

Korean Cleft Constructions Interactions with the Information Structure of Copula Constructions¹

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Basic uses of ‘kes’ in Korean

The formal noun *kes* in Korean has a variety of uses: in terms of its morphosyntactic properties, it can be classified as a noun meaning ‘fact’ or ‘thing’, a noun referring to a concrete entity of some kind, a nominalizer possibly referring to an event:

- (1) a. nay kes-i ne kes-pota khu-ta
 my thing-NOM your thing-more big-DECL
 ‘(Lit.) My thing is bigger than your thing.’
- b. [[John-i __ mek-un] kes]-ul mek-ess-ta
 John-NOM eat-MOD thing-ACC eat-NPPAST-DECL
 ‘(We) ate the thing that John ate.’
- c. [[John-i talli-nun] kes]-ul moll-ass-ta
 John-NOM run-MOD KES-ACC not.know-PAST-DECL
 ‘(We) didn’t know that John was running.’

Introducing cleft-like constructions

(2) a. Cleft:

[John-i $_i$ ilk-un kes]-un [kacca]_i-i-ta
 John-NOM read-MOD KES-TOP fake-COP-DECL
 'What John read is a fake.'

b. Inverted Cleft:

[i chayk]_i-i palo [John-i $_i$ ilk-un kes]-i-ta
 this book-NOM very John-NOM read-MOD KES-COP-DECL
 'This book is (really) what John read.'

inanimacy and animacy

kes is an inanimate noun and is usually translated as ‘fact’ or ‘thing’; yet in these copular constructions, the XP headed by *kes* can be an animate-denoting NP, and is apparently inter-substitutable with a noun like *salam* (‘person’):

- (3) a. [John-i manna-n kes/salam]-un chinkwu-i-ta
 [John-NOM meet-MOD KES/person]-TOP friend-COP-QUE
 ‘Who/The person John met is a friend.’
- b. [sang-ul pat-un kes/salam]-un John-i-ta
 [award-ACC receive-MOD KES/person]-TOP John-COP-QUE
 ‘The one who got the award is John.’

Asymmetry 1: animacy vs. inanimacy

- (4) a. [John-i sa-n kes]-un i chayk-i-ta
 [John-NOM buy-MOD KES]-TOP this book-COP-DECL
 'What John bought is this book.'
- b. i chayk-un [John-i sa-n kes]-i-ta
 this book-TOP [John-NOM buy-MOD KES]-COP-DECL
 'This book is the one that John bought.'
- (5) a. [John-i manna-n kes]-un ku yeca-i-ta
 [John-NOM meet-MOD KES]-TOP that woman-COP-DECL
 'Who John met is that woman.'
- b. *ku yeca-nun [John-i manna-n kes]-i-ta
 that woman-TOP [John-NOM meet-MOD KES]-COP-DECL
 'That woman is the one who John met.'

XPs in the Precopular position

The pre-copular position in a cleft is an XP which can be instantiated by several different categories and can function as either an argument or an adjunct.

- (6) a. [John-i Mary-lul manna-n kes]-un [kongwen-(eyse)]-i-ta
 [John-NOM Mary-ACC meet-MOD KES]-TOP park-at-COP-DECL
 'It was (at) the park that John met Mary.'
- b. [John-i Mary-lul manna-n kes]-un [tosekwan-(eyse)]-i-ta
 John-NOM Mary-ACC meet-MOD KES-TOP library-at-COP-DECL
 'Where John met Mary is (at) the library.'
- c. [John-i Mary-eykey senmwul-ul cwu-n kes]-un
 John-NOM Mary-DAT present-ACC give-MOD KES-TOP
 [wupyen(-ulo)]-i-ta
 mail(-by)-COP-DECL
 'The way John gave Mary a present is (by) mail.'

Adjunct Asymmetry in the Inverted Cleft

Both NP or Non-NP Adjunct Phrase are not possible in the inverted cleft:

- (7) a. *[kongwen-(eyse)]-ka [John-i Mary-lul manna-n
 park-at-NOM John-NOM Mary-ACC meet-MOD
 kes]-i-ta
 KES-COP-DECL
- b. *[tosekwan-(eyse)]-ka [John-i Mary-lul manna-n
 library-at-NOM John-NOM Mary-ACC meet-MOD
 kes]-i-ta
 KES-COP-DECL
- c. *[ecey]-ka [John-i Mary-lul manna-n kes]-i-ta
 yesterday-NOM John-NOM Mary-ACC meet-MOD KES-COP-DECL

Replacement by a Common Noun

In most cases, KES can be replaced by a common noun when the XP is an NP:

- (8) a. [John-i Mary-lul teyli-ko ka-n kes/kos]-un
 [John-NOM Mary-ACC take-COMP go-MOD KES/place]-TOP
 kongwen-i-ta
 park-COP-DECL
 ‘The place where John took Mary is the park.’
- b. [John-i Mary-lul manna-n kes/kos]-un
 [John-NOM Mary-ACC meet-MOD KES/place]-TOP
 kongwen-i-ta
 park-COP-DECL
 ‘The place where John took Mary is at the park.’

Non-replacement by a Common Noun

The common noun replacement is not possible when the postcopular expression is a non-NP.

- (9) a. [John-i Mary-lul teyli-ko ka-n kes/*kos]-un
 [John-NOM Mary-ACC take-COMP go-MOD KES/place]-TOP
 kongwen-ulo-i-ta
 park-COP-DECL
 'The place where John took Mary is the park.'
- b. [John-i Mary-lul manna-n kes/*kos]-un
 [John-NOM Mary-ACC meet-MOD KES]-TOP
 kongwen-eyse-i-ta
 park-COP-DECL
 'The place where John took Mary is at the park.'

Replacement by a Common Noun

The common noun replacement is obligatory in the inverted construction when the XP1 is an NP:

- (10) a. [ku kongwen]-i [John-i Mary-lul manna-n *kes/kos]-i-ta
 the park-NOM [John-NOM Mary-ACC meet-MOD KES]-COP-DECL
 'The park is where John met Mary.'
- b. [ku kongwen-eyse]-ka [John-i Mary-lul manna-n
 the park-NOM [John-NOM Mary-ACC meet-MOD
 *kes/*kos]-i-ta
 KES]-COP-DECL
 'The park is the place where John met Mary.'

Basic claims

- The asymmetries are closely related to the types of copular constructions in Korean.
- All these cleft-like constructions belong to one of the three copular constructions: equational, predicational, and specificational.
- The *kes*-constructions inherit the information structure properties of copular clauses
- The key aspects in the analysis of *kes* are (i) whether the phrase that it heads is referential or not and (ii) where the partition in the copular clause between GIVEN and NEW information falls.

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Copula constructions in English

- (11) Predicational:
- a. The hat is big.
 - b. The hat/present/thing I bought for Harvey is big.
 - c. What I bought for Harvey is big.
- (12) Equational:
- a. Sylvia Obernauer is HER.
 - b. Cicero is Tully.
- (13) Specificational:
- a. The director of 'Anatomy of a Murder' is Otto Preminger.
 - b. The only director/person/one I met was Otto Preminger.
 - c. Who I met was Otto Preminger.

General Properties of English copular constructions

- With the predicational copula in English, the post-copular element predicates a property of the subject.
- The equational copula equates the referents of the two surrounding expressions. Hence the subject in both of these interpretations is referential. (To be more precise, the two phrases are of the same semantic type.)
- With the specificational copula, the subject expression sets up a variable – so it does not refer – and the post-copular expression provides the value for this variable.

Referential properties of the arguments in copular constructions

(14) Copular Clauses

Interpretation	NP1	XP
predicational	referential	non-referential
equational	referential	referential
specificational	non-referential	referential

Three Types of Copular constructions in Korean

(15) a. Predicational:

i moca-nun kacca-i-ta
 this hat-TOP fake-COP-DECL
 'This hat is fake.'

b. Equational:

Chelswu-ka palo ku salam-i-ta
 Chelswu-NOM very that person-COP-DECL
 'Chelswu is that very person.'

c. Specificational:

nay-ka manna-n salam-un Chelswu-i-ta
 I-NOM meet-MOD person-TOP Chelswu-COP-DECL
 'The person I met is Chelswu.'

Predicational copula

In the predicational uses of the copula, one important aspect of this interpretation is that the subject is referential, and the pre-copular position is non-referential.

- (16) a. i kulim-un cincca kacca-i-ta
 this picture-TOP really fake-COP-DECL
 'This picture is really a fake.'
- b. i kulim-i cengmal choiyko-ta
 this picture-NOM really the best-COP-DECL
 'The picture is really the best.'

No inversion is possible

The predicative XP cannot be inverted as in English.

- (17) a. *kacca-nun/ka i kulim-i-ta
fake-TOP/NOM this picture-COP-DECL
- b. *choiyko-nun/ka i kulim-i-ta
fake-TOP/NOM this picture-COP-DECL

Equational interpretation

Both phrases are referential, and so both the subject NP1 and pre-copular XP either are or describe the same (individual or event) object: Due to this property, the construction is invertible (unlike the predicational cx), and different positions may be associated with given or with new information (in *italic*):

- (18) Who is John's favorite colleague?
- a. John's favorite colleague is *this person*.
 - b. *This person* is John's favorite colleague.

Equational and IS

The same patterns are found in Korean, as in (19) with a regular common noun head, parallel in the relevant senses to (18). It is also invertible.

- (19) a. [John-i ceyil cohaha-nun hoysa tonglyo]-nun
 [John-NOM most like-MOD company colleague]-TOP
 i salam-i-ta
 this person-COP-DECL
 ‘John’s favorite colleague is *this person*.’
- b. i salam-un [John-i ceyil cohaha-nun
 this person-TOP [John-NOM most like-MOD
 hoysa tonglyo]-i-ta
 company colleague]-COP-DECL
 ‘This person is *John’s favorite colleague*.’

Specificational interpretation

In the canonical cases, the subject of the specificational copular clauses, specifying who (or what) someone (or something) is, sets up a variable and the post-copular expression provides the value for that variable.

- (20) a. [nay-ka sa-ya ha-nun mulken]-un mangchi-wa
 [I-NOM buy-COMP do-MOD things]-TOP hammer-and
 mos-i-ta
 nail-COP-DECL
 'The things that I need to buy are a hammer and nails.'
- b. [Sam-i hyukacha ka-n kos]-un Seoul-i-ta
 [Sam-NOM vacation go-MOD place]-TOP Seoul-COP-DECL
 'Where Sam went for vacation is Seoul.'

Specificational and IS

Another important property of specificational copular clauses is that their information structure is fixed, in that the XP that is the complement of the copula must present NEW information:

(21) A: Who was the culprit? (John or Bill?)

B: The culprit was *John*.

(22) A: What was John? (Was John the culprit or the victim?)

B: **The culprit* was John.

Specificational and IS in Korean

A similar situation holds in Korean, where (24B') corresponds to (22B):

- (23) A: nwu-ka pemin-i-ya?
 who-NOM culprit-COP-QUE
 'Who is the culprit?'
 B: pemin-un *John*-i-ya
 culprit-TOP John-COP-DECL
 'The culprit is *John*.'
- (24) A: John-i mwues-i-la-ko?
 John-NOM what-COP-QUE-COMP
 'What did you say John is?'
 B: John-i *pemin*-i-ya
 John-NOM culprit-COP-DECL
 'John is *the culprit*.'
- B': **pemin*-i John-i-ya
 culprit-NOM John-NOM-DECL
 '*The culprit* is John.'

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Conjunction Possibility

If the *kes*-phrase is referential, it is possible to conjoin *kes*-phrases:

- (25) a. [John-i sa-n kes]-kwa [Mary-ka pha-n kes]-un
[John-NOM buy-MOD KES]-CONJ [Mary-NOM sell-MOD KES]-TOP
motwu kacca-i-ta
all fake-COP-DECL
'What John bought and what Mary sold are all fake.'
- b. i chayk-tul-i [John-i sa-n kes]-kwa [Mary-ka
this book-PL-NOM [John-NOM buy-MOD KES]-CONJ [Mary-NOM
ilk-un kes]-tul-i-ta
read-MOD KES]-PL-COP-DECL
'These books are what John bought and what Mary read.'

NP1 is non-referential: Conjunction

As expected from the fact that *kes* must refer to an inanimate individual, such a coordinated phrase cannot have an animate referent (cf.4b). This example contrasts with (26), which has conjoined clauses under *kes*:

- (26) a. *`[John-i cohaha-nun kes]-kwa [Mary-ka chotayha-n
[John-NOM like-MOD KES]-CONJ [Mary-nom invite-MOD
kes]-un ku yeca-i-ta
KES]-TOP the woman-COP-DECL`
'The [one that John likes] and [one that Mary invited] is the woman.'
- b. `[[John-i cohaha-ko] [Mary-ka chotayha-n] kes]-un ku
[[John-NOM like-CONJ] [Mary-nom invite-MOD] KES]-TOP the
yeca-i-ta
woman-COP-DECL`
'The one that [John likes] and that [Mary invited] is the woman.'

Postcopular KES is referential

A *kes*-phrase in pre-copular position must be used referentially, as suggested in the English translations for these examples. A truly referential use of a *kes*-phrase always has an inanimate referent, as part of the lexical information of *kes*, and this means that there is an animacy clash in examples like (27b). Hence, only non-inverted examples like (4) do not show sensitivity to animacy.

- (27) a. *i chayk-i [John-i sa-n kes]-i-ta* (inanimate subject)
 this book-NOM [John-NOM buy-MOD KES]-COP-DECL
 ‘This book is the one that John bought.’
- b. **ku yeca-ka [John-i manna-n kes]-i-ta* (animate subject)
 that woman-NOM [John-NOM meet-MOD KES]-COP-DECL
 ‘That woman is the one who John met.’

Copula and Possible IS

(28) Copular Clauses and Possible Information Structure

Interpretation	NP1	XP
a. predicational	referential/GIVEN	non-referential/NEW
b. predicational	referential/NEW	non-referential/GIVEN
c. equational	referential/GIVEN	referential/NEW
d. equational	referential/NEW	referential/GIVEN
e. specificational	non-referential/GIVEN	referential/NEW
f. specificational	non-referential/NEW	referential/GIVEN

Copula and IS: Explanations

- The canonical predicational construction is (28a), the equational construction and its inverse are (28c–d), and the canonical specificational construction is (28e).
- (28f) is not possible as the specificational structure cannot invert with the identical information structure (Mikkelsen 2005).

Specificational and IS

The information structure in the Korean specificational clause is also fixed, GIVEN-NEW (see Mikkelsen 2005).

(29) A: (Do I have to order the software first?)

B: ??[ney-ka hay-ya ha-nun kes]-i [software-lul mence
[you-NOM do-COMP must-MOD KES]-TOP [software-ACC first
cwumwunha-nun kes]-i-ta
order-MOD KES]-COP-DECL
'*What you must do is order the software first.*'

(30) A: (What should I do?)

B: [ney-ka hay-ya ha-nun kes]-un [software-lul mence
[you-NOM do-COMP must-MOD KES]-TOP [software-ACC first
cwumwunha-nun kes]-i-ta
order-MOD KES]-COP-DECL
'*What you must do is order the software first.*'

Copula and IS: Explanations

- However, (28b) is a possible structure in Korean. It should have these properties: NP1 is a *kes*-phrase, which refers, and which expresses NEW information; and the predicative XP should be given information:

- (31) A: (Of all the things that were bought, which one was most expensive?)
- B: [John-i sa-n kes]-i ceyil pissa-n
[John-NOM buy-MOD KES]-NOM most expensive-MOD
kes-i-ta
thing-COP-DECL
'*What John bought was the most expensive one.*'

Our claims for the Cleft-like Constructions

- (32) a. Predicational use:
The *kes*-phrase (NP1) refers and extra descriptive content (XP) is provided about the referent.
- b. Equational use:
The *kes*-phrase (NP1) refers and some other referential phrase (XP) is presented as being coreferential with it.
- c. Specificational use:
A new referent and new information about that referent (XP) is added to the information structure described by the *kes*-phrase (NP1). The XP functions as filling the variable.

Predicational use

- (33) [John-i sa-n kes]-un acwu pissa-ta
[John-NOM buy-MOD KES]-TOP very expensive-DECL
'What John bought is very expensive.'
- (34) a. GIVEN: $\exists y[\text{buy}(j,y)]$
b. NEW: $\text{very.expensive}(y)$

Equational use

- (35) a. [John-i sa-n kes]-un i chayk-i-ta
[John-NOM buy-MOD KES]-TOP this book-COP-DECL
'What John bought is this book.'
- b. i chayk-i [John-i sa-n kes]-i-ta
this book-NOM [John-NOM buy-MOD KES]-COP-DECL
'This book is what John bought.'
- (36) a. GIVEN: $\exists y[\text{buy}(j,y)]$
"There is some thing_y that was bought by John"
- b. NEW: book(b), b=y
"This book_b has the same_y referent"

Specificational and Referentiality

- In the canonical specificational cx, the XP is referential. However, there are many examples where the XP seems to be nonreferential. With the NP1 with *kes*, the PP as an XP example can be saved.
- Following Schlenker (2003), we assume that the specificational copula cases are interpreted like question-answer pairs, not referring to the referential power of the NP and XP. That is, the NP and XP represent a (concealed) question and an (elided) answer, rather than referential elements.

Specificational and Referentiality

As Mikkelsen (2011) summarizes, the classic specificational use is providing a list of one or more items which answer a question described by the subject of the construction, as in (37):

- (37) a. [nay-ka sa-ya ha-nun kes]-un mangchi-wa
[I-NOM buy-COMP do-MOD KES]-TOP hammer-and
mos-i-ta
nail-COP-DECL
'What I need to buy is a hammer and nails.'
- b. [Sam-i hyukacha ka-n kos]-un Seoul-i-ta
[Sam-NOM vacation go-MOD place]-TOP Seoul-COP-DECL
'Where Sam went for vacation is Seoul.'

Wh-Phase as an XP

One interesting property of Korean is that it is possible to have a *wh*-word or -phrase in the pre-copular position of a cleft-like example (the copula is phonetically silent in this particular example):

- (38) [Sue-ka Bonn-eyse palphyoha-nun kes]-un
[Sue-NOM Bonn-LOC present-MOD KES]-TOP
encey-ya?
when(-COP)-QUE
'When is it that Sue is presenting in Bonn?'

The filling process

- The core function of the specificational copular is to fill the value of the variable X in the cleft-like concealed question:

(39) [wul-ko iss-nun kes]-un John-i-ta
cry-CONN be-MOD KES-TOP John-COP-decl
'It is John that is crying.'

- The cleft-like clause does not refer, but denotes some type of variable X, "X such that X is crying", and this slot X is filled by the precopular NP 'John'.

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Asymmetry in animacy

As discussed, the pre-copular expression can be either animate or inanimate, with the subject providing given information:

- (4) a. [John-i sa-n kes]-un i chayk-i-ta
 [John-NOM buy-MOD KES]-TOP this book-COP-DECL
 'What John bought is this book.'
- b. [John-i manna-n kes]-un i yeca-i-ta
 [John-NOM meet-MOD KES]-TOP this woman-COP-DECL
 'Who John met is this woman.'

Asymmetry in animacy

- What is in the pre-copular position provides additional new information.
- The *kes* phrase does not refer, but just denote a variable X such that John met X'. The value for X is filled by the precopular NP 'John'.
- (4b) cannot be interpreted as an equational structure, as this would lead to an animacy clash, for the *kes*-phrase refers only to inanimate entities. This is confirmed by inverting the examples given in the following.

Asymmetry in the Inverted cleft-like examples

- The initial NP is now given information (marked with the topic marker), with the new information being the *kes*-phrase, a referential phrase in an equational structure. Here, the animacy clash makes (5b) unacceptable.

(5) a. i chayk-un [John-i sa-n kes]_{NP}-i-ta
 this book-TOP [John-NOM buy-MOD KES]-COP-DECL
 (inanimate topic)

‘This book is what John bought.’

b. *i yeca-nun [John-i manna-n kes]_{NP}-i-ta
 this woman-TOP [John-NOM meet-MOD KES]-COP-DECL
 (animate topic)

‘This woman is who John met.’

Common noun asymmetry

The NP1 with the common noun head and XP are of the same semantic type and the head noun refers to a location. We take (40a) as equational. The PP cannot be predicate of the locative NP as in (40b).

- (40) a. [John-i Mary-lul teyli-ko ka-n kos]-un
 [John-NOM Mary-ACC take-COMP go-MOD place]-TOP
 kongwen-i-ta
 park-COP-DECL
 'The place where John took Mary is the park.'
- b. *[John-i Mary-lul teyli-ko ka-n kos]-un
 [John-NOM Mary-ACC take-COMP go-MOD place]-TOP
 kongwen-eyse-i-ta
 park-COP-DECL
 'The place where John took Mary is at the park.'

Common noun asymmetry 2

With the NP1 with *kes*, the PP as an XP example can be saved. We take the following examples as specificational, in which the NP1 is nonreferential and XP updates the descriptive information, filling the variable X:

- (41) a. [John-i Mary-lul teyli-ko ka-n kes]-un
 John-NOM Mary-ACC take-COMP go-MOD kes-TOP
 kongwen-i-ta
 park-COP-DECL
 'Where John took Mary is the park.'
- b. [John-i Mary-lul manna-n kes]-un kongwen-eyse-i-ta
 [John-NOM Mary-ACC meet-MOD KES]-TOP park-at-COP-DECL
 'It was at the park that John met Mary.'

Specificational

As noted, specificational cleft-like examples then can have a wider range of uses beyond canonical examples involving two NPs, as long as the XP fills the variable X:

- (42) a. [John-i Mary-lul teyli-ko ka-n kes]-un
 [John-NOM Mary-ACC take-COMP go-MOD KES]-TOP
 kongwen-(ulo)-i-ta
 park-to-COP-DECL
 'The place where John took Mary is the park.'
- b. [John-i Mary-lul teyli-ko ka-n kos]-un acwu
 [John-NOM Mary-ACC take-COMP go-MOD place]-TOP very
 alumtaw-ass-ta
 beautiful-PAST-DECL
 'The place where John took Mary is very beautiful.'

Predicational vs. Specificational

- Examples like the following are taken to be predicational.

(43) *[John-i Mary-lul teyli-ko ka-n kos]-un
 [John-NOM Mary-ACC take-COMP go-MOD place]-TOP
 kongwen-eyse-i-ta
 park-COP-DECL
 ‘The place where John took Mary is at the park.’

- The intriguing fact is that XP can be PP when the head of NP1 is *kes*: this is possible since it is specificational.

(44) [John-i Mary-lul manna-n kes]-un
 [John-NOM Mary-ACC meet-MOD KES]-TOP
 kongwen-eyse-i-ta
 park-at-COP-DECL
 ‘It was at the park that John met Mary.’

Changing grammaticality

Next, we change the head noun of NP1 in (43) from *kos* ('place') to *kes*. The pattern of grammaticality changes in that only (45a) is now grammatical either as predicational or specificational. (45b) is specificational but the XP cannot fill the value.

- (45) a. [John-i Mary-lul teyli-ko ka-n kes]-un
 John-NOM Mary-ACC take-COMP go-MOD kes-TOP
 kongwen-i-ta
 park-COP-DECL
 'Where John took Mary is the park.'
- b. *[John-i Mary-lul teyli-ko ka-n kes]-un acwu
 John-NOM Mary-ACC take-COMP go-MOD KES-TOP very
 alumtaw-ass-ta
 beautiful-PAST-DECL
 'Where John took Mary is very beautiful.'

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Summary

- The Korean noun *kes* ('thing, fact') has a variety of uses including cleft-like uses with the copula.
- The cleft-like uses of *kes* or the constructions that have been taken to be similar to English counterparts of clefts or pseudo-clefts are indeed simply subtypes of copular constructions.
- The *kes* cleft-like constructions inherit the main grammatical as well as information-structure properties of the predicational, equational, and specificational copular constructions, supporting our claim that their syntax and semantics are basically not different from the corresponding copular constructions.