

Please confirm what I inferred: On the Korean inferential-evidential marker *-napo-*

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to shed light on the semantics of the Korean inferential evidential marker *-napo-* (*-na* 'whether' and *po-* 'see' > *-napo-*), which had not received much attention in the literature. This paper also aims to discuss its underlying cognitive mechanism by investigating their functions and distributions. First, this paper addresses its core function of marking inferential evidentiality, which relies on the speaker's inductive reasoning process. Then, I focus on the marker's extended functions of encoding mirativity and of mitigating the strength of the speaker's assertion, providing a unified account of the marker's multiple functions. Finally, this paper discusses that the underlying cognitive mechanism of the marker is to pose a conceptual distance between the speaker and the inference that she makes in the utterance. The discussion includes comparison with *-napo-* and *-n-moyang-i-* (*-n* 'relativizer,' *moyang* 'appearance,' and *i-* 'copular verb' > *-n moyang-i-*), another inferential periphrastic expression in Korean.

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1. Introduction

Human beings are egocentric. No utterance is ever free of the subjective beliefs, knowledge, and thoughts of its speaker, because every utterance results from that speaker's egocentric conceptualizations. In other words, in our use of language, we cannot but view the world through the window of our own perspective. Building on our access to entities or events in the world, language users produce new information by adding our beliefs about or attitudes toward the focal entities or events to what we say about them. It is therefore natural for languages to be equipped with linguistic devices for marking the sources of information and how it was accessed, as well as the shadings of the speaker's attitudes toward it. Indeed, many languages have an identifiable category of functional devices that encode the source of the speaker's information and her mode of access to it – namely, evidential markers (Aikhenvald, 2004).

A number of linguists have studied evidential markers in a variety of languages and have found that they can generally be categorized according to common parameters. These parameters include the type of information source encoded (direct or indirect) and the speaker's mode of access to the evidence (visual, auditory, via other senses, or via hearsay or inference). Markers can also be categorized in terms of whether they are specialized for use with information that is unexpected or new, i.e., whether they encode mirativity (DeLancey, 1997, 2001:370).

The grammar of Korean has been studied extensively, and its modality system in particular has received considerable attention. Surprisingly, however, there have been very few thorough systematic accounts of its evidential system (with the

Abbreviations: Acc, Accusative; Ant, Anterior; Clit, Clitic; Commit, Committal; Conn, Connective; Cop, Copula; Ev, Evidential; Fut, Future; Hon, Honorific; Hon.End, Honorific ending; Hort, Hortative; Imperf, Imperfective; Imp, Imperative; Indic, Indicative; Loc, Locative; Neg, Negativizer; Nom, Nominative; Rel, Relativizer; sg, Singular.

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exception of Song, 2009). It is likely that this is because it is difficult to separate the evidentiality system of Korean from the tense, aspect, and modality systems because of their complex functional overlaps and interactions. This lack of attention to the evidential system has resulted in a gap in the previous literature, which has so far failed to document the evidential properties of the verbal suffix *-napo-*. This paper aims to bridge that gap, arguing that *-napo-* is in fact an inferential-evidential marker.

For comparison, the example sentence in (1) is a simple descriptive utterance, without any explicit evidential marker.

- (1) *ku-ka hakkyo-ey ka-ss-e*
 he-Nom school-Loc go-Ant-Indic
 'He went to school.'

The meaning conveyed by the utterance in (1) is neutral in terms of evidentiality. It would be licensed in any situation in which the speaker had evidence that the subject had left for school. For example, the speaker might have seen the person in question leave (firsthand evidence), might have been told that he had left (hearsay), or might be assuming he had left because he was no longer in the room (inferential). However, if the postverbal evidential marker *-napo-* is used, as in (2), the construal of the utterance is completely different; it is quite explicit about the degree of belief the speaker has about the subject's having gone to school, and about what that belief rests on.

- (2) *ku-ka hakkyo-ey ka-ss-napo-a*
 he-Nom school-Loc go-Ant-*napo*-Indic
 'It seems he went to school.'

The sentence in (2) would be licensed in a situation in which, for example, the speaker did not see the subject in the room but had actually seen him going somewhere; in other words, the utterance is an inferential statement. This shows that *-napo-* functions as an inferential-evidential marker, encoding that the source of the focal information is indirect reasoning.

Intriguingly, *-napo-* can also be used in certain types of noninferential contexts. For example, the sentence in (3) would be licensed in a situation in which the interlocutors had shared the belief that the subject was not going to school, but then saw him on the street heading in that direction.

- (3) *ku-ka hakkyo-ey ka-napo-a*
 he-Nom school-Loc go-*napo*-Indic
 'Apparently he is going to school.'

In the situation I have described, the speaker is currently observing the occurrence of the target event, so the function of *-napo-* in this case cannot be to convey inferentiality. Rather, it has a mirative function, conveying that the focal information is unexpected or surprising – or in other words, it reflects the speaker's "unprepared mind" (DeLancey, 1997, 2001).

-Napo- can also be used in politeness strategies. For example, it can be employed in utterances where a speaker is trying to create some distance from the event she is referring to, in order not to threaten the face of an addressee, who is senior to her. A sentence like that in (4) might be licensed in a situation where a student was explaining to her advisor what he did last night because he had been too drunk to remember it.

- (4) *ecey sensayngnim-kkeyse manhi chwiha-si-ess-#(napo-)e-yo.*
 yesterday teacher-Nom.Hon much be.drunk-Hon-Ant-*napo*-Indic-Hon
 'It seems you were very drunk.'

In the situation in (4), it might well be obvious that the speaker did observe exactly how drunk her advisor was the previous night. However, she does not put it that way, using *-napo-* to pretend that she only inferred it somehow. If the sentence in (4) had been used without *-napo-*, the advisor's face would have been threatened, and it would therefore have been very rude.

This paper aims to examine in detail the multiple functions of the inferential-evidential marker *-napo-*, as part of a larger study of the entire evidential system of Korean (Kwon, in preparation). The major questions posed in this paper are: (1) What are the semantic and pragmatic properties of *-napo-*? and (2) What are the cognitive mechanisms underlying its various semantic and pragmatic functions?

In section 2, the concept of evidentiality is briefly defined and the evidential system of Korean is described, clarifying what this paper contributes to our general understanding of that system. Section 3 provides thorough analyses of the semantic and pragmatic functions of *-napo-*, including encoding inferentiality, marking mirativity, and supporting politeness strategies. Section 4 elaborates on the common cognitive mechanisms underlying those various functions of

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