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The Role of the Korean Topic Marker in Foregrounding Speaker Stance*

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1. Introduction

This paper attempts to explicate the interactional use of the Korean topic marker *nun* by drawing upon the methodology of conversation analysis (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974), and by taking a perspective in which various linguistic means are viewed as indexing particular kinds of affect observable in speaker stance (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1989; Besnier, 1990; Biber & Finegan, 1989). The major goal of the present paper is to show that previous semantic and functional characterizations of the Korean and Japanese topic marker¹, which are mostly based on the examination of isolated sentences, or written or spoken monologic narratives (Kuno, 1973; Hwang, 1987; Lee, 1987), can be improved and complemented by the characterization of the interactional use of *nun* in terms of how it is actually used by speakers and how it is exploited for affective purposes. Special reference is made to disagreement contexts where *nun* is frequently used. Comparison is also made to the subject marker *ka* whenever relevant.

2. Stance-foregrounding function of *nun*

While mainstream linguistics has concerned itself with referential meaning in language (cf. Besnier, 1990), there has recently been growing interest in the expressive function of language in terms of its constitutive role in indexing various kinds of speaker stance (Besnier, 1990; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1989; Ochs, 1990; Biber & Finegan, 1989)². With the assumption that syntactic features serve the stance-marking purposes (cf. Ochs, 1990), we can posit that the Korean topic marker *nun* and the subject marker *ka* play a role in indexing particular kinds of speaker stance which bear upon the different predicational modes associated with these particles.

In this light, I posit the basic interactional meaning of *nun* as stance-foregrounding, which refers to the speaker's highlighted attitude whereby it is signaled that the speaker is in full co-alignment with the *nun*-marked entity in the current participation framework (cf. Goffman, 1979). The speaker's stance foregrounded by *nun* signaling his/her co-alignment with the *nun*-marked entity conveys various interactional messages in actual interactional contexts. Most of all, foregrounded speaker stance marks the current utterance as one in which the speaker's personal, subjective response is overtly expressed (cf. Ochs, 1988). It also projects that the speaker will provide contextually new information whose ideational details provide the interactional relevance for the speaker's particular alignment with the *nun*-marked entity in specific interactional contexts (cf. "domain-setting" (Chafe, 1974), "aboutness" (Kuno, 1973), "unchallengeable shared domain" (Lee, 1987))³.

These interactional characteristics of *nun* are in sharp contrast with *ka*, which has traditionally been noted as being associated with an objective description of specific events and factual information (cf. Kuno, 1973; Kim, 1990). The particular speaker stance indexed by *ka* is viewed as that of backgrounded speaker stance. The speaker's affective disposition expressed by such a stance is depersonalization and affective distance, wherein the speaker presents a *ka*-marked

entity as a part of objective information by downgrading the subjective dimensions of the proposition (Besnier, 1990; Ochs, 1988). This type of stance relates to the manner of predication in which the utterance is presented holistically as a chunk of information, where an event is described objectively (cf. "neutral description" and "exhaustive listing", Kuno, 1973; Kim, 1990)⁴.

In this respect, I will attempt to argue for the interactional meaning of *nun* that indexes the speaker's foregrounded stance by showing that speakers exploit the meaning in interactional contexts which are compatible with the meaning. First, I will show that the speaker's signaling of his/her foregrounded stance is observed in disagreement contexts in terms of the the speaker's "counteractive" orientation or responsiveness to a perceived challenge or other interactional moves by the interlocutor. It will be argued in this light that the foregrounding of speaker stance is triggered mainly as a counteractive measure to cut off the interlocutor's move. On the other hand, the backgrounded speaker stance indexed by *ka*, which signals the speaker's detachment from the *ka*-marked entity, will be shown to be in contrast with the interactional meaning of *nun* in terms of its use in a context where the speaker does not need to initiate such a counteractive move. Secondly, I will show that the different kinds of speaker stance indexed by *nun* and *ka* can be observed with reference to their interaction with a socio-cultural and interactional norm underlying Korean conversational discourse which dictates that direct confrontational disagreement should be avoided. In relation to the interactional meanings of these particles, we can make a point that, for severe disagreement, *nun* is more appropriate than *ka* because it indexes the speaker's foregrounded stance, hence subjective viewpoint. For instance, if one disagrees with something that an interlocutor said, he/she can mark serious disagreement by saying "It-*nun* not true", with "it" referring to the interlocutor's disputed point. However, given the socio-cultural background, such a mode of disagreement should be avoided. If he/she marks "it" by *ka* in the utterance in the form of "It-*ka* not true", the disagreement is not serious because *ka* indexes the speaker's backgrounded stance, and hence is objective. In this respect, I will show that when *nun* is used in disagreement, what it signals is the speaker's foregrounded stance which is conveyed in the *nun*-marked phrase serving as a stance-marker, and the message of disagreement is thus communicated by inference through the speaker's oblique countering move against the interlocutor's utterance.

3. *nun* in conversation

The examination of conversational data suggests in general that *nun* is used in contexts where the speaker initiates a counteracting move in response to a perceived interactional move by the interlocutor in the preceding context; the speaker uses *nun* to signal that the *nun*-marked entity is being brought up to expressly use the perceived interactional move by the interlocutor as a basis for projecting some contextually new information relevant to the *nun*-marked entity. This observation indicates that, while the *nun*-marked entity has been traditionally viewed as containing "given" information, it plays a significant role whose interactional import is not merely to mark some given element passively, but to deal with the interlocutor's utterance. Such an interactional function of *nun* can be saliently observed in disagreement contexts, where the speaker deals with the interlocutor's point either by backing down, or (re)asserting his/her point in disagreement.

3.1. "Backing off" contexts

One context where the stance-foregrounding role of *nun* can be observed in terms of its orientation to the interlocutor's move is where the speaker backs off in the face of the interlocutor's argument. Example (1) below illustrates such a case. In the context that precedes this stretch of talk, speaker C has said that he cannot understand how one can eat only tortillas and salsa, after saying that one of his friends who had invited him for a meal offered him tortillas and salsa without any other food or toppings⁵:

(1) (Afternoon talk)

1 S: kuroke manhi mok-to -la. mikuk -ai -tul [po
like:that a lot eat -RETROS-DEC. American-people-PL look

2 -nikka
-INTERR

I found that American people often eat like that.

--> 3 C: [a kukos mos mok-kess- -ku-kos -un mwo (.) mos-mok-nun
ah that no:able eat-MOD that-NOML-TOP what cannot-eat -ATTR

--> 4 -kos -un ani -ciman
NOML-TOP NEG-CONSS

*Ah, I cannot eat that- -That is-, It is not that I cannot eat that,
but, {backing off move}*

--> 5 ku-kos -i (.) com kong-kat-un kos -i
that-NOML-SUB a little beans-like-ATTR NOML-SUB

6 iss -o -ya toe -ci -an -a
exist-CONN-NECESS become-NOML-NEG-IE

*That is-, (don't you think that) one should have at least some beans.
{Objective supporting move}*

In response to C's point that he was surprised at the fact that one can eat only tortillas and salsa, S, at lines 1 and 2, shows disagreement by saying that it is customary to eat like that, at least in America, which serves as a challenge to C's point. In lines 3 and 4, C does not complete his initial utterance at line 3, where he says that he cannot eat things like that, and then shifts to a *nun*-utterance, where two instances of *nun* are found. I will first focus on the second instance of *nun* in the utterance "It is not that I cannot eat that", which marks the speaker's backing off move. In this utterance, what C rejects is not something that is directly picked up from the preceding interlocutor's utterance, but something which C presents as his own opinion, which actually is picked up from his abandoned utterance at line 3. Such a context clearly constitutes one in which the speaker can foreground his stance and provide a subjective viewpoint, because the speaker does so not for the purpose of directly countering the interlocutor's argument.

Another important point is that, in lines 3 and 5, "kukos (that)" is marked by *nun* and *ka* respectively⁶ in different sequential contexts. The *nun*-marked "kukos" at line 3 is used in a position where the speaker counters a challenge in the immediately preceding turn, whereas the *ka*-marked "kukos" at line 5 is used in a place where there is no such need, because the speaker, after backing down in the

face of a challenge from the interlocutor and showing a partially accommodating attitude in the preceding context, is now in a position to focus on producing his own account. Therefore, we find that the use of *nun* is specifically oriented to the interlocutor's counteracting move which provides an interactional basis on which the speaker can foreground his stance. The stance-backgrounding function of *ka* is shown by way of its deployment in a context where the speaker can build his own case, with the interlocutor's argument having been dealt with in the preceding context.

3.2. (Re)assertion of disagreement

Example (2) illustrates instances of *nun* which are used in a context where speakers disagree with each other. Preceding this segment of conversation, S asked H whether he knew of any research papers which present a nice treatment of the Korean modal marker "kess", saying that those she had looked at were not very helpful. At line 1, H suggests one particular paper:

(2) (Class topics)

1 H: Kim kyosunim paper-e com nawa -iss -nunte
Kim professor paper-LOC a little come:out-exist-CIRCUM
Prof. Kim's paper discusses something about it.

--> 2 S: casehi -nun...
In detail-TOP...
(The paper does not show) in detail...{Oblique countering move}
:
((several overlaps in lines 3 through 5))
:

--> 6 H: haetun hyonsang -e taehaeso-nun //nawa iss -unikka
anyway phenomenon-LOC about -TOP come exist-REASON
Anyway, it talks about the phenomenon itself. {Oblique countering move}

7 S: ne. ne. ne.
yes yes yes {pro forma agreement}

--> 8 S: kunte uski -nun -kos -un park jinsoo ssi -ka paper-lul
well funny-ATTR-NOML-TOP Mr. Park Jin-soo-NOM paper-OBJ

9 kess-e taehaeso kongbuha-si -oss -na -po -a -yo.
'kess'-LOC about study -HR-PST-NCOMM-see-IE-DEF

10 kess paper-lul manhi cu -si -oss -nunte ku kyosunim
'kess' paper-OBJ a lot give-HR-PST-CIRCUM that professor

-tul-mata uski -o.

-PL-each funny-IE

(Lines 8-11)

By the way, what is funny is, Mr. Park Jin-soo seems to have studied "kess". He gave me a lot of papers about "kess", and each of the professors who wrote those papers is funny...{Oblique countering move}

((S goes on to talk about how the authors of the Korean papers criticize each other by offering counter-examples to every proposal anyone makes.))

While I will argue that this stretch of talk as a whole constitutes a disagreement sequence, I will first focus on the portion of the data from lines 1 to 7, where S and H overtly disagree with each other. After H suggests one paper in response to S's query, S, at line 2, disagrees with H's suggestion by using a *nun*-utterance. What is noteworthy in this *nun*-utterance is that disagreement is contextually inferred even though the utterance is not completed. That is, the *nun*-marked adverbial at line 2 "casehi-*nun* (In detail-*nun*)" by itself signals that S is disagreeing with H in relation to the value of the particular paper he suggested. This case provides a striking example in which *nun* indexes the speaker's foregrounded stance through the *nun*-marked adverbial, which is brought up by the speaker as a stance-marker, and disagreement is communicated by inference.

A similar pattern is observed in H's *nun*-utterance at line 6. This utterance is produced after several overlaps where the speakers start talking simultaneously, which indicates the sensitive quality of the interaction caused by S's disagreement at line 2. In this utterance, H defends his choice of the particular paper in countering S's disagreement by asserting that it at least talks about the grammatical phenomenon of "kess". That the *nun*-marked phrase alone conveys disagreement is strikingly observed by the place where S's pro forma agreement is produced in the next turn at line 7; it is produced just after the *nun*-marked phrase in H's utterance, as the double slash (/) at line 6 indicates. That is, S's interruption of H's utterance just after the *nun*-marked phrases shows that S inferred from the *nun*-marked phrase "about the phenomenon" that H is disagreeing with her even before the predication is provided. As in the case of S's disagreement at line 2, what *nun* does here is to directly index the speaker's stance through the phrase, and disagreement is communicated by inference through the speaker's oblique countering move.

That S's agreement at line 7 is a pro forma agreement is partly supported by her extended turn beginning at line 8, initiated by a *nun*-marked thematic nominalization ("What is funny is...") (cf. Halliday, 1985). At one level of analysis, the use of the thematic nominalization marks a topic shift in the sense that S is initiating an extended turn about her general evaluation of the Korean papers in question. Moreover, in that the thematic nominalization initiates a segment of talk in which she produces a negative evaluation of the papers in general, it can be viewed as marking a continuation of S's disagreement with an implicit orientation to H's persistent opposition in the preceding context. Assuming that a thematic nominalization can be treated as a canonical stance-marker which strongly expresses the speaker's attitude towards the following utterance, the role of *nun* that foregrounds speaker stance can be saliently observed here in the sense that the speaker reasserts her disagreement from another perspective and in a different direction, i.e., by initially expressing her stance conveyed in the thematic

nominalization and then talking about a more general topic which still reflects her negative attitude toward the papers. The use of *nun*, in this sense, can be viewed as foregrounding speaker stance in terms of the speaker's orientation to the interlocutor's opposition, thus obliquely countering the interlocutor's persistent disagreement⁷. Therefore, we find that the use of *nun* for thematic nominalization, as was the case in the preceding instances of *nun*, displays the speaker's predisposition to signal her foregrounded stance, and to convey disagreement by inference, thus avoiding a frontal, hence serious, encounter.

While a *nun*-marked thematic nominalization is frequently found in a context where the speaker initiates an oblique countering move in response to the interlocutor's challenge, *ka*-marked thematic nominalizations occur in different kinds of contexts. Example (3) illustrates one such context. In the context that precedes this utterance, the interlocutors have been advocating parking permits which can be purchased a little cheaper when one buys them a couple of weeks into the quarter:

- (3) (Lunch with H)
- > 1 K: ceil okulha -n -kos -i yolhul -ccum cina-so
 most distressing-ATTR-NOML-SUB 10 days-around pass-CONN
- 2 ka-ss -ul -tae
 go-PST-ATTR-time
*What is most distressing is when you go (to the parking office)
 about 10 days after a quarter began.* {Objective supporting move}

Given that in the preceding context the interlocutors agreed on the unfairness of having to pay the full amount when buying a parking permit even after several days elapsed after the quarter began, the *ka*-marked thematic nominalization can be treated as K's collaborative assessment about the preceding talk, where he presents a hypothetical situation in which such unfairness is felt most acutely. In this sense, we find that the *ka*-utterance is used in a context where the speaker is not initiating any counteractive move to the preceding context of talk. As was the case in the *ka*-utterance in example (1), the stance-backgrounding role of *ka* can be observed in terms of the way in which the utterance is produced as an objective supporting move for the preceding talk.

The use of *nun* for directly indexing the speaker's foregrounded stance and indirectly indexing disagreement by inference is also observed in a formulaic expression "munce-*nun*", which can be translated into English "The point is...". This expression is frequently produced in the context of argument. Example (4) illustrates an instance of this expression, which I overheard during an informal argument between students majoring in linguistics:

- (4) (Linguistics discussion)
- ((In an extended argument, speaker A has disagreed with B by arguing that language is innate, and the language input that children receive is limited.))
- > 1 B: kunte munce-nun ai -tul-i silce -lo input-ul manhi
 well point-TOP child-PL-SUB reality-INS input-OBJ a lot

- 2 tut -nun -tako.
 hear-ATTR-QUOT
 *Well, **the point** is that, in reality, children hear lots of language
 input.* {Oblique countering move}

We can readily note that B is producing the *nun*-utterance with a view to obliquely countering A's point. This would be a case in which the speaker presents a lexical item with a general meaning as a stance-marker in which his stance is foregrounded, and disagreement is contextually inferred.

In sum, the preceding examples provide evidence on the basis of which we can observe that the stance-foregrounding function of *nun* is at work in a way that does not mark confrontational disagreement, as in backing off or oblique disagreement sequences. It is noteworthy, in this regard, that, while a *nun*-utterance is rarely used for marking disagreement by specifically rejecting the interlocutor's point, it is often used in a context where disagreement with the interlocutor is actually meant to encourage him/her⁸. It is also noteworthy that full agreement with the interlocutor's point is usually done through a positive adjectival assessment with zero-marking. This would be so because in marking full agreement with the interlocutor, there is no reason for foregrounding one's stance. If *nun* is used in agreement, as in "kukos-*un* maca (That-*nun* is right)", it would not mark full agreement, but still connote the speaker's negative attitude which is implied to hold in some other respects than in the matter denoted by the *nun*-marked phrase⁹.

As I mentioned above, when *ka* is used in disagreement contexts, the nature of disagreement marked by *ka* is not serious. This point is illustrated by example (5). In the context that precedes this conversation, the interlocutors have talked about a computer purchased by J, and in lines 1 and 2, K says that it is the best of its kind, which was already noted by J in the preceding context. The topic was originally triggered by H, who had been in the computer store and had done a price survey:

(5) (TA meeting)

1 K: ku-cung -eso ceil coh -un -kos -i -l -kos
 that-among-LOC most good-ATTR-NOML-COP-ATTR-NOML

2 -i -eyo
 COP-DEF
 I think it is the best of its class.

3 H: ani olma -laku -yo?
 no how:much-QUOT-DEF
 No, how much (did you say you paid for the computer)?

4 J: con sabaek sasip yuk pul
 thousand four:hundred forty six dollar
 One thousand four hundred forty six dollars.

--> 5 H: kuromyon ceil coh -un -kos -i ani -eyo
 then most good-ATTR-NOML-SUB NEG-DEF
 Then, that's not the best one. {Objective countering move}

After asking J about the price, H marks disagreement in line 5 by using a *ka*-utterance. We can readily note here that H is not dealing with any counteractive move from the interlocutors, who simply assessed the class of J's computer in the preceding talk¹⁰. Instead, as the authority in the area of computer price tags, H initiates talk by asking factual information about the price of J's computer, and presents the *ka*-utterance to dispute the interlocutor's assessment, particularly K's utterance at lines 1 and 2. Even though disagreement is marked rather directly, it is not serious because it is done in an objective manner, presumably on the basis of information that H gathered from her price survey. Such an objective stance can be treated as being indexed by the stance-backgrounding role of *ka*.

4. Conclusions

The preceding discussion suggests that the pragmatic nature of a *nun*-marked entity should be characterized not merely as "given" or "old" information but as a stance-marker whose discursal and interactional relevance is established by the speaker's orientation to the context of talk. We can roughly characterize the signaling of foregrounded speaker stance as marking "interactional focus". In the same vein, the predicate following *nun*, which has previously been viewed as a locus for focus (Hwang, 1987), can be characterized as providing "ideational focus" which assures in retrospect the relevance of the foregrounded stance indexed by the *nun*-marked entity.

These two different kinds of focus seem to interact with each other in a subtle way in various communicative contexts. For instance, in some disagreement contexts where the mere utterance of a *nun*-marked phrase signals the disagreement, the interactional focus plays a significant role, because it reflects the speaker's attempt to single out a particular phrase as a stance-marker in the context of particular sequences and the socio-cultural norm that impinges on them. We can make a point in this respect that the contrast-marking function of *nun* (cf. Kuno, 1973) can be treated as deriving from the foregrounded speaker stance interacting with the contextual need to be oriented to the preceding talk. Such a need would inherently require the speaker's effort to negotiate a place to foreground his/her stance by situating a *nun*-marked entity in a context where it lends itself to the contrastiveness with some inferrable link with the previous context.

The cases of *nun*-marked thematic nominalizations and the formulaic chunk examined above also point to an important role of the interactional focus, though in a different sense; the speaker foregrounds his/her stance by bringing up an internal state predicate or a lexical item with a general meaning. In these cases, however, obliquely made disagreement is also contributed significantly by the ideational focus reflected by the specific ideational details in the predicate. Moreover, given that these instances of *nun* display a rather salient degree of thematic function (cf. Kuno, 1973) compared with the other instances of *nun* examined, we can make a preliminary point that the degree of ideational focus, while contributing to establishing a contrastive context, also correlates with the degree of thematic message¹¹. While this question will be an important one that should be pursued in future research, this point suggests that in other conversational contexts such as question-answer or story-telling sequences, thematic *nun* would be more predominantly used than in disagreement contexts, because in these contexts the speaker would be less pressured to negotiate the relevance of a *nun*-marked entity, and thus more oriented to giving a high degree of ideational focus to the predicate by providing new information. In the same vein, we can see that thematic *nun*

would be predominant in elicited spoken or written narratives¹² because the narrator, without any great need to be attentive to an interactional move by the hearer, can funnel his/her interactional effort to providing ideational focus with a discourse-organizational concern in terms of how to organize episodes centering around a prominent character¹³.

Finally, it should be noted that the stance-foregrounding role of *nun*, while contextually triggered and given relevance by the need to be responsive to the interlocutor in natural conversation, also evokes a context in which the interlocutor's response is called for. This means that, in the current participation framework in which the speaker can variably relate to the utterance and the interlocutor (cf. Goffman, 1979), the speaker's co-alignment with a *nun*-marked entity would inherently be evoked by and also evoke the speaker's co-alignment with the interlocutor. Therefore, even in monologues where there is no need to respond to the interlocutor's utterance, it seems to be the case that *nun* still invites the hearer's attention by evoking its interactional function of responding to the interlocutor, and signals the narrator's co-alignment with the hearer by inviting the hearer's co-participation in the construction of the narrative¹⁴. As for *ka*, which indexes the speaker's backgrounded stance and detachment from the *ka*-marked entity, it would not trigger such an alignment of the speaker with the interlocutor. Rather, we can observe that in many contexts the use of *ka* marks the speaker's alienation from the interlocutor, thus causing a different way in which the speaker relates to the interlocutor and the utterance¹⁵.

As a whole, while in this paper I have tried to show the interactional import of foregrounding speaker stance in conversational contexts where *nun* signals (i.e., directly indexes) foregrounded speaker stance, and disagreement is contextually inferred (i.e., indirectly indexed), there should be further attempts to explore the interactional uses of *nun* in other interactional contexts. Even though it would be possible to start from a neat analysis of *nun* used in a monologic narrative, or even in an isolated sentence, and extend the findings to an analysis of seemingly chaotic interactional use of *nun* in spontaneous conversation, I believe that the converse route should be taken, with the assumption that talk in interaction constitutes the most basic, primordial context of language use. The present study, in this sense, is presented as initiating a small pilot effort to break ground in an attempt to provide a handle for additional future research that takes an interactional perspective in addressing *nun* or other linguistic phenomena in Korean.

Footnotes

* I thank Professors Robert Kirsner, Marianne Celce-Murcia, Emanuel Schegloff, and Elinor Ochs for their insightful comments on the earlier version of this paper. However, I am wholly responsible for any problems or errors that remain.

¹Since the Korean topic marker *nun* and the Japanese topic marker *wa* display striking similarities, I will also refer to findings on *wa* whenever they are relevant to *nun*. However, the assumed relevance of the findings on *wa* to *nun* would be speculative at best.

²According to Biber & Finegan (1989), the notion of speaker stance is defined as referring to speaker's attitudes, feelings, judgments, or commitment concerning the propositional content of a message.

³The sentence-level association of the thematic *nun* with generic sentences referring to a permanent state of a referent, rather than sentences referring to a specific,

temporary event (cf. Kuno, 1973), can be viewed in terms of the compatibility of the nature of the predicate with the meaning of *nun*, because foregrounded speaker stance would be more significantly involved in identifying an "unobservable" permanent state such as generic, characteristic traits than in referring to an "observable" temporal, specific event (cf. Kuno, 1973; Kim, 1990).

⁴The stance-foregrounding and stance-backgrounding functions of these particles are posited as the interactional meanings which reflect the speaker's interactional strategy of exploitation made possible by their invariant meanings, which I earlier posited as "speaker-relevant focus" for *nun* and "event-relevant focus" for *ka* in the framework of the form-content analysis (Kim, 1990). The speaker-relevant focus is defined as a semantic instruction signaling that the speaker imbues a *nun*-marked referent with a high degree of subjectivity in relation to the following predicate. The event-relevant focus, on the other hand, is a semantic instruction signaling that the speaker is presenting a *ka*-marked referent, highlighted only in relation to the event being described, not in relation to the speaker's subjectivity. (For detailed introduction to the form-content analysis of the Columbia school, see Kirsner (1979).)

⁵In the English translation of the following examples, I will use the bold type for *nun*-marked entities, and, whenever relevant, I will underline *ka*-marked entities. Some English glosses are followed by a bracket in which the kind of interactional move carried out by the utterance is specified. In the Korean transcripts, overlaps are marked by "[", and interruption is marked by "/". An uncompleted utterance is followed by two hyphens "- -". (For transcription conventions, see Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson (1974).)

⁶*nun* and *ka* are realized as *un* and *i* respectively when preceded by a consonant.

⁷In the use of thematic nominalization which initiates an extended turn, we also find a sense in which the speaker establishes a story-telling context for the purpose of fending off the interlocutor's persistent opposing position.

⁸One such instance of *nun* was found in the data in the following context. After interlocutor A expresses frustration by saying that his classmates are going to conferences while he is not able to do so, interlocutor B downgrades A's point by producing a *nun*-utterance "*kukos-un yakwa-ya* (That's nothing)", and then talks about a more serious situation of his in which his classmates are publishing their papers in prestigious journals. This would be a case in which a direct rejection of the interlocutor's point is done to support the interlocutor.

⁹However, one can mark a strong agreement by adding adverbials like "congmal (really)" in this utterance. In this case, a strong agreement would be inferred by the rich ideational detail provided in the predicate (see conclusions for the interactional focus vs. the ideational focus in *nun*-utterances).

¹⁰This point is further supported by the fact that K's assessment at lines 1 and 2 contains the epistemic stance marker "-lkos", which indexes the speaker's objective and distancing stance (see footnote 15).

¹¹The interaction between the two kinds of focus in a *nun*-utterance is inherently intertwined with the discourse context. We can note in this regard that a sentence-level interpretation of a *nun*-utterance is likely to change according to what kind of discourse context we evoke in interpreting the sentence. For instance, the use of *nun* in a description of a specific event like "John-*nun* came" primarily yields a contrastive reading at the sentential level (cf. Iwasaki, 1987; Kim, 1990), which I

believe is attributed to the evocation of a conversational context where the interactional focus is more salient. However, a thematic reading becomes more relevant if we imagine that the sentence is being produced in an extended narrative about the *nun*-marked referent, where the ideational focus would be more salient.

¹²However, even in monologues, some degree of contrastiveness would still be inferred in a way that the narrator shows responsiveness to the preceding context.

¹³It seems to be the case that the thematic function of *nun* is salient in the "entity-oriented" type narrative rather than the "event-oriented" type narrative (cf. Kim, 1990). The former refers to narratives where the narrator talks about some major referent(s) with which he/she is familiar, and the latter refers to narratives like the Pear story where the narrator reports a series of events involving a number of anonymous participants. As Kim (1990) reports, thematic *nun* occurs much more frequently in the Grandpa story, an entity-oriented narrative where the narrator talks about his grandfather, than in the Pear story, where there is no major character that the narrator is familiar with and can co-align himself with.

¹⁴This characteristic of *nun* is congruent with Lee's (1987) observation that *nun* establishes unchallengeable common grounds whose relevance is taken for granted for the subsequent discourse.

¹⁵The distinction between the two kinds of speaker stance indexed by *nun* and *ka* and their different degrees of sensitivity to interaction may generally apply to other areas of grammar, where linguistic signs that denote more or less the same meaning are differentiated by their role of indexing subjective or objective speaker stance. For instance, Suh (in progress) shows that, between the Korean epistemic stance markers "-kess" and "-(u)lkos", the former indexes a subjective, speaker involving stance and the latter an objective, distancing one. As she notes, "-kess" is more tuned to the interlocutor's utterance than "-(u)lkos" in natural conversation, which points to a strong correlation between speaker stance and the degree of interactional sensitivity.

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