

## **The semantics and pragmatics of the focus particle -*na* in Korean\***

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**Kang, Sang-gu. 2015. The semantics and pragmatics of the focus particle -*na* in Korean. *Linguistic Research* 32(2), 355-378.** Korean has a diverse array of post-nominal particles, from which the speaker of a sentence can select one as the most appropriate for the semantic and pragmatic imports she intends to convey. The current approach tackles the issue of identifying the semantic contribution of *-na* in some constructions, and explaining seemingly divergent discourse effects of utterances employing the particle. Previous major studies, such as Yang (1973) and Ryu (2013), offered univocal analyses of diverse uses of *-na*, but failed to offer intuitively plausible accounts of the particle. The present study limits its purview on the so-called ‘second-best’ usage of *-na*, and utilizes the notions of subjective pragmatic scale and addressee orientation to identify its semantic core which bears on the relevant data. More specifically, within the focus particle framework, it is proposed that the particle indicate the addressee's unfavorable view toward the focus value as the speaker sees it. Speakers may use it to contrast the addressee's attitude toward the focus value with that toward an alternative value, which can be null. Furthermore, it is claimed that the particle's semantic contribution is better categorized as conventional implicature, rather than presupposition or assertion as previous studies have contended. (Hansung University)

**Keywords** *-na*, focus particle, conventional implicature, conversational implicature, presupposition, pragmatic scale, addressee orientation

### **1. Introduction**

Korean has many post-nominal particles whose usages range from marking grammatical cases to conveying various kinds of semantic and pragmatic information. They have been in the center of debates for the complexity and intricacy of their

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\* This research was financially supported by Hansung University.

\*\* I thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic contributions. Compared with other particles, *-na* has received less attention. This paper aims to provide an analysis of the particle which can handle more data than previous ones did.

There are at least three distinct uses of *-na*, as the following illustrate.

- (1) K-*na* J-*ka* ka-lswuiss-*ta*<sup>1</sup>  
 K-NA J-nom go-can-dec  
 ‘Either K or J can go.’
- (2) syechu-lul sey cang-*ina* sa-ss-*ta*<sup>2</sup>  
 shirt-acc three unit-NA buy-perf-dec  
 ‘I bought as many as three shirts.’
- (3) wuli yenghwa-*na* po-*ca*<sup>3</sup>  
 we movie-NA see-cohort  
 ‘Let’s watch a movie.’

In (1), the disjunctive coordinator *-na* requires two phrases to serve as disjuncts. (2) and (3) are syntactically distinct from (1) in this respect. In (2) *-na* is attached to a measure phrase, and it indicates that the quantity expressed by the measure phrase is more than what the speaker expected (Lee 1993). In (3), it is used as a sort of scalar particle whose specific meanings will be discussed later.

The two uses exemplified by (2) and (3) are not merely distinct in terms of the semantic characterizations of the particle, but they are also distributed in different types of sentences. The unexpectedness marking following measure phrases is compatible with realis moods, but the scalar use is confined to sentences expressing irrealis moods.<sup>4</sup> For instance, the unexpectedness marker is fine within sentences with perfective and imperfective aspect, e.g., (2) and (4a), but is not felicitous in (4b, c, d), an imperative sentence, a desiderative sentence, and a hortative sentence, respectively.

<sup>1</sup> I follow the Yale Romanization convention in transcribing the Korean examples.

<sup>2</sup> For an account of *-na* in numeral constructions, see Chung et al (2002).

<sup>3</sup> The particle is realized in two different forms, viz., *-na* and *-ina*, depending on whether the nominal it attaches to ends with a vowel or a consonant.

<sup>4</sup> The distinction between realis and irrealis is essentially based on the notion of factuality (Nordstöm 2010).

- (4) a. syechu-lul sey cang-ina ip-koiss-ta  
 shirt-acc three unit-NA wear-impf-dec  
 ‘I’m wearing as many as three shirts.’  
 b. #syechu-lul sey cang-ina ip-ela  
 shirt-acc three unit-NA wear-imp  
 ‘Wear as many as three shirts.’  
 c. #syechu-lul sey cang-ina ip-ullay  
 shirt-acc three unit-NA wear-desi  
 ‘I’m thinking of wearing as many as three shirts.’  
 d. #syechu-lul sey cang-ina ip-ca  
 shirt-acc three unit-NA buy-cohort  
 ‘Let’s wear three shirts (and that’s a lot).’

The distribution of the scalar *-na* is almost complementary with that of the unexpectedness *-na*, as attested by (5).<sup>5</sup>

- (5) a. #wuli-nun yenghwa-na po-ass-ta  
 we-top movie-NA see-perf-dec  
 ‘We just watched a movie.’  
 b. #wuli-nun yenghwa-na po-koiss-ta  
 we-top movie-NA see-impf-dec  
 ‘We are just watching a movie.’  
 c. ne-n yenghwa-na po-ala  
 you-top movie-NA see-imp  
 ‘Just watch a movie!’  
 d. na-n yenghwa-na po-llay  
 I-top movie-NA see-desi  
 ‘I’ll just watch a movie.’

It is not acceptable in a perfective or imperfective sentence, e.g., (5a) and (5b) respectively, but is flawless in an imperative sentence, e.g., (5c), a desiderative one, e.g., (5d), and a hortative one, e.g., (3).

<sup>5</sup> The reason why the distributions are not fully complementary is that (5a) and (5b) are judged as acceptable by some speakers. To me, however, they are marginal at best.

The different sentential environments are crucial in telling the two different uses of *-na* apart. Whether the particle is attached to a measure phrase is not a sufficient indicator of its role. Consider the following example from Yang (1973: 112).

- (6) i hakkyo-eyse-nun kotung-kosi-ey han myeng-ina hapkyekha-yss-umyen  
 this school-loc-top high-test-loc one unit-NA pass-perf-opt<sup>6</sup>  
 ‘I wish at least one student of this school had passed the higher civil  
 service exam.’

In (6), the particle does not indicate unexpectedness on the part of the speaker, even though it is attached to a measure phrase. The mood of the sentence optative and the usage of the particle is akin to that in (3) in that it evokes a certain pragmatic scale whose exact nature will be the main topic in Section 3.

These considerations lead to positing two different lexical entries of *-na* to account for the sentences (2) and (3). The present paper descriptively examines the usage of *-na* as a scalar particle, and seeks to provide its semantic contribution and identify its information status. I will not address the uses of *-na* as the unexpectedness marker or the disjunctive coordinator. In the literature, including Lee, Chung, and Nam (2000) and Choi (2007), there have been discussions of particular constructions involving the particle, e.g., *amwuna* and *nwukwuna*. This paper will eschew these indefinite phrases as well.

In Section 2, I review previous studies. While critically assessing them, various examples of the scalar use of *-na* will be introduced. Most of these examples are taken up again in Section 3, where I present the core meaning of the particle and determine its information status. Section 4 concludes the paper.

## 2. Previous approaches to scalar *-na*

### 2.1 Yang (1973)

Yang (1973) is important not merely because of his detailed and comprehensive

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<sup>6</sup> To keep this Korean example consistent with others in the present paper, I replaced the original lexical glosses with mine.

analysis of *-na*, but also for the clear intuition. He lays out the semantics of the particle, for all its diverse uses, in the following fashion.

(7) semantic analysis of *-na* in Yang (1973: 106)

presupposition: (i) The choice is potentially still open; (ii) The *na*-attached element is the sample to show a certain degree.

assertion: The *na*-attached element compensates for the ideal primary choice which is not available.

The presupposition (i) is due to his supposition that the use of *-na* as an unexpectedness marker or a scalar particle is not separate from its use as a disjunctive coordinator; the former is merely a reduced version of the latter. For instance, Yang analyzes (8) as containing a covert phrase immediately following *yenghwana* according to this approach.

- (8) wuli yenghwa-na (?) po-ca  
we movie-NA see-cohort  
'Let's watch a movie.'

This is problematic because, unlike other well-known elliptical constructions, the supposedly elided material in (?) is not recoverable, no matter how rich the context may be.

The second presupposition alludes to a pragmatic scale on which the denotation of the noun phrase *-na* is attached to may rank high or low. Yang explains that 'presidency' in (9a) is a high point on a scale (110), while 'washing hands' in (9b) marks a low point on another (111).

- (9) a. sensayngnim-un taythonglyeng-ey-na chwulmahay-poseyo  
sir-top president-loc-NA run.for-exhort  
'Sir, try to run for an office such as the presidency.'  
b. son-ina ssis-ko siksa-lul ha-yla  
hand-NA wash-and eating-acc do-imp  
'At least wash your hands and then eat.'

It is understandable that ‘presidency’ will rank above any other official posts in the Korean government system, and ‘washing hands’ may well be one of the minimal prerequisites for having a meal. The problem with this presupposition is that it is not specific about the nature of the scales involved. Merely stating that the relevant noun phrases denote some values on pragmatic scales is rather vague. Some of the subsequent studies have delved into this issue and offered clearer pictures of the scales underlying the uses of *-na*.

Yang claims that the denotation of the noun phrase delimited by the particle is not the ideal primary choice. He further states that from this meaning we can derive the implication that the very denotation is “neither the best choice nor the last recourse” (106). This intuition appears plausible when we consider cases like the following (109).

- (10) hal il-i                eps-unikka, cam-ina    ca-ya-keyss-ta  
       do work-nom    lack-because sleep-NA    sleep-must-prsm-dec  
       ‘I would rather sleep since I have nothing particular to do now’

In (10), it is clear that ‘sleeping’ is deemed as the less optimal choice of action the speaker is opting for, and that *-na* is instrumental in conveying the idea. This intuition is shared by Lee (1993), who claims that, given *X-na*, “X is a random choice among the second bests” (79).

Upon close inspection, however, Yang’s postulation of the assertorial content of *-na* turns out to be inadequate in accounting for the data. For (10), granting that the ideal choice of action is unavailable to the speaker at the time of utterance, it is not clear why ‘sleeping’ should be regarded as the second best choice, but not as “the last recourse.” More troublesome are sentences in (9). For (9a), if one is to consider ‘presidency’ as a secondary choice, what will be the primary choice? Similarly, one would be hard-pressed to find a better choice than ‘to wash one’s hands’ given the situation (9b).

To summarize, the presuppositions and the assertion Yang attributes to *-na* are not directly applicable to many of the data he cites. The first presupposition relies on Yang’s contention that (2) and (3) are reduced versions of disjunctive constructions, which is untenable. His second presupposition holds an important observation that the particle invokes a pragmatic scale, but it needs to specify the role pragmatic

scales play in interpretation of the whole sentence. The proposed assertorial contribution of *-na* is relevant, but certainly is in need of refinement.

## 2.2 Lee (2003)

Lee takes *-na* as a trigger of an existential presupposition as in the following (124).

(11) semantic analysis of *-na* in Lee (2003: 124)

The generalized form of presupposition triggered by *x-na*

- (i) *x* is one of the members of the set *X* that may be evoked in the prior linguistic context or situationally evoked at the discourse site.
- (ii) There is *y*, another member of the set *X*, such that it is potentially available to be chosen by the speaker at the discourse site.

On the basis of the presuppositions, he explains diverse discourse effects of the particle in terms of conversational implicature. For example, the sentence uttered by B in (12) has the meanings as in (13) (121).

(12) A: Youngmee-ssi, Linda sayngil senmul mues cwu-lkeyeyyo?

Youngmee-Ms. Linda birthday present what give-will

‘What are you going to give to Youngmee for her birthday?’

B: ce-nun chayk-ina cwu-lkeyeyyo.

I-top book-NA give-will

‘I will just give a book.’

(13) a. Assertion: ‘I will give a book.’

b. Presupposition: ‘There are other elements, e.g., T-shirt, to pick out other than a book from the set of birthday presents.’

c. Conversational Implicature: ‘I know that my choice is not the best one but as a default choice I choose *x*.’

As is evident by (13a), Lee does not see *-na* as affecting the truth conditions of the whole sentence. In this respect, Lee’s approach is, I believe, an improvement over Yang (1973).

It is also notable that he treats the less-than-ideal effect of the particle as conversational implicature as in (13c). This move is somewhat controversial because the effect does not seem to manifest the properties that Grice (1975) attributed to conversational implicature. First of all, Lee does not explicate how the particular implicature is derived step by step. According to Grice (58), a conversational implicature is brought about because one calculates “what has to be supposed in order to preserve the supposition that the Cooperative Principle is being observed.”

Secondly, the conversational implicature (13c) does not seem nondetachable. As Grice puts it, calculation of conversational implicature hinges on what is said, but not how it is said, because of which “it will not be possible to find another way of saying the same thing, which simply lacks the implicature in question.” (58) Assuming that what is said per Grice is equivalent to “assertion,” as in (13a), the presence of the particular implicature (13c) owes crucially to the occurrence of the particle *-na*, not what is said. To exemplify, consider the following example from Lee (121).

- (14) ce-nun chayk-ul cwu-lkeyeyyo,  
 I-top book-acc give-will  
 ‘I will just give a book.’

With accusative marker *-ul* substituted for *-na*, (14) does not give rise to the implicature (13c). This fact is a clear evidence that the implicature is detachable.

The third problem with treating (13c) as conversational implicature is that it is not clear how it is cancellable, which is another important trait of pragmatic inferences. If the speaker tries cancelling the implicature in the following way, the utterance will sound incoherent.

- (15) ce-nun chayk-ina cwu-lkeyeyyo.  
 I-top book-NA give-will  
 (??choyko-uy senmul-i toy-lkeyeyo.)  
 best-of present-nom become-will  
 ‘I will just give a book. It will be the best present.’

The unacceptability of (15) with the parenthesized sentence uttered suggests that the

implicature (13c) is not conversational.

The critique of Yang's account of the assertorial meaning of *-na* holds for Lee's approach as well. They share the same intuition that the noun phrase immediately preceding the particle denotes something less than ideal. Even if we assume that this is the legitimate part of the meaning of (12B), the problems pointed out above makes it clear that (13c) should be information of a different kind from conversational implicature. In Section 3.4, I discuss the information status of the core meaning of *-na* by re-examining the data.

### 2.3 Ryu (2013)

Ryu (2013) is the most thorough investigation into *-na* in the literature. He claims that the noun phrase preceding the particle denotes the lower bound of pragmatic scales of epistemic, deontic and optative modality. For instance, (16) is interpreted with an epistemic scale.

- (16) pap ciul ssal-i epse cwuk-ina sswue mek-uni hansimha-ta  
 meal cook rice-nom lack porridge-NA cook eat-because pitiful-dec  
 'Not having rice, it is pitiful that you cook and eat porridge.'

He explains that when the value 'porridge' is assigned to the variable in the open proposition 'it is pathetic to cook and eat x,' the result can be judged to rank lowest on the scale of possibility—in other words, to be the least likely to happen.

In a similar fashion, Ryu contends that (17) and (18) are interpreted using a deontic scale and an optative scale, respectively.

- (17) tangsin-ina ka-si-o  
 you-NA go-hon-imp  
 'You go!'
- (18) maykcwu-na han can masi-ess-umyen coh-keyss-ta  
 beer-NA one glass drink-perf-if good-prsm-dec  
 'I wish I had a glass of beer!'

To explain (17) in his framework, assigning the value 'the addressee'—out of the

available entities in the context—to  $x$  in the open proposition ‘ $x$  goes’ yields a proposition which is located at the lowest point on the scale of obligation. In other words, the addressee’s departure is less necessary than anyone else’s. As for (18), given the potential choices, ‘beer’ is the least desirable drink for the speaker.

Ryu’s account is consistent across diverse data:  $X$  in  $X$ -*na* denotes the lower bound of a modal scale. This consistency, however, comes with significant costs. First, in Ryu’s approach, there is no justification of which scale is to be at work for which sentence: a particular scale is assigned to a particular sentence arbitrarily. Thus, there is no predicting which scale is to be evoked for which case.

Secondly, the explanations for some examples are either counter-intuitive or unclear. Let us reexamine the ones above. In (16), the proposition under consideration is that a person with a fortune brag about her wealth. I believe it is rather safe to conclude that the possibility for some rich person to brag about it is higher than a poor person to do the same. This estimation goes against Ryu’s account of the example.

As for (17), imagine that the sentence is uttered by one of the two interlocutors, and that no third person is available as the potential value for the variable in the position of the agent. Now we will need to compare the two propositions ‘the speaker go’ and ‘the addressee go’ in terms of which is more necessary. Ryu’s account views the latter as the less necessary. Then the question is: How do we decide which of the two is more necessary? Maybe the context holds the answer to this query, and we simply do not have the specific context provided for us. Even if we accept the proposal that the latter is less necessary, there is the further problem that it seems odd that one would ask for a less necessary situation to be realized by uttering (17). (18) suffers from the same problem in that it is hard to understand why one would utter a sentence to make a wish for something which ranks lowest on the scale of desirability out of all the potential candidates.

In this section, I surveyed a few important studies of the scalar *-na*, namely, Yang (1973), Lee (2003), and Ryu (2013). The problems I pointed out above can be divided into two kinds. One is the issue of identifying a plausible core meaning of the particle, and the other is the issue of deciding what kind of information this core meaning is. In the next section, I tackle these two issues in turn.

### 3. The semantics of *-na*

#### 3.1 *-na* as an exclusive focus particle

The present approach is based on the treatment of *-na* as a focus particle. Focus particles are functional elements which may relate to different parts of the sentence through focusing—typically manifested through salience in pitch accent—to yield different interpretations of it. The meaning of the part of the sentence associated with a focus particle is called the focus value, and the effect of focusing is evocation of alternative values to the focus value. The characteristics of focus particles fit nicely with *-na*, considering the previous approaches which emphasized the role of alternatives to the speaker’s choice.

As mentioned in 2.2, Lee (2003) claims that *-na* triggers the presupposition in (11). However, if we assume that *-na* is a focus particle, then we can get the same effect from focusing which evokes a set of contextually determined alternatives. Then, of course, there arises the issue of whether this focus effect is in essence a presupposition. I find Dryer (1996) and Rooth (1999) insightful on this matter. They are both against the idea that the focusing effect is equivalent to triggering an existential presupposition.

As a piece of evidence against the existential presupposition approach, consider (10), repeated below.

- (10) hal il-i            eps-unikka,    cam-ina    ca-ya-keyss-ta  
do work-nom lack-because    sleep-NA    sleep-must-prsm-dec  
‘I would rather sleep since I have nothing particular to do now’

Requiring the presupposition to be satisfied in the context will run counter to the immediate context supplied by the subordinate clause, which specifically denies availability of any other activity than sleeping. Taking recourse to evocation of alternatives due to focusing, instead of positing existential presupposition, will allow us to sidestep such a problem.

In his foundational study on the typology of focus particles, König (1991) divides focus particles into two broad classes: inclusive and exclusive focus particles. Among common examples of exclusive focus particles are *only*, *just* in English, and

*-man* and *-pakkey* in Korean. With exclusive focus particles, none of the contextually relevant alternatives to the focus value of the particle “satisfies the open sentence obtained by substituting a variable for the focused expression” (98). For instance, assuming that the focus of *only* falls on *whiskey* in (19a), this focusing will evoke a contextually constrained set of alternatives, of which all but ‘whiskey’ will satisfy the open sentence *Fred drinks x*.

- (19) a. Fred only drinks WHISKEY.  
 b. only ( $\lambda x$ [Fred drinks  $x$ ], whiskey)

According to this scheme, *-na* belongs in the class of exclusive focus particles; while the focus value is contrasted with its alternative values, none of the sentences with any of these alternatives can substitute the focus value and be accepted by the speaker. Consider (3), where the focus value is ‘watching a movie,’ and its alternatives will be potential activities allowed by the context. Upon uttering the sentence, the speaker makes it clear that she settled on the particular choice, discarding other choices as unacceptable given the situation at hand. This point is brought home when we consider that the scalar *-na* is frequently accompanied by an explicit mention of rejection of an alternative.

- (3') wuli talun ke ha-cimal-ko kunyang yenghwa-na po-ca  
 we other thing do-refrain-and just movie-NA see-cohort  
 ‘Instead of doing anything else, let’s just watch a movie’

In (3'), the speaker precludes other potential alternative actions and insists on watching a movie. In a similar vein, consider (17), repeated below.

- (17) tangsin-ina ka-si-o  
 you-NA go-hon-imp  
 ‘You go!’

As was supposed previously, let us limit the individuals involved in the context to the speaker and the addressee of the sentence. By uttering it, the speaker makes it clear that she will not go. This is another piece of evidence for analyzing *-na* as an exclusive focus particle.

### 3.2 Scale of favorability

In this section, I address the issue of identifying the nature of the pragmatic scale involved in the uses of *-na*. I start by adopting the idea of “second-best choice” cited in the majority of the studies of the particle. Let us start by considering (12) again.

- (12) A: Youngmee-ssi, Linda sayngil senmul mues cwu-lkeyeyyo?  
 Youngmee-Ms. Linda birthday present what give-will  
 ‘What are you going to give to Youngmee for her birthday?’  
 B: ce-nun chayk-ina cwu-lkeyeyyo.  
 I-top book-NA give-will  
 ‘I will just give a book.’

B is considering a book an appropriate choice for Linda’s birthday present. The context does not reveal what the major candidates for the gifts are, but it is duly understood that books are being weighed among potential candidates in B’s mind. One thing worth mentioning is that we sense a certain degree of reservation. She does not sound fully confident and clearly conveys that books may not be the best choice out there.

Note that the context for (12B) does not have an alternative in contrast explicitly mentioned. Still, one can easily infer some fancier choices, such as a scarf, a pair of gloves, a wallet, and so on, thanks to our world knowledge. This is in line with the present approach, where an alternative is not presupposed, but is evoked through focusing.

To get a clearer picture of the effect of *-na*, let us compare (10) and the same sentence with *-ul* substituted for the particle.

- (10’) <sup>2</sup>ha-l il-i eps-unikka cam-ul ca-ya-keyss-ta  
 do work not.be-now.that sleep-acc sleep-must-prsm-dec  
 ‘I would rather sleep since I have nothing particular to do now’

Unlike (10), (10’) sounds rather odd, when sleeping is not being considered an important activity. The use of *-ul* after the noun *cam* ‘sleep’ is better suited in a

sentence which describes a situation where the activity attains more significance, as the following attests.

- (20) *nayil cikakha-myen an toy-nikka icey-nun*  
 tomorrow be.late-if not go.well-since now-top  
*cam-ul/ina ca-yaci*  
 sleep-acc/NA sleep-must  
 ‘I can’t be late tomorrow, so I’ve got to go to bed now.’

In (20), sleeping is something the circumstances oblige the speaker to do right at the moment. My judgment is that this factor has a direct bearing on the awkwardness of *-na* in place of *-ul* in (20).

While intuitively compelling, the notion of “second-best choice” suffers in the face of examples like (10). This notion entails that the focus value is seen to rank relatively high on the pragmatic scale of favorability. While this idea can handle cases like (12), where the speaker is contemplating a book as the birthday gift, I doubt that it fits with the situation where sleeping is being chosen as the choice with little enthusiasm on the part of the speaker. This consideration leads me to posit a more relaxed notion of ‘being less favorable’ as the core import of *-na*. The comparative notion is better suited for our purpose since it does not require the focus value to necessarily be a favorable choice. The following lays out the semantic contribution of the particle.

- (21) *na* indicates that  $f(a)$  is less favorable than  $f(\beta)$ , where  $a$  is the focus value associated with the particle,  $\beta$  is an alternative value in contrast with it,  $f(x)$  is the open sentence obtained by substitution of the variable for the focus value, and  $x$  is the variable for the value denoted by the expression being focused by *-na*.

This postulation makes it clear that the use of *-na* relies on the contrast between the focus value and an alternative to it in terms of degrees of favorability.

How does the present approach account for the examples for which Ryu (2013) had to employ different kinds of scale, namely epistemic and deontic scales? Let us revisit (16) and (17).

- (16) pap ciul ssal-i epse cwuk-ina sswue mek-uni  
 meal cook rice-nom lack porridge-NA cook eat-because  
 hansimha-ta  
 pitiful-dec  
 ‘Not having rice, it is pitiful that you cook and eat porridge.’
- (17) tangsin-ina ka-si-o  
 you-NA go-hon-imp  
 ‘You go!’

Ryu claims that ‘it is pitiful to cook and eat porridge’ is the least likely of all the available propositions that partake the epistemic scale. This claim is clearly counterintuitive. (16) is not a problem for the present approach, since we can explain the felicitous use of *-na* by pointing out that having porridge is seen as less favorable than having rice.

(17) is a more complicated case. Ryu’s account of (17)—the addressee’s departure is deemed less obligatory than anyone else’s—runs into a serious problem: it does not help us understand why the speaker of the sentence urges the addressee to go. However, the current account fares no better. According to (21), the departure of the addressee is seen as less favorable than someone else’s. We are left with the same question: Why issue a command to do something if it is less favorable than another? I tackle this problem in the next section.

### 3.3 Addressee orientation

While much of the previous research on *-na* has been centered on relativistic notions such as ‘being second-best’ and ‘being preferred,’ they have generally been tacitly assumed as objective. My claim is that, to better understand the particle, it has to be characterized as subjective and addressee oriented. To be more precise, *-na* marks the speaker’s belief about the addressee’s assessment of the focus value as being less favorable than an alternative in contrast. Addressee orientation is not a rare property to be associated with a linguistic item. For instance, it is generally believed that the use of the definite article in English requires the speaker’s assumption that the addressee can uniquely identify the referent of the nominal it is associated with.

To see how this analysis works, let us reconsider (17) in some context. Such sentences are typically uttered immediately after the addressee's entreaty for the same course of action. Consider the following dialogue at a bar.

- (22) A: manhi chwiha-si-ess-uni      icyey tayk-ey ka-sey-yo  
 much drunk-hon-perf-because now home-loc go-hon-dec  
 'You drank too much; Why don't you go home?'
- B: tangsinsin-ina ka-si-o  
 you-NA go-hon-imp  
 'You go!'

In B's sentence, the focus value is 'A,' and the alternative in contrast is 'B.' Then, in the present account, A's departure is deemed as less favorable than B's departure, not from B's perspective but from A's. In other words, the speaker of the sentence, by employing *-na* in it, acknowledges that the addressee does not really want to go home herself.

The following example from Lee (2003: 123) further illustrates why it is crucial to include the notion of addressee orientation in the account of *-na*.

- (23) kosam-i kongpwu-na hay-yaci. thelepicyen kactapeli-lkkeyya  
 senior.high-nom study-NA do-must TV throw.away-will  
 'You must study first. I will throw away the TV.'

The speaker admonishes her son using *-yaci*, a marker of deontic necessity. The quintessential import of *-na* has little to do with this necessity marker. Rather, it indicates the speaker's acknowledgement of her son's reluctance to study, and his favoring of watching TV, which is the alternative in contrast explicitly mentioned in the context. Accordingly, we can revise (21) to incorporate the notion of addressee orientation.

- (24) *-na* indicates the speaker's belief that the addressee sees  $f(a)$  as less favorable than  $f(\beta)$ , where  $a$  is the focus value associated with the particle,  $\beta$  is an alternative value in contrast with it,  $f(x)$  is the open sentence obtained by substitution of the variable for the focus value,

and  $x$  is the variable for the value denoted by the expression being focused by *-na*.

Examples like (22) and (23) pose a challenge for approaches which hinge on an objective (or the speaker's) assessment of what is second-best or less preferred. In the case of (22), B's bidding is hard to explain if we are to assume that B thinks of A's leaving as less preferred. Here, B sounds sincere in wanting B to leave, not himself. In the case of (23), such accounts will be hard pressed to explain why the speaker would urge her son, probably in anger and frustration, to do something which is only second-best.

The present account, on the other hand, can handle these examples and others introduced above in a consistent manner. Take (12B) for instance.

- (12) B: ce-nun chayk-ina cwu-lkeyeyyo.  
I-top book-NA give-will  
'I will just give a book.'

Here, the speaker reveals her decision to give a particular gift to someone, probably after comparing various candidates. The revelation itself counts as the assertion of (12B). The contribution of *-na* constitutes a separate piece of information: the addressee may well think that a book is hardly a fancy birthday gift. In this respect, *-na* in (12B) has a discourse effect of rendering the sentence polite, because the speaker is presenting her choice as modest, not grand or special. Since the particle is addressee oriented, it follows that even when the speaker thinks of her choice as highly favorable, she still may attach *-na* to the focused expression, if she believes that the hearer may well think less of the choice.

The same analysis applies to the following three examples introduced in Section 1.

- (25) a. wuliyenghwa-na po-ca  
we movie-NA see-cohort  
'Let's watch a movie'  
b. ne-n yenghwa-na po-ala  
you-top movie-NA see-imp  
'Just watch a movie!'

- c. na-n yenghwa-na po-llay  
 I-top movie-NA see-desi  
 ‘I’ll just watch a movie.’

The three sentences have different subjects: first person plural in (25a), second person singular in (25b), and first person singular in (25c). In (25a), the use of *-na* after *yenghwa* ‘movie’ can make the utterance more tactful because it indicates that the speaker is aware that the addressee may well find watching movies a fairly unexciting event. Similarly, the speaker of (25c) sounds polite to a certain degree since she is admitting that watching movies may well be looked upon as not highly favored by the addressee. In contrast, with (25b), the speaker is imposing an activity which the addressee does not favor. It is highly likely that the context immediately preceding (25b) is one where the addressee attempted some activity which he favored over watching a movie. Favorability from the addressee’s perspective is pivotal in an account of *-na* in these cases.

From the analysis above, it follows that the pragmatic effect of *-na* is closely tied to sentence types. In an imperative sentence such as (25b), the speaker sees two options, one of which is seen to be favored over the other by the addressee, and she issues a command for the addressee to perform what he prefers less. Thus, we can expect that *-na* renders the imperative sentence more intrusive or imposing to the addressee. On the other hand, in a desiderative sentence like (25c) or an intentional sentence like (12B), while expressing what she desire to do, the speaker recognizes that her choice may well be something the addressee considers less than optimal. In this way, *-na* within a desiderative sentence makes it sound more polite or modest, since it reveals that the speaker cares about what others think of her move. This effect is also observed in (25a). By uttering the cohortative sentence, the speaker invites the addressee to participate in an event of her choosing. Here, the role of *-na* is to make the event seem moderately good, but not great, from the viewpoint of the addressee. In this sense, the particle makes the suggestion more polite or modest.

### 3.4 The information status of the import of *-na*

Having layed out the semantic contribution of *-na*, it is in order that I address its information status. The critique of Lee (2003) in 2.2 rejected the idea that the sense

of ‘non-optimal choice’ the particle carries is conversational implicature. As seen in 2.1, Yang (1973) treated it as assertion, but the discussion above has shown that the assertion of each sentence having *-na* in it is separate from the contribution of the particle itself. If we follow the traditional practice of admitting one assertion per one sentence, then Yang’s take is not viable.<sup>7</sup>

Then the question narrows down to: Is it presupposition or conventional implicature? Unfortunately, this question is riddled with problems. Both presupposition and conventional implicature have had convoluted history, different authors imparting diverse definitions to them—some even conflating them. I will proceed on the assumption that the two are separate and stable semantic notions.

For presupposition, I follow the classical Frege/Strawson view, whereby a sentence *A*, via a certain constituent, presupposes proposition *B* iff the truth of *B* is a precondition of the truth or falsity of the assertion expressed by *A*. This characterization of presupposition recognizes two important aspects of the notion. It is lexically or grammatically triggered, and the presupposed proposition is considered part of what the user of the sentence is committed to. By this characterization, however, I do not deny any possible pragmatic aspects of it, including its exploitation such as accommodation. As Stalnaker (1972) notes, speaking of presupposition as semantic is not necessarily at odds with talking about its pragmatic aspects.

Now the question is whether the semantic contribution of *-na* as posited in (24) counts as presupposition. As long as we regard the truth of the assertion of a sentence as dependent upon the truth of its presupposition, it is intuitively clear that what the particle imparts is not likely a presupposed proposition. Consider a modified version of (12B).

- (26) *chayk-ina cwu-lyekoyo.*  
 book-NA give-intend  
 ‘I will just give (her) a book.’

If we assume that the assertion of the sentence above is ‘the speaker will give (Linda) a book,’ whether a book is seen as less favorable for the addressee as a

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<sup>7</sup> For a non-traditional stance, see Bach (1999), who allows more than one assertions per sentence.

birthday present certainly won't bear on the truth of the assertion.

This consideration leads us to entertain the possibility of (24) being conventional implicature. Grice (1975) contrasts what is said and other peripheral pieces of information conveyed by particles such as *therefore* and *but*, and calls the latter conventional implicature. More recently, Potts (2003) recast the notion by confining it to other kinds of information, i.e., expressive items such as *bastard* and *damn*. No matter which definition one may adopt, the following two tests lead to the conclusion that (24) is a conventional implicature, not a presupposition.

The first is backgrounding. Presuppositions are usually backgrounded, unless they are accommodated of course, whereas conventional implicatures aren't. Thus, if a sentence *P* presupposes a proposition *q*, a sequence of *Q* expressing *q* followed by *P* is considered an acceptable discourse, as the following illustrates.

(27) There is a King of France. The King of France is bald.

Applying this test to the import of *-na* in (25), we get (28).

(28) <sup>?</sup>[chayk-un peyllo-lako sayngkakha-si-lkeyeyyo.  
 book-top not.special-quot think-hon-will  
 'You'll think a book is not particularly good.'  
 chayk-ina cwu-lyekoyo.]<sup>8</sup>  
 chayk-NA give-intend  
 'I will just give (her) a book.'

With the information in (24) prefacing (26), the whole discourse sounds unnatural. The contrast between (27) and (28) suggests that the meaning of *-na* is not a presupposition.

The second test involves propositional attitude predicates. Presuppositions within the scope of *believe*, for instance, may be cancelled or plugged, but conventional

<sup>8</sup> A reviewer commented that (28'), the result of replacing the sentence ending *-lkeyeyyo* with the adversative connective *-keyssciman* is acceptable. However, I do not find (28') significantly less awkward than (28).

(28') [chayk-un peyllo-lako sayngkakha-si-keyssciman chayk-ina cwu-lyekoyo.]  
 book-top not.special-quot think-hon-will chayk-NA give-intend  
 'Even though you'll think a book is not particularly good, I will just give (her) a book.'

implicatures aren't.

(29) Kevin believes that his wife realizes that vaccines cause autism.

Presuppositional plugs such as *believe* may interfere with the projection of the proposition 'vaccines cause autism,' even though it is the argument of the factive *realize*, which is generally believed to trigger a presupposition. With *-na*, however, the speaker is committed to the information in (24) regardless of the presence of *believe* as the following attests.

(30) Paul-un yeca chinkwu-ka chayk-ina cwu-lke-lako  
Paul-top girl friend-nom book-NA give-will-that  
mit-koiss-eyo  
believe-impf-dec  
'Paul believes that his girlfriend will just give him a book.'

In (30), the verb *mit* 'believe' does not block the speaker's belief that the hearer of the utterance will feel that a book is nothing special.

The two tests lend support to the claim that the semantic contribution of *-na* is conventional implicature, rather than presupposition. The upshot of this conclusion is that the speaker's belief about the addressee's view of a book as a less favorable birthday gift is not presupposed, but imparted on the spot to the addressee through the selection of the particle *-na* out of the syntactically possible array of focus particles.

#### 4. Conclusion

Approaching *-na* from the perspective of focusing has a certain advantage: it can explain the presupposition effect of *-na* without burdening the particle with an actual presupposition. On the basis of this framework, I claimed that the particle is responsible for the conventional implicature that the speaker believes that the focus value is seen less favorable than an alternative in contrast. Favorability is in the eye of the beholder, and I propose that, with *-na*, the beholder be the addressee. In other

words, how the addressee views the proposition in question in terms of her favorability is seen to have a direct bearing on its use. Depending on the sentence types and the relationship between the discourse participants, the particle is seen partly responsible for pragmatic effects such as politeness or imposition. The present study is also different from previous ones in claiming that the semantic contribution of *-na* is better treated as a conventional implicature.

The present research clearly has its limitations. The first is that it only covers one of the main uses of *-na*. While it would be far more desirable to have a theory which can handle all of its uses, as in (1), (2), and (3), at this point, I simply do not see how that can be achieved without sacrificing the plausible explanations for cases addressed in this paper. Extending the present analysis of *-na* to encompass its other uses will be a daunting, if not impossible, task. Other limitations concern the imprecise nature of the favorability scale and the addressee orientation. At this point, I cannot offer rigorous formalization of these key notions, which will have to be relegated to future research.

The semantic contents of *-na* as delineated in (24) may appear rather peculiar, in that it involves a scale of favorability and is addressee oriented. However, this can also suggest a possibility that there may be far more variegated meanings in the world of focus particles across languages. I hope this study contributes to future investigation into semantic typology of focus particles.

### **Glosses of grammatical abbreviations**

acc: accusative  
cohort: cohortative  
dec: declarative  
desi: desiderative  
exhort: exhortative  
hon: honorific  
impf: imperfective  
imp: imperative  
int: interrogative  
loc: locative  
neg: negative  
nom: nominative  
opt: optative  
perf: perfective  
prsm: presumptive  
top: topic

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Received: 2015. 03. 02.

Revised: 2015. 07. 16.

Accepted: 2015. 07. 16.