Intentionality and Conative Constructions in English*

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Juwon Lee (2016), Intentionality and Conative Constructions in English. Studies in Linguistics 41, 327-356. The primary purpose of this paper is to investigate the relation between intentionality and affectedness. Specifically, I make a semantic generalization called the Complementarity of Intentionality and Affectedness (CIA), which states that intentionality and affectedness cannot be entailed in a minimal accomplishment predicate (the combination of a verb and its complement(s) which is a causative accomplishment) at the same time. This mutual exclusivity of entailments of intentionality and affectedness is observed in Korean accomplishment predicates, which have multiple readings in which either the subject is necessarily intentional or the patient is necessarily affected, but not both. After the introduction of the CIA, I argue that English conative alternations are an instance of the CIA: The conative constructions (e.g. He kicked at the ball) entail intentionality, but not affectedness; on the contrary the corresponding transitive verb constructions (e.g. He kicked the ball) entail affectedness, but not intentionality. Finally, I

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discuss some predictions of the generalization and argue that the CIA can be further supported cross-linguistically. (Myongji University)

**Key Words:** conative, intentionality, affectedness, non-culmination, failed attempt, agent control

1. **Introduction**

This paper investigates the relation between intentionality (which can be defined as the agent’s mental state of being intentional) and affectedness (which is usually considered to be a persistent change in or impingement of an event participant) involved in the so-called conative alternations in English (see the notion of intention in Anscombe, 2000; Searle, 1983; Jaszczolt, 1999, and that of affectedness in Tenny, 1987; Beavers, 2006, 2013; among others). An example of the conative alternation is given in (1) (see more English conative constructions in Ikegami, 1985; Levin, 1993; Goldberg, 1995; Broccias, 2001; Beavers, 2006; Kim, 2009; Perek & Lemmens, 2010; Vincent, 2013; *inter alia*).

1 a. Alice kicked the ball.
   b. Alice kicked at the ball.

The sentence in (1a) is a typical transitive verb construction and the sentence in (1b) is the corresponding conative construction. Syntactically, in both variants the causer is realized as the subject of the verb *kicked*. In (1a) the patient *the ball* is realized as the direct object of the verb, but in (1b) the patient *the ball* is realized as the oblique object marked by the preposition *at*.

The two variants of a conative alternation are generally

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1 Since the referent of the NP *the ball* is not necessarily affected in the conative sentence (see the example in (3a) and more discussion in Section 4 below), the oblique object *the ball* is, strictly speaking, not patient. The ‘potential
assumed to have different meanings in terms of intentionality and affectedness, while they basically describe the agent’s action associated with the event of the verb. For instance, in (1a) the inherent result of the accomplishment predicate (*kicked the ball*) necessarily obtains (i.e. the ball must be kicked), but whether the subject intended to kick the ball is not specified. By contrast, in (1b) the inherent result of the accomplishment predicate (*kicked at the ball*) does not necessarily obtain (i.e. Alice may miss making contact), but the subject must have an intention with the kicking event. The conative construction (1b) can be paraphrased as something like *Alice tried to kick the ball* (Levin, 1993: 6; Broccias, 2003: 1; Beavers, 2006: 6–7). In other words, the conative variant represents an attempted action without specifying whether or not the inherent result of the predicate occurs in the actual world (see also Levin, 1993: 42; Goldberg, 1995: 63; Pinker, 2013: 122; Vincent, 2013: 272; *inter alia*).

Similarly, but differently, the inherent result of the accomplishment predicate of a Korean transitive verb construction may or may not occur in the actual world for the sentence to be true (see Park, 1993; Lee, 2004; Lee, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016). When the inherent result of the predicate must actually occur, this reading does not require the subject’s intention with the event of the predicate. In contrast, when the subject’s intention regarding the event of the predicate is required, the inherent result of the event does not necessarily occur in the actual world (see details in Section 3). Based on this pattern, I propose in this paper the Complementarity of

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patient’ (or the ‘receiver’ of the action as used in Hopper & Thompson, 1980) would be a more appropriate term for the oblique object. However, in this paper, for the simplicity I use ‘patient’ as a cover term for genuine or potential patient.

2 The sentence, *Alice kicked at the ball again*, seems to be ambiguous between the repetitive reading that entails that Alice kicked at the ball and presupposes that Alice kicked at the ball before, and the restitutive reading which entails that Alice kicked at the ball and presupposes that the ball was previously kicked at (see the accomplishment test using *again* in McCawley, 1968; Dowty, 1979; Stechow, 1996).

3 It is known that conative is named after Latin *conor/conari* ‘to try’.
Intentionality and Affectedness (CIA); simply put, intentionality and affectedness cannot be entailed (or specified) in a minimal accomplishment predicate (the combination of a verb and its complement(s) which is a causative accomplishment) at the same time. I argue then that the English conative alternations are an instance of the Complementarity of Intentionality and Affectedness, thus supporting this generalization, albeit the English conative constructions and Korean transitive verb constructions have different syntactic forms and specific constraints. A central purpose of linguistics is to specify what is possible and what is impossible in natural languages (see e.g. the issue of manner/result complementarity in Rappaport Hovav & Levin, 2010; Beavers & Koontz-Garboden, 2012). In this respect, I argue that the CIA can provide an important insight into how the meanings of accomplishment predicates are structured in natural languages.

In Section 2, I discuss what is truly conative construction in English. In Section 3, the Complementarity of Intentionality and Affectedness (CIA) is proposed based on some Korean non-culmination interpretations (on which the inherent result of a predicate does not obtain at all or comes about only partially). Then in Section 4 I argue that the CIA figures into the interpretations of English conative alternations. In Section 5 I show that what is entailed in conative construction is the agent’s intention, rather than the agent control. Section 6 tests some predictions that the CIA makes as to a kind of English conative construction before concluding in Section 7.

2. Two Types of *At*-constructions

The English conative constructions all include a PP marked by the preposition *at*, but it is worth noting that a sentence with a PP headed by *at* is not always a conative construction. In this section, I discuss different types of sentences having a PP headed by the preposition *at*. The so-called *at*-constructions can be broadly classified into two types, allative and ablative *at*-constructions (Broccias, 2001). First, allative
at-construction is a construction in which the preposition at designates a target with which a forceful contact can be made in the final subevent of the event denoted by the construction. Some examples of allative at-constructions are given in (2).

(2) a. Tom hit at the wall
    b. Tom threw the stone at the wall.

In (2a) Tom did some kind of action to hit the wall and Tom's body may make contact with the wall. This is a typical example of conative construction discussed in the literature. Similarly, the at-construction in (2b) describes a motion of an argument (the direct object) towards the target designated by the preposition's object, the wall. Again, the argument may make contact with the target. This is illustrated in (3).

(3) a. Tom hit at the wall, but he missed it.
    b. Tom threw the stone at the wall, but the stone did not get there.

In short, as the name of the construction suggests, the allative at-constructions in (2) describe allative motions (i.e. motions to an object).

By contrast, ablative at-constructions describe ablative motions (i.e. motions out of/from an object). They describe a movement from a target or a change of state of a target after necessary contact (Broccias, 2003). Some examples of ablative at-constructions are presented in (4).

(4) a. Jane sipped at the coffee.\(^4\)
    b. Jane chipped at the rock.

\(^4\) A similar sentence like Jane ate at the pie is discussed as a conative sentence in the literature (see e.g. Levin, 1993: 213; Beavers, 2006: 64). However, according to a native speaker of English, ate at the pie is odd and he does not say a sentence that has the predicate; but the at-constructions in (4) all sound ok to him. Although this individual variation looks interesting, in this paper I focus on ablative at-constructions like the ones in (4).
In (4a) Jane acts upon the patient so that some part of the patient is indeed consumed in a bit-by-bit manner. Similarly, in (4b) the causer acts upon the patient so that some part of the patient is taken away in a bit-by-bit fashion. The oblique objects of the ablative at-constructions must be affected, as illustrated in (5).

(5) a. Jane sipped at the coffee, #but it was not sipped at all.
   b. Jane chipped at the rock, #but it was not chipped at all.

As Broccías (2003) mentioned, the notion of contact seems to be part of the meanings of the ablative at-constructions, since without making contact with the patient, it cannot be sipped or chipped.\(^5\)

(6) a. Jane sipped at the coffee, #but she couldn’t make contact with the coffee.
   b. Jane chipped at the rock, #but she couldn’t make contact with the rock.

However, a notion of contact involved in an ablative at-construction in (6) is not the final subevent of the whole event denoted by the sentence, but a change of state (the result state of being sipped or chipped) is.

All the at-constructions in (2a) and (4) are considered to be conative constructions in the literature (see e.g. Levin, 1993), but only the at-constructions like (2a) entail intentionality on the part of the subject (see details in Section 4 below). For instance, the ablative at-construction in (4b) can be modified by the adverb accidentally; as shown in (7).

\(^5\) In the real world, a contact must occur before something is chipped or sipped. But this does not necessarily mean that a notion of contact is linguistically encoded in the verbs chip and sip (see a similar discussion about break in Levin, 1993: 8). I assume that a notion of contact is inherent to the verbs, but this seems orthogonal to the question of whether the oblique objects of the verbs are actually affected or not.
(7) Jane accidentally chipped at the rock.

The modification of the adverb in (7) may suggest that the ablative *at*-construction without the adverb (i.e. the minimal accomplishment predicate of the sentence, chipped at the rock) does not entail the subject’s intention with the chipping event. Note, however, that the adverb *accidentally* can describe the agent’s non-intentionality (the agent’s mental state of being unintentional) or the agent’s misunderstanding (see the same ambiguity with the Korean adverb *silswulo* ‘accidentally’ in Lee, 2016; Beavers & Lee, In prep). If accidentally describes the agent’s misunderstanding (i.e. Jane mistook the rock as something else and chipped it), the modification of the adverb does not necessarily show that the agent did not intend to chip the rock in (7) (see more in Section 3). But even if we assume that *accidentally* describes the agent’s non-intentionality in (7) (i.e. Jane did not intend to chip the rock), the sentence in (7) is also grammatical. This then indicates that intentionality is not entailed in the *at*-construction (Jane chipped at the rock)\(^6\) and so this kind of *at*-construction is not really a conative construction; Broccias (2003) also pointed this out, but without explicit justification. Although I usually deal with conative constructions like (2a) in this paper, the other *at*-constructions may be also used to support the Complementarity of Intentionality and Affectedness, which is set forth in the next section.

3. The Complementarity of Intentionality and Affectedness

In English, the inherent result involved in an accomplishment predicate must occur in the actual world for a sentence with the predicate to be

\(^6\) This does not automatically mean that non-intentionality is then entailed in the ablative *at*-construction: in fact, an intentional adverb like *deliberately* can modify the sentence. Thus the predicate chipped at the rock does not specify whether the subject of the predicate has an intention or not with the chipping event.
true. For instance, the caused subevents of the accomplishment predicates in (8) cannot be denied when it is asserted that the events of the accomplishment predicates actually came about.

(8) a. He opened the door, #but it was not opened.
   b. He burned the book, #but it was not burned.

This suggests that the English verbs *open* and *burn* lexically entail the actual occurrences of their inherent results. However, not every language behaves the same way with English. In Korean an actual occurrence of the caused subevent involved in an accomplishment predicate is not necessary for a sentence with the predicate to be true (see similar phenomena in Ikegami, 1985 for Japanese, Singh, 1998; Arunachalam & Kotari, 2011 for Hindi, Park, 1993; Lee, 2004; Lee, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016 for Korean, Koenig & Muansuwan, 2000 for Thai, Bar-el, Davis, & Matthewson, 2004 for Salish languages, Pederson, 2008 for Tamil, Koenig & Chief, 2008 for Chinese, among many others). Consider the following Korean examples:

(9) a. *ku-ka* mwun-ul himkkes yel-ess-ciman,
    he-Nom door-Acc with.all.the.strength open-Pst-but
    mwun-i yel-li-ci anh-ass-ta
    door-Nom open-Pass-Comp Neg-Pst-Dec
    (lit.) 'He opened the door with all his strength, but it was not opened.' = (roughly) 'He tried to open the door with all his strength, but it was not opened.'

b. *ku-ka* chayk-ul thaywu-ess-ciman,
   he-Nom book-Acc burn-Pst-but
   chayk-i tha-ci anh-ass-ta.
   book-Nom burn-Comp Neg-Pst-Dec
   (lit.) 'He burned the book, but it did not burn.' = (roughly) 'He tried to burn the book, but it did not burn.'
The second clauses in (9) explicitly deny the occurrences of the results of the accomplishment predicates asserted in the first clauses. Due to these denials, the first clauses in (9) are interpreted as failed attempts (see failed attempt interpretations in Tatevosov, 2008). More specifically, in (9a) the subject did some kind of action to open the door (e.g. pushing the door), but failed (maybe since the door was so heavy) and in (9b) the subject did some kind of action to burn the book (e.g. putting the book into fire), but failed (maybe because the book was so wet).?

These failed attempt interpretations entail intentionality on the part of the subject. This is supported by the fact that when the adverb silswulo ‘accidentally’ modifies an accomplishment predicate as in the following, the inherent result of the predicate must occur in the actual world (Lee, 2015):

(10) a. [Context: There was a door in front of Marcus and he knew that it was a door. That is, Marcus did not mistake the door as something else.]

Marcus-ka mwun-ul silswulo yel-ess-ciman,
Marcus-Nom door-Acc accidentally open-Pst-but
door-Nom open-Pass-Comp Neg-Pst-Dec
(lit.) ‘Marcus accidentally opened the door, but it was not opened.’

b. [Context: There was a book in front of Marcus and he knew that it was a book. That is, Marcus did not mistake the book as something else.]

Marcus-ka chayk-ul silswulo thaywu-ess-ciman,
Marcus-Nom book-Acc accidentally burn-Pst-but
#chayk-i tha-ci anh-ass-ta.
book-Nom burn-Comp Neg-Pst-Dec
(lit.) ‘Marcus accidentally burned the book, but it did not burn.’

7 In Korean the accusative case marker -ul/-lul can be omitted. It seems that even if -ul/-lul is removed, the relevant failed attempt readings are still possible, albeit it appears to be relatively more difficult to get the readings.
As pointed out in the previous section, the adverb *silswulo* ['accidentally'] can describe the agent’s misunderstanding or the agent’s non-intentionality. Then the modification of the adverb *per se* does not necessarily imply that the agent does not have an intention regarding the event described by the accomplishment predicate. So in order to see whether an accomplishment predicate really entails the intentionality, we first need to exclude the possibility of the agent’s misunderstanding as in the contexts given in (10). In these contexts, the adverb *silswulo* ['accidentally'] must describe the subject’s non-intentionality, rather than the subject’s misunderstanding. Now if the subject has no intention as in (10), the results must obtain in the actual world. This indicates that the failed attempt interpretation of an accomplishment predicate requires the subject’s intention with the event denoted by the predicate.

We should note, however, that the failed attempt interpretations are different from the meaning of ‘try to VP’ (VP as an accomplishment), albeit they commonly entail the subject’s intention with the verbal events (Lee, 2015). The former requires the occurrence of a direct cause, but the latter does not, as illustrated in the following:

(11) [Context: Minho was breaking the door to enter the room in order to turn on the light. But he failed to break the door and thus failed to turn on the light.]

   Minho-Nom light-Acc turn.on-to-Comp try-Pst-Dec
   *kulena pwul-ul khi-1 swu eps-ess-ta.*
   *but* light-Acc turn.on-Rel way not.exist-Pst-Dec
   ‘He tried to turn on the light. But he could not turn on the light.’

b. #Minho-ka pwul-ul khi-ess-ciman,
   Minho-Nom light-Acc turn.on-Pst-but
   *pwul-ul khi-1 swu eps-ess-ta.*
   light-Acc turn.on-Rel way not.exist-Pst-Dec
   (lit.) ‘Minho turned on the light, but he could not turn on the light.’
The two sentences in (11) can be plausibly applied to a new context like 'Minho lifted the switch of the light, but the light was not turned on because there was a problem in the electrical wiring between the switch and the light', since a direct cause (lifting the switch of the light) occurred in this context. In short, failed attempt interpretation is more restricted than 'try to VP' meaning in terms of event occurrence.

The default reading of a Korean transitive verb construction is the reading in which the inherent result of the predicate actually occurs. When the result occurs in the actual world, the subject's intention with the event of the predicate is not required; the subject can have an intention or not, as illustrated in (12).

(12) a. *ku-ka mwun-ul ilpwule / silwswulo yel-ess-ko,*
    he-Nom door-Acc deliberately / accidentally open-Pst-and
    mwun-i yel-li-ess-ta.
    door-Nom open-Pass-Pst-Dec
    'He deliberately/accidentally opened the door, and it was opened.'

    b. *ku-ka chayk-ul ilpwule / silwswulo taywu-ess-ko*
    he-Nom book-Acc deliberately / accidentally burn-Pst-and
    chayk-i thaywe-ci-ess-ta.
    book-Nom burn-Pass-Pst-Dec
    'He deliberately/accidentally burned the book, and it was burned.'

Summarizing, the Korean transitive verb constructions with an accomplishment predicate can have three different kinds of readings: if we represent the readings using semantic features, the minimal predicates of the first clauses in (9) have the set of [intentional +] and [affected −] and the minimal predicates of the first clauses in (12) have the set of [intentional +] and [affected +] or the set of [intentional −] and [affected +]. From the three possible kinds of readings, I suggest that when intentionality is entailed, affectedness is not entailed and when
affectedness is entailed, intentionality is not entailed (see Lee, 2015). Based on this mutual exclusivity of entailments of intentionality and affectedness, I propose the constraint, as stated in (13).

(13) **The Complementarity of Intentionality and Affectedness**

(CIA): it is impossible that the subject of a minimal accomplishment predicate (the combination of a verb and its complement(s) which is a causative accomplishment) must have an intention with the inherent result of the predicate and the patient of the predicate must be affected at the same time.

a. The subject of a minimal accomplishment predicate must have an intention with the inherent result of the predicate and it is not that the patient of the predicate must be affected.

[**Intended Result**]

b. The patient of a minimal accomplishment predicate must be affected and it is not that the subject of the predicate must have an intention with the inherent result of the predicate.

[**Actual Result**]

c. It is not that the subject of a minimal accomplishment predicate must have an intention with the inherent result of the predicate and it is not that the patient of the predicate must be affected.

[**Unspecified Result**]

The CIA has three logically possible semantic conditions as shown in (13). It is in fact more general than the mutual exclusivity of entailments of intentionality and affectedness, which correspond to the two semantic natural classes, Intended Result in (13a) (only intentionality is entailed) and Actual Result in (13b) (only affectedness is entailed), since the CIA also includes another semantic natural class, Unspecified Result in (13c) (both intentionality and affectedness are not entailed). The Korean transitive verb constructions having an accomplishment predicate are then
ambiguous; they belong to either Intended Result or Actual Result. But they cannot be a member of Unspecified Result, since they must entail either intentionality or affectedness as shown above in (9)-(12). However, another type of sentences can satisfy the semantic conditions of Unspecified Result. The following Korean sentence with $\text{hyanghay}$ 'towards' can be modified by either $\text{ilpwule}$ 'deliberately' or $\text{silswulo}$ 'accidentally' and the occurrence of the inherent result of the predicate can be explicitly denied or confirmed:

\[ (i) \quad \text{ku-ka kong-ul mwun-ul hyanghay cha-ss-ta.} \]
\[ \text{he-Nom ball-Acc door-Acc towards kick-Pst-Dec} \]
\[ \text{He kicked the ball at the door.'} \]

It is assumed in (14), however, that the sentence has no implicit object and $\text{mwun-ul}$ 'door-Acc' is the patient: what can be kicked here is the door.

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8 This ambiguity can be verified by the identity test (see some ambiguity tests in Lakoff, 1970; Zwicky & Sadock, 1975; Cruse, 1986). For instance, in the following the first clause and the second clause must have the same type of interpretation, actual result reading or intended result reading:

\[ (i) \quad \text{Jane-i chayk-ul taywu-ess-ko, Max-to kulay-ss-ta.} \]
\[ \text{Jane-Nom book-Acc burn-Pst-and Max-also do.so-Pst-Dec} \]
\[ \text{‘Jane burned a book and so did Max.’} \]
\[ \text{(actual result readings of the clauses) or} \]
\[ \text{(roughly) ‘Jane tried to burn a book and so did Max.’} \]
\[ \text{(intended result readings of the clauses)} \]

It is necessary for the two clauses to have the same value for [intentional] or [affected]. It is impossible for the sentence in (i) to have a reading like $\text{Jane accidentally burned a book and Max tried to burn a book but it did not burn}$, which does not meet the identity constraint.

9 As an anonymous reviewer pointed out, $\text{mwun-ul}$ 'door-Acc' in (14) is not the patient if we assume that (14) is licensed from the sentence (i) by removing the patient NP $\text{kong-ul}$ 'ball-Acc' (Korean is a $\text{pro}$-drop language). What can be kicked here is the ball:

\[ (i) \quad \text{ku-ka kong-ul mwun-ul hyanghay cha-ss-ta.} \]
\[ \text{he-Nom ball-Acc door-Acc towards kick-Pst-Dec} \]
\[ \text{‘He kicked the ball at the door.’} \]

It is assumed in (14), however, that the sentence has no implicit object and $\text{mwun-ul}$ 'door-Acc' is the patient: what can be kicked here is the door.
The first sentence without the adverb in (14) does not entail the subject’s intention with the kicking event, nor does it entail the affectedness of the patient, and thus the sentence belongs to the semantic natural class, Unspecified Result: a specific meaning of the sentence can be resolved by utterance contexts or the modification of an adverb as in (14).10

4. Conative Constructions and Intended Result

I argue in this section that English conative constructions belong to

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10 It is not that a sentence like (14) is ambiguous between four different readings depending on the specific values of the semantic features, [intentional] and [affected]. In the following, the identity constraint is not satisfied with respect to the notions of intention and affectedness (see Catlin & Catlin, 1972 for a similar discussion on the non-ambiguity with regard to the distinction between intentional and non-intentional VPs):

(i) Swumi-ka mwun-ul hyanghay cha-ss-ko,
    Swumi-Nom door-Acc towards kick-Pst-and
    Minswu-to kulay-ss-ta.
    Minswu-also do.so-Pst-Dec
    'Swumi kicked towards the door and did so Minswu.'

In the first clause of (i), the door can be actually kicked or not, and in the second clause the door can be actually kicked or not. Similarly, Swumi’s kicking action can be intentional or unintentional and Minswu’s kicking action can be also intentional or unintentional. It is not necessary for the two clauses to have the same value for the semantic feature, [intentional] or [affected].
the semantic natural class of Intended Result and the corresponding transitive verb constructions belong to Actual Result. First, the inherent result of the minimal accomplishment predicate of a conative construction does not necessarily occur in the actual world, as already illustrated in (3a) above. See more examples in (15).

(15) a. Emma kicked at the ball, but she missed it/and the ball was kicked.
    b. Emma shot at the bird, but she missed it/and the bird was shot.

As shown in (15), it is not necessary that the oblique objects are affected. That is, the conative constructions are just unspecified for whether the inherent results actually occur or not.

Second, conative constructions in English require intentionality on the part of the subject, as illustrated in (16).

(16) a. #Tom accidentally kicked at the ball.
    b. #Tom accidentally shot at the bird.

Note that the adverb *accidentally* in (16) is assumed not to describe the subject’s misunderstanding; if the adverb expresses the subject’s misunderstanding, the sentences in (16) can be acceptable. However, if the adverb describes the non-intentionality of the subject, it cannot modify the predicates in (16), indicating that the predicates entail the subject’s intention regarding the inherent results of the predicates.

Third, the direct causing event of a conative construction must occur in the actual world and so the meaning of the conative construction is more restricted than that of the corresponding ‘try to VP’ construction. Consider the following contrast:

(17) [Context: Jane was opening the door to enter the room in order to kick the ball inside the room. But she failed to open the door and thus failed to kick the ball.]
a. #Jane kicked at the ball.
b. Jane tried to kick the ball.

(18) [Context: Jane swung her leg in order to kick the ball. But she missed it.]
a. Jane kicked at the ball.
b. Jane tried to kick the ball.

In the context of (17) Jane could not even open the door and so a direct causing event of kicking the ball was not achieved, but in the context of (18) Jane performed a direct causing action to kick the ball. From this contrast, we can see that the conative construction requires an occurrence of a direct causing event, but ‘try to VP’ does not. Instead, ‘try to VP’ requires an occurrence of an effort to achieve the inherent result of the VP; the subject having an intention in her mind without performing an action is not enough for a sentence with ‘try to VP’ to be true. If a conative construction is possible in a certain context, the corresponding ‘try to VP’ construction is also possible in that context, but not conversely. Based on the three semantic properties of conative constructions, it is plausible to view them as an instance of Intended Result, just like the Korean transitive verb constructions with an intended result reading.

Although both the Korean transitive verb constructions and English conative constructions belong to the same semantic natural class, they have distinct constraints and forms. For example, verbs like break or open cannot occur in a conative construction (*He broke/opened at the window; see Guerssel, Hale, Laughren, Levin, and Eagle, 1985 for a proposal on why such the verbs are not allowed in conative constructions), while the corresponding Korean verbs kkay– ‘break’ and yel– ‘open’ can have the relevant intended result readings:11.

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11 Some people never accept the failed attempt reading of kkay– ‘break’ However, we can find naturally occurring data like follows:
Thus it seems not very plausible to categorize the Korean transitive verb constructions with an intended result reading as a kind of conative construction, albeit they share some important semantic properties and thus belong to the same semantic natural class, Intended Result.

Unlike a conative construction, the patient of the corresponding English transitive verb construction must be affected as follows:

(20) a. Tom kicked the ball, but it was not kicked.
    b. Tom shot the bird, but it was not shot.

In (20) we cannot deny the occurrences of the inherent results of the predicates, but intentionality of the subject is not entailed in the transitive

(i) *macimakulo Kim Seyjeong-un Yoo Jaesuk-uy meli-ey pak-ul*
    
    
    *break-Pst-but gourd-Top break-Pass-Comp Neg-Pst-Dec*
    
    (lit.) 'Lastly, Seyjeong Kim broke the gourd on Jaesuk Yoo's head, but the gourd was not broken.'
    *(http://m.xtorque.xportsnews.com/?ac=article_view&entry_id=758641)*

So I believe it is not implausible to assume that the failed attempt reading of *kkay*– break’ is available for at least some native speakers of Korean (including the author).
verb constructions, as shown in (21).

(21) a. Tom accidentally/deliberately kicked the ball.
    b. Tom accidentally/deliberately shot the bird.

Then the English transitive verb constructions should belong to Actual Result. Note that the subject of an English sentence can be intentional and at the same time the object of the sentence can be affected in a context. For example, the sentence *Tom shot the bird* can be interpreted in a certain context as such that Tom intended to shoot the bird and the bird was actually shot, the default reading of the sentence. However, this is not a counter-example to the CIA. What the CIA concerns is the entailment of intentionality or affectedness. The same sentence, *Tom shot the bird*, entails affectedness of the patient as shown in (20b), but does not entail intentionality of the subject as shown in (21b). Whether the subject of the sentence has an intention or not with the shooting event can be determined in an utterance context and thus the sentence is not considered to be ambiguous with respect to the contextual specification of (non-)intentionality.

5. Conative Constructions and Agent Control Hypothesis

In this section I show that what is required for Korean transitive verb constructions with an intended result reading (particularly, failed attempt interpretation) and English conative constructions is not the notion of agent control. Non-culmination interpretations\(^\text{12}\) are allowed in many

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\(^{12}\) Non-culmination interpretations have two subtypes: partial result reading (in which only some result obtains) and zero result reading (in which no result occurs at all; failed attempt reading corresponds to this) (see e.g. Koenig & Muansuwan, 2000). In this paper, I do not discuss partial result interpretations; they are a type of actual result reading (Lee, 2015) and parallel to culmination reading with respect to the CIA.
other languages and Skwxwu7mesh\(^\text{13}\) (the Squamish language) is one of those languages. Jacobs (2011) argues that agent control ("controlled situations are those in which the agent functions with usual average capacities in keeping things under control" from Thompson & Thompson, 1992: 52, cited in Jacobs, 2011: 9) is required for non-culmination readings in Skwxwu7mesh. Demirdache & Martin (2015) also argue for the Agent Control Hypothesis (ACH) that "the availability of non-culminating construals for accomplishments correlates with the control of the agent over the described event." This is supported by the following examples from Skwxwu7mesh (Jacobs, 2011: 98, (2)):

\[(22)\]
\[\begin{align*}
\text{a. c-predicate does not require culmination} \\
\text{chen kwélash-t-Ø ta míxalh,} \\
1\text{S.SUB shoot-TR-3OBJ DET bear} \\
'I \text{shot the bear,}' \\
\text{welh na t'emt'am te-n skwélash} \\
\text{but RL astray DET-1S.POS shot} \\
'\text{but I missed (lit. my shot went astray).}'
\end{align*}\]

\[\begin{align*}
\text{b. lc-predicate requires culmination} \\
\text{chen kwélash-nexw-Ø ta míxalh,} \\
1\text{S.SUB shoot-LCTR-3OBJ DET bear} \\
'I \text{shot the bear,}' \\
\#welh na t'emt'am te-n skwélash \\
\text{but RL astray DET-1S.POS shot} \\
'\text{but I missed.'}
\end{align*}\]

In (22) the c-predicate (control-predicate) describes the agent's control and the lc-predicate (limited control-predicate) expresses the limited control of the agent, which may be in a difficult situation (see Thompson,

\(^\text{13}\) Skwxwu7mesh is a Coast Salish language spoken in the Northwest coast of North America.)
1979; Thompson & Thompson, 1992; Bar-el, 2005; Jacobs, 2011). From the contrast in (22), we can see that the inherent result of the predicate can be cancelled only if the agent has the control over the described event.

In order to see if the agent control (the degree of control) is also required for Korean failed attempt interpretations, we can test whether failed attempt interpretations are allowed even when the agent is intentional but experiences a difficulty. In other words, the ACH seems to predict that Korean failed attempt readings should not be possible with such a limited control; but if Korean failed attempt readings really belong to Intended Result, we expect that they are possible with the limited control if the agent still intends to bring about a result. In the contexts given in (23), Wiley intended to open the door or burn the book, but he was in a difficult situation.

(23) a. [Context: The door was very heavy. Wiley was weak and uncertain about whether he could open the door, but he pushed it to open it.]
Wiley-ka ku mwun-ul himkkes
Wiley-Nom the door-Acc with.all.his.strength
on-Pst-but at.all move-Comp Neg-Pst-Dec
(lit.) ‘Wiley opened the door with all his strength, but it did not move at all.’ = (roughly) ‘Wiley tried to open the door with all his strength, but it did not move at all.’

b. [Context: The book was so wet. Wiley was uncertain about whether he could burn the book, but he put it into fire to burn it.]
Wiley-ka ku chayk-ul yelsimhi thaywe-to,
Wiley-Nom that book-Acc diligently burn-although
acenhye tha-ci anh-ass-ta.
at.all burn-Comp Neg-Pst-Dec
(lit.) ‘Although Wiley diligently burned the book, it did not burn at all.’ = (roughly) ‘Although Wiley diligently tried to burn the book, it did not burn at all.’
In (23) even though the agentive subject has a limited control over the described events, the failed attempt (zero result) interpretations are still allowed: when the agentive subject has the control over the events, the failed attempt readings are also available, as assumed in the previous sections. Therefore, the notion of agent control (the degree of control) seems to be irrelevant to failed attempt interpretations at least in Korean.

Interestingly, English conative constructions are parallel to Korean with regard to the irrelevance to the agent control. As shown in (24), the agent control is not necessary for the conative constructions in English.

(24) a. [Context: Wiley injured his leg, but he swung it in order to kick the ball.] 
Wiley kicked at the ball (but he missed it).
b. [Context: Wiley injured his finger, but he pulled the trigger of a gun in order to shoot the bird.] 
Wiley shot at the bird (but he missed it).

In (24a) Wiley was unlikely to succeed in kicking the ball but intended to kick the ball anyway and the conative construction can be used in this context, and similarly for (24b). Again, note that the conative constructions are also acceptable when the agentive subject has the control over the events described by the predicates. In other words, the notion of agent control (the degree of control) does not correlate with the conative constructions in English as well. Summarizing, English conative constructions and Korean transitive verb constructions with an intended result reading belong to the semantic natural class, Intended Result (as argued in Section 3 and 4 above), rather than to a semantic natural class involving the agent control.

6. Some Predictions

In addition to the at-conatives, English is considered to have another
type of conative constructions with a PP headed by the preposition on instead of at (see e.g. Levin, 1993: 150; Beavers, 2006: §3.2). Consider an example in (25).

(25) Luke banged on the wall.\textsuperscript{14}

When the sentence in (25) is applied to a situation where Luke is in motion (e.g. he was thrown from a bus) and then hit the wall with a bang, the sentence is used not as a conative, but as an unrelated construction. Levin (1993: 150) assumes that bang on should be taken as a conative when it is not interpreted in that way. If the sentence in (25) is really a conative construction, it should also belong to Intended Result. However, as shown in (26), the on-construction does not require the subject’s intention with the result involved in the minimal accomplishment predicate (banged on the wall), unlike the at-conatives:

(26) [Context: Luke had a hammer in his back pocket and he kept turning around and the hammer was banging on the wall every time he turned but he did not realize it.]

Luke inadvertently banged on the wall.

In (26) Luke did not intend to bang the wall, but it is still possible to apply the on-construction to the context. However, the inherent result of the accomplishment predicate in the on-construction must actually occur. As illustrated in (27), the oblique object marked by the preposition on is required to be affected.

(27) a. Luke banged on the wall, #but the wall was not hit.
   b. Luke banged on the wall, #but there was not a bang.

\textsuperscript{14} Levin (1993: 150) also takes thump on as an on-conative, but a native speaker of English finds it a bit weird. So I do not discuss thump on here.
The contradictions of denying actual occurrences of the inherent results in (27) suggest that affectedness of the patients is entailed in the predicate of the on-construction. These two semantic properties are compatible with the mutual exclusivity of entailments of intentionality and affectedness. In short, the on-construction in (25) is not really a type of conative construction (contra the previous assumption in the literature), but it should belong to Actual Result, supporting the CIA.

According to Levin (1993: 155-156), only intentional action interpretations are allowed for pure verbs of contact like touch with body-part or reflexive objects:

(28) a. Reflexive Object: Carrie touched herself. (intentional only)
    b. Body-Part Object: Carol touched her hair. (intentional only)

In (28a) Carrie was actually touched by herself and in (28b) Carol’s hair was actually touched by Carol. It is obviously contradictory to deny the occurrences of the inherent results of the predicates, as shown in (29).

(29) a. Carrie touched herself, #but she was not actually touched.
    b. Carol touched her hair, #but it was not actually touched.

That is, the objects in (29) must be affected. Now if the sentences in (29) really entail the subject’s intention with the results included in the predicates, then these sentences can be counter-examples to the CIA, since intentionality and affectedness are simultaneously entailed in the predicates. However, Levin (1993) does not explicitly show that the sentences indeed describe only intentional events. I show here that it is in fact possible to add the adverb accidentally (or deliberately) to the sentences:

(30) a. [Context: Carrie did not mistake herself as someone else.]
    Carrie accidentally/deliberately touched herself.
b. [Context: Carol did not mistake her hair as something else.]
   Carol accidentally/deliberately touched her hair.

In (30) the adverb *accidentally* expresses non-intentionality of the subject, rather than the subject’s misunderstanding due to the given contexts. The modifications of the adverbs indicate that the minimal accomplishment predicates (*touched herself* and *touched her hair*) do not entail the subject’s intention regarding the events of the predicates; the non-intentionality of the subject is not entailed in the predicates, either. Therefore, the pure verbs of contact with a body-part or reflexive object do not really constitute a counter-example to the CIA. Rather, the sentences in (28) belong to Actual Result and thus support the CIA.

Many other languages have some kind of alternations which may further motivate the CIA. For example, the Finnish case alternation in (31) can represent something like conative alternation (examples from Vincent 2013: 273, (5)).

(31) a. *Ammu-i-n karhu-n / kaksi karhu-a*
    shoot-PST-1SG bear-ACC / two.ACC bear-PART
    / karhu-t.
    / bear-ACC.PL
    ‘I shot a/the bear, (the) two bears, (the) bears.’

b. *Ammu-i-n karhu-a / kah-ta karhu-a*
    shoot-PST-1SG bear-PART / two ACC bear-PART
    / karhu-ja.
    / bear-PL-PART
    ‘I shot at a/the bear, at (the) two bears, at (the) bears.’

In (31a) the completed event is expressed via the accusative case and in (31b) the incomplete activity with the partitive case. Although there is no explicit expression of the subject’s intention in (31b), according to
Vincent (2013) it is plausible to infer that someone shooting at a bear intends to kill it or scare it off. If intentionality is really entailed by (31b), then it is a member of Intended Result.

A similar phenomenon is found in Warlpiri, which also employs a case alternation to express the same kind of contrast (examples from Vincent 2013: 273, (6)):

(32) a. ngarrka-ngku ka marlu luwa-rni.
   man-ERG PRES kangaroo shoot-NONPST
   ‘The man is shooting the kangaroo.’

b. ngarrka-ngku ka-rla-jinta marlu-ku
   man-ERG PRES-3.DAT-3.DAT kangaroo-DAT
   luwa-rni.
   shoot-NONPST
   ‘The man is shooting at the kangaroo.’

In (32), the alternation here is between an absolutive patient NP and a dative patient NP. According to Vincent (2013), this case alternation indicates something like conative alternation. In (32a) the kangaroo must be shot, but in (32b) it is not necessary for the kangaroo to be shot. These alternations in (31) and (32) appear to show the same (or at least very similar) phenomenon found in the English conative alternations and the Korean transitive verb constructions (which are ambiguous between intended result and actual result readings). If it is demonstrated with some explicit evidence that the sentences in (31a) and (32a) indeed entail only affectedness (and so belong to Actual Result) and the sentences in (31b) and (32b) really entail only intentionality (and thus belong to Intended Result), this would further support the CIA cross-linguistically.

7. Conclusion
I argued in this paper that English conative alternations are an instance of the Complementarity of Intentionality and Affectedness, which is proposed based on the ambiguity of the Korean transitive verb constructions. The conative constructions belong to the semantic natural class of Intended Result and the corresponding transitive verb constructions belong to the semantic natural class of Actual Result. Conversely, an intended result meaning can be expressed in different morpho-syntactic forms in different languages (e.g. conative constructions in English, transitive verb constructions in Korean, and probably a certain case marking in Finnish and Warlpiri). Non-culmination reading is possible in other languages (e.g. Chinese, Japanese, Hindi, Tamil and Thai). If the CIA is also applied to these languages, the CIA could offer an important semantic principle on what is and what is not possible in many natural languages. Finally, how exactly the intended result reading is compositionally derived from the combination of the verb and the at phrase in a conative construction is not discussed in this paper (see a compositional approach to conative constructions in van der Leek, 1996). I also leave to future research this issue of compositionality in relation to intentionality.

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