

An Overview of Grammaticalization in the Korean Aspectual System

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Abstract

This paper examines the grammaticalization of aspectual markers in Korean, focusing on the evolution of *-go iss-* (-고 있-) and *-eo iss-* (-어 있-) from Middle Korean to modern Korean. In Middle Korean, these markers conveyed both resultative and progressive aspects, with *-go is-* (-고 있-) indicating the duration of a resultant state and *-eo is-* (-어 있-) serving broader aspectual functions. Over time, *-go is-* became primarily associated with the progressive aspect in modern Korean, while *-eo is-* retained its role in marking the duration of a resultant state, though its usage diminished. The study situates these changes within a broader typological framework, demonstrating that the evolution of Korean aspectual markers aligns with global linguistic trends. The paper also critically reviews existing literature, highlights gaps, and suggests avenues for further investigations on the interaction between pragmatics, transitivity, and aspect in the grammaticalization process.

Keywords: aspectual markers, grammaticalization, *-eo iss-*, *-go iss-*, Korean aspectual system, linguistic typology, Middle Korean, Modern Korean, progressive aspect, resultative aspect

Povzetek

Prispevek preučuje razvoj gramatikalizacije in označevalcev za izražanje glagolskega vida v korejščini, pri čemer se osredotoča na spremembe v rabi *-go iss-* (-고 있-) in *-eo iss-* (-어 있-) v srednjeveški in sodobni korejščini. V srednjeveški korejščini so ti označevalci izražali dovršnost in progresivnost, pri čemer je *-go is-* (-고 있-) označeval trajanje nastalega stanja, *-eo is-* (-어 있-) pa je služil širšim funkcijam glagolskega vida. Sčasoma so začeli *-go is-* povezovati predvsem s progresivno obliko glagolskega vida v sodobni korejščini, medtem ko je *-eo is-* ohranil svojo vlogo pri označevanju trajanja nastalega stanja, navkljub vse redkejši rabi. Te spremembe v članku umeščamo v širši tipološki okvir in dokazujemo, da je razvoj korejskih označevalcev za izražanje glagolskega vida usklajen s svetovnimi jezikovnimi trendi. V članku kritično pregledamo obstoječo literaturo, izpostavimo vrzeli in predlagamo možnosti za nadaljnjo raziskavo interakcije med pragmatiko, prehodnostjo in vidom v samem procesu gramatikalizacije.

Ključne besede: označevalci glagolskega vida, gramatikalizacija, *-eo iss-*, *-go iss-*, korejski glagolski vid, jezikovna tipologija, srednjeveška korejščina, sodobna korejščina, progresivni vid, rezultativni vid

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1 Introduction

Understanding complex linguistic components necessitates an in-depth investigation into the historical trajectory of a language.¹ The Korean grammatical morphemes *-go iss-* (-고 있-), *-eo iss-* (-어 있-), and *-eoss-* (-었-) share a common semantic origin, making an examination of their grammaticalization processes crucial for grasping their nuanced meanings. The tripartite aspectual system² in Korean grammar comprises *-go iss-* for the progressive aspect, *-eo iss-* for the resultant state, and *-eoss-* for past tense, all originating from the common ancestor *-eo iss-*. According to Kim (2003, p. 127), in the 15th century, this ancestor exhibited a dual function, encompassing both resultative and progressive ongoing duration.

Aspect, as defined by Comrie (1976, p. 3), refers to “the different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation.” This conceptualization is crucial for understanding the evolution of the *-go iss-* construction in Korean. Jeong (2006, p. 139) notes that in 15th and 16th-century *Eonhae* texts, the auxiliary verb construction *-go is-* primarily expressed resultant static duration rather than progressive ongoing duration, with occasional use to denote repetitive duration. The grammaticalization processes of these forms have been explored in studies by Kim (2003, 2009), Jeong (2006), and Park (2011), among others. These studies are selected because they provide foundational insights into the evolution of aspectual markers, specifically focusing on the grammaticalization of *-go iss-* and *-eo iss-*. These studies are seminal in their approaches to understanding Korean aspectual markers within the historical context and demonstrate varied theoretical and methodological approaches: Kim (2003) offers a broad historical overview, providing data-driven insights into the transformation of aspect markers from Middle Korean to Modern Korean. Kim (2009) challenges traditional models (like Bybee et al.’s separation of perfective and imperfective paths) by presenting an argument that these domains intersect within Korean. Jeong (2006) offers a detailed syntactic and semantic exploration, focusing on how *-go iss-* shifted from resultative to progressive meanings, while also noting the influence of transitivity. Park (2011) emphasizes morphological and syntactic developments, showing the transformation of *-go iss-* and its establishment as the primary progressive marker in Modern Korean. Together, these works provide complementary perspectives on the grammaticalization of aspectual markers in Korean. By addressing different facets-such as

¹ For those interested in an in-depth study of the historical trajectory of the Korean language, Shimunek’s paper (2025) in the same issue is recommended.

² ‘Aspectual marker’ and ‘aspect marker’ in this paper refer to the same concept.

diachronic data, syntactic analysis, and morphological changes—they offer a multifaceted understanding of the grammaticalization process.

The grammaticalization of the Korean construction *-go iss-* offers an insightful case study in the evolution of aspectual systems. Originally a combination of the connective suffix *-go* (-고) and the existential verb *iss-* (있-), this construction has evolved into a key marker of progressive and resultative aspects in modern Korean. This transformation reflects a common grammaticalization pathway, where verbs of existence or location evolve to encode aspectual meanings (Heine & Kuteva, 2002; Bybee, Perkins, & Pagliuca, 1994).

Historically, *-go iss-* may have begun as a structure indicating continued existence or state. Over time, it specialized in marking ongoing duration (progressive aspect) and later extended to describe resultant states (resultative aspect). This shift mirrors broader typological trends in the evolution of aspectual markers, where concrete meanings gradually become more abstract and grammatically fixed (Hopper & Traugott, 2003).

This paper traces the grammaticalization of *-go iss-* through previous research and historical data, analyzes the grammatical typology of Middle and Modern Korean aspectual systems, and discusses whether these developments align with universal grammaticalization patterns.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews previous studies, while Section 3 compares them in terms of the grammaticalization of the Korean aspectual system, with a focus on *-go iss-*. Section 4 critically examines these studies, and section 5 investigates the aspectual typology of Middle and Modern Korean, discussing its alignment with universal grammaticalization patterns. Section 6 concludes by summarizing the findings.

2 Previous research

In this section, I will provide an overview of the seminal works on the grammaticalization of the Korean aspectual system, focusing on the studies by Kim (2003, 2009), Jeong (2006), and Park (2011). Special emphasis will be placed on the grammaticalization of *-go iss-* (-고 있-), as the primary aim of this paper is to examine how *-go iss-* became integrated into the aspectual system of Modern Korean. This section will not include any examples of how the interpretation of the aspect markers *-eo is-* and *-go is-* changed across different historical periods, as this will be covered in Section 3. Through a

comparative analysis of these studies, Section 3 will examine these changes across various historical periods, using illustrative examples.

2.1 Minju Kim's analysis (2003, 2009)

Kim (2003) explores how the existential verb *is-* (있-) branched into various grammatical markers, with *-eo iss-* (-어 있-) and *-go iss-* (-고 있-) both emerging from the source construction *-eo is-* (-어 있-). She highlights the diachronic changes that led to the development of these markers, focusing on the dynamic relationship among grammatical markers with common origins, particularly the intersection between grammaticalization pathways of connectives and aspectual markers.

Kim argues that the aspectual marker *-eo iss-* in modern Korean represents the imperfective aspect and that when it conveyed static duration in Middle Korean, it also functioned as an imperfective aspect. She outlines the grammaticalization pathways that the Middle Korean form *-eo is-* underwent, showing how it served as the source for the imperfective resultative *-eo iss-* and also as the origin for the past/perfective aspect marker *-eoss-*.³ Additionally, it demonstrated early stages of development into a progressive aspect.

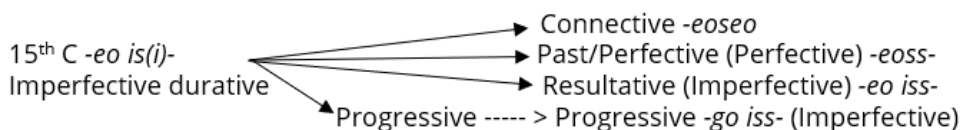


Figure 1: Multiple paths of the Grammaticalization of the Mid Korean *-eo is(i)-*

This dissertation presents the grammaticalization of *-go iss-* as particularly unique. Unlike *-eo iss-*, which retained a static, resultative meaning, *-go iss-* developed to express dynamic, progressive actions. The transition from *-eo is-* to *-go iss-* involved replacing the connective *-eo* with *-go*, altering the aspectual meaning from resultative to progressive. This shift reflects universal grammaticalization tendencies and introduces unique complexities in the Korean aspectual system.

Kim (2009) further examines the grammaticalization of Korean aspectual markers, focusing on the progressive *-go iss-*, the resultative *-eo iss-*, and the anterior *-eoss-*. She argues that all three markers originated from the 15th-century construction *-eo is-*, which expressed both resultative and

³ See Kim (2003, p. 129, p. 169).

progressive meanings. This challenges Bybee et al.'s (1994) model, which posits separate grammaticalization paths for perfective and imperfective markers. Kim highlights the replacement of *-eo is-* by *-go is-* beginning in the 15th century, especially with transitive verbs, and traces how *-go iss-* evolved into a specialized progressive marker in modern Korean.

The key differences between Kim (2003) and Kim (2009) lie in their focus, theoretical engagement, and methodological approach. The 2003 study provides a broad examination of the grammaticalization of Korean aspectual markers, aligning with Bybee et al.'s model while highlighting unique aspects of Korean. In contrast, the 2009 study specifically challenges Bybee et al.'s separation of perfective and imperfective paths by demonstrating an intersection between these domains in Korean. Additionally, the 2003 study employs a more data-driven approach with diachronic corpus analysis, whereas the 2009 study relies more on historical texts without the same quantitative emphasis.

In her 2009 work, Kim discusses the gradual expansion of the *-go is-* construction. Initially used with transitive verbs as a marker of durative aspect, *-go is-* gradually emerged as a progressive aspect marker. Prior to the 15th century, *-eo is-* marked both progressive and resultative aspects, irrespective of transitivity (Stage 1). As the connective ending *-go* expanded, *-go is-* began to replace *-eo is-* with transitive verbs, leading *-go is-* to express both resultative and progressive meanings (Stage 2). Over time, *-go is-* solidified its role as a progressive marker, and by the 18th century, it began to actively mark the progressive aspect even with intransitive verbs (Stage 3). Kim summarizes these stages in the table below.

Table 1: Gradual expansion of *-go is-*⁴

| Verb typology | Aspectual meaning | Stage1 (Pre-15 th cent.) | Stage 2 (16 th -17 th cent.) | Stage 3 (18 th cent.) |
|---------------|-------------------|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| Transitive | Progressive | <i>-eo is-</i> | <i>-go is-</i> | <i>-go is-</i> |
| | Resultative | <i>-eo is-</i> | <i>-go is-</i> | <i>-go is-</i> |
| Intransitive | Progressive | <i>-eo is-</i> | <i>-eo is-</i> | <i>-go is-</i> |
| | Resultative | <i>-eo is-</i> | <i>-eo is-</i> | <i>-eo is-</i> |

⁴ This table is a slightly modified version of a citation from Kim (2009, p. 194), with adjustments made to the table headings and transcriptions for clarity.

2.2 Jeong Eonhak's analysis (2006)

Jeong (2006) provides a detailed exploration of the grammaticalization of Korean aspectual markers, focusing particularly on the development of the *-go iss-* construction. During the Middle Korean period, *-eo iss-* was widely used to express a resultative state or ongoing action, roles that were gradually overtaken by *-go iss-* in Modern Korean. Initially, *-go iss-* shared meanings with *-eo iss-*, particularly in indicating the duration of a resultant state or repeated action. However, over time, *-go iss-* became more specialized in expressing the progressive aspect, marking ongoing actions in real time.

Jeong's analysis reveals that *-go iss-* began as a resultative marker, similar to *-eo iss-*, but evolved into a dominant progressive marker through grammaticalization. This process saw *-go iss-* become increasingly associated with transitive verbs and eventually used with both transitive and intransitive verbs in Modern Korean.⁵

Using a multifaceted approach, Jeong traced the evolution of the *-go iss-* construction from Middle Korean to Modern Korean. He explained that while *-go iss-* initially conveyed the duration of a resultant state, it gradually expanded to include the progressive aspect as the language developed. Jeong emphasized that although *-go iss-* was initially key for indicating the duration of a resultant state in Middle Korean, it transformed over time to express progressive meaning.

Jeong's study highlights that both *-go iss-* and *-eo iss-* in Middle and Modern Korean were used to indicate a resultant static duration. However, he found that *-go iss-*, particularly when combined with transitive verbs, gradually encroached upon the role of *-eo iss-* due to diachronic changes. As a result, in Modern Korean, *-eo iss-* is now mostly restricted to intransitive verbs for indicating a resultant state, while *-go iss-* is primarily used with transitive verbs for the same purpose.

Jeong's analysis presents a clear picture of how the *-go iss-* marker transitioned from Middle Korean through Modern Korean to its current usage in Contemporary Korean.

⁵ Jeong's 2002 and 2006 studies are consistent in their core findings but differ in the depth and scope of analysis. The 2002 study identifies the basic grammaticalization trends of *-go iss-* in historical Korean, while the 2006 study provides a more detailed exploration of these trends, incorporating a broader dataset and offering a more nuanced understanding of the shift from resultative to progressive meanings. The 2006 work reflects an evolution in Jeong's thinking, offering a more comprehensive view of the grammaticalization process.

Table 2: Grammaticalization process of the *-go iss-* construction (Jeong, 2006, p. 369)

| Period | Middle Korean | | Early Modern Korean | | Modern Korean | |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Aspectual reading | Progressive | RSD* | Progressive | RSD | Progressive | RSD |
| Transitive verb | X | <i>-go is-</i> <i>-eo is-</i> | (<i>-go is-</i>) | <i>-go is-</i> <i>-eo is-</i> | <i>-go iss-</i> | <i>-go iss-</i> X |
| Intransitive verb | X | <i>-eo is-</i> | X | <i>-eo is-</i> | <i>-go iss-</i> | <i>-eo iss-</i> |

* RSD: Resultant static duration

2.3 Jinho Park's analysis (2011)

Park (2011) explores the evolution of the Korean aspectual system, focusing on the grammaticalization of the *-go iss-* construction. Park discusses how, in Middle Korean, aspectual distinctions were not clearly marked in the present tense but were more distinct in the past tense, particularly between perfective and imperfective aspects. He explains that the construction *-eo iss-*, originally indicating a resultative or continuous aspect in Middle Korean, underwent grammaticalization, leading to its transformation into the modern past tense marker *-eoss-* in certain contexts. However, *-eo iss-* also evolved into *-go iss-* in Modern Korean, where it became specialized as a progressive marker, replacing *-eo iss-* for indicating ongoing actions. Park emphasizes how *-go iss-* became the dominant marker for the progressive aspect in Korean, marking a significant shift from its historical usage.

Park argues that grammaticalization in Korean evolved from the resultative aspect to the past tense. He categorizes *-eo is-* in Middle Korean into two forms: *-eo is₁-*, which indicated the resultative aspect, and *-eo is₂-*, which marked the continuous aspect. According to Park, *-eo is₁-* developed in two directions: one retained its original structure, continuing to express the resultative aspect in modern Korean, while the other underwent morphological reduction to *-eoss-*, acquiring the meaning of past tense.

For *-eo is₂-* in Middle Korean, the connective ending *-eo* was replaced by *-go*, leading to its substitution by *-go is₂-* in modern Korean, reflecting a broader linguistic trend. The *-go is-* construction, which initially indicated the resultative aspect in Middle Korean, transformed into *-go is₂-* in modern Korean. This process of change is summarized in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Grammaticalization of the Korean aspect system

| Aspectual Reading | Middle Korean | Modern Korean |
|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Continuative | -eo is ₂ - | -go iss ₂ - |
| Resultative | -eo is ₁ - | -eo iss- |
| | | -eoss- (Past tense) |
| | -go is- | -go iss ₁ - |

3 Comparative analysis of the grammaticalization of -go iss- (-고 있-)

In this section, I will compare the above-mentioned studies by focusing on the grammaticalization paths of the contemporary Korean progressive marker -go iss- (-고 있-). Following this, I will examine how the interpretation of the aspect markers -eo is- (-어 있-) and -go is- (-고 있-) changed across different historical periods, using illustrative examples. These examples will highlight the evolution of each marker’s meaning and usage, offering insight into their grammaticalization and the shifting aspectual roles within the Korean language.

All three studies recognize -go iss- as the result of a complex grammaticalization process, transitioning from a marker of resultant static duration to one of progressive aspect. Kim (2003) offers a broad historical analysis, while Kim (2009) provides a more focused, data-driven examination of the intersection between perfective and imperfective aspects. Jeong (2006) emphasizes the syntactic and semantic shifts of -go iss-, particularly its evolution from Middle Korean, and Park (2011) concentrates on the morphological and syntactic developments that shaped the current usage of -go iss-.

Each study contributes uniquely to understanding -go iss-, with variations in focus, methodology, and theoretical approach. Collectively, they enrich the scholarship on the grammaticalization of the Korean aspectual system. Kim (2009) does not address -go iss- in the pre-15th century, focusing instead on -eo is- as the dominant aspectual marker and presenting a clear timeline of -go is- expansion. Both Jeong (2006) and Park (2011) confirm the existence of -go is- in Middle Korean, primarily as a marker of resultative readings, especially with transitive verbs. They note that it did not convey progressive meanings during this period.

Kim describes -go iss- as emerging in the 16th-17th centuries with transitive verbs, initially for both resultative and progressive aspects, and later expanding to intransitive verbs, becoming the primary progressive

marker by the 18th century. Jeong highlights the gradual shift of *-go is-* from resultative to progressive meanings, noting its expansion from transitive to intransitive verbs, particularly during the transition from Middle to Modern Korean. Similarly, Park details how *-go is-* began with resultative meanings in Middle Korean and later evolved into a progressive marker that combines with both transitive and intransitive verbs in Modern Korean.

Kim initially associates *-go iss-* with transitive verbs, with a later expansion to intransitive verbs. Jeong emphasizes that *-go iss-* was originally restricted to transitive verbs for expressing resultative meanings and only later expanded to intransitive verbs as it developed progressive meanings. Park highlights the same progression, with *-go iss-* initially linked to transitive verbs in Middle Korean, later broadening its grammatical function to include intransitive verbs in Modern Korean.

Together, these studies provide a comprehensive picture of how *-go iss-* evolved gradually in the Korean language⁶. This comparison deepens our understanding of the significant grammatical role of the *-go is-* construction in 15th-century Middle Korean and how its meaning and usage evolved. The value of each scholar's research lies in the different perspectives they offer on these changes, contributing uniquely to the broader discourse on grammaticalization and aspectual development in Korean.

Next, we will explore the changes in the interpretation of aspect markers *-eo is-* and *-go is-* over different periods through illustrative examples. These examples will demonstrate how each marker's meaning and usage evolved gradually, providing a clear picture of their grammaticalization and the shifting aspectual functions within the Korean language.⁷

(1) In 15th-century Middle Korean, *-eo is-* had two interpretations: resultative and progressive, depending on the lexical aspect of the

⁶ Several other well-known studies, such as those by Hur (1975) and Lee (1981), also discuss the grammaticalization of the Korean aspectual system. Hur (1975) listed auxiliary verbs in 15th-century Middle Korean but gave limited attention to *-go is-*, not recognizing it as a distinct grammatical element, and concluded that its usage was relatively minor at the time. His analysis emphasizes that *-go is-* was not considered a major component of the grammatical system in the 15th century. In contrast, Lee (1981) argued that *-go is-* primarily expressed the duration of a resultant state, especially with transitive verbs, and noted its importance as an auxiliary verb in Middle Korean, though its usage was somewhat restricted.

⁷ Since this study does not focus on verb typology in combination with *-eo is-* and *-go is-*, it will provide only one example from each stage of the grammaticalization of the Korean aspectual system for *-eo is-* and *-go is-* to verify the interpretations of these forms. All examples provided here are cited from sources referenced by Kim (2009) and Nam (2010).

preceding verb. According to Kim (2009), these two aspectual functions belong to the same grammatical category, namely the imperfective aspect. In the example below, when *-eo is-* is combined with intransitive accomplishment verbs like *gidalida* (기다리다), it conveys a progressive aspectual reading (1a), while with transitive accomplishment verbs like *ibda* (입다), it conveys a result state reading (1b).⁸

- (1) a.

| | | | | |
|-----------|--------------|-----------|----------|------------------------------|
| 眞에 | 보물 | 나루와다 | 서르 | 기드려이시니... |
| Jin-e | bo-m-al | nalawad-a | seoleu | <u>gideul-yeo isi-ni</u> ... |
| truth-LOC | see-NOMZ-ACC | raise-CON | together | <u>wait-yeo isi-CON</u> |

 'To obtain the ability to see truth, (they) stayed waiting together...'
 [영가 Yeongga 1464, 1:78b]
- b.

| | | | | |
|---------|-----------------------------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| 善慧 | 니버잇더신 | 鹿皮 | 오슬 | 바사... |
| Seonhye | <u>nib-eo is-deo-si-n</u> | nogbi | os-al | bas-a... |
| Seonhye | <u>put.on-eo is-RETRO-HON-REL</u> | deer.skin | clothes-ACC | take.off-CON |

 'Seonhye took off the deer skin clothes that he was wearing and...'
 [월인석보 Wolinseogbo 1459, 1:15b]

(2) Beginning in the 16th century, the process of replacing the progressive *-eo is-* with *-go is-* began, primarily in transitive, non-reflexive accomplishment verbs.

- (2)

| | | | | |
|---------------------|------------|------|--------------|--|
| 火禪定에 | 드르샤 | 큰 | 光明 | 퍼고겨시거늘... |
| hwaseonjeong-e | deuleu-sya | keun | gwang-myeong | pyeo- <u>go gyeosi-geoneul</u> . |
| fire.meditation-LOC | enter-HON | big | bright-light | shed- <u>go gyeosi</u> ⁹ -CON |

 'In the fire samādhi, (he) entered, spreading great light, and...'
 [월인석보 Wolinseogbo 1459]

(3) Starting in the 18th century, the use of *-go is-* to indicate the progressive aspect expanded to include simple action verbs, regardless of whether they were intransitive or transitive. In the sentence below, the verb *sujeolha-* (수절하-) is an intransitive verb.

⁸ During this period, some transitive verbs, when combined with *-eo is-*, allowed for ambiguous aspectual readings.

⁹ *gyeosi-* is the honorific form of *is(i)-*.

- (3) 일찍 홀로 되어 슈절하고 잇더니...
 iljeug hollo doe-eo syujyeolha-go is-deoni...
 early alone become-CON live.alone-go is-CON
 'Having become a widow at an early age, she was living alone and...'
 [오론 Olyun 1797, 열 yeol:9a]

(4) The interpretation of *-go is-* as indicating resultant static duration was rarely observed, even in the 15th century, and when it did occur, it was typically in combination with reflexive achievement or accomplishment verbs.

- (4) 普賢이 空中에 六牙白象 투시고 거시거늘...
 bohyeon-i gongjung-e lyugangbaegsang ta-si-go gyeosi-geoneul
 bohyeon-NOM air-LOC white.elephant ride-HON-go gyeosi-CON
 '(Buddhist Saint) Bohyen was riding a white elephant...'
 [남명집 Nammyeongjip1482, 1:73b]

(5) The interpretation of *-go is-* as indicating the resultant static duration persisted throughout the 16th to 18th centuries.¹⁰ In the illustration below, *gajida*, meaning "take," is an achievement verb.

- (5) 내사 구연을 편히 가지고 잇고 집도 무사하다.
 nae-sa guyeon-eul pyeonhi gaji-go-is-go jib-do musaha-da.
 I-EMP strength/mind-ACC comfortably take-go-is-CON home-also fine-DEC
 'I have my strength/mind at ease and other family members are also fine.'
 [Suncheon Kim family letters, 16th c.]

(6) In modern Korean, for *-go iss-* to be interpreted as indicating the duration of a resultant state, lexical reflexivity requires pragmatic conditions.¹¹

¹⁰ In 15th to 18th century Korean, the use of *-go is-* to indicate the duration of a resultant state was lexically associated with verbs that referred to reflexive events.

¹¹ Since this paper focuses on the grammaticalization of the Korean aspectual system, it will not address the reflexivity semantics, or the pragmatic conditions associated with *-go iss-*.

- (6) a. 현지는 이불을 덮고 있다.
 Hyeonji-neun ibul-eul deop-go iss-da.
 Hyeonji-TOP blanket-ACC cover-go iss-Decl
 'Hyeonji is covering herself with a blanket.' [Progressive reading]
 'Hyeonji is covered with a blanket.' [Result state reading]
- (6) b. 현지는 운동장에 비닐을 덮고 있다.
 Hyeonji-neun undongjang-e binil-eul deop-go iss-da.
 Hyeonji-TOP playground-LOC vinyl-ACC cover-ko iss-Decl
 'Hyeonji is covering the playground with plastic.' [Progressive reading]

4 Critical review

In this section, I will critically review the works of Kim (2003), Jeong (2006), and Park (2011), with a particular focus on the grammaticalization process of *-go iss-* (-고 있-). While the previous section provided a comparative analysis, this section will focus on evaluating the strengths and, more specifically, the limitations of their arguments.

Kim (2003) offers a comprehensive historical analysis of how the *-go is-* construction in Middle Korean evolved into its modern form. However, several aspects of her study warrant closer scrutiny. Firstly, Kim's analysis predominantly focuses on internal changes within Korean, without adequately situating these changes in a broader typological context. A more extensive comparison with other languages such as those discussed in Comrie's (1976) typology of aspectual systems could have provided a richer understanding of how the Korean aspectual system aligns with or deviates from global linguistic patterns. While Kim attempts a comparison with Japanese *-te i-*, expanding this to include a wider range of languages would enhance the analysis. The absence of such typological discussion limits the broader implications of her findings and leaves a gap in understanding the universality or uniqueness of the Korean aspectual developments.

Jeong (2006) offers a historically grounded and detailed analysis of the grammaticalization of *-go iss-* within the Korean aspectual system. However, the study could be further enriched by incorporating a comparative perspective and considering additional factors such as discourse context and pragmatic usage. While Jeong effectively traces the transition of *-go iss-* from resultative to progressive meanings, the paper focuses heavily on grammatical and syntactic aspects, with less emphasis on pragmatic factors that might have influenced this shift. A discussion on how *-go iss-* was used in different social or communicative contexts could have added another

layer of insight into its evolution. Additionally, including comparisons with similar grammaticalization processes in other languages could have strengthened Jeong's argument and provided a broader context for the changes observed in Korean.

Park (2011) excels in tracing the grammaticalization of *-go iss-* within the Korean aspectual system, offering valuable insights into its historical and morphological developments. However, Park's analysis could have been deepened by exploring the semantic overlap and transitional stages where *-eo iss-* '어 있-' and *-go iss-* coexisted with ambiguous meanings, which could have provided a more nuanced understanding of the gradual nature of grammaticalization. While Park thoroughly discusses the divergence of *-eo iss-* and *-go iss-*, the emphasis is primarily on morphological changes, with less attention given to the syntactic and pragmatic factors that might have influenced the adoption and solidification of *-go iss-* as the primary progressive marker. Including a more detailed discussion on these factors would have provided a more holistic view of the grammaticalization process. Additionally, while Park references global linguistic patterns, a more detailed comparative analysis with other languages that have undergone similar grammaticalization processes could have further strengthened the argument by showing how Korean fits into or deviates from these broader patterns.

5 Evolution of aspectual systems: Middle Korean to Modern Korean

In this section, we will examine the typology of the aspectual systems in Middle Korean and Modern Korean, evaluating whether the changes from the 15th century to the present represent a natural linguistic evolution.

As discussed, the aspectual system in 15th-century Middle Korean primarily conveyed the imperfective aspect. The *-go is-* (-고 있-) construction originally indicated resultative states or iterative continuity, falling under the broader semantic category of the imperfective aspect, as defined by Comrie (1976). However, this imperfective aspect was limited in scope, primarily indicating resultant static duration rather than ongoing processes (progressive aspect). Additionally, in Middle Korean, the *-go is-* construction was restricted in its combination with transitive verbs, a notable syntactic feature.

During this period, the *-eo is-* (-어 있-) and *-go is-* (-고 있-) constructions expressed various forms of static duration, including present perfect and

past perfect states, allowing for both temporal and aspectual distinctions within the language's nuanced system.

In contrast, the aspectual system of modern Korean has evolved significantly. Today, *-go iss-* (-고 있-) primarily denotes the progressive aspect, indicating actions or states that are currently ongoing. Meanwhile, *-eo iss-* (-어 있-) continues to indicate the continuation of a resultant state, though its usage has become more limited.

This shift can be seen as a natural evolution within aspectual system typology. The grammaticalization of durative aspect (*jisogsang* 지속상) into progressive aspect (*jinhaengsang* 진행상) is a common phenomenon observed across many languages (Bybee et al., 1994). The *-go iss-* construction, which initially expressed repeated duration in Middle Korean, has evolved into a marker of the progressive aspect in modern Korean. Additionally, Bybee et al. (1994) note that the transition from resultative to perfective aspect or past tense is a frequent change in language development. This is evident in the evolution from Middle Korean, where *-eo is-* indicated a resultative state, to modern Korean, where it has developed into markers of perfective aspect (*-eo iss-* [-어 있-]) and past tense (*-eoss-* [-었-]).

Thus, the changes in the aspectual system from 15th-century Middle Korean to modern Korean can be understood as a progression in line with natural linguistic evolution. These changes align with typological theories of aspectual systems proposed by scholars like Comrie and Bybee, demonstrating that Korean follows general patterns of change observed globally.

In summary, the transition in the aspectual system from 15th-century Korean to modern Korean represents a natural and typical phenomenon, consistent with typological research on aspectual systems. According to Comrie's (1976) typology, the aspectual system in modern Korean is characterized by the opposition between perfective and imperfective aspects, with the former realized through *-eo iss-* (-어 있-) and the latter through *-go iss-* (-고 있-).

6 Conclusion

This paper has examined the grammaticalization of aspectual markers in Korean, focusing on the transition from Middle Korean to modern Korean, particularly with *-go iss-* (-고 있-) and *-eo iss-* (-어 있-). In Middle Korean, these markers expressed both resultative and progressive aspects, with *-go is-* (-고

있-) indicating the duration of a resultant state and *-eo is-* (-어 있-) serving a broader aspectual function. Over time, *-go is-* became primarily associated with the progressive aspect in modern Korean, while *-eo is-* retained its role in marking the duration of a resultant state but saw reduced usage, especially with intransitive verbs.

These shifts align with typological patterns observed in other languages, where durative markers often transition to progressive aspects, and resultative markers evolve into perfective or past tense markers. The evolution of these markers in Korean reflects broader linguistic developments, reinforcing the idea that the changes in Korean's aspectual system are consistent with global linguistic trends.

This study contributes to our understanding of aspectual system evolution within Korean by situating these changes within a broader typological framework. However, challenges remain in fully understanding the mechanisms behind these shifts, particularly regarding the role of pragmatics and the interaction between transitivity and aspect.

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