

The end is the beginning: The case of polygrammaticalization of *kas* ‘edge’ in Korean

Seongha Rhee

(Mahidol University & Hankuk Univ. of Foreign Studies)

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It is well known in grammaticalization studies that a single lexeme may develop into diverse grammatical markers in various functional domains (‘polygrammaticalization’ Craig 1991). The Korean nominal lexeme *kac* ‘edge, end, boundary’ has undergone extensive grammaticalization as shown in (1):

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| (1) | a. <i>kac</i> | n. | ‘edge’ |
| | b. <i>ka</i> | n. | ‘margin, edge, limit’ |
| | c. <i>kacang</i> | n. | ‘edge:diminutive’ |
| | d. <i>-ka</i> | deriv. | ‘shore, edge’ |
| | e. <i>-khes/kkes</i> | deriv. | ‘to the point of’ |
| | f. <i>kacang</i> | adv. | ‘very’ (Intensifier) |
| | g. <i>kacang</i> | adv. | ‘most’ (Superlative) |
| | h. <i>-kkaci</i> | postp. | ‘to’ (Allative) |
| | i. <i>-kkaci</i> | postp. | ‘in addition to’ (Additive) |
| | j. <i>-kkaci</i> | postp. | ‘even’ (Counter-expectation) |

In the nominal domain *kac* is either phonologically reduced to *ka* or augmented by suffixation of the diminutive suffix *-ang* to *kacang*. As a derivational suffix *-ka* designates the boundary areas of a sea (i.e. seashore) or river (i.e. riverfront), etc. and the less productive adverbializing suffix *-khes/kkes* is fully lexicalized in some words such as *sil-khes* [dislike-to.the.point.of] ‘to the fullest; to one’s heart’s content’, *him-kkes* [strength-to.the.point.of] ‘with all one’s might’, etc. As an adverb, *kacang* functions either as a general intensifier ‘very’ or a superlative marker ‘most’. The lexeme’s most grammaticalized form is the postposition *-kkaci*, which functions as a goal marker (Allative), an addition marker (Additive), or a scalar delimiter designating the extreme (thus, unexpected) member on a continuum.

This multi-linear development is the result of how ‘edge, end, boundary’ is construed from the ‘edge’-schema. Most prominently the notion of ‘extreme’ is actualized in various ways in the physical configuration (‘shore’, ‘limit’), in the degree continuum (‘very’ ‘most’), in the path continuum (‘to’), or in the likelihood continuum (‘even’). The change also shows a noteworthy directionality, i.e. starting from the objective meaning with reference to a bounded entity (‘edge’ ‘limit’, etc.) to the subjective meanings (i.e. quality- or degree-based meanings), and further to the even more subjective meanings (i.e. counter-expectation meaning). This is in line with Traugott’s (1982) observation that meanings tend to be increasingly subjectified as grammaticalization proceeds.

Drawing upon the data taken from historical corpora from Late Middle Korean to Modern Korean (mid-15th- early-20th centuries) and a contemporary corpus (1992-2015), this paper reports the diverse paths of the development of the lexeme *kac* ‘edge’ into grammatical forms, the cognitive mechanisms that operate behind the semasiological changes, and the conceptual network of the innovated meanings as manifested in contemporary Korean.

References

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