On the puzzling class of so-called inchoative states in Korean

This paper aims to investigate the lexical semantics of so-called inchoative states(INS) in Korean which include e.g. *nulkta* 'old', *maluta* 'thin', *hwanata* 'angry' (see e.g. Chung(2005), Bar-el(2005), Kiyota(2008) on the used notion). I argue that these predicates denote non-causative changes of state (*coming to be in a state*), derived from gradable adjectival roots via zero affixation of an inchoative verb BECOME. Differently from typical stative predicates(1a), the incompatibility with the overt inchoative marker *–e ci* 'become'(1b) suggests that INS are inherently inchoative.

(1)   a. Mina-nun   (kapcaki)   sulphu-***eci***-ess-ta.
            M-TOP   suddenly   sad-**INCHO**-PFCT-DECL
            "Mina (suddenly) became sad."   [state]
         b. Mina-ka   *hwana-***eci***-ess-ta.
            M-NOM   angry-**INCHO**-PFCT-DECL
            "Mina got angry."   [INS]

At first glance, INS seem to belong to the class of achievements, in that they denote a transition from one state (¬STATE) to another state (STATE). However, I claim that INS and achievements are actually different with respect to the nature of the involved change. That is, while achievements entail only a telic change reading (BECOME/COME TO A STATE) which is a general reading in change-of-state verbs, INS entail both a telic and an on-going atelic change/moving (GO TO A STATE; cf. Jackendoff(1983)) readings. With regard to telicity, INS and achievements show a different behavior: achievements can only be modified by 'in x time' adverbial(1a), whereas INS allow modification by both 'in x time' adverbial and durative adverbials such as 'for/since x time'(1b).

(1)   a. Minho-ka   han-sikan-***maney***/****tongan***   seoul-e   tochakha-ess-ta.
            M-NOM   one-hour-in/for   Seoul-in   arrive-PFCT-DECL
            "Minho arrived in Seoul in/*for an hour."   [achievement]
         b. Minho-ka   seip-neyon-***maney***/***tongan***   (manhi)   nulk-ess-ta.
            M-NOM   ten-year-in/for   much   old-PFCT-DECL
            "Minho got old in/for ten years.   [INS]

Moreover, INS felicitously co-occur with gradual adverbials 'gradually/increasingly", but achievements do not.

(2)   a. ?* Changmwun-i ***cemcem***   kkayci-ess-ta.
            window-NOM   gradually   break-PFCT-DECL
            ?*"The window gradually broke."   [achievement]
         b. Minho-nun   ***cemcem/teowuk***   hwana-ss-ta.
            M-TOP   gradually/increasingly   angry-PFCT-DECL
            "Minho gradually/increasingly got angry."   [INS]

The examples in (2) suggests that the gradual change is involved in INS, but not in achievements.

I also claim that the nature of the telos involved in INS and achievements is different: the telos of INS is provided by the **onset** (BECOME) of the described state (following Kearns(2007)), while that of achievements is provided by the culmination point of the described event. Kiyota(2008) argues that 'finally' adverb appears to focus on the last (the right-most) transition point available in an event.

(3)   a. Minho-nun han-sikan-maney   ***machimnae***   cichi-ess-ta.
            M-TOP   one-hour-in   finally   tired-PFCT-DECL
            "Minho finally got tired in an hour."

b. Minho-nun han-sikan-maney *machimnae* samusil-e tochakha-ess-ta.
M-TOP one-hour-in finally office-in arrive-PFCT-DECL
"Minho finally arrived in the office in an hour."

As shown above, 'finally' focuses on the inception which is the right-most transition point of INS(3a), while it focuses on the culmination which is the last transition point of achievements(3b).

In sum, contrary to achievements, INS in Korean are gradable change-of-state verbs which entail both a telic change and an on-going change readings, and the **onset** of the STATE gives rise to the telic change reading.

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