

ABSTRACT

A comparative study of the Korean nominalizer
-(u)m and the participle categories
in Altaic languages as matrix predicates

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The nominalized style, characterized by using nominalized clauses as independent sentences, has become prevalent among young Korean speakers, both online and the spoken variety of the language. This linguistic phenomenon challenges traditional notions of subordinate clauses by allowing nominalized clauses to function as main clauses in various pragmatic contexts. Drawing insights from Tungusic languages, where participles have undergone insubordination to become main clausal categories, this study explores the factors influencing the emergence of the nominalized style in Korean.

The study reveals that the nominalized style shares similarities with the intimate speech level of main clauses in Korean by examining speech levels, sentence types, and morphological constraints. The intimate speech level suffix *-e* plays a crucial role in shaping the characteristics of nominalized clauses. Moreover, the analysis demonstrates that semantic generalization in the nominalized style follows a pattern observed in Tungusic insubordination cases. The semantics of nominalized clauses are constrained by the parallel main clause suffix *-e*, limiting their expansion to certain semantic domains. As a result, the nominalized style lacks the ability to express the genuine propositive mood. Understanding the dynamics of the nominalized style contributes to our understanding of language change and the interaction between linguistic and social factors in contemporary language use.