

The semantics of conditionals with `ketun' in Korean

Jae-II Yeom, Hongik University

Abstract

In Korean conditionals connected by '-ketun' have some peculiarities. The purpose of this paper is to investigate what they are and to specify the semantics of 'ketun'. The conditional does not allow counterfactual conditionals. This observation is closely related to a second property that there is a restriction on the moods of 'ketun' conditionals. They only allow the moods of imperative, hortative and promissive, or the modality of volition. These moods and modality have the common property that the sentences change future actions on the part of the speaker or hearer.

There is an internal restriction on the antecedent clause of a 'ketun' conditional. The event or fact denoted by the antecedent clause must be perceptible. It is not a matter of aspect, though previous studies consider aspectuality. One exception is when the subject is 2nd person. One common factor between perception and personal experience of the hearer is knowing with firsthand experience. The antecedent clause of a conditional is a restrictor/modifier of the modal base. In this respect, we can suppose that knowing with firsthand experience somehow selects the modal base for changing future actions on the part of the agent of cognition with direct experience. This study implies that conditional imperatives have implicit operator of cognition with direct experience in the antecedent clause.