

From Fear to Grammar: The Case of Avoidives in Korean from a Crosslinguistic Perspective

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Presumably all languages have means to express fear about potential, undesirable events (cf. Lichtenberk 1995), and some of these expressions develop into grammatical forms, which have been referred to in the specialized literature as “apprehensionals”. A class of apprehensionals marks precautioning for avoidance of an undesirable event, e.g., English *lest*, *in order not to*, *for fear of*, etc. Korean has about ten avoidives that grammaticalized from a number of constructions involving lexical and grammatical sources, to a variable extent (Rhee and Kuteva 2018, Yae et al. 2021), as exemplified, in part, in (1) and (2) (ACC: accusative; AVD: avoidive; DEC: declarative; IMP: imperative):

(1) *pelley* *tuleo-lkka**pwa* *chang-ul* *tat-ass-ta*
insect enter-AVD window-ACC close-PST-DEC
'(I) closed the window lest insects come inside.'

(2) *nemeci-lla* *chenchenhi* *ka-la*
fall.down-AVD slowly go-IMP
'Walk slowly lest you fall down.'

Building on the analysis of apprehensionals in Rhee and Kuteva (2018) and Yae et al. (2021), the present study focuses on the grammaticalization of avoidives from a crosslinguistic perspective, drawing upon the data from historical and contemporary corpora.

Korean avoidives develop from the verbs of perception and cognition, e.g., *po-* ‘see’, *mwusep-* ‘be afraid’, and *siph-* ‘think’, the markers of negation, e.g., *anh-* ‘be/do not’, *mosha-* ‘cannot’, the future marker *-l-*, the question marker *-kka*, the mode marker *-key*, the purpose marker *-tolok*, among others. The development of avoidives from the syntagmatic combination of ‘fear’, ‘future’, ‘question’ and ‘thinking’ (or its related concepts) is an excellent exemplar of ‘endophoric evidential’ (Plungian 2001), in that fear is recruited as the source of information in the construction of epistemological stance, a state of affairs widely attested across languages (Jing-Schmidt and Kapatsinski 2012). It is intriguing, however, that there is no logical necessity that the notions such as ‘future’, ‘question’ and ‘thinking’ should engender the notion of fear. This strongly suggests that the emergence of the FEAR-meaning is the result of interaction among the source components, i.e., indeterminacy from the future, lack of confidence from the question, proactive or preemptive intention from purposive or mode, and self-oriented contemplation from the cogitation. In this respect the development exhibits ‘subjectification’ of meaning (Traugott and König 1991). Further, a quantitative and qualitative analysis shows that avoidives show variable strength through differential degree of ‘specialization’ (Hopper 1991).

The literature of grammaticalization of avoidives (or of apprehensionals), notably Lichtenberk 1995, Dobrushina 2006, Angelo and Schultze-Berndt 2016, Kuteva et al. 2019, Vuillermet et al. *forthc.*, often report the development of apprehensives and admonitives from avoidives through ‘insubordination’ (Evans 2007), the involvement of negation, negative purpose, or temporal marker, the patterns also observed in Korean. The involvement of the lexemes denoting visual perception and cogitation, however, seems to be unique in Korean.

Drawing upon historical and contemporary corpus data this paper traces the developmental paths of avoidives and their contemporary functional distribution from the grammaticalization, discourse-pragmatic, and crosslinguistic perspectives.

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