

## Different Faces of Equality:

### Grammaticalization of Equative Comparatives in Korean

The grammatical notion of comparison seems to be among the conceptual primitives but its manifestations are diverse across languages. This paper addresses the grammaticalization processes of 'equative comparatives' (Heine 1997), e.g. in (1), and their current states of affairs in Korean. It presents interesting aspects that surfaced in the course of their grammaticalization, some conforming to the commonly attested grammaticalization principles while some challenging them. Even though their interesting grammaticalization processes merit in-depth research, they have received little attention to date either individually or holistically, and this paper intends to fill the gap.

In Present Day Korean, there are four markers of equative comparative, i.e. *-kathi*, *-chelem*, *-mankhum*, and *-taylo*, all of which acquired the grammatical function, albeit through different paths and at different rates, from the 16th century. Among the important findings from this research are: (i) the geneses of these grammatical markers are almost simultaneous despite the absence of evidence of mutual interaction in replacing their precedent in Old Korean, a state of affairs exhibiting extreme case of 'layering' (Hopper 1991, Hopper & Traugott 2003); (ii) the grams came from diverse source lexemes of different conceptual domains, i.e. *-kathi* from the verb *kath-* 'equal', *-chelem* from *theyey* 'body', *-mankhum* from *mankom* 'amount', and *-taylo* from the defective noun *tA* 'place', all of which, through sense attraction by virtue of conceptual affinity, proceeded to the grammaticalization of a single marker (cf. 'the Universal Path'; Bybee et al. 1994); (iii) despite the fact that borrowed lexemes are less likely to grammaticalize into grammatical markers since they are often associated with specific genres and styles and consequently low use frequency, *-chelem* has a Sino-Korean origin which has become completely opaque in Modern Korean due to its extensive grammaticalization processes including a rare and seemingly unmotivated phonological addition, contra the 'Parallel Reduction' (Bybee et al. 1994); (iv) despite their shared origin of nominal category, *-mankhum*, *-taylo* and *-chelem* exhibit distinct syntagmatic characteristics in that *-mankhum* and *-taylo* allow for adnominal modifiers, a trait attributable to their nominal source characteristics, while *-chelem* does not, an unexpected trait considering its nominal origin, which can only be explained by resorting to the fact that this gram developed from its predominant use in compounding; and (v) these four markers, in a situation of conflict of interest because of their shared grammatical function, exhibit delicate division of labor by each specializing in more fine-grained grammatical sub-functions resorting to such notions as scalarity, identicalness, similarity, conformity, concomitance, etc. in the contemporary Korean.

Drawing upon historical data from the Middle Korean literature and contemporary corpora, this paper traces and contrasts the developmental paths of these equative comparatives, showing how they came into existence, how they produced their offspring in other conceptually related grammatical markers, how they fought for functional supremacy, and how they eventually settled their struggles. In so doing, it extensively discusses theoretical ramifications of the findings, presenting different faces hidden behind the cover label of equality.

## Data

- (1) a. ku ai-nun appa-mankhum khu-ta  
the child-Top father-Eq.Comp be.tall-Dec  
'The child is as tall as his father.'
- b. kunye-nun ku-chelem ttokttokha-ta  
she-Top he-Eq.Comp be.smart-Dec  
'She is smart like him (/as he is).'
- c. kunye-nun aki-kathi kwiye-p-ta  
she-Top baby-Eq.Comp be.cute-Dec  
'She is cute like a baby (/as a baby is).'
- d. ney mal-taylo cham coh-ta  
your word-Eq.Comp very be.good-Dec  
'It is good as you said.'

[Dec: declarative; Eq.Comp: equative comparative; Top: topic]

## References

- Heine, Bernd. 1997. *Cognitive Foundations of Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Hopper, Paul J. & Elizabeth Closs Traugott. 2003. *Grammaticalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Bybee, Joan L., Revere D. Perkins, & William Pagliuca. 1994. *The Evolution of Grammar: Tense, Aspect and Modality in the Languages of the World*. Chicago: Chicago Univ. Press.