

Grammaticalization of Conditionals in Korean*

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Conditionals have been widely investigated from the various theoretical perspectives. This paper explores the historical change of conditional markers from the perspective of the current grammaticalization theories. Using the translations of four different times of an identical text, *Nokeltay*, formal changes of the conditional markers and their frequency were counted and compared and sought interpretation of the result a la grammaticalization theories. Especially two representative conditional markers, *-myen* and *-ketun*, show specialization and generalization, through which *-myen* gained primacy in the function of conditionality marking. The functionally relegated *-ketun* is actively acquiring new discourse functions such as a sentential end marker signaling various semantics according to the speakers discourse strategy. This paper attempts to define how conditionals have long proceeded in the grammaticalization path and how novel functions are being created through communicative interactions.

1. Introduction

It has been suggested in many studies that conditionals have cross-linguistic universal characteristics (Wierzbicka 1997: 25, inter alia). Conditional markers in Korean that can be found in the earliest literature, which dates back to the 8th century, have undergone a series of changes. The extant earliest conditional marker in Korean is attested in Hyangga literature in the form of **tAn/tun* (等隱)¹ as has been discussed to a

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¹This is a reconstructed form from Hyangga.

greater extent in Koo (1989b). Since all linguistic forms are undergoing changes we can safely assume that conditional markers in Modern Korean may have undergone various forms of changes. According to the current grammaticalization thesis, all grammatical forms are likely to have been derived from the lexical forms or from their relatively less grammaticalized forms. This thesis is fully applicable to the conditional markers, i.e. a historical survey shows that grammatical forms that mark conditionality have evolved from the forms that were less grammatical in their extent. This paper aims at exploring such grammaticalization paths of conditional markers.

For this type of diachronic and synchronic survey, a corpus that can lend reliable interpretation of linguistic change is of critical importance. It is considered ideal to have multiple versions of the same text that represent the linguistic forms of different times; and to have a colloquial text because one of the major conditional marker, *-ketun*, seems to have been largely used in spoken genre. The various annotated literature of *Nokeltay* is an ideal text in those aspects. For this reason, this paper made use of four translations of *Nokeltay* as a historical data source, which were published in 1517, 1670, 1790, and 1995 respectively that can be summed up as follows.²

(1) <i>Penyek Nokeltay</i>	A.D. 1517
<i>Nokeltay Enhay</i>	A.D. 1670
<i>Monge Nokeltay</i>	A.D. 1790
<i>Yekcu Penyek Nokeltay</i>	A.D. 1995

Nokeltay was a foreign language textbook used to train translators of Chinese and Mongolian. These versions of four different periods have basically the same content despite some variations among them. They contain dialogue of Korean merchants with Chinese or Mongolians in business and casual encounters. These texts provide excellent data because they are basically same text in content; they show differences in linguistic forms according to the publication times; and the content is colloquial and present real-life use of the language.

Despite such advantages of the *Nokeltay* text, however, a caveat is in order. First of all, these versions show variations, if minor in their extent. The respective translators of these versions show variations which seem to

²Historically there are more than four versions but only these versions are used in this investigation.

be due to their stylistic preferences. Especially, the 1790 version shows omission in numerous places where enumerations occur in other versions, preferring descriptions of events instead. Secondly, the most recent version, the 1995 version, apparently in the authors' attempt to be more faithful to the original 1517 version, includes relatively archaic expressions instead of more modern colloquial counterparts. Such occurrences are not negligible in number. However, the implications of such skewing are that the current analysis and its interpretation would be more conservative, which would, in no way, affect the validity of the analysis. The overall picture of historical change may be captured nonetheless. With such minor caveats borne in mind, this analysis is given in the quantitative direction.

2. Formal Historical Changes

Before we turn to the main analysis by the different times, a brief explication on the typology of the conditional markers in the history of Korean and the conventions used in this paper are in order. The typology of conditional markers is as given in (2).

- (2) a. *-myen* (-*myen*, -*umyen*)
 b. *-keni* (-*keni*, -*eni*)
 c. *-ketun* (-*ketun*, -*ketAn*, -*etun*)
 d. *-eto* (-*eto*, -*to*)
 e. *-uni* (-*uni*, -*ni*)
 f. *-eynun* (-*eynun*, -*eynAn*, *eysenun*)
 g. *-nun* (-*nun*, -*un*)

Even though there are many forms listed here, (a) *-myen* is by far the most common form in Modern Korean. It is worthwhile to note that (g) *-nun* is the topic marker, but it often marks conditionals when it is used with a contrastive reading. We will touch on this later. Some of the forms have variations. But for simplicity and convenience of explication, we will use the representative forms only.

2.1. 1517 vs. 1670

A comparison of the 1517 text and the 1670 text reveals the following statistics in token frequency.

(3)

Type	1517	1670	token
A	-keni	-myen	13
B	-ketun	-myen	6
C	-eto	-myen	3
D	-keni	-ketun	3

In the comparison of the 1517 and 1670 texts, as shown in (3), the conditional marker that was most susceptible to change was *-keni*. It changed into *-myen* (Type A, 13 tokens) and into *-ketun* (Type D, 3 tokens). The examples are as follows:³

(4) a. imuy i tAlS chohAlAsnal wangkyeng-uysye
 already this month first.day capital-from
 psena-keni icyey pantAl-ilotAy
 depart-Cond now half.month-Conn (1517. I: 1)

b. imuy i tAl chohAlAnnal wangkyeng-uysye
 already this month first.day capital-from
 ptena-si-myen icyey pantAl-ey tatAl-as-ketAn
 depart-Pst-Cond now half.month-at reach-Pst-Conn
 (1670. I: 1.1)

'If you left the capital on the first day of the month, it is half a month ago already, but ...'

(5) a. neyh Ama mAl pAl-la ka-keni wuli
 youal ready horse sell-Purp go-Cond we
 pet-ciz-e kam-i machi tyoth-ota
 friend-make-NF going-Nom exactly good-Excl (1517. I: 8)

b. ney imuy mAl pAl-la ka-ketun wuli
 you already horse sell-Purp go-Cond we
 pes-ci-e kam-i machi tyoth-ota
 friend-make-NF going-Nom exactly good-Excl (1670. I: 7)

³The gloss is given in simplified form, and thus not all morphemes are glossed individually. Abbreviations used are as follows: Acc: Accusative; Cond: Conditional; Conn: Connective; Dec: Declarative; End: End-marker; Excl: Exclamative; Fut: Future; Hon: Honorific; Hort: Hortative; Imp: Imperative; NF: Non-finite; Nom: Nominative; Nomz: Nominalizer; Pol: Polite; Pst: Past; Purp: Purposive; Q: Interrogative; Retros: Retrospective; Top: Topic.

- (7) a. *nay hye po-cye. him-is-ketun nay sa-lila*
 I pull see-Hort strength-exist-Cond I buy-Fut.Dec
 (1517. II : 30)

a'. *nayka tangki-epo-psita. him-iss-*ketun sa-keyss-supnita*
 (ModK)

'Please let me try and pull (the bow string), if it is strong I will buy it.'

- b. *kyezul-ietun kum-ulo ... skwumin stuy-lul stuy-mye*
 winter-Cond gold-with ... decorated belt-Acc fasten-Conn
 (1517. II : 51)

b'. *kyewul-*ietun kum-ulo ... kkwumin tti-lul tti-mye*
 (ModK)

'If it becomes winter, he wears a belt decorated with gold.'

The above examples show that those sentences in the 1517 data are not acceptable in Modern Korean if *-ketun* is used. This is because *-ketun* has lost its general function of marking conditionality in Modern Korean. They have to be marked with *-myen* in Modern Korean. This means that *-ketun* had an equivalent function as *-myen* in the 16th century and enjoyed less constraints in use. Such functional equivalence and syntactic freedom gradually atrophied in the 17th century. This phenomenon can be explained by the grammaticalization principle of specialization, which states that as the semantics of one of the competing grammatical items expands, it takes over the functional domain ousting other grammatical items in rivalry.

Third change noticed in the comparison of the 1517 and 1670 texts is from *-eto* to *-myen* (Type C, 3 tokens). The following are some of such examples in the data.

- (8) a. *nay sa-to sa-∅ nay nip-ul kes-i ani-la*
 I buy-Cond buy(-NF) I wear-Fut thing-Nom not-Dec
 (1517. II : 60)

b. *nay sa-myen i nay nip-ul kes-si ani-la*
 I buy-Cond this I wear-Fut thing-Nom not-Dec
 (1670. II : 54)

'If I buy it, it is not for me to wear.'

Considering that *-eto* is primarily used for concessives, this change is quite suggestive as to the issue whether or not concessives should be

included in the conditionals issue. Because of the semantic relatedness and historical connectedness, concessives must be investigated with respect to the conditionals.

2.2. 1670 vs. 1790

Now, we turn to the comparison of the 1670 and 1790 versions. The changes from the 1670 version to the 1790 version are summarized in (9).

(9)

Type	1670	1790	tokens
A	-ketun	-myen	18
B	-uni	-myen	5
C	-myen/-ketun	-n hwuey	7

As is shown in the table, the most noticeable change in this period is the change from *-ketun* to *-myen* (Type A, 18 tokens). This change is the continuation of the change in the previous period. This illustrates that the functions of *-ketun* became more reduced and that the functions of *-myen* were more expanded. The following are some of such examples.

(10) a. hAtaka oyo-ti moshA-yetun tikzil syenpuy hAy-a
 if recite-cannot-Cond charge scholar make-NF
 ephi-ko sey pen thi-nAnila
 make.stoop-Conn three time hit-Dec (1670. I : 3)

b. manil nunghi oyo-ti moshA-myen kemkehA-nAn syenpAy
 if enough recite-cannot-Cond charge-Adn scholar
 kwuphi-ko seys sik chi-nAnila
 make.stoop-Conn three each hit-Dec (1790. 1 : 4)

'If he fails to recite (the text), the monitor makes him stoop down and hit him three times (as a punishment).'

(11) a. ney imuy mAl phAl-la ka-ketun wuli pes-ci-e
 if already horse sell-Purp go-Cond we friend-make-NF
 kam-i mathi tyoth-yota
 going-Nom exactly good-Excl (1670. I : 7)

b. ney mAl phAl-la ka-nola-ha-myen wuli
 you horse sell-Purp go-Dec-do-Cond we

- khong-ul neh-ye twu-ko
 bean-Acc put.in-NF keep-Conn (1670. I : 18)
- b. ney pul stit-e kama mul-i skulh-un hwuey
 you fire make-NF kettle water-Nom boil-after
 khong-ul neh-ye twu-ko
 bean-Acc put.in-NF keep-Conn (1790. 1 : 25)
- 'Make a fire and if the water boils you put in beans, and ...'

The construct of *-n hwuey* is periphrastic in that it is composed of [-adnominal + after + at]. Its meaning is simply "after". This replacement is an instance of paraphrase rather than formal change in a strict sense. However, this change suggests that the conditional markers *-myen* and *-ketun* have temporality as their basic meaning. This can be interpreted as an instance of persistence, in the sense that the original meaning of temporality in the conditional markers persist even long after they have become full-fledged conditional markers.

2.3. 1790 vs. 1995

We now turn to the next period to compare the 1790 and 1995 versions. The changes are summarized in (15).

(15)

Type	1790	1995	tokens
A	-ketun	-myen	24
B	-nun ↔ -myen		8

As shown in the above table, the most common change was from *-ketun* to *-myen* (Type A, 24 tokens). This was the case in the previous stages as well, and we can see that this was the continuous change throughout the history of the conditional markers. Let us consider the following examples.

- (16) a. cenyek toy-ketAn susung alphAy-sye
 evening become-Cond teacher front-at
 sasAl spahy-e kul oyiye
 lot-Acc draw-NF text recite ... (1790. 1 : 4)
- b. cenyekey ilu-myen susungnim apheyse ceypi-lul
 evening reach-Cond teacher front.at lot-Acc

popp-a kul oywuki-lul ha-nuntey
 draw-NF text reciting-Acc do-Conn (1995. I : 3)
 'If it becomes evening, students draw lots before the teacher and
 recite the memorized text ...'

This type of change records the highest number of tokens. Again, this change can be viewed as specialization of *-myen*. It is obvious in that many instances of using *-ketun* in the 1995 text can be naturally replaced by *-myen*. Therefore, if we count in such instances the number will be even greater. For example, *-ketun* in the following example in the 1995 text can be replaced with *-myen* without any semantic loss or decrease of acceptability.

(17) kulehkey mos ha-keyss-ketun ta kunyang
 so not do-Fut-Cond all just
 yekise kitali-si-o
 here wait-Hon-Imp (1995. II : 4)
 'If you cannot do so, you all just wait here.'

Other changes in this period are from *-nun* to *-myen* and from *-myen* to *-nun* (Type B, 8 tokens). Considering that *-nun* is primarily a topic marker in Korean, this bilateral change can be viewed as showing interchangeability of topic markers and conditional markers. This illustrates that Korean conditional markers were derived from topic markers (Koo 1989a), which supports the thesis that conditionals include topicality.⁴ An example of this change is illustrated in (18).

(18) a. nyelAm-ey-nAn kAcang kAnAn mosi poy
 summer-at-Top/Cond very fine ramie.cloth
 ceksam-i-o
 jacket-be-Conn (1790. 7 : 19)
 b. yelum-i toy-myen acu kanun mosi
 summer-Nom become-Cond very fine ramie.cloth

⁴ Koo (1989a) presents an analysis of *-myen* as composed of *-mye* (a marker of simultaneity) and *-nun* (a marker of topicality), and *-ketun* as composed of *-ke* (a marker of unperceivedness), *-tu* (a marker of past perception), and *-nun* (a marker of topicality). Based on this analysis, it is claimed that the conditional markers in Korean have an incorporated sense of topicality in their semantics.

ceksam-eytaka
 jacket-at-on.top.of (1995. II : 50)
 'If it becomes summer, he wears a jacket made of very fine ramie
 fabric ...'

From the preceding discussion we can conclude that the changes of conditional markers into *-myen* were the most robust change throughout the history of the Korean language.

3. Grammaticalization of Conditional Markers

We have examined the changes of the conditional markers longitudinally by comparing the *Nokeltay* texts in the four different periods. Now we will consider the grammaticalization processes operative in the respective conditional markers. First let us look at the grammaticalization of *-myen*.

3.1. Grammaticalization of *-myen*

The most interesting aspect of grammaticalization of *-myen* is its distributional expansion. The token frequency of use in the four texts compared is as in (19).

(19)

Text	1517	1670	1790	1995
Token	142	165	186	227

The increase of the frequency toward Modern Korean is a direct reflection of the semantic generalization of *-myen*. Generalization of an item is defined as the gradual loss of semantic specificity and consequent acquisition of general meaning by the grammaticalizing item (Rhee 1998 : 257). Bybee and Pagliuca (1985 : 63) argue that the import of the semantic generalization is that the lack of specificity provides opportunities of frequent use. From the semantic generalization perspective, the semantic change of *-myen* can be explained as an extension of original simultaneity to a more general temporality, which brought forth a wider distribution and higher frequency. Therefore, semantic generalization can be said as an enabling factor of functional increase. Therefore, Bybee *et al.* (1994) maintain that semantic generalization is a prerequisite for grammaticalization.

Bybee and Pagliuca (1985 : 76) argue that semantic generalization accom-

panies phonological reduction, a hypothesis termed as parallel reduction. This hypothesis has been widely supported by many grammaticalization phenomena across languages. This is intuitively appealing because grammaticalized items are frequently used, and frequently used items are increasingly susceptible to phonological loss. However, the comparison of the four texts does not yield an instance of such a phenomenon. This can be interpreted as a result of the fact that the time depth in our longitudinal investigation covered by four versions of the Nokeltay texts, i.e. about five centuries, is not relatively a long time. Incidentally, however, such a phonological reduction can be found in colloquial Modern Korean. The sentences in example (20) are all attested in Modern Korean.

- (20) a. ku salam-i chwulpalha-yss-ta-**myenun** ettehkey ha-ni?
 b. ku salam-i chwulpalha-yss-ta-**myen** ettehkey ha-ni?
 c. ku salam-i chwulpalha-yss-ta-**m** ettehkey ha-ni?
 he-Nom depart-Pst-Dec-Cond how do-Q
 (Modern Korean)

'What shall we do if he already left?'

From the above data we can conclude that the conditional marker *-myen*, which underwent a long history of competition of grammaticalizing items and gained ground in the competition through semantic generalization, has come to be subject to the phonological reduction or fusion in Modern Korean.⁵

From a functional perspective, the grammaticalization of *-myen* can be viewed as an example par excellence of specialization. Various grammatical items with similar functions are observed to have coexisted for a considerable length of time, and later one of them, i.e., *-myen*, gradually took over the domains covered by others. However, since the specialization has not reached its terminal stage, such grammatical items still coexist to this day, which is described as layering (Hopper 1991). Not surprisingly, therefore, no claim can be made that any grammaticalization phenomena must move in the direction of one-form-one-function principle.

Our discussion so far points to that in the process of grammaticalization of the conditional markers, *-myen* is still being generalized and specialized

⁵This kind of phonological reduction may have begun earlier but not found in the literature since the written forms are always more conservative than the spoken forms.

as a conditional marker, and that it is being phonologically reduced in Modern Korean.

3.2. Grammaticalization of *-ketun*

Now we turn to the discussion of the grammaticalization of *-ketun*. The historical change of the conditional marker *-ketun* can be shown in terms of distributional frequency as in (21).

(21)

Text	1517	1670	1790	1995
Token	98	86	47	29

In the above, (21) shows that the frequency change of *-ketun* is exactly the mirror image of *-myen* in terms of frequency change pattern, if not exact figures. The decrease in frequency of *-ketun* can be interpreted as a result of the change of its strong competitor, *-myen*, which expanded its use in the functional domain of the conditionals. As we already saw, *-myen* underwent semantic generalization and functional specialization. As *-myen* gained ground in the domain of conditional marking, *-ketun* gradually lost ground. Such a functional reduction of *-ketun* is attested in that it has cooccurrence restrictions in person and mood in Modern Korean, which was not the case in the previous periods (cf. example (7) in 2.1.). It is interesting that the original conditional marker in Korean was *-ketun* (Koo 1989b). But the function of *-ketun* has been shifted to the marking of hypotheticality and addressee confirmation in Modern Korean, the discussion of which is beyond the scope of this paper and shall remain for a future investigation.

Another point relevant to this issue is that *-ketun* underwent subjectification, by which external/objective meanings changed into internal/subjective meanings or from real world interpretation to discourse context interpretation (Traugott 1982, 1986, 1988, Traugott & König 1991, Rhee 1998: 151).⁶ The development of *-ketun*, as well as of *-myen*, from temporal marker to a conditional marker is an instance of subjectification. In the present-day Korean the subjectification process of *-ketun* is rapidly on-going, acquiring new subjective meanings. For example, in the present-day Korean *-ketun* is

⁶ cf. Koo (1998) for a detailed discussion on the change of temporal marker into a conditional marker as an instance of subjectification.

used as a sentential ending marker signaling reason, causality etc. in colloquial styles.⁷ As a matter of fact, this new function of *-ketun* is more frequent than the more conventional meaning of conditionality. Some of such examples are as follows.

- (22) yeki cali com math-a tw-e. ittaka
 here seat please reserve-NF keep-Imp a.while.later
 ku salam o-l ke-ketun.
 the person come-Fut-Reason
 'Please hold this seat. (Because) he's coming soon.'

- (23) A: eti-ey nwukwu-sey-yo?
 where-at who-Hon-Pol.End
 B: e.. yeki pwuchen-ey, ce ilum-un
 uh.. here Puchon-at, well name-Top
 palkhi-ki silh-ketun-yo?
 reveal-Nomz hate-Reason-Pol.End
 A: 'Who is this, and where are you calling from?'
 B: 'Uh.. this is from Puchon, ... well, I don't want to tell my
 name ...' (Lee 1998: 141)

As shown above, *-ketun*, after relegation from the function of marking conditionality, is gaining a unique function of discourse marker. However, the semantic shading of this new marker is subtle and elusive that this alone may constitute a separate study.

4. Conclusion

This paper explored the historical change of conditional markers from the perspective of the current grammaticalization theories. Using the translations of four different times of an identical text, formal changes of the conditional markers and their frequency were counted and compared. The frequency change pattern of the two representative forms of conditional marking can be tabulated as the following.

⁷This can be interpreted as an instance of 'absorption', a mechanism of grammaticalization proposed in Bybee *et al.* (1994).

(24)

Text	1517	1670	1790	1995
-myen	142	165	186	227
-ketun	98	86	47	29

Tracing the historical changes of the two conditional markers, *-myen* and *-ketun*, we could identify specialization and generalization processes, through which *-myen* gained primacy in the conditional marking function. The functionally relegated *-ketun* is actively acquiring new discourse functions such as a sentential end marker signaling various semantics according to the speakers discourse strategy. Such issues may be an interest of future researches.

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