

**The functional polysemy of the Korean discourse marker *mak*:
Its variant functions under an invariant meaning**

This study examines the functional polysemy of the Korean discourse marker *mak*, which carries out variant functions under an *invariant meaning* (Fischer 2000). No previous studies have identified *mak* as a discourse marker despite its multifunctionality, grammatical optionality, and high frequency in oral discourse, which are the main features of discourse markers (Brinton 1996). *Mak* has been only viewed as a prefix or adverb at sentence level. As a prefix, *mak* delivers a sense of unrefinement and coarse quality, as seen in (1). As an adverb, *mak* expresses an intense degree or rough manner of the action or state being described, as seen in (2). It can be translated as ‘hard’, ‘much’, ‘carelessly’, ‘haphazardly’, and more depending on the context.

However, an examination of *mak* at discourse and interactional levels reveals that it carries out multiple functions simultaneously depending on the place of occurrence and its context in spontaneous conversations - as a truncator, a word searcher, and a discourse highlighter. The following table shows the number of the tokens of each function found in samples of 4 telephone conversations and 3 multi-party face-to-face conversations (total approximately 360 minutes).

Truncator	Word searcher	Discourse highlighter	Non-discourse marker	Total
63	33	151	76	323

Moreover, this study explicates how these variant functions of *mak* are all motivated and interrelated by its invariant meaning. According to Yang (1984), the proto meaning of *mak* is *omitting or simplifying the (refining) process*. This core meaning of *mak* in the physical domain has been metaphorically and pragmatically extended into the cognitive and interactional domains as a word searcher and a truncator. While the prefix *mak* in *mak-kelli* ‘raw (unrefined) rice wine’ expresses cutting the physical process of making wine short, *mak* as a truncator serves to cut short the details or list of items the speaker describes and sums up the unfolding utterance, as seen in (3), (4), and (5). As a word searcher, *mak* represents the cognitive and verbal processes of rushing through to search appropriate words, as seen in (6). Likewise, as a discourse highlighter, *mak* describes or reenacts an action or state, carried out in a speedy, dynamic, and rough manner. *Mak* also serves to express the intense emotion or attitude that surrounds the scene. Multiple insertions of *mak* across the discourse, as seen in (7), play a vital role in telling a story in a vivid and performative manner.

Overall, this paper rediscovers *mak* as a discourse marker and resolves the puzzle of elucidating the multiple uses of *mak* in discourse and interactions by identifying the pragmatic extension of its invariant meaning. The results of the examination also confirm Sweetser (1990) and Soares da Silva’s claim (2006) that many verbal activities are metaphorically projected by physical activities.

