

The semantic change of the referent honorific *-sop-*: a usage-based approach

This paper investigates the development of the addressee honorific *-sop-* of Korean from the object honorific. Through the corpus-based study, I argue that the (inter)subjectification (Traugott&Dasher 2002) and the context absorption (Kuteva 2001) play pivotal roles in its change.

Since honorific markers are the social deixis, it is egocentric, that is, inherently subjective (Fillmore 1975, Levinson 1983). There has been two strategies for speaker/writer to determine whether *-sop-* is used: the first strategy is as a narrator trying to be out of the scene, to compare the highness between the subject and the object as in (1), and the other is as a emphasized subject, to compare the highness between the speaker and the non-subject referent as in (2).

- (1) *wang-i* *thayca-skuy* *mwul-usya-toy* (WISP 22:27b)
king-Nom. prince-Dat.(resp) ask-RES-Conv.
- (2) *wang-i* *thayca-skuy* *mwut-zoß-wo-sya-toy* (SPSC 3:12a)
king-Nom. prince-Dat.(resp) ask-RES-Conv.

“The king asked the prince (Buddha) that ...

The reason that the same situation with the same referent *wang* and *thayca* is described differently resides in the fact that the point of view of the speaker is distinct: (1a) is a canonical usage and (1b) is an extended, more subjective usage. In the case of (1b), the subject is removed from the speaker’s construal of the described event because the speaker pulled the subject into her deictic territory. When the speaker becomes very salient in the construal, the non-subject referents are extended to the non-speaker referents including the addressee(s). As early as 13th C.E., we can find the examples which seems to express the respect to the addressee (Lee 1992, Hongo 2002). The sporadic attestation of the addressee honorific function dramatically increases in 16th C.E. The example (3) is a 15th C.E. attestation of *-sop-* used to respect the circumstance related to the respectful person, and (4) is the 16th C.E. attestation of *-sop-* used to respect the addressee.

- (3) *insim-i* *kut-zoß-oni* (YPECK 67)
popularity-Nom hold-HUM-Conv.
“the popularity (to the king) holds tight.”
- (4) *seycon-ha* *nay-uy akep-i* *is-sow-oni* (CSK 7b)
Buddha-Voc.(Resp) I-Poss. sin-Nom. be-HUM-Conv.
“Buddha! I have sins.”

An interesting aspect of the addressee honorific *-sop-*’s usages is that it had increasingly co-occurred with the original addressee honorific marker *-(ŋ)i-*. In practice, the subject humiliative *-(s)op-* only occurred before Very Polite speech level marker *-(ŋ)i-* since its first attestation in Hangul text in 16th C.E. This strong co-occurrence tendency gave rise to the ambiguity, and made the speaker misallocate the Very Polite speech level function to *-sop-*, resulting in context absorption (Kuteva 2001). This analysis is supported by the fact that *-sop-* in other context still functions as a speaker humiliative marker, forming layers (Hopper 1991).

<Selected Reference>

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