

## From Politeness Discourse Strategy to Grammar: Grammaticalization of Stance Markers<sup>\*</sup>

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**Seongha Rhee. 2011. From Politeness Discourse Strategy to Grammar: Grammaticalization of Stance Markers. *The Journal of Linguistic Science* 59, 253-282.** This paper addresses some politeness strategies adopted by the speakers of Korean, which are grammaticalizing into modality markers encoding the speaker's stance about the proposition being presented. The attenuatives, recruiting lexical items denoting 'shape' 'be equal' 'be same' 'see' 'want' and 'not know', develop into a marker of politeness through conjectural meanings. In the grammaticalization process diverse strategies are employed: (a) the speakers resort to speaker-external phenomenon or uncontrollable mental state, thus avoiding presenting themselves as responsible for such judgment; (b) the sentential subjects do not agree with the sentential predicate, thus subjecting the sentence to reanalysis whereby the sentential predicates are now reanalyzed as modality markers; and (c) the true sentential subjects or other crucial arguments are omitted to make the sentential argument structure vague. All these are consequences of the common strategy in a language community where direct mention of the sentential elements is often avoided for politeness reasons. **(Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)**

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## 1. Introduction

Politeness, or showing respect, is a pervasive aspect in human language and presumably all languages have means of encoding it (Brown and Levinson 1978, 1987).<sup>1)</sup> Politeness as a social phenomenon may be best expressed in good manners and etiquette, largely showing positive concerns to the partner either verbally or non-verbally. Despite the presumed universality of politeness, the patterns of its linguistic realization are vastly diverse across cultures. The most common types of linguistic devices of showing politeness may include making one's statement indirect (or even false), often making use of circumlocution, lexical substitution, euphemisms, tags, or conventionalized formulae. These devices of indirectness are essentially intended to create uncertainty or ambiguity.

According to Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) theory of politeness, based on Goffman's (1955) sociological notion of 'face', there are two types of politeness: 'negative politeness' and 'positive politeness'. Negative politeness is basically a distancing strategy, showing the respect to a person's right to act freely. On the other hand, positive politeness is basically a befriending strategy, showing the respect to a person's need to be liked and understood.<sup>2)</sup> Negative politeness seems to be more prevalent than positive politeness since the former seems to be safer, as it is less likely to lead to misunderstanding for apparent lack of deference and seemingly inappropriate friendliness.

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1) Politeness, honorification, and respect are nearly synonymous and they are used largely interchangeably here. In the following discussion, the distinction may be made between politeness and honorification which in turn are conceived of as belonging to a larger concept of 'showing respect.'

2) The theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), however, has been criticized by Matsumoto (1988) and Ide (1989), who based their argument on Japanese notion of 'wakimae'.

In Korean, of particular importance is the grammatical notion 'respect-marking', a strategy of negative politeness in the Levinson and Brown's (1978, 1987) typology. This is well evidenced in the fact that, whenever warranted, compliance with honorification marking [+Hon] and politeness marking [+Pol] is not merely pragmatically-preferred but grammatically-mandatory in Korean.<sup>3)</sup> This paper addresses some of such politeness strategies adopted by the speakers of Korean, i.e. attenuatives, which are grammaticalizing into modality markers encoding the speaker's 'politeness' stance about the proposition being presented.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 briefly surveys the respect marking system in Korean; Section 3 discusses the grammaticalization processes of the attenuatives; Section 4 discusses some of the theoretical implications of the grammaticalization phenomena as elaborated in Section 3; and Section 5 summarizes and concludes the paper.

## 2. Respect Marking in Korean Grammar: A Brief Survey

Linguistically marking respect is a decision a Korean speaker should make at every utterance. Respect, as used here, encompasses honorification and politeness. In Korean, respect marking is particularly delicate and complex, and is among the major difficulties for learners of Korean as a foreign language. The challenge is also applicable to young children in the process of language acquisition, and teaching students at elementary levels how to say properly by way of using honorification and politeness devices surfaces as an important aspect of language arts.<sup>4)</sup> This section

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3) The notion of grammatical incorrectness in this context must be taken less rigidly because sentences may not explicitly contain the person to be honorified, and judging the grammaticality of the sentences based on presence/absence of honorific markers out of context is not meaningful. However, if a sentence explicitly contains the person to be honorified, e.g. one with honorific suffix or a term with inherent semantic feature of [+Hon] (see below), honorific/politeness marking is grammatically obligatory.

4) The comic effect produced by flagrant flouting this honorification agreement by adult speakers was once popularized by *Nena calhaseyyo!* 'Look who's talking! Mind your business!', a 2005 famous movie line in *Chinchehan Kumcassi* "Keumja, the Kind One" (entitled *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance* in English). The incongruity is from the uses of pronoun *ne* (you [-polite]) and the sentential ending *-seyyo* (imperative [+polite]).

briefly surveys the honorification and politeness marking systems in Korean.

## 2.1 Honorification Marking

Honorification marking comprises of diverse subtypes and is realized in various linguistic means.<sup>5)</sup> The system has three major subtypes depending on who is to be honorified: the subject, the object, and the addressee.<sup>6)</sup>

Honorification of the subject is realized by morphological marking: the honorific suffix *-si-* on the predicate and the honorific nominative case marker *-kkeyse* on the subject nominal, as illustrated in (1):<sup>7)</sup>

- (1) a. *chinkwu-ka ka-n-ta*  
 friend-Nom go-Pres-Dec  
 '(My) friend is going.'
- b. *apeci-kkeyse/\*-ka ka-\*(si)-n-ta*  
 father-Nom go-Hon-Pres-Dec  
 'My father is going.'

The honorification is inheritable under certain circumstances (Hong 1991, Jang 1998, Rhee 1999). When the subject is in the metonymic relation with a nominal that needs to be honorified, honorification is also triggered, and this is applicable even

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5) Since honorification is not as much relevant to the current exploration, the exposition is kept to a minimum.

6) Han (2002) adds one more type, i.e. honorifying the one in the modifier phrase. Honorifying the addressee may be achieved or reinforced by humbling the speaker himself or herself.

7) The Yale Transliteration System is used for the Korean data and the abbreviations used are: ABQ: audience-blind question form, Acc: accusative, Adn: adnominal, Ant: anterior, Atten: attenuative, Cond: conditional, Conjec: conjectural, Dec: declarative, Determ: determinative, End: sentential-ending, Fut: future, Gen: genitive, Hon: honorific, Nom: nominative, Nomz: nominalizer, Pol: polite, Pres: present, Pros: prospective, Pst: past, SFP: sentence-final particle, Sim: simultaneous, Top: topic.

when the nominal does not surface on the sentence and is only implicit, as shown in (2):<sup>8)</sup>

- (2) a. *apeci-uy*      *kho-ka*      *khu-si-ta*  
 father-Gen      nose-Nom      be.big-Hon-Dec  
 'My father's nose is big.'
- b. *ton-i*    *com*    *iss-usey-yo?*  
 money a.little exist-Hon-Pol.End  
 'Do you have some money?'

Another common type of honorification is choosing the words that are inherently marked with the [+Hon] feature. Some of the high frequency nouns and verbs have a [+Hon] counterpart term. Similarly, pronominals also maintain this distinction (Kim 1995, Sohn 1999, Song 2002, Rhee 2010). Some of such examples of lexically marked honorification are as follows:

- (3) a. *pap*    'food'      >    *cinci*      'food' [+Hon]  
 b. *mal*    'word'      >    *malssum*    'word' [+Hon]  
 c. *ca-*    'sleep'      >    *cwumwusi-*    'sleep' [+Hon]  
 d. *mæk-*    'eat'      >    *capswusi-*    'eat' [+Hon]

## 2.2 Politeness Marking

Politeness is largely marked by sentential endings with sentence-final particles (SFPs) and by means of periphrastic modals, the latter being the focus of this research.

### 2.2.1 Sentential-End Marking

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8) The honorification inheritance does not apply to the case-markers and is restricted to the predicates.

Politeness is typically marked by SFPs. When a sentence is marked with the [+Pol] feature, it is typically suffixed by SFP *-yo* (or *-o* in some archaic styles). The politeness marking interacts with speech levels, for which Korean has developed an elaborate system,<sup>9)</sup> as exemplified in the following, where the verb *ka-* 'go' is inflected for imperatives:

(4) Imperatives along Formality/Politeness Continuum

- |    |                     |              |                    |
|----|---------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| a. | <i>ka-sipsio</i>    | 'Please go.' | [+Formal, +Polite] |
| b. | <i>ka-o</i>         | 'Please go.' | [+Formal, +Polite] |
| c. | <i>ka-yo</i>        | 'Please go.' | [-Formal, +Polite] |
| d. | <i>ka-key</i>       | 'Go.'        | [+Formal, -Polite] |
| e. | <i>ka-la</i>        | 'Go.'        | [+Formal, -Polite] |
| f. | <i>ka-∅ (&lt;a)</i> | 'Go.'        | [-Formal, -Polite] |

The SFPs in (4) are fully grammaticalized suffixes. Since they are of old origin their grammaticalization processes are largely opaque, except for *-key* in (4d), which is supposedly derived from the adverbializer *-key* of mode-marking (Rhee 2002).

### 2.2.2 Modal Marking: Attenuatives

Of particular interest in marking politeness is the use of the attenuative modals. There are numerous phrasal expressions marking attenuation of the speaker's assertions, and they are of varying degrees of grammaticalization (see Section 3 below). The following are the most commonly used forms of attenuative modals:<sup>10)</sup>

- (5) a. *moyangi-* 'seem' < be the shape of  
 b. *kes kath-* 'seem' < be the same thing as

9) The system is further complicated since diverse parameters including dialectal variants and many other sociolinguistic considerations need to be incorporated (Lee 2008).

10) For a more extended list, see (7) below. The particle *-kka* for indirect question always occurs with the prospective adnominalizer/future-tense marker *-i-* (even in the past tense sentences). This leads some researchers to treating *-kka* as monomorphemic.

- c. *tus ha-* 'seem' < be the shape/likeness of
- d. *-na po-* 'seem' < see if (see asking if)
- e. *-(k)ka siph-* 'seem' < like to ask
- f. *cito molu-* 'seem' < do not know if

In addition to those listed in (5), similar forms, especially those using defective nouns (or 'nominalizers' Rhee 2011a), also carry a weak attenuative nuance, including *pepha-* 'seem', derived from *pep* 'law'. However, those that distinctively carry the attenuative function are largely restricted to ones listed above. The use of these forms is illustrated in (6).<sup>11)</sup>

- (6) a. *kyothong-i manhi makhi-nun moyang-i-ta*  
 traffic-Nom much be.blocked-Adn shape-be-Dec  
 'The traffic seems to be heavy.'
  
- b. *kukes-un nappu-n kes kath-ta*  
 it-Top be.bad-Adn thing be.same-Dec  
 'It seems to be bad.'
  
- c. *kukes-un nemwu pissa-n tus ha-ta*  
 it-Top too.much be.expensive-Adn likeness be-Dec  
 'It seems to be too expensive.'
  
- d. *ku-ka cwuk-ess-na po-ta*  
 he-Nom die-Pst-ABQ see-Dec  
 'He seems to be dead.'
  
- e. *ku-ka an o-l-kka siph-ta*  
 he-Nom not come-Fut-ABQ want-Dec

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11) For ease of exposition the periphrastic attenuatives are glossed analytically or non-analytically depending on the context.

'He seems to be not coming.'

- f. ku-ka        an        o-l                ci-to                molu-keyss-ta  
 he-Nom        not        come-Pros.Adn    Nomz-also    not.know-Conjec-Dec  
 'I'm not sure if he is coming. It's possible that he is not coming.'

In (6) above, *moyangi-*, *kes kath-*, *tus ha-*, *-na po-* *-kka siph-*, and *cito molu-*, formerly fully periphrastic expressions with concatenative meanings, are grammaticalizing into attenuative markers, by means of which the speaker tones down the illocutionary force of the prepositions. Their development into the stance markers and the motivations and mechanisms behind the development are discussed in Section 3.

### 3. Discussion: Grammaticalization of Polite-Stance Marking

The periphrastic expressions functioning as attenuative modals are at their incipient stages of grammaticalization and they have differential degree of grammaticalization. In terms of their lexical sources, these forms (and their extended variants) fall into six categories as shown in the following:<sup>12)</sup>

(7)

SOURCE CATEGORY	ATTENUATIVE MODAL
Shape	<i>moyangi-</i> <i>tus ha-</i> <i>tus siph-</i>
Likeness	<i>kes kath-</i> <i>tus ha-</i> <i>tus siph-</i>

12) As is shown in (7) there are modals that are cross-classified in more than one source category, which is a natural consequence of their periphrastic statuses. The lexical source of *tusha-*, i.e. *tus*, is synchronically perceived as a noun denoting 'shape, appearance' (though very weakly for its defectiveness as a noun), but its deeper origin is further traced to 'likeness' or 'simultaneity' sharing the origin with Old Turkish *tüz* (Kang 1991: 446-447). The lexical origin of *seng* in the desire-based *seng siph-* is completely opaque, even though it is clearly a (defective) nominal judging from its syntagmatic environment. Semantic designations of *seng* periphrasis in the dictionary allude to 'similar or equal degree', 'conjecture' and 'pretense' (*Wulimal Khunsacen* 1991: 1184).



Perception	<i>-na po- -ka po- -kka po-</i>
Desire	<i>-kka siph- tus siph- ci siph- -na siph- -ka siph- -myen siph- seng siph- -{ta, nya} siph-</i>
Question	<i>-na po- -ka po- -kka po- -na siph- -kka siph- -ka siph- -kka siph- -nya siph-</i>
Ignorance	<i>cito molu-</i>

### 3.1 From Shape to Conjecture to Attenuative

The first source category is 'shape'. The lexical items recruited are *moyang* 'shape' and *tus* 'shape/likeness' and the periphrastic modals developed from them are *moyangi-*, *tusha-* and *tus siph-*, as shown in (8) and (9):

- (8) a. *moyang-i-* < 'shape-be'  
 b. *tus ha-* < 'shape/likeness do/be'  
 c. *tus siph-* < 'shape/likeness desire'

- (9) a. ku salam sihem-ey nakceyha-n {moyangi-, tus.ha-, tus.siph-}ta  
 that person exam-at fail-Ant.Adn {Atten-}Dec  
 'He seems to have failed in the exam.'
- b. saep-i antoy-nun {moyang-i-, tus.ha-, tus.siph-}ta  
 business-Nom not.be.well-Sim.Adn {Atten-}Dec  
 '(His) business seems to be not going well.'

Since the attenuatives are based on nominals, the propositions they modify are marked by adnominalizers *-n* and *-nun* (for anterior and simultaneous, respectively).<sup>13</sup> Therefore, these examples may be more faithfully rendered as "He is (in) the shape

13) Korean has a tripartite adnominal system to designate the temporal location relative to the referenced time: *-n* for anterior, *-nun* for simultaneous, and *-l* for prospective.

of having failed in the exam; (I) feel like the shape of his having failed in the exam." and "His business is (in) the shape of not going well; (I) feel like the shape of his business not going well."

The strategies employed in the formation of these modals are, among others, objectification and obscurification, and as a consequence, attenuation. A brief discussion of the notion of 'objectivity' and 'objectification' is in order.

The notion 'objectivity' has been conceived of in a number of different ways depending on the disciplines where the notion is adopted. In the logical, philosophical, and computational traditions, for instance, objectivity has been linked to truth and information structure (Traugott & Dasher 2002: 21). Certain registers, such as scientific writing, tend to be maximally objective, and it has been also thought that active, declarative assertions in which the speaker's viewpoint is not explicitly coded are exemplars of an objective language. In this regard, the notion is adopted in a macroscopic conception of language use, i.e. information or rhetorical structure of a text or discourse.

In this paper, following Rhee (2005a), by objectification, we will refer to a process whereby something of subjective meaning is likened to an objective entity. For example, if a linguistic form  $x$  be it a word or a sentence, that encodes the language user's viewpoint such as evaluation or subjective judgment, or refers to a subjectively construed event, is used as comparable to a more objective, real-world entity, we will consider that particular language usage of  $x$  an instance of objectification. Therefore, this notion, widely construed, shall include figures of speech that involve mapping any abstract entity to a concrete entity as well, since they represent processes whereby 'abstractness' is demoted and 'concreteness' is promoted. In this regard, objectification is inseparable from, or at least closely related with, 'concretization'. In the line of this conception, the ontological categories of metaphorization as proposed by Heine et al. (1991) shown in (10), are useful notions.

(10) Ontological Categories of Metaphorization

PERSON > OBJECT > PROCESS > SPACE > TIME > QUALITY

In the cline above, the usual direction of metaphor is from left to right, which is expected because metaphorization typically involves a concrete entity as the vehicle and an abstract entity as the tenor (or topic). Since we assume a close relation between objectification and concretization, a process characterizable as objectification should involve the reversed direction of metaphorization, i.e. from right to left in the above cline, if the ontological categories are applicable indeed. One caveat, however, is that adopting the metaphorization cline does not entail that the progression from left to right is an instance of subjectification. This is simply because metaphorization does not always yield subjectification.

The second strategy involved in the grammaticalization of 'shape' into attenuatives is 'obscurification'. Obscurification plainly refers to a mental process whereby intended references are made obscure. In this sense it is the reverse of clarification. Obscurification is essentially similar to indirectness in the sense that clarity is avoided. In the given example making use of 'shape' words, the utterance is claiming 'likeness' rather than identity by using, for instance, an equative or identificational copula. In other words, the speaker "likenes A to B" rather than "claiming A is B." This process is responsible for the emergence of 'conjecture', and is largely identical with the strategy the speakers employ in the process of "from likeness to attenuatives" to be discussed below.

What is more important is attenuation, whereby the speaker weakens the illocutionary force of a proposition. For instance, in examples (9a) and (9b), the speaker avoids asserting "He failed in an exam" and "His business is failing". These assertions in mind are produced with weakened force in the forms of "He is in the shape of having failed" or "His business is in the shape of not going well". Therefore, the most prominent aspect of this mental strategy is that the speaker is categorizing events and states in the world by certain properties and expresses the classification as based on 'shapes'. The speaker, instead of claiming "He failed", simply places 'his state' in a category of shapes shared by all failed individuals. In other words, the speaker is merely claiming a category membership for an event he or she has observed.

## 3.2 From Likeness to Conjecture to Attenuative

The next category is the serial changes from likeness to conjecture and further to attenuative. This category comprises of the attenuatives in the form of *kes kath-*, *tus ha-* and *tus siph-*, the latter two also belonging to the previous 'shape' category. The formal construction of these forms are as in (11) and their uses are exemplified in (12):

- (11) a. *kes kath-* < 'thing be.same'  
 b. *tus ha-* < 'shape/likeness do/be-'  
 c. *tus siph-* < 'shape/likeness desire-'
- (12) a. *kukes-un nappu-n* {*kes.kath-*, *tus.ha-*, *tus.siph*}*ta*  
 it-Top be.bad-Ant.Adn {Atten}-Dec  
 'It seems to be bad.'
- b. *pi-ka o-l* {*kes.kath-*, *tus.ha-*, *tus.siph*}*ta*  
 rain-Nom come-Fut {Atten}-Dec  
 'It seems to rain soon.'

In addition to the use of *tus* 'shape/likeness' discussed in the previous section, this category makes use of *kes* 'thing' and *kath-* 'be same, be like'. The defective noun *kes* is among the most frequently used lexemes in the contemporary Korean (Choi 1994) and is one of the most versatile morphemes (Rhee 2008: 240).

The strategies used in the development of these forms are, in much the same way as the previous category, objectification, obscurification, and attenuation. However, with respect to *kes kath-*, an interesting pattern is involved, to which our discussion turns.

The grammatical status of the nominal *kes* and its grammaticalization have received much attention (cf. notably Wang 1988, Yoon 1995, E. Kim 1996, Sohn 1997, Park 1999 among others). As for the source of *kes*, Hong (1983a) suggests that it

developed from *kes/kas/kach* which formerly meant 'thing, skin, surface'. In this regard, the form encoding the concept of 'skin, surface' of a thing extended its use to refer to the thing itself, a case of synecdoche. Incidentally Modern Korean has the form *keth* that signifies 'skin, fur, surface, appearance', whose pronunciation is identical with that of *kes* in many phonological environments (Rhee 2008: 248).

Similarly, the predicate *kath-*, which developed into a similitive marker (Rhee 2005b), shows extensive semantic generalization from 'identicalness' to diverse senses of 'likeness' such as 'membership', 'similarity' and 'qualification'. This is an instance of semantic bleaching, which is commonly attested in the course of grammaticalization.

When *kes* and *kath-* are combined, and ultimately form a univerted modal, they carry the attenuative function. The examples in (12) literally mean: (12a) '(It) is the same as the thing that it is bad.' and (12b) '(It) is the same as the thing that the rain will come.' Objectification as exhibited in these cases shows a difference from the previous cases in that, unlike focusing on the 'shape' of events or states in the previous cases, the present case straightforwardly "treats a proposition as 'a thing'," an instance of concretization or reification *par excellence* (see Rhee 2011a: 397-398 for *kes*'s referring function for a third-order entity).

The strengthening effect of concretization or objectification is somewhat weakened by the use of likeness notion from *kath-*. This process is obscurification in the sense that the encoder claims likeness rather than identity. The same effect is derived from the use of the nominal *tus* in the other two cases.

### 3.3 From Perception to Conjecture to Attenuative

The next category involves the use of perception verb. The perception verb of vision, i.e. 'see' is used in the development of attenuatives, *-na po-*, *-ka po-*, and *-kka po*. Their formal construction is illustrated in (13) and their uses are exemplified in (14):<sup>14)</sup>

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14) The relationship between *-na* and *-n-ka* is peculiar in that they are interchangeable in certain contexts. Since *-ka* is always preceded by *-n-* in contemporary Korean, some researchers consider

- (13) a. *-na po-* < 'ABQ see'  
 b. *-ka po-* < 'ABQ see'  
 c. *-kka po-* < 'ABQ see'

(14) a. *ku-ka cwuk-ess-na.po-ta*  
 he-Nom die-Pst-Atten-Dec  
 'He seems to have died.' (Lit. '(I) see: 'Did he die?', '(I) see if he died.')

b. *ku-ka aphu-n-ka.po-ta*  
 he-Nom be.ill-Pres-Atten-Dec  
 'He seems to be ill.' (Lit. 'I see: 'Is he ill?', '(I) see if he is ill.')

c. *kongpwu-lul kumantwu-l-kka.po-ayo*  
 study-Acc quit-Fut-Atten-Pol.End  
 '(I) may be as well quit school.' (Lit. I see: 'Will (I) quit school?', '(I) see if (I) should quit school.')

The examples given above all involve the audience-blind particles *-na*, *-ka*, and *-kka*, and the verb of visual perception *po-* 'see'. Since these forms have the membership in the question category to be discussed in 3.5, the discussion here will be restricted to the use of the visual perception verb only.

The most distinctive strategy involved in the development of attenuatives in this category is 'epistemic demotion', in the sense that the speaker resorts to perception rather than cognition in his or her assertion. For instance, instead of presenting the

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*-n-ka-* as an unanalyzable single unit. Historically, however, and to a certain extent synchronically as well, they constitute two distinct morphemes. Since this is beyond our immediate research interest this issue is not addressed in further detail. Unlike *-na* and *-ka* which carry the strictly audience-blind interrogative function, *-kka* can be used without audience-sensitivity. However, when it is preceded by the prospective adnominal *-l-*, it is invariably for audience-blind usage. Attenuative modal with *-kka* always occurs with *-l-*, and thus *-kka* is presented as an audience-blind form for ease of exposition. This usage restriction, however, can be flouted for special discursive effects.

propositions "He died", "He is ill" and "I will quit school", the speaker simply says "I see if..." In other words, the speaker has the knowledge about a state of affairs, but instead of claiming "I know that..." he or she says "I am seeing that...; I am seeing to find out if..." thus demoting the epistemic strength by attributing the knowledge to speaker-external stimulus, i.e. visual perception.

Also intriguing in this context is that the visual perception verb *po-* 'see' in Korean is ambiguous between its English counterparts *see* and *look*, i.e. between agent- and experiencer-reading, but in the given context here where the interrogative clauses marked by *-ka*, *-na*, and *-kka* co-occur, the agentive reading would seem more amenable. However, the agentivity is considerably demoted here because these attenuative modals do not allow a full range of inflection by tense, aspect and modality; as for instance, *\*-na/ka/kka po-n-ta* (with the present tense morpheme *-n-*), *\*-na/ka/kka po-ass-ta* (with the past tense morpheme *-ass-*), *\*-na/ka/kka po-koiss-ta* (with the progressive aspect morpheme *-koiss-*), etc. The inflection of the verb in these attenuative modal functions is restricted to the variations by the speech style, i.e. the 'audience-blind form' ... *pota* (Rhee, 2011b), formal style ... *popnita*, universal informal form ... *poa*, and universal informal polite form ... *poayo*. In other words, the visual perception verb is used in completely fossilized form, unmarked by any tense, presumed only to be in the present tense.

All this suggests that the speaker relies on speaker-external stimuli as the basis of his or her assertion where the perceiver is only in the passive role. This epistemic demotion is directly responsible for the emergence of the notion of conjecture and further that of attenuative.

### 3.4 From Desire to Conjecture to Attenuative

The next source category of attenuatives involves the volitive verb *siph-* 'want'. This verb follows diverse forms, typically a marker of subordination which serves as the complement of the volition. The formal constructions of these forms are given in (15) and their uses are exemplified in (16):

(15) A. Audience-Blind Question

- a. *-na siph-* < 'Ind.Q want'
- b. *-ka siph* < 'Ind.Q want'
- c. *-kka siph-* < 'Ind.Q want'

B. Sentence-Type Marker

- d. *-ci siph* < 'Determin.SFP want'
- e. *-ta siph* < 'Dec.SFP want'
- f. *-nya siph* < 'Dir.Q.SFP want'

C. Nominalizer (Defective Noun)

- g. *tus siph-* < 'shape want'
- h. *seng siph* < '??? want'<sup>15)</sup>

D. Conditional Conjunction

- i. *-nyen siph* < 'Cond want'

- (16)a. ku-ka      na-l      cohaha-na.siph-ta  
 he-Nom      I-Acc      like-Atten-Dec  
 'He seems to like me.' (Lit. 'I desire to ask, 'Does he like me?')
- b. ku-ka      na-l      cohaha-nun-ka.siph-ta  
 he-Nom      I-Acc      like-Pres-Atten-Dec  
 'He seems to like me.' (Lit. 'I desire to ask, 'Does he like me?')
- c. ku-ka      an      o-l-kka.siph-ta  
 he-Nom      not      come-Fut-Atten-Dec  
 'He seems not to come.' (Lit. 'I desire to ask, 'Will he not come?')
- d. ku-ka      imi      cwuk-ess-ci.siph-ta  
 he-Nom      already      die-Pst-Atten-Dec

---

15) *Seng* here is undoubtedly a nominal (since it is always preceded by an adnominalizer) and appears as such in dictionary entries. However, its independent semantic designation is not provided in dictionaries. In certain constructions, as related to those here, it has the same meaning as *tus* and additionally that of 'possibility' (*Wulimal Khunsacen* 1991: 2310).



'He seems to have died.' (Lit. 'I desire to say, 'He already died.'')

- e. imi      nuc-ess-ta.siph-ta  
 already be.late-Pst-Atten-Dec  
 'I think (I am) already late.' (Lit. 'I desire to say, '(I am) already late.'')
- f. ku-ka    o-kyess-nya.siph-ta  
 he-Nom come-Conjec-Atten-Dec  
 'He seems to be not coming.' (Lit. 'I desire to say, 'Will he come?'')
- g-h. mwul-i      kiph-ul-{tus.siph, seng.siph}-ta  
 water-Nom be.deep-Pros.Adn-Atten-Dec  
 'The water seems to be deep.' (Lit. 'I desire the appearance of the water  
 to be deep.')
- i. ton      com      issu-myen.siph-ta  
 money a.little exist-Atten-Dec  
 '(I) wish that I had some money.' (Lit. 'I desire (to say) 'If I had some  
 money,...'')

All the examples in (16a-c) make use of audience-blind questions, as indicated by *-na*, *-ka*, and *-kka*, and the verb of volition, i.e. *siph*. The significance of the use of questions will be discussed in 3.5.

The examples in (16d-16f) involve the sentence-type markers, *-ci*, *-ta*, and *-nya*. Among numerous sentence-type markers, the most frequently used ones are *-ta* (for declarative), *-la* (for imperative), *-nya* (for interrogative), and *-ca* (for hortative). It is noteworthy that imperative and hortative are not recruited in the construction of attenuative modals. This has to do with the fact that the strategy of toning down the illocutionary force of an utterance is to make a 'declarative statement' or 'assertion' look less definitive. The use of declarative is thus well motivated. The use of interrogative, as shall be discussed in 3.5, has to do with the fact that interrogatives

are employed by the speaker when the truth of a statement has not yet been established. The question in this context is not addressed to a discourse participant but to the speaker himself or herself. In other words, the speaker is using a self-addressed question as a monologue as if asking for an answer from himself or herself.

The example (16g-h) has the defective nouns *tus* and *seng* in combination with the volitive verb. When the concept of 'shape' or 'likeness' is recruited (as is the case with *tus*) and is used with the verb of volition, the construction literally means something like 'I want the shape of ...' This is very similar to what was discussed in 3.1, the only difference being that in this category the concept of volition or desire is added.

The example (16i) makes use of a conditional conjunction, i.e. *-myen*. The source construction of this attenuative modal has to do with the ellipsis of the main clause (cf. main clause ellipsis: Rhee 2002, in press; insubordination: Evans 2007, 2009; suspended clause: Ohori 1995). Since the original construction means 'I desire (to say) "If ..."', its reconstructed main clause may mean 'how good it would be' or something of a similar meaning. Naturally, this is strongly reminiscent of the development of desiderative or optative constructions from hypothetical conditional constructions in English, e.g. 'If only he were here!' from 'If only he were here, I would be very happy.' (Rhee, in press).

The strategies involved in the development of these desire-based attenuative modals are diverse, and since some of them have been, or will be, addressed elsewhere, the current discussion is limited to epistemic demotion.

Epistemic demotion has been discussed with respect to the use of the verb of visual perception, but in the cases in this category it is realized in a way that the speaker's assessment is likened not to his or her cognitive workings but to her feeling, i.e. desires or wishes. This has to do with the fact that human desires when expressed in language tend to be unfulfilled or be something that cannot be easily entertained. If the desires are fulfilled without effort, they may not have to be verbalized. In this sense, desires or wishes are tentative and thus lack definiteness. Therefore, the speaker saying he or she desires *x* is in effect acknowledging that *x* is

ontologically not definitive but tentative. This tentativeness yields the notion of conjecture which further develops into the modality of attenuation.

### 3.5 From Question to Conjecture to Attenuative

The next category involves the use of questions. They are in two major categories depending on the verb that participate in the construction of the forms: *po-* 'see' and *siph-* 'desire', as shown in (17) (their uses have been exemplified in (14) and (16)):

(17) A. Verb of Vision

- a. *-na po-* < 'ABQ see'
- b. *-ka po-* < 'ABQ see'
- c. *-kka po-* < 'ABQ see'

B. Verb of Volition

- d. *-na siph-* < ABQ desire'
- e. *-ka siph-* < ABQ desire'
- f. *-kka siph-* < ABQ desire'

The strategies in the development of these attenuative modals are obscurification and metaphorization. There are characteristics associated with the use of the verb of visual perception and the verb of volition, but since these have been discussed in 3.3 and 3.4, respectively, they are not elaborated here.

Sentences with ABQs, or interrogative sentences in general, are propositionally incomplete in that they lack the information about a sentential argument (as in a *wh*-question sentence) or the definiteness of the truth value of the proposition (as in a yes-no question sentence). In other words, asserting "A is B" is different from asking "What is B?", "Is A B?" etc. in that the latter lack propositional completeness. A noteworthy aspect is that the speaker opts for these ABQs for strategic use, i.e. to present his or her assertion with weaker illocutionary force. For instance, in the example (14a) "I see (asking) 'Did he die?'" or "I see if he died." in a situation

where the speaker can assert "He died.", the speaker is obscuring the definiteness value of the proposition 'He died'.

Another strategy involved in this development is metaphorization. Questions are a part of a process of evaluating states of affairs in the direction of acquiring knowledge. In this sense questions are inherently associated with procedural indefiniteness in terms of human cogitation. This procedural indefiniteness is mapped onto propositional indeterminacy. In other words, the speaker, by saying 'I am still in the process of evaluating it.', is effectively saying 'Its truth value has not yet been determined.' The propositional indeterminacy brings forth conjecture, which in turn, creates the attenuative meaning.

### 3.6 From Ignorance to Conjecture to Attenuative

The next category involves the use of the verb of ignorance *molu-* 'not know'. The source construction is illustrated in (18) and its usage is exemplified in (19):

(18) *ci-to molu-* < 'Nomz-also not.know'

- (19) a. ku-ka cwuk-ess-nun ci.to.molu-kyess-ta  
           he-Nom die-Pst-Sim.Adn Atten-Conj-Dec  
       b. ku-ka cwuk-ess-ul ci.to.molu-kyess-ta  
           die-Pst-Pros.Adn

'a & b: 'He may have died.' (Lit. '(I) would not know even if he died.')

One peculiarity of this attenuative modal is that the nominalized clause that modifies the nominalizer *ci* may be marked by the simultaneous adnominalizer *-nun* (as in (19a)) or the prospective adnominalizer *-(u)l* (as in (19b)). These two sentences appear to have the same meaning with no discernible differences in nuance. The differences, if any, seem to be of the focus. The simultaneous adnominalizer, which is homophonous (and has the shared origin as 'heteronym' Lichtenberk 1991) with the present tense marker *-nun*, seems to promote the current relevance meaning, and the

prospective adnominalizer *-l*, which is the main element of the future tense marker *-l kəs'*, seems to promote the conjecture meaning. Therefore, subtle as they are, the two sentences seem to have the differential foci on current relevance or conjecture.

The major strategy of forming this attenuative modal is litotes and epistemic demotion. If the speaker says "I don't know if *x*" in order to be polite or to sound less assertive while he or she thinks that *x* is true, this is an extreme case of strategic litotes or deliberate understatement, the reversed hyperbole. This same strategic decision leads to epistemic demotion to its lowest extreme: from knowing *x* to claiming not knowing *x*.

#### 4. Theoretical Implication and Discussion

There are several theoretical issues that arise from the grammaticalization of the attenuative modals as expounded in the previous section: functional split and reanalysis, coalescence, grammaticalization channel and universal path, objectification, and specialization.

##### 4.1 Functional Split and Reanalysis

As is shown clearly in the preceding discussion, the new modality markers are still periphrastic, with all components still morphologically transparent, thus creating a split between lexical sources and grammatical functions.<sup>16)</sup> When new functions split out of the original functions, the forms involved in the process tend to develop quite different morpho-syntactic as well as semantic characteristics.

As for morpho-syntactic properties newly acquired, the sentential subjects in the attenuatives do not agree with the sentential predicate, thus subjecting the sentence to reanalysis whereby the sentential predicates are now reanalyzed as modality markers. Consider, for instance, the examples (6a) and (6d), repeated below and (20a) and (20b) respectively:

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16) The only exception to this transparency seems to be the lexical meaning of the defective noun *seng*, and to a lesser extent, *tus*.

(20)a. kyothong-i      manhi      makhi-nun      moyang-i-ta  
 traffic-Nom      much      be.blocked-Adn      shape-be-Dec

'The traffic seems to be heavy.'

b. ku-ka      cwuk-ess-na      po-ta  
 he-Nom      die-Pst-Ind.Q      see-Dec

'He seems to be dead.'

In the examples the original matrix clause subjects do not surface in the sentence. For example, (20a) is in the structure of [X is the shape of Y] and Y is the adnominal clause 'The traffic is heavy,' and X, which seems to be 'the current situation' judging from the context, is not explicitly mentioned here. In this structure, the addressee may reanalyze the *-nun-moyang-i-* as an attenuative, *makhi-* 'be blocked' as the main verb, and *kyothong* 'the traffic' as the main clause subject. Therefore, this reanalysis promotes the subordinate clause subject and predicate as the main clause subject and predicate, a case of syntactic upgrading (Heine et al. 1991: 169-170; Rhee 2011a: 417). Likewise, the main clause subject, presumably "I", does not surface in example (20b). In an exact parallel with (20a), the embedded question "Is he dead" is reanalyzed as the main clause, and thereby the subordinate clause subject 'he' and the subordinate clause predicate 'died' become the main clause subject and main clause predicate, respectively.

Despite such reanalyses, the source forms continue to function as lexical items in contemporary Korean. For instance, *moyang* is a fully lexical nominal that, unlike when it functions as an attenuative modal, can be modified by adjectives, pluralized, etc., and similarly, *po-* is a fully lexical verb that, unlike when it functions as an attenuative modal, can be inflected by tense, aspect and modality, requires an agent/experiencer, either explicit or implicit, etc.

#### 4.2 Bondedness and Coalescence



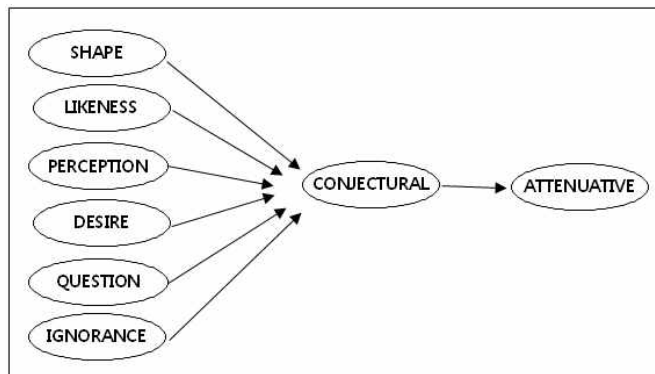
or complementizer *-hako* 'saying' in the source constructions. However, this insertion is no longer allowed when they are used for a modal meaning.

The increase of bondedness is also apparent in the fact that in actual utterance, the multi-morphemic periphrastic modal is spoken as a single unit without any discernible morpho-syntactic internal boundaries. This shows that as the linguistic forms on the syntagmatic plane develop internal bondedness, they coalesce into a single form and are treated as such in pronunciation.

#### 4.3 Grammaticalization Channel and Universal Path

A particularly interesting phenomenon in the development of attenuative modals is that seemingly diverse sources grammaticalize into a similar modality function (cf. grammaticalization channel; Givón 1979, Heine 1981, Lehmann 1995[1982], Heine & Reh 1984). In other words, grammaticalization chains to politeness modal markers tend to develop into conjecturals en route (cf. universal path; Bybee et al. 1994), as is shown in (22).

(22)



#### 4.4 Objectification



A common strategy in the development of attenuative modals is that the speakers resort to either speaker-external phenomenon or uncontrollable mental state, thus avoiding presenting themselves as responsible for such judgment.<sup>17)</sup> This is an effective means of avoiding responsibility, as is incidentally well illustrated in the contrast of two similar Korean expressions *hwa-ka na-n-ta* [anger-Nom come.out-Pres-Dec] and *hwa-lul nay-n-ta* [anger-Acc let.out-Pres-Dec], where the former, in which anger is the sentential subject and agent of exiting 'motion', looks more uncontrollable in contrast with the latter, which holds the sentential subject responsible for expressing anger.

A closely connected phenomenon with respect to objectification is the fact that the true sentential subjects or other crucial arguments are omitted to make the sentential argument structure vague. For instance, as was indicated earlier, the subject of the verb of perception *po-* and of volition *siph-* does not surface in the sentence. In fact, if the understood subject in the source construction appears in the sentence where those verbs are used as parts of attenuatives, the sentences do not render modal readings (see 4.1 above). All these are consequences of the common strategy in a language community where direct mention of the sentential arguments is often avoided for politeness reasons.

#### 4.5 Specialization

The attenuatives under discussion have the common function of marking the attenuative modality. However, there are subtle differences because they assume different viewpoints about the proposition. This is well illustrated by (23) which is a declarative statement without attenuative modality, contrasted with (24) with diverse attenuative modals:

(23) *kunye-ka cemcem coh-aci-n-ta*

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17) Rhee (2009: 245-256), in a cross-cultural comparative study of request speech acts, shows that Korean (along with other High Context Culture languages) tend to make reference to the speaker-external enabling forces to encode politeness in requests.

she-Nom gradually be.likable-become-Dec  
 '(I) like her more and more.'

(24) Sentence (23) modified with Attenuatives. (partially from Kim, 2000)

- a. *kunye-ka cencem coh-aci-nun kes kath-ta*
- b. *-nun tus ha-ta*
- c. *-nun-ka siph-ta*
- (a-c): 'I seem to like her more and more.'
- d. *-nun moyang-i-ta*
- e. *-na po-ta*
- f. *-nun cito molu-n-ta*
- (d-e): 'He seems to like her more and more.'

As shown above, *kes kath-*, *tus ha-*, and *-ka siph-* tend to mark the speaker's mental state, whereas *moyang-i-*, *-na po-* and *cito molu-* tend to be used with reference to a third party's mental state. In other words, (24a-c) assumes the subjective viewpoint in the sense that the speaker describes his or her mental state, whereas (24d-f) assumes the objective viewpoint in the sense that the speaker describes the mental state of someone else. This can be summarized as in (25):

(25)	Form	Meaning	Source Meaning	Viewpoint
a.	<i>tus ha-</i>	'seem'	do the shape of	Subjective
b.	<i>kes kath-</i>	'seem'	be the same thing as	Subjective
c.	<i>-(k)ka siph-</i>	'seem'	like to ask	Subjective
d.	<i>moyangi-</i>	'seem'	be the shape of	Objective
e.	<i>-na po-</i>	'seem'	see if (see asking..)	Objective
f.	<i>cito molu-</i>	'seem'	not even know if	Objective

## 5. Summary and Conclusion

In Korean, some formerly fully periphrastic expressions with concatenative meanings, are grammaticalizing as attenuative markers, whereby the speaker tones down the illocutionary force of the prepositions. A High Cultural-Context language (Hall 1976, 1990), Korean has an extensive system of marking politeness. Among the prominent strategies of politeness marking, the use of attenuatives is of high frequency.

A look into the development of attenuatives reveals intriguing cultural forces impinging on grammar creating new grammatical morphemes for use in a polite discourse. First of all, in order to encode politeness, the speakers resort to either speaker-external phenomenon or uncontrollable mental state, thus avoiding presenting themselves as responsible for such judgments. Secondly, the sentential subjects do not agree with the sentential predicate, thus subjecting the sentence to reanalysis whereby the sentential predicates are now reanalyzed as modality markers. And finally, the true sentential subjects or other crucial arguments are omitted to make the sentential argument structure vague.

All these are consequences of the common strategy in a language community where direct mention of the sentential arguments is often avoided for politeness reasons. This is an exemplar *par excellence* of consequences of politeness strategies in a society where respect-marking is fully grammaticalized unlike many languages elsewhere.

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