



Pragmaticalization of Pseudo-Question Constructions in English and Korean: A Grammaticalization Perspective



Seongha Rhee

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies
srhee@hufs.ac.kr

1. Introduction

- A large body of literature reveals that pragmatic markers (**PMs**; or discourse markers: DMs) are not only **universal** in language but also carry **diverse functions** in discourse organization (Östman 1982, Fraser 1990, Watts 1989).
- PMs arise from diverse lexemes and constructions (Fraser, 2006)
- This paper addresses PMs developed from **pseudo-question constructions (PQPMs)**

[PMs and Interpersonal/Textual Functions]

- PMs carry diverse **meta-textual functions**, e.g. **structuring the text, signaling the stance, marking interpersonality**, etc., which are directly or indirectly related to their source characteristics.
- PMs are typically productively used in **vis-a-vis informal conversation** thus their development often/always involves **subjectification and intersubjectification**.

[PMs from Pseudo-question constructions]

(1) KOR *eti* 'where'; *mwe* 'what'; *ku mwenya* 'what is that'...
ENG *what?; what is it?; who knows?; you know what?...*
(cf. *whatchamacallit*)

- These forms originated from **questions**, but **do not impose** illocutionary force on the addressee. (=pseudo-questions)
- They are motivated by the **discourse strategies** and carry the functions of **gap-filling, attention-attracting, mitigating, emphasizing**, etc.

[Objectives]

- To **describe the functions** of the PMs from pseudo-question constructions (PQPMs) in Korean and English
- To **analyze the strategies** involved in the development of PQPMs

2. The Development of PQPMs

2.1 Korean PQPMs

(2)

Function	Form	Source Meaning
Topic Presenter	<i>kukey x-nyamyen</i> (x: <i>mwe, nwukwu, eti, encey, way</i>)	“If you ask what/how... it is” (what, who, where, when, why)
Gap-Filler	<i>mwelalkka?</i> <i>kukey mwelalkka?</i> <i>ku mwenya?</i> <i>x-latela</i> (x: <i>mwe, nwukwu, eti, etc.</i>)	“what should I say?” “what should I say it is?” “what is it?” “what/how... did they say it was...”
Mitigator	<i>x-lalkka?</i> <i>eti?</i> <i>mwe?</i>	“should I say it is x?” “where?” “what?”
Attention-Attractor	<i>ettehsupnikka?</i> <i>x-inkayo?</i> <i>x-itenka?</i> <i>x-ilkka?</i> <i>way?</i>	“How is it?” “Is it x?” “Was it x?” “Will it be x?” “why?”
Emphatic Affirmative Emphatic Negative	<i>way(yo)?</i> <i>eti?</i>	“why?” “where?”

2.1.1 Topic Presenter

(3) a.

[I ran into someone yesterday in the subway...]

kuke-y nwukwunyamyen,

that-NOM **if.you.ask.who.it.is**

caknyen-ey wulicip-ey senmwul tul-ko chacawa-ss-te-n salam-i-ya

last.year our.house-at gift hold-and visit-PST-RETRO-ADN person-be-END

'He is the one who visited my house with a present last year.'

(Lit.: "**If you ask who it is**, he is...")

- Most PQPMs seem to have developed from **parenthetical constructions**.
- Elements comprising PQPMs in their developmental stages may have **a long history of grammaticalization**.
- PQPMs of topic presentation make use of conditional *-myen* and have undergone **a series of changes**.

- PQPMs of topic presentation *kukey x-nyamyen* developed from constructionalization of the periphrasis involving **a question as an embedded clause**.
- Their use in the incipient stage is attested at the turn of the 20th century.
- In MoK, their use is productive in spoken genre (in **oratory** styles).

2.1.2 Gap-fillers

(4) *ku salam-un, mwelalkka, com isanghan tey-ka iss-e*
the person-TOP **what.should.I.say** a.little strange thing-NOM exist-END

'The man is ... a little weird.'

(Lit.: "The man, **what should I say**, has something that is a little weird.")

- PQPM gap-fillers: *mwelalkka*, *kukey mwelalkka*, *ku mwenya*, *mwelatela*, *nwukwulatela*, *enceylatela*, *etilatela*, etc.
- To fill the gap when the speaker experiences **difficulty** in finding the words for diverse reasons (commonly found crosslinguistically)
- This seeming inability to continue may be **strategically** used (for other functions).
- Gap-fillers may take the form of **rhetorical direct questions** (the *mwelalkka*-type), or of **quotative interrogative in a monologual style** (the *mwelatela*-type).

2.1.3 Mitigators

(5)

a. *ikes-un kihyensang-ilalkka?* (monologue style)

this-TOP mystery-**should.I.say.it.is**

selmyeng-i swip-cianh-supnita

explanation-NOM easy-NEG-END

'This phenomenon is sort of mystery and cannot be easily explained.'

(Lit.: "This thing, **should I call it a mystery?**, its explanation is not easy.")

b. kulem **eti** com mek-epo-l-kka
then **where** a.little eat-TRI-FUT-Q

'Then shall I get to taste it a little?'

(Lit.: "Then, **where**, shall I try eating a little?")

c. *ku salam-un amwu mal an ha-yss-ta-te-ntey,* **mwe**
the person-TOP any word not say-PST-END-RETRO-CONN **what**

'But, he says he didn't say anything.'

(Lit.: "I recall he said that he hadn't said anything, **what?**")

- The mitigators all take the form of **questions** but the questions **do not carry the direct impositive illocutionary force**.
- Most mitigators are identical in form with gap-fillers (and there may be functional overlap as well).
- Their primary function is not to fill the gap for being unable to continue, but **to show the speaker's reservation of uttering** the already-determined locution.

2.1.4 Attention Attractors

- (6) *way* *kimchangswu-la-n* *chinkwu isscanha?*
why [name]-COMP-ADN guy doesn't.it.exist

'You know Kim Changsoo, right?'

(Lit.: "**Why**, there is a guy named Kim Changsoo, right?")

- **Securing enough attention** is undoubtedly the most important task for interlocutors in discourse.
- There are numerous devices employed in pursuit of drawing attention (linguistic, paralinguistic, and non-linguistic)
- Attention attractors are very widely used in spoken registers.

2.1.5 Emphatics

(7) A: [Wasn't it difficult?]

B: ***way?** kosayng cham manhi hayss-ci*

why difficulty very much do-PST-END

'**Don't mention it.** I had a lot of hard time.'

(Lit.: **Why?** I had lots of hard time.) (Emphatic affirmative)

(8) A: [He is pretty smart, isn't he?]

B: ***eti?** cenhye an ttokttokha-y.*

where not.at.all not smart-END

'**Not at all.** He is not smart at all.'

(Lit.: **Where?** He is not smart at all.") (Emphatic negative)

2.2 English PQPMs

- English has a rich inventory of PQPMs in the form of **parentheticals** in their origin.
- English PMs have been extensively researched (but mostly the **primary** forms e.g. *well, you know, I mean*, etc.)
- PMs may carry **interpersonal, turn-management, repair, monitoring, and organization functions**. (Fox Tree & Schrock 2002)

(9)

Function	Form
Negative Stance	<i>what?</i>
Gap-Filler	<i>what is it?</i>
Non-comittal	<i>who knows?</i>
Attention-Attractor	<i>you know what?</i> <i>guess what?</i>

2.2.1 Negative Stance

[what?]

- In certain varieties of English, **what?** functions as an **emotive** particle at the end of a sentence (Smith (1985, p. 110, as cited in Kuteva 2012, p. 57)
- There are special **prosodic** features (downward intonation and low pitch)

(10) [Context: Discussion of a student who is going overseas for one month and missing classes.]

A: He'll never pass the third year.

B: It's only for one month **what**.

- This is outdated usage that was common in the 19th century British English to signal **shared information and solidarity**.

(11) But she's so beastly chic, dontcherknow – eh, **what!**
(1891 J. Strange Lumley XV, quoted in Smith 1985,
as cited in Kuteva 2012, p. 57)

- In modern British English this is used with an upward intonation to signal contempt in **reminding something obvious** with the meaning of **‘You are a bloody fool if you don’t know that’**”
- developed from the syntagmatic/phonological reduction of “What could you say against that?!/What were you thinking?!” (Kuteva 2012)
- diverse extensional functions: **marking obviousness, anger, irritation, preparation for persuasion**, etc. (Kwan-Terry 1978, 1992, Smith 1985, Platt 1987, Platt and Ho 1989, Gupta 1992, 1999, Wong 1994, 2004, Goddard 1998, Wee 1998).

2.2.2 Gap-fillers

[what is it?] (Data from MICASE)

(12)

- a. *then um... the, **what is it** ... **what is it** you... wh- what they're trying to do is, since abatement costs of mm, greenhouse gases...*
 - b. *for example, Article Twenty-Five defends street children, by saying that um, **what is it?** um by saying that all children shall enjoy the same, social protection.*
- *What is it*, as a PQPM, is not an addressee-directed question (a **rhetorically self-directed question**; a gap-filler).

2.2.3 Non-committal

[who knows?] (Data from MICASE)

(13)

- a. *we don't know what's gonna happen either in the Peten in Guatamala or in Nicaragua, **who knows**, they might industrialize soon i doubt it. but they might. uh **who knows**, we might even have the kind of government which will permit us to plan, land use better than the current governments do.*
 - b. *it is God that has made us as we are but it will be God too who will raise us up again. if we bear all this suffering and if there are still Jews left when it is over, then Jews, instead of being doomed, will be held up as an example. **who knows?** it might even be our religion from which the world and all people learn good, and for that reason only do we have to suffer now.*
- Non-committal PM is to present a **potentially conflicting, improbable scenario**.
 - The distancing is a strategy to **avoid criticism**.

2.2.4 Attention Attractor

[you know what?] (Data from MICASE)

(14)

*it has to do with sexual selection but it also has to do with how they can really do the most incredible things in France that we are not allowed to do. PAUSE oh **you know what**, i forgot to plug in the uh, sound thing. you need the sound. this is it isn't it? okay.*

[guess what?] (Data from MICASE)

(15)

a. *they can slide along the membrane. and they do. and they slide along and **guess what** they run into every now and then. other receptors. other insulin receptors.*

b. *and they're rewarding what? maintain those numbers, hit plan, deliver the paperwork, but **guess what?** we need new ideas. right? we need new ideas if we're going to survive.*

- These PMs are **an utterance launcher and attention getting device** (cf. 'guess what' Freddi 2011)
- 'you know what?' seems to occur predominantly **initially**, and 'guess what?' seems to occur **medially**.

3. Strategies involved in the PQPM development

- Engagement Strategy
- Disengagement Strategy
- Intersubjectivity-Marking Strategy
- Deictic Strategy

3.1 Engagement Strategy

- The speaker tries to attract the **attention** of the addressee and induce the **engagement** of the discourse partner.
- This strategy is typically manifested by the use of **questions** or interrogative pronouns.
- This strategy must be **tactfully** used because a question is inherently an **impositive speech act**.
- Solution: **rhetorical questions (pseudo-questions)**.
- **Engage, but do not impose!**

3.2 Disengagement Strategy

- **Rhetorical questions disengage** the discourse partners because they relieve them from the burden of answering the questions.
- The signal of rhetoricity is often the **distinct prosody**.
- The speaker may feel it necessary to **distance** himself/herself from the discourse scene as if he/she is not the direct source of the utterance.

3.2 Disengagement Strategy

- This strategy is typically manifested by the use of **monologue** styles, often coupled with retrospective forms.
- For topic presenters, this strategy typically involves **embedding** a question, also in combination with **non-honorified forms**.

3.3 Intersubjectivity-Marking Strategy

- Certain forms are **structurally fossilized** (esp. in English) even though they are subject to phonological variation.
- Korean PQPMs often have **modulated** marking in terms of **intersubjectivity**.
- This is typically achieved by the use of formal/informal, polite/non-polite, honorific/non-honorific distinctions in form.

3.4 Deictic Strategy

- Development of PQPMs involves the differential uses of **deictic** pronouns.
- With the *this-that-it* distinction in English, the **neutral form 'it'** is commonly recruited in the development of PMs.
- With the *i-ku-ce* distinction in Korean, the **neutral form 'ku'** is commonly recruited in the development of PQPMs.

3.4 Deictic Strategy

- In terms of structural transparency, the old forms tend to have **compositional meanings**, whereas the newer forms tend to have **innovated (discursive)** meanings.

e.g. *kukey mwenya hamyen* vs. *kukey mwenyamyen*;
what do you call it? vs. *what-d'ya-call-it* etc.

4. Summary and Conclusion

- Rhetorical questions are commonly recruited in the development of PMs, because **rhetoricity** is important in discourse.
- These PQPMs carry diverse functions: **topic presentation, gap filling, mitigation, attention-attraction, emphasis, noncommitment**, etc.
- There are diverse strategies involved: **engagement, disengagement, intersubjectivity modulation, deictic representation**, etc.

4. Summary and Conclusion

- These PQPMs all have **meta-linguistic functions** of framing the discourse.
- PM research is significant in linguistic scholarship because it sheds light on the **dynamicity of categories, adjacent grammatical categories, emergence and loss of grammatical forms, and the degree of universality of categories and discourse strategies.**

Acknowledgment

This work was supported by the National Research Foundation of Korea Grant funded by the Korean Government (NRF-2013S1A5A2A01019751) and the 2015 Travel Grant of Hankuk University of Foreign Studies.

References

- Fox Tree, Jean E. & Josef C. Schrock (2002) Basic meanings of *you know* and *I mean*. *Journal of Pragmatics* 34: 727-747.
- Fraser, Bruce (1990) An approach to discourse markers. *Journal of Pragmatics* 14: 383-395.
- Fraser, Bruce (2006) Toward a theory of discourse markers. In Kerstin Fischer (Ed.) *Approaches to Discourse Particles*, 189-204. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Freddi, Maria (2011) A corpus investigation into the pragmatics of filmic speech. Paper presented at the IPrA-12 Conference, Manchester, U.K. July 3-8, 2011.
- Goddard, Cliff (1998) *Semantic Analysis: A Practical Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gupta, Anthea Fraser (1992) The pragmatic particles of Singapore colloquial English. *Journal of Pragmatics* 18, 31-57.

References

- Gupta, Anthea Fraser (1999) Standard Englishes, contact varieties and Singapore Englishes. In: Claus Gnutzmann (Ed.), *Teaching and Learning English as a Global Language: Native and Non-Native Perspectives*, 59-72. Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag.
- Kuteva, Tania (2012) On the cyclic nature of grammaticalization. (Invited lecture at the First World Congress of Scholars of English Linguistics, Hanyang University, June 26–30, 2012). In: Ik-Hwan Lee et al. (Eds.), *Issues in English Linguistics*, 50-67. Seoul: Hankookmunhwasa.
- Kwan-Terry, Anna (1978) The meaning and the source of 'la' and the 'what' particles in Singapore English. *RELJ Journal* 9.2, 22–36.
- Kwan-Terry, Anna (1992) Towards a dictionary of Singapore English – issues relating to making entries for particles in Singapore English. In: Anne Pakir (Ed.), *Words in a Cultural Context*, 62-72. Singapore: Unipress..

References

- Östman, Jan-Ola (1982) The symbolic relationship between pragmatic particles and impromptu speech. In Nils Erik Enkvist (Ed.), *Impromptu Speech: A Symposium*, 147-177. Åbo: Åbo Akademi.
- Platt, John (1987) Communicative functions of particles in Singapore English. In: Ross Steele & Terry Threadgold (Eds.), *Language Topics. Essays in Honour of Michael Halliday*, 391-401. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Platt, John & Mian Lian Ho (1989) Discourse particles in Singaporean English: Substratum influences and universals. *World Englishes* 2.8: 215–221.
- Smith, Ian (1985) Multilingualism and diffusion: A case study from Singapore English. *Indian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 11.2: 105-128.
- Watts, Richard J. (1989) Taking the pitcher to the 'well': Native speakers' perception of their use of discourse markers in conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics* 13: 203-237.

References

- Wee, Lionel (1998) The lexicon of Singapore English. In: Joseph A. Foley et al. (Eds.) *English in New Cultural Contexts: Reflections from Singapore*, 175-200. Singapore: Oxford University Press.
- Wong, Jock (1994) A Wierzbickian Approach to Singlish Particles. MA thesis, National University of Singapore.
- Wong, Jock (2004) The particles of Singapore English: A semantic and cultural interpretation. *Journal of Pragmatics* 36: 739-793.

Thank you!
감사합니다!
Dziękuję!