Structural asymmetry in the Korean imperfective constructions: -ko iss vs. -e iss*

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Suh, Sungki. 2015. Structural asymmetry in the Korean imperfective constructions: -ko iss vs. -e iss. Linguistic Research 32(2), 281-311. In the analyses of the Korean imperfective constructions, the two types of imperfective marking, -ko iss and -e iss, have been differentiated in terms of whether a progressive or a resultative reading is obtained, or in terms of dynamicity or telicity of the verb linked to them. With such analyses confronting empirical difficulties, a syntactic factor of unaccusativity has been proposed as the key for the differentiation. According to the proposal, whether the verb takes a VP internal subject or a VP external subject is responsible for the selection between the two types of imperfective marking. Many Korean verbs, however, are able to select both types, contrary to the prediction by the proposal. In order to explain their selection patterns properly, it is necessary to depart from the tacit assumption that the morpho-syntactic structure of -ko iss/-e iss is identical. Maintaining the idea of unaccusativity, we propose that the combination of -e with the main verb makes up one syntactic unit with iss and is subject to the grammatical condition that the verb combining with -e iss must be unaccusative or passive. By contrast, the combination of the main verb and -ko is a separate morpho-syntactic unit from the auxiliary iss and it is not subject to any particular grammatical constraints. Seemingly problematic examples to our proposal can be accounted for by the condition that there should not be any conflict between the imperfective readings of -ko iss/-e iss and the aspectual meaning of the combined verb. (The Catholic University of Korea)

Keywords imperfective, progressive, resultative, argument structure, unaccusativity, structural asymmetry, semantic conflict

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1. Introduction

Imperfective aspect in Korean can be represented by two periphrastic constructions, -ko iss and -e iss constructions. It has often been assumed that the former expresses actions in progress, and the latter denotes resultant states. The following examples are relevant to this point\(^1\).

(1) pay-ka mwul-sok-ulo kalaanc-ko iss-ta.
    boat-Nom water-inside-into sink-ko iss-Dec
    ‘The boat is sinking into the water.’

(2) pay-ka mwul-sok-ey kalaanc-a iss-ta\(^2\)
    boat-Nom water-inside-at sink-e iss-Dec
    ‘The boat has sunk under the water, (and still is under the water).’

When kalaanc- (sink) is combined with -ko iss, a progressive meaning is produced, as in (1). Meanwhile, combining kalaanc- with -e iss creates a resultative meaning, as in (2). Such a contrastive pair has been the ground for the progressive and resultative distinction for the two types of imperfective marking.

However, it has been pointed out that there are exceptional cases where the above distinction can't be maintained. (Lee 1991, Kim 1993, Lee 2008, J. Kim 2011 & 2013, M. Kim 2011, and Park 2014)

(3) Inho-nun cikum oytwu-lul ip-ko iss-ta
    -Top now overcoat-Acc wear-ko iss-Dec
    ‘Inho is putting on his overcoat.’
    ‘Inho is wearing an overcoat.’

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1 -ko and -e are verbal endings, and iss- is classified as an auxiliary verb in Korean Grammar. The abbreviations used in the glosses are as follows: Nom; nominative case marker, Acc; accusative case marker, Dat; dative case marker, Gen; genitive case marker, Loc; locative marker, Top; topic marker, Dec; declarative ending, Q; interrogative ending, Imp; imperative ending, Conj; conjunctive ending, Neg; negation, Hon; honorific, Aux; auxiliary verb, Pass; passive marker, Past; past tense marker, CL; noun classifier

2 -a iss has the same meaning and function as that of -e iss, and the variation between -a and -e in -e iss construction is determined by the phonological features of the last vowel of the verb stem that -a/-e iss is attached to. For the sake of simplicity, we will use only -e iss in the glosses hereafter.
(4) simlihak kwa-nun sahoy tay-ey sokha-ye iss-ta
    psychology department-Top social science college-Loc belong-e iss-Dec

    'The department of psychology belongs to the college of social science.'

In (3), combining ip- (put on) with -ko iss results in a stative reading as well as a progressive reading.\(^3\) In (4), we can hardly find any implication of resultative meaning from the combination of sokha- (belong) and -e iss. Such examples pose challenges to the analysis based on progressive-resultative distinction.

There have been many interesting proposals to deal with the above problematic cases. Among them, Lee's (2008) proposal seems unique; she claims it is the syntactic condition of unaccusativity which decides the selection between -ko iss and -e iss. She proposes that the former is selected by the verbs taking an external argument, whereas the latter is taken by the verbs having an internal argument as their subject. Her proposal is intriguing in that aspectual marking, i.e., the selection of the imperfective markers, is possibly done in Korean based on the syntactic properties of the predicates, as in some Romance languages. (Schmitt 1992, Burzio 1986)

Below we will review the previous analyses on the Korean imperfective constructions, including Lee (2008), and consider a wide range of data. It will be shown that Lee's simple dichotomy has difficulty dealing with some core data, and in order to explain the distribution of -ko iss and -e iss, it is crucial to see the structural difference between the two: -e attached to the main verb makes up one syntactic unit with the auxiliary iss while the combination of -ko and the main verb becomes a separate morpho-syntactic unit from iss.

This thesis is organized as follows. Section two and three overview previous analyses of the Korean imperfective constructions, including argument-structure analysis of Lee (2008). In section four, the problems with Lee's (2008) dichotomy are discussed, and we propose an alternative in section five. Section six deals with potential problems to our proposal, and section seven wraps up our discussion.

\(^3\) Combined with certain verbs, -ko iss produces more than one reading, and it is an intriguing question how more than one reading is licensed or what kind of verbs can trigger ambiguity. I will leave the question for future research and concentrate in this paper on how to account for the overall distribution of the two types of imperfective marking. See Kim (1993), J. Kim (2011), M. Kim (2011) and Park (2014) for interesting analyses on the ambiguity observed in -ko iss construction.
2. Traditional analyses

In this section, we overview the traditional analyses of the Korean imperfective constructions. Our discussion assumes the classical aspectual classification of verbs introduced by Vendler (1957, 1967), Dowty (1979), or Smith (1997).4

2.1 -ko iss as a progressive marker

-ko iss contributes to a progressive reading, especially when it is attached to an activity verb or an accomplishment verb, as in (5) and (6).

(5) Inho-nun onul-to tali-ko iss-ta
    -Top today-also run-**ko iss-Dec
    'Inho is running again today.'

(6) Inho-nun onul sinmwun-ul ilk-ko iss-ta
    -Top today's newspaper-ACC read-**ko iss-Dec
    'Inho is reading today's newspaper.'

When -ko iss is combined with a pure stative verb or an adjectival predicate, as in (7) and (8) below, it produces an odd or ungrammatical sentence. Such oddity or ungrammaticality is attributed to the conflict between the aspectual meaning of stative verbs and the progressive meaning carried by -ko iss.

(7) *ku-uy cicek-un nalkhalop-ko iss-ta
    he-Gen criticism-Top is sharp-**ko iss-Dec
    'His criticism is sharp.'

(8) *?mwul-un sanso-wa swuso-lo ilwueci-ko iss-ta
    water-Top oxygen-and hydrogen-of consist-**ko iss-Dec
    'Water consists of hydrogen and oxygen.'

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4 English verbs have often been classified into four different aspectual types: state, activity, accomplish, and achievement verbs. Smith (1997) added another type, semelfactives, to the list. In this paper, we assume that Korean verbs are also classified into those five aspectual types.
However, as pointed out by many scholars, -ko iss does not always lead to a progressive reading when it is combined with certain verbs, mostly accomplishment verbs, as in (9).

(9) Inho-nun tamyo-ul teph-ko iss-ta.
    -Top blanket-Acc cover-ko iss-Dec
    'Inho has covered himself with a blanket.'
    'Inho is covering himself with a blanket.'

The two translations of (9) suggest that -ko iss may create a stative reading as well as a progressive reading.

Moreover, -ko iss is often compatible with the verbs not belonging to the category of activity or accomplishment verbs, and in such cases, it has little to do with progressive reading. (See Chung 2007, Kim 1993, J. Kim 2011, Lee 2008, and Park 2014.)

(10) Inho-nun cinsil-ul al-ko iss-ta
    -Top truth-Acc know-ko iss-Dec
    'Inho knows the truth.'

(11) ?meyksikho-nun mikwuk-uy namccok-ey wuychiha-ko iss-ta
    Mexico -Top USA-Gen south -Loc be located-ko iss-Dec
    'Mexico is located south of the United States'

It is unlikely that -ko iss produces a progressive reading in (10) and (11). From the data considered so far, it is not conclusive that -ko iss always marks progressive state.

2.2 -e iss as a resultative marker

-e iss contributes to a resultative reading, as in (12) and (13).

(12) so-ka malttwuk-ey mwukk-i- e iss-ta
    cow-Nom stake -Loc tie-Pass-e iss-Dec
    'A cow has been tied to a stake.'
-e iss is linked to some dynamic verbs here, and the whole predicates lead to a resultative reading; arguably, the current state of the baby in (13), for instance, resulted from his falling asleep.

Meanwhile, when -e iss combines with some stative verbs, we often observe a different result. Consider the following.

(14) wuli hakkyo-nun sam hakkwun-ey sokha-e iss-ta
    our school-Top three group-Loc belong-e iss-Dec
    'Our school belongs to School Group Three.'

Here, sokha- (belong) is a typical stative verb, and there is not any noticeable change of state or anything resulting from the previous stage. Given this, the claim that -e iss marks resultative state may draw scrutiny.

3. Alternative analyses of Korean imperfective constructions

3.1 Semantics–based analyses

3.1.1 Dynamicity approach

H. Lee (1991) proposes that the notion of dynamicty is the key for the distinction between -e iss and -ko iss. He claims that both of them imply 'duration', but they are distinguished in that the former amounts to 'static durative' whereas the latter marks 'dynamic durative'. He argues that -ko iss is dynamic in the sense that the (temporary) state described by the combined verb is supposed to change sooner or later. By contrast, he argues, such a change of state is not assumed when -e iss is used. The following pair of sentences show the distinction.
(15) sakwa-ka namwu-eyse tteleci-ko iss-ta
  apple-Nom tree-from fall -ko iss-Dec
  'An apple is falling from the tree.'

(16) sakwa-ka tteleci -e iss-ta
  apple-Nom fall -e iss-Dec
  'An apple has fallen (and it is on the ground).

Both (15) and (16) imply some duration of an activity or an event. (15) is
dynamic in the sense that the apple is going to undergo some change when it hits
the ground. Meanwhile, (16) is static in that there is not going to be any noticeable
change of state.

However, as pointed out by Lee (2008), J. Kim (2013), and Park (2014), the
notion of dynamicity is not enough for handling some crucial data. Consider the
following.

(17) na-nun chinchek-tul cenhwa penho-lul motwu kiekha -ko iss-ta
  I -Top relatives phone number-Acc all remember-ko iss-Dec
  'I remember all the phone numbers of my relatives.'

(18) *na-nun chinchek-ul cenhwa penho-lul motwu kiekha -e iss-ta
  I-Top relatives phone number-Acc all remember-e iss-Dec

Contrary to the prediction by the 'dynamicity' theory, kiekha- (remember), a
typical stative verb, selects not -e iss but -ko iss. Interestingly, the same selection is
observed for other stative verbs such as sayngkakha-(think), miti-(believe), and al-
(know) What is common among those stative verbs is that they are all transitive
verbs. As pointed out by Lee (2008), among others, transitive verbs cannot select -e
iss. Such a phenomenon strongly suggests that dynamicty alone cannot account for

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5 The possibility of using -ko iss with those verbs suggests that its meaning is not the same as that
of English progressive. Presumably, it denotes some "continuous state" as well as an on-going
process or activity, thereby combining with many cognition verbs. Most stative predicates,
however, are not compatible with -ko iss, as seen in (8) in the previous section. A plausible theory
should be able to explain the contrast between (8) and (17). See Lee (2006), J. Kim (2011), and
Park (2014) for interesting explanations for such a contrast.
the overall distribution of Korean imperfectives, and some syntactic condition must be considered.

### 3.1.2 Telicity approach

According to Lee (1978), Chung (1994) and Yang (2004), among others, only telic verbs are compatible with \(-e \text{ iss}\). Such a proposal is based on the assumption that it contributes to a resultative reading, in which a state (or a process) ends and as a result, a new state begins and continues. Given this, only telic verbs should be compatible with \(-e \text{ iss}\), since atelic verbs do not assume a change of state. The following contrast is relevant to this point.

(19) aki-ka kkay-e iss-ta  
    baby-Nom wake-\(e \text{ iss-Dec}\)  
    'The baby has woken up.'

(20) *ai-ka ttwi-e iss-ta  
    boy-Nom run-\(e \text{ iss-Dec}\)  
    (Intended) 'The boy has run.'
    (Lee 1978: 360)

There is an apparent change of state in the meaning of \(kkay\)- (wake up) in (19), but there is neither a change of state nor a telic point with \(ttwi\)- (run) in (20).

While the idea of telicity can handle a wide range of data, it faces some empirical difficulties. As Chung (2007) pointed out, some atelic verbs can appear in \(-e \text{ iss}\) construction, as in the following.

(21) Chelswu-uy samchon-un sal-e iss-ta  
    -Gen uncle-Top live-\(e \text{ iss-Dec}\)  
    'Chelswu's uncle is staying alive.'

(22) aitul-i kwulumcwi-li-e iss-ta  
    children-Nom starve-\(e \text{ iss-Dec}\)  
    'The children are starving.'
    (Chung 2007: 782)
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There doesn't seem to be any telic point in the meaning of sal- (live)/ kwulmcwuli- (starve) in (21)/(22).

Another kind of problems with the telicity approach is that some telic verbs cannot take -e iss, as Chung (2007) pointed out.

(23) a. ku somwun-un halwu maney mite ci-ess-ta
the rumor-Top one day in believe Pass-Past-Dec
'It took only one day for people to believe the rumor.'

b. *?ku somwun-un mite ci-e iss-ess-ta
the rumor-Top believe Pass-e iss-Past-Dec
(Chung 2007: 783)

mite ci- (be believed) can be considered to be a telic verb since it can occur with an adverb phrase expressing change of state, such as halwu maney (in a day). However, when it combines with -e iss, it results in ungrammaticality. as in (23b). Sentences such as (24) below also pose a problem to the telicity approach, for salaci- (disappear), obviously a telic verb, can hardly occur with -e iss.

(24) *?koyangi-ka salaci-e iss-ta
cat-Nom disappear-e iss-Dec
'The cat disappeared.'

3.2 Syntax-based analyses: Argument structure approach

So far it has been shown that the theories based on dynamicity or telicity face challenges even though they may provide some reasonable explanations for the distribution of Korean imperfectives.

As noted earlier, transitive/ unergative verbs do not take -e iss, regardless of their dynamicity or telicity. Hence, it is tempting to resort to some syntactic principles for the explanation. Lee (2008) indeed proposes that the distribution of imperfectives is best accounted for by considering the argument structure of the predicate: Basically -ko iss combines with the verbs having an external argument, whereas -e iss is connected to the verbs taking an internal Theme argument as their
subject. In other words, the former is selected by transitive and unergative verbs, while the latter is selected by passive and unaccusative verbs. The following examples from Lee (2008) are relevant to this point.

(25) *kyengchal-i totwuk-ul cap-e iss-ta
    police-Nom thief-Acc catch-e iss-Dec
    (Intended) 'The police have caught the thief.'

(26) totwuk-i kyengchal-eykey cap-hi-e iss-ta
    thief-Nom police-by catch-Pass-e iss-Dec
    'The thief has been caught by the police.'
    (Lee 2008: 125)

While transitive verbs such as cap- (catch) in (25) are not compatible with -e iss, their passive counterparts can naturally occur with it, as in (26). Similar contrast is observed between unergative verbs and unaccusative verbs. Consider the following.

(27)*ku-ka talli-e iss-ta
    he-Nom run-e iss-Dec
    (Intended) 'He has run.'

(28) ku-ka cwuk-e iss-ta
    he-Nom die-e iss-Dec
    'He is dead.'
    (Lee 2008: 123)

Unergative verbs such as talli- (run) are not compatible with -e iss, whereas unaccusative verbs such as cwuk- (die) are, as in (27/28). The above data show us that passive and unaccusative verbs pattern together: The predicates having a Theme subject select -e iss. Meanwhile, transitive and unergative verbs select not -e ss but -ko iss: (25) and (27) become fully acceptable if -e iss is replaced by -ko iss. Thus, the predicates having a VP-external subject are contrasted to those having a VP-internal subject.

Lee's (2008) proposal based on the notion of unaccusativity leads to simple and
elegant dichotomy. Her claim is also interesting in that similar dichotomy is observed in other languages such as Spanish and Portuguese: The choice of auxiliary verb is affected by the syntactic property of the main verb, i.e., whether it is a stage-level predicate or an individual level predicate. (Diesing 1992, Schmitt 1992)

4. Problems with the dichotomy based on unaccusativity

Lee's (2008) argument structure approach appears to provide a reasonable explanation for the core data. Her theory also seems attractive in that it only needs a single condition of unaccusativity in order to deal with the issue. Nevertheless, her analysis has its own weaknesses. Below we discuss them.

4.1 Passive predicates

The major problem with Lee's analysis is that many of the passive verbs can select -ko iss, as in the following. (Refer to J. Kim (2011, 2013) and Park (2014) for details.)

(29) koyangi-ka kay-eykey ccot-ki-ko iss-ta  
cat-Nom dog-by chase-Pass-ko iss-Dec  
'A cat is being chased by a dog.'

(30) namwunip-i palam-ey huntul-li-ko iss-ta  
leaf-Nom wind-by shake-Pass-ko iss-Dec  
'The leaves are stirring in the wind.'

(31) peley-ka mwulkoki-eykey mek-hi-ko iss-ta  
bug-Nom fish-by eat-Pass-ko iss-Dec  
'The bug is being eaten by the fish.'

Contrary to the dichotomy proposed by Lee (2008), the above passive predicates

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6 Park (2014) also shows somewhat different but interesting parallelism between Spanish and Korean in terms of aspectual construals.
are fully acceptable with \(-ko\) iss. In Lee's framework, the only way to handle such exceptions would be to assume that those predicates can have either a VP-internal or a VP-external subject. Lee (2008) in fact argued that some locomotion and posture verbs such as \(ka\)- (go), \(o\)- (come), and \(anc\)- (sit) can select both \(-e\) iss and \(-ko\) iss since their subject can be interpreted as either a Theme or an Agent. Given this, we may be tempted to consider the verbs in (29)-(31) to have dual argument structure, just like some locomotion and posture verbs. However, such a consideration can hardly be maintained theoretically as well as intuitively: Our intuition doesn't seem to allow the subjects in (29)-(31) to be an agent of an action or an experiencer. Also, syntactic theories sharing the perspective of Generative Grammar naturally consider the subjects in (29)-(31) to be a Theme, i.e, a VP-internal subject. After all, passive verbs cannot be equated with the locomotive verbs with dual argument structure. Consequently, the above examples challenge Lee's theory.

4.2 Unaccusative predicates incompatible with \(-e\) iss

Another problem to Lee's (2008) analysis is that there are many unaccusative verbs incompatible with \(-e\) iss. Consider the following.

(32) *kwukki-ka palam-ey pheleki-e ss-ta  
  flag-Nom wind-in flutter-e ss-Dec  
  (Intended) 'The flag has fluttered in the wind.'

(33) *nwunpal-i nalli-e iss-ta  
  snow-Nom drift-e iss-ta  
  (Intended) 'The snow has drifted.'

(34) *palam-i pwul-e iss-ta  
  wind-Nom blow-e iss-Dec  
  (Intended) 'The wind has blown.'

It seems obvious that the predicates in the above sentences are unaccusative. Yet, they can't select \(-e\) iss. In fact, they can select only \(-ko\) iss (when the progressive meaning is intended).
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Notice that the predicates in (32)-(34) have something in common: They describe some rapid motions or natural phenomena changing moment after moment. This implies that the lexical meaning of the verb could be responsible for rejecting -e iss.

5. Alternative analysis

The data considered so far suggest that the distribution of Korean imperfective constructions cannot be accounted for by a single factor of unaccusativity. Still, it seems necessary to keep the notion of unaccusativity since transitive/unergative verbs are indeed incompatible with -e iss. Below it will be shown that departing from the idea of complementarity between -e iss and -ko iss is the first step for the solution.

5.1 The proposal: Asymmetrical structure

The apparent problem with Lee's (2008) analysis is that the distribution of -ko iss doesn't seem to be constrained by unaccusativity; not only unergative but also unaccusative predicates are compatible with it. Meanwhile, the distribution of -e iss is indeed constrained by unaccusativity; transitive verbs cannot select it. Also,

7 It has been observed that some verbs are compatible with -e iss even though they take accusative-marked nouns.

(i) chongkwu-ka na-lul hyangha-e iss-ta
gunpoint-Nom I-Acc point to-e iss-Dec
'The gun is pointed at me.'

(ii) kyengkeysen-i sewul-ul cepha-e ss-ta
borderline-Nom Seoul-Acc border-e ss-Dec
'(It) borders on Seoul.'
(Im 1975: #26)

As Yang (2004) pointed out, however, there is a good possibility that the verbs in (i) and (ii) are not truly transitive, since their accusative-marked nouns can naturally be locative-marked.

(i') chongkwu-ka na-eykey hyangha-e iss-ta
gunpoint-Nom I-toward point to-e iss-Dec
'The gun is pointed at me.'

(ii') kyengkeysen-i sewul-ey cepha-e ss-ta
borderline-Nom Seoul-on border-e ss-Dec
'(It) borders on Seoul.'
(Yang 2004: #6)
intransitive verbs classified as unergative verbs are not compatible with it.

The limit of the previous analysis, we believe, comes from the assumption that 

-iss and -ko iss have the identical morpho-syntactic status and structure. Departing 

from such an assumption, we propose that -iss is morpho-syntactically inseparable 

from its combining verb whereas -ko iss is not. In other words, they are not 

symmetrical in terms of their combined structure with their verbs, and due to such 

asymmetry, only -iss construction becomes subject to the unaccusativity 

requirement. But is there any independent evidence for the asymmetry? Below we 

provide evidence for that.

5.2 Arguments for the asymmetry

5.2.1 Orthography

In Korean orthography, the two imperfective constructions have been treated 

differently: In writing, it is often allowed to give no space between -i and iss, 

whereas there must be a space between -ko and iss. This implies that the main verb 

From the translation of the sentences and the argument structure of the above verbs, it seems 

reasonable to consider that the thematic role of their subjects is Theme (rather than Agent or 

Experiencer), and hence they are unaccusative verbs.

There is another kind of exceptions to our generalization that transitive verbs cannot occur in -iss 

construction. Consider (iii) and (iv).

(iii) cek-i wuli-lul ccoch-a o-iss-ta

    enemy-Nom we-Acc follow-Conj come-iss-Dec

    'The enemy followed us (and almost caught up with us).

(iv) wuli taywen-un motwu san-ul nem-e ka-iss-ta

    our squad-Top all mountain-Acc cross-Conj go-iss-Dec

    'The squad all crossed the mountain (and they are still there.)

    Chung 2007: 784

ccoch- (pursue) in (iii) and nem- (cross) in (iv) seem to be truly transitive, and yet -iss occurs 

with those predicates. Notice, however, that ccoch- or nem- alone can never select -iss. In fact, 

it can be selected only when o- (come) and ka- (go) follow ccoch- and nem- respectively. As 

Chung (2007) points out, ccoch-a o- (follow and come) and nem-e ka- (cross and go) are complex 

predicates, and if their head is the second verb, not the first one, it is rather expected that the 

complex predicates are compatible with -iss, provided that o- (come) and ka- (go) are 

unaccusative verbs. After all, it seems possible to maintain the claim that only unaccusative verbs 

can select -iss.
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Combined with \(-e\) is tightly connected to the auxiliary \(iss\) whereas the combination of \(-ko\) and the main verb is rather independent of the auxiliary \(iss\). 8

5.2.2 Deletion in coordinate structure

An important piece of evidence for the asymmetry comes from the possibility of deletion in coordinate structure. Consider the following.

(35) pihayngki-nun tteleci-ko iss-ciman heylikhopthe-nun memchwu-ko iss-ta
airplane-Top fall-\(-ko\) iss-Conj helicopter-Top stop-\(-ko\) iss-Dec
'The airplane is falling, but the helicopter is stopping.'

(35') pihayngki-nun tteleci-ciman heylikhopthe-nun memchwu-ko iss-ta
airplane-Top fall-Conj helicopter-Top stop-\(-ko\) iss-Dec

(36) pihayngki-nun tteleci-e iss-ciman heylikhopthe-nun memchwu-e iss-ta
airplane-Top fall-\(-e\) iss-Conj helicopter-Top stop-\(-e\) iss-Dec
'The airplane has fallen, but the helicopter has stopped.'

(36')*?pihayngki-nun tteleci-ciman heylikhopthe-nun memchwu-e iss-ta
airplane-Top fall-Conj helicopter-Top stop-\(-e\) iss-Dec

When the two clauses containing \(-ko\ iss\) are conjoined by using the coordinate conjunction \(-ciman\) (but), omitting \(-ko\ iss\) in the first predicate is allowed, and (35') is a perfect paraphrase of (35). By contrast, in a similar conjoined structure containing \(-e\ iss\), deleting the first \(-e\ iss\) is not allowed, as in (36'). Here the deletion only leads to a totally different meaning such as 'The airplane is falling down but

\[\text{In principle, there must be a space between the main verb and the auxiliary, as in '살고 있다.'}
\text{However, when the connective is '아/어', it is possible to give no space between the main verb and the auxiliary, as in '살아있다.' (The rules of Korean Orthography: chapter 5 (word spacing), section 3 (auxiliaries), article 47.)} \]

\[8\] The following are the relevant rules of Korean orthography:-
the helicopter has already stopped.' Why deletion is allowed only in the first case can be explained in the following way: In Korean coordinate structure, it is possible to delete repeated verbal morphemes, and deletion is done in the first predicate. The repeated elements are -ko iss in (35) and -e iss in (36). Deletion in the latter is not possible since tteleci-e iss amounts to a single, unseparable unit and we cannot delete any part of it. On the other hand, tteleci-ko iss in (35) is considered to be separate, and hence the repeated element, -ko iss, can be deleted. Sentences involving other coordinate conjunctions also show us the same contrast. (37) and (38) are such examples.

(37) kwukki-nun ollaka-ko iss-nunte kyoki-nun naylyeka-ko
   national flag-Top go up-ko iss-Conj school flag-Top go down-ko
   iss-ta
   iss-Dec
   'The national flag is going up, yet the school flag is going down.'

(37') kwukki-nun ollaka-nunte kyoki-nun naylyeka-ko iss-ta
   national flag-Top go up-Conj school flag-Top go down-ko iss-Dec

(38) kwukki-nun ollaka-e iss-nunte kyoki-nun naylyeka-e iss-ta
   national flag-Top go up-e iss-Conj school flag-Top go down-e iss-Dec
   'The national flag has gone up, yet the school flag has gone down.'

(38') *?kwukki-nun ollaka-nunte kyoki-nun naylyeka-e iss-ta
   national flag-Top go up-Conj school flag-Top go down-e iss-Dec

From the two clauses conjoined by the coordinate conjunction nunte (yet), deleting the repeated morphemes is allowed only in (37), and we cannot delete -e iss in (38) without changing the original meaning of the sentence. Again, ollaka-e iss in (38) is a single, unseparable unit and so it is not possible to delete any part of it.
5.2.3 Different status of -ko and -e

5.2.3.1 The possibility of negation

Asymmetry between -e iss and -ko iss can also be observed when they are negated.⁹

(39) kkochiph-i tteleci-ko iss-ta
    petal-Nom fall down-ko iss-Dec
    'Petals are falling down.'

    a. kkochiph-i tteleci-ci anh-ko iss-ta
        petal -Nom fall down-Neg-ko iss-Dec
        'Petals are not falling down.'
    b. kkochiph-i tteleci-ko iss-ci anh-ta
        petal -Nom fall down-ko iss-Neg-Dec
        'It is not the case that petals are falling down.'

(40) kkochiph-i tteleci-e iss-ta
    petal -Nom fall down-e iss-Dec
    'Petals have fallen down.'

    a. *kkochiph-i tteleci-ci anh-e iss-ta
        petal -Nom fall down-Neg-e iss-Dec
    b. kkochiph-i tteleci-e iss-ci anh-ta
        petal -Nom fall down-e iss-Neg-Dec
        'It is not the case that petals have fallen down.'

Here the two imperfective constructions show different negation patterns. As shown in (39a) and (39b), the negation marker -ci anh can occur either before or after -ko iss. Meanwhile, the same negation marker can occur only after -e iss, as

⁹ One reviewer brought my attention to the data involving negation and auxiliary placement after -ko and -e. I am very grateful to his comments and suggestions.
shown in (40a) and (40b). Then what is responsible for the ungrammatical status of (40a)? As mentioned above, -e iss combined with a verb makes a single, inseparable unit. So it is not allowed to separate the verb from -e iss and place the negation marker between them. By contrast, -ko iss is separable from the verb, and hence placing the negation marker between them is a possible option. Meanwhile, the negation marker placed after -e iss or -ko iss doesn't create any problem since that is just how to negate a sentence, taking the widest scope.

5.2.3.2 Adding an auxiliary after -ko / -e

The data in the previous section imply that the morphological status of -ko is different from that of -e. The following paradigm is also relevant to that point.

(41) ku kwail-ul mek-ko po-ni kipwun-i anh coass-ta.
    the fruit-Acc eat-ko Aux-Conj feeling-Nom Neg was good-Dec
    'After I ate the fruit, I didn't feel good.'

(41') ku kwail-ul mek-ko na-se po-ni kipwun-i anh coass-ta.
    the fruit-Acc eat-ko Aux-Conj Aux-Conj feeling-Nom Neg was good-Dec
     'After I finished eating the fruit, I didn't feel good.'

(42) ku kwail-ul mek-e po-ni kipwun-i anh coass-ta.
    the fruit-Acc eat-e Aux-Conj feeling-Nom Neg was good-Dec
    'Eating the fruit made me feel bad.'

(42') *ku kwail-ul mek-e na-se po-ni kipwun-i anh coass-ta.
    the fruit-Acc eat-e Aux-Conj Aux-Conj feeling-Nom Neg was good-Dec

All of the above sentences include the auxiliary po- (try). When we try to add another auxiliary na- (finish), we can observe a clear contrast; the auxiliary na- can be inserted only between -ko and po- (try), as in (41'). Then why can't na- be inserted between -e and po-? Along the same line as before, if we assume that morphologically -e is not independent of the following auxiliary, it is rather expected that a new auxiliary can't be inserted between -e and the auxiliary following it.
5.2.3.3 Adverb insertion after -ko / -e

The possibility of adverb insertion reveals another contrast between the two. Consider the following.

(43) a. ku-nun cwucang-ulose caki thim-ul mwukmwukhi ikkul-ko he-Top captain-as self team.Acc humbly lead-ko o-ass-ta come-Past-Dec 'As a captain, he humbly has led his team.'

b. ku-nun cwucang-ulose caki thim-ul ikkul-ko mwukmwukhi he-Top captain-as self team.Acc lead-ko humbly o-ass-ta come-Past-Dec 'As a captain, he humbly has led his team.'

(44) a. ku-nun cwucang-ulose caki thim-ul mwukmwukhi ikkul-e he-Top captain-as self team.Acc humbly lead-e o-ass-ta come-Past-Dec 'As a captain, he humbly has led his team.'

b. *ku-nun cwucang-ulose caki thim-ul ikkul-e mwukmwukhi he-Top captain-as self team.Acc lead-e humbly o-ass-ta come-Past-Dec

All the sentences here include a complex predicate, ikkul- (lead) followed by o- (come). The two verbs can be linked by either -ko or -e, and the sentences lead to more or less the same interpretation. Now observe the location of the adverb mwukmwukhi (humbly): It naturally occurs before the complex predicate ikkul-ko/-e o-ass (has lead), but it can be placed between the two verbs only when they are connected by -ko, as shown in the contrast of grammaticality between (43b) and
(44b). The ungrammatical status of (44b) is attributed to the morphological property of -e; the verb containing -e is not independent of the following item, and so inserting an adverb between them is not permitted.

5.2.3.4 Meaning differences

There are also clear meaning differences between the verbs connected by -e and those connected by -ko, even though both may be translated into English by using and. Compare the following pairs.

(45) a. ku-nun stheyiku-lul calu-e mek-ess-ta
    He-Top steak-Acc cut-e eat-Past-Dec
    'He cut and ate the steak.'

b. ku-nun stheyiku-lul calu-ko mek-ess-ta
    He-Top steak-Acc cut-ko eat-Past-Dec
    'He cut the steak in pieces first and ate them.'

(46) a. nwulu-e ssu-si-yo
    press-e write-Hon-Imp
    'Please press hard (when you write).'

b. nwulu-ko ssu-si-yo
    press-ko write-Hon-Imp
    'Please press (it) and write.'

calu-e mek- (cut and eat) in (45a) is non-separable semantically. Obviously, 'cutting' and 'eating' are concomitant, and the complex predicate represents the usual way people eat steak. By contrast, calu-ko mek- (cut and eat) in (45b) represents two separate activities; the man first cut the steak in pieces, and then ate them. We can observe the same kind of contrast from (46a)/ (46b). nwulu-e ssu- (press and write) in (46a) means 'press hard (when you write)', and 'writing' and 'pressing' are inseparable; they are considered to be a single activity. Meanwhile, nwulu-ko ssu- (press and write) in (46b) represents two distinct activities, i.e., to write after (or while) pressing something. Such meaning differences apparently come from different
Structural asymmetry in the Korean imperfective constructions: \(-\text{ko iss}\) vs. \(-\text{e iss}\) properties of \(-\text{e}\) and \(-\text{ko}\); the former relates to concomitant actions whereas the latter is associated with separate but consecutive activities.

The arguments for the asymmetry considered so far strongly suggest that \(-\text{e iss}\) is not separable morpho-syntactically from its preceding verb. Arguably, the combination of \(-\text{e}\) with the main verb makes up a syntactic unit with \(\text{iss}\), being subject to the unaccusativity requirement: The verb combining with \(-\text{e iss}\) must have a Theme subject. Such a requirement might derive from the lexical meaning of auxiliary \(\text{iss}\), whose origin is the 'unaccusative' verb \(\text{iss}\) (exist).\(^{10}\)

As for the status of \(-\text{ko}\), it is rather independent of the following auxiliary \(\text{iss}\), and the distribution of \(-\text{ko iss}\) has nothing to do with unaccusativity; not only unergative but also unaccusative predicates can select it. Since the complex predicate containing it is considered to be more than one syntactic unit, its deletion becomes possible when it appears more than once in a conjoined structure. Also, placing a negative marker or inserting some auxiliary verbs or adverbials is possible in \(-\text{ko iss}\) construction due to its separability.

6. The meaning of \(-\text{ko iss}\) and \(-\text{e iss}\): Semantic requirements

Below we will consider some potential problems to our proposal made in the previous section. It will be shown that the ungrammaticality of the problematic sentences results from the conflict between the imperfective readings of \(-\text{ko iss}/-\text{e iss}\) and the aspectual meaning of the combined verb. Crucially, even if the unaccusativity requirement is met, there should be no semantic conflict between the verb and its imperfective marking in order for the imperfective construction to be licensed.

\(^{10}\) Chung (2007) argues that prohibiting transitive or unergative verbs from appearing in \(-\text{e iss}\) construction is not a unique grammatical constraint. Rather, such a prohibition follows from the notion of Thematic Hierarchy in Grimshaw (1990), and from the assumption that the argument structure of \(-\text{e iss}\) construction matches best with a Theme subject. Chung (2007) points out that a typical transitive verb takes an Agent as its subject and a Theme as its object, and such argument structure hardly matches with that of \(-\text{e iss}\) construction. It is an intriguing question whether the prohibition on transitive/ unergative verbs is an independent grammatical constraint or is derivable from other grammatical conditions. In this paper, we simply consider the prohibition on transitive/ unergative verbs as an independent constraint and develop our argument.
6.1 Unaccusative verbs incompatible with \(-e\ \text{iss}\)

6.1.1 Rapid motions

Consider the following sentences involving unaccusative verbs.

(47) a. phayngi-ka tol-ko iss-ta / *tol-e iss-ta
   top-Nom spin-ko \text{iss-Dec}/ spin-e \text{iss-Dec}
   'The top is spinning.'

   b. cicin-ulo ttang-i huntul-li-ko iss-ta / *?huntul-li-e iss-ta
   earthquake-with ground-Nom shake-Pass-ko \text{iss-Dec}/ shake-Pass-e \text{iss-Dec}
   'The ground is shaking during the earthquake.'

   c. kispal-i palam-ey phelleki-ko iss-ta / *phelleki-e iss-ta
   flag-Nom wind-by flutter-ko \text{iss-Dec}/ flutter-e \text{iss-Dec}
   'The flag is fluttering in the wind.'

What is the common semantic property among the above verbs? Tol- (spin), huntul-li- (be shaken), and phelleki- (flutter) are all depicting some rapid motions. The activities described by the verbs are volatile and unstable. In those cases, \(-e\ \text{iss}\) cannot be selected even if the verbs are unaccusative or passive. Such a selectional restriction is not surprising in the respect that \(-e\ \text{iss}\) usually goes together with resultative or static situations. Provided that its function is to describe some static situation or steady state of a Theme subject, there must be some semantic conflict when it is selected by the verbs depicting rapid motions or activities changing moment after moment. The unacceptability observed in the above sentences results from such a semantic conflict.

The notion of 'static situation' or 'steady state' is crucial in deciding the acceptability of \(-e\ \text{iss}\) construction. Notice the contrast between the sentences below.

(48) a. thulek-i cengciha-e iss-ta
   truck-Nom stop-e \text{iss-Dec}
   'The truck has stopped.'
b. *?thulek-i chwulpalha-e iss-ta
   truck-Nom start-e iss-Dec
   (Intended)'The truck has started.'

c. *thulek-i wumciki-e iss-ta
   truck-Nom move-e iss-Dec
   (Intended)'The truck has moved.'

The above sentences show structural similarity: All the verbs here are considered to be unaccusative, having a Theme subject. Yet there is a sharp contrast in acceptability. Such a contrast results from whether the verb describes a static situation or not. Chwulpalha- (start) and wumciki- (move) conflict with -e iss since their meanings have little to do with 'static situation.' By contrast, cengciha- (stop) doesn't show any conflict; it carries a resultative and static meaning, combining naturally with -e iss.

6.1.2 No image available

Consider another kind of unaccusative or passive verbs not allowed in the -e iss construction.

(49) a. pelley-ka say-eykey capamek-hi- ko iss-ta
    bug-Nom bird-by eat-Pass-kO iss-Dec
    'The bug is being eaten by the bird.'
    b. *?pelley-ka say-eykey capamek-hi-e iss-ta
    bug-Nom bird-by eat-Pass-e iss-Dec
    (Intended)'The bug has been eaten by the bird.'

(50) a. polumtal-i ci-ko iss-ta
    full moon-Nom go down-kO iss-Dec
    'The full moon is going down.'
    b. ??polumtal-i ci-e iss-ta
    full moon-Nom go down-e iss-Dec
    (Intended)'The full moon has gone down.'
The above sentences sound very awkward or are marginal at best with -e iss while they are perfect with -ko iss. Then why can't -e iss be selected here?

Consider (49b)/(50b) again. The bug in (49b) is probably inside the bird's stomach with the intended meaning. It may already have been digested. With the intended meaning, the full moon in (50b) is already below the horizon and not visible. After all, the subjects in (49b)/(50b) are hardly visible or recognizable. Let us assume that -e iss construction can't be licensed if the image of the Theme subject is not clear enough. Then the situations in (49)/(50) don't seem appropriate for -e iss construction. Interestingly, (50b) is contrasted to (50') below, in which the full moon is above the horizon and it is visible. Hence using -e iss is not problematic at all.

(50') polumtal-i ttu-e iss-ta
   full moon-Nom come up-e iss-Dec
   'The full moon is in the sky.'

Note that it is not simple visibility which determines the acceptability of the sentences. In the following example, the verb swum- (hide) is fully acceptable with -e iss even though the subject kanchep (spy) is not visible to us.

(51) kanchep-i hakkyo-ey swum-e iss-ta
   spy-Nom school-at hide-e iss-Dec
   'The spy has hidden in the school.'

What seems to cause the difference in acceptability between (51) and (49b)/(50b)? While the spy in (51) is not visible at the time, we have probably heard about him from the news, having basic information. We are certain about the existence of the spy, and have some image of him. On the other hand, we are not so sure about the existence of the bug in (49b); it may already have been digested. For (50b), we haven't seen the moon located below the horizon, and it is hard to have the image of the moon in that situation.
6.1.3 Semelfactives

Semelfactive verbs represent punctual activities. Interestingly, they cannot select 
-e iss even if they are unaccusative, as in (52)/(53).\(^\text{11}\)

(52) *mellise pwulbich-i panccaki-e iss-ta
    far away light-Nom flash-e iss-Dec

(Intended)'A light has flashed in the distance.'

(53) *ai-ka kichimha-e iss-ta
    boy-Nom cough-e iss-ta

(intended) 'The boy has coughed.'

(54) say-ka cwuk-e iss-ta
    bird-Nom die-e iss-ta

'The bird is dead.'

The grammaticality of (52)/(53) is contrasted to that of (54), which contains an
achievement verb, cwuk- (die). Let's consider the diagrams from Suh (2015) for the
comparison between semelfactive and achievement verbs.

(53') ---------------------------------------------- ↓ -------------------------------

-before the cough- <the boy coughed> -after the cough-

(54') ---------------------------------------------- ↓ xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

-alive- <the bird died> -dead-

Both kichimha- (cough) in (53) and cwuk- (die) in (54) represent point activities.
However, they are contrasted in terms of whether there is a 'phase shift.' That is,
semelfactives are different from achievement verbs in that no 'change of state' is
observed in the former. This difference is crucial in the following respect: Since there

\(^{11}\) While panccaki- (flash) is clearly unaccusative, kichimha- (cough) could be unergative. If it is, 
then (53) will be ruled out by our first condition, unaccusativity requirement. But that doesn't 
affect our argument since we can still compare (52) and (54).
is no change of state when we compare "before the cough" and "after the cough," it is not possible to obtain any resultative meaning from 'the boy coughed.' In addition, we can't get any static reading either, since coughing, a punctual activity, does not assume any duration in time. Given that neither a resultative meaning nor a static meaning is available from 'the boy coughed,' it is predicted that kichimha- (cough) doesn't select -e iss due to the semantic conflict between them. This is contrasted to the case of an achievement verb: A change of state is observed from 'the bird died,' and hence a resultative reading is easily obtained when cwuk- takes -e iss.

6.2 Verbs incompatible with -ko iss

According to our proposal, verbs are basically not constrained by any grammatical conditions in selecting -ko iss. Meanwhile, when there is a conflict between the progressive meaning of -ko iss and the semantics of the combined verb, unacceptability results. Such a semantic conflict can be created by most stative verbs when they take -ko iss, as seen in section 2.1. Below we will consider more conflict-creating categories other than stative verbs.

6.2.1 Achievements

Pure achievement verbs can hardly select -ko iss, as seen in the following example.

(55) ?*wuli hakkyo-ka wusungha-ko iss-ta
    our school-Nom  win the title-ko iss-Dec
    'Our school is winning the championship.'

Achievement verbs such as wusungha- (win the title) are marginal at best when they select -ko iss. That is in fact not surprising since one important semantic feature of -ko iss is 'duration', which conflicts with the aspectual meaning of achievement verbs.

Sometimes an achievement verb seems to occur in -ko iss construction, as in (56) below, but there is a good reason for that.
Structural asymmetry in the Korean imperfective constructions: -ko iss vs. -e iss

(56) wuli hakkyo-ka sam cem-ul iki-ko iss-ta  
our school-Nom three point-Acc win-ko iss-Dec  
'Our school is leading by three points.'

Notice that, as reflected in the translation of (56), the verb iki- (win) hasn't been used as an achievement verb here. It is generally the case that when a typical achievement verb naturally selects -ko iss, it is not an achievement verb any more. It undergoes "type coercion" and functions as another aspectual type of verb.

6.2.2 Semelfactives

Provided that 'duration' is an important semantic feature for -ko iss, as Lee (1991) claimed, it is understandable that the predicates in (57) and (58) are marginal at best with -ko iss.

(57) ??ku-ka theyipul-ul han pen twutuli-ko iss-ta  
he-Nom table-Acc one time tap-ko iss-Dec  
'He is tapping once on the table.'

(58) ??ku-ka sonkalak-ul han pen thwuingki-ko iss-ta  
he-Nom finger-Acc one time snap-ko iss-Dec  
'He is snapping his fingers once.'

*twutuli*- (tap) in (57) and *thwuingki*- (snap) in (58) represent punctual activities; we can hardly think of any duration in time in 'tapping once on the table' or 'snapping fingers once.' Hence the predicates sound awkward when selecting -ko iss.

The above sentences become perfect if the adverb han pen (once) is removed. In that case, their predicates do not function as a semelfactive verb any more. They become activity verbs, representing repetition of a punctual activity. This kind of type coercion is very popular in Korean as well as in English.12

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12 According to Rothstein (2008), such a type coercion is so productive that every semelfactive verb can have a homonymous activity reading.
6.3 Remaining questions

Thus far, it has been proposed that we need two different requirements for explaining the distribution of Korean imperfective constructions: One is the unaccusativity requirement for the verbs combining with -e iss, and the other is the requirement of "no semantic conflict" between the verb and its imperfective marking.

There are still some remaining questions our proposal has to answer. According to our second requirement, when there is a conflict between the progressive meaning of -ko iss and the semantics of the combined verb, the sentence should be unacceptable. Now consider an example sentence from J. Kim (2011).

(59) Mia-ka cangkap-ul kki-ko iss-ta
    Mia-Nom glove-Acc put on-ko iss-ta
    (A) 'Mia is putting on the gloves.'
    (B) 'Mia has the gloves on.'
    (J. Kim 2011: 864)

The stative reading (B) is rather surprising; -ko iss is supposed to carry a progressive meaning, and the verb kki- (put on) is an accomplishment verb. Put together, they are expected to produce a progressive reading. Then how can the unexpected stative reading be derived?

The possible solution for this problem may come from the assumption that there are two different kinds of iss, as proposed by J. Kim (2011) and M. Kim (2011). According to them, the two interpretations in (59) reflect two different syntactic structures; in one structure corresponding to (A) reading, iss is an auxiliary whereas in the other structure corresponding to (B) reading, it is a lexical, main verb. Specifically, J. Kim (2011) considers the main verb iss to take two arguments: One is the subject Mia, and the other is the predicative VP, cangkap-ul kki-ko (to put the gloves on). What the main verb iss does is to represent the resultant state of the subject's wearing the gloves.

Since we are dealing with the constructions involving auxiliary iss in this paper, the stative reading in (59) may be ignored, provided that such a reading is attributed to the syntactic properties of iss as a matrix verb.
Another problem to our proposal is the case where cognition verbs are involved. Consider an example sentence from section 2.1.

\[(10) \text{Inho-nun cinsil-ul al} -\text{ko iss-ta}\]
\[-\text{Top truth-Acc know-} \text{ko iss-Dec}\]

‘Inho knows the truth.’

\textit{al-} (know) in (10) is a stative verb, and its aspectual meaning is expected to conflict with the progressive meaning of \textit{–ko iss}. Nevertheless, the sentence is fully acceptable.

Since many cognition verbs such as \textit{al-} (know), \textit{kiekha-} (remember), and \textit{mit-} (believe) can select \textit{–ko iss}, the possibility that those verbs are actually not stative verbs has been suggested. In particular, Lee (2006, 2008) proposed that Korean cognition verbs such as \textit{al-} (know) belong to the category of achievement verbs. However, as pointed out by Park (2014), there doesn't seem to be enough independent evidence for such a categorization. If Korean cognition verbs can't be categorized so, the remaining option would be to hypothesize that \textit{–ko iss} can carry some semantic feature other than "progressive". I leave this issue for future research.

7. Conclusion

The contrast between \textit{–ko iss} and \textit{–e iss} has been discussed in the literature from various perspectives: progressive vs. resultative, dynamic vs. static, telic vs. atelic, and unergative vs. unaccusative. However, none of these contrastive pairs have been entirely satisfactory in accounting for the distribution of Korean imperfective constructions. Our proposal that there is structural asymmetry between the two types of imperfective constructions has crucial implications: While selecting \textit{–e iss} is constrained by a grammatical condition, i.e., the unaccusativity requirement, selecting \textit{–ko iss} is not constrained by any particular grammatical conditions due to its separability from the main verb. Consequently, it can be selected by a much wider range of verbs.

In conclusion, the distribution of Korean imperfective constructions can be accounted for by two different requirements. One is the unaccusativity condition, and
the other can be considered as a requirement in a broad sense: There should not be
any conflict between the imperfective readings of -ko iss/-e iss and the aspectual
meaning of the combined verb. If there is one, the imperfective construction will not
be licensed.

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