

## A Usage-based Study of the Korean Adverb *kunyang* in Spoken Discourse

Mary Shin Kim, University of Hawaii  
Jieun Kim, University of Chicago

This study examines the use of the Korean adverb *kunyang* as an attitudinal stance marker in spoken discourse from a usage-based approach (Bybee 2006). *Kunyang* has traditionally been viewed as a manner adverb which can be translated as ‘as it is’, ‘continuously’, or ‘just’, depending on the context, as shown in (1)-(3).

- (1) *cepsi kunyang twe.*      (2) *pi-ka congil kunyang wa.*      (3) *kunyang chinkwu sai-ya.*  
dish as:it:is leave:IE      rain-NOM all:day continuously come:IE      just friend relation-to:be:IE  
‘Leave the dish as it is.’      ‘It is continuously raining all day.’      ‘(We) are just friends.’

An examination of *kunyang* in spoken discourse reveals that it frequently functions as an attitudinal stance marker, as seen in (4)-(7), which differs considerably from its function as a manner adverb. As a stance marker, *kunyang* expresses the speaker’s exclamation toward the action or state being described, which s/he views as excessive or extreme. Accordingly, *kunyang* often appears in affectively loaded utterances with interjections (e.g. *ahyu* ‘ah!’, *aiko* ‘oh my!’) and emphatic adverbials (e.g. *acwu* ‘very’, *wancenhi* ‘completely’). By highlighting the excessiveness or extremity of an action or state, the speaker further displays his/her discontent or sarcastic attitude towards the proposition.

- (4) *ahyu yeki-n pissa-ki-man ha-ko seysangey koki han pack-ey kunyang sip pwul ton-i-ya.*  
ah here-TOP expensive-NML-only do-and my:gosh meat one pack-for ten dollar money-to:be-IE  
‘Ah! It’s expensive here. My gosh, one package of meat is *kunyang* ten dollars!’
- (5) *kamki kellye kaciko sikkwu-taylo nanlina-ss-e kunyang.* (6) *ehyu cincca meli thecye acwu kunyang.*  
cold catch because family-each suffer-PST-IE      ah really head explode:IE very  
‘All family members are suffering from colds *kunyang*.’ ‘Ah! (my) head is really exploding *acwu kunyang*’
- (7) *oywe-to ice mek-ko, oywe-to ice mek-ko, ccacungna-n-ta acwu kunyang.*  
memorize-even:if forget-and memorize-even:if forget-and be:annoyed-IMPFV-DC very  
‘(I) keep forgetting even if I memorize it, and (I) am annoyed *acwu kunyang*.’

The following table shows the distribution of different uses of *kunyang* found in a corpus of 100 telephone conversations from the Linguistic Data Consortium.

	Manner adverb	Manner/stance	Stance marker	Total
Number of occurrences	1133	20	254	1407

**Table 1. Distribution of *kunyang***

A qualitative investigation of the use of *kunyang* in spoken discourse further highlights the semantic, syntactic, and functional differences of *kunyang*, depending on whether it is used as a stance marker or as a manner adverb. Unlike when it is used as a manner adverb, *kunyang* as a stance marker is semantically bleached and semantically optional. It does not add any propositional meaning, but instead embeds the speaker’s attitude and emotion concerning a proposition. Furthermore, the syntactic position of *kunyang* as a manner adverb is tied to the predicate or clause which it modifies. On the other hand, *kunyang* as a stance marker appears in variable syntactic positions, often in post-predicate position where an emotive, subjective voice often emerges, as shown in (5)-(7).

It is also interesting to note that the majority of co-occurrences of *kunyang* with emphatic adverbials (e.g. *acwu* ‘very’, *wancenhi* ‘completely’, *mak* ‘much, hard’) occur as a stance marker, not as a manner

adverb. The following table shows the distribution of *kunyang* with emphatic adverbials. As a manner adverb, *kunyang* cannot co-occur semantically with emphatic adverbials, as seen in (8). Nonetheless, as a stance marker, *kunyang* can appear with emphatic adverbials because it is semantically bleached. The emphatic adverbials function to intensify the speaker’s attitude or emotion, as seen in (6) and (7).

- (8) \* *acwu kunyang chinkwu sai-ya.*  
 very just friend relation-to:be:IE  
 \* ‘(We) are very just friends.’

	Manner/stance	Stance marker	Total
<i>acwu</i> ‘very’	0	31	31
<i>mak</i> ‘much, hard’	4	30	34
<i>wancenhi</i> ‘completely’	0	23	23
<i>kulehkhey</i> ‘like that’	0	13	13
Total	4/20	97/254	101/274

**Table 2. Distribution of *kunyang* with other emphatic adverbials**

Moreover, the study explicates how *kunyang*’s discourse function as a stance marker emerges from and relates to its basic meaning as a manner adverb. As seen in Table 1, there are 20 instances where *kunyang* simultaneously functions as a manner adverb and stance marker. In these cases, it conveys the semantic meaning (e.g. ‘continuously’), and, at the same time, embeds the speaker’s emotive attitude, such as annoyance, as seen in (9) and (10). Example (9) and (10) demonstrate how *kunyang* attains its emotive, subjective meaning in certain contexts where the speaker perceives repeated action or continuing state as excessive or extreme.

- (9) *yeph-eyse kunyang chamkyenhay.*  
 side-on continuously interfere:IE  
 ‘(She) **constantly** interferes in (my affairs).’

- (10) *kho-ka kunyang cilcil hulle.*  
 mucus-NOM continuously flowing drip:IE  
 ‘Nose **constantly** runs.’

As *kunyang* acquires subjective meaning and its original semantic meaning becomes gradually bleached, it begins to solely function as a stance marker regardless of the context, as seen in (4)-(8). *Kunyang* is an example of how changes in semantic meaning and pragmatic and interactional functions arise through a subjectification process (Traugott and Dasher 2002).

This paper not only points out the function of *kunyang* as a stance marker, but it also provides exemplars of how semantic, syntactic, functional transformations correlate and coincide in language change. Moreover, this study broadens the scope of research of Korean stance markers to include stance adverbials, while previous studies have focused on Korean sentence-endings. Adverbials with high frequency in spoken discourse, such as *kunyang*, need further investigation on its variant functions and uses in interactions from a usage-based approach.

## References

- Bybee, J. 2006. From usage to grammar: the mind’s response to repetition. *Language* 82: 529-551.  
 Traugott, E. C. and R. B. Dasher. 2002. *Regularity in Semantic Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.