) ^C = [λv(FREEZE-LAKE(v)) - CAUSE-FREEZE-LAKE(v))] ^C = [λv(CAUSE-FREEZE-LAKE(v))] ^C = CAUS(freeze lake) | i-inchoative [[_{vP} open door] + <i>li</i>] = ([[_{vP} open door]]) ^C = [λv(CAUSE-OPEN-DOOR(v))] ^C = [λv(OPEN-DOOR(v)) - CAUSE-OPEN-DOOR(v))] ^C = INCHO(open door) |

- Extends Grimm's analysis of number marking in Dagaare [3], but applies it to a novel (verbal) domain
- Stem status (Class 1: spontaneously caused vs. Class 2: externally caused) is lexically specified, and percolates up to the whole vP.
- Domain of base: the set of all events, i.e. the set of all possible caused and spontaneous events that the vP as a whole can refer to.
- When **-i** (i.e. the set operation SC) combines with different verb stems, it consistently yields causally marked (i.e. non-canonical) events.

VI. The syntax of Korean causatives and inchoatives

The affix **-i** occupies the Voice head (cf. [1]) in both causatives and inchoatives, and carries out the same SC operation to vP; if the output set of events is causative, the specifier position is filled with the causer.



Likewise, both the 0-causatives and 0-inchoatives are assumed to have VoiceP, this time without SC in the head.

VII. Re-examining the diagnostics

Apart from affixes, 0-forms and **-i** forms hypothesized to share the same syntactic structure: expected to pattern in the same way for a variety of diagnostics. An acceptability judgement survey verifies this prediction (cf. [5], see also [2]).

Table 3. Acceptability judgements

| | <i>i-caus</i> | 0-caus | <i>i-incho</i> | 0-incho |
|------------------------|---------------|--------|----------------|---------|
| +by (true) instr PP | O | O | ? | ? |
| +by itself ('cecello') | NA | NA | O | OK |
| +by agent PP | NA | NA | OK | OK |
| agent subject | O | O | NA | NA |
| non-agent subject | OK | OK | NA | NA |

VIII. Advantages of the analysis

- Provides a unified semantics for the morpheme **-i**.
- Explains why the Korean causative alternation always pairs **-i** forms with **-∅** forms and vice versa.
- Captures the parallel syntactic behaviors of 0 and *i-causatives* (likewise, 0 and *i-inchoatives*).

Discussion & Conclusion

1. The Korean causative/inchoative affix **-i** can be given a unified semantic treatment:

- It encodes an abstract meaning that the referent event deviates from its canonical properties.
- It does not directly encode causativity or inchoativity.

2. More generally, certain affixes contribute abstract meanings that are sensitive to markedness of the referent, creating an efficient morphological system.

3. This mechanism seems to exist both in the nominal [3] and verbal domain: the markedness targets boundedness on the one hand, and telicity on the other.

References & Acknowledgement*

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