

Ambiguity in the Korean Morphological Causative/ Passive¹

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1. Introduction

Since the Korean *I*-suffix means either causative or passive, the structure ‘DP-NOM/TOP + DP-DAT + DP-ACC + V-*I*³...’ is potentially ambiguous as (1b):⁴

- (1) a. Mary-ka John-uy(/ul) meli-lul kkakk-ass-ta.
NOM GEN(/ACC) hair-ACC cut-PAST-DEC
‘Mary cut John’s hair.’
b. John-i/ka/(n)un Mary-eykey meli-ul kkakk-i-ess-ta.
NOM/TOP DAT hair-ACC cut-C/P⁵-PAST-DEC
(i) ‘John had Mary cut the hair.’ (John’s or someone else’s hair) - C
(ii) ‘John was cut his hair by Mary.’
(John's hair was cut by Mary.) - P

There have been many attempts to specify the restrictions on the interpretation of an *I*-construction, but none of them captures such restrictions entirely. As a consequence, there hasn’t been any overarching structural analysis of the phenomenon that accounts for the correct interpretive restrictions present in the passive. This paper shows that the passive reading of the ambiguous structure requires a possession relation between the nominative-marked DP (the subject) and the accusative-marked DP, explaining how this semantic requirement follows from A-movement of the possessor, a process that does not

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² The authors’ names are in alphabetical order.

³ Archimorpheme for phonological variants *i*, *hi*, *li*, *ki* of the passive/causative morpheme *-I-*.

⁴ In example (1), (a) is active or underived and (b) is passive or causative.

⁵ CAUSATIVE/ PASSIVE.

take place in the causative counterpart.

Section 2 discusses the problems of the previous analyses⁶ and section 3 shows how our proposal captures the restrictions on the passive reading. Section 4 briefly discusses previous syntactic analyses of the phenomenon and section 5 introduces our analysis. Section 6 presents further evidence for our proposal.

2. Conditions on the Passive Interpretation

As for the determination of the interpretation of the ambiguous *I*-structure (e.g. 1b), Shibatani (1994) claims that the passive reading is available in Korean only when there is a physical relation between the subject (NOM-DP) and the Theme/Patient (ACC-DP) (e.g. a person and the shoes (s)he is wearing) as in (2) or when the subject is adversely affected by the event as in (3):

- (2) John-un Mary-eykey sinpal-ul pal-hi-ess-ta.
 TOP DAT shoe-ACC step.on-C/P-PAST-DEC
 'John was stepped on the shoe by Mary.'
 (Mary stepped on John's shoe.) - P (Shibatani 1994 (22b))

- (3) na-nun sensayngnim-eykey ilum-ul cek-hi-ess-ta.
 I-TOP teacher-DAT name-ACC write-C/P-PAST-DEC
 'I was written down my name by the teacher.' (My name was written down by the teacher.) - P (Shibatani 1994 (11b))

However, (4) is a counterexample to his claim. That is, there is no physical relationship in (4). But, according to Shibatani (1994), as long as the subject is adversely affected by the event, (4) should be grammatical, which does not hold.

⁶ The discussion is based on Kim (2002).

- (4) John-i Mary-eykey (Mary-uy) meli-lul kkakk-i-ess-ta.⁷
 NOM DAT GEN hair-ACC cut-C/P-PAST-DEC
 * 'John was cut Mary's hair by Mary.'
 (John was affected by Mary's cutting her hair.) - P

Washio (1993) on the other hand proposes that, for an *I*-construction to have the passive interpretation, the subject should be 'included' in the event by possessing the ACC-DP or by having a pragmatic relation (e.g. friendship or kinship) with its possessor. Otherwise, the construction can only be interpreted as causative. For example, Washio (1993 (37c)) argues that (5) is grammatical as the passive if *Yengcheli* and *Kyenghuy* are, say, friends but ungrammatical if they don't have a relation of any kind:

- (5) Yengcheli-nun Swunca-eykey Kyenghuy-uy ilki-lul
 TOP DAT GEN diary-ACC
 ilk-hi-ess-ta.
 read-c/p-past-dec
 (i) 'Yengcheli had Swunca read Kyenghuy's diary.' - C
 (ii) 'Yengcheli was read Kyenghuy's diary by Swunca.'
 (Kyenghuy's diary was read by Swunca.) - P

However, all the nine subjects in Kim (2002), who are native speakers of Korean, said that (5) is ungrammatical as the passive no matter whether the subject *Yengcheli* and the possessor of the ACC-DP *Kyenghuy* are friends or not. Thus, we reject a pragmatic relation as a licensing factor of the Korean passive. Kinship does not license the passive reading either:

- (6) John-i Mary-eykey tongsayng-uy tali-lul cha-i-ess-ta
 NOM DAT younger sibling-GEN leg-ACC kick-C/P-PAST-DEC
 * 'John was kicked his younger brother's leg by Mary.'
 (John's younger brother's leg was kicked by Mary.) - P

Modifying Washio's (1993) condition, K. Kim (1994 (16a)) proposes that the

⁷ In this and subsequent examples, a causative reading is grammatical ('John had Mary cut his/her hair') and is not affected by the kind of relation that holds between the matrix subject (*John*) and the Acc-NP (*hair*). We will show how this contrast follows from our analysis.

passive may also mean the causative when the ACC-DP is kept by the subject at least at the moment of the occurrence of the event (7). However, some passives like (8) do not involve temporary ownership or physical proximity to the subject at all. In (8), the context is one in which Korea was not awarded the gold medal because it didn't beat France.

- (7) John-un ecey cwu-un cenhye molu-nun
 TOP yesterday pick.up-REL at all not.know-REL
 salam-uy ilki-lul Mary-eykey ppayas-ki-ess-ta.
 person-GEN diary-ACC DAT deprive.of-C/P-PAST-DEC
 'John was deprived by Mary of the diary of someone who he does not know at all,
 which he picked up yesterday.' - P (Kim 1994 (16))
- (8) Hankuk-un France-eykey keum-medal-ul ppayas-ki-ess-ta.
 Korea-TOP France-DAT gold-medal-ACC deprive.of-C/P-PAST-DEC
 'Korea was deprived of the gold medal by France.' - P

Whitman and Hahn (henceforth, W&H, 1988: 722) propose that an argument (e.g. direct object, source, goal) can be promoted to the subject position in the passive by A-movement as long as it is subcategorized for and properly governed by V (9b). However, some arguments cannot be passivized even though they are subcategorized for and properly governed by V (10b).

- (9) a. Yengi-ka Chelswu-lopwuthe Swuni-uy chayk-ul
 NOM ABL⁸ GEN book-ACC
 ppayas-ass-ta.
 deprive.of-PAST-DEC
 'Yengi deprived Chelswu of Swuni's book.'
- b. Chelswu-ka Yengi-eykey Swuni-uy chayk-ul
 NOM DAT GEN ACC
 ppayas-ki-ess-ta.
 deprive.of-C/P-PAST-DEC
 'Chelswu was deprived of Swuni's book by Yengi.'

⁸ Ablative 'from'.

- (10) a. Mary-ka Tom-ul John-eykeylo ikkul-ess-ta.
 NOM ACC to(Allative) lead-PAST-DEC
 ‘Mary led Tom to John.’
 b. *John-i Mary-eykey Tom-ul ikkul-li-ess-ta.
 NOM DAT ACC lead-C/P-PAST-DEC
 ‘John_i was led Tom to (him_i) by Mary.’ - P

Given the problems pointed out above, in the next section, we analyze the precise restrictions on the passive reading.

3. Restrictions on the Passive Reading

In this section, we show that what constrains the passive reading is the requirement for a possession relation between the NOM-DP and the ACC-DP. This possession relation can be: inalienable or body-part (11), extended body part⁹ (12), or alienable (7); real (11, 12) or hypothetical (8); permanent (11) or temporary (12). The hypothetical possession relation in (8) assumes the expectation that the gold medal would fall into Korea’s possession. However, kinship alone is not a legitimate possession relation that can license the passive in Korean (6). In (7) and (12), NOM-DP must be wearing or holding the ACC-DP at the moment of the event for the passive reading to be possible.

- (11) John-i Mary-eykey maum-ul ilk-hi-ess-ta.
 NOM DAT mind-ACC read-C/P-PAST-DEC
 ‘John was read his mind by Mary.’
 (John's mind was read by Mary.) - P
- (12) John-i Mary-eykey Tom-uy os-ul ccic-ki-ess-ta.
 NOM DAT GEN clothes-ACC tear-C/P-PAST-DEC
 ‘John had Mary tear Tom’s clothes.’ - C
 ‘John was torn Tom’s clothes by Mary.’
 (John was wearing Tom's clothes, which were torn by Mary.) - P

⁹ For example, clothes or glasses being worn.

As we specify in Table 1, this fine-grained pattern of possession readings follows from the distribution of verbs that allow *I*-passives into three different verb types. For example, while the passive of *cek-* ‘write’ is allowed only for body part or an inalienably possessed element, *ccic-* ‘tear’ can be passivized for extended body parts as well. Table 1 summarizes which constructions are licensed when.

From Table 1, we can infer that, for verb types I and II, the passive readings of the ambiguous *I*-construction (D) and the double accusative construction (B) are derived from the same base structure. (Notice the perfect overlap between (B) and (D) for verb types I and II, regarding the grammatical possibilities, whereas such overlap is only partial between the *I*-passive (D) and the active structure with a GEN-ACC possessive pair (A)). For instance, verb types I and II in the active (A) allow an alienable or hypothetical interpretation for the GEN-ACC pair, but this possibility does not hold between the passive subject and the ACC-NP in the passive (D). As for verb type III, it is not clear whether the passive (D) is derived from the genitive pattern (A) or from the ablative one (C), because all possibilities are grammatical in the three patterns. However, we saw in (9) and (10) that only a DP that is interpreted as the current possessor of the ACC-NP can occur as the passive subject, suggesting that the corresponding active structure should actually be (A) as illustrated in (13). That is, we reanalyze (9b) as the possession relation in (13) rather than as a source relation.

- (13) Yengi-ka Chelswu-uy Swuni-uy chayk-ul ppayas-ass-ta. (cf. 9)
 NOM GEN GEN book-ACC deprive.of-PAST-DEC
 ‘Yengi deprived Chelswu of Swuni’s book.’
 (Swuni: permanent possessor, Chelswu: temporary possessor)

Table 1: Effects of Verb Type on Passive Interpretation

Construction Grammaticality (Y: ‘yes’, N: ‘no’)	Verb Types		
	I ¹⁰	II ¹¹	III ¹²
A. NOM + GEN-ACC + ACT e.g. (1a)			
a. ACC-DP: body part or inalienably possessed, e.g. face, mind, intention, name.	Y	Y	Y(#) ¹³
b. ACC-DP: extended body part being worn, e.g. John was wearing Tom’s coat.	Y	Y	Y(#)
c. ACC-DP: alienable possession, e.g. book, table	Y	Y	<u>Y</u>
d. ACC -DP: hypothetical/expected possession	Y	Y	<u>Y</u>
B. NOM + ACC- ACC + ACT¹⁴ e.g. (1a)			
a. ACC -DP: body part or inalienably possessed	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	N
b. ACC -DP: extended body part being worn	N	<u>Y</u>	N
c. ACC -DP: alienable possession, e.g. book, table	N	N	N
d. ACC -DP: hypothetical/expected possession	N	N	N
C. NOM + ABL + ACC + ACT e.g. (9a)			
a. ACC -DP: body part or inalienably possessed	N	N	Y(#)
b. ACC -DP: extended body part being worn	N	N	Y(#)
c. ACC-DP: alienable possession, e.g. book, table.	N	N	<u>Y</u>
d. ACC -DP: hypothetical/expected possession	N	N	<u>Y</u>
D. NOM + DAT + ACC + I-PASS e.g. (1b)			
a. ACC-DP: body part or inalienably possessed	<u>Y</u>	<u>Y</u>	Y(#)
b. ACC-DP: extended body part being worn	N	<u>Y</u>	Y(#)
c. ACC-DP: alienable possession, e.g. book, table.	N	N	<u>Y</u>
d. ACC-DP: hypothetical/expected possession	N	N	<u>Y</u>

¹⁰ e.g. *cek-* ‘write’, *ilk-* ‘read’, etc.

¹¹ e.g. *palp-* ‘step on’, *ccic-* ‘tear’, *cap-* ‘hold’, *mwul-* ‘bite’, etc.

¹² e.g. *ppayas-* ‘deprive’, *thel-* ‘rob’.

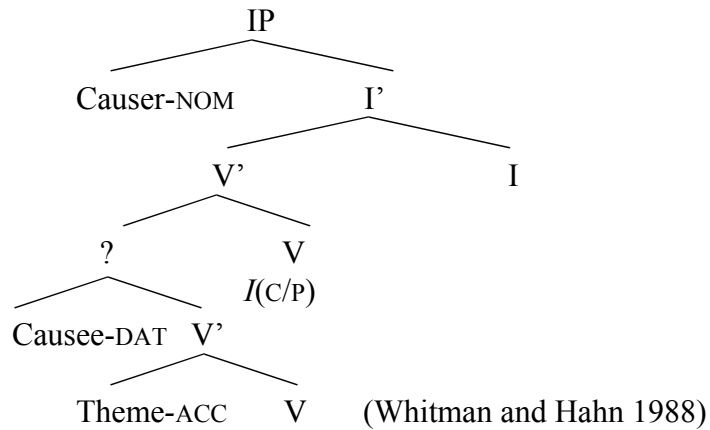
¹³ Cases marked with ‘#’ (e.g. depriving someone of his arms) are bad not for a linguistic reason but for a pragmatic reason.

¹⁴ Inalienable possession and affectedness have been assumed as conditions for the double accusative construction. Kim (2001) argues that the subject’s intention is also relevant, e.g. **Mary-ka silswu-lo John-ul kothu-lul pwucap-ass-ta*. ‘Mary held John by the coat by mistake.’

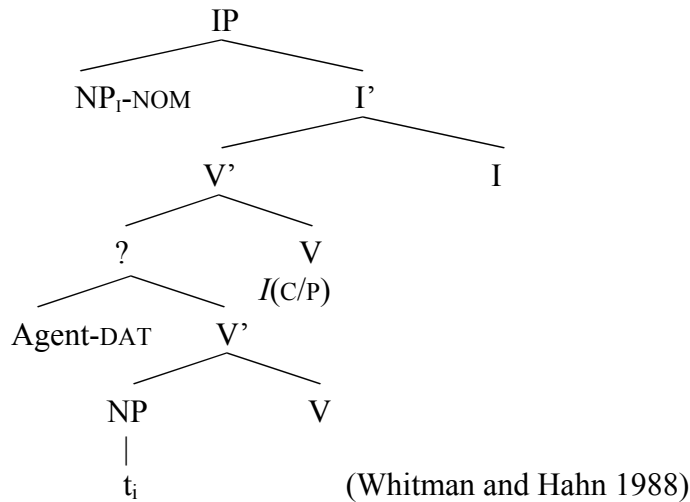
4. Previous Syntactic Analyses of Causative and Passive

Whitman and Hahn (1988) propose the structure (14) for the causative and (15) for the passive, and argue that Korean passives are derived by A-movement.

(14) Causative



(15) Passive



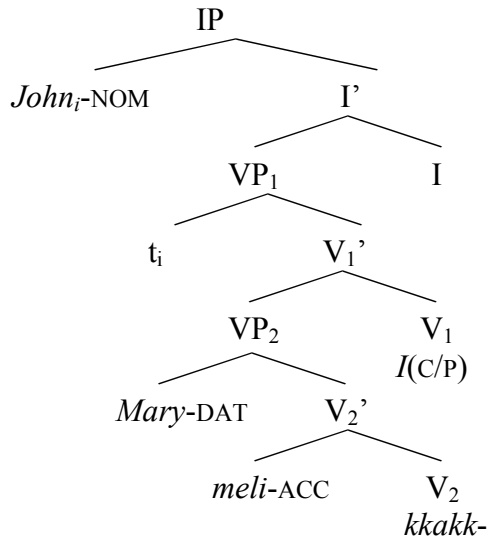
However, (15) was proposed by them for the direct passive and not for the passive reading of the ambiguous structure that is the focus of this paper. In section 5, we propose a syntactic analysis that directly captures the various phenomena shown in Table 1. Also, to our knowledge, no independent evidence has been offered for the A-movement

(possessor raising) analysis in such cases. We provide such evidence in section 6.

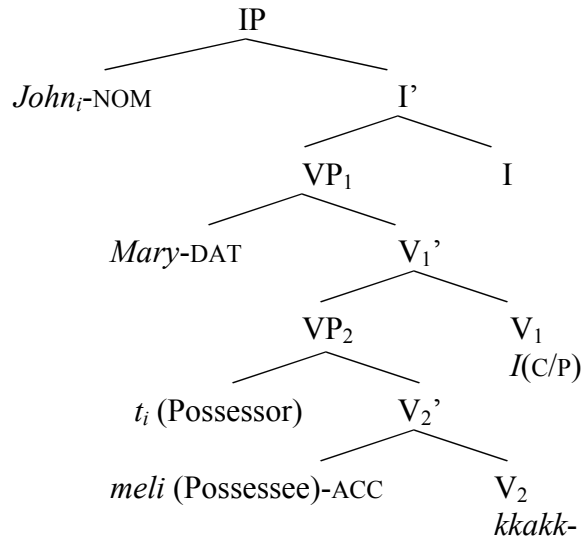
5. Possessor Movement Analysis

Our analysis of the structure of the causative is similar to W&H (1988) in that the causer is added as an extra argument:

(16) = (1b) as the causative



(17) = (1b) as the passive

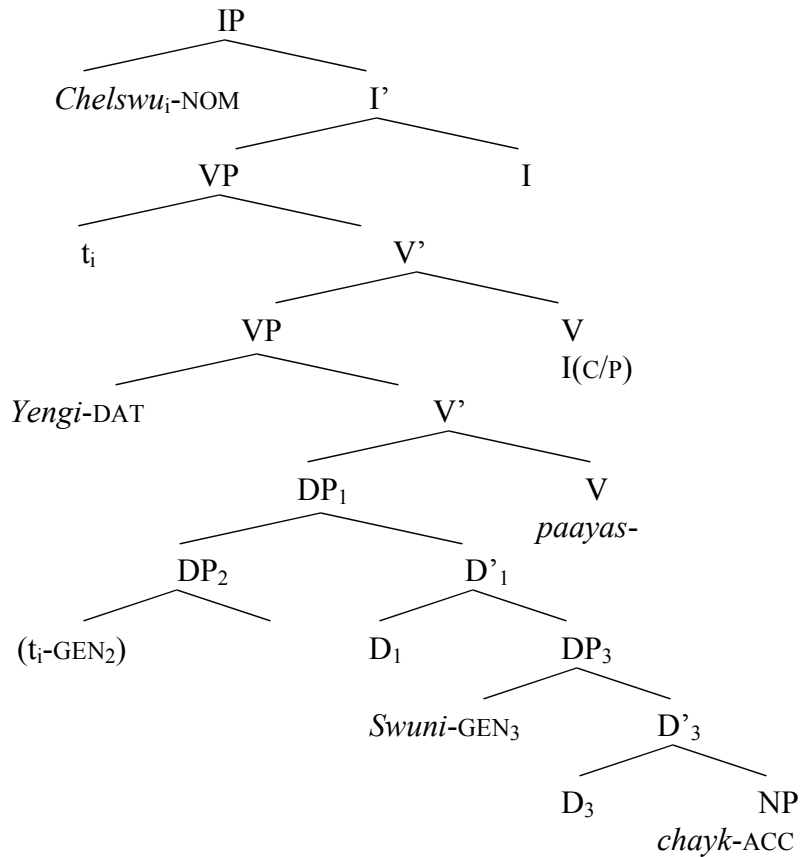


In the structure of the passive, however, we encode the semantic requirement of a possession relation by base-generating the passive subject as an NP that occurs in a local (possessive) relation with the ACC-NP. First, (17) shows the structure of the passive for verb types I and II. This is an application of Kim's (1989: 459) analysis of the double accusative construction (A in Table 1). The main motivation for this analysis comes from the overlap in the possession properties discussed in regards to the facts summarized in Table 1. We further argue that the possessor undergoes A-movement, a proposal which is in line with other possessor-ascension analyses (e.g. Chun 1985, Kim 1989, Yoon 1989, Dubinsky 1997).¹⁵

However, the double-accusative base structure cannot be extended to the passive of verb type III, since this verb type does not allow for the double accusative pattern (B in Table 1). Furthermore, we need to explain the fact that, in sentences like (9b), there are two possessors, *Chelswu* and *Swuni*. Therefore, for the structure of the passive of verb type III, we propose (18):

¹⁵ Regarding Washio (1993)'s condition on the passive reading, 'subject inclusion', Dubinsky (1997) points out that, given such cases, Korean would have analogs of the Japanese possessor ascension.

(18) = (9b), (13)



What should be noted here is that GEN₂-NP is the temporary possessor to be passivized and GEN₃-NP is the permanent possessor. When there is no distinction between the temporary possessor and the permanent possessor, there is no DP recursion in DP₁.

6. Evidence for Possessor A-Movement in the Passive

As independent evidence for the possessor raising proposed above, the following conditions should be met in the passive though they do not have to be in the causative. Given that these criteria consistently apply only in the passive, we argue that it follows from the A-movement involved in the passive but not in the causative.

6.1. Interpretive Restriction

In the passive, NOM-DP has to be interpreted as the antecedent of the possessor of the ACC-DP (19 = 1b). But, in (20), where an overt DP which is not coreferential with the subject is the possessor, only the causative reading is possible:

- (19) John_k-i Mary-eykey (e_k-GEN) meli-ul kkakk-i-ess-ta.
 NOM DAT hair-ACC cut-C/P-PAST-DEC
 ‘John was cut the hair by Mary.’ (John’s hair was cut by Mary.) – P
- (20) John-i Mary-eykey Sue-uy meli-lul kkakk-i-ess-ta.
 NOM DAT GEN hair-ACC cut-C/P-PAST-DEC
 (i) ‘John had Mary cut Sue’s hair.’ - C
 (ii) * ‘John was cut Sue’s hair by Mary.’
 (Sue’s hair was cut by Mary.) - P¹⁶

6.2. Impossibility of a Subset of the NOM-DP Referents as Possessor

The NOM-DP should be the exhaustive antecedent of the GEN-DP. If *John* alone were holding Sue’s book in (21), then the passive reading is unavailable:

- (21) John-kwa Tom-i Mary-eykey Sue-uy chayk-ul
 and NOM DAT GEN book-ACC
 ppayas-ki-ess-ta.
 deprive.of-C/P-PAST-DEC
 ‘John and Tom were deprived of Sue’s book by Mary.’ - P
 * ‘John was deprived of Sue’s book by Mary.’ - P

6.3. Syntactic Properties of A-Movement

The following three diagnostic tests from Lebeaux (1985) and Higginbotham

¹⁶ There can be in fact a passive reading, pragmatically odd, in which *John* is currently holding *Sue’s hair*, which was cut a second time after John got hold of it.

(1992), cited by Hornstein (1999), also support A-movement of the passive subject. First, the antecedent of the trace, the possessor, must be local (22). Though the hair in (22) could be either *John's* or *Bill's* in the causative, the hair must be *Bill's* and cannot be *John's* in the passive:

- (22) John-i Bill-i Mary-eykey meli-ul kkakk-i-ess-ta-ko
 NOM NOM DAT hair-ACC cut-C/P- PAST - DEC-COMP
 mal-hay-ss-ta.
 speech-do-PAST-DEC
 (i) 'John said that Bill had Mary cut Bill's/John's hair.' - C
 (ii) 'John said that Bill was cut Bill's/*John's hair by Mary.'
 (John said that Bill's hair was cut by Mary.) – P

Second, the antecedent must c-command the gap. In (23) as the causative, the hair could either be *John's* or *John's father's*. However, as the passive, the hair must be *John's father's*.

- (23) John-uy apeci-ka Mary-eykey meli-lul kkakk-i-ess-ta.
 GEN father-NOM DAT hair-ACC cut-C/P-PAST-DEC
 (i) 'John's father had Mary cut the hair.' - C
 (ii) 'John's father was cut the hair by Mary.'
 (John's father's hair was cut by Mary.) - P

Third, only a sloppy reading is possible under ellipsis in the passive (24). If John's hair was cut twice, the strict reading 'John was cut his hair and Tom was also cut John's hair' is bad. That is, the hair must be Tom's in the interpretation of the ellipsis site in the passive. Similar examples with verb types I and III work the same way for these tests.

- (24) John_i-i Mary-eykey meli-ul kkakk-i-ko Tom-to
 NOM DAT hair-ACC cut-C/P-and as well
 keule-hay-ss-ta.
 do.so-PAST-DEC
 'John had Mary cut the hair and so did Tom.' (anyone's hair) - C
 'John was cut the hair by Mary and so was Tom.'

(John's hair was cut by Mary and Tom's hair was also cut by Mary.) - P

In sum, this section presents both semantic and syntactic evidence for the possessor raising analysis we propose as a requirement to derive the passive reading.

7. Conclusion

In this paper, we have proposed a new analysis for the ambiguous morphological causative or passive in Korean. This analysis has several advantages: (i) it explains the interpretive restrictions on the passive reading in a precise and unified way; (ii) it explains why different types of possession-relation apply to the passive of three distinct verb types and accounts for how that follows from their structural properties; (iii) by deriving the passive from obligatory A-movement of the possessor, it explains why similar restrictions do not extend to the causative; and (iv) it straightforwardly captures the interpretive and structural restrictions on the passive reading, which do not apply to the causative counterpart.

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