On the grammaticalization of voice markers:  
Some evidence from Korean -i and -eci constructions

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This paper examines the relationship between causative, passive and middle constructions, focusing in particular on their direction of grammaticalization. Previous studies have identified two robust pathways, namely, a causative-to-passive development, often mediated by reflexive constructions (e.g. Barber 1975; Nedjalkov 1993; Yap & Iwasaki 2002), and a reflexive-to-passive pathway, sometimes mediated by a middle construction (e.g. Heine & Kuteva 2002). An interesting research question is whether there is evidence of versatile grammatical markers with uses extending the full length along a causative > reflexive > middle > passive continuum. In this paper, using diachronic data from the Sejong historical corpus, we trace the development of two Korean voice markers, namely -i and -eci, to determine their extent of grammaticalization along the voice continuum. We also examine the semantic-pragmatic and morphosyntactic conditions that facilitate their extended uses.

Our analysis (see Figure 1) reveals that suffix -i has extended beyond its causative function as in (1a) below and developed spontaneous middle and passive uses by the 15th century (1b-c), with double causative constructions also attested in this period (2), and with double passive constructions emerging in the 18th century (3), and facilitative middle constructions in the 20th century (4). Our findings indicate a primary grammaticalization pathway along a causative > reflexive > spontaneous middle > facilitative middle continuum, and a secondary grammaticalization pathway along a causative > reflexive > passive continuum. Thus, although the highly versatile suffix -i extends its usage across the full range of voice categories (causative, reflexive, middle and passive), its extensions into the middle and passive domains develop along separate grammaticalization trajectories, with both trajectories sometimes mediated by reflexive constructions.

Our analysis further reveals that suffix -i faced strong competition from suffix -eci within the middle voice domain. Originating from a verb ti- meaning ‘fall’ as in (5a) that developed into a spontaneous middle marker, attested since the 15th century (5b), -eci further developed into an inchoative middle marker in the 17th century (5c) and later also into a facilitative middle marker in the 20th century (5d). With its inherent focus on the outcome of the event rather than on the causer, suffix -eci soon outperformed suffix -i within the middle voice domain. Suffix -eci has also begun to develop passive uses, attested since the 18th century (5e), but tends to be deployed more with agentless passive constructions compared to its passive -i counterparts. These structural and functional biases are consistent with their historical origin, with -i starting out as a causative suffix, while -eci started out as a spontaneous (i.e. anticausative) middle marker. Overall, our analysis reveals that middle and passive voice constructions can develop independently of each other (as in the case of the -i constructions), or passive uses can emerge from middle uses (as in the case of the -eci constructions). There is no observable evidence of a contiguous causative > reflexive > middle > passive development, nor a passive > middle development, for the Korean -i and -eci voice markers.
Figure 1. Grammaticalization of voice markers -i and -eci in Middle, Modern and Contemporary Korean

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Late Old Korean</th>
<th>Middle Korean</th>
<th>Early Modern Korean</th>
<th>Modern Korean</th>
<th>Contemporary Korean</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(10th-13th c.)</td>
<td>(14th-16th c.)</td>
<td>(17th-18th c.)</td>
<td>(19th-early 20th c.)</td>
<td>(late 20th-21st c.)</td>
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<td>Morphological causative -i (10th c.)</td>
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<td>Spontaneous middle -i (15th c.)</td>
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<td>Passive marker -i (15th c.)</td>
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<td>Double causative (e.g. -i-wu in 15th c.)</td>
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<td>Double passive (e.g. -ki-i in 18th c.)</td>
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<td>Postverbal suffix -a/e + verb -ti ‘fall’ (15th c.)</td>
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<td>Spontaneous middle -ati/-eti (&gt; -aci/-eci) (15th c.)</td>
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<td>Inchoative middle -ati/-eti (&gt; -aci/-eci) (17th c.)</td>
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<td>Passive marker -ati/-eti (&gt; -aci/-eci) (18th c.)</td>
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<td>Hybrid passive (e.g. -hy-ecy 20th c.)</td>
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<td>Facilitative middle -i (20th c.)</td>
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Examples

(1) a. (nay) ... ahAy-lo hwenhi tungeli kulk-hi-ko [CAUSATIVE]
   ‘I had the child scratch my back so I no longer itch and …’ (1481, twusienhay 15:4)

b. tong-mwun-i tolo tat-hi-ko [SPONTANEOUS MIDDLE]
   ‘The East Gate closed again.’ (1459, welinsekpo 23:80)

c. yuceng-tAl-hi motin cyungsAyng mul-y-e [PASSIVE]
   ‘Every person was bitten by the brutal beast, and…’ (1459, welinsekpo 9: 58)

(2) (hwangtye-y) kyucyang-ul kwen meli-ey ssu-y-o-si-ko [DOUBLE CAUSATIVE]
   ‘The king had (us) put his writing in the introduction of the book.’
   (1620, yehwun enhay sang 6b)

(3) yekek-uy pilmuy piloso kkek-ki-ko [DOUBLE PASSIVE]
   ‘The excuse of the rebel was finally rejected (< ‘was cut off’).’ (1776, myenguylok 2:21a)

(4) i chayk-i cal phal-li-nta [FACILITATIVE MIDDLE]
   ‘This book sells well.’

(5) a. nal-i cyemul-e hAy-ka tt-kennul… [LEXICAL VERB ‘FALL’]
   ‘The day waned and the sun set …’ (1459, welinsekpo 8:93)

b. elAm-i muntuk phal-et-y, … [SPONTANEOUS MIDDLE]
   ‘Since the ice suddenly melted, …’ (1617, Tongkwuksinsoksamkanghayngsito)

c. sa-hAyng-i tall-aci-ni… [INCHOATIVE MIDDLE]
   ‘As the formal procedure of sending an envoy to (Japan) starts to change …’ (1674, Ilongcangyuaka)

d. coytm-um moscil-solAy-ey ta mwun-ecy-ex-tota [PASSIVE]
   ‘The wall of sin was destroyed by the sound of nailing (on the cross).’ (1901, sinhakwelpo1.txt(1921))

e. long laithe (Long Lighter) cal khy(o)-ecy-e-yo [FACILITATIVE MIDDLE]
   ‘Long Lighter ignites well.’

References