Korean evidential -te, the past tense -ess, and the commitment of the speaker

Puzzle. Some literature on evidentials (Koev 2017, Lee 2013, a.o.) argues that whether an evidential is interpreted as direct perceptive or indirect depends on the temporal distance between the event described by the prejacent (the described event or DE) and the event where the speaker learns the DE (the learning event or LE): if the DE and the LE overlap, then an evidential is interpreted as direct perceptive, whereas if they do not overlap, then it is interpreted as indirect. This implies that the tense in the prejacent should be interpreted relative to the relation between the DE and the LE. For example, in (1a), since the DE overlaps with the LE, *-te* is interpreted to introduce direct perceptive evidentiality, whereas in (1b), since the DE precedes the LE, it is interpreted to introduce to introduce indirect evidentiality.

(1) a. Pi-ka o-ø-te-la.
Rain-Nom come-Pres-te-Decl
'It rained.' (with direct perceptive evidentiality: the DE overlaps with the LE)
b. Pi-ka o-ass-te-la.
Rain-Nom come-Past-te-Decl
'It rained.' (with indirect evidentiality: the DE precedes the LE)

However, in Korean, there are cases where the evidential *-te* with the past tense *-ess* introduces the direct perceptive evidentiality, unlike the prediction made by these studies. Consider two scenarios in (2), where the speaker, Bill, has the direct perceptive evidentiality. Here (3a) is compatible with (2a), whereas (3b) is compatible with (2b).

- (2) a. John thought he lost his book yesterday, but when he came to his office today he found it was on his desk. Wondering when it came back, John asked Bill to check the security camera. Watching the security camera recorded 10 minutes ago, Bill said...
 - b. John found he lost his book when he came to his office today. John asked Bill to check the security camera. Watching the security camera recorded 10 minutes ago, Bill said...
- (3) a. (10-pwun cen-ey-to) chayksang wi-ey John-uy chayk-i iss-ø-te-la. ⊇ ⊇

 (10 min. before-Loc-too) desk up-Loc J.-Gen book-Nom exist-Pres-te-Decl

 'John's book was on the desk (10 minutes ago).' (with direct perceptive evidentiality)

 → Felicitous with (2a) but not with (2b)

 b. (10-pwun cen-ey-nun) chayksang wi-ey John-uy chayk-i iss-ess-te-la.

 (10 min. before-Loc-Top) desk up-Loc J.-Gen book-Nom exist-Past-te-Decl

 'John's book was on the desk (10 minutes ago).' (with direct perceptive evidentiality)

 \rightarrow Felicitous with (2b) but not with (2a)

Interpreting data. (2) and (3) suggest that, unlike what previous literature says, -ess under – te should be interpreted not relative to the LE, but relative to the utterance time (UT). In (3a), the prejacent should be 'the book is on the desk'. In contrast, in (3b), the prejacent should be 'the book was on the desk.' This further implies that the speaker makes different commitments to the prejacent, depending on the presence/absence of –ess. The speaker makes his/her commitment to the fact that the book is on the desk at the UT in (3a). In (3b), the speaker makes his/her commitment to the fact that the book was on the desk before but is not any more at the UT. Previous literature on Korean –te (such as Chung 2007, Lim 2011, or Lee 2013) does not seem to consider this kind of relation between the presence/absence of –ess and the speaker's commitment to the prejacent (and its implication). We also believe that no previous literature concerns the relation between the commitment to the prejacent and the UT.

Proposal. Adopting Kalsang et al.'s (2013) proposal, we argue that evidentials do not directly encode the type of evidence a speaker's assertion is based on, but express relations between situations (in terms of situation semantics: Barwise and Perry 1983, a.o.). Specifically, two different types of situations are relevant to the interpretation of evidentials. The first one is the Information Situation (IS), which constitutes the speaker's evidence. The second one is the Evaluation Situation (ES). Kalsang et al. (2013) simply assume that the ES is the situation against which the prejacent is evaluated, but here we revise Kalsang et al.'s (2013) proposal, and argue that the ES is the situation which verifies the compatibility between the IS and the states of affairs in the uttering situation. We further assume that, the IS should contain at least one situation directly perceived by the speaker before the utterance time, and the ES is construed based on that perceived situation in the IS. This revision is because of the following two reasons: i) there should be some way to relate the IS to the uttering situation, and ii) as pointed out by Lim (2011) and Lee J. (2013), a.o., Korean -te requires directly perceived evidence even when it apparently introduces inferential evidentiality. Based on these assumptions, we propose that the felicity condition of Korean -te is (4): the ES should contain, or be equal to, the IS.

(4) Felicity condition on -te (see also Lim 2014) ES \supseteq IS (in Kalsang et al.'s term)

Explaining the data. When *-ess* is not used, the ES consists of the situation where the prejacent *is* true, and when *-ess* is used, in usual contexts, the ES consists of the situation where the prejacent *was* true <u>and</u> the situation because of which the prejacent becomes true at some time before the UT (possibly due to lumping of two situations based on natural continuous relations satisfying efficacy in the sense of Copley and Harley 2015). We assume this is because *-ess* is a deictic tense interpreted relative to the UT. This means that, contrary to Koev, the temporal distance based on the relative tense cannot explain the types of evidence (indirect vs. direct). Rather, we propose that, as Kalsang et al., indirect evidentiality comes from the relation between the ES and the IS: the IS is part of the ES, and the speaker indirectly 'infers' the ES based on the IS. This explains why in (1b) *-te* introduces indirect evidentiality whereas in (3b) it introduces direct evidentiality. In (1b), suppose that the speaker perceived that it rained. Given that the speaker makes commitment to the fact that it rained before but does not rain now, the IS should contain both the situations where it rained before and the situation where it rains now, but the ES only consists of the former situation: as shown in (5), since the IS is bigger than the ES, (4) is violated.

(5) ES: it rained IS: it rained, it does not rain now → ES ⊂ IS (4 is violated)

This problem does not arise when the prejacent is present as in (1a). Suppose that the speaker just saw the wet ground. Then all the causal relations which lead us to the conclusion that it rained should be included in the ES: if not we cannot evaluate whether the prejacent is true or not (Kalsang et al. 2013). But, in this case, whether it rains at the UT is irrespective of such a causal chain; hence the ES include the IS as in (6), satisfying (4).

(6) ES: the ground was wet, grounds got wet when it rained, it rained IS: the ground was wet
→ ES ⊃ IS (4 is satisfied)

In (3b) under (2b), when watching the camera, the speaker need not consider the relations between situations, but only the recorded scenes showing that the book was on the desk. Since the ES is equal to the IS (due to the camera), (4) is satisfied, even when *-te* with *-ess* is used under the scenario with direct evidentiality such as (2b).

(7) ES: the book was on the desk IS: the book was on the desk → ES=IS (4 is satisfied)

Selected References

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