

Grammaticalization of Proximative Aspect in Korean*

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Rhee, Seongha, 2005, Grammaticalization of Proximative Aspect in Korean. *The Journal of Linguistic Science* 35, 149-168. In Korean, *lye(ko)ha-*, literally meaning 'do (something) in order to', marks the Proximative aspect. The development of the Korean Proximative aspect marker *-lye(ko) ha-* involves a volitive expression *lye(ko)* 'in order to' and thus follows the pattern attested in many languages. However, the Korean marker departs from those in other languages in that it was developed not from a single lexical source but from a periphrasis involving a volitive connective and a light verb; and that it is closely related to the future marker. The development from 'do (something) in order to' to 'almost, nearly, be about to' is, *prima facie*, an instance of metaphORIZATION, whereby human volition is mapped to a state of entities including inanimate beings, i.e. attribution of volition to inanimates. However, a diachronic, albeit cursory, exploration into the development of this grammatical marker reveals that the progression involved a series of complicated processes such as a gradual semantic generalization, a gradual formation of a construction, and a formal split from the source structure. Most of these processes can be characterized as metonymization. This paper shows that an apparent metaphor may in fact a cumulative effect of a series of metonymy, thus lending support to the notion 'post hoc metaphor'. An implication of this analysis in linguistic theories is that synchronic description may diverge from historical explanation, and thus it calls for the necessity of diachronic research to supplement purely synchronic descriptive analyses. This paper presents an analysis of the

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changes in meaning, phonology, and morpho-syntax that accompanied the grammaticalization of the proximative in Korean. (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)

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1. Introduction

The Proximative aspect¹⁾, also called the 'ALMOST-aspect' in Heine et al. (1993), is an interesting grammatical category that has received much attention in such important works as König (1993), Heine (1994a), and those cited in Heine and Kuteva (2002), even though it has generally not been regarded as a central grammatical category (Romaine 1999: 323). The Proximative is a temporal phrase located close to the initial boundary of the situation described by the main verb with the meaning 'on the verge of V-ing' (Romaine 1999: 324), 'almost', 'nearly', 'be about to', etc. Since this grammatical notion inherently makes reference to futurity in the sense that the psychological reference point is located posterior to the event under discussion, it is closely related to the futurity marker, such as the future tense and the prospective aspect. On the other hand, since the focal point lies before the reference point, i.e. culmination point in the conceptualization of progression of events, it is closely related to the so-called 'action-nearly-averted (ANA)' grammatical marker (Kuteva 1998), which is confined to past contexts with the meaning 'was on the verb of V-ing but did not V' (Romaine 1999).²⁾

The objective of this paper is twofold: (i) to describe how proximative aspect markers *-Iye(ko)ha-* and *-Iye(ko)* evolved; and (ii) to analyze the mechanisms that enabled the genesis of the markers.

1) The term 'Proximative' is credited to König (1993).

2) However, this function is marked by a different grammatical form, also a periphrasis, *-Ippenha-* 'almost did X but did not', which falls outside our immediate concern.

Before we proceed to a discussion of the Korean Proximate, a brief look at this grammatical category from a crosslinguistic perspective is in order. According to the cross-linguistic lexicons developed by Heine et al. (1993), and Heine & Kuteva (2002), crosslinguistic sources of the Proximatives are as listed in (1):

- (1) Crosslinguistic Sources of Proximatives
 - (i) motion verbs (COME, MOVE OUT...)
 - (ii) stative verbs (LOVE...)
 - (iii) verbs of volition (WANT...)

The development of the Korean Proximate aspect marker *-lye(ko)ha-* involves a volitive expression *-lye(ko)* 'in order to' and thus follows the pattern attested in Ewe, Bulgarian, Chamus dialect of Maa, Chrau, Sesotho, Margi, Persian, Old English, etc. (Heine et al. 1993, Heine and Kuteva 2002). However, the Korean marker departs from those in other languages in that it was developed not from a single lexical source but from a periphrasis involving a volitive connective and a light verb; and that it is closely related to the future marker (cf. Rhee and Myung 2005: 244-245).

This paper presents relevant data in Section 2, addresses semantic change resorting to such mechanisms as metaphor, metonymy, semantic weakening, and semantic divergence in Section 3, and addresses the concomitant morphosyntactic and formal changes such as reanalysis, phonological erosion, phonological reinforcement in Section 4.

2. Data

The Korean Proximate *-ley(ko)ha-* is a periphrastic expression, in which diverse linguistic forms are combined. The most important element in the form is *-lye(ko)*, the function of which is marking a purpose, with the meaning of 'in order to'. The

following example well illustrates such uses:³⁾

(2) a. ku-nun hakkyo-ey ka-lyeko cip-ul nao-ass-ta
he-Top school-to go-in.order.to house-Acc exit-Pst-Dec
'He left home in order to go to school.'

b. ku-nun sengkongha-lyeko yelsimhi kongpwuha-n-ta
he-Top succeed-in.order.to hard study-Pres-Dec
'He studies hard in order to succeed.'

In the example sentences in (2), *-lyeko* clearly marks the purpose, and carries the connective function for subordination of the purposive clause to the main clause. However, the situation changes in (3).

(3) a. ku-nun hakkyo-ey ka-lye(ko) ha-n-ta
he-Top school-to go-in.order.to do-Pres-Dec
'He is about to go to school.'
(Lit.: He does (something) in order to go to school.)

b. ku-nun yeki o-lye(ko) ha-n-ta
he-Top here come-in.order.to do-Pres-Dec
'He is about to come here.'
(Lit.: He does (something) in order to come here.)

In the examples above, what concerns us is that the literal meaning of the two sentences contains underspecification of the grammatical theme for the main verb *ha-*'do'. In other words, the sentence simply says "he does" but what he does is not

3) Transliteration of the Korean data follows the Yale Romanization System and the abbreviations used are: Acc: accusative; Dec: declarative; Nom: nominative; Pres: present; Prox: proximative; Pst: past; and Top: topic.

explicitly mentioned. There is a further change of situation in (4).

(4) a. kenmwul-i mwuneci-lye(ko) ha-n-ta
building-Nom collapse-in.order.to do-Pres-Dec
'The building is about to collapse. [With reference to a tilted building]'
(Lit.: The building does (something) in order to collapse.)

b. cha-ka mikkuleci-lye(ko) ha-n-ta
car-Nom slide-in.order.to do-Pres-Dec
'The car is about to slide. [With reference to a car on e.g. an icy road]'
(Lit.: The car does (something) in order to slide.)

In (4a), the sentence literally means that the building is doing something trying to collapse. Likewise, (4b) describes the car as if it were doing something trying to slide. A further change is shown in (5).

(5) a. pi-ka o-lye(ko) hanul-i khamkhamha-ta
rain-Nom come-in.order.to sky-Nom be.dark-Dec
'It is overcast; it looks like rain.'
(Lit.: The sky is dark in order for it to rain.)

b. chospwul-i kkeci-lye(ko) kamwulkamwulha-n-ta
candle.light-Nom get.extinguished-Prox flicker-Pres-Dec
'The candle light flickers, about to die out. [With reference to a weak candle light]'
(Lit.: The candle light does (something) in order to die out.)

In (5a), the sky is described as if it were doing something in order to make the rain to come. Likewise in (5b), the candle light is described as if it were intending to get extinguished. Unlike the previous examples, examples in (5) do not have the light verb *ha-* 'do'. In these sentences *-lye* or *-lyeko* are no longer literal Purposive, but

a Proximative. The same applies to *-lyeko ha-* in (4), where the Purposive meaning does not persist.

In the context of describing preliminary data, we need to see the composition of the linguistic forms that contribute to the formation of the Proximative marker. The participating components are as follows:

(6) Components of *-lye(ko)ha-* Proximative

- a. *-lye*: intention marker (closely related to the intention marker *-le*)⁴⁾
- b. *-(ko)*: connective
- c. *ha-*: light verb 'do'

3. Semantic Change

We have seen that the Proximative is composed of diverse morphemes that carry functional and semantic properties, the semantic concatenation of which produces 'do X, with an intention of', which consequently developed into 'be about to'. There are several cognitive mechanisms that were operative in the course of grammaticalization, such as metaphor, metonymy, semantic weakening (or generalization), and semantic divergence. We shall turn to a discussion of each of them.

3.1 Metaphor

Metaphor seems to have been most widely subscribed to as a semantic change mechanism in grammaticalization studies. The act of using metaphor, i.e. 'metaphorization' is evident in the following examples.

4) The intention marker *-le* is very similar in function, i.e. marking 'intention/purpose', but its occurrence is largely restricted to the contexts where the main clause verb is that of motion, such as COME, GO and MOVE ABOUT.

(7) a. Volitive Agent Subject

ku-nun casalha-lyeko ha-n-ta
he-Top commit.suicide-in.order.to do-Pres-Dec
'He is going to kill himself.'

b. Non-Volitive Inanimate Subject

kenmwul-i mwuneci-lyeko ha-n-ta
building-Nom collapse-in.order.to do-Pres-Dec
'The building is about to collapse.'

In comparisons of the examples (7a) and (7b), it is clear that there is a change of the domains of the entities that are grammatically encoded as the sentential subject, responsible for the event designated by the verb *ha-* 'do', i.e., in (7a) the sentential subject is a volitive agent, whereas in (7b) it is a non-volitive inanimate entity. The domain change from the volitive to the non-volitive is triggered by metaphorization, whereby volition is attributed to inanimate things. In a simple paraphrase of (7b), the linguistic form asserts that the building intends to collapse on its own volition.

3.2 Metonymy

Metonymy, basically based on contiguity, has been less frequently subscribed to as a semantic change mechanism. Recently, however, the notion of contiguity has been expanded to include conceptual contiguity (notably through works of Traugott and her colleagues, e.g. Traugott 1988, Traugott & König 1991, Hopper & Traugott 2003[1993]) and its importance was emphasized in Barcelona (2000, 2003). Viewed as an intra-domain change in contrast with inter-domain metaphor, metonymy poses a fundamental question as to what is meant by "domain" (Traugott and Dasher 2002). Heine et al. (1993) ingeniously solves the problem of apparently conflicting ideas of metaphor and metonymy in grammaticalization by proposing

metonymic-metaphoric change model, according to which metaphor operates in the macro-structure whereas metonymy operates in the micro-structure. However, the problems associated with the defining characteristics and the required sizes of domains largely remain unsolved (cf. Croft 1993, papers in Barcelona 2000, Kövecses 2000, and Barcelona 2003, for insightful critiques). If we subscribe to the scale of ontological domains proposed by Heine et al. (1991), however, we can find instances that can be best analyzed as metonymic changes. I.e., Heine et al. (1991) propose a continuum of ontological categories along which metaphORIZATION occur: [PERSON > OBJECT > PROCESS > SPACE > TIME > QUALITY]. The following discussion shows intermediate changes in the metaphorical transfer of [PERSON > OBJECT]. The following series of examples should illustrate the point.

(8) Volitive Human Agent

ku-nun mwulken-ul phal-lyeko ha-n-ta
 he-Top goods-Acc sell-in.order.to do-Pres-Dec
 'He intends to sell his goods.'

Example (8) has the volitive human agent as the sentential subject. It is the most typical sentence type involving the intentional marker (and further, the Proximative), in the sense that a 'selling' act requires the seller's intention and active effort to realize a transaction. The following example shows a minor change from (8).

(9) Non-Volitive Human Experiencer / Volitive Human Agent

ku-nun kot wul-lyeko ha-ess-ta
 he-Top soon cry-in.order.to do-Pst-Dec
 'He was about to break into cry.'
 'He tried to cry.'

Example (9), as was the case with (8), also has the human subject, but the predicate allows for the two possible interpretations. The person can be either

non-volitive human experiencer, or volitive human agent. In other words, the human subject may be passively act according to his/her feeling, or he/she may have been intentionally attempting to cry, perhaps in order to affect someone emotionally. A further change is seen in the following example.

(10) Non-Volitive Human Experiencer

ku-nun kapcaki mwuseweci-lyeko ha-ess-ta
he-Top suddenly become.fearful-in.order.to do-Pst-Dec
'He was becoming scared all of a sudden.'

Example (10) above has the non-volitive human experiencer. This sentence is not ambiguous, because becoming fearful is beyond human control. There are other predicates that belong to this category, typically inchoative psychic-verbs, such as *sulpheci-* 'become sad', *hwana-* 'become angry', *cohaci-* 'become interested in', etc. There is another change from (10) in example (11) below.

(11) Inanimate, Active

pi-ka o-lyeko ha-n-ta
rain-Nom come-in.order.to do-Pres-Dec
'It is about to rain.'

The sentence (11) above has the inanimate subject. Here the sentential subject 'rain' is not a sentient being and the original intention meaning is now completely lost, because it would have been semantically anomalous otherwise. However, the verbal predicate is, at least, still in the active voice. Still another small-step change is seen in the following example.

(12) Inanimate, Passive

cenhwa-ka kkunheci-lyeko ha-n-ta
phone-Nom get.cut.off-in.order.to do-Pres-Dec

'The phone is about to be disconnected.'

Example (12) also has the inanimate subject. The telephone experiencing disconnection does not involve intention of the telephone. If we compare this example with (d), the predicate *kkanbeci-* 'get cut off' has the passive morphology, whereas the rain's coming, as was pointed out, is in the active voice. We see that the intention is completely incompatible with example (12) because the predicate is in the passive voice.

Very interestingly, the progression from (8) to (12) roughly corresponds to the historical development. The old occurrences were entirely (8) or (9) types, as e.g. *phal-* 'sell', *pat-* 'get/receive/obtain', *ka-* 'go', etc. in the 16th century data,⁵⁾ and as the data become more recent they tend to include the latter types.⁶⁾

It was discussed in 3.1 that the development of the Proximative marker involved metaphorization, but in 3.2 it was shown that there exist many different internal stages. In the micro-structure of this grammaticalization processes are gradual small-scale metonymic changes, a contrast with the metaphorical changes of [PERSON > OBJECT] in the macro-structure. This type of change pattern is widely attested and some scholars suggested the concept of the "*post hoc* metaphor". It means that if you look at certain phenomena and compare the beginning and the end, it looks exactly like an instance of metaphor. But if you look at it more closely, the progression is actually a series of metonymy. This kind of semantic change pattern is well captured by the so-called metonymic-metaphorical model of semantic change proposed by Heine et al. (1991).

3.3 Weakening

5) A brief data search was performed with the 16th century literature *Penyek Nokeltay* (c. 1517).

6) A brief data search was performed with the contemporary corpus KAIST KORTERM for this purpose. However, exact points in history when the occurrences of different category were first attested could not be established, which should constitute an interesting research topic.

The notion of semantic weakening has been often considered as one of the defining characteristics of semantic change that occur in grammaticalization (cf. 'Verbleichung' a la Gabelentz 1901[1891]; 'affaiblissement' and 'dégradation' a la Meillet 1912; 'desemanticization' a la Lehmann 1995[1982], Heine & Reh 1984, and Claudi & Heine 1986; 'semantic depletion' a la Lehmann 1995[1982]).

The process of semantic weakening seems to have taken place by stages, each stage reflecting gradual loss of semantic specificity. These stages can be hypothesized as in (13) through (16), and the semantic weakening seems to be closely related to the concomitant morpho-syntactic changes, because lexical selection and syntagmatic arrangement seem to have enabled it.

(13) Stage 1: Full Lexical Specification

X Y-es in order to Z

He studies in order to succeed.

Stage 1 is marked by the lack of grammaticalization of the Proximate. The two events in the sentence, marked as Y and Z, are all lexically specified (i.e., Y=study and Z=succeed).

(14) Stage 2: Substitution of Pro-Verb (*ha-* 'do')

X Y-es in order to Z >> X DOes in order to Z

He studies in order to succeed. He does \emptyset in order to succeed.

In Stage 2, as the full verb is substituted with a pro-verb 'do', the semantic specificity originally marked by the lexical verb is lost.

(15) Stage 3: Semantic Weakening of *ha-* 'do'

X DOes in order to Z >> X intends to Z

He does \emptyset in order to succeed. He intends to Z

In Stage 3, the meaning of *ha-* 'do' becomes bleached. The pro-verb *ha-* 'do' was originally a full-fledged verb, meaning 'act' or 'say', but it became a light verb, without any substantial semantic substances. The specific meaning of *ha-* 'do' becomes the object of semantic negotiation between interlocuters, who rely on inferences warranted by the context and try to find the meaning that is contextually optimal.

(16) Stage 4: Semantic Weakening of *-lye* [Volition]

X intends to Z >> X is about to Z
He intends to succeed. He is about to succeed.

As shown in (16), when the volition meaning is lost, the only meaning that remains is the imminent futurity.

If we line up examples (13) through (16) from the four stages, the series shows the semantic change from, e.g. "He studies in order to succeed" to "He is about to succeed", losing semantic components at each stage.

3.4 Divergence

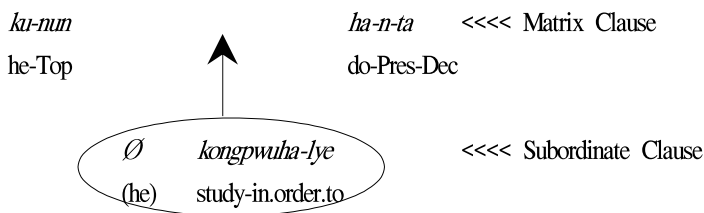
The term 'divergence' names a state of affairs subsequent to some change, namely the result of the process called 'split' by Heine and Reh (1984) (Lessau 1994). Typically a lexical item that enters into the grammaticalization process does so in local contexts, and the form remains a fully lexical item elsewhere. Therefore, after grammaticalization proceeds, two items sharing the lexical source coexist synchronically (Hopper 1991, Hopper & Traugott 2003[1993]). This process of divergence does not take place in a fell swoop, but rather involves an intermediate stage where the item is amenable with both the lexical and the grammatical interpretations.⁷⁾ For instance, as we have seen before, there is an ambiguity

marry", historically, the main verb was "go" and "to marry" was an adverbial phrase marking the intention. Through reanalysis, however, the entire chunk of "am going to" is reanalyzed as the futurity marker, and the "marry" as the main verb. An analogous change occurred to the Korean Proximative. We can hypothesize two stages.

(18) Stage I: Complex Sentence as Simplex Sentence

He intends to study. (He does \emptyset in order to study.)

[ku-nun [kongpwuha-lye] ha-n-ta] >> [ku-nun kongpwuhalyeha-n-ta]



In (18), originally, the sentential subject is *ku* 'he' and the main verb is *ha-* 'do'. The circled element "in order for him to study; in order that he studies" was a peripheral element, i.e. a subordinate clause marking the Purposive. However, this is reanalyzed as a part of the main clause. It seems reasonable to hypothesize that this reanalysis was triggered by the fact that the main verb *ha-* 'do' is the light verb and does not have any semantic substance, and the language users wanted to upholster the semantic vacuum with some element with substantial meaning. In this conceptual need for semantic reinforcement, the meaning of the verb in the syntagmatic vicinity and with the shared subject could have been the best candidate for the recruit.

The state of the affairs in the subsequent stage can be represented as in (19).⁸⁾

8) Korean is a rare East Asian language that employs spacing in orthography. According to the National Orthographic Regulations, the Purposive *-lye* and the light verb *ha-* should be written with an intervening space. This applies to the Proximative uses as well. However, many native speakers of Korean write the two morphemes without a space, a fact indicating

(19) Stage II: Multiple Words as a Single Word

[ku-nun kongpwuha-lye ha-n-ta] >> [ku-nun kongpwuha-lyeha-n-ta]

The intention marking *-lye* is reanalyzed as a part of a grammatical marker *-lye ha-* without an analysis as to the internal composition, and *kongpwuha-* 'study' becomes the main verb. Consequently, *-lyeha-* becomes the marker of the Proximative aspect.

4.2 Phonological Erosion

Now we turn to a discussion of phonological erosion, which is often claimed as a common concomitant of grammaticalization. Phonological erosion is attested in the development of the Proximative, as shown in (20).

(20) Deletion of *ha-* 'do' in poetic style, 1st person only

a. *-lye ha-* >> *-lye-*

b. na-nun cokwuk-ul ttena-lye-Ø-n-ta

I-Top fatherland-Acc leave-Prox-Ø-Pres-Dec

'I am leaving my fatherland.'

In contemporary Korean *-lye* by itself can function as the Proximative marker (cf. example (5) in the previous discussion) as a result of semantic weakening from the Purposive. This usage is very common in Present Day Korean. In such cases, however, the Proximative marker only attaches to the non-main-verb. Interestingly, however, sometimes as we see in (20), *-lyeha-* may be simply reduced to *-lye-* and still be attached to the main verb. This is not common, but such usage does exist. This is an instance of massive phonological erosion, because originally, the eroded

that conceptually they have formed a single unit. This paper represents them without a space especially to avoid confusion in interlinear morphemic glosses.

ha- was the main verb, the most central element of the construction. This core element is dispensed with probably for the lack of its semantic contribution.

4.3 Phonological Reinforcement

In grammaticalization studies, it has been often pointed out that grams tend to lose the phonological substance in the course of grammaticalization, as we have seen in the preceding discussion in 4.2. However, the Korean Proximative marker *-lyeha-* shows the opposite, that is, phonological reinforcement.

A cursory survey of historical data shows that *-lyeko-* and *-lyekoha-* were rarely used before the 19th century. These varieties, where *-ko-* is added to the original Proximative, are very common in Present Day Korean. This can be represented as in (21) and (22).

(21) Addition of *-ko-*, a Complementizer

a. *-lyeha-* >> *-lyekoha-*

b. namwu-ka ssuleci-lye(ko)ha-n-ta
tree-Nom fall-Prox-Pres-Dec
'The tree is about to fall down.'

(22) Addition of *-ko-*, after deletion of *ha-* (cf. (21))

a. *-lye-* >> *-lyeko-*

b. namwu-ka ssuleci-leyko kiwuleci-ess-ta
tree-Nom fall-Prox get.slanted-Pst-Dec
'The tree is tilted, about to fall.'

In this context, a brief discussion on the nature of the particle *-ko-* is in order. There are many functions of *-ko-* in Present Day Korean, most of which was derived from its connective function. The function of *-ko-* that has closest relation with respect to the current discussion is that of complementizer. The use patterns of

the complementizer *-ko* is as shown in (23).⁹⁾

(23) The *-ko* complementizer use patterns

<i>-laka</i> imperative/declarative	<i>-taka</i> declarative
<i>-nyaka</i> interrogative	<i>-caka</i> hortative

The elements combined with *-ko* in (23), i.e. *-la*, *-ta*, *-nya*, and *-ca*, are the representative sentential end forms by the sentence type. However, there is no sentence type that ends with *-lye*. Therefore, the addition of *-ko* is an obvious violation of grammatical rules. Despite the fact that the addition of *-ko* is in violation of grammatical rules, analyzing the phenomenon as an instance of analogy is not only possible but also probable, considering that changes analogous to this instance are in fact attested in other languages.¹⁰⁾ For instance, Genetti (1991: 246) reports affixing Instrumental case marker *-naM/n* on verbs in Newari. Similarly Lehmann (1991: 526) illustrates that in German connectives *weil* and *obwohl*, whose uses were originally restricted to subordinating clausal connection, came to be used as coordinating connectives, a change attributable to analogy from the uses of the semantically similar coordinating connectives, *denn* and *allerdings*. In view of these attested changes, the addition of *-ko* in the Proximative seems to be attributable to analogy.

5. Conclusion

9) As shall be clear in the following discussion, *-ko* does not carry a complementizer function by itself. It combines with other elements to form a complementizer. Its role in the formation is crucial because the grammatical status is usually determined by the last element in the string in Korean (Rhee 2003).

10) As a matter of fact, since analogy is a process based on a rule of reference, often utilized in circumstances where a grammatically correct form is being replaced by a newly analogized, and consequently wrong, form, initial ungrammaticality as a result of analogical process is an acceptable, or an unavoidable, state of affairs.

In the preceding discussion we addressed semantic, morpho-syntactic, and phonological changes that accompanied, or some even motivated, the grammaticalization of the Proximative. From the semantic perspective, the development into the Proximative can be characterized as a gradual semantic generalization (or weakening) process that enabled the emergence of 'be about to' meaning from 'doing X in order to Y'. The semantic change in the development of the Proximative involved metaphor, metonymy, semantic weakening, etc., and the apparent metaphor may be in fact a cumulative effect of a series of metonymy, i.e. post hoc metaphor.

From the phonological perspective, the development of the Proximative, though there is a variety amenable with phonological reduction, shows that grammaticalization may not be uniquely characterized with phonological erosion, because there are instances of phonological addition as well, as shown with the case of the Proximative. The addition of a connective particle involved structural changes that seem to have been triggered by 'irrational' analogy, i.e. one unjustifiable in terms of morpho-syntax. This seems to support the claim that in the course of adopting the strategies in linguistic manipulation, which ultimately leads to language change, language users do not show much concern with the consequences of the modification on grammar (see Rhee 2004).

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