

On the emergence of Korean markers of agreement

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Abstract

This paper discusses the emergence of some of the discourse markers of agreement (DMAs) in Korean. This paper shows the processes that DMAs have historically undergone *en route* to their grammaticalization into discourse markers. The DMAs under discussion originated from three different sources: conditionals, quotations, and causals. The development of these DMAs involves the strategic use of ellipsis. By way of strategically withholding the main clause, the speaker indicates that the situation is so obvious that the elided part does not require explicit utterance. This is a common strategy in Korean utilized in the development of connectives into sentence-final particles that acquired diverse meanings through conventionalization of pragmatic inferences. These DMAs also recruited the anaphoric *kule*- 'be so' that makes reference to the speaker's prior utterance and becomes a part of a conditional or causal protasis or a subordinated quotative clause. This paper also shows that the development of these DMAs crucially makes use of intersubjectification through which the elided parts are pragmatically reconstructed and the residual 'defective' (i.e. partially elided and phonologically reduced) discourse segments become full-fledged DMAs.

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1. Introduction

Despite the widely varying definitions of discourse markers, or pragmatic markers, it has been noted that the use of discourse markers is universal (Fraser, 2006), especially in informal oral discourse (Östman, 1982; Fraser, 1990; Watts, 1989). Across languages, discourse markers arise from diverse sources since they carry a wide range of functions with respect to discourse management. Brinton (1996:37–38) lists nine different functions of discourse markers. Among those diverse functions, the two functions that are relevant in the present research are to express a response or attitude, i.e., a subjective function, and to effect cooperation, sharing or intimacy, i.e., an intersubjective function.

Of particular interest among Korean discourse markers are those that mark consensus or agreement to what the previous speaker has said. These markers of agreement (DMAs, hereafter) are interesting because their use contributes to the creation of feelings of oneness (i.e. rapport and solidarity) at the level of interpersonality or

Abbreviations: ACC, accusative; ADN, adnominal; COMP, complementizer; CONTIN, contingency; DEC, declarative; DET, determinative; END, sentence-ender; EXP, experiential; FUT, future; GEN, genitive; HON, honorific; IMP, imperative; INTEN, intentional; NOM, nominative; NOMZ, nominalizer; PERF, perfective; POL, polite; PST, past; Q, interrogative; TOP, topic.

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Table 1
Korean DMAs and their Source Meanings.

Source category	Form	Source Meaning
Conditional	<i>kulem</i>	'if so'
	<i>amwulyem</i>	'if it is whatsoever'
Quotation	<i>kulehkomalko</i>	'that it is so and not so'
	<i>kulehtamata</i>	'that it is so; it is not so'
Causal	<i>kulenikka</i>	'because it is so'
	<i>kulekey</i>	'at it being so'
	<i>kulssey</i>	'at it being so'

intersubjectivity. In Korean, these DMAs come from three major categories: conditionals, quotation, and causals, as shown in Table 1.¹

Research on discourse markers has mostly focused on their function as causal- and conditional-based markers, i.e. inter-sentential connection for logical reasoning (Choi, 2007; Kim, 2000; Lee, 1996, *inter alia*).

Their 'interpersonal' function is underrepresented in the research literature, however. The interpersonal function is similar to Jakobson's phatic function, as he said, "There are messages serving primarily to establish, to prolong, or to discontinue communication, to check whether the channel works ("Hello, do you hear me?")" (1960:355). It can also be labeled as the 'back-channel' signal function, following Yngve (1970). Further, no investigation of DMAs from the grammaticalization perspective, i.e. focusing on the emergence of those markers and the enabling mechanisms involved in the process, has been attempted to date. This study is intended to fill this gap in research on grammaticalization of discourse markers.

2. DMAs by source categories

2.1. Conditional-derived DMAs

The two conditional-based DMAs under discussion are *kulem* and *amwulyem*. In synchronic Modern Korean, DMAs coexist alongside their lexical sources, a typical instance of 'divergence' (Hopper, 1991). Therefore, DMAs developed from conditionals have their 'heterosemous' (Lichtenberk, 1991) source forms which still function as conditional connectives, as shown in (1) with *kulem*, and its DMA usage is illustrated by a putative Present-day Korean (PDK) example (2).²

(1) Textual function of *kulem* 'if so; then'

A: [I'm not here to ask for money.]

B: *kulay?* *coh-a.* *kulem* *mwusun* *yayki-lul* *ha-keyss-ta-nun* *ke-y-a?*
be.so be.good-END then what.kind talk-ACC say-FUT-DEC-ADN NOMZ-be-END
'Is that so? Good. Then, what are you going to talk to me about?' (PDK, KORTERM #3617)

(2) DMA function of *kulem* 'Right!'

A: *kyay-ka* *cakkwu* *kule-nikka* *hwa-ka* *na-nun-ke-y-a*
that.guy-NOM repeatedly do.so-because anger-NOM exit-ADN-thing-be-END
'Since that guy was doing that again and again I became angry.'

B: *kulem*
'Right!' (< Lit. 'If (it is) so')

A: *kulayse....*
so...

¹ There are other DMAs, *kulay* and *kulehci* in Modern Korean. As they end with the sentence enders *-e* (>-y) and *-ci*, it is evident that they developed from full-fledged sentences, both meaning 'It is so'. The homophonic connective adverbial *kulay* 'so, therefore' (< *kuli-ha-ye* 'by doing so') did not develop into a DMA. *Kulehci* played a part in the grammaticalization of the DMA *kulem* as the main clause that was withheld (cf. 3.1 and 4.3).

² Examples are taken from two corpora and daily observation. The two corpora are the KORTERM Corpus, developed by Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST) for Present-Day Korean data, and the Sejong Corpus, developed by the 20th Century Sejong Project, for historical data.

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