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Epistemic Congruence as Motivation for Grammar Use: A Study of the Final Suffix kel in Korean Conversation

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Epistemic Congruence as Motivation for Grammar Use:

A Study of the Final Suffix *kel* in Korean Conversation

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Asian Languages and Cultures

by

Don Lee

2017

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION


Epistemic Congruence as Motivation for Grammar Use:

A Study of the Final Suffix *kel* in Korean Conversation


by


Don Lee

Doctor of Philosophy in Asian Languages and Cultures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2017

Professor Sung-Ock Shin Sohn, Chair

This dissertation explores the use of the final suffix -(*u*)*l kel* (henceforth *kel*) in managing epistemic deficiencies that emerge in Korean conversation. It aims to demonstrate a *non-committal* meaning that is achieved through the use of *kel* when access to knowledge that is requested from prior utterances is fragmentary. Specifically, the epistemic presumptions of information requests and assertions are investigated and shown to directly shape the subsequent social action that is understood with the deployment of *kel*. Furthermore, the concomitant use of a final high boundary tone is also considered. The tone initiates a momentary space for a negotiation where recipients of *kel* are given the opportunity to accept or reject the epistemic validity of *kel*-marked responses. As such, speakers' utilization of non-committal *kel* brings to attention an interactional sequence, where speakers manage and respond to knowledge gaps and imbalances they know cannot be remedied in full.

The study also looks at post-*kel* expansion sequences and finds the use of *kel* likely motivated by, first, a local epistemic contingency, in which speakers are compelled to find a balance between the demands of the prior utterances and their uncertain epistemic statuses. Secondly, *kel* provides speakers a grammatical resource, through which a relative, agreed-upon congruity in epistemics can be met. Although the initiation of negotiations do not necessarily guarantee an agreement from the recipients, the deployment of *kel* certainly points to a speaker's desire to maneuver through uncertainties and ultimately achieve some level of mutual understanding and affiliation.

This dissertation of Don Uk Lee is approved.

Christopher M Stevens

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Shoichi Iwasaki

Sung-Ock Shin Sohn, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2017

To my parents

For their unceasing love, encouragement, and support

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CONVENTIONS

The Yale system (Y) is primarily utilized for the linguistic glossing of data presented in this dissertation. This system allows for every morpheme in the Korean language to be accounted for. Additionally, the transcriptions of consonants and vowels from Old and Middle Korean language remain largely unchanged except for the addition of the round vowel *A*.

The dissertation makes an exception for the transliteration of proper names, concepts, historical periods, and events. The McCune Reischauer system (MR) is employed since it is the preferred and most common system for Korean and East Asian studies. This system allows for the most approximate phonological representation in English. For example, historical manuscripts such as the *Sŏkbo Sangjŏl* will not be shown as Y: *Sekpo Sangcel.* Furthermore, proper names that are frequent or well known in scholarship use their established spelling and omit diacritics, regardless of system. Examples of these include *Seoul*, not MR: *Sŏul* or Y: *Sewul*, and *hangul*, not MR: *hangŭl* or Y: *hankul*. Lastly, the Hepburn system is used for the transliteration of Japanese.

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Lee, D. (March, 2017). On the role of dialogic context in the emergence of kes constructions: Change and variation in Middle Korean. Paper presented at Workshop for Nominalization, University of California, Los Angeles, CA.

Lee, D. (April, 2016). The intersection of knowledge and social action: A case of the Korean ender kel. Paper presented at the Conference for the American Association for Applied Linguistics, Orlando, Florida.

Lee, D. (April, 2015). Managing imbalances in knowledge. Paper presented at Memory, Moment, and Mobility in East Asia, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.

Lee, D. (October, 2014). A usage-based study of the Korean adverb wancen(hi). Paper presented at the 2nd Conference of the American Pragmatics Association, University of California, Los Angeles, CA.

Lee, D. (January, 2013). Maximizing negative attitudinal stance: A corpus and discourse-based study on the Korean adverb wancen(hi). Paper presented at Innovation: East Asian Perspective Conference, University of California, Los Angeles, CA.

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1. Objectives

This dissertation explores the role of epistemicity in language use and the impact it has on the use of grammatical forms. Using data from spontaneous conversations, this study investigates how -(*u*)*l kel* (henceforth *kel*), a final suffix ender said to mark prediction or conjecture, is used to manage epistemic incongruity that emerges in moment-by-moment talk. It argues that speakers deploy *kel* as an epistemic *non-committal* suffix when full access to a particular piece of information is inaccessible in the immediate interaction.[1] The study also aims to highlight the significance of its sequential appearance, as *kel* is always prompted by the presumptions of a prior utterance. Additionally, the regularity of a high boundary tone that accompanies the suffix provides a linguistic space for participants to negotiate the imbalance towards a place where mutual agreement can be achieved. Lastly, the recipient's response to a *kel*-marked proposition—that is, the ratification or denial of *kel,* is also considered in order to clarify what social actions have been achieved by the use of *kel*. This investigation hopes to provide an understanding of how grammatical forms emerge when epistemic discrepancies become detrimental to the flow and progress of a conversation.

Being an agglutinative, predicate-final language, and exhibiting a preference for grammatical development in the right-periphery (RP) (Sohn & Kim, 2014), Korean offers a rich array of morphemes that append to predicates to indicate mood, modality, and varying speech

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[1] Several readers have pointed out that interrogatives and evidentials also exhibit non-committal-like functions. To clarify, the term is used to describe a speaker's declaration or insistence of his or her lack of conviction or strong belief towards the proposition. It is an *assertion* of the user's limited knowledge and functions to advance the conversation. Conversely, it does not rely on what has already been heard or seen as evidentials would or explicitly request information as questions would.

styles.[2] While left-peripheral items have been shown to have roles as logical discourse connectors, right peripheral items, on the other hand, appear to assume interpersonal or modal functions (see Beeching & Detges, 2014 for more details). Thus, it may not be surprising to see grammatical final suffixes in Korean the focus of attention on research in interaction and grammar. Suffix enders that frequently appear in conversation, such as *nuntey* (e.g., Y. -Y. Park, 1999), *canh* (e.g., Kawanishi & Sohn, 1993; Ju & Sohn, 2010), *ketun* (e.g., Kim & Suh, 2010), and *ci* (e.g., H. S. Lee, 1999), to name a few, have thoroughly been discussed, revisited, and continue to be debated. This has not been the case for *kel,* however. In fact, *kel* has been one of the least studied final suffixes, mentioned only in passing as having the functions of marking regret, prediction, or conjecture in several Korean grammar books and grammaticalization studies (e.g., Ahn, 2000; Rhee, 2011; Lee & Brown, 2011). As such, this dissertation attempts to contribute to the on-going discussion on the meanings of final suffixes and their functions in interaction by offering an in-depth study of one that has largely been neglected. Although *kel* has generally been treated as two distinct final suffixes with "predictive" and "regret" meanings, this dissertation centers on the "predictive" type*,* largely since regret *kel* appears to be unrelated to social actions of epistemic management and requires a different framework for analysis. Accordingly, issues regarding regret-type *kel* and its presumed connections with "predictive" *kel* will be discussed in chapter 2.

     Furthermore, a language such as Korean is in a unique position in contributing to issues in interaction and grammar since it explicitly integrates the residual effects of dialogic

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[2] Sohn and Kim use the CA concept of Turn Constructional Units (TCUs) to define what constitutes the end of an utterance. A TCU is "the most fundamental segment of speech that is grammatically, intonationally, and actionally complete" (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974). As we will see in this dissertation, the regularity of a high intonational boundary tone that creates what conversation analysts call a transition relevance place (TRP), show clear evidence that *kel* is a right-peripheral phenomenon.

interactions in its final suffixes. Even among right-peripheral-type languages, Korean curiously

differs in that it uses non-independent morphemic suffixes that can generally be reconstructed

back to an original form (see Sohn, 2015 for details). This is in stark contrast to final particles

that are observed in Chinese and Japanese (e.g., Chinese *ne* or *ba*; Japanese *ne* and *yo*). Still, in

all three languages, discourse-related suffixes evolve in what Iwasaki and Yap (2015: 3) describe

as "landing sites" or "hosts" to convey a "wide range of contextually-interpretable speaker stance,

including assertion, amazement, doubt, challenge, among many others." In this sense, it is

reasonable to say that a study using data from Korean can provide insights into interactional

grammar and offer a look into how they suffixes emerge in actual language usage.

　　　Ultimately, this dissertation aims to demonstrate how speakers utilize *kel* to assist in

remedying epistemic discrepancies, when the actual knowledge needed to amend it is

inaccessible for the moment. While speakers in an "ideal" setting would be able to attend to both

the veracity and epistemic standing of participants through the accessibility of relevant

information, there are indeed times when one or both of these factors cannot be met. In Korean,

the availability of a resource such as *kel* provides us a window into how speakers may maneuver

through interactions when the necessary information is only partially accessible. The dissertation

attempts to paint a picture of a grammatical suffix, whose role looks to provide a space for

speakers to negotiate a relative and highly localized epistemic congruence.[3]

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[3] Throughout the dissertation, I use the terms "local" and "relative" to refer to an epistemic congruence that is
achieved among speakers with only partial access to information. It appears that even with the inability to accurately
gauge the veracity of the information at the center of a dispute, speakers make an effort to reach a temporary or
provisional congruence.

**1.2. Goals and the scope of the study**

In order to help situate and facilitate the goals for this study, the following issues are addressed and explored:

1. The first question aims to determine what social actions a speaker achieves with the use of the final suffix *kel*. In what particular types of environments are *kel* likely to emerge and what resource(s) does it provide the user? These questions lay out the trajectory of this dissertation.

2. The second question attempts to understand what motivates a speaker in his or her use of *kel*. Specifically, what role does knowledge and knowledge distribution (i.e., epistemics) play in prompting a speaker's deployment of *kel*? How do recipients understand and respond to *kel* and what effects do these responses have on participants' understanding?

3. The third question highlights the implications of a study of a final suffix such as *kel*. How do the unique feature(s) of *kel* contribute to our understanding of epistemics and grammar in a language such as Korean? In languages with right-peripheral preferences? And, if applicable, in languages in general?

4. The last question explores the broader issue of grammar as continuously emerging phenomena in moment-by-moment talk. Is grammar emergent, in Hopper's sense (Hopper 1998, 2015), or a fixed and static entity? What does a study of a final suffix such as *kel* reveal in terms of the notion that grammar may be temporal and eventive?

As the aforementioned research questions highlight, the notion of epistemicity and how it prompts the use of *kel* is consistently maintained as a major theme in both analyses and

discussions.

**1.3. Point of departure**

To borrow from Wittgenstein (1958), language can be seen as a city, a dynamic social institution that reflects the complex interactions of a society, its people, and its history. Through this metaphor, Wittgenstein explained that the fundamental function of language was its utility as a tool for undertaking meaningful social actions in everyday life. He was critical of the overemphasis of studying language structures (the *langue* in Saussure's term), since to him, it did not capture the way in which actual people communicated. Decades earlier, Voloshinov (1929/1973: 86) had expressed a similar insightful view of language, arguing that, a "word is a two-sided act. It is determined equally by whose word it is and for whom it is meant." Essentially, he saw language use as a meaningful exchange, whereby every word uttered by a speaker has already considered words prior and has projected for those that will also come.

However, it is not until a half-century later after Wittgenstein, in fields such as pragmatics, conversation analysis, and interactional linguistics that the study of language use would gain acceptance and find a place in linguistic analysis. As scholars began to develop an interest in studying language use, the significance of understanding context also began to be clear. Although the notion of what context exactly is or how it can be used in analysis continues to be contested in many academic circles (covered in detail in Goodwin & Duranti, 1992), the fact that scholars continue to utilize the term in their research tells us something of its importance. One particular concept that is useful to the discussion on contexts is the temporality of language use. What this means is that language use occurs in *real time* and is *linear*; each uttered word incrementally built one after another and conversely, irreversible (see Hopper, 2015

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for an overview). Within this backdrop, one of the consistent themes that the reader will see is that the use of a grammatical suffix such as *kel* is heavily dependent on the utterances, ideas, and topics that precede it and equally affects those that come after it.

Another aspect of language use that must be discussed is its inherent *dialogicality* (Linell, 2009; Hopper, 2015; among others). In the most general understanding, dialogicality has been used to refer to a property of human and cultural sciences that explains how the world is interdependent. It is an ontologically oriented viewpoint of how humans in situ act, think, and communicate. In regards to analyzing language, dialogicality allows us to observe how speakers attend to various viewpoints that converge or diverge across turns or even how speakers in monologues utilize points-of-views to move forward in a dialogue-like manner.[4] Linell (2009: xxvii), in his seminal study on dialogicality, describes and summarizes in the following, how the concept is melded into everyday activities of humans:

> When human beings are involved in thinking, talking to each other, reading texts, working with computers and other cognitive artifacts, or quite simply trying to understand their environment, they are performing cognitive and communicative actions in interaction with others and cultures. Self and other are profoundly interdependent."

As he argues, the meaningfulness of language may prove to be inconsequential without a speaker or writer engaging and interacting with the people, utterances, ideas, and objects of those that are previously and subsequently made known. From such a viewpoint, the analysis of language certainly cannot be executed in a vacuum, as the uttered words that come before and after play a crucial part in how participants understand the information that is being relayed. In the section that follows, we review the work that has been done on the organization of talk in conversation

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[4] This dissertation does not employ dialogicality as a methodological notion, but rather, as a theoretical point of departure for the way talk in-situ is viewed and understood by speakers.

analysis and how it has offered scholars a methodical framework for the analysis of context and grammar in language use.

### 1.3.1. The temporality of language use

Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) were perhaps the first to systematically consider and develop a framework that accounted for the sequential organization of language use or *talk*. Since the publication of their influential paper, accounting for sequence has become an essential component in the analysis of language and social action. Key notions that were developed in their work included the idea that speakers methodically took turns, managed the interaction on a local level, and produced talk that was mindful and designed for the recipient.

In the same tradition, one way this study specifies context is to systematically look at how speakers incrementally build up discourse and how it leads to or even induce the use of a particular linguistic form. The notion of increments is especially consequential, as Goodwin and Goodwin (1990) posit, in that language in interaction is always contingent on prior language, such that it will have an influence on how subsequent language will be used. As an example, prior language or talk that is divergent or conflict with the listener's or reader's point-of-view will invariably lead to some sort of conflict or disagreement. Still, we must not forget that language use is not without a social purpose; speaker or writers stake claims in discourse by "patrolling" and "defending" their "territories," putting what they know about a certain topic on the line (Goffman, 1971).

Another aspect of context to consider is the fact that language cannot exist as an isolated quality excluded from the consequences of how it is understood by a hearer. As Schegloff (1996a: 5) succinctly states, "[talk] is constructed and is attended by recipients for the action or

actions it may be doing." To him, the recipient's ratification of an utterance, together with the understanding of the implication of the social action, is equally important as the linguistic forms themselves. This has been shown in the work done demonstrating how, for instance, the relaying of information is a recipient-oriented activity (e.g., Terasaki, 2004 [1976]; Goodwin, 1979; Heritage, 1984a), a social action (e.g., Pomerantz, 1980; Heritage, 2002), or used to mobilize responses (e.g., Goodwin, 1987). Heritage (2013: 370) argues that "mutual action and joint understandings in interaction rest on parties' abilities to recognize what each knows about the world and to adjust actions and understandings in accordance with that recognition." Goodwin (1979) had earlier observed how speakers are sensitive to and speak according to presumed epistemic statuses of those participating in a conversation. Hence, it has become a principle of sorts that all participants of talk *prospectively* and *retrospectively* engage and are sensitively attuned to the information being shared and relayed.

It goes without saying that context can be a nebulous concept, such that, without a clear definition of how it will be utilized, it can actually distract or be detrimental to the analysis. Thus, in order to accurately understand a linguistic form such as *kel*, a scrutiny of relevant sequences leading up to the point of conflict is emphasized. Moreover, understanding how participants stake claims can provide answers as to why *kel* may be selected over other types of grammatical forms and how it optimally functions for certain types of situations. It is equally important then, to see how a recipient understands and responds to the form, providing the observer a clear way, in which to see the social action emerge. We now turn to a discussion of epistemics in the following section and see how pertinent studies have contributed to this area of study and how it will guide the trajectory of this dissertation.

**1.3.2. Epistemicity**

From a linguist's vantage point, epistemicity has been discussed in terms of the grammatical or lexical encoding of knowledge or belief. It is a category of study that specifically centers around two grammatical categories; namely, epistemic modality and evidentiality. While epistemic modality has generally pertained to the degree with which a speaker commits to his/her proposition (e.g., Lyon, 1977; Givóns, 1982; Palmer, 1986), evidentiality has been concerned with the source of the knowledge or information (e.g., Boas, 1911; Chafe & Nichols, 1986).[5] There have been several notable exceptions to this, including Kamio's (1997) seminal work on territories of knowledge. Kamio, whose work was and remains influential on research in epistemics, argued that a speaker adjusts and orients information that lie in one's *territory of knowledge*, when conversing with others who have their own respective knowledge territories. In one of his example, Kamio illustrates that the knowledge of a president's meeting at 3:00 can be linguistically realized in varying ways depending the position and status of the person in the company. A secretary, for instance, can use an epistemically unmarked "You have a meeting at 3:00," while a business associate would say something along the lines of "I believe you have a meeting a 3:00." Kamio's explanation is that the position of the business associate places him further away from the information (i.e., it is not his job to make sure the president makes it to the meeting at 3:00) and thus finds himself hedging with the predicate phrase "I believe." Kamio's work was arguably one of the first in linguistics to consider how territories of knowledge could affect the way linguistic forms are realized.

In conversation analysis, the study of epistemicity has evolved into how knowledge, or the lack of knowledge, warrants new sequences in conversation. Methodologically, it has been

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[5] Not all linguists, notably Lyons, agree that there needs to be a distinction between epistemic modality and evidentiality.

studied by differentiating a speaker's *epistemic status* and *stance* (see Heritage, 2012; Hayano, 2013 for an in-depth overview of epistemicity). Epistemic status, as defined by Heritage (2010), is a concept that describes the relative position of speakers on what he calls an *epistemic gradient*.[6] This means that in a given conversation, a speaker will be more, equally, or less knowledgeable about a certain topic relative to his or her interlocutor. This is not to say that one's epistemic status is always maintained, however; as information is shared, a speaker's status is in flux as knowledge is gained and arguably muddled or altered throughout talk.

Epistemic stance, on the other hand, describes the realization of knowledge through both linguistic and extra-linguistic resources. Stance is always contingent on the speaker's status but not necessarily a reflection of it. This distinction between status and stance is crucial; a speaker, for instance, who may be knowledgeable over a certain topic, may fabricate a stance by relaying partial or even disingenuous information to the interlocutor. Stance is also a localized phenomenon. It is momentary and negotiated with an interlocutor over several or more sequences and advanced in a linear fashion. Heritage (2012), using a metaphor of an engine, illustrates how epistemic imbalances in speakers' statuses will warrant production of talk (i.e., the realization of stance) for the production or decay of sequences.

Lastly, with the increased availability of video data, extra-linguistic expressions such as gesture, gaze, and body orientation have become another crucial tool in the analysis of language and social action (e.g., Goodwin, 1979; Rossano, 2012). For example, Goodwin demonstrates how a speaker's utterance and cognizance of participant's understandings can be appropriately oriented through gaze. In his seminal analysis, he shows how a speaker's relaying of information

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[6] Heritage uses the concept of an epistemic *slope*, where a shallow slope indicates a less severe divergence in knowledge between two speakers and deeper one a more drastic divergence. The symbols K- (less knowledgeable) and K+ (more knowledgeable) are used to mark the status of speakers.

can be specified towards both knowing and unknowing recipient, such that the speaker can avoid offering redundant information through his or her gaze.

### 1.3.3. Interactional final suffixes in Korean

Interactional and discourse linguists, particularly those working on languages such as Korean and Japanese, have also aimed to examine and reconcile the linguistic form with the social actions that are achieved through their use. As mentioned before, Korean is a language, which offers a repertoire of grammatical resources to index and monitor social interaction through the use of morphemic final suffixes. This is not to say, however, that the monitoring of interaction is solely achieved through final suffixes; there is an abundance of lexical devices, grammatical patterns, and prosodic resources that are equally available to achieve this. Nevertheless, the fact that speakers of Korean explicitly index the end of their turns with a variety of final suffixes and boundary tones, provide a rich linguistic site for the analysis of language and interaction.

Diachronic studies of discourse-related grammatical suffixes have, in particular, been informative in how the form is connected to social action. Their emergence in a language such as Korean has been linked to a speaker's omission of final predicates that would be expected after a "sentence-medial" connective such as *nuntey* (*but*) and *ketun* (*if*) to name a few (see S. -O. Sohn, 2015 for an overview of the process of grammaticalization for final suffixes in Korean). The ellipsis of final predicates that occur frequently in conversations, as shown in Y. -Y. Park's (1999) seminal study of *nuntey* for instance, has been understood to lie in a speaker's awareness of an impending dispreferred situation. In other words, a sentence-medial connective becomes a strategic point at which a speaker allows the recipient to infer a dispreferred social action. This

linguistic practice increasingly becomes associated with the social action and subsequently leads to the emergence of a final suffix ender.

Final intonational boundaries associated with final suffixes have also been found to be an important element in the conveyance of meaning and social action (e.g., M. -J. Park & S. -O Sohn, 2002; S. H. Kim, 2010). The analysis of intonation has certainly given scholars an additional avenue through which to view a speaker's intentions for certain propositions (e.g., seeking a response) and a recipient's understanding of and response to the proposition (e.g., back channeling).[7] Moreover, from a diachronic perspective, an increased use of an interactive boundary tone (i.e., a rising tone) allows the scholar to be confident that a change has occurred in what was originally a place where the particular boundary tone was not used.[8] With a variety of intonational boundary tones available in a language such as Korean, interactional linguists have thus been able to establish a strong case for the link between grammar, intonation, and social action.

### 1.4. Methodology

This dissertation uses an interactional linguistic (IL) analytic framework that highlights the sequential appearance of the form, the social actions that cause certain interactional contingencies, and extra-grammatical features such as intonation and gaze to investigate what speakers achieve by using *kel* (see Fox, Thompson, Ford, Couper-Kouhlen, 2012 for details). As already alluded to in the prior sections, research among interactional (and discourse) linguist has begun to point to the contingency of meaning when accompanied by varying terminal boundary

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[7] In CA, backchanneling devices are often called *continuers* (Goodwin, 1986; Schegloff, 1982).

[8] Thus far, Jun (2000) has identified at least nine types of boundary tones (L%, H%, LH%, HL%, LHL%, HLH%, HLHL%, LHLH%, LHLHL%) in the Seoul variety of spoken Korean.

tones not only in Korean but also in similar languages such as Japanese (e.g., Iwasaki, 2013;

Hayano, 2013). Furthermore, a multi-modal type of approach continues to be fueled by scholars

from CA and Linguistic Anthropology and has been seen as advantageous in the way

Interactional Linguist analyze language and interaction.

Admittedly, much of the framework has been influenced by Conversational Analytic

methodologies and as a result may look not so different. Fox, Thompson, Ford and Couper-

Koulen (2012: 739) explain this striking similarity in the following explanation:

> Although CA and Linguistics have come to the study of language from quite
> distinct directions—CA having arisen from an ethnomethodological interest in
> how humans construct social order and Linguistics having begun life as a
> discipline that concerns itself with regularities in the patterning of linguistic
> form—the last three decades have seen a growing interest on the part of linguists
> in the details of talk as interaction, and a corresponding increase in the interest on
> the part of CA practitioners in the ways that linguistic resources shape
> interactional practices.

Moreover, this investigation establishes the manner in which epistemics and the *kel* suffix

ender are inextricably tied, and discusses grammar as "emerging" when speakers must attend to

epistemic incongruences that arise. As such, in order to best capture the ever-present changes and

fluidity of knowledge flow and distribution in sequences, the term *epistemic standing* has been

chosen over the words "status" or "stance." It is based on Goffman's (1981: 128) notion of

"footing," a term that he chooses to communicate a "participant's alignment, or set, or stance, or

posture, or project self….' It is a term that is better equipped to deal with localized knowledge

exchanges, where the relayed information is transitory, quick to change, and at times ambiguous.

In fact, since *kel* emerges in environments where participants are uncertain of the information, it

is perhaps a term that can more effectively capture a speaker's momentary, non-commitment to a

proposition.

**1.5. Data**

Data for this dissertation are from the *Callfriend Project* (Han et al., 2003), video data collected of conversations between students at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and spontaneously recorded conversations. The *Callfriend Project* is a corpus collected and transcribed by the Linguistic Data Consortium (henceforth LDC corpus) for the United States Department of Defense. The *Callfriend* transcriptions consist of thirty-minute telephone conversation recordings of native-Korean speakers living in the United States and Canada. There are approximately 190,000 words and 25,000 unique words in the data. From the *Callfriend* data, there were thirty-five instance of *kel*. Video data of conversations between UCLA students and YouTube totaled to approximately 270 minutes respectively. There were a total of five tokens total from the entirety of both. Throughout this dissertation data from face-to-face video recordings will be prefaced with the simple label of "video corpus." What one is able to immediately notice is the rarity of *kel* tokens in spontaneous conversation. This issue of low frequency, along with perhaps, the shortcomings of spontaneous conversation as data, will be addressed in the last chapter.

**1.6. Organization of the study**

This study first situates the overall linguistic form and contextualizes each known linguistic element that constitutes *kel* in chapter 2. Since it is thought that *kel* was derived from a complex morpho-syntactic string (although what they actual are seems to be open to discussion), it may be beneficial to begin with an historical understanding of each morphemic component and the way their meanings continue to persist in the present-day grammaticalized form.

Chapter 3 begins the analysis of the form, demonstrating the non-committal meaning of *kel* and what speakers are able to socially achieve with its use. It centrally looks at *kel* responses that are prompted by utterances that expose an epistemic deficiency between speakers. Specifically, it observes how speakers utilize *kel* when requests for information or confirmation cannot be met with epistemic certainty. In fact, the data consistently shows that *kel* arises when access to the veracity of information is out of reach for all parties. Nonetheless, a speaker deploys *kel* to initiate a negotiation that will *partially* alleviate the epistemic gap that was initially caused by the request.

In chapter 4, the study observes *kel* in response turns that problematize prior utterances for their underlying epistemic assumptions. The recipient of the utterance utilizes the suffix ender to initiate a negotiation of what he or she believes may be a more suitable answer. In contrast to the way requests for information or confirmation index a relatively lower epistemic standing of the speaker (K-), *kel* responses in chapter 4 are shaped by utterances that assume a speaker's relatively higher epistemic standing (K+). Regardless of what has actionally prompted the use of *kel*, the motivation of speakers in achieving a relative level of epistemic congruence appears to remain the same.

Attention is turned to the sequences that follow *kel* and the manner in which speakers ratify or deny the epistemic presumptions of a *kel* utterance in chapter 5. It centrally looks at the way recipients respond to *kel*-marked utterances with 1) agreements, 2) disagreements, or 3) weak/partial agreements, establishing how recipients understand the social action produced with the use of *kel*. Moreover, the chapter shows that participants utilize the momentary space to approach the closest point to epistemic congruence (i.e., mutual understanding), even if prior utterances were met with disagreements.

The final chapter concludes with a summary of findings, remarks on the data used, and makes suggestions for further research directions. Lastly, it discusses the implications of the study, in terms of how *kel* emerges, in Hopper's sense of "emergence," as both a final suffix in local interaction and over time through grammaticalization.

**Chapter 2**

**Background**

**2.1. The final suffix *kel***

Although scholars have come to have minor differences in the understanding of the

semantic meaning of *kel*, there is, nonetheless, a clear consensus around a semantic distinction

when the suffix is used with a specific final boundary tone. When *kel* is accompanied by a falling

terminal tone [L%], it is said to be a marker with meanings of *regret* (Ahn, 2000; Rhee, 2011), or

roughly translated in English as 'I wish' or 'I would have' (Martin, 1992; Lee & Sohn, 2003;

King, 2014). Excerpt (1), from Rhee (2011) illustrates this type of usage.

```
(1)     naccam-ina    ca-lkel
        nap-at:least sleep-kel
        I should have taken a nap-kel
```

On the other hand, when a rising boundary tone is used [H%], it has been said to be a marker of

prediction (Ahn, 2000; Rhee, 2011), inference, guess, or conjecture (Lee & Brown, 2011),

contrary expectation (Martin, 1992; King, 2014), or have the semantic equivalence of 'I guess'

or 'maybe' (Lee & Sohn, 2003). Excerpt (2) illustrates these usages.

```
(2)   a. Prediction (Ahn, 2000; Rhee, 2011)

        ku    salam  mos     o-lkel
        that person cannot come-kel
        I bet that person can't come-kel
```

b. Inference, guess, or conjecture (Lee & Brown, 2011)

    A: minsu-ka  cikum kotung      haksayng-i-cyo
       minsu-NOM now   high:school student-COP-Q:POL
      **Minsu is a high school student, isn't he?**

    B: kulssey acik    cwung        haksayng-i-lkel-yo
       hmm     still   middle:school student-COP-kel-POL
      **I'm not sure**
      **I reckon he's still a middle school student-kel**

c. Contrary expectation (Martin, 1992; King, 2014)

    sewul-ey ka-key   toy-lkel
    Seoul-to go-RESUL become-kel
    **[You'll] end up having to go to Seoul anyway-kel**
    (despite your contrary expectations)

d. "I guess, maybe" (Lee & Sohn, 2003)

    maikul-un  cikum cip-eyse kongpwuha-ko iss-ulkel-yo
    maikul-TOP now   home-LOC study-CONN   exist-kel-POL
    **I guess Michael is studying at home now-kel**

Scholars, who work mainly in the tradition of prescriptive grammar, have ostensibly reached

these conclusions through their intuition of the linguistic form. Besides example (3b), the

excerpts above depend on one-line sentences for detailing the core function(s) of *kel*. In a

departure from previous one-line descriptions, Lee and Brown (2011) in excerpt (3b) provide an

expanded sequence, offering the reader an understanding of how a prior utterance many prompt a

speaker's use of *kel*.

For regret-type *kel*, the original parent form, an accusative complement of a predicate

phrase, continues to exist in present-day Korean. However, the same cannot be said for the

*predictive* or what in this dissertation will be called the *non-committal*.[9] Martin (1992), Ahn

(2000), and Rhee (2011) postulate that like regret *kel*, non-committal *kel* may have also come

from the accusative complement of a larger clause, whose predicate phrase was elided for

various pragmatic reasons. The accusative-marked complement would have consisted of a

subordinate clause nominalized by prospective -(*u*)*l,* the head noun *kes* ('thing'), and the

accusative case particle -*ul*.[10] The individual morphemes of the *kel* ender have been

reconstructed as follows:

```
(3)   -(u)l     kes    ul    [main predicate]  →     -lkel
       REL:PRO thing ACC                              kel
```

With the onset of new pragmatic meaning, it is thought that the noun *kes* along with the

accusative particle -(*u*)*l* phonetically erode into *ke* and -*l* respectively and become part of a new

phonological structure that is now distinct from its parent form (Bybee, 2001, 2006).[11]

However, one issue with this postulation is the assumption that regret and predictive *kel*

are somehow related, or at minimum, had a similar grammaticalization path, largely because of

their homophonous structures. A second concern is that, unlike regret *kel*, it is nearly impossible

---

[9] The parent form, -*l kes-ul,* generally occupies formal registers and must occur with a predicate phrase. *Kel* as a final suffix marking regret is limited to spoken registers (e.g., conversations).

[10] Although some scholars see formal or bound nouns in languages such as Korean and Japanese as the nominalizing element (i.e., Korean *kes*, Japanese *no*), I follow after Shibatani (2017) and maintain that the nominalization specifically occurs with the relativizers -*l* and -*n*.

[11] Another interesting form to investigate and contrast *kel* with may be promissive -(*u*)*l key* (henceforth *key*). Similar to *kel*, *key* also contains prospective -*l* and *ke* and is related to epistemic stance marking. Whereas *key* is used for strong epistemic commitment for direct first person actions/states, *kel* (as the dissertation will argue) is used for partial epistemic commitment for actions/states of second and third persons.

to semantically reconstruct predictive *kel* as an accusative argument in a meaningful way. This is

not to say that *kel* was not derived from one; rather, there appears to be different mechanisms or

processes of change that are, at present, difficult to identify.[12] These issues will be revisited in

the final chapter, after seeing how "predictive" *kel* looks to function in naturally occurring

spoken Korean.

   We now turn to a historical look at earlier usages of the noun *kes* and the prospective

relativizer -(*u*)*l* to parse through and clarify the layers of meanings that now contribute to the

semantic meaning of *kel*. We begin with a discussion on the noun *kes*.


## 2.2. The noun *kes* and its etymological source

   *Kes* in Present Day Korean (PDK) is considered the most productive lexical item

according to a 2003 study conducted by The National Institute of the Korean language.[13] One

reason for this productivity is its necessity as a bound noun in deictic and possessive compounds

as well as in a variety of grammatical constructions. This productivity is also evident in the

spoken language, where speakers' frequent use has contributed to the phonetically reduced

variant *ke*. Although technically a noun, *kes* is categorized in a set of dependent or bound nouns,

which require a complex string of morphosyntactic constructions for it to become meaningful in

---

[12] Although native speakers can easily reconstruct regret *kel* back to its original form, this cannot be said for *non-committal* kel.

[13] The following periodization of the Korean language is based on Sohn (2001). Old Korean (OK) covers a period from the Three Kingdoms Period (roughly the beginning of the Common Era) to the end of the North-South States Period (early 10th century). OK in this dissertation mainly refers to the language of the Silla Kingdom. Middle Korean is divided into Early (EMK) and Late Middle Korean (LMK). EMK covers a period from the Koryŏ Dynasty (10th century) to the invention of the native script Hangul in 1446. The written language during this time reflects the dialect spoken in and around Koryŏ's capital Kaegyŏng (present-day Kaesŏng, North Korea). LMK begins with the invention of Hangul to the Japanese invasion and war (*Imjin waeran*) during the Chosŭn Dynasty. Modern Korean (MoK) begins with the end of the war with Japan in the 17th century, through periods of Western contact and continues into today. It is divided into early Modern Korean (EMoK), covering the language spoken from 17th to 19th centuries and Present Day Korean (PDK), spanning from the 20th century and onward.

an utterance. What this means is that *kes* and other similar types of bound nouns are semantically

opaque and are obliged to appear as the head of a modified phrase.[14] *Kes constructions*, or what

some scholars call sentential, morphosyntactic, or clausal nominalization, have been a topic of

considerable research, debate, and controversy (J. -S. Hong, 1983; Chŏe, 1994; Rhee, 2010,

2011; Horie, 2011; among others).[15] One reason for the abundance in studies of *kes* may lie in

the fact that the diversity of its semantic meanings (Heo, 2013), the variability of its syntactic

configurations (e.g., embedded *kes* constructions vs. terminal *kes* final suffixes), and the

pragmatic inferences derived from these constructions have been rather difficult to capture in an

all-encompassing framework. Indeed, it is not surprising to see there are over five different types

of fully grammaticalized suffixes in PDK (and over ten when including dialectal varieties)

derived from this bound noun (T. -Y. Kim, 1990).[16]

J. -S. Hong (1983) traces PDK *kes* to Middle Korean (MK) *kas* or *kes* 'thing' or 'matter,'

where he considers *kes* and *kas* variants of MK *kach* 'skin.' He argues that synecdoche is the

mechanism through which generalization occurred, as speakers began to use the word 'skin' to

refer to entire entities.[17] Hong further observes that PDK *kacwuk* '(animal) skin or hide,' *kecwuk*

---

[14] Which nouns are categorized as a defective appears to vary among scholars. This difference in opinion largely involves bound nouns that still retain semantic content to be occasionally used as free nouns. These types of nouns reflect an intermediate stage of grammaticalization, where the parent form is still productive alongside its more grammaticalized and morphosyntactically constrained form. Perhaps this blurry line in distinguishing what is a bound or free noun can be discussed by looking at the work that has been done on *affixoids* in German and English (Booij, 2010; Stevens, 2011). Affixoids have been defined as affixes that exhibit characteristics of both a free and bound suffix in English and German. For example, *-hood* in modern English only appears as a morphosyntactically constrained affix while *-able* appears as both a free and bound one.

[15] I use the term *kes* construction over terms such as nominalization, following Traugott and Trousdale's (2013) work on Constructional Grammar. One reason for this is to avoid the controversy over whether *kes* is actually a nominalizer or simply a bound noun.

[16] These final suffixes include a variety of future tense markers such as *-l kes* or *-l key* and attitudinal markers such as *-l kes, -n kes,* and *-nun kes*.

[17] This etymology may be an explanation for certain fossilized *kes* compounds in present-day Korean referring to living entities. For instance, *elin kes* or 'children' (literally 'one who is foolish/young') is used in certain contexts of

'surface, outward face or appearance,' and *keth* 'exterior or surface' share phonological and semantic affinities with *kes*, indicating a strong likelihood of being cognates. Rhee (2011) also notes that in certain phonological environments in PDK, the pronunciation of *keth* 'exterior or surface' and *kes* are exactly the same.

Textual evidence for *kes/kas* before the 15th century comes exclusively from *hyangch'al* 郷札 style readings of *hyangga* 郷歌 poems or 'native songs.'[18] Prior to the invention of hangul writing was achieved through a modified system of *literary Sinitic* characters broadly called the *idu* script 史讀, under which *hyangch'al* is generally categorized (c.f., Japanese *man'yōgana*).[19] Since the typologies of the spoken language on the Korean peninsula and the Chinese mainland at the time were unrelated, writers of Old Korean (OK) adopted Sinitic characters as either semanto- or phonograms to record the morphology and phonology of their language. Nonetheless, due to the inaccuracy of the phonological information made available by literary Sinitic, reconstructions of the morphology and phonology of Korean before Late MK remain disputed and tentative. OK scholars see the compounds 物叱 and 居叱 as representing the words *kas* (W. Kim, 1980; Nam, 2012) and *kes* (Yang, 1965; Hong, 1983) respectively. The examples are shown in excerpt (4).

```
(4)   a. 毛多    居叱沙      哭屋尸以    憂音
         motAn kes-za      wulol-i    sil-um
         all    thing-EMP cry-ADV    worry-NML
```

---

deprecation or pity and *i kes* 'this person,' is used as a derogatory term for a person or animal.

[18] *Hyangga* are a collection of twenty-five poems, which likely reflect what has now been termed Old Korean (OK). Fourteen of the twenty-five poems are found in the *Samguk Yusa* ('The Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms') and are thought to have been written by Silla poets and a Paekche prince between 600 and 879. The remaining eleven are in the *Kyunyŏjŏn* ('The Tale of Kyunyŏ') and were composed in the early Koryŏ period between 963 and 967.

[19] Following King (2015), I choose the word *literary Sinitic* characters over such terms as *Sino-Korean*, *Han* characters, or *literary Chinese*.

```
     (you) are anguished because all things bring sorrow
     Mojukjirangga stanza 2, 692-702


b.  物叱     好支       栢史
    kas     tyoh-i    cas
    thing   good-ADV  pine:tree
    a fine pine tree (literally good-quality pine tree)
    Wŏnga stanza 1, 737
```

The characters used to represent *kes* and *kas* demonstrate varying devices a writer could use to

record lexical items and grammatical inflections in Sinitic characters. In (4a), it is thought that

each character of the compound 居叱, with a literal character meaning of 'live-scold,'

represented an *ŭm* 音 reading, a device in which the semantic meaning associated with each

character is completely ignored and the phonological value of the character used to represent the

OK sounds. The character 居 is thought to represent the syllable *ke* and 叱 the coda *s*. In the

group of characters in (4b), the first character 物 of the compound 物叱 (literally 'thing-scold')

appears to represent a *hun* 訓 reading while the second character retains its *ŭm* reading. In this

example, the phonological value of the character 物 is ignored and its semantic meaning 'thing,'

in conjunction with the *ŭm* reading of the second character (the coda *s*) would have likely

triggered the native Korean reading *kas*.[20]


## 2.3. The prospective relativizer *-l*

Being an agglutinative head final language, one of three relativizer morphemes, *-(u)l*,

*-(u)n*, and *-nun*, (henceforth *-l*, *-n*, *-nun*) is selected and affixed to the stem of a predicate in order

---

[20] In OK the following characters are believed to have been used to represent the following coda sounds: 只 *k*, 隱 *n*, 乙 *r*, 尸 *l*, 音 *m*, 邑 *p*, 次 *c* and 叱 *s* (Lee and Ramsey, 2011; Nam, 2012).

to modify a noun.[21] Example (5) below illustrates their usages. Generally speaking, each one of

these relativizers provide a tense-aspect mood: the prospective *-l* marking future tense or an

irrealis mood, the anterior *-n* providing a past tense or perfective aspect reading, and the

simultaneous *-nun* functioning as a present tense or processive aspect morpheme.[22]

Consequently, the temporal distinctions between *-n* and *-nun* are only salient for verbs;

adjectives and the copula *-i-* may only take *-n* or *-l.*


```
(5)    a. Prospective -(u)l
          ha-l         kes-i-ta
          do-REL:PRO thing-COP-DC
          a thing that will be done


       b. Anterior -(u)n
          ha-n         kes-i-ta
          do-REL:ANT thing-COP-DC
          a thing that was done


       c. Simultaneous -nun
          ha-nun       kes-i-ta
          do-REL:SIM thing-COP-DC
          a thing that is being done


       d. Adjectival/copula -(u)n
          coh-un     kes
          good-REL thing
          a good thing (a thing that is good)
```

---

[21] The simultaneous relativizer *-nun* can be traced back to a combination of imperfective *-nA,* an attestable LMK morpheme, and the relativizer *-n.*

[22] Lee and Ramsey (2011) see *-nA* as a processive aspect marker while H. S. Lee (2015) views it as a historical relic that no longer has discernible meaning in PDK.

Among the three types available in PDK, *-l* and *-n* are the oldest attested relativizers, thought to have their origins as gerund enders in OK (Lee & Ramsey, 2011). The morphemes *-l* and *-n* are assumed to have been nominalizers marking prediction (irrealis) and established actions (realis) (Nam, 2012). The excerpts below from the *hyangga* ode *Mojukjirangga* illustrate a use of *-l* in OK.[23]

```
(6)   慕理尸     心未      行乎尸  道尸
      kuli-l    mAzAm-Ay nyeo-l kil
      yearn-REL heart-in go-REL road
      the road that [my] longing heart will follow
      Mojukjirangga stanza 7, 692-702
```

The character 尸 is thought to have been used for its *ŭm* readings (phonologic value) to represent the OK coda sound *l*.[24] The relativizer *-l* in (6) appears twice, once with the verb *kuli-* ('yearn') complementing the word *mAzAm* ('heart') and once again with *nyeo-* ('go') complementing *kil* ('road').

```
(7)   无常㣺 十      修ノ尸      所七      苦想㣺 十       略 口ㄱ
      mwusang-akAy   swuho-l      pa-s      kosang-akAy   lyak-kon
      meaningless-LOC cultivate-REL place-GEN suffering-LOC plan-COND
      when [you] grapple in the pain of laboring in meaninglessness
      Yugasajiron vol. 10
```

Additional evidence of prospective *-l* comes from its use in what is thought to be a

---

[23] Although the interpretations of the *hyangga* poems are very much in dispute even today, the use of the characters 尸 and 隱 as the nominalizers *-l* and *-n* is nearly unanimously agreed upon.

[24] *Hun* readings of OK are reconstructions based on established MK pronunciations.

Buddhist text from EMK.[25] The following excerpt is from the Buddhist text *Yugasajiron* (cited

from Hwang (2000)), written using a combination of Sinitic characters and *kugyŏl* script. The

morpheme -*l* is represented by the *kugyŏl* character 尸, adhering to the predicate *swuho*- ('to

cultivate').[26]

Hwang posits that it was in early MK when both -*l* and -*n* began to lose their nominal

complementizing function as they specialized into the relativizers modern speakers are familiar

with. Thus, there appears to have been a movement towards what Harris and Campbell (1995)

call *cohesion* and certain semantically *bleached* nouns (in this case *kes*) begin to form a close

bond with -*l* or -*n* as a sort of morpho-syntactic set in what is known as *syntactic reanalysis*.[27]

```
(8)   a. [pap-ul   mek-ul] ttay
         food-ACC eat-REL time
         the time that [one] will have a meal


      b. pap-ul    mek-[ul ttay]
         food-ACC eat-when
         while/when [one] eats
```

Example (8a) above (cited in J. -J. Kim, 2014) illustrates a canonical usage, in which semantic

distance between the relativizer -*l* and the head noun *ttay* ('time') is maintained and thus is read

---

[25] *Kugyŏl* refers to a writing system, in which the radicals of Sinitic characters were employed solely for their phonetic features to render morphological elements of Korean (c.f., Japanese *katakana*).

[26] The verb *ho*- 'to do' in *swuho*- (literally 'to do cultivation') is actually a combination of the verb *hA*- 'to do' and the volitive -*o/wu*-.

[27] According to A. Harris and L. Campbell (1995: 61), reanalysis constitutes a change in constituency, hierarchical structure, category labels, grammatical relations, and/or cohesion.

as 'the time that (one) will eat.'[28] However, as the construction becomes *routinized* over time (Hopper and Traugott, 2003), the constituency of *-l* and its head nouns also begin to change. This involves *-l* adhering to the head noun, while the word *ttay* is semantically bleached of its meaning of 'time.' Thus, the two morphemic elements come to form one morpho-syntactic grammatical construction, with a new semantic meaning of 'while' or 'when.'

In this brief overview of the evolution of prospective *-l*, it is important to keep in mind that the scarcity of pre-hangul data only affords us a glimpse of the myriad of functions this nominalizer presumably had. As scholars continue to research and debate the linguistic structure of Old and Middle Korean, it must be advised that our knowledge of pre-modern Korean will continue to evolve. What is more definitive, however, is that since the first documentations of Korean in literary Sinitic in the late 7th century, the relativizer *-l* (and *-n*) has played an indispensible role in the development of a variety of grammatical constructions including the focus form of this dissertation.


### 2.4. *Kes* constructions

Apart from a few documented cases of what is believed to be *kas/kes* usages in *hyangga* poetry, the word does not definitively appear in historic records until the 15th century. For this reason, scholars have had to look to conjectural evidence based on existing compounds or fossilized forms in MK and PDK.[29] Thus far, from what is known about the unidirectional

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[28] In 1446, with the advent of the native Korean script hangul, the phonological operations of grammatical constructions of *-l* and *-n* become clear for the first time. The constructions *-(A/u)l* and *-(A/u)n* is made available, indicating that the morphemes *-l* and *-n* had specific conjugation rules based on whether the coda of the verb stem was a consonant or vowel. Vowel harmony rules would also apply (i.e., the addition of one of two vowels *-A* or *-u* corresponding to the quality of the final vowel in the stem) if the coda ended in a consonant.

[29] Hong (1983) has observed that PDK words such as *hankas* 'merely' (literally from 'one thing,' in the sense of 'not even one thing') and *mwues* ('what') from what was *musukes* ('what thing') are likely remnants of a once

tendency of lexical to grammatical (Hopper & Traugott, 2003), it may be safe to assume that *kes* also began its life as a full-fledged independent noun meaning something akin to 'skin' or 'surface.' With subsequent processes in generalization through synecdoche and semantic bleaching, *kes* becomes a bound noun or 'formal' noun (i.e., nouns that cannot be used independently since they have lack concrete semantic content) by MK (Huh, 1983). As a formal noun in PDK, *kes* is semantically inconsequential until it is combined in a complex morpho-syntactic construction. This fact points to a more complicated picture, in which *kes* must have grammaticalized in conjunction with one of several obligatory components; namely *-n, -nun,* and *-l*. It has also been acknowledged that *kes* constructions likely competed with other constructions with near-synonymous formal nouns (e.g., *i* 'person,' and *kot*, *tA* 'place') (E. -J. Kim, 1996), and eventually surpasses them in frequency to become the most common bound noun in lexical compounds and grammatical constructions in PDK (Wang, 1988; Rhee, 2010).[30] Furthermore, it continues to undergo a series of secondary grammaticalization, generating new types of grammatical final suffixes, as well as going through changes in its phonetic makeup (e.g., *kes* > *ke*) (Heine and Kuteva, 2002).[31]

The earliest attested *kes* in grammatical constructions in 15th century documents already display signs of syntactic constraint and semantic opacity, a strong indication that grammaticalization was already in process by this time (Wang, 1988). Rhee (2010) states that two of the earliest usages of *kes* construction, provided below, show two differing stages.

---

diverse range of use.

[30] The most famous example of this type of competition in the grammaticalization literature is the grammaticalization of the French negator *pas* ('step'). *Pas* outcompeted similar words such as *point* ('dot') and *mie* ('crumb') and eventually became an obligatory element in negative constructions by Contemporary French.

[31] Rhee (2010) argues that the emergence of the phonetically reduced form *ke* may be a direct consequence of its increased pragmatic meaning as *ke* begins to assume a meaning distinct from that of its parent.

(8)  a. mwul-ey-s        kes-i-mye        mwuth-uy-s    kes-i-mye
        water-LOC-GEN thing-COP-and land-LOC-GEN thing-COP-and
        **whether it be fish or animals**
        *Wŏrin sŏkbo* 1:11, 1459

     b. thayca-s-pep-un      kecusmal-Al ani hA-si-nAn  kes-i-ni
        prince-GEN-law-TOP lie-ACC      NEG do-HON-REL thing-COP-since
        **since the prince's law states that [a prince] should not lie**
        *Sŏkbo sangjŏl* 6:25, 1447

The two usages of *kes* in (8a), referring to 'things of the water' and 'things of the land'

definitively refer to 'fish' and 'land animals' and is posited by Rhee to demonstrate a usage of

*kes* in a more concrete sense. In (8b), *kes* is highly abstracted and serves as the head noun of the

phrase 'lies are not told.' Through these two examples, Rhee (2010: 8) contends that *kes* began

as a noun denoting "tangible, highly individuated, and often generic" entities as in (8a) and

gradually broadened to include "intangible and abstract" entities as its use shows in (8b).

Prospective *-l kes* constructions in the earliest manuscripts, although quite rare, also show a high

level of abstraction, as it is also believed to have already grammaticalized into a modal

construction (P. K. Lee, 1997).

(9)  capAn il-i          mwusanghA-ya     mom-Al    mot
     world:affairs-NOM  meaningless-and body-ACC cannot

     mit-ulq      kes-i-ni         ne-y      mokswum-ul mit-e
     believe-REL thing-COP-since you-GEN life-ACC    believe-INF

     cAla-l       sicel-ul     kituli-nA-nta
     mature-REL season-ACC wait-IMPFV-Q

```
the affairs of the world are meaningless and [you] will not be
able to trust the body; can you trust your body and wait until
you are grown
```

*Wŏrin sŏkbŏ* 13:73, 1459


It is generally thought that in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century there was a dramatic uptick in the usage of *kes* constructions, although the reasons for its increase remain speculative. Chŏe (1994) attributes this increase to the influence of Western-style newspapers, essays, and novels, citing their abundance in publications such as the *Toknip Shinmun* ('The Independent'), Korea's first private newspaper. In fact, Chŏe (1994: 25) sees the sharp upswing in *kes* usage as the calquing of English cleft constructions, although he offers no further explanation for his presumptions.

Another consideration perhaps for this sudden shift may lie in the fact that writers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were also attempting to write in contemporary vernacular for the first time. For instance, the *Toknip Shinmun,* which began publication in 1896 as one of many enterprises undertaken by intellectuals in their pursuit of modernization, was the first newspaper to exclusively use *hangul* and the contributors made a concerted effort to utilize the spoken language of the time as the basis for its literary style (Suh & Fulton, 1994).

Today, *kes* constructions are frequently used to assert facts or detail an explanation (Chŏe, 1994). Horie (2011), in his comparative study of *kes* and the Japanese near equivalent *no,* elaborates that *kes* is not only used to explain a situation but to "explain its relevance to some previously existing circumstance." To him, a speaker uses a *kes* construction to encode presupposed, linguistic or non-linguistic evidentiality, with the intention that it is heard as a non-challengeable proposition. Indeed, a common feature that we are able to see with *kes* constructions is their clear connection to epistemic assertions and the marking of stance.

Additionally, the persistence of the irrealis meaning underlying -*l* allows us to see how the -*l kes* constructions signal epistemic meaning that have been altered in a variety of suppositional, predictive, and/or future-related constructions in PDK, including in the focal form of this dissertation. Although there is much research to be done in terms of how the *kes* constructions have evolved into its various modern incarnations, this chapter has attempted to provide an overview of the history of each morpheme and the way their functions have converged to form the constructions and suffix enders that modern speakers of Korean use today.

# Chapter 3

## *Kel* responses to information and confirmation requests

### 3.1. Introduction

As chapter one has outlined, research in language and epistemics demonstrate that speakers are acutely aware of and monitor, sequence-by sequence, the way, in which knowledge is distributed (Goodwin, 1979; Heritage, 2010, 2012; Heritage & Raymond, 2012; among others). In particular, studies have paid attention to the way speakers work to manage epistemic incongruity, since such imbalances can have detrimental effects on speakers' mutual understanding and, ultimately, the flow of conversation. When speakers come to a moment in their interaction where discrepancies in knowledge become a point of friction, additional sequences to mend those imbalances may be in order. In a language such as Korean, final suffixes play an especially important role, often being pivoted as linguistic resources to assist in managing and rectifying epistemic imbalances.

Accordingly, this chapter explores how respondents utilize *kel* to manage epistemic deficiencies that emerge in moment-by-moment talk. Specifically, it aims to demonstrate the *non-committal* epistemic meaning that is achieved by *kel* in situations where a questioner may *presume* a respondent, that is, the user of *kel*, to have access to an unknown piece of information that is requested. The final boundary tone that accompanies *kel* is also considered, as it looks to play a crucial role in eliciting a subsequent response. The final tone returns the floor to the original questioner and provides a space for him or her to decide whether the *kel*-marked response can satisfactorily remain as a de facto answer. Lastly, this chapter attempts to establish clarity on how deficiencies in epistemics can motivate a responder in his or her use of *kel* and

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what the implications for not committing to an answer may be. By doing so, it aims to discuss

the overarching issue of *kel*'s unique function and how it serves the language that other non-

committal final suffixes are unable to in spoken modern day Korean.


## 3.2. Information and confirmation requests

Generally speaking, a respondent's use of the final suffix *kel* conveys to the interlocutor

that the information being provided is not grounded in his or her knowledge or beliefs. This does

not mean however, a user of *kel* will choose to arbitrarily respond with a non-committal

proposition. More often than not, a *kel*-marked response emerges in direct response to the request

of a prior utterance.[32] In other words, when a piece of information or a confirmation that has

been requested is inaccessible to the respondent at the moment of speech, he or she may deploy

*kel* to minimize and attempt to mend the epistemic incongruity that was caused by the initial

request.

Utterances can be formulated in a variety of ways to elicit information, the most common

strategy being the use of "questions." There must be some level of caution, however, when the

term "question" is used. As Heritage (2002:1) defines it, "in its most elementary form, a

'question' is a form of social action, designed to seek information and accomplished in a turn at

talk by means of interrogative syntax." Accordingly, questions may not be linguistically marked

with interrogative syntax, as a simple rising boundary tone over a lexical item is sufficient for the

respondent to understand it as a request for information or a confirmation. Conversely, not all

"questions" necessarily demand answers, as rhetorical questions, for example, are not uttered for

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[32] Conversation analysts refer to this phenomenon as a 'turn-at-talk', where one's prior turn sets up a contingency for the way in which the recipient will response. Heritage (1984b) succinctly describes this as "context shaped and context renewing."

the purpose of a drawing out an explicit answer, but instead are for other needs such as teaching or criticism (Koshik, 2005). Still, for the purposes of this chapter, the term "question" is used loosely to refer to any utterance that requests a piece of information or a confirmation from another participant in the conversation. The analysis looks at the intent of the utterance, rather than solely following the linguistic form.

The request for information can be generally realized as content answers to constituent (WH) questions and the request for confirmation yes-no answers to polar questions. In the following, the analysis in this chapter has been divided according to whether a *kel*-marked answer is a response to one of these types of requests. This distinction is important since the epistemic standing of a questioner is contingent on the type of question: a constituent one demonstrates a questioner's epistemic deficiency (i.e., he or she has no knowledge of what the potential answer could be), while polar questions indicate relatively low levels of knowledge on the part of the questioner. For instance, a speaker who asks the question, 'did you do your homework?,' knows minimally that the respondent has had homework to do. Additionally, the particular grammatical design of polar questions also represents varying degrees of knowledge and can be reformulated or even transformed by the questioner over the course of a sequence. In order to understand how and why *kel* is deployed in conversation, it is vital that we then walk through, step-by-step, to see and understand how incongruity in epistemics appear, is incrementally adjusted, and potentially remedied by a speaker's use of *kel* in moment-by-moment talk.

At their most basic level, constituent questions are information seeking-type questions. In many of the sequences in the data, the contents of the constituent questions revolve around number, dates, and specific details of third parties. In adversarial contexts, constituent questions

can also be pivoted as information testing-types, particularly in cases where speakers are confronted with face-threatening actions (i.e., claims over who knows what are at stake). Polar questions, on the other hand, are specifically designed and projected for a confirming answer, although this does not mean the responder does not respond with disconfirming answers. Although studies have demonstrated a general social preference by speakers for confirmations (e.g., Bolinger, 1978; Pomerantz, 1984; Sacks, 1992; Raymond, 2003), it appears that speakers who use *kel* in response to polar questions are more concerned with the veracity of his or her answer, regardless of whether their answers affirm or not.

## 3.3. Constituent questions

We begin with an analysis of an information-seeking question during a conversation about one of the speaker's spring break dates in excerpt (1) below. As it will soon become evident, the information elicited by speaker A is inaccessible to speaker B and a *kel*-marked response is offered as an attempt to provide the closest approximation of an answer.

```
(1)   [LDC corpus]
      Spring break (Male speakers A and B; close friends)

1     A: encey-ni? pom     panghak-i ne-n,
         when-Q    spring break-NOM you-TOP
         when is it? spring break for you,

2     B: sam    wel    il   il
         three month one day
         March first

3     A: sam    wel    il   il-pwuthe-ya? [myech-]
```

```
           three month one day-from-Q        what
           starting March first?            what-


4     B:                                    [e      ]=
                                             yeah
                                            yeah=


5→    A: =myechil-kkaci
          what:day-until
         =until when


6→    B: hhh sam    wel   il   il-pwuthe .hhh sip il-kkaci-i-lkel [H%]
         hhh three month one day-from  .hhh ten day-until-COP-kel
         hhh it's from March first .hhh to the tenth-kel [H%]
```

As the two speakers in this sequence talk about their spring break plans, speaker A initiates a sequence of talk asking speaker B when his spring break is (line 1). Speaker B responds that his spring break will begin on the first of March (line 2), to which speaker A requests a confirmation of that date ('starting March first?'). Speaker A, however, leaves no space for speaker B to respond, as he immediately utters the word 'what,' for the upcoming question regarding when his spring break will end (line 5). Once speaker A has completed his question of when the break will end, speaker B responds with a date marked with the final suffix *kel* in line 6 ('to the tenth-*kel*').

```
6→    B: .hhh sam    wel   il   il-pwuthe hhh sip il-kkaci-i-lkel [H%]
         .hhh three month one day-from  hhh ten day-until-COP-kel
         .hhh it's from March first hhh to the tenth-kel


7     A: sam    wel   [il   il-pwuthe sip il-kkaci?              ]=
```

```
                three month   one day-from   ten day-until
                from March   [first to the tenth?=

8      B:                  [kwu  il-kkaci-nka        e    sip il-kkaci]
                           nine day-until-I:wonder yeah ten day-until
                           is it til the ninth yeah the tenth


9→        =e (1.0) moll-a         cal
           yeah    not:know-INT well
          =yeah (1.0) I'm not so sure


10    A: ung [:                    ]
          I:see
          I see:


11    B:    [nay-ka pwa-ya      tway]
            I-NOM   see-NECESS permissible:INT
            I'll have to check


12       il  il-un   mac-nuntey,
         one day-TOP correct-CIRCUM
         the first is right though,
```

A seemingly sufficient answer, speaker A attempts to confirm the beginning and end dates in line 7 ('from March first to the tenth'), while speaker B overlaps with a self-addressed question, in which he wonders if the date is actually 'the ninth.' It is at this point that we are able to demonstrably see the beginning signs of speaker B's uncertainty over the end date. He immediately responds to his own self question with a 'yeah the tenth' in the same line and then responds to speaker A's confirmation with a 'yeah' in line 9. There is, however, a subsequent one-second pause, followed by the statement, 'I'm not so sure,' which more or less discloses speaker B's inability to come up with an exact end date.

It is clear that the *kel*-marked response is providing an answer to Speaker A's question, while at the same time disclosing that there is uncertainty on his part. As the sequence progresses, speaker B's lack of knowledge, as seen in the multiple lapses that begins with the initial *kel*-marked answer in line 6, becomes apparent. First, speaker B takes a deep breath before the 'March first' statement and emphatically releases it just before his 'tenth' answer, in what looks to be the speaker buying some time.[33] He then second-guesses himself in line 8 with the 'ninth.' Although he subsequently confirms 'the tenth' as his answer in the same line, he pauses for a moment in the following line and proceeds in informing his recipient that he is, in the end, 'not so sure.' Finally, in order to assure his recipient which information he has given is accurate, he clarifies that the beginning date of his spring break, at the least, is accurate in line 12 ('the first is right though').

On an intonational level, we can also observe the use of an H% final boundary tone over the final suffix *kel* that provides an additional interactional resource for speaker A (figure 3.1).[34] According to M. -J. Park (2003), a rising boundary tone in Korean, and in many other languages such as English, (e.g., Hirschberg & Ward, 1995), is broadly associated with a question, non-finality, or openness. It is also used to signal that a proposition is to be added to speaker and/or listener's mutual beliefs and knowledge. Falling boundary ones [L%], on the other hand, can be seen as a speaker's strong commitment or added finality to the proposition.

Accordingly, the concomitant use of the [H%] boundary tone and *kel* demonstrate several notable interactional features. First, as Park has argued, the rising tone adds an element of uncertainty over the answer as it reflects the user's acute sensitivity towards a proposition that is

---

[33] Although a release of air does not always prelude an issue, it looks as though the speaker here is using it as a delay tactic.

[34] *Kel* consistently ends in a high boundary tone [H%], unless there is some type of disruption, such as laughter or an interlocutor's interruption.

only provisional. Secondly, the high boundary tone prospectively invites the recipient to respond

to the proposition. The high tone creates a tangential linguistic space for a negotiation of the

proposition, where, in this example, it is initiated by speaker A's confirmation question ('from

March first to the tenth?'). By asking this question, Speaker A elicits an additional confirmation,

since speaker B has already conveyed a sense of uncertainty over the dates. Instead of getting a

confirmation, however, the question prompts speaker B to announce that he does 'not know for

sure' fully disclosing his uncertainty. Still, as the sequence comes to a close, we see that the

'tenth' will remain the interim answer, as speaker A's 'I see:' in line 10 demonstrates the date as

sufficient for his understanding.

Figure 3.1 Contour of 'to the tenth-*kel*'
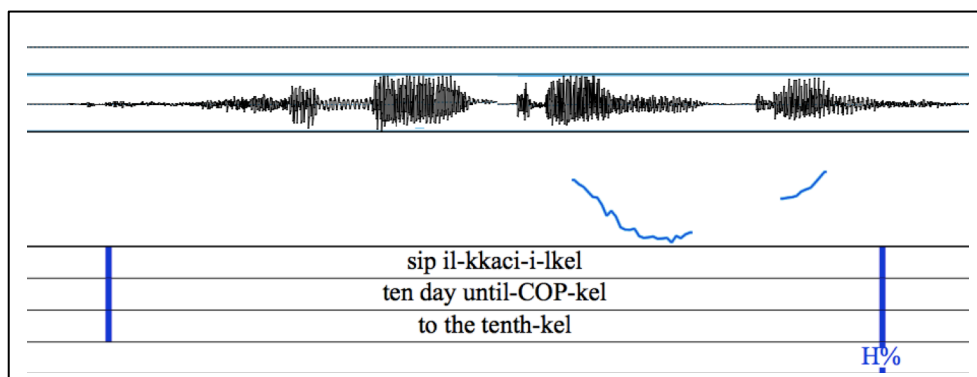


Speaker B, who has been positioned epistemically higher by the question, and whose

answer is presumed by the questioner to be in his epistemic territory, attempts to manage the

incongruity caused by his uncertainty. The fact that speaker B has responded with an answer

demonstrates that he does indeed have some knowledge of the elicited information in his

epistemic territory. At the same time however, he is unsure and must therefore indicate that his

answer is one of non-commitment, being that there is likely no manner in which he would be

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able to access the information in full. Moreover, the concomitant use of a high boundary tone involves the original questioner in allowing him to provide some type of response that will allow the answer to either stand or be amended. In this particular example, the answer is sufficient for speaker A's understanding and both speakers are able to proceed with their conversation.

Not all question and answer sequences, however, are innocuous transactions of information as the above example has shown. Within highly adversarial interactions, a questioner may test a recipient's knowledge, not for the sake of knowledge per se, but to have the recipient account for prior claims and/or actions (Koshik, 2003). In other words, these types of constituent questions make it known to the participant that his or her prior claims and/or actions were groundless and thus must be accounted for. In (2) below, a conversation devolves into an argument about credit cards. The female speaker, who has been displaying a relatively lower epistemic standing in regards to her knowledge, attempts to turn the tables by testing her interlocutor's knowledge.

```
(2)    [LDC corpus]
       Credit card limits (Male speaker M and female speaker F; friends)

1    M: optima iss-umyen mwe  ha-ko  eps-umyen     mwe  ha-nya
        optima have-COND what do-and not:have-COND what do-Q
        what does it matter if you have an Optima or not

2       ttokkath-ci::
        same-COMM
        it's all the same you know::

3    F: m:we: (0.5)
        what
        what: (0.5)
```

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```
4           [way ttokkath-ay::
             why same-INT
             why would they be the same::


5     M:  [kulem
             then
             then


6     F:  kuke thullye
            that wrong:INT
            you're wrong


7          ne  visa na kulen    ke-nun     hanto       iss-e
            you visa I  that:kind thing-TOP credit:limit exist-INT
            credit cards like visa do have limits


8          kuntey hh american express-ka
            but    hh american express-NOM
            but hh it's American Express


9          hanto        eps-nun      ke-ya::
            credit:limit not:have-REL thing-INT
            that doesn't have limits::


10    M:  optima-to   hanto        iss-e:
            optima-also credit:limit have-INT
            Optimas have limits too


11    F:  mwusun     hanto-ya.        han tal-ey?
            what:kind credit:limit-INT  one month-LOC
            what do you mean limits. per month?
```

```
12   M: kulem     haksayng ke-nun     tangyenhi kuleh-ci
         of:course student   thing-TOP naturally that:is-COMM
         of course a student's card naturally does you know

13       kulemyen mwe   ha-le   optima-lul mantul-ko
         then       what do-PURP optima-ACC make-and
         so then why would you try to get an Optima card and

14       ku    ceki-lul ha-nya?
         that that-ACC do-Q
         put yourself through that?

12→  F: elma-ntey [LH%]
         how:much-CIRCUM
         what's the limit then
```

The conversation initially had begun with speaker M telling speaker F that he has recently applied for an Optima credit card, to which speaker F recalls an unpleasant experience of being declined one because she forgot to pay the annual fee on one of her other cards. In response to her experience, Speaker M, in lines 1 and 2, tells her that it should not matter whether the credit card is an Optima or not, since to him, all credit cards are essentially the same ('it's all the same'). However, this claim appears to upset speaker F, as seen in her rather drawn out 'what' response, followed by a (0.5) second pause and a question that makes speaker M account for his prior comment ('why would they be the same'). Speaker F continues and enters a tangential topic on credit cards limits in lines 7 through 9 ('credit cards like visa do have limits but it's American Express that doesn't have limits::'), attempting to demonstrate that credit cards are, contrary to what he has just stated, different. In response, speaker M, in line 10, redirects the talk to address the fact that Optima cards have credit limits, essentially telling speaker F that the

Optima is not as good as she may think it to be. Speaker F then questions him in line 11 ('what do you mean limits. per month?'), to which speaker M explains that it is only natural that all student credit cards (a category to which she belongs) have credit limits. To further strengthen his argument, speaker M rhetorically asks why speaker F would want an Optima card since all student credit cards would have some sort of credit limit. It is at this moment that speaker F challenges speaker M's claims by asking him what the credit limit is for the Optima in line 12.

Grammatically, speaker F's challenge is marked by the suffix *nuntey*, an ender allowing her to pinpoint a problem in the interaction and temporarily halting the conversation until it is resolved (Y. -Y. Park, 1999). Although clearly a question, the [LH%] boundary tone (figure 3.2 below) accompanying *nuntey* conveys a sense of incredulity and skepticism over speaker M's assertions (M. -J. Park, 2003).

Figure 3.2 Contour of 'what's the limit then-*nuntey*'



elma-ntey
how:much-although
how much is it then
LH%
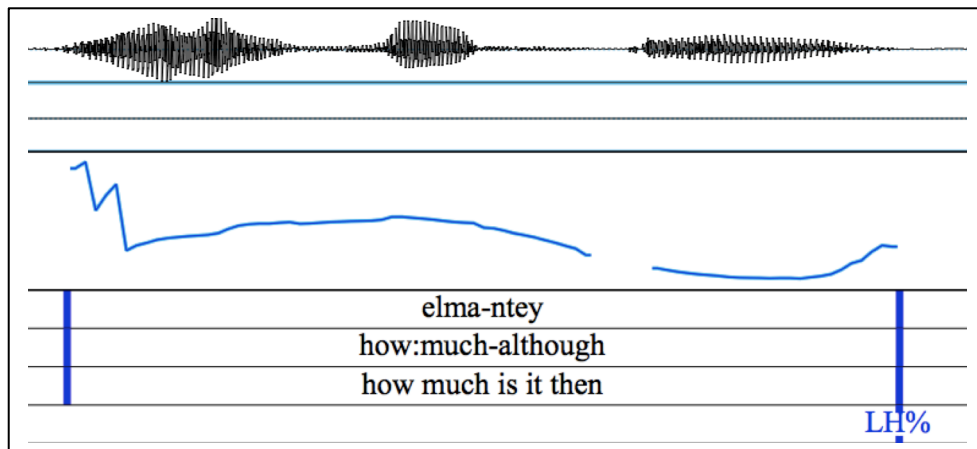
On the other hand, leading up to this question, speaker M has shown himself to be ostensibly more knowledgeable about credit cards, exemplified by his uses of *ci*, a final suffix showing strong commitment towards his claims ('it's all the same-*ci*' and 'of course a student's card

always has limits-*ci*') (H. S. Lee, 1999). Thus, in an effort to push back and challenge speaker

M's assertions, speaker F tests his knowledge on credit limit and, essentially, holds him

accountable for his previous assertions. He must respond with an answer or admit that his

knowledge of the Optima card has not been as complete as he had asserted it to be.


```
12→  F: elma-ntey [LH%]
         how:much-CIRCUM
         what's the limit then


13   M: kuke-n    na-to  molu-keyss-nuntey    ama
         that-TOP I-also not:know-SUP-CIRCUM probably
         that I wouldn't know either but it probably


14→     man          pwul    an  toy-lkel [H%]
         ten:thousand dollars NEG become-kel
         it shouldn't be more than ten thousand dollars-kel [H%]


15→  F: sss man          pwul?
         uh  ten:thousand dollars
         uh ten thousand dollars?


16   M: ya  ni-ka   selsa    hanto         nem-e kaciko
         hey you-NOM even:if credit:limit go-INF since
         hey would you ever go over your credit limit


17      cikum khatu mos    ssu-l   il       mwe iss-e,
         now   card  cannot use-REL occasion DM  have-Q
         where you couldn't use your card anymore,


18   F: kuke-n    eps-ci
         that-TOP not:exist-COMM
```

**that I'm sure I wouldn't**

Taking up the challenge, speaker M, in line 13, prefaces his response with an admission of uncertainty ('as for that I also wouldn't know but') but does provide an answer with a *kel*-marked proposition ('it shouldn't be more than ten thousand dollars-*kel* [H%]').

Figure 3.3 Contour of 'it shouldn't be more than ten thousand-*kel*'

| kuke-n na-to molu-keyss-nuntey ama | man pwul an toy-lkel |
|---|---|
| that-TOP I-also not:know-SUP-CIRCUM maybe | 10,000 dollars NEG become-kel |
| that I wouldn't know but probably | it shouldn't be more than 10,000-kel |

H%
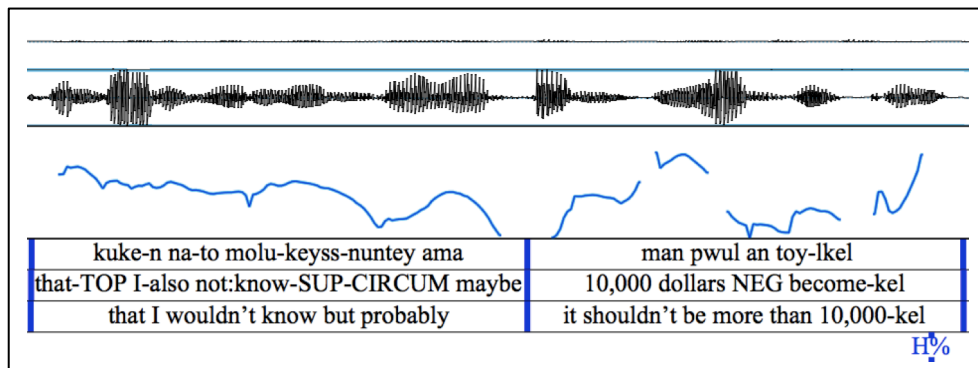
What is particularly interesting in his admission is his choice of the words *kuke-n* (literally 'as for that') and *na-to* ('I as well'), signaling two points that may vindicate his momentary lack of knowledge: 1) *kuke-n* illustrates that his uncertainty only applies to this particular question and 2) *na-to* assumes that speaker F is included as an unknowing participant. Furthermore, similar to the intonational pattern observed for the *kel* utterance in figure (3.1), the use of [H%] intonationally realizes what had already been explicitly uttered as an uncertainty in the prior line (figure 3.3).

At the same time, the high boundary tone permits speaker F to retake the floor and provide a response to speaker M's answer. With the space given to her, she reacts to the amount, first by casting doubt with an in-breath '*sss*' (a sound made by inhaling air through the teeth), signaling an upcoming disagreement. She then displays a sense of disbelief in her question ('ten

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thousand?), with the purpose of eliciting some type response from her interlocutor. Seeing that speaker F will not be giving him the benefit of the doubt, speaker M immediately redirects the quarrel by getting her attention with *ya* ('hey') and testing her with a slightly tangential question of whether she has ever gone over the credit limit of any card (line 16). By redirecting the burden of another question on speaker F, speaker M no longer needs to attend to her skepticism over the 'ten-thousand' confirmation, nor account for his lack of knowledge regarding the limit. It may also be interesting to note that since the response from speaker F was one that clearly elicited more information that speaker M likely did not have, his inability to confirm may have contributed to this abrupt shift, particularly as he looks to be attempting to maintain a relatively higher standing. In the end, however, speaker F responds to the new question ('that I'm sure I wouldn't') and the quarrel comes to an end, albeit on speaker M's terms.

In sum, we are able to see that neither speaker has access to the exact credit limit of the Optima card, although Speaker M has been demonstrating that his knowledge of credit cards in general is the greater of the two. Still, speaker F reveals a gap in his knowledge, through which she holds him accountable for all the claims he has been making. Speaker M must then confront the question by either confessing to not knowing about the credit card or providing an answer. Although it is a question that he does not have full access to, he, nonetheless, accepts her challenge and utilizes a non-committal *kel* to mark his response ('it shouldn't be more than ten thousand dollars-*kel*'). In this way, he is able to safeguard himself from speaker F's attempt at unraveling his epistemic standing, while partially liberating himself from the responsibilities associated with the answer. In this particular case, we can also observe that the high tone is met with a question that points to speaker F's skepticism and demonstrates that not all answers can be

sufficient for a questioner. In this example, speaker F's skepticism and ultimately her refusal to accept the answer is completely ignored by speaker M through his own tangents and questions.

The two examples that have been explored thus far initially reveal the intricate workings of how constituent questions can elicit *kel*-marked responses. In the first example, it was demonstrated that the questioner presumes the recipient to be in a position to answer, since the question pertains to information that is thought to be in his epistemic territory. However, the question is revealed to be partially outside the recipients' immediate domain of knowledge and cannot be answered in an accurate manner. In the second example, a speaker challenges a recipient with a question that forces him to account for prior claims. Although the recipient does not have access to the information elicited in the question, he, nonetheless, accepts the challenge and responds with a *kel*-marked answer. In both examples, users of *kel* are able to strategically respond to the constraints of the question by providing an answer that is marked as non-committal. In other words, *kel* allows the request for information to be fulfilled so that there is minimal disruption in the flow of the conversation. Furthermore, users of *kel* also invite their interlocutor to take part in negotiating their answers, so that there is, minimally, a level of mutual understanding regarding the veracity of the *kel*-marked information before a conversation can resume. As such, an acknowledgement from the original questioner permits a *kel*-marked proposition to be the temporary answer needed for a sort of congruence to be met. This does not mean, however, that the information is accurate or complete; rather, both speakers have made it known that they are satisfied with the *kel*-marked answer and proceed in their conversations. A denial, on the other hand, leads to different types of linguistic maneuvering such as what we observed in excerpt (2). Still, *kel*'s function as a non-committal final suffix appears to assist speakers in achieving a level of "relative" congruence during moments when information that is

elicited is partially or even fully inaccessible. As we continue in the next section to look through examples of polar questions, we will continue to discuss the way in which *kel* is positioned to address the epistemic incongruity and the flow of conversation.

### 3.4. Polar questions

In this section, we examine the role of *kel*-marked confirmations and disconfirmations to prior polar questions. Although recipients of polar questions are, hypothetically, limited to two polarities, the inability to fully commit to either a confirmation or disconfirmation can lead a recipient to use *kel* and initiate a negotiation of a desired polarity before the conversation is allowed to resume. This is not to say, however, that all sequences warrant some sort of negotiation; there are examples where a *kel*-marked confirmation appears to be sufficient for an interlocutor's understanding and the answer is allowed to remain. In what follows are two sub-sections, highlighting the way *kel* is pivoted to form certain shades of confirmation and disconfirmation respectively, and the way hearers treat those answers. The sections also consider how *kel* assists in the speakers' mutual understanding and the effects on subsequent sequences in conversation.

### 3.4.1. Confirmations

Confirmation sequences allow us to see how speakers utilize *kel* in effectively dealing with partial or no access to knowledge, as well as eliciting an approval for the answer. In general, confirmations to polar questions tend to be abbreviated and succinct, and are often accompanied by other linguistic and non-linguistic signs of affirmation (e.g., overlaps, positive interjections). As short as they may be, when a speaker is not fully committed to the confirmation, creating a certain gradient of that confirmation may consume larger chunks of sequences. In (3) below,

speaker X, who has never been to New York, inquires about what the appropriate attire for a Broadway musical is and speaker Y, who is seen as more knowledgeable, does not have the exact answer. Although her answer is ultimately a confirmation, she negotiates through her uncertainty, prior to her final *kel*-marked answer.


```
(3)    [LDC corpus]
       Attire (Female speakers X and Y; close friends)


1      X: kuliko tto  musical po-lye-myen
          and    also musical see-PURP-COND
          and also if you're going to see a musical


2         mak cengcang  ip-ko    ka-ya     tway?
          DM  dress     wear-and go-NECESS permissible:Q
          do (you) have to dress up?


3      Y: kuke-n   molu-keyss-ney   na a- na ku   ttay
          that-TOP not:know-SUP-APP I  a- I  that time
          as for that I'm not so sure I uh- I that one time


4         kulehkey  cengcang an  ip-ess-te-n      kes   kath-untey
          like:that dress    NEG wear-PST-RET-REL thing seem-CIRCUM
          I don't recall dressing up


5→     X: chengpaci ip-umyen  kwaynchanh-ulkka?
          jeans     wear-COND okay-DUB
          you think it'll be okay if I wear jeans?


6      Y: um:[:                                    ]
          hmm
          hmm:
```

7    X:    [hoksi    mak chengpaci ip-ess-ta-ko]
            in:case DM  jeans      wear-PST-DC-QT
            **in case they're like you wore jeans**


8          mak an  toy-n-ta-ko               kule-myen
           DM  NEG permissible-IMPFV-DC-QT say-COND
           **and if they say you're not suppose to**


9    Y:  chengpaci-ey  kwutwu kathun  ke    com   sin-e    cwe
         jeans-DAT     boots  similar thing a:bit wear-INF give:INT
         **just wear something like boots to go with your jeans**


10         yakkan    cengcangthik=
           somewhat formal
           **make it look some what formal**


11   X:  =e
          uh:huh
          **=uh huh**


12   Y:  kulenikka nemwu phakha chalim-i  anila
         so        too   parka  dress-NOM not
         **so what I mean is don't dress too casual**


13   X:  e
         uh:huh
         **uh huh**


14→  Y:  kulehkey   ka-myen toy-lkel [H%]
         like:that go-COND permissible-kel
         **if you go like that you should be fine-kel**


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In line 2, speaker X begins by asking if there is a formal dress code, to which speaker Y replies by telling her she is not sure (line 3). Nonetheless, she also recalls a past experience of a time when she did not have to dress up (lines 3 and 4), which then prompts speaker X to ask if she can wear jeans ('do you think it will be okay if I wear jeans?). In response to the question, we see speaker Y hesitate in line 6 with a 'hmm,' at which point, speaker X adds that she is only asking to make sure she does not wear jeans if it is not permissible (lines 7-8). To this, speaker Y explains that wearing boots with the jeans may give it a formal touch, allowing her to look 'somewhat formal.' We can see here that speaker Y is creating a boundary between what she calls *cengcangthik* (i.e., work wear) and *phakha chalim* (literally 'parka outfit'), guidelines that speaker X can possibly use. Once her boundaries are established, she summarizes her rather complicated answer to the question, bundled up in a *kel*-marked answer: 'if you go like that you should be fine-*kel*'.

14→   Y: kulehkey  ka-myen toy-lkel [H%]
         like:that go-COND permissible-kel
         **if you go like that you should be fine-kel**

15→   X: um
         alright
         **alright**

16    Y: ne  ku long coat iss-umyen coh-ci=
         you um long coat have-COND good-COMM
         **if you um have a long coat that should be good**

17    X: =e   long coat iss-e
         yeah long coat have-INT
         **yeah I do have a long coat**

```
18   Y: kalye-ci-nikka=
        cover-INCH-since
        since (the pants) will get covered

19   X: =e: (0.5) kulay
         uh:huh    alright:INT
        =uh huh (0.5) alright

20   Y: um
        yeah
        yeah

21      kulehkwuna
        I:see
        I see
```

As speaker Y has already made known her lack of certainty as to whether a formal dress

would be appropriate ('I'm not so sure about that') back in line 3, speaker X redesigns her

question and asks about the appropriateness of jeans.[35] In keeping with the preference of the

question in line 5, speaker Y's eventual confirmation only comes after a multi-sequential

deliberation, laying out several conditions for the wearing of jeans (lines 5 to 14). She concludes

that dressing 'like that' (*kulehkey*), a look she has deemed to lie between casual and slightly

formal, is her best guess of what would be most appropriate for a Broadway musical.

Moreover, speaker Y's use of a high boundary [H%] (figure 3.4) immediately elicits an

'alright,' (line 15) indicating that speaker X does not question or doubt the answer. The high

boundary tone creates a space, in which speaker Y is able to receive the confirmation, a

---

[35] It may be noted here that speaker X's polar question is syntactically designed with a preference for a confirmation as it presumes that it may be 'alright' to wear jeans.

component of this interaction that is highly crucial to the two speakers' mutual understanding and the general flow of this interaction. Getting the 'alright' response from speaker X provides an approval that will allow it to serve as the best answer for the time being. In the end, speaker Y has decided to align with speaker X and create a complex scenario that helps justify the wearing of jeans. In other words, what may have been easily a 'no' answer has been pushed closer to a 'yes' one. This becomes more evident, even after speaker Y has gotten her interlocutor on board with her, when she tell her that it may be good to wear a long coat that will help cover up her jeans in lines 16 and 18, a comment that certainly does not support her "confirmation" answer.

Figure 3.4 Contour of 'if you go like that you should be fine-*kel*'
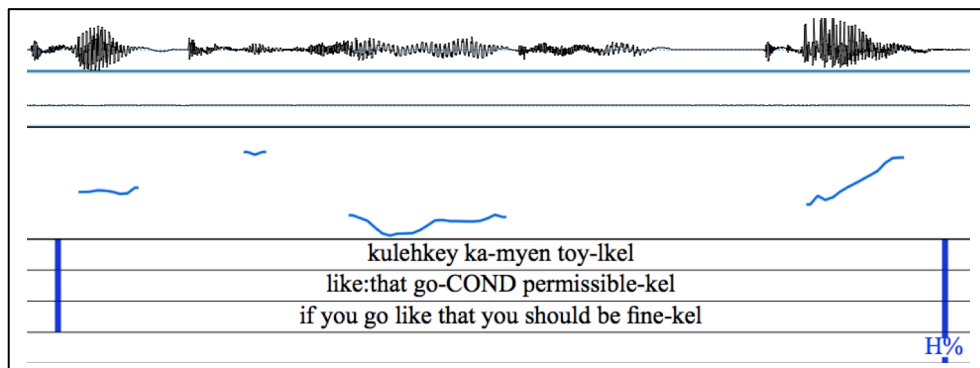


In contrast to example (3), a *kel*-marked confirmation that is close to the intended polarity can be sufficient for an interlocutor's understanding, such that supplemental sequences prior or subsequent to the *kel* are not necessary (Pomerantz & Heritage, 2012). In excerpt (4) below, two speakers talk about their homework and a quick question regarding the due date is asked. There appears to be no need for creating elaborate justifications for the polarity of the *kel*-marked confirmation to the question as we saw in the previous excerpt. The sequence begins with

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speaker E asking if speaker F has done her homework.


```
(4)    [LDC corpus]
       Homework (Female speakers E and F; close friends)


1      E: swukcey  hay-ss-e?
          homework do-PST-Q
          did you do your homework?


2      F: swukcey  mwe-ntey?
          homework what-CIRCUM
          what was the homework?


3      E: an  hay-ss-e?
          NEG do-PST-Q
          you didn't do it?


4      F: mwe kulim    kuli-nun ke?
          DM  drawing draw-REL thing
          uh the drawing thing?


5      E: ung
          yeah
          yeah


6→     F: kuke nayil-kkaci-ni?
          that tomorrow-until-Q
          is that due tomorrow?


7→     E: kule-lkel [H%]
          that:is-kel
          it is-kel [H%]
```

```
8    F: ha-ki-n     hay-ss-nuntey
        do-NML-TOP do-PST-CIRCUM
        well yeah I did do it but


9    E: na-n   hanato   an   hay-ss-nuntey
        I-TOP one:bit NEG do-PST-CIRCUM
        I didn't do one bit of it though


10   F: kuntey pyelke   eps-e         kunyang kuli-myen tway
        but    nothing not:exist-INT just    draw-COND permissible:INT
        but it's really nothing all you have to do is draw


11   E: ung
        yeah
        yeah
```

Speaker F's *nuntey*-marked question in line 2 (what was the homework-*nuntey*) makes it clear that she finds speaker E's question of whether she has done her homework problematic. It appears that she wants to know which homework assignment her interlocutor is alluding to, which immediately results in their conversation temporarily being halted to resolve this issue. In response to this, speaker E repolarizes the original question, 'didn't you do it,' prompting speaker F to recall the 'drawing' homework. Speaker E in line 5 confirms that that is the homework she is referring to. Then, in line 6, speaker F inserts an additional question asking whether the homework is 'due tomorrow,' to which the recipient simply answers 'it is-*kel*' in the following line. Speaker F has presumed in the question that the homework is due 'tomorrow' and an answer is offered, albeit with some uncertainty. Curiously, speaker E's answer is not met with an explicit affirmative or disaffirmative response; rather, speaker F answers the question in line

1, thereby resuming the conversation that was put on hold by the *nuntey* question in line 2.[36] By

bypassing an explicit response to the suffix *kel* [H%], speaker F indicates that speaker E's *kel*-

marked answer has not caused serious epistemic dissonance and that it has served its role in

providing the necessary answer to the question, even if it is an answer that speaker F has not

fully committed to. In fact, line 8 ('well I did do it but') only serves to confirm that speaker F's

original question was to confirm which homework it was that speaker E was referring to.

As we have seen in these two examples, hearers are easily able to confirm answers

marked with *kel*, even if the answer is uncommitted to. One reason for this may be that,

regardless of how strongly the respondent commits to his or her answer, the confirmation

preference of the polar question is, nonetheless, met. When the uncertainty of a response is not

an issue in the sequence, as in excerpt (4), we see that the negotiation of that response is also

unnecessary. We also see this in excerpt (3) where the uncertainty of how a person should dress

to a Broadway musical is still given an instantaneously affirmation.


### 3.4.1. Disconfirmations

In contrast to confirmations, *kel*-marked disconfirmations involve tangential sequences,

in which additional information regarding the answer may be elicited. In excerpt (5), speakers C

and D discuss speaker C's plan to visit New York City, where speaker D is currently living.

Apparently worried about the safety of using public transportation, speaker C asks how big

Manhattan is, assuming that were the city not so big, her and her friends would be able to walk it

instead. In this excerpt, speaker D disconfirms the request for a confirmation and enters a

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[36] The suffix *ntey* is a variant of *nuntey*.

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sequence in qualifying her disconfirmation.


(5)   [LDC corpus]
      New York City (Female speakers C and D; close friends)


1     C: elmankhum nelp-e     New York-i?
         how       wide-INT   New York-NOM
         **how big is New York?**


2     D: eng? a  new york emcheng nelp- nelp-e
         huh  oh new york really  wide  wide-INT
         **huh? oh New York it's very bi- big**


3     C: maniley   soho keli-eyse:
         by:chance soho distance-from
         **say from Soho:**


4     D: ung
         uh:huh
         **uh huh**


5     C: mwe wall street-kkaci ka-n-ta      kule-myen
         DM  wall street-to    go-IMPFV-DC say-COND
         **um say if you're going all the way to Wall Street**


6→      keleka-l swu          iss-e?
        walk-REL possibility exist-Q
        **would you be able to walk it?**


7→    D: .hhh::: an: toy-l:kel [H%] ama [H%]
         .hhh    NEG possible-kel   probably
         **.hhh::: you couldn't-kel [H%] probably [H%]**

```
8→   C: an   tway?
        NEG possible:Q
        you can't?


9    D: nal-to   chwuwu-ntey
        day-also cold-CIRCUM
        it's also been cold and stuff


10   C: eng::
        I:see
        I see


11→  D: ung,    neys-i-myen         thayksi tha:
        uh:huh  four:people-COP-COND taxi    ride:INT
        uh huh, if there's four of you (just) take a taxi
```

In line 1, speaker C initiates a sequence with the question of how big the city is. Speaker D immediately responds with 'huh?,' likely caught off guard by how this question is pertinent to the safety of the public transportation system in New York City. She immediately realizes the reason why her interlocutor may have asked such a question (seen in her 'oh'), and replies that New York is 'very big' (line 2). Speaker C expands with an additional question asking if walking from Soho to Wall Street would be possible (lines 3 and 5), to which speaker D sighs and responds with what is essentially a *kel*-marked 'no' answer. Speaker C requests a confirmation of this asking in the following line ('you can't?'), to which speaker D replies, 'it's also been cold and stuff' giving a reason, albeit a reason unrelated to the actual distance from Soho to Wall Street.

It is clear that speaker D disagrees with the presumption that it may be possible to walk from Soho to Wall Street. Her choice in the use of the negated *toy*- predicate ('possible')

unequivocally demonstrates that she is answering, rather than evading the question. The *kel*

marker, on the other hand, demonstrates a relative lack of certainty she has with her answer.

Although more certain than her interlocutor, as she is the one living in New York, her inability to

fully commit to the proposition has already been prefaced in her long sigh, a sort of place holder

immediately before she had produced her utterance. Her uncertainty also becomes more explicit

in the way she stretches out each syllable of her answer (*an: toy-l: kel*), as though she is in the

process of thinking about the answer, and she finally concludes with the word 'probably.' The

linguistic and para-linguistic devices used are clear signs that speaker D is hesitant in fully

committing to the disconfirming answer.


Figure 3.5 Contour of 'you couldn't probably-*kel*'
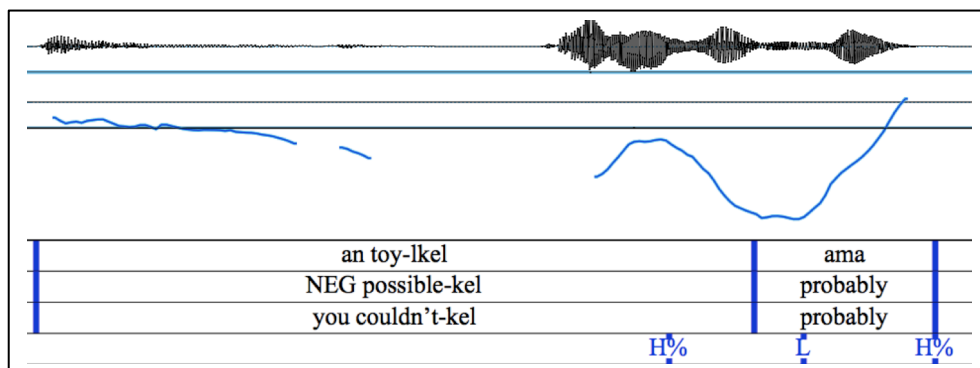


Taking a look at the intonational contour, speaker D uses a high boundary tone twice, once with

the suffix ender *kel* and a second one at the end of the word *ama* 'probably.' What is curious

about this is the fact that speaker C has reapplied a terminal high boundary tone when the word

*ama* is added, such that it is guaranteed to elicit a response from her interlocutor. Speaker D's

response is a confirmation question ('you can't,'), revealing that she would like additional

information regarding why it may be difficult to walk from Soho to Wall Street. It looks to be

that the answer to the question was not immediately sufficient for her understanding. In response, speaker C answers with a tangential reason, 'it's also been cold and stuff,' making the weather, in effect, a reason why she thinks walking would not be a good idea. The reason now appears to satisfy speaker D, ratified by her affirmation ('I see') (line 10), to which speaker C is then able to confidently give her 'uh huh' answer and additional advice in taking a taxi, likely knowing that speaker D is now onboard with her.

From speaker C's perspective, speaker D is presumed to be in the position of answering her question, but for Speaker D, the exact distance between Soho and Wall Street or the actual time it would take to walk it, is apparently unclear. By employing *kel*, speaker D is able to ultimately maintain her standing as the more knowledgeable speaker while also conveying that she does not have full access to the information elicited (i.e., her own experience in walking the distance or the exact distance between the two locations). The subsequent negotiable space created by the high boundary tone at the end of her answer allows speaker D to response to the proposition and take part in approving or disapproving the uncommitted answer. Although speaker C does not immediately affirm speaker D's disconfirmation, we do see that after several sequences of negotiations, the participants eventually settle on the original disconfirmation, even if the commitment to the answer remains weak.

In the next example, two friends talk and complain about speaker Y's need for a car and how expensive they are. In an effort to lighten the mood, Speaker X jokes that his friend should simply buy a lottery ticket to help fund a car, to which the friend asks if lottery tickets are cheap. The excerpt begins with this question.

(6)   [LDC corpus]

      Lottery (Male speakers X and Y; close friends)


1     Y: pokkwen-un  ssa-nya?    .hh

         lottery-TOP cheap-Q

         **are lottery tickets cheap? .hh**


2     X: pokkwen-un (0.2) toy-myen    ssan  ke-ya:

         lottery-TOP       become-COND cheap thing-INT

         **lottery tickets (0.2) they're cheap if you win:**


3     Y: e:

         yeah

         **yeah:**


4     X: kuke-y (1.0)

         that-NOM

         **they're (1.0)**


5        ku   toy-myen    acwu ssan  ke-la-n-ta[37]

         that become-COND very cheap thing-DC-IMPFV-DC

         **they say it is cheap if you win it**


6     Y: .hh kuleh-ci  .hh (0.4) elma-ccali-ka

         .hh that-COMM .hh       how:much-value-NOM

         **.hh sure .hh (0.4) the winnings**


7        toy-nu-nya-ey     ttala     talu-ciman

         become-IMPFV-Q-DAT according different-but

         **although it depends on what (the winnings) are**

---

[37] The quotative construction in line 5, *ke-lan-ta*, is a contraction of the full form *ke-la-ko ha-n-ta.* The original 'say' verb is no longer explicit in the shorter form.

```
8    X: mwullon    kuleh-ciman iltan
        of:course that:is-but first
        of course it depends but first


9    Y: hana-ey elma-ntey      il  pwul-ccum     ha-na?
        one-LOC how:much-CIRCUM one dollar-around cost-Q
        how much for one around a dollar?


10   X: moll-a       na-to
        not:know-INT I-also
        I'm not sure either


11      mwe ssan  ke-nun   toykey ssa-keyss-ci   mwe
        DM  cheap one-TOP  really cheap-SUP-COMM DM
        um well cheap ones are probably very cheap I suppose


12   Y: .hh ssan  ke-nun  kellye-to .hh mwe  kulehkey  kakyey-ey
        .hh cheap one-TOP win-even  .hh DM   like:that earning-DAT
        .hh even if you win a cheap one .hh uh the earnings


13→     towum-i  an  toy-nun    ke    ani-nya kuntey?
        help-NOM NEG become-REL thing not-Q   though
        wouldn't be that helpful wouldn't it though?


14   X: kulayto ama      iltungha-myen manhi toy-lkel [H%]=
        still   probably win-COND      a:lot become-kel
        still if you win it'll probably be very helpful-kel [H%]=
```

In line 2, speaker X appears to evade answering speaker Y's question by replying that lottery tickets are cheap if one is able to win it. His reply is grammatically marked with the suffix ender *ke-ya* (literally 'the thing is'), conveying to his interlocutor a strong sense of confidence about this particular fact. To this, speaker Y provides a modest agreement ('yeah') and speaker Y

retakes the floor in an attempt to provide further commentary with the word *kuke-y* ('that') in line 4. However, he pauses for a second and reformulates his original assertion in a quotative construction ('they say it is cheap if you win'), indicating that this is something he has heard. Again, speaker Y replies with a quick agreement (*kulehci* or 'sure'), while snickering under his breath. With the combination of laughter and the subsequent (0.4) second pause, it begins to look as though speaker Y may have an issue with the answer speaker X has provided in the prior turn. Speaker Y breaks the silence and asserts that the price of a lottery ticket may depend on the winning amount (lines 6 and 7). By adding this proposition, speaker Y not only indicates that he may have some knowledge of lottery tickets, as he has partially answered his own question, but also informs speaker X that the answer to the original question has not been satisfactory. Speaker X unequivocally agrees with speaker Y's statement in line 8 ('of course') but also indicates he has a different perspective in regards to what speaker Y has just said, indicated by his use of the connective *-ciman* or 'but' in a defensive response (*mwullon kuleh-ciman iltan* or 'of course it depends but first'). Before he can complete his thought, however, speaker Y retakes the floor and asks this time how much a lottery ticket would be, marked with *nuntey*. The *nuntey* question, along with speaker Y's own guess of 'a dollar,' spotlights the answers provided by speaker X as problematic and thus suggests that he may not know how much or how cheap a lottery ticket is. Now that the conversation has temporarily been shifted to the cost of a lottery ticket, speaker X confesses that he does not know in line 10 (*moll-a na-to* or 'I don't know either'), although he includes his interlocutor as an unknowing participant by using the particle *-to* ('also'). He does, however, offer a *ci*-marked answer informing his interlocutor that he can be assured that 'cheap ones are probably very cheap.'

It was speaker Y's two questions (lines 1 and 9) that had presumed speaker X to know

how much lottery tickets are and whether they are cheap or not. However, by this point in the

sequence, speaker X's uncertainty of the cost of lottery tickets has undoubtedly been exposed,

even though he has made himself look somewhat knowledgeable through assertions that are

tangentially related to the original questions asked by speaker Y. Responding to speaker X's *ci-*

marked assertion in line 11, speaker Y, in a final question, asks if the winnings from a cheap

ticket would amount to something significant in line 12 and 13. This time, the negatively

polarized tag question *ani-nya* ('would it not') is designed to pressure his interlocutor in

providing a confirmation that a cheap lottery ticket would not be beneficial in terms of its

winnings (line 13).

```
14    X: kulayto ama      iltungha-myen manhi toy-lkel [H%]=
         still   probably win-COND      a:lot become-kel
         still if you win it'll probably be very helpful-kel [H%]=

15       =ssan   ke  sa-to [H%]
          cheap one buy-even
         =even buying cheap ones [H%]

16    Y: ung
         I:see
         I see

17    X: hwanlywul-i       nac-keyss-ci
         exchange:rate-NOM low-SUP-COMM
         I suppose the exchange rate is low

18:   Y  powerball kathun  ke
         powerball similar thing
         things like powerball
```

The presumptive question is met with a *kel*-marked rebuttal ('still if you win it'll probably be helpful-*kel*') initiate with the word *kulayto* ('still') that signals that speaker X does not necessarily agree with speaker Y's statement. He directly answers the question not by saying 'no' but by providing an explanation as to why the presumptions of speaker Y's question may be wrong. Nonetheless, without access to the information elicited (his answer is only a good guess), speaker Y's marks his answer with a non-committal *kel*.

Figure 3.6 Contour of 'it'll be very helpful-*kel*'



| manhi | toy-lkel | ssan ke sa-to |
|---|---|---|
| a:lot | become-kel | cheap one buy-even |
| be very (helpful)-kel | | even buying cheap ones |
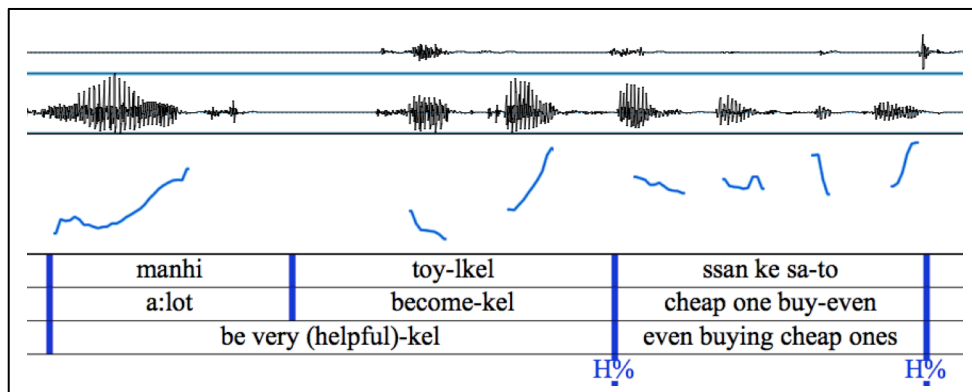
Even though speaker X's *kel*-marked answer goes against what speaker Y had anticipated, speaker X's uncertainty, nonetheless, leads him to invite his interlocutor to accept or reject it. Again, we see that this is achieved by the high tone accompanying *kel*, although in this example, the speaker has squeezed the phrase 'even buying cheap ones,' which also terminates in a high boundary tone. The final high tone returns the floor to speaker Y and allows him to decide whether or not speaker X's answer can satisfy his inquiry. Accordingly, we can see immediately that speaker Y responds by affirming speaker X's *kel*-marked answer with an 'I see.' Although the conversation leading up to the *kel*-marked response was essentially one of speaker Y gauging

what speaker X knew of lottery tickets, the negotiation that takes place after the *kel* is rather

concise and closes the sequence with speaker X's confirmation.

In the last excerpt (7), two speakers discuss what university resident assistants would

actually make if the living amenities provided by the university were to be monetized. Both

speakers have already come to the conclusion that a resident assistant (RA) would earn an

estimate of four thousand dollars for his or her living arrangement before the transcription of the

excerpt below. The excerpt begins with their estimates of a resident assistant's meal plan costs.


```
(7)    [LDC corpus]
       Meal plan costs (Male speakers A and B; speaker A is older than
       speaker B)


1      A: meal plan taychwung samchen  pwul     cengto ha-na?
          meal plan roughly    3000     dollars around cost-Q
          are meal plans roughly around three thousand dollars?


2      B: ani-ya  meal plan-to    kathi     wa        RA ha-myen
          not-INT meal plan-also together come:INT RA do-COND
          no meal plans are included if you're an RA


3→     A: kulenikka samchen   pwul     cengto ha-cyo [H-]=
          so          3000      dollars around cost-Q:POL
          so what I mean is that it's around 3000 dollars right [H-]


4         =wenlay     ton    an  nay-myen
           originally money NEG pay-COND
          =if you're not originally paying for it


5→     B: sss e     kuntey
          DM  yeah but
```

```
       um yeah but


6→     han    ichen pwul    ccali-lo   hay    cwu-lkel kuke [H%]
       around 2000  dollars value-INST do:INF give-kel that
       (they'll) do it for around two thousand dollars-kel [H%]
```

As speaker A begins to quantify the university meal plan, he asks speaker B whether his guess of three thousand dollars is correct in line 1 ('are meal plans around three thousand dollars?'). Speaker B misunderstands speaker A's question and replies that meal plans are free if one is a resident assistant. In line 3, speaker A signals to his interlocutor that he has misunderstood the question with the discourse marker *kulenikka* 'what I mean,' while at the same time, reformulating his question with the presumption that the estimated three thousand dollars would be the potential amount for a resident assistant's meal plans.[38]

Figure 3.7 Contour of 'it's around three thousand dollars right-cyo'



| kulenikka | samchen pwul cengto ha-cyo | wenlay ton an nay-myen-un |
|---|---|---|
| so | 3000 dollars around do-Q:POL | originally money NEG pay-COND-TOP |
| so what I mean is that it's around 3000 dollars right | | if you're not originaly paying for it |
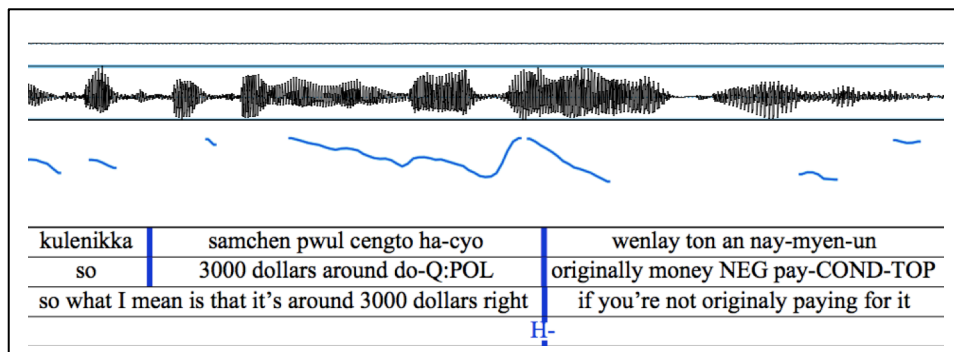
This presumptive question is grammatically marked with *ci*, a final suffix that not only marks the contents of question as fully committed to, but also assists in eliciting a confirmation (H. S. Lee,

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[38] Depending on the context and sequential placement, *kulenikka*, whose original meaning of 'so' or 'therefore,' can be used to partially disagree as in 'what I mean is' and to agree with someone as in 'yeah that what I mean.'

1999). Moreover, the speaker uses a high tone in the accentual phrase *sam chen pwul cengto ha-ci-yo* [H-] ('it's around three thousand dollars right [H-]') before the tone is dropped back down to complete the rest of the intonational phrase 'if you're not originally paying for it' (figure 3.7). Speaker B's response in line 5 begins with '*sss,*' indicating the beginnings of his disagreement with speaker A's presumptions and is followed by 'yeah but' and a *kel*-marked alternative that provides an estimated cost of 'around two thousand dollars.' Through the use of an alternative *kel*-marked answer, speaker B effectively disconfirms his interlocutor's original confirmation question of whether it was three thousand dollars that he had original thought it to be.

Figure 3.8 Contour of '(they'll) do that for around 2000 dollars-*kel*'



| e | kuntey han ichen pwul ccali-lo hay cwu-lkel kuke |
|---|---|
| yea | but around 2000 dollars value-INS do:INF give-kel that |
| yea | '(they'll) do that for around 2000 dollars-kel |
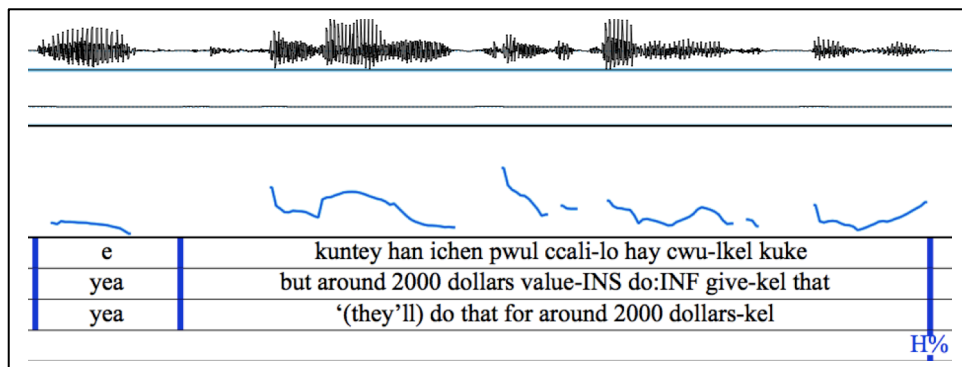
Looking at the intonational structure in detail, the last word *kuke* ('that'), immediately attached to *kel* suffix to form the end of an intonational phrase, terminates in a high boundary (figure 3.8) and accordingly provides an opportunity for speaker A to respond to the new number. Although speaker B's *kel*-marked answer is essentially a challenge to speaker A's original estimate, the fact that he uses the *kel* suffix also informs the interlocutor that this is only a better estimate.

6→     han   ichen pwul   ccali-lo   hay   cwu-lkel kuke [H%]

```
            around 2000  dollars value-INST do:INF give-kel that
            (they'll) do that for around two thousand dollars-kel [H%]


7      A: a  ichen pwul
           oh 2000  dollars
           oh two thousand dollars


8      B: ung  ichen pwul     animyen chenopayk pwul-i-ya
           yeah 2000  dollars or      1500      dollars-COP-INT
           yeah two thousand or fifteen hundred dollars


9      A: kulenikka   kuke-myen yukchen yukchen pwul-i-ya      hyeng
           so          that-COND 6000    6000    dollars-COP-INT brother
           so yeah what I'm saying is that it's six six thousand dollars


10     B: kulenikka
           so
           so that's what I'm saying


11     A: cangnan-i ani-ta
           joke-NOM  not-DC
           it's no joke
```

Hearing the *kel*-marked response, speaker A accepts the new estimate and explicitly reveals that this has been added to his own knowledge by the *a* ('oh') token, reflecting a change of state in his epistemic standing (c.f., Heritage, 1998). With a display of such a response, speaker A now has let speaker B know that the provisional 'two thousand dollar' is allowed to remain as the best estimated cost. Once speaker A has ratified this estimate however, speaker B's uncertainty of the actual cost of a meal plan becomes fully evident when he rethinks and provides an additional estimate of fifteen hundred ('or it's fifteen hundred dollars').

At this point, it may be important to note that even with speaker B's uncertainty over the

actual estimated cost, speaker A has already incorporated the provisional two thousand dollars amount into his own sphere of knowledge. Having done so, he begins to add the meal plan cost to their previously agreed four thousand dollars for living arrangements to ultimately come up with a total of six thousand dollars that a resident assistant may possibly make in line 9. As such, it appears that without first coming to a consensus on the cost of a meal plan, speaker A would not be able to make such a statement. The sequence comes to a close with speaker B ratifying the six thousand dollars in the subsequent line with *kulenikka* ('that's what I'm saying') in line 10 and speaker A subsequently assessing that 'it's no joke.'

In all three excerpts, the questioners' presumptions that they will get confirmations are actually met unfilled by a *kel*-marked disconfirmation. In excerpt (5), we saw that the disconfirmation was responded to with a request for an elaboration of the disconfirmation. Once the reason is given, the original questioner is able to accept the disconfirmation. In excerpts (6) and (7), the uses of a double negative and a *ci*-marked question respectively demonstrate specific strategies in which questioners will attempt to elicit a confirmation from the interlocutors. However, the *kel*-marked disconfirmation, regardless of what the constraints may be, demonstrates the responders' partial beliefs. In either case, rather than responding with a 'no' answer, an alternative is provided that implicitly provides the disconfirming answer, and ultimately, the conversation is allowed to proceed in a manner that is not hindered by epistemic incongruity caused by the initial requests.

## 3.5. Discussion

This chapter has looked at *kel*-marked responses in both constituent and polar questions and has demonstrated sequences of information and confirmation requests as two linguistic

environments the suffix ender *kel* is likely to emerge in. It has also illustrated the non-committal meaning the suffix provides speakers when there is a level of uncertainty in their response to an information or confirmation request. By analyzing the sequence leading up to and after the deployment of *kel*, we are first able to establish that the responder in each excerpt does not have a definitive answer to the elicited information or confirmation. In excerpts (1) and (2) for instance, the questioners' epistemic uncertainties were evident both before and after their respective *kel* utterance, in terms of what they linguistically made explicit (e.g., 'I'm not so sure') and para-linguistically made implicit with in-breaths, hesitation, and pauses.[39]

The high boundary tone that accompanies the suffix ender is also shown to be a vital feature of *kel*, particularly in terms of its role in assisting the elicitation of a response from the original questioner. This tonal aspect of *kel* is a unique feature of the suffix ender as the high boundary tone provides a momentary space for the questioner to re-enter the dialogue and allows the original questioner to decide whether the *kel*-marked response can remain as a satisfactory answer. It appears that without the participation of the questioner in defining how the answer is to remain, the "flow" of conversation can potentially be sidetracked and impeded. In cases where the *kel*-marked answer is initially rejected, the user of *kel* may opt to provide additional reasons to help support the proposition, as we saw in excerpt (5), or simply attempt to change the topic as we observed in excerpt (2).

Given the specific contexts where epistemic dissonance emerges, it appears that responders are ultimately concerned with the disruption of the flow of information during a conversation. By utilizing *kel*, speakers look to minimize major disruptions when full access to a particular piece of information is moot. Speakers also avoid the burden of taking on the

---

[39] It is in the larger context of each sequence that in-breaths, pauses, and hesitation index the beginnings of a disagreement, rather than inherently and explicitly indexing those meanings.

responsibilities for an answer that is unknown and cannot be committed to, largely since it would

have the consequence of being erroneous. *Kel* provides the resource through which a local,

relative congruence in epistemics can be met—that is, a congruence that has been agreed upon

by all participants. It allows a user to pivot an approximate answer to the information or

confirmation request and "straightens out," albeit partially, the rather steep epistemic incline that

is formed by the request. Following after Heritage (2010) and Heritage & Clayman (2010),

figure (3.9) visually illustrates both an ideal situation in which a committed answer (a) and a *kel*-

marked answer (b) is given to information or confirmation requests.

Figure 3.9 Epistemic standing of users of *kel*
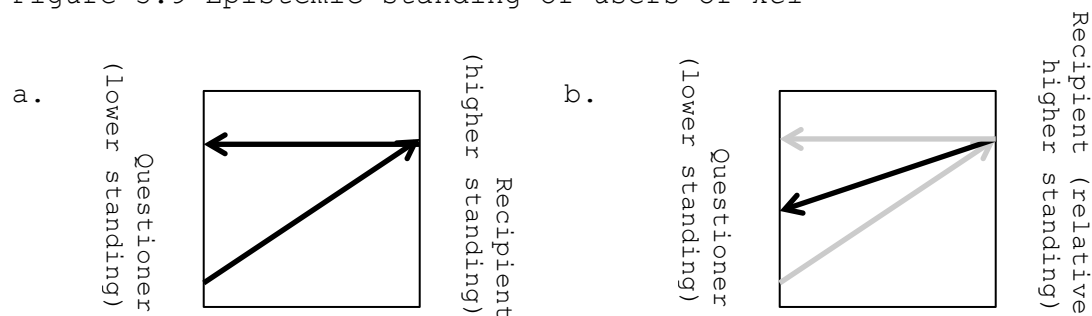


In (a), the diagram illustrates a questioner presumption of a responder's higher epistemic

standing when requesting information or a asking for a confirmation. In an ideal setting, this is

met with an answer that is fully committed to, in a sense flattening out the momentary epistemic

deficiency that was formed. In (b) however, a *kel* response only partially remedies the epistemic

gap, although, to some extent, it does decrease the steepness of the epistemic deficiency. At this

point, however, there appears to be nothing more the responder can do in terms of providing

additional or an alternative answer, and the gap is remedied by the concomitant high boundary

tone that provides additional sequences for negotiations.

Provisionally, *kel* provides speakers a resource, through which they are able to respond to an information or confirmation request, even if the answer is, at best, a guess or estimate. Still, when the uncommitted answer is sufficient for participants' understanding, they are able to advance their conversation. In this sense, *kel* is an economical means of reaching a level of epistemic congruence that is necessary for continuing a conversation when "true" congruence cannot be met.

In summary, this chapter has begun to establish clarity on how deficiencies in epistemics can motivate speakers to utilize *kel* and what the implications for committing and not committing to a response can be for conversation. These findings also point to the bigger question of what it means to achieve epistemic congruence and what may happen in situations where "true" epistemic congruence may be impossible. By looking at how speakers use *kel* in moment-by-moment conversations, the chapter has aimed to provide the foundations for arguments that directly deal with the larger issues of how *kel*'s unique function serves the language that other final suffixes are unable to and how grammatical suffixes in Korean (and possibly typologically similar languages) emerge locally in conversation and more broadly as "grammar" (in Hopper's sense) in language systems.

# Chapter 4

## The role of *kel* in epistemic imbalances

### 4.1. Introduction

In chapter three, it was demonstrated that speakers deploy a non-committal *kel* in response to information or confirmation requests when an answer is uncertain. Moreover, *kel,* as a linguistic resource for a speaker to "not commit," was shown to be crucial, since it provides a strategy in responding to a request, while minimizing the possibilities of negative effects on the flow of conversation. As such, *kel* can be seen as a suffix ender that creates a negotiable space for an answer that will facilitate relative epistemic congruence, even when participants cannot fully access the information that would be needed to advance the conversation in ideal settings.

In the following, chapter 4 centers on how respondents utilize the non-committal function of *kel* in situations where epistemic incongruity emerges or *potentially* emerges for speakers. In doing so, this chapter highlights the concomitant use of *kel* and its high boundary tone as a key resource in temporarily halting a conversation and providing a speaker the space needed to resolve asymmetries in knowledge that have or will have surfaced. However, as we have observed in chapter 3, knowledge is negotiated incrementally and is highly dependent on the understanding and agreement of participants in a conversation. In fact, fellow speakers may simply reject a certain piece of information that they deem to be inaccurate. As such, this chapter has included examples of *kel*, where its use does not necessarily guarantee an immediate agreement. Speakers may have to further negotiate their differences past several additional sequences. Lastly, one fundamental question this chapter discusses is how epistemic imbalances can motivate responders to deploy *kel*. As many conversation analysts have rightly noted, there is

a need for each person in a conversation to "track what others know… as a means of determining whether and how to act on what is being asserted" (Heritage, 2012: 20). Without attention paid to the details of a conversation, there would indeed be misunderstandings and misjudgments that would invariably obstruct or inhibit further sequences. Accordingly, this chapter argues that *kel* is a unique resource that can initiate negotiations when epistemics discrepancies locally arise.

 The contents of this chapters is as follows: the first section details the use of *kel*-marked alternatives in response to assertions, while the second section covers *kel*-marked downgrades from prior propositions, when hearers are apprehensive or reluctant in accepting a particular piece of information. In other words, *kel*-marked alternatives are deployed when an immediate imbalance has emerged while *kel*-marked downgrades appear to preempt one.


**4.2. Epistemic imbalance**

Before beginning the analysis, it may be crucial to first layout what this chapter means by epistemic imbalance and discuss what its significance is in language use and analysis. Epistemic imbalances or incongruities arise when two speakers have differing viewpoints and/or understanding about a topic at hand. Drawing from the work of Kamio (1997), Heritage illustrates that, in situations of imbalance, one speaker's sphere of knowledge, or what he calls epistemic status, essentially diverges with another speaker's. In other words, one speaker's "unknowing" status (K-) and another's "knowing" (K+), in relation to a particular piece of information, essentially begin to clash (Heritage & Raymond, 2012; Heritage, 2012).

This is not to say that one's epistemic status remains constant, however—one of the main driving forces that Heritage and other conversation analysts see as a motivation for language use is the "need" to rebalance incongruity. Research looking at English and other languages such as

Korean and Japanese (Goodwin, 1979; Kim & Suh, 2010; Heritage, 2012; Hayano, 2013; among others) has shown that a speaker's epistemic status, as shown through stance, is constantly changing. It is also important to remember that speakers' knowledge, partial knowledge, or a complete lack of knowledge is incrementally disclosed and remedied in real time. This can mean that speakers may find themselves actually not knowing what they had thought they knew or realize they actually know something simply through the act of talking.

## 4.3. Negotiating epistemic discrepancies

We begin by considering a sequence of talk in which a *kel*-marked alternative is used to respond to a speaker's strong assumptions. In general, assertions are overt ways, in which speakers display a higher epistemic standing. In spoken Korean, these assertions are often marked by final grammatical suffixes explicitly indicating a range of commitment levels. Some common final suffixes include *ci*, a morpheme that was observed in the second chapter used to show commitment towards a proposition (H. S. Lee, 1999), or *canh*, a suffix that assumes epistemic congruence while eliciting alignment from the hearer (Kawanishi & Sohn, 1993). Unlike *kel*-marked answers to requests for information or confirmations however, a *kel* response to an assertion is an alternative to the proposition and resists the assumption made by another speaker. In other words, *kel* permits a speaker to question or even disagree with an assertion to begin a negotiation towards congruence.

Four excerpts will be analyzed, the first three demonstrating a different outcome in terms of how the epistemic standings of each speaker changes (or do not change) through the deployment of *kel*. Although not all conversations end or can end in epistemic congruence, this analysis centrally focuses on *kel* as a conduit through which epistemic negotiations are

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potentially initiated. The fourth excerpt focuses on the way in which the non-committal meaning of *kel* can be used to fabricate a lower epistemic standing. In this particular example, the user of *kel* attempts to escape the responsibilities of affirming and, thus, committing to the assertion of the interlocutor.

In excerpt (1), speaker C begins with a topic regarding a young man by the name of Cengmin and the date on which he will go to serve in the army. Speaker C's assertion of a particular date in lines 1 and 2 create an immediate epistemic gap and speaker D subsequently initiates a *kel* utterance to provide her own, albeit uncertain, understanding of the situation. This example will show how *kel* can begin a negotiation, even if the user ultimately yields to interlocutor.

```
(1)     [LDC corpus]
        Recruitment (Female speakers C and D)

1→    C: .hh cikum ku cengmin-i-ka    nayil     kwuntay ka-canh-a
          .hh now   uh cengmin-VOC-NOM tomorrow army     go-you:know-INT
          .hh now uh Cengmin's going to the army tomorrow you know

2→        [kwuntay tuleka-canh-a]
           army     enter-youknow-INT
           entering the army you know

3→    D: [nayil-i-nka?                 ]
          tomorrow-COP-I:wonder
          is it tomorrow I wonder?

4     C: ung
          yeah
          yeah
```

```
5→    D: sipsa     il  nal-i-lkel [H%]
          fourteen day day-COP-kel
          it's the fourteenth-kel [H%]
```

Speaker C asserts that Cengmin will be leaving for the army 'tomorrow' (the eleventh of the month) and her certainty is evident in her use of *canh* in both lines 1 and 2. The suffix ender *canh* solicits alignment from speaker D with the assumption that speaker D's knowledge is or will be aligned with hers (Kawanishi & Sohn, 1993; Ju & Sohn 2013). However, rather than providing the alignment that is being sought, speaker D instead asks a self-directed question *nayil-i-nka?* ('is it tomorrow I wonder?'), indicating the first signs of her disalignment with 'tomorrow.' At the same time, the self-directed question also demonstrates a certain level of uncertainty as to what the exact date might be, as it only questions the 'tomorrow,' rather than providing an alternative date. Nonetheless, speaker C answers the question with a definitive 'yeah' (line 4), informing speaker D that she will not be amending her 'tomorrow' answer. At this point, with speaker D's finalized answer, speaker C answer her own question with an alternative 'fourteenth' date marked with the *kel* suffix ender, problematizing speaker C's prior 'tomorrow.'

```
5→    D: sipsa     ilnal-i-lkel [H%]
          fourteen day-COP-kel
          it's the fourteenth-kel

6     C: nayil-i      sipsa     il-i-nka
          tomorrow-NOM fourteen day-COP-I:wonder
          I wonder if tomorrow is the fourteenth
```

```
7     D: ani-ya     onul  sip-(0.2) sipil   il
         not-INT   today  ten        eleven  day
         no today's the ten- (0.2) eleventh


8     C: amwuthun nayil      tuleka-n-tay    .hh
         anyway    tomorrow  enter-IMPFV-HS
         anyway (I) heard he's going in tomorrow .hh


9     D: nayil     tuleka-n-tay,
         tomorrow enter-IMPFV-HS:Q
         so (you) heard he's going in tomorrow,


10    C: ung
         yeah
         yeah


11    D: way ilehkey   ppali tuleka
         why like:this early enter:Q
         why is (he) going in so early


12    C: moll-a
         not:know-INT
         I don't know
```

Although speaker D's response has caused a full epistemic imbalance, the high boundary tone that accompanies *kel* (figure 4.1), nonetheless, begins a negotiation of reconciling the conflicting viewpoints, by first, providing speaker C an opportunity to accept or reject the alternative answer. As a response, speaker C, rather than rejecting the *kel*-marked answer, asks whether 'tomorrow' is the 'fourteenth,' in what appears to be either a simple confusion or an attempt to reconcile both her and speaker D's date (line 6). To this however, speaker D clearly replies that tomorrow is not the fourteenth.

Figure 4.1 Contour of 'it's the fourteenth-*kel*'
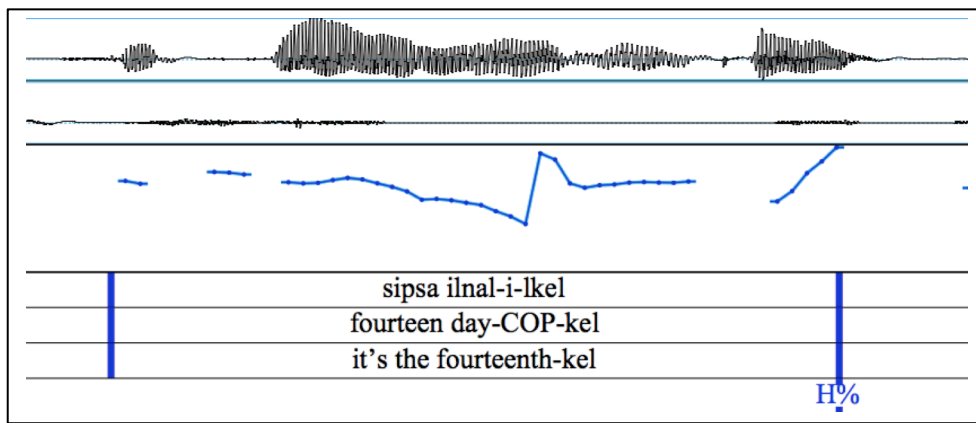


It is important to note here that speaker D's self-question (line 6) after the *kel*-marked

proposition demonstrate an important point: on the one hand, she does not agree with the

'tomorrow' answer, but on the other, can only approximate a 'fourteenth' date. In the end,

speaker D's epistemic standing is relatively lower to speaker C's, such that speaker C continues

to stand her ground in the subsequent lines. For example, in line 8, speaker C begins with the

word 'anyway' to refocus the conversation back to her original assertion, and this time uses the

hearsay evidential suffix -*tay* to reiterate her point that the day Cengmin will go to the army is

'tomorrow.' By using -*tay*, speaker C indicates that she has heard this news from a different

source, providing evidence for her original assertion. This appears to assuage speaker D in line 9,

where she can now be found requesting a confirmation ('so you heard he's going in tomorrow,').

Speaker C then confirms this with a 'yeah' and speaker D ratifies the 'tomorrow' answer when

she asks why Cengmin is leaving so early (line 11).

In this second excerpt, the user of *kel* succeeds in questioning an assertion, modifying the

interlocutor's standing, and achieves epistemic congruence on his terms. Two speakers (A and B)

talk about an acquaintance, who is attending the same school as speaker A. Before the excerpt

begins, speaker B has learned that the acquaintance will be graduating soon, prompting speaker

A to mention that this acquaintance seems to have been getting good marks. It leads speaker A

into further explaining that this acquaintance appears to have chosen economics as a major, not

because of his academic interests, but for the easy grades he is able to receive. To speaker A, the

acquaintance's ultimate goal with the good grades he earns will be to apply to law school.

Excerpt (2) begins with speaker A's judgment of the acquaintance's situation.

```
(2)    [LDC corpus]
       Law school (Male speakers A and B)


1      A: cemswu-lul cal  mac-ul   swu        iss-ul   kes    kath-ase
          grade-ACC  well get-REL possibility exist-REL thing seem-since
          since it seemed that he could get good grades


2         thaykha-n  kes   kath-a
          choose-REL thing seem-INT
          it seems that he chose (economics)


3      B: e::   kuntey ku economics hay    kaciko
          I:see but    uh economics do:INF with
          I see:: but uh by studying economics


4         law school ka-l   swu        iss-nun   ke-ya?
          law school go-REL possibility exist-REL thing-Q
          is it possible for him to get into law school?


5      A: kulem     law school ka-nun salam  chwung-ey
          of:course law school go-REL people among-LOC
          of course among people who go to law school
```

```
6→        economics ka-nun salam-tul manh-a
          economics go-REL person-PL many-INT
          there are a lot of people who study economics


7→   B: e::   kulay?
          I:see really
          I see:: really?


8    A: e
          yeah
          yeah


9→   B: ung: kuntay ku law school tuleka-ki-ka  ettay ku swiwu-nka?
          yeah but    uh law school enter-NML-NOM how   uh easy-I:wonder
          yeah: but uh entering law school how is it uh is it easy?


10   A: sss
          hmm
          hmm


11→  B: kukes-to     [manmanchi             ] anh-ulkel [H%]
          that-also     thorough:NML              not-kel
          that's also gotta be tough-kel [H%)
```

In line 1 we see speaker A speculate that the acquaintance's choice in economics as a major was for easier grades to get into law school. In response to the guess, speaker B pushes back with a 'but' and asks in line 4 if it is possible to go to law school with an economics degree. Speaker A answers with an 'of course' (line 5) and supports his assertion with the fact that there are many economics majors who go to law school (lines 5 and 6). Speaker B then attempts to get a confirmation of this ('I see:: really?'), to which speaker A confidently states 'yeah.' Speaker B

pushes back with another 'but' and inquires, almost rhetorically, if entering law school is easy in

line 9. At this point, it is clear that the question has highlighted speaker B's problem with what

speaker A has been asserting. To this, however, speaker A responds with a *sss,* signaling that he

himself may have an issue with the confirmation question just asked. Subsequently, both

speakers respond to speaker B's question from line 9.

Up to this point, speaker A has linguistically shown that he is more certain about the

acquaintance's situation. On the other hand, speaker B's questions in lines 4, 7, and 9, have

highlighted only his skepticism over speaker A's assertions. In fact, even with what appears to be

a relatively lower epistemic standing, speaker B does not appear to be satisfied with speaker A's

assertions. For one, after receiving a confirmation for his first question, 'is it possible to get into

law school?' in line 5, speaker B reformats the question into one that asks whether it is easy to

get into law school (line 9). By doing so, speaker B, in a sense, corners speaker A by creating a

question, to which a 'yes' answer would be an extremely difficult response.


```
11→   B: kukes-to      [manmanchi              ] anh-ulkel [H%]
          that-also      thorough:NML              not-kel
          that's also gotta be tough-kel [H%]


12    A:                [swip-ci  anh-keyss-ci mwe]
                         easy-NML not-SUP-COMM DM
                         it's likely not easy


13        com   elyep-keyss-ci      elyewe-    elyewe-to
          a:bit difficult-SUP-COMM  difficult- difficult-even
          it's likely a bit difficult even even if it's difficult


14        hay-ya-ci        mwe ettehkey hay?
          do-NECESS-COMM DM  how      do:Q
```

**he has to do it you know what else is he suppose to do?**

15    B: ung:
       yeah
       **yeah:**

Interestingly, speaker B's *kel*-marked answer that getting into law school has 'gotta be tough,' not only confirms the question he posed two lines earlier but also pinpoints the issue he is having; namely, that a degree in economics will not make it easier to get into law school. This is evident in his usage of *kukes-to* ('that also'), a word he not only uses to responds to his prior question ('is it easy?') (line 9), but also to the very first question regarding the acquaintance's prospects of getting into law school ('is it possible for him to get into law school?') (line 4). At the same time, however, his use of *kel* signals that he will not assume responsibility over this answer, largely since, his rights to the information regarding the acquaintance is minimal.

Overlapping speaker B's 'it's gotta be tough' answer, speaker A also responds with an expected confirmation that 'it's not easy.' Although, it appears that speaker A has fully confirmed speaker B's question, he does little to relinquish the authority he has had by affirming his own standing through committal *ci*. In other words, the suffix *ci,* used with a low boundary tone (figure 4.2), allows speaker A to maintain his epistemic independence and convey to speaker B that, although he is answering the question, he has also independently known that getting into law school is not an easy feat.

Figure 4.2 Contour of 'it's likely a bit difficult-*ci*'



| com elyep-keyss-ci |
| a:bit difficult-SUP-COMM |
| it's likely a bit difficult |
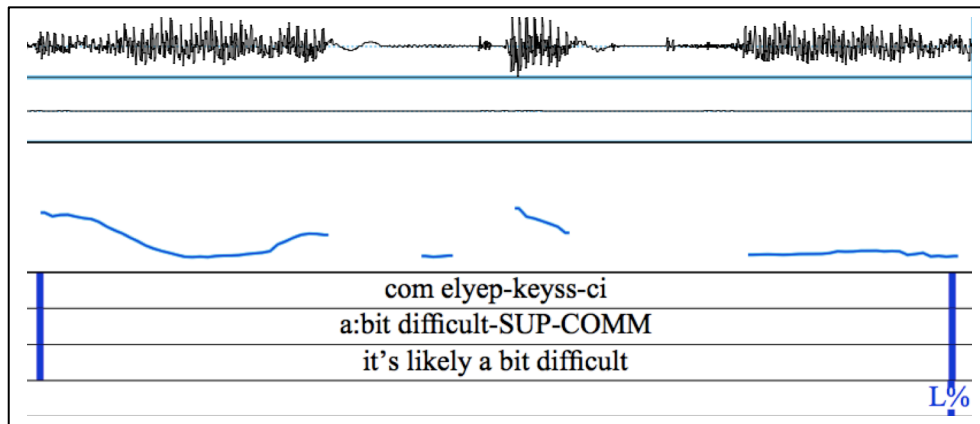
Figure 4.3 Contour of 'that's also gotta be tough-*kel*'



| kukes-to manmanchi anh-ulkel |
| that-also thorough:NML not-kel |
| that's also gotta be tough |
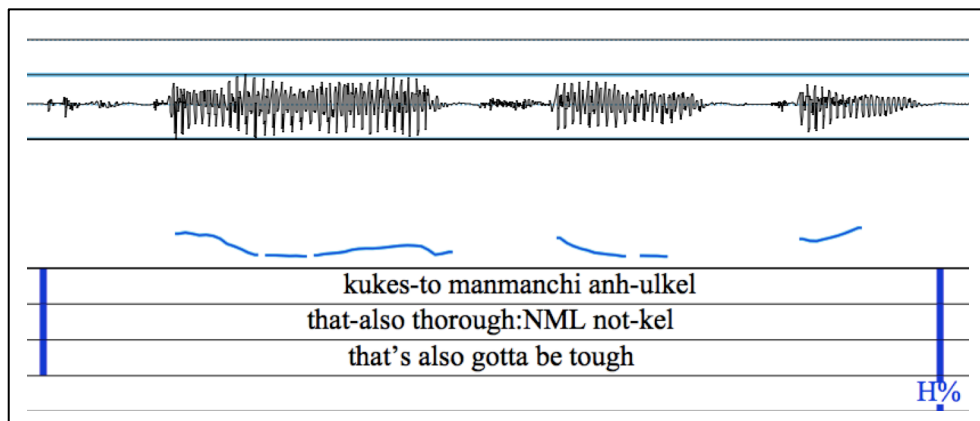
Observing the intonational contour of the *kel*-marked response (figure 4.3), speaker B's uncertainty is realized by a high boundary tone and serves to immediately give the floor back to speaker A. In line 13, a negotiation of speaker B's *kel*-marked answer begins to unfold between the two speakers. Speaker A responds to the *kel*-marked answer, by reformatting his original 'not easy' (line 12) to 'a bit difficult' (line 13) and immediately adds that 'even if it is difficult,' the acquaintance will have no other recourse and will have to do his best to get into law school. This moment is crucial; speaker B has affirmed speaker A's question in a way that it indirectly

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discounts his first assertion that majoring in economics can provide an easier way into law school. However, the addition of his almost plea-like assertion that the acquaintance has no other choice but to work towards law school salvages what he has been asserting all along. In the end, the questions of the acquaintance's major or the difficulties of entering law school has been altered; the acquaintance will have to go to law school regardless of his major or how difficult it is. Thereafter, speaker B affirms the statement (line 15) and thus, for all practical purposes, a local understanding has been achieved.

In this third excerpt, two female speakers converse about the cost of taking Uber from the airport to their respective homes. Since the cost is dependent on the distance, speaker X in line 1 appears to be interested in how much speaker Y spent the last time. However, one caveat is that while speaker Y is talking specifically about Uber, speaker X has confused Lyft's in-app tipping option with Uber's lack of one, and insists that she is talking about Uber when she is actually talking about Lyft. This confusion not only causes an epistemic imbalance in this conversation, it also causes speaker Y to begin doubting certain aspects of her own knowledge.

```
(3)   [Video corpus]
      Uber (Female speakers X and Y; classmates)

1     X: elma      hay-ss-nuntey   sip pwul?
         how:much cost-PST-CIRCUM ten dollars
         how much was it ten dollars?

2     Y: sipo     e  sipo    pwul-ey      sip pwul    ku   sai-[ey  ]
         fifteen uh fifteen dollars-from ten dollars that between-LOC
         fifteen uh between fifteen fifteen and ten dollars

3     X:                                                        [ce-to]
```

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```
                                                          I-also
                                                        me too


4        han    sipphal  pwul    ilehkey   nawa-ss-nuntey
         around eighteen dollars like:this come:out-PST-CIRCUM
         it came out to be around eighteen dollars and


5 →      tip-kkaci     isip   pwul-i-ess-ko:
         tip-including twenty dollars-COP-PST-and
         including tip it was twenty dollars:


6 →  Y:  u- u- u- uber-ey  tip-ul   cwe?
         u- u- u- uber-DAT tip-ACC give:Q
         u- u- u- you tip Uber?


7    X:  ce-nun- ung:
         I-TOP   yeah
         for me- yeah:


8    Y:  na-nun tip-ul  an   cwe
         I-TOP  tip-ACC NEG give:INT
         I don't tip


9    X:  an   cwe?
         NEG give:Q
         you don't?


10   Y:  uber tip way cwe     [hhh hhh hhh
         uber tip why give:Q
         why would you tip    [hhh hhh hhh


11   X:                       [hhh hhh hhh hhh=
```

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```
12        =enni          tip an  cwe?
           older:sister tip NEG give:Q
          =you don't tip?


13   Y: uber tip way cwe
        uber tip why give:INT
        why would you tip Uber


14   X: ku[ke:              ]
        that
        that:


15   Y:  [an  cwe-to      tway]
          NEG give-even.if permissible:INT
          you don't have to tip


16   X: a- kunyang,:
        a- just
        well just,:


17   Y: ss a-  solccikhi mwe talla-n  yayki-to   eps-ko
        ss um- honestly  uh  give-REL words-even not:exist-and
        ss um- well honestly they don't ask you (for tip)


18→     tip an  cwe-to      toy-lkel [H%]
        tip NEG give-even:if permissible-kel
        you don't have to give tip-kel [H%]
```

In line 1, speaker X asks how much the cost from the airport to speaker Y's home is, to which speaker Y gives a rough estimate of ten to fifteen dollars (line 2). Speaker X then chimes in and shares that the price for her was nearly the same at eighteen dollars (lines 3-4). She continues to add that with tip her amount totaled to twenty dollars in line 5. This additional

information regarding tipping apparently catches speaker Y by surprise and speaker X is asked

whether one provides tip to Uber services in line 6 ('u- u- u- you tip Uber?'). Between the

remark in line 5 and the response in line 6, a discrepancy has clearly emerged over speaker X's

assumption that one can tip with Uber. The confirmation question is qualified by speaker X's

'for me yeah' (line 7) and speaker Y responds by saying that she does not tip in following line

(line 8). Subsequently between lines 9 and 13, both speakers go back and forth in an attempt to

resolve the matter on whether tips can be given. Speaker Y, in lines 9 and 13, rhetorically asks

why one would tip Uber while speaker X, in lines 10 and 12 questions why her interlocutor does

not tip. In line 14, as speaker X attempts to explain something about tipping, she is cut off by

speaker Y, who asserts, once more, that one does not have to tip Uber (line 15). Speaker X's

response in line 16, 'well just,:' appears to prompt speaker Y to begin an explanation of her

experiences with Uber, in which she has never heard from anyone that she should offer a tip.

However, this is immediately followed by another statement that one does not have to offer tip,

this time marked with the suffix ender *kel* in lines 17-18.

Figure 4.4 Contour of 'you don't have to give tip-*kel*'
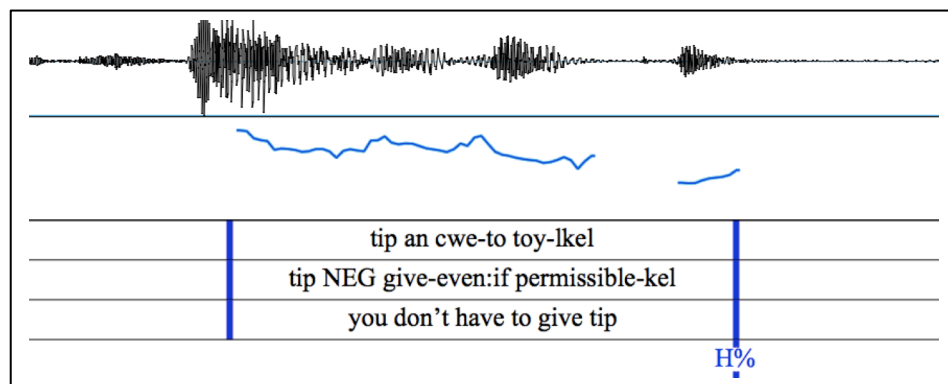
At this point, it appears that speaker Y is beginning to doubt herself as her 'you don't have to tip' in line 15 has been downgraded to a *kel*-marked one in line 18. This uncertainty will become increasingly evident as the sequence continues to unfold. Furthermore, the high boundary tone that the speaker uses invites speaker X to comment on the *kel*-marked alternative she has offered.

18→     tip an  cwe-to       toy-lkel [H%]
        tip NEG give-even:if permissible-kel
        **you don't have to give tip-kel [H%]**


19→  X: umm:
        hmm
        **hmm:**


20   Y: cikcep   hyenkum-ulo cwu-nun  ke-ya?
        directly cash-INST   give-REL thing-Q
        **so you give them cash directly?**


21   X: ani ani ku app-eyse
        no  no  um app-LOC
        **no no um on the app**


22   Y: app-eyse tip-ul  ettehkey nay?
        app-LOC  tip-ACC how      pay:Q
        **how do you tip on the app?**


23   X: ku nayli-ko    na-myen-un    tte-yo     tip cwu-nun  kes
        uh get:off-and then-COND-TOP appear-POL tip give-REL thing
        **it comes up after you get off the thing where you tip**


24   Y: e- na pyelphyo-pakkey eps-nuntey,
        uh I  stars-only      not:exist-CIRCUM

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```
uh- I only get stars though,
```

To this, speaker X replies with a 'hmm:,' signaling that she does not agree with speaker Y's alternative. Without the confirmation needed for it to remain a possible answer, speaker X has, in effect, eliminated the *kel*-marked proposition from the conversation. As such, speaker Y appears to cede to speaker X when she asks a question, that presumes in its design that tips are given in line 20 ('so you give them cash directly?') and speaker X immediately answers by correcting her assumption in line 21 ('no no um on the app'). The questions in line 20 and 21 ('how do you pay tip on the app?') reveal that speaker Y's epistemic authority has diminished under speaker X's continual onslaught of assertions. As the entire sequence plays out (not all included in the transcript) speaker Y gradually becomes the questioner who takes on a relatively lower epistemic standing while speaker X takes on the role of someone who has a higher epistemic standing. However, even with her own diminished standing, she, nonetheless, does not fully yield to speaker Y's assertion. As a result, the participants are unable to reach an agreement by the time the conversation comes to an end.

It is interesting to see the complex way in which *kel* can halt the conversation for a moment in order for a speaker to assert an alternative, while simultaneously gauging and requesting for a response in regards to that belief from the interlocutor. In this particular example (3), we were able to observe a *kel*-marked alternative completely be dismissed and thus causing a sort of epistemic stalemate where epistemic congruence was not achievable. Still, regardless of the outcome, the *kel*-marked proposition is presented as a way to begin a negotiation that can potentially advance towards congruence. What is also fascinating about this example is how specifically "local" the environment is that this epistemic tug-of-war take place in. Although we know that in actuality speaker X is completely inaccurate in her facts about Uber, she is, in the

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moment of conversation, the person with a relatively "higher" epistemic standing, shown through

her assertions and her interlocutor's acceptance "on-record" uncertainties and doubts.

This last excerpt illustrates a usage, in which the non-committal function of *kel* is

exploited to fabricate a lower epistemic standing when an assertion places the user in a face-

threatening situation. Rather than being deployed to deal with a real case of epistemic dissonance,

speaker F attempts to deliberately create an imbalance to escape the responsibilities of having

reformatted her computer. Excerpt (4) below begins with her explaining a situation, in which she

called a service to fix the computer that speaker M had helped with installing Microsoft Office.

```
(4)   [LDC corpus]
      Reformatting (Male speaker M and female speaker F; relatives)


1     F: ku    after service ha-nun tey   iss-canh-a::
         that after service do-REL place exist-right-INT::
         you know that place that does the after service right::


2        cenhwa-lul kel-ese  mwul-e  pwa-ss-te-ni
         phone-ACC  call-and ask-INF try-PST-RET-and
         I tried calling and asked and


3        sikhi-nun-taylo ha-lay,=
         force-REL-as    do-HS:IMP
         (the guy) said to follow his instructions


4        =kuleteni keki-ta   mwe master-lul neh-ko,    A drive-eytaka
          so       there-LOC DM  master-ACC insert-and A drive-LOC
         =and so (he) said put the master CD in, and in the A drive


5        mwe e? ku mwe diskette neh-ko-se-nun
         DM  uh um DM  diskette insert-and-then-TOP
         uh you know after inserting the diskette
```

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6       caki-ka  sikhi-nun-taylo ha-lay    kule-myense=
        self-NOM force-REL-as     do-HS:IMP say-while
        **he said just do what he was saying and=**


7       =keki  an-ey      iss-nun    ke     ta
         there inside-LOC exist-REL thing all
        **=everything inside the (computer)**


8       ciwe-ci-l      ke-la-ko    kule-te-la-ko
        erase-INCH-REL thing-DC-QT said-RET-DC-QT
        **he said everything would get deleted**


9       na-ya mwe a-na   kulayse ku    salam-i    sikhi-nun-taylo
        I-FP  DM  know-Q so      that person-NOM force-REL-as
        **what do I know so I just did what he said**


10      ku-taylo hay-ss-ci
        that-as  do-PST-COMM
        **I did it just the way he instructed you know**


11   M: ani-ya ciwe-ci-ci-n        anh-a
        not-INT erase-INCH-NML-TOP not-INT
        **no it won't get deleted**


12→     ney-ka hatu-   format   sikhi-n ke-nun    ani-canh-a:
        you-NOM hardware reformat make-REL thing-TOP not-you:know-INT
        **it's not like you reformatted right**


13→  F: ama      format  tasi  hay-ss-ulkel [H%]
        probably reformat again do-PST-kel
        **maybe (I) reformatted it again-kel**

From lines 1 though 10, speaker F provides an explanation for the reason why she no longer has Microsoft Office that speaker M had helped install on her computer a while back. As someone who is ostensibly unskilled in computers, she attempts to justify this by essentially blaming it on a person she had called for troubleshooting. Then in line 11, speaker M responds to Speaker F's utterance in line 8 ('he said everything would get deleted') by explaining that Microsoft Office should not have gotten deleted. Although what speaker F has described sounds to be a full reinstallation, it looks as though speaker M has yet to realize that speaker F's Microsoft Office has been completely deleted. However, he immediately attempts to verify whether speaker F has 'reformatted' her computer with a strong assertion ("it's not like you reformatted the computer right"). His use of a negatively polarized *ani* and *canh* shows that he fully expects an affirmation that speaker F did not reformat the computer. Nonetheless, it is exactly what speaker F has done.

Speaker M's assertion has placed speaker F in a difficult situation—she has indeed reformatted her computer but is now expected to agree with speaker M's assertion that her computer was not reformatted. Placed in a rather delicate situation, where agreeing would mean conceding to a mistake and disagreeing would be a disingenuous act, speaker F responds with a *kel*-marked statement in which she 'probably reformatted' it. Although the knowledge of the mistake lies completely with speaker F, the suffix ender *kel* allows her to fabricate a lower epistemic standing, such that it permits her to evade the responsibility for her mistake (i.e., deleting Microsoft Office), and helps facilitate a face-saving response.

```
13→   F: ama      format   tasi  hay-ss-ulkel [H%]
         probably reformat again do-PST-kel
         maybe (I) reformatted it again-kel [H%]

14    M: hatu format-ul    way hay
```

```
        hard reformat-ACC why do:Q
        why would you reformat it


15    F:  ku    ttay mwe kocangna-ss-ta-ko ilehkey    ilehkey    mwe
        that time DM  break-PST-DC-QT    like:this like:this DM
        the guy said it was broken in this way uh


16        ilen      il    ilen      il-i      iss-ta  kulay-ss-te-ni
        this:kind issue this:kind issue-NOM have-DC said-PST-RET-and
        he said there are these problems and then


17        kulem tasi  hay-ya-keyss-ta  kule-myense cenhwa-lo-
        then  again do-NECESS-SUP-DC said-while  phone-INST
        so then on the phone (he) said you'll have to reformat it


18        [sikhi-n]-taylo hay-ss-ci   ku    ttay
         force-REL-as   do-PST-COMM that time
        so I did as I was told at the time


19    M:  [aiko  ]
         gosh
        gosh
```

The high boundary tone that accompanies *kel* is met with a strong criticism of her actions rather than an affirmation that she was likely eliciting in line 14 ('why would you reformat it'). Speaker M has understood her *kel*-marked statement as something that has indeed happened, even if speaker F has not linguistically committed to the action. Speaker F concedes to her mistake by offering an excuse from lines 15 through 18.

Generally, in all the examples, *kel* calls into question an assertion that ostensibly causes an epistemic imbalance in the conversation. We are able to see that, although users of *kel* are uncertain about their own answers, they are also certain their interlocutors' assertions are

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inaccurate. In the case of the fourth example, the user of *kel* attempted to rebalance the epistemic incongruity in her favor by fabricating her certainty as uncertain. The *kel*-marked proposition provides an alternative to the prior assertion, while providing a linguistic space in which the interlocutor is able to accept or reject it as a more accurate answer. In excerpts (1), (3), and (4) the *kel*-marked alternative is altogether rejected, although in (1), the relative epistemic congruence is achieved in a different manner.[40] It is only in example (2) that we are able to observe a *kel*-marked alternative overturn a previous assertion. In sum, the *kel* suffix allows a speaker who believes a prior assertion to be inaccurate to momentarily halt the conversation and initiate a negotiation of that assertion before the conversation continues to proceed.

## 4.4. Preempting epistemic imbalances

*Kel*-marked propositions in the first section were observed to be alternative responses to "other-initiated" assertions that essentially became a source of epistemic conflict for the respondent. Accordingly, it was demonstrated that *kel* serves to initiate negotiations that potentially may end with speakers' relative epistemic congruencies. In this section, *kel* is analyzed as a downgraded version of a prior proposition when the hearer makes known that he or she cannot affirm that prior position. In other words, once a speaker reveals his or her commitment towards a proposition, the hearer may indicate that there may be an issue and thus signals that there is potential for epistemic imbalances to emerge. Whether through explicit or implicit displays of disagreements or dispreference, what can be gauged by a use of a *kel*-marked downgrade is that there is an acute awareness of an imbalance emerging and speakers will actively work to counter it.

---

[40] Regardless of whether a *kel*-marked utterance is rejected in the following line, speakers will continue to utilize the space created by *kel* to continue to negotiate agreement or, at the least, some level of affiliation.

Accordingly, three excerpts are examined through the course of this section, two of which serve to illustrate how a confirmation question can trigger a re-evaluation of a speaker's prior statement, and one example where a lack of uptake from the hearer causes the speaker to rephrase an original assertion. Through the analysis of these three examples, this section aims to demonstrate the way in which *kel* is pivoted after an initial statement to realign the user's standing with what is thought to be most epistemically appropriate for all participants in a conversation. Furthermore, by observing the role of *kel* in these types of dialogic contexts, the analyses will confirm that *kel* is, indeed, a suffix that assists speakers in their attempts at epistemic congruence. We begin with the first excerpt in (5) below.

Female speaker A and male speaker B are discussing speaker A's involvement in an activity sponsored by a club on her school campus. Speaker A describes an activity where participants, for the entire week of Valentine's Day, secretly deliver gifts to the person whose name they had previously drawn during their last club meeting. As speaker A describes in detail how her friends participate in this activity, it becomes apparent to the male speaker that speaker A does not actually know the term for this activity.

```
(5)    [Video corpus]
       Manitto (Female speaker A and male speaker B; classmates)

1      A: cepen cwu  mokyoil  nal: (0.2)
          last  week Thursday day
          last Thursday: (0.2)

2         kunkka tatul    ilehkey    pathune-ka ilehkey    iss-e=
          so     everyone like:this  partner-NOM like:this exist-INT
          so everyone has a partner=
```

3    =kunkka secret angel? ((quotation gestures))
     so  secret angel
    **=so secret angel?**



4  B: ((affirmation nod))

5  A: ilum-ul drawha-n-ta-nun  mal-i-ya
    name-ACC draw-IMPFV-DC-REL word-COP-INT
    **what happens is that they draw a name for it**

6    kulemyen-un kunkka allye:INF cwu-myen an tway
    then-TOP  so   inform  give-COND NEG become:INT
    **then so you can't let each other know**

7    kuliko throughout the whole week
    and  throughout the whole week
    **and throughout the whole week**

8    mwe ilehkey senmwul cwu-[tenci::
    uh like:this present give-whether
    **uh whether you give them presents**

9→  B:             [manitto, (0.5) ((entrance gesture))
                  manitto
                 **manitto, (0.5)**

10→    A: manitto-ya keke-y   ilum-i?
          manitto-Q  that-NOM name-NOM
          **it's (called) manitto that's the name of it?**

11     B: manitto-i-   a- manitto-ani-nka ((looks away))
          manitto-COP- a   manitto-not-I:wonder
          **manitto a- is it not manitto**



12→      manitto-i-lkel [H%] ((looks back at speaker A))
          manitto-COP-kel
          **it's manitto-kel [H%]**

20    B: ca-  cal  hay    cwu-ko
          well well do:INF give-and
          **you treat them to things and**

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From lines 1-3, speaker A describes a gift exchange activity she had taken part in but appears to

not know how she can best explain this to her interlocutor. This is evident in lines 2 and 3, where

speaker A uses *kunkka,* a discourse marker that is used for reformulation of talk (Kim & Suh,

1994), to reveal that she is in the process of searching for a way to explain this activity. In line 3,

she introduces the term 'secret angel?' while using a quotation gesture to signal to her

interlocutor that this word will be a temporary fill-in for the actual name of the activity. Her use

of a rising intonation over 'secret angel?' also elicits a non-verbal nod response from speaker B

(line 4). As speaker A continues to describe what the 'secret angel' activity entails between lines

5 through 7, speaker B in line 8 overlaps speaker A with the word *manitto*, accompanied by a

hand gesture that looks to "present" this word as if it were on stage to his interlocutor. Along

with a high rising tone, speaker B suggests if this may be the word speaker A has been looking

for. Instead of a response, however, the word is followed by a (0.5) pause, revealing hesitancy on

the part of speaker A. In line 10, speaker A breaks the silence and requests a confirmation of

whether the activity in question is indeed called 'manitto' ('it's manitto that's the name of it?').

Just as speaker B is about to affirm the question, he turns his head away and withdraws his gaze,

asking a question to himself in line 11 ('is it not manitto').[41] We can clearly see that he has

downgraded his 'manitto,' answer in line 9 to a non-committal *kel*-marked proposition in line 12.


12→      manitto-i-lkel [H%] ((looks back at speaker A))
         manitto-COP-kel
         **it's manitto-kel [H%]**

---

[41] Haddington (2006) demonstrates how gaze can be used to display certain types of stances during assessment sequences. He finds that speakers can 1) look together at an assessable phenomenon, 2) make eye contact with an agreeable second stance, or 2) cut gaze off when one of the participants' action shows a divergent stance.

```
13     A: moll-a          kuke mwe-n-ci
          not:know-INT    that what-REL-NML
          I don't know what that is


14     B: kunkka
          so
          so (what it is is)


15     A: secret angel


16     B: nam    molu-key
          other not:know-RESUL
          (so) others won't know


17     A: e  [e    e    e
          yeah yeah yeah yeah
          yeah yeah yeah yeah


18     B:    [ku   salam   molu-key      mak=
              that person not:know-RESUL DM
              so that the person doesn't know you're just


19     A: =mac-a     mac-a    mac-a    mac-a
           right-INT right-INT right-INT right-INT
           right right right right
```

```
20    B: ca-   cal   hay    cwu-ko
         well  well  do:INF give-and
         you treat them to things and
```

Looking back at how the sequences transpire, speaker B's 'manitto' utterance was asserted in a way that created an immediate epistemic discrepancy in speaker A's understanding. This is first evidenced by the (0.5) second silence in line 9 and then her subsequent confirmation question in line 10 that presumes an issue with the assertion. At the same time, the silence and the confirmation are what causes speaker B to doubt whether he has provided his interlocutor with the correct word she was searching for. At this point, it would be fair to say that both the epistemic standing of speaker A and B are disaligned. Moreover, as speaker B turns his head and looks away from speaker A questioning himself in line 11, it is quite likely that he was uncertain to begin with and provided an answer in a rather hasty manner.[42] As such, he quickly latches a *kel*-marked proposition in line 12, downgrading his prior utterance to indicate that he is no longer fully committed to his answer.

The high boundary tone, as seen in figure (4.5), creates a negotiation space, in which speaker A can now have a say and work towards a possible agreement. However, rather than receiving an agreement, speaker A responds with a 'I don't know what that is' in line 13. With the acknowledgment that she does not know this word, speaker B now can provide the necessary information for what he believes 'manitto' to be (lines 14, 16, 18, and 20). Speaker A affirms speaker B's explanations in lines 17 and 19, closing the sequence.

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[42] Rossano, et al. (2009) show that the amount and types of gaze among speakers may be related to the social actions that are being initiated with their talk.

Figure 4.5 Contour of 'it's manitto-*kel*'
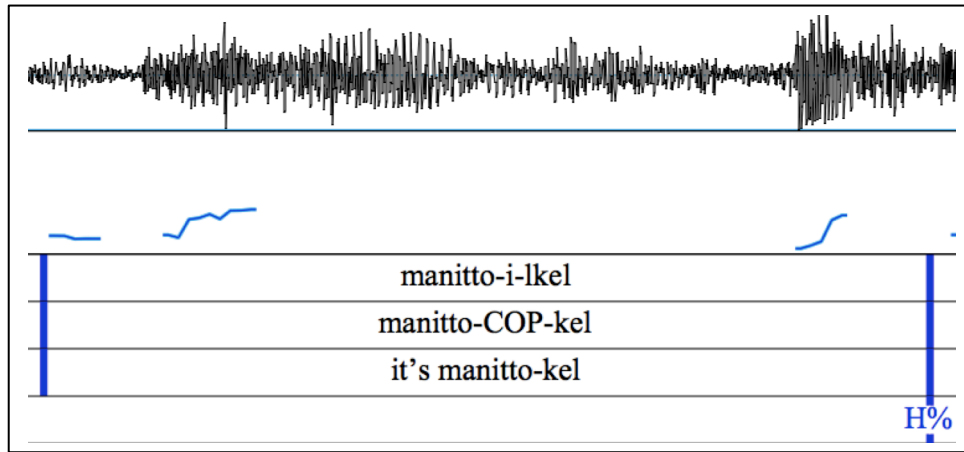


Excerpt (6) is a conversation among three speakers: one male (speaker M) and two females (speakers N and O) who are seated around a table talking about different pizzas and pizza companies. In a similar fashion to what we saw in the previous excerpt, speaker O will downgrade a prior utterance when asked to confirm her answer. However, what is different about this excerpt is that speaker O's *kel*-marked downgrade is rejected by speaker N. Furthermore, what is interesting to observe in this example is that the negotiation of the *kel*-marked downgrade occurs solely between speaker M and N, not O who originaldeployed *kel*. The excerpt begins speaker N's assessment of Domino's pizza and this causes speaker M to recall an anecdote.

```
(6)  [Video corpus]
     Pizza Delivery (Male speaker M and two female speakers N and O;
     co-workers)


1    N: ce-nun tomino pica   ha-myen
        I-TOP  domino pizza think-COND
        when I think of Domino's pizza
```

2       ppali paytal  o-nun-ke-y         ceyil insang[cek-i-n,]
        fast  deliver come-REL-thing-NOM most  impressive-COP-REL
        **the most impressive thing is their fast delivery,**

3   O:                                           [um:::  ]
                                                yeah
                                              **yeah:::**

4   M:  yaycen-ey      kuke-y  iss-ess-e ((points his fingers))
        while:back-LOC that-NOM have-PST-INT
        **a while back (they) had that what do you call it**

5       samsip pwun    an-ey,     paytal-i     an  o-myen
        thirty minutes within-LOC delivery-NOM NEG come-COND
        **within thirty minutes, if the delivery didn't come**

6       hwanpwulhay cwu-n-ta-nun      ke-y       iss-ess-e
        refund:INF  give-IMPFV-DC-REL thing-NOM have-PST-INT
        **they had this thing where they said they would refund you**

7   O: cikum-to  hay ((lifts head to make eye contact with M))
        now-still do:INT
        **they're still doing it**

8   M: cikum-to  hay-yo? ((makes eye contact with O))
        now-still do-POL:Q
        **(they're) still doing it?**

```
9    O: ung  ha-ki-nun  ha-lkel [H%] ((O makes eye contact with N))
         yeah do-NML-TOP do-kel
```
**yeah they do deliver (but)-kel [H%]**



Speaker N begins by explaining that when she thinks of Domino's, she is reminded of how fast

their delivery is (lines 1-2), to which speaker O offers an affirmation in line 3. Hearing this,

speaker N initiates a tangential anecdote regarding a time when Domino's Pizza had a promotion

that gave a refund to any pizza orders that were not delivered within thirty minutes (lines 4-6).

Speaker O, who has had her head down up to now, immediately lifts her head and makes eye

contact with speaker M and asserts that 'they're still doing it' in line 7.[43] This immediately

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[43] In the context of multi-party conversations, Goodwin (1979) observes that gaze accompanies utterances intended for a recipient and vice-versa. Stivers and Rossano (2010) also note that in face-to-face interactions, gaze plays a crucial role in mobilizing responses. Specifically, they find that speakers make eye contact when providing a response and withdraw one when not responding.

prompts speaker M to ask for a confirmation in line 8 (they're still doing it?), which constrains

speaker O to fully commit to an answer we will see she is not completely certain about. As a

result, we see speaker O downgrade the prior assertion to a *kel*-marked proposition ('yeah they

do deliver').


Figure 4.6 Contour of 'they do deliver (but)-*kel*'
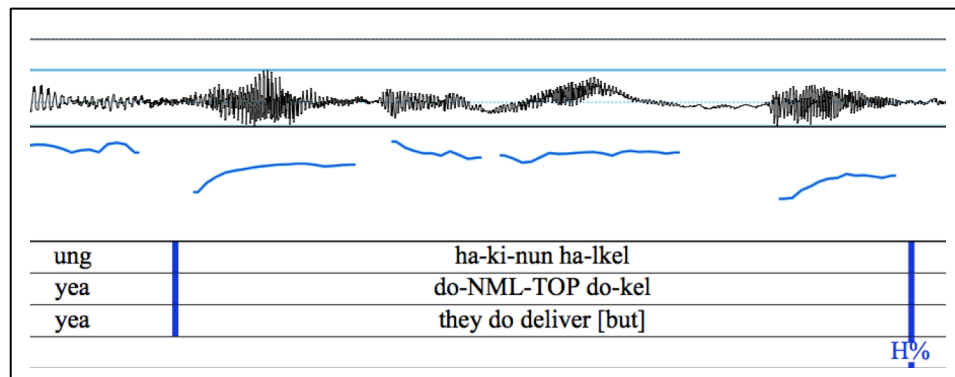


Grammatically, speaker O reformats the present tense *hay* ('do') in line 7 to *ha-ki-nun ha-* ('they

do deliver [but…]') in line 9, a construction used to mark partial acknowledge of a fact and is

often accompanied with a concession. Although she does not explicitly make known what the

concession is, it does indeed appear that she has made her uncertainty about this fact known. She

completes her *kel*-marked utterance with a high boundary tone (figure 4.6), while turning her

head towards speaker N, as though she is eliciting a direct response from her.


```
9     O: ung  haki-nun  ha-lkel [H%] ((O makes eye contact with N))
         yeah doing-TOP do-kel
         yeah they do deliver (but)-kel [H%]


10       ((redirects eye contact at M))
```
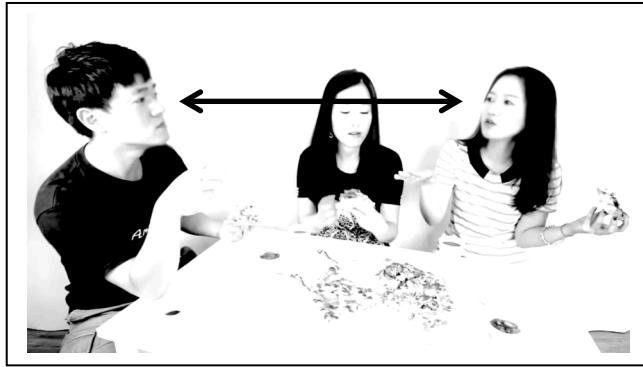
```
11      ay    kuntey paytalwon-tul-i    ppali talli-n-ta-ko
        yeah but    deliveryman-PL-NOM fast  drive-IMPFV-DC-QT
        yeah but they said the deliverymen drove too fast

12      wihemha-ta-ko
        dangerous-DC-QT
        they said it was too dangerous

13      ama       epseci-n       ke-llo     al-ko      iss-eyo
        probably disappear-REL thing-INST know-CONN exist-POL
        to my knowledge it's probably gone

14  M:  [e:
         I:see
         I see

15  O:  [um::,
         oh
         oh::,
```

Responding to the speaker O's eye contact, speaker N reciprocates a quick look back but immediately makes eye contact with speaker M in line 10. Once she has locked in speaker M's gaze and attention, she takes the floor that has been opened up by the high boundary tone and

utters a 'yeah' in line 11, even though it is not a 'yeah' that is necessarily intended to affirm speaker O's proposition. Immediately thereafter, she signals the rejection of speaker O's proposition with 'but' and elaborates on the reason why Domino's Pizza has likely ended this promotion in lines 11 through 13. Both speaker M and O then ratify speaker N's reasons in lines 14 and 15.

In the last excerpt, female speaker A complains about the church she is attending and the way in which her pastor continually burdens her with church-related work. However, speaker B defends the pastor's action and explains to her interlocutor that she should simply mind her own life and not criticize others for their actions. However, speaker A does not appear to be comforted by these words and does not respond to speaker B's questions.

```
(7)   [LDC corpus]
      Church complaints (Female speakers A and B; relatives)


1     A: na-poko mwe sengkatay- sengkatay-lul ha-la-ko kule-ko
         I-DAT   DM  choir      choir-ACC     do-DC-QT say-and
         (he) said I should join the choir


2        moksannim-un tto   mwe cwuil  hakkyo
         pastor-TOP   again DM  Sunday school
         and the pastor again (something about) Sunday school


3        mwe       ha-la-ko kulay-ss-nuntey
         something do-DC-QT say-PST-CIRCUM
         (he) said I should do something for Sunday school


4        ehyu twu  kay   ta ha-ki  silh-e
         ugh  both things all do-NML dislike-INT
         ugh I don't want to do either
```

```
5     B: cha-ey   iss-eya-ci=
          car-LOC stay-NECESS-COMM
          you should have stayed in your car=


6→       =tangsin kaci-ko    iss-ci     anh-a [LH%]
           you      have-CONN exist-NML not-INT
          =don't you have one


7     (2.0)


8→    B: kaci-ko    iss-ulkel=ecekkey [H%]
          have-CONN exist-kel yesterday
          you had one-kel yesterday [H%]


9     (1.5)


10    A: eng
          yeah
          yeah


11    B: kulay   ta  ha-ki  silh-ta-ko
          alright all do-NML dislike-DC-QT
          alright so you're saying you don't want to do anything
```

After complaining to speaker B of the annoying tasks her pastor has tried to get her to do (lines 1-3), speaker A in line 4 takes a deep breath and explains that she simply does not want to do either of them. To this, speaker B responds that speaker A should have stayed in the car while at church, perhaps in order for her to avoid the pastor.

Figure 4.7 Contour of 'don't you have one-*ci anh-a*'



cha-ey iss-eya-ci tangsin kaci-ko iss-ci anh-a
car-LOC stay-NECESS-COMM you have-CONN exist-NOM not-INT
you should have stayed in your car don't you have one
LH%
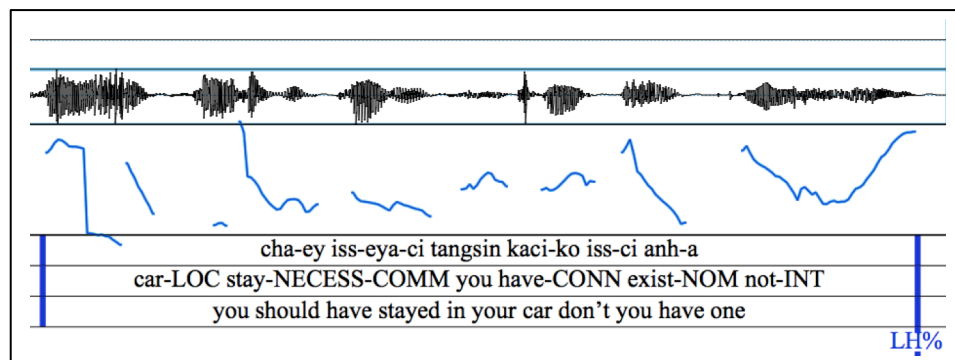
Grammatically speaking, this assertion is marked by committal *ci* showing speaker B's strong

belief that she ought to have done this (line 5). Then, in her following utterance ('don't you have

a car') in line 6, speaker B ends in *ci anh-a* [LH%], a negatively polarized ending, showing

strong commitment to her proposition while attempting to elicit an agreement from speaker A.

The intonational contour also reflects the function, as the dip into an L% accentuates her own

belief while the final H% projects the utterance out to the hearer (M. -J. Park, 2003).

However, speaker B's assertion is met by a two-second pause in line 7. This pause is long

enough to inform speaker B that her advice is highly problematic. In other words, speaker B now

finds herself in a delicate situation, where she has encroached on her interlocutor's territory of

knowledge and thus may have strained their immediate interaction. Seeing that speaker A's turn

was not taken, speaker B reformats her prior remark, downgrading her utterances from an

extremely assertive *ci anh*-marked to a highly negotiable *kel* one (line 8). The word 'yesterday,'

immediately attached to *kel* ends in a high boundary tone and elicits a response from speaker A.

Figure 4.8 Contour of 'you had one-*kel* yesterday'



kaci-ko iss-ulkel ecekkey
have-CONN exist-kel yesterday
you had one-kel yesterday

H%
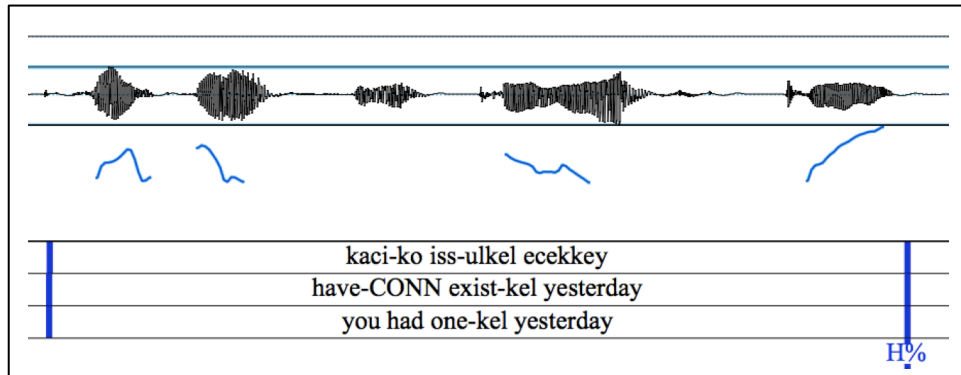
Even with the downgrade, speaker A is still undoubtedly upset, as there is a continual lack of uptake in line 9. After a (1.5) second pause, speaker A reluctantly concedes with a response in the following line 10 ('yeah') and the two speakers continue to talk about speaker A's annoyance with the church (line 11).

In all three excerpts, we are able to observe how a speaker downgrades a prior utterance with *kel* once their interlocutor signals that there may be an issue with the proposition. In (5) and (6), an interlocutor's questioning prompts speakers' to appropriately downgrade their propositions to address the discrepancy that has occurred, while in (7) the long silence prompts the speaker to downgrade her prior assertion. Although the *kel*-marked downgrades are affirmed and subsequently negotiated towards congruency in (5) and (7), the *kel*-marked downgrade is rejected in (6). This indicates that even a downgrade is not reason enough to warrant an agreement and may thus prompt a negotiation for a new proposition.

**4.5. Discussion**

This chapter has examined how speakers utilize the suffix ender *kel* in response to epistemic incongruity that has or will emerge. Whereas the chapter 3 was concerned with how

speakers managed epistemic deficiencies that were initiated by information or confirmation requests (i.e., lower epistemic standings), this chapter examined examples of *kel* where discrepancies are caused by relatively higher epistemic standing (i.e., K+). The examples in this chapter also highlight the versatility of *kel* when the environment becomes one of epistemic contention. It also centered on the vital role the high boundary tone plays in creating a space where speakers can negotiate diverging and often conflicting perspectives. It demonstrated that speakers deploy *kel* as a sort of grammatical pivot that essentially halts an interaction and provides a space for the negotiation of epistemic discrepancies.

The analysis focused on two specific environments where *kel* is likely to emerge; namely, in sequences where incongruity was caused by 1) a speaker's assertion, and 2) a hearer's hesitancy or skepticism. The following schematic (9) illustrates the general pattern of sequences that suffix ender *kel* is found in the data. In both sequences, the first utterance begins with a speaker's assumption, which effectively indicates a higher epistemic standing relative to the interlocutor. The lines with the arrows indicate where the epistemic incongruity first emerges, causing a *kel*-marked proposition to be employed. One thing to note about the schematic is that the discrepancy in epistemics is marked from the perspective of the user of *kel*. Lastly, the boundary tone used with *kel* returns the floor back to the interlocutor, where the new alternative or downgrade is accepted or rejected in the last line.

Figure 4.9 Two schematics of *kel* responses

```
a.    →    1  A: assertion
           2  B: kel-marked alternative
           3  A: uptake or rejection of alternative
```

```
b.          1  A: assertion
    →       2  B: hesitancy (silence and/or confirmation question)
            3  A: kel-marked downgrade of assertion from line 1
            4  B: uptake or rejection of downgrade
```

In the first section, assertions are observed with usages of interactive suffixes such as *canh*, and they, more often than not, elicit agreements and/or alignment. These suffixes typically constrain the recipient in providing an answer that will fit the design of their assertions. However, when the assertion is something that cannot be agreed to, a recipient's *kel*-marked response provides an alternative proposition that essentially questions or counter the assumption. At the same time, since the user of *kel* is disagreeing without the epistemic certainty to completely override the assertion, one of two things may occur. First, the *kel*-marked alternative may cause the speaker who made the assertion to concede. This was observed in excerpt (2), where the user employs a *kel* to push back on the claim that it is easy to get into law school. Secondly, the speaker who made the assertion may simply reject the *kel*-alternative, causing the epistemic gap to widen, as observed in the Uber example in (3). Lastly, the user of *kel* may abandon his or her non-committal claim after epistemic negotiations falls in favor of the speaker who first made an assertion, as in the army example in (1). Excerpt (4) also provided a glimpse into how a speaker can exploit the mechanisms of *kel* to impede a face-threatening assertion.

The second section saw the use of *kel*-marked downgrades when an interlocutor begins to signal that a prior statement was epistemically problematic. The user of *kel* perceives that an epistemic conflict will materialize and attempts to preempt it with a downgrade. Moreover, excerpts (5) and (6) demonstrated that the downgrade was a necessary step, since the user has made, what would become disclosed as an unsubstantiated claim, a fact in the prior statement. However, as we have observed in the analysis of the data, speakers undoubtedly monitor the

flow of knowledge, not only through uttered words, but also through para- and extra-linguistic cues such as intonation, hesitations, pauses, gaze, hand gestures, and body movements. These "extra" modes played an especially important part in disclosing a speaker's uncertainty (e.g., withdrawing gaze the interlocutor when questioning oneself in excerpt (5)) or when negotiating an answer (e.g., the use of eye contact as a way to direct a *kel*-marked downgrade to a specific person in excerpt (6)).

What the use of *kel* in these types of environments demonstrates is that speakers monitor and have an acute sense of awareness of how each utterance produced will affect how the following utterance will unfold. In other words, it is not only important for a speaker to relay information in a manner that is appropriate to his or her epistemic standing, but also to think about how it will be received and interpreted by the interlocutor. Accordingly, this brings us to one of the fundamental questions this chapter has aimed to discuss: the role in which epistemic imbalances or the perception of epistemic imbalances "drive," in the words of Heritage (2012), speakers to deploy *kel*. From what the data has shown, there is a strong sense that speakers are ultimately aiming to achieve epistemic congruence, whether or not that congruence can actually come into fruition. With this, it is crucial to note that use of *kel* is not the *means* through which speakers achieve congruity; its non-committal function only facilitates a momentary detour, where participants discuss and adjust their knowledge accordingly.

In sum, this chapter has aimed to demonstrate *kel*'s unique function in environments where epistemic incongruity arises. It has established clarity on how these incongruences can motivate speakers to utilize *kel* in their attempt at realigning epistemic differences. It also touched upon the role of *kel* in facilitating what conversation analysts have argued as "drive" for epistemic congruence, although not every sequence can or will end in one. The final suffix *kel*

demonstrates that epistemic discrepancies emerge locally in conversation and, in a language such

as Korean, becomes a grammatical resource for responding to and driving forward sequences in

talk. The findings in this chapter set the parameters for the discussion in the final chapter, where

we will consider the details of what comes after *kel*; that is, how speakers utilize the space

created by *kel* to agree or disagree and how they are able to achieve epistemic congruence.

# Chapter 5

## *Kel* initiated expansion sequences

### 5.1. Introduction

In the previous two chapters, the investigations focused on how a speaker's epistemic presumption underlying his or her utterance (i.e., a higher or lower epistemic standing relative to the recipient's) prompts a recipient's deployment of *kel*-marked response. In this final chapter, the analysis centers on how recipients respond to *kel*-marked utterances. As we saw in both chapter 3 and 4, the boundary tone that is utilized alongside the suffix ender creates a momentary space where participants are able to negotiate the veracity of a prior *kel*-marked proposition. Within this "post-*kel*" space, speakers are invited to respond with a confirmation or disconfirmation. The response is crucial in whether the *kel* utterance is to be maintained as a de-facto answer or rejected and further negotiated until some type of resolution is met. As such, this study attempts to demonstrate the significance of looking at a recipient's treatment of *kel* in order to clarify what social actions are achieved by its use. Moreover, by looking in detail at the types of responses to *kel*, this chapter aims to discuss what larger conversational goals are involved in motivating a speaker in his or her deployment of *kel*.

From an analysis of 40 total instances of *kel* available from the corpora, 24 of the instances, or about 60% of the responses to *kel* showed an interlocutor's full agreement. This means that disagreements, including weak and partial agreements, make up a fairly large portion of the responses at 40% (16 instances). Moreover, there were a few instances where responses to a *kel* suffix were confirmation questions that did not immediately show agreement or disagreement. In such cases, the following line that discloses the intention of the prior

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confirmation question is taken into account.[44] Consider the following example where speaker C

comes to an agreement after asking a confirmation question in line 2.

```
(1)    1     D: .hhh::: an: toy-l:kel        ama
              .hhh     NEG permissible-kel probably
              .hhh::: you probably can't


       2→    C: an  tway?
              NEG permissible:Q
              you can't?


       3     D: nal-to   chwuwu-ntey
              day-also cold-CIRCUM
              it's also been cold and stuff


       4→    C: eng::
              I:see
              I see::
```

This chapter is divided into two sections looking at agreement and disagreement

responses to *kel*-marked propositions. While agreements are generally executed as quick and

short responses (see Pomerantz & Heritage, 2012 for details), disagreements are more complex

and can be conveyed through various interactional strategies, including partial or weak

agreements. These strategies exemplify one of Sack's principles for (dis)preferences: "If

---

[44] With polar questions, a questioner takes up a stance and invites a response that affirms that stance (Bolinger, 1978, Heritage & Raymond 2012). However, not all responses will be affirmations, as excerpt (1) demonstrates.

possible, avoid or minimize a stated disagreement, disconfirmation, or rejection, and if possible, include an agreement, confirmation, acceptance, or other supportive action."[45]

While the first section of this chapter provides a fairly straightforward analysis of how a speaker agrees with a *kel*-marked proposition, the second section is divided into two sub-sections that illustrate two types of disagreements found in the data. The first one of these sub-sections is focused on what are unambiguously disagreements. In general, disagreements are accompanied by hesitations and pauses and may even be prefaced linguistically by a quick 'yes' token that minimally functions to indicate that the recipient is listening.[46] Disagreements can also be revealed in accounts that ostensibly serve to minimize damage a direct answer would possibly inflict.

The second section examines the way partial or weak agreements are pivoted to avoid a dispreferred social action. Despite having a surface linguistic structure of an agreement, they are generally interpreted as a reluctance or unwillingness to agree.[47] For the most part, partial or weak agreements appear to arise due to a contingency in a prior utterance that makes an explicit agreement or disagreement an inappropriate response. In circumstances of self-deprecation for instance, agreeing and disagreeing both are a dispreferred social act and their use may cause disaffiliation between the speakers.

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[45] These principles are from Sack's 1969 and 1971 lectures.

[46] Although in contexts of polar questions, the formulaic expression *ung kuntey* ('yes, but') is clearly a partial agreement, its use in responses to *kel*-marked propositions appears to function quite differently. As there is no question being answered, the 'yes' portion looks to simply acknowledge an understanding of what was just uttered. For this reason, responses with this expression were not considered partial agreements for this study.

[47] This is not to say that all partial or weak agreements end up as disagreements, as a speaker may do additional interactional work to have his or her action interpreted as a genuine agreement.

## 5.2. Agreements

In this section, we observe a variety of ways speakers respond with agreements to non-committal stances taken by speakers who deploy the final suffix *kel*. Although it has become an axiom of sorts that speakers are quick and succinct when showing agreements, it does not necessarily mean that agreements are always met in a matter of one or two sequences. In fact, when the information at hand is uncertain, there may also be a need for clarification that can stretch out a negotiation for several additional sequences. Furthermore, an important note to bear in mind is that when agreements are offered in response to *kel*-marked propositions, they are momentary, relative agreements, since one or both speakers are ostensibly unable to claim full knowledge of the phenomenon.

Excerpt (2) illustrates one way in which a speaker agrees with a *kel* utterance, despite the speaker who has deployed *kel* lacking access to the relevant information. In the excerpt below, Speaker C and D are conversing about speaker C's husband who wants to open up a taco shop in a part of town they live. As speaker C begins to tell her story, it quickly becomes evident that she does not support her husband's idea of starting a taco franchise. The excerpt begins with speaker C explaining why her husband's (Thakkun's dad) believes a taco shop will succeed (lines 1-3).[48]

```
(2)  [LDC Corpus]
     Taco shop (female speakers C and D)

1    C: kulenikka thakkun appa    mal-un    taco-ka   eps-ese
        so        thakkun father  word-TOP  taco-NOM  not:exist-since
        so according to Thakkun's dad since there aren't taco shops
```

---

[48] It is common practice among Korean wives to refer to their husbands as their son's fathers rather than directly addressing them as "my husband" or by their names.

```
2          taco-ka  toy-l        ke-la-ko
           taco-NOM succeed-REL thing-DC-QT
           he says a taco shop will succeed


3          yo    hill yo-   kulayng pullang ccok-ey:
           here  hill here- grand   blanc   side-LOC
           over here on the hill here on the Grand Blanc side


4    D: ung    ung
           I:see I:see
           I see I see


5    C: kulehkey  yayki-nun ha-nuntey   [mwe kuke-ya ahyu
           like:that talk-TOP  do-CIRCUM   DM  that-DM gosh
           he talks about it like that but  yeah about that gosh


6    D:                                 [aikwu
                                         goodness
                                         goodness


7    C: emtwu-to     [mos     nay-ci
           thought-also  cannot make-COMM
           it's absurd


8    D:               [taco franchise kathun  kes
                        taco franchise similar thing
                        things like a taco franchise


9          hana ha-lye-myen
           one  do-PURP-COND
           if you're gonna start one


10→        kuke-y   ton-i     toykey manhi  tu-lkel [H%]
           that-NOM money-NOM really a:lot  cost-kel
```

```
it'll really cost a lot much money-kel [H%]
```

After hearing about the husband's taco franchise idea, speaker D displays her

understanding and agrees with her interlocutor in line 4. This returns the floor back to speaker C

in line 5, where she marks her husband's idea with a topic marker *-nun* (i.e., *yayki-nun ha-nuntey*)

and contrasts it with the following phrase *mwe kuke-ya ahyu* ('yeah about that gosh'). Although

not an explicit verbalized expression that describes her feelings, *ahyu* undoubtedly demonstrates

an unfavorable attitude the speaker has towards the taco franchise. In the meanwhile, it appears

that speaker D is fully aware of her interlocutor's feelings, as seen by her overlap with the word

*aikwu* ('my goodness') that occurs in line 6. This then leads into a strong assessment from

speaker C marked with committal *ci* [L%] ('it's absurd-*ci*') in line 7.[49] At this point, speaker C's

has marked her higher epistemic standing vis-à-vis the assessment and the falling tone of *ci*.[50]

Interestingly, even before speaker C has completed her utterance in line 7, speaker D has

already overlapped her and has begun to share that any franchise in general will end up costing a

lot of money (lines 8-10). However, since the information being relayed is in regards to speaker

C's husband and his idea, speaker D is not necessarily in a position to epistemically claim full

knowledge of the situation (Kamio, 1997). Thus, she appears to rely on a general fact that a

---

[49] Assessments are important organizing features of talk, through which a speaker is able to demonstrate his or her understanding of a phenomenon. In their seminal study, Goodwin and Goodwin (1987: 48) demonstrate that assessments constitute an important resource for participants in conversation in "collaboratively building within the talk itself an interpretive context that will be utilized for the analysis of subsequent talk and action." Pomerantz (1984: 57) states that "assessments are produced as products of participation; with an assessment, a speaker claims knowledge of that which he or she is assessing." In other words, speakers utilize assessments to demonstrate to one another that they are collaborating, signaling alignment (or disalignment), and in the larger picture, working to continually advance a congruent understanding of one another's perspectives.

[50] Pomerantz (1984) discusses how recipients of assessments can show agreement or disagreement based on their own assessment responses. Her work established that recipients may provide an upgraded, same-type, or downgraded second assessments, indicating different degrees of agreement or disagreement. Upgrades are shown to demonstrate strong agreement, while same-type evaluations signal weak agreements and often act as prefaces to disagreements. Those that are downgraded clearly mark a speaker's disagreement.

franchise, regardless of what it may be, is an expensive endeavor and offers it as a non-committal

*kel* response in line 10 (figure 5.1). This allows speaker D a relatively lower epistemic standing

that will not encroach on speaker C's territory of knowledge.


```
10→      kuke-y   ton-i      toykey manhi  tu-l[kel [H%]]
         that-NOM money-NOM really a:lot  cost-kel
         it'll really cost a lot much money-kel


11→  C:                                    [kulem   ]
                                            of:course
                                            of course


12→      koyngcangha-l  ke-la-ko-yo      kulen      ke=
         tremendous-REL thing-DC-QT-POL that:kind thing
         I'm telling you that sort of thing is a big deal=


13   D: =kuleh-ci-yo        ung
         =like:that-COMM-POL yeah
         =that's right yeah


14   C: kuke emtwu-to      mos     nay-ko,=
         that thought-also cannot make-and
         it's absurd and,=


15   D: =ung
          yeah
         =yeah
```


Projecting speaker D's *kel* utterance in line 10, speaker C overlaps with an 'of course'

(line 11), indicating that she fully recognizes and agrees with what her interlocutor is and has

been saying (Jefferson, 2004). Moreover, we see speaker C further ratify the agreement with her

interlocutor ('I'm telling you that sort of thing is a big deal') in line 12, which allows the *kel*-marked proposition to be maintained. With this acknowledgement in place, speaker D confirms the statement ('that's right yeah') and now shows strong agreement and alignment with her use of committal *ci*. Speaker C responds by reiterating her original assessment from line 7 ('it's absurd') and the sequence essentially concludes with a relative maintenance of epistemic congruence on both sides (i.e., the taco franchise is a bad idea).

Figure 5.1 Contour of 'it'll really cost a lot money-*kel*'



|  |
| --- |
| ton-i toykey manhi tu-lkel |
| money-NOM really a:lot cost-kel |
| it'll really cost a lot money |

H%
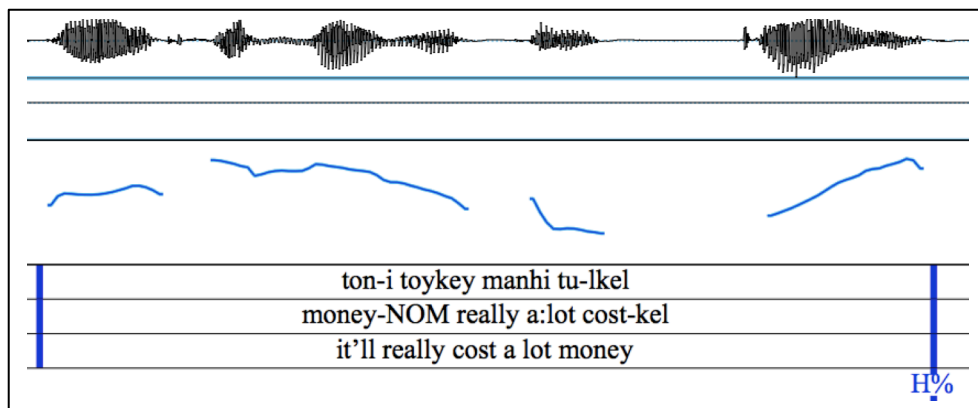
The next excerpt involves two speakers talking about a mutual friend named Kyengi. As the talk progresses, it becomes apparent that both speakers only have partial access to the information needed to make a definitive claim regarding this friend. However, as they have known this friend from before, speaker K initially shares some of his thoughts of this old friend through a non-committal stance.[51] The story begins with speaker J informing his interlocutor that he is taking the same economics course as their friend.

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[51] Goodwin and Goodwin (1987) notably recognize that there are times when a participant, who ostensibly has no experience or knowledge of the information being relayed, will have no choice but to rely on their past experiences or the interlocutor's story to provide an appropriate response.

(3)    [LDC Corpus]
       Skipping class (Male speakers J and K)


1      J: .hhh kyengi hyeng-i::        nay econ class-ey iss-e
          .hhh kyengi older:brother-NOM my  econ class-LOC exist-INT
          **.hhh Kyengi is in my econ class**


2      K: e?
          huh
          **huh?**


3      J: **econ class**


4      K: e: kulay?
          oh really
          **oh: really?**


5      J: kyengchal kkuletuli-lye-ko kulaykaciko
          police    attract-PURP-and so
          **he's gonna get the police involved here so**


6         cincca wuski-key   tway-ss-e
          really funny-RESUL become-PST-INT
          **something really funny happened**


7      K: kyengi  hyeng-i?
          kyengi older:brother-NOM
          **to Kyengi?**


8      J: e
          yeah
          **yeah**


9      K: e     ya  ku   hyeng         mwe (0.2)
          I:see hey that older:brother DM
                            124

```
        I see hey Kyengi um (0.2)


10      han    (0.2) ches  penccay han    myech class-nun ka-ciman
        around       first time    around a:few class-TOP go-but
        (he'll) go to the first few class but


11      incey incey com   pwa-
        now   now   a:bit watch:IMP
        now now just watch


12      iss-taka      pwa-la      hh
        exist-TRANS   watch-IMP
        just wait and see hh


13   J: hh hh hhh [hhh


14→  K:           [hhh tasi-n    an  ka-l hh kel⁵²
                   hhh again-TOP NEG go-kel
                   hhh he won't be going hh back again-kel
```

After being notifying that Kyengi is taking the same economics class as his interlocutor, speaker K's responses, 'huh?' and 'oh really' in lines 2 and 4 respectively, indicate his surprise with the information being provided. Then in line 5, speaker J sarcastically adds that 'he's gonna get the police involved' as a hook of sorts to draw his interlocutor into a story he appears to be getting ready to tell in line 6 ('something really funny happened'). However, before speaker J is able to begin his story, speaker K in line 7 asks whether this is still about their friend Kyengi, to which speaker J provides an affirmation in line 8. The affirmation returns the floor to speaker K in line 9 and the turn is leveraged for a story of his own by using the word *ya* ('hey') in line 9. In

---

⁵² The high boundary tone in this instance is unrealized due to the speaker laughing through the latter part of the utterance containing the final suffix. However, it appears the suffix ender is sufficient to elicit a response.

line 10, speaker K begins to paint a picture of Kyengi as person who may initially go to class

('he'll go to the first few classes') but rather than completing his thought, he leaves his

interlocutor to infer the rest with the phrase 'now now just watch' (line 11). He continues to

build anticipation for a possible punch line by telling speaker J to 'just wait and see' and

concludes with a slight chuckle in line 12. Speaker J appears to show that he is on board with his

interlocutor by responding with a burst of laughter in line 13.

Even without an explicit explanation of their mutual friend's habit of skipping class,

speaker J's laughter in line 13 indicates that he knows what speaker K is referring to. In fact, the

laughter essentially functions to show what speaker J thinks of their mutual friend (i.e., it is

comical that Kyengi skips class all the time). As a response, speaker K produces a *kel*-marked

utterance ('he won't be going back hh') that finally realizes what they have been laughing about

(line 14).


```
14→   K:              [hhh tasi-n    an  ka-l hh kel
                       hhh again-TOP NEG go-kel
                      hhh he won't be going hh back again-kel
15→   J: hh hh

16    K: kulayto mwe
           still   DM
          but still yeah

17→   J: hhh hhh tangyenha-ci
           hhh hhh of:course-COMM
          of course (he won't be) you know
```

Speaker K, who currently does not attend class with this mutual friend, can only speculate, based

on his past experiences. As a result, it is only appropriate for him to maintain some distance

between him and the information regarding Kyengi. In line 15, speaker K's *kel*-marked response

is immediately affirmed with laughter from his interlocutor ('hh hh'). Although the laughter does

not explicitly reveal the epistemic standing of speaker J, it does, however, demonstrate his

affiliation with the prior *kel* statement. As a result, the laughter essentially informs his

interlocutor that the *kel*-marked proposition is allowed to stay. Once mutual understanding is

established, speaker J upgrades the agreement in line 17 with a combination of a lexical 'of

course' and committal *ci* suffix ender, confirming that the speakers have achieved a certain level

of epistemic congruence.

In example (3), we revisit one of the video data sequences that were analyzed in chapter 4

to observe how a negotiation can transpire before an actual agreement is reached. Speaker A has

been describing to her interlocutor a gift-giving activity that she does not know the name of.

Speaker B, however, begins a negotiation by producing the name of this activity. Lines 1 and 2

below begin the tail end of speaker A's description of this activity.

```
(4)  [Video corpus]

    Manitto (Female speaker A and male speaker B)

1    A: throughout the whole week
        throughout the whole week
        throughout the whole week


2       mwe ilehkey   senmwul cwu-[tenci::
        DM  like:this present give-whether
        whether you give them presents


3    B:                          [manitto, (0.5)
                                  manitto
```

```
                              manitto, (0.5)


4      A: manitto-ya keke-y   ilum-i?
          manitto-Q  that-NOM name-NOM
          it's (called) manitto that's the name of it?


5      B: manitto-i-   a- manitto ani-nka
          manitto-COP- a- manitto not-I:wonder
          manitto- a- is it not manitto


6→        manitto-i-lkel [H%]
          manitto-COP-kel
          it's manitto-kel [H%]
```

Hearing speaker A's description, speaker B in line 3 presents a possible candidate name

for the activity. In response, speaker A asks a confirmation question (line 4), which appears to

cause speaker B downgrade his confident 'manitto,' to a tentative 'it's manitto-*kel*' (lines 3 and 6

respectively). By doing this, speaker B signals a clear change to a non-committal stance, which

then creates a negotiation space where the two speakers can work towards achieving some level

of epistemic congruence (see chapter 4, excerpt (5) for a more detailed analysis).


```
6→        manitto-i-lkel [H%]
          manitto-COP-kel
          it's manitto-kel [H%]


7     A: moll-a       kuke mwe-n-ci
          not:know-INT that what-REL-NML
          I don't know what that is
```

```
8       B: kunkka
           so
           so what it is is


9       A: secret angel


10→     B: nam   molu-key
           other not:know-RESUL
           so that others won't know


11→     A: e  [e    e    e
           yeah yeah yeah yeah
           yeah yeah yeah yeah


12      B:    [ku   salam  molu-key      mak=
               that person not:know-RESUL DM
               so that the person doesn't know=


13→     A: =mac-a     mac-a     mac-a     mac-a
            right-INT right-INT right-INT right-INT
           =right right right right


14      B: ca-  cal  hay   cwu-ko
           well well do:INF give-and
           you treat them to things and
```

Speaker A's statement in line 7, 'I don't know what that is' requests a clarification of the word 'manitto,' to which speaker B attempts to describe what he thinks 'manitto' to be (lines 8 and 10). Then in line 11, speaker A shows the first indications of an agreement ('yeah yeah yeah yeah') and speaker B's final description in line 12 is met then with 'right right right right,' clearly showing that epistemic congruence between the speakers has been met.

In excerpt (5) below, two speakers, A and B, discuss their children's experiences with day care programs in America. As the two speakers compare their children's school situation, speaker A asks a question regarding Haceng's age (speaker B's daughter) that initiates the short sequence below.

(5)    [LDC corpus]
       Age difference (Female speaker A and B)

1      A: haceng-i-ka     si   wel   sayng-i-nka?
          haceng-VOC-NOM ten month birth-COP-I:wonder
          **is Haceng's birthday in October I wonder?**

2      B: e     cyay-nun si   wel   sayng-i-ya
          yeah she-TOP   ten month birth-COP-INT
          **yeah she has an October birthday**

3      A: ung thayyeng-i-pota    manhi ppalu-kwuna:
          yeah thayyeng-VOC-than a:lot fast-APP
          **yeah she's a lot older than Thayyeng I see:**

4→     B: han    yuk kaywol ppalu-lkel [H%] [kuleh-ci [LH%]]
          around six month  fast-kel        that:is-COMM
          **she's around six months older-kel [H%] right [LH%]**

5→     A:                                    [kuleh-ci.    ]
                                              that:is-COMM
                                              **right.**

6         [yuk kaywol ppalu-nun ke    kath-a]
           six month   fast-REL  thing seem-INT
           **she seems to be older by six months**

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```
7    B: [e:   yuk                        ]
        yeah six
        yeah: six
```
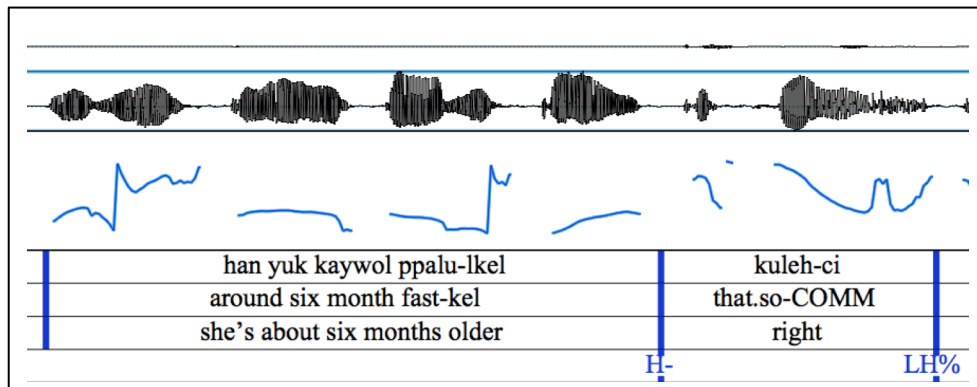
After being asked a question regarding Haceng's month of birth, speaker B (Haceng's mother)

confirms that her daughter was indeed born in October (line 2). The confirmation provides

speaker A an opportunity to assess that Haceng is older than her child in line 3 ('yeah she's a lot

older than Thayyeng I see-*kwuna*'). The assessment is made with the use of suffix ender *kwuna*,

allowing her to acknowledge and affirm speaker B's prior answer.[53] K. Kim (2004) argues that

the suffix *kwuna* has a "topic-curtailing" or "sequence-terminating" function, where there are

quick exchanges of affirmations, but generally no expansions of sequences initiated by the

recipient. However, we find that in this sequence, speaker B has an epistemic interest in the prior

assessment and thus continues the sequence with the addition of a *kel*-marked proposition in line

4. With the deployment of *kel*, it appears that speaker B is honing in on a problem with the prior

assessment, that is, speaker B's 'six months' problematizes speaker A's prior 'a lot.'

Speaker B's *kel*-marked utterance marks a non-committal standing and begins a

negotiation of the 'six-month' proposition by inviting the interlocutor to respond to it. In figure

(5.2), we see that speaker B's *kel*-marked proposition in line 4 ('she's about six months older')

ends with a high accentual boundary tone [H-], at which point speaker A recognizes that it is her

turn by responding with an affirmative *kuleh-ci.* ('right.') in line 5 (not in the figure).

---

[53] Korean appears to have grammatical suffixes that work in tandem with assessments (e.g., *ci*, *kwuna,* or *ney*),
although further studies are needed to better understand how they interact with one another.

Figure 5.2 Contour of 'she's about six months older-*ci*'



| han yuk kaywol ppalu-lkel | kuleh-ci |
|---|---|
| around six month fast-kel | that.so-COMM |
| she's about six months older | right |

H-                                                                     LH%

However, speaker B, before surrendering her turn, has latched a confirmation question *kuleh-ci* [LH%] (in the figure), that overlaps speaker B's just uttered affirmation. Although the high boundary tone of the *kel*-marked proposition has already done its job of eliciting speaker A's full affirmation, it appears that speaker B is explicitly letting her interlocutor know that she desires an affirmation. This is seen in her use of a [LH%] boundary tone that not only indexes the confidence in her prior proposition (marked by [L-]), but also compels speaker A to provide the affirmative answer she desires (marked by [H%]). Speaker A then demonstrates her understanding as knowledge shifted closer to her interlocutor's, indicated by her use of the suffix *-ke-kath* or 'seem' in line 6. Speaker B then ratifies this in line 7 (yeah:) and a certain mutually recognized level of epistemic congruity is achieved.

From these excerpts we have observed, an agreement to a *kel*-marked proposition is reached through the assistance of the speaker who has relatively more authority over the information that is being shared and relayed. We also find that the user of *kel* can either have a relatively higher epistemic standing, as in excerpt (2), or a lower one as excerpts (4) and (5) show. For all practical purposes, it appears that recipients who show agreement with a *kel* utterance acquire partial understanding through their interlocutor's talk, and in some cases,

through analogous past experiences (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987).

For example, the information marked by *kel* in excerpt (2) is only a presumption that speakers can make through common knowledge (i.e., the expense of starting a business), while the two speakers in excerpt (3) expect their friend to skip class based on their past history with him. In excerpt (4), it is the user of *kel* that appears to be more confident of the name of the activity, although at the time of its deployment, he marks a non-committal stance as the gift-giving activity has yet to be fully defined. Still, the user of *kel* incrementally negotiates the veracity of the information with his interlocutor until an agreement is achieved. Lastly, in excerpt (5), the recipient of *kel* shows agreement with her interlocutor, who has shown that she is more knowledgeable with a specific answer of 'six months.' In all cases, an agreement response brings the speakers epistemically closer and thus allows them to achieve some level of mutual understanding.

## 5.3. Disagreements

The manner in which recipients execute a disagreement depends on various social and interactional factors that include the nature of the relationship between the speakers, the environment in which they are speaking, and the topic they are discussing. These factors may lead to disagreements that are quick and direct or those that are performed with delays, prefaces, accounts, and mitigation, so as to minimize the impact of the dispreferred action.[54] As mentioned

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[54] This is not say that disagreements are only performed in these two ways. Pomerantz and Heritage (2012: 224) caution, "[w]hen preference principles are stated in terms of gross categories, the reasoning and analyses implied by those principles oversimplify and hence distort the actual ways that participants reason about and analyze interactional conduct. Even a cursory examination of data will reveal problems with claiming that participants orient to all instances of an action, for example requests, in the same way."

before, even affirmative tokens such as 'yes' can be proffered to minimally provide a supporting action.

In this section, the analysis attempts to illustrate the way disagreements are intricately designed by taking into account the social and interactional factors unique to each example. This undoubtedly includes uncertainty that looms as speakers attempt to resolve their differences. We begin by turning our attention to several examples that demonstrate prototypical disagreement sequences with attention on the way speakers advance their talk, despite the friction caused by the disagreement.

### 5.3.1. Negotiating disagreements

In the first excerpt, one of the speakers (speaker A) notices that her teddy bear has a tear at its foot (lines 1 and 2). Speaker B in line 3 asks whether it is her teddy bear that she is talking about and speaker A confirms the request. She then adds that she does not wish to repair it. This leads into an expanded back-and-forth sequence regarding whether the cotton in the bear will come out. Although the bear is in plain sight of speaker A, it appears to be that neither she nor her interlocutor are in a position to definitively say if or when the cotton will fall out of the bear.

```
(6)  [LDC corpus]
     Teddy bear (Female speakers A and B)


1    A: cokum ccic-ecye-ss-kwuna ike-y    pal-i    tch (0.5)
        a:bit tear-INCH-PST-APP   this-NOM foot-NOM
        I see it's a bit torn at the foot tch (0.5)
```

```
2        moll-ass-e
         not:know-PST-INT
         I didn't notice


3    B:  mwe  kom?
         what bear
         what the bear?


4    A:  ung  kuntey an  kkweymay-llay
         yeah but    NEG sew-INTENT
         yeah but I don't want to sew it back up


5    B:  way
         why
         why


6    A:  kunyang
         just
         just because


7    B:  som    nao-n-ta
         cotton come:out-IMPFV-DC
         (just watch) the cotton's gonna come out


8    A:  som?
         cotton
         the cotton?


9    (1.0)


10   B:  ani kom  sok-ay    iss-nun   ke=
         no  bear inside-LOC exist-REL thing
         yeah the cotton in the bear
```

```
11    A: =ku[lekey
         I:guess
      =yeah I know


12    B:    [som
            cotton
            the cotton


13→      nao-lkel [H%]
         come:out-kel
         gonna come out-kel [H%]
```

Speaker B, in line 5, asks why speaker A would not want to sew the foot and begins to

insist that the cotton inside will come out (line 7). Speaker A begins to push back and shows the

first indications of a disagreement with an emphatic confirmation question in line 8 ('the

cotton?'). Speaker B's disagreement is also demonstrated by a subsequent one-second pause in

line 9. Although she clarifies that it is the cotton in the bear that she is referring to, speaker A

resists the utterance with a 'yeah I know' response in line 11, informing her interlocutor that she

does not need an explanation. This is overlapped by speaker B in line 12, with the *kel*-marked

proposition, 'it's gonna come out,' that effectively predicts what may become of the teddy bear if

speaker B does not mend the tear.


```
13→      nao-lkel [H%]
         come:out-kel
         gonna come out-kel [H%]


14→  A: ani-lkel [H%]
         not-kel
```

```
            no it won't-kel [H%]


15→   B: nay-ka ka-se  ppay-ya-ci
          I-NOM  go-and pull:out-NECESS-COMM
          I should come over and pull it out


16    A: cham: hhh na hhh ya  cengmal ne-
          real  hhh     hhh hey really  you
          oh: hhh brother hhh hey really you-
```

Initially, we can observe that speaker B's *kel*-marked proposition is only a presumption of what may occur since she has only obtained the information through what her interlocutor has said. As such, she is unable to claim with epistemic certainty that the cotton will come out of the bear and marks her judgment with the non-committal final suffix *kel*.

Figure 5.3 Contour of 'gonna come out-*kel*; no it won't-*kel*'
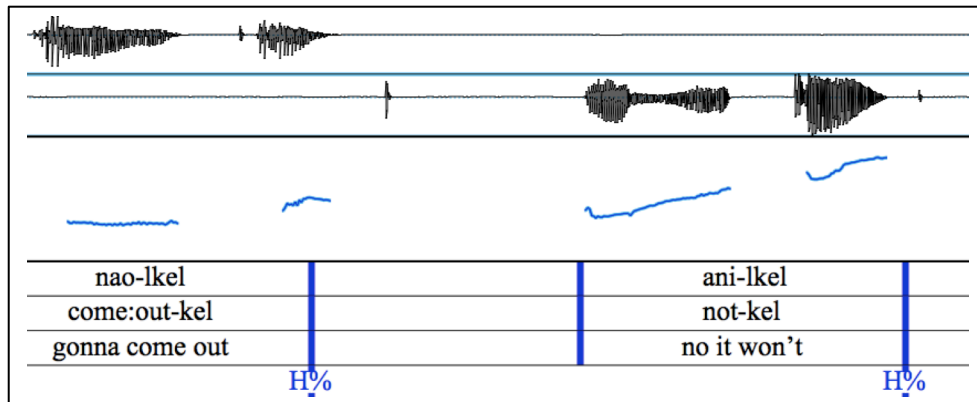


Accompanied by the final boundary tone, the *kel* utterance elicits another *kel*-marked response in what M.H. Goodwin (1990) calls a *format tying structure* (line 14).[55] The reuse of the suffix not

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[55] M.H Goodwin (1990) discusses format tying as a speaker's use of phonological, syntactic, or semantic surface structures of a prior turn in organizing his or her following utterance for constructing disagreements.

only shows strong disagreement with the prior utterance but also questions the underlying epistemic presumption of the utterance as argued in chapter 4. In fact, as figure (5.3) shows, the disagreement is also highlighted by a considerably higher pitch of the boundary tone and vocal range of the overall proposition of speaker A's *kel* rebuttal (*ani-lkel*) when compared to the prior *kel*.

Despite their disagreement, the use of *kel* indicates that neither can truly know whether the cotton will come out of the stuffed bear. It is knowledge that will remain unknown until the moment the cotton actually falls out. The second *kel* rebuttal ('no it won't-*kel*') returns the floor to speaker B, where she asserts that she will then come over and directly take the cotton out herself (line 15). With this assertion, speaker B maintains her original standing that the cotton will indeed come out, whether automatically or with her participation. Subsequently, the assertion elicits a response from speaker A that points out the interlocutor's ridiculousness ('oh: hhh brother hhh hey really you-') but does not oppose the prior utterance. It appears that this statement becomes a sort of concession where the sequence ends.

In other disagreement sequences, speakers attempt to minimize their opposition by avoiding a direct answer and instead offering mitigations, under statements, an/or accounts. There is also tendency for pauses, cut-offs, and various other non-linguistic resources that assist in the delay of a disagreement. In this second excerpt two speakers talk about a friend, Kiyeng, who has just been accepted to a university in Wisconsin. After conversing about Kiyeng's many attempts at getting into school in America, the two speakers conclude, in a sequential pair of assessments in lines 1 and 2, that things have ultimately turned out well for this friend. Then, starting in line 3, speaker C begins to make a general assessment about all their former

classmates ('everyone') and slightly changes the trajectory of his talk in line 4 by providing an account that 'so many' of his and his interlocutor's classmates have come to study in America.

```
(7)    [LDC corpus]
       Classmate (male speakers C and D; former schoolmates, C is
       younger than D)


1      C: kulayse [ettehkey tto   cal  tway-ss-ci      mwe
          so       somehow  again well become-PST-COMM DM
          so it somehow turned out to be fine


2      D:          [cal  tway-ss-ney     e
                    well become-PST-APP yeah
                    yeah it turned out to be fine


3      C: tch kulayse tatul    cal  toy-ko       iss=
          tch so      everyone well become-CONN exist
          tch so for everyone it's turned out well-


4         =wuli- wuli tongki-ka  cengmal manhi nao-n       ke-ya
           our-  our  cohort-NOM really  a:lot come:out-REL thing-INT
           =our- it's that so many of our classmates have made it out


5         mikuk-ey=
          America-to
          to America=


6      D: =e    kulen     ke   kath-ta ya
           yeah like:that COMP seem-DC FP
           =yeah it does seem that way


7→     C: yel myeng-to    hwelssin te   toy-lkel [H%]
          ten people-even far      more become-kel
```

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**there's gotta be <u>far</u> more than ten people-kel [H%]**

Linguistically, speaker C's utterance in lines 4 and 5 ('it's that so many of our classmates have made it out to America') terminates in a *-ke-ya* suffix, explicitly marking the utterance as an explanation for speaker D's assessment in line 2 ('yeah it turned out to be fine'). Speaker D chimes in with an agreement ('yeah it does seem that way'), although his use of the deictic predicate *kule-* ('to be like that') and a *-ke kath* suffix ('it seems') shows some reluctance on his part to fully provide a full agreement. In response to this, speaker D provides a *kel*-marked utterance, which qualifies his prior epistemic position of 'so many' classmates to a more detailed 'far more than ten people.'

7→   C: yel myeng-to    <u>hwel</u>ssin te    toy-lkel [H%]
        ten people-even far      more become-kel
        **there's gotta be <u>far</u> more than ten people-kel [H%]**

8→   D: ung:: (1.0)
        I:see
        **I see (1.0)**

9→      cengmal cinan pen-ey
        really  last  time-LOC
        **last time I really**

10→     hyengyen-ilang sey       pwa-ss-nuntey [L%]
        hyengyen-with  count:INF try-PST-CIRCUM
        **tried counting with Hyengyen though**

11   C: kulay?
        really:INT

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```
             really?


12   D: toykey manh- yel- yel myeng  toy-l      ke-ya      ama
        really a:lot ten  ten people become-REL thing-INT perhaps
        there's really a lot ten- it's gotta be ten people probably


13   C: yel myeng- yel myeng  toy-ko-to      nam-ci-yo
        ten people ten people become-and-even remain-COMM-POL
        ten people- there's ten people and then some


14   D: e    e    e
        yeah yeah yeah
        yeah yeah yeah
```

Figure 5.4 Contour of 'there's gotta be far more than ten people-*kel*'
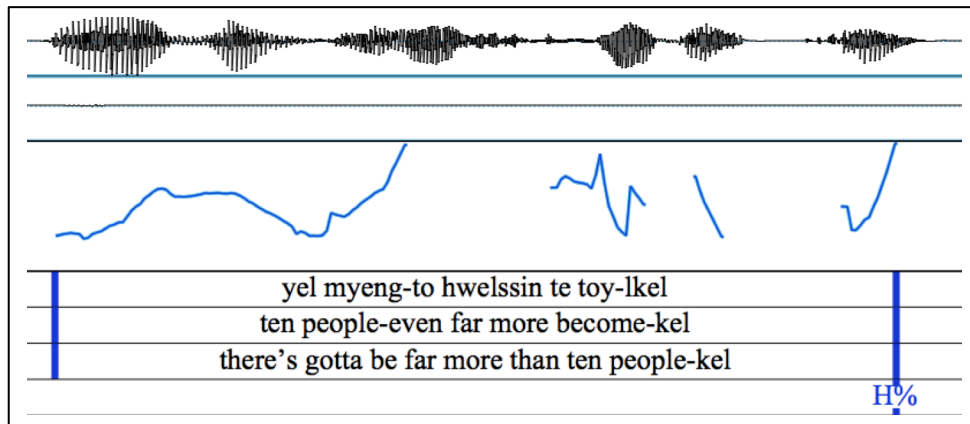


The high boundary tone of the *kel* phrase (figure 5.4) elicits an 'I see' response in line 8, followed by an immediate one-second pause. We can see here that although speaker D has shown support with the *ung* token, the one-second hesitation reveals that he has an issue with the prior *kel* utterance. Accordingly, in lines 9 and 10, speaker D begins to qualify his disagreement, informing his interlocutor that he and another friend of his had actually counted the number of

classmates before, essentially disputing speaker C's 'far more than ten people.' The suffix

*nuntey* [L%] in *sey pwa-ss-nuntey* ('tried to count though') (figure 5.4), while introducing a

reason why the speaker would know how many people were present, specifically problematizes

the *kel* statement of 'more than ten people.'[56]

Figure 5.5 Contour of 'tried counting though-*nuntey*'
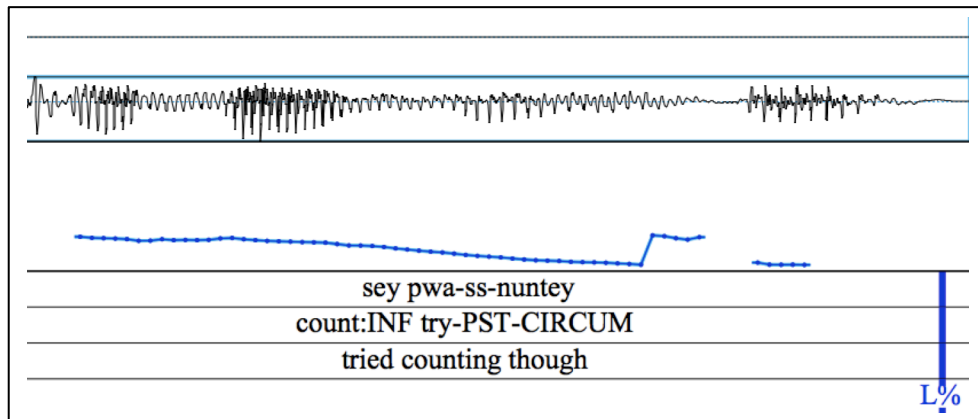


This is met with a confirmation question in line 11 ('really?'), to which speaker D replies that

'it's gotta be ten people probably,' finally disclosing the discrepancy the two speakers have. In

line 12, seemingly unwilling to cede, speaker C reiterates that it was more than ten people, this

time marking his utterance in committal *ci* (there's ten people and then some-*ci-yo*'). Speaker D

then responses with an affirmation ('yeah yeah yeah'), demonstrating his concession.

In this last example, we return to an example that was analyzed in chapter 4 and observe

a similar type of disagreement strategy. As the three speakers sit around eating and talking about

pizza, speaker M recalls a refund promotion that Domino's Pizza had if a pizza was not delivered

in thirty minutes or less (line 1). Upon hearing this, speaker O chimes in to tell her interlocutors

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[56] Y. -Y. Park (1995) describes this type of *nuntey* as a telling-my-side device that sets up an accountability-relevance point.

that the policy is still in effect (line 2) and this immediately prompts speaker M to confirm this in the following line. This confirmation question results in speaker O downgrading and withdrawing her commitment to her prior assertion with the suffix *kel*.

```
(8)  [Video corpus]
     Pizza Delivery (Male speaker M and two female speakers N and O;
     coworkers)


1    M: hwanpwulhay cwu-n-ta-nun-ke-y           iss-ess-e
         refund:INF  give-IMPFV-DC-REL-thing-NOM have-PST-INT
         they had this thing where they said they would refund you


2    O: cikum-to hay
         now-also do:INT
         they're still doing it


3    M: cikum-to hay-yo?
         now-also do-Q
         they're still doing it?


4    O: ung  ha-ki-nun  ha-lkel [H%]
         yeah do-NML-TOP do-kel
         yeah they do deliver-kel [H%]
```

As speaker O (the female speaker in the middle) offers a *kel*-marked utterance and opens up the floor for a negotiation, she turns her gaze towards speaker N (female speaker on the right), who also makes eye contact, albeit for less than half a second (lines 4-5). Immediately thereafter, speaker N redirects her gaze at speaker M (line 6) and offers an answer that indirectly disagrees with what speaker O had suggested in line 4. It may also be of interest to note that speaker N waits to provide a 'yes' (line 7) when she has switched her gaze to speaker M who appears to be

waiting for a more definitive answer.

```
4     O: ung  ha-ki-nun  ha-lkel [H%] ((makes eye contact with N))
         yeah do-NML-TOP do-kel
         yeah they do deliver-kel [H%]
```
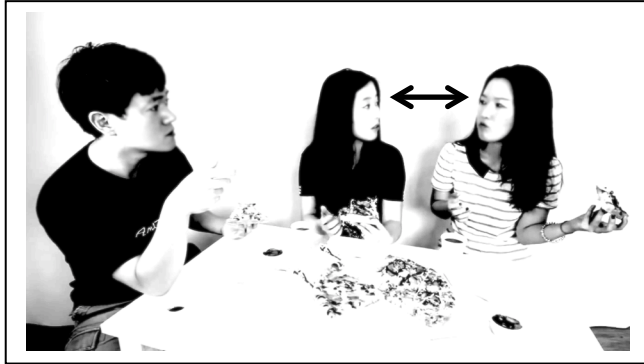


```
5     N: ((makes eye contact with O for (0.4) seconds))

6        ((redirects eye contact at M))
```
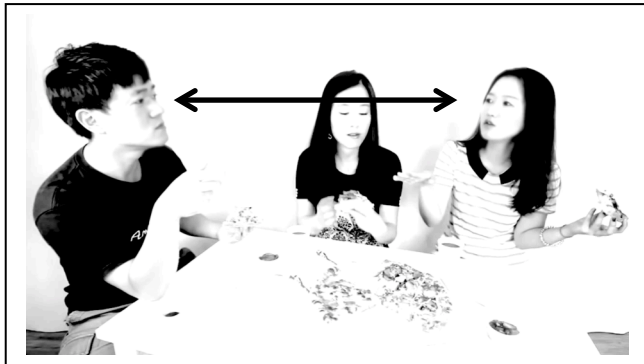


```
7        ay    kuntey paytalwon-tul-i    ppali talli-n-ta-ko
         yes   but    deliverymen-PL-NOM fast  drive-IMPFV-DC-QT
         yes   they say that the deliverymen drove too fast

8        wihemha-ta-ko
         dangerous-DC-QT
```

```
        said it was dangerous

9       ama       epseci-n      ke-llo     al-ko     iss-eyo
        probably disappear-REL thing-INST know-CONN exist-POL
        to my knowledge it's probably gone

10   M: [e:
         I:see
         I see:

11   O: [um::,
         oh
         oh::,
```

In line 7, the *kuntey* ('but') that immediately follows *ay* ('yes') indicates that speaker N is not intent on showing agreement. Instead, she provides a lengthy reason for her an upcoming disagreement, arguing that the promotion was likely cancelled because of the dangers of the speeds at which the deliverymen were driving (line 7-9). The two speakers respond to the disagreement simultaneously, where speaker M ratifies it with an 'I see' (line 10) and speaker O, whose *kel*-marked proposition had originally initiated this sequence, indicates that her understanding has changed with 'um::' (c.f., Heritage, 1988). With this, we see that speaker O has abandoned her non-committal standing to align closer to speaker N's understanding of the situation (i.e., the promotion has been cancelled).

Although participants do not have full access to the information that is at the center of their disagreement, it is evident that speakers guard their epistemic territories by demarcating how far their partial knowledge can extend. In excerpt (6), a direct *kel*-marked disagreement ('no it won't-*kel*') is playfully answered with an assertion that the recipient will come over and take

the cotton out of the bear herself. In this way, her original presumption that the cotton is 'gonna come out' is now, even if a joke, made a possibility. In examples where speakers are more cautious in their disagreements (excerpts 7 and 8), accounts take on an important role in providing a needed justification for an opposition. In other words, speakers are able to boost their credibility (i.e., epistemic standing) and can thus counter a prior *kel*-marked claim. In excerpt (7), speaker D's delay and subsequent account of personally counting ten people opposes speaker C's claim that there were more than ten people. In this case, speaker D's personal experience does not appear to satisfy speaker C and, in the end, we find that speaker D concedes. The speaker in excerpt (8) who presumes that the delivery promotion is still in effect is met with resistance from both interlocutors. In particular, speaker N provides a detailed reason why Domino's may no longer be taking part in the promotion, to which speaker O accept this explanation and demonstrates that her understanding has shifted closer to speaker N's.

### 5.3.2. Negotiating partial or weak agreements

Recipients also find ways to avoid outright disagreements (and agreements) by formulating responses that demonstrate a weak or partial agreement (Pomerantz, 1984; Pomerantz & Heritage, 2012). While weak agreements are reluctant and "unenthusiastic" agreements that are accompanied by hedge token, deixes, pro-terms from the prior utterance, and grammatical devices that mark distance (e.g., evidentials), partial agreements are tangential or "off-topic" answers that do not directly address the concerns of the prior utterance. The following example demonstrates how a weak and partial agreement may differ.

```
(9)   a. Weak agreement
         B: nemwu eps-umyen      himtul-ci:
```

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```
         too    not:exist-COND difficult-COMM
         if there's nothing it's difficult you know


   A:  himtu-l         kes    kath-a
       difficult-REL thing seem-INT
       it seems difficult


b. Partial agreement
   A:  ya  ne-  ne-to     na po-myen  nolla-lkel    .hh
       hey you- you-also me see-COND surprised-kel
       hey if you- you were to see me you'd be shocked too .hh


   B:  ewu [ya::
       ugh  hey
       ugh [hey::
```

One of the main reasons recipients respond with weak or partial agreements may be due to the necessity of avoiding a dispreferred social action. Disagreements (and in some cases agreements), can become an interactionally insensitive action and therefore must be mitigated to minimize disaffiliation. This claim will be further elaborated when discussing the excerpts in this section.

Excerpt (10) presents an interesting case where a speaker demonstrates a weak agreement that acknowledges the contents of the *kel*-marked utterance but rejects the social action that the utterance is doing. In lines 1-6, speaker S advises speaker T to put down a larger payment on a home, in order to lower the potential monthly mortgage to under a thousand dollars. Although speaker T understands that having a lower monthly mortgage is in her best interest, she discloses that she is not be able to do so because of her current financial situation, and thus cannot agree with the advice.

(10) [LDC Corpus]

    Down payments (Female speakers S and T)


1    S: down pay-lul

       down payment-ACC

       **the down payment**


2    T: ney

       yes

       **yes**


3    S: cokum te   ha-nun ke-y     nau-l     ke-yay-yo

       a:bit more do-SIM thing-NOM better-REL thing-COP-POL

       **putting a bit more down will be better**


4    T: wuri-yo?

       us-Q

       **you mean for us?**


5    S: waynyahamyen (1.0) cikum cepen ttay kutaylo hay    kacko

       because           now   last time as     do:INF since

       **because (1.0) now like the last time you (got a loan)**


6       han tal-ey    chen     i  payk-i-myen

       one month-LOC thousand two hundred-COP-COND

       **if it's twelve hundred per month**


7       cokum say-ci    anh-ayo?

       a:bit strong-NML not—Q

       **wouldn't that be a bit much?**


8       ama     wolkup-i   te   naka-to=

       perhaps salary-NOM more go:out-even.if

       **even if you spend a bit more of your salary**


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```
9     T: =yay
         I:see
      =I see


10→   S: () pwutam-i    com    toy-lkel [H%]
          burden-NOM a:bit become-kel
      () it'll be a bit of a burden-kel [H%]
```

As speaker T listens to the speaker S's advice, a confirmation question in line 4 ('you mean for us?') provides the first indications that she may have an issue with the advice her interlocutor is offering. We can see from lines 6 through 8 that speaker S continues to press her interlocutor by providing a reason for her advice ('if its twelve hundred per month wouldn't that be a bit much'). The negatively polarized question subsequently elicits an affirmative confirmation from her interlocutor in line 9 ('I see'). Once the confirmation is received, speaker S offers a non-committal *kel*-marked assessment ('it'll be a bit of a burden'). As someone who does not fully understand her interlocutor's financial situation, as evidence by prior hedges (e.g., 'a bit' in line 7 and 'probably' in line 8), speaker S is not in the position to make a definitive epistemic claim. Instead, she designs her utterance to properly mark the partial knowledge she has gained through her talk with speaker T. This provides speaker S with the linguistic space to gauge what speaker T thinks of her presumption.

```
10→   S: () pwutam-i    com    toy-lkel [H%]
          burden-NOM a:bit become-kel
      () it'll be a bit of a burden-kel [H%]


11    T: ung  kulssey [cokum-
          yeah well      a:bit
      yeah I guess [(it's) a bit-
```

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```
12   S:                    [chen     pwul    nem-umyen
                            thousand dollars exceed-COND
                            if it goes over a thousand dollars


13→  T: com   kule-l        kes  [kath-ayo
        a:bit like:that-REL thing  seem-POL
        it would seem a bit like that


14   S:                                  [toy-l        swu         iss-umyen
                                          become-REL possibility exist-COND
                                          if it's possible


15   T: chen     pwul    an  nem-tolok   hay    pwa-yo han pen=
        thousand dollar NEG exceed-RESUL do:INF try-POL one time
        you should try to not go over a thousand dollar


16→  S: =e   kuley-ss-nuntey      way kule-nya    ha-myen
          yeah like:that-PST-CIRCUM why like:that-Q say-COND
        =yeah I did (try) but I'll tell you why it's like that
```

The *kel* in line 10 momentarily halts the talk and provides speaker T an opportunity to provide her understanding of whether putting down 'more' would be burdensome or not. The proposition is met with what could become the beginnings of a disagreement in line 11 ('yeah I guess it's a bit'), but instead, speaker T is interrupted with a clarification that speaker S is actually talking about the monthly mortgage (if it were to be over twelve hundred dollars) rather than the initial down payment (line 12). In line 13, speaker T provides a weak agreement ('it would seem a bit like that'). Linguistically, we see the word *com* ('a bit') and the suffix ender *-ke kath-a* ('seem') that functions to hedge her response. This utterance is, however, overlapped by

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speaker S with a second insistence that speaker T try to get her monthly mortgage down to under a thousand dollars (lines 14 and 15). In line 16, speaker S provides an actual account to tell her interlocutor that she will not be able to make a bigger down payment ('yeah I did (try) but I'll tell you why it's like that'), despite what looks to be helpful advice. Thus, she informs her interlocutor that she will have no choice but to have a higher monthly mortgage and we subsequently find that the speaker S also comes to understand this as the talk continues (not shown in excerpt).

The recipient of a *kel* utterance in excerpt (11) (analyzed in chapter 4) also demonstrates a similar type of maneuvering where a partial agreement is used to ultimately disagree with a speaker. Before the sequence begins in the excerpt, the two speakers have been going back and forth about whether a mutual friend's economics major will help him get into law school. Speaker A appears to support this proposition while speaker B signals strong doubts.

```
(11)  [LDC corpus]
      Law school (Male speakers A and B; acquaintances)


1     A: economics ka-nun salam-tul manh-a
         economics go-REL person-PL many-INT
         there are a lot of people who study economics


2     B: e::   kulay?
         I:see really:INT
         I see:: really?


3     A: e
         yeah
         yeah
```

```
4    B: ung: kuntay ku law school tuleka-ki-ka  ettay ku swuyu-nka?
        yeah but    uh law school enter-NML-NOM how    uh easy-I:wonder
        yeah: but uh entering law school how is it uh is it easy?


5    A: sss
        hmm
        hmm


6→   B: kukes-to      [manmanchi              ] anh-ulkel [H%]
        that-also      thorough:NML              not-kel
        that's also gotta be tough-kel [H%]
```

Line 1 begins with speaker A's conjectural evidence that there 'are a lot of people who study economics' that are able to get into law school. The confirmation question in line 2 and a request for information in line 4, however, clearly demonstrates that speaker B does not think that having an economics degree will be helpful for getting into law school. This is met with some opposition in the following line ('sss'), to which speaker B, in a *kel*-marked response, answers his prior question.

```
6→   B: kukes-to      [manmanchi              ] anh-ulkel [H%]
        that-also      thorough:NML              not-kel
        that's also gotta be tough-kel [H%]


7→   A:                [swuyp-ci anh-keyss-ci mwe]
                        easy-NML not-SUP-COMM DM
                        it's likely not easy


8       com  elyep-keyss-ci      elyewe-   elyewe-to
        a:bit difficult-SUP-COMM difficult- difficult-even
        it's likely a bit difficult even even if it's difficult
```

```
9        hay-ya-ci      mwe ettehkey hay?
         do-NECESS-COMM DM  how      do:Q
         he has to do it you know what else is he suppose to do?


10→  B: ung:
         yeah
         yeah:
```

Both speakers simultaneously answer speaker B's rhetorical question in line 4, with
speaker B providing a *kel*-marked response (line 6) and speaker A partially agreeing with the
response ('it's likely not easy' in line 7). Subsequently, speaker B's *kel* response elicits an
additional partial agreement from speaker A (it's likely a bit difficult' in line 8). Rather than
agreeing with 'that's gotta be tough,' speaker A's 'a bit difficult,' marked with suffix *ci,* allows
him to make his own claim to knowledge.[57] Although it may be true that speaker B is correct
about the difficulties of getting into law school, speaker A utterance does not directly address the
prior *kel* utterance (i.e., a yes or no answer), revealing that he does not intend on agreeing with
his interlocutor. In fact, speaker A continues to advance his own agenda in lines 8 and 9 by
rhetorically asking what more the mutual friend can do to get into law school. To this, speaker B
shows an agreement and the sequence comes to close on speaker A's terms.

The next two examples in this last section illustrate how affiliation and mutual
understanding can be met with partial agreements. It looks to be that recipients are intent on
avoiding a dispreferred action since an agreement (or disagreement) would create disaffiliation
among participants. In excerpt (12), speaker A has been complaining to speaker B about her
difficulties with her husband and begins in lines 1 and 2 about how it has caused her to age ('it
seems like one ages:'). In response, speaker B asks for a confirmation ('really?'), to which

---

[57] An assessment such as this indexes the speaker's independent access to knowledge and informs the interlocutor
that it is unconnected with the prior assessment.

speaker A overlaps speaker B with an assertion that she could not believe what she had looked like when she saw herself in the mirror in line 4 ('Let me tell you I saw myself in the mirror and was completely shocked.'). Speaker A continues to hold the floor and provides an assessment of her appearance in line 5, which is then followed by a *kel*-marked proposition that takes the perspective of her interlocutor.

```
(12)  [LDC Corpus]
      Difficulties (Female speakers A and B)

1     A: nemwu soksanghan    il-
         too    upsetting     thing-
         (there are) too many upsetting things-


2        soksanghan il-i      manhi  sayngki-nikka
         upsetting  thing-NOM a:lot  occur-since
         since there's so many upsetting things


3        nulk-te-la salam-i:
         age-RET-DC person-NOM
         it seems like one ages:


4     B: cin[cca?
         really
         really?


5     A:   [kewul  po-ko    na kheyp:: nolla-ss-tanikka
           mirror see-and  I  totally surprise-PST-I:say
           let me tell you I saw myself in the mirror and was
           completely shocked


6        wancen     hal:meni tway-ss-e=
```

```
          completely old:lady become-PST-INT
          I've totally become an old lady
```

7→        =ya  ne-  ne-to    na po-myen  nolla-lkel [H%] .hh
           hey you- you-also me see-COND surprised-kel
          =**hey if you- you saw me you'd be shocked too-kel [H%].hh**


From what we can observe thus far, we have an instance, in which the user of *kel*
(speaker A) is actually the speaker with epistemic certainty regarding her own situation, while
speaker B is ostensibly hearing this for the first time. Speaker A's assessment in line 5 and a
subsequent upgraded one in line 6, as seen heightened by the intensifier *wancen* ('totally'), are
clear reflections of her higher epistemic standing. Immediately thereafter, she latches the word
*ya* or 'hey' in line 7, allowing her to keep her turn to produce a *kel*-marked proposition. With this
proposition, speaker A encroaches into her interlocutor's epistemic territory by speaking from
her vantage point (as it would be impossible to know what she actually thinks or sees), although
an appropriate distance is maintained from the information through non-committal *kel* ('hey if
you- you saw me you'd be shocked too .hh').


7→        =ya  ne-  ne-to    na po-myen  nolla-lkel [H%] .hh
           hey you- you-also me see-COND surprised-kel
          **hey if you- you saw me you'd be shocked too-kel [H%] .hh**

8→   B: ewu [ya::
        ugh [hey
        **ugh hey::**

9    A:     [()halmeni-ya  () salcci-ko     mak
                old:lady-INT   gain:weight-and  DM

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**I'm an old lady I've gained weight and (my) just**

10   meli-to  kheyp  cicepwunhay kaciko ahyu:

     hair-also totally messy:INF  since  ugh

     **and my hair is a complete mess**

11   cwuk-ul mas-i-ta

     die-REL taste-COP-DC

     **I'm a complete disaster**

12→ B: tch .hh weynil-i-ni

     tch   what-COP-Q

     **tch .hh what's going on**

The high boundary tone of the *kel* provides a space for speaker B to respond with *ewu* ('ugh'), signaling strong alignment with her interlocutor's unfortunate predicament. Nonetheless, it is crucial to note here that speaker B's alignment does not necessarily mean that she is agreeing with the prior *kel*-marked proposition in an epistemically meaningful way. In fact, for speaker B to affiliate with her interlocutor's situation, she cannot agree with the self-depreciating remarks. On the other hand, a disagreement would derail the talk. Although, there appears to be a slight opening for speaker B to add something ('hey::') in line 8, speaker A immediately overlaps her with additional complaints about what a disaster she has become (lines 9 to 11). In response, speaker B takes a deep breath and again shows alignment ('what's going on') so that some level of mutual understanding is achieved, even if she has been unable to epistemically agree.

In a similar fashion, the last excerpt illustrates how speakers avoid agreeing when the main storyteller, who ostensibly has a relatively higher epistemic standing, encroaches into their territory. Nevertheless, the recipients show that they understand the interlocutor's circumstance

and show affiliation through other linguistic and non-linguistic means. In excerpt (13), speaker X tells a story of her father getting in a car accident and having to rent a car. It appears that speaker Y has already heard this story before and supports speaker X with a question that prompt a detail from the story (line 3).

```
(13)  [Video corpus]
      Mustang (Female speakers X, Y and Z; speaker X and Y are friends
      and speaker X a classmate)

1     X: cha-lul leynthu-lul hay-ss-ta-n    mal-i-ya: hhhh
         car-ACC rent-ACC     do-PST-DC-REL word-COP-INT
         so what I'm saying is that [he] rented a car: hhhh

2     Z: ((head nod))

3     Y: ung     hhh mwe-llo?
         uh:huh      what-INST
         uh huh hhh so what did [he get]

4     X: kuntey appa-ka  ppalkan saykkkal:, me:: hhhh suthayng:
         but    dad-NOM  red     color        mustang
         but he got a red:, mu:: hhhh stang:

5     Y: [hhh hhh [hhh hhh hhh

6     Z: [hhh hhh [hhh hhh hhh

7     X:          [o: phunkha-lo: [pillyeo-n  ke-ya     hhh kuke-lul
                  convertible-INST borrow-REL thing-INT     that-ACC
                  so what he got was a convertible hhh that thing

8     Y:                          [hhh hhh
```

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```
9    Z:                                    [((silently laughs with head down))
```

Speaker X gets to the punch line of the story in line 4 ('but he got a red mustang') before momentarily pausing because her interlocutors begin to laugh (lines 5 and 6). Then in line 7, speaker X explains that her father rented a convertible and this detail prompts more laughter from her interlocutors (lines 8 and 9).

```
10   Y: mesiss-canh-a,     hhh way? hhh hhh
         cool-you:know-INT      why
         it's cool right, hhh what's the problem with that hhh hhh


11   X: ani a   neney   kuntey,
         no  ah you     though
         no [seriously] you guys though


12       cincca neney-ka po-myen-un:
         really you-NOM  see-COND-TOP
         really if you were to see this


13→      cincca nolla-[lkel [H%]
         really surprise-kel
         you'd be really surprised-kel [H%]
```

In line 10, speaker Y sarcastically adds that driving a mustang convertible is 'cool,' to which speaker X deflects it by using the words *ani* ('no') and *kuntey* ('but') in an attempt to retain control of her story. In a similar type of pattern we saw in excerpt (11), speaker X takes the perspective of her interlocutors and explains that if they were to see the situation themselves, they would be really surprised (lines 11-13). Here, speaker X uses the suffix *kel* to mark what

she believes her interlocutors would feel.

```
13→      cincca nolla-[lkel [H%]
         really surprise-kel
         you'd be really surprised-kel [H%]
```

```
14   Y:                  [hhhh sacin   ccik-e   o-ci ((tapping hand))
                          picture take-INF come-COMM
                hhhh you should have taken a picture
```
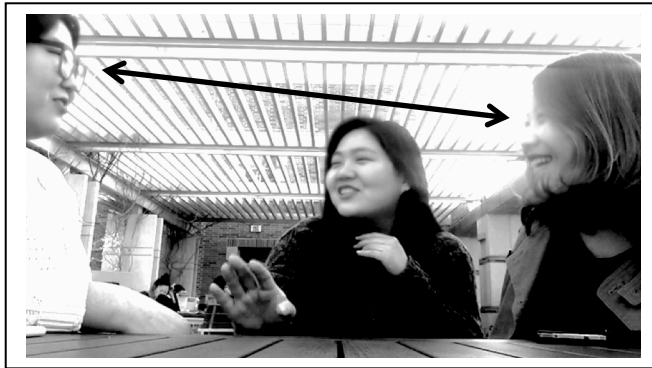


```
15   X: a  kuntey cincca sacin   chac-a    po-ko    sip-ta   ya
        ah but    really picture find-INF try-CONN desire-DC FP
        ah but really now I want to look for the picture
```

```
16   Y: hhhhhh
```

Speaker X's *kel*-marked utterance in line 13, however, is not met with a direct response
that addresses the presumptions from either interlocutor. Instead, it is first overlapped by a strong
burst of laughter and an assertion suggesting that she should have taken pictures from speaker Y
(line 14). Speaker Y's *ci*-marked assertion is not directly connected to the prior *kel*-utterance and
instead, only appears to be a continuation of her sarcasm that began in line 10. In the meanwhile,
speaker X has continued to make eye contact with speaker Z, who, in turn, has only responded

with eye contact, a smile, and nothing more. In a sense, without linguistically uttering an

agreement, speaker Z's smile, simply, is an embodiment of her partial agreement (i.e., she is not

agreeing with her interlocutor but is on board with how surprised she felt). All told, both

interlocutors ignore the epistemic negotiation that has been initiated by the *kel* utterance. As such,

speaker X turns her attention to speaker Y's prior utterance regarding taking pictures and grabs

her phone and responds that she is going to look for those pictures (line 15).


```
17    X: cincca ttak po-myen-un,
         really DM   see-COND-TOP
         if you were to take a look,


18    Z: ((head nod))


19    X: a  ceke-nun cengmal sss
         ah that-TOP really
         ah [you would think] that's really sss


20    Y: nemwu=
         too:much
         [it's] so


21    X: =ne[mwu
          too:much
         =[it's] so


22    Y:   [elin  aytul-i       tha-nun  ke-ya]
           young children-NOM ride-REL thing-INT
           it's what young kids would ride


23    X: e:   elin  aytul
         yeah young children
```

```
yeah young kids
```

In line 17, speaker X attempts to reorient the talk back to where she had deployed a *kel* utterance by reusing the phrase ('if you were to take a look'). This time speaker Z returns a head nod in line 18, which prompts speaker X to continue to speak. In line 19, however, as she attempts think about what her interlocutors would say or think (*sss*), speaker Y contributes the word *nemwu* ('too much'), to which speaker X echoes it in the following line. In the end, speaker Y finishes the thought for her ('it's what young kids would ride'), revealing why the story of a convertible is funny, and speaker X closes the sequence in line 23 with an agreement.

Both excerpts (12) and (13) illustrate the avoidance of dispreferred social actions as a reason for why recipients may not agree. More specifically, the epistemic overstep of the user of *kel* with 'if you were to see me you'd be shock too-*kel*' (excerpt (12)) and 'you'd be really surprise-*kel*' (excerpt (13)) is particularly important, considering an agreement would likely upset or dampen the mood of the speaker. On the flipside, a full disagreement would also signal recipients' disaffiliation with the speaker, initiating what could become a break down in mutual understanding. Thus, we can see that affiliation undoubtedly is a key ingredient in establishing mutual understanding and as such, partial agreements are the most sensible type of responses that simultaneously disagrees and affiliates.

In excerpts (10) and (11), speakers use a weak/partial agreement to signal that they disagree with the social action associated with the *kel*-marked proposition. For one, the recipient of the *kel*-marked proposition in excerpt (10) indicates a weak agreement with the advice being offered, given that a full agreement would inform her interlocutor that the advice is appropriate for her situation. In other words the responder cannot put a higher down payment down on a

house. Speaker B in the excerpt (11) creatively provides a response that partially agrees with the prior *kel* utterance ('it's gotta be tough-*kel*'). While speaker A's proposition is a legitimate statement and concern, an agreement would essentially dismantle the argument that speaker B has constructed (i.e., a major in economics could make its easier to get into law school). As such, speaker B partially agrees by offering an evaluation of his own ('it's likely not easy-*ci*') and the sequence closes with speaker A's affirmation.

## 5.4 Discussion

This chapter has discussed three specific types of responses to *kel*-marked utterances: agreements, disagreements, and weak/partial agreements. Each section has examined the way speakers utilize the post-*kel* space to negotiate agreements and disagreements and has argued that speakers are largely concerned with how epistemic congruence and mutual understanding is met. First, the analysis of four agreement examples in section 5.2 point to a high priority placed on orienting participants' epistemic standing closest to the speaker who ostensibly has more knowledge. Moreover, the section notes that users of *kel* can be speakers who actually have more knowledge than other participants in the talk.

Secondly, large numbers of disagreements from the data set are produced in ways that avoid direct responses. By employing such a strategy, speakers are able to circumvent the dispreferred social actions associated with disagreements. When epistemic congruence is temporarily halted by the emergence of a disagreement, speakers continue to generate sequences that ultimately advance towards some level of understanding. When speakers are constrained by various interactional factors (i.e., not being able to agree nor disagree), speakers may deploy a weak or partial agreement. In these sequences, we are able to observe affiliation play a rather

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significant role, contributing another layer of interaction that responders must be attuned to and respond in an appropriate manner.

In sum, while speakers respond to the underlying presumptions of a *kel*-marked utterance, the negotiation that immediately takes place allows us to clearly see how speakers manage and work out affiliation and mutual understanding. In addition to the actual linguistic contents, the chapter demonstrated the role of prosody and gaze as having an equally important role in face-to-face interaction during negotiations of epistemic congruence. The post-*kel* sequences, regardless of how recipients respond, becomes a crucial linguistic space that reveals the motivations of speakers in advancing both their viewpoints on a local level and their talk towards a place where a relative mutual understanding can be achieved.

## Chapter 6

## Conclusion


### 6.1. Summary of findings

The dissertation has explored how speakers utilize the final suffix *kel* as a linguistic resource in locally managing knowledge deficiencies. When a speaker does not have access to knowledge that is necessary for an epistemically appropriate response (i.e., in the second position), the deployment of *kel* creates a tangential space, where a provisional answer is negotiated with the recipient. Accordingly, this investigation establishes that the core meaning of *kel* is an epistemic *non-committal* one, allowing speakers to respond to a prior utterance with a proposition that best reflects participants' partial understanding.

It was also demonstrated that the *non-committal* meaning underlying *kel* provides the foundations for various social actions. We saw that *kel* utterances are used to 1) offer partial knowledge to requests for information or confirmation (chapter 3) and to 2) counter assertions (chapter 4). When *kel* is used in response to questions, speakers provide a partial understanding that is then negotiated towards a localized, relative epistemic congruity. In cases where *kel* is used to counter prior assertions, speakers pivot an alternative answer that problematizes the epistemic presumptions underlying the prior utterance. By and large, whether epistemic discrepancies between participants emerge through a knowledge deficiency (K-) or a strong assumption (K+), speakers deploy *kel* in an attempt to momentarily halt the conversation and work to minimize epistemic incongruity.

Furthermore, it was found that the high boundary tone [H%], which accompanies *kel*, creates a linguistic space where recipients are able to ratify or deny the veracity of a prior *kel-*

marked proposition (chapter 5). While it is clear that a recipient of *kel* makes every effort to reach an agreement with his or her interlocutor, the recipient appears to also make use of a variety of strategies to avoid the explicit dispreferred action of disagreeing. They utilize delays, accounts, and partial agreements to indirectly signal that the prior *kel* utterance is problematic and thus must be further negotiated. Even when a *kel*-marked utterance is denied, however, participants will continue to utilize the space to advance their talk towards mutual understanding and affiliation.

Additionally, the dissertation has attempted to show how prosody and multi-modality (i.e., gaze and gestures) play a crucial role in the management of information exchange during face-to-face conversations. In particular, gestures and gaze that co-occur with linguistic forms can elucidate a speaker's epistemic standing (e.g., head turned away when uncertain) or specify to whom the information is to be directed when there are more than two persons (c.f., Goodwin, 2007). This last point may especially be relevant since actual everyday human interaction and knowledge exchange often take place in conversations that involve more than two people.

Another aim of this dissertation was to uncover what in the interaction motivates a speaker in responding with a *kel*-marked proposition. On the one hand, it would seem more logical for speakers to simply avoid providing responses or, perhaps, in a more explicit manner, state that they do not have sufficient knowledge to provide a proper response. Nevertheless, it appears that there are moments in conversation when speakers' partial knowledge of a phenomenon suffices for continued participation and social action. As such, there are strong indications that a speaker's deployment of *kel* is motivated by both a local epistemic and a larger interactional contingency that arises during conversation. First, an epistemic constraint may be caused by the demands of a prior sequence (e.g., a request for information), thereby shaping the

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user's utterance to be epistemically appropriate. The use of *kel* shows that speakers have an acute awareness and concern for managing epistemic territories, even when access to the information is partial. Secondly, from a perspective of interaction, speakers are mindful of participation, such that there is a concerted effort to achieve some type of mutual understanding. In this way, a speaker's desire to remedy the occurrence of epistemic incongruity, even if their efforts are limited, is arguably a motivating factor for the deployment of *kel*. Conversely, an inaccurate or a complete lack of understanding and the absence of a negotiation would be detrimental to the "production of sequences" as Heritage (2012) describes it, which in turn may affect participants' understanding of one another.

## 6.2. Suggestions for future studies

From an interactional linguist's point-of-view, comparing *kel* with evidentials such as -(*u*)*l kes kath-* ('would seem like') or the marker for self-quotation, -*nka*, would be a significant step in our understanding of forms that may appear to produce similar social actions in discourse.[58] The data has shown that there is a tendency for *kel* to collocate with -(*u*)*l kes kath-* and -*nka*, indicating that these forms are working in tandem in a similar type of epistemic ecology. A comparative study would look at their frequencies, distribution patterns, sequential contexts, and social actions that are achieved through their deployment and delineate what unique niches these forms inhabit.

Perhaps to a conversation analyst, a comparison of how uncertainty is epistemically managed in other genres of discourse such as institutionalized talk would be an important topic to pursue. Although it can be assumed that the social action of "non-committing" in other genres

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[58] See introduction for a clarification for how the term non-committal is used in this dissertation.

will likely take on varying grammatical forms (Iwasaki, 2015) and may even appear in different or multiple sequential positions, it will, nonetheless, be a worthwhile exploration to see how speakers achieve this outside the realm of everyday colloquial Korean.

It would also expand our knowledge of language and language use if this study were to be expanded into a cross-linguistic study to gauge how speakers of typologically different and similar languages manage epistemic uncertainty. How do speakers of Japanese or English, for instance, employ such a strategy? Intuitively, Japanese speakers may use *-to omou* ('to think') and English speakers *I think* or *I guess* (Brinton, 2011) to not commit, but there may also be other particles in the case of Japanese or set phrases in English that are employed to manage issues that occur with partial knowledge. A cross-linguistic study would provide a broader perspective of how speakers choose to not commit and whether speakers of other languages employ similar types of negotiations strategies to achieve mutual understanding.

Finally, an expanded and more detailed investigation of the role of multi-modal behaviors and *kel* would provide insight into the way epistemic territories are defended, encroached upon and protected. More specifically, as this dissertation has pointed out, there appears to be stark differences between the way knowledge is relayed in dyadic and triadic interactions. Triadic ones, in particular, have shown that speakers must be more aware and vigilant in keeping track of one another's epistemic standing (c.f., Goodwin, 1979). As such, gaze and gestures take on a more pronounced role when there are more people and information to account for.

## 6.3. Implications of the study

From a grammaticalization point of view, it can be assumed that the parent form of *kel* likely began in contexts of managing uncertainty of knowledge. Although historic documents

have yet to yield clear examples of earlier usages of *kel*, it may be deduced that *kel* is likely

derived from an ellipsis, where the main predicate clause was systematically omitted for

interactional purposes (Ohori, 1995). For instance, the main clause containing socially sensitive

actions such as rejections are often omitted in Korean and the utterance medial suffix often takes

on the burden of implying the action. These social practices have initiated many of the recent

grammaticalized suffixed observed in PDK, including *nuntey* (Y. -Y. Park, 1999; Sohn, 2006),

*ketun* (Sohn & Park, 2002; Sohn, 2013), and *canh* (Sohn, 2010).

The high boundary tone that accompanies *kel*, nonetheless, offers a clue into how the

parent form may have changed into an interactive final suffix. Park and Sohn's (2002) study of

the grammaticalization of *ketun* demonstrate that the high boundary tone that accompanies the

suffix was likely developed from speakers' desire for further elaboration or justification. The

concomitant use of markedly high or low terminal boundaries points to a pattern of interpersonal

or interactional functions developing at what Sohn (2015) calls the "utterance-final position"

(i.e., right periphery). It is at this critical juncture that we see boundary tones and the implied

social action converge to eventually be understood by the interlocutor as a cue which signals that

the floor has been returned for a response.

Being a low frequent suffix, however, a study of *kel* brings into question the monopolistic

role frequency has had in terms of methodology for our understanding the grammaticalization

process. The fact remains that even with low frequency and a peculiar elusiveness in manuscripts

and historical documents, *kel* has been used in colloquial language and has in some way

managed to grammaticalize. One possible mechanism that may have contributed to its change is

the saliency of the form—that is, speakers may see their uncertainty as something strikingly

noticeable or standing out during interaction. Although a diachronic study of saliency would be

nearly impossible to execute, as naturally occurring data of conversations from the past are non-existent, scholars working with conversational data (e.g., Couper-Kuhlen, 2012) have pointed out that synchronic data can be useful for looking at micro-changes related to interaction and sequential positioning in discourse. Although in its infancy, it may, in the future, be a productive way through which to see how *kel* and other grammatical forms are evolving in PDK.

Furthermore, one of the limitations of this study has been the low frequency of *kel*. Doubling or tripling the corpus size would certainly mitigate the issue to a certain extent, but would require a concerted effort of a large group of people to collect and transcribe the data. An undertaking such as this would certainly take time. Still, the number of tokens, even with a larger database, would not necessarily produce a significantly larger number. In fact, the low numbers may be due to the fact that *kel* appears in context where there are conflicts, and regardless of how natural recorded conversations may be, it looks to be that speakers avoid on-record disputes. Arguments and conflict may turn out to be a genre of talk, in which *kel* may be appear as a more frequent final suffix.

Nonetheless, low frequency of *kel* or any other grammatical form, regardless of language, ought not to deter us from accounting for them. Every grammatical form has a unique role in human communication, even if its niche may look to be miniscule or trivial. These grammatical forms may have functions that we do not fully understand and may also turn out to have complex interactions with other more frequent grammars. This, in turn, can make the study of ostensibly rare forms quite valuable for our understanding of language, language use, and human interaction. As this dissertation has attempted to show, a seemingly minor, infrequent form has presented itself to be a highly specialized final suffix, such that it illustrates a function and a social practice that has yet to be discussed in detail in either the interactional/discourse linguistic

or conversation analysis literature.

Studies in both linguistics and CA have largely centered on using data that unequivocally show transparency and precision in the way a speaker asserts, maintains, or alters his or her epistemic standing vis-à-vis the other's. Undoubtedly, without such studies, a study of *kel* would not have been possible. With *kel* as the focal form, however, this investigation has been able to observe a practice in which speakers respond to and manage epistemic standings that are maintained in the *gray areas* so to speak. In other words, one or all participants' epistemic standings are temporarily un-committed to due to their inability to recall or access in full the information at the center of discussion. Consequently, participants manage the information relative to the limits of their partial knowledge.

In sum, the final suffix *kel* is, in the words of Hopper (2015), eventive and temporal. The suffix emerges as a direct response to prior utterances, such that it can be said that *kel* is shaped by the actions of prior grammars and subsequently affects the grammars to come. It emerges as epistemic incongruity among speakers build up with each passing utterance. Furthermore, the non-committal function of *kel* and its high boundary tone converge at the end of utterance, to optimally shape the following turn and advance the conversation. In this light, *kel* can certainly be seen as an instance of grammar emerging out of interaction.

# APPENDIX I: ABBREVIATIONS

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ACC | Accusative Case | | IMP | Imperative |
| ADV | Adverbializer | | IMPFV | Imperfective |
| ANT | Anterior Relativizer | | INST | Instrumental Case |
| APP | Apperceptive | | INTENT | Intention |
| CIRCUM | Circumstantial | | LOC | Locative Case |
| COMM | Committal | | NECESS | Necessitative |
| COND | Conditional | | NEG | Negation |
| CONN | Connective | | NOM | Nominative Case |
| COP | Copula | | NML | Nominalizer |
| DAT | Dative Case | | PL | Plural |
| DC | Declarative | | POL | Polite Speech Ender |
| DM | Discourse Marker | | PRO | Prospective Relativizer |
| DUB | Dubitative | | PST | Past Tense/Perfect Aspect |
| EMP | Emphatic Particle | | PURP | Purposive |
| FP | (Utterance) Final Particle | | Q | Interrogative |
| GEN | Genitive Case | | QT | Quotative |
| HS | Hearsay Evidential | | RESUL | Resultative |
| HON | Subject Honorification | | REL | Relativizer/Attributive |
| INCH | Inchoative | | RET | Retrospective |
| INF | Infinitive | | SIM | Simultaneous Relativizer |
| INT | Intimate Speech Ender | | SUP | Suppositive |

| | |
|---|---|
| TOP | Topic marker |
| TRANS | Transferentive |
| VOC | Vocative Case |
| VOL | Volitive |

APPENDIX II: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS


[           beginning of an overlap or simultaneous talk

]           end of an overlap or simultaneous talk

=           contiguous utterance; there is no discernible pause between two utterances

.           falling intonation

?           rising intonation; not necessarily a question

,           slightly rising intonation marking continuation; not necessarily a clause boundary

(1.0)       interval between utterances; length of pause

-           a glottal stop; cut-off or self-interruption

::          sound stretches

words       markedly stressed and emphatic

.hhh        inhaling

hhh         aspiration indicating exhaling or laughing; number of h corresponds to length

((gaze))    transcriber's description of events (i.e., gestures, gaze, or expressions)

(words)     inaudible

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