

Turn units in Korean conversations

Based on Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson's (1974) work on turn-taking for English conversations, this paper aims to provide an initial characterization of turn constructional practices in Korean. I specifically focus on exploring how certain grammatical units are constituted and recognized as turn units with a projectable end point, which is usable for a transition to next speaker with no-gap and no-overlap.

It is a general consensus that a possible completion point of a turn (or a TCU) is constituted by the completion of a sequentially appropriate action and prosodic completion, as well as grammatical completion, although there has been controversy over how evenly (or unevenly) each component contributes to the constitution of a transition relevance place (e.g., Ford, Fox and Thompson, 1996; Ford and Thompson, 1996). According to my examination of audio- and video-taped ordinary conversations, Korean conversationalists abide by the three main criteria and deploy notable interactional practices to achieve a possible completion point. In order to explicate this point, I first present some of the unit types that are frequently observed in single unit turns. I tentatively name them single word units, phrasal units, clausal units, and multi-clausal units. This demonstrates that possible completion points are regularly identified at the completion of describable grammatical constructions. I further argue that unit types are finely classified (arguably more so than English counterparts) due to agglutination.

I subsequently present recurrent unit types that are not easily categorized using readily available grammatical terms. These are tentatively labeled as truncated clausal/multi-clausal units, which leads to the discussion of how participants "work" to achieve a possible completion point at a point prior to the occurrence of a projected last element (which is often a verb). More often than not, speakers start a turn projecting a possible trajectory of the turn, which is not necessarily brought to its projected end point (see examples below). A concatenation of a projected clausal or multi-clausal unit can be rendered as a recognizable turn unit, which makes relevant the start-up of a next turn before the arrival of an initially proposed possible completion point. The stoppable point is invariably marked by distinctive final intonation, which often accompanies prosodic prominence (such as a louder volume, a sound stretch, and a pitch hike) at the last syllable of the newly proposed turn-final item. This finding suggests that there are relatively few restrictions in the grammatical points that can serve as a possible completion point (in comparison to English, for instance).

That Korean allows high constructability or negotiability of turn units is shown to be intricately related to a wide range of turn constructional practices, including how turns are recompleted past a possible completion point and how anticipatory completions are formulated and taken up by the speakers of preliminary components. I will also demonstrate how speakers often work even "harder" under certain circumstances to make proposed turn units be recognized and treated as such; they avert their eye gaze and/or take up a stance toward the immediately preceding talk by deploying laugh tokens. Speakers may also draw on a resource that is extrinsic to the ongoing talk, for instance, by engaging themselves in a situation-specific activity such as eating. I will discuss how speakers aptly use a constellation of various resources to accomplish turns that allow a smooth transition to a next speaker in Korean.

References:

- Ford, C.E., Fox, B.A. and Thompson, S.A. (1996) 'Practices in the Construction of Turns: The "TCU" revisited', *Pragmatics* 6: 427–54.
- Ford, C.E. and Thompson, S.A. (1996) 'Interactional Units in Conversation: Syntactic, Intonational, and Pragmatic Resources for the Management of Turns', in E. Ochs, E.A. Schegloff and S.A. Thompson (eds) *Interaction and Grammar*, pp. 134–84. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E.A. and Jefferson, G. (1974) 'A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn Taking for Conversation', *Language* 50(4): 696–735.

Example (1)

[Sen just told a news story about a man who was shot while driving on a freeway in southern California. He is speculating why the criminal suspect may have done such a thing.]

- 4 Sen: *kipwun nappukey mak saychiki mak hwayng:*
 Feeling badly blindly cutting.in blindly fast
- ci[nakanta-tunka icy kule -myen icy .h*
 pass.by -whether now do.so-if now
- yelpata -ss -na -pwu-ci twis cha-ka .h!*
 get.furious-PAST-NCOMM-see-AST rear car-NOM
- 5 Ara: *[um*
 Yes
 "Yeah,"
- "(He) could have cut in the line badly, passing fast and so now .h the driver of the car behind may have gotten furious .h!"
- 7 → *ani-myen kunyang: mal kutaylo kunyang: iywu epsi kunyang:*
 not-if just literally just reason without just
- ['mwutcima:'*
 Do.not.ask
- "Or (it's) just: (it's) literally just: (it's) just (something like) 'Don't ask' with no reason"
- 8 Ara: *[a::*
 EXC
 "Ah::"
- 9 Ara: (*>kunyang<*) *caki kipwun ttan tey -se nappa -se*
 Just himself feeling different place-at get.upset-CONN
- kunyang. ttan tey hwaphwuliha-nun [siku↑lo.*
 just different place avenge -RL in.a.way.
- "(>(it's) just<) (he) got upset somewhere else. (He did it) in a way that (he) took it out on someone else"
- Example (2)
 [Prior to this segment, Girlfriend says that she had cold noodles for lunch with her friend.]
- 1 Girlf: *kuntey onul cemsim com ceney yenlak -i wa -ss*
 and today lunch a.little before contact-NOM come-PAST
- te -la -kwu: <kulayse (0.2) °cemsim mek((barely hearable))*
 -RET-DEC-CONN so lunch eat
- "And today, (he) called a little before the lunch hour, <so (we) *had lun ((*produced in reduced volume))"
- 2 Boyf:→ *.hhhh kulehkwuna::.hh masiss- mwulnayngmyen?*
 I.see tast(y) cold.water.noodle
 ".hhh I see:: .hh (was it) goo- (did you have) cold water noodles?"
- 3 Girlf: *ani- hoynayngmyen.*
 No raw.fish.cold.noodle
 "No- raw fish cold noodles."

*the gray areas indicate the portion of talk that does not get articulated by the completion of the target turn