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FROM DISCOURSE TO GRAMMAR: GRAMMATICALIZATION AND
LEXICALIZATION OF RHETORICAL QUESTIONS IN KOREAN¹

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IN GRAMMATICALIZATION STUDIES discourse has been widely recognized as one of the most important domains where grammaticalization is triggered (Hopper & Traugott 2003[1993]), since discourse is the locus of active meaning negotiation, in the course of which an array of potential meanings associated with a form is made available for possible conventionalization of context-induced reinterpretations (Heine et al. 1991, *inter alia*).

In discourse, various strategies like rhetorical questions are used by interlocutors to achieve communicative aims effectively. In stylistics, a rhetorical question is a question which does not expect an answer, since it really asserts something which is known to the addressee and presumably cannot be denied (Wales 2001). For our purposes, however, we will extend the definition to include all questions asked without the intent of soliciting answers, regardless of whether the addressee has the knowledge on the matter. Therefore, rhetorical questions as defined here essentially include all strategic uses of questions that are different from conventional ones in that they do not seek information or require answers. Since questions can be formed with as few constituents as single interrogative pronouns, our discussion also includes certain developments involving interrogative pronouns only.

Rhetorical questions are used to enhance the impact of an assertion by engaging the addressee in the interaction by demanding a response to an apparent question, and at the same time revoking the demand in one way or another, including signals that the question does not require an answer. These questions are particularly susceptible to grammaticalization, since they are subjected to meaning negotiation by virtue of their frequent appearance in discourse, and their grammaticalization into certain grammatical markers has indeed been attested. These important elements of discourse, however, have not received due attention in grammaticalization studies to date, with Herring (1991) for Tamil being a notable exception. This study is intended to fill the gap by presenting the grammaticalization of discourse markers and lexicalization of indefinite adverbs from rhetorical questions in Korean.

1. GRAMMATICALIZATION OF DISCOURSE MARKERS. Rhetorical questions are grammaticalized into diverse markers of grammatical functions in Korean. The most salient function of the grammaticalized rhetorical questions is one as discourse markers, the development of which, despite some controversy, is regarded as an instance of grammaticalization (Traugott 1995, Brinton 1996, Hopper & Traugott 2003[1993]). Making

use of discourse markers, the speaker presents the question either as a full-fledged question, thus fully engaging the addressee, or as an embedded form, thus relieving the addressee from answering. In Korean syntax, the complementizer that marks an embedded clause follows the clause. Moreover, embedded interrogative sentences/clauses are identical in linear order to non-embedded full questions, so embedded questions still exert strong engaging force on the addressee.

The functions of these discourse markers are diverse and include discourse initiation, topic presentation, pause-filling, mitigation, emphasis, and attention-attraction.

1.1. DISCOURSE INITIATORS. Discourse initiators developed from rhetorical questions are used by interlocutors to initiate a discourse, and the two most frequently used forms are as in (1)².

- (1) a. *iss-ci?*
 exist-Q
 ‘Look!’ (Lit. Does (it) exist?)
 b. *iss-c-anh-a?*
 exist-NF-Neg-Q
 ‘Look!’ (Lit. Doesn’t (it) exist?)

The two forms in (1) mean ‘Does/Doesn’t (it) exist?’ literally, but semantically they are vacuous. In discourse, however, they have the important function of initiating a discourse. The speaker initiates a discourse by engaging the addressee to answer if something does or does not exist. (Note that this something is not present in the text, even as a pronominal form.) This is in line with the crosslinguistic observation that verbs of existence can develop into topic presenters (Heine et al. 1993), presumably because these verbs presuppose the existence of the entity being presented as a topic. The development of discourse initiator function in these cases makes use of such an existence verb and a question to maximize the engaging effect of the addressee.

The engaging effect of these discourse initiators is infallible. The addressee is bound to respond to these initiators, normally by a *ung/yey* ‘yes,’ a listenership signal. From a superficially semantic perspective, this interaction of ‘Exist?–Yes’ as the opening of a discourse may sound ludicrous, considering that the interlocutors have not yet established a topic. The lexical semantics of the existence verb is completely bleached in the course of its development into a discourse initiator.

1.2. TOPIC PRESENTERS. Some rhetorical questions are also grammaticalized into topic presenters as in (2)–(4).

- (2) a. *kuke-y X-nya-myen*
 it-Nom X-Q-if (where X is who/what/when/where/how/why)
 ‘The thing is...’ (Lit. If (you) ask who/what... it is)

- b. *kuke-y encey-nyamyen caknyen imamttay-ya*
 it-Nom when-Top:Presenter last.year around:this:time-Dec
 ‘Speaking of the time, it was around this time last year.’ (Lit. If (you) ask
 ‘When is it?’...)
- (3) a. *X-nya-myen*
 X-Q-if (where X is a proposition)
 ‘If we are to discuss X’ (Lit. If (one) asks if X)
- b. *kusalam-i ttokttokha-nyamyen kukes-to ani-ketun*
 he-Nom be:smart-Top:Presenter it-even not-End
 ‘Speaking of his intelligence, he is not smart.’ (Lit. If (you) ask ‘Is he
 smart?’...)
- (4) a. *way X-iss-c-anh-a?*
 why X-exist-NF-Neg-Q (where X is an NP)
 ‘You know X, right?’ (Lit. Why, doesn’t X exist?)
- b. *way Kimsensayng-isscahna?*
 why Mr:Kim-Top:Presenter
 ‘You know Mr. Kim, right?’ (Lit. Why, doesn’t Mr. Kim exist?)

These topic presenters differ from discourse initiators in that the former, as the name suggests, tend to appear at the beginning of a segment of a discourse with a single topic, whereas the latter tend to occur at the beginning of an interaction between the interlocutors. As is evident in (2)–(4), these topic presenters are templates rather than single items in that the slot indicated as X allows for insertion of a range of items from the same paradigm. For this reason, these cases do not fit the traditional notion of grammaticalization, which normally addresses development into highly unitized forms like words or morphemes rather than constructions.

The crosslinguistic relation between topic and conditionals has long been recognized (Haiman 1978, Koo 1989). The development of the topic presenters in (2) and (3) makes use of a conditional (*-myen*) as well as a question (*-nya*). The rhetorical strategy here is that the speaker presents an apparently full-fledged question and then immediately cancels the requirement of an answer to the question by the following conditional marker signaling that the question is an embedded one. The topic presenter in (4) resorts to a different strategy: they are full-fledged question in form, often identical even in suprasegmental features such as intonation. The engaging effect of these topic presenters is such that (2) is typically followed by the speaker’s assertion, presumably inarguable due to the speaker’s assumed authority over the matter; and (3) by a strong negative assertion, i.e. the proposition X is normally negated.

1.3. PAUSE-FILLERS. There are pause-fillers developed from rhetorical questions, as in (5):

- (5) a. *mwe-la-l-kka?*
 what-Comp-Fut-Q
 ‘like/well...’ (Lit. what should (I) say?)

- b. *ku mwe-nya?*
 that what-Q
 'like/well...' (Lit. what is it?)
- c. *X-la-te-la?*
 X-Comp-Retros-Q (where X is who/what/when/where/how/why)
 'what/who...is it?' (Lit. what/who... did they say it was?)

The pause-fillers are full-fledged questions in form. Nevertheless, (5)c is rarely used as an independent question, and its illocutionary force is cancelled by a typical non-question intonation. The Korean language has a fully grammaticalized honorification and politeness systems that deeply permeate all parts of the grammar. Any violation of honorification or politeness renders an utterance not merely pragmatically unacceptable but grammatically incorrect. The examples in (5), especially (5)a and (5)b, by virtue of being complete sentences in form, are subject to full morphological trapings, including the use of sentence-final honorification marker or morphological replacement according to honorification requirements. Interestingly enough, even when a [+honorific] or [+polite] marking is warranted by an addressee who is a social superior, these forms may not be so marked. This is a clear indication that these forms are no longer questions *per se*. Equally interestingly, some of these forms may be marked [+polite], cf. the politeness marker *-yo* for (5)a. However, even when (5)a is so marked, it is not intended to be a question, in that neither does the speaker expect an answer nor does the addressee feel obliged to provide one. This indicates that the forms in (5) have moved into the domain of the discourse markers, but the forms are not (yet) fossilized enough to be opaque to morpho-syntactic operations.

1.4. MITIGATORS. Another category of discourse markers developed from rhetorical questions is mitigators, the main function of which is to tone down an assertion being presented. Those listed in (6) are some of these mitigators.

- (6) a. *mwe-la-l-kka*
 what-Comp-Fut-Q
 'let's say' (Lit. what should (I) say)
- b. *eti / mwe*
 where / what
 'well'

The mitigator (6)a is identical in form with (5)a and shares certain features with it, in that both of them are epenthetically used and that they indicate some type of hesitation on the part of the speaker. For these reasons they are obviously related and sometimes indistinguishable. One major difference is that the form in the mitigator function is motivated by the speaker's intention to reduce the assertive force, whereas the form in the pause-filler function is necessitated by the speaker's difficulty in linearizing linguistic materials.

The mitigators in (6)b, *eti* ‘where’ and *mwe* ‘what’, are identical to interrogative pronouns and pronoun-only interrogative sentences (which are not only possible but also very common in Korean). However, these forms as mitigators are entirely deviant semantically from actual pronouns, as shown in (7).

- (7) a. *eti na-to com mek-ca*
 where I-too a little eat-Hort
 ‘May I get to eat a little bit, too?’ (Lit. Where, let me eat a little.)
 b. *kuke-n pyello an coh-untey mwe*
 it-Top particularly not good-End what
 ‘It doesn’t seem to be so good (to me).’ (Lit. It is not particularly good, what.)

As is shown in (7), *eti* ‘where’ and *mwe* ‘what’ do not refer to a space or an entity, respectively, as they would if they were pronouns. Instead, taking the entire proposition as their scope, they tone down the assertiveness of the proposition.

1.5. ATTENTION-ATTRACTORS. Some rhetorical questions have been grammaticalized into attention-attractors. The main function of these discourse markers is to attract the attention of the addressee. Some of them work as in (8).

- (8) a. *etteh-supnikka?*
 how-Q
 ‘What do you think?’ (Lit. How is (it)?)
 b. *X-i-n-ka?*
 X-be-Pres-Q (where X is an NP)
 ‘Is (it) X?’

The examples above look exactly like ordinary sentences with literal meanings, i.e. with no special grammaticalized function. In fact, they can be used with literal meanings, too. In addition, (8)a and (8)b have certain variations. For example, (8)a has other counterparts, depending on variations along the formality and politeness axes: *ettay?* [-Polite, -Formal], *ettayyo?* [+Polite, -Formal], *ettenka?* [-Polite, +Formal], in addition to *ettehsupnika?* [+Polite, +Formal] presented above. Likewise, the form in (8)b has variants depending on the tense and aspect axes: *X-ilkka?* [Future], *X-iesna?* [Past], *X-itenka?* [Present Retrospective], *X-iesstenka?* [Past Retrospective], etc. Thus it resembles regularly inflected sentences. However, these expressions as discourse markers depart from regular sentences by the fact that they can be used discourse-initially when the addressee does not have an established topic. The extreme suddenness associated with these forms without contextual cues of what is being referred to in such literal questions as ‘How is (it)?’ or ‘Is (it) X?’ produces an engaging effect on the addressee, often to the level of embarrassment. It is often observed that the addressee, caught by surprise, asks what the speaker meant. To avoid this undesired conversational twist, since the question is rhetorical, the speaker preempts

the speaker-turn, usually by proceeding without a pause or with a pause not long enough for a response. The following examples illustrate the point.

- (9) a. *Kim-paksanim, etteh-supnikka? ipen hoytam-i cal*
 Kim-doctor how-Q this:time meeting-Nom well
toy-kyess-supnikka?
 become-Fut-Q
 ‘Dr. Kim, what do you think? Will this (summit) meeting go well?’
 b. *cinan tal-i-n-ka? nay-ka hongkhong ka-ssecc-i.*
 past month-be-Pres-Q I-Nom Hong Kong go-Plup-End
 ‘Was it last month? I’ve been to Hong Kong.’

As is shown above, these questions are given to an addressee who does not have prior knowledge of what the questions are about. From the addressee’s literal perspective these questions are defective. According to Korean syntax, if the question sentences are meant to be bona fide questions, they should follow, not precede, the second sentence with certain additional morpho-syntactic devices for subordination. These rhetorical questions are built on apparently stark rudeness, but they are often employed without such adverse effect, a fact indicative of their being routinized.

The fact that these forms still resemble regular sentences in form and that their forms are still transparent to morpho-syntactic operations such as the addition or substitution of grammatical morphemes suggests that the grammaticalization process is at an incipient stage with a low degree of fossilization.

1.6. EMPHATICALS. Another discourse function acquired by certain rhetorical questions is marking emphasis. There are two question words, *way* ‘why’ and *eti* ‘where’, used in this function, as shown in (10).

- (10) a. A: [Didn’t you have much trouble?]
 B: *way? kosayng cengmal manh-ass-ci.*
 why? trouble really be:much-Pst-End
 ‘Absolutely! We had lots of trouble.’ (Lit. Why? We had...)
 b. A: [He is truly a genius.]
 B: *eti? cenhye an ttokttokha-y.*
 where? never Neg be:smart-End
 ‘Absolutely not! He is not smart at all.’ (Lit. Where? He is not...)

As seen in the discourse segments, the question words are used singly, either as an emphatic substitute for ‘yes’ in (10)a and for ‘no’ in (10)b. Even though these uses are not normally recalled by Korean speakers as a usage associated with such forms, they often surface on casual speech, a fact indicative of their early stage of grammaticalization into discourse markers.

2. INDEFINITE ADVERBS AND INDEFINITE PRONOUNS. In addition to grammaticalization into discourse markers, rhetorical questions display lexicalization, a process whereby a non-lexical form becomes a fully referential lexical item (Hopper & Traugott 2003[1993]:49). The lexicalization process is exemplified by the development of indefinite adverbs from interrogative pronouns and interrogative constructions. In a similar way interrogative pronouns and interrogative constructions gave rise to indefinite pronouns.

2.1. INDEFINITE ADVERBS. The interrogative pronouns denoting ‘when’, ‘where’, and ‘how’ have developed into indefinite adverbs, as illustrated in (11).

- | | | | | |
|---------|-----------------------------|-----------|---|-------------|
| (11) a. | <i>encey</i> | ‘when’ | → | ‘some time’ |
| | b. <i>eti</i> | ‘where’ | → | ‘somewhere’ |
| | c. <i>ettehkey</i> | ‘how’ | → | ‘somehow’ |
| | d. <i>ettehkey ettehkey</i> | ‘how how’ | → | ‘somehow’ |

Likewise, certain interrogative constructions are developed into indefinite adverbs:

- | | | | |
|---------|---------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| (12) a. | <i>encey-(i)-n-ka</i> | → | ‘some time’ (Lit. when is it?) |
| | when-(be)-Pres-Q | | |
| | b. <i>way-(i)-n-ka</i> | → | ‘for some reason’ (Lit. why is it?) |
| | why-(be)-Pres-Q | | |
| | c. <i>eti-(i)-n-ka</i> | → | ‘somewhere’ (Lit. where is it?) |
| | where-(be)-Pres-Q | | |
| | d. <i>eti-lo-(i)-n-ka</i> | → | ‘to somewhere’ (Lit. to where is it?) |
| | where-to-(be)-Pres-Q | | |

Despite the fact that the English translations do not seem to suggest that these forms belong to the category of adverbs, due to their appearance as phrases rather than single items, they are perceived as single words by the native speakers. However, the adverb (12)d has variants formed by substitution of the directional *-lo* ‘to’ with other directionals and locatives such as *-ey* ‘at’, *-eyse* ‘at’, *-pwuthe* ‘from’, etc. These other variants are also perceived as single lexical items as in such example sentences as: *Etiyinka issta* ‘(It) exists somewhere’; *Etiyensa oassta* ‘(He) came from somewhere’; *Etilonka kassta* ‘(He) went somewhere’, etc.

2.2. INDEFINITE PRONOUNS. Seemingly identical processes produce indefinite pronouns, as illustrated in the following examples, where the indefinites developed from interrogative pronouns in (13), and from interrogative constructions in (14)–(16).

- | | | | | |
|---------|-----------------|-----------|---|-------------|
| (13) a. | <i>nwukwu</i> | ‘who’ | → | ‘someone’ |
| | b. <i>nwuka</i> | ‘who:Nom’ | → | ‘someone’ |
| | c. <i>mwe</i> | what | → | ‘something’ |

- (14) a. *nwukwu-(i)-n-ka*
 who-(be)-Pres-Q
 ‘someone’ (Lit. who is it?)
 b. *nwukwunka-ka ne-l chacao-ass-ta*
 someone-Nom you-Acc come:to:visit-Pst-Dec
 ‘Someone came to see you.’ (Lit. ‘Who-is-it?’ came to see you.)
- (15) a. *mwe-(i)-n-ka*
 what-(be)-Pres-Q
 ‘something’ (Lit. what is it?)
 b. *ku-ka mwenka-lul swumki-koiss-ta*
 he-Nom something-Acc hide-Pres:Prog-Dec
 ‘He is hiding something.’ (Lit. He is hiding ‘What-is-it?’.)
- (16) a. *mwues-ey-(i)-n-ka*
 what-at-(be)-Pres-Q
 ‘at something’ (what is it at?)
 b. *ku-nun mwueseynka-ey moltwuha-koiss-ta*
 he-Top at:something-at indulge:in-Pres:Prog-Dec
 ‘He indulges in something.’ (Lit. He indulges in ‘What is (it) at?’)

From a historical perspective, interrogative pronouns have long been used throughout the history of Korean. For example, *nwukwu* and *mwues* (in their historical forms) were used in Middle Korean, and the use of *nwu*, etymologically related to the former, is attested even in earlier sources (M. Kim 2001:5–7). Interestingly enough, most attested data are used as interrogative pronouns and no instances show the indefinite pronominal uses derived from interrogative pronouns. It is hence reasonably hypothesized that such development is a recent one in history.

3. THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS. The grammaticalization and lexicalization phenomena displayed by rhetorical questions have some important theoretical implications, of which we will discuss three major issues: intersubjectification, the grammaticalization-lexicalization continuum, and the grammar-lexicon continuum.

3.1. INTERSUBJECTIFICATION. From early grammaticalization studies, numerous mechanisms of semantic change have been proposed, such as metaphor, metonymy, inferences, etc. There also have been important generalizations of the nature of the semantic change, such as subjectification and intersubjectification (Traugott 1982 and 2003, Traugott & König 1991, and Traugott & Dasher 2002, among others). Crosslinguistically there is a strong tendency for words, particularly in grammaticalization, to acquire subjective, and further intersubjective, meanings over time. Intersubjectivity is closely related to ‘face’ and ‘image needs’ and may be most prominently displayed by honorification systems (Traugott 2003, Traugott & Dasher 2002).

Korean is a language in which honorification system is rigidly grammaticalized, and all sentences or fragments of sentences constituting an utterance must be properly

marked as mandated by the honorification and formality rules. Rhetorical questions, by virtue of being questions, albeit superficially, are fully marked with honorification feature of [\pm honorific] and formality feature [\pm formal], and at the same time, by resembling monologue more than dialogue in that they are not being given to the addressee as a finished product in a sense, they tend to be marked with [-honorific] and [-formal], because in a monologue the addressee is the speaker him/herself. Therefore, fully grammaticalized intersubjectivity markers are losing their intersubjective force in the course of grammaticalization. The impact of this loss in discourse is obvious: it is not uncommon that a social inferior uses these new discourse markers with [-honorific] and [-formal] marking in a discourse with a social superior, who may interpret them as normal sentences, and the speaker is deemed rude or offensive and this may result in conversational break-down. This potential risk is the price of these newly grammaticalizing markers with a high engaging power.

3.2. THE GRAMMATICALIZATION-LEXICALIZATION CONTINUUM. If we compare the development of indefinite adverbs in (11) and (12) on the one hand with that of indefinite pronouns in (13) through (16) on the other, we see that the processes involved are nearly identical. The major, or sole, difference seems to be that in the former the process operates on interrogatives denoting 'when', 'where' and 'how'; while in the latter on those denoting 'who' and 'what'. These different targets result in different classification of resultant formants, i.e. indefinite adverbs for the former and indefinite pronouns for the latter.

It is exactly for this reason that this is the area where the boundary of lexicalization and grammaticalization becomes unclear. The items in the single grammatical domain, i.e. interrogative pronouns, undergo seemingly identical processes, but produces different end-results in terms of the grammatical categories. According to the widely received concept of grammaticalization, there have to be different degrees of grammaticality between the source and the target, the latter being more grammatical. If we consider the category adverb more lexical than the category pronoun, as many do, the development of indefinite adverbs is clearly a lexicalization process and may, as some would argue, further qualify for de-grammaticalization, the reversal of a grammaticalization process³. However, the relative degrees of grammaticality for the categories interrogative pronouns and indefinite pronouns cannot be easily determined. If we consider that the end result category is clearly grammatical and developed from certain constructions, the case may be viewed as an instance of grammaticalization from certain perspectives. On the other hand, if we consider that interrogatives are more abstract than indefinite pronouns in that at least the latter has more concrete referential value (cf. 'who' vs. 'someone'), and thus assume that indefinite pronouns are more lexical than interrogatives, this process may qualify for an instance of lexicalization. From still another perspective, if the relative degrees of grammaticality of the two categories are thought to be undeterminable, this process may have to remain undefined.

3.3. THE GRAMMAR-LEXICON CONTINUUM. The phenomena discussed here also suggest that grammar and lexicon do not have a distinct boundary between them. A linguistic form fully compositional on the surface may function as a single grammatical item. This is in line with the notion of 'emergent grammar' (Hopper 1987) as opposed to a priori grammar. For some speakers, certain emerging forms may be used as grammatical markers, while for some speakers they may be still a combinatory string of lexical items.

Since rhetorical questions are fundamentally discursive and involve large chunks of linguistic strings rather than single words, their grammaticalization phenomena are unavoidably unclear in certain aspects, but at the same time effectively show that grammar and lexicon form a continuum rather than exist as two separate entities.

4. CONCLUSIONS. In this paper we have seen how certain rhetorical questions are grammaticalized into various discourse markers and how some of them are lexicalized. We have noted that some of these developments show the reversal of intersubjectification by losing their capabilities of directly reflecting the speaker-addressee relationship; that grammaticalization and lexicalization are not entirely discrete processes but intertwined, each even making use of certain identical processes; and that grammar and lexicon, rather than being two separate entities, form a continuum.

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 - ² For Korean data the Yale Transliteration System is used, and the abbreviations used for gloss are: Comp: complementizer; End: sentential ending; Fut: future; Neg: negative; NF: non-finite; Nom: nominative; Perf: perfect; Plup: pluperfect; Pres: present; Pst: past; Q: interrogative; Retros: retrospective; and Top: topic.
 - ³ However, the question of whether this process can qualify as an instance of de-grammaticalization can be controversial, since this process *per se* does not reverse the grammaticalization trajectory (Elizabeth Traugott, p.c.). However, since there are diverse stances as to this issue which is compounded by terminological inconsistency with lexicalization, de-grammaticalization, re-grammaticalization, and anti-grammaticalization, there are positions that assert that all instances moving from more grammatical to less grammatical categories along the continuum are qualified to be labeled as de-grammaticalization (cf. Kim 1998, Ahn 2001, and the critique on this issue in Rhee 2003).

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