

Approximation markers in Korean: classifier construction

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Korean has two rows of numerals – Native Korean [NK] and Sino-Korean [SK]. SK numerals have regular morphemes to derive ordinal numerals from the “basic” cardinal numerals; approximate numerals (beginning from 10) are also regularly derived (Table 1).

NK numerals have a different, not so regular pattern of derivation. Besides the “basic” cardinal form used as a modifier of a classifier (1a) or a noun (1b), NK numerals have an “enumeration” [ENUM] form that has both numeral and classifier features (2a-b). Only numerals 1–4 and 20 have their ENUM form different from the regular one (2a); the ENUM form does not co-occur with a classifier (2b). The ordinal form is derived with the affix *-ccay*: *ilkop-ccay* ‘7[NK]-CARD[NK]’ “the 7-th”, cf. the SK ordinal prefix *cey-* in Table 1.

NK numerals 1–10 have an approximate *-e(s)* form: *twue(s)* ‘about two’. [Martin 1992: 178] mentions the NK derivation pattern similar to the SK *-ye* pattern: “Num + *-namun*” ‘odd/ a little more than’ (*sumwu-namun* ‘20-odd’); *nam-un* is a frozen form of *nam-ta* ‘be left’. This pattern is used only with round numbers and is highly lexicalized.

The NK particle *-ccum* has an ‘approximately’ [APPR] meaning; *-ccum* can attach to a classifier in a classifier construction (3a) or to an ENUM form (3b). *-Ccum* has grammatical properties of phrasal affixes [Yoon 1995]. First, when *-ccum* attaches to a classifier, its scope is the whole Class(ifier) P(hrase): [_{ClassP} *oleyn-ci payk kay*]-*ccum* in (3a). Second, *-ccum* can attach to any classifier, or to a SK noun denoting measure/ period of time in (4a) – these are Type 3 classifiers following [Martin 1992: 182].

-Ccum attaches not only to quantity words/ expressions but also to deictics, interrogative words (4b) and denominative postpositions (4c). It must be used after nouns, but otherwise it has no restrictions on its host (*-ccum* is a nominal phrasal affix in terms of [Yoon 1995]). Examples (4c-d) from [Martin 1992: 632] show that *-ccum* can be part of so-called “multiple particle constructions” [Sohn 1999: 270], in which particles can in some cases be switched. In Type 3 classifier constructions, numerals frequently go with nouns of the same origin (5).

The ‘APPR’[SK] affix *-ye* (see Table 1) attaches to numerals, besides 1–9: see (6a); *-ye* can also attach to ‘period of time/ measure’ nouns (Type 3 classifiers) instead of attaching to a numeral (6a-b); *-ye* cannot attach to other classifier types – cf. (6c) and (3a).

-Ye has essential derivation affix features (except for adnominal position (6a-b)); it cannot attach to a non-Type 3 classifier construction in a way similar to *-ccum* (6c). *-Ccum*, on the other hand, is a phrasal affix (phrasal affixes are typically non-derivational).

Thus, Korean has two morphemes for the approximation meaning: the SK derivation affix *-ye* and the NK phrasal affix *-ccum*. These two morphemes can coexist in one phrase with no additional change of meaning (*payk-ye* ‘100-APPR[SK]’ is possible in (3a)). They can co-occur in one word: [rare] (*sip*) *nyen-ye-ccum* ‘(10) year[SK]-APPR[SK]-APPR[NK]’.

Use of both *-ye* and *-ccum* in one phrase mentioned above, as well as examples with only one APPR marker because the other one is prohibited (cf. (6a) and (3a)/ (6c)) show that *-ye* and *-ccum* have essentially identical grammatical function, even though their formal properties drastically differ: they belong to the derivational vs. agglutinative inflection grammar components. In the paper, besides *-ye* and *-ccum*, other approximation constructions will be considered, such as the postposition *cengto*, the noun *namcis*, etc.

Table 1

Cardinal	Ordinal	“Odd”/ Approximate
<i>Sip</i> ‘10’	<i>cey-sip</i> ‘10-th’	<i>sip-ye</i> ‘a little more than 10’

- (1) a. **yel** **kwen-uy** chayk(-ul)
10[NK] CLASS-GEN book(-ACC)
- b. chayk **yel** **kwen(-ul)**
book 10[NK] CLASS(-ACC)
“Ten books”
- (2) a. sey ‘3’ → **seys** ‘3.ENUM’
- b. pongthwu **seys(-ul)** (*cang)
envelope three.ENUM[NK](-ACC) (*CLASS) “3 envelopes”
- (3) a. Oleynci payk **kay-ccum**
orange 100[SK]-APPR[SK] CLASS[SK]-APPR[NK]
“Around 100 oranges”
- b. Haksayng **sumwul-ccum**
student 20.ENUM-APPR [NK] “Around 20 students”
- (4)a. Sipi-wel **isip-il-ccum** [SKLD]
12[SK]-month[SK] 20[SK]-day[SK]-APPR[NK] “Around December 20”
- b. Sicheng-i **eti-ccum** iss-ci yo? [Martin 1992: 437]
City_Hall where-APPR[NK] exist-SUSP PTCL.POL
“Whereabouts is the City Hall?”
- c. myechil **cen-ccum-kkaci** ku-nun kenkangha-yss-ta.
a_few_days before-APPR[NK]-UNTIL he-TOP healthy-PAST-DECL
“In/After (about) a few days, he was healthy” (“Before around 5 days passed,...”)
- d. [Sey si-**kkaci-ccum**]/ [Sey si-**ccum-kkaci** kitaly-e
[3[NK]hour-PART-APPR[NK]]/ [3[NK] hour-APPR[NK]-PART] wait-INF
pota-(ka) an o-myen ka-l they-ya
and_than(-NOM) NEG come-COND go-PRT.FUT MOD-EMPH
“I will wait till around 3 o’clock, and then if you haven’t come I’ll leave”
- (5) sey hay/ sam nyen
3[NK] year[NK]/ 3[SK] year[SK] “3 years” [Martin 1992: 182]
- (6)a. ***han-ye** sikan/ ^hhan **sikan-ye**
1[NK]-APPR [SK] hour[NK]/ 1 hour[NK]-APPR[SK] “Around 1 hour”
- b. **isip-ye** pwun / isip **pwun-ye**
20[SK]-APPR[SK] CLASS.minute/ 20[SK]CLASS.minute-APPR [SK]
“Around 20 minutes”
- c. *oleyncci payk **kay-ye**
orange 100 CLASS[SK]-APPR[SK] “Around 100 oranges”

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