Among the diverse needs of the speakers in interaction is the desire to emphasize the message they intend to convey. The strategies to fulfill this presumably universal desire may materialize in various linguistic forms, including the use of discourse markers (DMs). Korean has a large inventory of DMs of emphasis (EDMs), totaling 17 base forms and their variants. This paper investigates their development from grammaticalization and discourse-pragmatic perspectives. These EDMs may be grouped into the following six categories according to their conceptual sources (N.B. ttak has a multiple category membership), and the illustrative examples of the EDMs kunyang and ta are in (2) overleaf:

(1) a. Totality/Plurality: *ta* (< ‘all’), *tul* (< ‘and others’)
   b. Exactness: *ttak* (< an ideophone for hard objects coming into contact), *kkok* (< an ideophone for two objects fitting tightly), *kunyang* (< ‘that shape’), *kuce* (< probably ‘that shape’)
   c. Force/Impact: *ttak* (< an ideophone for hard objects coming into contact), *toykey* (< adv. ‘hard’), *mak* (< ‘coarsely, rashly’)
   d. Disregard: *eccayystun* (< ‘regardless of what is done’), *yehathun* (< ‘regardless of how’), *hayethun* (< ‘regardless of how’), *amwuthun* (< ‘regardless of how’)
   e. Metalinguistic Reference: *malya* (< ‘the word is’), *cincca* (< ‘a true thing’), *cengmal* (< ‘a correct word’)
   f. Challenge: *eti* (< ‘where?’), *way* (< ‘why?’)

The present analysis raises a number of theoretically significant issues. First of all, it reveals what can contribute to the creation of emphasis/intensification and thus what constitutes good categories of source lexemes, potentially applicable across languages (Rhee 2018; cf. the universal path and source determination hypotheses, Bybee et al. 1994). Secondly, it reveals diverse cognitive mechanisms that operate in the development, notably pragmatic inferences. Conceptual links from Totality/Plurality, Exactness, Force/Impact, and Disregard into emphasis are obvious since they involve physical dimensions in pragmatic inferences. At a closer look, however, they may involve different and even seemingly contradictory inference frames, e.g., Exactness invokes the notion of extreme relevance, whereas Disregard invokes the notion of irrelevance. The development of expressions referring to the speaker’s utterance into EDMs involves a metalinguistic strategy, thus resorting to higher-order pragmatic inferences, i.e., they highlight the utterance itself as the point of attention between interlocutors. Further, the development from Challenge into emphasis involves highly interactional discursive strategy, i.e., these EDMs rhetorically challenge the interlocutor to claim the unchallengeability of the assertion/description being presented. Thirdly, recent discussion on DM development centers around the notion of peripherality, i.e., functional asymmetry with respect to left- and right-peripheries (Degand 2014; Traugott 2014a,b; Beeching & Detges 2014 and works therein). Emphasis is unequivocally a subjective function, supposedly preferring the left-periphery. However, the distributional patterns of EDMs do not support the alleged positional preference. Rather, they exhibit strong influence of the prosody, lending support to recent research (Sohn 2016; Sohn & Kim 2016).

Drawing upon diachronic and synchronic corpus data, this paper analyzes the developmental paths of EDMs focusing on the enabling pragmatic inferences. Further, it addresses the process of gaining syntagmatic freedom from the syntactic structure of the proposition, i.e., the movement toward the peripheral positions, and discusses implications with special reference to (inter)subjectification that has been actively discussed in recent literature (Beeching 2016; Onodera & Traugott 2016; Rhee 2016, among others).
Data

(2) EDMs kunyang and ta

a. ai icy pwul com kuman tstay-Ø  kunyang!... pang-i phelphel kkwulh-canhe kunyang!
   INTERJ now fire DM stop heat-END EDM room-NOM ONOMA boil-END EDM
   ‘O, stop heating the room for heaven’s sake! It is boiling!’
   (Adapted from Shen 2013: 162)

b. (A is in a room enjoying the flowers delivered to her from an unknown sender, and her boyfriend B, who sent the flowers, walks in with a feigned surprise.)

B: ani i-ke-y ta mwe-y-a? weyn kkoch-i-ya?
   DM this-thing-NOM EDM what-be-END what.kind flower-be-END
   ‘Wait a minute, what is this? What kind of flowers are these?’
   (2004 Drama Phwulhawusu Episode #12)

References


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