

## An Argumentative Approach to Korean -*Cocha*

Kang, Sang-gu

Hansung University

### ABSTRACT

*The Journal of Studies in Language* 39.2, 191-206. The conventional approach to Korean -*cocha* assumes that it triggers an existential presupposition. It maintains that the prejacent is placed lower on the pragmatic scale of likelihood than the presupposed alternative proposition salient in the context. The current study finds that the alternative proposition is not reliably available in the contexts where the particle is used, especially those where it is contained in a negative statement denying a precondition of a contextually salient event. In order to handle these cases and other uses of the particle in a consistent manner, the paper proposes that the particle be treated as an argumentative operator marking the prejacent as a strong argument for a conclusion salient in the context. (Hansung University)

**Keywords:** focus particle, pragmatic scale, argumentation, alternative proposition, conclusion



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본인이 투고한 논문은 다른 학술지에 게재된 적이 없으며 타인의 논문을 표절하지 않았음을 서약합니다. 추후 중복게재 혹은 표절된 것으로 밝혀질 시에는 논문게재 취소와 일정 기간 논문제출의 제한 조치를 받게 됨을 인지하고 있습니다.

### 1. Introduction

According to König (1991), a typological study of focus particles, the role of focus lies in relating the semantic value of the focused expression, or the focus value, to a set of contextually relevant alternatives. Given the focus value and its alternatives, “focus particles may include or exclude these alternatives as possible values for the open sentence in their scope” (König, 1991: 33). This gives us two broad classes of focus particles: inclusive and exclusive ones. In English, examples of inclusive particles include *also*, *either*, *too*, and *let alone*, and among exclusive ones are *merely*, *only*, *exactly*, and the like.

Orthogonal to this classification, there is another based on scalarity. Scalar particles are marked by a scalar implicature they convey. To illustrate, let us compare (1) and (2), where *Sam* is being focused by *also* in (1a) and by *even* in (2a).

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- (1) a. SAM also laughed at the joke.<sup>1)</sup>  
       b. Sam laughed at the joke.  
       c. Someone other than Sam laughed at the joke.
- (2) a. Even SAM laughed at the joke.  
       b. Sam laughed at the joke.  
       c. Someone other than Sam laughed at the joke.  
       d. Sam is the least likely person to laugh at the joke.

Here, the speakers of (1a) and (2a) assert the same proposition, i.e., (1b) or (2b), and presuppose the same proposition, i.e., (1c) or (2c). However, only the speaker of (2a) implicates (2d), which is why *even* is called a scalar particle.

Scope and focus play important roles in satisfying existential presuppositions like (1c) or (2c). With (2a), the scope of the particle is over the entire sentence. Since the focus of *even* falls on *Sam*, we get an open proposition in the form of ‘*x* laughed at the joke.’ Once the context provides a salient alternative entity for the variable *x* other than Sam, the presupposition requirement is met. This alternative proposition can then be compared with the assertion, or prejacent, in terms of which is higher or lower than the other on a pragmatic scale.

Within this framework, Korean *-cocha* may be deemed as a scalar inclusive focus particle. In the literature, it has been analyzed in diverse ways (Ko, 1976; Kim, 1982; Lee, 1988; Lee, 1993; Lee, 1995; Yoon, 1993; Sung, 1997; Na, 1997; Choi, 1999; Han, 2005; Han and Do, 2010; Yae, 2012). Nonetheless, main properties of the particle are shared by most of these different analyses. Let us consider Lee’s (1993: 58-59) view of the particle.

- (3) a. Chelswu-nun mwullon      Changswu-cocha    o-ass-ta.<sup>2)</sup>  
       Cheolsoo-top not.to.mention Changsoo-cocha    come-past-dec  
       ‘Not to speak of Cheolsoo, even Changsoo came.’
- b. Chelswu-nun-khenyeng Changswu-cocha    an o-ass-ta.  
       Cheolsoo-top-far.from Changsoo-cocha not come-past-dec  
       ‘Even Changsoo didn’t come, not to speak of Cheolsoo.’

Lee assumes that the two entities mentioned in (3) have different relative standings on a pragmatic scale of expectation, depending on the polarity of the sentence. For (3a), Changsoo is on the unexpected side, while Cheolsoo is on the expected one. For (3b), however, the scale is reversed; Changsoo is expected, but Cheolsoo is not.

This analysis, however, does not work as one might expect on cases like the following, a monologue from the movie *Like You Know It All*.

1) Capitalization of the entire expression indicates prosodic prominence.

2) (3a) seems less felicitous than (3b) in the sense that it is hard to think of a proper context it can be uttered. Most of the example sentences analyzed in the literature come without the contexts they are appropriately used, which makes it difficult to assess the analyses.

- (4) sangyongi-nun ku hwu olays-tongan heymayta-ka myes nyen cen yenghwa hana-lul  
 Sangyong-top that after long-while wander-and.then a.few year before movie one-acc  
 mantul-ess-ciman amwuto mantu-n-ci-cocha molu-nun yenghwa-ka toy-ess-ta.  
 make-pst-but anyone make-rel-whether-cocha not.know-top movie-nom become-pst-dec  
 ‘After that, Sangyong strayed about for a while, but a few years ago, he made a movie, which ended  
 up being one no one knew the existence of.’

The biggest problem that (4) poses for the conventional approach to *-cocha*—such as Lee’s—is that the context does not provide for a salient propositional alternative to the prejacent. Let us assume that the focus of the particle is on *mantunci* ‘whether it had been made’ and that its scope is over the immediate clause. The alternative proposition is expected to be in the form of ‘no one knew *x*’ with the variable replaced with a salient discourse entity. The problem is that such a discourse entity does not seem available. This lack of an alternative proposition leads to another serious problem: it precludes the comparison of two or more propositions on the pragmatic scale.

One should bear in mind that just because we can devise or imagine some discourse entity that can fit for the variable, it does not mean that it is a relevant alternative to the focus value. In discussing the existential presupposition of *too* in English, Kripke (2009) points out that the particle requires an alternative to the focus value in an active context where it is either explicitly mentioned in the previous text or actively engaged in the minds of both the speaker and the addressee. As evidence, he adduces the oddity of *too* in the following sentence uttered where there isn’t enough background information about a particular person having supper in New York at the time.

- (5) Tonight SAM is having supper in New York, too.

According to Kripke, *too* is not felicitous in (5) despite the fact that there are obviously other entities having supper in the city at the moment of the utterance.

As will be shown in the subsequent discussions, cases like (4) are far from marginal. With cases like (3), where the context provides for an alternative proposition, and (4), where it doesn’t, we need a new approach to *-cocha* that does not require such an alternative proposition. The current paper attempts to provide an account of these cases from the perspective of the theory of argumentation. This approach centers on the relation between an argument and a conclusion identified within a discourse: an argument provides support for a conclusion. For (4), the speaker is seen to present the prejacent, ‘no one knew the existence of the movie,’ as a supporting argument for a negative conclusion, e.g., ‘no one saw the movie.’

Korean *-cocha* is a particle relating multiple propositions within a discourse. Hence, in order to get to the bottom of its meaning, it is essential that we examine discourse examples with rich contexts. Throughout the paper, discourse examples sourced from movies will be examined in detail.<sup>3)</sup> The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 critically discusses previous research on *-cocha*. Section 3 presents a proposal based on the theory of argumentation. Section 4 concludes the paper.

3) In the 132 Korean movies the author personally watched, there were ten tokens of *-cocha*. Out of these, eight are introduced and discussed in the paper.

## 2. Issues with Previous Research

In this section, we discuss some issues which revolve around the main properties previous studies on *-cocha* ascribe to the particle. There are three main properties that deserve careful examination: additivity, scalarity, and negativity. By addressing these issues, we can define the problems and find ways to solve them.

Before we delve into each issue, the purview of the current paper needs to be made clear. In the literature, it is typically the case that various uses of *-cocha* are addressed altogether. The current paper, however, excludes from the discussion what Yae (2012) terms as its emphatic use. The following is such an example (Yae, 2012: 250).

- (6) olaynman-ey kokwuk      ttang-ul palp-uni      tongney kangaci-cocha pankap-kwuna.  
 long.while-at home.country land-acc tread-now.that village dog-cocha      welcome-dec  
 ‘Visiting my home country in a long while, I’m glad to see a dog.’

Such use is typically found in literary texts. Since they often diverge from its more canonical uses and reflect the author’s liberal appropriation of the particle, they aren’t addressed in the subsequent discussions.<sup>4)</sup>

### 2.1 Additivity

By additivity, it is meant that the use of *-cocha* requires a propositional alternative to the prejacent of the sentence containing it. When it comes to additivity, none of the previous studies denies that it is a main property of *-cocha*. There is a study which attempts to adduce evidence of this. Yoon (1993) compares the judgments of (7a) and (7b) and concludes that without an alternative proposition to the prejacent, *-cocha* is not acceptable.

- (7) a. mokyok-unkhenyeng sayswu-cocha      hanpen mos      hay-ss-upnita.  
 bath-far.from      washing.face-cocha once      cannot do-pst-dec  
 ‘Not to mention bath, I couldn’t even wash my face once.’  
 b. \*talun ke-n molla-to      sayswu-cocha      hanpen mos      hay-ss-upnita.  
 other-thing-top not.know-though washing.face-cocha once      cannot do-pst-dec  
 ‘I don’t know about other things, but I couldn’t even wash my face once.’

There are two problems with (7). First, at least some speakers find both sentences odd. The culprit appears to be the use of *hanpen* ‘once’ used along with *-cocha*.<sup>5)</sup> Secondly, the insertion of the phrase *talun ken mollato* ‘I don’t know about other things’ itself may contribute to the infelicity of (7b). This phrase can be used when the speaker is unsure of what she asserts, and whether she did nothing but washing her face is not something she can be unsure of in ordinary circumstances. This can explain why (8) is considered odd, which is an altered version of (7b) where *hanpen* is dropped and *-cocha* is replaced by the accusative marker or removed.

4) The Grand Dictionary of Korean (Urimal Keun Sajeon), published by the Korean Language Society (Hangeul Hakhoe), treats this use as separate from the main use of *-cocha*.

5) Currently, I do not have an answer to why the adverb is not congruent with *-cocha*.

- (8) \*talun ke-n molla-to sayswu(-lul) mos hay-ss-upnita.  
 other thing-top not.know-though washing.face(-acc) cannot do-pst-dec  
 ‘I don’t know about other things, but I couldn’t wash my face.’

Contrary to Yoon’s claim, as was briefly pointed out in Section 1, there are cases where an alternative proposition to the prejacent of the clause containing the particle is not available in the active context. Let us discuss the matter in more detail. With (4), under the assumption that an alternative proposition is of the form ‘no one knew *x*,’ some might contend that even though not stated explicitly, a proposition like ‘no one knew where the movie was shown’ can serve as an alternative proposition and can be compared with the prejacent.

Aside from the issue of whether such a proposition is in the active context, this contention is problematic in that the two propositions are not on a par and hence not amenable to comparison. We cannot seek a movie if we do not know whether it exists. In other words, ‘knowing whether the movie had been made’ is a precondition of ‘knowing where the movie was shown.’ To see that the former is a precondition of the latter, consider the following.

- (9) #I don’t know whether such a movie was made. Let’s see if the movie is showing around here.

This consideration renders ‘no one knew where the movie was shown’ unsuitable as a proper alternative to ‘no one knew whether the movie had been made.’ Even if we accept the former as an alternative proposition to the latter, it is hard to assess which is higher on the pragmatic scale of likelihood. This is because you cannot estimate the likelihood of the former independently of that of the latter, since the latter is part of the former in a sense. Note that this kind of problem does not arise with (3), where ‘Cheolsoo came’ and ‘Changyong came’ can be separately evaluated.

The case of (4) is akin to the phenomenon Horn (1985) terms metalinguistic negation, illustrated in (10).

- (10) The king of France is not bald. There is no king of France.

The first sentence presupposes ‘there is a king of France.’ Since presuppositions, unlike assertions, are not considered a target of negation, the denial of the presupposition in (10) is distinguished from ordinary negation.

Francis (2019) discusses the case of *even* used in a denial of a presupposition with the following example (Francis, 2019: 24).

- (11) A: Did Kenji’s wife come to the picnic?  
 B: Kenji isn’t even married!

Here, B cannot answer A’s question because, if it is true that Kenji does not have a wife, one of the preconditions of ‘Kenji’s wife came to the party’ and ‘Kenji’s wife didn’t come to the party’ is not met. In (10) and (11), the presuppositions are triggered by definite descriptions, i.e., *the king of France* and *Kenji’s wife*. A presupposition can arise without such a trigger and subsequently be denied, as shown in (12). The following dialogue, which is taken from the movie *8 Heads in a Duffle Bag*, shows an engaged couple in the middle of an argument.

(12) A: I think I want a divorce.

B: What? A divorce? We're not even married.

Here, the word *divorce* lexically presupposes that A and B are married. B's response indicates that divorce is impossible for them since the most basic precondition for it is not met.

Francis notes that with the focus on *married*, the prejacent of B's sentence, 'Kenji isn't married,' has no apparent alternative proposition in the context. Assuming that an adjective can activate its antonym in the interlocutors' minds, she ponders 'Kenji isn't unmarried' as a possible propositional alternative. However, this does not work since the two propositions contradict each other. She ponders another candidate, 'Kenji isn't dating.' This is beset with similar problems as those pointed out with 'no one knew where the movie was shown' above. 'Kenji isn't dating' isn't in the active context. Moreover, 'Kenji isn't dating' is not on a par with 'Kenji isn't married' in that they are not mutually exclusive; it is possible for Kenji to be not married and not dating at the same time.

Using *-cocha* in denying a precondition of a proposition at issue in the discourse is not uncommon. In the following interview segment, the speaker talks about how she is enjoying her first family camping, which was made possible when a local high school held a family camping event on its campus.

- (13) wuli kacok-ul teyli-ko ilehkey khaymphing-ila-n ke-l haypo-n cek-i  
 we family-acc bring-and like.this camping-called-rel thing-acc experience-rel time-nom  
 eps-eyo. ayey sayngkak-cocha an hay-ss-unikka-yo.  
 not.exist-dec at.all thought-cocha not do-pst-because-dec  
 'We've never gone camping as a family before, for we've never even thought about it.'  
 (<https://news.kbs.co.kr/news/view.do?ncd=7697372>)

Here, *-cocha* is attached to the noun *sayngkak* 'thought' within a negative sentence. The speaker is employing the particle and the negation to deny a basic precondition of the proposition 'we have gone camping before,' and thereby provide a main reason why the speaker has never done family camping. Thinking about camping is a basic precondition of going camping in the sense that, to be able to accomplish something, a thought about it has to enter your mind first.

The following, taken from the movie *Old Miss Diary*, is another example of *-cocha* being attached to *sayngkak* 'thought.' The speaker is a voice actor and is narrating for a scene in a horror movie where one of the characters encounters a ghost-like presence.

- (14) na-nun ku swunkan-ul yengwenhi ic-cimosha-l kes-ita. kongpho. kulena na-n ku swunkan  
 I-top the moment-acc forever forget-cannot-rel thing-dec horror but I-top the moment  
 mwusepta-nun sayngkak-cocha-to ha-lswueps-ess-ta.  
 afraid-rel thought-cocha do-cannot-pst-dec  
 'I'll never forget that moment. The horror. But I couldn't even think of being afraid at the moment.'

The first sentence conveys a current assessment of an experience which happened at some time in the past. The sentence

containing *-cocha* gives the audience a description of what the experience was like at the moment of the incident. The negative sentence contains the particle after *sayngkak*, by which the speaker is seen to deny a precondition of an act characteristic of a scared person, such as screaming. In other words, by saying that a thought of fear didn't enter her mind, the speaker indicates that he couldn't scream, freak out, and so on. Upon hearing the last sentence, the audience can understand that the sheer terror of the situation petrified the person.

A similar analysis of *sayngkakcocha* is offered in Lee (1995: 294). According to Han and Do (2010), which catalogued the expressions *-cocha* is attached to in the Sejong Corpus and counted the frequency of each, *sayngkak* is the third most frequent, appearing with the particle 248 times out of 13,248 tokens of the particle. We can surmise that these cases are analyzable in the same way as (13) and (14) above. Note that in (4), (13), and (14), a salient alternative proposition that can be compared with the prejacent is not identifiable in the active context. From this discussion, we can conclude that additivity is not a necessary component of the meaning of *-cocha*.

## 2.2 Scalarity

As was touched upon in Section 1, the pragmatic scale associated with *-cocha* is often characterized in terms of likelihood. Almost all of the studies on *-cocha* adopt this scale even though some use the term “expectation” in its stead or by conflating the two. One notable exception is the informativeness scale espoused by Han (2005) and Han and Do (2010). Both studies base the analysis of *-cocha* on Kay's (1990) scalar model approach. Kay defines informativeness as “a relation holding between two propositions relative to a scalar model SM, in which the more informative one unilaterally entails the less informative one” (Kay, 1990: 69).

Let us see how the accounts based on the scale of likelihood and those based on the scale of informativeness work for the following discourse, taken from the movie *Please Teach Me English*. The speaker is at a dinner with her colleagues, where the boss spins a bottle to pick a random person who will learn English on behalf of the whole team of monolingual civil servants.

- (15) na-n celtaylo ani-pnita. ku hunha-n cwulpanchang, chengsopanchang-ey-to ppophi-n cek  
 I-top never not-dec that common-rel head.of.line head.of.cleaning-at-also get.picked-rel time  
 eps-ko pokkwen-ul sa-to 500-wen ccali-cocha an mac-nun cayswu om pwuth-un  
 not.exist-and lottery-acc buy-though 500-won worth-cocha not hit-rel luck scabies stick-rel  
 yeca-lapnita.  
 woman-dec  
 ‘I’m not the one. I’ve never been picked as the leader of any group or cleaning team. When I buy  
 a lottery ticket, I never win even a ₩500 ticket. I’m just downright unlucky.’

Let us assume that *-cocha* in (15) has its scope over the immediate clause, i.e., *500wen ccalicocha an mac* and that its focus falls on *500wen ccali*. With ‘I don’t win a ₩500 ticket’ as the prejacent, we can easily get an alternative proposition of the form ‘I don’t win x.’ For one, ‘I don’t win a ₩1,000 ticket’ can be an alternative proposition to be compared with the prejacent on a pragmatic scale.



If the scale is of likelihood, the prejacent can be said to be less likely than the alternative proposition. If we compare the two in terms of informativeness, however, it is harder to maintain that the prejacent is more informative than the alternative. Since the notion of informativeness is based on the relation of entailment, ‘I don’t win a ₩500 ticket’ should entail ‘I don’t win a ₩1,000 ticket,’ but it doesn’t. Therefore, (15) is a challenge to accounts adopting the scale of informativeness, but not to those centering on the scale of likelihood. However, a case like (15) is a counterexample to Kim (1982), who claims that the prejacent of the clause containing *-cocha* is placed near, but not at the end of, the scale of likelihood. Considering that the ₩500 ticket is the cheapest one in the lottery, a sound account of *-cocha* should be able to accommodate cases where the prejacent is put at an extreme end of the scale.

Note that in (15), the focused expression involves a numeral, which makes it easy for discourse participants to bring up other numerals in their mind and compare them along a scale. Cases like the following, taken from the movie *Running Turtle*, pose a problem for accounts couched in either the scale of likelihood or that of informativeness.

- (16) haciman kyengchal-un kho aph-eyse songkithay-lul nohchi-n tey ie hyencang cosa-cocha  
 but police-top nose before-at Song.Kitae-acc lose-rel thing then site investigation-cocha  
 keyullilha-koiss-e songkithay-lul cap-ul uyci-ka eps-ta-nun...  
 neglect-prog-conn Song.Kitae-acc catch-rel will-nom not.exist-dec-rel  
 ‘But the police has failed to capture Song right before their eyes, and they are neglecting to  
 investigate the crime scene, so they don’t have the will to arrest him...’

(16) is a news report on TV, which is cut off the scene before the reporter finishes the sentence. To understand the use of *-cocha* in (16), we need to first decide on its scope and focus. Let us assume that the scope is over the immediate clause. Unlike in (15), the particle’s focus is not likely to be *hyencang cosa* ‘crime scene investigation.’ Confining its focus to the noun phrase will force a conventional approach to seek an alternative proposition of the form ‘the police neglected x,’ and the active context does not seem to provide one.

To solve the problem, we can expand the focus from the noun phrase to the verb phrase or even to the clause, as suggested by Sung (1997) and Choi (1999). Then, the previous clause can be considered a candidate for the alternative proposition to the prejacent. Hence, ‘the police lost Song right before their eyes’ can be compared with ‘the police is neglecting the crime scene investigation’ in terms of likelihood or informativeness. An entailment relation does not seem to obtain between the two, which poses a serious problem for an account based on the scale of informativeness.

An account adopting the scale of likelihood does not seem to work smoothly, either, because the two situations described by the propositions are hard to compare in terms of which is less likely. A conventional approach should claim that ‘the police is neglecting the crime scene investigation’ is less likely than ‘the police lost Song right before their eyes,’ but that does not seem convincing. During Song’s escape, there were four cops confronting him, and three of them got seriously injured, which may well be considered as highly unusual to the extent that it is deemed more unlikely than the police neglecting the crime scene.

The problems posed by (15) and (16) for the conventional approach to *-cocha* add to those concerning the availability of an alternative proposition that can be compared with the prejacent. When an alternative proposition is not identifiable, it is hard to maintain that the particle conveys a scalar implicature, since no comparison can be made. The



current approach based on argumentation can handle (15) and (16) in this way. For (15), the speaker advances the prejacent as a strong argument for the conclusion, 'I am not lucky.' As for (16), the reporter puts forth the prejacent to support the conclusion, 'the police does not have the will to catch Song.' Here the prejacent is considered a strong argument for such a conclusion on the ground that investigating the crime scene thoroughly is the basic and necessary step for anyone who hopes to catch the criminal. By denying the basic precondition, the reporter is casting his doubts on the fulfillment of such an outcome.

### 2.3 Negativity

Most studies on *-cocha* recognize its affinity to negation. As (16) shows, however, its uses are not confined to negative sentences. In the literature, the particle is associated with negativity in various ways. For instance, Ko (1976) ascribes the speaker's discontent to *-cocha*.

- (17) kulen phwungsok-un i kocang-eyse-cocha poki-ka himtul-ta.  
 such customs-top this town-at-cocha see-nom difficult-dec  
 'Such customs are hard to find even in this town.'

Ko states that (17) conveys a sense of regret on the part of the speaker. However, sentences like (17) can be uttered without a speaker's negative sentiment; for instance, it could be used in an academic report where the neutral and objective stance of the speaker is the norm.

On the other hand, Na (1997: 220) attributes a negative implicatum to the following sentence.

- (18) pwuin-cocha cikcang saynghwal-ul ha-n-ta.  
 wife-cocha corporate life-acc do-pres-dec  
 'Even his wife goes to work.'

She claims that (18) conveys the idea that the family is financially struggling. While it is a possible interpretation, she does not provide a context rich enough to verify it.

Lee (1988: 216) claims that *-cocha* conveys the speaker's negative attitude toward the prejacent and adduces her judgments of the following sentences as evidence.

- (19) a. yengi-nun cawenpongsa-cocha ha-cianh-nun-ta.  
 Yeongee-top volunteering-cocha do-not-pres-dec  
 'Yeongee does not even do volunteering work.'  
 b. \*yengi-nun sastaycil-cocha ha-cianh-nun-ta.  
 Yeongee-top finger.thrusting-cocha do-not-pres-dec  
 'Yeongee does not even thrust a finger at someone's face.'  
 c. \*nay atul-un cenghak-cocha pat-cimosha-yss-ta.

My son-top suspension-cocha receive-cannot-pst-dec  
 ‘My son couldn’t even get the suspension.’

Lee argues that (19b) is ungrammatical because thrusting a finger at someone’s face is considered negative and Yeongee not doing it is considered positive. Contrary to Lee’s judgment, *-cocha* can be attached to *sastaycil* ‘thrusting one’s finger’ in a negative sentence, as is attested by the following sentence in a news report about people traveling to visit their families over the Chuseok holidays.

- (20) hantalumey kohyang-ulo ka-kophu-n kwuysengkayk-uy kwasok wuncen-ulo chwutol  
 straight.through hometown-to go-want-rel people.going.home-of speed driving-for collision  
 sako-ka piccy-ess-ciman neknkha-n maum-ey sastaycil-cocha eps-upnita.  
 accident-nom result-pst-but generous-rel heart-at finger.thrusting-cocha not.exist-dec  
 ‘There is a collision due to speeding of a driver heading for their home with a wish to get there in a bound,  
 but there is not even finger thrusting thanks to generous hearts (of those involved).’  
 ([https://news.sbs.co.kr/amp/news.amp?news\\_id=N0311668352](https://news.sbs.co.kr/amp/news.amp?news_id=N0311668352))

The speaker is reporting from a helicopter while watching a scene of an accident on the highway. The last clause of the sentence contains *sastaycilcocha*, along with the negative predicate *eps* ‘not exist.’

Lee’s judgment of (19c) also deserves a reconsideration. If we change *patcimoshayssta* into *patcianhassta*, as in (21), the sentence becomes acceptable.

- (21) nay atul-un cenghak-cocha pat-cianh-ass-ta.  
 My son-top suspension-cocha receive-not-pst-dec  
 ‘My son didn’t even get the suspension.’

This is because unlike *patcianhassta*, *patcimoshayssta* conveys the idea that the speaker sought the suspension, which is odd in itself considering that the speaker’s own son is at issue here. In other words, the oddity of (19c) may not necessarily be due to the presence of *-cocha*, but to the choice of the predicate.

The discussion of Lee’s examples suggests that the speaker’s personal sentiment toward the preagent as unfavorable may not bear on the semantics of *-cocha*. In fact, the particle can be used in a context where the speaker is neutral about the situation described by the preagent. The following dialogue, taken from the movie *Mokpo the Harbor*, is a case in point.

- (22) A: hancwungil samkwuk-un kongco-ha-ey chimmoltoy-n senpak-ul  
 Korea.China.Japan three.countries-top cooperation-under-at be.sunk-rel vessel-acc  
 inyangha-lyeko ay-lul sse-ss-ciman  
 salvage-in.order.to effort-acc spend-pst-but  
 ‘Korea, China, and Japan worked hard together to pull up the sunken ship, but’

B: chimmol    cicem-cocha    alanay-cimosha-n    chay    kyelkwuk    hayphuning-ulo    kkuthna-ss-cyo.  
 submersion point-cocha find.out-cannot-rel state ultimately event-to    end-pst-dec  
 ‘they couldn’t even find the point of submersion, and it all ended up a waste.’

B, a prosecutor, finishes the sentence started by A, a cop. They are after a criminal syndicate, and they are smiling throughout the conversation because they just found out what it is up to. Importantly for our discussion, they do not show any discontent or disfavor with the fact that the search did not find out where the ship sank.

It is clear that the notion of negativity plays a crucial part in the usage of *-cocha*. The question is how to incorporate it into the semantics of the particle. The discussion above shows that previous attempts to define it in terms of the speaker’s subjective sentiment or attitude toward the prejacent are not quite adequate for handling the uses of the particle. In Section 3, it will be proposed that the negativity involving the particle manifests through the conclusion the prejacent is oriented towards.

### 3. An Argumentative Approach to *-Cocha*

#### 3.1 Theory of Argumentation

According to Ducrot (1980), certain expressions have argumentative functions in their semantics. For French *mais* ‘but’ in *X mais Y*, for instance, there is a conclusion *r* which *p*, the proposition expressed by *X*, is an argument for and which *q*, the proposition *Y* expresses, is an argument against. What the conclusion is will depend on the speaker and the speech situation.

In this framework, Anscombe and Ducrot (1983) introduce an analysis of *presque* ‘almost’ and *à peine* ‘barely’ with close attention to its argumentative nature. Consider (23a) and (23b) (Anscombe and Ducrot, 1983: 80).

- (23) a. <sup>#</sup>Il fait presque nuit, allume seulement tes veilleuses.  
           it do almost night alight only your night.lights  
           ‘It is almost night, turn on only your night lights.’  
       b. <sup>#</sup>Il fait à peine nuit, allume tes veilleuses.  
           it do barely night alight your night.lights  
           ‘It is barely night, turn on your night lights.’

Neither sentence is acceptable as it is. However, by removing *seulement* ‘only,’ (23a) becomes felicitous. As for (23b), adding the said adverb can make it acceptable. The literal meaning of *presque* ‘almost’ concerns a state of not quite reaching the standard in question. However, it is associated with a positive state of affairs in (23a), namely, ‘it is dark enough.’ In contrast, in (23b) *à peine* ‘barely’ suggests a negative state of affairs, that is, ‘it is not dark enough.’

The negativity associated with *à peine* in French is also seen in *barely* in English. Huddleston and Pullum (2002) acknowledge its negative nature by including it in the group of what they term “approximate negators,” whose members include *few*, *little*, *rarely*, *seldom*, *hardly*, and *scarcely*. They adduce the following example as evidence (Huddleston

and Pullum, 2002: 820).

(24) He's probably lying. It's barely conceivable that he could have done it himself.

They state that (24) suggests that the speaker is inclined to believe he couldn't have done it himself. Horn (2002) recognizes the negativity of *barely* and puts forth the following example (Horn, 2002: 57).

(25) Barely/\*Almost had we arrived when an unearthly scream rang out.

The behavior of *barely* resembles other negative adverbials in that it can be fronted and cause the inversion of the subject and the auxiliary. This is in clear contrast with the behavior of *almost* in (25).

From the perspective of the theory of argumentation, the negative nature of *à peine* in French and *barely* in English can be incorporated into the conclusion that the prejacent supports. In other words, with *à peine*, the speaker of (23b) advances an argument to support a negative conclusion, e.g., 'it is not dark enough.' Likewise, the current paper claims that the speaker of a sentence containing *-cocha* puts forth a strong argument for a negative conclusion identified in the context. Note that the negativity inherent in *à peine* and *barely* may not have anything to do with the speaker's personal sentiment toward the prejacent, as attested in (23b) and (25).

### 3.2 Analyzing *-Cocha* as an Argumentative Operator

As was discussed in Section 2, some uses of *-cocha* do not involve a propositional alternative to the prejacent, thereby obviating the need for a pragmatic scale on which multiple propositions salient in the active context can be compared. On the other hand, negativity of the particle is regarded as an important component of its meaning. Within the framework of an argumentative approach, the speaker is seen to use *-cocha* for the purpose of marking the prejacent as a strong argument for a negative conclusion made salient by the context. Given the nature of argumentation, the stronger the argument is, the more pertinent the particle will be considered.

Identifying a conclusion for *-cocha* is not an arduous process. Often it is explicitly mentioned in the discourse. In (13), the conclusion is 'we never tried camping,' and in (15), the conclusion, 'I am not lucky,' is also stated clearly. In (16), the conclusion, 'the police does not have the will to catch Song,' is mentioned right after the clause containing the particle.

In the other discourse examples, conclusions are not explicit, but not hard to identify. In (4), we can easily detect the speaker's intent of stressing how Sangyong's movie flopped, and hence take 'no one saw the movie' as the conclusion. In (14), considering that it is a narration over a scene where the character faces a ghost, the conclusion should be 'I didn't scream.' With (20), befitting the headline, 'Long Chuseok Holidays and Relaxed Traffic on the Highway,' the reporter is describing the traffic on the highway as not too hectic, and we can safely take 'there isn't a conflict between drivers involved in the accident' as the conclusion. In (22), the conclusion, 'the three countries didn't salvage the ship,' is implicit, but obvious.

The current approach contrasts with the conventional one in non-trivial ways. For instance, to explain the role of

*-cocha* in the following discourse, taken from the movie *Hanbando*, the conventional approach will take the first clause of the sentence containing the particle as an alternative proposition being compared with the prejacent.

- (26) kulehtamyen kwukcengwencang-kkeyse-nun kwukka-uy wunmyeng-i kelli-n mwulken swusong-ey  
 then NIS.director-hon-top nation-of fate-nom hang-rel object transport-at  
 silphayha-si-ess-ko, 40 sikan-i nem-tolok ku huncek-cocha chac-cimosha-ko kyeyisi-kunyo. i sikan  
 fail-hon-pst-and 40 hour-nom pass-till the trace-cocha find-cannot-and exist-dec this hour  
 ihwu kwukcengwencang kyelcay sahang-un chonglisil-eyse choycong sungin-ul  
 after NIS.director decision item-top prime.minister.office-at final approval-acc  
 pat-tolok ha-si-psio.  
 receive-must do-hon-dec  
 ‘Then, Director of National Intelligence Service has failed to transport an object the fate of our  
 nation depends on, and couldn’t even found its trace for over 40 hours. From now on, Director of  
 National Intelligence Service will have to go through my approval before making any decision.’

The object which the speaker, the Prime Minister, refers to is the seal of state which has just been discovered after missing for almost a century. In the middle of transporting it from the site of its discovery, it got stolen. If we treat ‘the NIS Director failed to transport the seal of state’ as a salient propositional alternative to ‘the NIS Director couldn’t find the trace for more than 40 hours,’ then we need to make sure that the latter is ranked lower than the former on the pragmatic scale of likelihood. It is, however, not evident that the latter is truly less likely than the former.

The argumentative approach regards the prejacent as a strong argument toward a conclusion, e.g., ‘the NIS Director is not going to find it.’ There is a huge stake on the recovery of the recently stolen seal of state, and in order to retrieve it, they have to know how and where it got stolen in the first place. By denying the necessary precondition of the outcome of recovering the seal of state, the Prime Minister reinforces his support for the unfulfilled outcome.

Identifying a conclusion, however, may require taking into account not only the sentences adjacent to the clause containing the particle. Let us consider the following exchange, taken from the movie *Glove*, between an announcer and a sportscaster in a live broadcast of a baseball game.

- (27) A: kyencey tongcak-ul chwuyha-ypo-nun chamyengcay senswu, sangtanghi cichy-e poi-pnita  
 pickoff motion-acc take-try-rel Cha.Myungjae player highly tired-conn look-dec  
 ‘Cha fakes a pickoff throw. He looks very tired.’  
 B: cikum-yo, i chamyengcay senswu-nun mawuntu-ey s-e-iss-nun kes-cocha-to  
 now-dec this Cha.Myungjae player-top mound-at stand-conn-exist-rel thing-cocha-also  
 himtu-pnita, sasil.  
 difficult-dec fact  
 ‘The fact is, it is hard for him to even stand on the mound right now.’

To get at the intention behind the sportscaster’s use of *-cocha*, we need to go back to his earlier comment, (28), which is

several sentences apart from the sentence containing *-cocha*.

- (28) B: cey-ka phantanha-l ttay-nun cikum hankyey thwukwuswu-ey wa-ss-eyo.  
 I-nom judge-rel time-top now limit throw.count-at come-pst-dec  
 ‘The way I see it, he’s reached his pitch limit.’

After uttering (28), the sportscaster says that the pitcher has thrown 123 pitches. With this information, we can see why he used *-cocha* in (27). The prejacent, ‘it is difficult for him to stand on the mound,’ is a strong argument for the conclusion, ‘he cannot throw any more.’ The reasoning goes like this: in order for the pitcher to continue to throw, he needs at the minimum the strength to stand on the mound. By denying the precondition of throwing, the speaker undercuts the prospect of the pitcher continuing to throw.

One might argue that the conventional approach can handle this case by holding that ‘it is difficult for the pitcher to throw’ is compared with the prejacent as an alternative proposition. This analysis has to contend that the two propositions are on a par, but they are not. Being able to throw presupposes being able to stand. The failure of the latter precludes the former, and in this sense the two are not independent of each other. Not only are they not on an equal footing, one’s dependence on the other renders assessing the relative difference of likelihood between the two unfeasible.

The argumentative approach can elucidate the intent behind the speaker’s use of *-cocha* better than the conventional one. Let us examine the following conversation between a father and a daughter from the movie *A Tale of Two Sisters*.

- (29) A: swumi-ya. ney-ka na-hanthey manhi hwana iss-nun ke al-a. nay-ka nappun  
 Soomee-voc you-nom I-to much get.angry exist-rel thing know-dec I-nom bad  
 appa-lanun kes-to al-ko.  
 father-rel thing-also know-and  
 ‘Soomee. I know you’re very angry at me. I also know I’m a bad father.’  
 B: nappun appa-cocha an toy-canha.  
 bad father-cocha not become-aren’t.you  
 ‘You’re not even a bad father, aren’t you.’

Under the assumption that the particle has its focus on *nappun appa* ‘bad father,’ the conventional approach will take the implicit, but salient, proposition, ‘you are not a good father’ as the propositional alternative to the prejacent and compare the two in terms of likelihood. From the perspective of the argumentative approach, however, it is important to get at the third proposition, i.e., the conclusion. From the father’s remark, it is clear that he is not a good father. Using *-cocha* after *nappun appa* is an effective maneuver on the part of the speaker to deliver the conclusion, ‘you are not father,’ which is an ultimate blow to her father. The argumentative approach can shed light on this aspect of the discourse involving the particle.

## 4. Concluding Remarks

Focus particles are discourse operators relating two or more propositions within a discourse. Korean is a language with a rich inventory of discourse particles. Understanding each requires a thorough analysis of the environments surrounding the particle, not merely the sentence containing it. Previous research has been lacking in this regard, with a notable exception of Choi (1999). In this paper, we tried to avoid addressing individual sentences introduced in previous studies; because they typically do not come in particular contexts, it is hard to evaluate the claims regarding them. Instead, we have discussed mainly discourse examples taken from movies.

The discourse examples help us see the negative nature of the particle more vividly. Its negative character is seen most starkly in examples where it is used within a clause in which a precondition of an event is denied. The negativity can neither be defined in syntactic terms, nor in terms of the speaker's personal sentiments. The argumentative approach offers a solution to the problem of incorporating the negativity into the semantics of *-cocha*: the particle marks the prejacent as a strong argument for a negative conclusion salient in the context.

There are further issues worthy of looking into. Since Korean speakers are given an array of focus particles to choose from, we need to investigate why *-cocha* is selected in a given discourse over other comparable particles, such as *-kkaci* and *-mace*. Each particle, of course, will have to be thoroughly understood in order for such an investigation to be feasible. I leave these for future research.

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Kang, Sang-gu, Professor  
116 Samseongyoro-16gil, Seongbuk-gu, Seoul 02876, Republic of Korea  
Division of Creative Humanities, Hansung University  
E-mail: rockroach@hansung.ac.kr