

Communicative functions and pragmatic meanings of silence in conversational Korean*

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Ha, Sunjung and Taeho Kim. 2013. Communicative functions and pragmatic meanings of silence in conversational Korean. *Linguistic Research* 30(3), 583-610. The primary purpose of this study is to examine various types of silences observed in Korean conversation, particularly focusing on their communicative functions. In this study, the various kinds of silence occurring in Korean are discussed, using Korean news interview video data. More specifically, it investigates under what conditions an instance of silence occurs during conversation. It also looks at pitch change, bodily gesture, and eye gaze when an instance of silence is observed, to see their relations with the use of silence. This study finds out that an instance of silence may occur after a lengthened vowel, a topic marker, a question, a declarative, or a self-repair. It also suggests that the silence in Korean conversation has a variety of communicative functions such as a hesitation marker, a recognition marker, or an embarrassment marker. More importantly, it suggests that the most frequent use of silence is to mark the speaker's hesitation, and that the use of silence as a recognition marker lasts for the longest duration. (Pusan National University)

Keywords silence, hesitation, pitch, gaze, bodily gesture, turn-taking, communicative functions

1. Introduction

Silence frequently occurs in conversation for various reasons, and it comes, usually in the form of pause or break, between conversational turns which often indicate a hitch or slow-down in turn transition. Silence is often regarded as an unusual or troublesome act on conversational interaction, or as a dispreferred act that may be performed before the speaker's self-repair or word searching acts, depending on where it occurs (Goodwin and Goodwin 1986, Pomerantz 1984). This paper examines silence occurring in a colloquial form of Korean, particularly focusing on

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its communicative functions and places to appear in an utterance. More specifically, this study looks at the instances of silence found in the data, for their communicative functions, and claims that the speaker strategically uses silence to give various messages to the listener such as the speaker's hesitation or recognition, as well as his or her desire to hold conversational floor.

Silence in conversation has been the locus of many linguistic researches (Agyekum 2002, Bonvillain 1993, Mushin and Gardner 2009, Sacks et al. 1974, Schegloff 2006), and accordingly some degree of debates exist over how silence in conversation should be interpreted. Some argues that silence in conversation, appearing as a pause or break between turns, does not necessarily imply there may be a problem in conversation. For instance, when one is selected as the next speaker in conversation, there exists a natural delay between conversational turns (Mushin and Gardner 2009). Others investigate exquisite time when the speaker projects another speaker's turn, and they claim that silence in conversation may indicate a disengagement or a topic shift from the ongoing conversation (Schegloff 2006). They also state that silence in conversation may reflect reluctance between turns when it occurs between the end of one turn and the beginning of another turn. For example, when a question is raised, silence can occur from not getting a timely reply to the question or from not understanding the question itself correctly. Others take silence in conversation as an indication that not everything is going properly in turn-taking (Sacks et al. 1974). They say that silence can transmit meaning by expressing reverence, love or awe. Indeed, silence itself can function as a powerful message, and it can even project non-verbal cues (Agyekum 2002, Bonvillain 1993). In Akan speech community, silence may be used as a gesture of respect or deference to authority (Agyekum 2002). Silence in conversation may also indicate that people understand one another in their communicative acts, and positive interpersonal relationship exists among people. In a similar vein, silence is regarded as a necessary background that gives meaning to speech (Johannesen 1974).

There are also chances for creative and metaphoric interpretation of what is left unsaid, so what it means to be silence in conversation may differ from culture to culture (Kim 2010). Silence in Asian culture is often interpreted as acceptance while the one in western culture is usually viewed as disagreement. Johannesen (1974) says that the right not to speak comes from what one does or does not believe, as well as from what one knows. He proposes a list of 20 typical ways of interpreting

silence observed in speech communication.¹ Similarly, Jensen (1973) also points out that silence in conversation may perform a number of different communicative functions when it is used along with non-verbal cues, such as a shrug of the shoulders, a frown, a tensed mouth, a glare, a clenched fist or a nod of the head. For example, it may function as linking people together or as indicating assent or dissent to what is stated or implied in the speech.² Verschueren (1985) proposes eight factors that he thinks would trigger silence between conversational turns. In other words, silence may occur in a conversation due to the eight different reasons, and they are given as follows: Silence appears in conversation when the speaker is temperamentally declined to talk, when the speaker is not able to talk because he or she becomes strongly emotional, e.g. being amazed, when the speaker has nothing more to say, when the speaker has forgotten what to say, when the speaker is indifferent about the current conversational topic, when the speaker is unable to select the next speaker, when the other speaker is currently speaking, as well as when the speaker tries to hide something.

As was stated above, silence in conversation has been investigated extensively, and its various communicative functions have been reported as the result of what have been studied thus far. Although communicative features of silence in conversation are well-established for languages such as English, but this is not necessarily the case for Korean. That is, silence in Korean has been studied to some degree, but its research has been concentrated mostly on speech pathological issues (Lee 2006). Some researchers investigate silence in Korean from a linguistic, particularly sociolinguistic perspective. For instance, Kim (2010) interprets silence in a sociocultural point of view, suggesting how silence is analyzed differs from culture to culture. Yet, it seems that not much attention has been paid to communicative functions and pragmatic meanings of silence in conversational Korean. For this reason, this study investigates many instances of silence with respect to its communicative functions and meanings, in order to broaden our understanding of the communicative roles of silence in conversational Korean.

¹ See Johannesen (1974) for the list.

² See Jensen (1973) for the complete description of its various communicative functions.

2. Data and methods

This section is devoted to the description of the data used for this study, as well as how they are analyzed. As was addressed before, previous analyses of silence in Korean are far from being comprehensive. For this reason, this study looks at silence in Korean from both linguistic and non-linguistic bodily-visual practices, using video interview files.

The data used in this study is obtained from a video TV interview, and its length is approximately 15 minutes long, during which four participants are actively engaged in a question-answer format of conversation.³ Two participants are a comedian and a rapper respectively, and they are invited to the TV interview program as guests. The other two participants are anchors of YTN, the Korean news channel, and they are the hosts of the program. The first two speakers are labeled as HD and DJ, and the latter two speakers are labeled as MA and FA respectively.

The interview is mainly about the reasons and motivations to have become a hip-hop musician. That is, the guests formed a hip-hop group, and they released their first album recently. The hosts of the interview, i.e., the anchors of YTN, introduce the guests as well as their album to the TV viewers, and they ask the guests what makes them to have become a hip-hop musician.

In order to better study communicative aspects of silence in Korean, this study examines a pitch and prosody placed before and after the silence. The speech analysis program, called *Praat*, is used for the acoustic analysis of the pitch and prosody of the relevant parts.⁴ More specifically, the pitch and prosody in those parts of the speech where silence takes place are examined to describe communicative properties of silence appearing in a conversation. Along with pitch and prosody, bodily-visual aspects are also studied to see whether they play any roles, when they appear together with silence. As a matter of fact, it is previously claimed that bodily-visual behaviors are coordinated with speech, and their roles extend beyond the possible completion of verbal formulations. Good examples of bodily-visual practices associated with silence include facial motion, eye gaze and hand movement (Jefferson 1989).

³ The interview video file is freely available at the following address:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uZ_YEhyDd4.

⁴ *Praat* is freely available from the website, <http://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat>.

Silence lasts for the different length of time; Silence lasting for less than 0.5 second is considered a short silence, and silence lasting for longer than 0.5 second a long silence. Jefferson (1989) analyzes silence with the length of one second or so (e.g. 0.9-1.2s) as the longest silence, and he points out that any silence longer than 0.5 second is often linked with a variety of non-verbal activity. Following are examples illustrating how silence in Korean may be classified into its subtypes.⁵

(1) Hesitation marker⁶⁷

kayngste: (0.5) layp(0.3)-i >cwuchwuk<-idoyn-n=
gangster rap-NOM pivot-become-REL
“Ganster’s rap becoming a pivot...”

(2) Recognition marker

u::m (0.8) huhh[hhh
DP sigh
“(I see.)”

(3) Embarrassment

>batu-si-psiyo yeki< **ahwu (0.5) ss (0.5)**
take-HON-SEM here

(4) Self-repair

cehi-ka (0.4) cey-ka sa-nun kos-i cikum
1PL-NOM 1SG-NOM live-REL place-NOM now

(5) Question and Declarative

- a. >ileh<key chi:nha::n sai-i-sin-**kenkayo? (1.4)**
like.this close-REL relation-be-HON-Q
b. cengmal nu:l ma:khi-**telakwuyo.(0.9)** ettekke >ilehke<
really always jammed-SEM how like.this

As illustrated in the above examples, silence in Korean can occur in various positions for its various functions. Silence placed after an elongated vowel may

⁵ The contextual background for the examples (1) through (5) is not given here, but instead it is discussed later in the paper.

⁶ Since this study does not require detailed morpheme gloss, the level of morpheme gloss is given to its minimum degree

⁷ Transcription for each speech is made following the transcription convention given in Sidnell (2010).

indicate the speaker's hesitation, as in (1). Silence may also function as a recognition marker, as exemplified in (2), indicating that the speaker understand or admit what was stated in the immediately preceding utterance by the other interlocutor. Silence in Korean can reflect speakers' feeling of embarrassment. That is, when there is no response to the speaker's statement or when turn-taking does not take place in an appropriate way, the speaker often places silence before expressing his or her feeling of embarrassment in the following speech. Silence used as an embarrassment marker is exemplified in (3). Silence may appear when the speaker makes a self-repair, as shown in (4), reflecting the speaker demands for the time to repair his or her statement. Finally, silence immediately following a question or statement, like the one in (5), may indicate that the other interlocutors dislike to take the next turn. Therefore, when one is selected as the next speaker, a pause may be placed between turns indicating a dispreference for turn-taking (Mushin and Gardner 2009).

As is noted before, bodily-visual practices like an eye-gaze are often helpful in classifying silence into its sub-groups. For instance, when he or she feels hesitant or disaffiliated, the speaker seeks to avoid an eye contact with the other interlocutor, and this may be taken as a marker of the speaker's hesitation. In contrast, the speaker seeks for an eye contact with the listener when he or she wants to make sure that the listener understands what has been said. Therefore, it may be said that these bodily behaviors help us to determine the communicative functions of silence in Korean.

3. Silence in Korean conversation

This section is devoted to the quantitative and qualitative discussion of various communicative functions that silence in Korean conversation holds. That is, Korean speakers intentionally use silence during speech, for example, to express their thoughts or opinions about what was stated in the preceding speech. In other words, silence is not the mere break or pause that the speaker takes in order to breathe, but it is often an indication of hesitation, agreement or recognition, especially when used with a variety of non-speech bodily gestures.

3.1 Silence as a marker of hesitation

As is stated above, silence in conversation appears in a variety of places for several different reasons, and the most common function of silence in Korean seems to be marking the speaker's hesitation. The speaker intentionally places a pause during a speech as a way of expressing his or her hesitation or reluctance to talk about a certain thing. As a matter of fact, silence is often psychologically manifested by the speaker's hesitation during conversation (Bruneau 1973). In this section, instances of silence that occur in Korean conversation are examined with regards to its relation with the speaker's hesitation or feeling of embarrassment. Consider the following examples.

- (6) a. **tulepo-si-n-pwun-tul-u::n (0.9)** mwo: koyngcanghi co::m
 listen-HON-REL-person-PL-TOP DP extremely DP
- b. **han-phyen-ulo-nun tto ilehkey: (1.6)**
 one-way-in-TOP also like.this
- c. **pangsong-ul ha-myense:: (1.5)** (sh) cey-ka ha-nun
 broadcasting-ACC do-while 1SG-NOM do-REL

In (6a), there is an instance of somewhat short silence appearing after the elongated vowel that denotes the speaker's hesitation. In (6b), 1.6 seconds of a long silence occurs after the use of discourse marker, *ilehkey* 'like this', to express the speaker's hesitation. Similarly, in (6c), 1.6 seconds of a long silence appears immediately after a conjunction, *-myense* 'while', again denoting the speaker's hesitation. As you may tell from the above examples, Korean speakers often place a pause during a speech to show that they feel somewhat reluctant to talk about a certain thing. Silence marking the speaker's hesitation may appear in various positions during a speech, but it most frequently occurs after an elongated vowel, a discourse particle or a conjunction. When a vowel of a given word happens to be lengthened, a silence, either short or long, may follow that elongated vowel; Some expressions seem to make a speaker feel hesitated, or even embarrassed, to mention about it. Therefore, the speaker is reluctant to say those expressions, so that he or she elongates the vowel part of those expressions, which would result in a period of silence during a speech. Consider the following conversation as an example.

- (7) 40 MA: =twu-pwun-i i ilehkey:: (0.3) pokcang->i com<
 two-person-NOM this like.this outfit-NOM a.little
 41 namtalul-si-ntey mali[cyo.
 unusual-HON-EPS SEM
 “Two persons, like this, (your) clothes are a little unusual?”
 42 HD: [ney:: (0.7)
 yes
 43 MA: ikey mwusun >iyu-ka ta< iss-nu:n
 this what reason-NOM all exist-REL
 >sophwum-tul-in-kayo<?
 props-PL-be-Q
 “Do these props have any reason?”
 44 HD: (0.4) sss (0.6) >amwulayto< cey-ka com (0.7)
 somewhere 1SG-NOM DP
 45→HD: **kayngste: (0.8)** layp(0.3)-i >cwuchwuk<-itoy-n=
 gangsta rap-NOM pivot-become-REL
 46 =umak-ul hada-bonikka [yey
 music-ACC do-because yes
 “Somewhere a little... because I play music that gangster rap
 becomes pivot... yes.”

In (7), the two guests, labeled as HD and DJ in the transcription, make their first appearance on television since their first music album was released into the music market. Both of the two anchors are somewhat shocked to learn about their music genre and to see their strange outfits. Therefore, the male anchor (henceforth, MA) asks the guests why they are dressed in such an unusual way, and if there is any reason for being dressed in that way. In the speech transcription given from the line 40 to 43 of (7) above, MA comments about the strange outfit of the guests, and then he asks if there is any reason for such unusual outfits. HD receiving such a question becomes embarrassed and tries to explain why they are dressed like that by associating his outfit with a gangsta music genre. The gangsta music is not encouraged in Korean society, and the atmosphere not welcoming such a genre, as well as questioning his outfit as strange, seems to make the guest feel embarrassed. Thus, it is only natural that he becomes hesitated, or even reluctant to talk about the

gangsta music, after which he places a 0.8 second of a long pause to express his hesitation or reluctance to mention such an unwelcoming word, as is illustrated in the 45th line of (7) above. In fact, lengthening a certain vowel itself is a good indication of the speaker's hesitation. Furthermore, HD's hesitation is even attested in his bodily gesture such as an eye contact, as shown in the following figure. He even attempts to avoid an eye contact with the anchor, so he looks down when the word is being said, as is illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1. The gaze before and after a lengthened vowel

In Figure 1, the left image shows HD's gaze before pronouncing the word, and the image on the right shows his gaze after pronouncing that word. In other words, the change of HD's gaze, marked with dotted arrows, clearly shows that HD wishes to avoid an eye contact with the anchors, so he looks down while he is uttering the expression, which he believes is not welcomed in rather conservative Korean society.

An explicit pause is often placed after a discourse particle, such as “yes, you know” or “like this”, as an indication that the speaker feels rather uncomfortable to speak about an upcoming statement. That is to say, the speaker's hesitation may be marked not only by a discourse particle but also by the silence placed after a discourse particle marking the speaker's hesitation.⁸ As a matter of fact, Schegloff (1987) points out that an expression like “yes, but...”, often referred to as a “predisagreement,” can trigger a delay between turns, functioning as a harbinger of what is to come in conversation. Therefore, it may be said that the silence placed after such a discourse particle may imply that the speaker is being cautious or careful about what to be said next in conversation. Consider the following conversation where such a tendency is attested.

⁸ Due to its function, a discourse particle marking the speaker's hesitation tends to appear before a clause begins or right after the subject.

- (8) 472→HD: han-pyen-ulo-nun tto ilehkey: (1.6)
one-way-with-TOP also like.this
473 DJ: [ney
yes
474 HD: cal sa:l-tun mo:s sal-tu:n (0.3) ttokkathun chato-lo
rich live-whether NEG live-whether same road-with
475 makhi-telakwuyo.
jammed-sem
“On the other hand, like this... (the traffic) is jammed by the
same vehicles whether (people) are rich or poor.”

In (8), HD talks about the heavy traffic which is always observed on Olympic Express Way. He relates the heavy traffic with our tightly clogged life, feeling sorry for such an undesirable situation, and then he explains why he named his song “The Olympic Express Way.” As you can see in the 472nd line of (8), a long pause of 1.6 seconds is placed immediately after the discourse particle, *ilehkey* “like this”, and it implies that the speaker is being careful with what he is about to say next. In fact, 1.6 seconds later, HD states that “Every sort of vehicles on the express way would have to run through such a heavy traffic, regardless of how luxurious it may be.”



Figure 2. Gaze before the silence and hand movements after the silence

As is attested in Figure 2, the speaker attempts to avoid the direct gaze when he feels uncomfortable to talk about what he needs to say next. That is, HD looks down, instead of having a direct gaze with the anchors, when silence is placed after the discourse particle. This can be taken as an evidence that shows the speaker's being careful or feeling hesitated about what to be said next. After a long pause ends, he explains what he wants to state, using both of his hands, to show that he

- 474 HD: cal sa:l-tun mo:s sal-tu:n (0.3) tokkatun chato-lo
rich live-or NEG live-whether same road-with
475 makhi-telakwuyo.
jammed-DECL
“(The traffic) is jammed by the same vehicles whether
(people) live in rich or poor.”
- 476→FA: u::m (0.8) huhh[hhh
477 MA: [cikum mwo: uymi bwunsek-ul
now DP meaning analysis-ACC
478 [ha-nun-key te wuski-eyo. ciku::m
do-MOD-NOM more funny-DECL now
“Now, (it is) more funny to do the meaning analysis of
Olympic Expressway.”

In the data, HD explains why he has named his song “Olympic Express way.” He says that he always witnesses a heavy traffic jam on Olympic Express Way, and he feels sorry about such a tightly clogged life by relating the traffic jam with our life. He also says that people living in a city where everything runs so fast are similar to one another no matter how rich or poor they may be. The female anchor (henceforth, FA) responds with a laugh to HD’s personal but philosophical commentaries because she did not expect such a serious justification from him, a comedian. As a matter of fact, the recognition marker, ‘u::m’ in the 476th line, would denote that FA understands or acknowledges his account, and then there is a silence followed.

MA also adds an additional response to HD’s statement. What is interesting is that HD accounts for how his song has acquired the title of “Olympic Express Way.” HD seeks for FA’s gaze, and then they make an eye contact with one another, indicating that they understand one another’s statement. The bodily gesture of eye gaze is marked with dotted arrows in Figure 3 below.



Figure 3. The gaze exchange during the silence functioning as a recognition marker

3.3 Silence as a conversational floor holder

Similar to the cases of lengthened vowels, a short or long period of silence often appears after a topic marker (*un/nun*) in Korean. The speaker intentionally takes a short or long break after the topic marker, rather than at the end of a clause, to show that he or she wishes to continuously hold the conversational floor while thinking of what to say next. Consider the following conversation.

- (10) 336 MA: [cengmal
really
- 337 kulayyo?
is.that.so
“Is that really so?”
- 338 HD: (0.6) sasil >kuntey< ku: teyphuko::n-ssi::-uy umak-ul
actually but the Defcon-Mr-pos music-acc
- 339 →**tulepo-si-n-pwun-tul-u::n (0.9)** mwo: koyngcanghi co::m
listen-hon-rel-person-pl-top dp extremely dp
- 340 (0.3) cal a-si:-lkelako >sayngkakha-pnita.< wona:k com (0.3)
well know-comp think-sem very dp
- 341 umak cachey:-to:: (0.6) (sh) (0.2) >koyngcanghi< com
music self-also extremely dp
- 342 meyniacekin umak-[i com kanghak[o:::
maniac music-nom dp strong
“But, actually (I think that) the people who listen to the

Defcon's music know (it) very well. The very music-self is strongly maniacal."

In the conversation immediately preceding (10), where four people were talking about the personality of the guests, MA said that he had gotten the wrong impression that DJ, one of the guests, were really aggressive and extrovert, and DJ, on the other hand, tried to convince the anchor that his thought was wrong. Yet, MA wanted to make sure if what DJ said was true, so he responded to DJ's statement with the question "Is that really so?", as shown in the 336th and 337th lines of (10). Then, HD got into the conversation to support DJ's assertion.

It appears, in the 338th line of (10), that HD was somewhat hesitated to say that MA had a wrong impression about DJ. Therefore, he made a 0.9 second long pause after the (contrastive) topic marker, *un*, in the 339th line, to indicate that he was being cautious about initiating a controversial topic, as well as to earn a time to think of what to say next and how to say it. That is, HD claimed, contradicting MA's thought, that once listening to Defcon's songs, people would understand the situation well. What is interesting is that all the instances of silence classified into this type appear with a high rising pitch on the topic marker, marked with a dotted circle in Figure 4.

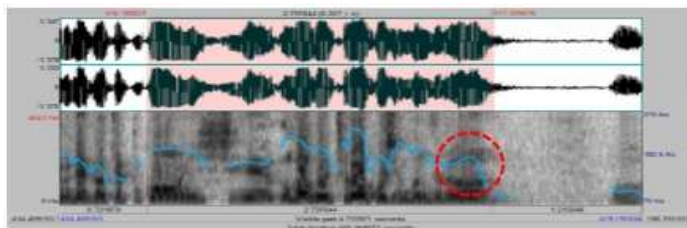


Figure 4. A high pitch on a topic marker

Furthermore, the speaker, HD, did not directly look at MA. As a matter of fact, he intentionally avoided a direct gaze at MA while silence lasted. This bodily practice is deeply associated with silence, and it is marked with dashed lines in the following figure.



Figure 5. The speaker's gaze before and after a topic marker

In Figure 5, HD looks at MA directly while he is making a speech up to the introduction of a topic marker, yet he avoids the direct gaze at MA, by looking down at the desk, during when as well as right after he utters the topic marker *-un*. It is clear that HD's eye gaze differs before and after the pronunciation of the topic marker, and the change of this bodily gesture is marked with dotted arrows in the left and right image of Figure 5.

3.4 Silence as a marker of a topic proffer

It is generally said that a current speaker continues his or her turn if no other participant is selected; when no one picks up the turn in a conversation, silence ensues (Mushin and Gardner 2009; Sacks *et al.* 1974). If no one chooses to talk, then this is not considered problematic. Even if someone is selected as next, there would be little or no pressure to respond. This lack of pressure to respond may result in an instance of silence (Sacks *et al.* 1974). It is observed in this study that when a speaker makes an unexpected statement and no one responds to it, the speaker self-selects the next turn to give an additional statement to his or her preceding statement. This type of turn transition is initiated by a self-topic proffer and is continued by a topic talk. In the conversation below, HD says where he lives and why he named his song as *Olympic Expressway*.

- (11) 462 HD: (0.5) cehi-ka (0.5) cey-ka sa-nun kos-i
 we-nom I-nom live-mod place-nom
 cikum
 now

- 463 eyui:do-nte: sss cehi-cip-eyse ilehkey
 Yeuido-sem my-house-from like.this
 ol>limpik<daylo:->ka<
 Olympic Expressway-nom
- 464 nu:l boi-ketunyo[::: >kunte< (0.6) ss (0.4)
 always see-sem but
 “The song called ‘Olympic Expressway’ is actually... The
 place that I live now is *Yeuido*, (I can) always see *Olympic
 Expressway* from my house.”
- 465 FA: [ney:
 yes
- 466→HD: **cengmal** **nu:l** **ma:khi-telakwuyo. (0.9)** ettekkey
 really always jammed-DEC how
 >ilehkey<
 like.this
- 467 nu:l makhi-ilswu[iss-ulkka:?
 always jammed-can-Q
 “(The traffic) is really always jammed. How is (that
 traffic) always jammed like that?”

In the 466th line of (11), HD makes an abrupt statement, ‘(The traffic) is really always jammed.’ Few people may have such information, so only few people are likely to participate in the conversation. It is only natural that an instance of silence follows after the statement like this. Then, HD self-selects himself as the next speaker, and he continues his talk making additional commentary about the heavy traffic jam on the expressway. In this conversation, HD tries to attract all the other participants’ eye gazes by directly looking at them, which is marked with dotted arrows in Figure 6 below. That is, HD, the speaker, sends them a message, which may be interpreted as ‘I would like you to take the next turn.’



Figure 6. The speaker's seeking gaze before and after the silence used as a topic proffer

3.5 Silence as an embarrassment marker

An instance of silence can be observed as an embarrassment marker; A speaker may feel embarrassed or even disconcerted if neither turn-taking nor reaction is made after he or she says something. Therefore, it is only natural for an instance of silence to be followed, as is seen in the 38th line of (12).

- (12) 35 DJ: [yu seywun-ssi! (giving an album to FA)
 Yoo Seyun-Mr.
 "Mr. Yoo Seyun!"
- 36 FA: ahwu komapsupni[ta.
 wow thank.you
 "Wow, thank you"
- 37 DJ: [ney
 yes
- 38→HD: (0.4) >batu-si-psiyo yeki< **ahwu (0.5) ss (0.5)**
 take-hon-sem here wow
 "Take (this) here, wow"
- 39 FA: ahwu=
 ahwu
- 40 MA: =twu-bwun-i i ilehkey:.(0.3) bokcang->i com<
 two-person-nom this like.this clothes-nom a.little
- 41 namtalu-si-ntey mali[cyo?
 unusual-hon-sem right-q
 "Two persons, like this, (your) clothes are a little unusual?"

In a sense, this use of silence as an embarrassment marker is similar to that of a topic proffer. In another sense, it differs from the previous case in that it does not require a self-select turn, and another conversational participant may take the next turn instead.

In (12), DJ and HD give out their music album, as a gift, to the two anchors. More specifically, DJ says '*please take this,*' handing over the album to FA. In the 38th line of (12), HD also gives a present to FA, and a short period of silence comes together with *ahu* and *ss*; Then, HD becomes embarrassed and avoids an eye contact with the two anchors in order not to self-select himself as the next speaker, by looking down the table. This bodily-gesture is illustrated in Figure 7. It is clear to MA that HD does not want to take the turn, so he takes the turn starting a new topic, as shown in the 40th line of (12).

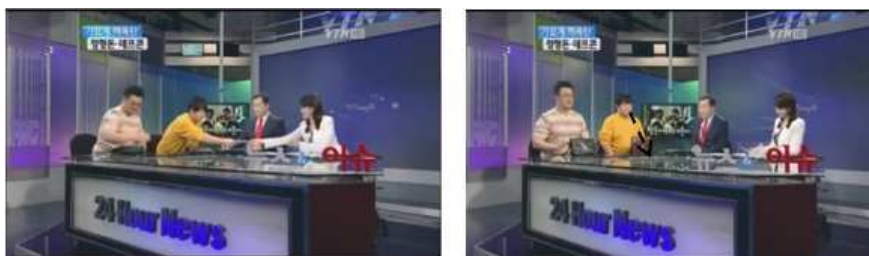


Figure 7. the speaker' s gaze after the feeling of embarrassment

3.6 Silence as a marker of the listener' s dispreference

An instance of silence may also be analyzed as a dispreference marker appearing after a question. That is, a certain duration of silence may appear when there is no immediate response to the question. When someone is selected as the next speaker, is requested or offered something, a certain length of speech break tends to occur between conversational turns (Mushin and Gardner 2009). Schegloff (2006) also states that when a question is asked, a short or long silence may happen from not getting a timely reply. In this sense, an instance of silence is often regarded as the marker of dispreference (Goodwin and Goodwin 1986; Mushin and Gardner 2009; Pomerantz 1984).

According to our data, an interrogative marker in Korean has always a rising

pitch pattern, and a silence after an interrogative marker seems to function as marking the speaker's dispreference to take the next turn. In the conversation, the two anchors occasionally ask the two guests such questions that they feel dispreferred to answer. Thus, when the guests, the listeners, answer such a question, they naturally try to avoid an eye contact with the anchor, the speaker. This is attested in the conversation and Figure 6 below.

- (13) 210 FA: [ney::
yes
21 →twu-pwun-i wonlay >ileh<key chi:nha::n
two-person-nom originally like.this intimate
sai-i-sin-kenkayo?(1.4)
relation-be-hon-q
“(You), two persons, originally have a close relation?”
212 DJ: y[e?
pardon
213 FA: [hhh
214 HD: [uhhh
215 FA: [uhahaha
216 DJ: uhahaha[haha
217 FA: [hahahaha [.hh chinkwu: ani-sin-[kayo?
friend neg-hon-q
“Aren’t you close friends?”

In (13), FA asks an abrupt question to the two guests, HD and DJ, “Are you close to each other?” This question does not seem to make any sense to the guests, who are very good friends to each other, and it causes them to have an absurd, loud laugh. More specifically, in the 211th line of (13), FA makes a silly inquiry with a rising tone, and it makes both guests, DJ and HD, feels embarrassed. As a result, approximately 1.4s long silence is immediately followed and is construed as the listener's dispreference to the speaker's question. This phenomenon is also attested in the guests' bodily gestures. That is, DJ looks up the ceiling and HD looks down for a while, and then they both burst out loud laughing illustrated in Figure 8. In this sense, this type of silence may be analyzed as a marker showing listener's

dispreference to the preceding question.



Figure 8. Gaze during and after silence following a silly question

3.7 Silence placed after a conjunction

As the placement of silence is frequently observed after a conjunction, various forms of conjunction can trigger the different uses of silence in Korean conversation. For example, on one hand, a conjunction, such as *because* or *whether*, often leads to a clause which contains a debatable issue as its content. On the other hand, a conjunction, such as *and*, *but*, *so*, or *while*, tends to lead a clause that conveys a message the speaker feels difficult and reluctant to mention about. The following is the conversation, in which this tendency is attested.

- (14) (We) are extremely introvert. So actually when (we) met at the broadcasting for the first time, at that time Hyung-Don was an MC and I was a guest.

235→DJ: bangsong-ul **ha-myense:: (1.5) (sh)** cey-ka ha-nun
 broadcasting-acc do-while lsg-nom do-rel
 236 mal-tul-u:l (0.2) cal ma:l>acwu-tela<koyo
 word-pl-acc well mix-sem
 “While doing broadcasting, he mixed well the words that I
 said.”

In the conversation preceding (14), FA asked DJ if he and HD were close friends. DJ answered her question by explaining how they had become acquainted with each other. DJ said that they were introduced to each other for the first time at

a TV program, and DJ was a guest and HD was a host of the program. DJ said that he was still grateful to HD for his hospitality. In the 235th line of (14), 1.5 seconds of rather long silence occurs immediately after the conjunction, *-myense* ‘while’, and this occurrence of silence indicates that the speaker is being careful, and even hesitant to say what is going to be said next, that is, “he mixed well the words I said.” The speaker’s hesitance may be observed in a variety of bodily gestures. Consider Figure 9 below, with the focus on the dotted arrows.



Figure 9. the speaker’s eye gaze after the use of a conjunction

What needs to be noted is the direction of the speaker’s gaze. That is, immediately after the use of the conjunction, in the 235th line of (14), DJ seeks to avoid looking at two anchors, and instead he looks up to the ceiling, as if he wants to express that he is recollecting that very moment when they met each other for the first time. It is also notable that a conjunction, when used along with a certain duration of silence, leads a clause containing the contents that the speaker would feel difficult or hard to speak about. There is, however, no noticeable pitch change placed between before and after the use of this conjunction. Consider the following conversation.

- (15) 448 FA: ahu (0.9) huh
 449 HD: coysong-hapnita. a:h ye::h
 sorry-sem
 “I am sorry.”
 450 FA: ah eccel-kka (0.4) hh
 how-q
 “How (can I do)?”
 451→HD: nyusu-lul cheum >nawa-kaciko< (0.7)

news-ACC first.time come.out-because
 “(It is) because (I) came out at news for the first time.”

In the conversation preceding (15), DJ and HD sing their hip-hop song, and it makes the anchors laugh out loud. Then, HD makes an apology for having ruined the news atmosphere, which is normally very tensed and strictly managed. He even tries to explain why they had to overact singing their song. In contrast with the conjunction *-myense* ‘while’ in (14) above, the subordinator *-kaciko* ‘because’ in (15) is preceded by the statement that “this was the first time (for us) to be on a TV news program.” The clause preceding the conjunction expresses an excuse or a reason why HD is not very happy to give out, and this brings out 0.7 long second of silence placed after the use of a conjunction, as illustrated in the 451st line. Similarly, there is no noticeable pitch change between before and after the use of the conjunction.¹⁰

3.8 Silence after self-repair and in-between words

The one thing to point out is that a speaker can have an instance of silence while doing a self-repair. That is, when a word or phrase is not produced correctly, the speaker often places a certain duration of pause before he or she repairs his or her utterance. In (16), HD says that he has a view of Olympic Expressway from his house, and then he talks about our tough and hard lives, relating them to the expressway.

- (16) 462→HD: (0.5) **cehi-ka** (0.5) **ce-ka** sa-nun kos-i
 we-NOM I-NOM live-MOD place-NOM
 cikum
 now
 463 eyui:do-nte:sss cehi-cip-ese ilehke
 Yeuido-DECL my-house-from like this
 ol>limpik<daelo:->ga<
 Olympic Expressway-NOM

¹⁰ Unfortunately, HD’s gaze during his speech was not observable in the video file.

be-sem

“We um.. are a new group, Hyungdon and Daejune.”

In the 16th line of (17), HD makes a pause between *sinin kulwup*, ‘new group’ and *Hyungdon-i-wa Daejune-i* ‘Hyungdon and Dajune’ in order to stress their group name ‘Hyungdon and Daejune.’ A rising pitch is placed in the *Hyung* part of *Hyungdon-i* as is indicated by the dotted circle in Figure 11, and it is taken as a supporting evidence to show that this particular instance of silence functions as emphasizing the expression to come next. In addition, HD has a direct eye contact with the two anchors.

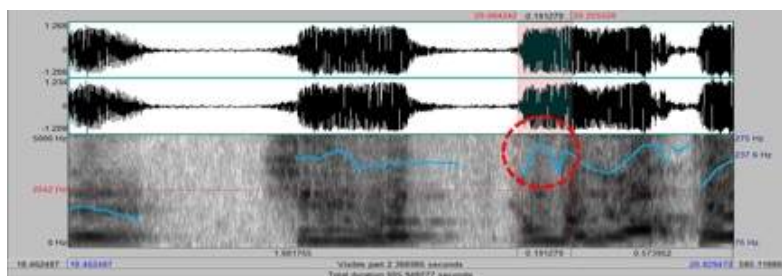


Figure 11. A high and rising pitch indicating an emphasis

3.9 The frequency and length of silence

In this section, it is discussed which kinds of silence appear in Korean conversation, and how long each lasts, presenting a continuum of silence. According to the data, the most frequently occurring type is the use of silence as a hesitation marker, while the least frequent one is the use of silence after a self-repair or in-between words. Consider the following table.

Table 1. The frequency of silence occurring in Korean conversation

Type	per cent (n=102)	Type	per cent (n=102)
as a hesitation marker	27.5%	as a recognition marker	7.8%
after a conjunction	13.7%	as an embarrassment marker	5.9%
after a declarative	12.8%	after a lengthened vowel	3.9%
after a topic marker	12.8%	after a self-repair	2.9%
after a question	11.8%	in-between words	1%

According to Table 1, the use of silence marking the speaker's hesitation (27.5%) is far more frequent than any other uses of silence. The uses of silence after a conjunction and a topic marker also indicate the speaker's hesitation. Thus, it may be said that the most frequent use of silence is to mark the speaker's hesitation (54%). Consider the following table.

Table 2. The mean length of silence occurring in Korean conversation

Type	Length (mean)	Type	Length (mean)
as a recognition marker	0.64s	after a question	0.51s
as an embarrassment marker	0.62s	after a declarative	0.51s
after a conjunction	0.61s	after a topic marker	0.44s
as a hesitation marker	0.55s	in-between words	0.40s
after a self-repair	0.53s	after an elongated vowel	0.32s

According to Table 2, the use of silence as a recognition marker has its longest duration whereas an instance of silence occurring after an elongated vowel lasts for its shortest duration. The duration range of silence is represented as a continuum given in Figure 12.

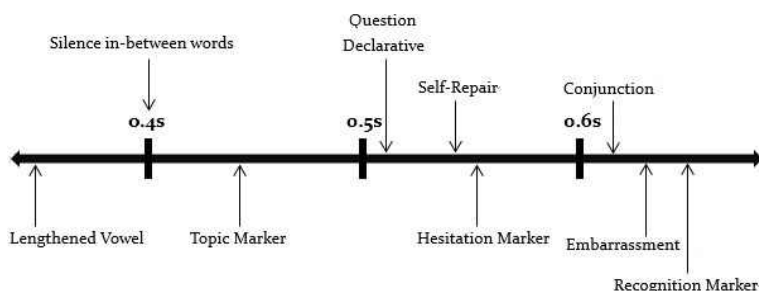


Figure 12. A continuum of silence duration in Korean

4. Concluding remarks

This study examines the various uses of silence in conversational Korean, using a short TV interview file. More specifically, it investigates what triggers the use of silence in conversation, considering pitch changes and bodily gestures as a relevant factor. According to the data, it appears that the most commonly occurring function of silence is to mark the speaker's hesitation. For example, the use of silence after an elongated vowel is due to the speaker's reluctance or hesitation in saying that word. An instance of silence often appears after the use of a topic marker in a sentence, when the speaker feels hesitated to say the subject part of the given sentence. Furthermore, silence marking the speaker's hesitation often occurs together with bodily gestures such as avoiding an eye contact with the listener. An instance of silence also appears after the use of a conjunction, also marking the speaker's hesitation. The use of silence as an indication of the listener's understanding of the preceding statement frequently occurs with certain types of bodily gestures; the speaker seeks for the listener's eye gaze to ensure that the listener has good understanding of what is stated. The use of silence may also be used as a dispreference marker indicating that no one wants to select the next conversational turn. Lastly, the use of silence is also observed after an instance of self-repair or in-between words to mark an emphasis. Simply put, silence in conversational Korean is most likely to be used as a hesitation marker, and the use of silence as a recognition marker lasts for the longest duration.

There are some issues to be addressed in future studies for the better analysis of

communicative functions of silence in conversational Korean. First, a further study can be done with more silence data to verify our classification of silence in Korean conversation. Second, it would be worth pursuing further researches on the uses of silences in comparison with those of other languages, as the use of silence is considered as a means of communication in many different cultures; an instance of silence in Korean conversation tends to last longer than that of other languages because it is often considered as a sign of politeness.

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Received: 2013. 11. 14
Revised: 2013. 12. 27
Accepted: 2013. 12. 27