

5.

Sky Lee - University of Wisconsin – Madison Telicity and VN-LV vs. VN-Acc-LV

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Miyagawa 1989 claims contra Grimshaw and Mester 1988 that there is a certain type of verbal noun (VN), i.e., unaccusative VNs, that does not allow the Japanese *VN-Acc-L[ight] V[erb]* construction.

- (1) a. **ya-ga mato-ni meichuu-o-shita.*
arrow-Nom target-at strike-Acc-did
'The arrow struck the target.'
b. *ya-ga mato-ni meichuu-shita.*
arrow-N target-at strike-did
'The arrow struck the target.'

To account for the ungrammaticality of (1a), where the unaccusative VN *meichuu* 'strike' is assigned accusative case by the LV *suru*, Miyagawa appeals to Burzio's (1986) generalization: a verb assigns an external theta-role iff it can assign case. The idea is that the LV in (1a) does not have an external theta-role to assign, due to the unaccusativity of its host VN *meichuu* 'strike', from which the LV receives theta-roles (cf. Grimshaw and Mester). In (1a), the LV assigns accusative case without assigning an external theta-role, violating Burzio's generalization. In contrast, (1b) is good, since the LV does not assign accusative case.

This snippet argues that the unaccusative analysis is insufficient to account for parallel Korean examples, and suggests a generalization.

Note the contrast between (2) with *activity* VNs and (3) with *accomplishment/achievement* VNs (cf. Vendler 1967):

- (2) a. *kongpwu-hata / kongpwu-lul-hata* 'study'
study-do study-Acc-do
b. *wuncen-hata / wuncen-ul-hata* 'drive'
drive-do drive-Acc-do
- (3) a. *phakoy-hata / *?phakoy-lul-hata* 'destroy'
destruction-do destruction-Acc-do
b. *wanseng-hata / *?wanseng-ul-hata* 'complete'
completion-do completion-Acc-do

Focusing on the transitive VNs, we immediately see that the ungrammaticality in (3) cannot be attributed solely to Burzio's generalization. The Korean LV *hata* in (3) can have an external theta-role from the transitive VNs, which are not unaccusatives, by argument transfer. Therefore, the LV is allowed to assign accusative case, in accordance with Burzio's generalization. However, the examples are still unacceptable, comparing with (2). This contrast tells

us that activity VNs can, but accomplishment/achievement VNs cannot, be assigned accusative case by the LV *hata* in Korean.

Rather than a syntactic property like unaccusativity, a certain intrinsic semantic feature of VNs -- telicity -- appears to interact with the *VN-Acc-LV* construction. Interestingly, the *VN-Acc-LV* construction, unlike the *VN-LV* construction, forces a telic interpretation: it is clear in (4) that the entire event denoted by the *VN-Acc-LV* construction is bounded or temporally delimited. Given that in the ungrammatical cases (1a) and (3), which contain accomplishment/achievement VNs, we find an inherently telic VN together with the telic-oriented *VN-Acc-LV* construction, the ungrammaticality can perhaps be reduced to the semantic restriction that an eventuality may have only one delimitation (Tenny 1987, Simpson 1983, Levin & Rappaport 1995).

- (4) a. John-i hansikan-tongan/?*nayey ku cha-lul wuncen-hayssta. (atelic reading)
 John-Nom an hour-for/in the car-Acc drive-did
 ‘John drove the car for/*?in an hour.’
- b. John-i hansikan-nayey ku cha-lul wuncen-ul-hayssta. (telic reading)
 John-Nom an hour-in the car-Acc drive-Acc-did
 ‘John came to be able to drive the car in an hour.’
- c. John-i hansikan-tongan ku cha-lul wuncen-ul-hayssta.
 (repetition reading: semelfactive)
 John-Nom an hour-for the car-Acc drive-Acc-did
 ‘John drove the car repeatedly for an hour.’

References

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