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"I know I'm shameless to say this": Grammaticalization of the mitigating discourse marker *Makilay* in Korean

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Abstract

Discourse markers are universal especially in oral discourse. Korean has one peculiar type of mitigating discourse markers that came into existence recently and is widely used among the young generation, i.e. *makilay* and its variants. An analysis of their grammaticalization processes reveals that they involve (i) meta-discursive strategies in that the speaker is monitoring the self's utterances, (ii) a shifted perspective in that an imaginary third-person's evaluative viewpoint is adopted, and (iii) elaborate intersubjectification in that the speaker is attenuating the self's talk by protecting the face of the addressee as well as the speaker in a potentially face-threatening act.

1. Introduction

The use of discourse markers (DMs) is universal especially in oral discourse (Fraser 1990[1], 2006[2], Östman 1982[3], Watts 1989[4]), and they carry diverse functions (Brinton 1996[5]). Korean has one peculiar type of mitigating discourse markers that came into existence around the turn of the 21st century and is widely used among the young generation, especially young girls: *makilay* and its variants *makyolay, makcelay, makilayyo, makcelayyo,* etc. (the *makilay*-type DMs or the *makilay*-DMs, henceforth).

The emergence of these *makilay*-DMs shows intriguing aspects of the use of discourse markers in that they constitute a unique type of DMs displaying meta-discursive strategies, as well as discourse pragmatics in that through their use the discourse stances of the interlocutors are constantly evaluated and negotiated, and the initially attendant discourse function becomes fully grammaticalized.

Despite such intriguing aspects of the development of the *makilay*-DMs, they have not yet received attention to date, and this paper intends to fill the gap (cf. Kim 2007[6] addressed the semantic change of *mak*). The objectives of this paper are to describe the emergence of these *makilay*-type DMs from the viewpoints of grammaticalization and discourse pragmatics and to discuss the theoretical issues the grammaticalization process brings forth, such as discourse strategies, meta-discursive strategies, shifted perspectives, intersubjectification.

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2. Preliminaries: discourse markers

DMs are an excellent device to organize a discourse and to signal the speaker's diverse stances because they are not syntactically bound to the propositions they occur with. For their interactive functions, they are frequently used in oral discourse. Korean is a language in which intersubjectivity has been robustly grammaticalized into verbal morphology. Despite the fact that the verbal morphology is so fine-grained that its functions often seem to be beyond clear description, it cannot provide the language users with a complete means of marking the speaker's diverse stances toward the proposition, the interlocutor and the discourse scene. For this reason there are many DMs to fill in the gap.

From the pioneering work of discourse markers by Schourup (1985)[7] and Schiffrin (1987)[8], there has been a plethora of research on DMs in Korean (Ahn 1992[9], Lee 1995[10], Lee 1996[11], Kim 2000[12], Choi 2007[13], as well as in and among other languages (Yngve 1970[14], Östman 1982[3],Watts 1989[4], Jucker 1993[15], Brinton 1996[5], among numerous others).

DMs carry diverse functions. For instance, Brinton (1996: 37-38)[5] lists nine different functions of discourse makers: (a) to initiate or close discourse, (b) to aid floor management, (c) to fill a gap, (d) to mark boundaries, (e) to distinguish new and old information, (f) to mark sequential dependency, (g) to repair, (h) to express a response or attitude, and (i) to effect cooperation, sharing, or intimacy. Among these diverse functions of discourse markers, those under investigation in the present research are (h) to express a response or attitude, i.e., the subjective function, and (i) to effect cooperation, sharing or intimacy, i.e., the intersubjective function. In other words, the discourse markers under current discussion carry the stance-marking functions.

3. Grammaticalization

3.1. Data

The DMs under the current investigation comprise a group of forms that are related to *makilay* in a way or other, e.g. *makilay, makilayyo, makcelay, makyolay, makileko,* etc. (see 3.2 for their constructions). Some of the examples are as shown in (1) (Abbreviations; ACC: accusative; BEN: benefactive; DAT: dative; DM; discourse marker; POL: politeness; PROG: progressive; SFP: sentence-final particle; TOP: topic):

(1) a. *na-n   cengmal   chakha-ko   ippu-e   **makilay***
I-TOP   really   be.nice-and   be.pretty-SFP   DM
"I am really nice and pretty. (DM: (She) says this recklessly.)"

b. *oppa   na-Ø   olul   cemsim-Ø   sa-cw-e   **makilay***
older.brother   I-(DAT)   today   lunch-(ACC)   buy-BEN-SFP   DM
"Older brother (=Boyfriend), buy me lunch today. (DM: (She) says this recklessly.)

In the examples in (1a), the female speaker comments on her own personality and appearance to her interlocutor(s). When the utterance is completed in form, i.e. it is marked by a grammatical marker that signals the end of a sentence (SFP), she adds *makilay* ('(She) says this recklessly') as an addendum to the utterance, as if the added DM were a sentence spoken by a third party. This is evidently to mitigate the uneasiness of the interlocutor who just heard a universally avoidable speech act by prudent speakers, i.e. self-praise. In the same manner, the example (1b) is uttered by a female speaker who asks her boy-friend to buy her a lunch. She also attaches the DM *makilay* at the end as if it were an addition by a third party. The DM *makilay* also mitigates the burden on the addressee who might not be able to comply with the request, by signaling that the request was only a spontaneous, perhaps even reckless one uttered without much consideration, thus the addressee may not take it too seriously.

3.2. Source construction

The *makilay*-type DMs have the source constructions as in (2):

(2) a. *makwu*   *ilehkey*   *ha-e(yo)*   >>   *makilay(yo)*
        recklessly   like.this   say-SFP(POL)   DM

   b. *makwu*   *yolehkey*   *ha-e(yo)*   >>   *makcelay(yo)*
        recklessly   like.this   say-SFP(POL)   DM

   c. *makwu*   *celehkey*   *ha-e(yo)*   >>   *makcelay(yo)*
        recklessly   like.that   say-SFP(POL)   DM

   d. *makwu*   *colehkey*   *ha-e(yo)*   >>   *makcolay(yo)*
        recklessly   like.that   say-SFP(POL)   DM

   e. *makwu*   *ilehkey*   *ha-ko*   >>   *makileko*
        recklessly   like.this   say-and   DM

As shown in (2), the *makilay*-type DMs involve the adverbial *makwu* 'recklessly, coarsely, in an unrefined manner', as a common and essential component. This adverbial provides an evaluative judgment on the manner and attitude of the speaker who just said the foregoing utterance, which is the evaluator himself or herself. The second element is the deictic adverb *ilehkey* 'like this', *yolehkey* 'like this', *celehkey* 'like that' and *colehkey* 'like that'. The deictic demonstratives *i* and *yo* in the first two are both proximal but *yo* is the diminutive proximal used to refer to something small or insignificant. The others, *celehkey* and *colehkey*, also involve the deictic *ce* and its diminutive counterpart *co*, both the visible (physically or mentally) distal demonstratives. The main verb in the construction, i.e. *ha-*, is a light verb whose lexical meanings are 'say' and 'do'. These DMs may be further marked by *-yo*, a grammatical marker to show politeness toward the addressee. The sources in (2a)-(2d) all involve the sentence-final particle *-e* (a cross-modal SFP for declarative, interrogative, and imperative). The source given in (2e) stands out in that it does not recruit a SFP but a connective *-ko* 'and', which is the initial segment of the progressive aspect marker *-ko.iss-* (see following discussion).

3.3. Historical survey

A data survey in a 15 million-word historical corpus (The 20th Century Sejong Corpus) covering the data sources from the 15th to early 20th century and a 30.3 million-word modern corpus (The KAIST KORTERM Corpus) covering the latter half of the 20th century shows that there are no attestations of the *makilay*-type DMs. On the other hand, these DMs are very popular among youngsters in contemporary Korean, so much so indeed that there is even a children's TV show named so, since May 2011. A google search (accessed on May 22, 2013) turns up a large number of matching hits as shown in (3) (N.B. the count may include non-DM uses):

(3) *makilay*   661,000 hits
    makilayyo   138,000 hits
    makyolay   208,000 hits
    makyolayyo   7,820 hits
    makcelay   4,530 hits
    makcelayyo   99 hits
    makcolay   569 hits
    makcolayyo   2 hits
    makileko   611,000 hits
    makilekoyo   46,600 hits

A related linguistic aspect in the history is that the use of the source adverbial *makwu* 'randomly, carelessly' is very recent, first attested in the corpora around the end of the 19th century, i.e. in 1896 newspaper articles (*The Independence*) which referred to reckless beating of a person (*makwu ttAylita*), thoughtlessly digging up a farming

land (*makwu phacyeschita*), taking others' property by force (*makwu spAysta*), arresting people improperly (*makwu capakAta),* etc. Incidentally, this source adverbial undergoes a phonological reduction into *mak* and a semantic split between the former imprudence-marking 'recklessly, randomly' and the new imminence-marking 'be about to, just at the verge of, just at the point of'. The *makilay*-DMs are based on the source adverbial's older meaning.

4. Discussion

The grammaticalization of the *makilay*-type DMs presents a number of interesting theoretical issues.

4.1. Syntactic and semantic aspects of the makilay-*DMs*

The first issue involves the Korean idiosyncrasy that sentential arguments may be freely omitted as long as they are recoverable from the context. For this reason *makilay*, basically consisting of a quality-evaluating adverbial ('recklessly'), a manner adverbial ('like this') and a verb of saying ('say'), has the sentential status without the explicit grammatical subject. Even though the understood subject of the DM predicate is the third person, but, since the subject is omitted, it can be construed as the first person ("I am saying this recklessly") or, more naturally, the third person ("He/she is saying this recklessly"). The most intriguing aspect of the usage of this DM is the switched perspective, i.e. the third-person perspective assumed by the speaker (see 4.4 below), and this intricacy is enabled by the Korean idiosyncrasy of argument optionality.

Another issue is the use of deixis. Korean has a three-way distinction of demonstratives, *i* 'this', *ku* 'that' and *ce* 'that-visible' (also note the diminutive counterparts *yo* 'this', *ko* 'that' and *co* 'that-visible'). The *makilay*-type DMs only recruit the proximal *i/yo* ('this') and distal-visible *ce/co* ('that'), not distal *ku/ko* ('that'). This shows that the DM is referring to the speaker's preceding utterance as a whole as something that is immediately present or visible. It has been shown in previous studies that the choice of proximal-distal demonstratives in DM formation is not random but is influenced strongly by cognitive motivations (Chang 1980)[16]. For instance, when the speaker is trying to come up with some words, names, etc. the pause filler DM tends to recruit distal, non-visible *ku* 'that' because the linguistic entity is not close to the speaker (thus not proximal) or mentally invisible (thus not distal-visible). The use of proximal and visible demonstratives in the *makilay*-type DMs strongly suggests the linguistic entity (the preceding utterance) is brought to the addressee as something that deserves his/her attention.

Still another issue is the selection of the ending of the expression. The *makilay*-DMs typically use the SFP *-e*, which changes to *-y* due to phonological rules. The use of this ending is reserved for the sentences in informal styles. Style mixing results in extreme awkwardness, though not ungrammaticality. However, since the form is strongly unitized (cf. 'univerbation' Lehmann 1995)[17], it has lost flexibility in terms of the style variation. Therefore, even when the speaker has been using the formal style (i.e. marked with *-supnita*), the DM cannot be modulated in form accordingly. This is in harmony with the findings that grammaticalization tends to accompany formal reduction and fossilization (Hopper & Traugott 2003 [18], Bybee, Perkins, Pagliuca. 1994[19], Nichols & Timberlake 1991[20].)

As for the ending of the *makilay*-DMs, there is another, peculiar, form marking the end of the predicate, i.e. *-ko* (cf. (2e) above). As was briefly noted in passing in 3.2, this is a part of *-ko.iss-,* the progressive marker. The 'reconstructed' form of (2e)-type DM is as shown in (4):

(4) *mak   ilehkey   ha-ko.iss-e(-yo)   >>   makileko*
    recklessy   like.this   say-PROG-SFP(-POL)   DM
    '(He/she) is saying this recklessly.'

As strongly suggested in (4), the *makileko* DM results from an ellipsis of *-iss-e(-yo)* from the source construction. This elliptical structure brings another discursively useful effect, i.e. it has the flavor of trailing of an utterance (see Koo & Rhee 2013 [21] for similar phenomena in the grammaticalization of SFP marking discontent), signaling that the speaker is unable to complete the utterance for one reason or another. In this case, the addressee is likely to adopt the interpretation that the speaker is unable to complete the utterance because the speaker himself or herself also realizes the seriousness of the recklessness of his or her preceding utterance. The emphatic effect of the use as a by-product in fact boosts the speaker's intended effect of the DM use.

Finally, the development of the *makilay*-DMs involves unique prosody. In Korean, unlike the DMs that occur at the left periphery or those that occur utterance-medially, the DMs that occur at the right periphery (e.g. *mwe* 'what', *kuchi* 'right?', etc.) tend to be located in the enveloping prosodic contour of the preceding sentence. Interestingly, even though the *makilay*-type DMs are located at the right periphery, they do not occur within the prosodic envelope of the preceding remarks (see, however, a thetical's characteristic of prosodic separation from its anchor (Kaltenböck, Heine, Kuteva. 2011: 853)[22]). Nor does it follow a noticeable pause between them. The prosodic break seems to have been motivated by the speaker's desire to mark the shifted perspective, i.e. from the first speaker's perspective to the third-party's perspective (see 4.4 for more discussion). On the other hand, the absence of a noticeable pause is motivated by the speaker's anxiety over the possibility of incurring displeasure on the addressee by the seemingly shameless demand, question, claim or statement. That is to say, the speaker wants to foil the addressee becoming displeased by the utterance, by quickly intervening with the hypothetical third party's evaluation that the remark was reckless and thus should not be taken seriously (see 4.2 and 4.3 below for more discussion on the discursive and meta-discursive issues).

4.2. Discourse strategies

A particularly interesting aspect of these *makilay*-DMs is that the speaker is employing the strategy of expressing a hypothetical third-party's potential response or evaluation about the utterance. Even though the speaker is assuming the third-party's perspective, the discourse may be, and typically is, dyadic, not triadic, and, therefore, this act of adopting the third-party perspective is highly abstract in nature. The absence of the explicit quotative marker suggests a feigned speaker-shift (though, curiously, the DM follows the preceding remark without a noticeable pause, as noted in the preceding discussion). Therefore, the discursive meaning of "She says this recklessly," in effect, is "I know I am shameless to say this (so you don't need to blame me for that)." The main strategy of employing these addendum-like DMs is to tone down the illocutionary force of assertions or requests, by saying that someone might well say that the speaker is arrogant or impudent to say so. This is the main functional characteristic of mitigating or attenuative DMs in general.

4.3. Meta-discursive strategies

An analysis of the grammaticalization processes of the *makilay*-DMs reveals that they involve meta-discursive strategies. In other words, the use of these DMs shows that the speaker is monitoring the self's utterances, and makes an evaluative judgment. This phenomenon is immediately reminiscent of such notions as 'parentheticals' (Thompson & Mulac 1991)[23], 'comment clauses' (Brinton 2008)[24], or 'theticals' (Heine & Kuteva 2010 [25], Kaltenböck, Heine, Kuteva. 2011[22]). This means that the *makilay*-DMs are not propositionally bound to the host utterance, and in fact it belongs to a totally different linguistic plane, i.e. in the thetical grammar rather than the sentence grammar in Heine & Kuteva's (2010)[25] and Kaltenböck, Heine, Kuteva's (2011)[22] terms. The use of the *makilay*-DMs exactly coincides with the description of Corum's (1975: 135)[26] 'parenthetic adjuncts' which are used for speaker evaluation, softening, and a "sneaky" or deceptive use "to seduce the addressee into believing the content of the proposition."

4.4. Shifted perspectives

The use of the *makilay*-DMs involves a shifted perspective. In other words, the speaker adopts the imaginary third-person's evaluative viewpoint. As was indicated in passing in 4.2, the speaker makes an evaluation about his or her utterance, calculates the burden on the part of the addressee, and attempts to mitigate the illocutionary force by downplaying the significance of the remark. In so doing, the speaker presents the evaluative statement as if it were spoken by a third party. This is an excellent example of the speaker's linguistic manipulation for discursive needs, analogous to the comments made by the omniscient narrator in fictions and short stories. This is also consonant with Palacas' (1989: 514)[27] characterization of such linguistic units as providing second-order reflection, commentary, or evaluation upon the anchor, i.e. the host proposition that precedes the *makilay*-DMs. Such parentheticals described in Palacas'(1989)[27] study and others (e.g. Dehé and Kavalova 2007[28] and the works therein) may not

switch the perspectives in terms of the speaker, but in the case of the *makilay*-DMs the switched perspective is a unique and prominent aspect of the DM use.

4.5. Intersubjectification

Finally, the development of the *makilay*-DMs shows elaborate intersubjectification process (Traugott & Dasher 2002[29], Narrog 2010[30]). In other words, the speaker is attenuating the self's talk by protecting the face of the addressee as well as that of the speaker in a potentially face-threatening act. On the part of the linguistic form, when the DMs develop into full-fledged markers of mitigation, the intersubjective function becomes a part of the semantic-pragmatic meanings of the form, a process termed as intersubjectification. When the form is grammaticalized as a mitigating DM, the new meaning departs from the propositional meaning of the sources, i.e. it is no longer an expression that merely describes a state of affairs. It is a signal that the addressee should be aware that the speaker is also aware of the potential negative implication of what he or she said, and thus the addressee should not feel obligated to comply with the request or to respond to the statement. This face-consideration is a discourse tactic to show politeness toward the addressee, a universal aspect in language use (Brown & Levinson 1987)[31]. In this context it is noteworthy that Korean is a typologically rare language in which intersubjectivity is fully grammaticalized, typically in the form of speech levels, honorification, and politeness (Koo 2004)[32].

5. Summary and Conclusion

It has been shown in the preceding discussion how the *makilay*-type DMs developed in contemporary Korean. Also illustrated is how these DMs are used to meet the needs of the speaker's attitudinal stance of showing politeness in interactive discourse scenes.

It has also been shown that an interesting aspect of these *makilay*-type DMs is that the speaker is employing the strategy of expressing a hypothetical third-party's potential response or evaluation about the utterance. Even though the speaker is assuming the third-party's perspective, the discourse is typically dyadic, and, therefore, this act of adopting the third-party perspective is highly abstract in nature. The absence of the explicit quotative marker suggests a feigned speaker-shift. Therefore, the discursive meaning of "She says this recklessly," in effect, is "I know I am shameless to say this (so you don't need to blame me for that)." The main strategy of employing these addendum-like DMs is to tone down the illocutionary force of assertions or requests, by saying that someone might well say that the speaker is arrogant or impudent to say so. This act relieves the addressee's burden in his or her response to the speaker's utterance.

An analysis of the grammaticalization processes of the DM *makilay* and their variants revealed that they involve (i) meta-discursive strategies in that the speaker is monitoring the self's utterances, (ii) a shifted perspective in that the imaginary third-person's evaluative viewpoint is adopted, and (iii) elaborate intersubjectification in that the speaker is attenuating the illocutionary force of the self's talk by protecting the face of the addressee as well as that of the speaker in a potentially face-threatening act. The development of the DMs *makilay* and their variants shows the intricate discourse cognitive strategies that motivated its grammaticalization.

Acknowledgements

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