

A Corpus-based study of the two grammaticalizational chains of Korean *siph-ta*

This study uses diachronic and synchronic corpus data to investigate the grammaticalization of the Korean *siph-ta*, which has undergone two different grammaticalizational paths of desiderative (“want”) and inferential (“it seems”) chains. Diachronic studies agree that the original meaning of *siph-ta* (< *sikpu-ta*, *sipu-ta*) was “think” or “feel,” which allowed for its dual functions. Starting with the lexical meaning (unlike previous studies) this study analyzes stages of the semantic changes involving *siph-ta*, their underlying mechanisms, and their collocational extensions.

Contrary to the synchronic data, in the diachronic data inference tokens occur at a higher frequency than desiderative ones. Though the inference usage is observed as early as the 15th C, reconstruction of the semantic extension is still possible. In example (2) of the inferential chain, *sikpu* is combined with a yes-no question; their compositional meaning of “I wonder whether...” engenders the pragmatic inference of “it seems”. Yes-no questions logically indicate a 50% possibility, but in real life, the very act of raising and pondering the question allows the inference of higher probability “it seems”. Through frequent use, “yes-no question - *sipu*” emerged as an independent construction and consequently, the interpretation of “I wonder” no longer sounds natural with (3). In a further extension, the *sipu* construction in (4) expresses the meaning of high probability, and even implies prediction. It is noteworthy that sentences like (4) are found only in historical documents and not in modern Korean conversation, in which such higher probabilities are now expressed by a new construction, *tus sipu*.

The grammaticalization of the inferential *sipu* led in the 18<sup>th</sup> C to the emergence of *tus sipu*, in which the question marker *ka* preceding *sipu* is replaced by a dependent noun *tus* “similar to.” Comparison of (4) and (5) demonstrates that *tus sipu* signifies greater epistemic certainty than *ka sipu*. Finally, in modern Korean, with the indicative ender *ta*, *siph-i* denotes “as”; see (6). This function is derived from the grammaticalized rather than the lexical meaning of *siph*. Grammaticalization of the periphrastic “I think” into epistemic markers has also been observed in other languages, and interestingly, they all grammaticalized into similar meanings of “probably”; see (7).

In the desiderative path (see 8-10), at the first stage the meaning of desire was expressed by the connective *kocye* and the following *sikpu* only signaled “think” or “feel”. Starting with the 17th C, *cye* was omitted due to an overgeneralization of the “connective *ko* plus auxiliary verb” constructions which became prevalent at that time because of the explosive expansion of *ko*. The omission was also made possible because through frequent use, *kocye sikpu* had already grammaticalized as a single construction. Hence, the phonological reduction of *cye* did not interfere in recognition of the gram. Subsequently, speakers construed *sikpu* in *ko sikpu* as marking desire. Finally, starting in the 19<sup>th</sup> C, the new borrowed desiderative meaning of *sikpu* enabled it to combine with conditional *myen* engendering, a new construction *myen siph-ta*.

<Inferential Chain>

Stage 1. I think/ I feel ... (lexical verb)

(1) *nay mAzAm-to yeksim-i na-ni twu-ela essti-li sipu-ni* (Kim Family letters, 16<sup>th</sup> C)  
my heart-also dislike-emerge leave-IMP how-FUT:Q sipu-CONN

"Annoyance starts to rise also in my heart (about your mother's jealousy toward concubines), I think (to myself) 'leave her alone, what can happen?'"

Stage 2. It seems... (inference): Based on subjective feeling

(2) (context: missing her children, the writer feels that days are going very slowly)

*tAl-i pAyk nyen-i-n-ka sikpe-ila* (Kim Family letters, 16<sup>th</sup> C)  
month-NOM hundred year-COP-PRES-Q sikpu-End

"I wonder 'is one month one hundred years?'"

> "One month seems one hundred years (to me)."

Stage 3. It seems... (inference): Based on objective judgment

(3) *kul-no tewuk syelwehA-osi-nAn-ka sipu-ta hAn-i* (kyeychwuk ilki 17<sup>th</sup> C, 1:14b)

That-with more sorrowful-HON-PRES-Q sipu-END say-CONN

"He said (to the King) that the Queen seemed more sorrowful because of that (the failed plan to make her son King)" > the Queen is probably more sorrowful because of that.

Stage 4. Probably... => in Modern Korean replaced by -tus siph

(4) *nAyil-un chenki tyohA-l-ka sipu-ta yekuy salAm-to nilu-o-ni coco chwulsenhA-Apsa-i*

tomorrow-TOP weather good-FUT-Q sipu-END here people-also talk-HON-CONN:CAUS early- morning  
embark-HON-END (chepay 1676, 6:13b)

"Since people here say that the weather will be good tomorrow, let's go out in a boat early in the morning."

Stage 5. Probability (emergence of a new form *tus sipu-ta* in the 18th C)

(5) *nayil-un nalssi-ka coh-ul tus siph-ta*.

tomorrow-TOP weather-NOM good-FUT tus sipu-END

"The weather will be good tomorrow."

(6) *al-ta siph-i, ku-nun acik haksayng-i-ta*.

know-END siph-ADV, he-TOP yet student-COP-END

"As you know, he is still a student." *siph- i \*i*: adverbial ending)

(7) English "I think" as in "I think she's home." (Thompson & Mulac 1991, Givon 1991), Tok Pisin *ating* ("I think") > "maybe, probably" (Keesing 1991)

<Desiderative Chain>

Stage 1 (15th - 17th C)

(8) *na-kocye sikpu-nye* (welinchenkang 1447, sang:132)

come out-kocye sikpu-Q

"Do you want to come out?" \**kocye*: connective meaning "intention" and "desire"

Stage 2 (omission of *cye* starting from the 17th C)

(9) *al-ko sipu-o-ni* (chepay 1676, 5:11a)

know-ko sipu-HON-CONN

"Because I want to know..." \**ko*: connective meaning "and"

Stage 3 (emergence of a new construction, *myen sipu-ta* in the 19th C)

(10) *nathana-key hA-si-myen sipu-te-nila* (hancwunglok 19th C)

appear-CAUSE-HON-CONN sipu-RET-END

"I wished he could make it appear..."