

The Evolving Language Landscape: Advanced Korean Learners' Use Of ‘-(u)lkka?’ in Chat Conversations and Its Impact on Artificial Intelligence*

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1. Introduction

Recently, there has been a surge in language usage on mobile platforms, reshaping the dynamics of communication. Of the diverse array of mobile communication methods available, this study focuses on mobile chat conversations, investigating the intriguing use of the linguistic form ‘-(u)lkka’ by advanced learners of Korean. Grammar books and textbooks for Korean learners elaborate on the meaning of the ‘-(u)lkka’ form but, for educational purposes, the examples presented in these materials are often processed and lack the authenticity of real-world language usage.

To bridge the gap between these examples and authentic language and understand the genuine application of ‘-(u)lkka’ in mobile chat conversations, this study gathered authentic chat conversations from advanced learners of Korean. By taking a pragmatic approach, we seek to reveal the usage of authenticity that traditional grammar books and textbooks may have overlooked.

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In the following sections, we will review previous studies on mobile chat conversations, focusing separately on those involving native speakers of Korean and Korean language learners. Additionally, we will scrutinize how grammar books describe the *'-(u)lkka'* form, providing examples to illustrate its usage. Furthermore, we will summarize existing research on the pragmatic functions of *'-(u)lkka'*. We will then introduce authentic uses of *'-(u)lkka'* in mobile chat conversations, analyze the structured process of these chat conversations, and explore the pragmatic functions of *'-(u)lkka'*.

This study aims to bridge the gap between textbook examples and authentic language usage, enabling us to observe the evolving landscape of the Korean language. We will focus on the changes in communication platforms and the evolving roles of language learners as language agents. Additionally, this study will provide insights into the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) within the contemporary language landscape.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Native speakers of Korean in mobile chat

Research on computer-mediated communication languages has been actively conducted since the early 2000's (Do, 2002; Koo, 2002; Kim, 2005; Park 2006; Lee, 2003, 2005, 2009; Lee, 2010). However, in the 2010s, there was a shift in research focus towards mobile chat language use. At this time, Choi et al. (2012) conducted a study analyzing the linguistic phenomena on Kakao Talk, a popular mobile chatting app in Korea. The researchers discovered that mobile chat exhibits characteristics of both spoken and written languages, creating a hybrid form of communication. In particular, due to the time-consuming nature of typing on mobile devices, unique linguistic phenomena such as the use of additive particles at the end of sentences, vowel changes, nominal sentence closure, and contractions have been observed.

More recent studies have made similar observations. Park et al. (2015) conducted a linguistic analysis of online chat on social media,

specifically Facebook. They examined various linguistic features, including dialect influences, initials, contractions, the unique use of particles and sentence endings, and unique spellings. In addition, Baek (2022) analyzed mobile chat on social media such as Kakao Talk, with a specific focus on response expressions. The study aimed to explore the characteristics of online chat and how it differs from both written and spoken language.

According to Baek (2022), mobile chat exhibits similarities to written language in terms of its reliance on written forms of communication. However, it diverges from traditional written language, where users typically do not expect immediate responses in most genres (except for emails), by sharing similarities with spoken language in two key respects. First, it facilitates real-time communication, enabling participants to engage in interactive exchanges instantaneously. Second, online chat employs response expressions that resemble the conversational cues encountered in spoken conversations. Nevertheless, it is important to note that mobile chat differs from spoken language in that it does not involve the physical co-presence of the communicators.

Baek's study further categorized response expressions in mobile chat and examined them based on their frequency and distribution, as well as their variation across different demographic factors, such as gender and age. By analyzing these relationships, the study shed light on the patterns and characteristics of response expressions within the context of mobile chat on social media such as Kakao Talk. While research has been conducted on mobile chat and analyzed linguistic characteristics and distinct features of this mode of communication, no research has specifically focused on its grammatical aspects and pragmatic strategies.

2.2 Korean language learners in mobile chat

There is currently a dearth of research exploring how Korean learners utilize grammar in mobile chat. However, if the research scope is widened to include non-face-to-face situations, several relevant studies emerge. Hong (2012) proposed pedagogical approaches that incorporate mobile learning in

Korean language education, emphasizing the potential benefits of integrating technology into language learning environments.

Furthermore, Park and Hwang (2015) and Lee (2018) examined how Korean language learners comprehend and navigate mobile learning environments. They investigated the various features and functionalities of mobile learning platforms, identifying their strengths and limitations in supporting language acquisition. These studies have shed light on the affordances and challenges associated with utilizing mobile technology as a tool for Korean language education, offering valuable insights for both educators and learners alike.

In a more recent study, Park (2021) provided a comprehensive review of the evolving landscape of mobile learning. The research highlights the advancements and trends in mobile learning technologies, examining their impact on language education. By analyzing the development of mobile learning, Park outlines the potential implications for Korean learners and suggests future directions for research and pedagogical practices.

Another relevant study by Do and Lee (2022) focused on the analysis of interaction patterns in non-face-to-face language classes by examining the communication dynamics between instructors and students, as well as among students themselves. While their study does analyze Korean learners' conversations, it primarily explores interactional aspects rather than specifically investigating the utilization of particular grammatical structures in online chat settings.

2.3 Meaning of ‘-(u)lkka’ in grammar books.

Baek (1999, pp. 248–251) provides six usages of ‘-(u)lkka’:

1) When the subject is in the first-person singular and it is used after an action verb, the speaker asks their interlocutor's opinion on the action they are going to perform, as shown in 1(a) below. The interlocutor will respond with an imperative.

2) When the subject is in the first-person plural and it is used after an action verb, the speaker asks their interlocutor's opinion (1b). The interlocutor will respond in a propositive manner.

3) When the subject is in the third person and it is used after an action verb, state verb, or copula, it expresses the speaker's conjecture on a subject's actions or state (1c).

4) Regardless of the subject, the speaker inquires about the possibility of an action (1d).

5) Although it can appear in question form, it actually functions declaratively, as shown in (1e). It strongly expresses the opposite meaning of the sentence.

6) When the speaker cannot clearly express something because the appropriate expression does not come to mind, they use '*-(u)lkka*', and a conclusion follows (1f).

- (1) a. *changmwun-ul tatu-lkka-yo*
 window-AC close-shall I-POL
 'Shall I close the window?'
- b. *ceki namwu kunul-eyse swi-lkka-yo*
 there tree shadow-in rest-shall we-POL
 'Shall we take a rest in the shadow of the tree there?'
- c. *nwuka iki-lkka-yo*
 who win-guess-POL
 'Who will win?'
- d. *pesu-ka yeki-kkaci o-lkka-yo*
 bus-NM here-to come-wonder-POL
 'I wonder if the buses come here.'
- e. *caki-ka nah-un casik-ul miweha-lkka-yo*
 self-NM deliver-INF child-AC hate-(you)think-POL
 'What do you think? Do people hate their children?'¹⁾

1) The actual meaning is that there is no one who hates their children.

- f. *wuli twu salam-un hanhuy-la-lkka insayn-uy kacang alumtawu-n*
 we two people-TC delight-QT-might life-of most
 beautiful-INF
swunkan-ul mas po-ass-ta
 moment-AC taste feel-PST-DC
 ‘The two of us experienced something like delight. We
 experienced the most beautiful moment of our life.’

Note. AC: accusative case particle; DC: declarative sentence-type suffix; INF: infinitive suffix; NM: nominative case particle; POL: polite speech level; PST: past tense suffix; QT: quotative particle; TC: topic-contrast particle

The National Institute of Korean Language (2005, pp. 777-778) outlines three usages of ‘-(u)lkka’:

- 1) When used in self-talk, it expresses the speaker’s doubt or inquiry (2a).
- 2) In writing, such as theses or news articles, it poses general questions (2b).
- 3) When used after verbs, it seeks the interlocutor’s intention or opinion or suggests something (2c).

- (2) a. *i aney mweka tul-e-iss-ulkka*
 this in what be-INF-ing-guess
 ‘What’s inside this?’
- b. *salimilan kawyen muwesi-lkka*
 life is indeed what-ask
 ‘What is life, indeed?’
- c. *umak tulu-lkka*
 music listen to-suggest
 ‘Shall we listen to music?’

2.4 Pragmatic functions of ‘-(u)lkka’

Lee (2017) developed pragmatic information for beginning-level grammar in a

textbook. In this research, Lee examined various grammatical structures and their pragmatic functions in real-life conversational settings. The aim was to equip learners with not only linguistic knowledge but also the ability to use language appropriately in different communicative contexts.

According to Lee (2017), ‘-(u)lkka’ is used to gently express commands or requests. This linguistic form is commonly employed to show politeness and consideration towards the interlocutor, particularly when the speaker wants to avoid sounding too direct or demanding. With the appropriate use of ‘-(u)lkka’, learners can demonstrate respect and create a positive atmosphere during interactions.

In another study, Lee (2019) assessed the usage of ‘-(u)silkkayo’, a combination of ‘-(u)si’ (the subject honorific suffix), ‘-(u)lkka’, and ‘-yo’ (a polite sentence ending). According to Lee (2019), ‘-(u)silkkayo’ serves as a euphemistic command, skillfully blending the elements of respect and assertiveness. This linguistic construction allows speakers to give instructions or suggestions politely while retaining authority in certain contexts.

2.5 Authenticity issues in textbooks

Baek (2016) highlighted the lack of authenticity in conversation examples presented in the textbooks for Korean learners. However, Bang (2013, p. 48) argued that there is a valid reason for processing conversation examples for the ease of teaching and learning, normality, and educational utility, which ultimately increases efficiency for teachers. Nevertheless, it raises concerns about learners potentially developing "foreigner talk" if exposed only to processed Korean.

Baek (2016) proposed a solution to address authenticity concerns. The assumption is that learners who actively expand their contact with Korean society and interact with native Korean speakers will naturally

acquire authentic language. In this context, learners' efforts in engaging with the language and culture play a vital role in developing genuine language skills.

In another study on the acquisition of authenticity, Baek (2016) examined the features of spoken Korean as an initial step in reflecting authenticity in the textbook. The author points out that certain elements such as shortening, repetition, pauses, overlapping speech, hesitation, interjection, and dynamic turn-taking are not inherent features of spoken language but rather traces of those features. Baek (2016) specifically focused on understanding how these traces are generated and what they signify in spoken language.

In doing so, Baek (2016) identified five fundamental principles of spoken language that shed light on the underlying mechanics that govern authentic spoken Korean. By elucidating these principles, Baek's study contributes to a deeper understanding of how spoken language functions in real-life communication. Integrating these findings into language textbooks can help learners develop a more accurate and authentic command of the language, better preparing them to engage effectively in natural conversational settings.

In a related study, Lee et al. (2015) approached authenticity issues from a pragmatic perspective. While Baek (2016) explored spoken Korean language in a broader context, Lee et al. (2015) narrowed their focus to self-introduction and dialogues in hospital conversations. Through an analysis of conversation examples in textbooks and authentic spoken data sourced from various real-life contexts, including television programs and genuine interactions, the authors illustrated the significance of pragmatic information in the process of spoken Korean language.

Both studies have collectively contributed to the understanding of authenticity issues in Korean language learning materials. By recognizing the importance of authenticity and pragmatic aspects in language textbooks, educators can better cater to learners' needs, foster genuine language proficiency, and prepare learners to successfully navigate real-life

communicative situations. Emphasizing authentic language usage and incorporating pragmatic insights into language materials will undoubtedly enhance learners' language abilities and promote more effective language-learning experiences.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The participants of the present study were 20 advanced Korean learners who had taken or were taking advanced-level Korean classes in the spring semester of 2023 or had achieved TOPIK 5 or higher. A total of 22 chat conversations were initially collected from these participants (two of them submitted two conversations each). However, two of the participants did not use ‘-(u)l*l*ka’ in their chat conversations, so they were excluded from the study. In total, 20 chats from 18 participants (15 female and 3 male) were analyzed. Overall, the participants had lived in the Republic of Korea for a minimum of two months to a maximum of 10 years, with an average of three years and six months. Their ages ranged from 17 to 36 years old, with an average of 23 years and 2 months.

3.2 Data collection

The data collection period for this study spanned several weeks from April 4 to April 29, 2023. The participants were instructed to capture their chat conversations in the local community-based flea market application *Karrot*. They were asked to capture chat interactions that consisted of at least five turns, ensuring a sufficient amount of interaction for analysis.

To facilitate the data collection process, the participants were given access to a designated Google Forms. The participants were informed that they would be rewarded for successfully submitting their chat conversation.

3.3 Data analysis

The process of buying and selling items via chat interactions can be structured into three steps: 1) information sharing, 2) negotiation, and 3) purchase completion. The initial step involves the sharing of important information pertaining to the items in question, in which the seller provides relevant details about the specifications, condition, and features of the product in question. The second step involves negotiation, during which the parties deliberate on the price, the meeting time, and the meeting place. The goal is to reach a consensus that aligns with the expectations and requirements of both parties. Finally, in the third step, the parties finalize the transaction and complete the purchasing process.

Example 3 presents an authentic chat conversation between a native speaker of Korean acting as a prospective buyer (3B) and an advanced learner of Korean as the seller (3S). In the example (31), it is assumed that the seller has already posted detailed information about the item, eliminating the need for the prospective buyer to inquire about it. Consequently, the first step of the standard information sharing process is not observed in Example 3. The second negotiation step ranges from (3a) to (3k). During this phase, they negotiate the price, meeting time, and place. The purchase completion stage spans from 3(l) to (z). This step illustrates the process of finalizing the sale and the purchase of the item.

(3) Authentic chat example

B: a. *annengha-si-eyo*

Be well-SH-POL

‘Hello?’

b. *hoksi* *oman-wen-ey* *kanungha-si-lkka-yo*

By any chance fifty thousand-won-by possible-SH-confirmation-POL

‘Would it be possible to do it for 50,000 won?’

c. *manyake kanunga-si-tamyeon phyenha-si-n sikan-e palo*
 by any chance possible-SH-if convenient-SH-RL time-at immediately
kaci-le ka-keyss-supni-ta
 take-to go-will-DEF-DC

‘If it is available, I’ll pick it up at your convenience.’

S: d. *annengha-si-eyo*

Be well-SH-POL

‘Hello?’

e. *hoksi onul ceneyk-e kanungha-si-nkayo*
 by any chance today evening-at possible-HON-POL

‘I wonder if tonight would be fine with you.’

B: f. *ney annenyngha-si-eyo*

Yes be well-SH-POL

‘Yes, hello?’

g. *cenyeck myeck si-ccum kwaynchanhu-si-eyo*
 evening what time-around possible-HON-POL

‘What time in the evening works best for you?’

S: h. *cenyeck 8-si kwaynchan-usi-lkka-yo*

Evening 8-o’clock fine-SH-POL

‘Does 8 pm work for you?’

B: i. *ney. 8-si teken meyakhephi-lo ka-myen toy-lkka-yo*

Yes 8-o’clock Teken Mega coffee-to go-if work-do you think-POL

‘Is the Mega Coffee Taken branch convenient for you at 8 PM?’

S: j. *ney-ney*

Yes-yes

‘Yes, yes.’

k. *5-man-won-ulo haytuli-keyss-supni-ta*
 5-10 thousands-won-by do-will-DEF-DC

‘I can do it for 50,000 won.’

- B: l. *ney kulen 7-si pan-ccum hanpen te yenlak tuli-keyss-supni-ta*
 Yes then 7-o'clock half-around once more contact give-will-DEF-DC
 'I'll get in touch with you again at 7:30-ish.'
- m. *neyp kansaha-pni-ta*
 Yes appreciate-DEF-DC
 'Yes, thanks.'
- S: n. *ney algeyss-supni-ta*
 Yes know-DEF-DC
 'Yes, I got it.'
- o. *8-si poyp-geyss-supni-ta*
 8-o'clock see-will-DEF-DC
 'See you at 8 o'clock.'
- p. *sikan-i te philyoha-si-myeon 8:30-to kanunha-pni-ta*
 time-NM more need-SH-if 8:30-also possible-DEF-DC
 'If you need more time, 8:30 is also an option.'
- q. *alli-ecwu-si-eyo*
 know-INF-SH-POL
 'Please let me know.'
- r. *kulem 8-si-lo algo-iss-keyss-supni-ta*
 then 8-o'clock know-ing-will-DEF-DC
 'See you at 8 o'clock.'
- B: s. *nep cey-ka il-i iss-ese yanlak-I nuc-ess-supni-ta*
 Yes I-NM work-NM have-because reply-NM be late-PST-DC
 'I'm sorry for the delay in getting back to you. I had something to take care of.'
- t. *5-pwun aney chwulpalha-nuntey neypi ccik-ko tochak sikan*
 5-minutes within depart-by the way navigation type-and arrival time
allyetuli-keyss-supni-ta
 let you know-will-DEF-DC
 'I'll be leaving in 5 minutes and once I check the navigation, I'll let you know my estimated arrival time.'

S: u. *ney*

Yes

‘Yes.’

B: v. *8-si 10-pwun tochak yeycengi-pni-ta*

8-o’clock 10-minutes arrival estimate-DEF-DC

‘The estimated arrival time is 8:10.’

w. *kunche-eyse tasi hanpen yenlak-tuli-eyss-supni-ta*

near-in again once contact-give-will-DEF-DC

‘I’ll get back you when I’m nearby to the place.’

S: x. *ney al-geyss-supni-ta*

Yes know-will-DEF-DC

‘I got it.’

y. *sikan macchw-ese naka-keyss-supni-ta*

time then go out-will-DEF-DC

‘I’ll be there at that time.’

B: z. *nepp*

Yes

‘Yes.’

Note. DEF: deferential speech level; RL: relativizer suffix; SH: subject honorific suffix

In Example 3, we observe three instances of ‘-(u)lkka’ in (3b), (3h), and (3i). In (3b), the prospective buyer seeks the seller’s confirmation of the price using ‘-(u)lkka’, with the response expected to be either “yes” or “no”. However, the seller’s reply takes an unexpected turn because they shift the topic and inquire about the meeting time in (3e), implying that their answer for (3b) is indeed “yes”. In (3h), the seller takes on a performative role by suggesting a specific time to meet to trade the item. While the suggestion may appear to simply ask, “Does 8 pm work for you?” it carries a deeper implication, conveying “if 8 pm works for you, I will meet you at 8 pm,” thus highlighting the performativity inherent in this usage. Additionally, in (3i), the prospective buyer accepts the seller’s

proposed meeting time and further seeks confirmation of the place. The seller's affirmative response in (3j) solidifies the agreement. To summarize, '-(u)lkka' in (3b) and (3i) serves as a means for seeking yes/no confirmations on the price and time, and either a "yes" or "no" response is expected. In contrast, the '-(u)lkka' usage in (3h) involves a performative suggestion, where the seller proposes a time and implies performativity in the interaction.

Example (4) presents another authentic chat conversation between a native speaker of Korean as the seller (S) and an advanced learner of Korean as the prospective buyer (B). In this example, the first step in the information sharing process is not observed²⁾. The second step in the negotiation ranges from (4b) to (4o); they negotiate the price from (4b) to (4e) and the meeting time from (4f) to (4o). The third step of purchase completion spans from (4o) to (4p).

(4) Authentic chat example

B: a. *anneyngha-si-eyo acik chayk iss-ulkka-yo*

Well being-SH-POL still book be-confirmation-POL

'Hello? Is the book still available?'

b. *ce ttalo phanmayha-si-nun tokhey2000 chayk-to kwansim-i iss-nuntey*

I separately sell-SF-INF reading 2000 book-also interest-NM have-INF

twu kay tongsiey kwumayha-myeon cokum te celyemhajey

two counter simultaneously buy-if a little more cheaply

pahnmayhay cwu-si-lsuissna-yo

sell give-SH-possible-POL

²⁾ When dealing with relatively expensive items such as electronic devices, (e.g., smartphones) or hobby-related products (e.g., bikes), prospective buyers tend to engage in the first step of the information sharing process. This is because these potential buyers seek to meticulously assess the conditions of high-value commodities. Conversely, when dealing with items of lower cost, such as books or microwaves, items are often offered on a first-come-first-served basis, prompting prospective buyers to bypass the information-sharing phase and initiate negotiations directly. As a result, the first step in the information sharing process is not observed in Examples 3 (microwave) and 4 (book).

'I'm also interested in the book *Reading 2000*, which you posted separately. If I buy both of them, would you consider reducing the price a little?'

S: c. *anneyngha-si-eyo*

Well belong-SH-POL

'Hello?'

d. *kulem 3 man-wen-kkaci-nun kwaynchanh-ul kes kath-supni-ta*
 well 3 10,000-won-up to- TC fine-INF thing might-DEF-DC
 'I'd be okay with 30,000 won.'

B: e. *he kamskha-pni-ta*

Huh appreciate-DEF-DC

'Huh, Thank you.'

f. *makoknalwu-kkaci ka-lswu-iss-ul ke kath-untey encey-ka*
 Magoknaru-to go-might-be-IF thing seem-INF when-NM
phyenhan-si-lkka-yo
 convenient-SH-confirmation-POL

'I'll go to Magoknaru. What time would be convenient for you?'

S: g. *a kule-si-kwum-yo kulem swuyoil 11-si kanychan-usi-nka-yo*

A as such-SH-IF-POL then Wednesday 11-o'clock fine-SH-INF-POL

'A, I got it. Is Wednesday at 11 fine with you?'

B: h. *ney kanychan-supni-da*

Yes fine-DEF-DC

'Yes, it is. It's fine with me.'

cennal-ey phenha-si-n which ponaycwu-si-myeon keki-lo
 the day before-on convenient-SF-INF oclation send-SH-if there-to
ka-keyss-sulni-ta
 go-will-DEF-DC

'If you send me a location, I'll go there.'

S: i. *3.1cel-i-n kes-ul kkamppakha-yss-sumpni-ta*

3.1seasonal division-copular-INF thing-AC forgetful-PST-DEF-DC

'I forgot it's Independence Movement Day.'

j. *hwayoil-un ocen 9si-na cenek 7si-myen kanungha-l*

2. Tuesday-TC in the morning 9 o'clock-or in the evening 7o'clock-if possible-INF

3. *kes kath-supni-ta*

4. thing might-DEF-DC

'On Tuesday, I would be available at 9 am or 7 pm.'

B: k. *ney camsi-man-yo sukheycwul cheykuha-ypo-ko malssumtuli-lkey-yo*

Yes moment-only-POL schedule check-INF-and tell-will-POL

'After checking my schedule, I'll tell you.'

hokis achin 9si pan-un com nucu-si-lkka-yo

by any chance 9o'clock-TC a little late-SH-suggestion-POL

'By any chance, is 9:30 too late for you?'

S: l. *9si ihwu-nun elyewu-l ges kathu-supni-ta*

9o'clock after-TC difficult-INF thing might-DEF-DC

I'm not available after 9.'

B: m. *kulemyen hwayoil cenyek 7si-ey pwutahaktuleto toy-lkka-yo*

then Tuesday evening 7o'clock-at ask able-suggestion-POL

'Could Tuesday at 7 work for you?'

S: n. *coh-supni-ta hwayil ceyek-ey poyp-geyss-supni-ta*

Good-DEF-DC Tuesday evening see-will-DEF-DC

'That's good. See you on Tuesday at 7 pm.'

B: o. *al-keyss-supni-ta makoknalwu-lo ka-keyss-supni-ta*

Know-will-DEF-DC Magoknaru-to go-will-DEF-DC

'I got it. I'll go to Magoknaru.'

S: p. *pyhenanha-n pam ponay-si-eyo*

restful-INF night have-SH-POL

'Have a restful night.'

Note. PST: past tense suffix

In Example (4), there are four instances of *'-(u)lkka'*: (4a), (4f), (4k), and (4m). All of these instances involve the advanced learner of Korean as the prospective buyer. In (4a), the prospective buyer seeks the seller's confirmation that the book is still available, with the response expected to be either “yes” or “no”. However, the seller does not answer the question directly; instead, the seller reduces the price, implying that the book has not sold out. Similarly, in (f), the prospective buyer seeks the seller's confirmation on the meeting time. While 2(a) expects either a yes or a no response, 4(f) with the use of the *wh*-word expects new information from the seller and seeks the seller's confirmation of that new information. On the other hand, 4(k) seems to suggest an alternative meeting time, conveying the prospective buyer's performativity. However, the prospective buyer's suggestion is refused and, in 4(m), they convey performativity again by suggesting another alternative meeting time.

5.

6. 4. Results and Discussion

The findings from the analysis of chat interactions in the context of buying and selling items revealed a structured process that can be divided into three distinct steps: information sharing, negotiation, and purchase completion.

Of the 20 collected chat interactions, three transactions involved electronic devices (AirPods, an iPhone, and a MacBook), items that are considered relatively expensive. In these instances, the initial stage of information sharing was consistently observed. Prospective buyers displayed a cautious approach, seeking detailed information about the product's condition before proceeding with the negotiation phase. This behavior aligns with the perceived significance of high-value commodities, where buyers prioritize understanding the product's quality and suitability before engaging in the negotiation process.

In contrast, the remaining 17 chat interactions revolved around items of lower cost (e.g., books and inexpensive household appliances such as microwaves), and the prospective buyers demonstrated a different approach

by generally bypassing the initial stage of information sharing. Instead, the prospective buyers directly initiated negotiations, skipping the step of seeking detailed information about the product beforehand. This expedited approach indicates that, for lower-cost items, buyers tend to prioritize quick transactions over in-depth information gathering.

'(-u)lkka' was observed in the first two stages of information sharing and negotiation. In these chats, it had two distinct functions: confirmation and suggestion. Confirmation could be further subdivided into two types: yes/no confirmation and *wh*-confirmation. In instances of yes/no confirmation, the speakers sought confirmation from their interlocutors with a simple yes or no response. Although syntactically either a yes or a no is expected in the following response, the authentic chat examples show that the interlocutors tended to shift topics rather than confirming with a direct answer. However, these topic shifts implied a yes response. On the other hand, in cases of *wh*-confirmation, the speakers asked their interlocutors for new information and required confirmation of that new information.

The performative suggestions appeared to suggest something, such as a meeting time or place, but they also expressed the speakers' performativity. As shared information accumulated, the speakers became more certain of their interlocutors' intentions, and they revealed their performativity using the form of a suggestion.

Yes/no confirmation and *wh*-confirmation are easily differentiated by their syntactic structures. However, yes/no confirmation and performative suggestions cannot be differentiated syntactically. To differentiate between yes/no confirmation and performative suggestions, context is needed. For example, (3i) falls into the category of yes/no confirmation, while 4(m) represents a performative suggestion. Without appropriate context, it is not clear whether instances such as (3i) and (4m) require a simple yes or no confirmation from the interlocutors or if they express the speaker's performativity.

The authentic chat data in this study also revealed that, within one chat conversation, there were multiple uses of '(-u)lkka'. Additionally, the

functions of *'-(u)lkka'* within the same chat conversation were not fixed but were context-dependent. For example, in Example 3, the prospective buyer used *'-(u)lkka'* as a means of yes/no confirmation, while the seller used it as a performative suggestion. On the other hand, in Example (4), the seller did not use *'-(u)lkka'*, but the prospective buyer used it four times with three different functions: yes/no confirmation, *wh*-confirmation, and performative suggestion.

Lee (2017) and Lee (2019) have outlined the pragmatic functions of *'-(u)lkka'*. However, these studies do not address how these pragmatic functions work in real-life contexts. In contrast, our study examines authentic chat conversations to observe how pragmatic functions adapt and change according to different contexts. The advanced learners of Korean in our study engaged in dynamic interactions, and they appropriately adjusted their pragmatic functions based on the changing context.

Interestingly, the information on pragmatic functions and principles obtained from textbooks does not fully align with what we observed in the authentic chat conversations. The knowledge of authenticity appears to be acquired as a result of real-world practice and interactions with native speakers. In our study, the 20 participants had an average of three years and six months of living experience in the Republic of Korea. Their exposure to Korean society and regular interactions with native speakers have undoubtedly contributed to the development of their authentic language skills.

5. Conclusion

This study analyzed authentic chat conversations between native speakers of Korean and advanced learners of Korean in the context of buying and selling items. Through this analysis, we identified a structured process involving information sharing, negotiation, and purchase completion. The linguistic form *'-(u)lkka'* was observed in the information sharing and negotiation stages, serving three distinct functions: 1) yes/no confirmation,

2) *wh*-confirmation, and 3) performative suggestion. While yes/no confirmation and *wh*-confirmation were easily differentiated by their syntactic structures, differentiation between yes/no confirmation and performative suggestions relied heavily on context.

The findings of this study highlighted the adaptability of pragmatic functions in authentic chat conversations, where the role of ‘-(u)lkka’ could shift based on specific circumstances within the same chat conversation. We observed multiple uses of ‘-(u)lkka’, and its functions were context-dependent rather than fixed, indicating that its pragmatic application is dynamic and versatile.

This dynamic use of the pragmatic functions of ‘-(u)lkka’ is not fully captured in existing textbook examples, indicating that the authenticity of the advanced Korean learners who participated in this study was acquired through real-world practice and interactions with native speakers. The advanced learners of Korean in our study demonstrated an ability to engage in dynamic interactions and appropriately adjust their pragmatic functions according to the changing context.

In this research, we embarked on an exploration of the evolving landscape of the Korean language, focusing on its adaptation to emerging digital platforms and the expanding role of language agents. Conventional spoken and written expressions are undergoing a profound transformation, particularly on mobile platforms. Simultaneously, the profile of language agents has shifted from primarily native speakers to a more inclusive representation that encompasses language learners.

The emergence of these novel platforms has empowered language learners with a distinct agency, enabling them to actively participate in communication as language agents on par with native speakers. They are no longer confined by the need to await the completion, collection, and processing of examples from native speakers' conversations. Furthermore, their language usage is increasingly influencing the evolution of the language itself, marking a notable departure from the traditional passive role of language learners.

While the primary emphasis of this study centers on the evolving landscape of the Korean language concerning human language agents, it is essential to recognize that AI also plays a significant role as a language agent in contemporary communication. AI-driven language technologies, including chatbots, language translation services, and virtual assistants, are progressively becoming an integral part of language interactions in the digital age. Investigating AI as a language agent provides a promising avenue for future research, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of its influence on language dynamics and its reciprocal relationship with human language users. The exploration of how AI seamlessly integrates with and shapes the evolving language ecology will provide valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of language in the digital era.

Within the context of the evolving language landscape, it has become apparent that language agents have grown increasingly diverse, encompassing not just native speakers and language learners but also AI and other entities. This diversification reflects a significant shift in the dynamics of language interactions, leading to intricate and multifaceted exchanges among these various language agents. Native speakers, language learners, and AI systems each contribute distinct attributes to the language ecology, thereby shaping and influencing language usage. A thorough understanding of the intricate interplay among these diverse language agents is imperative to gain insights into the intricate mosaic of contemporary digital communication. Future studies are encouraged to investigate further the nuanced interactions and collaborative efforts among these agents, further illuminating the ever-evolving landscape of language in the digital age.

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The Evolving Language Landscape: Advanced Korean Learners' Use Of ‘-(u)lkka’ In Chat Conversations and Its Impact on Artificial Intelligence

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This study explores how advanced learners of Korean shape the language landscape by investigating the use of ‘-(u)lkka’ in chat conversations. The study found that advanced learners of Korean use ‘-(u)lkka’ for three different types of confirmation or suggestion on mobile platforms: 1) yes/no confirmation of previously shared information; 2) *wh*-confirmation, confirming new information and the interlocutor's intentions; and 3) performative suggestions, proposing ideas for buying or selling items, confirming the interlocutor's intentions on the surface level, while implying the speakers' performativity on a deeper level. Interestingly, when multiple instances of ‘-(u)lkka’ occur in a single chat conversation, different confirmation strategies are employed, indicating contextual adaptation rather than a fixed approach. These findings reveal the dynamic transformation of the Korean language landscape, focusing on its adaptation to digital platforms and the evolving roles of language agents. Notably, conventional linguistic expressions are shifting towards mobile platforms, expanding the spectrum of language agents to include both language learners and native speakers. This shift empowers learners, enabling them to assume an active role as language agents, no longer dependent solely on native speakers. The study also recognizes the growing significance of artificial intelligence (AI) in contemporary language communication. The findings can contribute to enhancing AI systems and fostering more sophisticated human–AI interactions.

Keywords: mobile chat, pragmatic function, authenticity, Korean advanced learner, language landscape

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