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Journal of Pragmatics 60 (2014) 1–16

journal of PRAGMATICS

www.elsevier.com/locate/pragma

"I know you are not, but if you were asking me": On emergence of discourse markers of topic presentation from hypothetical questions

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Received 3 May 2013; received in revised form 17 October 2013; accepted 23 October 2013

Abstract

Korean has a number of grammatical devices to introduce topics into the discourse. Among such markers is a paradigm of periphrastic topic presenters that are built on rhetorical questions, bringing micro-level topics into the discourse. The major strategy involved in the development of these topic presenters is feigning interactivity, whereby the speaker rhetorically asks a hypothetical question on behalf of the addressee and then answers it. This rhetorical question strategy is an intriguing discourse manipulation to create an engaging effect in that what the speaker pursues from the addressee is not a verbal response, i.e. reply, but a cognitive response, i.e. attention. A historical investigation reveals a number of important implications in grammaticalization studies. For instance, the grammaticalization process of these innovative topic markers creates a template-like paradigm of periphrastic constructions that contain slots to be filled in from another grammatical paradigm of interrogative pronouns and adverbs. Furthermore, the historical developmental pattern of the emerging paradigm strongly suggests that the formative process is enabled by analogy. In addition, the directionality of the process is from the domain of discourse, i.e. rhetoric, contra most traditional instances that undergo the process proceeding from lexical domain to grammatical domain.
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Keywords: Grammaticalization; Topic-presenter; Rhetorical question; Discourse strategy; Feigned interactivity; Intersubjectification

1. Introduction

A large body of literature reveals that discourse markers (DMs) are not only universal in language but also carry diverse functions in discourse organization. Due to this multifunctionality it is very difficult to define DMs straightforwardly. Schiffrin (1987:31) operationally defines them as sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk. Fraser (1996, 1999), Hansen (1997), and others highlight their function of relating utterances as a discourse connective.[1] DMs arise from diverse lexemes and constructions (Fraser, 2006). One of such categories in Korean is the interrogative clausal constructions, which inherently have the engaging effect on the addressee by virtue of their containing a question (Rhee, 2008). The question occurs as a part of conditional protasis of a sentence, in the form of rhetorical questions (RQs). Such

Abbreviations: ACC, accusative; ADN, adnominal; COMP, complementizer; COND, conditional; CONN, connective; COP, copula; CR, current relevance; DM, discourse marker; HORT, hortative; HYP, hypothetical; NOM, nominative; PDK, present-day Korean; PST, past; Q, interrogative; QUOT, quotative; REPT, reportative; RQ, rhetorical question; SFP, sentence-final particle; TOP, topic; TP, topic presenter.

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[1] For instance, Schourup (1999) lists connectivity, optionality, non-truth-conditionality, weak clause association, initiality, orality, and multi-categoriality as characteristics of DMs.

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http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.10.005

an engaging illocutionary effect offers a perfect quality for the forms involved to develop into topic presenters (TPs), the primary function of which is to draw sufficient attention of the addressee in order to successfully introduce a new topic into the discourse.

These TPs based on RQs (RQ.TPs), in the form of *kukey X-nyamyen* 'if (you) ask (me) X it is (where X is an interrogative pronoun/adverb denoting 'what' 'where' 'who' 'when' 'how' and 'why'),' are presently in active innovation in the grammar of Korean, beginning from around the turn of the 20th century. Despite the fact that these RQ.TPs warrant in-depth research for their emergent nature interacting with discourse rhetoric, they have not received serious attention to date, perhaps due to the more dominant research trend of focusing on patterns in the 'lexical item > morpheme' model (Traugott and Heine, 1991:2), largely addressing the development of a full-fledged lexical item into a grammatical marker. Even though the 'discourse > morphosyntax' perspective (Traugott and Heine, 1991:2–3) is of comparable significance, or rather, of more significance, in view of the fact that discourse context plays a critical role in grammaticalization, this perspective has been embraced by fewer researchers. This research intends to fill the gap. Drawing upon historical data this paper investigates how RQ.TPs developed and presents the findings with theoretical import in view of their relevance to grammaticalization mechanisms, formal idiosyncrasies, and directionality of change, among others.

This paper presents in section 2 a brief survey of grammatical devices relevant to current investigation, i.e. development of complementizers (COMPs) and hypothetical conditionals (HYP.CONDs), followed by presentation of the examples of RQ.TPs under the present investigation. In section 3 the development of TPs in three different levels is illustrated. Section 4 addresses a number of important issues in grammaticalization studies, such as the local nature of emerging context, and the role of interactivity, intersubjectivity, and rhetoricity. It further discusses the implications in grammar and grammaticalization raised by the findings such as template-nature of these grammatical forms, analogy as a mechanism, formal variability, rhetorical effect on grammaticalization, and directionality. Section 5 summarizes the findings and concludes the discussion.

2. Preliminaries

2.1. Complementizers

Korean is a head-final agglutinating language with a rich inventory of verbal morphology. Largely due to the agglutinating nature of this language, diverse markers indicating grammatical notions may be stacked in a string mostly affixed to verbs or nouns, forming layers of grammatical markers, and thus when the strings with diverse combinations are individually counted as separate grammatical markers, the inventory of sentence-final particles (SFPs) and clausal connectives is truly unparalleled by other languages.[2]

In the history of Korean, the development of complementizers (COMPs), which occurred around the 19th century, was a catalytic event for grammaticalization of connectives. In other words, unlike the previous period when the connectives had a limited number of enabling conditions of affixation to non-finite verbs, they now could be used with fully inflected verbs for tense, aspect, and modality modulation, with the help of COMPs. With the emergence of this newly enabling condition, particles and affixes, the verbal morphologies in particular, came to be proliferated. COMPs are directly built on the sentence-type markers shown in Table 1.[3]

It is noteworthy that even though there is one SFP listed for each sentence-type, there have been many sentence-type markers that arose and fell throughout history. For instance, Jang (2002) and Kwon (1992) list about 40 SFPs across the four sentence types for each period from Late Middle Korean to Modern Korean, where some SFPs remain stable in the paradigm while some have been replaced. Therefore, it is peculiar that, despite numerous sentence-type markers that had the potential of developing into COMPs, only four of them, one for each sentence type (which, incidentally are the most stable ones across time), have been recruited in the development of COMPs. Consequently, Korean has four COMPs depending on the sentence type of the subordinated clause as shown in Table 2.[4]

Among the four COMPs, the one that concerns us for the present discussion is the interrogative-based complementizer (Q.COMP), *-nyako*. Even though it seems, from its appearance, to have been formed through direct

[2] For instance, Lee and Lee (2010) list as many as 2057 grammatical markers which are verbal or nominal morphologies. Granting that many of these are in allomorphy relations, the sheer number is indicative of the richness of the verbal and nominal morphologies in Korean.

[3] Even though the examples are interpreted with the third person subject in the parentheses in Table 1 and elsewhere throughout this paper, the sentential subject can be any person depending on the context. This is due to the idiosyncrasy in Korean grammar that any sentential arguments may be omitted as long as they are contextually recoverable.

[4] Synchronically, the declarative complementizer *-tako* has its allomorph *-lako*, the latter following the copula *i-* or the retrospective *-te-* (not illustrated for simplicity). This *-ta*/*-la* allomorphy relation is applicable to all COMP-based forms presented throughout the paper.

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