

Variability of Formal Reduction in Grammaticalization*

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This paper explores the coexistence phenomena of many particles in their longer and shorter forms, in which the latter are result of formal reduction. The variable degrees of reduction is such that the reduction is either in the form of partial reduction or omission of entire particle, or of construction involving the particle. Special attention is given to the facts that (i) there are forms that suffer the result of phonological loss/erosion in that they became morpho-syntactically deformed by not being able to comply with the morpho-syntactic rules; (ii) there are forms that became homophonous with their antonyms with no apparent conflict; and (iii) most of the forms in variation do not exhibit clear semantic differences, or the form-meaning isomorphism. It is also argued in the paper that, contra common conceptions, the variations are often not correlated with particular speech communities or genres, though, in general, more conservative forms are relatively more frequently used in the written language variety. The variation and contingent reduction contribute to the genesis of new grammatical forms and reorganization of grammar as a result of massive reduction, which brings forth an implication that grammar is constantly in the flux. It is also shown that, despite the widely accepted view that semantic change precedes formal change, some of the forms do not exhibit

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noticeable semantic differences between the conservative forms and their innovative, and reductive, counterparts. **(Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)**

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1. Introduction

The Korean language heavily relies on the use of particles for encoding diverse grammatical concepts. Despite the general tendency of relegating the particles as a secondary or peripheral category in their importance in scholarship, they often play critical roles in determining the categorial status and semantic designation of the final product of the grammatical forms in the construction of which the particles participate (Rhee 2003a).

There are instances, however, where such particles, after their critical roles have been played in emergence of new grammatical forms, become the first target of gradual omission or erosion, resulting in synchronic coexistence of full forms and short forms. Not a few grammatical forms in contemporary Korean exhibit such formal split phenomena with their functions remaining intact. Figuratively speaking, the language hires the particles, exploits them for creation of important grammatical forms, and when the mission is completed, betrays and eliminates them, like a vicious employer. This study focuses, among others, on the grammatical forms that show formal 'layering' phenomenon (Hopper 1991; Hopper & Traugott 2003[1993]), and on the theoretical implications of this phenomenon.

2. Data

Korean has been widely recognized as a free word-order language, in which sentential components, both arguments and particles, may be relatively freely omitted as long as they are recoverable from the context or understandable from the utterance

situation. However, the cases under our focus are qualitatively different in that the omitted elements seem to be crucial from both semantic and morpho-syntactic points of view, as shown in the following discussion.

2.1 Alternation of *-se*

The particle *-se*, originally developed from the existence verb *iss-/is-/isi-*, carries diverse functions, denoting such notions as location, sequence, cause, condition, etc. (Rhee 1996). There are numerous instances where this particle shows alternation between presence and absence as shown in the following examples.

- (1) a. ku il-ey kwanhay(se) uynonhay-ss-ta
that matter-about discuss-Pst-Dec
'(We) discussed the matter.'
- b. ku il-ey tayhay(se) molu-ko iss-ta
that matter-about not.know-Prog-Dec
'(We) do not know about it.'
- c. chinkwu-hanthey(se) cenhwa-ka wa-ss-ta
friend-from telephone-Nom come-Pst-Dec
'(I) got a phone call from a friend.'
- d. pwulhwang-i-la(se) sonnim-i eps-ta
depression-be-as client-Nom not.exist-Dec
'There are no customers because it is a depression.'
- e. ku-ka cwuk-e(se) nemwu sulphu-ta
he-Nom die-because too.much be.sad-Dec
'(I) am very sad because he died.'

As shown in the above examples, many affixing particles may be omitted from its host, which is usually a particle itself. It is noteworthy that the hosting particles were often developed from complex constructs. For example, in (1a) and (1b), the hosts, *-ey kwanhay* 'regarding/about' and *-ey tayhay* 'regarding/about', consist of the locative particle *-ey* 'at', Sino-Korean verbal morphemes *kwan* 'relevance' and *tay* 'encounter', a light verb *ha-* 'do', and a non-finite connecting particle *-e* (later changed into *-y* due to morphophonemic rules).

2.2 Alternation of Non-Finite Connectives

A serial verb language, Korean has a productive way of linking multiple verbs, in which non-finite connectives are used. Among them are *-a/-e*, *-ko*, *-ci*, *-key*, etc. Of these, *-ci* has a severe restriction in use in that it can occur only in negative constructions. For this high specificity in use, this particle is rarely subject to deletion, and thus its presence/absence alternation is almost non-existent. Likewise, *-key* has a special morpho-syntactic function of changing its host into an adverb adding the semantics of mode or manner. For this semantico-syntactically significant function this particle is rarely omitted as well.

However, *-a/e* and *-ko* are relatively void in semantics: the semantics of *-a/e* has been bleached to such an extent that its meaning cannot be pin-pointed, and its only grammatical function is connecting two verbs/adjectives. The particle *-ko*, on the other hand, though its semantics is also general, has a semantic component intuitively attributed by the native speakers, i.e. sequentiality (or 'isolating force', Koo 1987; 'isolating connective' Rhee 1996, Rhee 2003a; cf. 'termination' Choe 1989[1929]: 309-313). This sequentiality sense, however, seems to be not strong enough to resist deletion in certain constructions. Therefore, commonly deleted connective particles are *-a/e* and *-ko*, often accompanying other elements in omission, as shown in the following examples.

- (2) a. pap-un mwullon(iko) mwul-to eps-ess-ta
 food-Top let.alone water-even not.exist-Pst-Dec

'We didn't have water, let alone food.'

b. kyengchal-un ku saken-kwakwanlyen(haye) cosa-ey
police-Top the incident-regarding investigation-at
nase-ss-ta
come.out-Pst-Dec

'With regards to this incident, the police launched an investigation.'

c. ku-nun i saep-eyta(ka) manhun ton-ul thwucabay-ss-ta
he-Top this business-at much money-Acc invest-Pst-Dec

'He invested lots of money in this business.'

As seen in the examples above, the non-finite connectives *-ko* and *-e/a* are deleted from the originally complex structures containing a copula *i-* 'be' in (2a), a light verb *ha-* 'do' in (2b), and a formerly full-fledged verb *taku-* 'approach' in (2c). With the deletion of these verbal elements in (2a) and (2b) along with the non-finite connective, the sentence contains an odd structure, i.e. the formerly full-fledged clausal elements become peripheral elements of adverbial function, yet without any adverbializing morpho-syntactic trappings.

The case of (2c) is related to the wholesale change of the former verb *taku-* or *tak-*, which survived in some compound verbs in which it designates manner of approaching; in clausal connectives of transference in a form of *V-taka* (non-finite) or *V-ess-taka* (past); in emphatic connectives as *V-etaka*; and a comparative marker affixing to the nominal designating the standard of comparison in the form of *N-pota*, itself developed from the transference function of *N-potaka*, meaning 'changing abruptly from seeing N'. In all these cases stated, the older form *-taka* coexists with its shortened form *-ta*. In the case of (2c), when the host noun ends with an open syllable, the locative *-ey* can be further eroded, and the only remnant of this particle constellation is *-ta* directly affixed to a noun, in which case the origin is largely opaque. This type of erosion is so widespread with the use of *-taka* that certain periphrastic connectives like iterative *-taka ... -taka*, abortive *-taka mal(ko)*, recollective

-taka poni, recollective conditional *-taka ponyen*, etc. all have eroded counterparts as *-ta ... -ta*, *-ta malko*, *-ta poni*, and *-ta ponyen*, respectively.

2.3 Topic Marker

Korean topic marker *-nun* and its allomorph *-un* often carry dual functions of topicality and contrastivity, i.e., marking the sentential topic and contrasting an argument with its potential alternatives or counterparts. It seems to be a recent development that the topic marker is substantially eroded and is increasingly becoming opaque, as illustrated in the following examples.

- (3) a. ku-nun pap-ul mek-ko(nu)n ilena-ss-ta
 he-Top food-Acc eat-and rise-Pst-Dec
 'He ate a meal and then rose.'
- b. ku-nun il-enase(nu)n palo pakk-ulo naka-ss-ta
 he-Top rise-and directly out-to exit-Pst-Dec
 'He got up and then went out right away.'
- c. ku-ka nwukwu-(i)-n-ci-(nu)n amwu-to molu-n-ta
 he-Nom who-(Cop)-Pres-Nomz-Top no.one-even not.know-Pres-Dec
 'Nobody knows who he is.'
- d. pakk-ey(nu)n nemwu tep-ta
 outside-at too.much be.hot-Dec
 'It is too hot outside.'
- e. kathi ka-{myenun, myen, m} coh-keyss-ta
 together go-{if} be.good-Fut-Dec
 'It would be nice if we go together.'

f. kuke-y coh-ki-(nu)n ha-ta
 it-Nom be.good-Nomz-Top do-Dec
 'It is good, as long as 'being good' is concerned.'

g. kuke-l mek-e(nu)n pwa-ss-ta
 it-Acc eat-Top see-Pst-Dec
 'I tasted it, as long as 'eating it' is concerned.'

As shown in the above examples, the topic marker seems to be subject to erosion in a variety of use contexts. When the marker is combined with a connective, as in (3a) and (3b), it is particularly susceptible to change, without any semantic loss. It is particularly interesting to see that (3e) has three different candidates in alternation, in that from the historical perspective, the earliest form of conditional is *-myen*, itself derived from *-mye* of simultaneity and *-um* of topicality, which was phonologically fortified recently by adding a full-fledged topic marker in addition to the now-opaque conditional marker in the host, and then more recently, especially in younger generation's colloquial register, a massive erosion results in *-m* (Koo 2004).

The topic/contrast marker *-nun* enjoys great freedom in selecting its host, and thus often breaks a semi-fossilized periphrastic collocational phrases as in *-e pota* 'try something' in (3g), or sometimes it changes the sentential main verb into a predicate of a nominalized clause by recruiting a nominalizer *-ki*, and a light verb *ha-*. In all these cases, the topic marker *-nun* coexists with its more eroded counterpart *-n* suggesting that the marker is still morpho-syntactically visible for a phonological operation.

2.4 Cause/Reason Marker

Another type of particles showing presence/absence alternation involves cause/reason markers, where the concept 'cause' is more direct and physical whereas the concept 'reason' is more indirect and involves reasoning process. Korean does not differentiate this distinction clearly, and some connective forms such as *-ttaymwuney*,

-kiey, and *-nikka*, etc., their variable degrees of specialization between reason and cause notwithstanding, carry the grammatical function of marking 'cause/reason', as shown in the following examples.

- (4) a. ku-ka o-ki-ttaym(wun)ey kitali-eyaha-y
 he-Nom come-Nomz-Reason wait-should-End
 '(I) have to wait because he is coming.'
- b. khun il-i na-keyss-ki(ey) alli-etuli-pnita
 big incident-Nom arise-Fut-Reason notify-Benef-Dec
 '(I) am letting you know this because there might break out a big accident.'
- c. ku-ka o-ni(kka) motwu hayngpokha-ta
 he-Nom come-Reason all be.happy-Dec
 'Everyone's happy because he is coming / has come.'

It is not at all clear if (4b) is related to (4a) in that the former is a more extensively eroded version of (4a) since both cases involve the nominalizer *-ki*. However, since the locative *-ey* can bring forth a reason/cause meaning as a result of subjectification (Traugott 1982, 2003), we may not have to hypothesize its relation to (4a). Further research is required to settle the issue.

The locative *-ey* that is subject to deletion in (4b) is qualitatively different from other particle deletion which is widely attested in the Korean language. For example, the most commonly omissible particle is the nominative and accusative markers which are relatively void in semantics. Other particles that contain substantial meanings are rarely omitted, and the locative *-ey* is one of such particles. Therefore, we can say that *-ey* can be deleted from *-kiey* because it is not a regular locative, but is a part of the reason-marking particle constellation.

2.5 Complementizers

Korean has a good inventory of complementizers the choice of which depends on the embedded sentence type. Therefore, if the sentence to be embedded is a declarative the complementizer is *-tako* or *-lako* (the latter when the main verb is a copula *i-* or when the embedded sentence ends with the *-la* declarative); if an interrogative, *-nyaka*, if an imperative, *-laka*, if a hortative, *-cako*, etc. From a historical point of view, the complementizer in a strict sense is *-ko* only, originally developed from a combination with the verb *ha-* 'say', which eventually eroded, because the first element of these modern complementizers is in fact a historical remnant of the representative form of a sentential ending.

In recent years, however, these complementizers are increasingly used in an eroded form as shown in the following examples.

- (5) a. ku-ka na-tele o-n-ta(ko) hay-ss-ta
 he-Nom I-to come-Pres-Comp do-Pst-Dec
 'He told me that he is coming.'
- b. ku-ka na-tele papo-(i)-la(ko) hay-ss-ta
 he-Nom I-to stupid.person-(Cop)-Comp do-Pst-Dec
 'He said that I am stupid.'
- c. ku-ka na-tele o-nya(ko) hay-ss-ta
 he-Nom I-to come-Comp do-Pst-Dec
 'He asked me if I would come.'
- d. ku-ka na-tele o-la(ko) hay-ss-ta
 he-Nom I-to come-Comp do-Pst-Dec
 'He asked me to come.'
- e. ku-ka na-tele ka-ca(ko) hay-ss-ta
 he-Nom I-to go-Comp do-Pst-Dec

'He asked me to go together.'

As shown in the examples above, the reduced forms of the complementizers lack *-ko* in common. As mentioned above, considering that *-ko* is the only true part of the complementizer, this phenomenon is tantamount to the loss of the complementizer. This may have to do with the reduction of *-ko* in its non-finite connective function (cf. (2a)). It is also possible that this reduction is motivated by the rhetorical strategy of the speaker who wants to present the embedded clause more vividly comparable to a non-embedded direct quote (cf. Rhee 2003b).

3. Discussion

An analysis of the variations in the use of these forms in the preceding discussions has a number of theoretical ramifications.

3.1 Morpho-syntactic Defectiveness

The first point is that there are forms that suffer the result of phonological loss/erosion in that they became morpho-syntactically defective by not being able to comply with the morpho-syntactic rules. Some of such scarred cases form a group that does not nicely fit into the regular classification of grammatical categories in terms of their formal characteristics. For example, *mwullon* 'let alone' is originally a noun for lexicographic classification denoting 'unnecessity of discussion' (and as an adverb carrying the discourse-marker function of absolute agreement, which, however, does not concern the present discussion), and the original form for the connective function was *mwullon-i-ko* [unnecessity.of.discussion-be-and]. With the loss of the copula and the connective, the only remaining component, i.e. the noun *mwullon*, carries the connective function despite the fact that it is a noun in form. Therefore, even if it has the nominal form, it cannot be affixed with the particles commonly accompanying nouns. This is a case of hybrid forms in that it has the nominal form and adverbial function. As has been pointed out in Heine (1991:168) the various uses

of hybrid forms can be accounted for with reference to their relative degree of grammaticalization.

3.2 Semantic Risks

Interestingly enough, there are forms that have become homophonous with their antonyms as a result of this erosion, which yet mysteriously fare well in the potentially dangerous situation. One such example is the of *hanthey* and *hantheyse*, as illustrated in the following examples.

(6) a. chinkwu-hantheyse cenhwa-ka wa-ss-ta
friend-from phone-Nom come-Pst-Dec
'There was a phone call from a friend.'

b. chinkwu-hanthey cenhwa-ka wa-ss-ta
friend-to/from phone-Nom come-Pst-Dec
'There was a phone call to my friend.'
'There was a phone call from my friend.'

There has been a long-held tradition that began with the so-called 'natural grammar', of regarding the language as a maximally optimal system with the transparency principle, according to which there is a one-form-one-meaning isomorphism in the language. However, the case under discussion here runs directly counter the claim, because language users do not seem to be bothered by creating homophonous antonyms.

3.3 Formal Multiplicity

The alternation phenomena under discussion result in a situation where there are multiple forms, i.e. longer and shorter forms, for the same function. However, interestingly, most of these forms in variation do not exhibit clear semantic

differences. Most of the forms under discussion belong to this situation, but to take the examples of the complementizers, we can look at the following cases.

(7)a. -tako vs. -ta

ku-ka	na-tele	o-n-ta(ko)	hay-ss-ta
he-Nom	I-to	come-Pres-Comp	do-Pst-Dec

'He told me that he is coming.'

b. -lako vs. -la

ku-ka	na-tele	papo-(i)-la(ko)	hay-ss-ta
he-Nom	I-to	stupid.person-(Cop)-Comp	do-Pst-Dec

'He said that I am stupid.'

c. -nyako vs. -nya

ku-ka	na-tele	o-nya(ko)	hay-ss-ta
he-Nom	I-to	come-Comp	do-Pst-Dec

'He asked me if I would come.'

In the examples above, it is hard to find any semantic distinction between the conservative and innovative forms. This means that the forms in formal reduction variation do not exhibit division of labor often observed in many cases across languages. This again constitutes a counterexample of the form-meaning isomorphism.

3.4 Register

It has been commonly pointed out in literature that when there exist variations the more conservative, i.e. longer, forms are correlated with the written and/or formal registers, whereas the more recent, i.e. shorter, forms are correlated with the spoken and/or casual registers. This generalization seems to be applicable to certain cases under discussion here. However, there are variations that are often not correlated with particular speech communities or genres. For example, shorter forms such as *mwullon*,

kwanlyen, etc. (as opposed to *mwilloniko*, *kwanlyenhaye*, etc.) are often found in formal writings on newspaper. And, indeed, there seems to be a tendency that the formal writing often prefers these innovative, reduced, forms to the conservative, longer, forms for reasons yet to be identified.

3.5 Grammar in Flux

We have observed that in many instances, the formal shortening either by entire omission or reduction often accompanies other adjacent elements in the process. This kind of reductive process can bring forth certain anomalies in the grammar. Generally speaking, reduction can cause non-trivial grammatical change.

One excellent example is the genesis of *-lan*, a homophonous/polysemous item carrying the particle function attaching itself to a noun, or the adnominal function attaching itself to a verb. This apparently short morpheme is a result of a massive reductive process as shown in the following.

- (8) a. kongpwu-lan ta ttay-ka iss-ta
study-Pcl all time-Nom exist-Dec
'There are times for study.' (Beware not to lose them.)

- b. kongpwu-(i)-lako-ha-nun-kes-un
study-(Cop)-Comp-say-Adnom-thing-Top

The source construct of the particle *-lan*, here functioning as a topic presenter, in (8a) is as (8b), which can be largely rendered as 'the thing that (we) call study is'. From a formal perspective, the traces of the source construct in *-lan* are a part of the complementizer *-la* and a fraction of a topic particle *-n*. The reductive process created a new grammatical item *-lan* from a topic-marked noun phrase containing a full-fledged clause.

Less drastic in its scale, yet similar in nature, there is yet another homophonous *-lan* as in the following examples.

(9) a. na-tele ka-lan mal-i-nya
I-to go-Adnom word-Cop-Q
'Are you saying that I (should) go?'

b. ka-lako-ha-nun
go-Comp-say-Adnom
'that I (should) go'

As shown in the above, the original construction of -lan is *-lakohanun*, which can be interpreted as 'which is said to'. This is also a case where a full clausal element was reduced along with other adjacent items, with various degrees of reduction as attested in such forms as *-lakohanun*, *-lahanun*, *-lanun*, and *-lan*.

Still another type of reduction that causes grammatical change is the case where the so-called declensional word, i.e. a verb or an adjective, becomes deleted, typically involving a copula *i*-, as shown in the following examples.

(10)a. hanyelum-i-lase mwuchek tep-ta
midsummer-Cop-Reason very be.hot-Dec
'It is very hot because it is midsummer.'

b. hyuka-lase cip-ey iss-ta
vacation-Reason house-at exist-Dec
'(I) am staying home because it is a recess.'

c. hyuka-la cip-ey iss-ta
vacation-Reason house-at exist-Dec

One major difference between (10a) and (10b) is that in (10a) the host of *-lase* is a noun ending with a closed syllable, i.e. *hanyelum*, whereas in (10b) its is one ending with an open syllable, i.e. *hyuka*. Its consequence is that when the noun ends

with an open syllable the following copula *i-* can be, or rather preferably, deleted. Now, with the absence of the main verb, this structure is regarded as a mere particle directly attached to the host noun, and even this putative particle can further undergo a reductive process bringing forth *-la* as in (10c). Now this form is regarded as a reason-marking particle attached to a noun instead of a verb, thus a creation of a new grammatical form again, a clear case of emergence of a grammatical item through reanalysis.

3.6 Formal Change vs. Semantic Change

It has been widely believed, though there is a controversy, that semantic change precedes formal change because meaning is constantly under negotiation and forms tend to be more conservative in change. However, as we have seen in the preceding discussion, there are numerous cases where there are multiple forms coexisting with no discernable semantic differences. This is directly against the claims that semantic change precedes formal change.

4. Conclusion

We have seen thus far the coexistence phenomena of many particles in their longer and shorter forms, where the shorter forms are in the middle of further grammaticalization, or further phonological reduction to the point of loss.

In particular, we have seen the aspects that can be recapitulated as in the following:

- (11) i. there are forms that suffer the result of phonological loss/erosion in that they became morpho-syntactically deformed by not being able to comply with the morpho-syntactic rules;
- ii. there are forms that became homophonous with their antonyms, which yet mysteriously fare well in the potentially dangerous situation;
- iii. most of these forms in variation do not exhibit clear semantic differences, thus not showing division of labor often observed in other cases, or the

form-meaning isomorphism;

- iv. the variations are often not correlated with particular speech communities or genres, though, in general, more conservative forms are more frequently, but not always, used in the written language;
- v. some of the forms show massive reduction which generates new grammatical forms and thus reorganizing the grammar; and
- vi. despite the widely accepted view that semantic change precedes formal change, some of the forms discussed here do not exhibit noticeable semantic differences yet have formal differences by either retaining the older forms or by assuming the more reduced forms.

Considering the fact that particles play an important role in the formation of grammaticalizing periphrastic items, the phonological erosion and sometimes ultimate deletion of these particles after the grammaticalizing forms attain stable grammatical status can be likened to a social life of the language and linguistic forms, i.e. hiring, exploiting, betraying and dismissing.

Abbreviations

Acc: accusative	Adnom: adnominal	Benef: benefactive
Comp: complementizer	Cop: copula	Dec: declarative
End: sentential ending	Fut: future	Nomz: nominalizer
Pcl: particle	Pres: present	Prog: progressive
Pst: past	Q: interrogative	Reason: reason/cause
Top: topic		

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