

From truth to reality to effect: The journey of *sasilsang* in Korean

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Abstract

The Korean discourse marker sasilsang, literally 'in fact', developed from the Sino-Korean nouns sasil 'truth, fact' and sang 'top' as a compound. Unlike its original meaning making reference to religious truth, its later meanings are concerned with reference to reality, hidden reality, etc. The hidden reality meaning prompted the word's development into a discourse marker as a signal to indicate the surprising nature of the information to be presented. Interestingly, hidden reality is often the speaker's interpretive reality rather than objective reality. The strategic use of the discourse marker engendered such discursive functions as marking common-ground solicitation, pause-filling, hesitance, and politeness, among others. The development of the discourse marker can be characterised as an instance of subjectification and intersubjectification. The oft-cited peripheral asymmetry, however, cannot be confirmed by the development of the discourse marker sasilsang.

KEYWORDS: DISCOURSE MARKER, SASILSANG, REALITY, (INTER)SUBJECTIFICATION, STANCE-MARKING

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1. Introduction

Korea has long maintained contact with China because of its geographical proximity as well as China's vital leadership in political, religious, literary, and scientific development in the Northeast Asian region for millennia. The influence of this sustained contact is prominent in the fact that a large proportion of Korean vocabulary consists of words of Chinese origin (see 3.4 below). Many of these words retain their meanings from historical times, but many of them have also changed their meanings through history. The Sino-Korean word *sasilsang* (事實上), a combination of three logographs *sa* (事) 'affair', *sil* (實) 'fruit, fill up, mature', and *sang* (上) 'top, on', displays interesting semantic and functional change, a characteristic also partially shared by the etymon *silsang* in Korean (see Lee, 2021), *shishishang* in Chinese (see He, 2021), and *jijitsujoo* in Japanese (see Shibasaki, 2021). The lexeme has undergone semantic shifts and extension at the lexical level, and its functional change led to its development in Modern Korean (MoK) into a discourse marker (DM) signifying a range of functions, which will be elaborated in Section 2. Based on the observed development, we will discuss select issues of theoretical importance, i.e., subjectification, stance-marking, periphery, and source characteristics, in Section 3.

The data is taken from two sources. The historical data is largely taken from the twenty-first-century Sejong Corpus, a 200-million word corpus (1446–1912), developed by the Korean Ministry of Culture and Tourism. The contemporary data is taken from the Drama and Movie Corpus, a 24-million word corpus (1992–2015) consisting of 7,424 drama, sitcom, and movie scenarios, compiled by Min Li, and an 8-million-word corpus of TV and radio dramas (1950–2000), compiled by the author. The concordance program used in the data search is UNICONC, developed by Jinho Park.¹

2. Semantic change

2.1 *Sasil* in Middle Korean

Even though *sasilsang* is among the most commonly used words in MoK, it is not attested in Middle Korean texts.² As noted before, *sasilsang* is trimorphemic in composition, but its origin can be ultimately traced back to Early Middle Korean (EMK; 918–1445) in the form of *sasil* (事實) 'the fact', a combination of two Chinese lexemes *sa* (事) 'affair' and *sil* (實) 'fruit, fill up, mature'. Early attestations are only in the form of *sasil*, and its derivative *sasilsang* is not attested until MoK. In its earliest attestations *sasil* meant 'the truth' in the religious sense, e.g., attestations in the late Koryo dynasty times (tenth to fourteenth century). A notable example in the extant data is *Nammyengchen Hwasang Song Cungtoka Sasil* (Truths in Master Nammyenchen's Testimonial Lauds), dated from 1248, a Buddhist commentary on 320 pieces of laudatory songs composed by Master Yengka

Hyenkak (Yongjia Xuanjue, 665–713) of the Tang Dynasty, China, based on the commentary by Master Nammyengchen. As the title involving *sasil* indicates, the commentator is highlighting the religious truths represented in the songs.

As indicated above, an investigation of the early historical data shows that *sasil* denoted religious truths, as exemplified in (1):³

(1) 1286, *Myopepyenhwakyeng Pangphyenphwum* #623

諸佛出於世 唯此一事實 餘二則非真

CEYPWUL-CHWUL-E-SEY YU-PHI-IL-SASIL YE-I-CUK-PICIN

all.Buddhas-exit-to-world only-that-one-truth remain-two-equal-non.truth

‘All Buddhas come to the world, and (among the three principles) only that one [principle] is the truth, and the other two [principles] are not truths.’

Example (1) is taken from a thirteenth-century text (EMK) of the Buddhist scripture *The Lotus Sutra*. The excerpt is an explanation about three principles in Buddhism, which consist of ‘the truth’ in one and ‘non-truths’ in the other two. It is clear from the context that the truth (*sasil*) is contrasted with the non-truth (*picin*), even though all the three principles may in appearance seem to be truths.

Another early attestation is dated from 1381 in a collection of Buddhist disciplining principles, entitled *Sencong Yengkacip* (A Collection of Master Yengka’s Dhyana Disciplines), with a shifted meaning, as exemplified in (2):

(2) 1381, *Sencongyengkacip* #144

如實語者 亦二 一事實者 [...] 二理實者 [...]

YE-SILE-CA

YEK-I IL-SASIL-CA

I-ISIL-CA

like-truthful.saying-thing also-two one-reality.truth-thing two-reasoning.truth-thing

‘There are also two truthful sayings; one is the reality truth [straightforwardly saying yes and no, based on reality], and the other is reasoning truth [saying that everyone has the spirit of Buddha].’

Example (2) contrasts two different types of truthful sayings, one based on reality (*sasil*) and the other based on reasoning (*isil*). Incidentally, only *sasil* survives in MoK, and the lexeme *isil* has become defunct. The surviving vestiges of these two contrastive lexemes are *iphan(sung)-saphan(sung)* ‘meditating monks and detailing monks’ (i.e., the two types of monks) and *iphansaphan* ‘desperately’ or ‘without any reasonable choice’ (since becoming a monk in Joseon dynasty times was tantamount to an utter failure in life). The detailing monks performed menial labour such as paper-making, oil-pressing, shoe-making, or maintenance of the temple ground. Thus, the contrast between *isil* and *sasil* is one between ‘the sacred’ and ‘the mundane’. Since mundane matters are more concrete and are based on facts, *sasil* seems to have strengthened its reality meaning from the earlier firmness meaning with respect to Buddhist truths.

When *sasil* departed from religious truth in meaning, it acquired the meaning of truthfulness in general. Incidentally, religious truth became encoded by a different Sino-Korean lexeme *cinli* (眞理) ‘truthful principle’, which is first attested in a 1417 text and is still in common use. Therefore, in MoK, *sasil* means ‘truth, fact’ as a noun or ‘in fact, as a matter of fact’ as an adverb, the latter a synonym of *sasilsang* (*Phyocwun Kwuke Taysacen* [A Complete Standard Korean Dictionary] by the National Institute of the Korean Language). From a historical survey, it is clear that the adverbial use of *sasilsang* is a modern development. All instances of its use before the twentieth century are those in the nominal use. In other words, it is accompanied by a nominal particle or used as a predicative nominal.

2.2 *Sasilsang* in Modern Korean

Around the turn of the twentieth century, the lexeme *sasil* begins to occur in combination with another Chinese lexeme *sang* (上), a relational noun designating superiority ‘the upper region’, and appears in the forms of *sasil-sang-ey* [fact-on-to] ‘to practicality’ and *sasil-sang-uy* [fact-on-of] ‘of reality, de facto’, in highly formal, pedantic articles in Korea’s first newspapers. Even though *sang* is more generally a relational particle with the ‘on, upon, above, over’ meaning, it is generally treated as a noun as are other Sino-Korean relational particles in Korean grammar, and thus often occurs with such postpositional particles as *-ey* and *-uy*. The earliest attestations of *sasilsang* are exemplified in (3) and (4), in which *sasil-sang* is glossed as ‘reality’:

(3) 1896, *Taycysyen Tokliphyeophoy Hoypo* #204

理想派는 純理를 써 事實上에 置하고

ISANGPHA-*nan* SWUNLI-*lal* ss-*e* SASILSANG-*ey* CHI-*ha-ko*

idealist-TOP pure.reason-ACC use-NF reality-at place-do-and

‘Idealists place pure reason unto reality, and ...’

(4) 1896, *Taycysyen Tokliphyeophoy Hoypo* #428

西鄉隆盛이 去한 後

SEHYANGYUNGSENG-*i* KE-*han* HWU

[name]-NOM pass-do-ADN after

大久保利通은 事實上の 首相이 되야써

TAYKWUPOLITHONG-*un* SASILSANG-*uy* SWUSANG-*i* toy-*yasse*

[name]-TOP reality-GEN prime.minister-NOM become-and

‘After Saigo Takamori passed away, Okubo Toshimichi became the de facto Prime Minister and ...’

The two excerpts in (3) and (4) are taken from the circulars of a patriotic organisation established in the midst of the turmoil of imperialism around East Asia

in the late nineteenth century. The language of (3) and (4) is highly pedantic, as indicated by the use of excessive Chinese words (also written with Chinese characters) that are not in ordinary use. The date of the publication of the texts is around the time of the new literary movement, whereby writers were experimenting with colloquial language, but the target audience of the article was the literati class, who were knowledgeable in written Chinese, which seems to have made the writer adopt pedantic language. The lexeme *sasilsang* in (3) denotes ‘reality’ or ‘practicality’ in contrast with pure reasoning, in the context where idealists are compared with empiricists, urging the former to adopt a level of pragmatism. Example (4) is with reference to the two of the Three Great Nobles of the Meiji Restoration in nineteenth-century Japan, i.e., Saigo Takamori (Sehyangyungseng) and Okubo Toshimichi (Taykwupolithong). The excerpt refers to the time when, after Saigo Takamori ended his own life, Okubo Toshimichi was performing the job of Prime Minister, though such credential had not been officially bestowed. The lexeme *sasilsang* here denotes ‘de facto’, focusing on the reality in contrast with the appearance or formality. It is noteworthy that the two attestations of *sasilsang* in the nineteenth century are in its nominal usage, as indicated by the particles *ey* and *uy* that occur with it.

Shortly afterwards, in novels written in more colloquial language, in accordance with the new literary movement, which formed the genre known as *sinsosel* (lit. ‘new novel’), *sasilsang* occurs without a particle in non-argument positions, thus signalling its grammatical status as an adverb, with the meaning of ‘truly, really, indeed’ (as an intensifier), as exemplified in (5) and (6), in which *sasilsang* is glossed as ‘truly’:

(5) 1911, *Molanpyeng* #677

이 모자의 눈물을 사실상 아모라도 금치 못함이어니와

i moca-uy nwunmwul-ul sasilsang amolato kum-chimosham-i-eniwa

this mother.son-GEN tear-ACC truly no.one forbid-cannot-NMLZ-NOM-CONN

‘Truly no one can stop the tears of these mother and son, and ...’

(6) 1914, *Anuyseng* #394

네와 내가 볼 기약이 업난 것은 사실상 엇지 할 슈 업난 일이라.

ney-na nay-na po-l kuyyak-i ep-nan kes-un

you-or I-or see-ADN prospect-NOM not.exist-ADN thing-TOP

sasilsang esci ha-l syu ep-nan il-i-la

truly how do-ADN way not.exit-ADN matter-be-DEC

‘That you and I have no prospect of seeing each other (again in the future) is truly something we cannot do anything about.’

In Examples (5) and (6), *sasilsang* occurs without nominal particles and in non-argument positions. For instance, in (5) *sasilsang* is a clausal modifier, i.e., of ‘no one can stop’ and in (6), a verbal modifier, i.e., of ‘do something about’, both supporting the adverbial analysis.

The adverbial intensifier meaning is closely related to the nominal meaning of *sasilsang*, i.e., the ‘not only in form but also in effect’ meaning that gains circulation in MoK, as exemplified in (7), in which *sasilsang* is glossed ‘reality’ as a shorthand:

(7) 22 May 1920, *Chosunilpo Daily News*, Political section

事實上的 普通選舉를 實施할 事

SASILSANG-uy POTHONGSENKE-lul SILSI-ha-l SA
reality-GEN universal.suffrage-ACC enforce-do-ADN affair

‘To enforce universal suffrage both in name and in reality’

Example (7) is taken from the political section of a 1920 newspaper article, which reports the national convention of the American Socialist Party in May 1920. The excerpt is the twelfth of the 13 party platforms, demanding universal suffrage across the nation. As is clear from the context, *sasilsang* invokes the notion ‘both in name and in reality’, which is comprehensive of appearance and effect. In MoK this notion is encoded by a different lexeme, i.e., *myengsilkonghi*, whereas *sasilsang* strongly retains the ‘reality hidden in apparent form’ meaning.

2.3 *Sasilsang* in Present-Day Korean

The lexeme *sasilsang* displays a rather unusual distribution in the sense that after its attestations in the *sinsosel* novels at the turn of the twentieth century, it occurs only sporadically throughout MoK.⁴ The relative infrequency still persists in PDK. Despite the low frequency, however, *sasilsang* has acquired a new pragmatic function, i.e., that of a discourse marker, a function that branched out of its adverbial usage. Furthermore, despite the emergence of a new usage as an adverbial in MoK, the nominal usage did not disappear. Thus, in PDK *sasilsang* is treated as a noun and an adverb with the semantic designations as in (8) and (9), taken from *Phyocwun Kwuke Taysacen*, with modified examples, in which *sasilsang* is glossed as ‘reality’ and ‘in reality’, respectively:

(8) *sasilsang*, noun meaning: ‘a state of affairs in the past; the current state’

사실상의 권리

sasilsang-uy kwenli

reality-GEN power

‘practical power; de facto power’

(9) *sasilsang*, adverb meaning: ‘in terms of reality or fact’

이번 계획은 사실상 실패로 돌아갔다.

ipen kyeyhoyk-un sasilsang silphay-lo tolaka-ss-ta
 this.time plan-TOP reality failure-to return-PST-DEC

‘The plan this time has virtually failed.’

It is notable that the meanings are based on the contrast between reality and appearance (see 3.1). In other words, *sasilsang*, either as a noun or an adverb, invokes the meaning of the reality which may not be immediately perceivable from the appearance. Even though the dictionaries list the nominal and adverbial function of *sasilsang*, a corpus investigation reveals that the nominal usage in PDK is extremely rare. In fact, the drama corpus of 24 million words has only 35 instances of *sasilsang*, none of which is the nominal usage.

An interesting aspect of *sasilsang* is that, even though it is not productive in the nominal usage, there is one usage closely linked to it, i.e., the adjectival usage, which, however, is not recognised by lexicographers. This is exemplified in the following, in which *sasilsang* is glossed as ‘in reality’:

(10) 2005, Drama *Kenppangsensayngkwa pyelsathang*, Episode #14

정석재단 지금 사실상 유명무실 상태 아닙니까?

cengsekcaytan cikum sasilsang yumyengmwusil sangthay ani-pnikka?
 [name] now in.reality nominal state be.not-Q

‘Isn’t it that Jungseok Foundation is in the nominal state in reality?’

(11) 2005, Drama *Kulinlocu*, Episode #8

자기는 베일 뒤에 숨어서 사실상 실권을 행사하고 있어.

caki-nun peyil twi-ey swum-e sasilsang silkwen-ul hayngsaha-koiss-e
 self-TOP veil behind-at hide-NF in.reality real.power-ACC exercise-PROG-END

‘He is hiding behind the veil and is exercising the real power in reality.’

(12) 2005, Drama *Kulinlocu*, Episode #14

... 사실상 SR전자의 오너신데...

... *sasilsang SRcenca-uy one-si-ntey...*
 in.reality [name]-GEN owner-HON-as

‘Since (you) are the owner of SR Electronics in reality ...’

In Examples (10) to (12), *sasilsang* is glossed as an adverbial for convenience, but its function is more amenable to adjectival rather than adverbial analysis. For instance, *sasilsang yumyengmwusil sangthay* is better interpreted as ‘real nominal

state', in which *sasilsang* is modifying the nominal *yumyengmwusil*, rather than as 'be not in nominal state in reality'. Similarly, *sasilsang* in (11) and (12) modifies the following nouns denoting 'power' and 'owner'. From the semantic point of view, this usage is directly linked to the nominal usage of *sasilsang*. Since nominals are normally accompanied by a nominal particle and, further, the nominal particle is often omitted as part of Korean syntactic idiosyncrasies, the examples above may also be interpreted as cases involving the nominal usage of *sasilsang* that is not accompanied by a nominal particle. In other words, *sasilsang* in these examples can be *sasilsang-uy* [reality-GEN] 'of reality', from which the genitive case marker *uy* is omitted. Therefore, from the semantic point of view, when the particle omission occurs, the form may be analysed either as a noun, forming a compound with the following nominal, or as an adjective, modifying the following nominal.

As is indicated above, *sasilsang* can also function as an adverbial. In such cases the 'in reality, of reality' meaning is applied to the verbal instead of the nominal, as is exemplified in the following:

(13) 2000, Drama *Meytikhelseynthe* Episode #5

사실상 환자 대다수는 가난하지만 극빈잔 아니잖아요.

sasilsang hwanca taytaswu-nun kananha-ciman

in.reality patient majority-TOP be.poor-but

kukpinca-n ani-canh-a-yo

indigent.person-TOP be.not-EMPH-END-POL

'The majority of the patients are poor, but in reality they are not indigent persons.'

(14) 2010, Drama *Chenmanpen salanghay* Episode #25

은행에서도 자금 지원이 사실상 끊겼다고 하는데...

unhayng-eyse-to cakum ciwen-i sasilsang kkunhky-ess-tako ha-nuntay ...

bank-from-also fund support-NOM in.reality be.cut-PST-REPT say-as

'(I'm worried) as they say that the funding from the bank has stopped in reality as well ...'

As is clear from the context, *sasilsang* in (13) does not modify the following nominal, in which case the string would have an awkward meaning, i.e., 'patient in reality', but it modifies the predicate, i.e., 'are not indigent persons in reality'. Similarly, *sasilsang* in (14) modifies the predicate, i.e., 'has virtually stopped'. In fact, there is no nominal following *sasilsang* that would compete to be modified by it. Even though the grammatical function of these examples is different from the nominal usage exemplified in (10) to (12), their semantic function is similar in that they both make reference to the reality of essence in contrast with the form or appearance. In PDK *sasilsang* has a range of 'truth/reality'-related meanings,

e.g., ‘in a true sense’, ‘in effect’, ‘in practice’ and ‘nearly, as good as’, and carries pragmatic functions as a DM, to which we turn next.

2.4 *Sasilsang* as a discourse marker

In PDK, *sasilsang* competes with its formal and semantic relative *sasil* ‘fact’, and the latter prevails in productivity as a noun, an adverb, and a DM. For instance, a corpus search turns up 15,020 instances of *sasil*, in stark contrast with 35 instances of *sasilsang*. Therefore, in terms of the mere statistical representation, *sasilsang* can be ignored, but its new function deserves attention as it shows an important conceptual developmental pattern. In the history of Korean, the development of *sasilsang* into a DM is a recent phenomenon. *Sasilsang*, as a DM, has positional freedom (cf. Heine, Kaltenböck, Kuteva, & Long, 2021; Norde, 2009; Schiffrin, 1987; Tabor & Traugott, 1998;) and carries diverse discursive meanings, such as ‘This is real, not imaginary’, ‘This may surprise you’, ‘This can be interpreted as’, ‘This is as good as’, etc., all highly subjective and intersubjective meanings (see 3.1 below). Its DM usage is exemplified in (15) to (17) (note that only the focused part of the data is given with full glosses, and for other parts only the translation is presented, within square brackets):⁵

(15) 1999, Drama *Khaisuthu* Episode #14

[Most people on earth live peacefully without knowledge of this bug, but]

사실상 이 벌레는 35년 전부터 알에서 깨어나서 꿈틀거리고 있습니다.

sasilsang i pelley-nun 35-nyen-cen-pwuthe al-eyse kkayena-se

DM this bug-top 35-year-before-from egg-from hatch-and

kkwumthulkeli-koiss-supnita

wiggle-PROG-DEC

‘DM (in fact; you know what?) this bug hatched out 35 years ago and is wiggling now.’

(16) 2003, Drama *Chenkwukuy kyeytan* Episode #4

(A, a director, is reporting, while standing, to B, the CEO, who is sitting in his office; B is greatly interested in a designer and is being briefed about her from A.)

A: [She is a famous designer. Both of them are.]

B: [How about her family?]

A: [She lives at Han Chulsoo’s house at the South Gate district.]

B: [(turning tense) What kind of relationship does she have with him?]

A: 사실상...

Sasilsang ... (hesitates)

DM

B: [(looks up)]

A: [... they cohabit ...]

B: [(making face) ... you mean ... they ... moved in together ...?]

(17) 2000, Movie *Phullantacuy kay*

(A is a candidate for professorship awaiting the final decision, and his friend B, working at the departmental office, is informing him over the phone of what he found out.)

A: [Hello, Joonphyo?]

B: [Sorry, my cellphone battery was dead (while talking) and I had to replace it.]

A: [Oh, you are calling from a cellphone?]

B: 어 하여튼 ... 계속 얘기하자면 ... 지금 사실상 내정된 사람이 있는 것 같다.

e hayethun ... kyeysok yaykiha-camyen ...

yeah anyway continuously talk-if

cikum sasilsang naycengtoy-n salam-i iss-nunkekath-ta

now DM be.predetermined-ADN person-NOM exist-seem-DEC

'Yeah, anyway, to return to what I was saying, it seems DM (in fact) that there is someone who they already determined to recruit before the process began.'

A: [Who on earth is that?]

In (15), a university professor refers to the Y2K millennium bug and uses the DM *sasilsang* as a preface to information of surprise value, which may be roughly translated as 'in fact, you know what, to tell you the fact, etc.' This revelatory function brings into contrastive focus the complacency of the general public and the imminent havoc the bug will wreak. Similarly, in (16), the DM *sasilsang* signals a surprise value of the information to be presented. As speaker A is aware that his interlocutor B has a strong romantic interest in the woman being referred to and is sure that B will be unhappy with her already living with a partner, he hesitates to reveal the information right away, as is indicated by the parenthetical direction by the script-writer. In this function, the DM *sasilsang* may serve as the preface to dispreferred information to follow, or as a pause-filler when the speaker is unable to proceed because of the negative nature of the information. Example (17) is taken from a scene in which B is revealing disheartening information with reference to his friend's candidacy for professorship. The preceding adverb *cikum* 'now' also often functions as a DM with a focusing effect. From these examples, it is clear that the DM *sasilsang* signals the surprise value of the information to follow, its negative nature, and sometimes the speaker's hesitance due to negativity.

There is another, though similar, function of the DM *sasilsang* in PDK. It also carries the contrast meaning, but the focus is a newly introduced subjective interpretation of the event or state of affairs. This is well illustrated in the following:

(18) 2010, Movie *Silanoenaycocaktan*

명목상은 자진사직이지만 사실상 짤렸어요.

myengmoksang-un cacinsacik-i-ciman

sasilsang ccally-ess-e-yo

in.name-TOP voluntary.resignation-be-but DM be.cut-PST-END-POL

‘(It) was voluntary resignation in form, but DM (in effect) I was fired.’

(19) 2005, Drama *Pwulkkoch* Episode #8

(With reference to overseas convertible bonds the speaker’s firm intends to purchase)

[There remain certain procedures such as resolution, pricing, and exchange rate, but pricing is determined by a set algorithm and thus is predictable.]

그러니까 사실상 결정은 됐다고 보시면 됩니다.

kulenikka sasilsang kyelceng-un tway-ss-takwu po-si-myentoy-pnita

so DM decision-TOP reach-PST-COMP see-HON-may-DEC

‘So, DM (in effect), you may as well regard that the procedure has been completed.’

As is shown in the translation, the DM *sasilsang* signals that the information that follows is the interpretation of the speaker. In other words, the speaker in Example (18), a former broadcaster, relates her experience of losing her job after laughing in the middle of a live news report, inappropriate conduct in a formal broadcast. Even though she submitted her resignation to the administration, she interprets the incident as an imposed dismissal.⁶ Similarly, in (19), the speaker is explaining to his boss about the procedure involved in procuring overseas bonds and states that all the remaining procedures are mechanically determined without involving the corporate decisions. His evaluation of the situation is that it is as good as having reached the end of the procedure, despite the fact that, strictly speaking, it has not. The interpretive function of the DM *sasilsang* is close to the lexeme’s adverbial function, since a DM typically takes the sentential scope, and an adverbial can have a large spectrum of modification scopes, including the sentential scope.

3. Discussion

The developmental path of *sasilsang* in Korean exhibits some noteworthy theoretical aspects. Of these we discuss subjectification, stance-marking, periphery, and source characteristics, in turn.

3.1 (Inter)subjectification

Among a number of intriguing aspects, ‘subjectification’ (Traugott, 1982, 1995; Traugott & König, 1991) of the semantics of the lexeme *sasilsang* traceable to

sasil is the most noteworthy. We already noted in the preceding discussion that the source lexeme *sasil* denoted religious truth, particularly truth in Buddhism, in the earliest attestations, i.e., in EMK. Towards the end of the fourteenth century, the lexeme acquired the ‘real world’ meaning, making reference to mundane matters, departing from the religious meaning. The religious meaning has since been entirely lost. This instance can be characterised as concretisation of meaning, i.e., a shift from a more abstract and intangible domain to a more concrete and tangible domain, thus leaving room for interpretation of counter-subjectification. More importantly, however, this is a metaphorical transfer of the notion ‘firmness’ from the spiritual to the mundane world. In other words, truth in religion being steadfast is likened to real-world facts being unalterable (see 3.4 for more discussion).

As *sasil* came to denote ‘fact, reality’, its meaning came to implicate practicality in opposition to impracticality of speculation or insubstantiality. This is a natural course of development motivated by the human propensity for attributing subjective value to an event or state of affairs. Further, when the ‘practicality’ meaning became well entrenched, the lexeme further developed into the contrastive meaning, highlighting the hidden reality or substance behind the appearance or form. The emergence of a contrastive meaning is a good instance of subjectification, because it involves evaluation of an aspect or entity from a standpoint of another aspect or entity, a scenario immediately reminiscent of the development of the contrastive and concessive meaning of the English conjunction *while* (Hopper & Traugott, 2003[1993]).

We also noted the development of the intensifier function of *sasilsang* with the meaning of ‘truly, really, indeed’. Since ‘reality’ involves diverse aspects, the concrete nature being only a part of it, selecting the ‘firmness’ or ‘steadfastness’ meaning from it and using it as an intensifier is an instance of further subjectification. The development of intensifiers from lexemes denoting ‘reality’ seems to have strong conceptual motivation, as shown with the English intensifiers *really*, *actually*, *genuinely*, etc. (Rhee, 2018) as well as in Chinese (He, 2021) and Japanese (Shibasaki, 2021).

Furthermore, as discussed in 2.4, *sasilsang* carries a range of discursive meanings, e.g., ‘This is real, not imaginary’, ‘This may surprise you’, ‘This can be interpreted as’, ‘This is as good as’, etc. All these functions highlight the noteworthiness or surprise value of the information that will follow, a clear instance of subjectification. Further, in general, DMs signalling surprise or mirativity tend to go further from the proposition level to the interactional level for strategic reasons, i.e., to invite the interlocutor to share the surprise the speaker experienced, thus leading the function from the subjective to the intersubjective level (Rhee, 2020a). Similarly, since the surprising information tends to involve unexpectedness on the part of the interlocutor, though positive surprise is not disallowed, the DM

may not be followed by actual information due to the speaker's hesitance to reveal it. In such cases, it functions as a pause-filler. As is well observed, pause-fillers are often employed to strategically indicate the interlocutor's unwillingness to disclose the information for the sake of the interlocutor's face or wellbeing, a common politeness strategy across languages (Rhee, 2020a). Thus, the development of the DM acquiring this function is a good instance of 'intersubjectification' (Traugott, 2003, 2010; Traugott & Dasher, 2002).

All these developmental scenarios, except for the initial development from religious truth to reality, point to the fact that the general direction is the increase of subjectivity, i.e., subjectification, from denoting a physical world to value-imbedded practicality, to general intensity, and to surprise or mirativity. Furthermore, the development of the DM *sasilsang* as a marker of inviting the addressee into the common ground of shared information or feelings, and of signalling hesitance to reveal dispreferred information for the sake of politeness is a good example of intersubjectification. The developmental paths can be diagrammatically presented as Figure 1, which shows a conceptual network surrounding the core notion of 'reality'.

As is illustrated in Figure 1, after *sasil* began to be used to denote mundane reality departing from its original meaning of religious truth, the meaning of the lexeme became fully conventionalised and has become the primary meaning of the lexeme to this day, as indicated by the shaded cell. When it became a compound

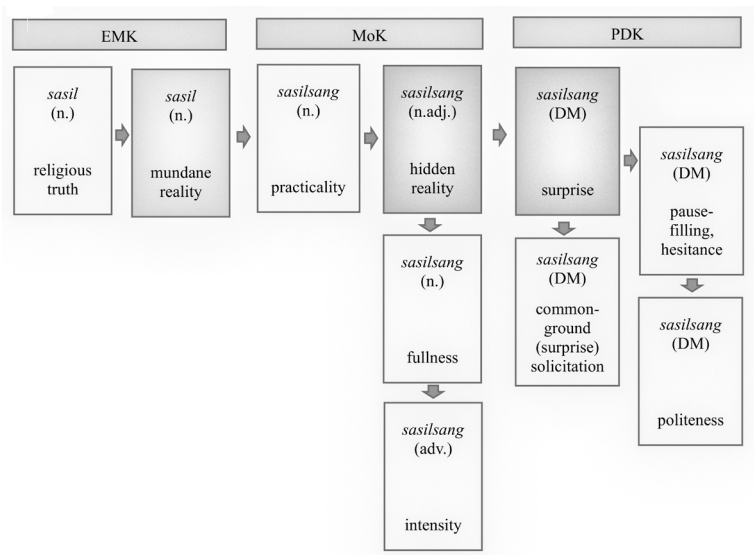


Figure 1: Developmental path and conceptual network of *sasil(sang)*

noun with the relational noun *sang* (上) 'top', it came to denote diverse subjectified meanings depending on its focus on a particular aspect of an event or state of affairs. All those meanings tend to involve the notion of 'hidden reality'. In PDK *sasilsang* has the nominal, adjectival, adverbial, and DM functions, though with variable lexical strengths. As a DM, the primary function of *sasilsang* is to convey the surprise value of the information which is to follow, but its strategic use in discourse engendered other closely related uses.

3.2 Stance-marking

A DM, by virtue of being situated in a discourse, is inherently interactive in the sense that the speaker or writer has the audience, visible or not, in mind in their performance of speech acts. DMs are typically employed for persuasion in interactional contexts, thus are rhetorical (Rhee, 2008, 2016, 2020b). Since interactivity is also closely related to intersubjectivity, i.e., the concern of the interlocutor, the development of a DM is an exemplary instance of intersubjectification, as discussed in 3.1. One important aspect of intersubjectivity is that the speakers, while showing concern about the interlocutor, signal their stance as well. Therefore, DMs often serve as stance markers.

In the case of *sasilsang*, we noted that its primary function is to signal the surprise value of the information to follow. The actions discourse participants typically engage themselves in are largely directed verbal acts of transfer, such as informing, requesting, responding, etc. Thus, the signal of surprise value by means of the DM *sasilsang* is a good example of such a directed action. At the same time, discourse participants also often perform actions with the purpose of inviting the addressee into the speaker's common ground of emotion, attitude, evaluation, etc., thus forming an affective bond. This is why most instances of mirativity-related DMs do not encode pure surprise but feigned surprise, whereby the speaker invites the addressee to share the emotion the speaker experienced (Rhee, 2020a). In the case of *sasilsang*, for instance, the speaker utters *sasilsang* with the strategic purpose of informing the addressee of the surprise value of the information and at the same time inviting the addressee into the shared evaluation of the information. This is manifest in the case of the DM's interpretive judgment of an event or state of affairs, as exemplified in (18) and (19) above.

Furthermore, we noted that the DM *sasilsang* is often accompanied by a pause or even ellipsis, as exemplified in (16) above. The pause or ellipsis is often necessitated by the speaker's cognitive state of lexical search in order to find suitable words. At the same time, such lexical search can be feigned for strategic reasons, i.e., in order to signal that the situation warrants caution because the negative nature of the information puts the speaker in a difficult position to verbalise the information. This results in the use of the stand-alone DM *sasilsang* often with a trailing verbalisation. When a DM is used for signalling hesitance, it is nearly

invariably a marker of politeness, i.e., the speaker being mindful of the addressee's face or mental wellbeing. The pause-filler function and the hesitance function are practically indistinguishable, because the distinction resides only in the speaker's cognitive state or intention (Rhee, 2020a). In general, we can state that interpersonality and strategic rhetoricity work in tandem to signal the speaker's stance in a discourse scene.

3.3 Periphery

Recent literature addresses the potential peripheral asymmetry with respect to the semantics or functions of a form. For instance, Adamson (2000), Onodera (2007), Degand (2014), Traugott (2014), Beeching and Detges (2014) discuss the issue (see also the articles in the 2016 special issue of *Journal of Historical Pragmatics* 17.1). Many researchers hypothesised that the left-periphery (LP) functions are associated with 'dialogual' and subjective functions, whereas right-periphery (RP) is associated with dialogic and intersubjective functions. Since periphery is a theoretically important issue in DM studies, a brief discussion is in order.

As indicated in the previous discussion in 2.4, the DM *sasilsang* has positional freedom, i.e., it does not have to occur in an argument position (as a noun) or in a position suitable for adjectival or verbal modification (as an adverb). It can occur at the LP or RP, or even at medial (MED) positions.⁷ Even though the frequency of *sasilsang* is low, its typical positions by the functions it carries can be easily identified in observations of the daily use of the language. As a surprise signal, the DM *sasilsang* can occur at any position of an utterance, since the surprise value may involve the entire proposition (in which case the DM tends to occur at the LP) or the predicate (in which case the DM tends to occur at the MED position between the subject and the predicate) or a particular lexical item (in which case the DM immediately precedes it). This means that the DM in this function is not likely to occur at RP. The same holds with the common-ground solicitation function, since the evaluation may involve items at the lexical, phrasal, or propositional level.

DMs with the pause-filler function, in general, do not have a preferred position, because the need for a lexical search may occur at any point of a speech production event. Since, the pause-filler, hesitance, and politeness functions are inseparable, the same positional characteristics are applicable to all of them. When the pause-filler *sasilsang* occurs at RP, it tends to be an instance of lexical search failure. Therefore, the difference between this group of functions and the surprise and common-ground solicitation functions described above is that the DM with the functions in this group can occur at RP.

This observation points to the fact that *sasilsang* has no particular preference for its occurrence position. If we distinguish subjective and intersubjective functions of the DM *sasilsang*, its functions as a pure surprise signal and pause-filler

are subjective functions, whereas all other functions, i.e., common-ground solicitation, hesitation, and politeness functions, are intersubjective functions. The subjectivity/intersubjectivity variable and the positionality variable with respect to the functions of the DM *sasilsang* are laid out in Table 1.

Table 1: (Inter)subjectivity and positionality of the DM *sasilsang*

	Subjective function	Intersubjective function
LP	Pure surprise	Common-ground solicitation
	Pause filling	Hesitation
		Politeness
MED	Pure surprise	Common-ground solicitation
	Pause filling	Hesitation
		Politeness
RP	Pause filling	Hesitation
		Politeness

Despite certain functions not occurring at a particular position, e.g., pure surprise and common-ground solicitation at RP, the positionality in general is not correlated with the subjective vs intersubjective distinction. Thus, the peripheral asymmetry hypothesis, which states that LP is associated with the subjective functions whereas RP is associated with the intersubjective functions, is not supported by the developmental pattern displayed by the DM *sasilsang*.

3.4 Source characteristics

Chinese heavily influenced Korean vocabulary from its supposed introduction in the second century BCE. Identifiably Korean texts written in Chinese characters date back to the fifth century CE (Nam, 2012; Narrog, Rhee, & Whitman, 2018; Whitman, 2015; among others). It is supposed that about 60% of the Korean vocabulary is of Chinese origin (Sohn, 1999, p. 87), and in the authoritative dictionary *Phyocwun Kwuke Taysacen* (1992) by the National Institute of the Korean Language, 57.3% of its headwords are of Chinese origin (Lee, 2002).⁸ According to quantitative studies, however, a considerably lower percentage of Sino-Korean words is used in daily life. For instance, Kim (2005) shows that only 19% of the 100 top-frequency words are Sino-Korean words. Similarly, the proportion of the DMs derived from Sino-Korean words is very low, i.e., 14.4% (27 out of about 188), even though the exact number of DMs is inconclusive.

It is generally (and correctly) assumed that the roots of grammaticalisation are found in conversation, in the interaction of speaker and hearer (Hansen, 1998; Waltereit, 2011). For example, in Traugott’s model of grammaticalisation, pragmatic inferences trigger the process of grammaticalisation (cf. Hopper & Traugott, 2003, pp. 81–85). From this perspective, borrowed lexemes are less likely to grammaticalise into grammatical markers since they are often associ-

ated with specific genres and styles and consequently have a low frequency of use. This is particularly true with Sino-Korean words because the use of Sino-Korean words tends to belong to the high register, such as philosophical, religious, legal, and scientific texts by the literati class. In Korean, however, we find cases where grammaticalisation came through written language, especially through translation, i.e., written language contact. For instance, Narrog et al. (2018) report the cases of Sino-Korean adverbials carrying grammatical functions, numeral classifiers, mermaid constructions, and deverbal postpositions as instances of grammaticalisation through written language. It is widely known that DMs, though universal across languages (Fraser, 2006), flourish typically in oral, informal registers (Fraser, 1990; Östman, 1982a, b; Watts, 1989). Thus, as noted in Rhee (2020b) in his discussion of the development of the Sino-Korean lexeme *kyelkwa* ‘result’, the predominance of native Korean words in everyday colloquial language seems to explain the low percentage of Sino-Korean words in the DM inventory. Therefore, the fact that *sasilsang* developed into a DM is closely related to the fact that this DM developed in a high register, i.e., argumentation, rather than in an informal register. In this light, the development of DMs from Sino-Korean lexemes, though small in number, is also likely to be an instance of grammaticalisation through translation.

Given the background, since *sasilsang* originated from Chinese, a quick etymological note is worth mentioning. The character *sa* (事) is a combined ideogram, involving a hand holding a brush, thus symbolising an act of recording (by a scribe), from which the meaning of ‘recording important things’, ‘important work’ was derived, which, in turn, extended to the more general sense of ‘work, matter, affair, etc.’ (Ha, 2014, p. 401). The character *sil* (實) is also a combined ideogram, involving a house, a farm-field, and a shell, thus first symbolised a house filled to the roof with grain (from the farm-field) and money (represented by the shell used as currency). It is clear that the character *sil* was the symbol of fullness of material wealth, from which the procedural meanings ‘to fill up’, ‘maturation’, ‘fruition’ arose. A further development from the fullness is the ‘fact’ and ‘reality’ meaning (Ha, 2014, p. 501).⁹ This suggests that *sasil* is likely to have been used with reference to the importance and fullness in the material, concrete domain, at the time of the word’s invention.

Therefore, the fact that *sasil* was first used to refer to highly abstract, religious truth in the history of Korean is puzzling. It is possible, then, that the Chinese lexeme *sasil* was first introduced via religious (and philosophical) literature, in which it denoted religious or philosophical truth, and that later the meaning was generalised to ‘fact, reality’. It seems indeed true that Koreans used the native Korean lexemes *olhan/olun* for ‘correct, truthful, right’ and ‘right hand side’ (Narrog & Rhee, 2013; Suh, 2003[2000], pp. 447–448, 453) and *cham/cham*

'truth, truthful' before the Sino-Korean word *sasil* with the 'fact, reality' meaning gained full currency.

4. Conclusion

This article addressed the development of the Sino-Korean lexeme *sasilsang* tracing its origin in historical texts with special focus on its semantic and functional change. The lexeme originated from the Sino-Korean noun *sasil*, which denoted 'religious truth' in Buddhist literature as early as EMK times, the meaning falling into disuse consequently. Its meaning soon shifted to denote 'mundane reality' also in the EMK period. In MoK times, the word first appears as a compound form *sasilsang*, also denoting reality but highlighting the practicality associated with the reality, and the meaning further shifted its focus onto the reality hidden behind the appearance or form, in MoK. Even though the meaning was also extended to denote fullness (of form and substance) and intensity, the sense of hidden reality is the primary one in PDK. The hidden reality meaning prompted the lexeme's development into a DM as a signal to indicate the surprising nature of the information to be presented, a natural course of development as it signals that the speaker is about to disclose the hidden reality, even though the hidden reality sometimes may only be the speaker's interpretive reality. The strategic use of the DM also engendered such discursive functions as marking common-ground solicitation, pause-filling, hesitance, and politeness.

The development of *sasilsang* is an excellent example of the semantic change characterised as subjectification, i.e., from the 'fact, reality' meaning of its source *sasil* to the 'practicality' meaning, and further to the 'hidden reality', 'surprise' meanings. Similarly, the development of the 'fullness' meaning and the 'intensity' meaning is also an instance of subjectification, as it highlights the speaker's selective attention and interpretation of the material reality. Likewise, its development into a DM of signalling surprise and pause-filling can be characterised as subjectification, as the function relates to the speaker's cognitive states. On the other hand, the development of the DM functions of marking common-ground solicitation, hesitance, and politeness, by virtue of involving expressivity, interactivity and interpersonality, is a good example of intersubjectification.

We also saw that the noteworthy aspect of the DM *sasilsang* is its stance-marking function, particularly with its common-ground solicitation function, with which the speaker invites the addressee to share the speaker's affective or evaluative stance. A similar point can be made with reference to its hesitance and politeness-marking functions, as the DM signals the speaker's concern for the addressee.

In an investigation of the DMs positional preference and (inter)subjectification, we noted that there is no correspondence between LP/RP positionality on the

one hand and subjectification/intersubjectification on the other, consequently concluding that the hypothesised peripheral asymmetry is not supported by the development of the DM *sasilsang*.

The DM *sasilsang* is among the few DMs that originated from Sino-Korean lexemes. The relative infrequency of the DM development from Sino-Korean lexemes may be due to the fact that Sino-Korean words belong to the high register. Drawing upon the argument presented by Narrog et al. (2018), I also argued that the development of the DM *sasilsang* is likely to have been influenced by translation of Chinese texts. This is reasonable considering that the early uses of *sasilsang* are found in highly pedantic texts marked by Chinese style diction and morphosyntactic composition.

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Notes

1. Special thanks go to the developers of these corpora and the search program for their generosity in granting their use for academic research.
2. The following periodisation is adopted in this article: Old Korean (OK; –917), Early Middle Korean (EMK; 918–1445), Late Middle Korean (LMK; 1446–1600), Early Modern Korean (EMoK; 1601–1893), Modern Korean (MoK; 1894–present), and Present-Day Korean (PDK; 2000–present; note that PDK is a subset of MoK).
3. The Extended Yale Romanization System (Rhee 1996) is used for transliteration of Korean texts in historical times, and following the general convention of Korean historical linguistics, the Chinese characters in the source texts are written in upper-case in Modern Korean pronunciation. The following abbreviations are used for glossing: ACC: accusative; ADN: adnominal; COMP: complementiser; CONN: connective; DEC: declarative; DM: discourse marker; END: sentence-ender; GEN: genitive; HON: honorific; NF: non-finite marker; NOM: nominative; NMLZ: nominaliser; PDK: present-day Korean; POL: polite;

- PROG: progressive; PST: past; Q: interrogative; REPT: reportative; TOP: topic.
4. An anonymous reviewer suggests the possibility of the effect of writing reforms on the development of *sasil(sang)*. This is a good research topic, which, unfortunately, could not be pursued here, largely because of the data gap in the corpora referenced in this article.
 5. An anonymous reviewer comments on the difficulties in drawing a line between an adverb and a DM. This seems to be due to the category boundary of adverb being unclear, and DMs are often treated as belonging to it (cf. Aijmer 1997, 'disjunct adverbial'; Fischer 2007; Swan, 1982, 'speech act adverbials').
 6. Unlike the DM *sasil*, which tends to represent the whole truth, the DM *sasil-sang* marks interpretive reality, and thus *sasil* would not fit in (18). An anonymous reviewer notes that this contrast is also applicable to their Japanese counterparts *jijitsu* and *jijitsujo*.
 7. Among the 35 instances of *sasilsing* in the referenced corpus, there are none that occur at RP. However, RP *sasilsang* is occasionally heard in everyday interaction, the use of which resembles an afterthought addition when the preceding remark reflects the speaker's 'interpretive evaluation' rather than objective description of an event or entity. As *sasilsang* belongs to a high register, it carries a shade of authoritative overtone even in such uses. An anonymous reviewer comments that the effect of such register-specific uses on DM grammaticalisation can be applied to Japanese DM *jijitsujo*, which developed from the same etymon as Korean *sasilsang*.
 8. Rhee (2006) and Rhee (2011) hypothesise that in the Korean lexicon the Sino-Korean words account for 80% and 70%, respectively. The figures are proven false from statistical research. Hence the author stands corrected and declares that the earlier statements were incorrect.
 9. The arbitrary and subjective nature of the selective focus from 'fruit' to 'fact, reality' can be seen in contrast with the focus differences with the 'fruit'-related words in English. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* and *Merriam-Webster English Dictionary*, the English word *frugal* comes from the Latin *frux* 'fruit', 'profit', 'utility' and is related to its formal-semantic relative *frui* 'enjoy'. Since *frugal* has the core semantics of 'restraint' or 'denial of enjoying', the fruit-restraint association is peculiar. This shows that selective focus involves subjectification of semantic change.

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