Case-Marking on Duration Adverbs Revisited
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1. Introduction

The observation that ACC-case-marking can be used on various kinds of adverbs in Korean dates back to at least H-P Ch'oe's (1937) pioneering work, 'Korean Grammar'. In the last decade, the case-marking of duration and frequency adverbs (notype, DFA adverbs) in Korean has been the focus of a number of studies. Mailing (1989) observed that these two classes of adverbs could be case-marked with either nominative or accusative case, and moreover, that these adverbs exhibit the same case alternations as verbal objects. Based on these facts, she suggested that these adverbs were assigned structural nominative and accusative case by the same case-assigning mechanisms as verbal arguments. This conclusion is, at first glance, somewhat surprising given the importance of the argument/adjunct dichotomy in syntactic theory. Yet, there is a number of researchers who have attempted to incorporate the case marking on adverbs into a general account of case marking for Korean. In this paper we investigate the descriptive generalization to be accounted for, and propose an analysis based on the hierarchical Case Tier (Yip et al. 1987), modified to reflect both the distinction between internal and external arguments, and the semantic distinction between states and events. Case alterations on the arguments of intransitive verbs and passives are attributed to the fact that for many speakers of Korean, externalization is optional. Overt case-marking of DFA adverbs in Korean is optional. According to Y-J Kim (1990), the norm for DFA adverbs is to have a zero case marker in formal speech, whereas in colloquial speech, however, overt case markers are allowed."

(1) a. Inho-ka TV-luk sey sikan go-ans-ta
Inho-NOM TV-ACC 3 hours watch-Pst-Dec
'm Inho watched TV for three hours'

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1. For some speakers, it is a sentence (1b) with an overt ACC marker on the
duration which sounds 'formal', and sentence (1a), with a zero case marker, which
sounds far more 'colloquial.'

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b. Inho-ka TV-lul sey sikan-ul po-ass-ta

We assume that discourse factors determine the choice between no case or a DEF adjunct vs. an overt case marker.

(2a) Inho-ka sey sikan tongan-0ul-1Pl TV-lul po-ass-1Pl
Inho-NOM 3 hours for-ACC+NOM TV-ACC watch-Pst-Dec
‘Inho watched TV for three hours’

(2b) ?Inho-ka TV-lul palo sey sikan tongan-0 po-ass-1Pl
‘Inho watched TV for three hours’ (J. S. Jun 2000)

J. S. Jun (2000) argues that the use of an overt case marker provides an adverbial phrase with a kind of focus reading. The contrasts in (2) support this intuition. The use of palo has an effect similar to the it-clit construction in English, namely, it provides a kind of “metalinguistic focusing” which identifies the focused element from a set of possible topics.

In this paper, we are concerned only with investigating the principles which govern the choice between nominative vs. accusative case when discourse factors allow an overt case marker and speakers are forced to choose. Descriptively, we can distinguish three subtypes of examples: (a) accusative case is the DEF adverbial is more acceptable than nominative; (b) accusative and nominative cases are equally acceptable; and (c) nominative is more acceptable than accusative. An example of each type is given in (3a-c):

(3a) Inho-nun ku manykwa-lul manyengangko-ey sey sikan tongan-0ul-1Pl
Inho-NOM the beer-ACC fridge-LOC 3 hours for-ACC+NOM
put/store-Pst-Dec ‘Inho put the beer into the fridge for three hours’

(3b) ku manykwa-nun manyengangko-ey sey sikan tongan-0ul
the beer-ACC fridge-LOC 3 hours for-ACC+NOM
‘The beer was in the fridge for three hours’

2. Descriptive Generalizations

We argue here that the following descriptive generalizations hold:

(4a) Accusative case is the only possible case on a DEF adverbial if the verb has an external argument. This includes

- agentive, nonative verbs with volitional subjects;
- the large class of morphologically complex ha-verbs;
- verbs like pita, matza and amahata ‘get/receive’ which are semantically passive but morphologically and syntactically active;
- verbs with inanimate subjects which are CAUSES

As we will see, it also includes

- verbs like phita ‘bloom’, which denote natural phenomena. Note that although these verbs are not agentive or volitional in the usual understanding of these terms, they are eventive rather than stative.

b. Accusative and nominative cases are equally possible if the verb has no external argument underlyingly. This includes

- unaccusative verbs, including verbs of motion:
- Passive verbs in -ihlu/kel, -ei, and -toy.

The base verbs may be either stative or nonstative.

c. Nominative is the only possible case for simple psychological predicates (e.g. ilka ‘dislike’ but not ilka-hata) and adverbal predicates (e.g. kwype ‘cure’ but not kwype-0hata, etwapa ‘dark be’) without -za.

2. A caveat is in order. We observed a strange fact about phyngeung ‘entire life’, namely that it takes ACC even when other duration adverbials take NOM.

(i) a. Swuni-nun ku bow phyngeung-ul-1Pl Tom-1 col-NOM-1Pl
‘Swuni liked Tom for her entire life’ (Wechsler & Lee 1996:63)

b. Swuni-nun ku bow yfte hag tongan-2Pl Tom-1 col-NOM-2Pl
‘Swuni liked Tom for many years afterwards’

(ii) a. Swuni-nun phyngeung-ul enemi-0 Pl-1 Pl-0
‘Swuni missed her mother for life’

b. Swuni-nun chenu Il-cwitt-tongan-man-2Pl enemi-0 kulu-0 Pl-1
‘Swuni missed her mother only for the first week’

These contrasts suggest that phyngeung-ul is a fixed form which does not follow the general case-marking principles. Unfortunately, some of the crucial examples in the literature on this topic have contained this adverbial, the authors having failed to recognize its exceptional behavior. If we want to discover the principles that underly the choice between nominative and accusative, we need to carefully avoid using this particular duration adverbial.
We suggest that the difference between states and actions/events is what matters. We hypothesize that accusative case is licensed by the presence of an Action Tier in the sense of Jackendoff (1990). We propose to explain the observed case alternation with the verbs in (4b) by assuming that case difference reflects different syntactic structures: if all verbal arguments remain internal at S-structure, then NOM will be assigned to the D/F adverbial, whereas ACC will be assigned if there is an external argument at S-structure.1 We will now discuss each of these three subtypes in turn, starting with the surprising nominative.

2. 1. NOM is only possible case

Most research on the case-marking of adverbials has focused on the use of accusative, which is widely considered to be the default case on adverbial adjectives in Korean (Y-J Kim 1990; K-S Hong 1991; J-S Kang 1991, 1993). Some studies mention only the possibility of ACC (C-S Suh 1996; H-R Chae 1999). It has sometimes been claimed that accusative is always possible on duration adverbials; "duration adverbial nominals in VP are always Accusative-Case-licensed, irrespective of the stativity of a relevant predicate (Y-S Kang 1993: 346)." However this is not accurate. There is a large class of systematic exceptions to this claim. Consider the examples in (5).

(5) a. aki-nun cec mek-nun tongan-ii-ul kwiyepta/sepputa baby-TOP milk-eat-REL for-NOM/ACC cuate.be/prety be
   ‘Babies are cute while breastfeeding’

b. ku malathon sensaw-nun chopen tongan-ii-ul ppol-ass-ta the marathoner-TOP first-half for-NOM/ACC fast.be=Pst-Dec
   ‘The marathoner was fast in the first half’

c. i pang-un pukhyang-ilsae nae tongan-ii-ul etuwpt a this room-TOP northern-due to day time for-NOM/ACC dark.be=be
   ‘This room is dark during the day because it faces north’

d. na-nun khphii-ka yele hay tongan-ii-ul sibb-eex-ta i-TOP coffee-NOM many-years for-NOM/ACC dislike-Pst-Dec
   ‘For many years, I disliked coffee’

3. There is ideological/ideational variation in judgments, especially with respect to passives. An analysis based on the externalization of an internal argument provides a simple means of parameterization.

The adjectival and simplex psychological predicates which allow only nominative are usually considered to be stative predicates. Why is accusative not allowed for these predicates? We suggest that accusative case in Korean is licensed by the Action Tier in the sense of Jackendoff (1990). Given that the Action Tier is the semantic representation of Actors and Patients, stative predicates lack the Action Tier which licenses accusative case on duration adverbials.

2. 2. ACC is the only possible case

As noted earlier, accusative is widely assumed to be the default case on adverbial adjectives in Korean. Indeed, if the verb is agentive, then accusative is the only possible case marker. As K-S Hong (1991: 265) observes, "Descriptively, if the subject is an agent, only ACC marking is allowed on the duration adverbials."

(6) Swani-ka han sikan tongan-ii-ul tali-eess-ta
Swani-NOM 1 hour for-ACC+NOM run-Pst-Dec
‘Swani ran for one hour’

(K. S. Hong 1991)

Y-J Kim (1990) proposes that agentivity is relevant for the case-marking of verbal arguments. She argues that unaccusativity in Korean is based on the [agentive] feature of verbs (Y-J Kim 1990: 96), thus making the case-marking fall under Burzio’s Generalization. It goes without saying that an Action Tier is associated with any verb whose subject is an agent. We propose to extend her idea to all VP-internal nominals, both adverbs and arguments, hypothesizing that ACC is assigned to duration adverbials if and only if there is an external argument.

K-S Hong’s descriptive generalization is an automatic consequence of our hypothesis that ACC is assigned if there exists an external argument at 3-structure, since agents are always external arguments. Many linguists have suggested that ACC case has a delimiting effect (K-S Hong 1991; O’Grady 1991: 227; H-R Chae 1999; inter alia). Hong (1991: 229) attributes the use of ACC to the fact that “duration adverbs function to delimit an event.” We agree that durational adverbs have this delimiting function (see Wechsler & Lee 1996, and for a similar claim for Slavic, Fowler & Yadroff 1993). Note, however, that the delimiting function exists independently of the case-marking. A duration adverb delimits the event whether it bears NOM, ACC, or no overt case marker. Thus it is not necessary to assume that this is a different, special use of ACC, as H-R Chae (1999) assumes. The suggestion
that -ul/ul on duration adverbials is a special delimiter; rather than a case marker begs the question of why accusative case is so frequently used on duration adverbials cross-linguistically.

2.3. Case Alternations: either NOM or ACC

Maing (1989) noted that with some verbs, either nominative or accusative is possible on DDF adverbials. Accounting for this fact in a principled way has proved to be a challenge. K-S Hong (1991) offers the following generalization that if the grammatical subject is not in agent, then either NOM or ACC is possible on a duration adverbial, and provides the following illustrative examples:

(7) a. pi-ka han sikan-tongan-ul o-ass-ta.
   rain-NOM 1 hour-for-ACC/NOM come-Pst-Dec
   ‘It rained for one hour’

b. chuk-i han sikan-tongan-ul ili-ki-ess-ta.
   book-NOM 1 hour-for-ACC/NOM read-Pass-Pst-Dec
   ‘The book was read for one hour’

c. chuk-i han sikan-tongan-ul ili-ki-ess-ta.
   book-NOM 1 hour-for-ACC/NOM read-Pass-Pst-Dec
   ‘The book was read for one hour’

As noted above, K-S Hong attributes the ACC marking to the delimiting function of duration adverbials; he admits that she has no account for the possibility of NOM marking. In a footnote (Hong 1991: 266), she suggests that “Statives and duration do not seem to be semantically compatible.” But this cannot be right; duration adverbials can freely co-occur with stative predicates, and NOM is possible in examples like (3b,c) and (5).

Let us explore the hypothesis that the different case-marking reflects different syntactic structures. We have already hypothesized that ACC is assigned to VP-internal nominals, both adjuncts and arguments, if there is an external argument.

(8) a. Working Hypothesis: Accusative case is assigned if and only if the clause has an external argument at s-structure.

b. Corollaries:
   (i) Since agents are always external arguments, only ACC will be possible if subject is an agent.
   (ii) If the argument of an unaccusative verb remains in VP-internal position, NOM will be assigned.

(iii) If the argument of an unaccusative verb is externalized, then ACC will be assigned.

We propose to explain the appearance of case alternations in terms of unaccusativity. The argument of an unaccusative verb is necessarily non-agentive, and is standardly assumed to originate as a sister to V. If it remains in VP-internal position, there will be no external argument for NOM case to be assigned to. Under the Case-Tier approach of Yip et al. (1987), as modified for Finnish (Maing 1993), NOM will then be assigned to the internal argument(s). Maing (1993: 67 and fn 17) proposes the following generalization: “All internal arguments of a predicate must get the same syntactic case.” For a typical two-place predicate, NOM will be assigned to the external argument, which is the grammatical subject, and ACC will be assigned to the remaining argument which is VP-internal. This results in a clause with a Nominative subject and an Accusative object, which is schematically summarized in (9).

(9) Summary of the Case-Tier (adapted from Maing 1993)
   a. NOM is assigned before ACC.
   b. Only one XP can get assigned NOM, any remaining NPs get ACC
   c. Which XP gets NOM reflects the hierarchy of XPs, where EXT > INTERNAL > ADV

We now ask whether this analysis, which has been tested for languages like Finnish and Icelandic, can be extended naturally to account for the case alternations on duration adverbials in Korean. Unlike Finnish and Icelandic, Korean allows more than one nominative NP in a single clause. This applies not just to verbal arguments, but includes DDF adverbials. The fact that the DDF adverbial bears the same case as any VP-internal argument suggests that the Case-Tier hierarchy does not distinguish between adjuncts and internal arguments in Korean. Suppose further that externalization of an internal argument is optional in Korean. Then a sentence containing an unaccusative verb like (3b) or (7a), which is repeated here as (10) and (11) respectively, will have two different syntactic representations, one in which all nominals are VP-internal, and one in which an argument has been externalized:

10a. (yo-may-koe-wi-nun nag-nang-xo-gi ey sikan tongan-i iss-ess-ta)
   the beer was in the fridge for three hours

10b. (yo-may-koe-wi-nun nag-nang-xo-gi ey sikan tongan-i iss-ess-ta)
   the beer was in the fridge for three hours

11a. (yo-may-koe-wi-nun nag-nang-xo-gi ey sikan tongan-i iss-ess-ta)
   the beer was in the fridge for three hours

11b. (yo-may-koe-wi-nun nag-nang-xo-gi ey sikan tongan-i iss-ess-ta)
   the beer was in the fridge for three hours
Case-Marking on Duration Adverbials Revisited

330

b. ku maykwew-nun [\nu naygængko-ey sëy sikan tongan-ul iss-ess-ta]

(13)a. [\nì kay [\nì han sikan-tongan-l o-ass-ta]
   'It rained for one hour'

b. \nì-\nì-\nì [\nì han sikan-tongan-ul o-ass-ta]

(12)a. \nì-\nì-\nì Kim sensayng-i sampl nyen tongan-i kwyssuy-ess-ta
   Mr. Kim-NOM 30 years for-NOM professor be-Pst-Dec
   'Mr. Kim has been a professor for 30 years'

b. Kim sensayng-i [\nì sampl nyen tongan-ul kwyssuy-ess-ta]

The same will be true of syntactic passives like those in (7b,c).

(13)a. [\nì chayki [\nì han sikan-tongan-i lil-ki-iss-ta]
   'The book was read for one hour'

b. chayki [\nì han sikan-tongan-ul lil-ki-ess-ta]

Support for this analysis comes from the observation made by H-D Ahn (1991: 520), namely, that VP-fronting is not possible for VPs headed by unaccusative verbs. Note the contrasts below.

(14)a. i elum o-\nì-\nì han sikan-ul nok-ass-ta
   this ice piece-NOM 1 hour-NOM/ACC melt-Pst-Dec
   'This piece of ice melted for one hour'

b. i [\nì han sikan-i nokki]-i\nì-\nì elum o-\nì-\nì huy-ess-cimant...

c. [\nì han sikan-ul nokki]-i\nì-\nì elum o-\nì-\nì huy-ess-cimant...

Given our analysis, (14b) is predicted to be ungrammatical because the nominative case on the adverbial indicates that the subject NP is internal to the VP. So VP-fronting will only be possible if that argument has been externalized as in (14c). The fact that (14c) is less than fully acceptable we attribute to a discourse conflict in what is being focused, since both VP-fronting and overt case marking on the adverbial are focus constructions.

3. Further Consequences

3.1. Voicingality

Our hypothesis automatically accounts for the fact that ACC is the only possible case if the subject is an agent, given the standard assumption that agents are always external arguments. It also explains why the occurrence of ACC on the duration adverbial results in the interpretation of voicingality or intentionality. The quintessential unaccusative verb is the copula. Consider the contrasts in (15).

(15)a. noyeti-i ku sem ey ipayk nyen kan-ul i iss-ess-ta
   slaves-NOM the island LOC 200 years-period-NOM/ACC NOM exist-Pst-Dec
   'Slaves were on the island for 200 years'

b. noyeti-i ku sem ey ipayk nyen kan-ul?i swaye iss-ess-ta
   hide exist-Pst-Dec
   'The slaves hid on the island for 200 years'

In (15a), either NOM or ACC case is possible on the duration adverbial, but with a slight difference in meaning. With NOM, the interpretation is that of a simple existential reading: 'there were slaves on the island for 200 years' or assertion of the existence of the institution of slavery. With ACC, the interpretation is that the grammatical subject is in some sense a volitional or intentional agent. This reading is brought out in (15b): if the slaves were hiding, they were volitional agents. As such, this argument must be an external argument, and thus only ACC is possible on the duration adverbial. Likewise, the NOM marking on the duration adverbial in (16) is blocked with an unaccusative predicate since there is a volitional subject in the sentence.

(16) akhaskan-ul: thu-n kwuantin-i sip pun tongan-ul?i
   parachute-ACC ride-REL soldiers-NOM 10 minutes for-NOM/ACC/NOM hasten-ess teledec-ess-ta
   sky-from fell.down-Pst-Dec
   'The parachuting soldiers fell from the sky for ten minutes'

3.2. Other Kinds of Verbs with External Arguments

Our analysis makes crucial use of the Unaccusativity Hypothesis. It is essential, therefore, that we have reliable ways of determining which verbs are unaccusative, that is, which verbal arguments are mapped to VP-internal positions, and which arguments are mapped to VP-external position. Our assumption that agents are always external arguments is noncontroversial (with the usual proviso about the changes effected by passive morphology). It is important to note the evidence of verbs which are semantically passive (in the sense that the grammatical subject is a recipient, not an agent) but are nonetheless associative case assigners: patta, manca, and kurung.
(17) Semantically passive, but accusative-assigning verbs: putta, mae, etc.

a. ka hwaseung-mun li eul tongan-at*1 semmul-ul pat-ass-ta
   the emperor-TOP 1 week for-ACC+NOM gift-ACC receive
   ‘The emperor received gifts for one week’

b. taho-nun spec-e-ykey (two sikan tongan-at*1) yatan mac-ass-ta
   father-DAT 2 hours for-ACC+NOM scolding get
   ‘The child was scolded by the teacher for two hours’

c. liho-ka Kim poharche-e-ykey sey sikan tongan-at*1 moyok
   Kim manager-DAT 3 hours for-ACC+NOM insult
tanghay stta
   ‘Kim was insulted for three hours by manager Kim’

Now consider the sentences in (18), which contain verbs with inanimate subjects.

(18) a. habwaul-ka halw tongan-al*1 sa-n-ta
   dayfly-NOM 1 day for-ACC+NOM live-Pres-Dec
   ‘Dayflies live one day’

b. i semincang kloch-e halw tongan-al*1 phi-ta
   this cactus flower-NOM 1 day for-ACC+NOM bloom-Pres-Dec
   ‘This cactus flower blooms for one day’

c. hoy-ka cahil-ia yellow sikan tongan-al*1 pichu-ass-ta
   sun this place-ACC 12 hours for-ACC+NOM rise-Pres-Dec
   ‘The sun rises for 12 hours’

(18c) contrasts with unaccusative in (19), which allows NOM as well as ACC on the durational adverb.

(19) hoy-ka halw-ay yellow sikan tongan-ul pichu-n-ta
   sun one 6am-LOC 12 hours for-LOC/ACC shine-Pres-Dec
   ‘The sun shines for 12 hours a day’

Nonetheless, the relevant arguments are certainly not themes, and thus we feel justified in supposing that they are external arguments.

Y-J Kim (1990) also assumes that inanimate CAUSES are external arguments. She defines [+agentive] verbs as those which have a DO or CAUSE as the highest clause in their lexical-structural structure (LCS). This includes Inanimate Causes, and causative Psych-verb constructions in which the ACC marked NP is the expresive-core arguments.

(20) a. chongal-1.tyk-ul trwah-ass-ta
   bullet-NOM wall-ACC pierce-Past-Dec
   ‘A bullet pierced the wall’

b. chongal-tul-li tyk-ul sip putan tongan-al*1
   bullet-PL wall-ACC 10 minutes for-ACC+NOM pierce-Past-Dec
   ‘Bullet pierced the wall for ten minutes’ (Kim 1990: 99)

3.3. Causatives

We have been assuming that duration adverbs are assigned the same case as any VP-internal argument. We are just beginning to investigate copular predicates, including lexical and periphrastic causatives. What exactly does the durational adverb modify?

(21) a. Q xu kwemetay-ka [ain-ul elma tongan kippe-key] bay-as-nun
   the clown children how long for happy-COMP make-Past-Q
   ‘For how long did the clown make the children happy?’

b. A ku-ka [ain-ul sey sikan tongan-ul*1] kippe-key
   he-NOM children-NOM 3 hours
   happy he make-Past-Dec
   ‘He made the children happy for three hours’

c. A ku-ka ainul-1 sey sikan tongan-ul*1 kippe-key hary-ass-ta
   he children-NOM 3 hours
   happy he make-Past-Dec
   ‘He made the children happy for three hours’

In (21a), it is difficult to tell whether the durational adverb modifies the causative matrix predicate or the static embedded predicate, since the two are co-extensive. The fact that accusative case is strongly preferred suggests that despite the word order, it is interpreted as belonging to the matrix clause, which is associated with an Action Tier. Compare this to a sentence like (22) from Brett (1993: 246) where the two predicates have clearly different time frames. Here the durational adverb is not co-extensive with matrix verb, and as a result, only the nominative case-marking associated with the embedded predicate is possible.

(22)(baksanyung-1 cvumal tongan-lal kipps-tolek] sensaynimm-kkese
   student-NOM weekend for happy-Pres-in order to teacher-HNOM
   kannyo-ty swokey-key
   an-nay-ul tta
   Friday-LOC homework-ACC get assign-Make-Past-Dec
   ‘In order for the student to be happy during the weekend, the teacher did not assign homework on Friday’
On the other hand, (21c) contrasts with (21b) in that the embedded subject is exceptionally case-marked as ACC by the matrix verb, which blocks the NOM-marking on the duration adverbial.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have reviewed the environments in which D/F adverbials can bear nominative and/or accusative case markers in Korean. We have suggested that the complex array of data can be accounted for in a simple way by using the Case Tier hypothesis. We have shown that it is crucial to refer both to the distinction between internal and external arguments, and to the semantic distinction between states and events. Further research is needed to explore the full implications of this approach particularly with respect to frequency adverbials which we ignored here due to limitations of time and space.

References


