

A corpus study of the reversed causality*

Hye-Kyung Lee
(Ajou University)

Lee, Hye-Kyung. 2022. A corpus study of the reversed causality. *Linguistic Research* 39(1): 95-126. This study analyzes the sentence-final causal connective *-nikka* in Korean. Based on corpus data, several meanings or functions of sentence-final *-nikka* clauses are identified, including epistemic causality, speech-act causality, and discourse marking, each with several subcategories. The findings corroborate earlier research that identified the first two meanings. The construction under discussion can serve as a discourse marker mainly modulating the impact of an assertion or speech act, since presenting a cause or reason for a situation is one of the most accessible means to express politeness. This study reports cases in which the conventional time sequence between a cause and a consequence is transposed while providing a cause for a speech act depicted in a main clause. Additionally, this study suggests that sentence-final *-nikka* clauses can stand alone without any deleted or preposed main clauses to impart circumstantial or additional information inferable from the context. To represent the various senses of the construction, a continuum model is proposed for both theoretical and practical reasons, wherein the core underlying meaning is argued to be causality, which is fleshed out in a specific context. (Ajou University)

Keywords cause, causality, sentence-final *-nikka*, continuum representation, stance marker, Korean

1. Introduction

Causality refers to the relation between two events, the cause and its consequence or effect. Obtaining knowledge on cause-consequence relations is fundamental for humans to investigate their world and survive (Bender 2020, and references therein). This knowledge is inevitably reflected in the language they employ, because linguistic expressions are closely intertwined with our conceptual structures. Correspondingly, we have linguistic methods to express causality and select one option over another when competing resources are available.

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As with other concepts and their corresponding linguistic expressions, there are various ways of expressing causality in Korean, the most conspicuous being the use of causal connectives. Korean is well equipped with causal connectives, two representative ones being *-(e)se* and *-nikka*. In addition, it is widely known that causality can be either forward or backward. In the former case, the cause precedes its consequence or effect, while, in the latter, the order of the two is reversed. Accordingly the two representative connectives can be employed for both forward and backward causality.

This study reports corpus-based research on the use of sentence-final *-nikka* constructions in Korean. Drawing on the categories emerging from corpus data, we identify several meanings or functions possible with sentence-final *-nikka* constructions, which are further classified into subcategories. The construction under discussion can often be employed to mitigate the force of one's assertion or speech act, hence serving politeness purposes. Accordingly, the use of sentence-final *-nikka* as a discourse marker will be explored. Furthermore, we consider cases in which the time sequence between the main clause and the *-nikka* clause is reversed, which have seldom been previously investigated. Despite the reversed time line, the *-nikka* clause in such cases is suggested as a cause for a speech act.

The core meaning of the connective is presented as causality, which is then concretized in a specific context as one of the identified meanings depending on the level or domain in which the causality holds. To represent the diverse meanings of sentence-final *-nikka* clauses, we propose a continuum for both theoretical and practical reasons, following Lee (2002, 2022). The continuum representation allows us to abide by a pragmatic principle, the Modified Occam's Razor of Grice (1989): "Senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity." Additionally, this model captures the relatedness of the various meanings possible with sentence-final *-nikka* clauses as well as better reflecting our intuition that a *-nikka* clause can convey multiple meanings simultaneously.

2. Background

2.1 Causality in language

As discussed in the introduction, causality refers to the phenomenon by which one event contributes to the production of another. Causality has proven to be fundamental

in language structures because of its pervasiveness in human cognition (e.g., Copley 2015; Sanders and Sweetser 2009). As is the case with other concepts, causality can be expressed by a range of different linguistic devices, the most readily accessible one being the use of causal conjunctions such as the English word *because*.

Causality has been classified depending on the relationship between two adjoined clauses. For example, Quirk et al. (1985: 103-104) present five different types of relationships: cause and effect, reason and consequence, motivation and result, circumstances and consequence, and indirect reason and speech act. The former four are subsumed under a direct relationship, while the last is dubbed an indirect relationship. As Lyons (1977: 493) legitimately points out, however, in a substantial number of cases, it is difficult to sharply demarcate the categories, especially between reasons and causes.

Presenting analyses of a group of discourse markers including English *because*, Schiffrin (1987) proposes a framework for organizing the marker's functions by classifying them into five planes of talk that are based on the notion of coherence between adjacent units in discourse: ideational structure, action structure, exchange structure, information structure, and participation framework. Relevant to causality are ideational structure, action structure, and information state. In the ideational structure, the ideas expressed in an utterance make cohesive and referential relations with each other, while in the action structure, utterances serve as contextually situated speech acts. Noting that coherence also depends on the interlocutors' (meta)- knowledge, Schiffrin (1987) models this factor into a separate plane, the information state.¹ Examples (1) and (2) illustrate the three functions of *because*.

- (1) Sometimes it works. Because there's this guy Loui Gelman, he went to a big specialist. (Schiffrin 1987: 206)
- (2) D'you mean 'did' or 'do. Cause we don't go out with anybody much anymore. (Schiffrin 1987: 208)

In (1), *because* is used to mark a fact-based cause at the ideational plane, and it also signals a warrant with respect to the information states. However, in (2), *because* indicates a motive for an action, an account for a request. In Schiffrin's analysis of the data, the same example can be analyzed in terms of multiple planes, as exemplified in

1 For the critical discussion of Schiffrin's (1987) model, see, for example, Redeker (1991).

(1). The functions proposed by Schiffrin are simplified and reshuffled from the categories of Quirk et al's.

Sweetser (1990) proposes another classification of causality in language: content-causality, epistemic-causality, and speech-act causality. Each type can be exemplified by (3), (4), and (5), respectively.

(3) John came back because he loved her.

(4) John loved her, because he came back.

(5) What are you doing tonight, because there's a good movie on.

(Sweetser 1990: 77)

In (3), the two clauses are causally connected in the real world, because his love is the real-world cause of his coming home. In (4), however, the causality does not hold in the real world but instead between the speaker's knowledge of John's return and the conclusion that John loved her. In (5), the *because*-clause provides the cause of the speech act presented by the main clause. Thus, (5) is normally understood as indicating that the speaker asks what the listener is doing tonight, because the speaker wants to suggest that they see a good movie. Central to Sweetser's analysis is that the polysemy of causality shown in (3), (4), and (5) is accounted for by what Horn (1985) calls pragmatic ambiguity, which states that "a single semantics is pragmatically applied in different ways according to pragmatic context" (Sweetser 1990: 76). Sweetser's approach conforms to a pragmatic principle labeled Modified Occam's Razor. Rather than proposing lexical ambiguity, Sweetser (1990) advocates a unitary meaning of causality, which then operates in different domains. Sweetser further supports the existence of these domains by citing some languages that distinguish the domains with different words.

2.2 Causality and *-nikka* in Korean

The use of causal connectives is the most salient device in Korean for expressing causality. In Korean literature, a set of causal connectives has been identified, the most common being the two connective endings, *-(e)se* and *-nikka*.² These two endings have

² As one reviewer correctly points out, there are other causal connectives available such as *-mulo* and *-ki taymwuney*. Comparisons of these connectives can be conducted in future research.

been compared in a large volume of previous research (e.g., He 1977; Kwon 2012; Lukoff and Nam 1982; Oh 2005; Sohn 1992; Sung 2018). The general consensus of these studies is that the two connectives operate in different domains (à la Sweetser 1990) or planes (à la Schiffrin 1987). While *-(e)se* expresses content (or ideational)-causality, *-nikka* is used for both epistemic (or information) and speech act (or action) causalities, as exemplified in (6), (7), and (8).

- (6) *John-i kukos-ey eps-ese/??unikka*
 John-NM that.place-at not.be-ese/??nikka
*wuli-nun ccokci-lul namki-ki-lo ha-ess-ta.*³
 we-TC message-AC leave-NOM-directional decide-PST-DC
 ‘We left a message for John because he was not there.’
 (Kwon 2012: 11)
- (7) *John-i ikos-ey eps-??ese/unikka*
 John-NM this.place-at not.be-??ese/nikka
cip-ey ka-n-ke-ney.
 home-to go-MD-thing-DC
 ‘Since John is not here, he must have gone home.’ (Kwon 2012: 14)
- (8) *ne-n ttokttokha-??ese/nikka cal sayngkakha-epo-a.*
 you-TC be.smart-??ese/nikka hard think-try-IMP
 ‘Since you’re smart, try to solve it!’ (Kwon 2021: 16)

It has been noted that the ending *-nikka* can be employed sentence-finally, thus nearly having the status of a sentence-final suffix (e.g., Kim and Suh 1994; Ko 2020; Sohn 2003; Yoo 2003). Its primary function as a sentence-final suffix is argued to express the speakers’ co-alignment for politeness (Kim and Suh 1992) or acknowledge the speaker’s view and intersubjectivity (Sohn 2003). Thus, it has been noted that *-nikka* in sentence-final position serves functions that cannot be performed by the ordinary connective *-nikka*. Some studies (Chin 2005; Jo 2011; Ko 2020) classify the functions of sentence-final *-nikka* clauses. Ko (2020), working on a spoken corpus, presents two major sources of sentence-final *-nikka*, omission and inversion, which are exemplified in

3 For the transcription of the Korean data, the Yale Romanization was used. The abbreviations are adopted and modified from Sohn (1999, 2013), which are presented in the Appendix. Due to the limited space, morpheme-by-morpheme glossing is offered only for relevant parts.

(9) and (10), respectively.

(9) A: *cal tulli-ci?*

well hear-Q

‘Do you hear well?’

B: *nemwu kakkai tay-ko malha-nikka.*

too close put-and talk-nikka

‘Because you talk too close (to me).’

(10) *keki mwul toykey manhi naylye-o-canha*

there water too much flow-come-COMM

san i-nikka.

mountain be-nikka

‘There’s a lot of water coming down, because it’s a mountain.’

(Ko 2020: 7)

Ko (2020) argues that the *-nikka* clause in (9) arises through omission, because speaker B deletes the main clause, which must be the same as A’s utterance. However, the *-nikka* clause in (10) is via an inversion because the speaker simply inverts the order of the two clauses. Ko further distinguishes the two categories into several sub-types. The key criterion for teasing the two categories apart is whether the *-nikka* clause is employed by different speakers or the same speaker.

Nevertheless, this methodology cannot be robustly supported because the two clauses illustrated in (10) could have been produced by two different speakers. In addition, several subcategories appear to overlap, which also holds for the aforementioned taxonomic studies. Moreover, previous studies did not exhaust the possible meanings of the sentence-final *-nikka* clause such as in (11), which will be repeated in (22) below.

(11) 01 *cincengulo me-man hay po-a.*

honestly something-only do see-IMP

‘Honestly, do something really.’

02 *colla anthike-l the-i-nikka.*

hard_vulgar object-MD thing-be-nikka.

‘Then I will strongly object to it.’

[#6CM00104]⁴

In most occurrences of *-nikka* clauses, the event depicted in the *-nikka* clause precedes the event in the main clause, regardless of the actual temporal order of the two clauses. However, in example (11), as the English translation reveals, the order of the two clauses is reversed, because the content in the *-nikka* clause is presented as an action the speaker will take if the event in the main clause occurs, thus intensifying the force of the warning delivered by the main clause. As most previous studies were based on constructed data, examples like (11) were not properly addressed. Even corpus-based studies, such as Ko (2020), did not adequately tackle such examples. Departing from previous studies, this study adopts a continuum representation to represent the meanings/functions possible with sentence-final *-nikka*, which will be discussed in more detail in Section 4. Thus, this study aims to exhaust all meanings of sentence-final *-nikka* clauses emerging from corpus data.

3. Data and methods

This study used language data from the Sejong Corpus that are provided in two different modes: written and spoken corpora.⁵ The former is offered in four different options (raw, morphologically tagged, morpho-semantically tagged, and syntactically tagged corpus), while raw and morphologically tagged options are offered for the spoken corpus. The current study made use of the raw spoken corpus for easily searching target forms. Table 1 presents the profile of the Sejong raw spoken corpus.

Table 1. Information of the Sejong raw spoken corpus

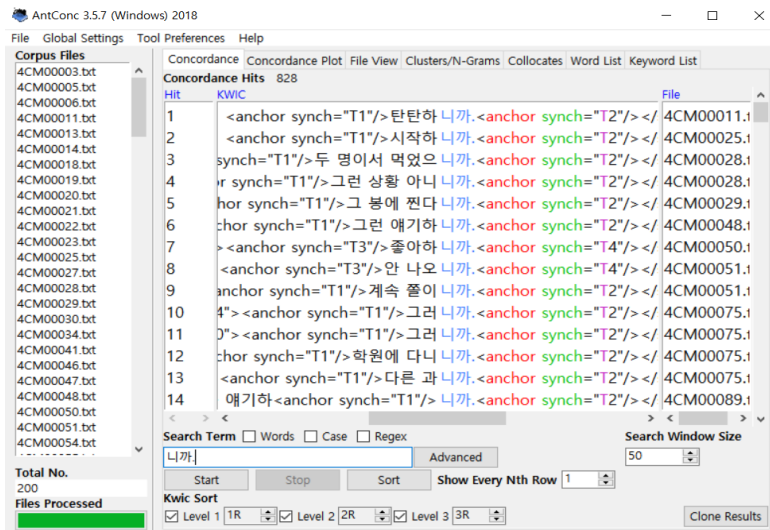
No. of files	No. of sentences (per file)	No. of words (per file) (per sentence)
200	216,718 (1,083)	805,606 (4,028) (3)

To obtain the uses of *-nikka* ‘as, because’, this study utilized the AntConc program (Anthony 2018). The corpus was uploaded and processed using AntConc 3.5.7. In the program, the target form was typed with a period after it, because this study focuses on sentence-final *-nikka*. Figure 1 presents results of the search of the target form in

⁴ File numbers in the Sejong Spoken Corpus are presented in square brackets after examples.

⁵ <https://ithub.korean.go.kr/user/main.do>

AntConc.

Figure 1. Screen capture of the search on *-nikka*, in AntConc

This search returned a total of 828 relevant concordance lines. The collected materials were copied and saved in an Excel file to facilitate data searching and cleaning. Then, the data were manually examined to eliminate irrelevant occurrences. Among the culled items, 330 examples were excluded because the target form was used as part of an adverb *ku(le)nikka* ‘because of that’ as in (12), employed as an interrogative particle as in (13), or mis-transcribed as a sentence-final particle as in (14).

- (12) A: *kyayney-ka thukcenghakey khiwuna-po-ta. aithi.*
 they-NM specially nurture-seem-DC IT
 ‘They (people in India) nurture their children in a special way focusing on IT.’
- B: *kulen kes-to iss-kwu kunikka. koyngcanghi salamtul-i*
 such thing-too be-and so very peopl-NM
 ‘It might be the case. So they are very’
chelhakcek-i-ko swuhakcek-i-nikka.
 philosophical-be-and mathematical-be-nikka

- ‘philosophical and mathematical.’ [6CM00064]
- (13) *ku sennyelul sokiko isstanun sasili nul mianhaysseyo.*
 ‘(The woodcutter) felt sorry that he had been cheating on the fairy.’
haciman ku sinlyengnim-uy malssum-i iss-ess-ci anh-sup-nikka.
 but that spirit-of word-NM be-PST-NOM not-DEF-Q
 ‘But didn’t the spirit say?’ [4CM00097]
- (14) *solcikhi malha-myen aytul na maysince ttuywe no-nikka.*
 honestly peak-if children I messenger use put-nikka
 ‘Honestly speaking, because I was using an online messenger,’
aytul-twu kyeysok mwunca nallao-kwu mak kulekwu iss-nuntay.
 childre-too continuously text be.sent-and just like.that be-but
 ‘they (students) kept texting me and the stuff, but’ [4CM00003]

The tokens on the revised list were classified according to the categories arising from the data. The categories were based on and modified from previous studies, which will be discussed in detail in Section 4 below. When classifying the examples, the extended contexts were carefully examined to ensure feasible matchings. In some cases, even the reading of the extended contexts suggested multiple interpretations of the construction under discussion, which supported the adopted continuum model.



4. Analysis and discussion

The senses of *-nikka* constructions were classified, as shown in Table 2. Adopting the analysis of Lee (2002, 2022), the categorization of the senses of *-nikka* is represented in a continuum model rather than a taxonomic one.⁶ There are at least two reasons for this. First, the boundaries between meanings are frequently blurred, which suggests that sentence-final *-nikka* can serve multiple functions in some cases. Second, the continuum model can better reflect the common property of various senses of *-nikka* expressions, whose enduring and core meaning is causality. This analysis can also abide by the parsimony of sense (i.e., senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity (Grice 1989)).

⁶ One reviewer commented how my continuum model can better explain the multiple meanings possible with the sentence-final *-nikka* than do taxonomic models. I argue that both types of approaches can be equally viable, only differing in terms of viewing the multiple meanings of an expression.

The core sense of *-nikka* is fleshed out as one of the meanings presented in Table 2 in an ad hoc manner in a specific context. That is, the meaning intended by the speaker is construed automatically or effortlessly by the listener in a specific context (à la Jaszczolt's Default Semantics 2005, 2009, 2016).

Table 2. Classification of meanings of sentence-final *-nikka*

	Category	Frequency (%)
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold; margin-right: 10px;">Conceptual</div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-right: 10px;">   </div> </div>	1. epistemic causality	
	1.1. causes for perceptions	33 (6.6)
	1.2. causes for beliefs/ conclusions	221 (44.4)
	1.3. causes/excuses for situations	95 (19.1)
	subtotal	349 (70.1)
	2. speech-act causality	36 (7.2)
	subtotal	36 (7.2)
	3. discourse markers	
	3.1. for hedging	9 (1.8)
	3.2. for topic-changing	7 (1.4)
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold; margin-right: 10px;">Discoursal</div> </div>	3.3. for implicating	39 (7.8)
	3.4. stand-alone cases	58 (11.6)
	subtotal	113 (22.7)
	total	498 (100)

The categories of meanings are presented along a continuum or cline, the two ends of which are a conceptual and a discoursal connection (Lee 2002, 2022). The conceptual connection corresponds to a connection in (elements of) a propositional content, while the discoursal connection refers to any other derived functions that a connective carries. The connective for the second type is labeled discourse connectives (Blakemore 1987, 1989) or discourse markers (Fraser 1990, 1998; Schifffrin 1987), which encode “procedural” information that helps the listener comprehend an utterance (Blakemore 1987, 1989). While conceptual and discoursal connectives can be distinguished, this study abandons such bipartite methods, mainly because one lexical item can concurrently carry the multi functions depending on specific contexts (e.g., An 2020; Lee 2015, 2022; Matsuoka 2021).⁷

⁷ Among the meanings, epistemic causality meaning stands out most prominently, accounting for approximately

4.1 Epistemic causality

Epistemic causality comprises three major categories: causes for perceptions, causes for beliefs/conclusions, and causes for situations. The common feature of these categories is that the causality lies in the speaker's epistemic domain, not in the content domain (Sweetser 1990). As convincingly argued by Kwon (2012), *-nikka* encodes epistemic and speech-act causality while rarely being deployed for content causality, which is chiefly marked by another causal marker, *-(e)se*. This section focuses on the sub-types of epistemic causality carried by sentence-final *-nikka*.

4.1.1 Causes for perceptions

Sentence-final *-nikka* construction can convey a cause for the person's perception, such as seeing or feeling. In excerpt (15), two interlocutors talk about pricking one's finger with a needle to relieve symptoms, such as stomachaches. Speaker A narrates that her boyfriend was scared of pricking A's finger, fearing bleeding.

- (15) 01 A: *kuntey kyaynun mos hay.*
 ‘But he (A’s boyfriend) can’t (prick my finger).’
 02 B: *mos hanun salam mos hayyo.*
 ‘There are people who can’t do that.’
 03 A: *mwuseptay . . .*
 ‘He said it’s scary.’
 04 *phika naonun key mwuseptay*
 ‘He said bleeding is scary.’
 → 05 *phi-ka nao-nikka nam-ey phi-nikka.*
 blood-NM come-nikka other-of blood-nikka
 ‘Because blood comes out. Because it’s somebody else’s blood.’
- [#4CM0005]

In line 5, the causes for A's boyfriend's feeling are provided: the bleeding and

70 percent of all occurrences. In particular, the category of causes for beliefs/conclusions occupies more than 40 percent of all cases. When one example appears to convey multiple meanings, the most salient one was carefully chosen, with the relevant context taken into account.

someone else's blood. Thus, the causes for a person's perception or feeling can be provided in a sentence-final *-nikka* clause, which can also be done with a forward *-nikka* clause. Even though the *-nikka* clause can be positioned either first or last, there are subtle nuances of these two uses. If the *-nikka* clause preceded the main clause, the redundancy resulting from the repeated use of blood or bleeding would be prominent, rendering the whole utterance less appropriate. Hence, the sentence-final *-nikka* clause reinforces the meaning of the first *-nikka* clause and provides the cause for a person's perception.

4.1.2 Causes for beliefs/conclusions

The sentence-final *-nikka* construction can also be deployed to convey a cause for a person's belief or conclusion, because providing a cause must enhance the validity of one's beliefs or arguments. In excerpt (16), the speakers recall their college life, including a college club in which they were once involved.

- (16) 01 A: *i sekhuley tuleon salamtulun . . . kongpwu toykey calhanun kenikka.*
 'People in this club are really good at studying.'
 02 B: *emchengnaci wanpyekhaci hanttay nato ilhaknyen chokieynun*
 'Absolutely, they are perfect. When I was a freshman,'
 03 *i sekhuley tulekal swuto issessnuntey. . .*
 'I could've joined that club, but'
 04 *YH hyeng ku sakeni issun taumey nanun tocehi anin i sekhul.*
 'since the incident about YH big brother, the club has been
 horrible.'⁸
 05 A: *niney han pen.*
 'You two once.'
 06 B: *celtay chyetato an poci. insato an hacanha?*
 'I don't see him. Neither do I say hello?.'
 07 *eccel swu epsi ttak macwuchikey toymyenun . . . acwu esaykhan*
 mosup.
 'If we come across inevitably, we feel so awkward.'

8 Persons' names were acronymized by the author to protect people's privacy.

- 08 *napotato elye. napota han ilcwuil cha nana?*
 ‘He is younger than you. He and I must be a week apart or so?’
- 09 A: *aniya.*
 ‘No.’
- 10 B: *yelhul yelhul an nemkey chai nal keya*
 ‘ten.days ten.days not more.than difference be SUP
 ‘The difference should not be more than ten days,’
- 11 *iwel mal-i-nikka.*
 February late-be-nikka
 ‘because it is late February.’ [7CM00026]

Speaker B explains why he decided against joining the club after an incident involving YH. Then, B adds that YH and B have not been in good terms, emphasizing that YH is younger than he is thought to be, even though YH is addressed as a big brother. In line 10, speaker B presents his belief or conclusion about YH’s age, which is then backed up by the following *-nikka* clause in line 11. Again the *-nikka* clause in (16) performs the function of providing evidence for B’s argument in the preceding clause.

This argument holds even when the main clause and the *-nikka* clause are employed by different speakers as in (17) below. This is excerpted from a casual conversation of four speakers in their twenties.

- (17) 01 A: *SKinun kuke hay pangsongsa.*
 ‘SK is doing that. (Preparing for) a broadcasting company.’
- 02 B: *macta macta.*
 ‘Right, right.’
- 03 A: *kuntay kyayn com tulama tulama phiti hakeyssta kulenuntay*
 ‘By the way, he says he wants to a drama producer, but.’
- 04 *tulama phiti hako sipheto tulamalul pomyen an toyci.*
 ‘even if he wants to a producer, he shouldn’t watch dramas.’
- 05 C: *yelsimhi tulamaman pwa?*
 ‘Does he watch only dramas eagerly?’
- 06 A: *tulamaey tayhaysen ppasakhatulako yayka kuntay.*
 ‘He knows a lot about dramas, by the way.’

- 07 D: *kwansimpwunya-nikka*.
 area.of.interest-nikka.
 ‘Because it is his area of interest.’
- 08 A: *tulamaey tayhayse ppasakhan kelang*
 ‘Knowing a lot about dramas and’
- 09 *tulamalul mantul swu issnun kelangun taluketun.*
 ‘making dramas are different stories.’ [7CM00026]

In this excerpt, the speakers talk about a mutual friend SK, who is preparing to be a drama producer in a broadcasting company. Through lines 1 to 6, the three speakers present their opinions on SK’s keen interest in dramas, and speaker A reveals that he is well acquainted with SK. Then, speaker D utters a *-nikka* sentence in line 7, which can be construed as a co-aligning (Kim and Suh 1994) or back-channeling action (Ko 2020), suggesting an obvious cause for SK’s interest in watching drama.

4.1.3 Excuses/causes for situations

The sentence-final *-nikka* can be used to suggest a cause or excuse for a certain situation, usually a negatively perceived one. Excerpt (18) is from an informal conversation of three persons. They recount various topics in the past, including A’s experience as a teacher. Speaker A narrates that he was once so preoccupied with playing tennis that he spent a few hours at it every day on workdays.

- (18) 01 A: *kulemyen han seysi me han twu sey kkeyim hamyenun.*
 ‘Then it was around 3 p.m. if we played two or three games.’
- 02 B: *halwuka kunyang mak mak cinakaney kunyang.*
 ‘A day just went by fast.’
- 03 A: *kuluhci kuttaymun.*
 ‘Yes, back then.’
- 04 B: *oppa kyosa hal ttay?*
 ‘(Are you saying that) when you (speaker A) were a teacher?’
- 05 A: *kuluhci kuttaymun.*
 ‘Yes, back then.’

- 06 B: *kyosa hal ttay kyosa kuluhkey nolato tway kunkka.*
 ‘When you are a teacher, can you spend time playing that way, anyway.’
- 07 A: *a namun.*
 ‘Ah, I was.’
- 08 C: *kyosanikka kulul swu issci.*
 ‘That was possible because you were a teacher.’
- 09 A: *na-nun kuttay tamim-ul*
 I-TC that.time homeroom.teacher-AC
- 10 *an math-ass-unikka.*
 not be.in.charge.of-PST-nikka
 ‘It was because I wasn’t in charge of a class.’ [5CM00041]

In this dialog, the interlocutors all agree that teachers can enjoy their free time to do things like playing sports when they are not homeroom teachers. Simultaneously, spending more than a few working hours a day seems to be viewed negatively, which is indirectly indicated by repetition and wordiness. In that context, speaker A offers an excuse by saying that he was not in charge of a specific class in lines 9 and 10. This function can hardly be carried out by a forward *-nikka* clause, because the content in the *-nikka* clause in line 10 delivers a kind of afterthought. Thus, the speaker can mitigate the force of negative evaluation of the situation under discussion.

In (18), the speaker uses the *-nikka* clause, providing an excuse for a situation brought up by himself. The same function can be performed by a *-nikka* clause uttered by a different speaker. Extract (19) is excerpted from a casual conversation between two interlocutors. In (19), speaker A recites a narrative about a student he tutored, focusing on the student’s adverse family situation.

- (19) 01 A: *kulayse maynnal nolle kato appalang kathi kako twulise*
 ‘So he[the student] always goes out only with his dad’
- 02 *a appato mak maynnal swulmekko ol ttayka manhko*
 ‘and even his dad frequently comes home drunk.’
- 03 *kyay honca isscanha. kulayse ilehkey kullenke ttak pomyenun*
 ‘And he is alone. So when I see them,’
- 04 *mwelul wihayse cincca ilhana ilen sayngkakto tulko.*

- ‘I wonder what they are really working for.’
- 05 B: *aymun mwehale nass-nya?* . . .
 child-TC for.what give.birth-to-Q
 ‘Why did they give birth to their children?’
- 06 A: *tomul pelkeysstako hanun kesto cohko* . . . *cohuntey*
 ‘It’s good to try to earn money, but’
- 07 *com swil ttaymun com swieya toyl ke kathuntey an switela.*
 ‘it seems that they should take a break when needed, but they don’t.’
- 08 B: *mwe seysang sa-nun key elyewu-nikka.*
 um world live-MD thing tough-nikka
 ‘Um, because it’s tough to make a living in the world.’
- [#6CM00048]

Speaker A narrates that his student’s parents are so busy that they cannot spend enough time with their child, which is taken negatively by speaker A. In line 5, speaker B shows his agreement with speaker A. Then, in line 8, speaker B provides an excuse or cause for the student’s parents not taking care of their child and family. The *-nikka* clause in line 8 also functions as an afterthought, which would not be properly delivered by a forward counterpart.

4.2 Speech-act causality

It is well known that a *-nikka* clause can express speech-act causality, wherein the main clause performs a speech act, such as questioning, suggesting, or ordering (Kwon 2012). In the current data, several occurrences of such *-nikka*-based clauses are found, where *-nikka* constructions provide a cause for a speaker to perform a speech act. Excerpt (20) is drawn from a conversation about a college club. The speakers are discussing the details of an activity called ‘censwu’, a gathering for educating club members. While organizing the event, they discuss ways to raise funds.

- (20) 01 A: *ya hoypi hoypi issunikka e twu myeng pakkey an kanikka*
 ‘Hey, because we have membership fees, because only two people

- attend,’
- 02 *censwupilul tay cwukena papkapsul tay cwukena kulay.*
‘we fund the fees for the event or for the meals.’
- 03 B: *kulay panpan cengto.*
‘Yeah, about half.’
- 04 A: *osip phulolul tay cwukena cenpwulul tay cwukena*
‘Support 50 percent of the expense or the whole of it.’
- 05 *ku-kes com sayngkakul hay po-a.*
‘Let’s think about it a little.’
- 06 B: *panpan cengto ha-ca.*
half.half about do-HOR
‘Let’s make it around half and half.’
- 07 *echaphi wuli-ka ciphayngpwu-nikka.*
anyway we-NM executive.department-nikka
‘Because we are the executive department.’ [#6CM00104]

In line 6, speaker B suggests providing half the fee. The rationale is that the speakers are in charge of the executive department, and, therefore can make decisions concerning club activities. Typically, with speech-act causality uses of conjunctive endings, there is a connecting proposition between the two clauses in lines 6 and 7, which can roughly be paraphrased as in (21).

- (21) a. If we are in the executive department of a club, **we can make decisions about the club.**
- b. If **we can make decisions about the club,** let’s decide on the fee in such a way that half of the fee is covered by the club fund.

What legitimizes speaker B’s use of the *-nikka* clause in line 7 of (20) is the implied proposition underlined in (21). As ordinary speakers can retrieve this proposition effortlessly and automatically in this specific context, the use of the *-nikka* clause in (21) is fully licensed. As highlighted by previous studies, such as Kwon (2012), another causality suffix *-(e)se* cannot perform this function because it mainly hinges on the content domain.

In most cases, there is a time sequence such that the situation in the *-nikka* clause

precedes that of the matrix clause (Quirk et al. 1985: 1103). However, in some examples, the time sequence of the two events can be reversed. The proposition delivered by the *-nikka* clause is construed as occurring after that of the main clause. This interpretation is the most conspicuous when the speech act expressed by the main clause is a warning.

- (22) 01 A: *nemwu kulehkey cwuipsik kulen ken anin kes kathayo.*
 ‘I don’t think such rote learning is the right way.’
- 02 B: *cwuip.*
 ‘Rote learning.’
- 03 A: *honlansuleptelato.*
 ‘Even if it’s confusing.’
- 04 B: *aniya. kuliko te isang ku kiconeynun kulen key epsessmuntey e.*
 ‘No, and there was no such thing before, but,’
- 05 *tayskeli cwucheyey ttalase . . . kyelloncem panghyangilatenci.*
 ‘depending on the hosts of the debate, the direction of the conclusion or.’
- 06 A: *kuchi kulehkey.*
 ‘Yeah, like that.’
- 07 B: *animyenun ta cwucheycekimyen. philyoepse.*
 ‘Or if they’re all independent, nothing is needed.’
- 08 *cincengulo me-man hay po-a.*
 honestly something-only do see-IMP
 ‘Do something really.’
- 09 *colla anthike-l the-i-nikka.*
 strongly_vulgar object-MD thing-be-nikka.
 ‘Then I will strongly object to it.’ [7CM00055]

The exchange in (22) is sampled from a conversation of several college students about various topics. In (22), they share their thoughts about a gathering called ‘tayskeli’, which must refer to a debate meeting. The speakers agree that the way ‘tayskeli’ is carried out should be changed. From lines 1 through 7, speakers A and B criticize one specific practice in ‘tayskeli’, rote learning. Then, in lines 8 and 9, speaker B exemplifies the rote learning atmosphere by saying that if anything is done, he will strongly object to it. As the English translation reveals, the event described in the *-nikka* clause will

occur after the depicted in the prior clause, which is couched in an imperative mood. As opposed to most sentence-final *-nikka* clauses, which express a prior event or condition in terms of time, the event expressed in the *-nikka* clause in (22) will definitely take place contingent on that in the main clause. However, from a functional viewpoint, the content in the *-nikka* clause in (22) strengthens the force of the warning speech act depicted in the preceding clause. That is, by adding that the speaker will strongly object, the power of the warning can be further intensified.

4.3 Discourse markers

Sentence-final *-nikka* clauses can function as discourse markers. The definition of discourse markers in the literature varies. Blakemore (1987, 1989) proposes that discourse markers encode ‘procedural’ information that guides the hearer to interpret an utterance, simultaneously delivering the speaker’s attitude/evaluation toward the relevant messages as well as expressing propositional content meanings, generally because their literal meanings can be bleached. In the case of the sentence-final *-nikka* clause as a discourse marker, it can convey the speakers’ hedging attitude toward the co-occurring proposition and thus fulfilling any expected politeness expectations. This paper explores the possibility that the sentence-final *-nikka* can be used as a discourse marker compositionally with accompanying expressions.

4.3.1 Hedges

Hedges refer to linguistic items of various levels that modify “the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 145). The sentence-final *-nikka* clause can serve as a hedge, displaying that the speaker is not fully committed to the propositions.

Excerpt (23) is sampled from a conversation of a group of students about a variety of topics, including courses they are taking. In (23), two speakers talk about the presentation they are preparing. Speaker A wishes their team to use different terms from those offered by the instructor and suggests that one group member should email the instructor to explain their opinions. However, from the students’ perspective, emailing the professor to oppose the professor’s ideas would be a burden. Noticing this, speaker B

adopts a *-nikka* clause as a hedging strategy to lessen the force of his argument and thus reduce the possible burden imposed on his peers.

- (23) 01 A: *ccom wulikkili manhi tayhwalul hayyakeyssta ya ikenun.*
 ‘We need to talk about this a lot. Hey, this is . . .’
- 02 B: *kunkka mincokelanun mal cacheyka nan maumey an tununtey*
 ‘So I don’t like the term ‘national language’, but’
- 03 *tanilelang ... kongthonge yolehkey nan hayssum cohkeyssmuntey. . .*
 ‘I want to use the terms ‘one language’ and ‘common language.’..
- 04 *nanun wulitul cwung han myengi . . . seykyeylanun kaynyemulo*
 ‘I suggest one of us (email the professor to explain) that with the concept of the world,’
- 05 *ihaylul . . . hayse selmyengul hako siphehantalanun . . .*
 ‘we’d like to understand and explain (the topic).’
- 06 *kulen sikulo yayki toynyako imeyiley han pen ne pwayo ney?*
 ‘Email the professor, asking if it can be explained that way. Uh?’
- 07 *kuke-n na-uy **ikyen-i-nikka.***
 that-TC I-of different.opinion-be-nikka
 ‘Because this is my different opinion.’
- 08 A: *cwungkan kosa . . . kkuthnanun cwulang ku taum cwukkacito*
 ‘On the week when mid-term exams are finished and the next week,’
- 09 *ccom hal ili issci anhnya?*
 ‘don’t we have something to do?’ [6CM00107]

From lines 2 through 6, speaker B explains his opinion, which is finally hedged by an evasive expression in line 7 (=This is a different opinion of mine). The listeners can then be given some leeway in deciding whether to take speaker B’s suggestion.

Hedging can be carried out across speakers: one speaker can hedge his/her interlocutor’s utterance. Sequence (24) is extracted from a conversation of three people. In (24), they talk about Sasang typology, which means the “traditional Korean medical typology that assigns people to any of four types based on their biopsychosocial traits”.⁹

9 <https://en.dict.naver.com/#/search?query=sasang%20typology&range=english>

- (24) 01 A: *twul ta soumin cheycilicanha.*
 'Both of you belong to 'soul' physiological type.'¹⁰
- 02 B: *naykasoumininci ettehkey ale?*
 'How do you know that I am a 'soul' person?'
- 03 C: *kuke pomyen ettehkey ale? pomyen alayo?*
 'How do you know that? Can you tell?'
- 04 A: *e kunyang kulun ke kathay.*
 'Uh, it just looks like it.'
- 05 B: *awu ya senmwutangi salam capnuntako cham.*
 'Oh, no, a novice shaman can kill a person, honestly.'
- 06 A: *ani ani cinccaya.*
 'No, no, it's true.'
- 07 C: *ani na-twu soumin-i-lan yayki-lul manhi tut-nuntey*
 no I-too 'soul'.person-be-MD word-AC much hear-but
 'Well, I've also heard a lot that I am a 'soul' person.'
- 08 A: *e yay-nun ttak soumin-i-ci po-nikka.*
 yeah you-TC just 'soul'.person-be-TC look-nikka
 'Yeah, you just look like a 'soul' person.'
- 09 C: *uysa-ka yaykiha-n key an-i-nikka.*
 Doctor-NM tell-MD thing not-be-nikka.
 'Because it's not what a doctor said.'
- 10 A: *ne sohwaey wiew cangaylul manhi nukkici.*
 'Don't you have a lot of stomach problems with digestion.'
- [#4CM00041]

Speaker A, who appears to be knowledgeable about Sasang typology, guesses that the other two belong to a specific Sasang type called the 'soul' type. Speakers B and C, surprised at speaker A's conjecture, ask how speaker A knows that. In lines 7 and 8, speaker C says that he has been told that he is a 'soul' person many times, and speaker A replies that speaker C just looks like a 'soul' person in appearance. Then, in line 9, speaker C hedges the previous exchange between speaker A and himself by saying that his being a 'soul' person is not medically attested by a doctor. The *-nikka* clause in

10 According to the Sasang Typology, people belonging to the 'soul' type are usually short and skinny with large kidneys and small spleens. They have frequent digestive problems because of weak intestines.

line 9 can be regarded as hedging both speaker C's previous utterance in line 7 and speaker A's utterance in line 8.

4.3.2 Topic changing

As topic changes can be a burden to a speaker, they need to be executed in an appropriate manner (Brown and Levinson (1997) for Relevance hedges). The *-nikka* clause can be used to introduce a sub-topic of a main topic, "making thus an implicit claim to being relevant" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 170). A *-nikka* clause for this can serve as a discourse organizer. Here, the construal of a *-nikka* clause definitely comes compositionally with the accompanying expressions.

Excerpt (25) is taken from a conversation between two speakers about food and health. In (25), speaker A talks about the seriousness of atopic dermatitis and life habits to overcome the disease.

- (25) 01 A: *athophilang ilen kestuli ku simkaksengul cal mollase*
 ‘We don’t know how serious atopic dermatitis is.’
 02 *kulentey ikenun kochici anhumyemun salmul mangchil ke kathun.*
 ‘But if we don’t cure it, it might ruin our life.’
 03 B: *ung*
 ‘Yeah’
 04 A: *ettehkey kochillyeko nolyekul hay pwaya toyl ke kathay.*
 ‘I think I should try to cure it.’
 05 B: *ung*
 ‘Yeah.’
 06 A: *icey cwunpi-lul hay-ya toy-l ke kath-ay.*
 now preparation-AC do-should become-MD thing seem-DC
 ‘It seems that I should get ready now.’
 → 07 *kuntay ilkhey pakkeyse manhi mek-unikka.*
 but like.this outside a.lot eat-nikka
 ‘But because I eat out a lot like this.’
 08 B: *solcikhi mekul key epsci.*
 ‘Honestly, there is not much to eat.’

[#6CM00048]

From lines 1 to 6, speaker A talks about suffering from atopic dermatitis and her plan to overcome the diseases. In line 7, she switches the main topic to another with a *-nikka* clause, frequent eating out. Simultaneously, this utterance is prefaced by a contrastive connective *kuntey* ‘but, however’, which can mark a topic change (Kim and Suh 1996; Park 1997). While the new topic closely relates to the main topic, the *-nikka* clause in line 7 proffers a new topic compositionally with the contrastive connective *kuntey*.

Another example is excerpt (26), which is taken from a conversation of three male speakers sharing their experiences in the army. In (26), speaker A, who has already completed his military service, talks about being assigned a “privileged” post in the army, being a discipline squad leader.

- (26) 01 A: *hwunyukpwuntaycang kathun ke hay kacikwu . . .*
 ‘Take a position like a discipline squad leader,’
 02 *aytulhantey ilkay emhakey hay pelimyen inkiman issumyenun*
 ‘if you become popular by being strict to other soldiers,’
 03 *cincca ilcwuil sacwunka? sacwuey han penssik kuke kulehkeyhay.*
 ‘(the survey) is done every four weeks? Every four weeks or so.’
 → 04 *kulentey selmwuncosa hay kacang insang*
 but survey do most impression
 05 *kiph-ess-ten salam nwukwunya kule-myen*
 be.deep-PST-MD person who.is ask-if
 ‘By the way, in the survey, if it is asked who the most impressive
 person is,’
 → 06 *ku salam ppophi-myen kyeysoh hyuka naka-nikka.*
 that person be.selected-if continuously vacation go-nikka
 ‘if a person is selected, then because he can always take a vacation.’
 07 B: *ung*
 ‘Right.’
 08 A: *wuli ttay OO ilako issessketun. nay ilumto an kkameknuntay. . .*
 ‘When I was in the army, there was a person called OO. I don’t
 forget his name. . .’ [6CM00080]

In (26), speaker A explains how to be elected a squad leader, whose benefits are then exemplified and enumerated immediately after this excerpt, such as employment

advantages. As shown in line 6, while recounting how to become a discipline squad leader, speaker A inserts one benefit of becoming a squad leader, being given a vacation. The introduction of a sub-topic is indicated by a *-nikka* clause in line 6, which is also initiated by the connective *kulentey* ‘but’ in line 4. Even though the main topic of (26) and the topic introduced in line 6 are certainly intertwined, speaker A deviates from the main topic in line 6, which is compositionally signaled by the connective *kulentey* and the *-nikka* clause. Then, in line 8 and afterwards, speaker A continues talking about a person called OO and all interlocutors exchange their experiences about the privileges that a squad leaders can enjoy.

4.3.3 Implicature/indirect speech act device

Communication can be done implicitly or indirectly for a range of reasons and purposes (Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) for indirect speech acts; Grice (1989) for implicatures). Presenting a negative response or reply is marked or dispreferred, which is, therefore, addressed in an appropriate fashion.¹¹ Various linguistic devices can be deployed to express a response disagreeing with one’s interlocutor, including being indirect or hesitant (Tanaka 2008). In the current data, a set of occurrences of *-nikka* clauses is found that conveys the speaker’s negative answer or opinion in an indirect way, thus rendering her utterance less impolite (Kim and Suh 1994).

Excerpt (27) is from a casual dialog among three speakers, in which they discuss a rally they are supposed to attend.

(27) 01 A: *onul keki ciphoi*.

‘Today there’s a rally.’

02 B: *ung*.

‘Yeah.’

→ 03 A: *uymwucekulo ta ka-ya oy-mun ke an-i-cyo*.
 mandatorily all go-must become-MD thing not-be-Q

11 The structural preference was revealed by Conversational Analysis (CA) (e.g., Sacks, Schegloff, and Goffman (1974)). The notion of preference in CA is not a psychological depiction about interlocutors’ desires, but a label for a structural organization. For example, responses that disagree with, or reject, prior positions tend to be less straightforward and slower than those that agree with, or accept, prior positions (Davidson 1984; Pomerantz 1984).

- ‘It’s not mandatory to attend, is it?’
- 04 B: *nay-ka mos **ka-nikka**.*
 I-NM not go-nikka
 ‘Because I cannot attend.’
- 05 A: *kamyen pam sayko mak hayya toyl ke kathay.*
 ‘If we go, it seems that we’ll have to stay up all night.’
- 06 B: *manhitultwu moshal ke kathay ceyekey machiko kanikka.*
 ‘It seems that few people can make it because we can go after work in the evening.’
- 07 *nayil tto ohwu sey siey hantamey um.*
 ‘They say it will be held at 3 p.m. tomorrow again. Um.’
- 08 C: *natwu mos kalcitwu molumuntey.*
 ‘I might not be able to make it, either.’ [4CM00020]

Speaker A wonders whether participation in the rally is mandatory in line 3. In response, a direct answer can be provided with *yes* or *no*. Instead, speaker B utters in a *-nikka* clause that she cannot attend in line 4. Thus, speaker B indirectly indicates that participation is not compulsory, which is further supported by B’s ensuing utterances in lines 6 and 7. Here, the use of a *-nikka* clause in line 4 allows the speaker to pursue an alternative way of providing a negative reply, concurrently implicating that she feels sorry about not being able to attend the rally.

Voicing an opposite opinion about a topic can be couched in a *-nikka* clause, which also helps add an indirect nuance to the explicitly expressed. The exchange in (28) is extracted from the dialog of a group of speakers about diverse subjects. In (28), the speakers converse about speaker C’s job, a firefighter, and people’s preconceptions of firefighters.

- (28) 01 A: *cincca sopangkwaniseyyo?*
 ‘[to speaker C] Are you really a firefighter?’
- 02 B: *ne iceykkaci kecismalul hanunci alassni?*
 ‘Did you think we’ve been lying till now?’
- 03 C: *ney.*
 ‘Yeah.’
- 04 A: *na kecismalin cwul alasse.*

- ‘I thought you’re telling a lie.’
- 05 D: *ttakttakhakey an sayngkyesscanha.*
‘He (speaker C) doesn’t look tough.’
- 06 A: *toykey himtulcanhayo.*
‘It’s really hard.’
- 07 C: *ney? himtul himtul-ta-kwuyo?*
sorry hard hard.be-DC-Q
‘Sorry? Are you saying it’s hard?’
- 08 E: *kulenka? kulehkey an himtul theyntey.*
‘Is it? It can’t be that hard.’
- 09 C: *kuntey salamtul-i kkok kuletela-kwuyo . . .*
but people-NM always ask-DC
‘But people always say this,’
- 10 *himtul-cyo payk-i-myen payk kulay-yo.*
hard-Q one.hundred-be-if one.hundred say.so-DC
‘they ask this, “isn’t it hard?”’, without exceptions.’
- 11 D: *kuntey yocum-ey hato manhi nyusu-ey nao-nikka.*
but these.days-at too much news-on appear-nikka
‘But because they (firefighters) are in the news a lot these days.’
- 12 E: *solcikhi wihemhan cikepin ken sasiliciman himtulcin anhcanha.*
‘Honestly it’s a dangerous job, but not a hard one.’
- 13 A: *kulayyo?*
‘Really?’
- 14 D: *himtul-ci an-ha-yo?*
hard-MD not-be-Q
‘Isn’t it hard?’

[#4CM00029]

Realizing that speaker C is a firefighter, speaker A asks speaker C whether it is a tough job. In lines 7, 9, and 10, speaker C replies in an implicit/indirect way that a firefighter is not as tough a job as people usually assume. In line 11, right after C’s turn, speaker D dissociates himself from speaker C allegedly on grounds of what they hear from the news. While asserting that proposition, speaker D indirectly delivers the message that firefighters appear in news because firefighting is a tough job. This implied message is then explicitly expressed in speaker D’s next utterance in line 14.

4.3.4 Stand-alone *-nikka* clauses: circumstantial information

Most backward causality cases can be changed into forward causality ones, as implicitly assumed by previous studies, such as Ko (2020). Therefore, sentence-final *-nikka* constructions are dubbed either deletion or inversion cases. However, in a substantial number of instances, the sentence-final *-nikka* clauses appear to stand alone; an accompanying main clause cannot be found but must be inferred from the context. These provide circumstantial or additional information about the situation. One such case is presented in (29).

- (29) 01 A: *ku yayki tulesse i XXkwan ciski . . .*
 ‘Did you hear of the construction of XX building?’
 02 *cikceney mwe toykey mwe cohun key issesstako*
 ‘There was something really good before (in that place).’
 03 B: *kulayse maynnal ku yenintuli kekise teyithuhako kulaysstanuntey. . .*
 ‘I heard that’s why couples used to date there every day.’
 04 *kulen kesto mos poko. mwenka ikey hakkyolanunkey kulehkey.*
 ‘I didn’t even see that. So campuses are like, like that.’
 05 A: *ippetwu mwe culkil salamtwu epse.*
 ‘I have no one to enjoy the beautiful campus with.’
 06 B: *ai kulaytwu issumyen cohcanha . . .*
 ‘But it will nice if there is someone.’
 07 *namun ccom kongkika cohun kosi cohuntey*
 ‘I like places with fresh air, but,’
 08 *kulayyaci kongpwutwu caltoynun kentey.*
 ‘then I can study better, but.’
 09 A: *a mace.*
 ‘You’re right.’
 → 10 B: *nemwu ta kulehkey sakmakhakey pyenha-nikka.*
 too all like.that drearily change-nikka
 ‘Because everything changes too drearily.’
 11 *eyyu palami pwunta (laugh)*
 ‘Phew, it’s windy (laugh).’

[#6CM00048]

The two interlocutors in (29) talk about the changes in their college campus, one of which is the construction of a certain building. They appear to opine that such constructions destroy the beauty of the campus. In line 10, speaker B states in a sentence-final *-nikka* clause that everything, including their college campus, changes in a dreary way, which he feels sorry about. In the context where the *-nikka* construction is used, no main clause can be regarded as being deleted or preposed. We can only recover or infer a proposition conveyed by the *-nikka* clause from the context: speaker B does not like or appreciate the rapid change because he prefers places with fresh air. Quite often, the recovered or inferred message for this usage expresses the speaker's evaluation of the topic. In (29), the implicit proposition conveys a negative evaluation of the situation under discussion.

5. Summary and conclusion

In this study, we analyzed sentence-final *-nikka* clauses using corpus materials. Based on categories emerging from the corpus data, we identified several meanings or functions possible with sentence-final *-nikka* constructions, which include epistemic causality, speech-act causality, and a discourse marker. Each meaning is further divided into several subcategories, as discussed in Section 4. The findings here partially resonate with those of previous studies, such as Kwon (2012), since the first two functions have already been intensively explored. The possibility of sentence-final *-nikka* as a discourse marker, which has received relatively little research attention, except for Kim and Suh (1994) and Sohn (2003), was pursued in this study. Sentence-final *-nikka* can function as a discourse marker because suggesting a cause or reason is the most accessible means of modulating one's assertion or speech act and thus serving politeness purposes from a pragmatic viewpoint. Furthermore, this study showed that the ordinary time sequence between the main and *-nikka* clauses can be reversed, which has not been actively addressed in the literature. Despite the reversed time line, the *-nikka* clause in such cases is suggested as a cause for the speech act contained in the main clause.

Most sentence-final *-nikka* clauses can be changed into forward causality, albeit with subtle nuances. However, a group of occurrences cannot be felicitously paraphrased into their forward counterparts, as discussed in 4.3.4, in which the *-nikka* clauses sound feasible without any accompanying matrix clauses. The connective *-nikka* thus can be

viewed as being grammaticalized as a sentence-final ending, which constitute an open question for future studies (Yoo 2003).

The enduring or core meaning of the connective is argued to be causality. Depending on the level or domain in which this core meaning occurs, the meaning of a sentence-final *-nikka* clause is realized or fleshed out as one meaning. In representing the various meanings of *-nikka* clauses, we suggested a continuum rather than a taxonomic representation for both theoretical and practical reasons, as proposed elsewhere (Lee 2002, 2022). From a theoretical perspective, the continuum representation conforms to a pragmatic principle, Modified Occam's Razor. On the other hand, from a practical viewpoint, this continuum representation better reflects the relatedness of various meanings of sentence-final *-nikka* clauses. It also better portrays the fact that a *-nikka* clause can impart several meanings simultaneously.

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Appendix

Abbreviations

AC	accusative	COMM	committal
DC	declarative sentence-type	DEF	deferential
HOR	hortative mood	IMP	imperative mood

IN indicative mood
NM nominative
PST past tense
SUP suppositive mood

MD pre-nominal modifier
NOM nominalizer
Q question
TC topic-contrast

Hye-Kyung Lee

Professor

Department of English

Ajou University

206 Worldcup-ro

Suwon Gyeonggi, 16499 Korea

Email: hkleee@ajou.ac.kr

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