A GRAMMAR OF COM ‘A LITTLE’

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation will offer a synchronic and diachronic analysis of *com* from a grammaticalization perspective to show the evolution of *com* as a discourse marker. The word *com* started as a contracted form of the adverb of degree *cokum* ‘a little or a few’ and gradually has moved toward greater (inter)subjectivity, expanding its semantic and pragmatic functions and undergoing reanalysis of grammatical categories as well as phonological change. First, *com* has undergone pragmatic changes and seems to have passed the boundaries of the mitigating device. Analyzing my discourse data, I identified three general categories according to *com*’s function: (1) to reduce illocutionary force, (2) as a filler, and (3) to increase illocutionary force. Second, the semantics of *com* have shifted from ‘a little’, to ‘minimal’ and to meaning a new, ironic ‘a lot’ by the mechanism of how a contronym evolves. Third, *com* has undergone structural change. The origin of *com* can be traced back to the nominalized construction *cyekom* ‘being a little amount’ and it became the noun *cokum* by lexicalization. *Cokum* as a noun branches into three forms: it remains as a noun with the same phonological form, decategorizes into an adverb *cokum*, and undergoes phonological attrition to one syllable *com* as a noun, an allomorph of *cokum*. *Com* as a noun branches into three: it remains *com* as a noun, and it decategorizes into *com* as an adverb and *com* as an adnoun or prefix. *Com* as an adverb decategorizes into a delimiter. *Com* within the category of delimiter shows subjective gradience, and it can be used as two different types of delimiter: constituent delimiters and sentential (discoursal) delimiters. *Com* as a delimiter continues to develop and decategorizes into a discourse marker. Fourth, *com* has undergone phonological change as well. Two syllable *cokum* becomes one syllable *com*, losing the consonant /k/ and the
vowel /u/. As *com* has expanded its function into the category of discourse marker, the form is still undergoing other phonetic changes. There exist several forms of *com* in colloquial speech and casual writing, such as *cem, ccem, chom, chyom, ccom, cwum,* and *cum.*
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations from Sohn (1999) except for INJ (made by myself) are used to label the linguistic terms employed in this dissertation.

AC  Accusative particle
AD  Adverbial suffix; adverbializer
ADM  Admonitive (warning)
AH  Addressee honorific
APP  Apperceptive sentence-type suffix
BLN  Blunt speech level or suffix
CAS  Causative suffix
CL  Numeral classifier (counter)
CMP  Complementizer suffix
CNJ  Conjunctive suffix
DC  Declarative sentence-type suffix
DEF  Deferential speech level
DR  Directional particle
EM  Emphasizer
ENDER  Sentence/clause ender
EX  Exclamatory suffix
FML  Familiar speech level or suffix
GN  Genitive particle
hon.  Honorific word
HT  Honorific title
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IM</td>
<td>Imperative sentence-type suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IN</td>
<td>Indicative mood suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INF</td>
<td>Infinitive suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INJ</td>
<td>Interjection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INT</td>
<td>Intimate speech level or suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NM</td>
<td>Nominative case particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOM</td>
<td>Nominalizer suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAS</td>
<td>Passive suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Plural suffix or particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLN</td>
<td>Plain speech level or suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POL</td>
<td>Polite speech level, suffix, or particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR</td>
<td>Propositive sentence-type suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRM</td>
<td>Promissive sentence-type suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRS</td>
<td>Prospective modal suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PST</td>
<td>Past tense and perfect aspect suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Question marker, i.e., interrogative sentence-type suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QT</td>
<td>Quotative particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RL</td>
<td>Relativizer (or abnominal modifier) suffix</td>
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<td>RQ</td>
<td>Requestive mood suffix</td>
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<tr>
<td>RT</td>
<td>Retrospective mood suffix</td>
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<tr>
<td>SH</td>
<td>Subject honorific suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUP</td>
<td>Suppositive mood suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TC</td>
<td>Topic-contrast particle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TR</td>
<td>Transferentive suffix</td>
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<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>VOC</td>
<td>Vocative particle</td>
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</table>
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The Korean word *com* is usually characterized as a contracted form of an adverb of degree *cokum*, which means ‘a little’ or ‘a few’ in English. However, *com* is often used as a discourse marker that cannot be interchanged with *cokum* in many contexts. Due to its propositional meaning of ‘a little’, the discourse marker *com* is widely defined as a politeness marker with a hedging function to mitigate face threatening acts (FTAs). However, in the real world, *com*’s function does not seem to be limited to mitigation as a politeness marker, because *com* is often used when there is no potential FTA, or when there is no evidence that speakers intend to mitigate an FTA at all. It is often used when the speaker tries to sound aggressive toward the addressee. It seems that the function of *com* as a discourse marker has expanded beyond what linguists have observed.

Moreover, there is inconsistency in how dictionaries label *com*’s structural category. For example, the *Standard Korean Language Dictionary* (2008) published by the National Institute of the Korean Language classifies *com* as an adverb, but *A Reference Grammar of Korean* by Samuel Martin (1992) defines *com* as a member of other categories such as noun, adnoun, and adverb. The *Sisa Elite Korean Dictionary* (2006) and *Minjung Essence Korean-English Dictionary* (2000) label *com* a prefix. In addition, I frequently observe diverse forms of *com* such as *ccom*, *chom*, *cem*, *ccem*, *cwum*, *cum*, and so forth, in spoken discourse or informal writings of native speakers of Korean.

The short word *com* thus seems to raise many questions, and a number of researchers have been interested in it and have tried to shed light on it. First, there are studies from the approach of pragmatics. Son (1998) lists three pragmatic functions of
*com*: politeness, emphasis, and negation. He argues that these three have a common purpose, which is to be considerate of the listener’s feelings. The difference in these three functions is in their distributions. The politeness function appears in command and request sentences. The emphasis function is used in all sentence types, including commands, requests, statements, and questions. The negation function is only used for answering the question *Eettayyo? ‘How is it? ’* Kim (1997) defines *com* as an indirect request marker, used with benefactive verbs or as a hedge with other verbs. Kwu (1998) argues that the function of *com* as a pragmatic marker is to weaken the importance of the speaker’s utterance. Cwu (2000a, 2000b, 2004) suggests that the functions of *com* can be separated into speaker’s *com* and listener’s *com*. Speaker’s *com* expresses speakers’ attitudes such as feeling sorry for the listener, politeness, hesitation, denial, or negation. Listener’s *com* has the connotation that the situation is shared and understood by both the speaker and the listener. Mok (2001) argues that *com* is undergoing a process of grammaticalization and has two new functions. First, *com* indicates that an element that is being talked about is emerging for the first time in the conversation. Second, *com* indicates that the speaker is imposing upon the listener. Se (2006) takes a pedagogical point of view in categorizing the pragmatic functions of *com*. She argues that *com* is used in requests, blame, exclamation, suggestions, explanations, offers, and teasing. Yu (2008) listed four pragmatic functions of *com*: to hedge on a request or offer, to highlight an utterance, to mitigate an utterance, and to hesitate before or avoid making an utterance. Kim (2009) claims that *com* in discourse functions as a politeness marker indicating the speaker’s hesitance, and also can express the speaker’s negative feeling.
toward the listener. An (2009) observes four functions of *com*: to speak politely, to emphasize an opinion, to mitigate an opinion, and to speak ambiguously.

Several studies take a syntactic and/or semantic perspective. Bang (1992) categorizes *com* as a degree adverb and analyzes the meaning of *com* in terms of features of [degree], [weakening], and [politeness]. He observes certain constraints on *com*: it can be used with delimiters *un* ‘as for’ and *man* ‘only’, and it cannot be modified by other degree adverbs, but it can be modified by time adverbs *mence* ‘first of all, above all’, *mili* ‘beforehand’, and *iccy* ‘now’. Im (1995) argues that *com* is a degree adverb but has evolved into a non-degree adverb as well, and that it carries the meaning of politeness. Lee (1998) claims that the traditional categorization of *com* as a degree adverb is problematic. He argues that while degree adverbs can modify only state predicates, *com* can modify action predicates as well as state predicates. In terms of the semantics of *com*, he explains that it has the meaning of request or it makes a question rhetorical. Lee (2004) argues that *com* is a degree adverb functioning like a particle, and that it is hard to tell whether it is used as a degree adverb or as a particle in any given case and that whether it is a degree adverb or a particle is an open question. Kim (2006) claims that if an element being modified by *com* in an utterance has the feature [+degree], *com* reduces the degree, whereas if the element being modified is [-degree], *com* mitigates the illocutionary force of the utterance.

The previous research that has been conducted to investigate the function or use of *com* has included many studies that have claimed to adopt various approaches, but such research often turns out to focus on semantic or pragmatic features. That is to say, the studies generally try to explain when *com* is used. Moreover, the analyses are
generally based on data generated by the researchers themselves, and they do not seem to cover all of com’s existing semantic and pragmatic features. Moreover, the lack of research that includes structural and phonological investigation, and of research from the perspective of grammaticalization, leaves much room for further study. Such limitations of previous research motivated this dissertation’s comprehensive study that investigates com from, I seek to provide a comprehensive study that investigates com from syntactic, semantic, pragmatic, phonological, and evolutionary perspectives in this dissertation.

In the remainder of this chapter, I explain the study’s framework, grammaticalization. In Chapter 2, I take a syntactic view of com. I show the syntactic categories that com belongs to, and I give syntactic and morphosyntactic evidence. As com has been grammaticalized from noun to adnoun and prefix and then to adverb and delimiter, all the categories coexist in contemporary Korean. In Chapter 3, I take a semantic view. I show with non-subjective semantics how com has gained new meaning through subjectification and intersubjectification, and I explain how the core meaning of com ‘a little’ has developed in two directions, with both a deepening of the meaning of minimality and a new, contrary meaning. In Chapter 4, I examine how com is used at the discourse level to in order to better understand the current pragmatics of com. In Chapter 5, I talk about the phonology of com. I explain the phonological change that com has been undergoing from phonological erosion, leading to the development of new allomorphs. In Chapter 6, I offer a diachronic analysis of com using the frame of grammaticalization to show the evolution of com as a discourse marker.
1.1 Theoretical framework: Grammaticalization

As the theoretical framework for this study, I adopt the framework of grammaticalization. The French linguist Antoine Meillet (1912) first used the term “grammaticalization” to describe “the attribution of a grammatical character to an erstwhile autonomous word” (p. 131). Jerzy Kurylowicz (1965) explains that grammaticalization “consists in the increase of the range of a morpheme advancing from a lexical to a grammatical or from a less grammatical to a more grammatical status” (p. 52). Traugott and Heine (1991) define grammaticalization as “the linguistic process, both through time and synchronically, of organization of categories and of coding” (p. 1). Heine and Kuteva (2002) state that “grammaticalization is defined as the development from lexical to grammatical forms and from grammatical to even more grammatical forms” (p. 2). Hopper and Traugott (2003) define grammaticalization as “the change whereby lexical items and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions and, once grammaticalized, continue to develop new grammatical functions” (p. xv).

1.1.1 Reanalysis and analogy

There are two major mechanisms of language change: reanalysis (rule change) and analogy (rule generalization). Of the two, reanalysis is the more important. Langacker (1977) defines reanalysis as “change in the structure of an expression or class of expressions that does not involve any immediate or intrinsic modification of its surface manifestation” (p. 58). Since Langacker proposed the idea, reanalysis has become widely accepted as a shift from one parametric setting to another. Hopper and Traugott (1993) argue that reanalysis “modifies underlying representations, whether semantic, syntactic,
or morphological, and brings about rule change” (p. 32). On the other hand, they explain that analogy “modifies surface manifestations and in itself does not effect rule change, although it does effect rule spread either within the linguistic system itself or within the community” (p. 32). Reanalysis is the covert and linear development of new structures out of old ones, and it is not directly observable, whereas analogy is an overt attraction of extant forms to already existent constructions and it makes the unobservable reanalysis observable. The interaction of these two processes becomes the major mechanism of grammaticalization.

1.1.2 Pragmatic inferencing

Reanalysis and analogy are the two most important mechanisms of grammaticalization, but what are the motivations that enable these mechanisms? Hopper and Traugott (1993) attribute them to pragmatic inferencing, which is a conventionalized conversational implicature. Two different types of process underlying pragmatic inferences are metaphor and metonym. The metaphoric process is motivated by analogy, and it can be arranged as follows:

Person > Object > Space > Time > Process > Quality

Heine et al. (1991, p. 157)

This arrangement is unidirectional and the process is toward metaphorical abstractness. For example, *behind* is a spatial term metaphorically originating from a body part term.

The second kind of process underlying pragmatic inferencing is the metonymic process. For example, in the development of the future meaning of *be going to* with *go* as an auxiliary, the contiguity with *to* must have been a major factor, not the metaphoric
meaning of go with its spatial properties (Hopper & Traugott, 1993). Anttila (1989) suggests that metaphor occurs through a similarity of sense perceptions while metonymy occurs through contiguity and indexicality. Hopper and Traugott (1993) suggest that “metaphor operates across conceptual domains, while metonymy operates across interdependent (morpho)syntactic constituents” (p. 82). However, Goossens (1989) argues that “although metonymy and metaphor are clearly distinct in principle, they are not always separable in practice” (p. 19). These two processes at the pragmatic level work together and enable the dual mechanisms of reanalysis and analogy, which motivate grammaticalization.

1.1.3 Unidirectionality
Grammaticalization is a process of semantic shift and grammatical restructuring, and optionally a phonological change. These three kinds of changes correlate and evolve gradually along a path that follows the same direction across languages, and they do not occur in the reverse direction. About this irreversibility, Givón (1971) made the famous comment: “Today’s morphology is yesterday’s syntax” (p. 413). The pathway is called a “grammaticalization chain” by Heine, Claudi, and Hünnefeld (1991, p. 222) or a cline of unidirectionality, that is “a pathway that channels change through a limited number of structures that are minimally different from one another” by Traugott and Heine (1991, p. 4). Grammaticalization is “a unidirectional process; that is, it leads from less grammatical to more grammatical forms and constructions” (Heine & Kuteva, 2002, p. 4).

First, semantic unidirectionality is the process of grammaticalization that moves toward increasing abstractness. Traugott (1982) proposes three functional-semantic
components in a linguistic system: the propositional, the textual, and the expressive. The propositional component consists of “the resources of the language for making it possible to talk about something” (p. 248). The textual component is related to “the resources available for creating a cohesive discourse” (p. 248) including connectives, anaphoric and cataphoric pronouns, and so forth. The expressive component covers “the resources a language has for expressing personal attitudes to what is being talked about, to the text itself, and to others in the speech situation” (p. 248). Traugott (1982) suggests the following cline of these three components, moving from more concrete to more abstract: propositional > textual > expressive. The propositional item acquires textual (cohesion-making) and/or expressive (modal and other pragmatic) meanings. Syntactic freedom and scope increase as an element develops toward the right side of the cline. For example, the discourse marker right as in You’ll do it tomorrow, right? evolved from a propositional item to gain interpersonal meaning at the expressive level (Traugott, 1982). Later, Traugott (1995) provides a more specific cline for the development of discourse markers: “clause-internal adverbial > sentence adverbial > discourse particle (of which discourse markers are a subtype)” (p. 1).

Second, unidirectional grammatical restructuring proceeds along the following path: discourse > syntax > morphology > morphophonemics > zero (Givón, 1979, p. 209). Givón (1979) explains that discourse structures develop into grammaticalized syntactic structures over time. The syntactic structure erodes by the processes of morphologization and lexicalization and eventually disappears.

Last, the unidirectional phonological cline tends to move toward reduction. Heine (1993) explains that “once a lexeme is conventionalized as a grammatical marker, it tends
to undergo erosion; that is, its phonological substance is likely to be reduced in some way and to become more dependent on surrounding phonetic material” (p. 106). \textit{Going to > gonna} and \textit{because > coz} are examples in English. Generally, grammatical forms are shorter than lexical ones across languages (Heine, 1993). However, phonological reduction is not a necessary property of grammaticalization (Lessau, 1994).

1.1.4 \textbf{Conditions licensing grammaticalization}

How do we know when grammaticalization takes place? Sohn (1999) summarizes four major prerequisite conditions for grammaticalization to occur across languages.

\begin{itemize}
  \item[a.] Semantic suitability
  \item[b.] Typological salience
  \item[c.] Syntagmatic contiguity
  \item[d.] Frequency of use
\end{itemize}

First, semantic suitability is the most important condition. Traugott and Heine (1991) argue that “there is only a restricted set of lexical fields, and within them only a restricted set of lexical items, that are likely to be sources” (p. 8). The source concepts that enter into grammaticalization processes refer to “concrete objects, processes or locations” (Heine et al., 1991, p. 151), especially the most elementary human experiences like physical state, behavior, or immediate environment. For instance, a concrete object like the body part \textit{back} becomes a source concept for space in \textit{three miles back}, and again for time in \textit{three years back} (Heine et al., 1991).

Second, typological salience in the language becomes a condition for grammaticalization. Sohn (1999) points out that while a postposition-to-nominal case
cline or a verb-to-honorific suffix cline in Korean is well-established, such a channel is unlikely to take place in isolating languages such as Chinese.

Third, in order for two or more forms to merge and form a grammatical element, these forms must be contiguous. Unless two forms are not syntagmatically adjacent, morphosyntactic reduction cannot take place.

Last, the form has to be used frequently in order to be grammaticalized. Hopper and Traugott (1993) argue that “the more frequently a form occurs in texts, the more grammatical it is assumed to be. Frequency demonstrates a kind of generalization in use patterns” (p. 103).

1.1.5 Principles of grammaticalization

When grammaticalization begins to take place, but the form or construction has not become obligatory or fixed, how can we identify whether the process is occurring? Hopper (1991, p. 22) proposes five principles that underlie the emergence of grammatical forms at the incipient stages:

a. Layering: New layers are continually emerging. When this happens, the older layers remain to coexist and interact with the new layers. For example, English future tense and aspect will, be going to, be + -ing, and be about to coexist in the same layer.

b. Divergence or split: When a lexical form undergoes grammaticalization, for example to an auxiliary, clitic, or affix, the original lexical form may remain as an autonomous element. And it may undergo the same changes as any other lexical
items. French negative particle *pas* ‘not’ versus its source noun *pas* ‘pace, step’ is a good example.

c. Specialization: This refers to “the narrowing of choices that characterizes an emergent grammatical construction” (Hopper, 1991, p. 25). For example, out of all the competing forms in Old French, only *pas* became a general negator.

d. Persistence: “When a grammaticalized meaning B develops this does not necessarily mean that the earlier meaning A is lost” (Heine et al., 1991, p. 20); rather, B is likely to reflect the details of the lexical history of A in constraints on the grammatical distribution.

e. De-categorization: Forms undergoing grammaticalization tend to lose their original morphological or syntactic categories. For example, when verbs grammaticalize to affixes, they are not able to assign theta roles to arguments and to be inflected for tense, aspect, and mood (Sohn, 1999).

1.1.6 Subjectivity and intersubjectivity

Traugott and Dasher (2002) suggest that “there are predictable paths for semantic change across different conceptual structures and domains of language function” (p. 1). These regularities are closely related with the cognitive and communicative processes of subjectification and intersubjectification.

Benveniste (1971) defines “subjectivity” as “the capacity of the speaker to posit himself a ‘subject’” (p. 224). He argues that “subjectivity makes language possible and, simultaneously, that language makes subjectivity possible” because “language is possible only because each speaker sets himself up as a subject by referring to himself as I in his
discourse” (p. 225), and “it is in and through language that man constitutes himself as a subject, because language alone establishes the concept of ‘ego’ in reality” (p. 224). The establishment of “subjectivity” in language has varied effects on “the very structure of languages, whether it be in the arrangement of the forms or in semantic relationships” (p. 227).

Lyon (1982) characterizes subjectivity as “the way in which natural languages, in their structure and their normal manner of operation, provide for the locutionary agent’s expression of himself and of his attitudes and beliefs” (p. 102). He made a distinction between subjective utterances and objective utterances, which are a set of communicable propositions. It was Traugott (1989) who linked Lyon’s concept of subjectivity with grammaticalization from a diachronic perspective, defining subjectification as “the historical pragmatic-semantic process whereby meanings become increasingly based in the speaker’s subjective belief state, or attitude toward what is said” (p. 31). Langacker’s (1985) analysis of subjectivity takes a synchronic perspective within the framework of cognitive grammar. He argues that “subjectivity/objectivity is a matter of vantage point and role in a viewing relationship” (Langacker, 2000, p. 297). He explains that “when I direct my gaze at an external object, I construe it objectively (as the object or target of visual perception), whereas I construe myself subjectively (I do the perceiving but am not myself perceived)” (p. 378). For Langacker, “subjectivity pertains to the observer role in viewing situations where the observer/observed asymmetry is maximized” (1985, p. 107). Maximal subjectivity attaches to “an implicit, ‘offstage’ viewing presence” (2000, p. 378), whereas maximal objectivity attaches to “an explicitly mentioned focus of attention ‘onstage’” (2000, p. 378). The four sentences that follow demonstrate this range.
According to Langacker, (a) is maximally objective because it makes the most minimal reference to the conceptualizer (or speaker) in the description of the movement of the subject referent Vanessa. (b) is more subjective because it includes a conceptualized path from Veronica to Vanessa as part of the conceptualizer’s construal of the scene, even though there is no actual motion in the description. (c) is yet more subjective because the conceptualizer is herself included in the description across from me. And (d) is the most subjective because it presupposes the conceptualizer as the point of reference without actually coding her.

The notion of subjectification that Traugott and Dasher (2002) put forth is related to Langacker’s, but the latter is more focused on semantic analysis while the former is more focused on semantic change. Traugott and Dasher (2002) emphasize the speaker’s role in the semantic or pragmatic change of a lexical item or a linguistic structure through time. Such diachronic subjectification shows unidirectionality: the meaning of a linguistic item is much more likely to develop from more objective to more subjective.

Intersubjectivity is not a separate mechanism but an extension of subjectification. Benveniste (1971) argues that language is not only inherently subjective, but is also intersubjective. He states that “every utterance assum[es] a speaker and a hearer, and in the speaker, the intention of influencing the other in some way” (p. 209). For him, the
process of communication is “only a mere pragmatic consequence” (p. 225) between I and you. Traugott and Dasher (2002) argue that “intersubjectivity is most usefully thought of in parallel with subjectivity: as the explicit, coded expression of speaker/writer’s attention to the image of ‘self’ of addressee/reader in a social or an epistemic sense, for example in honorification” (p. 22).

As for semantic change, Traugott and Dasher (2002) provide a path of directionality: “nonsubjective > subjective > intersubjective” (p. 40). Accommodating other relevant meaning shifts to this cline, Guesquiè re (2010) provides the following model of semantic change:

externally propositional objective > internally propositional subjective > textual > expressive subjective and intersubjective

non-bleached

bleached

(Guesqui è re, 2010, p. 309)

Guesquiè re’s model shows that externally propositional objective meaning precedes internally propositional subjective meaning, which precedes textual meaning, which precedes expressive meaning. Both textual and expressive meanings can be both subjective and intersubjective in meaning. The cline also indicates a semantic generalization in that the elements to the rightward are semantically more general than those to the leftward.

To be elaborated in Chapter 3 and 4, the notion of subjectivity and intersubjectivity plays an important role in the analysis of the semantics and pragmatics of *com*. *Com* was first used as an objective term meaning ‘a little’ but with the increase of
speaker’s involvement, it developed its subjective meaning ‘a lot’, and it is now also employed in hedges or as an intensifier in speaker-hearer relations.

1.1.7 Gradience and gradualness

As grammaticalization is “generally regarded as a gradual diachronic process, it is expected that the resulting function words form a gradient from full content words to clear function words” (Haspelmath, 2001, p. 16539). As Haspelmath implies, gradience and gradualness are important aspects of grammaticalization.

Gradience refers to “areas of language where there are no clear boundaries between sets of analytic categories” (Crystal, 1991, p. 157). Aarts (2007) suggests two types of gradience: subsective gradience and intersective gradience. First, subsective gradience is intracategorial, that is, within a category. An example is gradience within a single class of verbs, from main verb (hope to) to catenative (seem to), semi-auxiliary (have to), modal idioms (had better), marginal modals (dare), and central modals (can) (Traugott & Trousdale, 2010). Second, intersective gradience is intercategorial, that is, between categories. An example is the distinction between adverbs and adjectives. Some adverbs mimic adjectives, such as now in the “now generation,” and almost in “his almost-victory” (Aarts, 2007).

Gradualness refers to “the fact that most change involves (a series of) micro-changes, an issue which is sometimes overlooked in consideration of more general patterns of language change” (Traugott & Trousdale, 2010, p. 22) and Lehmann (1982) argues that “grammaticalization is a process of gradual change” (p. 13).
Gradience is a synchronic phenomenon whereas gradualness is a diachronic one. Gradualness can be seen as a diachronic dimension of gradience because it is discrete and identifiable by small-scale changes in linguistic properties (Traugott & Trousdale, 2010).
CHAPTER 2. MORPHOSYNTACTIC DISTRIBUTION OF COM

Contemporary Korean dictionaries such as the Standard Korean Language Dictionary (2008) by the National Institute of the Korean Language, as well as many linguistic studies, agree that com is originally a contracted form of cokum and can be categorized, for the most part, as an adverb with various usages. However, some research recognizes that com also shares characteristics of other word categories. For example, A Reference Grammar of Korean by Samuel Martin (1992) labels com a noun and adnoun as well as an adverb. The Sisa Elite Korean Dictionary (2006) and Minjung Essence Korean-English Dictionary (2000) introduce com as a prefix that attaches to nouns. This diversity in descriptions of com seems to be attributable to the phenomenon of layering, in which, as new layers emerge, the old layers remain to coexist with the new layers. Com has been grammaticalized from noun to adnoun and prefix and then to adverb and delimiter, and all of the later categories coexist with the original. In this chapter, I will show the morphosyntactic evidence that com is a noun, adnoun, prefix, adverb and delimiter.

2.1 Com as a noun

Before I go into the case of com, first I would point out that cokum, the original form of com, can also be categorized as a noun. Cokum is traditionally categorized as an adverb of degree. But a number of linguists recognize it as a noun as well (Im, 1995; Martin, 1992, 2006; Sohn, 1995). In particular, Martin (1992) introduces both cokum and com as substantives. He argues that cokum and com are derived from cek- ‘be few/little’ and became substantives with the addition of a nominalizer (or the substantive mood) suffix-
um/-m. He explains that cokum and com are irregularly formed, and the regular form would be cek.um (Martin, 2006, p. 344).

Nouns occur as a nominative-marked subject or as an accusative-marked object.

Martin (2006) lists four environments where a noun occurs:

a. Before a particle (e.g., achim i wass.ta ‘morning has come’)

b. Before the copula i- as a complement (e.g., achim ita ‘it’s morning’)

c. Before a noun or noun phrase that it modifies (e.g., achim hays pich ‘morning sunlight’)

d. In absolute constructions, which may be interpreted in any appropriate role, including adverbial (e.g., achim wass.ta ‘morning has come’ (= achim i wass.ta) or ‘arrived in the morning’ (= achim ey wass.ta)

(Martin, 2006, p. 130)

Sohn (1999) also has an analysis that “nouns may follow determiners and precede particles in a sentence. They can also be modified by a preceding genitive or a relative clause” (p. 204). Im (1995) claims that cokum has these characteristics as a noun and, specifically, it falls into the category of a numeral based on several pieces of evidence. First, cokum can occur with pakkey ‘except for’, a particle that takes a noun.

(1) cokum-pakkey an mek-ess-ta.

a.little-except.for not eat-PST-DC

‘I ate only a little.’

Second, cokum can become a complement before the copula ita ‘be’, which always takes a nominal complement.
‘I know little.’

Third, *cokum* modifies the preceding nouns like other numerals (Im, 1995). Korean numerals modify the preceding nouns as seen in the following example. In Example (3b), *cokum*, like *seys* ‘three’ in (3a), also modifies the preceding noun, *haksayng* ‘students’, not the verb *tul* ‘enter’.

(3)  

a.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student-PL-NM</th>
<th>Three</th>
<th>Enter-PST-DC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>haksayng-tul-i</em></td>
<td><em>seys</em></td>
<td><em>tulew-ass-ta</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Three students came in.’

b.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student-PL-NM</th>
<th>A.few</th>
<th>Enter-PST-DC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>haksayng-tul-i</em></td>
<td><em>cokum</em></td>
<td><em>tulew-ass-ta</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘A few students came in.’

Furthermore, in Sohn’s (1999) analysis, in the classifier construction Noun + [Numeral + Counter], [Numeral + Counter] may be replaced by non-numeral quantifiers, which include *cokum* as well as *motwu* ‘all’, *ta* ‘all’, *taypupun* ‘most’, *yeles* ‘many, several’, and *ilpu* ‘part’.

(4)  


Additionally, Seo (1994) also argues that *ta*, *motwu*, and *cokum* are originally numerals that have expanded their function to become adverbs, and that is why non-numeral quantifiers can be followed by a case marker, as seen in (5).
So far, I have shown cases in which cokum, the original form of com, falls into the noun category. Although com has characteristics of a noun, among the major dictionaries only the Learner’s Dictionary of Korean (2006, p. 662) categorizes com as noun, giving the following example sentences, and not many other references or linguists recognize that com inherited the characteristics of a noun from cokum.

(5)  a. salam-tul-i pang-ey motwu(-ka) nam-a iss-ta.
    people-PL-NM room-in all(-NM) remain-INF be-DC
    ‘All the people are remaining in the room.’

    b. salam-tul-i pang-ey cokum(-i) nam-a iss-ta.
    people-PL-NM room-in a.few(-NM) remain-INF be-DC
    ‘A few people are remaining in the room.’

However, there is morphosyntactic evidence that com also has the characteristics of a noun. First, com morphologically behaves as a noun. The adjective-derived suffix sulep ‘be suggestive of, seeming’ is always attached to nouns. The following parallel shows that com as a noun can be attached to sulep.

(6)  a. com cen-ey cemsim mek-ess-eyo.
    a.little before-at lunch eat-PST-POL
    ‘I had lunch a little while ago.’

    b. com-man mek-ul-key-yo.
    a.little-only eat-PRM-PRS-POL
    ‘I will eat only a little bit.’
nungcheng-sulepta (‘dissimulation’-sulepta) ‘be shameless, unabashed, cunning’
mancok-sulepta (‘satisfaction’-sulepta) ‘be satisfactory, gratifying, acceptable’
salang-sulepta (‘love’-sulepta) ‘be lovable, adorable, endearing’
sswuk-sulepta (‘dupe’-sulepta) ‘be shy, bashful, embarrassed’
elun-sulepta (‘adult’-sulepta) ‘be mature’
calang-sulepta (‘pride’-sulepta) ‘be proud’
chon-sulepta (‘country(side)’-sulepta) ‘be countrified’
com-sulepta (‘little’-sulepta) ‘be petty, small-minded, small, insignificant’

Additionally, there is more morphological evidence that com is a noun. The
equative particle chelem ‘as, like’ always takes a nominal. The adverb comchelem ‘rarely,
seldom, hardly’ is originally a derivation of com and the particle chelem ‘as, like’.
Comchelem is one example of a negative polarity item, such as the adverb pyel-lo
‘particularly’ or the delimiter pakk-ey ‘except for’. Negative polarity items are generally
the outcome of grammaticalization. For example, pyello developed from the defective
noun pyel and the particle (u)lo. Pakkey developed from the noun pakk ‘outside’ and the
particle ey ‘at’ (Choy, 1937; Hong, 1983; Jung, 1997; Kim, 1989; Nam, 1993; Park,
1997; Sohn, 1999). In the same way, camchelem is grammaticalized from the noun com
and the particle chelem, which only attaches to nouns, such as papo ‘fool’ or saythel
‘feather’ in the following examples.

a. papo-chelem kwu-n-ta.
    fool-like behave-IN-DC
    ‘You behave like a fool.’
b. **saythel-chelem** kapyep-ta.

feather-like be.light-DC

‘It is as light as a feather.’

Since *chelem* never attaches to an adverb, a word like *manh.i-chelem* (‘much’) or *ppalli-chelem* (‘fast’) is impossible.

Besides the morphological phenomena, a substitution test shows that *com* can replace *cokum* as a noun. In the following examples, *cokum* can replace a numeral *hana* ‘one’ and *com* also can fit in the same slot. Moreover, the fact, that *com* functions as the object or the patient as an argument of the verb *mekta* ‘eat’, is further evidence that *com* is a noun.

(9) a. [hana]-ssik mek-ela.

one-by eat-IM

‘Eat one by one.’

b. [cokum]-ssik mek-ela.

a.little-by eat-IM

‘Eat little by little.’

c. [com]-ssik mek-ela.

a.little-by eat-IM

‘Eat little by little.’

However, despite the fact that *com* displays characteristics of a noun, there are restrictions that preclude it from behaving like nouns or numerals. For example, *com* cannot be used with case particles like subject particles and object particles. I suppose it
is due to the effect of decategorization, a process under which a lexical item “tends to lose the morphological and syntactic properties that would identify it as a full member of a major grammatical category such as noun or verb” (Hopper & Traugott, 2003, p. 107). *Com* seems to have lost its original syntactic behaviors while undergoing decategorization and recategorization to other word categories.

### 2.2 *Com* as a prefix

*Com* also has characteristics of an adnoun and a prefix. Lee (2009) argues that adnouns and prefixes share a similar distribution and function in that both of them modify following nominals. Yet an adnoun with a noun makes a nominal phrase whereas a prefix with a noun forms another noun. For example, a nominal phrase *khun apeci* ‘tall father’ is totally different from *khunapeci* ‘older brother of father’. However, there are many cases in which one morpheme can occur as an adnoun as well as a prefix, especially among native Korean words. For example, *say* ‘new’ can be used as an adnoun as in *say kenmwul* ‘new building’ as well as a prefix as in *saycip* ‘new house’.

Willis (2007) observes a universal path from free morpheme to affix. Lee (2009) shows that native Korean nouns develop into adnouns and then become prefixes. Adnouns modify another noun or noun phrase at the pre-noun position. They are also called prenouns (Martin, 1992), determiners (Sohn, 1999), or unconjugated adjectives. Martin (1992) categorizes three kinds of adnouns in terms of their characteristics:

1. those that occur only as adnouns (e.g., *ches* ‘first’, *ccey* ‘-th’ [ordinalizer], *yeys* ‘old’)
2. those that have other uses (e.g., *nal* ‘raw’, *thong* ‘whole’, *ken* ‘dry, dried’)

23
(3) pseudo-adnouns that indicate their etymological sources (e.g., *taum-taum*

‘next but one’, *phalang* ‘blue’, *hen* ‘old’)

Martin (1992) categorizes *com* ‘petty’ as a pseudo-adnoun. That is, *com* originally was a noun, but it developed into an adnoun and finally became a prefix, following the universal path.

The *Sisa Elite Korean Dictionary* (2006) and *Minjung Essence Korean-English Dictionary* (2000) introduce *com* ‘petty, small’ as a prefix that attaches to nouns, as in the following examples:

(10)  

*comtotwuk* (*com*-‘thief’) ‘pilferer, sneak thief, petty thief’

*comsayngwen* (*com*-‘Mr., Esq.’) ‘a narrow-minded person, a petty person’

*compokswunga* (*com*-‘peach’) ‘small-sized peach’

*comkes* (*com*-‘thing’) ‘petty person, small things, trifles’

*comkkoy* (*com*-‘wits’) ‘petty wiles, little tricks’

*comnolus* (*com*-‘job’) ‘petty jobs’

*comnom* (*com*-‘guy’) ‘petty person’

*commal* (*com*-‘word’) ‘small talk, narrow-minded remark’

*comsayngi* (*com*-‘person, thing’) ‘small things’

*comphayngi* (*com*-‘young person’) ‘petty little person, small-minded person’

There are some 270 prefixes in Korean that derive a noun from another noun (Kim, 1998; Ku, 1998; Sohn, 1999). Sohn (1999) notes that “numerous affixes have developed from formerly full-fledged words and this kind of grammaticalization process is still going on” (p. 217). Sohn (1999) provides the example of the prefix *cham* ‘true, real, genuine’, as in *cham-kilum* (-‘oil) ‘sesame oil’ and *cham-mal* (-‘word’) ‘true remark,
truth’, which can easily be associated with the noun *cham* ‘truth, reality’ and the adverb *cham* ‘really, truly’. Just like the prefix *cham*, the prefix *com* is also linked with the noun *com* and the adverb *com*.

### 2.3 *Com* as an adverb

In contemporary Korean dictionaries and other linguistic literature, *com* is introduced as an adverb most of the time. Sohn (1999) defines an adverb as modifying “a verb, an adjective, another adverb, a clause, or a nominal phrase in terms of negation, time, place, manner, degree, modality, conjunction, or discoursal purposes” (p. 211). Adverbs occur before the element modified in a sentence or discourse.

Adverbs can be grouped into subclasses. Sohn (1999) groups Korean adverbs into five categories: negative, attribute (time, place, manner, degree), modal, conjunctive, and discoursal. Suh (2005) divided them into seven categories in terms of semantics: space, time, process, modality, number, negative, and degree. Martin (2006) uses a different division of the adverbs into semantic categories: time, degree, contingency, assertion, conjunctional (connective), and manner (p. 136). Although the categorization of adverbs is slightly different among these researchers, *com* is generally known to be an adverb of degree (Ceng, 2006; Cwu, 2000; Kim, 1997; Se, 2006; Son, 1988).

Degree adverbs “denote a qualitative or quantitative degree of the state or action indicated by the predicate” (Sohn, 1999, p. 396). They modify adjectives, copula clauses, determiners, and manner adverbs, and they cannot modify verbs (Suh, 2005). However, *com* modifies verbs because *com* sits on the borderline between being a degree adverb and something else. Sohn (1995) argues that in the cases of *cokum* ‘a little’, *te* ‘more’,
and tel ‘less’, it is difficult to distinguish whether they are adverbs of degrees or adverbs of manner. Martin (2006) also argues that cokum and com ‘a little; please’ may fall into the adverbs of degree or the adverbs of assertion category. Park (1983) distinguishes com as an adverb and com as a functional-adverb, which has a special pragmatic role.

Choy (1937) categorizes degree adverbs into two groups: adverbs that indicate high degree (e.g., maywu ‘very’, hwelssin ‘by far’, phek ‘very’, kkumcciki ‘extremely’, taytanhi ‘very’, simhi ‘severely’) and those that indicate low degree (e.g., cokum ‘a little’, com ‘a little’, yakkan ‘slightly’, keuy ‘almost’). Son (2001) categorizes degree adverbs in three groups and he argues that com allots low degree to modified words:

a. those that allot the highest degree (e.g., mopsi ‘very’, mwuchek ‘very’, maywu ‘very’, acwu ‘very, quite, really’, kacang ‘most’)

b. those that allot high degree (e.g., phek ‘very’, ssek ‘awfully, greatly’, hwelssin ‘far’, hankyel ‘conspicuously’)

c. those that allot low degree (e.g., kkway ‘considerably’, ceypep ‘fairly’, com ‘little’)

First, com as a degree adverb modifies adjectives and denotes a low degree of the state the adjective describes.

(1) meli-ka [maywu/com] aphu-ta.

head-NM [very/little] be.painful-DC

‘I have a [severe/slight] headache.’

Second, com as a degree adverb modifies copula. However, it has limitations. Com, just like other degree adverbs, can modify copula clauses only when the clause can be
semantically decomposed into a noun and an adjective (Suh, 2005). In the following example (2a), *com* looks like it modifies the complement noun *pwuca* ‘a rich person’, not the copula *ita* ‘to be’. However, if the noun is semantically decomposed, as in (2b), into *ton manhun salam* ‘a person who has much money’, the degree adverb modifies the adjective *manh* ‘to be much’. Degree adverbs cannot be used if the complement noun is decomposed into a verb and a noun. Example (3a) is unnatural because *sensayng* ‘teacher’ is semantically decomposed as *kaluchinun salam* ‘a person who teaches’, with a verb *kaluchi* ‘to teach’ and a noun *salam* ‘person’ as in (3b).

\[\begin{align*}
(2) & \quad a. \quad \text{ku-nun} \quad [\text{maywu/com}] \quad \text{pwuca}-\text{ta}. \\
& \quad \text{he-TC} \quad [\text{very/little}] \quad \text{rich.person-(be)-DC} \\
& \quad \text{‘He is [very/somewhat] rich.’} \\
& \quad b. \quad \text{ku-nun} \quad [\text{maywu/com}] \quad \text{ton manh-un} \quad \text{salam-i-ta}. \\
& \quad \text{he-TC} \quad [\text{very/little}] \quad \text{money be.much-RL person-be-DC} \\
& \quad \text{‘He is a person who has [a lot of/a little] money.’}
\end{align*}\]

\[\begin{align*}
(3) & \quad a. \quad *\text{ku-nun} \quad [\text{maywu/com}] \quad \text{sensayng-i-ta}. \\
& \quad \text{he-TC} \quad [\text{very/little}] \quad \text{teacher-be-DC} \\
& \quad \text{‘He is a [very/little] teacher.’} \\
& \quad b. \quad *\quad \text{ku-nun} \quad [\text{maywu/com}] \quad \text{kaluchi-nun} \quad \text{salam-i-ta}. \\
& \quad \text{he-TC} \quad [\text{very/little}] \quad \text{teach-RL person-be-DC} \\
& \quad \text{‘He is a person who teaches [a lot/a little].’}
\end{align*}\]

Third, *com* as a degree adverb modifies determiners. Korean determiners have three subclasses:

a. Demonstrative
b. Quantifier

c. Qualifier

Demonstratives include definite *i* ‘this’, *ku* ‘that’, *ce* ‘that over there’, and indefinite *enu* ‘which, any, a certain’. Quantifiers modify the head noun quantitatively, as in *may* ‘every’ in *may hakki* ‘every semester’, *cen* ‘whole’, *ches* ‘first’, *on* ‘entire, full’.

Qualifiers modify the head noun qualitatively, as in *say* ‘new’ in *say cha* ‘a new car’, *hen* ‘used’, *yeys* ‘old’. Degree adverbs can modify only qualifiers because qualifiers share similar semantic functions with adjectives (Suh, 2005). *Com* as a degree adverb can only modify qualifiers, just like other degree adverbs.

(4) ikes-un [maywu/com] hen os-i-ta.
    this-TC [very/little] old cloth-be-DC
    ‘This is a [very/somewhat] old cloth.’

Fourth, *com* as a degree adverb modifies manner adverbs. Manner adverbs denote “various manners in which the action or state denoted by the predicate is to be manifested” (Sohn, 1999, p. 396). Suh (2005) classifies manner adverbs into two subclasses: general manner adverbs, which modify regular verbs and special manner adverbs, which modify only a limited number of certain verbs, including many onomatopoeic adverbs. The former is available to be modified by degree adverbs, including *com* (Suh, 2005).

    that-person-TC [very/little] urgently leave-PST-DC
    ‘That person left [very/somewhat] urgently.’
Suh (2005) groups special manner adverbs into three types according to the number of verbs that they can modify. The first group includes the special manner adverbs, which can modify only one or two verbs as in (a); the second group modifies two or three verbs as in (b); and the third group modifies more than three verbs, as in (c).

(a) kentus, komkom(i), ttakhi, nayche, pelek, ttokululu, tolu, ttalulu, pwukululu, ppeppel, caykkak, theng, humssin, tasokosi, sayngkus, phayngphaynghi

(b) kkumcciki, kkwak, teppek, palak, palttak, pwusisi, salphosi, ssok, wakacakulu, uak, celcel, chek, chwuk, thek, pathwu, konhi, ttakkunhi, tumppwuk, ppanhi, pengpengi, salttukhi, cikus.i, mwuchamhi

(c) kkangkuli, naypta, tepsek, mithccak, cengmilhi, hankahi, enttus, elchwu, oyloi, cicili, hamppak, taccakoccalo, nophciki, menghani, sulph, wutwukheni, epsi, katukhi, kattunhi, nalanhi, kKaykkusi, koi, kosulanhi, swunswunhi, kkomkkomhi, kongulo, kunkunhi, ttattusi, tuntunhi, manmanhi, melcciki, pisutumhi, sensenhi, socwunghi, alttulhi, ik(swuk)hi, hwenhi, kankokhi, nelli, ttesttesi

Suh (2005) argues that the greater the number of verbs that the special manner adverbs can modify, the greater the possibility that they can be modified by degree adverbs. That is to say, none of the special manner adverbs in the first group, (a), can be modified by a degree adverb, whereas some adverbs in the second group, (b), can be modified by a degree adverb, and that most of the adverbs in the third group, (c), can be modified by a degree adverb.

Though Suh (2005) makes a meaningful attempt at explaining the constraint on degree adverbs, he draws fuzzy boundaries between his group classifications. Specifically, he posits that number of verbs that can be modified for group (a) is “one or
two” and “two or three” for group (b) – in other words, his groupings are indistinct from each other. In addition, many of the manner adverbs in (a) or (b) can modify more than three verbs, contrary to his claim.

In regard to whether it is possible for a manner adverb to be modified by degree adverbs, my rough test shows that five manner adverbs out of 16 (31%) in (a), eight out of 23 (34%) in (b) and 21 out of 40 (52%) in (c) sound natural with degree adverbs such as *maywu* ‘very’ or *acwu* ‘very’. Although the possibility increases from (a) through (b) to (c) as Suh argues, this seems to be insufficient grounds for generalizing it as a rule because there is no theoretical explanation about why the constraints occur.

Shin (2002) provides a more cogent explanation of the constraint. He argues that degree adverbs can modify the semantic feature [static] of the modified element regardless of its word category. Degree adverbs indicate whether the [static] feature of the element is strong or weak. Degree adverbs cannot modify active verbs because they have the feature [active] instead of [static]. However, if an active verb has a semantic root as [static], degree adverbs can modify it as in (6a) and (6b).

(6)  

a. Passive/ causative verbs

[maywu/com] pokcaphycita become [very/somewhat] complicated

[maywu/com] simhwasikhita [highly/slightly] intensify

[maywu/com] simhwatoytta become [very/somewhat] intensified

[maywu/com] yeyppecita become [very/somewhat] pretty
b. Sensory verbs

[maywu/com] cohahata like [a lot/a little]
[maywu/com] yeyppehata adore [a lot/a little]
[maywu/com] pwulewehata envy [a lot/a little]

Therefore, it is a better description to say that if the manner adverb has a semantic feature [static], it can be modified by degree adverbs whereas if it has a feature [active], it cannot be modified by degree adverbs. For example, *palttak* ‘with a spring’ is [active] because it denotes a manner of an action, rising up abruptly, and it cannot be modified by degree adverbs. Whereas *pwusisi* ‘untidy, frizzy’ is [static], describing untidy and frizzy hair, and it can be modified by degree adverbs. However, one of the degree adverbs, *acwu* ‘very much’, can modify both [static] and [active] manner adverbs.

a. [active manner adverbs] pelek, humssin, palak, palttak, naypta, tepsek, thek, ttalulu

b. [static manner adverbs] pwusisi, tumppwuk, sulphi, khukey, manhi, kiphi

*Com* as a degree adverb can modify those manner adverbs that carry the [static] feature semantically, as (7) shows.

   picture-TC [very/little] largely draw-PST-DC
   ‘I drew a picture [very/somewhat] largely.’

   telephone ring-NM [very/little] tingkly ring-PST-DC
   ‘The bell [very/somewhat] tinkled.’
Interestingly, Suh (2005) constructs three distinct categories from the degree adverb: distance adverb, time adverb, and quantifier adverb. *Com* can be fit into these three categories. First, *com* as a distance adverb modifies an attribute or property of the action or state of a predicate in terms of spatial length.

(8)  

    bird-NM [highly/little] fly-PST-DC  
    ‘A bird flew up a [great/small] height.’

    they-TC [far/little] run-PST-DC  
    ‘They ran a [long/short] distance.’

Second, *com* is a time adverb. Time adverbs modify ‘points of time, duration, relative time, and repetition/frequency’ (Sohn, 1999, p. 396). *Com* is used to describe duration of time period as in (9a) and (9b) and frequency as in (9c).

(9)  

a. ku salam-i yeki-eyse [hancham/com]  
    that person-NM here-at [for.a.long.while/for.a.little.while]  
    kitaly-ess-ta.  
    wait-PST-DC  
    ‘That person waited here for a [long/short] while.’

b. ku kanguy-nun [olaystongan/com]  
    that lecture-TC [for.a.long.time/for.a.little.while]  
    kyeysoktoy-ess-ta.  
    continue-PST-DC  
    ‘That lecture continued for a [long/short] while.’
    they-TC that restaurant-at [often/sometimes] meet-PST-DC
    ‘They [often/sometimes] met at that restaurant.’

Third, *com* is a quantifier adverb, denoting quantitative degree of the state or action.

    morning-at apple-AC [much/little] eat-PST-DC
    ‘I ate [many/few] apples in the morning.’

    parents-with talk-AC [much/little] share-PST-DC
    ‘I talked with my parents a [lot/little].’

However, I found it to be more appropriate that these three separate categories be regarded as subordinate to degree adverbs because they also have the same function of denoting the degree of distance, time, and quantity.

### 2.4 *Com* as a delimiter

Sohn (1999) explains that “many words in a major category (nouns, verbs, and adjectives) have developed into minor category elements such as adverbs, particles, and affixes” (p. 261). *Com* also followed this path and developed into a particle.

There are three types of Korean particles: case particles, conjunctive particles, and delimiters. Mok (2001) argues that *com* has been grammaticalized into a delimiter.

Delimiters delimit the meanings of the co-occurring elements and are attached to a word, a phrase, a clause, or even a sentence (Sohn, 1999). Mok (2001) pays attention to how a sentence is broken into prosodic units (intonational contours) when the predicate is
followed by *com*. He argues that an adverb and the following verb become one prosodic unit. Therefore, the adverb *ppalli* ‘fast’ and the verb *mekela* ‘eat’ become one unit, as in (11a). However, when *com* is located in the regular position of an adverb, it composes one unit with the object *pap* ‘meal’, not the verb *mekta* ‘eat’, as in (11b).

(11) a.  
\[
\begin{array}{llll}
\text{pap} & [\text{ppalli mek-ela}]. \\
\text{meal} & \text{fast} & \text{eat-IM}
\end{array}
\]

‘Eat quickly; Start eating quickly.’

b.  
\[
\begin{array}{llll}
[pap \quad \text{com}] & \text{mek-ela}. \\
\text{meal} & \text{com} & \text{eat-IM}
\end{array}
\]

‘Eat, please.’

Mok (2001) claims that if *com* could be classified as an adverb, sentence (12a) should be broken down as in (12b). However, (12b) is grammatically wrong because the adverb *com* in that position modifies the noun *kapang* ‘bag’. Besides, native speakers of Korean would never say the sentence in this way, but would break it down as in (12c). He claims that *com* tends to form one unit with the preceding element, not the predicate, because it is on its way to becoming grammaticalized as a delimiter.

(12) a.  
\[
\begin{array}{llllllll}
\text{ne} & \text{com} & \text{kapang} & \text{com} & \text{il-lwu} & \text{com} & \text{kac-kwu} \\
you & \text{com} & \text{bag} & \text{com} & \text{here-toward} & \text{com} & \text{have-and}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{llllll}
\text{wa} & \text{bw-a}. \\
\text{come} & \text{see-IM}
\end{array}
\]

‘Bring the bag here.’

b.  
\[
*\text{ne} / \text{com} \text{kapang} / \text{com} \text{illwu} / \text{com} \text{kackwu} \text{wa bwa}.
\]

c.  
\[
\text{ne} \text{com} / \text{kapang} \text{com} / \text{illwu com} / \text{kackwu} \text{wa bwa}.
\]
Following Mok (2001), Lee (2004) also points out that com’s behaviors are similar to those of a delimiter. In (13b), com can be used at the place of the accusative particle ul. Without ul, the sentence sounds inappropriate, as in (13c), although it may be acceptable in some situations. In (13d), com is inserted, splitting the compound verb tow-a-cwuta ‘give a helping hand’; this is not usual for an adverb. In (13e), com appears at the end of the sentence, which is not a usual place for an adverb to be located. These phenomena cannot be explained if com is classified as an adverb.

(13) a. Cini-uy tongsayng-ul towacw-e.
   Cini-GN younger.sibling-AC help-IM
   ‘Help Cini’s younger sibling.’

b. Cini-uy tongsayng com towacw-e.
   Cini-GN younger.sibling com help-IM
   ‘Help Cini’s younger sibling.’

c. ?Cini-uy tongsayng towacw-e.
   Cini-GN younger.sibling help-IM
   ‘Help Cini’s younger sibling.’

d. Cini-uy tongsayng-ul towa com cw-e.
   Cini-GN younger.sibling-AC help com give-IM
   ‘Help Cini’s younger sibling.’

e. Cini-uy tongsayng-ul towacw-e com.
   Cini-GN younger.sibling-AC help-IM com
   ‘Help Cini’s younger sibling.’
Sohn (1999) divides delimiters into two types according to their syntactic and semantic properties: constituent delimiters and sentential (or discoursal) delimiters. First, constituent delimiters occur in noun phrases and with adverbs and complement clauses.

Some examples are *man* ‘only, solely’, *nun/un* ‘as for’, *to* ‘also, too, indeed’, *mata* ‘each, every’, *ya/a* (vocative), *cocha* ‘even, as well’, *(i)lato* ‘even, for lack of anything better’, *(i)nama* ‘in spite of’, *puthe* ‘starting from’, *kkaci* ‘as far as, even, up to’.

*Com* behaves like a constituent delimiter as it can occur with case particles in noun phrases, with adverbs, and with two or more other delimiters. I intentionally include two *coms* in each following example sentence, *com*¹ and *com*². The position of *com*² is always right before the predicate, which is the typical location for an adverb. Therefore, it is *com*² that modifies the predicate, and *com*¹ can be discussed as something other than an adverb. In (14), *com*¹ is attached to the adverb *ppali* ‘fast’ (14a); *ka* nominative case particle (14b); *man* delimiter (14c); and a series of delimiters *kkaci, man, and (i)lato* (14d).

(14) a.     ppali  *com*¹ / *com*²  ka  cwu-sey-yo.  
            fast  *com*¹ / *com*²  go  give-SH-POL

            ‘Please go a little faster.’

b.     cey-ka  *com*¹ / *com*²  papp-ayo.
            I-NM  *com*¹ / *com*²  be.busy-POL

            ‘I’m little busy.’

c.     han  kay-man  *com*¹ / *com*²  cwu-sey-yo.
            one  item-only  *com*¹ / *com*²  give-SH-POL

            ‘Please give me only one.’
d. Sewulyek-kkaci-man-ilato \( \text{com}^1 / \text{com}^2 \) ka cwu-sey-yo.

Seoul.station-to-only-even \( \text{com}^1 / \text{com}^2 \) go give-SH-POL

‘Please take me even if you can go only so far as the Seoul station.’

2.4.1 *Com* in compound verbs

There are more interesting phenomena related to the delimiter’s behavior in compound verbs. Korean compound verbs have two types: the native compound type and the Sino-Korean or loan plus native compound type. First, there are five kinds of native compounds:

i. noun + intransitive verb

ii. noun + transitive verb

iii. verb + complementizer + verb

\((\text{the complementizer can be the infinitive } -e/-a, \text{ the transferentive } -\eta\eta/-\eta\eta\text{ata}, \text{ or the conjunctive } -ko)\)

iv. juxtaposition of verbs

v. adverb + verb

Groups (i), (ii), (iii), and (v) allow delimiters to be inserted after the noun (i, ii), the complementizer (iii), and the adverb (v). In the following examples, the delimiter to splits native compound verbs. Other delimiters also can be inserted to split the compound. In the same manner, as also shown in the following examples, the native compounds can be split by inserting *com* after the noun (i, ii), the complementizer (iii), and the adverb (v).
(15)  

i.  *kep-nata* ‘be scared’  
\[\rightarrow \text{ kep-to nata}\]  
\[\rightarrow \text{ kep-com nata}\]  

ii.  *maum-mekta* ‘intend, plan’  
\[\rightarrow \text{ maum-to mekta}\]  
\[\rightarrow \text{ maum-com mekta}\]  

iii.  (Infinitive) *al-a-tutta* ‘understand’  
\[\rightarrow \text{ al-a-to tutta}\]  
\[\rightarrow \text{ al-a-com tutta}\]  

(Transferentive) *chy-eta-pota* ‘look up’  
\[\rightarrow \text{ chy-eta-to pota}\]  
\[\rightarrow \text{ chy-eta-com pota}\]  

(Conjunctive) *cca-ko-tulta* ‘plot’  
\[\rightarrow \text{ cca-ko-to tulta}\]  
\[\rightarrow \text{ cca-ko-com tulta}\]  

v.  *cal-hata* ‘do habitually’  
\[\rightarrow \text{ cal-to hata}\]  
\[\rightarrow \text{ cal-com hata}\]  

Second, Sino-Korean nouns and loan nouns combine with native verbs to form compound verbs. Delimiters, as well as *com*, can be inserted after the noun as seen in the following examples.

(16)  

*ki-makhita* ‘suffocate, feel choked’  
\[\rightarrow \text{ ki-to makhita}\]  
\[\rightarrow \text{ ki-com makhita}\]  

*litu-hata* ‘lead’  
\[\rightarrow \text{ litu-to hata}\]  
\[\rightarrow \text{ litu-com hata}\]
2.4.2 *Com* in complex predicate constructions

*Com*, like other delimiters, can intervene between two predicates in other complex predicate constructions, such as relative complex predicates, auxiliary predicate constructions, and negation. This would be impossible if *com* were only an adverb.

First, Korean relative complex predicates are formed by defective nouns with a following main clause predicate. For example, the adjective *kathta* ‘be the same’ occurs with the defective noun *kes* ‘fact, thing’ to form a compound. In (17a), in between the defective noun *kes* and the predicate *kathta*, adverbs cannot be inserted. However, *com* in (17c), just like the other delimiter in (17b), can intervene, denoting the speaker’s modality.

(17)  

a. nwun-i o-n kes kath-ayo.

snow-NM come-RL fact be.same-POL

‘It seems that it has snowed.’

b. nwun-i o-n kes-*to* kath-ayo.

snow-NM come-RL fact-also be.same-POL

‘It also seems that it has snowed.’

c. nwun-i o-n kes *com* kath-ayo.

snow-NM come-RL fact *com* be.the.same-POL

‘It seems that it has snowed.’

Second, Korean auxiliary predicate constructions (including sensory, benefactive, and aspectual constructions) are composed of the first predicate, which is semantically the main verb, and the second, auxiliary verb, which is the syntactic head. For example, in *ca-ko iss-ta* ‘be sleeping’, the first verb *cata* ‘sleep’ is the main predicate, and the
second verb *Esta* ‘be, stay’ is the auxiliary predicate. No adverb can intervene between the two predicates but delimiters can, as in *ca-ko-man iss-ta* ‘be only sleeping’. *Com* also can be positioned in between the predicates, as in (18).

(18) camkkän ca-ko **com** iss-ela.
    a.little.while sleep-and **com** be-IM

    ‘Get some sleep for a little while.’

Third, *com*, just like other delimiters, can be inserted in a negation construction. Korean negation has two general types, sentential negation and constituent negation. The former is a way of negating a sentence by using syntactic devices. In declaratives and interrogatives, *an* ‘not’ and *mos* ‘not possibly, cannot, unable’ are placed immediately before the predicate. In imperatives and propositives, the negative verb *malta* ‘stop doing, don’t do’ is used after the nominalized clause. In such cases delimiters can occur between the nominalized clause and the verb. This is exemplified in (19b) with the delimiter -man, which appears between a clause nominalized with the suffix -ci and the verb *malta*. In (19c) *com* appears in the same position, which is impossible for adverbs.

(19) a. ka-ci mal-a.
    go-NOM don’t.do-INT

    ‘Don’t go.’

b. ka-ci **man** mal-a.
    go-NOM-only don’t.do-INT

    ‘I ask you only not to go.’
c. ka-ci com mal-a.
go-NOM com don’t.do-INT

‘Please don’t go.’

Syntactic negation has a short form (20a) and a long form (20b). In long form negation, *com*, like an accusative, nominative, or delimiter particle may intervene between the nominalizer suffix *-ci* and the predicate in imperatives and propositives, as in (20c).

(20) a. Mia-nun an k-a.
    Mia-TC not go-INT
    ‘Mia is not going.’

    Mia-TC go-NOM not-do-INT
    ‘Mia is not going.’

c. swul-ul masi-ci com an-h-umye-n an-h tway-yo?
    alcohol-AC drink-NOM com not-do-if-RL not-do become-POL
    ‘Can’t you quit drinking alcohol?’

Yang (1972) subcategorizes constituent delimiters into three groups based upon their distributional characteristics: X-delimiters (X-lim), Y-delimiters (Y-lim), and Z-delimiters (Z-lim), and provides the following examples of each sub-category of delimiters (p. 59):

(21) **X-lim:** *mace* ‘even, also, so far as, on top of’, *mata* ‘each, every, all’, *kkaci* ‘till, up to, even, as far as’, *pwuthe* ‘starting from’

**Y-lim:** *man* ‘only, just’, *pakk.ey* ‘except for, outside of’
**Z-lim:** *un/nun* ‘as for, regarding’, *to* ‘also, too, indeed’, *(i)ya* ‘as only for’, *(i)na* ‘or the like, or so, or something, about’, *(i)lato* ‘even, even if’

X-lim precedes Y-lim and Y-lim precedes Z-lim, and at most one member of each category can occur within a noun phrase, as in the following example.

(22)  ne-[**pwuthe**]$_X$-[**man**]$_Y$-[**ilato**]$_Z$ ilccik ilena-ya ha-n-ta.

you-starting.from-only-even early wake.up-only.if do-IN-DC

‘At least only you must get up early.’

The nominative marker and accusative marker are obligatorily deleted before any delimiter as in the following examples.

(23)  a.  kipwun-to an coh-u-n tey pay-[**mace**]$_X$

mood-even not be.good-IN-RL place stomach-even

aphu-ta.

be.sick-DC

‘I am in a bad mood and even my stomach hurts.’

b.  *kipwun-to an coh-u-n tey pay-[**ka**-**mace**]$_X$

mood-even not be.good-IN-RL place stomach-NM-even

aphu-ta.

be.sick-DC

However, *com* doesn’t belong to any of the three categories. First, when *com* co-occurs with either one or two or three of them, *com* always follows them.
(24)  a.  [X-lim + com]

seyswu-[pwuthe]_{X-[com]}  ha-lkey-yo.

face.washing-from-com  do-will-POL

‘Let me wash my face first.’

b.  [Y-lim + com]

ku  yeca-nun  elkwul-[man]_{Y-[com]}  yeypp-ess-umyen

the  lady-TC  face-only-com  be.pretty-PST-if

wanpyekha-ltheyntey.

be.perfect-supposedly

‘The lady would have been perfect only if her face was pretty.’

c.  [Z-lim + com]

cey  yayki-[to]_{Z-[com]}  tul-e  cwu-sey-yo.

my  story-also-com  listen-INF  give-SH-POL

‘Please listen to me, too.’

de.  [X-lim + Y-lim + com]

ceki-[kkaci]_{X-[man]}_{Y-[com]}  kathi  k-a-cwu-si-llay-yo?

there.until-only-com  together  go-INF-give-SH-intend-POL

‘Could you go only up until there together?’

e.  [X-lim + Z-lim + com]

ckukum-[pwuthe]_{X-[lato]}_{Z-[com]}  yel-simhi  ha-y-pwa.

now-from-even-com  diligently  do-INF-try

‘Try hard to do it even from now on.’
Second, the nominative marker and accusative marker are not obligatorily deleted before a delimiter. The sentences in the following examples, whether the case marker is deleted or not, are not grammatically wrong.

(25)  

a. pap com manhi tu-sey-yo.
    rice com much eat-SH-POL
    ‘Please eat much rice.’

b. pap-ul com manhi tu-sey-yo.
    rice-AC com much eat-SH-POL
    ‘Please eat much rice.’

c. pap-ul manhi tu-sey-yo.
    rice-AC much eat-SH-POL
    ‘Please eat much rice.’

d. ney-ka nak-a pw-ala.
    you-NM go.out-INF try-IM
    ‘You go out and check.’
As seen so far, com is idiosyncratic and it doesn’t fit into any of the three categories that Yang (1972) suggested. In fact, there is one more constituent delimiter, khенынг ‘far from, on the contrary’, which doesn’t fall under any of the categories either. Therefore, it is necessary to add new categories for com and other exceptions like khенынг to the existing ones.

Com has the unique property that it behaves as a sentential delimiter as well as a constituent delimiter. Sentential or discoursal delimiters affect the whole sentence in terms of the speaker’s perception or modality in a discourse situation. They occur at the end of a sentence and after any major constituent. Sohn (1999) introduces four representative sentential delimiters: the plural particle tul, the politeness particle yo, the obsolete apperceptive sentence-final particle kulye ‘indeed, I confirm’ and the concessive particle man(un) ‘but’. He explains that tul and yo can be attached to any major constituent of a sentence and they sometimes multiply. Com seems to share similar syntactic properties, and it can attach to every constituent in the sentence, as in (26). It floats the same way that the sentential delimiters tul and yo do, even though com right before other adverbs or a verb has the possibility of being classified as an adverb. Moreover, two coms may co-occur within the same prosodic unit. In the following

e.  ней-ка com нак а pw-ала.
you-NM com go.out-INF try-IM
‘You go out and check.’
f.  ne com нак а pw-ала.
you com go.out-INF try-IM
‘You go out and check.’
examples, a phrase within one prosodic unit is enclosed by #....#, in order to indicate contours when multiple coms occur serially.

(26) com# ne com com# com hwacangsil-ilang com#
    com you com com com bathroom-and com
    com ce pang com com# com kkaykkusi com com#
    com that room com com com neatly com com
    com chiwu-ko com com# com inkan-tapkey com# com
    com clean-and com com com human-be.like com com
    sal-ala com.
    live-IM com

‘Clean the bathroom and that room neatly and live like a human being.’

The phenomena described in this chapter illustrate the fact that com appears in many slots where an adverb is not able to. Therefore, in terms of syntactic properties, com, which hitherto has been treated as an adverb by most linguists, already seems to have been recategorized from noun to adnoun and prefix and adverb, and to a delimiter, and all of the categories coexist.
CHAPTER 3. SEMANTICS OF *COM*

Traugott and Dasher (2002) argue that “the direction of semantic change is often highly predictable, not only within a language but also cross-linguistically” (p. 4). Jurafsky (1996), in his study on the semantics of diminutives, including English *little*, French *petit*, and Japanese *chotto*, which are equivalents of Korean *com* as morphological diminutives, argues that there are universal tendencies in their semantic changes. Dressler and Merlini Barbaresi (1994) argue that the diminutives cannot be simply listed in the lexicon or grammar with the single abstract meaning ‘small’ and that other senses are derived by contextually based inferences when the diminutive is used. Inference gradually becomes conventionalized as the literal meaning of the morpheme (Bybee et al., 1994; Heine et al., 1991; Traugott & König, 1991). Jurafsky (1996) observes that cross-linguistically there is a paradox that diminutives can cover not only the sense of attenuation but also that of intensification. In addition, words meaning ‘a little’ generally develop to function like English ‘please’ cross-linguistically (Matsumoto, 2001). In Greek, the diminutive suffixes such as *-aki* are also used to make the utterance friendly and informal (Sifianou, 1992). In Awtuw, the diminutive suffix on a personal pronoun is used to show sympathy for the referent of the suffixed pronoun (Jurafsky, 1996). In Japanese, *chotto* ‘a little’ also has expanded to become a speech act qualifier (Matsumoto, 2001). These universal semantic tendencies of diminutives are the result of a unidirectional semantic change: from subjectivity into intersubjectivity. The meaning of a word acquires subjectivity first and intersubjectivity afterward. In other words, the meaning change occurs from the more physical, specific, and real-world toward the more abstract, general, and qualitative.
Traugott and König (1991) suggest three tendencies in how meaning becomes more removed from the external world and more subjective or evaluative:

1. External situation $\rightarrow$ internal situation (evaluative, perceptual, cognitive)
2. External/internal situation $\rightarrow$ textual/metalinguistic situation
3. External/internal/textual situation $\rightarrow$ more speaker’s subjective belief state

*Com* acquired subjectivity and intersubjectivity through the same mechanism. The semantics of *com* shift from the real-world domain ‘a little’ to the linguistic or textual domain of ‘semantic hedges’, weakening the locutionary force, to the metalinguistic domain ‘metalinguistic hedges’, weakening the illocutionary force. It extends into the pragmatic domain as *com* has acquired intersubjectivity.

The *Standard Korean Language Dictionary* (2008) by the National Institute of the Korean Language defines *com* as an adverb with five meanings, as follows. All the example sentences are taken from the dictionary.

First, *com* is the contracted form of *cokum* in terms of degree or amount.

(1)  

a. mwulken-kaps-i **com** pissa-ta.  
item-price-NM **com** be.expensive-DC

‘The price of the item is a little expensive.’

b. emeni-ka **com** phyenchanh-usi-n kes kath-ta.  
mother-NM **com** be.sick-SH-RL thing be.like-DC

‘Mother seems to be a little bit sick.’

Second, *com* is the contracted form of *cokum* in terms of duration.
(2) **com** nuc-ess-sup-ni-ta.

Third, *com* is inserted in a request or when seeking agreement in order to make it sound softer.

(3) a. **son com** pilly-e cwu-sey-yo.

hand com lend-INF give-SH-POL

‘Give me a hand, please.’

b. **ikes com** tu-sey-yo.

this com eat-SH-POL

‘Please eat some.’

c. **mwues com** mwulepo-p-si-ta.

something com ask-AH-IN-DC

‘Let me ask you something, please.’

d. **kuman com** ha-y!

no.more com do-IM

‘Stop doing it, please.’

e. **ka-l kil-i kwu-man-li-la-ney,**

go-PRS road-NM nine-ten.thousand-unit.of.distance-QT-APP

**ppalli com** ka-sey.

fast com go-PR

‘We have such a long way to go, please let’s hurry.’
Fourth, \textit{com} indicates the situation is tolerable in a question or an ironic statement.

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(4)] \text{nalssi-ka com chuwu-eya kitong-ul ha-ci.}
\text{weather-NM com be.cold-should movement-AC do-SUP}

‘I can move only if the weather is only a little bit cold. (I cannot move if the weather is too cold).’
\end{enumerate}

Fifth, \textit{com} denotes \textit{elmama} ‘how much/many’ in a question or an ironic statement.

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(5)] a. \text{twul-i kulehkey saicohkey cinay-ni}
\text{two-NM so in.amity get.along-because}

\textit{com coh-unya}?

\textit{com good-Q}

‘Isn’t it nice that you two get along well?’

b. \text{kongpwu calha-ko mal cal tul-uni}
\text{study do.well-and words well listen-because}

\textit{com hwullyungha-yyo}?

\textit{com be.great-POL}

‘Isn’t it great that he/she is good at studying and obedient?’
\end{enumerate}

The first and second meanings are the pure propositional meaning of \textit{cokum}, and they can be translated as ‘a little’ or ‘a few’ in English. \textit{Com} can qualify duration or amount of measurable things or the degree of states. When \textit{com} is used as ‘small amount, short duration, or low degree’, it is synonymous and interchangeable with \textit{yakkan} ‘a little’.
(6)  

a. Small amount

sokum-ul  **com**  neh-usey-yo.
salt-AC  **com**  put-SH-POL

‘Please put a small amount of salt.’

b. Short duration

sikan-i  **com**  nam-ass-nuntey  mwe  ha-Ikka?
time-NM  **com**  leave-PST-but  what  do-PRS-Q

‘There is a little time left, what should we do?’

c. Low degree of a certain condition

ecey-pota  nalssi-ka  **com**  chuwu-e-cy-ess-eyo.
yesterday-than  weather-NM  **com**  be.cold-INF-become-PST-POL

‘The weather became a little colder than yesterday.’

The meaning of **com** ‘a little’ intensified, and it has come to carry the connotation of a minimum amount. The negative polarity item, **comchelem** ‘rarely’, is lexicalized from a noun **com** and a particle **chelem** ‘like’. The quantity expression in a negative polarity item is called a “minimizer,” which denotes “some minimal quantity or extent” (Vallduvi, 1994, p. 263). In other negative polarity items such as **cokumto** ‘at all’, **hanato** ‘even one’, or **hanpento** ‘never once’, the root nouns **cokum**, **hana** ‘one’, and **hanben** ‘once’ are the minimizers, and they all have the meaning of ‘minimum’. The fact that **com** is the minimizer in **comchelem** shows that **com** also has the meaning of ‘minimum’. These negative polarity items carrying the meaning of ‘minimum’ can only be used with negative expressions as in (7).
While *com* has deepened its meaning of ‘a little’ to ‘minimum’, it also seems to have expanded its semantics beyond something related to *little* in quantity. The third definition of *com* in the *Standard Korean Language Dictionary* (2008), “*com* is inserted in a request or when seeking agreement in order to make it sound softer,” is already a well-recognized function of *com* as a hedge. But this function is not limited to requests or seeking agreement but can be applied to other sentence types also, in order to tone down the force of expression. Yoo (2010) argues that in terms of semantics, the original form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(7)</th>
<th>ku-nun</th>
<th>comchelem</th>
<th>keki-ey</th>
<th>ka-ci</th>
<th>an-h-nun-ta.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>he-TG</td>
<td>rarely</td>
<td>there-to</td>
<td>go-NOM</td>
<td>not-do-IN-DC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘He hardly ever goes there.’

<table>
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<th>a’</th>
<th>ku-nun</th>
<th>comchelem</th>
<th>keki-ey</th>
<th>ka-n-ta.</th>
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<td>rarely</td>
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<td>go-IN-DC</td>
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<th>b.</th>
<th>pesu-ey</th>
<th>pi-n</th>
<th>cali-ka</th>
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<tr>
<td>bus-in</td>
<td>be.empty-RL</td>
<td>seat-NM</td>
<td>even.one</td>
<td>not.exist-PST-DC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘There was not an empty seat in the bus.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>b’</th>
<th>pesu-ey</th>
<th>pi-n</th>
<th>cali-ka</th>
<th>hanato</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bus-in</td>
<td>be.empty-RL</td>
<td>seat-NM</td>
<td>even.one</td>
<td>exist-PST-DC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>c</th>
<th>na-nun</th>
<th>hanpento</th>
<th>kyelsekha-n</th>
<th>cek-i</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I-TG</td>
<td>even.once</td>
<td>be.absent-RL</td>
<td>time-NM</td>
<td>not.exist-DC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘I have not missed a single class.’

<table>
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<tr>
<th>c’</th>
<th>na-nun</th>
<th>hanpento</th>
<th>kyelsekha-n</th>
<th>cek-i</th>
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<td>I-TG</td>
<td>even.once</td>
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<td>time-NM</td>
<td>exist-DC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
cokum is [+measurability] whereas com is [-measurability]. In other words, com acquired subjectivity and has meaning beyond modifying something measurable. Likewise, Lee (1998) points out that com can be used as a modal adverb as well, in which it is again different from cokum or yakkan ‘a little’. That is, com is semantically related to measuring amount, duration, or degree and is used as an approximative, or “semantic hedge” as well. Jurafsky (1996) observes that diminutives are used for approximation, or weakening of adjectival or verbal force, cross-linguistically. In the following examples, com cannot be replaced with either yakkan ‘a little’ or manhi ‘many/much’, which denote amount, duration, or degree. On the other hand, it can be replaced with modal adverbs such as ceypal ‘please’, amwuccolok ‘as much as one can’, pwuti ‘by all means’. Even when com is omitted from the example sentences, the propositional meaning of the sentence doesn’t change since com only expresses the modality of the speaker.

(8) a. malssum com mwut-keyss-sup-ni-ta.
   words com ask-will-AH-IN-DC
   ‘May I please ask you something?’

b. kuman com ha-y.
   to.that.extent.only com do-IM
   ‘Please stop it.’

c. ppalli com ka-p-si-ta.
   fast com go-AH-RQ-PR
   ‘Please go faster.’
d. **com** kamanhi iss-e.  
   *com* still be-IM  
   ‘Please stay still.’

e. kongpwu **com** ha-y.  
   study *com* do-IM  
   ‘Please do your study.’

f. mwul **com** cwu-si-llay-yo?  
   *water* *com* give-SH-will-POL  
   ‘Water, please.’

In this type of usage, *com* has acquired intersubjectivity and extends into the pragmatic domain. Kay (1987), in his research on the semantics of hedges, argues that “hedges don’t merely modify the extent to which an argument is a member of a category; a hedge involves the performance of an extra speech act” (p. 71). Jurafsky (1996) explains that this kind of metalinguistic hedge is commonly represented by the diminutive cross-linguistically. Metalinguistic hedges modify “the metalinguistic content of an utterance, that is, they contain a second speech act which comments on the sentence or its content” (Mendoza, 2005, p. 166). Jurafsky (1996) argues that “this pragmatic type of hedge is often used in an extended way to soften or weaken the illocutionary force of the entire utterance” (p. 557) instead of “focusing on its propositional content” (p.556). I will elaborate on the pragmatics of *com* in the next chapter.

The fourth definition of *com* in the *Standard Korean Language Dictionary* (2008) is: “*com* indicates the situation is tolerable in a question or an ironic statement.”
provides the following sentence (9) as an example. Here, *com* can be replaced with *ecikanhi* ‘fairly; tolerably’ or *pothong-ulo* ‘ordinarily’.

(9) nalssi-ka com chwuw-eya kitong-ul ha-ci.

weather-NM com be.cold-should movement-AC do-SUP

‘I can move only if the weather is tolerably cold.’

Fifth, *com* denotes *elmana* ‘how much/many’ in a question or an ironic statement. The dictionary provides the following example sentences (10). Here, *com* can be replaced with *pothong-ulo* ‘ordinarily’. Although the dictionary distinguished between the fourth and the fifth definitions, they are actually the same in that they both mean *pothong-ulo* ‘ordinarily’.

(10) a. twul-i kulehkey saicohkey cinay-ni

two-NM so in.amity get.along-because

com coh-unya?

com good-Q

‘Isn’t it nice that you two get along well?’

b. kongpwu calha-ko mal cal tul-uni

study do.well-and words well listen-because

com hwullyunghay-yo?

com be.great-POL

‘Isn’t it great that he/she is good at studying and obedient?’

As seen from the fourth and fifth definition in the dictionary, the meaning of *com* seems to have been expanding beyond a reliance on its propositional meaning ‘a little’.

Researchers like Cwu (2000), Kim (2009), and Yoo (2010) also observe the meaning
Yoo (2010), in her study on the semantic changes in reduced forms, observes that the intended meaning of cokum and com are the same for both but com alone has gained the new meaning of intensification. Cwu (2000) and Kim (2009) argue that com means manhi ‘many/much’ in many cases. Their claim seems to be promising and com seems to be undergoing a gradual change to obtain this new meaning.

A native speaker of Korean might think that com doesn’t always mean ‘a little’ or work as a semantic or metalinguistic hedge. I conducted a short survey on an internet cosmetics community board where Korean women in their 20s and 30s participate. First I asked what the meaning of this sentence is: ku yeca-nun elkwul-i com yeypputa ‘that lady’s face is com pretty’. And I gave them two choices: (1) ku yeca-nun elkwul-i yakkan yeypputa ‘that lady’s face is a little bit pretty’ and (2) ku yeca-nun elkwul-i manhi yeypputa ‘that lady’s face is very pretty’. A total of 22 people answered, and nine people chose (2). Two of the nine commented that com means kkway ‘fairly, pretty’, and two commented that when you say kongpwu com haci, ‘be good at studying’ or mommay com toyci ‘be in good shape’, com is added to emphasize the statement. Ten people didn’t choose anything, but left comments. Seven people said that it means ‘her face is on the side of being pretty’. Two people commented that it means yeypucanghata ‘be on the pretty side’. One person said it can be both.

Interested in these results, I asked about the meaning of another sentence: ku salam-un ton-i com issta ‘that person has com money’. I gave them two choices: (1) ku salam-un ton-i yakkan issta ‘that person has a little money’ and (2) ku salam-un ton-i manhi issta ‘that person has much money’. A total of 15 people replied and 14 people chose (2). Among them, eight left comments saying com here emphasizes the meaning,
and five said it is equivalent to *kkway* ‘fairly, pretty’. The one who didn’t answer (2) didn’t choose (1) either, but said the meaning was ‘he at least doesn’t have debt’.

I also found an interesting question on the same internet community board:

(11) ‘ton com pe-n-ta’la-nu-n phyohyen, money com earn-IN-DC be-DC-IN-RL expression elma cengto-la-ko sayngkakha-sey-yo?

how.much extent-be.DC-QT think-SH-POL

‘How much money do you think the expression “make *com* money” means?’

The person elaborated: “If you make more than two million won a month, can it be called *ton com pe-nun cengto* ‘level of making much money’?” and “If you are a graduate from a prestigious university, how much will be the *ton com pe-nun swucwun* ‘standard of making much money’?” There were 15 replies. One person replied:

(12) com pe-n-ta-la-ko ha-myen cal pe-n-ta-nun

com earn-IN-DC-be.DC-QT say-if well earn-IN-DC-RN iyaki kath-ase welswu opayk isang talk be.like-because monthly.income five.hundreds or.more

‘Since it sounds like one “makes a lot of money” when one says “make *com* money,” it would be more than five million won (approx. $4,700) a month.’

All others agreed except one person who said “more than ten million won (approx. $9,400) a month.”

Cwu (2000) provides two sentences as evidence that *com* has this new meaning. (13a) is a sentence with *cokum* and (13b) is exactly the same except that *cokum* is
substituted with *com. However, (13b) sounds unnatural, and she argues that this is because *com has the meaning of ‘much’.

(13) a. Yengmi-nun pap-ul cokum mek-nuntey
Youngmi-TC meal-AC a.little eat-but
sal-i ccin-ta.
fat-NM gain-DC

‘Although Youngmi eats only a little amount of her meals, she still gains weight.’

b. *Yengmi-nun pap-ul com mek-nuntey
Youngmi-TC meal-AC com eat-but
sal-i ccin-ta.
fat-NM gain-DC

‘Although Youngmi eats only a little amount of her meal, she still gains weight.’

Not only can *com be understood with the new meaning of ‘much/many’ or intensification because of the speaker’s intonation or through the creation of new forms like ccom, but *com is already used frequently with the new meaning among native speakers of Korean, although it hasn’t been lexicalized. How did the meaning ‘a lot’ develop from the referential meaning ‘a little’? What is the mechanism that leads to such semantic change? I begin by considering how generalization, or semantic bleaching, plays a role in linking these two paradoxical senses. The referent meaning of *com can be rephrased as “low on some scale” (Jurafsky, 1996, p. 554). The scale can be “a scale of
amount,” “a scale of duration,” or “a scale of degree.” That is to say, the core semantics of *com* is related to something gradable or measurable. By the mechanism of generalization, *com* loses the meaning ‘low’ and becomes more abstract and generalized. The result becomes less specific and can be applied to a wider range of contexts while it continues to include the original meaning of “related to something gradable or measurable.” A similar mechanism has led the diminutive to gain extremely abstract, vague semantics in many languages (Jurafsky, 1996).

Through such a mechanism, *com* acquires the opposite meaning ‘a lot’ and becomes a contronym, that is, a lexical item that “can be subject to opposite sense at the micro-level” (Karaman, 2008). Kronasser (1952) and Meid (1979) argue that language change results in the occurrence of contronymy in natural language. There are five different kinds of contronymy according to the type of opposition that occurs between two related senses of a single form at a micro-level: contronymy of incompatibility, contronymy of antonymy, contronymy of complementarity, contronymy of reversivity, and contronymy of conversivity. *Com* is a type of contronymy of antonymy, which has “the features of gradability” (Lutzeier, 1995, p. 81). At the macro-level, antonymous relationships consist of adjectives that are opposites. At the micro-level, a lexical unit is a case of contronymy of antonymy if it can be subjected to gradation and if it consists of at least two senses, which are contradictory within one aspect. For example, the English adverb *quite* expresses two meanings, ‘to the utmost or most absolute extent or degree’ and ‘a little or a lot but not completely’, as seen in the following examples. Both meanings take place within the aspect of ‘evaluative state’ (Karaman, 2008).

(14) a. The two situations are quite different.
b. He is quite attractive but not what I’d call gorgeous.

One mechanism for the emergence of contronymy is through polysemy, where a single word acquires different and ultimately opposite senses. Some polysemies may be harmonic with each other but others may be strongly disharmonic (Traugott & Dasher, 2002, p. 54). Contronymy is the result of the disharmonic polysemies. Traugott and Dasher (2002) argue that semanticization of a polysemy comes from the appearance of an item in a “new” context in which the earlier meaning of the item would not make sense. Frequency is one of the factors that condition such change. Repetition is one of the factors behind emancipation and bleaching through the process of habituation (Haiman, 1994). In other words, acquiring subjectivity and then intersubjectivity, com as a hedge has evolved into a signal that indicates that the speaker is intensifying something, whether it is the locution or illocution of the utterance. Since intensifying is the opposite end of the scale, com has the sense of ‘high on scale’. This pragmatic intervention leads to semanticization of com’s polysemy and it eventually makes com a contronym. The process can be illustrated thus:

[low on a scale] > [low]

> [on a scale] > [high on a scale]

There are expressions like *cip-i com salta* ‘have a wealthy family’ or *com issta* ‘be wealthy’, where com doesn’t mean ‘a little property’ but ‘a lot of property’, as in the following examples.

(15) i hakkyo-nun tunglokkum-i pissa-se cip-i

this school-TC tuition-NM be.expensive-because house-NM
They say that only those students whose families are rich can go to this school because the tuition is very expensive.

(16) those clothes wear-because you com possess-INF look-IN-DC

‘You look rich in those clothes.’

In the beginning, people were likely to use *com* as a hedge when talking about someone’s wealth, as in *cip-i com cal salta* ‘have a wealthy family’ or *ton-i/caysan-i com manhi issta* ‘be wealthy’, because such comments can be a face threatening act in Korean culture. Through high frequency and repetition, the sense of *cal* ‘well’ or *manhi* ‘much’ seems to have been carried over to *com* so that *com* acquired the meaning of ‘high in scale’ and finally became almost like an idiom.

The core meaning of *com* is ‘a little’, and it has developed in two directions, so that it now includes the deepened meaning of minimal and the new contrary meaning. I have shown that *com* with non-subjective semantics gains new meaning through subjectification and intersubjectification. The semantics of *com* is not enough to explain its functions at the discourse level because *com*, with its high frequency, has already gained intersubjectivity and is used for qualifying interactions of speaker and addressee. I examine the ways *com* is used as a speech-act qualifier in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4. PRAGMATIC FUNCTIONS OF COM

Traditional explanations of com’s pragmatic functions mostly focus on its function as a hedge relying on its propositional meaning ‘a little’. However, in contemporary Korean, com is also used in other functions transcending its propositional meaning. In this chapter, I would like to analyze the current pragmatics of com as a discourse marker at a discourse level. Before going into a discourse analysis of com, I’ll first summarize the theory of discourse markers. Second, I’ll summarize the theory of politeness that can be a useful framework to explain the current functions of com. And lastly, I will describe three general pragmatic functions of com that I found from my discourse data: (1) reduction of illocutionary force, (2) filler, and (3) increase of illocutionary force.

4.1 Theory of discourse markers

In the last few decades, discourse markers have attracted much attention from researchers, whose choices of terms to refer to those markers have, however, varied according to a range of justifications: discourse deictics (Levinson, 1983), discourse connectives (Blakemore, 1987, 1992), discourse particles (Aijmer, 2002; Schourup, 1999), pragmatic connectives (Stubbs, 1983; Van Dijk, 1979), pragmatic markers (Andersen, 1998, 2001; Brinton, 1996; Caron Pargue & Caron, 1991; Erman, 2001; Redeker, 1990; Watts, 1988), gambits (Kasper, 1979), cue phrases (Knott & Dale, 1994), discourse markers (Fraser, 1999; Jucker & Ziv, 1998; Schiffrin, 1987; Schourup, 1999), and connectives (Bazzanella, 1990; Degand, 2000; Fraser, 1988; Lamiroy, 1994; Unger, 1996). I use the term “discourse markers” following Schiffrin (1987).
4.1.1 Basic frameworks for discourse markers

Schiffrin (2003) distinguishes three basic frameworks that view discourse markers from different perspectives: (1) the semantic perspective on cohesion, (2) the discourse perspective, and (3) the pragmatic perspective.

The first framework looks at discourse markers from the perspective of coherence. The earliest research from this perspective is done by Halliday and Hasan (1976). They are basically concerned with what makes a text different from a random collection of unrelated sentences, and find that the difference lies in cohesive devices. They analyze words such as *and, but, because, I mean, by the way, to sum up* and their functions, focusing on their cohesive role in the text, and they propose that these conjunctive items “express certain meanings which presuppose the presence of other components in the discourse” (p. 236).

The second framework is based on a discourse perspective, and Schiffrin (1987) is the most influential researcher using this framework. She defines discourse markers operationally as “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk” (1987, p. 31); i.e., “nonobligatory utterance-initial items that function in relation to ongoing talk and text” (2003, p. 57). She proposes that “discourse markers could be considered as a set of linguistic expressions comprised of members of word classes as varied as conjunctions (e.g., *and, but, or*), interjections (e.g., *oh*), adverbs (e.g., *now, then*), and lexicalized phrases (e.g., *y’know, I mean*)” (2003, p. 57).

Schiffrin is interested in what discourse markers add to discourse coherence. She states that coherence “is constructed through relations between adjacent units in discourse” (p. 24), and proposes a model of discourse consisting of different planes for the analysis of
discourse markers: (i) participation framework, (ii) information state, (iii) ideational structure, (iv) action structure, and (v) exchange structure. Discourse markers are indicators of the location of utterances in this model. Furthermore, they can connect utterances in a single plane or across different planes.

First, the participation framework refers to the different ways in which interlocutors can relate to each other. It includes not only speaker/hearer relations but also speaker/utterance relations. The participation framework is pragmatic in that it concerns speakers’ relations to each other and to the utterances. Müller (2005) argues that the primary markers to do this job are well and I mean, supported by the secondary uses of oh, so, now, and y’know.

Second, information state involves “the organization and management of knowledge and meta knowledge” (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 28). Here interlocutors relate to each other in their cognitive capacities. It is pragmatically relevant (rather than pragmatic) because knowledge and meta-knowledge can be externalized as well as being internal. Oh and y’know (plus well, so, because, then, and I mean) work on this plane.

Third, ideational structures, contrasted with exchange and action structures, which are pragmatic, are more on the semantic side. The units in this structure are propositions with semantic content, or ideas. Ideational structure is constituted by three relations between ideas: cohesive relations, topic relations, and functional relations. Cohesive relations are established “when interpretation of an element in one clause presupposes information from a prior clause” (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 26). Topic relations mean the organization of what is being talked about. Functional relations concern “the roles which ideas play vis-à-vis one another, and within the overall text” (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 26).
primary markers to do this job are *and, but, or, so, because, now,* and *then.* Well, *I mean,* and *y’know* are also used in this way as their secondary function.

Fourth, action structures indicate that “speech acts are situated not only in terms of speaker’s identities and social setting, but in terms of what action precedes, what action is intended, what action is intended to follow, and what action actually does follow” (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 25). In other words, they are related to “the orders of occurrence” (p. 25) and “the decision procedures through which such orders emerge” (p. 25). Seven discourse markers (*oh, well, and, but, so, because, then*) mark speech acts in this way as their secondary function (Müller, 2005).

Fifth, exchange structures are “the outcome of the decision procedures by which speakers alternate sequential roles and define those alternations in relation to each other” (Schiffrin, 1987, p. 24). Schiffrin labels these turns, and they conditionally include questions and answers and greetings. Six markers (*well, and, but, or, so, y’know*) work in this structure as their secondary function.

To summarize Schiffrin’s (1987) discourse model, it shows that discourse is composed of both non-linguistic structures (exchange and action) and linguistic structures (ideational). In a participation framework, interlocutors are related to each other as well as to their utterances. Their knowledge and meta knowledge are organized and managed in an information state. Markers in discourse function within the same plane or across several planes, and indicate where the utterances are located. Thus, discourse coherence is “the outcome of joint efforts from interactants to integrate knowing, meaning, saying and doing” (1987, p. 29).
In addition to the operational definition of discourse markers based on the discourse model, Schiffrin suggests a theoretical definition, offering four tentative conditions that an expression should fulfill to be considered a discourse marker (1987, p. 328):

1. It has to be syntactically detachable from a sentence.
2. It has to be commonly used in initial position of an utterance.
3. It has to have a range of prosodic contours, e.g., tonic stress followed by a pause, phonological reduction.
4. It has to be able to operate at both local and global levels of discourse, and on different planes of discourse. This means that it either has to have no meaning, a vague meaning, or to be reflexive (of the language, of the speaker).

Finally Schiffrin (2003) proposes that discourse markers help to create coherence in the construction of discourse since they are multifunctional on different planes of discourse. Their multifunctionality enables many different simultaneous processes to integrate and construct the discourse.

The third framework, represented by Fraser (1990, 1998, 1999), takes a pragmatic perspective. His approach is based on the assumption that content meaning is different from pragmatic meaning. According to him, content meaning is “a more or less explicit representation of some state of the world that the speaker intends to bring to the hearer’s attention by means of the literal interpretation of the sentence” (1990, p. 385), whereas pragmatic meaning is a “message the speaker intends to convey in uttering the sentence” (p. 386). He suggests three types of pragmatic markers that convey the pragmatic
meanings: basic pragmatic markers that indicate illocutionary force, e.g., *please*; commentary pragmatic markers that encode another message that comments on the basic message, e.g., *frankly*; and parallel pragmatic markers that encode another message separate from the basic and/or commentary message, e.g., *damn*, vocatives) (Schiffrin, 2003). Discourse markers are included in commentary pragmatic markers. Fraser (1999) defines discourse markers as “a linguistic expression only (in contrast to Schiffrin, who permits non-verbal discourse markers) which: (i) has a core meaning which can be enriched by the context; and (ii) signals the relationship that the speaker intends between the utterance the discourse marker introduces and the foregoing utterance (rather than only illuminating the relationship, as Schiffrin suggests)” (p. 936). In other words, “a discourse marker, if present, dictates the relationship intended by the speaker between the interpretation of S2 [S = segment] and S1” (Fraser, 1998, p. 302).

To sum up, Fraser (1990, 1998, 1999) is interested in the meaning of sentences, and specifically how the discourse markers function to signal the relationship between S2 and S1. He starts with the classification of various types of pragmatic meaning, and then describes how discourse markers dictate the relationship of S2 and S1. On the other hand, Halliday and Hasan (1976) are interested in the cohesion of text, and Schiffrin (2003) tries to “account for the use and distribution of discourse markers in everyday discourse” (p. 58).

### 4.2 Theory of politeness

Language has both a transactional function and an interactional function. Linguists who make the assumption that the most important function of language is the communication
of information tend to be interested in the transactional function of language. The language that is used to convey “factual or propositional information (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 2)” is called “primarily transactional language (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 2).” Primarily transactional language is message-oriented because it is important for the listener to get the informative details correct (Brown & Yule, 1983). On the other hand, sociologists or sociolinguists who pay attention to the use of language for establishing and maintaining social relationships take the interactional view. Brown and Yule (1983) suggest that we use speech largely for primarily interactional purposes, whereas we use written language largely for primarily transactional purposes. Other researchers also discuss this dichotomy between the transactional and interactional functions of language but use different labels for the two types of functions, such as representative/expressive (Bühler, 1934), referential/emotive (Jakobson, 1960), ideational/interpersonal (Halliday, 1970) or descriptive/socio-expressive (Lyons, 1977).

The interactional function of language is performed via various politeness principles. The politeness principle explains how people interpret each other’s meaning, and it is universal, although its realization varies in different cultures (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Lakoff (1973) and Leech (1983) suggest that speakers “attempt to give options, avoid intrusion and make their interlocutor feel good” (Johnson & Johnson, 1999) in order to be polite. Specifically, Lakoff (1973) proposes the following rules of politeness:

a. Don’t impose.
b. Give options.
c. Make addressee feel good.
Leech (1983) suggests a politeness principle based on a principle of benefit and cost: “minimize (other things being equal) impolite beliefs” (p. 81), and the corollary: “maximize (other things being equal) polite beliefs” (p. 81). Impolite beliefs means those that are unfavorable to the hearer, and polite beliefs are the opposite. He lists more specific conversational maxims: tact, generosity, approbation, modesty, agreement, and sympathy. Of these, the one that has gained the most attention is the tact maxim: “minimize the expression of beliefs which imply cost to other; maximize the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to other” (p. 109).

The most influential politeness model in current pragmatic research is that proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978). Goffman (1967) suggests the notion of face as “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (p. 5). Extending Goffman’s notion, Brown and Levinson (1978) posit a Model Person who is “a willful fluent speaker of a natural language, further endowed with two special properties—rationality and face” (p. 58). Rationality means that Model Persons select the means that will achieve their ends. Two Model Persons are interested in maintaining each other’s face. Face has two components, negative face and positive face. The former is “the want of every ‘competent adult member’ that his actions be unimpeded by others” (p. 62), whereas the latter is “the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others” (p. 62). Certain kinds of acts that are contrary to these face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker are face threatening acts (FTAs). The following tables summarize examples of FTAs from Brown and Levinson (1978, pp. 65–68). The table 1 includes those acts
that threaten the addressee’s negative and positive face wants and the table 2 provides examples of those acts that threaten negative and positive face wants of the speaker.

Table 1. FTA toward the addressee’s face

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FTA toward the addressee’s <strong>negative</strong> face</th>
<th>FTA toward the addressee’s <strong>positive</strong> face</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• orders and requests</td>
<td>• expressions of disapproval, criticism,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• suggestions, advice</td>
<td>contempt or ridicule, complaints and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• reminding</td>
<td>reprimands, accusations, insults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• threats, warnings, dares</td>
<td>• contradictions or disagreements,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• offers</td>
<td>challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• promises</td>
<td>• expressions of violent (out-of-control)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• compliments, expressions or envy or</td>
<td>emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>admiration</td>
<td>• irreverence, mention of taboo topics,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• expressions of strong (negative)</td>
<td>including those that are inappropriate in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emotions toward the addressee</td>
<td>the context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• bringing of bad news about the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>addressee, or good news (boasting)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>about the speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• raising of dangerously emotional or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>divisive topics, e.g., politics, race,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>religion, women’s liberation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• blatant non-cooperation in an activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• use of address terms and other status-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>marked identifications in initial</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>encounters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. FTA toward the speaker’s face

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FTA toward the speaker’s <strong>negative</strong> face</th>
<th>FTA toward the speaker’s <strong>positive</strong> face</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• expressing thanks</td>
<td>• apologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• acceptance of the addressee’s thanks</td>
<td>• acceptance of compliment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or apology</td>
<td>• breakdown of physical control over</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• excuses</td>
<td>body, bodily leakage, stumbling or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• acceptance of offers</td>
<td>falling down, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• responses to the addressee’s faux pas</td>
<td>• self-humiliation, shuffling or cowering,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• unwilling promises and offers</td>
<td>acting stupid, self-contradicting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• confessions, admissions of guilt or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• emotion leakage, non-control of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>laughter or tears</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All Model Persons will try to avoid these FTAs or minimize the threat of FTAs by employing certain strategies. Brown and Levinson (1978) suggest four possible strategies: (1) bald-on-record, (2) positive politeness, (3) negative politeness, and (4) off record.

4.2.1 Bald-on-record

4.2.1.1 Cases of non-minimization of FTAs

Bald-on-record strategy involves doing an act “in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible” (p. 69). One set of the purposes for bald-on-record utterances has to do with achieving maximum efficiency in communication, rather than satisfying the addressee’s face, in cases of (i) urgency, (ii) channel noise, and (iii) task-oriented utterances. Examples for each of these, taken from Brown and Levinson (1978, pp. 96–97), are given here:

(i) Help!

Listen, I’ve got an idea.

(ii) (calling across a distance) Come home right now!

(talking on the telephone with a bad connection) I need another £1000.

(iii) Open other end.

Add three cups of flour and stir vigorously.

Other motivations for using the bald-on-record strategy are when the speaker’s want to satisfy the addressee’s face is small because (iv) the speaker is powerful and doesn’t worry about the addressee’s reaction or (v) the speaker wants to be rude or doesn’t care about face, as in teasing or joking, as in these examples:
(iv) Bring me wine, Jeeves. (Brown & Levinson, 1970, p. 97)

(v) Taymeli kkakk-ala!

  baldhead cut-IM

  ‘Shave your head (and become bald)! (classic Korean expression when teasing a friend)

A third set of motivations for the bald-on-record strategy is when the FTA is in the interest of the addressee, including in cases of (vi) giving advice or warning, (vii) granting permission, and (viii) employing farewell formulae, as in the following examples from Brown and Levinson (1978, p. 98):

(vi) Careful! He’s a dangerous man.

(vii) Yes, you may go.

(viii) Take care of yourself, be good, have fun.

4.2.1.2 Cases of FTA-oriented bald-on-record usage

A different use of the bald-on-record strategy is, in contrast to the examples in the previous section, oriented to face. In certain cases, the speaker alleviates the anxiety of the addressee about potential infringement by pre-emptive invitations. The examples of such cases include three functional categories: (i) welcomings, (ii) farewells, and (iii) offers. In Korean, like in many other languages, such invitation words are imperative:

(i) Tul-e-o-sey-yo.

  enter-INF-come-SH-POL

  ‘Come in.’
(ii) Annyenghi ka-sey-yo.

in.peace go-SH-POL

‘Go in peace, goodbye.’

(iii) Anc-usey-yo.

sit-SH-POL

‘Have a seat.’

Brown and Levinson (1978) note that “only sometimes is the ‘urgency’ expressed by such face-oriented bald-on-record usages totally unredressed. Often it may be emphasized by positive-politeness hedges” (p. 101) or “it may be softened by negative-politeness respect terms, or by please” (p. 101). Examples (iv) and (v) show the use of the positive-politeness hedge do (iv); the negative-politeness respect term sir (v); and please (v).

(iv) Do come in!

Do go first.

(v) Please come in, (sir).

This remark is applicable to Korean, and the functions of positive-politeness hedges and please are fulfilled by the Korean discourse marker, com, as we will see later.

4.2.2 Positive politeness

The speaker can give face to the addressee by two forms of redressive action: positive politeness and negative politeness. The former is targeted toward positive face, and is
approach-based. The latter redresses the addressee’s negative face, and is avoidance-based.

Positive politeness acquires its redressive force by intimate language use. It can be used not only to redress FTAs but also as a social accelerator. Brown and Levinson (1978, pp. 103–129) provide the following summary of detailed strategies of positive politeness.

The first strategy is to claim common ground with the addressee:

- Notice, attend to the addressee (his interests, wants, needs, goods).
- Exaggerate (interest, approval, sympathy with the addressee).
- Intensify interest toward the addressee.
- Use in-group identity markers such as address forms, in-group language or dialect, jargon or slang, contraction and ellipsis of mutual knowledge.
- Seek agreement. Use safe topics and repetition.
- Avoid disagreement by using token agreement, pseudo-agreement, white lies, and hedging opinions.
- Presuppose/raise/assert common ground.
- Joke.

The second strategy for positive politeness is to convey that the speaker and the addressee are cooperators:

- Assert or presuppose the addressee’s knowledge of and concern for the addressee’s wants.
- Offer, promise.
- Be optimistic.
- Include both the speaker and the addressee in the activity.
• Give or ask for reasons.
• Assume or assert reciprocity.

The third and last positive politeness strategy is to fulfill some of the addressee’s wants:

• Give gifts to the addressee (goods, sympathy, understanding, cooperation).

Positive politeness strategies do not necessarily redress the face want damaged by FTAs but they do involve appreciation of the addressee and signal similarities between the wants of the speaker and the addressee. On the other hand, negative politeness strategies are relevant to the imposition itself.

4.2.3 Negative politeness

Negative politeness minimizes the imposition that the FTA effects. Brown and Levinson (1978) claim that negative politeness is what springs to mind when we think of politeness. Familiar linguistic devices such as indirectness, hedges on illocutionary force, polite pessimism, and an emphasis on the addressee’s power are examples of negative politeness. The strategies for negative politeness are useful for social “distancing.”

Brown and Levinson (1978, pp. 130–211) describe several negative strategies, which are summarized here.

The first strategy is to be direct. Because negative politeness pursues both on-record delivery and redress of an FTA, the desire to convey a message directly clashes with the desire to redress the negative face of the addressee. Therefore, the mechanism of being conventionally indirect is needed in order to make an utterance go on record while the speaker signals his or her desire to go off record. Conventional indirectness lets the speaker achieve both wants.
Brown and Levinson (1978) note an interesting linguistic device for conventional indirectness from Tamil. In Tamil, there is a word, *koncam*, which is both an adjective and an adverb, with the literal meaning ‘a little’. However, it appears in circumstances where it cannot have its literal meaning, as in the following example (Brown and Levinson, 1978, p. 140).

\[
\text{Inta paattriratt-le neriya } \textbf{koncam} \quad \text{teeva paTutu}
\]

\[
\text{this vessel-in much } a\textit{.little} \quad \text{need is.felt}
\]

‘This plate needs much more please.’

When used with a highly performative verb, *koncam* is an adverb and functions as a hedge on illocutionary force. In such a case, *koncam* means ‘I request you a little’, and it is equivalent to English *please* to make sentences into requests. This is interesting because *com* is a similar linguistic device in Korean. Like *koncam*, *com* has the referential meaning of ‘a little’ and it also functions as a hedge on illocutionary force.

The second strategy for negative politeness is not to presume or assume. The speaker should avoid presuming or assuming anything involved in the FTA, but question or hedge any such assumption. Brown and Levinson (1978, p. 145) define hedges and give examples as follows:

A ‘hedge’ is a particle, word, or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set; it says of that membership that it is partial, or true only in certain respects, or that it is more true and complete than perhaps might be expected.

- A swing is *sort of* a toy.
• I rather think it’s hopeless.
• I’m pretty sure I’ve read that book before.
• You’re quite right.

Hedges on illocutionary force consist of some of the most commonly used words, but they don’t receive much attention and their hedging functions are often omitted in dictionaries. In some languages, performative hedges may hedge either performative forces or propositional content. Brown and Levinson (1978) found many examples, from Tzeltal and Japanese, that hedge illocutionary force. There are two such types of hedging particles: strengtheners and weakeners. The former are “those that mainly act as emphatic hedges, ‘exactly’ or ‘precisely’ or ‘emphatically’” (p.147) whereas the latter are “those that soften or tentativize what they modify” (p.147).

The third strategy for negative politeness is not to coerce the addressee, that is to say, avoid coercing the addressee’s response when requesting or offering something that requires acceptance. Detailed strategies are to:
• Be pessimistic.
• Minimize the imposition.
• Give deference. (Use honorifics.)

The fourth strategy for negative politeness is to communicate the speaker’s wants in order not to impinge on the addressee. Detailed strategies are to:
• Apologize for the infringement straightforwardly.
• Impersonalize the speaker and the addressee by avoiding the pronouns I and you.
• State the FTA as a general social rule, regulation, or obligation.
• Nominalize, because the sentence becomes more formal with a nominalized subject.

The fifth strategy for negative politeness is to redress other wants of the addressee’s by offering partial compensation for the face threat; for instance, the speaker may go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting the addressee.

4.2.4 Off record

Brown and Levinson (1978) assert that “if a speaker wants to do an FTA, but wants to avoid the responsibility for doing it, he can do it off record and leave it up to the addressee to decide how to interpret it” (p. 211). Such off record utterances are constituted of indirect uses of language.

The first off record strategy is to invite conversational implicatures. When the speaker chooses to do an FTA indirectly, s/he must give some conversational implicatures so that the addressee can interpret the real meaning or intention of the speaker. Some examples of such implicatures are to:

• Give hints.
• Give association clues.
• Presuppose by using relevance or contrastive stress.
• Understate by saying less than is required or by using hedges.
• Overstate by exaggerating.
• Use tautologies for an excuse, a criticism, or disapproval and approval.
• Use contradictions.
• Be ironic.
• Use metaphors.

• Use rhetorical questions.

The second off record strategy is to be vague or ambiguous. Five methods of doing this are to:

• Be ambiguous.

• Be vague.

• Over-generalize.

• Displace the addressee by pretending the target of the FTA is someone else.

• Be incomplete, use ellipsis.

4.2.5 The contribution of discourse markers to politeness

Lewis (2006) explains that discourse markers are “discourse relational and speaker oriented” (p. 55) and that “the forms used for discourse marking have an external use as well as one or more speaker-oriented uses” (p. 56). She raises the question of why speakers prefer to use discourse markers rather than use explicit expressions, and provides one of the several possible explanations as being politeness. Discourse markers contribute to politeness in various ways.

First, Lewis (2006) argues that “the expression of speaker-oriented meanings such as beliefs and evaluations involves face, and one strategy for managing face is to invite inferences rather than be explicit” (p. 57). Second, it is commonly said that discourse markers “fulfill the function of down toners and that they are used in a general way and without having a specific meaning in order to make the utterance in which they occur imprecise and vague” (Weydt, 2006, p. 208). Third, and associated with the second point,
“a speaker can take the sharpness from utterances, in order to prevent a so-called FTA or at least to make it less threatening” (Weydt, 2006, p. 208). Fourth, certain discourse markers can “make dialogues friendly, social, and natural” (Weydt, 2006, p. 209) even without down toning. They show that “the actual speaker takes into account his partner’s perspective on the subject, that he cooperates” (Weydt, 2006, p. 209). Fifth, discourse markers show the mental process of the speaker to indicate that s/he doesn’t reject anything thoughtlessly when making a dispreferred response. For example, *um or oh* indicates that the speaker is concerned about the addressee’s face wants (Fischer, 2006). Sixth, discourse markers allow the addressee to see what the speaker understands by “displaying relations of accordance and by referring to the domain’s perception, understanding and topic construction” (Fischer, 2006, p. 446) so that they can construct interaction. Lastly, the speaker can indicate that the current utterance is directly related to the discourse situation and minimize responsibility for what is being said (Fischer, 2006).

4.3 **Functions of *com* as a discourse marker**

*Com* is used as a discourse marker at the discourse level. It has acquired subjectivity and intersubjectivity and carries diverse pragmatic functions as a discourse marker. A well-known function of *com* is as a politeness marker. Because of the referential meaning ‘a little’ of the original form *kokum, com* has been known as a mitigating device. However, in a brief corpus analysis, I found that *com* is more used as a discourse marker with other functions than as a politeness marker. I used the Synthesized Korean Data Process (SynKDP) as a concordance and a raw corpus, the Corpus of Transcribed Colloquial Discourse, from the Korean National Corpus. I used ten files, with a total of 49,798 *ecel,*
from the corpus. The content of the corpus is daily conversations among university students in their 20s. First, I compared the frequency of com and cokum. The phonological variable ccom was counted as com; cokkum, ccokum, ccokku, ccoykum, and coykkum were counted as cokum. Out of the total of 49,798 ecel, com is used 401 times while cokum is used only 21 times: the contracted form com is used almost 20 times more often than the original form cokum in this sample of colloquial speech. Second, I looked at the functions of com. Out of the total of 401 occurrences, com was used 22 times as an adverb of degree and 379 times as a discourse marker with diverse functions—not only as a politeness marker. That is to say, com is used 17 times more often as a discourse marker than as an adverb of degree. However, I observed many cases where com as a discourse marker is not used for mitigation.

There have been many studies that have attempted to find all the pragmatic functions of com besides its function as a politeness marker. Son (1988) categorizes the contextual meaning of com in three ways: politeness, emphasis, and negation. However, he relies on the syntactic structure of each function when analyzing how com obtains its meaning, not looking at the discourse level. Kim (1997) mostly explains the semantics of com in relation to the verbs and argues that com mitigates the addressee’s feeling of burden. Cwu (2000) argues against Son’s (1988) claims, and suggests that com’s function is as a device to express the speaker’s attitude in certain situations, such as requesting and apologizing, among others. She calls this function “speaker’s com.” It is similar to the traditional function of com as a politeness marker. Cwu (2000) also suggests another function, “speaker and addressee’s com,” used, she claims, when both the speaker and the addressee have common knowledge about the topic. Se (2006) and Ceng (2006)
categorized com’s functions in the discourse context from the perspective of Korean education.

Com has expanded its pragmatic function beyond its traditional function as a politeness marker. Some of the functions have already been described by previous research, but others have not. In this chapter, I will introduce all the functions I have found in my data, providing evidence that com’s pragmatic function has expanded, which is also evidence of grammaticalization. I will describe three general functions of com and their subdivided functions with data from a corpus and TV dramas, and I will also discuss the universal theories that are relevant in each section.

I find three general categories according to com’s function in the discourse: (1) to reduce illocutionary force, (2) as a filler, and (3) to increase illocutionary force. The level of semantic bleaching is least in (1), somewhat higher in (2), and highest in (3). In the category of (1), com reduces the power of illocution using its original meaning per “the principle of persistence” (Hopper, 1991, p.28). In (2), it functions as a filler and so is more independent from the propositional meaning than in (1). However, in the category of (3), the lexical meaning has faded almost entirely, and the intensifying force of the particle even seems to be contrary to the original lexical meaning. Each function has subcategories, as represented in the diagram in Figure 1. The arrow in the figure illustrates the intuitive sense of the intensity of dependence on the propositional meaning of ‘little’.
4.3.1 Data

I will discuss each of these three functions, along with relevant theories and exemplary data from the Sejong Corpus and TV dramas and talk shows. The TV drama data are from *Kamwunuy yengkwang* ‘Family of Honor’ (episodes 26, 27, 29, 30, and 31), *49il* ‘49 Days’ (episodes 14 and 18), *Kanglyekpan* ‘Crime Squad’ (episodes 9 and 10), *Naycouy yewang* ‘Queen of Housewives’ (episode 8), and *Oneye* ‘On Air’ (episode 1). The TV talk show data are from *Hayphithwukeyte* ‘Happy Together’ (March 25, 2010), *Nollewa* ‘Come to Play’ (August 16, 2010), *Hwangkum ecang* ‘Golden Fishery’ (episodes 231, 232, and 255) and *Chanlanhan yusan thukcip supheysyel* ‘Special Talk Show for Drama *Shining Inheritance*’ (August 3, 2009).

Figure 1. The pragmatic functions of *com* and the intensity of its propositional meaning

(1) Reduce illocutionary force

(2) Filler

(3) Increase illocutionary force
4.3.2 Reduction of illocutionary force

The first function of *com* is to reduce illocutionary force. *Com* is used as a hedge to save face for both the speaker and the addressee using its original meaning. This function can be explained within the framework of politeness theory, especially in terms of negative politeness as Brown and Levinson (1978) conceive of it. The speaker can “give face” to the addressee by “redressive action” (p. 69) that takes one of two forms: positive politeness and negative politeness. The former is geared toward positive face, which is approach-based. The latter redresses the addressee’s negative face, which is avoidance-based. Brown and Levinson suggest that hedges are a device for negative politeness (p. 145):

A “hedge” is a particle, word, or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or noun phrase in a set; it says of that membership that is partial, or true only in certain respects, or that it is more true and complete than perhaps might be expected.

Watts (2003) defines hedges as “linguistic expressions which weaken the illocutionary force of a statement” (p. 169) by means of attitudinal predicates such as *I think, I don’t think, I mean*, or by means of adverbs such as *actually*. He argues that if these are missing, their absence tends to lead to an evaluation of a participant’s behavior as impolite, brash, inconsiderate, abrupt, or rude. Sohn (1985) introduces *com* as a hedging word, equivalent to the English word *just*, which has an integral part in indirect requests. The Japanese word *chotto*, which means ‘a little’, functions in a similar way as *com* when it is used as a hedge, qualifying the illocutionary force. It is a cross-linguistic tendency that diminutives qualify illocutionary force (Jurafsky, 1996).
Koo (2004) points out that mitigation is one of the most important politeness strategies. In her corpus data, she counted *com* as the most frequent expression used for mitigation. In addition, she claims that 58.96% of the politeness strategies in her data were accomplished by the three most frequent expressions: the sentence ending *ci an-h-ta* ‘not be’, the discourse marker *com*, and the sentence ending *kes katha* ‘seem, appear’.

My data also show that *com* occurs frequently to reduce illocutionary force. Since *com* is found in the data to hedge either a certain element within the utterance or the illocutionary action itself, I will discuss these two cases separately: *com* as a semantic qualifier and *com* as a speech act qualifier.

### 4.3.2.1 Semantic qualifier

*Com* as a semantic qualifier is a hedge that modifies a certain element inside the utterance. It indicates the hesitant attitude of the speaker by modifying the degree of a specific word but it doesn’t affect the truthfulness of the utterance. This is demonstrated in excerpt 1, which I derived from the Sejong Corpus. A says that, at first, she thought her male friend was timid. She goes on to say that since they became closer, he speaks in a harsh way to her. In line 3, A says that she is suspicious about certain aspects of his personality. But when saying the word meaning ‘suspicious’, A adds *ccom* in order to express her hesitant attitude, because what she is saying could be wrong or too strong and it could threaten B’s positive face. In lines 8 and 10, A also uses following *com* or *ccom* to modify the degree of her words in order to mitigate FTAs.
Excerpt 1

1 A: ani, ce salam-i sosimha-ci an-h-na, no that person-NM be.timid-NOM not-do-whether
‘No, if that person is timid or not,’

2 B: a:: INJ
‘I see.’

3⇒ A: kulen myen-i ccom uysim-sulep-kо? such aspect-NM ccom suspicion-seeming-and
‘such aspect seems to be suspicious.’

4 B: kulen ke kulen ke ta po-myen celtay yenay mos such thing such thing all see-if never date cannot

5 ha-nta.

do-DC
‘If you care about everything like that, you will never fall in love.’

6 A: cincca.

really
‘Really.’

7 B: (laughing)

8⇒ A: ku taum-ey, ccom chinha-yci-kwu na-nikka, that next-at ccom be.close-become-and happen-because
‘After that, after we became closer,’
In excerpt 2 from the corpus data, the speaker A blames her/himself for being lazy while praising Hyocin who works very hard. In line 2, A says *com yamay-lo* ‘roughly’ describing his/her careless attitude at work. *Yamay* is a slang word for ‘rough’; A mitigates the word’s strength by adding *com* before it.

**Excerpt 2**

1 A:  Hyocini-n  toykey  yelsimhi  ha-y.  
     Hyocin-TC  very  hard  do-INT
     ‘Hyocin does very hard.’

2→ na-nun, (laughing)  *com*  yamay-lo,  keyull-e  kaciko  
    I-TC  *com*  rough-with  be.lazy-INF  because

3  (laughing)  nuckey  nao-nuntey.  
    lately  come.out-but
    ‘Me, compared to her, I do roughly, because I’m lazy, I come late.’
Excerpt 3 is taken from a drama, *Kamwunuy yengkwang* ‘Family of Honor’, episode 27. Y is the stepmother of the chief of a family company, Ha Soo Young, where O works as a cleaning lady. Y also works at the company as an executive. Ha Soo Young and O are attracted to each other, but the discrepancy in their social standing and ages prevents them from developing their relationship. Y wants to help them, but wanted to meet O in person before taking action. Y asks O to come to her office and explains why she called O there in line 7 and 8: ‘I can’t ignore the fact that my son looks like he has a special relationship with a woman’. Y is cautious about calling their relationship special because she knows that O is very nervous. In order to make O less anxious, Y adds *com* before *thukpyelha-n kwankyey* ‘special relationship’ to express her cautious attitude about using the expression.

**Excerpt 3**

1. Y: *nay-ka Haswuyeng silcang sayemen-i-n*
   
   I-NM Ha Soo Young chief stepmother-be-RL

2. ke al-ayo?
   
   thing know-POL

   ‘Do you know that I’m the mother of Chief Ha Soo Young?’

3. O: *ney, kathi chengsoha-si-nun acwumeni-hanthey yes together clean-SH-RL lady-from*

4. tul-ess-eyo.

   hear-PST-POL

   ‘Yes, I heard from the cleaning lady who I work with.’
Y: sayemeni-la-ko-nun ha-ciman atul-un atul-i-n
stepmother-be-QT-TC do-but son-TC son-be-RL

ke-canh-ayo.

thing-you.see-POL

‘Although I’m only his stepmother, you know, a stepson is a son to me.’

atul-i etten akassi-wa com thukpyelha-n
son-NM certain lady-with com be.special-RL

kwankyey-i-n ke-chelem poi-nuntey
relationship-be-RL thing-like look-but

‘I can’t ignore the fact that my son looks like he has a special relationship
with a woman

kunyang molu-n chekha-l swu
intact do.not.know-RL pretend-RL way

eps-ese sikan com nay talla-ko ha-yss-eyo.
not.have-because time com spare request-QT say-PST-POL
so I asked you to spare some time for me.’

**4.3.2.1.1 Double effect with kulehta**

It is interesting that *com* often collocates with the adjective *kulehta* ‘be so’. Choo and

Kwak (2008) explain that “the expression *kulehta* proves especially useful when trying to

avoid saying something unpleasant or something that one doesn’t feel comfortable going

into detail about. It therefore provides an efficient hedging device” (p. 70). With the help
of com, speakers can achieve a double effect of mitigating an FTA by replacing a certain expression with kulehta.

In excerpt 4, taken from the Sejong Corpus, A and B are talking about their teacher and wondering how it is that she recently got married despite being ugly and old. However, A doesn’t explicitly use the word for ‘ugly’ when describing the teacher, but instead uses kulehta because the statement could be a potential FTA to both the speaker and the addressee. Even though there is no previous information given about what ‘be so’ means, B understands what A means.

Excerpt 4

1→ A: e (laughing) oymo-nun ccom kule-si-ciman,
   yes appearance-TC ccom be.so-SH-but
   ‘Yes, it is. Although the teacher looks like that,’

2 B: e.
   yes
   ‘Yes.’

3 A: (laughing) kuntey, (laughing) ton-i ccom
    but money-NM ccom
    manh-usi-canh-a.
    be.much-SH-you.see-INT
    ‘But she is rich, you know.’

Excerpt 5 is taken from the drama, Kamwunuy yengkwang ‘Family of Honor’, episode 31. Husband (H) and wife (W) have a daughter who suffers from a mental
They make desperate efforts to get her married as soon as possible so she will be taken care of when they die, but their efforts have always failed. Recently, they have noticed a positive change in her attitude. They assume that the daughter has started to date someone, and they are very curious about him but the daughter doesn’t tell them anything. A cousin tells the mother that she saw a picture of a man playing basketball in the daughter’s room. The wife tells the husband that the man seems to be a basketball player. The wife doesn’t like the fact that her daughter is dating an athlete, but she doesn’t want to say bad things because the man who might be her future son-in-law who will take care of her precious daughter. In line 3, she says wuntong senswu com kuleh-ci anhn-a? ‘Isn’t being an athlete a bad job?’ to her husband. She doesn’t use explicit negative expressions but instead the word kulehta when giving this opinion. She adds com to be even more cautious about expressing the negative opinion.

Excerpt 5

1 W: kuntey wuntongha-nun namca ay-n ke kath-e. but exercise-RL man kid-RL thing be.like-INT
   ‘But he seems to be a boy who does sports.’

2 H: wuntong?
   exercise
   ‘Sports?’

3 W: wuntong senswu com kuleh-ci anhn-a?
   exercise player com be.like-NOM not.be-INT
   ‘Isn’t being an athlete a bad job?’
‘Isn’t that a job that you do for a short time, when you’re young?’

4.3.2.2 **Speech act qualifier**

*Com* in certain contexts qualifies the illocutionary force of the speech act rather than the lexical item in the utterance. The traditional function of *com* as a politeness marker is a typical example of speech act qualification.

4.3.2.2.1 **Theory of speech act**

When we speak to one another, we make use of utterances. Especially when we are not just saying something but are actually doing something using utterances, Austin (1962) refers to it as the “performative utterance.” He divides performative utterances into five categories:

a. **Verdictives**: giving of a verdict, estimate, grade, or appraisal, e.g., *We find the accused guilty.*

b. **Exercitives**: exercising of powers, rights, or influences as in appointing, ordering, warning, or advising, e.g., *I pronounce you husband and wife.*

c. **Commissives**: promising or undertaking, and committing one to do something by announcing an intention or espousing a cause, e.g., *I hereby bequeath.*

d. **Behabitives**: apologizing, congratulating, blessing, cursing, or challenging, e.g., *I apologize.*
e. Expositives: how one makes utterances fit into an argument or exposition, e.g., *I argue*, *I reply*, or *I assume*.

Austin distinguishes three kinds of acts that are done by making performative utterances: the locutionary, the illocutionary, and the perlocutionary. We perform a locutionary act, uttering a certain sentence with a certain sense and reference, which is roughly equivalent to “meaning” in the traditional sense. We also perform illocutionary acts, such as informing, ordering, warning, and undertaking, that is to say, utterances that have a certain (conventional) force. We may also perform perlocutionary acts, with which we achieve something by saying something, for example, convincing, persuading, deterring, and even surprising or misleading. For example, locution refers to the act of saying *Shoot her!* and meaning by *shoot*, shoot and by *her*, her. Illocution means the act of urging, advising, and ordering the addressee to shoot her. Finally, perlocution is the act of persuading or making the addressee shoot her.

Drawing on the work of Austin, Searle (1969) argues that we perform three different kinds of acts when we speak: utterance acts, propositional acts, and illocutionary acts. Utterance acts are equivalent to Austin’s (1962) locutionary acts, meaning that we must use words and sentences to say anything. Propositional acts are related to referring and predicting. We use language in order to refer to the matters in the world and make predictions about these matters. Illocutionary acts are related with speakers’ intent, such as stating, questioning, promising, or commanding. Further, Searle (1975) classifies illocutionary speech acts into five types:
a. Representatives (assertives): speech acts that commit a speaker to the truth of the expressed proposition, e.g., stating, suggesting, boasting, complaining, claiming, reporting, etc.

b. Directives: speech acts that are to cause the hearer to take a particular action, e.g., ordering, commanding, requesting, advising, recommending, etc.

c. Commissives: speech acts that commit a speaker to some future action, e.g., promising, vowing, offering, etc.

d. Expressives: speech acts that express the speaker’s attitudes and emotions toward the proposition, e.g., congratulating, thanking, pardoning, blaming, praising, condoling, etc.

e. Declarations: speech acts that change the reality in accord with the proposition of the declaration, e.g., excommunicating, resigning, dismissing, christening, naming, appointing, sentencing, etc.

Furthermore, Searle (1975) introduces the notion of an “indirect speech act.” In an indirect speech act, an utterance is performed indirectly by performing another. He explains that “in indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer” (pp. 60–61). For example, Can you pass the salt? is an interrogative. Usually, a question is asked to get an answer. However, this example utterance has a different purpose, that of requesting.

Com, in certain contexts, qualifies speech acts itself, and is not just a lexical item in an utterance, by reducing illocutionary force – a function that I call a ‘speech act
qualifier’. *Com* as a speech act qualifier minimizes imposition toward the addressee and lightens the responsibility of the speaker.

### 4.3.2.2 Minimizing imposition

Native Korean speakers say *com* almost habitually in requesting sentences. It is likely that when the speaker needs to redress the addressee’s negative face, *com* plays an important role to weaken the force of the utterance. For example, in a request such as *chen wen com pillyecwe* ‘please lend me one thousand won’, *com* cannot mean ‘a little of one thousand won’ because one thousand is already a fixed number, and there cannot be a little portion of it. The same utterance without *com*, *chen wen pillyecwe* is less polite than the utterance with *com*. Therefore, *com* here expresses the speaker’s attitude of trying to minimize the imposition toward the addressee. In the data, *com* was used to reduce the imposition not only of making requests or commands, but also of expressing negative or strong emotions or giving negative or uncertain information to the addressee.

Excerpt 6 is taken from the Sejong Corpus. A talks about a request made to her by a male student who is her senior. They have an assignment to submit, and he asked her to show hers to him. Such requests are rare because the assignments are critical for school grades, and students usually don’t want to share their answers with others. In this case, the older male student used *com*, showing an attempt to be polite when asking an unreasonable favor. If the sentence were exactly the same but without *com* it would sound impolite or blunt. This is because *com* weakens the force of the utterance, implying that the request is not too important, that the addressee is not under an obligation to respond to it, and that it is acceptable to reject it.
Excerpt 6

1 A: eymeysueyn-eyse manna-ss-nuntey, ttak, oppa-ka

   MSN-at meet-PST-but INJ brother-NM

2 oppa-ka ku oppa-ka,

   brother-NM that brother-NM

   ‘I met him on MSN (messenger) and he, he, he said,’

3 \(\rightarrow\) ni pokose com bw-ato toy-l-kka? ile-nun

   your paper com see-although allow-PRS-Q be.like.this-RL

4 ke-ya.

   thing-INT

   “can I see your paper, please?” He said so.’

Excerpt 7, taken from the drama Kamwunuy yengkwang ‘Family of Honor’, episode 27, shows an interaction that takes place before the interaction in excerpt 3, between the same characters. Y is using the bathroom and O enters to clean. Y cautiously talks to O. In line 3, when Y asks O’s name, she doesn’t even finish the utterance, which shows how Y tries to lessen the nervousness that O might have. Y asks O’s name first so that she can use O’s name politely in line 5. In addition, Y uses com, which functions to reduce the imposition on Y.

Excerpt 7

1 Y: ceki-yo.

   there-POL

   ‘Excuse me?’
Excerpt 8 is taken from the same drama, *Kamwun yengkwang* ‘Family of Honor’, episode 27. This is a very short excerpt, but it shows the most typical situation when native Korean speakers use *com*. A man (M) asks his housemaid (H) to give him some water. In line 1, he uses *com cwu-sey-yo* to the housemaid, whose job is to serve him. This shows that *com cwu-sey-yo* has become a typical pattern of requesting. If without *com*, it would sound more like a command without reducing the imposition toward the addressee.
Excerpt 8

1  M: acwumeni, ce mwul com cwu-sey-yo.
   Maid I water com give-SH-POL
   ‘Maid, please give me some water.’

2  H: ney.
   yes
   ‘Yes, sir.’

Excerpt 9 is taken from a talk show, Chanlanhan yusan thukcip supheysyel
‘Special Talk Show for Drama Shining Inheritance’, which aired August 3, 2009, where
the actors and actresses of a successful drama, Chanlanhan yusan ‘Shining Inheritance’
talk about interesting things that happened behind the scenes. The actress Han Hyo Joo
(H) was the heroine of the drama and Lee Seung Ki (L) was the hero. H tells the audience
of L’s efforts to look perfect on screen. At a time when the cameras were shooting only
his hand, he suddenly stopped shooting and asked for hand lotion. H copies how L
stopped shooting saying ‘bring me lotion’ in line 3. Audience members say ‘I hate you’
to L because of his excessive pursuit of perfection. However, L gets embarrassed more by
the fact that H did not use com in her reproduction of his requesting utterance. L corrects
her by saying ‘I didn’t say “lotion”. I said “lotion, please”’ adding cwum. H and the host
of the show, Y, tease L by copying him, saying ‘lotion, please’ with cwum or com.
Another host, K, also teases L, saying that even though the usage of com is very
important, L’s correction implies that L is obsessed with looking polite. This
conversation shows that the use of com is important in requesting. L was afraid that he
might be depicted as an impolite person who doesn’t use *com* in requests. And even when K teases L in line 9, he admits the importance of *com*.

**Excerpt 9**

1. **H:** son thaithul-ul tta-canh-ayo.
   
   hand title-TC take-you see-POL
   
   ‘Sometimes, the camera only needs to shoot our hands.’

2. son-ul tta-nuntey, kkunh-e ka-yo,
   
   hand-TC take-and stop-and go-POL
   
   ‘One time we were shooting his hands and he stopped the take.’

3. **camkkan-man-yo,** losyen!
   
   a.short.time-only-POL lotion
   
   ‘He said, “Hold on, lotion!”’

4. **Audience:** (laughter with clapping) yalmiw-e yalmiw-e.
   
   be.hateful-INT be.hateful-INT
   
   ‘I hate you, I hate you.’

5. **L:** losyen ile-kok an pwull-ess-canh-a. ce, losyen *cwum*.
   
   lotion like.this-QT not call-PST you see-INT that lotion *cwum*
   
   ‘I didn’t say “lotion!” I said, “lotion please.”’

6. **H:** (laughing) losyen *cwum*.
   
   lotion *cwum*
   
   ‘Lotion please.’
8 Y: losyen com.
lotion com
‘Lotion please.’

9 K: kulen ke cwungyoha-ketun-yo.
such thing be.important-you.see-POL
‘Such things are important, you see.’

10 Y: losyen ike-y maum-ey kelli-nun ke-y-a.
lotion this-NM mind-at be.hung-RL thing-be-INT
‘He even cares about whether or not she added “please” to the story.’

lotion com com
‘Lotion please. Please.’

12 K: cengceng tuleka-nun ke po-sey-yo.
correction enter-RL thing see-SH-POL
‘Look, he even corrected her just to add the “please.”’

4.3.2.2.3 Lightening responsibility

Oftentimes when speakers need to give their own opinions, they say com after the subject/topic particle as an idiom. Com reduces responsibility for the utterance and lessens the degree of importance of the utterance, and the speaker sounds more humble.

In excerpt 10, taken from the Sejong Corpus, the speaker gives her opinion that the university campus is getting dreary with less nature, and that she prefers places with fresh air because it helps her study better. This shows a typical case when na-nun ‘as for
me’ and ccom go together like an idiom, weakening the responsibility for the utterance.

Since Korean people believe that it is not polite to be assertive, they seem to make use of ccom in order to appear less assertive.

Excerpt 10

1 A: na-nun ccom kongki-ka coh-un kos-i
   I-TC ccom air-NM be.good-RL place-NM

2 coh-untey, kulayyaci kongpwu-twu cal toy-nun ke-nte
   like-but so study-also well become-RL thing-but

‘As for me, I like places where the air is fresh, then I can study well, but,’

Excerpt 11 is taken from a TV talk show, Hayphithwukeyte ‘Happy Together’, aired on March 25, 2010. The hosts, Mi Sun Park (P) and Jae Suk Yoo (Y), have a guest, Geun Young Moon (M). M started acting when she was very young and has the nickname ‘National younger sister’, meaning she is adored by people nationwide as if she were their younger sister. At 24 years old, she is still very popular because her face and behavior are still cute like a little girl’s. The host P reminds Y that M is already 24 years old. Y acts very surprised. P asks M what kind of man she likes, addressing her as akassi ‘lady’. M asks if P is asking her because she is not used to being addressed as an adult. When she gives her answer in line 7, she uses ccom, which reduces responsibility for the utterance and sounds more humble because it adds the connotation that she might be wrong about her perspective.
Excerpt 1

1 P: sumwul neys-i-canh-ayo.
    twenty four-be-you.know-POL
    ‘She is twenty four years old, you know.’

2 Y: a, cincca kule-ney-yo.
    oh really be.so-APP-POL
    ‘Oh, she is.’

3 P: sumwul ney sal akassi-nun etten suthail-ul
twenty four year lady-TC which style-AC
4 cohahay-yo?
    like-POL
    ‘What type of man do you like as a twenty four old lady?’

5 M: ce-yo?
    I-POL
    ‘Me?’

6 P: ung.
    yes
    ‘Yes.’

7 M: ce-nun ecom kitay-l swu iss-nun salam.
    I-TC ecom lean-RL way be-RL person
    ‘As for me, a person who I can rely on.’
4.3.2.4 Omission of explicit performative or negative expressions

According to Sohn (1999), “omission of situationally or contextually understood elements is a widespread phenomenon in Korean” (p. 291). There are many cases when the speaker doesn’t complete the utterance but ends with *com*. The omitted part carries negative feelings, information, or performative expressions. The speaker tries to avoid FTAs by omitting such negative parts and uttering *com* as a mitigating device. Although the speaker doesn’t complete the entire utterance, his/her thoughts are indirectly conveyed to the addressee, but the chances of losing face are reduced with the help of the hedge *com*.

In excerpt 12, taken from the Sejong Corpus, A and B talk about a movie. A says that he watched “Teacher Kim Bong-Doo,” and B criticizes A for not choosing a better movie. Although B doesn’t complete his utterance, it is certain that the omitted part of the utterance would not have been a positive approval of the movie, but rather a negative criticism. By omitting the negative part and adding *com*, both of the interlocutors reduce the chance of losing face.

**Excerpt 12**

   teacher Kim Bong-Doo-AC see-to go-PST-DC
   ‘I went to watch the movie “Teacher Kim Bong-Doo.”’

2. B: a kimpontwu?
   INJ Kim Bong-Doo
   ‘Ah, Kim Bong-Doo?’
Excerpt 13 is taken from the drama, *Kamwunuy yengkwang* ‘Family of Honor’, episode 27. Young In Lee (Y) is recently re-married into a very conservative family, where her father-in-law rules the house. The family has a tradition that a newly married wife has to wear traditional Korean costume, *hanbok*, for at least three months. In this excerpt, Y enters the kitchen in ordinary clothes and says her father-in-law gave her permission to stop wearing *hanbok*. The housemaid (H), who has worked for the family her entire life, disapproves. Y’s stepson (S) enters the kitchen and sees his stepmother in ordinary clothes. He is surprised and thinks she is resisting their family tradition. In his utterance, he doesn’t explicitly say that she is dressed ‘inappropriately’ but finishes his utterance with *com* because he wants to avoid FTAs with his new stepmother. Even though he omits the negative part of the utterance, his intention of indicating the inappropriateness of her outfit is conveyed.
Excerpt 13

1 Y: yaho!

INJ

‘Hooray!’

2 onul-pwuthe hanpok ip-ci anh-ato
today-from hanbok wear-NOM not.do-though

3 toy-nta-ko ha-sy-ess-eyo. apenim-kkeyse.
be.okay-DC-QT say-SH-PST-POL father-NM

‘Father-in-law said that I don’t have to wear hanbok from today.’

4 H: kulayto sek tal-un…

nevertheless three month-TC

‘Even so, (you’d better wear it) for three months.’

father-NM be.so-IM-QT say-SH-PST-DC-because-POL

‘I’m telling you that he told me so.’

6 S: (Entering kitchen) Coman-a na mwul com cw-e.

Joman-VOC I water com give-INT

‘Jo-man, please give me some water.’

7 (To his stepmother) emeni, kuntey, pokcang-i com…

mother by.the.way outfit-NM com

‘Mother, by the way, your outfit (doesn’t look proper).’
So far, I have discussed the first function of *com*, reduction of illocutionary force. *Com* is used as a lexical hedge to modify either a certain element inside the utterance or the speech act itself. *Com* can achieve a double effect of mitigating FTAs with the help of *kulehta*. *Com* not only reduces the feeling of imposition of an utterance, but also weakens the responsibility for personal opinions. In addition, native speakers of Korean often omit a negative or performative part of an utterance and add *com* to avoid FTAs.

### 4.3.3 Filler

The second function of *com* found in the data is as a filler. Onodera (2004) argues that “filler may be a category which contains words least loaded with semantic meaning. However, fillers might carry discourse/pragmatic meaning which makes an important contribution to the social/interactional aspect of discourse” (p. 148, my emphasis).

In my data, I have noticed that some tokens of *com* are used when no FTA is expected in the interaction. I have also noticed in my personal observations that native speakers of Korean seem to add *com* to fill a silence, or even habitually. Hence, I propose this category of filler in order to distinguish a function in which *com* is less dependent on the semantic meaning ‘a little’ from the function in which *com* is rather dependent on that meaning. That is to say, *com* in the filler category has undergone more semantic bleaching than has *com* in the reduction of illocutionary force category. Although it also reflects the speaker’s attitude concerning FTAs, the function as filler is different from the function of reducing illocutionary force. *Com* as a filler is more speaker-oriented whereas *com* as a hedge is more interactional. On that account, if the speaker omits *com* as a filler,
the utterance doesn’t change in its degree of politeness. On the other hand, if *com* as a hedge is omitted, the utterance becomes less polite.

In the data, *com* as filler can be divided into three sub-categories: (1) to show some hesitancy or less certainty, (2) to fill a gap by demonstrating the speaker’s effort to search for words and continue the conversation, and (3) to fill a potential gap with a semantically empty item. I will describe each function with data and the relevant theories.

### 4.3.3.1 Hesitation

Bloomfield (1933) states that “when a speaker hesitates, English and some other languages offer special parenthetic hesitation-forms, as [r] or [s]” (p. 186). In Korean, *com* works as the parenthetic hesitation-form. The implications of this use of *com* can be elaborated as signaling that the speaker is hesitating about saying something, is in doubt or uncertain about something, or is providing information about a current mental state of hesitation.

Excerpt 14 is from the TV drama, *Kamwunuy yengkwang* 'Family of Honor’, episode 26. This is a discourse between A, a younger sister, and B, her older brother. A has an ex-boyfriend who needs money urgently. They broke up because her family was strongly opposed to their relationship. A inherited real estate from her father, and B currently manages it for her. A wants to sell the land in order to help her ex-boyfriend. But she cannot confess to her brother that they still keep in touch because he would be very angry and would never agree to sell the land. Therefore, when B asks where she intends to use the money after selling the land, she is hesitant to answer, and she uses *com* in line 5, expressing her reluctant attitude toward being open to her brother.
Excerpt 14

1  A: ssakey-lato phal-a cwu-sey-yo.
cheap-even sel-INF give-SH-POL
‘Sell it even at a low price, please.’

2  anim mwunse cwu-si-myen cey-ka al-ase
or document give-SH-if I-NM know-and.so

3  chepwunha-lkey-yo.
dispose-PRM-POL
‘Or, if you give me the document, I will dispose of it.’

4  B: kuke eti ssu-lyekwu?
the.thing where use-intending
‘Where do you intend to use it?’

5  A: kunyang com(.) ssu-l tey-ka iss-ese kulay-yo.
just com use-RL place-NM be-because be.such-POL
‘Just, because I have things to do with the money.’

Excerpt 15 is taken from a TV talk show, *Hwangkum ecang* ‘Golden Fishery’, episode 231, with host Kang Ho Dong (K) and guest Lee Sun Kyun (L), aired on May 11, 2011. L is an actor who became popular in the very successful drama “Pasta.” L talks about how he got the role. Others had turned down the role and the director contacted him on very short notice. He explains his reluctant feeling when he first received the scenario, giving several reasons: that the character had more takes than his previous roles, he would be more responsible for the success of the drama, he felt burdened by such an
important role, he didn’t feel confident because there was so little time to prepare, and his wife was about to have their second baby. When he lists these reasons, he uses *com* several times, in lines 1, 8, 10, and 16. Rejecting or even seriously considering rejecting such a promising role could look arrogant because at that time he was not a popular actor. These *coms* make his utterance sound discreet as he lists his reasons.

**Excerpt 15**

1→ L: koyngcanghi *com* cayngcayngha-n pwun-tul-hanthey
   greatly *com* be.prominent-RL people-PL-to

2 sinalio-ka ka-ss-ta-nun yayki-nun tul-ess-ko
   scenario-NM go-PST-DC-RL story-TC hear-PST-and
   ‘I heard the scenario was sent to very prominent actors and’

3 nwuka nwuka ha-ki-lo hay-ss-taka
   someone someone do-NOM-DR decide-PST-do.and.then

4 kecelha-y kaci-kwu meynicye-hanthey yenlak-i
   refuse-INF have-and manager-to contact-NM

5 w-ass-nuntey nayil moley-kkaci tap-ul
   come-PST-and tomorrow the.day.after-until answer-AC

6 tal-la kulay-ss-ta
   give-IM say-PST-DC
   ‘someone accepted the role but (later) rejected it, so they contacted my manager and wanted us to answer within two days’

7 mwe iltan-un cey-ka hay-ss-ten yekhal-pota
   well first-TC I-NM do-PST-RT role-than
koyngcanghi  

greatly

‘well, first of all, the role is a greater portion (of the drama) than my previous acting roles and’

chaykim-ul  

responsibility-AC  

‘it is a role that I have to act with responsibility and’

ku  

that character-to  

‘My status then was such that I felt the burden of that character and even though it was a role that I was inclined to act’

sikan-i  

time-NM  

lack-RT-DC-QT-POL  

‘time was pressing but I felt that I had no confidence.’

waiphu-ka  

wife-NM  

‘at that time my wife was even pregnant’
15 keuy ay-ka nao-ki cikcen-i-ess-ko
almost child-NM come.out-NOM right.before-be-PST-and
‘the child was about to be born and’

16→ ay-hanthey com cipcwung-ul te ha-ko siph-ess-ko
child-to com focus-AC more do-NOM wish-PST-and
‘I wanted to concentrate my mind more on childcare and’

4.3.3.2 Word search

Schegloff et al. (1977) consider that a word search is one type of self-repair, and it occurs if an item (e.g., word) is not available to a speaker. Goffman (1981) explains the function of elements that mark a word search: by using the elements, “the speaker, momentarily unable or unwilling to produce the required word or phrase, gives audible evidence that he is engaged in speech-productive labor” (p. 293). Helasvuo, Laakso, and Sorjonen (2004) elaborate that a word search occurs when “a speaker breaks off a turn in progress, not modifying anything previously said, but pauses to search for the continuation of her or his turn” (p. 2). Stretching word-final sounds, pausing, or producing separate search sounds such as mm, uh, er (in English) are typical examples of elements initiating a word search. More explicit expressions such as what is it may also mark a search.

Likewise, in Korean, com is used when the speaker wants to say something but the words don’t come about easily. The speaker gains some time to search for the appropriate words while saying com with a pause or lengthening. Com in this function is similar to uh and um in English, which have often been described as signaling “I’m still in control—don’t interrupt me” (Maclay & Osgood, 1959, p. 41). The implications of
in this function are that the speaker is experiencing a planning problem; is “engaged in a word search” (Goodwin, 1987, p. 117); is “engaged in speech-productive labor” (Goffman, 1981, p. 293), such as choosing “what to say, content-wise” (Maclay & Osgood, 1959, p. 41) or how to say it; or wants to keep the floor while searching for words.

In excerpt 16, taken from the Sejong Corpus, A and B are talking about their mutual friend who needs to graduate from the university soon. A also needs to graduate. In line 2 and 3, A tries to describe how he feels about this, but it seems hard for him to find the exact word. So he says **ccom** and gains some time while he tries to find the right word for expressing his feeling. **Ccom** signals that the speaker is now trying to find appropriate words, and it reduces the chance of having the other person interrupt. Hearing **ccom** and a pause after it, the addressee notices that the speaker is searching for words and waits for his continued utterances.

**Excerpt 16**

1 A: uum XX oppa-nun ya ppalli colephay-yaci::,
   INJ XX brother-TC INJ fast graduate-should
   ‘Well… XX should graduate soon.’

2 B: an kulay-to yocum yocum-ey-nun **ccom::**
   not be.so-although lately lately-at -TC **ccom::**

3 pwulanha-n ke-n ani-la, **ccom**,
   be.anxious-RL thing-TC not-but, **ccom**
   ‘As a matter of fact lately, lately…. I am…I don’t mean anxious but…..’
4 A: ne-pota manhi nam-ass-ul ke-I?
you-than much leave-PST-RL thing-AC
‘I guess he probably has more time left than you do.’

5 B: aniya::, pisushakey nam-ass-e.
no similarly leave-PST-INT
‘No, he and I have a similar time left before graduation.’

Excerpt 17 is taken from the TV talk show *Hwangkum ecang* ‘Golden Fishery’, episode 232, with host Kang Ho Dong (K) and guest Sung Shi Kyung (S), aired on May 18, 2011. S is a very popular singer and has been for ten years. K asks what his secret is for being constantly successful. In line 5, S produces *com* and a pause before he responds. Then, in line 8, he continues to search for words to elaborate on his initial response, producing *ccom* with a pause two times.

Excerpt 17

1 K: sip nyen-ul pethi-ko iss-nun Sengsikyeng
ten years-AC endure-and stay-RL Sung Shi Kyung

2 ssi-uy mwuki-nun mwe-p-ni-kka?
Mr-of weapon-TC what-AH-IN-Q
‘What is your weapon that makes you available to stay as long as ten years?’

3 S: kunyang (.) ce-kath-un nom-to hana iss-nun ke
Just I-be.like-RL guy-also one exist-RL thing
Just, I think it is meaningful that one guy like me also exists in this world.’

‘I guess my merit is that I don’t change a lot.’

‘my voice or the way I sing or my behaviors or my stories are just always sarcastic.’

4.3.3.2.1 Collocation with other discourse markers

When the speaker uses com to gain some time to think of an appropriate word, it often appears with other discourse markers. The usual discourse markers that collocate with com in the data are mwela kulelkka ‘what should I call it’, ilehkey ‘like this’, and mak ‘roughly’. In excerpt 18, taken from the Sejong Corpus, A and B talk about love. A says women tend to confuse a false love with a true love, especially when they are in difficult situations and don’t have anybody with whom to talk. In line 2, A wants to continue to
list other circumstances when women tend to be confused, but he has difficulty in retrieving and selecting appropriate words. Ccom, along with the following self-addressed question mwe-la kule-l-kka, signals that A is searching for words and trying to complete the rest of the utterance. In line 3, A tries to continue but again has difficulty finding the appropriate expression before completing the utterance. Com in conjunction with another discourse marker ilehkey signals that A is unable to come up with the word, and the following self-addressed question shows that the words aren’t occurring to A. A delays the utterance with these discourse markers, signaling that he wants to keep the conversation going. In line 4, A finally succeeds in completing his utterance as the word chaykimkam ‘responsibility’ is retrieved.

**Excerpt 18**

1 thukhi cikum himtul-ko, maum-ul thel-eno-l sanghwang-i especially now be.tough-and mind-AC open-put-RL situation-NM

2→ eps-ko, ku taum-ey ccom mwe-la kule-l-kka. not.exist-and the next-at ccom what-DC be.so-PRS-Q

‘Especially when the situation is very tough and there is no one to talk heart-to-heart, and the next….what should I call it…’

3→ ponin-i manhi hay-ya toy-nun. manhi ilehkey com herself-NM much do-should become-RL much like.this com

4 mwe-la kule-l-kka caki-hantey chaykimkam-i manhi what-DC be.so-PRS-Q self-to responsibility-NM much
‘the person herself should do it much, do much…what should I call this…in such a tough situation where the person has much responsibility,’

Excerpt 19 is taken from a TV talk show, *Nollewa ‘Come to Play’* aired on August 16, 2010. The hosts Jae Suk Yoo (Y) and Ha Neul Kim (K) have a guest, Jong Hyuk Lee (L). They are all men, and they are talking about childbirth. L says he watched his wife’s delivery. K says some say it’s good for husbands to watch it but others say it’s bad. L responds saying ‘it depends on the angle’. Before he comes up with the word ‘angle’ he gains time by saying *com* with other discourse markers in line 6.

**Excerpt 19**

1. **K:** kuntey kuke-y cikcep po-nun ke-y
   but that-NM directly see-RL thing-NM

2. coh-ta-ko ha-nun ke-y coh-ta-ko
   be.good-DC-QT say-RL thing-NM be.good-DC-QT

3. ha-nun salam-tul-to iss-kwu po-myen
   say-RL people-PL-also exist-and see-if

4. an toy-n-ta-ko ha-nun salam-tul-to
   not be.okay-IN-DC-QT say-RL people-PL-also
iss-ketun-yo.
exist-given.that-POL

‘But, some people say it’s good to watch it in person and others say it’s not good.’

L: a kuntey kuke-nun e ku
INJ but that-TCP ccom INJ that

mo-la kule-l-kka ayngkul-ey ttala
what-be-DC say-PRS-whether angle-to according

com tall-ayo.
com be.different-POL

‘Oh, but, that is well…the…what should I say… it’s a little different depending on the angle.’

Excerpt 20 is taken from the TV talk show Hwangkum ecang ‘Golden Fishery’, episode 231, aired on May 11, 2011. A host, Jong Shin Yoon (J), questions a guest, a famous musician, Do Kyun Kim (D). D is known to have dated people from many different countries. The host J is curious about how they are different. D answers that they are different in their mentality. Y asks how American women’s mentality is different from others. D responds that they are a little wild and then tries to give a better explanation. He says ccom with a pause and gains time before he comes up with an example of a cowboy or a cowgirl as being ‘wild’ in line 5.
Excerpt 20

1 J: simseng-i ette-n-ka-yo?

disposition-NM be.how-RL-Q-POL

‘How are their dispositions?’

2 mikwuk pwun-tul-un ette-sey-yo?

America people-PL-TC be.how-SH-POL

‘How are American people?’

3 D: icey (.) yakkan wailtuha-n myen-i iss-ci-yo.

now little be.wild-RL aspect-NM exist-SUS-POL

‘Well (.) I think they tend to be little wild.’

4 ameylikha ameylikha taylyuk-uy phwungwucek-i-ko

America America continent-of geomantic-be-and

‘America, Feng-shui on American continent, and’

5 ccom (.) khawupoi khawukel kath-un

ccom cowboy cowgirl be.like-RL

6 kule-n sik-ulo

be.so-RL style-DR

‘ccom (.) in such style like cowboy or cowgirl’

4.3.3.3 Filled pause

Although the definition of a filled pause seems to be different for different scholars, there is no doubt that English um or uh, Japanese eto, and French euh are typical examples of a filled pause. Filled pauses are “pauses (not words) that are filled with sound (not silence)” (Clark & Fox Tree, 2002, p. 75) which “occur frequently in spontaneous
speech” (Cook, 1971, p. 135). They are “automatic utterances” (Fromkin, 1973, p. 49) inserted into longer utterances and are “usually idiosyncratic in that one individual may say er, another you know, another uh” (p. 42). Here, I define the notion of a filled pause as a semantically empty element of speech, which is used to fill a potential gap. Com is frequently used as a filled pause when the speaker puts com anywhere in the utterance, without much apparent pragmatic intention of mitigating FTAs, or indicating hesitancy or uncertainty, or gaining time for word searching.

In excerpt 21, taken from the Sejong Corpus, A and B talk about the zodiac. When B asks if next year is the year of the boar, A says there is much time left until the year of the boar comes. Com in line 6 doesn’t seem to have any meaning, but rather, the speaker just says com as a filled pause. The interlocutors are very close to each other and they wouldn’t have reason to worry about FTAs while talking about the zodiac. In addition, A is not searching for words or stalling for time. Therefore, com doesn’t seem to carry any discourse or pragmatic meaning that makes any contribution to the interactional aspect of the discourse.

Excerpt 21

1  A:  ccom-man  iss-umyen  twayci-tti-ci  incey,
     ccom-only  be-if  boar-zodiac-SUP  now
     ‘After a little while, it will be the year of the boar.’

2  B:  ung.  naynyen-ey  twayci  ani-ya?
     yes  next.year-in  boar  be.not-Q
     ‘Yes, isn’t it next year?’
Excerpt 22 is taken from the TV talk show *Hwangkum ecamg* ‘Golden Fishery’, episode 231, aired on May 11, 2011. Hosts Jong Shin Yoon (J), and Kook Jin Kim (K) are talking with a guest, musician Do Kyun Kim (D). The host J has introduced D as the creator of a new music genre, a combination of Korean traditional music and rock music. Y says D played a famous Korean traditional song with an electric guitar. In D’s long response, he uses *ccom* as filled pauses in line 9. He also uses discourse markers as meaningless filled pauses frequently in other lines; *incey* ‘now’ in line 2 and 5, *ku* ‘that’ in line 7, *ilen* ‘such’ in line 8, *e* ‘uh’ in line 9, *o* ‘oh’ in line 16. It seems to be a personal trait of his to use filled pauses frequently, because these words are semantically empty and he doesn’t seem to have any pragmatic intention in using them.
Excerpt 22

1 J: yoke-lul illeyk kitha-lo yencwu-lul hay-ss-ta-ko
this-AC electric-guitar-with performance-AC do-PST-DC-QT
‘I heard you played it (a traditional Korean song) with an electric guitar.’

2 D: ko pwuny-a-nun cckokum kyeysok incey
that genre-TC little continuously now

3 yenkwu-lul hay w-ass-ess-c-yo.
research-AC do come-PST-PST-SUP-POL
‘I have continuously researched that genre, little by little.’

4 Y: kwukak-kwa illeyk kitha-lul?
traditional.music-with electric guitar-AC
‘About Korean traditional music and electric guitar?’

5 D: way-nya-myen incey heypimeythal ha-ta po-nikka-nun
why-Q-if now heavy.metal do-and.then see-because-TC
‘Because, well, I have been engaged in the genre of heavy metal and’

6 Y, K: yey.
yes
‘Yes.’

7 D: i heypimeythal-uy ku kanglyekha-n ku
this heavy.metal-of that be.powerful-RL that

8 pithu-wa ile-n samwulnoli-ka hangsang
beat-and be.like-RL Korean.folk.music-NM always
‘well, the powerful beat of heavy metal and Korean folk music is always,’
‘(I realized that) oh, there is a point of similarity in the sounds of heavy metal and Korean folk music’

‘from that moment, I started to pay attention to it and’

‘I studied about it.’

‘Oh, can you play that once?’

‘Now?’

‘Yes, now, once, a little’
Excerpt 23 is taken from the TV talk show *Hwangkum ecan* ‘Golden Fishery’, episode 255, aired on November 2, 2011. The four hosts and three guests are all men, and they are talking about marriage. One of the hosts, Kura Kim (K), questions one guest, Myung Soo Park (P). P is a comedian famous for having a rude personality and speaking bluntly in others’ face. He is also well-known for his ineloquent and boorish speech; he is apt to stutter, as in line 3. His marriage three years ago caused a sensation because of the big gap between his and his wife’s social background. K suggests that he must argue a lot with his wife in lines 1 and 2. P answers that he and his wife argued a lot when they were newly married but now they have come to understand each other better, in lines 3-7. He uses semantically empty *coms* frequently without any apparent pragmatic intention. Adding *com* is only a habit, and is part of his famous ineloquence in which he uses filled pauses habitually. In this conversation, K also uses many *coms* but they are different from P’s use of *com* in that they are used to mitigate the illocutionary force, asking questions that might be too personal or rude.

Excerpt 23

1  K: ani kuntey ceki sal-myense han sam nyen sa-nikka
    no but there live-while about three year live-because

    ‘Well, by the way, well, as you live, you live about three years’
mwe ccokkom mwe *com manhi com* pwuticchi-c-yo?
what little what *com much com* collide-SUP-POL
‘well, little, well, you often quarrel with your wife, don’t you?’

P: cheum-ey ku sin… sinhon ttay-nun *com*
first-at that new newly.married time-TC *com*
‘At first time, well, when we were new… newly married’

selo-kan-ey *com* sengkyek-i *com*
mutually-between-at *com* personality-NM *com*

an mac-unikka kule-taka cikum-un mwe
not match-because be.such-while now-TC what
‘with each other, because our personalities don’t match well, and then,
well, we became a better match now’

enu cengto-nun *com* cal mac-ko selo manhi
certain degree-TC *com* well match-and each.other much

ihayha-y cwu-ko
understand-INT give-and
‘and we understand each other a lot and’

K: cheka-ka amwulyayo *com* kongpwu-lul *com* ikhey
wife’s.family-NM anyhow *com* study-AC *com* like.this

ha-nun
do-RL
‘Anyway, well, your wife’s family is highly educated.’
10 P: yey yey yey yey yey.
yes yes yes yes yes
‘Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.’

11 K: *com* pekep-c-yo?

*com* feel-too.much-SUP-POL

‘Don’t you feel it’s hard to deal with them?’

12 P: ani-yo kuleh-ci an-h-ayo.

no-POL be.such-NOM not-do-POL

‘No, I don’t.’

13 tayhwa-lul an ha-myen tway-yo.

conversation-AC not do-if be.alright-POL

‘It is alright if I don’t have conversations (with them).’

4.3.4 *Increase of illocutionary force*

The third function of *com* is increase of illocutionary force. This is contrary to the first function of reduction of illocutionary force. Lexical items that strengthen illocutionary force exist in many languages. In some languages, they are contronyms, that is, one lexical item that has the two contrary functions of both weakening and strengthening the illocutionary force.

Bolinger (1972), in his book on degree words, defines the term *intensifier* as “any device that scales a quality, whether up or down or somewhere between the two” (p. 17). He distinguishes four classes of intensifiers according to the regions of the scale. The
following list is of his explanations of the four classes, followed by his example sentences (p. 17):

(i) Boosters: upper part of scale, looking up
    He is a perfect idiot.

(ii) Compromisers: middle of the scale, often trying to look both ways at once
    He is rather an idiot.

(iii) Diminishers: lower part of the scale, looking down
    They were little disposed to argue.

(iv) Minimizers: lower end of the scale
    He’s a bit of an idiot.

Quirk et al. (1985) present a different classification of degree modifiers. They divide them into two groups according to whether they scale upwards or downwards: amplifiers and downtoners. The former scales “upwards from an assumed norm” (p. 590) and is subdivided into maximizers and boosters, and the latter has “a lowering effect, usually scaling downwards from an assumed norm” (p. 590) and is subdivided into approximators, compromisers, diminishers, and minimizers, as seen in Quirk et al.’s figure (pp. 589–590), reproduced below:

(I) Amplifiers
   Maximizers (e.g.: completely)
   Boosters (e.g.: very much)
   Approximators (e.g.: almost)

(II) Downtoners
   Compromisers (e.g.: more or less)
   Diminishers (e.g.: partly)
   Minimizers (e.g.: hardly)
Com fits into Bolinger’s (1972) diminisher or minimizer classes and Quirk et al.’s (1985) downtoner group when it comes to its propositional meaning. After it gains subjectivity and intersubjectivity, it becomes a compromiser in Bolinger’s (1972) classification as well. However, native speakers of Korean also use com as a booster in many situations. Com increases the force of illocutions, contrary to its well-known function of reducing illocutionary force, precisely fitting the definition of boosters by Watts (2003) as “linguistic expressions enhancing the force of the illocution in some way” (p. 273).

But when and why is com used in such a function? Among Brown and Levinson’s (1987) four politeness strategies is the bald-on-record strategy. It is often used when the interlocutors are very close—friends or family members. If the speaker chooses this strategy, there is a possibility that the addressee will be shocked or embarrassed because the speaker doesn’t attempt to mitigate FTAs. Often the strategy may be emphasized by “positive-politeness hedges” (p. 101), as in the following example:

Dó come in, I insist, really!

(Brown & Levinson, 1978, p. 101)

This is applicable to Korean, where the functions of “positive-politeness hedges” are filled by the discourse marker com. In my data, com often is used for a bald-on-record strategy and speakers use com in order to mark a request.

4.3.4.1 Request

Com enhances the illocutionary force of an utterance when the speaker wants to indicate that it is a request or even a command. Choo and Kwak (2008) explain that Korean commands often are made indirectly with cwuta ‘give’. Kim (1997) argues that the
pragmatic marker *com* often collocates with *cwu-sey-yo* (give-SH-POL) type verbs. Kim (2006) mentions that *com* has become a fixed modality expression in requesting. That is to say, *com* with a *cwu-sey-yo* type verb is a typical fixed requesting expression in Korean. Oftentimes, the explicit performative verbs are omitted in requesting because it “is a productive mechanism for performing indirect speech acts since main clauses usually carry the speaker’s assertion” (Sohn, 1999, p. 418). To “be incomplete” or “use ellipsis” is “one of the most favored strategies for requests and other FTAs” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 227). For example, (i) has an explicit performative verb with *com* as a hedge. Native speakers of Korean frequently omit the performative verb and do not complete the utterance, as in (ii), in order to mitigate the illocutionary force. The utterance (ii) compared to (i) sounds less imposing and might be chosen to be used toward those who have more power or when the situation is more desperate. As this strategy occurs habitually in requesting circumstances, the connotation of imposition that the performative verb originally has seems to be carried over to *com*. So, in such a case as (ii), even though there is not an explicit expression, a native speaker of Korean understands it is a requesting speech act owing to *com* at the end of the utterance. *Com*, which is almost fossilized in requesting utterances as a mitigating device, has become loaded with imposition through frequent use. Jurafsky (1996) argues that “in semantic change via inference, a morpheme acquires a new meaning that had been an inference or implicature of its old meaning.... inferential change occurs because a frequent, natural inference becomes frozen into the explicit meaning of a form” (p. 551). Through this mechanism, *com* also serves to indicate that an utterance is a request.
(i) ton \textit{com} cwu-sey-yo.

money \textit{com} give-SH-POL

‘Please give me money.’

(ii) ton \textit{com}.

money \textit{com}

‘Please give me money’ or ‘Give me money.’

Since \textit{com} has acquired its new meaning as a request marker, \textit{com} can be a performatible expression by itself, even when unaccompanied by any other element. For example, if the addressee knows that what the speaker wants is money from the context or previous information, \textit{com} alone, as in (iii), will be enough to convey the speaker’s intention.

(iii) \textit{com}.

\textit{com}

‘Please give me money’ or ‘Give me money.’

As Jurafsky (1996) mentions, “at some point there is a form that is ambiguous between the old meaning and the new one” (p. 551), and \textit{com} can be used in situations both where the speaker wants to lessen and where the speaker wants to intensify the imposition on the addressee as in (ii) and (iii). The illocutionary force can be either weak or strong when \textit{com} completes the utterance, as in (ii), or stands alone, as in (iii), since \textit{com} can be used as a hedge but is itself loaded with imposition taken over from the omitted performative verb.

Excerpt 24 is taken from the TV drama \textit{49il ‘49 Days’}, episode 14. Song Yi Kyung (S) is a waitress at a restaurant owned by Han Kang (H), who is secretly in love with her. S, who is having personal troubles, has asked H if she can leave to take care of
personal matters when the restaurant is not busy, and H gave her permission to do so because he was afraid she might just quit otherwise. In this episode, S receives a call and then rushes out of the restaurant. H waits for her anxiously. When S comes back, she asks him if anything is wrong. In lines 2–5 he requests that she tell him before she goes out or goes home. In line 2 he uses ccom with a pause in the beginning of the utterance, implying that he will make a request, and in line 5 he adds two more ccoms to indicate that his remarks are a strong request.

Excerpt 24

1  S:  way kulay-yo? mwusun il iss-eyo?
    why be.such-POL what work have-POL

    ‘What’s wrong? Did anything happen?’

2→  H:  ccom (.) aph-ulo-nun ccom (.)
    ccom front-DR-TC ccom

    ‘ccom (.) in the future ccom (.)’

3  camkkan naka-ss-ta o-n-ta
    short.while go.out-PST-and come-IN-DC

    ‘I will come back after a short while’

4  naka-ss-ta thoykunha-n-ta cangki oychwul-i-ta
    go-PST-and leave-IN-DC long.time outing-be-DC

    ‘(or) I leave restaurant now and go home (or) I go out for a long time’

5→  ccom mal com ha-ko tani-p-si-ta e?
    ccom speech com do-and go-AH-SH-DC INJ

    ‘let me know, OK?’
Excerpt 25 is also taken from the TV drama 49il ‘49 Days’, episode 18. Han Kang (H), the restaurant owner, has asked Song Yi Kyung (S) to go shopping with him early in the morning. She thinks they are shopping for the restaurant, but he is planning to surprise her by making breakfast for her. However, she offends him and he angrily tells her that he had planned to make her breakfast but has changed his mind. She responds coolly that she can eat at the small restaurant that she saw on their way to the market. He is taken aback by her response and in line 5 he requests her to hear him out using two *coms* to emphasize that it is her obligation.

**Excerpt 25**

1. H: ha-y cwu-lla kulay-ss-nuntey
do-INF give-intending be.so-PST-but

2. an ha-y cwu-n-ta-kwu!
not do-INF give-IN-DC-QT

‘I said I was planning to (make breakfast for you), but I will not!’

3. S: kulem mwe o-ta po-nikka ttekpokki cip
then what come-while see-because rice.cake house

4. iss-tentei kuke mek-um toy-ci.
be-I.found that eat-if be.okay-SUP

‘Then, well, I saw a hot rice cake restaurant on the way here and I can eat there.’
Excerpt 26 is taken from Kanglyekpan ‘Crime Squad’, episode 9. Two women are talking in their shared room. A is on the bed, stretching before she sleeps. B, a journalist, is sitting at the desk silently. A asks B what she is doing, and B starts talking seriously about her work. In line 2 and 3 she confesses that she had forgotten the most important reason that she wanted to become a journalist in the first place. A is not interested in B’s confession, so A cuts B short and, in line 5, asks B to turn off the light so she can sleep. A uses ccwum at the end of her request to raise the force of her illocution.

Excerpt 26

1 A: cenki-sey manhi naw-a. pwul-ina kk-e.
   electric-bill much come-INT light-or.something turn-off-INT
   ‘The electric bill will be high. Just turn off the light.’
Dal Soo (O) is the husband of Chun Ji Ae (C). C is trying to discuss a serious matter with O. In line 1, C misquotes a proverb, saying, ‘It’s like a cat that is worried about a fish’. O corrects her, saying ‘A cat that is worried about a mouse’ in line 2. C gets annoyed because she thinks it is a trivial mistake. He corrects her often, and she thinks it distracts them from their conversation. In line 3 and 4, she requests that he just ignore her mistakes this one time. She adds two *coms* to indicate that she really means it and her request is serious.
Excerpt 27

1  C: koyangi sayngsen sayngkakha-y cwu-kwu iss-e.
cat fish think-INT give-and stay-INT
‘It’s like a cat that is worried about a fish.’

2  O: koyangi cwi sayngkak-i-keyss-ci.
cat mouse think-be-may-SUP
‘A cat that is worried about a mouse.’

3→ C: ai, kunyang hanpen-ccum-un kunyang nemeka-nun
INJ just once-about-TC just skip-RL

4 mas-i com iss-e pw-ala com.
taste-NM com have-INF try-IM com
‘Darn, can you give me a break for just this time?’

Excerpt 28 is taken from the TV drama Kamwunuy yengkwang ‘Family of Honor’, episode 29. It is a conversation between a senior, B, and a junior, A, at a workplace. A wants to use B’s cell phone because A’s cell phone is out of battery power. A needs to urgently call home and at the same time, wants to rush to the restroom immediately. A is upset that B doesn’t just give him her cell phone right away, but stalls for time asking questions. In line 7, A presses B to give him the cell phone quickly, but he omits the main performative verb and merely utters the adverb twice in addition to com. In this case, com strengthens the illocutionary force denoting that the utterance is an urgent request. The speaker adds com because he wants to make the addressee understand the imposition on her and take the action of giving him the cell phone immediately.
Excerpt 28

1 A: senpay, hyutayphon com pilly-e cw-e.
    senior cell.phone com lend-INF give-INT

   ‘Senior, please let me use your cell phone.’

2 B: ni ke-n ecce-kwu?
    your thing-TC be.how-and

   ‘What happened to yours?’

3 A: pasteyli-ka ta talh-ase kul-ay.
    battery-NM all wear.out-because be.so-INT

   ‘(I’m asking you) because my battery went dead.’

4 B: kulem chwungcenha-myen toy-c-an-h-a?
    if.so charge-if be.okay-NOM-not-do-INT

   ‘If so, you can charge the battery, can’t you?’

5 A: cip-ey kuphakey cenhwaha-yya ha-nuntey, hwacangsil-to
    house-to urgently call-must do-but restroom-also

6 kuphata-n mal-i-ya.
    be.urgent-RL word-be-INT

   ‘I have to call home urgently but I want to go to the restroom too.’

7⇒ (pressing) ppalli ppalli com.
    quickly quickly com

   ‘Quickly quickly (give it to me).’

8 B: (Frowning, hands over the cell phone)
A: komaw-e, senpay.
be.thankful-INT senior
‘Thank you, senior.’
(receives the cell phone and runs into the bathroom)

Com can even stand alone and be a request marker by itself, given the appropriate context. In excerpt 29, taken from the TV drama Kamwunuy yengkwang ‘Family of Honor’, episode 30, A, and her new boyfriend, B, are in her room. A feels uneasy being alone in the room with him. She abruptly tells him to go home right away, making the excuse that it is too warm to be together in such a small room. Since B doesn’t think it’s hot in the room, he insists on staying a little longer. A raises him up by force and pushes him out of the door. In line 5, A says ccom four times consecutively while she forcefully pushes her resisting boyfriend. Despite the fact that ccom occurs independently without any other sentential elements or a performative verb, it can efficiently convey the speaker’s intention of forcing the addressee into an action as a strong request marker. The several consecutive repetitions of the request marker intensify the effect even more.

Excerpt 29

1 A: (pushing him to the door by force) cal ka-la.
   well go-IMP
   ‘Go safely.’

2 B: a na-n an tew-untey.
   INJ I-TC not be.hot-but
   ‘Ah, it’s not hot for me.’
In excerpt 30, taken from the TV drama Oneye ‘On Air’, episode 1, a mother, A, is seeing off her very young son, B, at the airport. She is sending him to her ex-husband in London for summer vacation. The son is annoyed by her anxious reminders, and at the end of his endurance shouts *ccom* at his mother. *Ccom* alone as a complete sentence is enough to convey his strong demand that she should stop talking to him in such a manner.
Excerpt 30

1 A: Lenten pi cacw o-nikka
London rain often come-because

2 wusan kkok chayngki-kwu,
umbrella surely pack-and

‘Make sure to pack an umbrella because it often rains in London and,’

3 a thyupu tha-l ttay,
INJ tube ride-RL time

‘oh, when you take subway,’

4 B: a ccom!
INJ ccom

‘Ah stop!’

5 Lenten-un nay-ka te cal al-a emma-pota.
London-TC I-NM more well know-INT mom-than

‘I know about London better than you.’

6 A: okhey.
okay

‘Okay.’

Excerpt 31 is taken from Kanglyekpan ‘Crime Squad’, episode 10. Four
detectives, Jin (J), Park (P), Nam (N), and Shin (S) and one journalist, Cho (C), are
talking about the kidnapping of a college girl, Park Eun Ah. Everybody is trying to guess
the motivation of the kidnapping, but their ideas don’t seem sensible. N says it could be a
crime of passion and P becomes annoyed at N’s careless remark, and says ‘Ayu, ccom’ in line 7. This line has enough power to convey his annoyance and request N to stop saying such ridiculous things. N responds to P’s strong reaction with annoyance in line 8.

Excerpt 31

1 N: napchi iyu-ka mwe-y-a, ton, animyen mwe?

kidnap reason-NM what-be-INT money or what

‘What is the reason for the kidnapping? Money, or what?’

2 J: wenhan?

grudge

‘Grudge?’

3 S: Pakuna-ka kulehkey wenhan-ul sal il-i

Park.Eun.Ah-NM like.that grudge-AC earn thing-NM

4 mwe-ka iss-ul-kka-yo?

what-NM exist-PRS-Q-POL

‘What kind of thing could she have done to incur such grudge?’

5 phyengpemha-n cip-ey phyengpemha-n tayhaksayng-i-nte.y.

be.ordinary-RL house-at be.ordinary-RL college.student-be-given.that

‘She was merely an ordinary college student from an ordinary family.’

6 N: chiceng?

crime.of.passion

‘A crime of passion?’
So far, I have described three general pragmatic functions of *com*: (1) reduction of illocutionary force, (2) filler, and (3) increase of illocutionary force. Traditional explanations of *com’s* pragmatic functions only shed light on (1), but *com* has expanded its function to a level where it no longer relies on the propositional meaning. This pragmatic expansion is another piece of evidence for *com’s* grammaticalization.
CHAPTER 5. PHONOLOGY OF COM

Com is known to be an abbreviation of cokum. Phonetic erosion or reduction is one of the “ordinary regular sound changes” (Joseph, 2004, p. 53) that could reflect “the effects of low prosodic prominence” (Joseph, 2004, p. 53). De Cuypere (2008) argues that this phenomenon is generally due to the “principle of least effort,” which is “the speaker’s tendency to minimize articulatory effort by shortening the length of the utterance” (p. 215). He interprets the principle of least effort in two ways. First, frequency of use causes linguistic shortening. Second, the principle of least effort is an objective motivation for language change (De Cuypere, 2008). Phonological attrition or phonological reduction is one of the characteristics that occur in the process of grammaticalization. Heine (1993) explains this phenomenon thus: “The phonological substance is likely to be reduced in some way and to become more dependent on surrounding phonetic material” (p. 106). Heine and Kuteva (2007) argue that phonetic erosion is restricted to the following four kinds of process, or any combination thereof (p. 43):

1. Loss of phonetic segments, including loss of full syllables
2. Loss of suprasegmental properties, such as stress, tone, or intonation
3. Loss of phonetic autonomy and adaptation to adjacent phonetic units
4. Phonetic simplification

The development from cokum to com is an instance of the first kind of process, showing both loss of phonetic segments and reduction from a disyllabic to a monosyllabic unit. This same phenomenon is observable in many Korean words: sai ‘interval, gap’ became say, makwu ‘recklessly’ became mak, payam ‘snake’ became paym, and noul ‘sunset’ became nol.
The initial motivation of the phonetic erosion of *cokum* to *com* was the principle of least effort, and with frequent use the abbreviated form *com* entered into the grammaticalization process, which included semantic and pragmatic changes.

*Com*’s phonological change doesn’t stop here; the form is still undergoing other phonetic changes. There exist several forms of *com* in colloquial speech and casual writing, such as *cem, ccem, chom, chyom, ccom, cwum,* and *cum.* *Com* is the original form and it is often pronounced as *cum* or *cwum* or *ccom.* Other forms seem to be newly emerging among young people, especially online. Internet language has been called “written speech” (Elmer-Dewitt, 1994, p. 66) because Internet users “write the way people talk” (Hale and Scanlon, 1999, p. 83). Diverse forms on the Internet reflect the fact that people actually use forms other than the original form in real life.

Phonologically different forms of *com* are created through the operations of tensification, aspiration, and vowel alternation. In particular, tensification and aspiration occur because speakers put stress on *com.* They think that the role of *com* in an utterance is “important or needs to be emphasized or focused” (Sohn, 1999, p. 197) because *com* carries “connotative meanings representing the speaker’s delicate feelings” (Sohn, 1999, p. 196).

![Diagram of phonological forms of *com*](image)

Figure 2. Various phonological forms of *com*
The following examples are taken from texts produced by an online community that is composed of 350,450 females ranging from ages 20 to 30. In their writing, they often use various forms of *com*. Examples (1) and (2) show that both *cem* with lax /c/ and its tense form *ccem* are used in front of the *ha-y cwu-sey-yo* ‘do for me’ pattern, and both are used in the same situation of making a request of the addressees. Examples (3) through (7) show cases where different forms of *com* are used in the ~ *e/a cwu-sey-yo* ‘do ~ for me’ pattern. Different forms of *com* occur in the same way in conjunction with the *cwu-sey-yo* verb in requesting situations.

(1) Thiala Thithieyl iss-usi-n pwun kongyu *cem* ha-y

   Tiara TTL have-SH-RL person share *cem* do-INF

   *cwu-sey-yo*.

give-SH-POL

   ‘Anybody who has the file “TTL” from Tiara, please share it with me.’

(2) Kwumi Intong-ey soknwunssep yencangswul cal ha-nun

   Kumi Intong-at eyelash extension well do-RL

   kos chwuchen *ccem* ha-y *cwu-sey-yong*.

   place recommendation *ccem* do-INF give-SH-POL

   ‘Please recommend me the best place for eyelash extensions in Intong, Kumi Province.’

(3) tapkul-lo *chom* tal-a *cwu-sey-yo*.

   reply-with *chom* suspend-INF give-SH-POL

   ‘Please leave me a reply.’
Why do people pronounce *com* in various ways? Is the sound alternation of *com* with other forms automatic? Or is there any significant correlation between different forms and speaker’s attitude?

First, let’s take a look at the tensed forms *ccom* or *ccem*. Tensification in general refers to the phenomenon in which the lax stops /p, t, k, c/ and fricative /s/ are changed into their counterparts /p’, t’, k’, c’, s’/ when they appear after /p, t, k/. The cause of tensification appears to be the air pressure built up due to these stops being unreleased for a fraction of a second. Generally it is a word-level rule, but it can occur even across a
word boundary when this boundary is not accompanied by a phonetic juncture (pause) within an intonational phrase (Sohn, 1999). That is to say, /cl/ in com can be tensed as /cc/ in ccom or ccem automatically when it occurs after the syllable final /p, t, k/. For example, when com occurs right after the stop sound, it is predicted that com becomes tensed to ccom or ccem automatically, as in the following example sentence.

(8) ikes com cwu-sey-yo.

this com give-SH-POL

‘Please give this to me.’

Because of coda neutralization, ikes is pronounced [iket]. Native speakers of Korean will pronounce /com/ in this example sentence as /ccom/ after the /t/ sound of ikes ‘this’. But after anything other than a stop sound, as in the following examples, com doesn’t need to be automatically tensed and will be pronounced as /com/ in ordinary situations.

(9) pheyn com cwu-sey-yo.

pen com give-SH-POL

‘Please give me a pen.’

(10) hakkyo com ka-la.

school com go-IM

‘Please go to school.’

However, in my data, the alternation to various forms of com cannot be predicted by sound environment alone. The following examples show all the different forms of com in the same sound environments, right after the word chwuchen ‘recommendation’ and followed by the ha-y cwu-sey-yo pattern. Because chwuchen ends in nasal /nl/, if com
follows an automatic alternation rule, only *com* or *cem*, which have a lax sound syllable-
initially, can occur, as they do in Examples (11) to (13). However, as seen in Examples
(14) and (15), people actually use tensed *ccom* or *ccem* and, in (16) and (17), even
aspirated *chom* and *chym*.

(11) khephimeyikhe chwuchen *com* ha-y cwu-sey-yo.
    coffee.maker recommendation *com* do-INF give-SH-POL
    namchin senmwul-yo.
    boyfriend gift-POL
    ‘Please recommend me a coffee maker. It’s a gift for my boyfriend.’

(12) syayto chwuchen *cem* ha-y cwu-sey-yo.
    eye.shadow recommendation *cem* do-INF give-SH-POL
    ‘Please recommend me an eye shadow.’

(13) namca cikap pulayntu chwuchen *cum* ha-y cwu-sey-yo.
    man wallet brand recommendation *cum* do-INF give-SH-POL
    issta paykhwacem ka-lyekwu-yo.
    later department.store go-intending-POL
    ‘Please recommend me a brand for man’s wallet. I’m going to the department
    store later.’

(14) namca cikcangin nothupwuk neh-ul swu iss-nun
    man office.worker laptop put-PRS way have-RL
    paykphayk chwuchen *ccom* ha-y cwu-sey-yo.
    backpack recommendation *ccom* do-INF give-SH-POL
‘Please recommend me a backpack where you can put a laptop inside for a male office worker.’

(15) chwuli sosel chwuchen  

detective novel recommendation  

‘Please recommend me detective novels.’

(16) Naikhi wuntonghwa chwuchen  

Nike sneakers recommendation  

‘Please recommend me sneakers from Nike.’

(17) phica chwuchen  

pizza recommendation  

‘Please recommend me a pizza.’

According to the principle of least effort, speakers use economy in their articulation. In other words, phonological change occurs for reduction of physical effort (Schuhmacher, 1974). When the speakers violate the automatic rule, it means another motivation is involved. Among many other phonological changes, consonantal weakening has long been recognized as a significant, natural type of phonological change. For example, the process of /t/ > /d/ > /ð/ > /ø/ as in Latin [vita] ‘life’ > [vıda] > [vıda], and eventually to Modern French vie [vi] (Escure, 1977). The occurrence of tense or aspirated forms of com go against the universal tendency; however, this can be partly explained by sound symbolism. Sound symbolism is the “direct linkage between sound and meaning” (Hinton, Nichols, & Ohala, 1994, p. 1). Sohn (1999) observes that there are several thousands of sound symbolic words in the Korean lexicon, and such words have
delicate connotational nuances. Sound symbolism is reflected in both vowels and consonants. For example, bright vowels /a, ɛ, o/ tend to indicate brightness, sharpness, lightness, smallness, thinness, and quickness. On the other hand, dark vowels /e, u, ə/ tend to connote darkness, heaviness, dullness, slowness, deepness, and thickness. Speakers seem to apply the sound symbolism of consonants and vowels in creating different phonological forms of *con* to express the delicate nuances of their feelings.

Makino and Michio (1989) discuss several types of sound symbolism in Japanese that are related to phonemes and psychological states. For example, the nasal sound /n/ gives a more personal and speaker-oriented impression than the velars /k/ and /ɡ/. This is the reason why, although the pair of synonyms ので node ‘because’ and から krar ‘because’ both mean ‘because’, the first is perceived as more subjective. They also explain that the use of gemination can make a more emphatic or emotive version of a word, as in the following pairs: ぴたり / ぴったり pitari / pittari ‘tightly’, やはり / やっぱり yahari / yappari ‘as expected’, 放し / っ放し hanashi / ppanashi ‘leaving, having left [something] in a particular state’, and many others (Makino & Michio, 1989). This use of gemination is similar to Korean tensification, and it verifies that tensification occurs in order to represent the speaker’s modality.

Sound symbolic words can be subclassified as phonomimes, phenomimes, and psychomimes. Phonomimes mimic human, animal, or natural sounds; phenomimes suggest the manner, look, or shape of something in the external world; and psychomimes express internal feelings, mental conditions, states, or sensations. Various phonological forms using different phonemes in *con* function as psychomimes in that they indicate different feelings or intentions of speakers. Speakers “explore phonological choices for
pragmatic and conversational purposes” (Foulkes, 2006, p. 626) and thus produce different forms.

The question then arises of what the different forms try to indicate. Why do speakers choose to pronounce *com* in different ways? *Com* has more formality than the other phonological forms. Many studies have shown that speakers “move closer to the standard in more formal styles of speech” (Foulkes, 2006, p. 644). Other forms are mostly used in informal situations, especially in speaking.

Korean’s ten vowel phonemes may be arranged as in the following table 3 (Sohn, 1999, p. 156).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>place</th>
<th>front</th>
<th>back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lips</td>
<td>unround</td>
<td>round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tongue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mid</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low</td>
<td>ε</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vowel /o/ in *com* is a mid-back vowel. On the other hand, the /i/ in *cum* and /u/ in *cwum* are pronounced with a higher tongue position. According to the sonority scale of Blevins (1995), the sonority of /o/ is higher than that of /i/ or /u/ because the tongue position is lower:
Kwon (2007) analyzes sonority and aperture for Korean vowels and proposes the following scale of their phonological strength (p. 20):

\[
\begin{array}{c c}
\text{LOW} & \text{STRONG} \\
i & < u < i < wi < \partial / o < e / we < a < \epsilon \\
\end{array}
\]

Therefore, even though it has the same onset /c/ and coda /m/, com is more sonorant and strong than cum and cwum. Com is the most audible to the hearer, while cum and cwum are less audible. Speakers choose the less audible forms, cum and cwum, in order to reduce the pragmatic effect of their function. Cum or cwum is only used to modify (either increase or decrease) illocutionary force, but never used for a “filler” function because a filler carries the least pragmatic load. Speakers can say cum or cwum when they don’t have to rely on the function of com. For instance, in such a situation as making a request to a very close person or when the request is not a heavy burden to the hearer, the speaker may want to reduce the function of “decreas[ing] illocutionary force” of com. On the other hand, when speakers want to make a strong request but still want to indicate their hesitant or reluctant feeling, they may want to reduce the function of “increas[ing] illocutionary force” of com.

Consonantal variations in onset position, as in ecom or chom, also have pragmatic effects. The lax stop /c/ has only a minor degree of aspiration and no tenseness. The aspirated stop /ch/ is pronounced with a strong puff of air. The tensed stop /c’/ is
produced with the glottis constricted and by building up air pressure behind the closed place of articulation and instantaneously releasing the closure while pushing the air forward (Sohn, 1999). Garrigues (1995) argues that the three steps of the shift from the lax to the tense to the aspirated form in Korean signify simple, intensive, and paraintensive feelings, respectively. Sohn (1999) explains that a plain consonant tends to connote slowness, gentleness, heaviness, and bigness; an aspirated consonant flexibility, elasticity, crispness, and swiftness; and a tense consonant compactness, tightness, hardness, smallness, and extra swiftness.

Mozziconacci (2001) argues that different prosodic cues, such as variations in pitch, intensity, speech rate, rhythm, and voice quality add information about the speaker’s view, emotion, and attitude towards the topic, the dialogue partner, or the situation. For example, the adjective ccokkumahata is glossed as “stronger feeling of cokumahata ‘to be small’” in the Standard Korean Language Dictionary (2008). The verb kkwukita ‘to crumple’ intensifies the wrinkly impression of kwukita ‘to crumple’. The verb pancikelita ‘to be idle’ can be changed to ppayncikelita in an example of speakers expressing their attitude of disapproval by tensing the sound. Although not lexicalized in the dictionary, the verb ssokita ‘to deceive’ gives the feeling that the cheating is more serious than the cheating of sokita ‘to deceive’. The noun kkol ‘look’ originates from kol ‘look’, and its tensification is involved with the speaker’s attitude of disdain added to the original meaning. Aspiration also adds to the speaker’s expressiveness. The aspirated phwunswu ‘an indiscreet person’ is a version of the noun pwunswu ‘discretion’, and it is used to describe a person with a scornful attitude.
Therefore, aspirated and tense consonants are related to more intensity compared with lax consonants. *Ccom* or *chom* intensifies the speaker’s intention in using *com* in conversation. That is to say, if it was used in a request as a mitigating FTA, it is more filled with the intention of reducing imposition. On the other hand, if it is used to intensify the illocutionary force, for example, to mark the utterance as a strong request, then *ccom* or *chom* is more powerful than plain *com*.

While *chom* appears only on the Internet, *ccom* is frequently used in real speech. Because *ccom* expresses more intense feeling on the part of the speaker, it is often used as a strong expression of rejection or hesitation. If someone annoys the speaker, the speaker can say “*ccom*” alone implying “stop it”. In a situation when the speaker is expected to show a response, but is extremely hesitant, “*ccom*” can be added in the response. Examples of such cases are provided in Chapter 4.

A motivation for creating variations of *com* is “the creativity of language production” (De Cuypere, 2008, p. 215). Heine and Kuteva (2007) say that “an important driving force of linguistic change is creativity” (p. 15). Creativity is about “modifying rules or constraints by using and combining the existing means in novel ways, proposing new meanings and structure” (Heine & Kuteva, 2007, p. 17). Crofty (2006) claims that speakers produce innovations in the service of a communicative goal. There are three functions of innovation. First, speakers “innovate in order to be expressive for various reasons, for example, to be noticed, to be amusing, to be charming, etc.” (Crofty, 2006, p. 81). Second, it is used for economy, which has been proposed for a wide variety of phonetic and grammatical processes to save the energy of the speaker as well as the hearer’s time. Speakers pursue not only the ease of articulation but also the ease of
perception through fortition. Finally, it is used to avoid misunderstanding (Keller, 1990, p. 94). These three functions account for the emergence of new forms of com. It is especially the case that speakers innovate and create diverse forms of com to express their feeling, attitude, or intention. Forms like chyom or cem or ccem have gone through more innovation, as they include both consonant and vowel alternation. They seem to be created in order to satisfy the speaker’s desire to manifest a unique personality.

McMahon (1994) argues that language is comparable to fashion because speakers “do not want to express themselves the same way they did yesterday, and in particular not the same way as somebody else did yesterday” (p. 168). When speakers enact the attitude of aykyo ‘charm, cuteness, loveliness’, they can use forms like chyom or cem or ccem, whereas ccom or chom could sound like the speaker is temperamental. By altering its pronunciation, speakers modify com into words that most fit to the occasion.

Besides the different forms of com, there is another interesting observation about the phonology of com. That is, com shows different phrase boundaries according to its meaning, function, or category changes.

First, when com is used as a noun, the phrase boundary including com becomes [X#com#Y].

(18) haksayng-tul-i #com# tulew-ass-ta.

student-PL-NM a.few enter-PST-DC

‘A few students came in.’

Second, when com is used as an adverb, the phrase boundary becomes [X#comY].

“reflecting the modifying scope of the adverb” (Jun, 1996, p. 21).
Third, as Mok (2001) argues, when *com* is used as a delimiter, or a discourse marker, the phrase boundary becomes \([X\com#Y]\) as in (20). Song (2005) explains that if a boundary is placed within phrases, unless the speaker is distracted by someone or something, it sounds odd and unnatural.

(19)  meli-ka \#com \ aphu-ta.

head-NM a.little be.painful-DC

‘I have a slight headache.’

(20)  ne \com# kapang \com# il-lwu \com# kac-kwu \ wa

you com bag com here-toward com have-and com come

bw-a.

see-IM

‘Bring the bag here.’
CHAPTER 6. EVOLUTION OF COM

In the previous chapters, I have made synchronic analyses of com using morphosyntactic, semantic, pragmatic, and phonological approaches. This chapter will offer a diachronic analysis of com from a grammaticalization perspective to show the evolution of com as a discourse marker. Grammaticalization as an approach to understanding language change “is concerned with such questions as how lexical items and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions or how grammatical items develop new grammatical functions” (Hopper & Traugott, 2003, p. 1). This research framework is concerned with “strong correlations between phonological, syntactic and semantic-pragmatic changes” (Haspelmath, 2004, p. 26). It is widely accepted that such changes follow this path:

change of use > change of meaning > change of form

(pragmatic) (semantic) (syntactic + phonological)

(Nicolle, 2007, p. 47)

The word com started as a contracted form of cokum and gradually has moved toward greater (inter)subjectivity, expanding its semantic and pragmatic functions and undergoing reanalysis of grammatical categories as well as phonological change. I will analyze each kind of change that com has undergone in the sections that follow.

6.1 Structural change

According to Hopper and Traugott (2003), when a form undergoes grammaticalization, “it tends to lose the morphological and syntactic properties that would identify it as a full member of a major grammatical category” (p. 107). They suggest this cline of categories:
major category (> intermediate category) > minor category. The major categories include nouns and verbs in almost all languages. Minor categories are prepositions, conjunctions, auxiliary verbs, pronouns, and demonstratives, although these vary from language to language, being manifested often as affixes. Intermediate categories derive straightforwardly from verbs and nouns, such as adjectives and adverbs. With the unidirectionality of grammaticalization, it can be hypothesized that all minor categories have their origins in major categories (Hopper & Traugott, 2003). The origin of com can be traced back to the nominalized construction cyekom ‘being a little amount’ in Middle Korean. Through lexicalization and grammaticalization processes, cyekom has experienced phonological, syntactic, and semantic-pragmatic changes. Figure 3 shows the path down which cyekom has proceeded to become com as a discourse marker, the furthest point of the changes. Coms in different categories have been developed gradually, and the older categories remain to coexist with new categories; grammaticalization processes occur through such gradual changes along a gradient. As Andersen (2001) argues, “changes are always manifested in synchronic variation” (p. 228). Com as a delimiter currently shows the greatest degree of change, and it is still in the process of grammaticalization, involving both subsective gradience within a category of delimiter and intersective gradience between categories of adverb and delimiter. In this chapter, I will describe the changes that com has gone through, starting from cyekom, with brief explanations about the properties of each category.
Figure 3. Structural change of *com*
The nominalized construction cyekom became the noun cokum by lexicalization. Lexicalization refers to “adoption into the lexicon” (Brinton & Traugott, 2005, p. 18). Brinton and Traugott (2005) explain that lexicalization involves “processes that combine or modify existing forms to serve as members of a major class” (p. 101) as compared with grammaticalization, which involves “decategorization of forms from major to minor word class and/or from independent to bound element to serve as functional forms” (p. 101). Cokum as a noun, which was lexicalized from cyekom, continues to change as it proceeds through the grammaticalization process.

Cokum as a noun branches into three forms. First, it remains as a noun with the same phonological form, following a principle of divergence that the original lexical form may remain as an autonomous element when it undergoes grammaticalization (Hopper, 1991). Cokum as a noun decategorizes into an adverb cokum.

Cokum as a noun also undergoes phonological attrition to one syllable com as a noun, an allomorph of cokum. It follows a unidirectional phonological cline in the grammaticalization process, in which the move is toward reduction, as in going to > gonna and because > coz in English or noul ‘sunset’ > nol; ssawum ‘fight’ > ssam; cheum ‘first time’ > chem in Korean. First, com itself is a noun, as in (2a) and (2b).

(2) a. com cen-ey cemsim mek-ess-eyo.
   little before-at lunch eat-PST-POL
   ‘I had lunch a little while ago.’

b. com-man mek-ul-key-yo.
   little-only eat-PRM-PRS-POL
   ‘I will eat only a little bit.’
The fact that \textit{com} functions as the object or the patient, as an argument of the verb \textit{mekta} ‘eat’, is more evidence that \textit{com} is a noun in (3).

(3) \textit{com-ssik} \textit{mek-ela}.

little-by eat-IM

‘Eat little by little.’

Second, there is morphosyntactic evidence that \textit{com} has the characteristics of a noun. The adjective \textit{com-sulepta} (‘little’-sulepta) ‘be petty, small-minded, small, insignificant’ is lexicalized from \textit{com} combined with the adjective-deriving suffix \textit{sulep} ‘be suggestive of, seeming’. Because the suffix \textit{sulep} is only attached to nouns, \textit{com} here must be a noun.

Additionally, the adverb \textit{com-chelem} ‘rarely, seldom, hardly’ is lexicalized from \textit{com} and the particle \textit{chelem} ‘as, like’. Because the particle \textit{chelem} ‘as, like’ also always takes a nominal, \textit{com} here again must be a noun.

\textit{Com} as a noun branches into three: it remains \textit{com} as a noun, and it decategorizes into \textit{com} as an adverb and \textit{com} as an adnoun.

\textit{Com} as an adverb is generally known to be an adverb of degree (Ceng, 2006; Cwu, 2000; Kim, 1997; Se, 2006; Son, 1988). \textit{Com} as a degree adverb allots a low degree to modified words (Son, 2001) in terms of state, distance, time, and quantity. \textit{Com} as a degree adverb modifies adjectives (4a), copulas (4b), determiners (4c), and manner adverbs (4d).

(4) a. \textit{meli-ka} \textit{[maywu/com]} \textit{aphu-ta}.

head-NM [very/little] be.painful-DC

‘I have a [severe/slight] headache.’
b. *ku-nun* [maywu/com] *pwoo-ca-ta.*

he-TC [very/little] rich.person-(be)-DC

‘He is [very/somewhat] rich.’

c. *ikes-un* [maywu/com] *hen os-i-ta.*

this-TC [very/little] old cloth-be-DC

‘This is a [very/somewhat] old cloth.’


that person-TC [very/little] urgently leave-PST-DC

‘That person left [very/somewhat] urgently.’

*Com* as a noun has also developed into an adnoun. Martin (1992) categorizes *com* ‘petty’ as an adnoun, specifically, a pseudo-adnoun that is derived from a noun. Adnouns modify another noun or noun phrase at the pre-noun position. Martin argues that some adnouns are more like bound adnouns (or prefixes), which cannot be separated from the following noun that they modify, and that *com* is one of these. In such a case, the boundary between adnoun and prefix is not clear. How to decide on the boundary line between adnouns and prefixes in Korean categories is still an unresolved issue. But from the perspective of grammaticalization, this fuzzy boundary between categories can be understood by the gradience in language change. Lee (2009) shows that native Korean nouns develop into adnouns and then become prefixes; *com* also follows the universal path and decategorizes into a prefix. *The Sisa Elite Korean Dictionary* (2006) and *Minjung Essence Korean-English Dictionary* (2000) introduce *com* ‘petty, small’ as a
prefix as in *comtotwuk* (*com*-'thief') ‘pilferer, sneak thief, petty thief’ or *comsayngwen* (*com*-'Mr., Esq.’) ‘a narrow-minded person, a petty person’.

*Com* as an adverb decategorizes into a delimiter. As Sohn (1999) explains, “many words in a major category (nouns, verbs, and adjectives) have developed into minor category elements such as adverbs, particles, and affixes” (p. 261); *com* also followed this path and developed into a particle. Mok (2001) observes that when *com* is located in the regular position of an adverb, it becomes one prosodic unit with the object, not the verb. *Com* composes one unit with the object *pap* ‘meal’, not the verb *mekta* ‘eat’ in (5b), while the adverb *ppalli* ‘fast’ and the verb *mekela* ‘eat’ become one unit in (5a). Mok claims that *com* tends to form one unit with the preceding element, not the predicate, because it is on its way to becoming grammaticalized as a delimiter.

(5)  

a. *pap [ppalli mek-ela].*

meal fast eat-IM

‘Eat quickly; Start eating quickly.’

b. *[pap* *com]* *mek-ela.*

meal *com* eat-IM

‘Eat, please.’

*Com* within the category of delimiter shows subjective gradience, and it can be used as two different types of delimiter: constituent delimiters and sentential (discoursal) delimiters. *Com* behaves like a constituent delimiter as it can occur with case particles in noun phrases, with adverbs, and with two or more other delimiters. In (6), *com* is
attached to the adverb *ppali* ‘fast’ (6a); *ka* nominative case particle (6b); *man* delimiter (6c); and a series of delimiters *kkaci, man, and (i)lato* (6d). The position of *com*² is always right before the predicate, which is the typical location for an adverb. Therefore, *com*¹ can be discussed as a delimiter.

(6)   a.   *ppali*  *com*¹/*com*²  *ka*  *cwu-sey-yo.*  
      fast  *com*¹/*com*²  go  give-SH-POL  
      ‘Please go a little faster.’   

b.   *cey-ka*  *com*¹/*com*²  *papp-ayo.*  
      I-NM  *com*¹/*com*²  be.busy-POL  
      ‘I’m a little busy.’   

c.   *hankay-man*  *com*¹/*com*²  *cwu-sey-yo.*  
      one-only  *com*¹/*com*²  give-SH-POL  
      ‘Please give me only one.’   

d.   *Sewulyek-kkaci-man-ilato*  *com*¹/*com*²  *ka*  *cwu-sey-yo.*  
      Seoul station-to-only-even  *com*¹/*com*²  go  give-SH-POL  
      ‘Please take me even if you can go only so far as the Seoul station.’   

Just like other delimiters, *com* as a delimiter can be inserted to split the compound verb as in (7).

(7)   i.   *kep-nata*  ‘be scared’  
      ➔  *kep-to nata*  
      ➔  *kep-com nata*   

ii.   *maum-mekta*  ‘intend, plan’  
      ➔  *maum-to mekta*  
      ➔  *maum-com mekta*
In addition, *com*, like other delimiters, can intervene between two predicates in other complex predicate constructions, such as relative complex predicates (8a), auxiliary predicate constructions (8b), and negation (8c).

(8) a. *nwun-i o-n kes com kath-ayo.*
    *snow-NM come-RL fact com be.the.same-POL*
    ‘It seems that it has snowed.’

b. *camkkăn ca-ko com iss-ela.*
    *a.little.while sleep-and com be-IM*
    ‘Get some sleep for a little while.’

c. *ka-ci com mal-a.*
    *go-NOM com don’t.do-INT*
    ‘Please don’t go.’

*Com* has the unique property that it behaves as a sentential delimiter as well as a constituent delimiter. Sentential or discoursal delimiters affect the whole sentence in terms of the speaker’s perception or modality in a discourse situation. There are four representative sentential delimiters: the plural particle *tul*, the politeness particle *yo*, the obsolete apperceptive sentence-final particle *kulye* ‘indeed, I confirm’ and the concessive particle *man(un)* ‘but’. Among them, *com* seems to share similar syntactic properties with *tul* and *yo*, and it can attach to every constituent in the sentence, as in (9). A phrase within one prosodic unit is enclosed by #....#, in order to indicate contours when multiple *coms* occur serially.
(9)  
\begin{verbatim}
  com# ne  com  com# com  hwacangsil-hako  com# com  pang
  com  you  com  com  com  bathroom-and  com  com  room
  com  com#  com  kkaykkusi  com  com#  com  chiwu-ko  com#
  com  com  com  neatly  com  com  com  clean-and  com
  com  inkan-tapkey  com#  com  com  sal-ala  com.
  com  human-be.like  com  com  com  live-IM  com
\end{verbatim}

‘Clean the bathroom and room neatly and live like a human being.’

*Com* as a delimiter continues to develop and decategorizes into a discourse marker. Traugott (1995), in her study of grammaticalization of discourse markers *indeed, in fact, and besides*, observed the cline *verbal adverbial > sentence adverbial > discourse marker*, where syntactic freedom is increased as the development proceeds further. *Com* follows this same path, but it has a delimiter stage between sentence adverbial and discourse marker, which has the most syntactic freedom. Discourse markers allow speakers to “display their evaluation not of the content of what is said, but of the way it is put together, in other words, they do metatextual work” (Traugott, 1995, p. 6). As Traugott argues, discourse markers acquire new prosodic characteristics; *com* as a discourse marker also shows the emergence of various phonological forms such as *cem, ccem, chom, chyom, ccom, cwum*, and *cum*. Traugott also points out that in present day-English, discourse markers can and often do occur as disjuncts in initial position as in ‘well, she spoke’ or ‘indeed, many people hated it’, and this applies to *com*, too. Traugott claims that grammaticalization into a discourse marker is accompanied by an increase in pragmatic function, moving along a cline of *referential > non-referential* functions. *Com*
as a discourse marker has also expanded its pragmatic functions from its traditional function as a politeness marker to the function of reducing illocutionary force, the filler function, and the function of increasing illocutionary force.

6.2 Semantic change

Herring (1991, p. 253) claims that “grammaticalization involves semantic bleaching, or weakening of lexical meaning, and that this process, too, is unidirectional” (p. 253). The process of increasing subjectification, or increasing speaker involvement, is also claimed to be unidirectional in grammaticalization. Herring (p. 254) explains that:

The extension of meanings encoded by a given lexical or grammatical item is predictably away from objective, referential meaning towards subjective, “speaker-based” attitudes and points of view.

Figure 4. Semantic diagram of *com*
The referential meaning of *com* is the meaning of *cokum*, ‘a little’ or ‘a few’ in English. *Com* can qualify duration or amount of measurable things or the degree of states. When *com* is used to mean ‘small amount, short duration, or low degree’, it is synonymous and interchangeable with *yakkan* ‘a little’.

(10)

a. Small amount

\[ mwul-ul \quad com \quad neh-usey-yo. \]

water-AC a.little put-SH-POL

‘Please put a small amount of water.’

b. Short duration

\[ sikan-i \quad com \quad nam-ass-ta. \]

time-NM com leave-PST-DC

‘There is a little time left’

c. Low degree of a certain condition

\[ ecey-pota \quad nalssi-ka \quad com \quad tew-e-ey-ess-eyo. \]

yesterday-than weather-NM com be.hot-INF-become-PST-POL

‘The weather became a little hotter than yesterday.’

Besides this referential meaning, the *Standard Korean Language Dictionary* (2008) by the National Institute of the Korean Language suggests two more meanings of *com*, which seem to reflect the expansion of the semantics of *com*. First, *com* indicates the situation is tolerable in a question or an ironic statement as in (11), taken from the dictionary. In this case, *com* can be replaced with *ecikanhi* ‘fairly; tolerably’ or *pothongulo* ‘ordinarily’. 
‘I can move only if the weather is only a little bit cold. (I cannot move if the weather is too cold).’

Second, the dictionary explains that *com* denotes *elmana* ‘how much/many’ in a question or an ironic statement as in (12), taken from the dictionary. Here, *com* can be replaced with *pothong-ulo* ‘ordinarily’.

(11) *nalssi-ka com chuwu-eya kitong-ul ha-ci.*

weather-NM *com* be.cold-should movement-AC do-SUP

‘I can move only if the weather is only a little bit cold. (I cannot move if the weather is too cold).’

These two meanings provided by the dictionary show that semantic bleaching has taken place and *com* has lost its referential meaning ‘a little’. On the other hand, semantic strengthening also has occurred and the referential meaning has become more intense, so *com* has come to carry the meaning of ‘minimum’. The negative polarity item, *comchelem* ‘rarely’ is a lexicalized form from *com* and a particle *chelem* ‘like’. The quantity expression *com* in the negative polarity item is used as a “minimizer,” which denotes “some minimal quantity or extent” (Vallduvi, 1994, p. 263). The fact that *com* is the minimizer in *comchelem* shows that *com* has the meaning of ‘minimum’.

(12) *twul-i kulehkey saicohkey cinay-ni com*

two-NM so in.amity get.along-because *com*

c*oh-unya?*

good-Q

‘Isn’t it nice that you two get along well?’

(13) *ku-nun comchelem yeki-ey o-ci an-h-nun-ta.*

he-TC rarely here-to come-NOM not-do-IN-DC

‘He hardly ever comes here.’
As *com* has undergone its meaning changes, it has acquired subjectivity, and it now has meaning beyond modifying something measurable. Yoo (2010) argues that the original form *cokum* is [+measurability] whereas *com* is [-measurability]. Lee (1998) points out that *com* can be used as a modal adverb as well. That is, *com* can also be used as an approximative, or “semantic hedge.” Jurafsky (1996) observes that it is a cross-linguistic phenomenon that diminutives are used for approximation, or weakening of adjectival or verbal force. In (12), *com* can be replaced with modal adverbs such as *ceypal* ‘please’, *amwuccolok* ‘as much as one can’, and *pwuti* ‘by all means’.

(14)  
\[
\text{ppalli } \text{com } \text{ka-p-si-ta.}
\]

fast \hspace{1em} \text{com} \hspace{1em} \text{go-AH-RQ-PR.}

‘Please go faster.’

The meaning of *com* undergoes further changes to mean ‘a lot’ or to intensify speakers’ locution or illocution. The referential meaning of *com* can be rephrased as “low on some scale” (Jurafsky, 1996, p. 554). By the mechanism of generalization, *com* loses the meaning ‘low’ and becomes more abstract and generalized; the diminutives gain extremely abstract, vague semantics in many languages (Jurafsky, 1996). Traugott and Dasher (2002) argue that semanticization of a polysemy comes from the appearance of an item in a new context in which the earlier meaning of the item would not make sense, and this describes how *com*, through high frequency and repetition, has started to gain the new connotation, *high on a scale*, to be used in a new context, where the speaker is intensifying something.
Com is already used frequently with this new meaning among native speakers of Korean, although it has not been lexicalized. Com in an expression like cip-i com salta ‘have a wealthy family’ does not mean ‘a little’ wealth but ‘a lot’ of wealth. In earlier usage, people were likely to use com as a hedge when talking about someone’s wealth, as in cip-i com cal salta ‘have a wealthy family’, because such comments can be a face threatening act in Korean culture. Through high frequency and repetition, the sense of cal ‘well’ seems to have been carried over to com so that com acquired the connotation of ‘high on a scale’, and finally the meaning ‘a lot’.

6.3 Pragmatic change

Traugott (1989) suggested three unidirectional tendencies (T) in semantic/pragmatic change.

T1: Meanings based in the external described situation > meanings based in the internal (evaluative/perceptual/cognitive) described situation.

T2: Meanings based in the external or internal described situation > meanings based in the textual and metalinguistic situation.

T3: Meanings tend to become increasingly based in the speaker’s subjective belief state/attitude toward the proposition.
That is, the unidirectionality of semantic/pragmatic change in grammaticalization is “from relatively more objective meanings to relatively more subjective meanings/functions, and from (relatively) objective meanings to textual and speech-act functions” (Lichtenberk, 1995, p. 321).

In other words, the unidirectionality of semantic/pragmatic change can be summarized as “from objectivity to subjectivity to intersubjectivity.”

Following universal tendencies, *com* has undergone pragmatic changes and has expanded its pragmatic functions. *Com* has been known as a mitigating device when used as a politeness marker because of its propositional meaning ‘a little’. However, the pragmatic function of *com* seems to already have passed the boundaries of the mitigating device. Analyzing my discourse data, I identified three general categories according to *com*’s function: (1) to reduce illocutionary force, (2) as a filler, and (3) to increase illocutionary force. The semantic bleaching has proceeded the least in (1), somewhat more in (2), and the most in (3). That is, the strengthening of the speaker’s involvement (subjectivity and intersubjectivity) is least in (1), more in (2), and greatest in (3). Per unidirectionality, it can be assumed that (1) is in the earliest stage and (3) is in a later stage of grammaticalization, following Hopper and Traugott’s (2003) explanation of unidirectionality, that “there is a relationship between two stages A and B, such that A occurs before B, but not vice versa” (p. 100).

The first function of *com* is to reduce illocutionary force. *Com* is used as a hedge to save face for both the speaker and the addressee. This function can be explained within the framework of politeness theory, especially in terms of negative politeness as Brown and Levinson (1978) conceive of it. Brown and Levinson suggest that hedges are a device
for negative politeness. Sohn (1985) introduces *com* as a hedging word, equivalent to the English word *just*. The Japanese word *chotto* ‘a little’ also functions as a hedge, qualifying the illocutionary force of a statement. It is a cross-linguistic tendency that diminutives qualify illocutionary force (Jurafsky, 1996).

*Com* functions to reduce illocutionary force. Since *com* hedges either a certain element within the utterance or the illocutionary action itself, I separate these two cases: *com* as a semantic qualifier and *com* as a speech act qualifier. *Com* as a semantic qualifier indicates the hesitant attitude of the speaker by modifying the degree of a specific word, but it does not affect the truthfulness of the utterance. *Com* as a speech act qualifier qualifies the illocutionary force of the speech act rather than the lexical item in the utterance. The traditional function of *com* as a politeness marker is a typical example of speech act qualification. *Com* functions to minimize imposition toward the addressee or reduce the speaker’s responsibility.

The second function of *com* is as a filler. Onodera (2004) argues that “filler may be a category which contains words least loaded with semantic meaning. However, fillers might carry discourse/pragmatic meaning which makes an important contribution to the social/interactional aspect of discourse” (p. 148, my emphasis).

*Com* that has evolved to become a filler has undergone more semantic bleaching than has *com* in the reduction of illocutionary force category. *Com* as a filler is more speaker-oriented, whereas *com* as a hedge is more interactional. On that account, if the speaker omits *com* as a filler, the utterance doesn’t change in its degree of politeness; however, if *com* as a hedge is omitted, the utterance becomes less polite. *Com* as a filler can be used for three functions: (1) to show some hesitancy or less certainty of the
speaker, (2) to fill a gap by demonstrating the speaker’s effort to search for words and continue the conversation, and (3) to fill a potential gap with a semantically empty item.

The third function of *com* is increase of illocutionary force. This is contrary to the first function of reduction of illocutionary force. *Com* strengthens illocutionary force as a “booster” (Bolinger, 1972, p. 17), that is, “enhancing the force of the illocution in some way” (Watts, 2003, p. 273) or as an “amplifier,” which scales “upwards from an assumed norm” (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 590).

*Com* in this function is used in the *bald on-record* strategy among Brown and Levinson’s (1987) four politeness strategies; this is when the speaker does not attempt to mitigate FTAs, for example, when the speaker tries to mark a request. The strategy may be emphasized by *com*, which functions as one of the “positive-politeness hedges” (p. 101).

### 6.4 Phonological change

As the nominal structure of *cyek-om* ‘being a little’ is lexicalized into the noun *cokum* ‘little amount’, the unrounded central mid vowel /ye/ changes to the rounded back mid vowel /o/. Thereafter, two syllable *cokum* becomes one syllable *com*, losing the consonant /k/ and the vowel /u/.

Phonological changes accompanied by grammaticalization are often characterized with reductions as Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca (1994) explain:

Phonological reduction can be manifested in any of the segmental or suprasegmental features of the phonetic string. Loss of stress and reduction to a neutral tone are early indicators of reduction and these are often accompanied by a shortening and reduction of vowels. Consonants can also reduce by shortening,
voicing or loss of secondary features, and both vowels and consonants are subject to complete loss. (p. 117)

Within Lehmann’s (1982) framework, phonological reduction is called phonological “attrition,” and it refers to “the loss in phonological integrity” (p. 125). He argues that “it is obvious that phonological attrition is omnipresent in linguistic change” (p. 126). Heine and Reh (1984) use the term “erosion,” and they suggest four types of erosions with regard to the relative position, type, or size of what is eroded: junctural erosion, non-segmental erosion, peripheral erosion, and syllabic erosion. Among these, *cokum* undergoes syllabic erosion, “a process whereby bisyllabic morphemes become monosyllabic, trisyllabic ones bisyllabic, etc.” (Heine & Reh, 1984, p. 21), with the effect of “reduction of size/length of a morpheme” and “decrease of the number of phonemes” (Lessau, 1994, p. 262).

With frequent use, the abbreviated form *com* entered into the grammaticalization process, which included pragmatic, semantic, and structural changes. As *com* has expanded its function into the category of discourse marker, the form is still undergoing other phonetic changes. There exist several forms of *com* in colloquial speech and casual writing, such as *cem, ccem, chom, chyom, ccom, cwum*, and *cum*. A motivation for creating variations of *com* is “the creativity of language production” (De Cuypere, 2008, p. 215). Creativity is about “modifying rules or constraints by using and combining the existing means in novel ways, proposing new meanings and structure” (Heine & Kuteva, 2007, p. 17). It is especially the case that speakers innovate and create diverse forms of
"com to express their feelings, attitudes, or intentions. Speakers seem to create these forms in order to satisfy a desire to manifest a unique personality.

So far, I have described the structural, pragmatic, semantic, and phonological changes that *com* has undergone in the process of grammaticalization. These gradual changes have been intimately connected and they have developed diverse syntactic structures and codes. These diverse *coms* coexist in contemporary Korean, following the principle of layers (Hopper, 1991): as a new layer emerges, the older layers remain to coexist with and interact with it.
CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate Korean *com*, from both synchronic and diachronic approaches, and to show how *com* has been grammaticalized into a discourse marker.

From the synchronic perspective, I have examined *com* in syntactic, pragmatic, semantic, and phonological terms. Chapter 2 describes the syntactic categories to which *com* belongs. *Com* can be categorized as noun, adnoun, prefix, adverb, and delimiter, and it exists in all of those categories in contemporary Korean.

In Chapter 3, I examined *com* from the perspective of semantics. The *Standard Korean Language Dictionary* (2008) defines *com* as having five meanings. First, *com* is the contracted form of *cokum*, which functions as a modifier in terms of degree or amount. Second, *com* is the contracted form of *cokum* as a modifier in terms of duration. Third, *com* is inserted in a request or when seeking agreement in order to make it sound softer. Fourth, *com* in a question or an ironic statement indicates that the situation is tolerable. Fifth, *com* denotes *elmana* ‘how much/many’ in a question or an ironic statement. However, the first and second meanings can be combined because they both are the pure propositional meaning of *cokum*, and they can be translated as ‘a little’ or ‘a few’ in English. Furthermore, the meaning ‘a little’ or ‘a few’ has intensified, and thus *com* has come to carry the connotation of a minimum amount. The third definition also fails to fully reflect the functions of this *com*, which is used to tone down the force of an expression, because it is not limited to being inserted in a request or when seeking agreement, but can be applied to other sentence types as well. Moreover, while the current dictionary gives five meanings, I found that *com* is used frequently among native
speakers of Korean to express a new meaning, ‘a lot’, which is contrary to its original meaning. For example, it appears in expressions like *cip-i com salta* ‘have a wealthy family’ or *com issa* ‘be wealthy’, where *com* means ‘a lot’.

In Chapter 4, I reported that *com* in my data is used in three general functions in terms of pragmatics: to reduce illocutionary force, as a filler, and to increase illocutionary force. The first function, reduction of illocutionary force, is traditionally attributed to *com*’s propositional meaning. *Com* plays an important role as a hedge in terms of negative politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). It can qualify as both a lexical item in an utterance or a speech act itself, and it is used especially when the speaker wants to reduce the feeling of imposition of an utterance or to weaken the responsibility for the utterance. However, the other two functions, as a filler and to increase illocutionary force, are evidence that *com* has undergone semantic bleaching, and even acquired a new semantics contrary to the original meaning. *Com* is used as a filler that is more speaker-oriented compared to the more interactional *com*. *Com* as a hedge affects the politeness of an utterance, but *com* as a filler doesn’t change the degree of politeness. *Com* as a filler is used (1) to show some hesitancy or less certainty, (2) to fill a gap by demonstrating that the speaker is searching for words and wants to continue the conversation, and (3) to fill a potential gap with a semantically empty item. The third function is contrary to the first function of reduction of illocutionary force; *com* can be used for the *bald on-record strategy* (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Speakers use *com* in order to mark a request and boost its illocutionary force.
In Chapter 5, I explained the phonological erosion that *com* has undergone. I described several current new allomorphs of *com*, and I also showed how *com* has different phrase boundaries that correspond to its category changes.

These synchronic analyses of *com* provide evidence that *com* has been grammaticalized in the diachronic view. *Com* has undergone pragmatic expansion along with an increase in the frequency of its use in contemporary Korean, and this has led to *com*’s meaning changes. Along with pragmatic functional expansion and semantic change, *com* has achieved syntactic freedom and undergone phonological change as well. These changes have been intimately connected, and *com* has been grammaticalized into a discourse marker.

An issue that was not addressed in this study is the role of pitch in an utterance with *com*. Based on my personal observations, I believe that there is a greater possibility for *com* to carry a high pitch when the speaker intends to increase an utterance’s illocutionary force, and less possibility that a high pitch will be used when *com* is meant to reduce illocutionary force or is a filler. This would be an interesting topic for future study, and could be examined through prosodic analysis.

Further research could also be undertaken in the following areas. First, research on how to change or update current dictionary entries for *com* should be conducted. Current dictionaries do not have consensus on *com*’s word categories or its meanings. My study could serve as a basis for future studies to contribute to modifying and updating *com*’s dictionary entry. My study shows that *com* has been recategorized from noun to adnoun and prefix, and then to adverb and delimiter. These diverse *coms* coexist in contemporary Korean, following the principle of layering (Hopper, 1991): As a new layer
emerges, the older layers remain to coexist with and interact with it. Therefore, dictionaries must include all of the existing categories and meanings of com.

Second, in terms of Korean as a second/foreign language, textbooks should include correct explanations of the functions and usages of com. Com is one of the most necessary discourse markers for KFL students because its use is closely related to communication strategies in Korean society. It is important to provide adequate instructions in textbooks. Otherwise, textbooks are likely to contribute to “pragmatic fossilization,” which is “the phenomenon by which a non-native speaker systematically uses certain forms inappropriately at the pragmatic level of communication” (Romero Trillo, 2002, p. 770).

Because of the importance of com in contemporary Korean discourse, any future work on com should consider both diachronic and synchronic perspectives. In addition, as this study has shown, it is crucial to use naturally occurring data of native speakers to fully understand com’s actual usage and functions.
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¹ I used the Yale system to romanize a Korean author’s name in case it was not provided in their study.


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