

## Korean *-Mace* as a Scalar Focus Particle

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### ABSTRACT

*The Journal of Studies in Language* 40.3, 321-334. The current study aims to identify the core semantic properties of Korean scalar focus particle *-mace*. In the literature, the particle has been analyzed in terms of the extremity of its focus value, its potential to signal unexpectedness of the situation depicted by the sentence that contains it, and the kind of speaker attitude it reflects. The following discussions demonstrate that the particle is not necessarily responsible for these properties. Instead, the study finds that *-mace* is responsible for evoking a consequentiality scale where the prejacent is ranked higher than its propositional alternative(s). In this approach, the central role of *-mace* is to indicate that the associated proposition is considered more serious and impactful in contrast to another prominent proposition salient in the context. (Hansung University)

**Keywords:** focus particle, pragmatic scale, prejacent, propositional alternative, consequentiality

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본인이 투고한 논문은 다른 학술지에 게재된 적이 없으며 타인의 논문을 표절하지 않았음을 서약합니다. 추후 중복게재 혹은 표절된 것으로 밝혀질 시에는 논문게재 취소와 일정 기간 논문 제출의 제한 조치를 받게 됨을 인지하고 있습니다.

### 1. Introduction

Korean focus particle *-mace* has been analyzed in diverse ways. Lee (1979: 47) presents the following data and claims that it has scope over a negative clause.

(1) chelswu-mace mica-lul \*(an) cohaha-n-ta.

Cheolsoo-MACE Mija-ACC not like-PRS-DEC

‘Cheolsoo does not like Mija.’

He argues that (1) is only grammatical with *an* ‘not’ in its place. This idea of confining the use of *-mace* to the syntactically negative environments is roundly refuted by other studies. However, a certain kind of negative attitude is often associated with the particle in some studies. For one, Kim (1982: 112) claims that (2) conveys discontent on the part of the speaker.

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- (2) pwuin-mace cikcang      saynghwal-ul ha-n-ta.  
 wife-MACE employment life-ACC      do-PRS-DEC  
 ‘The wife is employed, too.’

On the other hand, Lee (1984: 4) states that *-mace* as in (2)<sup>1)</sup> shows “the speaker’s critical attitude toward” the referent of the subject. One problem with these observations is that they are simply not verifiable, mainly because we lack contextual information necessary for assessing whether they are valid or not.

An orthogonal issue with uses of *-mace* is that of extremity. In discussing (2), Kim (1982) argues that *-mace* indicates extremity of the situation. Hong (1983: 281) shares this view and states that the referent of the expression to which the particle is attached is the last item among relevant entities. Tackling this issue also requires more contextual information.

This paper seeks to resolve these and related issues by examining some discourses from movies. There are two reasons for resorting to movie dialogues. First, these dialogues afford us sufficient information regarding the circumstances in which they occur, which is essential in determining certain semantic properties of the particle. Second, uses of *-mace* in spoken register allows for clearer understanding of the particle’s usage.

In the subsequent discussions, it will be assumed that *-mace* is an additive focus particle, a notion delineated in König (1991: 29-30) in the following fashion. In (3a), additive focus particle *also* has its focus on *whiskey* and has scope over the entire sentence. Accordingly, (3a) implies (3b).

- (3) a. He also drinks WHISKEY very rarely.  
 b. He drinks something other than whiskey very rarely.

(4a) has a different implication from (3a) due to a difference in the scope of *also*.

- (4) a. Very rarely does he also drinks WHISKEY.  
 b. He drinks something other than whiskey.

In (4a), *very rarely* is outside the scope of the focus particle. Hence, (4b) does not include the adverbial phrase in it. From now on, “focus value” will be used for the value of the focused expression; for (3a), the focus value is ‘whiskey.’ The proposition conveyed by the scope sans the focus particle will be called the “prejacent”; for (3a), the prejacent is ‘he drinks whiskey very rarely,’ and for (4a), it is ‘he drinks whiskey.’

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 discusses the issue around ‘extremity.’ It is shown that *-mace* does not necessarily indicate that the focus value or the prejacent is found at an extreme end of a pragmatic scale. In Section 3, we examine another notion robustly ascribed to the particle by many studies: ‘unexpectedness.’ It will be argued that *-mace* does not consistently convey unexpectedness of the situation conveyed by the prejacent. Section 4 addresses the issue of negative speaker attitude often attributed to the particle. Looking into discourse data will show that speaker attitude should be explained in terms of contextual factors rather than the particle itself. In Section 5, it will be proposed

1) His example sentence is *pwuinnmace cikcangul kacnunta*, which is slightly different from (2).

that the particle evokes a pragmatic scale along the dimension of consequentiality. More specifically, the particle indicates that the prejacent is considered to be higher on the consequentiality scale than its salient propositional alternative(s). Section 6 concludes the discussions.

## 2. Extremity

Hong (1983: 278) holds that the expression focused by *-mace* refers to the most important item among the potential entities that could be considered as the focus value, and that it cannot be followed by another one of them. He backs his claim by maintaining that (5a) is acceptable, but that (5b) is not.

- (5) a. so-kkaci phal-ko, ipen-ey-n                      cip-mace                      nemeka-ss-ta.  
       cow-also sell-and this.time-LOC-TOP house-MACE be.transferred-PST-DEC  
       ‘I sold my cow, and now my house is gone, too.’  
       b. so-mace                      phal-ko, ipen-ey-n                      cip-kkaci                      nemeka-ss-ta.  
       cow-MACE sell-and this.time-LOC-TOP house-also be.transferred-PST-DEC  
       ‘I sold my cow, and now my house is gone, too.’

Hong’s claim can be recast in terms of the focus value and its alternatives positioned on a pragmatic scale in a certain order; i.e., the focus value occupies the highest point on the importance scale.

On the other hand, Yoon (1993: 20) brings up the following example and contends that the focus value is at the end point of a pragmatic scale along the dimension of likelihood.

- (6) a. so-cocha phal-ko, ipen-ey-n                      cip-mace                      nemeka-ss-ta.  
       cow-also sell-and this.time-LOC-TOP house-MACE be.transferred-PST-DEC  
       ‘I sold my cow, and now my house is gone, too.’

Both Hong and Yoon consider ‘extremity’ a crucial semantic component of the particle, and this view is also shared by Kim (1987), Lee (1993), and Sung (1997).

The following example, from *Mantala* (1981), however, runs counter to this view. Prior to the utterance, Cisan, a Buddhist monk, was taken off a bus by some military officers on account of the fact that he didn’t carry an identification. When he is questioned, he explains to them why he doesn’t have one.

- (7) Cisan: kuleh-so. motwu-ka pennoy                      tengeli-yo. ikes-mace                      pely-eya                      toy-nun                      ke-ntey.  
       so-DEC all-NOM evil.passions mass-DEC this-MACE abandon-only.if become-REL thing-and  
       kuliko i                      yuksin-kkaci-to pely-eya                      toy-nun                      ke-ntey. kula-yya                      cayulow-aci-l  
       and                      this body-also-also abandon-only.if become-REL thing-and do.that-only.if free-become-REL  
       swu iss-ul                      te-y-ntey.  
       way exist-REL ground-be-and

‘That’s right. All are earthly desires. I should’ve thrown this away, too. And I should’ve thrown this body away, too. Only that would make me free.’

In (7), *-mace* has its focus on *ikes* ‘this,’ which refers to his belongings, including his rosary. No matter what kind of scale it is, if we put the contextually relevant items—‘his identification,’ ‘his belongings,’ and ‘his body’—on it, ‘his belongings’ should be placed between ‘his identification’ and ‘his body.’ This example suggests that the focus value of *-mace* does not necessarily rank at an end point on a pragmatic scale. This point provides the ground for seeking an approach to *-mace* where only the relative standing of a prejacent on a pragmatic scale matters with respect to its propositional alternatives.

### 3. Unexpectedness

Earlier, it was briefly mentioned that Yoon (1993) views the focus value of *-mace* as the least likely of all the candidates relevant in the context. In the literature, there are many studies adopting the notion of ‘unlikelihood’ or ‘unexpectedness’ in their account for the particle, including Kim (1982), Lee (1984), Lee (1993), Na (1997), and Han (2005). Let us examine a few examples used in arguments for this thesis. According to Kim (1982: 113-114), (8) indicates that the situation described by the prejacent is generally not the case.

- (8) halmeni-mace      wu-sy-ess-ta.  
 grandmother-MACE cry-HON-PST-DEC  
 ‘Grandmother cried, too.’

Note that (8) comes without any context. To verify whether the use of *-mace* in the sentence is responsible for this reading, let us give it a little bit of context, as in (9).

- (9) halapeci-ka      wulum-ul thettuli-si-ca      halmeni-mace      wu-sy-ess-ta.  
 grandfather-NOM cry-ACC burst-HON-as.soon.as grandmother-MACE cry-HON-PST-DEC  
 ‘As soon as Grandfather burst into tears, Grandmother cried, too.’

With the added information, it is doubtful that (9) yields the interpretation that the grandmother is the kind of person who don’t normally cries. The use of *-mace* in (9) appears to have more to do with the grandfather’s crying than with the grandmother’s personal traits.

Let us consider another example which is cited as evidence for ‘unexpectedness’ conveyed by *-mace*. Lee (1984: 4) brings up (10) as such.

- (10) ceyca-mace      susung-ul      paysinha-tani.  
 pupil-MACE master-ACC betray-MIR  
 ‘A pupil betrays her master, too!’

While (10) does show that *-mace* is compatible with a prejacent which describes an unexpected situation, we need to see if the sense of unexpectedness comes from the particle or some other element. With this in mind, consider (11), which is the same as (10) except for the nominative marker standing in for *-mace*.

- (11) *ceyca-ka susung-ul paysinha-tani.*  
 pupil-NOM master-ACC betray-MIR  
 ‘A pupil betrays his master!’

The sense of unexpectedness conveyed by (11) isn’t noticeably different from that which (10) imparts. Comparing (10) and (11) leads us to suspect that the use of the mirative marker, *-tani*, is responsible for the sense of unlikelihood.

Han (2005: 11-12) uses a sentence like the following to make a similar point. Let us assume that Talswu consistently scores the highest mark in every test in his class.

- (12) *talswu-mace sihem-ey tteleci-ess-ta.*  
 Talswu-MACE exam-LOC fail-PST-DEC  
 ‘Talswu failed the test, too.’

Given the context, the prejacent, ‘Talswu fail the test,’<sup>2)</sup> certainly describes a highly unexpected situation. Let us compare it with (13), a modified version of (12) with the nominative marker substituted for *-mace*.

- (13) *talswu-ka sihem-ey tteleci-ess-ta.*  
 Talswu-NOM exam-LOC fail-PST-DEC  
 ‘Talswu failed the test.’

Again, there is no discernable difference between (12) and (13) in terms of unexpectedness. This is because the source of the unlikelihood is the introduction of the prejacent against the background information. The biggest difference in the interpretations of the two sentences is that (12) alone implies the existence of another entity who failed the exam.

To see whether unexpectedness is a proper part of the meaning of *-mace*, let us examine some discourse examples from movies. The following, from *Olppaymi* (2022), is a conversation between the king’s grandson and Kyengswu, an acupuncturist who witnessed the murder of the prince.

- (14) Kyengswu: *ihyengik-i seyca ceha-lul toksalha-yess-supnita. toksal-ul*  
 Lee.Hyung.Ik-NOM prince highness-ACC kill.by.poison-PST-DEC killing.by.poison-ACC  
*cisiha-n kes-un cwusang cenha-si-pnita.*  
 order-REL thing-TOP king highness-HON-DEC  
 ‘Lee Hyung-Ik killed the crown prince by poison. It was the king who ordered the murder.’

2) In representing a prejacent and a propositional alternative, markers of tense and modality are eliminated throughout, and the proposition will be in a subjunctive form.

Wenson: kecismal-i-ta. nay tangcang halpa-mama-eykey mwul-e pw-aya-keyss-ta.  
 lie-be-DEC I right.now grandfather-highness-to ask-CON try-must-guess-DEC  
 ‘It’s a lie! I should ask Grandfather right now.’

Kyengswu: an toy-pnita. an toy-pnita, mama. wenson-mama-mace wihemha-yci-si-pnita.  
 not become-DEC not become-DEC highness grandson-highness-MACE unsafe-get-HON-DEC  
 ‘No, you can’t. You’ll be in danger, too.’

We have two situations to compare: ‘the crown prince get killed’ and ‘the addressee get endangered.’ The latter is the prejacent, and the former, the propositional alternative. Note that Kyengswu’s last sentence points to the possible death of the addressee. Since the killing of the crown prince was ordered by the king, the murder is a case of filicide, which is highly unusual. This extraordinary crime having been committed, the killing of the grandson is deemed no more surprising. It could be even argued to be par for the course, since evidently the king does not want the grandson to succeed him. These considerations suggest that the key role of *-mace* is not to indicate the unexpectedness of the event described by the prejacent.

Here is another example where the situation represented by the prejacent appears less unlikely than that described by the propositional alternative. In (15), taken from *Pisangsenen* (2022), Sookhee, the Transport Minister, holds an emergency briefing and announces the current situations within the plane under attack from a terrorist spreading a virus.

- (15) Sookhee: hyencay sangthay-nun imi theylepem ponin-to kamyemtoy-e samangha-n sangthay-y-ess-ko  
 present state-TOP already terrorist self-also get.infected-CON die-REL state-be-PST-and  
 wentonghyen kicang-mace kamyemtoy-e samangha-n sangthay-i-pnita.  
 Won.Dong.Hyeon captain-MACE be.infected-CON die-REL state-be-DEC  
 ‘At this point, the terrorist himself has died from the infection, and Captain Won Dong-Hyeon died from the infection, too.’

The focus value of *-mace* is ‘the captain,’ and its most prominent alternative is ‘the terrorist.’<sup>3)</sup> For proponents of the unexpectedness thesis, the death of the captain should be considered more unlikely than that of the terrorist. However, if we take into account the supposition that the terrorist would not have intended to kill himself before the other people on board, including the captain, it could be argued that the terrorist’s death should count as highly unlikely and even more so than the captain’s death.

The following, taken from *Kullepu* (2011), is a case where it is not clear which situation is more likely than the other. Sangman is a coach in charge of a baseball team made up of hearing-impaired players. His team has a match against a strong high school baseball team of nondisabled players. When the other team pull their punches and go easy on his team, he stops the game and vents his anger on the nondisabled players.

3) The minister does not mention the first victim, who was a passenger.

- (16) Sangman: *kuntey ike-n ani-canha. pwulssangha-key po-myen him-i ppaci-canha. palp-nun*  
 but this-TOP not-TAG pitiful-ADV look-if strength-NOM drain-TAG tread-REL  
*ke-n sangkwaneps-nuntey, ilese-l him-mace ppays-umyen an toy-canha, i*  
 thing-TOP irrelevant-and stand-REL strength-MACE take-if not become-TAG this  
*sipangsay-tul-a!*  
*son.of.a.bitch-PL-VOC*  
 ‘But this is all wrong. If you pity them, they’ll lose spirit. I don’t care if you just step all over them,  
 but it’s not okay to take away their strength to get back up, you sons of bitches!’

The third sentence contrasts two situations: ‘the other team defeating Sangman’s team’ and ‘the other team taking away the spirit of Sangman’s team.’ Sangman thinks that the other team going easy on his team ends up draining the spirit of his team. In a case like this, it does not seem feasible to assess which of the two situations is more likely to happen. Even if the relative likelihood can be determined, it does not appear to bear on the use of *-mace* in (16).

To summarize, the claim that *-mace* is responsible for the sense of unexpectedness regarding the prejacent runs into problems with cases where assessing the likelihood of the situation described by the prejacent is hardly viable or where the situation depicted by the propositional alternative is arguably more unlikely. The three discourse examples from movies, however, have something in common about the role of *-mace*. It conveys the idea that the situation the prejacent portrays is far graver than what is expressed by the propositional alternative. This point is addressed further in Section 5.

#### 4. Speaker Attitude

Negative attitude from the speaker is another property often associated with *-mace*. According to Lee (1984: 12-13), (17) implicates that the speaker criticizes the addressee or the situation.

- (17) *ne-mace ka-myen na-n attehkey ha-ni?*  
 you-MACE go-if I-TOP how do-INT  
 ‘What am I to do if you go, too?’

On the other hand, Lee (1988: 21) detects disappointment in (18). This interpretation appears, however, hard to justify, with no contextual information given.

- (18) *ku yeca-mace tochakha-yss-ta.*  
 the woman-MACE arrive-PST-DEC  
 ‘The woman arrived, too.’

Even if we accept the interpretations of the examples above, the different observations about the negative attitude the use of *-mace* is held responsible for are indicative of a problem with an approach that sees it as a semantic component of the particle: there are various kinds of negative attitude. Consider the following example from *Kunyelul Mitci Maseyyo*

(2004). In feeble voice, Yengcwu tells Heecheol's family about her relationship with him, trying to elicit some sympathy from them.

- (19) Yengcwu: huychel-ssi-ka elma cen-pwuthe yaktay hwupay-lul manna-n-ta-nun  
 Heecheol-Mr-NOM some before-from pharmaceutical.college junior-ACC meet-PST-DEC-REL  
 sasil-ul al-myense-to cey-ka mosna-n ke-l al-ki ttaymwun-ey mal-to  
 fact-ACC know-while-though I-NOM ugly-REL thing-ACC know-NML reason-LOC saying-also  
 mos-ha-yss-ko tolao-ki-man-ul kulehkey kitoha-yss-ciman icey-n yenlak-mace  
 cannot-do-PST-and return-NML-only-ACC such pray-PST-but now-TOP contact-MACE  
 kkunhki-ko...  
 break-and  
 'Even though I knew that Heecheol was seeing his younger classmate, I couldn't say anything,  
 knowing I wasn't good enough, and I prayed that he'd come back, but now I've lost contact, too.'

Here, the prejacent is 'Yengcwu lose contact with Heecheol,' and it stands in contrast with 'Yengcwu pray for his return.' She is neither critical toward the situation nor disappointed with it. We could say she expresses her frustration with the whole situation by uttering the last clause.

The following monologue, from *Pwunnouy Yunlihak* (2013), reveals a different attitude from the speaker as he employs *-mace* in his utterance. Pak is a loan shark, who visits Kwen to get the money owed.

- (20) Kwen: coysongha-pnita, isa-nim. kuliko ipkum-un taum cwu-kkaci...  
 sorry-DEC director-sir and deposit-TOP next week-until  
 'I'm sorry, Mr. Pak. About the payment, within next week...'  
 Pak: kwen-sacang-nim, nay i hyelap ttaymwun-ey hwa-lul mos nay-yo. kuntey  
 Kwen-chairman-sir I this blood.pressure reason-LOC anger-ACC cannot release-DEC but  
 eckucey nay ssayng-ton 5,000 talli-ess-ta. kuntey mit-ess-te-n  
 the.other.day I fresh-money 5,000 blow-PST-DEC but trust-PST-REC-REL  
 kwen-sacang-nim-mace mak ilay peli-myen nay-ka acwu mak konlanha-yci-ko...  
 Kwen-chairman-sir-MACE recklessly like.this end.up-if I-NOM very much difficult-get-and  
 'Mr. Kwen, I can't get angry because of my blood pressure. I lost precious fifty grand a couple of days ago.  
 And if you act like this, after all the trust I gave you, you're making it very difficult for me...'

Pak's third sentence contains *-mace*. The prejacent is 'Kwen do not pay,' and its propositional alternative is 'Pak blow fifty grand a few days ago.' The speaker's attitude toward the prejacent is anger, obviously.

(19) and (20) are about current or recent situations which are part of the reality. When *-mace* is used with prejacentes describing situations yet to be realized, we get different kinds of attitude. In (21), taken from *Kongcak* (2018), Sekyeng is asking Jong-Il Kim, the leader of North Korea, to refrain from any military provocations against South Korea ahead of the presidential election.



- (21) Sekyeng: wiwencang-nim-uy cochi-ka ohilye panpal simli-lul cakukha-yse kim.taycwung  
 chairman-sir-of measure-NOM instead resistance psychology-ACC spur-because Kim.Dae-jung  
 hwupo-uy apsung-ul mantul-e cwun-ta-myen ku twi-ey-n  
 candidate-of sweeping.victory-ACC make-CON give-DEC-if that following-LOC-TOP  
 yekphwung-i pwul-ese kwangko saep-ul nalli-e peli-l kes-i-ko  
 headwind-NOM blow-becuae advertizement business-ACC ruin-CON end.up-REC thing-be-and  
 wiwencang-nim-uy cengchayk cakum-i toy-l koltongphwum saep-mace  
 chairman-sir-of policy fund-NOM become-REL antique business-MACE  
 paksal-nay peli-l kes-i-pnita.  
 break.down-yield end.up-REL thing-be-DEC  
 ‘If your action provokes negative sentiments and gives Kim Dae-jung a landslide victory,  
 subsequently the backlash will sweep away the ad business and crush the antiques business that  
 will fund your policies.’

Here, the focus of *-mace* is on the verb phrase subsuming the noun phrase, *koltongphwum saep*, which makes ‘crush the antiques business that will fund your policies’ the focus value. The speaker is expressing his worry about the situation detailed by the prejacent.

The following, from *Kimcongkwuk Chacki* (2010), reveals yet another distinct kind of attitude, but here the attitude is what the speaker suspects the addressee to have had. Kicwun speculates about the reason Ciwu didn’t go to the airport to meet her first love after ten years of no contact.

- (22) Kicwun: ciwu-ssi-nun ilpwule an naka-n ke-y-eyo. tasi manna-l kimcongkwuk-i  
 Ciwu-Miss-TOP purposely not go.out-REL thing-be-DEC again meet-REL Kim.Congkwuk-NOM  
 ku ttay ku salam-i ani-lkka-pw-a, wanpyekha-n chessalang-uy kiek-mace  
 that time that person-NOM not-INT-see-CON perfect-REL first.love-of memory-MACE  
 kkayci-key toy-lkka-pw-a eynting kath-un ke-n mantul-ci-to  
 break-RES become-INT-see-CON ending similar-REL thing-TOP make-NML-also  
 anh-ass-ten ke-pnita.  
 not-PST-REC thing-DEC  
 ‘You didn’t go on purpose. Fearing he might not be the same man of that time, fearing the memory  
 of your perfect first love might get shattered, you didn’t make something like an ending.’

Here, the focus of *-mace* falls on the immediate clause. The speaker reasons that the addressee must have had fear about the potential future situation described by the prejacent, ‘the memory of your perfect first love get shattered.’

The four discourse examples reveal that a speaker’s attitude toward a prejacent varies depending on the circumstances. It could be anger, frustration, worry, or fear, and the list could include other distinct kinds of emotion. This poses a serious problem for an account couched in a particular kind of speaker attitude.

## 5. Consequentiality Scale

The discussions in Section 4 lead us to conclude that *-mace* is not responsible for some negative speaker attitude. Without relying on a negative attitude, could it still be maintained that the particle carries some kind of negativity? As a case in point, Na (1997: 221-222) attributes to the use of *-mace* in (23) highly negative judgment on the part of the speaker.

- (23) onul achim 206 hosil sonnim-mace ttena-ko icey sensayngnim han pwun nam-ass-eyo.  
 today morning 206 room.number guest-MACE leave-and now sir one person remain-PST-DEC  
 ‘The guest of #256 also left this morning, and you are the only one left.’

Note that she adopts the broad notion of ‘negative judgment’ here. The occurrence of *-mace* in (7) above poses a problem to this approach. Let us consider the three situations being contrasted. Cisan explains that he has thrown away his identification as a monk detached from mundane life. Then he contemplates throwing away his belongings and his body. Assuming that the scope of *-mace* is over the immediate clause, the prejacent is ‘Cisan throw away his belongings,’ and its propositional alternative is ‘Cisan throw away his identification.’ Cisan might find the situation described by the prejacent difficult to achieve, but he doesn’t have a negative judgment on it. As a monk, he recognizes it as part of some tough process he will have to muster courage to go through. The same goes for the third situation, ‘Cisan throw away his body.’

The discussions so far suggest that whether the speaker finds a situation unlikely or unfavorable is not a proper part of *-mace*’s meaning. We need an approach to *-mace* where the relevant scale is not of the dimension of unexpectedness or some kind of expressive meaning. Rather, the analysis of (7) points to the relevance of scalar dimension reflecting how serious or impactful a certain situation is considered to be. The discussion of (14), (15), and (16) in Section 3 also aligns with this idea. Hence, we propose that *-mace* is a focus particle evoking a pragmatic scale along the dimension of consequentiality. By “consequentiality” is meant the significance of an impact a certain state of affairs has on the circumstances at hand. The notion is intended to capture the speaker’s assessment of the prejacent in terms of how much it affects the development of an ongoing situation. In essence, *-mace* indicates that the prejacent is placed higher than its propositional alternative(s) on the consequentiality scale.

Let us go back to each discourse example to see how the current approach can explain it. In (14), the prejacent is ‘the prince’s son get endangered,’ and the propositional alternative, ‘the crown prince get killed.’ The speaker has been serving both the crown prince and his son and has gotten quite close to the addressee. The old king, Injo, wanted some other son than the crown prince to succeed him, which is why he was murdered. With the crown prince’s demise, the next in line to the throne is his son, the addressee. Even though the word Kyengswu uses is *wihemhayci* ‘get unsafe,’ the intended meaning is ‘be killed.’ Given these circumstances, the addressee possibly getting killed is a much more serious situation to the speaker, which could have significant consequences, e.g., destruction of the whole family, than the crown king getting murdered.

In (15), the prejacent is ‘the captain die from the infection,’ and the propositional alternative is ‘the terrorist die from the infection.’ Here, the pilot’s death is more consequential from the standpoint of the speaker as Transport Minister

because the plane cannot fly itself, and she fears for the lives on board. As for (16), the prejacent and its alternative are ‘the other team take away the spirit of Sangman’s team’ and ‘the other team defeat Sangman’s team,’ respectively. The coach of the weaker team stresses how crucial it is for his team to have a chance to fight with spirit even if they suffer a crushing defeat.

In the case of (19), the prejacent is ‘Yengcwu lose contact with Heecheol,’ and it is more consequential than its alternative because it leaves her with little hope of getting him back. As for (20), The prejacent is ‘Mr. Kwen does not pay.’ The context does not reveal how much money is at stake with Mr. Kwen, but from the expression *mitessten* ‘who I trusted,’ it appears that the failure to get paid by Mr. Kwen affects the speaker more significantly. In (21), the prejacent is ‘Kim’s action destroy the antiquities business that will fund his policies,’ and the propositional alternative is ‘Kim’s action destroy the advertising business.’ The former is a more serious situation than the latter since Kim relies on it for executing his policies. As for (22), the prejacent, ‘the memory of the first love get shattered,’ is more consequential than the alternative, ‘the person turn out to be different from the person from the past,’ because the latter will merely give her disappointment, but the former will affect her life for a long time afterwards. In the movie, for ten years, Ciwu has deeply cherished the memory of the holidays she spent with Congwuk in India.

An objection to the current approach might be raised with an example like (24), from *Nalasmalssami* (2019). The speaker, a royal physician, implores King Sejong to refrain from working too hard on creating the new letters.

- (24) Physician: maum-ey appak-ul cwu-nun il-un celtay ha-si-myen an toy-pnita. thukhi  
 mind-LOC pressure-ACC give-REL work-TOP absolutely do-HON-if not become-DEC especially  
 silyek-ul kwatoha-key ssu-si-myen oynccok nwun-mace silmyengha-si-l  
 eyesight-ACC excessive-ADV use-HON-if left eye-MACE lose.eyesight-HON-REL  
 swu-ka iss-supnita.  
 way-NOM exist-DEC  
 ‘You mustn’t do anything that burdens your mind. Especially if you overuse your eyesight, your left  
 eye may lose sight, too.’

We have the prejacent, ‘the king’s left eye lose sight,’ and its propositional alternative, ‘the king’s right eye lose sight.’ Apparently, the comparison of the two situations as they are will not lead one to give more weight to either of them; it doesn’t make much sense to say one eye is more important than the other eye. However, if we take the progression of events taking place into account, the later event, the left eye losing sight, is considered more serious since this means that the person will suffer total blindness. Given the fact that a person has two eyes, losing the second eye after losing the first has to be more consequential.

The following example, taken from *Olppaymi* (2022), can be given a similar explanation. Here, the crown prince’s son asks Kyengswu, the acupuncturist, to save his mother’s life.

- (25) Wenson: 8 nyen-man-ey manna-n apa-mama-to tolaka-si-ko, ema-mama-mace  
 8 year-full-LOC meet-REL father-highness-also die-HON-and mother-highness-MACE  
 caphy-e ka-si-ko, icey na-hantey-n amwu-to eps-ta. cikum-kkaci emeni

get.caught-CON go-HON-and now I-to-TOP    anyone-also not.exist-DEC present-until mother  
 elkwul han pen po-ci.mosha-ko sal-ass-ta.  
 face    one time see-cannot-and live-PST-DEC  
 ‘My father, who I met after 8 years, has died, my mother has been taken away, and now I have no one.  
 I’d lived without ever seeing my mother’s face until recently.’

The focus of *-mace* falls on the immediate clause. Hence, the prejacent is ‘the speaker’s mother be taken away,’ and its propositional alternative, ‘the speaker’s father die.’ Taken at face value, the alternative appears more serious than the prejacent, since the mother is not dead yet. However, to the speaker, his mother was everything he had after his father’s death, and he is aware of how dire the situation is and how worse it could turn. Since he knows that his mother could also be killed, her imprisonment is much more consequential to him than his father’s demise.

In the current approach, *-mace* has its import only through the contrast between the prejacent and its propositional alternative(s). Hence, it is crucial that a propositional alternative obtain in the context of the use of the particle. Cases like the following, from *Nalasmaslssami* (2019), could be seen as a difficulty for this approach. In (26), the speaker, one of the ministers, warns King Sejong against some impacts of creating new letters.

(26) Inji: i    mwunca-ka paykseng-tul sai-ey                    pheci-nun    swunkan ku    him-i                    wangco-mace  
 this letter-NOM subject-PL    distance-LOC spread-REL moment    that power-NOM dynasty-MACE  
 samkhy-e    peli-l                    swu iss-ta-nun                    ke-l                    cinceng molu-si-pnikka?  
 swallow-CON end.up-REL way exist-DEC-REL thing-ACC really    not.know-HON-INT  
 ‘Don’t you really see, when these letters spread amongst the people, it could destroy the dynasty?’

The focus of *-mace* is on the verb phrase, and we have ‘the power destroy the dynasty’ as the prejacent, but there is no explicit mention of its propositional alternative. This is not really a counterexample to the current approach since a propositional alternative can be implicit; we only need to recover it using contextual information and our world knowledge. The speaker of (26) is concerned about how the new letters could empower the common people. If it becomes a reality, and they do gain power, they may challenge the authority around them first before they may be able to overthrow the monarchy itself. Hence, ‘the power destroy local governments’ will be a plausible propositional alternative.

Similarly in (27), taken from *Taccimawa Lee* (2008), we don’t have a propositional alternative to the prejacent overtly expressed. The following is a monologue by a Korean secret agent who works for a resistance organization against the Japanese rule.

(27) Yenca: na-uy cwukum-un wicang-toy-n                    kes-i-ess-eyo.                    choykun naypwu-uy paysinca-lul  
 I-of death-TOP fake-become-REL thing-be-PST-DEC recently inside-of betrayer-ACC  
 ccoch-ko.iss-ta-nun    cengpo-mace                    say-e    naka-l                    kes-ul                    wulyeha-n  
 chase-PRO-DEC-REL information-MACE leak-CON go.out-REL thing-ACC worry-REL  
 cochi-y-ess-cyo.

measure-be-PST-DEC

‘I faked my death. It was a precaution to keep the intel that the agency was recently tracking the mole from also leaking out.’

The prejacent of the clause containing *-mace* is ‘the intel that the agency was recently tracking the mole leak out.’ Its propositional alternative is not explicitly alluded to here but is easily recoverable, given the background knowledge that resistance groups strived to keep all sorts of secret information from getting stolen by betrayers during the Japanese rule.

## 6. Concluding Remarks

Korean particle *-mace* is reported to have grammaticalized from adverb *mace*. Then, it may not be unreasonable to expect semantic relationship between the two to a certain extent. However, it is also firmly established that grammaticalization involves semantic changes. The approach taken in this paper does not attempt to seek the meaning of the particle in the adverb, on the assumption that the particle has its own meaning independent from the adverb.

We have discussed several notions commonly attached to *-mace* such as ‘extremity,’ ‘unexpectedness,’ ‘speaker attitude,’ and ‘negativity,’ and it was shown that none of them is a necessary component of the focus particle. On the assumption that the particle evokes a pragmatic scale, we determined that the semantic dimension involved is that of consequentiality. This notion is not entirely a novel one, considering that Hong (1983) used ‘importance’ as a key concept in the meaning of *-mace*, as was touched upon in Section 2.

The finding of the current paper is that the particle designates the prejacent at a higher point than its propositional alternative(s) on the consequentiality scale. When there is a limited number of alternatives, as in (24) and (25), the focus value can refer to the last item in a process of elimination. When this happens, the prejacent tends to be considered to have the greatest consequentiality, due to the culminating effect.

In this paper, *-mace* is not compared with either *-kkaci* or *-cocha*, as is done in most other studies of the particle. In the literature, the three particles are frequently treated as akin to each other, and one of the main reasons appears to be that they share a lot of semantic properties with English *even*. Starting with this unnecessary assumption could bias us towards irrelevant details or lead us askew. It is our belief that our research benefits more by investigating each focus particle in its own right. A comparative study of these related particles will have to wait until each of them has been thoroughly researched.

It must be acknowledged that the study has its limitations due to reliance on a small number of discourse examples from movies. While these examples are meaningful, looking into a wider range of data from literary texts or actual occurrences of *-mace* in real-life situations may go a long way to furthering the understanding of the particle. Another limitation of the current study is that drawing a generalization from these particular examples may run into problems with other particular cases not covered here.

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