

Where Does Extra Copula in Korean L2 English Come From?*

Jeong-Shik Lee
(Wonkwang University)

Lee, Jeong-Shik. (2013). Where Does Extra Copula in Korean L2 English Come From? *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal*, 21(3), 1-30. In this paper, we argue that the overused extra copula found in L1 Korean learners of English is neither a topic marker nor an underdeveloped functional category. Instead, we claim that the appearance of the extra copula be in L2 English of Korean learners has real substance, attributed to L1 transfer from the construction we dub 'approximate cleft.' We also claim that the correct use of another normal copula in the L2 English be-Adj construction, despite the lack of its direct L1 source, can be attributed to the facilitation caused by positive L1 transfer via the similarity of copula in nominal predicative construction between English and Korean. The current research results suggest that in the course of L2 acquisition, two languages can be mixed through L1 interference and L2 knowledge.

Key Words: extra copula, normal copula, L1 transfer, L2 English, approximate cleft, language mixing

1. Introduction

It has been reported in the literature that L2 learners of English often overuse copula at their early stage of learning, as illustrated in (1) (for L1-Korean EFL learners, see Hahn 2000, 2001; Shin 2000, 2001; Yang 2001, 2002;

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Ahn 2003, 2006, Kang and Lee 2008, among others):¹⁾

- (1) a. She **is** like cookies. 'She likes cookies.'
- b. He **is** play computer. 'He plays computer.'
- c. Girl'**s** look at sandwich. 'A girl looks at sandwich'.

It is seen that the copula is overused after the subject and before the uninflected main verb in a declarative. What is to be noted is that these examples are not intended to express a progressive where the *-ing* suffix on the main verb is missing. For the purpose of discussion, we will call the above examples 'extra copula construction.'

This overused copula also participates in forming interrogative or negative sentences, as shown in (2):

- (2) a. **Is** she have a flower? 'Does she have a flower?'
- b. She **is** not like orange. 'She does not like orange.'
- c. Dan **is** not big nose. 'She does not have a big nose.'
- d. She like hot dog. 'She likes hot dog.'

The copula may not appear in the declarative as in (2d).²⁾

The copula in question is attested in different suppletive forms as well ((3a,b) from Ahn 2006, (3c-h) from Kang and Lee 2008):

- (3) a. Many people **are** play game. 'Many people play game.'
- b. ... these problems **are** disappeared.
 '... these problems disappeared.'
- c. I **am** eat chigae. 'I ate chigae.'
- d. They **are** go to Europe. 'They went to Europe.'

1) The relevant data used here and below are mostly from these references. Throughout the paper, the copula refers to the variants of the verb *be* in English, for example, *am*, *are*, *is*, etc. It also refers to the affixal verb *-i-* 'be' in Korean to appear in the next section. EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

2) According to Hahn (2001), data in (2) was observed at a later stage than that of extra copula construction in (1).

- e. I *am* not have a car. 'I do not have a car.'
- f. Chelswu *is* not go to college.
'Chelswu did not go to college.'
- g. What *are* you study major?
'What are you studying for your major?'
- h. Where *are* you live in? 'Where do you live?'

The copula agrees with its subject in number and person.

We also add that the following examples co-exist along with the data considered above in L1-Korean learners of English:

- (4) a. I *am* a dinosaur.
- b. You *are* my friend.
- c. She *is* pretty.

In the above examples, the usual copula appears before a nominal and an adjective in the predicative position. For the purpose of discussion, we will call the above examples 'normal copula construction.'

One of the characteristics of examples like (1, 2, 3) is the lack of inflection on the main verbs, which has often been attributed to the lack of verb raising in the literature (Ionin and Wexler 2001, Lee 2001, among many others).³⁾ Another is the appearance of the copula *be* in different suppletive forms, which carries syntactic information such as tense and agreement. This is intriguing because the sequences here are not available in the various input sources in the English learning environment (e.g., textbooks, classrooms, adult L1 English speakers, etc.).

There have been proposals for the overuse of the copula in Korean in the literature. We will comment on them in the next section. In this paper, differently from the previous proposals, in section 3 we will argue that the extra copula in question is a reflex of LI transfer from one kind of cleft construction in Korean, which we will call 'approximate cleft.' Finally, section 4

3) Thus tense/agreement is realized by the copula. We will return to this in section 2.3. Exceptionally, however, the main verb is inflected in (3b). We will deal with this fact in section 4.

will close this paper with a summary.

2. Some comments on previous approaches

In this section, we will examine some existing proposals for the appearance of the extra copula in Korean: among others, the Topic marker hypothesis by Hahn (2000, 2001), Shin (2000, 2001), and Ahn (2003, 2006), who claim that the overused copula is a topic marker; the Underdeveloped functional F hypothesis by Yang (2001), who claims that the overused copula is an underdeveloped functional category F.

2.1. Topic marker analysis

Hahn (2000, 2001) and Shin (2000, 2001) conducted pioneering studies of the overused copula by Korean EFL learners in Korea.⁴⁾ The core of their proposals is that the overused copula is a topic marker in examples like those in (1), treating the copula as a kind of nominal particle attached to the subject, namely, the topic marker:

(5) [CP [She-**is**]_{Topic} [IP e [VP like [NP cookies]]]]

Noting that the subject followed by the copula can be interpreted as a topic of the sentence, as shown in (6), they suggest that the copula in question be analyzed as a topic marker.

- (6) a. She **is** like cookies. 'As for her, she likes cookies.'
 b. Danny's brother **is** teach him.
 'As for Danny's brother, he teaches him.'
 c. He's have many friend.
 'As for him, he has many friends.'

4) Here we do not intend to introduce the details of their subjects, research designs, experimental procedures, etc.

This position is supported and further extended in Ahn (2003, 2006).

Thus the surface coding for the topic marker *-nun* in Korean, as shown in examples like (7), is transferred and realized as copula in L2 English:

- (7) kunye-***nun*** kwaca-lul cohahay.
 she-Top cookies-Acc like
 'As for her, she likes cookies'
 (L2) 'She is like cookies.' (=1a)

We, however, wonder how the topic marker *-nun*, a nominal affix, in Korean can translate into the copula verb *be* in English. The correlation between the topic marker *-nun* and the copula is not so clear. There are L2 English sentences in which the topic is not followed by the copula (Shin 2000, 2001):

- (8) a. He, family ***is*** four.
 'As for him, he has four members in his family.'
 b. He, family ***is*** father, mother and Jung-tae.
 'As for him, he has father, mother, and Jung-tae
 in his family.'
 c. She, subject ***is*** math.
 'As for her, her favorite is math.'

Yang (2001) points out that the absence of the copula above is not consistent with the Topic marker analysis. He also discusses the following examples:

- (9) a. He ***is*** family four.
 b. He, family ***is*** four. (=8a)
 c. He ***is***, family ***is*** four. (Shin 2001)
 'As for him, he has four members in his family.'

According to Yang, examples like (9a) are not attested. Given that the first NP is a topic in (9c), as seen in the corresponding similar Korean source sentence in (10) below, he argues that the fact that the copula *be* follows the second NP as in (9b), not the first NP as in (9a), constitutes a problem for the Topic

marker analysis.⁵⁾

- (10) ku-**nun** chinkwu-**ka** neyss-i-ta.
 he-Top friend-Nom four-be-Dec
 'He has four friends.'

More decisively, Kang and Lee (2008: (21)) find out that non-topic subjects can be followed by the copula in Korean EFL learners:

- (11) a. I **am** eat chigae. 'I ate chigae.' (=3c)

5) This problem is more evident from the cross-linguistic perspective. In Chinese, a typical topic-oriented language, no overt topic marker is attached to the subject:

- (i) Zhangsan xihuan yinyue.
 Zhangsan like music
 'As for Zhangsan, he likes music.'

Thus, under the Topic marker analysis, it is expected that Chinese EFL learners do not produce extra copula construction like those in (1). On the contrary, it is reported that they do produce such examples (from Mah et al. 2010):

- (ii) a. When I **am** study Form Four, I start to read the Star Newspaper.
 b. My friend **is** always asked me how to improve essay writing.
 c. When I was 6 years old, I **was** came back to Penang.

On the other hand, Chinese appears to offer seeming extra copula constructions under concern: the examples in (iii,a,b) illustrate the familiar *shi* ... *de* focus construction, and the one in (iii,c) the bare *shi* focus construction (from Hole 2011):

- (iii) a. Zhangsan **shi** yong maobi xie shi-de
 Zhangsan be use brush write poems
 'It was with a brush that Zhangsan wrote poems.'
 b. Zhangsan **shi** kan dao Wang xiaojie-de
 Zhangsan be see Miss
 'Zhangsan [saw]CLEFT FOCUS Miss Wang.'
 c. Zhangsan **shi** mingtian lai
 Zhangsan be tomorrow come
 'Concerning Zhangsan, it is the case that he will come tomorrow.'

But the copula *shi* 'be' to the right of the subject is not a topic element but a focus indicator for the following underlined part. Thus the corresponding copula *be* in English (as seen in the transliterated glossary) cannot be intended to be a topic marker.

- b. They **are** go to Europe. 'They went to Europe.' (=3d)
 c. Minsoo **is** not work on weekend.
 'Minsoo does not work on weekend.'
 d. I **am** not have a car. 'I do not have a car.' (=3e)

The above non-topic sentences can be elicited through subject wh-questions like those in (12) below:

- (12) a. **Who** ate chigae?
 b. **Who** went to Europe?
 c. **Who** does not work on weekend?
 d. **Who** does not have a car?

It is evident that the subjects in the answers in (11) are not a topic but a focus. And this focus is not associated with the topic marker but with the subject marker in Korean, as shown below:

- (13) a. Q: nwu-ka chigae mek-ess-ni?
 who-Nom soup eat-Past-Q
 'Who ate chigae?'
 b. A: nay-ka/*na-nun chigae mek-ess-ta.
 I-Nom/I-Top soup eat-Past-Dec
 (L2) 'I **am** eat chigae.' 'I ate chigae.'

2.3. Topic/Subject marker analysis

To accommodate Yang's observation of the contrastive paradigm in (8)-(9), Ahn (2003) extends the Topic marker analysis to include the subject case marker as well, which is attributed to Shin (2001). This is motivated from considering the following examples from Shin (2001):

- (14) a. He **is**, friend **is** four.
 'As for him, he has four friends.'
 b. ku-**nun** chinkwu-**ka** neyss-**i**-ta. (=10)

he-Top friend-Nom four-be-Dec
 'As for him, he has four friends.'

Ahn (2003: 373) believes that (14a) can be regarded as reflecting a multiple nominative construction corresponding to the Korean counterpart in (14b), and suggests that the copula can represent the subject marker as well as the topic marker. He (p. 373: fn 17) does not preclude the possibility that the topic marker can be a realization of the object marker as well. In this regard, let us consider the following nominative object construction:

(15) Chelswu-*ka* Yenghi-*ka* mwusep-ta.
 Chelswu-Nom Yenghi-Nom afraid-Dec
 'Chelswu is afraid of Yenghi.'

Under Ahn's extended analysis, it is expected that L1-Korean learners of English would produce an unattested sentence like (16a), not like the one in (16b) that is much closer to the target English:

(16) a. Chelswu *is* afraid Yenghi *is*.
 'Chelswu is afraid of Yenghi.'
 b. Chelswu *is* afraid Yenghi.
 'Chelswu is afraid of Yenghi.'

This will make Ahn's extended analysis difficult to maintain. Its assumption that the L2 English copula can refer to different elements (e.g., a topic marker, a focus marker, a subject marker) in L1 Korean does not make much sense in view of language acquisition in that this one-to-many relation sounds somewhat arbitrary.

Things get more complicated when we consider the fact that in (14b) the nominal predicate *neyss* is followed by the morpheme *-i-*, which is commonly regarded as copula in Korean morphosyntax. The same morpheme *-i-* is found in the Korean counterparts of (4a,b):⁶⁾

6) In our experiment (see the tables below in this section), the subject, whether it is a topic or a focus, is mostly followed by the copula (i.e., *am*, *are* and *is*) in L2 English, as partly shown

- (17) a. na-nun/nay-ka konglyong-**i**-ta.
 I-Top/I-Nom dinosaur-be-Dec
 'I **am** a dinosaur.' (=4a)
- b. ne-nun/ney-ka nay chinkwu-**i**-ta.
 you-Top/you-Nom my friend-be-Dec
 'You **are** my friend.' (=4b)

If the morpheme *-i-* is a copula, the English counterpart of (14b) would be like (18) under Ahn's extended analysis:

- (18) He is, friend is is four.
 'As for him, he has four members in his family.'

However, a sentence like (18) in L2 English is not likely to be attested.⁷⁾

Thus, under Ahn's extended analysis, the morpheme *-i-* in (14b) would have to be neither a copula nor a subject case marker. Ahn (2003) might treat the predicate complex in (14b) as a kind of stative verb as he (p. 373) does for the example in (19b) (from Shin 2001):

- (19) a. He **is**, friend **is** many.
 'As for him, he has many friends.'
- b. ku-**nun** chinkwu-**ka** manh-ta.
 he-Top friend-Nom many-Pres-Dec
 'As for him, he has many friends.'

in (17).

7) If the morpheme *-i-* is a subject case marker, the English counterpart of (14b) would be like (i) under Ahn's extended analysis:

- (i) He **is**, friend **is** four **is**.
 'As for him, he has four members in his family.'

Again, a sentence like (i) is not likely to be attested in L2 English, either. Moreover, we do not buy the idea that *-i-* is a subject case marker here in that this morpheme can be inflected for different tense representation just like any other verbs can (e.g., *konglyong-~~i~~-ess-ta* 'be-Past', *konglyong-**il kes-i**-ta* 'be-Fut').

Claiming that in (19a), the first NP is attached by the topic marker *is* and the second one by the subject case marker *is*, just as in the Korean counterpart in (19b), he assumes that the English adjectival predicate *many* can be analyzed as a stative verb under the L1 influence. The same analysis can apply to the Korean counterpart of (4c):

- (20) kunye-nun/kunye-ka yeppu-(*-i-)-ta.
 she-Top/she-Nom pretty-Dec
 'She **is** pretty.' (=4c)

It is noticed that the copula *-i-* cannot appear in (20), and thus, the copula *is* in the L2 English looks like a topic/subject marker.

It seems, however, difficult to maintain that predicate nominal complexes in (14b; 17a,b) are stative verbs. They can be formed by the (phrasal) affixation of *-i-* to the predicate nominal. This means that the complex is categorially more likely to be a noun phrase. Or these complexes may be said to be formed by noun incorporation of the predicate nominal head to the copula verb *-i-*. In this case, the predicate nominal should not be replaced by a pronominal form like *mwues* 'what' in (17b), for instance, since in the resulting structure, [_{VP} [_{NP} *nay t*] [_V *chinkwu-i-*]], the determiner *nay* and the head *chinkwu* do not form a constituent any more. Contrary to fact, however, they can be substituted for by *mwues* 'what,' as seen in (21b), indicating that they actually form a constituent:

- (21) a. ne-nun/ney-ka nay chinkwu-i-ta. (=17b)
 you-Top/you-Nom my friend-be-Dec
 'You **are** my friend.'
 b. ne-nun/ney-ka mwues-i-la-ko?
 you-Top/you-Nom what-be-Dec-Comp
 'You **are** what?'

Thus, we are led to take the morpheme *-i-* in (14b; 17a,b) to be a main verb copula. We claim that L1-Korean learners of English use the *be* forms in the English counterparts in (4a,b), repeated below, as a main verb copula, but not as a topic/focus/subject marker; we extend this view to (4c) as well, added below:

- (4) a. I **am** a dinosaur.
 b. You **are** my friend.
 c. She **is** pretty.

We speculate that L1-Korean learners of English may take advantage of the similarity between the Korean verb *-i-* in (17a,b) and the English copula *be* in (4a), thereby acquiring the English copula *be* in their L2 learning; then they extend this knowledge to the use of the copula in examples like (4c) although their Korean counterparts lack the copula *-i-*, as seen in (20).

Support for this claim comes from the results of our experiment performed over the sentences in (17a,b; 20), as presented in the tables below.⁸⁾

Table 1. Performance rate in Topic subject + copula *be* (n=58)

Performance	Be + Noun	Be + Adj	Overall use of copula <i>be</i>
Correct use	112/116 (96%)	54/58 (93%)	166/174 (95%)
Omission	2/116 (2%)	4/58 (7%)	6/174 (4%)
Incorrect use	2/116 (2%)	0/58 (0%)	2/174 (1%)

Table 2. Performance rate in Focus subject + copula *be* (n=58)

Performance	Be + Noun	Be + Adj	Overall use of copula <i>be</i>
Correct use	89/116 (77%)	46/58 (79%)	135/174 (78%)
Omission	6/116 (5%)	3/58 (5%)	9/174 (5%)
Incorrect use*	21/116 (18%)	9/58 (16%)	30/174 (17%)

Table 3. Performance rate in copula *be* (n=58)

Performance	Be + Noun	Be + Adj	Overall use of copula <i>be</i>
Correct use	201/232 (87%)	100/116 (86%)	301/348 (87%)
Omission	8/232 (3%)	7/116 (6%)	15/348 (4%)
Incorrect use*	23/232 (10%)	9/116 (8%)	32/348 (9%)

8) Participants for the experimental study are 58 L1-Korean-speaking learners of English from Korea. They are all college students in our classes, who achieved relatively low TOEIC score below 600 (the average score of the freshmen involved (24/58) is 450); they are regarded as beginners in the area of writing in English.

According to the table 3, L1-Korean learners of English got the average 87% of correct use of the copula *be* structure, 87% of *be* + Noun and 86% of *be* + Adj construction. On the other hand, although omission of the copula *be* is highly expected, as implied by the absence of the copula as in (20), its omission rate is only 6% of *be*+Adj and 3% of *be*+Noun.⁹⁾ This result shows that there is a significant difference between correct use and omission, which in turn suggests that participants took advantage of the similarity between the copula verb *-i-* and the English copula *be* and had positive transfer from their L1 in the acquisition of English copula *be*. In other words, participants might have acquired the English copula *be* in their L2 learning. Particularly, this can account for the contrast between the 87% of correct use of the copula *be* and the 4% of omission of it in the English *be*+Adj construction.¹⁰⁾ In short, the

9) There appears a very interesting contrast between the incorrect use in the Table 1 (1%) and that marked with * in the Table 2 (17%). Some students avoided using the copula *be* after the focus subject, while they used it after the topic subject. Thus, for the Korean sentences with the focus subjects in (17a,b; 20), they produced the following L2 English ones, respectively.

- (i) a. A dinosaur is I/me. (vs. I **am** a dinosaur.)
- b. My friend is you. (vs. You **are** my friend.)
- c. The pretty girl is she/her. (vs. She **is** pretty.)

More interestingly, one student used a cleft construction for the focus subject:

- (ii) a. It's me that is a dinosaur.
- b. It's you that's my friend.
- c. It's she who is pretty.

It is evident that these students treat focus subject differently from topic subject. This means that at least for them, the copula after the topic subjects in (i) within the parentheses is probably a topic marker, as Hahn (2000) and Shin (2000) originally proposed. Now that this copula topic marker is inconsistent with the focus subject, they might have been led to find alternative structures to accommodate the focus subjects. I leave this fact open. Considering the relatively high rate of correct use of copula, however, I assume that the current discussion is not seriously affected by the above fact.

10) Hsieh (2009: Table 2, p. 53) reported similar results from Chinese--Participants for the experimental study are 20 L1-Chinese-speaking learners of English from Taiwan. They are all students, aged from 11 to 14, and have learned English for 4 to 7 years. In Chinese, predicate nominals can be preceded by the copula verb *shì* 'be,' while predicative

morpheme *-i-* in (14b) is a main verb copula, indicating that the second verb *is* in (14a) is not a subject marker but a copula, contra Ahn's extended analysis.

Next, we turn to the copula in (2). This element must not be the topic marker because the topic maker cannot invert with the subject to produce an interrogative sentence, and it cannot be followed by the negation to produce a negative sentence. Hahn (2000) suggests that the *be*-forms undergo a certain life cycle to the effect that at the initial stage with declaratives in (1), the copula is a topic marker; at a little later stage with interrogatives and negatives in (2), it turns into an auxiliary verb of the kind. In Ahn (2006: 772), the nominal affixal copula is reanalyzed as a kind of auxiliary verb to form interrogatives and negatives. If this reanalyzed copula still remains undropped in declaratives in (1, 3), the Topic marker analysis will be rendered entirely redundant. For Hahn-Shin-Ahn, therefore, at the stage of examples in (2), the copula should be dropped in examples in (1, 3). It remains to be seen, however, why reanalysis should further bring about dropping of the copula only in declaratives. Rather than the reanalysis, it would be better for them if a new copula verb could be inserted to form interrogatives and negatives after the topic marker completely drops.

As for Hahn's suggestion above, it can hold only if there exists a strict longitudinal relationship between the two developmental stages. Other cross-sectional experimental results in Kang and Lee (2008), however, reveal that these two stages can co-exist--both declaratives and interrogatives/negatives are observed together, as seen in (3, 11).¹¹⁾ Further, positive evidence for the two stages in one plane is available, in which case matching between declaratives and interrogatives/negatives is made at the same learning stage.¹²⁾

adjectives cannot. Hsieh (2009: 55) concludes that participants might have acquired the English copula *be* in their L2 learning and that learners take advantage of similarities between Chinese and English. Thus the contrast between the high rate of correct use of the copula *be* (82%) and the low rate of omission of it (17%) in the English *be*+Adj construction in L1-Chinese EFL learners.

11) They observed the copula overgeneration in low level college students, limiting the subjects with TOEIC score below 645.

12) In addition, EFL learners may have direct negative evidence through classroom feedback, tests, etc.

Ahn (2006: fn 7) suggests that the reanalysis of a nominal category into a verbal functional category is possibly based on positive evidence provided by examples like (22) which shows that *be* is not a nominal functional category in the target language:

(22) Is John happy?

We, however, argued before that for L1-Korean EFL learners, the element *is* here is a main verb copula from the start.

Under the reanalysis approach mentioned above, at the stage where examples like those in (2, 22) are produced and thereby the topic marker is dropped, the L1-Korean interlanguage grammar of English would allow sequences like the following, with the first topic marker dropped from (14a) and (19a), respectively:

- (23) a. He, friend is four.
 'As for him, he has four friends.'
 b. He, friend is many.
 'As for him, he has many friends.'

What is to be noted is the fact that the copula is after the second NP, which is now no longer a topic/focus/subject marker, should remain undropped. If it were a topic/focus/subject marker, it could have wrongly dropped at the reanalysis stage. Setting aside the validity of the category changing reanalysis, it is highly doubtful that examples like (14a, 19a) are longitudinally observed before those like (23a,b) from an empirical point of view.

Our conclusion is that the second *is* in (14a, 19a) is originally a copula rather than a topic/focus/subject marker.¹³⁾ If so, the first copula in these examples must be something other than the topic marker, which will be discussed in the next section. Meanwhile, we note that the examples like (14a, 19a) belong to an interlanguage since they are not part of the target English,

13) Ahn (2003: 375) leaves the contrast between (9a) and (9b) unaccounted for. Ahn (2006: (22)) himself also treats the copula *be* that takes predicative complements in examples like (4a,b,c) as a main verb copula.

indicating that they come from L1 transfer.

In sum, it turns out that the subject in the extra copula construction in L2 English data like (1) is not always a topic, and that the verb *be* found in different suppletive forms in this construction is not a reflex of the topic marker *-nun* (or any other similar focus/subject markers) in Korean. Thus, despite its initial attraction, the Topic marker analysis or any of its extension seems evidently unsuccessful.

2.2. Underdeveloped Functional F Analysis

Yang (2001) notes that there is an agreement relationship holding between the subject and the copula *be* in examples like those in (1) and (3), and proposes that the copula is a verbal functional head that takes an XP of various types of lexical complements, as offered below:

(24) [_{FP} [_{NP} He] [_F is [_{VP} drink juice]]]

He suggests that this inflected form of *be* is an underdeveloped functional category F rather than a topic marker. The first reason he provides is that if the functional head were fully developed, the main verb should merge with it, rendering the main verb inflected. In the data under consideration, however, inflected main verbs are not found, leading him to reason that some property of the functional head is missing. The second one comes from the lack of modal auxiliaries such as *will* or *can*. If the functional head were fully developed, they should be found in the same position as that in which the overgenerated copula appears. To him, the lack of them suggests that some property of the functional head is missing in the grammar of L2 learners, which results in copula overgeneration. Before proceeding, we introduce a few counterexamples to Yang's observation from Lee (2002) and Ahn (2006):¹⁴ ¹⁵

14) Fleta (2003: (17c)) also reports the example in (ia) produced by an L1-Spanish learner of English; Radford (1990) the one in (1b) produced in English L1 acquisition:

- (i) a. **Is** he can jump?
b. **Is** I can do that?

15) Since the dummy *do* occupies the same position as modals, the example (26b) is relevant, too.

- (25) a. these problems **are** disappeared. (=3b)
 b. KK **is** loved EK. JJ **is** thought many time.
 Three people **is** meeted.
- (26) a. I **am** cannot song good. 'I cannot sing well.'
 b. **I'm** don't clean the room so my mother is angry.

In what follows, Kang and Lee's (2008: 98) criticism on Yang (2001) will be essentially appreciated. They point out some problems for the Underdeveloped functional F analysis. Briefly put, first, Yang assumes that the absence of overt inflection is an indication of impaired functional category. According to Kang and Lee, however, many recent L2 studies have shown that despite the lack of overt inflection, L2 learners have fully specified functional features (Prevost and White 1999, Ionin and Wexler 2001, among others). Second, they (p. 98) point out that Yang does not provide any explanation on what aspect of the functional head is underdeveloped, and how it gives rise to the overgeneration of copula as a consequence. It is not clear how the functional head lacking some syntactic features or mechanism ends up getting spelled-out as copula. Thus they claim that we cannot take the presence of the overgenerated copula itself as evidence for an underdeveloped functional head. In short, Yang's (2001) Underdeveloped functional F hypothesis does not provide sufficient explanation on the link between the underdeveloped functional head and the overgenerated copula.

2.3. Tense/agr realization as copula, *Is*-insertion

According to Kang and Lee's (2008) experimental results, the average rate of copula overgeneration is 13% of the total utterances produced (164/1221). They found that the form of the copula is correctly inflected in agreement with the subject in person and number. Their results show that the overgenerated copula behaves like a normal functional head, fully agreeing with the subject in person and number, and in terms of the position with respect to negation. This fact cannot be explained if the learners do not have a fully developed functional head.

In their Table 1, out of 660 contexts, only 16% came with correct inflection

(105/660), and 84% with incorrect inflection (555/660), out of which 81% were in non-finite forms and 3% were incorrectly inflected. Out of 81% of non-finite main verbs, the majority of them is the sequence of a subject followed by uninflected main verb, as seen in (27a), and the rest is the sequence of a subject followed by the inflected copula plus non-finite main verb, as seen in (27b):

- (27) a. Minsoo hate apartment. 'Minsoo hates apartment.' (=their (19))
 b. Sookie *is* play piano. 'Sookie plays the piano.' (=their (20))

Interestingly, according to them (p. 104), there are no instances of the copula in the non-finite form *be*, and further there was only one agreement error. This kind of error-free overgeneration of the copula then suggests that the learners indeed have fully developed functional head, having the knowledge of the features in English tense and agreement.

Kang and Lee propose (2008: 105) that some L2 learners have incorrect grammatical representation of the copula; that is, they mistakenly assume that the copula is a spell-out of tense/agreement rather than a raising verb. A similar proposal to Kang and Lee's is offered in Fleta (2003): *is* is inserted before the uninflected verb in preference to verb raising, which is attributed to a principle like economy.

We, however, wonder if this copula spell-out is just a mistake of the learners. A question also arises as to what motivates the learners to put the copula before the uninflected verb. Or why is tense/agr realized particularly as copula? It might be said that L2 learners first encounter and learn the copula in EFL learning. Actually, there are reports telling us that forms of copula are learned by L2 learners before the regular inflectional endings such as *-s* and *-ed* on lexical verbs (e.g., Ionin and Wexler 2002). But it is still unclear why the forms of the first learned copula are taken to be responsible for the realization of the tense/agr before the uninflected main verb. Although *is*-insertion itself may be preferred to verb raising, why particularly *is* (or other relevant *be* forms) appears still remains unclear.

3. Proposal

We note the omission of tense/agr displayed in examples like (27a) as well as those like (2d), with both examples repeated below:

- (28) a. Minsoo hate apartment. (=27a)
 b. She like hot dog. (=2d)

Recall that according to Kang and Lee (2008), 84% of incorrect inflection comprises 81% of non-finite forms and 3% of incorrect inflection. Out of 81% of non-finite main verbs, the majority is the uninflected main verb, as seen in (28a). One may say that this is due to negative transfer from L1 in that Korean lacks pure syntactic subject-verb agreement. Recall also that according to Kang and Lee, the rest of the 81% is the sequence of the inflected copula plus non-finite main verb, as seen in (27b) and (1, 3). In this case, however, the form of the overgenerated copula is correctly inflected in agreement with the subject. This suggests that L2 learners had knowledge of features in tense and agreement in English. However, the fact that they use uninflected non-finite main verbs after the extra copula indicates that they have difficulties in realizing inflected lexical verbal forms with affixes such as *-s* and *-ed*.

Interestingly, Ahn (2006: (16)) also reports that L1-Korean learners may produce either the sequence of the copula and the uninflected main verb or the sequence of the uninflected main verb with tense/agr omission:

- (29) (The movies real story.) He's many people kill. But he's don't know.
 he **is kill** people ten. he **kill** red clothes.

This fact suggests that although L2 learners have difficulties in their morphological realization on the main verbs, they have knowledge of tense and agreement; either they omit the inflection interfered by negative transfer from L1-Korean due to the lack of subject-verb agreement in this language or they choose to rely on different forms of the overgenerated copula to express the acquired knowledge of English tense and agreement.¹⁶⁾

16) There are also examples like (25a,b), to which we will turn in the next section.

Now, if L1 transfer is relevant, what L1 source leads them to pick up the copula in English? First, to deal with a case of normal copula, let us consider the following normal copula constructions, repeated below:

- (30) a. na-nun konglyong-*i*-ta.
 I-Top dinosaur-be-Dec
 'I am a dinosaur.' (=4a)
- b. ne-nun nay chinkwu-*i*-ta.
 you-Top my friend-be-Dec
 'You are my friend.' (=4b)
- c. kunye-nun yeppu-(**i*)-ta.
 she-Top pretty-Dec
 'She is pretty.' (=4c)

The current proposal is that L1-Korean learners of English find that the Korean copula *-i-* matches the copula in English, especially in the *be* + Noun structure in examples like (30a,b), and thus, it transfers to L2 English writing. This accounts for why L1-Korean learners of English show high rate of correct use in English copula *be*, as seen in English examples like (4), compared with high rate of incorrect use in main verb inflection, as seen in examples like (27a,b).

In sum, with the advantage of similarity and positive L1 transfer, Korean EFL learners acquire the normal copula *be* in English. At this period, they learn the copula agreement with the subject in person and number. Then they extend this knowledge to the acquisition of the *be* + Adj structure in English. This can be confirmed by the high rate of correct use of the copula *be* and the low rate of omission of it in the *be* + Adj structure in L2 English, the omission being otherwise expected since the matching Korean lacks the copula *-i-*, as seen in (30c).¹⁷⁾

The next question is what could be the source of the extra copula in

17) Here the matching under consideration is a matter of similarity established in terms of shared distribution, not like a phonological one. At first glance, there seems to be a phonological matching between English *is* and Korean *-i-*. However, other forms of *be* such as *am* and *are* are phonologically dissimilar. And there are languages in which no such phonological matching is observed, for example, in Sesotho copula is *ke* (Suzman 1999).

examples like those in (1). We observe truncated copula constructions from Korean, as found in examples like (31b). We will dub sentences like (31a) ‘approximate cleft,’ which has also been called ‘internally clefted construction’ (Lee 2010).¹⁸⁾

- (31) a. A: ne mwe mek-ul kes-*i*-nya/ni/ ke-nya/ni?
 you what eat-Fut KES-be-Q/ KE-Q
 ‘What would you like to eat?’
- b. B: (na-n) pipimpap-*i*-ta/ya.
 I-Top mixed rice-be-Dec
 (Lit.) ‘I *am* pipimpap (mixed rice).’
 ‘I will eat mixed rice.’

In (31a) involving an object wh-phrase, the near future for the main verb is expressed by the sequence of discrete morphemes, namely, *-ul kes -i-*, which behaves like one morpheme that possibly results from restructuring (Shin 1993). What is noted here is the presence of the copula *-i-*, which still survives in the truncated answer in (31b). Since the speaker is understood to know the whole proposition, it is evident that the surface string in (31b) can be derived by deletion, as roughly represented below:

- (32) B: (na-n) pipimpap mek-ul—kes-*i*-ta/ya.
 I-Top mixed rice eat-Fut KES-be-Dec
 (L2) I *am* pipimpap.

Under this deletion analysis,¹⁹⁾ it is easy to understand how the corresponding

18) In the following (a) example, *kes-i-ni* can be shortened as *ke-ni*, with the copula *-i-* deleted. In dealing with the latter shortened form, we assume that the copula is still present. In (31b), *-i-ta/ya* can further be optionally deleted. The sentence-final particle *-ya* in (31b) and *-yeyo* in other examples below are hereafter described as an informal declarative marker, or Dec, for short.

19) This *in situ* deletion analysis requires further discussion in that it is not clear whether the sequence *mek-ul kes* forms a constituent or not. Since showing its detailed derivation is not our main concern, we simply assume that the original sentence in (32) is a complex sentence in which the copula appears in the matrix verb position (see Lee 2010). The

L2 English sentence (i.e., *I am pipimpap.*) is obtained (see also Hahn 2000 for L2 English in this form).

Given this truncated copula construction, a fuller L2 English sentence for (32) can be easily reproduced as (33a),²⁰⁾ and that for (31a) can as (33b).

- (33) a. I **am** eat pipimpap.
 b. You **are** eat what? => Wh-Move & Subj-Aux Inversion
 c. What **are** you eat?

Now, consider another example that involves a wh-subject this time:

- (34) a. A: nwu-ka Swunhi-lul cohaha-nun kes-**i**-nya/ke-ni?
 Who-Nom S-lul like-Pres KES-be-Q/KE-Q
 'Who likes Swunhi?' / 'Who is it that likes Swunhi?'
 b. B: Chelyong-**i**-ta/ya.
 C-be-Dec.
 'It **is** Chelyong.'

In (34a) the main verb is followed by the sequence of discrete morphemes, namely, *-nun kes -i-*, which again behaves like one morpheme. The copula *-i-* appears in the truncated answer in (34b), which can be derived by deletion, as roughly represented below:

remnant object in the embedded clause has undergone Focus movement to the matrix clause before the sequence in question is deleted.

- (i) a. [na-n [_{CP} e kimpap mek-ul kes]-i-ta/ya] => Move Obj to FocP
 I-Top kimpap eat-NF KES-be-Dec
 b. [na-n [_{FocP} kimpap [_{CP} e ~~kimpap mek-ul kes~~]-i-ta/ya]
 => Delete the embedded CP
 c. [na-n [_{FocP} kimpap [_{CP} e ~~kimpap mek-ul kes~~]-i-ta/ya]
 d. na-n kimpap-i-ta/ya
 I-Top kimpap-be-Dec
 'I **am** kimpap.'

20) We assume that modals like *will* are learned later and eventually replace the extra copula here.

- (35) B: Chelyong-ika Swunhi-lul cohaha-nun kes-*i*-ta/ya
 C-Nom S-lul like-Pres KES-be-Dec

Under this deletion analysis, a fuller L2 English sentence for (35) can also be easily reproduced, as follows:

- (36) Chelyong **is** like Swunhi.

Here, the normal non-clefted sentence (37a) can also be answered with the same approximate cleft and truncated copula construction, as provided in (37b) and (37c), due to Prof. Myong-hi Chae (p. c.):

- (37) a. A: nwu-ka Swunhi-lul cohaha-nya/ni?
 Who-Nom S-lul like-Q
 'Who likes Swunhi?'
 b. B: Chelyong-ika Swunhi-lul cohaha-nun
 C-Nom S-lul like-Pres
 kes-*i*-ta/ya/ ke-ya
 KES-be-Dec/ KE-Dec
 (L2) 'Chelyong **is** like Swunhi.'
 c. B: Chelyong-*i*-ta/ya.
 C-be-Dec.
 'It **is** Chelyong.'

Since the truncated answer (37c) is derived by deletion from (37b), as represented in (35), a question arises as to whether or not the non-clefted sentence (37a) can serve as an appropriate antecedent for the internally clefted (37b) for deletion to take place. In other words, is there a syntactic identity between the two for the deletion?

For this, I first note that an answer to the *wh*-question (37a) may be simply *Chelyoung(-i)* 'Chelyong(-Nom)', and this answer involves focus. Another answer can be offered by way of cleft, hence the truncated copula construction (37c), in which the copula *-i-* is instrumental in accommodating focus. As Kim (2012: 250, (39)) also notes, the copula *be* plays an essential role in the expression of

emphasis or focus:

- (38) a. John **is** happy.
 b. It **was** then that I became a young revolutionary.
 c. What you are saying **is** that the President was involved.

The truth of a sentence is emphasized in (38a), and a part of a sentence is highlighted in the cleft in (38b) and the pseudo-cleft in (38c). Indeed, it has been observed that approximate clefts (or internally clefted constructions) are used to express emphasis, assertion, confirmation, expectation, guess, report, etc. (see Shin 1993, Lee 2010). Thus the utterances in (39a) can be produced by a boy asking if his mother cooked this food (cf. (39b)) or if this food was cooked by her (cf. (39c)) by way of confirmation:

- (39) a. A: Emma-ka ike yoliha-n ke-yeyo/ya?
 mom-Nom this cook-Past KE-Dec
 'Mom, is this what you cooked?'
 (L2) 'Mom **is** cook this.'
- b. B: Kulay, NAY-ka ike yoliha-n ke-ya.
 Yes, I-Nom this cook-Past KE-Dec
 'Sure, it is I who cooked this.'
 (L2) 'Yes, I **am** cook this.'
- c. B': Kulay, IKE nay-ka yoliha-n ke-ya.
 Yes, this I-Nom cook-Past KE-Dec
 'Sure, it is this that I cooked.'
 (L2) 'This **is** Mom cook.'

In this connection, I assume that (37a) has the same focus representation as (34a) in LF: [_{FOCUS} Who_i] [_{X_i} like S]. Thus the speaker B in (37) can make an easy shift from the normal sentence (37a) to the clefted one (34), so the syntactic identity in question can be met without any problem.

Now that the copula in the approximate cleft participates in accommodating (internal) focus in Korean, the extra copula in L2 English sentences arising from L1-Korean transfer may well be regarded as a focus indicator rather than a

topic marker of the sort in Hahn-Shin-Ahn.

Massam (1999) reports that there is a similar construction in English which involves an extra copula (her (1a, g, h)):

- (40) a. The problem *is, is* that we can't find the evidence.
 b. The secret *is, is* for them not to find out.
 c. The only thing *is, is* I couldn't move down here because I don't drive.

Ahn (2003: (25)) also cites an example from Massam (1999), saying that the extra copula can be treated as a topic marker:

- (41) Our kids are great on vacations, but when they come back, **is** they need to play.

According to Massam (p. 350), however, this element is analyzed as a focus indicator as in our analysis.

4. Closing remarks and summary

In this paper, we argued that the extra copula found in L1 Korean learners of English, as seen in examples like (1), repeated below, is neither a topic/subject marker nor an underdeveloped functional category.

- (1) a. She **is** like cookies. 'She likes cookies.'
 b. He **is** play computer. 'He plays computer.'
 c. Girl'**s** look at sandwich. 'A girl looks at sandwich.'

Instead, we argued that its presence can be attributed to L1 transfer. The relevant L1 source closely related to this transfer is claimed to be a cleft-like construction in (42a), which we called 'approximate cleft.'

- (42) a. (na-n) kimpap mek-ul kes-i-ta/ya /ke-ya.
 I-Top kimpap eat-F KES-be-Dec /KE-Dec
 (L2) 'I **am** eat kimpap (laver-rolled-rice).'
- b. (na-n) kimpap ~~mek-ul~~ kes-i-ta/ya.
 I-Top kimpap eat-NF KES-be-Dec
- c. (na-n) kimpap-i-ta/ya.
 I-Top kimpap-be-Dec
 (L2) 'I **am** kimpap.'

What is noteworthy is the appearance of the copula in (42a), which is required in the presence of *kes* before it. Under this influence, thus, Korean EFL learners more likely produce extra copula sentences like that given in the glossary (i.e., *I am eat kimpap*). Now the following kind of extra copular sentences are naturally expected to occur as well:

- (43) a. ney-ka ike-l kulin kes-i-nya/ni/ ke-nya/ni/ya?
 you-Nom this-Acc draw KES-be-Q/ KE-Q/Q/Dec
 (L2) 'You **are** draw this?'
- b. emma-ka ike yolihan kes-i-yeyo/ ke-yeyo/ya?
 Mom-Nom this cook KES-be-Dec/ KE-Dec
 (L2) 'Mom **is** cook this? **Is** Mom cook this?'

This analysis can also nicely derive a peculiar L2 construction where copula appears to directly take the object of the main verb as its complement, as presented in the glossary in (42c) (i.e., *I am kimpap*), through necessary ellipsis, as seen in (42b). Accordingly, the present analysis rejects the analyses that attempt to deal with L2 sentences like (42c) in such a way that lexical verbs are harder to learn than the copula or that VP-stage comes later than the topic-comment stage under the topic marker analysis (Hahn 2000, Shin 2000). In the current discourse context of a question-answer pair in (42), a substantial lexical verb is already present. In this connection, we may say that spelling out of lexical verbs is harder at the early stage, and thus, producing truncated copula construction is preferred at this stage.

As for the low rate of occurrence of the extra copula in L2 English

produced by L1-Korean learners, we suspect that the effects of L1 transfer that is assumed to be responsible for the appearance of the extra copula in question are not so strong as to force the overt realization of it. This is presumably because EFL learners more or less observe that in English, clefts are less frequently used, being a non-canonical sentence type, hence the extra copula *be* will eventually disappear. As the main verb is now left alone by the ellipsis of the preceding copula carrying *tens/agr*, it would still remain uninflected, and this can possibly account for the high rate of omission of *tens/agr* in L2 English. Thus our analysis offers an alternative understanding of the previous claims that verbal inflection is more difficult to learn than the copula and that the extra copula is a mistakenly realized *tense/agr*.

Another advantage of the current analysis is found in dealing with the data observed in Ahn's (2006) corpus, in which the main verb appears as a finite form instead of the usual non-finite form, as seen in glossary below:

- (44) (na-n) kimpap mek-un kes-i-ta/ya/ ke-ya.
 I-Top kimpap eat-Past KES-be-Dec/ KE-ya
 (L2) 'I **am** ate kimpap (laver-rolled-rice).'

If an EFL learner reached a certain state and is more conscious of the past tense on the main verb in the above kind of examples, the main verb in the corresponding L2 English may well appear in the past tensed form. A negative counterpart of L2 English can also be straightforwardly derived:

- (45) (na-n) kimpap mek-un kes an-i-ta/ke an-i-ya.
 I-Top kimpap eat-Past KES not-be-Dec/KE not-be-Dec
 (L2) 'I **am** not eat/ate kimpap (laver-rolled-rice).'

Next, we touched upon the normal copula, as observed in (4), repeated below.

- (4) a. I **am** a dinosaur.
 b. You **are** my friend.
 c. She **is** pretty.

Corresponding Korean sentences are provided in (30), repeated below.

- (30) a. na-nun konglyong-*i*-ta.
 I-Top dinosaur-be-Dec
 'I am a dinosaur.' (=4a)
- b. ne-nun nay chinkwu-*i*-ta.
 you-Top my friend-be-Dec
 'You are my friend.' (=4b)
- c. kunye-nun yeppu-(**i*)-ta.
 she-Top pretty-Dec
 'She is pretty.' (=4c)

In the case of nominal predicative constructions in English (4a,b) and Korean (30a,b), the similarity of copula between English and Korean is so obvious that it appears that it can facilitate L2 learning of English. Thus, Korean EFL learners can relatively correctly produce English copula sentences like (4c) despite the fact that there appears no copula in adjectival predicative constructions in Korean, as seen in (30c). This L2 acquisition can also account for the low rate of the otherwise expected copula omission in the L2 English *be*-Adj construction.

In sum, we claim that the appearance of the extra copula *be* in L2 English of Korean learners is due to L1 transfer from the construction we dubbed 'approximate cleft'. The use of this cleft construction comes as a natural consequence of an unconscious attempt to put a focus or emphasis, which often involves copula *be* in a sentence. The normal copula *be* correctly appears in the L2 English *be*-Adj construction in most cases despite the lack of direct L1 source, which is attributed to the facilitation caused by positive L1 transfer via the similarity of copula in nominal predicative constructions between English and Korean. In addition, the current research results suggest that in the course of L2 acquisition, two languages are mixed--L1 interference and L2 knowledge with regard to tense and agreement.²¹⁾

21) An anonymous reviewer raises an intriguing question. That is, given that copula overgeneration is a pervasive phenomenon among L2 learners of English from the cross-linguistic perspective, how can the current analysis motivated from Korean extend to

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work with this general fact? As briefly summarized at the end of section 4, two interlanguages, namely, L1 interference and L2 knowledge, are said to be mixed in the course of L2 acquisition. As we see, the acquired L2 knowledge from normal copula constructions constitutes a common denominator among L2 learners with different L1 background; L1 transfer takes place from other constructions that involve copula mainly found in cleft sentences of the sort, leading to the overuse of copula in L2 English. It is also known that copula overuse is observed even among L1-English learners of English (see fn 14). In addition to (approximate) cleft sentences in this language, the following contracted copula-like forms may also be a good input that triggers the transfer in question (Kang and Lee 2008: (24)).

- (i) a. How's that grab you? 'How does that grab you?'
 b. What's that mean? 'What does that mean?'
 c. He's got it. 'He has got it.'

Thus, although the strength of the effects of L1 transfer may differ from speakers of one language to those of another in that there may be different L1 copula sources, the bottom line is that our proposed L1 copula transfer is basically responsible for the copula overuse in L2 English, as we think shown in the case of Korean and Chinese. If a language lacked cleft sentences of the sort and if native speakers of this language still produced overused copula constructions, L2 knowledge alone would be the factor responsible for the copula overuse, which then becomes close to Kang and Lee's (2008) proposal in essentials. Whether this kind of language exists or not remains to be checked, though. Putting aside more speculations, we leave this matter for further study.

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Jeong-Shik Lee

Department of English Language and Literature
Wonkwang University
344-2 Shinyong-dong, Iksan 570-749, South Korea
Phone: 82-63-850-6873
Email: jslee@wku.ac.kr

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