From a classifier language to a mass-count language: What can historical data show us?
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This paper investigates both the historical development and the modern-day uses of the Korean morpheme *-tul*. Korean, like other Eastern Asian languages, is considered to be a classifier language. A predominant property of classifier languages is that they lack plural-marking (Allen 1980, Chierchia 1998); however, Korean poses an interesting problem for this claim since it appears to have an optional plural-marker: *-tul* (Kang 1994, Baek 2002, Kim 2005). Some researchers propose that it is not a plural-marker at all, but rather a marker of information structure marking distributivity (Park 2008) or focus (Song 1975). Korean *-tul* has been studied extensively; however, there is little consensus as to its distribution or function. My research takes a new approach to the analysis of *-tul* by examining the historical development of this morpheme. The goal of this paper is to shed light on the modern-day uses of *-tul* through its past. The general question this paper addresses is whether the development of *-tul* is consistent with the properties of a classifier language and whether, based on that development, Korean still qualifies as a classifier language.

Park (2010) proposes that Modern Korean *-tul* has grammaticalized from an autonomous noun to an inflectional morpheme and then, subsequently, develops into an agreement marker. I observed a different developmental path for Korean *-tul*. Like Park (2010), I suggest that Middle Korean *-tul* underwent grammaticalization. However, I also suggest that *-tul* was originally used to mark focus on nouns that should be interpreted as plural, rather than functioning as a uniquely plural-marking morpheme. Under this approach, *-tul* would not have been optional, but would have only been used in certain specific contexts. I also propose that if *–tul* functions like an plural-marker today, it is not due to the development from Middle Korean, rather, it is, at least partially, due to language contact. My study is based on a corpus analysis which investigates the historical use and development of *-tul*. The study comprised 125 newspaper articles which covered, approximately, a 100-year period (1924 – 2011). I specifically looked for data relevant to the distribution of *-tul*, the number of instances of *-tul* in the article, the type of nouns which *-tul* attached to, as well as cases where a plural interpretation was clear, but *-tul* was not used.

This research revealed that in the earlier data, there were very few cases of *-tul*. The cases which were found were limited to use with human nouns (e.g. *haksaeng* 'student') and the use of *-tul* did not extend to other animate (e.g. *khokkiri* 'elephant') or inanimate (*giep* 'enterprise') nouns. In the early data, *-tul* did not seem to be functioning as a plural marker. Rather, *-tul* seemed to be functioning as a way to place emphasis or focus on the noun to which it attached. In the later texts, *-tul* is used more frequently and its use is extended to additionally include non-human nouns, and later concept-denoting abstract nouns. Corbett (2000) proposes an implicational ranking of semantic classes for languages that do not mark number for all count nouns: if a language marks number on nouns referring to inanimates, then it must also mark it on animate nouns. We could expect that Corbett's Animacy Hierarchy is mirrored in diachrony, such that if number is introduced as a morphological category, it will first appear on human nouns, then be extended to other animates, next to inanimates, and finally to nouns referring to abstract concepts. This appears to be supported by the Korean data.

The newspaper data challenges Korean's status as a classifier language. It appears that Korean started out as a classifier language, not unlike other typical classifier languages, but the language appears to be undergoing a shift towards a mass-count system. Addressing the issue from a historical perspective is something not previously undertaken, but it provides a unique insight into the question of the status of Korean. My presentation will focus on the corpus data and its analysis and will discuss the implications of these findings for the modern-day uses of *–tul* and Korean's status as a classifier language.

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