**The syntax of the Korean -ese construction**

In Korean, two clauses may be linked using the verbal suffix -ese, as in (1). This morpheme establishes a sequential or causal link between the embedded -ese marked constituent and the matrix clause thus indicating that the event of the -ese construction occurs prior to or causes the event of the matrix clause (H. Lee 1991; H. Kim 1992; Sohn 2009; Hong 2012; Kwon 2012; among others).

(1)  

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{cihwun-i-nun} & \quad [\Delta_i \text{ tochakha-ese}] \quad \text{palpyo-lul} \quad \text{sicakha-ess-eyo} \\
\text{Jihun-i-TOP} & \quad \text{arrive-ese} \quad \text{presentation-ACC} \quad \text{start-PST-POL} \\
\end{align*}
\]

‘Jihun arrived and then he started the presentation.’

The literature has mainly focused on the semantics of the -ese construction (Kwon 2012, Y. Park et al. 2021; Yoo 2021; among others). However, my work focuses on determining the syntactic structure of the -ese constituent. Firstly: what is the maximum projection of the constituent that -ese attaches to? Is it simply a vP/VP with no higher projections – as it appears in (1) with -ese directly affixed to the verb stem, is it a full CP, or something in between? I demonstrate that -ese may co-occur with tense, aspect, or modal morphology, as in (2). This contrasts with Gerd & Shin (2018)’s claim that that -ese cannot combine with TAM morphology. I argue that the occurrence of TAM morphology indicates that the maximal projection within the -ese construction can be at least as large as ModP (a modal phrase) – i.e., larger than a TP but smaller than a CP.

(2)  

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{chinkwu-dul-i} & \quad \text{mence} \quad \text{twochakha-ess-ess-ese} \quad \text{anc-ul} \quad \text{cali-lul} \quad \text{chac-ass-eyo} \\
\text{friend-PL-NOM} & \quad \text{first} \quad \text{arrive-PERF-PST-ese} \quad \text{sit-IRR} \quad \text{place-ACC} \quad \text{find-PST-POL} \\
\end{align*}
\]

‘(My) friends, having arrived first (a while ago), found a place to sit.’

My work also investigates the subject of the -ese construction. In light of θ-theory which posits that each verb predicate requires a DP subject (Chomsky 1981), I assume that there is an implicit subject in the -ese construction in (1) (indicated by the theory-neutral symbol Δ). Given that, what is the nature of the implicit subject in (1)? Specifically, is the implicit subject a null PRO like in a canonical control structure (Landau 1994; Green 2019) or a phonologically null pronoun (pro) (Sundaesran 2014)? I show that the null subject of the -ese construction does not behave like PRO. In contrast to the requirements of PRO (Chomsky 1980; Landau 1994; Green 2019), the antecedent of the null subject is not required to be in a local relationship with Δ nor is it required to c-command Δ, as in (3). Thus, I argue that the null subject of the -ese construction is actually pro.

(3) a.  

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{kyoswunim-i} & \quad \text{tochakha-si-ess-eyo} \\
\text{professor-NOM} & \quad \text{arrive-HON-PST-POL} \\
\end{align*}
\]

‘The professor arrived.’

b.  

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{?mwun-un-i} & \quad [\Delta_{k}\text{kyosil-ey} \quad \text{nemwu} \quad \text{ppalli} \quad \text{tuleka-si-ese}] \\
\text{door-TOP-NOM} & \quad \text{classroom-LOC} \quad \text{very} \quad \text{quickly} \quad \text{enter-HON-ese} \\
\text{kocangna-ess-eyo} & \quad \text{be.broken-PST-POL} \\
\end{align*}
\]

‘The door broke because they (the professor) entered the classroom too quickly’

This work provides a novel investigation into the morphological and syntactic structure of the -ese construction and provides data showing the morphological complexity of the -ese construction that is, to the best of my knowledge, missing from the literature. Lastly, it presents a preliminary investigation into the behaviour of subjects in the -ese construction.
References


