

Three ways to see in Korean: Sentence final endings, clause structure, and the subjunctive circumstantial evidence construction*

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An, Duk-Ho. 2020. Three ways to see in Korean: Sentence final endings, clause structure, and the subjunctive circumstantial evidence construction. *Linguistic Research* 37(3): 477-498. This paper deals with the nature of the lexical item *po-ta* in Korean. Interestingly, the verb stem *po* can be used in three different ways: it can be used as a lexical verb meaning ‘to see’; it can be used as an auxiliary whose meaning is similar to ‘to try’; it also has a third use, which expresses the speaker’s uncertainty or conjecture about the truth of the proposition. The gist of the proposal is that in the third construction, which is dubbed the Subjunctive Circumstantial Evidence (SCE) construction, the ending *-na*, attached to the stem of the main verb, is a subjunctive mood marker, indicating the speaker’s uncertainty, while *po* is grammaticalized as a kind of evidentiality marker, indicating the speaker’s bias toward the truth of the proposition despite the uncertainty. Based on this, the goal of this paper is to argue that the three different uses of *po* provide a window into clause structure—especially, the architecture of the right periphery in Korean. The discussion also has implications for the status of sentence final endings in the language. The current analysis is in line with the widely adopted view that there are fine-grained layers of functional projections in the traditional CP domain (Cinque 1999, 2006; Rizzi 1997, among many others). (Konkuk University)

Keywords sentence final ending, clause structure, subjunctive, evidential, cartography, right periphery, complementation

1. Introduction

This paper is concerned with the nature of the lexical item *po-ta* in Korean, which is many ways ambiguous.¹ For instance, the Standard Korean Language

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1 As indicated, the word *po-ta* is made up of the verb stem *po* and the declarative sentence final

Dictionary, published by the National Institute of the Korean Language, lists 26 uses of *po-ta* as a lexical verb, 4 uses as an auxiliary, and a third use to be discussed in more detail below. As a lexical verb, *po-ta* basically means ‘to see’.²

- (1) Toto-ka Mimi-lul po-ass-ta.
 Toto-Nom Mimi-Acc see-Past-Dec³
 ‘Toto saw Mimi.’

As an auxiliary, *po-ta* means something like ‘to try’. In this case, it should be preceded by a lexical main verb, which hosts the verbal suffix *-e*. The identity of *-e* is somewhat controversial in the literature, e.g., some researchers assume this element to be a complementizer, while others consider it to be a connecting ending. I return to this below.

- (2) Toto-ka chayk-ul ilk-e po-ass-ta.
 Toto-Nom book-Acc read-E PO_{aux}-Past-Dec
 ‘Toto tried reading a book.’

In its third use, which is found in a construction that I refer to as the SCE (subjunctive circumstantial evidence) construction, *po-ta* is also preceded by a lexical main verb, similarly to its use as an auxiliary. Unlike the latter, however, the main verb hosts the morpheme *-na*, which is often assumed to be an interrogative sentence final ending in the literature (Byun 2008; Ho 1999; Pak 2008; Sohn 1999, among others).

ending *-ta*. The latter can be replaced by other endings or verbal suffixes, as discussed in more detail below. Therefore, in many cases discussed below, it is often *po* alone that has the relevant properties. But it is also customary in Korean dictionaries to use the declarative ending *-ta* on verb stems to represent the default or neutral form of the verb. Below, I represent the element in question as *po-ta* where its internal structure is not important and as *po* where it is necessary to focus on the verb stem itself.

- 2 The many lexical meanings of *po-ta* listed in the aforementioned dictionary, e.g., ‘to watch’, ‘to view’, ‘to read’, ‘to examine’, and so on, can be considered extensions of this core meaning. The subtle differences in meaning do not lead to any syntactic differences that are relevant to our discussion and therefore, will not be considered in this paper.
- 3 List of abbreviations: Acc (accusative), Comp (complementizer), Cop (copula), Dat (dative), Dec (declarative), Evid (evidential), Exo (exhortative), Hon (honorification), Imp (imperative), Mod (modal), Nml (nominalizer), Nom (nominative), Q (interrogative), Sub (subjunctive), Top (topic).

- (3) Toto-ka cip-ey ka-ss-na po-ta.
 Toto-Nom home-to go-Past-NA PO-Dec⁴
 '(I guess that) Toto went home.'

In this paper, I look into the three constructions involving *po-ta*, paying special attention to the SCE construction. Regarding the SCE construction, I propose that *-na* is a subjunctive mood marker rather than an interrogative sentence final ending, whose main function is to indicate the speaker's epistemic uncertainty. Regarding *po* itself in the SCE construction, I propose that this element is grammaticalized as a kind of evidentiality marker. The kind of evidentiality it expresses is dubbed circumstantial evidentiality, rather than direct evidentiality, which, combined with the subjunctive marker *-na*, indicates the speaker's bias toward the truth of the proposition despite his/her uncertainty about it. I also propose that the morpheme *-e* which attaches to the main verb in the auxiliary *po-ta* construction, is a morphological closer in the sense of Kang (1988) rather than a genuine complementizer or a sentence final ending as often assumed in the literature. Based on this, I argue that the three constructions involving *po-ta* provide a nice window into clause structure—in particular, the architecture of the right periphery in Korean. In fact, Korean provides a nice ground for carrying out cartographic research into clause structure, because numerous morphemes with clearly discernible functions show up in various positions in quite a systematic fashion reflecting their distinct syntactic positions. The current analysis provides support for the widely adopted view that there are fine-grained layers of functional projections in the traditional CP domain (Cinque 1999, 2006; Haegeman 2014; Miyagawa 2012; Rizzi 1997; Speas and Tenny 2003, among many others).

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 discusses properties of *po-ta* as a lexical verb; Section 3 discusses properties of *po-ta* as an auxiliary; Section 4 discusses the morpheme *-e* that attaches to the main verb in the auxiliary *po-ta* construction; Section 5 discusses the morpheme *-na* in the SCE construction and proposes that it is a subjunctive mood marker; Section 6 discusses *po* in the SCE construction and proposes that it is a marker of circumstantial evidentiality;

4 The glosses NA and PO are tentative. They will be replaced by more precise glosses below.

Section 7 considers the implications of the three *po-ta* constructions for clause structure in Korean; Section 8 concludes.

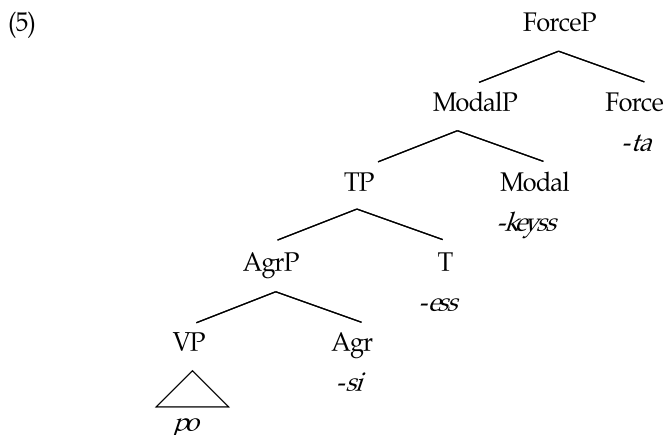
2. *Po-ta* as a lexical verb

In this section, I briefly discuss some properties of *po-ta* as a lexical verb. As mentioned above, the basic meaning of *po-ta* as a lexical verb is 'to see'. It can also be used for various other activities involving 'seeing', though they are not important for us. What is significant for our discussion is the morphological structure of *po-ta* when it is used as a lexical verb. As shown below, quite generally, various suffixal elements can be attached to verb stems in Korean.

- (4) Sensayngnim-kkeyse ku kes-ul po-si-ess-keyss-ta.
 teacher-Nom the thing-Acc see-Hon-Past-Mod-Dec
 'The teacher might have seen it.'

As indicated by the glosses, *-si* is an honorification marker; *-ess* is the past tense marker; *-keyss* is a modal element expressing the notion of possibility; *-ta* is a sentence final ending for the declarative clause type. Given the usual assumption in the literature that these distinct morphemes instantiate various functional projections, the order of the morphemes attached to the verb stem reveals aspects of the clause structure of Korean. More specifically, ignoring certain irrelevant details, I adopt the following basic clause structure for Korean:⁵

5 There is some controversy regarding the status of the honorification marker *-si*. The issue is basically whether its occurrence is syntactically governed or not. I tentatively assume it to be the head of an agreement projection. It should be noted however that the discussion below does not depend on this assumption in any significant way. See Choe 2004 and Choi 2003 for relevant discussion and references.



3. *Po-ta* as an auxiliary

Let us turn to the auxiliary *po-ta*, which reveals a number of important properties that are relevant to our discussion on the SCE construction below.⁶

First, as shown in (2), repeated below, one of the characteristic properties of the auxiliary *po-ta* is that it must be used with a separate main verb.

- (6) Toto-ka chayk-ul ilk-e po-ass-ta.
 Toto-Nom book-Acc read-E PO_{aux}-Past-Dec
 'Toto tried reading the book.'

Second, as an auxiliary, *po-ta* does not affect the argument structure of the sentence, i.e., it is not a thematic verb. For instance, although *po-ta* is transitive when used as a lexical verb, it does not require an object when it is used as an auxiliary.

- (7) Toto-ka talli-e po-ass-ta.
 Toto-Nom run-E PO_{aux}-Past-Dec
 'Toto tried running.'

6 For general discussion on auxiliaries in Korean, see Lee 2010; Sohn 1999; Son 1996; Um 1999, among others, and the references therein.

In fact, when the main verb is intransitive, as in (8), an object is not allowed even in the presence of *po-ta*, which clearly indicates that it does not behave as a transitive verb at all.⁷ This confirms that *po-ta*, as an auxiliary, is not involved in determining the thematic structure of the sentence.

- (8) *Toto-ka ku kes-ul talli-e po-ass-ta.
 Toto-Nom the thing-Acc run-E PO_{aux}-Past-Dec
 'Toto tried running it.'

Third, the position of verbal suffixes in the auxiliary construction is also important. Crucially, the verbal suffixes attach to the auxiliary, not to the main verb. For instance, all the verbal suffixes discussed in Section 2 can attach to *po-ta* in the auxiliary construction, as shown below.

- (9) Sensayngnim-kkeyse chayk-ul ilk-e
 teacher-Nom book-Acc read-E
 po-si-ess-keyss-ta.
 PO_{aux}-Hon-Past-Mod-Dec
 'The teacher may have tried reading the book.'

However, attaching any of these suffixes to the main verb leads to ungrammaticality, no matter what the combination.

- (10) Sensayngnim-kkeyse chayk-ul
 teacher-Nom book-Acc
 ilk-(*usi)-(*ess)-(*keyss)-(*ta)-e po-si-ess-keyss-ta.
 read-Hon-Past-Mod-Dec-E PO_{aux}-Hon-Past-Mod-Dec

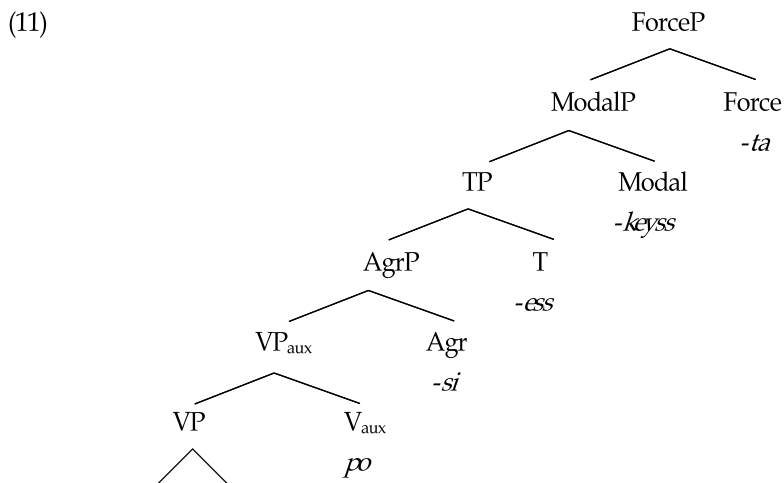
⁷ Consider the contrast below.

- (i) Toto-ka ku kes-ul po-ass-ta.
 Toto-Nom the thing-Acc see-Past-Dec
 'Toto saw it.'
- (ii) *Toto-ka ku kes-ul talli-ess-ta.
 Toto-Nom the thing-Acc run-Past-Dec
 'Toto ran it.'

'It may be that Toto tried reading the book.'

It should also be noted that the ungrammaticality of (10) has nothing to do with the morphological structure of the auxiliary. Whether the suffixes also show up on the auxiliary or not does not change the ungrammaticality. Simply put, main verbs in the auxiliary construction cannot host such verbal suffixes.

Given this, I propose that the auxiliary *po-ta* construction involves a layer of VPs, where the lower VP is headed by the main verb, while the higher VP is headed by the auxiliary *po-ta*.⁸ The relevant portion of the structure of (9) is illustrated below.



4. A brief digression to the nature of *-e*

In the auxiliary *po-ta* construction, the main verb hosts the morpheme *-e*. In the literature, this element is sometimes assumed to be a complementizer or a conjunctive element. I briefly turn to the status of *-e* in this section.⁹

8 I assume that a vP layer (or whatever projection responsible for external arguments) can be projected on top of the lower VP, sandwiched between the two VPs in configurations like (11). For simplicity, I omit it here.

9 Depending on the phonological environment, *-e* can be realized as *-a*. Similar alternations can be found in the past tense morpheme *-ess* and *-ass*.

It is significant that there is another context where *-e* appears. That is, *-e* can be used at the end of a sentence as a sentence final ending, as in (12).

- (12) Cemsim mek-ess-e. (falling intonation → declarative)
 lunch eat-Past-E
 ‘(I) ate lunch.’

In the literature, especially, in traditional Korean grammar in the non-generative framework, *-e* in the auxiliary *po-ta* construction and the one in sentences like (12) are considered separate elements, so that the former is sometimes assumed to be a kind of complementizer or a connecting (or conjunctive) ending, while the latter is assumed to be a sentence final ending. What is interesting about the latter use of *-e* is that it is not limited to declarative sentences. Depending on the intonation, (12) can also be interpreted as an interrogative sentence, as in (13).

- (13) Cemsim mek-ess-e? (rising intonation → question)
 lunch eat-Past-E
 ‘(Did you) eat lunch?’

In fact, it can also be used in exhortative and imperative sentences as well.

- (14) Cemsim mek-e.
 lunch eat-E
 ‘Let’s eat lunch/Eat lunch.’

This clearly contrasts with more typical sentence final endings such as *-ta*, *-ni*, *-ca*, and *-la*, which are associated with specific clause types such as declarative, interrogative, exhortative, and imperative, respectively.¹⁰

- (15) a. Cemsim mek-ess-ta.
 lunch eat-Past-Dec
 ‘(I) ate lunch.’

¹⁰ For some general discussion and references on sentence final endings in Korean, see An 2020; Nam and Ko 1993; Pak 2008; Sohn 1999, among others.

- b. Cemsim mek-ess-ni?
lunch eat-Past-Q
'(Did you) eat lunch?'
- c. Cemsim mek-ca.
lunch eat-Exo
'Let's eat lunch.'
- d. Cemsim mek-ela.
lunch eat-Imp
'Eat lunch.'

Given this, it is clear that *-e* itself does not mark any particular clause types, i.e., it is neutral with respect to clause types. In this respect, it is quite different from the other sentence final endings. Given this, An (2020) argues that the *-e* in sentence final position, as in (12)-(14), is a morphological closer in the sense of Kang (1988) rather than a genuine sentence final ending. That is, *-e* attaches to bare verb stems because verb stems in Korean need to be morphologically closed off, i.e., they cannot stand alone. Typical sentence final endings, such as *-ta*, *-ni*, *-ca*, and *-la*, mentioned above, have the ability to morphologically close off the verb stem as well as marking the clause type, while *-e* only has the former function, which is why sentences ending with *-e* must rely on intonation to encode their clause type.

Assuming the analysis in (11), I propose that the same consideration applies to the *-e* in the auxiliary *po-ta* construction. That is, the main verb in the lower VP is not followed by any sentence final ending or a verbal suffix, i.e., its stem remains morphologically open, which is why *-e* is necessary.¹¹ If this is correct,

11 It is worth mentioning that some focus particles can be attached to *-e* in the auxiliary *po-ta* construction.

- (i) Toto-ka chayk-ul ilk-e-nun/man/to po-ass-ta.
Toto-Nom book-Acc read-E-Top/only/also PO_{aux}-Past-Dec
'Toto at least/only/also tried reading the book.'

The question is why *-e* should be attached to the verb stem despite the presence of these additional particles. Regarding this, it should be noted that these focus particles cannot directly attach to a verb stem, while they can directly attach to nouns, as in (ii). Note also that if the verb stem is nominalized, these focus particles can be attached to it, as in (iii).

there is actually only one type of *-e* in Korean: it is a morphological closer—not a connecting ending, nor a sentence final ending. This also means that *-e* is not a complementizer either. This is desirable because if one assumed *-e* to be a complementizer, it would be mysterious why sentences involving a verb with *-e* including the auxiliary *po-ta* construction, do not behave as complex sentences. It would also be mysterious how sentences like (12)-(14) can be used as independent sentences, if *-e* were a complementizer.

5. The SCE construction: Subjunctive mood

Let us turn to the SCE construction. Basically, the SCE construction expresses the speaker's supposition or conjecture about the situation. Its interpretation has two characteristic properties: first, the speaker is uncertain about the truth of the proposition, i.e., he does not or cannot make a full commitment to its truth; second, nevertheless, the speaker has some reasons to be biased toward its truth, though he does not have direct evidence to support it. I propose that these properties arise from the contributions made by two central elements—namely, *-na* and *po*. More specifically, I propose that *-na* is responsible for the former property, which I assume is an instance of the subjunctive mood, while *po* is responsible for the latter, a property that I call “circumstantial evidentiality”. I examine the properties of *-na* in this section and turn to the properties *po* in the next.

In the literature, *-na* is often assumed to be an interrogative sentence final ending (Byun 2008; Ho 1999; Jeon 2015; Park 1999; Sohn 1999). Indeed, it can be used in questions, as in (16).

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- (ii) a. Toto-nun/man/to
Toto-Top/only/also
b. *mek-nun/man/to
eat-Top/only/also
(iii) mek-ki-nun/man/to
eat-Nml-Top/only/also

This means that without the *-e* in (i), the verb stem *ilk* ‘read’ would not be properly morphologically closed, leading to a morphological clash in the sense of Kang (1988).

- (16) Pi o-na?
rain come-NA
'Is it raining?'

Significantly, however, there is a crucial difference between interrogative sentences ending with *-na* and those ending with typical interrogative sentence final endings like *-ni*. More specifically, sentences ending with *-ni*, as in (17), have the characteristic interrogative force that prompts the listener to provide an answer, i.e., they are information-seeking questions.

- (17) Pi o-ni?
rain come-Q
'Is it raining?'

On the other hand, sentences ending with *-na* simply signal the speaker's uncertainty about the proposition rather than asking for information. In the case of (16), the speaker perhaps hears the sound of raindrops or notices that the ground is wet, which leads him to think that it is raining, though he is not sure about it. Crucially, in clear contrast to (17), (16) does not require the listener to provide an answer. In fact, it has been noted in the literature that sentences like (16) can be used as monologic self-addressed questions. They can be used even in the absence of a listener. This is clearly different from genuine interrogative sentences like (17), which normally cannot be used in a monologue. Of course, from a pragmatic point of view, uttering a sentence like (16) in the presence of a listener has the effect of prompting the listener to provide relevant information, as the sentence reveals the speaker's uncertainty about the situation.¹² This way, sentences ending with *-na* can be used as interrogative sentences, though *-na* itself is not a genuine marker of the interrogative clause type or force.¹³

12 Koo and Rhee (2013) refer to this way of using *-na* as a "feigned monologue" and point out that it is a way of asking questions gently, because they do not require the listener to answer.

13 An anonymous reviewer points out that a sentence like (iA) is possible as an information-seeking question despite the fact that it ends with *-na*.

(i) (A father-in-law talks to his son-in-law.)

Given this, note that the subjunctive mood is generally associated with various forms of non-commitment, e.g., wishes, tentative assumptions, hypothetical states, and so on. I propose that *-na* is a functional head in the CP domain whose main function is to indicate the speaker's uncertainty about (or non-commitment to) the truth of the proposition.¹⁴ More specifically, I assume

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- A: Caney cemsim-un mek-ess-na?
 you lunch-Top eat-Past-Q
 'Did you have lunch?'
 B: Ney, mek-ess-supnita.
 yes eat-Past-Dec
 'Yes, I did.'

It should be noted however that the *-na* in (iA) is not the same element as the *-na* we are concerned with in the main text, as in (16). That is, the former element is a genuine marker of the interrogative clause type in formal style, which is also signaled by the formal second person pronoun *caney*: With a casual second person pronoun, (iA) becomes unacceptable due to a clash in the speech style.

- (ii) *Ne cemsim-un mek-ess-na?
 you lunch-Top eat-Past-Q

On the other hand, the type of *-na* we are concerned with in this paper is not subject to this kind of restriction. For instance, a sentence like (iii) is perfectly fine. Note the presence of the casual second person pronoun. (*Né* in (ii) and *ni* in (iii) are variants of the same item.)

- (iii) (At a dancing contest, the speaker and listener are waiting for the result of the listener's performance. They cannot see the score board from where they are, but they notice that the audience is cheering.)
 Ni-ka iki-ess-na?
 you-Nom win-Past-NA
 'Could it be that you won?'

It is also crucial that in the particular case in (iii), it is not just the speaker, but even the listener is uncertain about the situation, which precludes a genuine information-seeking question. This confirms that the *-na* we are dealing with here should be distinguished from the *-na* in cases like (iA) and that it simply indicates the speaker's uncertainty.

14 The current proposal is in line with Kang and Yoon's (2020) discussion on *-nka*, which they argue to be a subjunctive marker. What is crucial for our discussion is that *-nka* shows parallel behavior to *-na* in relevant respects. (There are some lexical differences between them, though they do not affect the point.) For instance, questions ending with *-nka*, as in (i), indicate the speaker's uncertainty about the truth of the proposition without obligating the listener to provide an answer, unlike those ending with the genuine interrogative marker *-ni*. Recall that I showed based on (16) and (17) above that *-na* contrasts with *-ni* in the same way. (See also the discussion in note 13.)

that *-na* occupies the head position of MoodP above TP, which I assume is distinct from the position occupied by typical sentence final endings. (Henceforth, I gloss *-na* as Sub, not as NA.) I elaborate on the structure of the SCE construction in Section 7.

6. The SCE construction: Circumstantial evidentiality

Recall that the presence of *-na* indicates that the speaker is uncertain about the truth of the proposition. In other words, it indicates that p and $\neg p$ are equally possible for the speaker in a given situation. However, in the SCE construction, where *-na* is accompanied by *po-ta*, there is a crucial difference in the interpretation of the sentence. That is, although the speaker is not fully committed to the truth or falsity of the proposition due to the lack of direct evidence to support it, he is nevertheless inclined to its truth due to the availability of some circumstantial (or indirect) evidence. For instance, in (18), the speaker expresses the supposition that Toto may have read the book based on an observation of some relevant aspect of the situation, e.g., the speaker hears Toto talk about the content of the book or finds out that some passages in Toto's book are highlighted. These observations do not provide direct evidence that Toto read the book, because the speaker did not actually see Toto read it, but they are suggestive enough to suppose that he did. Crucially, without such an observation, an utterance like (18) cannot be made. In the same vein, if the speaker is simply imagining the situation where Toto read the book, (18) would not be legitimate either. Furthermore, (18) cannot be used in a situation where it is certain or known to the speaker that Toto read the book.

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- (i) Toto-ka wusungca-(i)-nka?
 Toto-Nom winner-Cop-NKA
 'Perhaps Toto is the winner (or not)?'

Furthermore, sentences ending with *-nka* can be used as a self-addressed question just like those ending with *-na*. Crucially, Kang and Yoon (2020) propose that *-nka* has something to do with the subjunctive mood in that its presence triggers a nonveridicality effect, i.e., it weakens the speaker's epistemic status, so that s/he is not committed to the truth of the proposition, which is the same as *-na*. See also Yoon 2011 for relevant discussion on *-na* as a subjunctive mood marker.

- (18) Toto-ka chayk-ul ilk-ess-na po-ta.
 Toto-Nom book-Acc read-Past-Sub PO-Dec
 'It seems that Toto read the book.'

Given this, I propose that the prerequisite for the SCE construction—in particular, for the occurrence of *po-ta* in the construction, is that the speaker has some circumstantial evidence for the possible truth of the proposition, leading the speaker to be positively biased toward its truth. Of course, the speaker still does not have direct evidence to support the truth of the proposition, which is why the speaker does not (or cannot) assert its truth. Based on this, I suggest that *po* is a marker of circumstantial evidentiality. (Henceforth, I gloss *po* as Evid.) Intuitively, this is plausible because the core meaning of *po-ta* is 'to see', so that the speaker "sees" what is going on and makes a supposition or conjecture based on it.

Regarding the structural status of *po* in the SCE construction, it is important to note that it is neither a lexical verb nor an auxiliary. I list some reasons for this below.

First, *po* in the SCE construction does not describe situations involving visual perception. For instance, (19) is perfectly fine even when the speaker can only hear the sound of a car approaching without being able to actually see the car or the person in it. Even a blind person can use the SCE construction. This makes it clear that *po* in the SCE construction is not used as a lexical verb.

- (19) Toto-ka o-ass-na po-ta.
 Toto-Nom come-Past-Sub Evid-Dec
 'It seems that Toto came.'

Second, recall that when *po* is used as a lexical verb, it bears verbal suffixes, as shown in (20).

- (20) Sensayngnim-kkeyse wuli-lul po-si-ess-keyss-ta.
 teacher-Nom we-Acc see-Hon-Past-Mod-Dec
 'The teacher might have seen us.'

Similarly, as shown in Section 3, the auxiliary *po* can bear verbal suffixes too.

- (21) Sensayngnim-kkeyse chayk-ul ilk-e
 teacher-Nom book-Acc read-E
 po-si-ess-keyss-ta.
 PO_{aux}-Hon-Past-Mod-Dec
 'The teacher might have tried reading the book.'

Crucially, however, *po* in the SCE construction cannot bear any of these verbal suffixes, except for the clause-typing sentence final ending,¹⁵

- (22) Sensayngnim-kkeyse chayk-ul ilk-na
 teacher-Nom book-Acc read-Sub
 po-(*si)-(*ess)-(*keyss)-ta.
 Evid-Hon-Past-Mod-Dec
 'It seems that the teacher read the book.'

Rather, it is the main verb that bears all the relevant verbal suffixes.

- (23) Sensayngnim-kkeyse chayk-ul ilk-usi-ess-na¹⁶

15 Note that the SCE construction does not sound natural when used in clause types other than declarative, arguably due to its semantics. That is, clause types like interrogative, imperative, and exhortative, indicated by the sentence final endings *-ni*, *-la*, and *-ca*, respectively, are not compatible with the construction.

- (i) *Toto-ka o-ass-na po-ni?/-ala!/-ca.
 Toto-Nom come-Past-Sub Evid-Q/-Imp/-Exh
 'Did it seem to me that Toto came?' / 'Seem that Toto came.' / 'Let us seem that Toto came.'

This seems expected, because the SCE construction expresses the speaker's state of mind based on a certain observation that s/he obtained from the situation. It is unlikely that one can ask a question, give an order, or make a proposition about it.

16 Incidentally, the modal element *-keyss* sounds somewhat awkward before *-na* in (23).

- (i) ?? ... ilk-usi-ess-keyss-na po-ta.
 read-Hon-Past-Mod-Sub Evid-Dec

But, it seems that *-keyss* is not entirely impossible before *-na*.

teacher-Nom book-Acc read-Hon-Past-Sub
 po-ta.
 Evid-Dec
 'It seems that the teacher read the book.'

Given this, I assume that *po* in the SCE construction is neither a lexical verb nor an auxiliary. Rather, I suggest that it is grammaticalized and functions as a marker of circumstantial evidentiality.¹⁷ When a sentence contains *-na* alone, it simply indicates the speaker's uncertainty about the truth of the proposition. When *po* is added, it further indicates that the speaker is inclined to the truth of the proposition, though he is still not entirely certain about it. Figuratively speaking, *-na* indicates that the speaker is 50% certain about the truth of the proposition, while *po* indicates that he is 80% certain about it. Assuming this, the core properties of the SCE construction are given below.¹⁸

- (24) Properties of the SCE Construction
- i. It expresses uncertainty about the truth of the proposition, which is indicated by *-na*.
 - ii. Nevertheless, it is positively biased toward the truth of the

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- (ii) Icey ilk-usi-keyss-na po-ta.
 now read-Hon-Mod-Sub Evid-Dec
 '(pro) may be about to read now.'

It seems noteworthy that when *-keyss* is possible before *-na*, as in (ii), it expresses the subject's volition, while in (i), it expresses the speaker's supposition, in which case I suspect that there is some kind clash between *-keyss* and *-na*, leading to the degraded status. At the moment, I am not sure whether this speculation is on the right track. I leave aside further explorations of this issue for future research.

17 Park (1999) also points out that *po* in the SCE construction lost its lexical meaning and underwent some formal changes in the course of its grammaticalization.

18 After I submitted the first draft of this paper to *Linguistic Research*, I realized that Kyongjoon Kwon discusses the SCE construction extensively in his 2018 paper. Kwon's work differs from mine in that it involves an in-depth exploration of the semantics of the SCE construction, while my work focuses on illuminating the clause structure of Korean based on three different *po-ta* constructions, one of which is the SCE construction. Kwon's work provides a nice supplement for my discussion of evidentiality in this section, because the latter is admittedly somewhat sketchy. Given this, interested readers are referred to Kwon's (2018) work for further discussion on the notion of evidentiality and relevant references.

proposition.

- iii. It presupposes the existence of circumstantial evidence, which is indicated by $\rho\alpha$

7. The structure of the SCE construction

I have proposed above that ρ in the SCE construction is neither a lexical verb, nor an auxiliary. Rather, it is a circumstantial evidentiality marker. An important consequence of this proposal is that the SCE construction is monoclausal.¹⁹ This correctly captures the fact that it is impossible for matrix elements to show up in the SCE construction, as in (25).

- (25) a. *Na-nun Toto-ka o-ass-na po-ta.
 I-Top Toto-Nom come-Past-Sub Evid-Dec
 ‘I suppose that Toto came.’
- b. *Na-eykey Toto-ka o-ass-na po-ta.
 I-Dat Toto-Nom come-Past-Sub Evid-Dec
 ‘It seems to me that Toto came.’

It also follows that tense inflection as well as other types of verbal suffixes can only occur once in the construction (see (22), (23)). Moreover, it is correctly predicted that these verbal suffixes only attach to the main verb and not to ρ . That is because ρ functions as a marker of circumstantial evidentiality, not as a genuine predicate. The fact that clause-typing sentence final endings, unlike other verbal suffixes, can attach to ρ is expected because they need to occupy the final position in a sentence, i.e., the verb is simply not in final position in the

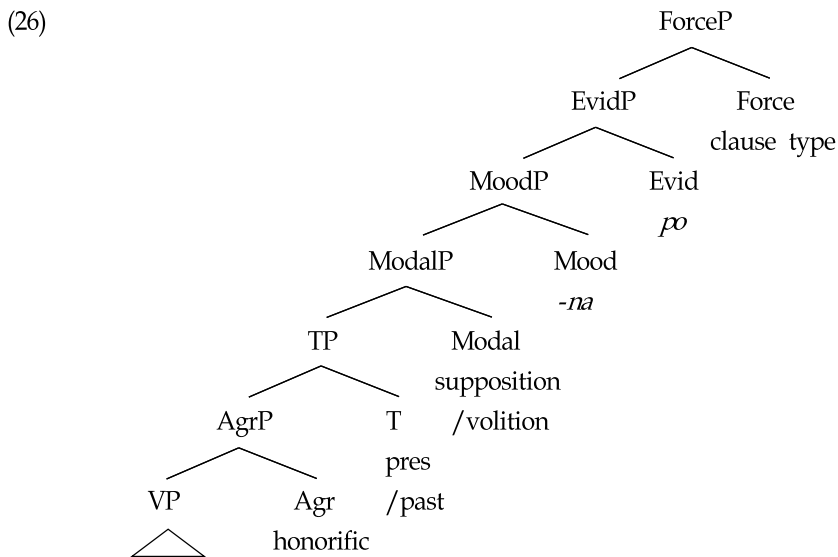
¹⁹ It should be pointed out that *-na* can also be used in embedded clauses, indicating the subject’s uncertainty.

- (i) Toto-nun Mimi-ka cip-ey o-ass-na kwungkumha-ess-ta.
 Toto-Top Mimi-Nom home-to come-Past-Sub wonder-Past-Dec
 ‘Toto wondered whether or not Mimi came home.’

I assume that *-na* in cases like (i) occupy the same position as that in (26). See Kang and Yoon 2019, 2020 for relevant discussion on subjunctive complementizers in Korean.

SCE construction, hence cannot host the clause-typing sentence final endings.

Putting all these together, I propose (26) as the structure of the SCE construction. Here, the key elements that characterize the SCE construction are MoodP and EvidP, which host the subjunctive ending *-na* and the circumstantial evidentiality marker *ɸ* respectively. Of course, some independent factors may require some projections to be added to or be omitted from (26).²⁰ For instance, though it is not an integral part of the SCE construction per se, ModalP is represented here because some of the examples above included the modal element *-keyss*.



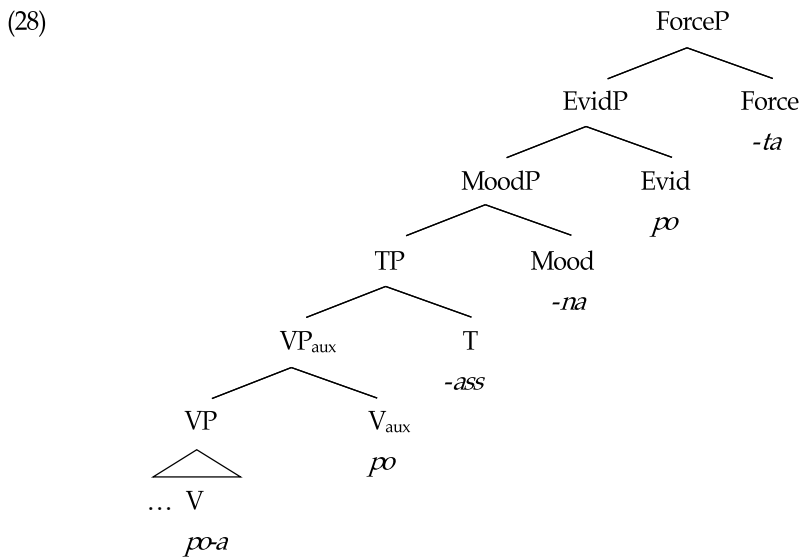
Finally, it is in principle possible to have all three types of *ɸ* in a single sentence, though the interpretation of the sentence can be somewhat odd. Given the discussion above, it will be instructive to see how that would be captured under the current analysis before closing the paper. As an example, (27) contains the lexical verb *ɸ* the auxiliary *ɸ* and the circumstantial evidentiality marker

²⁰ For instance, it has been suggested in the literature that some speech-act-related projections exist on top of ForceP, which is omitted here for reasons of simplicity. See An 2020; Cinque 1999, 2006; Haegeman 2014; Miyagawa 2012; Rizzi 1997; Speas and Tenny 2003, among others, for relevant discussion and references.

po

- (27) Uysa sensayngnim-i ocen-ey-man hwanca-lul
 doctor-Nom morning-in-only patient-Acc
 po-a po-ass-na po-ta.
 see-E PO_{aux}-Past-Sub Evid-Dec
 'It seems that the doctor tried seeing patients only in the morning.'

The relevant portion of the structure of (27) can be represented as in (28).



8. Conclusion

In this paper, I examined three different uses of the lexical item *po-ta* in Korean. The stem *po* can be used as a lexical verb with the basic meaning 'to see'. It can also be used as an auxiliary that combines with a separate main verb and receives an interpretation akin to 'to try'. In its third use, *po* shows up as a marker of circumstantial evidentiality in the SCE construction. Focusing on the SCE construction, I have argued that the ending *-na* that shows up on the main

verb is a marker of the subjunctive mood rather than a genuine marker of the interrogative clause type as often assumed in the literature. The main function of *-na* is to indicate the speaker's uncertainty about the truth of the proposition. As a result, utterances ending with *-na* do not directly require a listener's response unlike typical interrogative sentences. Furthermore, I have argued that the presence of *po* indicates that the speaker has circumstantial evidence, so that he is biased toward the truth of the proposition, though he is still not committed to its truth entirely.²¹

Crucially, I have argued that the three constructions involving *po-ta* provide a nice window into clause structure—in particular, the architecture of the right periphery in Korean. The current analysis provides support for the widely adopted view that there are fine-grained layers of functional projections in the traditional CP domain (Cinque 1999, 2006; Rizzi 1997, among others). Especially, I believe there is no reason to assume that the structures proposed in Section 7 should be limited to sentences involving *po-ta*. I assume that the general hierarchical relations among the elements in (26) and (28) should be largely constant across sentences up to independent lexical restrictions. That should be the default assumption, though further explorations of it should be put aside for future research.

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21 An anonymous reviewer asks whether or how the current analysis of the SCE construction could be extended to other languages. Given that subjunctives and evidentials are attested in many other languages, I suppose that constructions that are similar, if not identical, to the SCE construction are likely to be found in other languages as well, though I have not been able to check that at this point. See Kwon 2018 and Kang and Yoon 2020 for discussion on cross-linguistic data and relevant references for evidentials and subjunctives, respectively.

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