Event Structure and Argument Structure of Korean Predicates
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Abstract:

We present two main results of lexical semantic study on Korean predicates: First, the empirical descriptive work which identifies the typology of their argument structures and characterizes their semantic structures in terms of event structure and qualia structure. Second, the theoretical account of the mapping between the semantic structure and the syntactic realization of the arguments. This book pays special attention to argument alternations, since they reveal the mapping principles between ARGUMENT structure and EVENT structure.

The lexical meaning of a predicate can be represented as a modular combination of a few substructures, which contains Argument structure and Event structure. These subcomponents are not just separate and independent, but closely related to each other. In order to account for the relationship, we propose much extended event structures of predicates, and show how their arguments participate in the subevents of a matrix EVENT. In particular, we assume by default that each predicate has its unique way to project a real-world event to focus a specific facet of the event. Thus the Event structure and the Argument structure of predicates should be designed to capture the ways of conceptualizing linguistic EVENTS from real-world events.

This book identifies various Argument Structures in terms of semantic role and case frame. In Chapter 2, we illustrate how each argument is assigned a semantic role in a specific grammatical position. Seven grammatical Cases are used to classify argument positions – Nominative, Accusative, Dative, Ablative, Directional, Comparative, and Commutative; and sixteen semantic roles are used to describe the arguments – Agent, Patient, Theme, Experiencer, Instrument, Location, Goal, Source, Direction, Route, Benefactive, Stimulus, Cause, Qualification, Criterion, and Companion. For example, we illustrate nine semantic
roles for nominative arguments – agent, experiencer, patient, theme, stimulus, location, source, goal, cause – and nine semantic roles for accusative marked arguments – patient, theme, experiencer, stimulus, location, source, goal, route, direction. Chapter 2 also illustrates four syntactic types of argument alternations and nine semantic subtypes in total. The argument alternations are very important in lexical semantics, because they raise the polysemy problem for alternating predicates. We employ two generative devices to account for the polysemous uses of alternating predicates: (i) "underspecification" of event structure which allows ambiguous interpretation of a lexical meaning according to the context, and (ii) "co-composition" of function application which forces the predicate meaning to change its functional structure so to combine with an argument of an unexpected semantic class.

Chapter 3 proposes a set of test methods to figure out the aspectual character of predicates in Korean – constraint and interpretation of the adverbial modification (durative adverbials, time frame adverbials, aspectual adverbs); constraint and interpretation of the durative constructions -e iss- or -ko iss-; constraint on morphological passivization. The test methods readily show us that we need a more refined classification of events to characterize various aspectual meanings of predicates in Korean. Here we support the claim that the aspectual meaning of a predicate should be represented in its event structure, and so we propose a way of extending the internal structure of EVENT in terms of underspecification. We make wide use of underspecified HEAD of complex EVENTS to account for the polysemy of alternating predicates in Korean, and we claim that the HEAD-specification of a predicate indicates which facet of a real-world event is cognitively focused by the predicate, and the way of cognitive conceptualization determines the aspectual/eventual character of the predicate.

This book finally shows that the proposed formal treatment of predicate meaning successfully accounts for the various syntactic and semantic properties involved in argument alternations. Chapter 4 presents a series of detailed study of
various (non)alternating verbs and adjectives which belong to the class of psych-predicates, creation verbs, and change of location verbs. This chapter is mostly devoted to the formal account of the mapping problems in argument alternations, where we handle four alternation patterns of psych-predicates, two alternation patterns of creation verbs, and four more alternation patterns of location change verbs in Korean.