

# Pluperfects in Korean and English discourse

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## Abstract

This paper provides an explanation of the distributional differences in the use of pluperfect in Korean and English in terms of the interplay between discourse properties and crosslinguistic variations in the interpretation of the pluperfect forms. I argue that the English pluperfect is ambiguous between preterit and aspectual meanings, while the Korean pluperfect has only a preterit meaning, requiring the absence of result state at the reference time. In narratives, where the reference time is in the past and the speech time is irrelevant, the pluperfect in both languages induces a flashback effect. In non-narratives, where the reference time coincides with the speech time, the English pluperfect does not show up because its two functions, i.e., signaling an event preceding the reference time and describing a state holding at that time, are served by the simple past and the present perfect, respectively. By contrast, the Korean pluperfect naturally occurs in non-narratives, encoding the discontinuity of the result state at the speech time. This paper discusses further semantic-discourse constraints on the pluperfect and argues that pluperfect, in both preterit and aspectual interpretations, must be related to the context event in terms of topicality. This paper shows that knowledge about the discourse structure influences the semantic interpretation of tense and aspect and proposes a common discourse role of the category pluperfect in both Korean and English.

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## 1. Introduction

The English pluperfect (past perfect) *had -en* triggers a flashback effect, introducing background information, as shown in example (1). We infer from (1) that Ellie's brother made the birthday card before he gave it to his sister.

- (1) 'Happy birthday, Ellie,' he whispered, handing her a gift. 'That's for you.' Ellie *opened* it. It was a birthday card, hand-made by her brother out of cardboard. He *had painted* a greeting on the front and inside *had drawn* a picture of an animal and signed his name.  
(In *Sunshine or in shadow*, Bingham, C, Bantam, London, 1992)

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*Abbreviations:* PS, possessive; LC, locative; M, nominative; PST, past; PRS, present; DC, declarative; TP, topic; AC, accusative; PPF, pluperfect; COND, conditional; RS, resultative; ND, noun modifying form.

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Many researchers have pointed out that the English pluperfect form is required in order to signal a reversed order configuration only in narrative discourse types and that a simple past event-event can be interpreted as reversed order in non-narratives (Caenepeel, 1989, 1995; Caenepeel and Moens, 1994). Caenepeel (1995:246), in her corpus study, reports that the pluperfect is seldom used in English news reports since they consist of non-narratives.<sup>1</sup> She used two corpora of written discourse, a narrative and a non-narrative one. The former consists of a number of twentieth-century novels and short stories. The second is made up of news reports published in British newspapers published between 15 and 17 of January 1991, at the onset of the Gulf War. Although she does not provide statistics, she reports that the English pluperfect occurs extremely rarely in the news reports in comparison with the narrative corpus. (2) contains her example from the news report. The second sentence and the following sentences describe events that precede the event described by the first sentence, using the simple past, rather than the pluperfect.<sup>2</sup>

- (2) The American broadcasting networks in the Iraqi capital *reported* brilliant flashes of light, thunderous explosions and heavy anti-aircraft fire in the sky. The attack *began* about 3 am on a moonless night. A squadron of British Tornado ground attack aircraft also *took off* from Bahrain just after 2 am local time. The war *began* roughly 19 hours after the United Nations deadline passed for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait.  
(The Daily Record, 17 January 1991)

The Korean pluperfect *-essess* (also called the double past, since it is the doubling of the past tense form *-ess*), by contrast, is freely used in both discourse types, but with different meanings. In narratives, like the English pluperfect, *-essess* triggers a flashback effect. In (3), the third sentence in the Korean pluperfect *-essess* refers to an event that occurred before the events described by the preceding sentences. From (3), it is inferred that Yengswuk met Tahee to give money for their father's memorial service before their current conversation took place.

- (3) 1. Yengswuk-uy elkwul-ey cheum-elo huymihan wusum-i penci *-ess*-ta.  
Yengswuk-PS face -LC first time faint smile-NM spread-PST-DC  
'For the first time, a faint smile *spread* over Yengswuk's face.'
2. "Cal hay-ss-e. Enni tekpwun-ey."  
well do-PST-DC sister thanks-to  
'Thanks to you, sister, it went well.' (Yengswuk *said*.)
3. Tahee-nun apeci ceysa -ka iss-ki ithul ceney Yengswuk-ul manna  
Tahee-TP father memorial-NM be two days before Yengswuk-AC meet  
ceysa-lul nekneki chiluko -to namul ton -ul cwu-*essess*-ta.  
memorial-AC sufficiently carry out-even remain money-AC give-PPF-DC  
'Tahee *had met* Yengswuk two days before their father's memorial service and *had given* her enough money to carry it out.'  
(from the Seyjong written corpus)

In Lee (2007), I examined 158 narratives containing sentences in the *-essess* form. In the majority of the cases (138 out of 158, 87.3%), it is observed that an *-essess* sentence describes a situation occurring before the situation described by the *-ess* sentence preceding it. A similar trend has been observed in Wako et al. (2003). On the other hand, in the face-to-face conversation database used for Oh's (2003) study, the majority of *-essess* utterances signal discontinuity of the effect of a prior situation. In the database used for her study, there were 30 tokens of *-essess*, and only four of them (13%) were used for a flashback effect. (4) contains Oh's example. In (4), the *-essess* sentence indicates that the speaker's eyes used to get well with the use of an eye drop, but they do not anymore at the speech time.

<sup>1</sup> Caution should be called for, however, in considering different genres as representative of different discourse types because the discourse type can cut across genre lines (Smith, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> According to Caenepeel, when the pluperfect does occur in non-narratives, it serves a function in contexts where the journalist or reporter does not wish to commit herself to the views represented, as illustrated in (i).

(i) The prime minister told MPs that from today all means of bringing about the withdrawal, including force, were justified. A line *had been drawn*, not by any single country but by the United Nations. It was a just war. (The Daily Telegraph, 16 January 1991)

- (4) Himtul-myenun mak chwunghyel toy-myense kulayse yak-ul ttak  
 be tough-COND wildly eyes became bloodshot so medicine-AC just  
 nu-myen na-~~essess~~-ketun.  
 put-when be cured-PPF-DC  
 Kulentey yopen-cwu-ka toy-nikka kapcaki nemwu simhay-ci myense  
 but this-week-NM become-when suddenly too much get worse-while  
 ku yak-ul nuh-etwu...  
 the medicine-AC put-although  
 ‘When I felt tired, my eyes became bloodshot. So I dropped some eye lotion into my eyes, and then they got well. But, with the beginning of this week, suddenly they got worse, and even though I put the eye lotion into my eyes (they didn’t get well).’

Unlike the English pluperfect, *-essess* also appears in isolated sentences, implying that the result state no longer obtains at the utterance time. The English pluperfect in (5a) is awkward in isolation, whereas the Korean counterpart in (5b) is natural. Parallel to (4), it entails that the result state of the described event, namely, the baby being asleep, ceases to hold at the speech time.

- (5) a. \*The baby had fallen asleep.  
 b. Aki-ka camtul ~~essess~~-ta.  
 baby-NM fall asleep-PPF-DC  
 ‘The baby fell asleep.’ (but is awake now.)

When the English pluperfect does occur in narratives, it is generally assumed that it serves to express a relationship of temporal precedence between the situation it combines with and a point of reference in the past. The same is assumed for Korean. We have observed in (1) and (3) that both English and Korean pluperfects induce a flashback effect. However, such an account does not explain why a discourse like (6) sounds odd, despite the fact that the situation described by the second sentence in the pluperfect form precedes that of the first.

- (6) John poured himself a cup of coffee. \*He had entered the room.  
 (Caenepeel, 1995)

A temporal anterior relation alone does not license a simple past-pluperfect sequence in narrative discourse, and the use of the pluperfect is constrained by further discourse-semantic rules.

To sum up, the English pluperfect occurs much more frequently in narratives because the simple past can supplant it in non-narratives, while the Korean pluperfect is used in both, but with different meanings. In narratives, much like the English pluperfect, it induces a flashback effect, introducing background information; in non-narratives, including isolated utterances, it indicates the cessation of a result state. When the pluperfect occurs in narratives in both languages, a simple temporal anterior relationship does not explain its use. Some questions naturally arise. Why does the English pluperfect typically appear only in narratives while the Korean pluperfect shows up in both narrative and non-narrative discourse types with different meanings? Why do different discourse contexts influence or even determine the (non-)occurrence and interpretation of a grammatical form such as the pluperfect? What are the discourse-semantic constraints in the use of the pluperfect? The fact that the discourse context plays such an important role in the interpretation of a tense marker has not been given enough attention in truth-conditional semantics. In this paper, I will provide an explanation of the distributional differences in the use of pluperfect in Korean and English in terms of the interplay between discourse properties and crosslinguistic variations in the interpretation of the pluperfect forms. I argue that, in narratives, where the reference time is in the past and the speech time is irrelevant (Caenepeel and Sandström, 1992; Caenepeel, 1995), the pluperfect describes an event preceding the past reference time in both English and Korean. In non-narrative discourse, where the reference time coincides with the speech time, the English pluperfect does not normally occur because its two functions, i.e., signaling an event preceding the reference time and describing a state holding at that time, are served by the simple past and the present perfect, respectively. By contrast, the Korean pluperfect indicates the

discontinuity of the result state, which is not expressed by the simple past. The Korean *-essess* form, therefore, still has a function to serve, namely, expressing the lack of a result state at the reference time (speech time), in non-narratives. In order to provide a comprehensive discourse-based analysis of the pluperfect, this paper will also discuss further semantic-discourse constraints on the pluperfect and, through an examination of naturally occurring corpus data, propose a common discourse role of the category pluperfect in both Korean and English. I argue that the pluperfect becomes contextually relevant in terms of topicality, including discourse relations Explanation, rather than consequentality alone, in both English and Korean. The implications of this analysis will bear on the discourse relations in narratives in general.

## 2. An explanation of the differences between English and Korean

### 2.1. Pluperfect in English and Korean

The English pluperfect allegedly has two interpretations, one aspectual and the other temporal. Aspect refers to the internal temporal constituency of an event, such as onset, middle, and result state, while tense locates a situation in time (Comrie, 1976). Many linguists have argued that the English pluperfect may be interpreted as a perfect-in-the-past (aspectual meaning) or as a past-in-the-past (preterit meaning) (Jespersen, 1924; Comrie, 1976; DeClerck, 1991; Ogihara, 1996, among others). The aspectual pluperfect describes a result state holding at the past reference time. The preterit pluperfect, on the other hand, expresses an event preceding the reference time. The contrast between the two readings of the English perfect is apparent in discourse (Ogihara, 1996). (7) contains an instance of preterit pluperfect, while (8) illustrates an instance of aspectual pluperfect.

- (7) John arrived at the airport at nine. He had left home two hours earlier.  
He had met a friend on his way to the airport.
- (8) John arrived at the airport at nine. Mary had already arrived there.  
He smiled at her.

The first occurrence of the past perfect in (7) induces a flashback effect. The past perfect here introduces a new time located earlier than the time of John's arriving at the airport and asserts that John's leaving home obtains at this time. The second occurrence of the past perfect describes an event that takes place after his leaving home, but before his arrival at the airport. The past perfect in (8) is different: The second sentence describes the "result state" of Mary's arriving at the airport, i.e., Mary's being at the airport. Although it does say that the time of Mary's arrival is located before John's arrival, this is not the main assertion made by the sentence. The assertion is that Mary was already there when John arrived. Kamp and Reyle (1993: 598–599) also maintain that the pluperfect is ambiguous and provide (9) as a clear instance of the aspectual pluperfect.

- (9) Mary was content. The past two days had been strenuous. But now she had sent off her proposal.

Due to the presence of the adverb *now*, the second pluperfect in (9) must describe a state holding at the given reference time. The preterit pluperfect, which typically occurs in narrative flashbacks, does not accept the modification of *now*.

- (10) Fred arrived at 10. (\*Now) he had got up early. He had got dressed and had had a leisurely breakfast.

Another important difference between the two types of past perfect is that the preterit pluperfect has the capacity to sustain narrative progression, while the aspectual pluperfect does not. In (7), the second and the third sentences in the pluperfect move the narrative time forward.

Now let us turn to the Korean *-essess*. Unlike the English pluperfect, *-essess* does not express a result state holding at the reference time (Kim, 1975; Lee, 1987, 2007; Oh, 2003), but it only describes a situation that precedes the reference time, as in (3). This is because Korean has a separate form expressing a result state holding at the reference time, namely, the resultative *-e iss*. Therefore, *-e iss* must be used, rather than *-essess*, for a perfect-in-the-past (aspectual) meaning. (11) is the Korean translation of (8) above.

- (11) John-un ahop-si -ey konghang-ey tochakhay-(e)ss-ta.  
 John-TP nine -o'clock-at airport -LC arrive -PST-DC  
 'John arrived at the airport at nine.'  
 Mary-nun pelsse konghang-ey tochakhay-(e) *iss*-ess-ta.  
 Mary-TP already airport -LC arrive -RS -PST-DC  
 'Mary was already in the state of having arrived at the airport.'  
 John-un Mary-lul po-ko uws -ess -ta.  
 John-TP Mary-AC see-and smile-PST-DC  
 'John smiled at Mary.'

Since *-essess* lacks the aspectual meaning, unlike the English pluperfect, it cannot be used in the main clause in (12). In the English translation of (12), it has an aspectual meaning, referring to a state resulting from an event of the train leaving, i.e., the train's not being at the station at the time when Suni arrived there. In other words, the focus is the resulting state of the train's having left, i.e., it was not at the station when Suni arrived there, rather than a previous event of the train leaving.<sup>3</sup> In this context, *-essess* cannot be used due to its lack of result state meaning.

- (12) \*Suni-ka yek-ey tochakhay-(e)ss-ul ttay kicha-nun ttena-(a)ssess-ta.  
 Suni-NM station-LC arrive -PST-when train-TP leave-PPF-DC  
 [Intended] 'When Suni arrived at the station, the train *had left*.' (Lee, 1987)

Because of the existence of *-e iss*, which expresses the result state at the reference time, *-essess* requires the absence of the result state at the reference time. There is a clear semantic difference between *-essess* and the simple past form *-ess* in Korean, as shown in (13). The Korean simple past refers to a past event and pragmatically implicates that the resulting state still obtains at the utterance time (C. Lee, 1987).

- (13) a. Mina-ka cip-ey ka-*ass*-ta.  
 Mina-NM home-LC go-PST-DC  
 'Mina went home (and is home now/is not here now.)'  
 b. Mina-ka cip-ey ka-*ssess*-ta.  
 Mina-NM home-LC go-PPF-DC  
 'Mina went home (but has come back now.)'

In English, the same form, *had -en*, is used for both preterit and aspectual meanings. By contrast, Korean has two separate forms to refer to preterit and aspectual meanings: *-essess* focuses on the event preceding the given reference time while *-e iss* focuses on the state holding at the given reference time. See Lee (2007) for further evidence supporting the claim that the Korean *-essess* lacks an aspectual meaning, possessing only a preterit meaning. Based on this semantic difference between the pluperfects in the two languages that we have observed in this section, I will explain why the Korean pluperfect appears in non-narrative discourses including isolated sentences while the English pluperfects do not in the next section.

## 2.2. Discourse types and the pluperfect

It has been observed in the literature that there is a fundamental processing difference between narrative and non-narrative discourse types (Caenepeel, 1995; Caenepeel and Sandström, 1992; Caenepeel and Moens, 1994). In the narrative discourses, there is no clear relationship between the referential domain of the discourse and the utterance time. Because of the cutting of the link between the discourse and the coordinates of its production, the narrative discourses do not have a deictic center that links them to its actual utterance event. The loss of deictic temporal reference is compensated for by the construction of a narrative time line, i.e., an imaginary time line that derives its existence solely from the discourse itself. In the absence of an index for speech time, tense will lose the deictic capacity it exhibits in other discourse types and, instead, take on an anaphoric role (Kamp and Rohrer, 1983; Partee, 1984). Since the narrative context is self-contained in the sense that it is independent from the actual

<sup>3</sup> However, *-e iss* is awkward in (12) because it expresses the existence of a result state, rather than the absence of it. In (12), *ttena-ko ep-ess-ta* (leave-and not exist-Dec) 'the train wasn't there' sounds natural.

speech point, the temporal location of events with respect to each other on the narrative time line becomes the focus for their temporal interpretation, that is, the temporal ordering of events with respect to each other is crucial for an adequate understanding. Consider for example a narrative discourse in (14) below.

(14) John entered the bar. He was wearing a black jacket. He sat down.

In (14), the most common sense interpretation is that John entered the bar before he sat down and he was wearing a black jacket when he entered the bar. In a given stretch of discourse, if the order in which events take place or states are held is not presented in a sequential order of the sentences, as in (15), the discourse could sound very awkward; in fact, there could be something clearly untrue about the discourse.

(15) John sat down. He was wearing a black jacket. He entered the bar.

In non-narratives, on the other hand, the relationship between the discourse and the actual world, as well as the production and its perception, are far less indeterminate than in the case of narratives. Non-narratives are organized with respect to a deictic center (the point of speech), informing the addressee of significant recent events. Therefore, the deictic now of the speaker and addressee and the topical connection between events established from the viewpoint of this deictic center lend coherence to non-narrative discourses. In other words, in non-narratives, the tense is used deictically, i.e., it refers to the utterance time, which is salient in the speech situation similar to the use of deictic and demonstrative pronouns such as *I*, *you* and *this*, while in narratives, the tense is used anaphorically, i.e., it refers to a time which is extracted from the previous discourse similar to the use of pronouns and anaphors (see Partee, 1984). The two different discourse types, namely, narratives and non-narratives, are defined in (16).

- (16) a. **Narratives** have anaphoric tenses, which are interpreted with respect to verbal context.  
 b. **Non-narratives** have deictic tenses, which are interpreted with respect to the speech time.

We have observed in the introduction that Caenepeel's corpus study shows that the pluperfect is seldom used in non-narrative discourses such as news reports while it is frequently used in narratives such as novels and short stories in English. In order to verify her claim quantitatively, I researched the frequency of the pluperfect in different genres in British National Corpus.<sup>4</sup> The result is represented in a table and a bar graph below. They show that the pluperfect form occurs most frequently in narratives such as fiction and verse, non-academic prose and biography, while it rarely occurs in spoken conversation (Fig. 1).

I argue that the contrast between deictic and non-deictic use of tense may affect the interpretation of consecutive simple past event sentences and the use of the pluperfect form. In the non-narrative context, where the primary function of tense lies in establishing a relationship between a state of affairs and its speech point, the pluperfect will not normally be selected to express temporal precedence because the simple past can encode temporal precedence. Two simple past events can be interpreted in reverse order if world knowledge allows for such an interpretation. Most face-to-face conversational exchanges belong to this type of context, in which the utterance is deictically related to the actual situation of speech, so that the situation features of the latter contribute directly to the understanding of the utterance. Although in principle every utterance originates in a situation of speech, a discourse may be presented as distanced from the actual time/space coordinate at which it is produced. This can be achieved by constructing the material which makes up the discourse as a narrative or a story. In narrative contexts, the use of the pluperfect is essential for marking anterior time reference: since there is no obvious relationship between events and the speech time in such texts, greater text-internal restrictions are imposed on temporal relations, and because of this two simple past event-event sentences are very difficult to be

<sup>4</sup> The British National Corpus (BNC) is a 100 million word collection of samples of written and spoken language from a wide range of sources, designed to represent a wide cross-section of British English from the later part of the 20th century, both spoken and written. The written part of the BNC (90%) includes, for example, extracts from regional and national newspapers, specialist periodicals and journals for all ages and interests, academic books and popular fiction, published and unpublished letters and memoranda, school and university essays, among many other kinds of text. The spoken part (10%) consists of orthographic transcriptions of unscripted informal conversations (recorded by volunteers selected from different age, region and social classes in a demographically balanced way) and spoken language collected in different contexts, ranging from formal business or government meetings to radio shows and phone-ins.

Class	hits (pluperfect)	words	%	per million words
Academic prose	20459	17831029	0.001147	1147
Fiction and verse	89407	19419137	0.004604	4604
Non-academic prose and biography	66206	27320013	0.002423	2423
Newspapers	18179	10660246	0.001705	1705
Other published written material	20055	20323023	0.000987	987
Unpublished written material	4407	5023649	0.000877	877
Spoken conversation	901	4966970	0.000181	181
Other spoken material	2787	6988925	0.000399	399
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>222401</b>	<b>112532992</b>	<b>0.001976</b>	<b>1976</b>

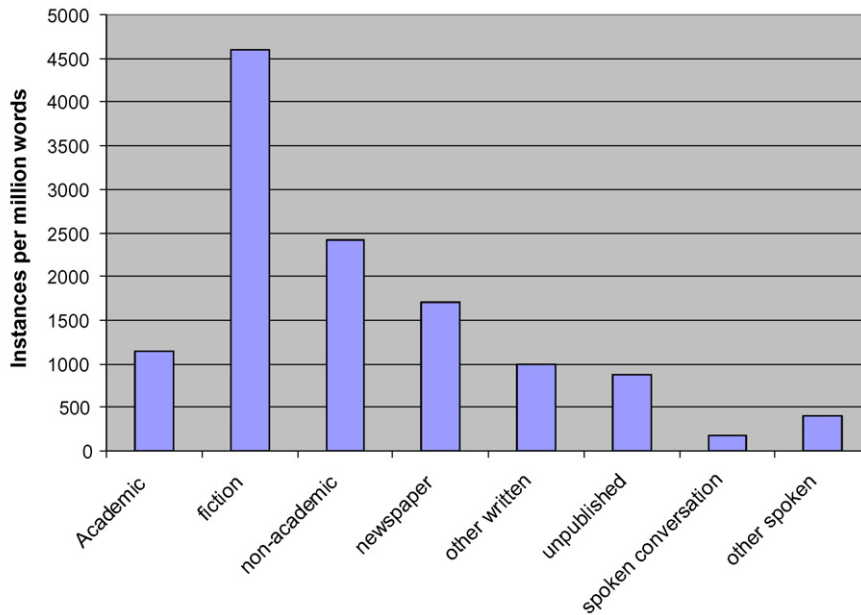


Fig. 1. Frequency of pluperfect in English.

interpreted in reverse order in such contexts.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, in narratives we will not normally find sentences like (17) in an explanation interpretation.<sup>6</sup> In narratives, they tend to be interpreted in a sequential order.

- (17) a. Max fell. John pushed him.  
b. I got in early this morning. I took the bus.

I argue that, in narratives, where the reference time is in the past and the speech time is irrelevant (Caenepeel and Sandström, 1992; Caenepeel, 1995), the pluperfect describes an event preceding the past reference time in both

<sup>5</sup> Narrative vs. non-narrative distinction should not be confused with the difference between written and spoken modes. It is possible to introduce a narrative context into a conversation (e.g., story telling) or to introduce a non-narrative context into writings (e.g., diaries and news reports). Moreover, there are many languages that lack a writing system.

<sup>6</sup> Some recent proposals have attempted to explain a reverse order discourse like (17) in terms of world knowledge about causality overriding the principle that events introduce a temporal update (Dahlgren et al., 1989; Lascarides and Asher, 1993b). For example, in (17), if a pushing and falling occurred, then one may assume that the pushing caused the falling. However, Caenepeel and Moens (1994: 10) observe that, if we assume that world knowledge alone licenses a reverse order interpretation for simple past sequences, it is not clear why the following discourses in (i) sound odd.

- (i) a. ?Everyone laughed. Fred told a joke.  
b. ?The committee applauded. Niegel announced his promotion.

There is a salient causal or scenario-based link between someone telling a joke and people laughing, or between someone's promotion being announced and people applauding, but that does not make these discourses acceptable. Anonymous reviewers of *Journal of Pragmatics* pointed out that discourses in (i) are awkward in a reverse order interpretation while those in (17) are fine because there is no anaphoric link in (i) and the predicates in (i) are activities. However, even if we change (ib) into 'The committee applauded for ten minutes. Niegel announced his promotion to the committee.', the discourse still sounds awkward.

English and Korean. The English pluperfect has an additional possibility of expressing a result state holding at the reference time. In non-narrative discourse, where the reference time coincides with the speech time, the English pluperfect does not normally occur because its two functions, i.e., signaling an event preceding the reference time and describing a state holding at that time, are served by the simple past and the present perfect, respectively. By contrast, the Korean pluperfect indicates the discontinuity of the result state, which is not expressed by the simple past. The Korean *-essess* form, therefore, still has a function to serve, namely, expressing the lack of a result state at the reference time (speech time), in non-narratives.

### 3. Discourse-semantic restrictions on the use of the pluperfect

#### 3.1. Problems with Reichenbachian analysis of pluperfect

In this section, I will discuss further discourse-semantic constraints on the use of the pluperfect in narrative discourse and their implications. I focus on narratives because the pluperfect has different functions than marking an anterior temporal relation in non-narratives. That is, the Korean pluperfect in the non-narrative has a ceasing sense and the English pluperfect in non-narrative encodes the speaker's perspective. Since both Korean and English pluperfects induce flashback in narratives, I will mostly discuss English examples.

In traditional Reichenbachian (1947) two-tiered analysis of tense and aspect, the simple past refers to an event that is included in the contextually provided reference time (Rpt) whereas the pluperfect indicates an event that precedes the Rpt. As we have observed, when the pluperfect sentence is embedded in a discourse context, the preceding sentence provides an Rpt. However, as we have observed in the introduction, this purely temporal analysis cannot explain the oddity of (18), as pointed out by many researchers (Caenepeel, 1995; Caenepeel and Sandström, 1992; Lascarides and Asher, 1993a,b). Although the event of John pouring himself a cup of coffee can be plausibly situated after the event of him entering the room, (18) sounds awkward. By contrast, (19) is acceptable even though it has the same temporal relation as (18).

- (18) John poured himself a cup of coffee. \*He had entered the room.  
 (19) John poured himself a cup of coffee. He had entered the room feeling tired, but now he was beginning to feel better.

Therefore, a temporal anterior relation alone does not license a simple past-pluperfect sequence in discourse, and the use of the pluperfect is constrained by further discourse-semantic rules. Most accounts of the pluperfect implicitly or explicitly adopt a Reichenbachian framework (e.g., Kamp, 1991), and thus are subject to the same problem. A theory which requires saliency of result state (Moens, 1987) cannot explain why (18) sounds odd either (Caenepeel and Sandström, 1992), since, both in (18) and (19), the result state of having entered the room continues when John poured himself a cup of coffee. In the next two sub-sections, I will review two previous discourse-level approaches to the semantics of the pluperfect, Lascarides and Asher (1993a) and Caenepeel and Sandström (1992). I will propose my own analysis in section 3.3.

#### 3.2. Lascarides and Asher (1993a)

Lascarides and Asher (1993a) provide an account of the oddity of (18) in terms of the Gricean maxim of informativeness. According to their account, the pluperfect used in a later clause for background information cannot refer to an implicated information by preceding clauses. In other words, the Background must be relevant, that is, it cannot be something that is normally inferred. In (18), entering the room can be inferred by pouring a cup of coffee. In a similar example, (20), reaching someone is entailed by walking toward her and whispering something in her ear.

- (20) John walked over towards Alice and whispered something in her ear. \*He had reached her.

Their analysis does not treat the English pluperfect as an ambiguous category. Simple past and pluperfect are semantically equivalent, the only difference between the two being their discourse roles. The analysis of Lascarides

and Asher (1993a) assumes that a new sentence is attached to the preceding discourse structure with a particular discourse relation. They use seven discourse relations: Narration, Elaboration, Explanation, Background, Continuation, Parallel, and Contrast. The first four of these constrain temporal structure: Narration entails that the descriptive order of events matches their temporal order; an Explanation or Elaboration entail they mismatch; and Background entails temporal overlap. Continuation conveys the pragmatic effects of the preceding discourse structure; it states that normally, the current clause continues to describe the same topic as the preceding clause did. These are based on Gricean-style pragmatic maxims and world knowledge, i.e., they are defeasible laws which are assumed to form part of the reader's knowledge basis. Lascarides and Asher stipulate that pluperfect only allows discourse relations, Elaboration, Explanation, Parallel, Contrast, and Background, which are called the Constraint When Changing Tense (CCT). They also assume that, if there are conflicting rules that apply, then the most specific rule applies, which they call the Penguin Principle. Observe (21) as an example.

(21) Max stood up. John *had greeted* him.

In interpreting (21), Narration (by default, textual order mirrors temporal order), State Overlap (states normally provide background information) and CCT (if a pluperfect clause is attached to a simple past clause, then the discourse relation is Elaboration, Explanation, Parallel, or Contrast) apply. By the Penguin Principle (more specific rule applies), State Overlap and CCT win. The defeasible knowledge about greeting (if stand up and greeting are connected, then the discourse relation is Explanation) applies and Background and Explanation are inferred.<sup>7</sup>

For Lascarides and Asher (1993a), the fact that no temporal progression is observed in a series of pluperfect sentences in (22) while temporal progression is salient in (23), despite the occurrence of the same pluperfect form, is problematic. They assume that the pluperfect has a single meaning, which leads them to explain the difference between them in terms of rhetorical relations.

(22) Max arrived at the summit at midday. He *had got up* at 5:30am, *had prepared* his lunch, *had chosen* his route, and *had passed* base camp before 7am.

(23) Alex was a very good girl by the time she went to bed yesterday. She *had helped* her mom with the housework. She *had practiced* her piano. She *had done* all her homework. We all felt very good about it.

In (23), they infer Elaboration between the first sentence and each of the pluperfect clauses. State Overlap, Narration and Continuation (normally, the current clause continues to describe the same topic as the preceding clause did, and the current clause is related to the topic by the same discourse relation) apply for the sequence of pluperfects. By the Penguin Principle, Background is inferred and thus the consequent states these clauses describe overlap. According to Lascarides and Asher, in (22), there are more specific rules than State Overlap, that convey the pragmatic effects of list-type discourse structures and knowledge concerning the normal course of events when climbing a mountain. By the Penguin Principle, these laws deem State Overlap irrelevant and Narration is inferred.

However, the contrast between (22) and (23) can be explained by the ambiguity of the pluperfect. I assume that the pluperfect form in English is lexically ambiguous and marked either aspectual or preterit in the lexicon. The aspectual pluperfects are present in (23), providing background information, whereas the preterit pluperfects appear in (22), triggering extended flashbacks. If we accept Lascarides and Asher's explanation of (22), one wonders why Narration, which is a more general rule and thus has been cancelled out by the Penguin Principle, can be brought back later as a more specific rule about list-type discourse structure and knowledge about sequential events. Furthermore, in terms of economy and learnability, invoking an infinite number of non-generalizable case-specific laws that are arbitrarily ordered is problematic. Although I do not follow their specific methods of deriving temporal and rhetorical relations in discourse, my analysis agrees with theirs in the sense that the pluperfect only allows the discourse relations Explanation, Elaboration, Parallel and Contrast, as I explain in section 3.3.

<sup>7</sup> See Lascarides and Asher (1991, 1993a, 2007) for technical details of their Segmented Discourse Representation Theory (SDRT) and Discourse and Common sense Entailment (DICE).

### 3.3. Caenepeel and Sandström (1992)

Caenepeel and Sandström (1992, 172) observe that the pluperfect in narratives is subject to two general discourse constraints as follows:

- (24) A. The information status constraint: each new information in a discourse must contain new information, i.e., assert something which has not yet been asserted and which is not inferrable (presupposed or implicated) from preceding discourse.
- B. The contextual relevance constraint: the new information contained in a sentence must cohere in a significant way with its immediate context.

Since entering the room where the coffee is inferable from the act of pouring it, the second clause in the pluperfect in (18) does not provide new information, and it therefore violates the information status constraint. This is similar to Lascarides and Asher's explanation of the oddity of (18). The difference between the two analyses lies in the semantics of pluperfect: The difference between preterit and aspectual interpretations (e.g., (22) vs. (23)) only derives from discourse/rhetorical relations in Lascarides and Asher's account. According to Caenepeel and Sandstrom, on the other hand, the pluperfect is ambiguous between event (preterit) and state (aspectual use) descriptions, and it is subject to different kinds of contextual relevance constraints. The contextual relevance for events depends on the establishment of consequential relations (Moens, 1987); for states, since narrative progression stops, discourse relations other than consequentiality becomes salient. Topicality is the discourse relation pertaining for states and includes the rhetorical relations, Background, Explanation, Parallel and Contrast. I will discuss the consequential relations in greater detail in the next section, but for now let us note that, given this asymmetry between events and states, the preterit pluperfect is subject to consequentiality relations since it expresses an event preceding the reference time. By contrast, the aspectual pluperfect, describing a state holding at the reference time, is regulated by discourse relations pertaining to states, such as Background and Explanation. (25) below is an example the authors provide to show that the preterit pluperfect must observe the consequentiality constraint.

- (25) He took two dirty glasses from the table and filled them with brandy. \*He had rinsed them out, and the glasses glittered in the sunlight.

(25) is incoherent despite the fact that it meets the information status constraint, since the rinsing-out event is not asserted or entailed by the preceding sentence, and the contextual relevance constraints, as it provides the background information necessary for interpreting the next clause. Their analysis postulates a further restriction called Monotonicity Constraint, which is specific to the preterit pluperfect.

- (26) Monotonicity of episodic structure (specific to past-in-the-past pluperfect) The current episodic structure is only open at its right end; two events entered as adjacent (related in terms of consequentiality relation) cannot be made non-adjacent (undo the consequentiality relation) through the later insertion of a third event.

Due to (26), the preterit pluperfect cannot newly introduce an event forming part of the current episodic structure,<sup>8</sup> although it can reintroduce an event, provided that the information status constraint is met. This explains why (25) is unacceptable.

### 3.4. Events, states, consequentiality and topicality

As we have observed, a pluperfect can be used after a simple past under certain circumstances (i.e., when it provides some noninferrable background information), while the descriptive content of the former precedes the event expressed in the latter. For the aspectual interpretation of pluperfect, a natural explanation can be provided. This pluperfect is a stative operator, and an event-state reversed order construction is in principle acceptable in English. A state does not invoke narrative movement; it takes the previously mentioned event for an anchor. Therefore, states only allow

<sup>8</sup> A sequence of consequentially related events form an episodic structure.

discourse relations such as Background, Explanation, Parallel and Contrast, which are subsumed under topicality. Therefore, the aspectual pluperfect, being a stative operator, becomes contextually relevant in terms of topicality.

With regard to the preterit pluperfect, on the other hand, the contextual relevance for events depends on the establishment of consequential relations (Caenepeel and Sandström, 1992). The consequential relations presented by Caenepeel and Sandstrom require some elaboration. Although the relation of temporal ordering has long been seen as the primary source of narrative coherence, as well as the feature distinguishing narratives from other discourse types (Labov, 1972; Fleischman, 1986; Givon, 1987), the fact that one event can be interpreted as occurring after another does not necessarily lead to narrative coherence. Compare (27) with (28).

(27) ?A car stopped in the car park. Anna sliced some radishes.

(28) A car stopped in the car park. Anna looked up from her work and walked over to the window.

The fact that the events in (27) can plausibly be interpreted as happening consecutively does not make the discourse coherent. (28), by contrast, does not sound odd. For a narrative discourse to be well-formed, events must be connected by the relationship of consequentiality. Caenepeel and Sandstrom, following Moens (1987), define consequentiality as follows.

(29) An event  $e'$  is consequential upon an event  $e$  if

- (i)  $e$  causes or takes part in causing  $e'$ ;
- (ii)  $e$  creates or takes part in creating the appropriate conditions for  $e'$  to take place;
- (iii)  $e$  evokes or is part of what evokes  $e'$  as a response; or
- (iv) one of the relations (i)–(iii) holds between  $e$  and  $e'$  together (and possibly more events) and another event  $e''$  (or several other events).

The most straightforward interpretation of the preterit pluperfect, in the context of another event, places a consequential relation between the presupposed event and the context event. This is the case in (30) below. In (30), Ella receiving her wages enables her to order the fanciest dessert.

(30) Ella picked out the fanciest dessert. She *had* just *received* her first wages.

Compare (30) with the case of the aspectual pluperfect in (31), where the connection is topical, rather than consequential.

(31) One rainy morning, she did see some cowboys, though no horses. They were breakfasting in a highway café – eggs sunny side up. And to her amazement she saw that they were all wearing their Stetsons. A friend *had told* her that they never took them off, but she *had thought* that he was pulling her leg. (Jane's journey. 1991. Bow, Jean, The Book Guild Ltd., Lewes, East Sussex.)

In (31), the event of the protagonist's friend telling her that the cowboys never take off their stetsons did not cause or enable the event of her seeing the cowboys wearing them. Although the last sentence, in the pluperfect, is not related in a consequential way to the previous discourse, it does not violate the context relevance constraint because of the possibility of providing background interpretation.

If we examine naturally occurring discourses, however, we soon find that even in the case of the preterit pluperfect, the felicity of a simple past-pluperfect sequence depends on topicality, rather than a consequentiality relation. I randomly searched fifty narrative examples of English from the British National Corpus (BNC) and had two native speakers of English examine the discourse relation between the pluperfect sentence and its preceding sentences. Each narrative example at least consisted of a simple past sentence and a following pluperfect sentence, and the length of it was about 2–4 sentences. The two annotators coded the examples independently in order to determine whether S2 (pluperfect) is related to S1 (simple past) in terms of consequentiality or topicality. I provide in (32) the definition of each discourse relations. I basically use Moen's definition of consequentiality and Lascarides and Asher's definition of topicality. Topicality is also defined in terms of lack of consequentiality because deciding whether a pluperfect sentence is used as background or explanation for a preceding simple past sentence can be rather ambiguous and subjective. In other words, if there is no clear consequentiality (causal, enablement, and response) relation, then the relation is topical.

- (32) a. In a connected discourse containing consecutive sentences  $S_1$  containing a simple past and  $S_2$  containing a pluperfect, an event  $e_1$  described by a sentence  $S_1$  and an event  $e_2$  described by the sentence  $S_2$  are related in **consequentiality** if
- (i)  $e_2$  causes or takes part in causing  $e_1$ ;
  - (ii)  $e_2$  creates or takes part in creating the appropriate conditions for  $e_1$  to take place;
  - (iii)  $e_2$  evokes or is part of what evokes  $e_1$  as a response.
- b. In a connected discourse containing consecutive sentences  $S_1$  containing a simple past and  $S_2$  containing a pluperfect, an event  $e_1$  described by a sentence  $S_1$  and an event  $e_2$  described by the sentence  $S_2$  are related in **topicality** if
- (i) there is no consequentiality relation, i.e. none of (i) to (iii) of (32a) holds;
  - (ii)  $e_2$  is background or explanation for  $e_1$ .

In the sample, only 13-14 discourses were judged to have a salient consequentiality relation. The majority of the examples (73%) show the pluperfect related to the previous simple past event in terms of topicality. Inter-annotator agreement score (kappa score = 0.689) was calculated and there was a substantial agreement between the two independent annotators. Table below shows the kappa score calculation.

(33) contains an example of an extended flashback. Here a series of pluperfect sentences describe events that happened sequentially. In (33), the prostitute going to her cousin’s apartment enabled the cousin to take care of her.

- (33) Accident victim. Beaten-up prostitute. Drug addict. Sometimes she **had worked** twenty-four hours without sleep. She was twenty-six years old. She had looked twice that when she **had limped** into her cousin Mandy’s apartment in Vernon, in the Okanagan Valley, burnt out, exhausted, disillusioned and emotional. She **had intended** to stay for a weekend. Mandy **had plied** her with tender loving care until the tears had come. (One shining summer, 1993, Wilder, Quinn, Mills, Boon, Richmond, Surrey.)

(34) is an example of a simple past-pluperfect sequence related to each other in terms of topicality. Note that there is no consequentiality relation between the first two sentences in simple past and the third sentence in the pluperfect form. That is, the fact that the British press was compromised did not cause or enable the protagonist to start reading newspapers and taking interest in current affairs. Here, the pluperfect sentence provides background about the British press when she became interested in current affairs.

	Annotator A		
	Topicality	Consequentiality	Total
Annotator B			
Topicality	34 (68%)	2 (4%)	36 (72%)
Consequentiality	4 (8%)	10 (20%)	14 (28%)
Total	38 (76%)	12 (24%)	50

- (34) I started to read newspapers and magazines more, and, for just about the first time in my life, I began to take an interest in current affairs. This new hobby developed during an interesting period for the british press. The majority of the newspapers **had become** woefully compromised in their support for the government and good investigative journalism was one of the casualties. (Part of furniture, 1991, Falk, Michael, Bellew Publishing, London.)

Even when the consequentiality is salient, the pluperfect sentence still can be related to the context event topically. For example, in (30), the event of Ella getting paid provides an explanation as to how she was able to order an expensive dessert. Although previous studies explain the oddity of (18), which is repeated in (35), in terms of an informative constraint, I find it difficult to accept that the event of pouring a cup of coffee implicates the event of entering the room. Although the event expressed by the second sentence, in pluperfect, enables the event described by the first sentence, the latter is by no means semantically entailed by the former. Neither is it pragmatically implicated, since pouring coffee can happen anywhere and need not be done in a room.

(35) John poured himself a cup of coffee. \*He had entered the room.

Furthermore, note that the iconic ordering of sentences makes the discourse felicitous.

(36) John entered the room. He poured himself a cup of coffee.

Here, it is clear that the two events are consequentially related and thus the discourse sounds natural. If the only restriction on preterit pluperfect is the consequentality relation, we cannot explain why (30) is felicitous while (35) is not, since in both cases the consequentality relation is salient. The reason why (35) is awkward while (30) is natural, I argue, stems from the fact that the pluperfect, even in its preterit use, requires topicality, i.e., it should provide some background or explanation for the context event. In (35), the fact that John entered the room does not provide any explanation of the event of him pouring himself a cup of coffee. In other words, they are not topically related. In (30), on the other hand, the event of Ella receiving her wages explains how she was able to pick out the fanciest dessert. This runs parallel with the fact that the pluperfect never invokes narrative progression, instead it provides background information.

If the preterit pluperfect, being event-descriptions, can be freely used whenever a consequentality relation can be established between an event described by the pluperfect clause and the context event, then we should expect the Korean *-essess*, possessing only the preterit meaning, to be related to the context event in terms of consequentality only. However, this prediction is not borne out. Two native speakers of Korean examined fifty randomly selected narrative examples from the Seyjong Written Corpus<sup>9</sup> and have found cases of *-essess* being both consequentially and topically related to the context event. They coded the examples independently, following the same guidelines in (32) above. Inter-annotator agreement score (kappa score = 0.733) shows that there was a substantial agreement between the two independent annotators. Table below shows the kappa score calculation.

	Annotator A		
	Topicality	Consequentially	Total
Annotator B			
Topicality	35 (70%)	3 (6%)	38 (76%)
Consequentially	2 (4%)	10 (20%)	12 (24%)
Total	37 (74%)	13 (26%)	50

Among the 50 examples, we found that only 12-13 had a clear consequentality relation. Moreover, even in such a case, the *-essess* sentence is used to explain the context event in the previous sentence. Observe (37), where the consequentality relation is salient.

- (37) 1. Cotaswu song-ssi -uy oyn -ccok pol -i sakwa pancok-ul  
 navigator Song-Mr.-PS right-side cheek-NM apple half -AC  
 pwuthin moyang-elo pwueola-(a)ss-ta.  
 attach shape-into swell up-PST-DC  
 ‘The navigator Song’s right cheek swelled up as if half an apple were attached to it.’
2. Senwentul-eykey-nun disel kikwan-uy yenghyang-elu  
 the crew -to -TP diesel engine -PS influence -due to  
 chikwa cilhwan-i manh-ass-ta.  
 dental trouble -NM many-PST-DC  
 ‘Due to the influence of the diesel engine, the crew had a lot of dental problems.’

<sup>9</sup> Seyjong Written Corpus is an abridged version of the Seyjong Corpus jointly published by the National Korean Language Institute and the Department of Tourism and Culture in Korea. The compilation is based on ten different genres or topics, including novels, science, general, humanities (i.e., anthropology, philosophy), newspapers, art and life, essays, education, and society.

3. Song-ssi -nun mikwuk-ul chwulhangha-ko  
 Song-Mr.-TP the U.S. -AC sail out-and  
 kalpikwui -lul mek-taka salcem-ey nam -a iss-ten  
 grilled ribs-AC eat -while meat -on remain-RS -ND  
 ppye cokak-ul kutaylo kkwak ssip *-essess-ta*.  
 bone piece-AC as it is hard chew-PPF-DC  
 ‘After sailing out from the U.S., Song *had chewed* a hard piece of bone while eating grilled ribs.’

The first sentence in the narrative in (37) describes the event of Song’s cheek swelling up. The second sentence in the *-ess* form does not shift the narrative time forward because it is a state description. Instead, it describes a state holding at the time of Song’s cheek swelling up. The third sentence in the *-essess* form describes the earlier event of him chewing a piece of bone, which is modified by an adverbial ‘after sailing out’. The event of Song chewing a piece of bone caused his cheek to swell up. That is, they are connected through a consequentiality relation. Also, the *-essess* sentence provides an explanation for the preceding sentence in the simple past form, namely, the reason why his cheek is swollen. Now observe (38), in which no consequentiality relation can be inferred.

- (38) 1. Oyswukmonim-un oyswukpwunim-kwa ssaum-ul hay-ss-ko  
 maternal aunt-TP maternal uncle-with fighting-AC do-PST-and  
 yeni-lul mwusepkay takuchi-ko hulki-e po-ass-ta.  
 Yen-AC fiercely press-and look askance-PST-DC  
 ‘Aunt and uncle fought and they verbally pressed and glared at Yen fiercely.’
2. Upnay kimsepang accessi-ka nyech pen chacao-ko muwenka uynonha-nun  
 Town Kim Mr. uncle-NM several times visit-and something discuss-PRS  
 nwunchi-ess-ta.  
 seem-PST-DC  
 ‘Mr. Kim from the town visited several times and they seemed to discuss something.’
3. Paynamwucip halapecinay sonnyettal kyeswuki-lul etinka simpwulumha-nun  
 pear tree house grandfather’s granddaughter Kyeswuk-AC somewhere maid  
 ai-lo ponay-ess-ta-nun mal-to yeni-nun kuce palam chelem tul-ess-ko  
 -as send-PST-DC-that rumor-also Yen-TP simply wind like hear-PST-and  
 koawon-ini poyukwon-ini ha-nun mal-to encenka tul-*essess-ta*.  
 orphanage-or an orphan asylum do-that saying-also sometime hear-PPF-DC  
 ‘She *had heard* that Kyeswuk, who was a grand-daughter at the house with the  
 pear trees, was adopted to be a maid, and she also *had heard* about orphanages or orphan asylums.’

The first two sentences describe an event of Yen’s aunt and uncle treating her harshly and discussing what to do about her with Mr. Kim from the town. The third sentence in the *-essess* form refers to a previous event of Yen hearing about some girl sent to another house as a maid and about orphanages. Although the *-essess* sentence is not related to the previous sentences in a consequentiality relation (the fact that Yen heard about orphanages by no means caused or enabled her aunt and uncle to treat her harshly), the discourse sounds natural because the *-essess* clause provides background information. I have concluded, on the basis of my research, that the contextual relevance constraints for events, like that of states, can also be topical, rather than only consequential. This explains why event sequences sometimes do not move the narrative time forward when they are not related in terms of consequentiality but connected by topicality, as we observe in (39).

- (39) a. John gulfed down the beer. Some of it ran down his chin.  
 b. The man ordered her to give him her money. He said the words in a slow, deliberate manner.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that the English pluperfect is ambiguous between preterit and aspectual meanings, while the Korean pluperfect has only a preterit meaning, requiring the absence of result state at the reference time. In narratives, where the reference time (Rpt) is in the past and the speech time is not relevant, the pluperfect in both languages induces a flashback effect. In non-narratives, where the Rpt is the speech time, the English pluperfect does

not show up because the presence of the present perfect and the simple past; the Korean pluperfect does show up in non-narratives, since it encodes discontinuity of the result state at the speech time. I have also discussed semantic-discourse constraints on the pluperfect and argued that the pluperfect, in both preterit and aspectual interpretations, must be related to the context event in terms of topicality. This implies that events, although they have the potential to move the narrative time forward due to their consequentiality relations, can be related to the context with the discourse relations of Background or Explanation. This paper has shown that the knowledge concerning the discourse structure influences the semantic interpretation of tense and aspect. It has also demonstrated that, through the examination of narrative discourse data, the pluperfect becomes contextually relevant in terms of topicality, rather than consequentiality alone, in both English and Korean.

The topic of discourse relations among clauses in a narrative is an interesting and complex one. Only recently has a systematic account for such relations been proposed. Further research needs to be done in this area, since the semantics of grammatical items such as tense and aspect morphemes crucially depend on the information derived from larger discourse contexts for their proper interpretation.

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