Possession in Ability Modality
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Main goals
To present an analysis of the ambiguity of the possibility nominal modal construction in Korean (-u)l swu-iss- sentences, and its implications for the compositional semantics:

1. Toli-ka nolayha-l swu-(ka) iss-ta.
2. Toli-nom anything neo drink-NOM possibility-NOM be-DECL.
   'Toli has the ability to drink anything.'
   'There is a possibility that Toli will not drink anything.'

NPI licensing in the possibility nominal modal construction

- Clause-mate Condition: An NPI can appear in both the subject and the object position as long as there is a licensor (negation) in the same clause (Choe 1988).
- Ha’s observation: -u)l swu-iss- sentences with negation and an object NPI allow both the epistemic and ability readings, those with negation and a subject NPI allow only the epistemic reading.
- Ha’s observation follows from the clause-mate condition and the proposed structural ambiguity.

- (4) Toli-ka amwukesto an masi-l swu-ka iss-ta.
  Toli-nom anything neo drink-NOM possibility-NOM be-DECL.
  'There is a possibility that Toli will not drink anything.'
  'There is a possibility that Toli has the ability to drink anything.'

- (5) Amwuto maykowu-lul an masi-l swu-ka iss-ta.
  Anyone beer-ACC neo drink-NOM possibility-NOM be-DECL.
  'Nobody has the ability to drink beer.'
  'There is a possibility that nobody will drink beer.'

Structure of existential and possession sentences

- Intransitive is-ss-sentences have an existential reading, transitive ones a possession reading.
- is-ss-sentences are a projection of an existential P (Freeze 1992, Kayne 1993).
- Following Harley’s (2002) extension of Freeze’s P, the existential and possessive structures are projections of two different P’s: P<sub>Ex</sub> and P<sub>Have</sub>.

- (2) Toli-ka nolayha-l swu-(ka) iss-ta.
  Toli-nom anything neo drink-NOM possibility-NOM be-DECL.
  ‘Toli has the ability to drink anything.’
  ‘There is a problem.’

- (3) Toli-ka nolayha-l swu-(ka) iss-ta.
  Toli-nom anything neo drink-NOM possibility-NOM be-DECL.
  ‘There is a possibility that Toli will not drink anything.’

Compositional semantics for P<sub>Ex</sub> and P<sub>Have</sub> structures

- Addition of world variables for the intensionality coming from modality
- Predicate Abstraction: If α has the form \[ \lambda x \in D. \alpha \] or \[ \alpha \alpha \], where α is a noun, (iii) swu-iss- is an adnominal suffix, (ii) swu is a noun, (iii) iss- is a copula (as independently argued in Ha 2007).
- The source of the ambiguity is structural: the copula swu-(u)l is an adnominal suffix, (ii) swu is a noun, (iii) iss- is a copula (as independently argued in Ha 2007).
- Possession in Ability Modality
  Possession reading.

Conclusion and Future Work

- Correlated the structural ambiguity of copula sentences with the epistemic and ability readings in possibility nominal modal construction
- Reveals another instance of a close connection between existential and possession expressions, and how they interact with modality
- Meaning of ability includes the meaning of possession and possibility
- How general is the proposed analysis cross-linguistically?
- What does it mean for an individual to be in a possession relation with a possible world?

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