Two ‘now’s in Korean

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This paper presents a study of the two lexical adverbs in Korean, cikum and icy, which are assumed to be synonymous to each other and equivalent in meaning with the English now. Contrary to the common assumptions, this paper claims that cikum and icy differ inherently in terms of the viewpoint of perspective taking in narrative discourse. Drawing from actual corpus-based examples, we show that cikum, much like now in English and many other languages, simply refers to a time interval which contains the temporal perspective point from which the described event is viewed. On the other hand, icy, which is unique in Korean, describes a change in situation, showing that the temporal perspective point can be perceived as a turning point that divides the past and the future seen from this vantage point. Their semantic differences in narrative discourses are represented in Discourse Representation Theory.

1. Introduction

This paper presents a study of the two lexical adverbs, cikum and icy, meaning ‘now,’ in Korean narrative discourse in dynamic semantics. The adverb ‘now’ is often assumed to be a prima facie indexical expression referring to the time of utterance or, more accurately, to a time interval including the time of utterance. This assumption does not seem problematic when it comes to a canonical speech situation, where the moment of utterance referred to by ‘now’ serves as the temporal deictic center for both speaker and hearer. Unlike the canonical situation of utterance, however, the tense of the narrative is independent of the narrative’s reference time; that is, ‘now’ has its own independent status in the story world, and is not referenced against the discourse participants’ own realtime experience. In this paper, we discuss how cikum and icy ‘now’ can occur with the past tense in narrative discourse, and how different semantically they are.

The adverb ‘now’ in English, as well as in many other languages, refers to a time interval that overlaps the time of perspective from which the described event is viewed. The temporal perspective point (TPpt, Kamp and Reyle, 1993) can be either the speech time, as in (1a), or a past reference time, as in (1b).

1 The Temporal Perspective Point is similar to Reichenbach’s (1947) Reference Point (Rpt) and is discussed further in Section 3.

Toronto Working Papers in Linguistics 28: 213–222
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(1a) John is eating breakfast now.
   b. Finally, at six o’clock, Mr. Johnson started to speak. Now there were only ten people left in the room.

In the case of (1b), the perspective shifts towards the TPpt of the last sentence in the simple past, and the situation is viewed from that temporal angle, from the position of someone who could have been attending the meeting (Kamp and Rohrer, 1983). Korean has two lexical adverbs, *cikum* and *icey*, meaning ‘now’. As shown in the example (2), it is very difficult, if not impossible, to exactly pinpoint the difference in meaning between the two in isolated sentences without any context. Regardless of whether *cikum* or *icey* is used, (2) describes an action of eating that is ongoing at the utterance time.

(2) Mina-ka  cikum/icey  hakkyo siktang-eyse  pap-ul  mek-nun-ta.
“Mina is eating at the school cafeteria now.”

Because *cikum* and *icey* seem to be interchangeable in many instances without significant differences, as in the above example, their own distinctive features in narrative discourse have been easily overlooked and not systematically studied. There are only a few previous studies on the Korean *cikum* and *icey*, and even most of them are concerned with the properties of *cikum* as a temporal indexical, and there are very few studies about *icey*, let alone comparative studies of *cikum* and *icey*. Previous analyses did not include any discourse examples and did not take contextual factors into consideration, since their main focus is on the intra-sentential analysis (Lee, 1976; Park, C., 1994; Park, S., 2003). In this paper, we provide a discourse-based account of their semantic differences.

2. The use of *cikum* and *icey* in narrative discourses

We examined two hundred actual discourse examples of *cikum* and *icey*, from the Seyjong written corpus, which is an abridged version of the Seyjong Corpus jointly published by the National Korean Language Institute and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Korea. The compilation is based on ten different genres, including novels, science, general, humanities (i.e., anthropology, philosophy), newspapers, art and life, essays, education and society. In the majority of cases in which *cikum* and *icey* are used, they refer to the speech time (82% for *cikum*, 71.5% for *icey*). In the remaining cases, they occur with the past tense, changing the temporal perspective, similar to the English example (1b). In this paper, we focus on the combination of *cikum* and *icey* and the past tense since we are interested in their ability to shift the temporal perspective. At first sight, it seems rather surprising that the adverb now can occur with the past tense; we commonly assume that now always refers to the utterance time. In most narratives the events of the story are described in the past tense, which is not used deictically, i.e., referring to an event preceding the utterance time. Rather, the past is used as an indicator helping us to create a narrative now point or interval for the current events of the

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2 The abbreviations that are used in the gloss are as follows: TOP: topic, NOM: nominative, ACC: accusative, LOC: locative, POS: possessive, NEG: negation, PST: past, PRS: present, PRG: progressive, RESL: resultative, CONJ: conjunction, RC: relative clause, DEC: declarative, Q: quotative.
narrative, during which they begin, end or are ongoing. In other words, when reading a narrative fiction we shift the anchor for deictic referents of here and now to a movable time and place within the story world (Rauh, 1983). This explains the use cikum and icey in the past tense sentence in narratives.

Among the two hundred discourse examples we researched, 36 examples of cikum and 57 examples of icey occur with the past tense sentences (18% for cikum and 28.5% for icey). The following table shows various lexical and grammatical aspects with which cikum and icey can combine in the past tense.

Table 1: various lexical and grammatical aspect occurring with cikum and icey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cikum</th>
<th>Icey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eventive verbs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stative predicates</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modal expressions</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative (-ci ahn)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result state (-a iss)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive (-ko iss)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inchoative (-toyta, -cita)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most salient feature of the data is the large percentage of the cases where cikum is with the progressive -ko iss ‘be -ing’ and stative predicates, and where icey is used with the inchoative toyta or cita ‘get, become’. Although both adverbs involve a shift of the temporal perspective, the properties of cikum and icey, as revealed by these facts, are quite different. In a sentence where cikum is used, the deictic relatum is the very time at which events are being viewed or narrated. By contrast, the temporal perspective point of icey seems to be a turning point that divides two opposite states.

Let us examine the use of cikum first. For cikum, the shifted reference point is perceived simply as a temporal vantage point from which the described event is viewed. As a result, like the English now, cikum almost invariably takes an internal viewpoint, i.e., it describes something as currently going on at the time of description. As shown in Table 1, there were only two cases where cikum was used with an eventive verb. In (3), where cikum is used with the progressive, the event is viewed from a past perspective point as on-going, adding presentness and vividness to the situation.

(3) Swuhye-nun amwu soli-to tulli-ci-ahn-ass-ko casin-i cikum
Swuhye-TOP no sound-also be heard-NEG-PST-and self-NOM now
run-PRG-DEC-RC feeling-even enter-NEG-PST-DEC
“Swuhye could not hear any sound and could not even feel that she was now running.”

Since the stative predicate overlaps an event described in the previous sentence (Kamp and Reyle, 1993; Kamp and Rohrer, 1983; Hinrich, 1986; Partee, 1983), a sentence in which cikum is used expresses an overlapping temporal relation with an event described
in its preceding sentence. In (4), cikum indicates a current state of the narrator’s (a newspaper delivery person) having one newspaper left in his hand. Furthermore, the fact that the narrator has a newspaper that has not been delivered overlaps the time when he tried to remember if he missed any houses. If we replace cikum with icey, which requires a change of state, the discourse sounds unnatural.

(4) Nay kiek-ulo-nun han cip-to ppatulti-n kes kath-ci ahn-untey…
   my memory-in-TOP one house-even miss-seem like-NEG-CON
   Kulena cikum/*icey nay son aney-nun pwunmyeng sinmwun-i hancang
   but now my hand in-TOP certainly newspaper-NOM one
   nam-a iss-nun kesi-ess-ta.
   remain-RESL-RC thing-PST-DEC
   “As far as I remembered, it seemed I had not missed a single house.
   However, without a doubt, now I had one newspaper left in my hand.”

Let us now turn to icey. Unlike cikum, icey is used with inchoatives or resultatives most often, implying that there must be a qualitative change of state, as shown in (5).

(5) Minswu-nun say os-ulo kalaip-ess-supnita. Ku-nun icey/*cikum
    Minswu-TOP new clothes-into change-PST-DEC he-TOP now
    wancenhi mosup-i pakkwi-ess-supnita.
    completely appearance-NOM be changed-PST-DEC
    “Minswu changed into new clothes. Now his appearance changed completely.”

In (5), the protagonist Minswu changed into new clothes, which made him look like a different person. In order to indicate a change of state from his appearance before changing into new clothes to his resulting appearance, icey is used. Since cikum does not imply a change of state but refers to an on-going state, it is deviant in this context. The second sentence with icey describes a situation that holds after the event of first sentence is completed. Let us observe another discourse example. In (6), the final sentence with icey describes an event of two neighbors’ becoming estranged, which follows the event of their fighting over an egg. Here, the event modified by icey is a turning point of two opposite states; between the state of getting along well and the state of having a bad relationship. The event of becoming estranged follows the event of fighting in the previous sentences, moving the narrative time forward. The existence of icey in Korean shows that the shifted temporal perspective can be perceived as a turning point that divides the past and the future seen from the temporal vantage point that is being shifted.
Another interesting result of our corpus research is that, when used with the past tense, *icey* appears in more diverse genres such as novels, newspaper articles, and diaries. In the corpus, we found that all of the examples of *cikum* in the past tense sentence were drawn from novels, while 20 examples of *icey* (35%) in the past tense sentence were derived from non-fiction sources such as newspaper articles. Therefore, *icey*’s function is not restricted to changing the temporal perspective in a novel. (7) contains an example of *icey* in a newspaper article.

(7) Hanttay i kos-ey ipcwuhan oykwuk kiep swusca-ka ilpayk
One time this place-at move in foreign company number-NOM hundred sipkay-lul nem-ess-una *icey* celpan isang-i ttena-ss-ko…
ten-ACC over-PST-but now half more than-NOM leave-PST-and
“At one time, there were more than a hundred and ten foreign company offices in this building, but now more than half of them left…”

As we have mentioned, there were only two examples in which *cikum* was used with telic eventive sentences. These seem like counterexamples to our claim that *cikum* simply refers to a shifted temporal perspective point from which the event is viewed as on-going. For example, in English and French, it is almost impossible for *now* or *maintenant* to refer to a past time if the clause in which it occurs describes an event rather than a state (Kamp and Reyle, 1993, p. 595; Kamp and Rohrer, 1983, p. 265). Let us look at the example where *cikum* occurs with an event predicate.

(8) Ku-nun *cikum* han yein-kwa salang-ey ppac-ess-nuntey
he-TOP now one woman-with love-in fall-PST-CONJ ecciha-l ci molukey-ss-ko hay-ss-ta.
what to do-do not know-PST-DEC-Q do-PST-DEC
“He said that he now fell in love with some woman, and he didn’t know what to do.”

In (8), however, it is not entirely clear whether the sentence describes a very recent event of him falling in love or a current state of him being in love at the time of his statement.³

³ The Korean past tense form -*ess* pragmatically implicates that the result state of an event still holds at the utterance time (C. Lee, 1987). That is, without any overt time adverbials, sentences with the past suffix -*ess* implicates current relevance of the described situations. For example, (i) indicates that the accident has
More data is needed to see when exactly *cikum* can occur with event descriptions. In the corpus that we used, we have found two examples where *icey* occurs with the progressive *-ko iss*. If *icey* indicates a change of state, it is not expected to co-occurs the progressive, which is always stative. Observe (9).

(9) Kulena nay-ka nolay-lul pwulu-nun swunkan-mata kulen kes-ey tayhay but I-NOM song-ACC sing-PRS moment-each such thing-about sayngkakhako iss-cinun anh-keyssei. Na-nun *icey* haypalaki think-PRG-TOP NEG-PRS-SUP I-TOP now sunflower i cip-uy “maum kiph-un kos-ey kutaylo”-lul pulu-ko iss-ess-ta. second album-POS heart deep place as it is-ACC sing-PRG-PST-DEC “However, I did not think I would ponder upon such things every moment I sing a song. Now, I was singing a song titled “From the bottom of my heart” from the second album of the Sunflower.”

If we examine the interpretation more closely, we soon find that (9) is not necessarily a counterexample to our claim. In the second sentence, the narrator suddenly realizes that he was singing a different song. Hence, there is a change of state, namely, finishing a song and starting a new song. The progressive seems to be employed to have an effect of “the next thing I know, I was singing…” Note that the first sentence describes the narrator’s inner thoughts about something else.

Based on these observations, we claim that *cikum* has the same meaning as ‘now’ in English and other languages in that it signals that the temporal perspective point (TPpt) overlaps the described eventuality. In other words, the eventuality modified by *cikum* simply refers to an open time interval, whether long or short, which contains the time of perspective. Due to this overlapping relation between the TPpt and the described eventuality, *cikum* occurs with state descriptions. On the other hand, unlike the English ‘now’, since *icey* is compatible with inchoative and resultative event descriptions, we claim that the event it modifies is a turning point of two opposing states. The event has an open time span with only one end of its boundaries fixed, either the starting point or the resulting point. Figure 1 captures the differences. *Icey*, which is unique in Korean, shows that the TPpt can be perceived either simply as a temporal vantage point from which the described event is viewed, or as a turning point that divides the past and the future seen from this vantage point.

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occurred recently and that possibly Mina is in the hospital now. In English, this can only be expressed with the present perfect. Also, the sentences with some durative adverbials show similar effects. (ii) indicates that Mina is still sick.

(i) Mina-ka cha-sako-lul tanghay-ss-ta.  
Mina-NOM car-accident-ACC suffer-PST-DEC  
“Mina has had a car accident.”

Mina-NOM two.day-before-from sick-PST-DEC  
“Mina has been sick for two days now.”

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3. Semantic representation

The semantic differences between cikum and icy are represented in Discourse Representation Theory (henceforth DRT, Kamp and Reyle, 1993). In DRT, it is the discourse representation structure (DRS), not the individual sentence as such, which is semantically interpreted. Hence, the theory is useful in analyzing narrative discourses and the anaphoric relations among sentences occurring in them. DRS for tensed discourse includes events, states, and times as objects in the universe of discourse, and it specifies relations of precedence and inclusion among them. There are also discourse referents for utterance time n and reference time (Rpt); Rpt is the discourse referent representing the event described by the most recent past tense event sentence. Otherwise, DRT lets the Rpt be equal to some new arbitrary time. If the new sentence introduced describes an event, then the discourse referent of the event sentence follows the Rpt, and if it describes a state, then it includes the Rpt (see the construction rules in Kamp and Reyle, 1993: 543, 554). In other words, only event-descriptions move the Rpt forward, whereas state sentences describe states holding at the given Rpt, which is introduced by a preceding event sentence. The DRS thus constructed is true iff. there is an embedding function that verifies the DRS in the given model. Observe (10) as an example.

(10) A man entered the White Hart. He was wearing a black jacket. Bill served him a beer.

In (10), the first sentence in the past tense introduces an Rpt that includes the event of a man entering the pub. The Rpt precedes the utterance time. The second sentence in the past progressive, on the other hand, does not move the narrative time forward, but instead describes a state holding at the time when the man entered the pub. The third sentence in the simple past introduces a new Rpt which follows the existing Rpt which was introduced by the first sentence, thus describing a later event.

Kamp and Reyle propose two different kinds of reference times, namely, Rpt and Temporal Perspective Point (TPpt). These two notions are required for the interpretation of extended flashbacks, as in (10).

(11) Fred arrived at 10. He had got up at 5; he had taken a long shower, had got dressed and had eaten a leisurely breakfast. He had left the house at 6:30.

The interpretation of the last four clauses in (11) requires a reference time in the sense of
the narrative progression principle; this reference time changes from one clause to the next – it moves along with the narrative. At the same time, all of the past perfect clauses in (11) need the time of Fred’s arrival as reference time in the sense of Reichenbach’s two-dimensional theory of tense. Kamp and Reyle retain the term reference point (Rpt) for the type of reference time which accounts for narrative progression. For reference time that arise in the two-dimensional analysis of the past perfect, they use the term temporal perspective point (TPpt). This term is meant to reflect our intuition that the intermediate time which Reichenbach recognized as essential to the interpretation of past perfects is the time from which the described eventuality is seen as past. The adverb now signals that TPpt overlaps the described eventuality.

DRT specifies a set of rules for constructing DRSs from each syntactically analyzed discourse, and a second set of rules for determining from the DRS the condition under which the discourse is true. The syntactic structure contains features in their top nodes. In DRT’s feature system, TP determines the relationship between TPpt and the utterance time. It has two values, +PAST (TPpt lies before utterance time) and –PAST (TPpt and utterance time coincide). The second feature which determines the relation between TPpt and the location time of the described eventuality is TENSE. Its values are past (eventuality before TPpt) and present (eventuality and TPpt overlap). Cikum requires its past tense to be analyzed as involving the TP- and TENSE-values <+PAST, pres>. These features enable the combination of the past tense and cikum to introduce DRS conditions [TPpt < n, TPpt O e] (where n is the utterance time, x < y means x temporally precedes y, and O means temporal overlap). (13) is the DRS for the example (3), which is repeated in (12).

(12) Swuhye-nun amwu soli-to tulli-ci-anh-ass-ko casin-i cikum
    Swuhye-TOP no sound-also be heard-NEG-PST-and self-NOM now
    run-PRG-DEC-RC feeling-even enter-NEG-PST-DEC
    “Swuhye could not hear any sound and could not even feel that she was
    now running.”

(13) [n, e₁, e₂, s, x, y, z, x = Swuhye, y = any sound, e₁: x could not hear y, e₂:
    x could not feel s, z = x, s: z PROG (run), TPpt < n, TPpt O s, e₁ ⊆ s, e₂ ⊆ s]

The DRS (13) contains the event e₁ of Swuhye not being able to hear any sound,
the event e₂ of her not being able to feel the state s, and the progressive state s of her
running. It also specifies the temporal inclusion relation between s and e₁ and e₂, the
temporal overlap between TPpt and s, and the temporal precedence between s and the
utterance time n. The DRS conditions support temporal inferences such that Swuhye was
running while she could not hear or feel anything. Due to the existence of cikum, we also
infer that TPpt is in the past and the described progressive state overlaps TPpt.

4 According to Reichenbach’s two-dimensional theory of tense, the past perfect expresses a pair of
temporal relations, one between reference time and utterance time and the other between reference time and
described eventuality: reference time is before utterance time and described eventuality is before reference
time.
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Like *cikum*, *icey* in a past tense clause requires the TP- and TENSE-values to be <+PAST, pres> since it also shifts the temporal perspective from the utterance time to a past time, and it indicates that the described eventuality holds at that past perspective point. Unlike *cikum*, however, *icey* in a past tense sentence introduces the DRS conditions \[ TP_{pt} < \text{n}, TP_{pt} = e, e = \text{end}(s_1) \lor e = \text{beg}(s_2) \] since it describes an inchoative event triggering a change of state (where end: endpoint, beg: beginning point, \( s_1 \) and \( s_2 \) refer to opposite states). (15) is the DRS for the example (5), which is repeated in (14).


(15)[n, e_1, e_2, s, x, y: Minswu = x, new clothes (y), e_1: x change into y, x = z, e_2: z’s appearance change completely, e_2 = beg (s), s: x has different appearance, TP_{pt} < n, TP_{pt} = e_2]

The DRS (15) contains an event \( e_1 \) of Minswu changing into new clothes and \( e_2 \) of his appearance being changed completely. \( e_2 \), which is modified by *icey*, is the beginning point of a result state of him changing clothes, i.e., a completely different appearance. It also serves as the temporal perspective point from which the described turning point event is viewed. Let us observe another example of *icey*. (17) is the DRS for the example (6), which is repeated in (16).

(16) Iwus sachonkkili meli-ka theci-tolok ssawutani… *icey/?*cikum neighbor cousin head-NOM break-until fight now twu cip-un kuman sai-ka nappa-ci-ess-supnita. two house-TOP unfortunately relation-NOM bad-become-PST-DEC “The two neighbors who used to have such a good relationship fight so furiously (over an egg). Now the two neighbors became estranged.”

(17)[n, e_1, e_2, s, x, y: two neighbors = x, e_1: x fight, x = y, e_2: y become estranged, e_2 = beg (s), s: x have a bad relationship, TP_{pt} < n, TP_{pt} = e_2]

Here, \( e_2 \), which is modified by *icey*, is the beginning point of a result state of neighbors’ fighting. The event of becoming estranged follows the event of fighting in the previous sentences, moving the narrative time forward.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we argued that *cikum* has the same meaning as ‘now’ in English and other languages in that it signals that the TP_{pt} overlaps the described eventuality, while the event that *icey* modifies is a turning point between two opposing states. We showed that the difference between the two clearly becomes visible in narrative discourses, where
the verbal context plays an important role in inferring temporal relations between events. Their semantic differences have been formalized in Discourse Representation Theory (DRT, Kamp and Reyle, 1993).

References