A Suspicious Analysis of the Suspective Morpheme and its Homonyms[1]

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Homonymy is a common phenomenon in language and many great writers have adroit-ly exploited it for various literary effects. It is a source of puns and it can be a great fun for those who can juggle words to have a large number of homophonous words at their finger tips, or on their tongue tips, to be more precise. Funny sentences containing homophonous words may not be entertaining to a linguist who is trying to present a simple and consistent description of these forms. Homonymy of lexical morphemes is less of a problem, for the context and other extra-sentential features often contribute to dis-ambiguate these elements but the homonymy of grammatical forms, such as case markers and verbal endings, without similar clues, can give a linguist fits. To further aggravate the situation, we do not have a clear-cut criterion to depend upon to unequivocally distin-guish a case of homonymy from one of polysemy. I will not indulge in theoretical speculations on descriptive procedures to deal with the problem nor on the justification of principles involved in such methodological considerations in this paper. Instead, I will simply employ a heuristic approach utilizing currently available descriptive apparatus re-gardless of its theoretical persuasion. The aim of this paper is to clarify a confusion in descriptions of certain homophonous items in Korean, thus sharpening our insight into the structure of the language rather than making an attempt to refine the descriptive methodology.

Like many other languages, Korean abounds in homonyms and some of them, one syl-lable grammatical morphemes, in particular, present truly knotty and frustrating problems to a linguist if he attempts to describe the underlying grammatical system of what ap-pears to be the enormously complex and complicated linguistic behavior of native speakers. I have chosen one item, namely, *ci* for an illustration, and will show kinds of problems

involved in unravelling an apparently entangled problem of homonymy.

First, consider the following sentences:

(1) a. manwula-ka musep *ci* anh *ci*?   NM=Nominative Marker
      wife-NM   scary   Neg   Neg=Negative
      'You are not afraid of your wife, are you?'

   b. ku cangkwun-i manwula-lul museweha *ci* anh nun *ci* alapo *ci*.
      that general-NM   ACC be afraid of Neg Ind   find out
                                  ACC=Accusative
                                  Ind =Indicative
      '(I) will find out if that general is not afraid of his wife.'

   c. manwula-lul museweha nun *ci*-ka elmana toy nun *ci* malha *ci*
                            how long become   say

      anh kess *ci*.[2]
         will
      '(He) wouldn't say how long he has been afraid of his wife.'

What is interesting to a linguist is not the scary substance of the onerous questions these sentences imply but the multiple occurrences of *ci* in these sentences. I am of course not denying humane compassion on the part of a linguist towards the common frailty of his fellow men but simply insisting that we focus our attention on matters linguistic rather than mundane for descriptive purposes. There are two occurrences of *ci* in sentence (a) and three in sentence (b) and four in sentence (c). The question that suggests itself is this: are these occurrences of *ci* instances of the one and the same morpheme or are there more than one homophonous morphemes in Korean which are realized as *ci*? Before we can answer this question, we will have to determine the meaning of these forms and ascertain their grammatical functions. It is, however, not so simple and easy in this particular case. These forms are grammatical elements and unlike lexical morphemes, their meaning is abstract and elusive. The only thing a linguist càn do in such a situation is to assign reasonably definite functional tags such as tense marker, accusative case, and negative particle and so forth. A heuristic procedure for determining the function of a morpheme would be to examine its distribution and cooccurrence possibilities. Now let us go back to sentence (la) and call the first occurrence of *ci* as ci_1 for discriminatory purposes. See additional examples that contain ci_1 below.

(2) a. Mary-ka ippu ci nun ani hata
            pretty Top Neg is   Top=Topic Marker
      'It is not the case that Mary is pretty.'

   b. John-i Mary-lul salangha ci nun ani hanta
            love   Top

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[2] The transcription employed here is basically that of Yale Romanization system.

'It is not the case that John loves Mary.'

Although many grammarians have noted that ci_1 typically occurs in a negative sentence as illustrated by example (2a), (2b), and also (1a), the function of this form has remained a mystery. The fact that ci_1 has an apparent defective distribution along with the traditional claim that Korean has two types of negative sentence corresponding to each and every affirmative sentence suddenly became untenable when the true identity of this form was discovered in Song (1967). The unorthodox view that the affirmative correspondents to examples (2a) and (2b), as I hypothesized, are (3a) and (3b) is still controversial in some quarters, but I will assume the correctness of this hypothesis until a better and more convincing alternative is put forward.[3]

(3) a. Mary-ka ippu ki nun hata

　　　pretty Nom　　　　　　　　　　　Nom＝Nominalizer

'It is the case that Mary is pretty.'

b. John-i Mary-lul salangha ki nun hanta

　　　　Acc　love　Nom

'It is the case that John loves Mary.'

When we compare (3a) with (2a), the striking structural parallelism becomes immediately clear, the sole difference being the presence of the negative particle *ani* in the negative sentence (2a), and the absence of it in the affirmative sentence (3a). There is one further, although trivially small but nevertheless crucial difference between the affirmative and negative sentences, namely, that *ki* occurs in the former instead of ci_1 whose occurrence is restricted to a negative sentence. The reasonable conclusion would be to consider ci_1 as a variant of the nominalizer *ki* in the negative sentence of a specifiable type. Thus, it is evident that ci_1 is the nominalizer used exclusively in a negative context. Now that I have identified the ci_1 as a negative counterpart of the nominalizer *ki*, I will proceed to discuss the second occurrence of *ci* in sentence (1a). Let us label this one as ci_2 for purposes of identification. Examine some additional examples that contain ci_2.

(4) a. Jack-un enehak-ul kongpuha $\begin{Bmatrix} ci \\ e \end{Bmatrix}$ (yo).

　　　Top linguistics-Acc study

'Jack studies linguistics.'

b. Tom-i nakceyha ess $\begin{Bmatrix} ci \\ e \end{Bmatrix}$ (yo)?

　　　NM flunk Past

'Tom flunked (the course), didn't he?

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[3] In his article entitled 'Aspects of Negation' (in Korean), Hongpin Im strongly challenges my hypothesis and puts forward his own alternative. His argument is quite unconvincing and I will not discuss it here. See Song's "Negative Aspects of 'Aspects of Negation'" (forthcoming) for a critical appraisal of Im's proposal.

Ci_2 typically occurs in a sentence final position and functions, like e in the same position, as a verbal ending. Samuel E. Martin has labeled the sequence $ci\ yo$ as 'Casual Polite Style.'[4] One of the characteristics of ci_2 is that it can be used to signal Question, Proposal, and Command as well as Statement when accompanied by appropriate intonations. This is also true of the sentence-final verb ending $e(yo)$. Another characteristic of both these endings is that they never cooccur with the Aspect markers.

(5) *Tom–i tampay–lul   phi nun $\begin{Bmatrix} ci \\ e \end{Bmatrix}$ (yo).

        cigarette–Acc smoke Ind

When the Indicative Aspect marker nun occurs before the sentence final ending e, there is no question about its ungrammaticality. If, however, ci_2 occurs in the same environment, some native speakers waver in their grammaticality judgement. This is due to the fact that the first sentence of (5) can be perfectly grammatical as a question. It must be stressed, however, that the same sentence is unquestionably unacceptable as a statement. The fact that ci can occur after the Indicative Aspect marker in a question sentence does not conflict with my earlier statement that it never occurs with the Aspect marker. My claim is that the ci which occurs in a grammatical question sentence is not ci_2 but an entirely different morpheme. I will directly proceed to substantiate this claim. Compare the following pairs of sentences.

(6) a. John–i manwula–lul twutulki ci?

      NM wife–Acc   beat

    'John beats his wife, doesn't he?'

   b. John–i manwula–lul twutulki–ess ci?

                         Past

    'John beat his wife, didn't he?'

(7) a. John–i manwula–lul twutulki–nun ci?

                          Ind

    'Does John beat his wife?'

   b. John–i manwula–lul twutulki–ess–nun ci?

    'Did John beat his wife?'

In sentences (6), ci_2, the Sentence-final ending, is preceded by a Tense marker. Although in (6a) there is no Tense marker, and ci_2 directly follows the verb stem, this fact should not mislead the reader. The present tense in Korean is unmarked or realized as zero on the surface. But whatever approach you take to mark the tense, you must recognize the presence of the present tense on the semantic level. It is immaterial to the discussion whether you postulate a semantic representation of the tense "PRESENT" in capital letters or you consider it as a feature [–Past] and segmentalize it as zero, that

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[4] See Beginning Korean, pp. 98–105.

is, not segmentalize it at all. In contrast, ci in sentences (7), which I shall label as ci_3, to distinguish it from ci_1 and ci_2 above, is always preceded by the Aspect marker. But this distributional difference alone cannot be proof that ci_3 is different from ci_2. Could it not be the case that the Aspect marker can optionally be inserted between the tense marker and the sentence-final verb ending? The answer to this question is negative for several reasons. First, sentences (6a-b) are clearly different in meaning from those of (7a-b) respectively.[5] The only formal difference between sentences of (6) and (7) is the absence in the former and the presence in the latter of the Aspect marker. It is difficult to imagine, however, that semantic difference between them is due solely to contribution of the Aspect marker, for in no other context does the Aspect marker make a semantic contribution which even remotely resembles this case. Secondly, as I have already pointed out, ci_2 can be used as an ending for Question, Proposal, and Command as well as Statement with appropriate intonation, but this is not the case with ci_3. This form is exclusively used as a question marker like ya and ka. It is possible to replace ci_3 in sentences (7) with ya and ka and get grammatical sentences, as illustrated by (8), but not ci_2 in sentences (6).

(8) a. John-i manwula-lul twutulki nun $\begin{Bmatrix} ya \\ ka \end{Bmatrix}$?

'Does John beat his wife?'

b. John-i manwula-lul twutulki ess nun $\begin{Bmatrix} ya \\ ka \end{Bmatrix}$?

'Did John beat his wife?'

(9) a. *John-i manwula-lul twutulki $\begin{Bmatrix} ya \\ ka \end{Bmatrix}$?

b. *John-i manwula-lul twutulki ess $\begin{Bmatrix} ya \\ ka \end{Bmatrix}$?

Thirdly, only ci_2, not ci_3, can be followed by a conjunct man.

(10) a. John-i manwula-lul twutulki ci man moyokha nun il un epsta.

'Although John beats his wife, he never insults her.'

b. *John-i manwula-lul twutulki nun ci man moyokha nun il un epsta.

It is a relatively easy matter to marshall more evidence that further illustrates the difference between ci_2 and ci_3, but I shall limit myself to only one or two more. The ci_3, as a question marker, can also be used in Alternate question but not the ci_2.

(11) a. Mary-ka John-ul coaha nun ci yo miweha nun ci yo?

               like   hate

'Does Mary like or hate John?'

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[5] The translations provided here are quite inadequate to show the difference in meaning between sentences in (6) and those in (7). For an illuminating analysis of the semantic content of ci_2, see Chang (1973), pp. 127-31.

b. *Mary-ka John-ul coaha ci yo miweha ci yo?

This seems also to be related to another fact: that only ci_3 can occur as an ending of an embedded question, whereas ci_2 cannot.

(12) a. nwu-ka manwula-lul museweha nun ci molunta
     who-NM   not-know
     '(We) do not know who is afraid of his wife.'

b. *nwu-ka manwula-lul museweha ci molunta

Now that I have distinguished ci_3 as a separate entity from the all-purpose sentence-final verb-ending ci_2, let's go back to sentence (1b) and see if we can identify ci_3 in it. The first occurrence of ci is that of ci_1, being followed by the negative particle. The second occurrence of ci is preceded by the Aspect marker *nun* and, furthermore, it is part of the embedded question. These two facts alone are a strong enough indication that this indeed must be ci_3. But we can provide a further support to the claim by applying tests which will clearly prove its identity. Remember that ci_3 is always used as a question marker and never as a Declarative, Propositive, or Imperative ending. When the embedded S ending in *nun ci* is used as an independent S, it is a question, never a statement, proposition nor command. Now as a Question marker, ci_3 can be replaced by other Q markers such as *ya* and *ka*, and the original sentence will remain grammatical.

(13) ku cangkwun-i manwula-lul museweha ci anh nun $\left\{\begin{array}{l} \text{ci} \\ \text{ya} \\ \text{ka} \end{array}\right\}$?

It has already been pointed out that ci_3 occurs in an Alternate Q. Since the normal ordering of the sequence in Alternate Q is an affirmative followed by a negative question, out of sentence (13), we get the following Alternate Q.

(14) ku cangkwun-i manwula-lul museweha nun ci (yo) an museweha nun ci (yo)?

There is little doubt that the second occurrence of ci in sentence (1b) is that of ci_3. The third and the final ci, of course, is ci_2 the sentence-final verbal ending used in a statement S.

Now there are four occurrences of ci's in sentence (1c). The easiest one to recognize is again the sentence-final ending ci_2 at the end of the sentence. The third ci followed by the negative particle is the negative counterpart of the nominalizer, namely, ci_1. The second ci at the end of an embedded S is the very ci_3 which I have just discussed. The first occurrence of ci in sentence (1c) is preceded by the Indicative Aspect marker *nun* and is at the end of an embedded S. To this extent, it resembles ci_3 but the resemblance ends here. Compare the following examples:

(15) a. manwula-lul museweha nun ci $\left\{\begin{array}{l} \text{ka hwaksilha ci anh ta} \\ \text{lul alapo keyss ta} \end{array}\right.$

$\left. \begin{array}{l} \text{'It is not certain} \\ \text{'(I) will find out} \end{array}\right\}$ whether (he is) afraid of his wife.'

b. manwula-lul museweha nun ci ⌠ ka sipsam nyen i toyn ta
 ⌡ *lul elma an toyn ta

'He has been afraid of his wife for 13 years.'

Although the embedded sentences in (15a) and (15b) are exactly alike, it is evident that they are quite distinct syntactically and semantically. In sentence (15a), the complement S is an embedded Q whereas it is a statement in (15b). Syntactically, the complement in (15a) can be either a subject or an object but in (15b) it can only be a subject. They also have different ways to represent past tense as the following pair illustrates.

(16) a. manwula-lul museweha ess nun ci ka hwaksilha ci anh ta

past

'It is not certain whether (he) was afraid of his wife.'

b. *manwula-lul museweha n ci ka hwaksilha ci anh ta

c. manwula-lul twutulki n ci ka sipsam nyen i toyn ta

'It has been thirteen years since he beat his wife.'

d. *manwula-lul twutulki ess nun ci ka sipsam nyen i toyn ta

Semantically, the complement subject in (15b) must be followed by a predicate expressing time-span. No such constraint is applicable to matrix verbs of the sentence of (15a). Clearly, ci in (15b), which I will designate at ci_4, must be distinguished from ci_3. The most crucial difference between ci_3 and ci_4 is that the former is a sentence-final verb ending indicating Q, whereas the latter cannot occur sentence-finally. ci_4 is a nominalizer of a sort, of which there are many in Korean (and also in Japanese) with very specific meaning and function. The nominalizer ci_4 means "TIME since something happened or has been happening," the modifier ending n and nun respectively indicating the event being completed or continuous to the present. Although Samuel Martin considers ci_3 and ci_4 a single morpheme, several factors I have enumerated seriously undermine such a conclusion. He also considers ci_1 and ci_2 together as a single element and labels the sequence 'Verb stem plus ci' as the "suspective form" of a verb. But ci_1, as I have shown earlier, is a negative counterpart of the nominalizer ki and has little to do with the sentence-final ending of ci_2 I have not found one as yet, if there are grounds for combining the two into one morpheme. It is not clear how ci_1 and ci_2 can be treated as a single entity and Martin provides no justification for his analysis. My suspicion is that he suspects that negation is somehow related to the 'suspective form of a verb' which seems to reflect a suspicious mentality on the part of a speaker. It must be concluded, however, ci_1 is morphemically distinct from ci_2. In sum, any description of Korean that fails to distinguish four distinct morphemes homophonously realized as ci will suffer from the inadequacy of underanalysis.[6]

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[6] When I was writing this paper, I was not aware of the existence of Im's article mentioned above (fn. 3) in which he also discusses various morphemes phonetically realized as ci. It is not surprising that we have reached a similar conclusion with regard to certain morphemes

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