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A Study of Tense, Aspect and Mood in Korean

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Tenses belong to the deictic category deciding the sequence at the point of speech. They correspond to temporality in the semantic category. For proper description of tenses in Korean, we need to set up the point of experience as well as the point of speech or the point of event. The point of experience is a tense feature to explain the tense in the retrospective mood. It is a typological tense feature of Korean's own. Aspects are the aspects of action in each tense. They belong to the non-deictic category, corresponding to actionality in the semantic category. Tenses can be reinterpreted from the viewpoint of aspects, and vice versa. They often make two sides of a thing. Moods are the speaker's psychological attitude toward the sentence proposition. They correspond to modality in the semantic category. Hereafter, TAM is used for tense, aspect and mood.

Present-day Korean has TAM-related morphemes, such as formatives and constitutives. Formatives are autonomous prefinal endings, which are directly related to sentence formation. Constitutives are fusional prefinal endings, which must combine first with the prefinal or final endings before they get related to sentence formation. In present-day's standard of Korean, tenses are realized in virtue of formatives while moods are realized in virtue of constitutives. Aspects depends on periphrastic expression such as '-ko iss ta'. Let's see the correlation among the three categories in the following:

- (1) 칠수 -는 잠자리 -를 잡고 있 었 습 니 다
Chulsu -nun camcali lul catches iss ess sup ni ta
Chelsu nun dragonfly Acc. caught exist past pol. ind. dec.
'Cuklsu was catching the dragonflies'

In (1), the tense is a past. The past is realized in terms of the formative '-ess-'. '-ess-' is in paradigmatic relation with the future form '-kess-' and makes a tense category. '-ess-' or '-kess-' following '-ess-' indicates the modality of certainty or supposition. The aspect in (1) is a progressive. Such aspect is realized in the grammaticalized periphrastic form '-ko iss ta'. The mood is an indicative. It is realized in the formative '-ni-' in '-iss ess sup ni ta'. '-ni-', in paradigmatic relation with the formative '-ti-', makes a mood category of its own. From these

descriptions, we can see that the tenses of Present-day Korean are decided, at least in sentence-final ending, on the base of moods

In the above example, TAM are realized to the maximum. But there are other cases that have only the tense or the mood in sentences.

- (2) 칠수 는 잠자리 를 잡 았 \emptyset_6 다
 Chulsu -nun camcali lul catch ass \emptyset_6 ta
 'Chulsu caught the dragonfly'
- (3) 칠수 는 잠자리 를 잡 \emptyset_2 \emptyset_6 다.
 Chulsu -nun camcali -acc cap \emptyset_2 \emptyset_6 -ta
 Chulsu catch dragonfly

In (2), only the mood and the tense appear. We cannot find the aspect. The mood is indicated by the unmarked indicative \emptyset_6 . Hence, in Present-day Korean, mood morphemes are obligatorily realized in the sentence final-ending and its transformed(condensed form?), adnominal relative construction. We can say that tense of present-day Korean are indicated on the base of the moods, in that present, past, and future are expressed on the base of mood morphemes respectively. In (3), only the mood is indicated by the unmarked indicative \emptyset_6 and the tense appears in \emptyset_2 , without a concrete form designated. To summarize, in Present-day Korean moods are obligatorily realized while tenses are mostly realized with some exceptions. On the other hand, aspects are rarely realized; the tense is enough to make a sentence.

Some grammarians have the opinion that tenses and aspects make up an unspecialized tense-aspect category. But this is a one-dimensional thinking overlooking that Korean has TAM of its own. Aspects, as we described earlier, indicate the various aspects of action. We can read meaning of aspect in the tense, and can discover the aspect in the mood.

Observe the following examples.

- (4) a. 나 는 지금 책 을 읽 는 다
 na- nun cikum chaek-ul ilk- nun- ta
 I top.. now book read pres.
 'I reads books now'
- b. 저 는 지금 책 을 읽 습 니 다.
 ce- nun cikum chaek-ul ilk-sup-ni-ta
 I(humble f.)
 'I reads books now, sir'
- c. 메어리 는 벌써 학교 에 갔다(가왔다)
 Mary -nun pelsse hakkyo-e kassta(ka-ass-ta)

already school at go
 'Mary go to school already'
 d, 오늘 오후 에 는 비가 오겠다
 onul ohu- e nun pi-ka o-eyss-ta
 'It will rain in the afternoon today'

In (4a), '-nun-' in 'ilk-nun-ta' is in paradigmatic relation with the past tense '-ess-' and indicates a present. In the viewpoint of the aspect, it may be interpreted as a progressive. But Present-day Korean has a periphrastic form with progressive meaning such as '-ko-iss-ta'. Hence, (4a) is not a progressive aspect. '-ni-' of 'ilk-sup-ni-ta' in (4b), opposed to the retrospective '-ti-', indicates the indicative mood. The tense is a present and the aspect is a progressive. It may seem that '-ni-' has a function of denoting the present tense, but in fact there is an unmarked \emptyset_2 before '-ni-' to express the present. Anyway, moods can be interpreted from the viewpoint of tenses or aspects. '-ass-' in (4c) is of the past tense but the aspect is a perfective. '-kess-' in (4d) has a meaning of conjecture, a tense of future and an aspect of prospect.

In middle Korean, moods and aspects took the lead in TAM. Let's see the relation between moods and aspects in Middle Korean.

(5) 네 어미... 이제 惡趣 에 이셔 至極 受苦 흥 는 다(월석 21, 53)
 ney emi ... icye akchui-yey isye cikuk swukwo ho -no- ta
 your mother now hell at exist extremely suffer do ind. plain dec.
 'Your mother suffers in the hell now'

(5) has an indicative '-no-'. This is in paradigmatic relation with the retrospective '-te-', presumptive '-li-', retrospective '-lile-'. In terms of tenses and aspects, '-no-' is a present and progression, '-te-' is a past and progression, '-li-' is a future and prospect, and '-lile-' is a future and prospect at the point of experience. In the following example, the perfective aspect '-e is ta' was added to (5).

(5') 네 어미 ... 이제 惡趣에 이셔 至極 受苦 흥야 잇 는 다
 ney emi ice akchui-yey isye cikuk swukwo hoya is no ta
 'Your mother has suffered in the hell now'

With an aspect form '-e(>ya) ista' added to the indicative '-no-', (5') has become a indicative perfective aspect. If the retrospective '-te-' and presumptive '-li-' is replaced, it becomes a retrospective perfective aspect and a presumptive perfective aspect respectively.

In dialects, TAM base on moods for tenses and aspects, as in present-day's standard Korean. In the peninsula, some dialects used '-kess-' and others used

have co-existing rules. The past or perfect '-es-' is distributed through all dialects. The future or presumptive '-kes-' is evenly distributed, so are moods and aspects. But exceptionally in Cheju dialect, aspects are realized in the place of tenses of peninsula dialects. It has different forms of retrospective that without extension rules we would face a big trouble in communicating. This difference in aspects is another cause that Cheju dialect sounds like a foreign language to peninsulars.

Researches on TAM in Korean will add much to the construction of the grammatical change theory, as well as to the general grammar theory. Many foreign grammarians have already noticed that the retrospective mood is a grammatical phenomenon representing the typological characteristics of Korean, and used it to prove the evidential modality. The aspects in Cheju dialect, along with its retrospective mood, can empirically support the general theory of aspects. It is a treasury of the TAM research in Korean. The fact that the past tense '-ess-' developed from the periphrastic construction '-o iss ta-' and the future tense '-kess-' developed from the periphrastic construction of prospect '-ke hayasta' will go far toward constructing a theory of grammatical change.