A pragmatic account of the Korean sentence-final particle *ney*

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1. Introduction

Korean sentence-final particles have received attention not only for their linguistic properties (K-D. Lee 1993, H-S. Lee 1993) but also for their implications for language acquisition (S-J. Choi 1995). The particles are claimed to code the distinction of old and newly perceived information to the speaker: the information that the speaker has just perceived and the information that she had earlier are expressed with different particles.[1] These are called epistemic modal suffixes. Korean is also claimed to code evidential sources: hearsay, inference and direct experience are expressed with different particles. They are called evidential markers. Since evidentiality belongs to epistemicity, those particles are also called epistemic modal suffixes (see Palmer 1995).

It is interesting that the notion of relevance defined and used in relevance theory also involves the newness and evidentiality together. New information is relevant to an individual if it is based on a stronger source than a related existing assumption and yields a cognitive effect (see Sperber and Wilson 1985/1996). It is suggested that if a linguistic form is used both for new information and its evidential source, the form may have a bearing on the notion of relevance.

In this paper, I attempt to account for such a form in Korean. The Korean sentence-final particle *ney* is analysed as an epistemic modal suffix or an evidential marker: it marks newly perceived factual information (e.g. H-S. Lee 1993) or directly witnessed information (e.g. S-J. Choi 1995). It is also claimed that the information used with *ney* is against the speaker's expectation (e.g. C-M. Lee 1993; H-S. Lee 1993; K-D. Lee 1993). After reviewing these accounts, I propose to analyse the particle *ney* as a marker of the speaker's cognitive effect yielded by relevant information.

This paper is organized as follows: section 2 discusses some previous accounts of the Korean particle *ney*. Section 3 introduces the notions of relevance and cognitive effects, and proposes a relevance-theoretic account. Section 4 shows some pragmatic implications communicated by *ney* very briefly. Section 5 is a summary and conclusion.

2. Review of the previous accounts

The Korean sentence-final particle *ney* as in (1) and (2) has been analysed as an epistemic modal suffix conveying newly perceived information:[2]

(1) (Seeing a broken car)
     cha-ka kocangna-ss-*ney*
     car-NM break-down-PST-*ney*   "The car broke down."

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[1] There is another distinction of old-new information. It is contingent on the listener's cognitive state: the information that the listener already had is old, and the information that the listener does not have is new. See Prince (1981).

[2] For the glossing, I use the following abbreviations. In the case of borrowing others' examples, I follow their glossing as much as possible:

AC: accusative IE: informal ending NM: nominative case NOML: nominalizer
PST: past tense   POL: polite form
I use the Yale transcription system consistently. The transcriptions of Korean examples from other Korean writers may have been adjusted in this paper.

(2)　(Seeing a table with a lot of dishes)
　　　manhi　　charye-ss-*ney*-yo
　　　much　　prepare-PST-*ney*-POL　　　　　"You prepared a lot (of dishes for dinner)."

In (1), the speaker sees a car broken down, and (2) she sees the table with a lot of food when she is making the utterance.

Typical analyses have analysed the particle *ney* to have the following properties:

(3)　A. The sentence-final suffix *ney* conveys newly perceived information. (e.g. H-S. Lee 1993)[3]
　　　B. It is used with direct evidence. (e.g. S-J. Choi 1995)
　　　C. It is used when the information is against the speaker's expectation. (e.g. K-D. Lee 1993)

Let us examine these properties and their consequences. First, it is claimed that *ney* conveys newly perceived information. However while the information in (1) and (2) is newly perceived information, but that in (4) and (5) is not:

(4)　(Hearing of a rise in house prices an unmarried man wrote)
　　　wuli katun chongkaktul　kyelhonhaki　cemcem te　　himtuleci-ney
　　　us　like　bachelors　　to marry　　more and more　become-hard-*ney*
　　　"It's becoming harder for us, bachelors, to marry."
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[From an internet cafe of <www.hani.co.kr>]

(5)　(A lecturer, losing his temper at a student's annoying attitude, wrote)
　　　acikto cohun kyosa-lose swuyang-i　te　philyohan-kes kat-ney-yo.
　　　still　good teacher-as　training-NM more　need　　　seem-*ney*-POL
　　　"It seems I still need more training for a good teacher."
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　[From an internet cafe of <www.hibrain.net>]

What the speaker has said is not newly perceived information itself, but his conclusion, the information being used as a premise.

Second, it is claimed *ney* is used with direct evidence. For example, S-J. Choi (1995) assumes that *ney* is used with direct evidence while *kwun* is used with inference. She notes:

(6)　a. "-*ney* signals that the event was directly witnessed by the speaker."　　(p.173)
　　　b. "-*kwun* is often used with knowledge obtained through inference."　　(p.173)

She further defines that the particle *kwun* is defined to mean 'newly made inference' and *ney* 'information based on factual evidence' (ibid. table 1).

This assumption refers to H-S. Lee (1993). Consider his example in (7) (I use English translations except for the relevant part for easy understanding henceforth):

(7)　[Ah,] it was deep inside the icebox.

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[3] He even claims that the information is not only newly perceived but also factual:
　　　"information conveyed with -*ney* is perceived as factual, and the speaker seems to assume its factuality
　　　immediately at the moment of its perception." (H-S. Lee 1993: 157)
See Noh (2002) for a further discussion.

According to him, in (7) when the listener appeared to find a fish cake package, a woman a few steps away who could not look inside the ice box cannot use *ney*. In contrast, if she actually witnessed the finding of the fish cakes, she could use *ney*. Thus, he takes *ney* to be used with visual evidence or direct experience here.

However, the particle *ney* can be used not only with direct evidence but also with indirect evidence. This is clear in that it is also used with a historical fact that the speaker could not have possibly experienced.[4] Consider (8):

(8) Columbus discovered America-*ney*.

It is not possible that the speaker saw Columbus discover America. She obtained the information through a book, a film, or from her teacher. Any information obtained indirectly can be used with *ney* as long as the speaker accepts it as true, in other words, in the case where the new information is based on a stronger source than the related assumption that she has had. (This will be dealt with in section 3. in detail).

Even in the present tense, the information used with *ney* may not express the speaker's direct experience. One is the case where the speaker's new thought is expressed, as in (4)-(5) above. Another is that the particle *ney* can be preceded by *keyss*, which means the speaker's presumption or conjecture.[5] Consider (9):

(9) Peter: *cwungkwuk pihayngki-ka cinhay   pukuney chwulakhay-ss-tay*
             China   airplane-NM Chinhay nearby   crash-PST-hear.
             "I hear that a Chinese airplane crashed around Chinhay.

     Mary: *pyengwuen-i   nanli-keyss-ney.*
             Hospitals-NM   confusion-presume-*ney*. .
             "The hospitals may be in confusion."

In Mary's utterance, the information is not directly experienced.

Third, it is claimed that *ney* is used when the information is against the speaker's expectation. According to K-D. Lee (1993), a crucial property of the particle *ney* is in the speaker's prior assumption: when the speaker had an assumption contrary to the event he sees, she uses *ney* for the newly perceived information. He also claims that this property distinguishes *ney* from another particle that also conveys newly perceived information, *kwun*, which he claims is used with what the speaker has expected.

This view is generally agreed by H-S. Lee (1993) and C-M. Lee (1993). H-S. Lee claims that the particle *ney* is used with the information against the speaker's expectation and that the particle *kwun* is used with information that the speaker has expected.

However, background assumption does not seem to be so crucial. Consider (10):

(10) (Greeting a neighbor on a sunny day):
     nalssi   coh-ney-yo
     weather   good-*ney*-POL   "It is a sunny day."

In (10) it is not clear that the speaker has thought that it is not sunny.

The particle *ney* favoured in literature, especially in poetry and songs, may convey the content that is not contrary to the speaker's expectation. Consider (11) (my English translation):

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[4] See Woodbury (1986) for an account of the direct evidential marker *nok* in Sherpa.
5 Sohn (1999: 361) illustrates the two basic meanings of *keyss*: "(a) the speaker/listener's intention or volition and (b) the speaker's presumption or conjecture ...."

(11) san-ey-nun   kkoch-i   phi-ney   kkoch-i   phi-ney
hill-on-TOP   flower-NM   bloom-*ney*   flower-NM   bloom-*ney*
                    "On the hill flowers bloom, flowers bloom,
kal   *pom*   *yelum*   *epsi*   kkoch-i   phi-ney
fall   spring summer with no difference   flower-NM   bloom-*ney*
                    "In fall, spring, summer, with no difference, flowers bloom."
                                    [abstracted From So-Weol Kim's poem Sanywuhwa]

In (11), the information does not appear to be against the poet's expectation. Since the previous accounts we reviewed in this section do not use or mention any example from poetry, it is not clear whether they take this use of *ney* to be the same as the particle *ney* they deal with. Anyway, their accounts in terms of 'against the speaker's expectation' do not fit well with the examples like (10) and (11).

In (10) and (11), the speaker expresses what she has noticed, which has little against her previous assumption. In (11), for example, it is not clear that the poet has thought that flowers do not bloom on the hill. It does not seem to be crucial the new information is against the previous assumption or not.

3. The particle *ney* and relevant information
3.1 Relevance to an individual and cognitive effects
Information derived from any source (perception, inference or communication) is relevant to an individual if it interacts with some of his contextual assumptions to yield cognitive effects. Without any cognitive effect it would not be relevant to the individual.

Cognitive effects are of three main types: strengthening an existing assumption, combining with an existing assumption to yield a contextual implication or contradicting and eliminating an existing assumption. To illustrate, suppose I came back from Paris after staying for two years there. If I say to a friend who has never been to Paris "Paris is not so hot as Seoul in summer," it may be relevant to him if he guessed that it would be hotter than Seoul, in that the information will eliminate the prior assumption, and becomes his new assumption. If he assumed that Paris was not so hot as Seoul, the information will be relevant to him, in that it strengthens his assumption. If he assumed that if Paris was not so hot as Seoul in summer he would visit Paris next summer, the information would be relevant to him in that it implicates that he will go to Paris next summer.

In order for new information to yield cognitive effects, the individual needs to have a prior assumption relating to the new information. Otherwise, the new information is not relevant to the individual. For example, if an individual has no (direct or indirect) assumption regarding the weather of Paris, the information that Paris is warm is not relevant to him.

New information also has to be based on a stronger source than that of the related existing assumption. Otherwise, it may not strengthen or eliminate the existing one. It may not produce a new contextual implication, either. Suppose that my six-year old niece says that Paris is less warm than Seoul. The information is not relevant to me because it is less reliable than my own assumption based on the experience. So it will not yield any cognitive effect. (The fact that she said so might be relevant to me if I thought, for example, that she had no idea of what Paris is or what weather is).

We have looked at the relation between new and relevant information. New information is relevant to an individual as long as it is related to any of his existing assumptions and based on a stronger source than that of the related one. New information is not relevant if there is no relation between the new information and the existing assumptions or if it is based on a source weaker than that of the related one.

3.2 The particle *ney* with relevant information to the speaker
So far we have seen that relevant information to an individual means that the information yields a cognitive effect in his cognitive environment. In order for a piece of information to be relevant to an individual, the new information should be based on a stronger source than that of the related assumption. That a source is strong is one thing and that the source is direct is another. I admit that the source of the information used with *ney* is quite

strong, but I do not agree that it should be perception or direct experience. Even when the evidence is not direct or perceptible, as long as the evidence is stronger than that of the related existing assumption, it is sufficient for the information to be used with *ney*.

Suppose the speaker overheard on a street that Chirac and Jospin won the first round of French presidential elections. At home, she sees an article in a newspaper to report that Chirac and Le Pen won. Then, she will say as in (12):

(12) lu pang-i i-kyess-*ney*
  Le Pen-NM win-PST-*ney*   "Le Pen won."

The new information is obtained from a newspaper, which is more reliable than the hearsay on a street, though not directly experienced. This information eliminates her assumption that Jospin won. My relevance-based account of *ney* does not require that the information used with *ney* be direct, but that its source be stronger than that of the related existing assumption.

Direct experience is of course stronger than any other type of source. Consider (13), abstracted from H-S. Lee (1994: (17)):

(13) h. H: *mocala-ci*   *anh-e?*
   fall:short-NOML NEG:do-IE   "Isn't it too short?"

 i. K: [Stretching his body] *ahywu kkok* *tuleka-ney*
         gee exactly enter-*ney* "Gee, [contrary to our expectation] it just fits me!"

In (13) lying down on the bed, she comes to see that it fits her and eliminates the previous assumption that it would be too short. If she does not want to express the relevance of the information overtly, she may not use *ney*. She can say, "No, it fits me-ta/e."

My account can also deal with the case where the past event is reported. Consider (14):

(14) (A boy reading a history book says)
  Columbus discovered America-*ney*.

The information that the boy found in the history book is more reliable than the assumption he used to have. So the information is relevant, and used with *ney*.

The previous accounts we saw in section 2 claim that the information used with *ney* is against the speaker's expectation. It is true that *ney* is often used with the information contrary to the speaker's assumption. However, it is not the essential property of *ney*. Rather, the speaker only tends to convey the information against her expectation with *ney* more often than the information that corresponds with the speaker's assumption. The speaker may consider the strengthening effect is not worthy enough to take processing effort for it since it is the same assumption that she only has had.

In contrast, my account using the notion of relevant information only requires that the speaker have a related assumption to the new information, but it does not have to be against it. The particle *ney* can be used even when the information is not contrary to the speaker's assumption as long as it is more strongly evidenced than the assumption. In this case, *cengmal* "really, truly" is often added. Suppose that I predicted that Le Pen might win. When I see an article about Le Pen's being elected, I would say:

(15) *cengmal* *lu pang-i* *ikye-ss-ney*
  really Le Pen-NM win-PST-*ney*.   "Le Pen won indeed."

By using *cengmal* "really," the speaker is indicating that her previous assumption was less strongly made.

To sum up: my relevance-theoretic account differs from the previous accounts in that it does not require the evidence to be perceptible or direct, and that the information has to do something with the speaker's cognitive environment, but it does not have to be against it. Above all, in my account, the properties of *ney* are all the aspects of the notion of relevance.

3.3 The particle *ney* with the speaker's cognitive effect

So far I claimed that relevant information can be used with the particle *ney*. However, not all the propositions that the particle *ney* is preceded by are relevant information itself to the speaker. Some utterances with *ney* do not convey relevant information but the speaker's thought or feeling caused by the relevant information. Consider (16):

(16) a. (When A has found out that B lied again, she says):
     I cannot trust him any more-ney.
    b. (A cannot find her wallet, which she thinks she left on the table, and says):
     It is strange-ney.

The propositional content of the utterance in (16a) is not relevant information itself. It is the result of the interaction between relevant information "B lied again" and an existing assumption like "if B lied again, I cannot trust his any more". That is, the implication that the speaker cannot trstu him any more is a newly yielded contextual implication.

Using *ney* with the speaker's thought is not a new finding. In Yonsei Dictionary of Korean Language, *ney* is entered as follows (p. 379) (my English translation):

(17) *Ney*
1. a. It is used to confirm the speaker's thought or feeling about the listener informally.
    Ex) You've got angry-*ney*.
  b. It is used to describe the speaker's own thought or feeling. Ex) This is a serious problem-*ney*.
2. It is used as a question to seek the listener's agreement to the speaker's opinion of the propositional content she is conveying. Ex) I presume I may eat this-*ney*?
3. It is used in poetry. Ex) Virgin Spring comes again-*ney*, A new grass robe she wears-*ney*.

It is interesting that the entry is more concerned with the speaker's thought or feeling, rather than newly perceived information.

Let us have a look at the example (18), repeated from (4):

(18) (Hearing of a rise in house prices an unmarried man wrote)
    wuli katun chongkaktul kyelhonhaki cemcem te   himtuleci-ney
    us like   bachelors   to marry   more and more become-hard-*ney*
       "It's becoming harder for us, bachelors, to marry."
         [From an internet cafe of <www.hani.co.kr>]

In (18), the news does not say that it is becoming harder for bachelors to marry. It is contextually implicated to the speaker. Using as premises both the news ("the housing prices are rising") are and the speaker's assumption ("if the housing prices rise, it will be hard for bachelors to marry"), the speaker gets to the conclusion that bachelors will have trouble in marriage.

What is said in (18) is the speaker's new cognitive effect implicated by relevant information. Relevant information in (12) – (15) becomes the speaker's new cognitive effect, too. In order to cover these two uses of the particle together, I propose to analyse the particle *ney* as a marker of the speaker's new cognitive effect yielded by relevant information. This notion can cover not only the case of contextual implication discussed in

this section (*ney* with the speaker's new idea or feeling) but also the case of relevant information discussed in the last section (*ney* with relevant information).

3.4 The particle *ney* and its processing effort

There is a case where the standard definition of *ney* is met, but the particle is hardly used. The particle *ney* is sensitive to the amount of effort required to process it. Suppose a man is walking in the dark. When he sees a tiger, he may not say (19), while when he sees a rabbit, he is likely to say (20):

(19) (Seeing a tiger in the dark)
   ?Holangi-ka   iss-ney
   tiger-NM   be-*ney*   "There is a tiger."

(20) (Seeing a rabbit in a field)
   Thokki-ka   iss-*ney*
   rabbit-NM   be-*ney*   "There is a rabbit."

When one sees a tiger, what is important is the information itself. Using the particle *ney* takes unnecessary effort from the speaker as well as the listener. Any pragmatic implications associated with *ney* may not set off the processing effort in the situation. (For the interaction between cognitive effects and processing effort, see Sperber and Wilson 1985/1996: chapter 3).

As we saw above, it has been generally agreed that *ney* is used when the information is against background assumption. However, whether the speaker expected to see a tiger or not, she is not likely to say (19). In contrast, (20) sounds very natural.

In a similar vein, when one sees a fire in the distance, she may say (21), but when she sees a fire in the very building where she is, she will definitely not say (21), but something like (22):

(21) *pul-i-ney*.
   fire-be-*ney*   "There is a fire."

(22) *pul-i-ya*.
   Fire-be-IE   "(There is) a fire!"

When the building in which the speaker is on fire, the information itself is important. Implicating something by using *ney* takes unnecessary effort from the speaker as well as the listener.

The particle *ney* has takes additional processing effort. So, it is used only when the speaker and listener are available for the additional processing effort. Without considering the processing effort, it is difficult to explain the different degrees of acceptability between (19) and (20), or (21) and (22). The meaning conveyed by *ney* is the information about the speaker's cognitive states, as was seen in previous sections.

The particle *ney* is not used in official or formal style. In my view, *ney* is not favoured in formal style, because in such a situation, the speaker's cognitive effect is not relevant to the listener. For example, in a newspaper the information of the reporter's cognitive effect is hardly what the reader is interested in. That is why newspapers, TV news, documentaries and other academic books seldom use the particle *ney*. The relevance-theoretic account using the notion of cognitive effect and processing effort accounts for the informal style of the particle *ney*.

3.5 Metarepresentations of the listener's cognitive effect

I have proposed to analyse the particle *ney* as a marker of the speaker's new cognitive effect, that is, as expressing the speaker's new assumption. However, there are some cases where the proposition has no bearing on the speaker's cognitive effect. Consider (23):

(23) Father arrives at home with a toy for his daughter, he often says:
    appa-ka   senmwul   sa wass-ney
    daddy-NM   present   bought came-*ney*   "Daddy bought this toy."

This type of utterance is often used to a baby or a young child.

Let us look at another case. When it is mutually known that the listener believes P, the speaker may well inform him of 'not P,' as in (24):

(24) Peter was unhappy because Mary went out to buy a very expensive projection TV.
    When she returns, he looks still unhappy.
    Peter: *How much was it?*
    Mary: *I didn't buy it-ney.*

Apparently these two cases are counterexamples to the account that *ney* is used with the speaker's new cognitive effect.

I think these are metarepresentations of the listener's prospective utterance, that is, metarepresenting the listener's new cognitive effect which will be brought about by the information that the speaker is going to provide. (For the notion of metarepresentation, see Noh 2000: Chapter 2 or Wilson 2000.) The father's utterance in (23) metarepresents the young daughter's new cognitive effect that he expects her to obtain (cf. K-D. Lee 1993). Mary's utterance in (24) is also a metarepresentation of the cognitive effect that Peter would get. Metarepresenting the listener's cognitive effect may not be allowed in formal or polite situation. So only to a close friend or to a baby (or a young child) is it used without causing any provocation.

4. Some implications by the particle *ney*

I have argued that the particle *ney* is used with the speaker's new cognitive effect yielded by relevant information. It does not mean that the speaker's new cognitive effect has to be overtly expressed by any means. If the speaker does not want to express it overtly, she may not use it (see section 3.4). Then, why does the speaker use *ney*?

First, the speaker uses the particle *ney* to confirm what she has newly obtained:

(25) a. *meli   call-ass-ney*
        hair(AC)   cut-PST-*ney*   "You got your hair cut."

    b. *chima   sa-ss-ney*
        skirt(AC)   buy-PST-*ney*   "You bought a skirt."

When one comes across her friend who had his hair cut, she is likely to say something like (25a). The utterance overtly expresses that the speaker has obtained the new information. This is kind of a phatic expression. The same holds for (25b). The intended meaning of the utterance may vary according to the context, which is left to infer or partly hinted by the intonation. (see Noh 2002)

The utterance with *ney* can be used as a phatic expression more likely than that without *ney*, because the speaker is telling what is her new cognitive effect. For example in (25a), the speaker is telling that the listener's hair cut is relevant to her. Now that it is guaranteed that the topic is relevant to the speaker, the friend (listener) is free to talk about the topic a little longer.

The speaker may want to show that the effect is yielded by relevant information. That is, the speaker wants to communicate that what she is saying is evidenced by an external source. Let us compare the utterances in (26):

(26) a. *Swukoka   manh-ney.*

pains-NM	many-*ney*	"You are taking a lot of pains."

b. *Swukoka*   *manh-a.*
pains-NM   many-IE   "You are taking a lot of pains."

The utterance *Swukoka manh-* "You are taking a lot of pains" is an expression used when one wants to appreciate what the other is doing. Here, if the speaker says (26a), it means that she is appreciating what she is observing now. In contrast, (26b) does not say when or how the speaker came to have the belief. It may mean the same as (26a), or it may be just an overall appreciation.

In section 2, we saw *ney* is used with what the speaker has expected. The thing is, this case is not used as often as the case where the information is against the speaker's expectation. It is because the effect may not be great enough to compensate the processing effort. In contrast, in the cases where the processing effort is set off by additional pragmatic implications, *ney* is used regardless of the type of the cognitive effects, as in (26). Especially in poems, for example, in (11), the poet may consider even the strengthening effect to be important enough to take the processing effort from the reader. Hence, *ney* is used .

6. Summary and conclusion

I have reviewed some standard accounts of the Korean particle *ney*: they analyse *ney* as an epistemic modal suffix of newly perceived factual information or an evidential marker of direct evidence. They also claim that the information used with the particle *ney* is against the speaker's expectation. Those accounts not only do not deal with *ney* with new information, but also cannot cover the *ney* with the speaker's new thought (opinion, conclusion, view, etc.) and the *ney* with the information not contrary to the speaker's expectation.

I have proposed to analyse *ney* as a marker of the speaker's cognitive effect produced from the interaction between relevant information and existing assumptions. This account can apply to the particle *ney* with the speaker's new thought as well as *ney* with relevant information itself. The *ney* with the information that the speaker has expected can be used with *ney* as well as that with the information contrary to the speaker's assumption. I argued that considerations of processing effort, often ignored in the literature, can shed light on the relative scarcity of uses of *ney* in confirming rather than contradicting existing assumptions, and on cases where the standard definition of *ney* is met, but the particle is not used.

My account captures a generalization and provides a more comprehensive account of *ney*. Relevance theory sheds light on the account of the particle *ney*: newness, direct evidence, and being against the speaker's expectation are three unrelated things in the previous accounts, whereas the properties of the particle *ney*, newness, stronger evidence and relation to a previous assumption are all involved with the notion of relevant information in my account.

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