Moving beyond the researcher's individual introspection: Perspectives from the *key-tolok* alternation and the nominative-accusative alternation of Korean resultatives

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ABSTRACT

Relying on introspection (i.e. the researcher's own intuition and judgment) has been the normal practice particularly in generative linguistics. However, especially when faced with crucial data for the development of a linguistic theory or for the right characterization of a linguistic phenomenon, it is important to rely on more scientific data. Against this background, this paper conducts two acceptability judgment tests and shows that none of the claims made in the literature as to the alternation between –key and –tolok and the alternation between the nominative and the accusative case with respect to Korean resultatives is so accurate. By methodologically relying on a number of subjects and taking into consideration both the factor of whether there is a distinct nominative-marked NP from what the main verb is predicated of and the factors of the category of the main predicate and the category of the –key/–tolok predicate, the experiment on the key-tolok alternation reveals that, generally, –key and –tolok can alternate with each other only when the –key/–tolok predicate is a verb. Meanwhile, by taking into consideration not only the factor of the category of the key-predicate but also the factor of whether the NP thematically predicated of by the key-predicate is also thematically an argument of the main verb, the experiment on the nominative-accusative alternation shows that the alternation is truly allowed only when the key-predicate is formed with an adjective plus the –ci suffix and that the use of the accusative case is the norm in co-argument key-sentences and the use of the nominative case is the norm in non-co-argument key-sentences. Through these two case studies, this paper stresses the importance of not relying purely on the researcher's own introspection in linguistic research.

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1. Introduction

It has become common practice particularly since the advent of generative linguistics that linguistic research can rely solely on the researcher's introspection and his/her own intuition and judgment as linguistic data to formulate a linguistic theory, propose a linguistic account, or offer a characterization of a specific linguistic phenomenon. This is so even when faced with crucial data for the development of a linguistic theory or ambiguous data for the characterization of a linguistic phenomenon. It is against this background that we conduct two questionnaire studies of Korean resultatives, through which we

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would like to stress the importance of not relying purely on the researcher's own introspection in linguistic research and to advocate an approach that requires the researcher's consultation with at least five to ten (ideally non-linguist) native speakers of the language under investigation (if no formal experiment is run) and/or with corpus data.

As mentioned above, the two case studies in this paper both concern Korean resultatives, an area that has figured prominently in the studies of Korean syntax and semantics (e.g. Ko, 2011; Lee and Lee, 2003; Wechsler and Noh, 2001). In a narrow sense, resultatives refer to complex predicates formed by two components located in the same clause, where one of the two components is the causing predicate and the other is the result predicate that expresses the result caused by what is denoted by the causing predicate (see the definition of the resultative construction in Li, 2008, 2009). For the purpose of discussion in this paper, resultatives are used in a broad sense to include not only complex predicate resultatives like compound and phrasal resultatives but also clausal resultatives in which two predicates form a causative–resultative relation but are located in two different clauses of the same sentence (see below for more discussion of the term "resultative" and the typologization of resultatives).

This paper specifically examines the validity of two sets of claims concerning Korean resultatives through the lens of the intuitions from a number of subjects, claims that have relied on the researcher's own individual intuition and judgment. More specifically, we examine claims concerning the alternation between –*key* and –*tolok*[1] and the alternation between the nominative case and the accusative case. First, with respect to the alternation between –*key* and –*tolok*, conflicting claims can be found in the literature. For example, Wechsler and Noh (2001, p. 407) (see also Lee and Lee, 2003, p. 171 and Yeo, 2006, p. 700) claim that –*tolok* can replace –*key* "in clauses, but not in predicates," as shown in (1).[2] However, Ko (2011, p. 745) claims that –*tolok* can also be used when the resultative apparently does not form a separate clause, as shown in (2).[3]

(1) a. Ku-nun   sinpal-i   talh-key(/-tolok)   talli-ess-ta.
         he-TOP   shoe-NOM   worn-KEY(/-TOLOK)   run-PAST-DECL
         'He ran his shoes threadbare.' (Adapted from (31a) and (37a) in Wechsler and Noh, 2001)

     b. Mary-nun   thakca-lul   kkaykkusha-key(/*-tolok)   takk-ass-ta.
         Mary-TOP   table-ACC   clean-KEY(/-TOLOK)   wipe-PAST-DECL
         'Mary wiped the table clean.' (Adapted from (30c) and (36c) in Wechsler and Noh, 2001)

(2) Susana-ka   Jim-ul   aphu-key/tolok   ttayli-ess-ta.
     Susana-NOM   Jim-ACC   in.pain-KEY/TOLOK   hit-PAST-DECL
     'Susana$_i$ hit Jim$_j$ so that she$_i$/he$_j$ was in pain.' (Ko, 2011, p. 745)

Second, with respect to Korean resultatives formed with –*key* there are also conflicting claims as to the alternation between the nominative case and the accusative case on the thematically Patient argument of the matrix transitive verb, a participant which is also thematically the argument of the result predicate. In this case, three positions are found in the literature: free alternation (Hong, 2006; Ko, 2011), no alternation and only the option of using the accusative case (Jang and Kim, 2001, p. 117; Kim and Maling, 1997, 1998), and conditional alternation (Lee, 2004). As for the third position, Lee (2004) claims (i) that the alternation is possible only when the result predicate is a verb and (ii) that only the accusative case can be used when the result predicate is an adjective, as shown in (3).[4]

(3) a. John-i   pyek-ul/*i   **ppalkah-key**   chilhay-ss-ta.   (Adjectival)
         John-NOM   wall-ACC/NOM   red-KEY   paint-PAST-DECL
         'John painted the wall red.' (Lee, 2004, p. 166)

     b. Mary-ka   Tom-ul/i   **mengtul-key**   ttayli-ess-ta.   (Verbal)
         Mary-NOM   Tom-ACC/NOM   bruised-KEY   beat-PAST-DECL
         'Mary beat Tom black and blue.' (Lee, 2004, p. 167)

To determine the validity of the previous claims as to the alternation between –*key* and –*tolok* and the alternation between the nominative and the accusative case and to achieve a better understanding of the use of –*key* and –*tolok* as well as the use

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[1] To be consistent with the Yale Romanization system, we have decided to use –*tolok* instead of –*torok* to transcribe Korean –도록.

[2] Abbreviations: ACC = accusative; CLS = clause; DAT = dative; DECL = declarative; GEN = genitive; LIT = literally; NOM = nominative; TOP = topic. Also, to be consistent throughout the paper, we have streamlined the glosses and Romanization of the examples drawn from the literature. As far as Romanization is concerned, the Yale system is adopted in this paper.

[3] Regardless of whether or not a researcher adopts the narrow sense of resultatives mentioned above and thus views (1a) not as a "true" resultative, the question of whether –*key* and –*tolok* can alternate with each other when the –*key*/–*tolok* predicate is clearly predicated of a nominative-marked NP distinct from the subject NP of the main predicate will not go away. As can be seen below, we try to use theory-neutral terms or distinctions (e.g. "separable-*key* sentences" and "non-separable-*key* sentences") in our discussions.

[4] Son (2008, pp. 104–106) makes a similar claim by stating that the alternation is not allowed when the resultative predicate is stative. Yeo (2006, p. 688, note 3) provides an example showing that the alternation is not available when the result predicate is an adjective. Moreover, Kim (1999a, p. 66) offers an example of alternation of the same nature as (3b) in the sense that its result predicate is also a verb.