

Revisiting Korean long form negative question: A usage-based perspective*

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Kim, Ahrim. 2016. Revisiting Korean long form negative question: A usage-based perspective. *Linguistic Research* 33(3), 371-394. Unlike most of the previous work on the semantic/functional ambiguity of the long form negative question construction in Korean which mainly focused on its terminology and classification, this present paper aims to revisit the issue from a strictly usage-based perspective. To do so, this study examines actual usages of the long form negative question from naturally occurring conversational data, collected from the 21st Century Sejong Corpus. My findings show that in Modern Spoken Korean, the construction is used for three different main functions: (i) to ask the hearer whether what the speaker assumes to be not true is true or not, (ii) to request the hearer's verification or confirmation of what the speaker assumes to be true, and (iii) to request agreement from the hearer about what the speaker assumes to be true. However, the corpus data analysis further shows that there are ambiguous cases of functional overlap among these three different functions. In this paper, I argue that these overlapping cases provide evidence that the three different functions have a gradient speech act continuum. Moreover, I claim that the synchronic functional ambiguity of the construction not only indicates that it is currently undergoing a functional shift, but the frequency analysis of each function and the categories that overlap further provide evidence for the direction of the construction's current semantic/functional shift. (Hankuk University of Foreign Studies)

Keywords long form negative question, usage-based approach, frequency analysis, speech act continuum, language change

1. Introduction

Korean uses various constructions for sentential or clausal negation¹. The two

* I would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions. All the remaining errors, however, are mine.

¹ There are numerous constructions for lexical or constituent negation in Korean as well (Sohn 1994: 130-139), but this paper will only deal with the sentential/clausal type.

main types are: ‘short form negation,’ using *an* and ‘long form negation’ using *-ci anh-* (Sohn 1978; Nam and Ko 1985; Im 1987; Kim 1990). An invented set of examples shows short form negation in (1a) and long form negation in (1b)².

- (1) a. *Kwupo-nun hakkyo-ey an ka-ss-ta.*
 Kwupo-TOP school-LOC NEG go-ANT-DECL
 ‘Kwupo didn’t go to school.’
- b. *Kwupo-nun hakkyo-ey ka-ci anh-ass-ta.*
 Kwupo-TOP school-LOC go-CON NEG-ANT-DECL
 ‘Kwupo didn’t go to school.’

The obvious difference between these two forms of negation is syntactic. In the short form, the negative morpheme *an* precedes the predicate; hence it is sometimes called ‘pre-verbal negation’. In the long form, the negative construction *-ci anh-* follows the predicate; hence it is sometimes called ‘post-verbal negation’ (J.-B. Kim 2000, cited in Park 2010).

Whether there are also semantic or functional differences between the short form and long form negation is a question that has been much discussed by Korean linguists (Oh 1971; Lee 1972; Im 1973; Song 1973, 1975; Cho 1975; Yang 1976; Lee 1979; Kim 1980; Suh 1984; Koo 1992; Lee 1993; Sohn 1994; Suh 1996; Lee

² All of the Korean examples in this paper are transcribed using the Yale Romanization system. Abbreviations used for morpheme-by-morpheme glossing are as follows:

ACC	Accusative	GEN	Genitive
ADD	Additive	HON	Honorific
ANT	Anterior	IMPF	Imperfective
ATTR(RL)	Attributive (Realis)	INDC	Indicative
CAUSL	Causal	INSTR	Instrumental
CIRCUM	Circumstantial	INTER	Interrogative
COMP	Complementizer	LOC	Locative
COMT	Comittal	NEG	Negative
CON	Connective	NEG(IMPOT)	Negative (Impotent)
COND	Conditional	NOM	Nominative
CONTRA	Contrastive	PLU	Plural
COP	Copular	PRECED	Precedence
DECL	Declarative	PRESUM	Presumptive
DET	Determinative	PURP	Purposive
DM	Discourse Marker	QUOT	Quotative
DUB	Dubitative	TOP	Topic
END	Ending	UFP	Utterance-Final Particle
FH.EV	Firsthand Evidential	UNASSIM	Unassimilative

1999; Lee 2008; Kim 2015). Another widely discussed topic concerns the use of long form negation in interrogative contexts, where it can carry more than one interpretation. The construction's semantic or functional ambiguity in interrogative contexts has been discussed by many Korean linguists, such as Kim (1981), Chang (1984), Chang (1986, 2001), Koo (1992), J.-H. Kim (2000), and Choe (2015), and is the focus of this paper. The basic assumption of most of the previous work on this topic is that if a construction has more than one function or meaning, then it should be considered two or more separate constructions. Much of the discussion has centered on questions of terminology and classification. In contrast, the present study will revisit the issue of the ambiguity of the long form negative question from a strictly usage-based approach. To do so it will examine naturally occurring conversational data collected from the 21st Century Sejong Corpus. By examining the actual usage of the long form negative question construction, this study intends to answer three main questions: First, what types of functions/meanings does the long form negative question have in actual use by the speakers? Second, if the construction can have more than one interpretation, how often is it used with each interpretation? And third, what can its functional ambiguity and its overall functional distribution tell us?

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 will briefly discuss previous work on the ambiguity of the long form negative question, and will introduce the theoretical background of this study's usage-based approach. Section 3 will provide detailed information on the data for the study. Section 4 will describe the coding used in the analysis of the corpus data. Section 5 will present the findings of the corpus analysis. Section 6 will discuss a number of important theoretical implications of the analysis, and section 7 will conclude the paper.

2. Literature review

The long form negative construction in Korean has attracted a great deal of attention from linguists because its interpretation in interrogative contexts can be ambiguous. Example (2) illustrates different possible interpretations of a long form negative question, as indicated by the English translations. Most previous work suggests that the construction has two possible interpretations (e.g., (2a) and (2c)),

but a few scholars consider three interpretations to be possible (e.g., (2a-c))

- (2) *Kwupo-ka hakkyo-ey ka-ci anh-ni?*
 Kwupo-NOM school-LOC go-CON NEG-INTER

- a. 'Kwupo doesn't go to school?'
 b. 'Doesn't Kwupo go to school?'
 c. 'Kwupo goes to school, doesn't he?'

Unlike English, which has different syntactic constructions for an echo question (which simply adds a rising intonation contour to the declarative sentence) and an interrogative (which is formed by subject-auxiliary inversion), Korean employs only one syntactic order to form a question. Thus, what has been considered as a single interpretation by most Korean linguists can in fact have two possible interpretations, as in (2a) and (2b). For example, in (2), the speaker may assume that Kwupo doesn't go to school and asks the hearer whether this assumption is true or not, as in (2a), or the speaker may assume that Kwupo does go to school, but is not entirely sure, and therefore asks the hearer for verification or confirmation, as in (2b). In the third interpretation, the speaker also assume that Kwupo does go to school, but this time requests the hearer to agree with him or her, as in (2c).

The main issue of the long form negative question's ambiguity has been whether the construction's speech act is truly interrogative or not, regardless of the polarity of the speaker's assumption (i.e., either negative, 'Kwupo doesn't go to school', or positive, 'Kwupo does go to school'). In other words, what seems to matter in previous attempts to distinguish between the different interpretations of the long form negative question is whether the speaker of the question is truly asking for information. According to most Korean linguists' arguments, the long form negative question in (2) with the interpretation in (2a) and (2b) is truly interrogative, because the speaker is requesting the hearer to provide some information that the speaker does not have at the time of speech: an explanation, verification or confirmation of the speaker's assumption. On the other hand, in the second interpretation of the long form negative question, as the translation in (2c) suggests, the speaker is not asking the question because he or she lacks certain information. Instead, the speaker believes that his or her assumption is true, and expects a positive answer or

agreement from the hearer. Hence, the interpretation in (2c) is not truly an interrogative speech act, unlike the interpretations in (2a) and (2b).

This functional ambiguity of the long form negative question in Korean has led to controversy over what to call it and how to classify it. The basic assumption behind this debate, is that if a construction has more than one function or meaning, then each of these functions or meanings should be considered to be those of different constructions.

Most scholars seem to agree that when the long form negative question functions as an interrogative speech act, as in (2a-b), it should be categorized as a ‘negative question’ construction. However, they take slightly different views on how to categorize the long form negative question that does not function as an interrogative speech act, as in (2c). Kim (1981) argues that it should be called *hwakin uywmunmwun* ‘confirmative question’ (translation mine), because rather than conveying negativity it expresses the speaker’s positive assumption (e.g., that ‘Kwupo goes to school’ rather than that ‘Kwupo doesn’t go to school’) and seeks confirmation from the hearer. Chang (1984) and Koo (1992) both classify it as a type of ‘tag question’. For instance, Chang calls the construction *cenhyengcek pwukauymwunmwun* ‘typical tag question’ (translation mine), analyzing the morpheme *-ci* as a sentential ending and the rest of the construction, *-anh-ni?*, as a tenseless tag. Koo, on the other hand, argues that the construction should be called *yunghaphyeng pwukauymwunmuwn* ‘amalgam type tag questions’ (Koo’s translation). He agrees with Chang that the morpheme *-ci* is a sentential ending, but he argues that the construction *-ci ahn-ni?* is derived from the syntactic reduction/fusion of the expression *kuleh-ci anh-ni?* (be.such-CON NEG-INTER) ‘isn’t it?’.

Unlike most of the scholars who have weighed in on this matter, Chang (1986, 2001) argues that the long form negative question in Korean has three, not two, different interpretations (as exemplified by the three different interpretations of example (2)). Chang argues that from a syntactic point of view, all three interpretations fall into a single category, the ‘negative question’. However, from a pragmatic point of view, they can be classified into three different subtypes: the first (e.g., ‘Kwupo doesn’t go to school?’) is *picenceyyongpep* ‘non-presuppositional usage’ (translation mine), because the speaker is not biased towards a presupposition; the second (e.g., ‘Doesn’t Kwupo go to school?’) is *ilchacenceyyongpep* ‘primary presuppositional usage’ (translation mine), as the speaker is biased towards a certain

(either positive or negative) assumption; the third (e.g., ‘Kwupo goes to school, doesn’t he?’) is *ichacenceyyongpep* ‘secondary presuppositional usage’ (translation mine), because the speaker is biased towards a positive assumption only, and the construction has a special usage – to request agreement from the hearer.

In this paper, I leave open the classificational or terminological issue of the long form negative question in Korean. I take a different approach to the construction by re-examining its semantic/functional ambiguity from a usage-based perspective. Usage-based theory proposes that language usage affects linguistic structure (Bybee and Beckner 2010), and that therefore, usage patterns, frequency of occurrence, language variation and language change provide direct evidence of language users’ cognitive representation of language (Bybee and Beckner 2010: 827). Taking this perspective, the present examination of the construction’s actual usages in Modern Spoken Korean will provide insight into how long form negative questions and their multiple interpretations are organized in a Korean speaker’s mind.

3. Data

Research within the framework of usage-based theory commonly examines naturally occurring language (Bybee and Beckner 2010: 828). To examine the semantic and functional ambiguities of the long form negative question construction in Korean, this study collected data from the 21st Century Sejong Corpus. Only naturally occurring conversations were selected from the corpus, hence monologues, lectures and speeches as well as written data were excluded. The study selected and examined 99 conversations consisting of casual talk, telephone conversation and group discussion between two or more interlocutors. These conversations took place between 2002 and 2005. The selected data comprise 439,167 *ecel*³.

4. Coding

Negative interrogatives in Korean are formed either by using an interrogative sentential ending (such as *-nya*, *-ni* or *-supnikka*) with an optional rising intonation

³ An *ecel* is a unit that is unique to Korean, but is roughly similar to a *word* in English.

contour, or by simply adding a rising intonation contour to a negative declarative or indicative utterance. For the data analysis, utterances ending with indicative/declarative sentential endings co-occurring with a rising intonation contour were considered interrogative constructions. However, when the rising intonation contour seemed to be used to show that the speaker wanted to keep the floor or that he or she was expecting a reaction from another interlocutor (such as backchannels), then the utterance was considered non-interrogative. Utterances with falling intonation were also considered interrogative constructions if they included interrogative sentential endings such as *-nya*, *-ni* or *-supnikka*. A total of 263 long form negative question constructions were found in the corpus data. In eight of these, it was impossible to define exactly how the construction was used due to lack of sufficient context. The remaining 255 cases were analyzed in detail.

Based on the corpus data, the long form negative question construction is mainly used with three interpretations in naturally occurring conversation in Modern Spoken Korean. The invented sentence in (2), repeated here as (3), exemplifies the three possible interpretations.

- (3) *Kwupo-ka hakkyo-ey ka-ci anh-ni?*
 Kwupo-NOM school-LOC go-CON NEG-INTER

- a. 'Kwupo doesn't go to school?'
- b. 'Doesn't Kwupo go to school?'
- c. 'Kwupo goes to school, doesn't he?'

Depending on the context, the construction could have the first interpretation, as in (3a), when the speaker is asking whether what he or she assumes to be not true (in this case, that Kwupo doesn't go to school) is true or not – hence it has been translated in English as an echo question ('Kwupo doesn't go to school?'). If a construction found in the corpus was used with this first interpretation, it was coded NEG ASSM (interrogative with negated assumption).

The construction could have the second type of interpretation, as in (3b), when the speaker is assuming that a certain proposition (in this case, the fact that Kwupo goes to school) is indeed true, but he or she is not absolutely confident about the assumption and so requests the hearer to provide verification or confirmation of it

(as indicated by the translation into English as ‘Doesn’t Kwupo go to school?’). If a construction in the corpus was used with this second interpretation, was coded PST ASSM/VER (interrogative with positive assumption requesting verification or confirmation).

The construction could have the third type of interpretation, as in (3c), when the speaker is confident that a certain proposition (in this case, that Kwupo goes to school) is true, and at the same time assumes that the hearer would take it to be true as well, and requests the hearer to provide agreement – hence it has been translated into English as a tag question (‘Kwupo goes to school, doesn’t he?’). If a construction found in the corpus was used with this third type of interpretation, it was coded PST ASSM/AGR (interrogative with positive assumption requesting agreement).

5. Functional distribution of the long form negative question in Modern Spoken Korean

Table 1 summarized the functional distribution of the long form negative question in Modern Spoken Korean according to the analysis of the corpus data.

Table 1. Functional distribution of long form negative questions in spoken Korean

	NEG ASSM	NEG ASSM or PST ASSM/VER	PST ASSM/VER	PST ASSM/VER or PST ASSM/AGR	PST ASSM/AGR	Total
LFNQ	5 (2.0%)	10 (3.9%)	57 (22.4%)	57 (22.4%)	126 (49.4%)	255

LFNQ = Long form negative question

NEG ASSM = Interrogative with negative assumption

PST ASSM/VER = Interrogative with positive assumption requesting verification or confirmation

PST ASSM/AGR = Interrogative with positive assumption requesting agreement

As the first column of Table 1 shows, only five of the 255 cases of the long form negative question (2.0%) in the corpus were used for NEG ASSM (i.e., the speaker is asking whether what he/she assumes to be not true is true). Excerpt (4)⁴ shows an instance of the long form negative question with this function.

- (4) 5CM00043
 (Context: P1 is telling P2 about his past experience working in a bar.)
- 1 P1: *ku patak-eyse ywuk kaywel iss-ess-te-ni,*
 that field-LOC six month exist-ANT-FH.EV-DET
 ‘After having been in that field (working in a bar) for six months,’
- 2 P2: @@
 ‘@@’
- 3 P1: <@ *malpal-i nul-te-kwun, @>*
 conversing.skill-NOM improve-FH.EV-UNASSIM
 ‘<@ My conversation skills were improved, @>’
- 4 P2: *a wenlay tangsin-uy= malpal-un [fileh-ci*
 DM originally your-GEN conversing.skill-TOP like.this-CON
anh-ass-e?]
NEG-ANT-INDC
 ‘Oh your conversation skills weren’t like this before?’
- 5 P1: [*na mal toykey mos-hay-ss-e.*]
 I speech very NEG(IMPOT)-do-ANT-INDC
 ‘I used to have very bad conversation skills.’
- 6 *na cincca-lwu*
 I real-INSTR
 ‘For real.’

In (4), after listening to P1’s explanation that he acquired his conversation skills by working in a bar, P2 uses a long form negative question in line 4. P2’s long form negative question is used to ask whether the fact that P1’s conversation skills weren’t good before working at a bar is true or not. Hence, P2 is asking whether a negated assumption is true or not, which is a clear example of NEG ASSM.

Let us discuss the results shown in the table’s third column (PST ASSM/VER) before those shown in the second column (PST ASSM/VER or NEG ASSM). The corpus data show that 57 cases of the long form negative question (22.4%) were used as PST ASSM/VER (i.e., the speaker assumes that a certain proposition is true, but requests the hearer’s verification or confirmation of this assumption). The excerpt

⁴ The transcription conventions for the excerpts are provided in the appendix.

in (5) illustrates an instance of the long form negative question used for PST ASSM/VER.

- (5) 4CM00011
 (Context: P2 and P1 are conversing about good places to visit in Seoul, Korea.)
- 1 P2: *Tongtaymwun ku ssyophingthawun isscanha.*
 Tongtaymwun that shopping town exist-UFP
 ‘You know that Tongtaymwun Shopping Town,’
- 2 P1: *ung.*
 yeah
 ‘Yeah.’
- 3 P2: *keki ka-se pam-ey no-nun kes-twu*
 that.place go-PRECED night-LOC play-ATTR(RL) thing-ADD
koyaynchanh-tula siwenha-kwu.
 good-FHEV cool-CON
 ‘I thought it was nice to hang out there at night, the air is cool too.’
- 4 P1: *keki nemwu celmun ay-tul-man*
 that.place too young child-PLU-only
iss-ci anh-na?
 exist-CON NEG-INTER
 ‘Aren’t there only younger people?’
- 5 P2: *ani-y-a.*
 NEG-COP-INDC
 ‘No.’
- 6 *uyoylo mweci=?*
 unexpectedly DM
 ‘Surprisingly, well,’
- 7 *os sa-le o-n os-ul po-le*
 clothes buy-PURP come-ATTR(RL) clothes-ACC see-PURP
sa-le o-nun ke-y an-i-la
 buy-PURP come-ATTR(RL) thing-COP NEG-COP-CONTRA
po-le o-canha,
 see-PURP come-UFP
 ‘You know, a lot of people come to look at the clothes, not to

- buy them,’
 8 P1: *ung.*
 yeah
 ‘Yeah,’
 9 P2: *koyngcanghi kwaynchanh-a.*
 very.much good-INDC
 ‘It’s a very nice place.’

In (5), the long form negative question is used by P1 in line 4. Unlike the long form negative question in (4), the construction in (5) suggests that P1 assumes that a certain piece of information (in this case, the fact that only younger people go to in Tongtaymwun Shopping Town) is true, rather than not true (hence it is a positive rather than negated assumption). However, because she is not completely sure about her own assumption, P1 uses the construction to request more information about it. Hence, this is a case of PST ASSM/VER. The corpus includes some cases of the long form negative question in which it is difficult to tell whether the speaker was using the construction for NEG ASSM or for PST ASSM/VER. In other words, there were cases where the construction’s interpretation could be ambiguous. Excerpt (6) is such an instance.

- (6) 7CM00044
 (Context: P1 and P2 are conversing in a café.)
 →1 P2: *Cihye-nun mwe= ywuhak kath-un ke*
 Cihye-TOP DM study.abroad be.like-ATTR(RL) thing
ka-ko siph-ci ka-ko siph-ci anh-a?
 go-CON wish-CON go-CON wish-CON NEG-INDC
 ‘Cihye, {don’t you want to / you don’t want to} go study
 abroad or something like that?’
 2 P1: *ywuhak-i-yo?*
 study.abroad-COP-HON.END
 ‘Studying abroad?’
 3 P2: *ung.*
 yeah
 ‘Yeah.’

- 4 P1: *ce-nun*=,
I-TOP
'In my case=,'
- 5 *oykwuk-ey ka-se.*
foreign.country-LOC go-PRECED
'In foreign countries.'
- 6 *oykwuk-ey ka-se kongpwu-ha-ko*
foreign.country-LOC go-PRECED study-do-CON
siph-un sayngkak-un pyello
wish-ATTR(RL) thought-TOP not.particularly
eps-ko-yo,
not.exist-CON-HON.END
'I don't particularly want go study in foreign countries but,'
- 7 P2: <@ ung, @>
yeah
'<@ Yeah, @>'
- 8 P1: *kunyang noll-e-nun ka-ko*
just have.fun-CON-TOP go-CON
siph-e-yo.
wish-INDC-HON.END
'I just want to go there to travel.'

In (6), P2 uses a long form negative question in line 1. From the hearer's (P1) point of view, P2's utterance could have two possible meanings: (i) P2 assumes that P1 does not want to go study abroad (as indicated by the translation *you don't want to*) and asks her if this is true (NEG ASSM), or (ii) P2 assumes that P1 wants to go study abroad (as indicated by the translation *don't you want to*) and asks her to verify or confirm if this assumption is true or not (PST ASSM/VER). As shown in the shaded second column in Table 1, the corpus includes ten (3.9%) such ambiguous cases.

Let us next discuss the results in the fifth column (PST ASSM/AGR) of <Table 1> before those in the fourth column (PST ASSM/VER or PST ASSM/AGR). The corpus data showed 126 cases of the long form negative question (49.4%) used for PST ASSM/AGR (i.e., the speaker assumes both that a certain piece of information

is true and that the hearer would assume it is true as well, and thus requests agreement from the hearer). Excerpt (7) is an instance of the long form negative question used for PST ASSM/AGR.

- (7) 4CM00034
 (Context: The speakers are talking about Chwucayen, a Korean actress.)
- 1 P6: *ippu-ci _____ anh-e?*
 pretty-CON NEG-INDC
 ‘She’s pretty, isn’t she?’
- 2 P1: *kyay-ka Cengwungin-ilang*
 that.child-NOM Cengwungin-with
kyelhon-ha-n-ta-kwu,
 marriage-do-IMPF-DECL-COMP
 ‘They say she’s marrying Cengwungin,’
- 3 P5: *yey.*
 yes
 ‘Yes.’
- 4 P4: *Cengwungin-ilang kyelhon-ha-n-tay-yo,*
 Cengwungin-with marriage-do-IMPF-QUOT-HON.END
 ‘They say that she’s getting married to Cengwungin,’
- 5 P2: *cincca-lo?*
 real-INSTR
 ‘For real?’
- 6 P6: *ippu-ci?*
 pretty-COMT
 ‘She’s pretty, right?’
- 7 *a nemwu ipp-e.*
 DM so pretty-INDC
 ‘Ah she is so pretty.’

In (7), P6 uses the long form negative question in line 1. The construction is not used to ask whether a negated assumption (i.e., that she is not pretty) is true or not; on the contrary, P6 assumes that the proposition is indeed true (i.e., that she is pretty); in other words, P6 has a positive assumption. However, P6’s stance towards his

assumption is unlike that of the speaker P4 in excerpt (5), who was not entirely sure of the truthfulness of her assumption and thus was asking the hearer for confirmation. In contrast, in (7), P6 seems to be very confident of his own assumption. Although it is possible the other interlocutors provided nonverbal feedback such as nodding (the transcript does not include such information), none of them provides a verbal response to P6's question in line 1. Instead, in lines 2-5, they talk about the actress's upcoming marriage. P6 then re-phrases his unanswered question in lines 6 and 7. This time, he uses a slightly different construction, an interrogative ending with the committal ending *ci*, which makes the utterance a very biased question towards the truthfulness of the proposition⁵, and hence has been translated into English as 'right?'. Furthermore, P6's following utterance in line 7 clearly demonstrates that he indeed believes that the actress is pretty. P6's utterances in lines 6 and 7 provide clear evidence that his long form negative question in line 1 is not used to request verification or confirmation from his hearers, but rather to request some type of agreement from them.

Excerpt (8) is another such instance.

- (8) 4CM00029
 (Context: P1 has just argued that her swimming practice in the past caused her to have thick forearms.)
 →1 P6: *swuyeng-ha-myen ekkay-ka*
 swim-do-COND shoulder-NOM
peleci-ci _____ anh-a-yo?
 broaden-CON NEG-INDC-HON.END
 'If you swim, it's the shoulders which become broader, isn't it?'
 2 *phaltwuk-un an kwulkeci-nuntey,*
 forearm-TOP NEG thicken-CIRCUM
 'It's not the forearms which get thicker, '
 3 P1: *ani-ey-yo,*
 NEG-COP.INDC-HON.END
 'No,'
 4 *swuyeng-hay- ha-nun salam-to pothong phaltwuk*
 swim-do do-ATTR(RL) person-ADD normally forearm

⁵ For detailed discussion on the pragmatic functions of the sentential ending *-ci* in Korean, see Lee (1999).

tukke,
 thick
 ‘People who swim normally they also have thick forearms,’
 5 P6: <@ *eyi swuyeng-ul ceytaylo mos-ha-nikka*
 DM swim-ACC properly NEG(IMPOT)-do-CAUSL
kule-ci, @>
 be.such-COMT
 ‘<@ Hey, that’s because they can’t swim properly, @>’

In (8), P6 uses the long form negative question in line 1. The context suggests that P6 assumes that her assumption that swimming broadens shoulders (and does not thicken forearms) is true. That P6’s long form negative question is used to request agreement (rather than verification or confirmation) from the hearer can clearly be seen in P6’s utterance in line 5. When P1 expresses a different point of view in lines 3 and 4 (that people who swim normally have thick forearms), P6 argues back in line 5. P6’s reaction to disagreement from her interlocutor is very different from that of the speaker P1 in excerpt (5). In (5), when the speaker P2 expresses an opposing point of view (by arguing that Tongtaymwun is not a place only for younger people), P1 simply accepts P2’s opinion, by answering ‘*ung* (yeah)’ in line 8. Excerpt (5) thus clearly shows the long form negative question (in line 4) functioning to ask the hearer to verify or confirm the speaker’s assumption, which she was not completely sure about. In contrast, in excerpt (8), the speaker P6’s refutation in line 5 of P1’s opposing opinion (lines 3-5) clearly demonstrates that P6’s long form negative question in line 1 was not used to ask for verification/confirmation of P6’s assumption, but simply to request agreement.

While most of the cases of PST ASSM/AGR in the corpus were similarly clear, many were ambiguous between PST ASSM/VER and PST ASSM/AGR. There were 57 (22.4%) of these ambiguous cases, as shown in the shaded fourth column of Table 1. Excerpt (9) shows such an ambiguous example.

(9) 4CM00028
 (Context: P1 has just told P2 that she recently moved and now lives near the Express Bus Terminal station.)
 →1 P2: *keki Nyukhoa-to kakkap-ci anh-ni?*
 that.place Nyukhoa-ADD close-CON NEG-INTER

- ‘Isn’t that place also close to the Nywukhoa department store? /
That place is also close to the Nywukhoa department store, right?’
- 2 P1: *yey.*
yes
‘Yes.’
- 3 [*Nywukhoa kakkap-ci-yo.*]
Nywukhoa close-COMT-HON.END
‘The Nywukhoa department store is close.’
- 4 P2: [*acikkkaci iss-ni?*]
still exist-INTER
‘Is it still there?’
- 5 P1: *yey.*
yes
‘Yes.’

In (9), P2 uses the long form negative question in line 1. Her utterance in line 4 (‘Is it still there?’) suggests that she used to be quite familiar with the existence of the Nywukhoa department store near the Express Bus Terminal Station. Therefore, the first possible interpretation of her long form negative question in line 1 could be ‘That place is also close to the Nywukhoa department store, right?’, requesting agreement from the hearer for what she already believes to be true (i.e., PST ASSM/AGR), which is in the case, the fact that Nywukhoa department store is close to the Express Bus Terminal Station. However, the question in line 4 (‘Is it still there?’) also suggests that at the time P2 uttered the long form negative question in line 1, she was not entirely sure whether the department store still even exists. Hence, it is also possible that P2’s long form negative question is used to request the hearer’s verification or confirmation of the assumption (i.e., PST ASSM/VER), which is in this case the proximity of the department store to the bus terminal station. The excerpt in (10) is another such ambiguous instance.

- (10) 6CM00107
(Context: Eight students are discussing their upcoming group presentation. Because they are not feeling very confident about it, P2 has just suggested that they should send an email to their

- professor and ask him for his opinion. P1 agrees.)
- 1 P1: *kyeysok mwul-e po-myen toy-canha.*
 continually ask-CON see-CON be.done-UFP
 ‘We should just keep trying asking him.’
- 2 *sensayngnim[X]*
 teacher X
 ‘Teacher X’
- 3 P2: [*e cehuy co-uy*] *myech co-nun me=*
 yeah our group-GEN some group-TOP DM
ile-n sayngkak-ul ha-ko iss-ketun-yo?
 like.this-ATTR(RL) thought-ACC do-CON exist-UFP-HON.END
 Yeah, (we should write him that) our group’s group number is
 something, um= we have been having such and such thoughts,’
- 4 *kulentey com caymi-eps-ci anh-na-yo?*
 but a.little fun-not.exist-CON NEG-INTER-HON.END
 ‘But it’s a little boring, right? / But isn’t it a little boring?’
- 5 *ile-n sik-ulo salccak tho-tal-ase,*
 like.this-ATTR(RL) way-INSTR a.bit phrase-add-PRECED
 ‘We should add a phrase like this and,’

In (10), P2 uses the long form negative question in line 4. However, it is not clear if P2 uses the construction (i) to request the professor to verify whether their presentation is boring or not (PST ASSM/VER), or (ii) because P2 believes that the presentation is boring, and assumes that the professor would think so too, and hence expects the professor to agree (PST ASSM/AGR).

6. Implications of the functional ambiguity of the long form negative question in Spoken Korean

6.1 A speech act continuum

In section 5, I discussed the distribution of the different functions of the long form negative question found in naturally occurring spoken Korean data. Let us now

re-examine Table 1, which is repeated below for convenience.

Table 1. Functional distribution of long form negative questions in spoken Korean

	NEG ASSM	NEG ASSM or PST ASSM/VER	PST ASSM/VER	PST ASSM/VER or PST ASSM/AGR	PST ASSM/AGR	Total
LFNQ	5 (2.0%)	10 (3.9%)	57 (22.4%)	57 (22.4%)	126 (49.4%)	255

LFNQ = Long form negative question

NEG ASSM = Interrogative with negative assumption

PST ASSM/VER = Interrogative with positive assumption requesting verification or confirmation

PST ASSM/AGR = Interrogative with positive assumption requesting agreement

Section 5's examination of actual usages of the long form negative question demonstrated that speakers of Korean use the construction for three different functions: (i) NEG ASSM, (ii) PST ASSM/VER, and (iii) PST ASSM/AGR. However, what is also interesting is that, the construction shows ambiguity between two different functions in many cases. I argue that these ambiguous cases provide evidence that the three different functions of the long form negative question in Korean form a speech act continuum. The ambiguous cases demonstrate that the boundaries of the different functions are not as clear-cut as most of the previous works on the Korean long form negative question have claimed.

Both Givón (1984) and Croft (1994) have argued that even speech acts or sentence types form a continuum, rather than being discrete grammatical categories. Drawing on their works, I will employ four parameters to discuss the semantic/pragmatic continuum of interrogative speech acts with the long form negative question in Korean. The first is a parameter proposed by Givón (1984: 251): the degree of the speaker's subjective certainty. The second parameter is one suggested by Croft: the polarity (positive or negative) of the proposition in the interrogative. Croft also takes account of different types of responses from hearers. Responses make up a structurally and typologically significant class of utterance, because all speech acts involve a response of some kind, if only minimal acknowledgement of the speaker's utterance (Croft 1994: 468). To these three parameters proposed by Givón and Croft, I add a fourth: the degree of the speaker's expectation of the hearer's agreement or disagreement. Table 2 presents a schematization of the continuum of the three

different functions of the Korean long form negative question based on these four parameters, illustrated with the example sentence *Kwupoka hakkyoey kaci anhni?* (Kwupo-NOM school-LOC go-CON NEG-INTER).

Table 2. The speech act continuum of the Korean long form negative question ‘Kwupoka hakkyoey kaci anhni?’

Closest English translation	Speaker’s (positive or negative) assumption	Speaker’s subjective certainty towards his/her own assumption	Speaker’s expectation of hearer’s agreement to his question	Speaker’s expected type of response from hearer	Examples of possible expected response
(a) ‘Kwupo doesn’t go to school?’	Kwupo doesn’t go to school.	[most uncertain]	[most uncertain]	[most explanatory]	‘He doesn’t right now but... (explanation)’ ‘Right, it’s because ... (explanation)’ ‘Yes, of course he does.’ ‘Actually, no.’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Uh huh.’
(b) ‘Doesn’t Kwupo go to school?’	Kwupo goes to school.	↓	↓	[confirming or verifying]	
(c) ‘Kwupo goes to school, doesn’t he?’	Kwupo goes to school.	↓	↓	[most agreeing]	

6.2 On-going functional shift


In section 6.1, I argued that the results of the corpus analysis, in particular the fact that there are ambiguous uses of the long form negative question, provide evidence that the three different functions of the construction form a speech act continuum, rather than having clear-cut boundaries between them. The multiple interpretations of the long form negative question and the ambiguous cases might also imply that the construction is currently undergoing a semantic/functional change. Semantic changes generally do not occur without a stage of polysemy. As Traugott and Dasher (2001: 11) argue, ‘[e]very change, at any level in a grammar, involves not “A > B,” i.e., the simple replacement of one item by another, but rather “A > A ~ B > B” and then sometimes “> B” alone’. The current layering (Hopper 1991)

of different meanings of the long form negative question in Korean suggests that this construction might be in such an intermediate stage (“A ~ B”) of semantic change.

Another question that could be asked is whether the frequency count for each different function of the long form negative question tells us anything. My answer is yes: it provides ample evidence for the direction of the construction’s current shift. Let us re-examine <Table 1>, this time focusing on the frequency of each different function of the long form negative question. The table is repeated here with a slight modification as Table 3.

Table 3. Overall frequency of long form negative questions in modern spoken Korean

	NEG ASSM	NEG ASSM or PST ASSM/VER	PST ASSM/VER	PST ASSM/VER or PST ASSM/AGR	PST ASSM/AGR	Total
LFNQ	5 (2.0%)	10 (3.9%)	57 (22.4%)	57 (22.4%)	126 (49.4%)	255



 Increase of frequency

LFNQ = Long form negative question

NEG ASSM = Interrogative with negative assumption

PST ASSM for VER/CONF = Interrogative with positive assumption requesting verification or confirmation

PST ASSM for AGR= Interrogative with positive assumption requesting agreement

Table 3 shows that the construction is least frequently used when the speaker is asking whether what he or she assumes to be not true is true (NEG ASSM; 2.0). On the other hand, the construction is most frequently used for PST ASSM/AGR, that is, when the speaker is requesting agreement from the hearer about information that the speaker believes to be true (49.4%). The table clearly shows an increase of frequency of use on a gradient from left to right (i.e., from NEG ASSM to PST ASSM/AGR). Moreover, it should be noted that ambiguous or overlapping cases exist between the first and second interpretations (shown in the shaded second column), and between the second and third interpretations (shown in the shaded fourth column), but not between the first and third interpretations. The lack of overlapping cases between the first and the third interpretations, and the gradual increase of frequency as the continuum moves towards PST ASSM/AGR both provide clear evidence of the direction of the shift of the function of the long form

negative question: from NEG ASSM to PST ASSM/VER, and then again from PST ASSM/VER to PST ASSM/AGR⁶.

7. Conclusion

This study revisited the functional ambiguity of the Korean long form negative question, from a usage-based perspective. By examining actual usages of the construction with naturally occurring conversational data, this study showed that the construction is used for three different main functions: (i) to ask the hearer whether what the speaker assumes to be not true is true or not (NEG ASSM), (ii) to request the hearer's verification or confirmation of what the speaker assumes to be true (PST ASSM/VER), and (iii) to request agreement from the hearer about what the speaker assumes to be true (PST ASSM/AGR). The corpus data analysis showed that there were ambiguous cases of functional overlap among these three different functions. I argued that these functionally overlapping cases provide evidence that the three different functions do not have clear-cut boundaries, but rather a speech act continuum. Furthermore, I claimed that the synchronic functional ambiguity of the construction indicates that it is currently undergoing a functional shift. The frequency analysis of each function and the categories that overlap provide evidence that the direction of the current functional shift of the construction is from NEG ASSM to PST ASSM/AGR.

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⁶ In Kim (2016), I have explained that the loss of negativity of Korean long form negative question is part of its grammaticalization process, shifting its function into the utterance-final particle *-canha* (which simply conveys the speaker's belief of shared knowledge with the hearer).

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Corpus

- 21st Century Sejong Corpus. 2011. Distributed by the 21st Century Sejong Project. [URL: <http://www.sejong.or.kr/>]

Appendix: Transcription conventions

The transcription conventions used the by 21st Century Sejong Corpus have been slightly modified to follow transcription conventions developed by Du Bois *et al.* (1993).

.	Final transitional continuity
,	Continuing transitional continuity
?	Appeal or rising intonation
!	Booster: Higher than expected pitch on a word
--	Truncated intonation unit
-	Truncated word
=	Lengthening of a segment
[]	Speech overlap
()	Vocal noises
(H)	Audible inhalation
<X X>	Uncertain transcription; difficult to hear
<X>	Uninterpretable syllable
<@ @>	Laughing voice quality
<Q Q>	Quotational vocal quality

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