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Abstract

The study of queer linguistic practices in East Asia as a whole, and especially in Korea, is an area in desperate need of scholarship. While extensive research exists on the linguistic practices of people with non-heteronormative sexual identities in an English-speaking context (see Bucholtz and Hall, 2004; 2005; Eckert and McConnel-Ginet, 1992 as examples), only two paper touches on queer identity in a Korean linguistic context, namely King (2008) and Kim (2016). King's paper discusses the roles queer identity plays in English learning among three Korean gay men in Seoul, and Kim's paper deals with the othering of queer Korean voices through television. This paper seeks to begin to fill the immense gap in understanding of queer linguistic practices in a Korean context by proposing an analysis of the locative phrase *ijjok*, meaning this way or this direction, as well as non-standard English use as resources for queer identity creation in Korean. Using Bucholtz and Hall's tactics of intersubjectivity (2004) and interactionist (2005) frameworks as a theoretical framework, this paper analyzes speech produced by queer streamers and seeks to show that *ijjok* serves the following functions: (1) as an indirect index for queer identity; (2) as a mechanism through which to maintain conversational harmony and aesthetics; (3) as a mechanism to authenticate queer identity and in-group membership; (4) to project the social alienation and erasure of queer Koreans onto abstract linguistic space; and (5) to subvert the hegemony of earlier queer self-reference terms. Furthermore, this paper grounds itself in ethnographic research and dialogues with post-structural, feminist, and queer theories.

Keywords: Korean, queer, discourse, locativity, identity, sexuality, sociolinguistics, critical discourse analysis

1 Introduction

The study of gender and sexuality in East Asia, primarily through the lens of linguistics, is an area in desperate need of more scholarship. While the study of the manifestation of gender and sexuality in language is still somewhat burgeoning as a field, there has been a considerable amount of research done on the ways queerness manifests itself through language in English-dominated contexts (e.g., Bucholtz and Hall, 2004; 2005; Eckert and McConnel-Ginet, 1992). In addition, the research done in the East Asian context has focused mainly on Chinese and Japanese (e.g., Pan, 2018; Abe, 2010). In contrast, there is little linguistic research on queerness in the Korean context, King (2016), Kim (2016), and Berry (1999) being some of the only ones. King (2008) discusses the roles queer identity plays in English learning among three Korean gay men in Seoul. Contrary to the ways that Park (2009) describes the disclaiming of English as a way to maintain one's Korean identity, King describes how the lack of legitimacy and access to heteronormative spaces and privileges plays a large role in Korean queer people's motivation to learn and use English more openly. While the English-language use of the Korean queer community will not be discussed heavily in this paper, the ideologies surrounding Korean queer identity, as well as the other commentary about the Korean queer community, specifically, will serve as further ethnographic information, and aid me in grounding my analysis in context. Kim (2016) discusses the ways in which Korean media furthers the othering of Korean gay men and Korean-Chinese people through reproductions of culturally salient vocal stereotypes. In addition, while Berry (1999) is not strictly dealing with linguistic structures, he introduces and explains an assortment of queer self-reference terms in Korean. In addition, his paper analyzes the state of the Korean queer community, particularly public perception and the ever-changing relationship between the Korean queer community and institutions of authority.

In addition to the two studies mentioned above, there has been a decent body of work in other fields dedicated to understanding the Korean queer community, its history, modern sociopolitical contexts, as well as prospects for the future. Kim and Hahn's 2006 paper describes the history of homosexuality in Ancient and Modern Korea by describing contemptuous records of homoeroticism and situating them in relation to the dominant ideological frameworks of Korean culture. By discussing diachronic perspectives and perceptions of homosexual relationships and identities in Korean culture, their paper provides the current study with a more broad historical grounding. Choi (2015) furthers the historical discussion of queerness in the Korean context, focusing on women and the intersection of the female identity with neo-Confucianism, evangelical Protestantism, and ethnocentric nationalism. Through this more nuanced discussion of the diachronic perceptions of queer relationships and identities, this paper provides a deeper understanding of how broader, culturally salient ideologies intersect with historical and legal discourses to form the current perceptions of the Korean queer community. Rich (2016), Youn (2017), Rich and Eliassen (2020), Yi and Phillips (2015), and Jung (2021) center their work on the perceptions of queer people in Korea, primarily focusing on how religious ideologies shape modern perceptions of the contemporary queer community and the broader political and legal implications for queer Koreans. These papers provide the current study with further ethnographic information about the history and sociopolitical standings (past and present) of the Korean queer community. Seo (2001) seeks to describe the rise of the Korean queer community as a self-aware social entity and conceptualizations of queerness. This paper forms a large part of the ethnography for the present study. Written by a gay Korean man, Seo's perspectives on the Korean queer community are invaluable to grounding the current study in context. Lee (2017) continues this work by demonstrating the making of gay male place through

geographic a case study of the Nakwon-dong district in Seoul, a popular gathering place for gay men. This paper provides a unique insight into a critical, yet little-discussed aspect of contemporary Korean queer culture, namely discreet meeting places. Furthermore, Phillips and Yi's (2019) study of queer activism focuses on the differences in ideology in queer communities around identity based on geographic location. This paper serves to provide the current study with recent ideologies surrounding queer identity from a geographically diverse sample of queer Koreans, which will allow for further grounding of the analysis in a Korean queer context.

      In building off work mentioned above, the current study seeks to fill the gap in understanding how queer identity is constructed in Korean through language by analyzing the uses of the locative phrase *ijjok* 'this way/side/direction' in Korean queer identity construction. In seeking to dialogue with queer, feminist, and post-structural critical theories, the current study also seeks to deconstruct orientalist ideas of queerness in the Korean context by grounding the research in the practice, history, and sociopolitical context of the Korean queer community through the perspectives of the scholars discussed above and the queer Koreans whose speech practices serve as the basis for the current study. Using Bucholtz and Hall's (2004, 2005) tactics of intersubjectivity and interactive models, Gal and Irvine's (2000) semiotic processes of the ideological construction of difference, and Yum (2012)'s principles of Korean communication competence as a theoretical basis, the current study will put forth an analysis of the use of the locative phrase *ijjok*, 'this way/direction 'as a resource of queer identity construction in Korean. While there are certainly other queer reference terms in the Korean context (see Berry, 1999 and All about LGBTQ, 2020 for discussions of common queer reference terms), the current study will focus on *ijjok* exclusively. Due to the unique nature of *ijjok* as a commonly used locative term from which queer identity emerges, the current study chose to focus on *ijjok* to highlight the

dynamic and culturally specific ways in which queer identity is constructed in Korean. In addition, as most of the queer reference terms commonly used today derive from English, the current study feels as though the larger sociocultural dynamics of English use in the Korean queer community should be discussed more thoroughly in a separate study.

Through an analysis of queer speech, the current study will attempt to answer the following questions: 1) what functions does the locative phrase *ijjok* serve in Korean queer discourse, 2) what are the motivations behind its use compared to other queer reference terms, and 3) how does the locative nature of the phrase impact its meanings and functions. To this end, the current study proposes that these linguistic resources serve five primary functions in queer identity construction: (1) as an indirect index for queer identity; (2) as a mechanism through which to maintain conversational harmony and aesthetics; (3) as a mechanism to authenticate queer identity and in-group membership; (4) to project the social alienation and erasure of queer Koreans onto abstract linguistic space; and (5) to subvert the hegemony of earlier queer self-reference terms. In addition, the current study will also touch on the paradigm and distribution of queer self-reference terms in which *ijjok* exists.

Section 2 grounds the analysis in the sociopolitical history of queerness in the Korean context and the modern cultural landscapes facing Korean queer communities today. Section 3 discusses the theoretical framework that was constructed for analysis. The study methods, including data collection, and coding are discussed in Section 4. The methodological discussion is immediately followed by an analysis of the data in Section 5. Finally, Section 6 furthers the discussion of the analysis and suggests avenues for future research.

As a non-Korean queer researcher looking into this community from an outside perspective, extensive ethnography is imperative to ground the current study in the community

from which it arose. While not Korean myself, I have spent over eight years studying the Korean language and culture. In addition, I have also conducted extensive research on the use of English in Korean music. By mentioning these things, I only seek to demonstrate my experiences with the Korean language and culture, and to qualify myself as a researcher with the necessary competencies to conduct this research. However, despite my extensive experience with Korean, my identity as a non-Korean person will undoubtedly affect my analysis and interpretations. To combat the effects of my positionality, I have endeavored to ground my transcriptions, translations, and interpretations of the data in ethnographic research and conversations with native Korean speakers to ensure accuracy. Because the speakers in my vicinity are not queer themselves, only questions of transcription and lexical meaning were discussed when unclear.

Before moving into the sociopolitical landscapes of queerness in Korea, a point on the use of the term 'queer' and other queer Korean reference terms within the current study. The word 'queer' is used in the current study as shorthand to refer to &&non-heteronormative sexual identities connected with a broad range of non-heterosexual erotic desires and relationships. As Wilson (2006) points out in her framework for analyzing queerness in a non-Western context, a crucial point of ethnographic and post-colonial scholarship is "that the conceptualizations of the sexual vary profoundly, and in particular depart from the Anglo or Western assumptions about sexuality" (p. 1). Therefore, for brevity and to show that the use of *ijjok* is not restricted simply to a particular group within the broader Korean queer community, 'queer' will be used. However, it is worth noting that while Korean queer people do use the word 'queer' to characterize themselves (Berry, 1999), the use of it in the current study is limited to academic shorthand that denotes a particular set of salient queer identities analyzed, specifically *gei* and *rejeu* identities. *Gei*, from the English 'gay', refers generally to male homosexual identities. Similarly, *rejeu* or

7

rejeubieon, from the English 'lesbian' refers to female homosexual identities. Furthermore, in context, *ijjok* refers to the identity most salient to the speaker, and as such, I will use the specific identity reference term relevant to the example when discussing the meaning of *ijjok* in context. *While* these two identities are by no means a definitive list, they are the identities represented by the speakers analyzed in the current study. Additionally, these two terms, along with other queer reference terms will be introduced and briefly discussed in greater detail in later sections as necessary.

2 Sociopolitical history and modern contexts

Today, the sociopolitical and legal landscape faced by Korea's queer community is complex, subtle, and often quite contradictory (Phillips and Yi, 2019). Stemming from interwoven, locally interpolated influences of neo-Confucianism, evangelical Protestantism, and ethnocentric nationalism (Jung, 2021), as well as a scantly documented and culturally invisible history of homoeroticism in Korean culture (Seo, 2001; Kim and Hahn, 2006), the existence of homosexuals and other non-heteronormative sexual identities has been effectively ignored on the societal level until relatively recently. While the queer community in South Korea does not face the harsh punishments seen in surrounding nation-states (Rich, 2016), the lack of legal recognition and protection has left them vulnerable to mounting discrimination and violence from conservative religious groups, most vocally Protestants (Youn, 2017; Jung, 2021, Phillips and Yi, 2019).

However, in their 2006 paper on the history of homosexuality in the Korean context, Kim and Hahn point to three concrete instances of homosexuality in ancient Korean society: (1) the homoerotic poetry of the hwarang, elite warriors of the Silla Dynasty; (2) accounts of the Koryo King Kongmin's pederastic practice; and (3) lexical items rooted in Shamanistic practice. Each of

these accounts shows us that homosexuality is not, as many evangelical Protestants argue, a corrupt Western import (Rich and Eliasse, 2020), but in fact, it has a long history and precedence in Korean culture. However, Seo (2001) urges us to take these accounts with a grain of salt. While he does not deny the existence of the historical precedence of homosexual identity in Korean culture, he posits the accounts themselves represent nothing more than "[exceedingly rare] historical footnotes" (p. 69), the nature of which have ultimately led to the invisibility of queer communities in the wider Korean cultural consciousness.

In today's context, while acceptance of Korea's queer communities has been steadily increasing among younger generations —48% ages 30-49 and 71% in people ages 18-29 — the older generations have remained consistent in their lack of acceptance (Pew Research Center, 2013). This lack of support among older generations has subsequently led to an overall lack of political support for the advancement of LGBTQ+[1] rights and protections in Korea (Phillips and Yi, 2019), including but not limited to the legalization of gay marriage and other interconnected rights, such as trans-affirming healthcare. Despite this, queer communities have also been increasingly open about their identities and actively sought to increase identity activism in Seoul and the periphery.

This drastic increase in identity activism in the past three decades, mainly that focused on sexual identity, in the Korean context, stems largely from a group of upper-class queer Koreans who have engaged with much Western literature on queer identity (Berry, 1999). As a queer identity has primarily been invisible for most of contemporary Korean history, especially with the prevalence of Confucian and subsequently Protestant ideals as dominant ideologies in Korean societal discourse (Jung, 2021), conceptualizing a queer identity within the Korean societal frame is, in essence, defining something for which there is no coherent social referent (Seo,

2001). However, as Seo further elaborates, this new 'awareness' of queer sexual identities as valid identities beyond the personal sphere has emerged as people's access to information and others with the same identity have become more accessible, which has subsequently led to them being able to congregate secretly in gay bars and now anonymously online. These queer online spaces, which at the time of Seo's 2001 article were just beginning to become prominent, have dominated queer Korean culture (All about Queer, 2020), allowing people to engage anonymously (a critical tenet of these spaces) with other queer folks in a safe space, without the fear of being seen. These online spaces include forums, group chats, as well as streams, which are particularly relevant to the current study. I don't wish to suggest, however, that the social awareness of queer Korean identities stemmed solely from interactions with Western queer thought. On the contrary, despite intense marginalization and widespread social erasure, queer sexual identities, as mentioned above, have a long, but scantly documented history in Korean culture (see Kim and Hahn, 2006; Choi, 2015 for examples). It is only in the past century or so, however, that people have begun to actively explore what these identities mean in a contemporary Korean context.

3 Theoretical Framework

I analyzed the roles *ijjok* serves in Korean queer identity creation using a critical discourse analysis framework informed by Bucholtz and Hall (2004, 2005), Gal and Irvine (2000), Yum (2012), and Wilson (2006). Bucholtz and Hall's framework was chosen as the main framework, with influences from the others interspersed, to effectively capture the dynamic, non-essentialist nature of identity as an ongoing process that is constantly negotiated intersubjectively and in every social interaction. Their 2005 paper proposes five principles: *emergence*, *positionality*, *indexicality*, *relationality*, and *partialness*. They view identity not as something

inherent to each individual but rather as constantly being negotiated on multiple, intersectional levels through our everyday language use. In addition, they argue identities emerge through contact with others, and as such, every construction of identity is partial, a construct of the moment and the participants in it rather than a static object. The first four principles are all directly relevant to the current study.

The first principle, *emergence*, states that identity is the emergent product, rather than the source, of linguistic and other semiotic practices and is thereby a fundamentally social and cultural phenomenon (p. 593). They further elaborate that the emergent property of identity does not exclude the possibility (and in many cases, the reality) that the resources utilized for identity work can derive from previously developed resources and structures, such as the linguistic systems or specific ideologies. In the analysis, I will use this principle to show that Korean queer identity emerges not solely in the language they use but also in the shared queer identity of the participants in the discussion.

Building on that, Bucholtz and Hall argue through the *positionality* principle that identities encompass both macro-level demographic categories and local and even interactionally specific stances and discursive roles (p. 592). In essence, this principle shows that identities function on multiple levels simultaneously, and each level is equally important and inextricably linked. In this analysis, I will use this principle to show that Korean queer identity, and the resources one uses to construct it in interactions, often index multiple identities or interactional stances simultaneously.

The *indexicality* principle is arguably the most important of all of the principles, for it describes 'the mechanism whereby identity is constituted' (p. 593). Building off the work of Silverstein (1976, 1985), they argue that indexical processes, that is linguistic forms whose

meanings depend on the interactional context, occur at all levels of linguistic structure and use. They list the following as a set of linguistic means common in indexical processes of identity construction, including: (a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding one's own or others' identity position; (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups (p. 594). While that list is by no means exhaustive, it casts a wide net and allows for the researcher to begin to recognize other processes by which identity is being constructed. This principle will, in combination with the tenets outlined in the next principle, constitute the tools by which I will analyze queer identity construction in Korean.

The final principle is the *relationality* principle. The *relationality* principle emphasizes the inextricably relational nature of identities. Its purpose is to highlight that identities acquire social meaning in relation to other identities, in other words, someone's sexual identity is explicitly tied with other identities they hold like class, race, geographical origin, etc. In addition, with this principle, they also seek to deconstruct the widely held notion that identity relations revolve solely around a single axis of similarity and difference. Instead, in combination with the tactics of intersubjectivity they proposed in their 2004 paper, they offer a much broader range of relational processes, namely: adequation/distinction (cf. similarity/difference), authentication/denaturalization (cf. genuineness/artifice), and authorization/illegitimation (cf. institutional sanctioning/prohibition) (p. 598-599). Adequation denotes sufficient sameness between individuals or groups, without necessarily implying solidarity, while distinction emphasizes differences. Authentication is a process that invokes essentialist conceptions of authentic identity, while denaturalization underscores the artificiality and non-essentialist nature

of identity. Finally, authorization and illegitimation involve the sanctioning or prohibition of identities from sources of institutionalized power. Queer Korean people use these strategies in numerous ways to construct their identities, and as such, this principle, in combination with the previous one will be the main tools whereby the analysis will be conducted.

The *partialness* principle, while not as relevant to the current study, is still important to discuss, nonetheless. This principle seeks to highlight that every construction of identity is a partial account, meaning that each construction is never the full picture, but rather a constantly shifting object 'produced through contextually situated and ideologically informed configurations of self and other' (p. 605). While not directly relevant to the current study, this principle will serve as a reminder to be considerate of the positionality of both myself as a researcher and the creators and people being analyzed within their own contexts.

In addition to the main framework elements from Gal and Irvine (2000), Yum (2012), Wilson (2006), and Motschenbacher and Stegu (2013) were also incorporated into the framework for analysis.

Gal and Irvine (2000) propose three semiotic processes for representing linguistic differences, but for the current study, we will be focusing on *fractal recursivity*. *Fractal recursivity* is the projection of an opposition, salient on one level, onto another (p. 38). Reminiscent of fractals in geometry, the oppositions that can create identity can be reproduced repeatedly on each side of a dichotomy, or outside it. And while the oppositions themselves do not define social groups, they can provide actors with discursive or cultural elements to claim and thus attempt to create shifting communities, identities, selves, and discursive roles at different levels within a cultural field. For the current study, I will use this process to show how

the social erasure of Korean queer people, as described in Seo (2001), is reproduced on the lexical level through the use *ijjok*.

Continuing from Gal and Irvine, in their paper on the tenets of Korean conversational competence, June Ock Yum describes Korean communication competence as "understood not by what one does to gain one's goal but what all parties do to maintain appropriate relationships and to enhance the level of harmony" (2012, p. 12-13). To achieve and maintain this harmony, Yum outlines five major aspects: (1) empathy, (2) sensitivity, (3) indirectness, (4) being reserved, and (5) transcendentality.

Empathy is described as the most important tenet in the upholding of interpersonal relationships and conversational harmony. While in a Western context, the more cognitive, perspective taking aspect of empathy is emphasized, in a Korean context, the more important element is the engagement in emotional commitment (p.13). Yum posits that this emphasis on emotional commitment and sharing in the emotion of the other person stems from the Confucian principle of *shu*, which invites the person to feel (rather than think) how it would to be the other person, become like-hearted, and share the same emotion.

Related to empathy, sensitivity is described as the ability of interpersonal perception, in other words, how well you are intuiting the other person's needs in the conversation and ensuring the fulfilment of those needs (p. 13). In Korean conversation, the ability to become like-hearted with someone and intuit their emotional needs as not to damage their feelings or their relationship is crucial to the maintenance of interpersonal relationships and is thus a hallmark of a competent communicator. Yum posits that this brand of sensitivity stems from the Buddhist ideal of mercy first, truth second.

The third principle, indirectness, is also described as fundamental to maintaining

interpersonal harmony and conversational competence (p. 13). While intertwined with

politeness, Yum argues that indirect speech, which Korean employs frequently, stems from the

Confucian value of prioritizing relationships over the individual, and emphasizes the process that

each speaker in the interaction is undergoing as a collective to ensure a harmonious interaction.

Indirect speech softens the message, reducing assertiveness and ensuring the comfort of those

involved in the interaction. In addition to harmony, indirect speech is also perceived as

aesthetically pleasing. Yum asserts that traditional Korean poetry, *shi-jo*, is rife with extensive

forms of indirect expressions, and that poems were judged on the writer's ability to utilize

indirect speech.

In tandem with indirectness, being reserved is another process through which

conversational harmony is maintained. Yum states that by being reserved, one can avoid the

potential harm caused by freely expressing one's feelings and opinions (p. 14). In addition, Yum

also discusses the Confucian principle of *hsin* as another reason for being reserved, which states

that one's words should align with the way they live and act. If one speaks out, they must be

prepared to follow through on their words. As such, being reserved is not seen as a negative as it

is in the West, but as a sign of a competent communicator. If one is judicious about their word

choice and the expression of their feelings, they are ensuring harmonious interpersonal

relationships with those around them.

In addition to being reserved, the final tenet of Korean communication is

transcendentality. Yum asserts that "Koreans believe that the highest level of communication

competence is achieved when you communicate without communicating" (p. 14). Stemming

from Buddhist influences on Korean culture, transcendentality plays off the ideals that true

communication occurs instantaneously, and one should be able to infer all one needs to know without either party ever having to explicitly state what the message is. This deeply ingrained ideal appears in discourse as a frequent absence of direct references to the topic of conversation. Koreans tend to avoid using pronouns in all levels of speech, preferring instead to either infer the topic from context or simply use a person's name or social title if clarification is needed (Lee, 1975).

In my analysis, I will incorporate these principles as possible motivations behind the use of *ijjok* in Korean queer discourse. In addition, as these principles are deeply ingrained in Korean society, they also provide the current study with further ethnographic information and a basis from which to analyze the data.

Finally, Wilson (2006)'s paper will serve less as an analytical tool, but more as an anchor, a reminder to ensure the study is upholding the ideals it's committing to. As mentioned above, she argues that when engaging with sexuality in a non-Western context, one should not attempt to force the locally salient queer sexual identities into a hegemonic Western model, but rather interpret them within the contexts from which they came. In the current study, I will work towards this goal by situating the analysis in the social, political, and historical contexts of the Korean queer community.

4 Methods

The current study focuses on the use of the locative phrase *ijjok* 'this way/direction' in Korean queer identity-creation in discourse. It seeks to show that this linguistic resource serves five primary functions in queer identity construction: (1) as an indirect index for queer identity; (2) as a mechanism through which to maintain conversational harmony and aesthetics; (3) as a mechanism to authenticate queer identity and in-group membership; (4) to project the social

alienation and erasure of queer Koreans onto abstract linguistic space; and (5) to subvert the

hegemony of earlier queer self-reference terms. For this analysis, transcripts were made for over

30 YouTube videos and clips of streams originally streamed on other platforms such as

AfreecaTV that were subsequently posted on YouTube[2]. The videos were all created by people

who self-identify as *gei* 'gay' and *rejeu* 'lesbian' content creators. The transcripts were coded for

instances of *ijjok*. These instances included the utterance containing *ijjok*, semantically relevant

surrounding utterances, the referent, as well as the situation the utterance occurred in and the

sexual identity of the speaker. Furthermore, only creators who show their faces were chosen for

analysis. This was done to prevent unintended attention from being brought to creators who

would not feel comfortable being identifiable as queer in public spaces, such as the workplace.

As stated in Section 2, as there are no legal protections for queer people in Korean law, including

those providing for protections against discrimination in the workplace, and so this choice was

made with the assumption that creators who post their faces publicly are comfortable being

identified as queer in a public capacity.

4.1 Data Collection

The edited videos were chosen due to their short length and the metalinguistic

commentary that the creators insert with emphatic subtitles and other methods. This commentary

reveals much about the creators' own ideologies surrounding their guests' concerns, experiences,

and sometimes even physical features. Following the methods of Kiesling (2004), a corpus of

tokens was created from the coded transcripts of the videos. Tokens were recorded when *ijjok*

was made by a speaker. In addition to the token itself, the researcher also noted the following in

the corpus: the sexual orientation and gender identity of all parties, the relationship between the

speaker and the intended listeners (i.e. streamer and audience, friend to friend, creator and guest,

etc.), and details about the topic of conversation or story in which the tokens occurred. The sexual and gender identities of the participants were determined by how the speakers identified themselves. In addition, the relationship between the speaker and listeners was also determined by overt descriptions of the relationships by the parties involved and/or through subtle linguistic cues, such as the use of honorifics and polite speech (or lack thereof). This was done to ensure that proper attention was being paid to social dynamics outside of the immediate conversation. As Bucholz and Hall continuously emphasize in their 2004 and 2005 papers, the intersectional and intersubjective nature of interactions are inextricable and paramount to understanding the whole picture, as it were. Furthermore, transcriptions were checked against subtitles written by the creator, and/or native speakers.

Furthermore, the selected videos generally fell into one of three general formats: (1) storytelling, either alone or with guests; (2) advising, often called 'therapy' by the creators; or (3) thematically driven games, generally involving the consumption of alcohol. These formats are not entirely exclusive; one format often leads to another, most commonly storytelling. Moreover, the fluidity of the streaming format means that these categories themselves are not rigid, but more loose categories based on observation. It is also worth mentioning that in these streams, people often donate money with specific requests attached to them, which can also serve to guide the format of the stream. In each format, the people featured on screen, including the creator themselves, are positioned as more experienced and, arguably more importantly, 'out' community members, whom one can turn to for advice. They affirm this elevated status through telling stories, either to share their wisdom, advise younger, less experienced members of the community, or a combination of the two. These formats are particularly pertinent to the analysis,

as much of the conversation in the videos centers on the shared experience of being queer in Korea, and thus, references to queerness abound.

5 Results

The following section will analyze the five main functions that *ijjok* serves in negotiating and constructing queer identity in Korean. These functions emerged as common themes in the transcripts of the videos. These patterns exist on a larger scale, and to demonstrate, examples from selected videos are below.

5.1 Ijjok as an index of queer identity

The first and most salient function that *ijjok* serves in queer Korean discourse is to index that something or someone is, in fact, queer. For example, one can describe a person or an action, among other things, as *ijjok.* In the data analyzed for the current study, *ijjok* was used around forty times to index queer identity. While the literal meaning of *ijjok* is quite general, 'this side/way/direction' (Yeon and Brown, 2011, p. 52), its queer meaning emerges through the various interactions with the identities of the discursive participants as well as with local and macro contexts. This phrase is also often juxtaposed with other terms of queer reference in the Korean lexicon like *gei* 'gay', *rejeu* 'lesbian', or *iban* '(lit.) different, second class, strange', a term created by the Korean queer community during the late 80s and early 90s, the latter of which will be discussed in detail later. These phrases are often used interchangeably with one another, as shown in Excerpt 1 below:

Excerpt 1 (from Namgyu, 2019d)[3]:

41   *je-ga*   *neukki-n-ge*   **ijjok**   *mwonga*   *gei-ro*
       1SG-SUB   feel-ATTR-thing   **this.way**   something   gay-INS
       taeeona-t-neunde   *yeoja-reul*   *manna-neun*   *geo-neun*
       born-PST-CIRCUM   woman-OBJ   meet-ATTR   thing-TOP
       "The way I see it, meeting women having been born **this way** or gay…"

42   *jagi-ga*   *moreu-l-tte-neun*   *sanggwan-i*   *eopseo-yo*

self-SUB	not.know-ATTR-time-TOP	care-SUB	not.exist-POL

"if you don't know (that you're gay), I don't care …"

43 *geunde al-myeonseo* *manna-neun-geo-neun* *geu-geo-n*
but know-while meet-ATTR-thing-TOP that-thing-TOP
yeoja-reul *jom* *yeoja-hante* *maeneo-ga* *ani-n-geo*
woman-OBJ little woman-DAT manner-SUB NEG-ATTR-thing
gata-yo *geu-geo-neun*
similar-POL that-thing-TOP

"but if you meet women while knowing (that you're gay), that's not polite to women."

44 *yeoja-bun-deul-hante* *maeneo-ga* *ani-n-geo* *gata-yo*
woman-person-PL-DAT manners-SUB NEG-ATTR-thing similar-POL
je-ga *he-bo-nikka* *al-get-deo-ra-go-yo*
1SG-SUB do-see-because know-PRES-RETROS-INTROS-ASSR-POL

"It's not polite to women. Having done it, I would know."

The creator's use of both *ijjok* and *gei* in quick succession in line 41 suggests that they occupy a similar, but not entirely equivalent, semantic space in the speaker's repertoire. However, the use of *mwonga*, a discourse particle similar in usage to the English 'like,' as a sort of correction, shows that while *ijjok* does provide the indexical meaning of gay, the more direct lexical item, *gei*, is needed for clarity. In terms of the indexical processes outlined in Section 3.2, the speaker shifted from using an indirect implicature, *ijjok*, one based on the assumption of the sexual identities of other participants in this discourse, mainly those watching his stream, to an overt mention of the more socially salient label, *gei*. This need for clarification comes later in lines 43-44, where he contrasts his indifference to a gay man who dates girls while unaware of his sexual identity with his contempt for a sexually self-aware gay man who dates women despite the awareness of his sexual identity, something he has personal experience with. In lines 42-44, there is no overt reference to sexuality, the verbs meaning 'to know' and 'to not know' (*alda* and *moreuda* respectively) have no objects. Instead, as is common practice in Korean discourse (Lee, 1975), the creator overtly mentioned sexuality at the beginning of this story in line 41 and omitted a direct reference sexual identity through the rest of this excerpt. Due to this, the

creator's choice to switch from *ijjok* to *gei* exemplifies his desire to be specific; he assumes he's speaking to a queer audience, but he wants to emphasize, by naming the identity directly, that knowing you're gay and dating people of the opposite sex is not a good thing.

Through his use of *ijjok*, this creator effectively adequated himself, as well as those listening to him, with *gei* identity. The locative nature of *ijjok* adds a more concrete, spatial metaphor to this act of adequation. Instead of simply saying *gei*, which he later does, he first chooses to say *ijjok*, implicating that he, and those listening by proxy, are all on this metaphorical 'side', which through the context, emerges as *gei* identity. The adequation of the other participants to 'this side' is not explicit, but comes as an interaction with the context of the story. This story was prompted by his listeners, most of whom are queer themselves, who were asking him to talk about his earliest dating experiences, which happened to include this particular experience with a female friend in high school. Due to the prompting from other assumed gay viewers, the creator first chooses to use *ijjok*, as a marker of adequation. A marker that shows that he is still gay, still on 'this side' despite this experience with a girl that he is going to elaborate on. The emergence of *ijjok* as a marker of queer identity is further strengthened by his use of *gei* immediately afterward. In the context of the conversation, the explicit reference, *gei*, was needed to ensure that the moral message of his story, not to hurt women by dating them for appearances despite the awareness of one's sexuality, was made as explicit as possible.

While in Example 1, the more subtle *ijjok* was changed to the more concrete lexical reference, *gei* for clarity, often, the subtle nature of *ijjok* is preferred in discourse as a subtle, yet salient marker of queerness. This can be seen quite clearly in Excerpt 2 below, where a subtle marker of gayness is needed to qualify a detail in a story about the creator's former job:

Excerpt 2 (from Namgyu, 2019c):

12   *to-ha-si-n*   *bun-deul-do*   *manh-a-yo*
       vomit-do-HON-ATTR   person-PL-also   a.lot-CONN-POL
       "There were a lot of people who threw up."

13   *il-cha-ro*   *o-neun-de-ga*   *ani-nikka*   *da*   *sul-e*   *kkora-seo*
       1-CL-INS   come-ATTR-place-SUB NEG-because   all   alcohol-LOC   drunk-PRECED
       o-nikka   *botong*   *to-reul*   *manhi ha-se-yo*
       come-beacause normally   vomit-OBJ   a.lot do-HON-POL
       "Because we weren't the first place they came to, they all came drunk and normally
       threw up a lot."

14   *to-ha-myeon-eun*   *nae-ga*   *geu-geo*   *maknae-j-anh-a*   *tto*
       vomit-do-COND-TOP   1SG-SUB   that-thing   youngest-COMP-NEG-IR   also
       nae-ga   *botong*   *geu*   *to-reul*   *tto*   *hapil*
       1SG-SUB   normally   that   vomit-OBJ   also   of.all.things
       "And when they threw up, because I was the youngest, the vomit of all things (I had to
       clean up)."

15   *uri-neun*   **ijjok**   *karaoke-nikka*   *sobyeongi*   *namja*
       we-TOP   **this.way**   karaoke-because   toilet   man
       sobyeongi-e-de-ga   *hae-yo*
       toilet-LOC-place-SUB   do-POL
       "And since we were a **"this way"** karaoke we only had urinals."

16   *geureo-myeon-eun*   *ije*   *hyeong-deul-eun*   *an-chiu-ji*
       like.that-COND-TOP   now   older.brother-PL-TOP   NEG-clean.up-COMM
       "And the older guys didn't clean up."

In this story, the creator is discussing his former job working at a famous gay karaoke bar. While not depicted here, the creator begins the story talking about how much money he made, and then suddenly shifts, prompted by questions in the stream chat, to talk about things he didn't like about the job. At first, he discusses people hitting on him, but then moves on to the cleaning aspect of the job. It is worth mentioning that prior to this use of *ijjok*, no overt references were made to sexual identity, it was simply inferred from context. However, in line 15, an overt reference was necessary to qualify why the karaoke bar only had urinals in the restroom, a fact that made his job much more difficult when a patron threw up, something he says often occurred. Through this use of *ijjok*, the creator effectively adequate the karaoke, as well as himself and the

other workers and patrons, with gayness. What was previously implied in the discourse became explicit in that moment.

Another example of *ijjok* being used to make the reference to queer identity explicit comes in Excerpt 3, shown below. Prior to this instance, there is not one overt mention of sexuality. Through the entire conversation, it is simply understood that all of the things being discussed in the conversation are related to queer identity, as these videos are generally intended for a queer audience:

Excerpt 3 (from Ddolddol, 2020a) :

118	*ne*	*geu-ch-yo*	***ijjok***	*saram*	*manna-n*	*geot-do*
	yes	that-COMM-POL	**this.way**	person	meet-ATTR	thing-also

cheoeum-i-go
first-be-CONN
"Yes, you're right. This was my first time meeting a **"this way"** person."

In this example, the speaker is calling the creator for advice over his worries in his first queer relationship. Through the conversation, the speaker discusses how he met his current partner online and then after only a day of chatting, decides to go on a trip with him and his friends. On this trip, the speaker has his first sexual experiences with this person, the nature of which were not entirely safe. After the trip, the speaker feels that he has become more invested in the relationship on an emotional level and has got played, used for sex by his partner. The creator then begins consoling him and giving him advice on safe sex practices and what to do about his current relationship. At the end of the conversation, before ending the call, the speaker utters line 118. Due to this line signaling the end of the conversation and having an insignificant semantic relationship with the surrounding lines, only line 118 was included in this excerpt. Throughout the entire conversation, no overt references to sexual identity were made; the queer identity emerged from the context of the conversation (and the video) and left implied. However, in line

118, the speaker opted to use *ijjok* to make the queerness explicit to garner sympathy. As mentioned previously, he had already stated that this was his first relationship and his first sexual experience, but by explicitly stating his partner's sexual identity, he also, in effect, emphasized all the other things he had discussed about him, including and especially the negative aspects of the relationship.

Another example of *ijjok* used to clarify a detail in discourse comes in our next excerpt, shown below. Here, similar to the example above, *ijjok* is being used as both adequation to queer identity as well as a qualifier to a detail relevant to the story:

Excerpt 4 (from Bumble Bee, 2021):

38	*netpeullikseu-e*	*it-neun*	**ijjok**	*yeonghwa*	*geu-geo*
	netflix-LOC	exist-ATTR	**this.way**	movie	that-thing
	bo-si-n	*jeok*	*it-euse-yo*		
	see-HON-ATTR	experience	exist-HON-POL		
	"That **'this way'** movie on Netflix? Have you seen it?"				

39	*jeo-neun*	**ijjok**	*yeonghwa-neun*	*geoeui da*
	1SG-TOP	**this.way**	movie-TOP	almost all
	chaenggyeo-bwa-gajigo			
	take.care.of-see-REASON			
	"I've seen almost all the **'this way'** movies (on Netflix)."			

40	*an*	*bo-n*	*yeonghwa-ga*	*eopseo-yo*
	NEG	see-ATTR	movie-SUB	not.exist-POL
	"There isn't a (gay) movie I haven't seen."			

In this example, the creator is discussing a lesbian film on Netflix that she had recently watched. While in the context of the conversation, it would have been clear that she was discussing a queer film, due to her subsequent description of the main characters as both women in a relationship (see attached transcripts), the speaker felt it necessary to specify that this film was queer through her repeated use of *ijjok*. What's interesting about this example is her question to the audience in line 38. While introducing the film, she asks her audience if they have seen it. Here use of *ijjok* in this example not only adequates the film to queer identity, but the listeners as

well. She assumes the people listening to her are *rejeu* 'lesbian' as well and expresses this assumption through her use of *ijjok*. And in line 40, as we saw in Excerpt 1 as well, the creator opts to drop *ijjok*, in favor of implying the queerness, most likely due to the principle of transcendentality described in Section 3.

While thus far, we have seen *ijjok* used mainly to qualify details in stories, subtly expressing queerness in the process, this final example shows a different side of *ijjok*. In this excerpt, shown below, the creator is describing a problematic ex-girlfriend's views on gaydar, or the ability to discern someone's queer identity, and her own thoughts on why her partner rated her gaydar so highly:

Excerpt 5 (from Bumble Bee, 2021):

94	*geunde*	*gyae-ga*	*najung-e*	*han*	*mal-i*	*jagi-ga*
	but	she-SUB	later-LOC	one	word-SUB	self-SUB
	geideo-ga	*joha-seo*				
	gaydar-SUB	good-CONN				
	"But one the later told me was that her gaydar was so good…"					

95	*jagi-do*	*molra-do*	**ijjok**-*i-l*		*geot*	
	self-also	not.know-also	**this.way**-be-ATTR		thing	
	gat-eun	*saram-eul*	*jagi-ga*	*jal*	*an-de-yo*	
	similar-ATTR	person-OBJ	self-SUB	well	know-HEARSAY-POL	
	"that even if the person didn't know themselves that they were **'this way'**, she would."					

96	*geu*	*mal-i-n*	*jeukseun*	*ireo-n*	*jit-eul*	*myeot*
	that	word-be-ATTR	being	like.this-ATTR	act-OBJ	a.few
	beon	*hae-t-deo-n*		*geo-j-yo*		
	times	do-PST-RETROS-ATTR		thing-COMM-POL		
	"Which means she must've done this a few times."					

97	*manhi*	*kkosyeo-bwa-t-na-bwa*				
	a.lot	pursue-try-PST-CONN-try				
	"She must've pursued them (straight girls) a lot, huh?"					

In this example, the creator is retelling what her ex-girlfriend said about her own gaydar, in other words, how good she was at telling if a person was *rejeu*. During her retelling, *ijjok* is ascribed to the hypothetical third person in question (line 95), despite not actually knowing if the person in

question was 'this way' or not. This adequation to queerness, unlike our previous examples, was forced onto the person. This forced nature of the adequation is further strengthened in the next few lines, where the creator says that 'those words mean that she's done this a few times. She must've hit on those people a lot, huh?' While not expressly clear on the lexical level, the verb *kkosida* used in line 97 implies a sense of unwanted pursuit or unrequited flirting. Furthermore, the creator translated this verb in previous lines as '(to try) turning someone gay', which only further serves to emphasize the problematic nature of this adequation.

Before moving into the next section, I would also like to acknowledge that while I analyze the above examples of *ijjok* as adequation, that is not the only function these instances have. In fact, most of the examples in the current study could fit into multiple categories within the analysis. Every instance of *ijjok* adequates something to queerness, but in addition to its most basic function, the following instances of *ijjok* exhibit other, more salient qualities that contribute to a deeper understanding of how *ijjok* is used within Korean queer discourse.

5.2 *Ijjok* as a mechanism of conversational harmony and aesthetics

While the discussion of *ijjok* thus far has centered around *ijjok*'s roles in queer identity construction, this section will focus on cultural-linguistic motivation behind the use of locatives to index queerness in Korean discourse. In first encountering this phenomenon, a question of the motivation behind this unique construction arose, namely: why would someone opt to use *ijjok* in discourse, when words of the same meaning are used just as frequently? The Korean language has several words that describe various aspects of queerness and queer identities. Words like *gei* 'gay', *rejeu* 'lesbian', *kwieo* 'queer', and *iban* 'different, second class, abnormal', abound in the Korean queer lexicon. However, aside from *gei* and *rejeu*, the other words did not appear in the data. This is most likely due to the fact that the latter words, as described in Section 5.4 have

fallen out of favor in the Korean queer community. It therefore begs the question, why would a speaker opt for something like *ijjok* instead of one of the more direct options? And similarly, why might a speaker use *ijjok* in conjunction with another, more direct option? The answer lies in a fundamental aspect of Korean culture and conversational dynamics.

As described in Section 3, Yum (2012) posits five key principles of communication competence in a Korean context. These principles are: (1) empathy, (2) sensitivity, (3) indirectness, (4) being reserved, and (5) transcendentality. For the purposes of this Section, mainly principles (3) and (5) will be discussed. Both principles are essential to maintaining conversational harmony, and as such, play a crucial role in the discussion of a topic as taboo as sexual identity in the greater Korean society. While the creators themselves tend to generally be less outwardly burdened by the open discussion of sexuality in a public setting, for the vast majority of Koreans, including most of the guests who appear on their streams, either through calling in or being physically there, this is not the case. Berry (1999) describes sexuality in Korean society as a topic that remains outside of public discourse; in other words, not acceptable to discuss openly. This, coupled with the aggressive, intentional erasure of non-heteronormative sexual identities from historical records (Jung, 2021), has led to what Seo describes as a sort of invisible suffering of queer people in Korea (2001). That is, knowing that something is amiss but not having concrete terms or social referents to pinpoint. And while this phenomenon has been rapidly changing in metropolitan areas like Seoul, outside of these areas and for those from more conservative backgrounds, the discussions remain hushed (Phillips and Yi, 2019).

It is therefore no surprise that for many, discussing this topic can be a stressful experience, and so indirect speech often takes on the role of softening the message, allowing communication to occur without the need (and stress) to directly acknowledge something as

taboo as queer identity. As we have seen in our many examples thus far, while speakers can use other, more direct words like *gei*, *ijjok* is a preferable alternative to maintain conversational harmony. Let's take a look at some examples of this principle in action.

In Excerpt 3, the only overt reference to sexual identity or queerness came in line 118 (Ddolddol, 2020a). For the rest of the conversation, neither the creator nor the guest used an overt reference to sexuality. And from the content, we can see why. In that video, the guest is calling for advice on how to deal with a traumatic start to his romantic and sexual lives. For context, this person had just turned 18, and for someone so young, discussing such a taboo topic, particularly with the extra stress of the trauma attached, is quite a burden. To ease the burden, and to maintain harmony, neither person in the conversation makes any direct reference to sexuality. The guest's partner is referred to as *hyeong* 'older brother', a common reference term for a close male friend (or partner in homosexual male relationships), and the creator refers to the guest as *chingu* 'friend', to make him feel comfortable and to create an atmosphere of empathy and support (harkening to principles (1) and (2)). The queerness of the guest and his partner's identities as well as the situation emerges from the context (c.f. transcends overt reference), and when the guest finally chooses to overtly reference queerness, he does it indirectly, through *ijjok*. This use of *ijjok* not only serves to soften his message through indirect speech, but also seeks to lessen the burden of discussing a topic as taboo as sexuality, particularly when coupled with negative experiences, as was the case in this excerpt.

Another example of this can be found in the title of the video **Ijjok** *sulbeongaeeseo gongpyo pihaneun beop* 'How to avoid scoring zero points at gay speed dating' (Namgyu, 2019b). The only overt reference to sexuality appears in the title. After that, as is common practice, the topic of sexuality is never referenced explicitly again. Instead, the knowledge that

whatever is discussed in the video transcends overt reference and is understood from context. While some gay reference terms are discussed in the video, like gay archetypes like *kkisuni* 'flamboyant gay' for example, these terms derive their meaning from inside knowledge. Someone outside the queer community is unlikely to know what *kkisuni* is referring to. Additionally, since these terms are inherently queer, their queerness does not need to be overtly restated with an additional overt queer reference term.

In summary, a large cultural motivation for the use of *ijjok* instead of a more explicit queer identity reference lies in the tenets of Korean conversational competence, namely indirectness and transcendentality. Being indirect in one's speech and being able to intuit the meaning from context are integral to maintaining interpersonal relationships and conversational harmony, and as such become increasingly important when discussing something as taboo as sexual identity.

5.3 *Ijjok* as a mechanism to authenticate queer identity and in-group membership

The third function *ijjok* serves in queer identity construction is the authentication of queer identity and in-group membership. By opting for *ijjok* instead of other references to queerness, the speaker authenticates their own identity in relation to queerness and is making this statement to the other parties in the interaction. They are saying, 'I am on this side,' and indirectly bringing the other party into the metaphorical side. In the interaction, the use of *ijjok*, not only adequates one's own identity to queerness but also serves to authenticate it to other queer people, as if to imply that being queer in Korea means that you should have access and utilize these specific linguistic resources. Additionally, the act of authentication, by nature, invokes essentialist realizations of identity, and as such, authenticating uses of *ijjok* often accompany a notion of how queer people should inherently be.

This authentication occurs on a few levels. If we look at the morphemes that make up

ijjok, the function of marking in-group membership seems like a logical function for this phrase

to serve. *Ijjok* is composed of two morphemes, '*i-*' the proximal demonstrative pronoun, and

'*jjok*' meaning 'side' or 'direction'. By using this phrase in the context of identity construction,

one morpho-syntactically aligns the referent of the phrase to themselves. And through

interaction, this arbitrary direction is interpreted as a reference to the sexual orientation, both of

the thing being referenced, and also to the speaker. An example of this comes in Excerpt 6,

where the creator details the ways he knows if someone is gay from his observation of how they

move their head when someone calls them in a public place:

Excerpt 6 (from Ddolddol, 2020b):

13	Creator:	*yakgan*	*ye-reul*	*deuleo-seo*	*nae-ga*	*manyak-e*
		slightly	example-OBJ	hold-CONN	1SG-SUB	if-LOC
		nae-ga	*ilban*	*iseongaeja-ya*	*geurigo*	*manyak-e*
		1SG-SUB	normal	heterosexual-ASSR	and	if-LOC
		bansong	*ireohge*	*ttolttol-a*		*bulleo-bwa*
		broadcast	like.this	Ddolddol-VOC		call-see

"If, for example, I am a normal straight person, and you call me like I'm
on a show…"

14   Guest: *ttolttol-a*
        Ddolddol-VOC
        "Ddolddol![4]"

15   Creator: *iseongaeja-ya*   *dasi*
            heterosexual-ASSR   again
            "I'm a heterosexual. Again."

16   Guest: *ttolttol-a*
        Ddolddol-VOC
        "Ddolddol!"

17   Creator: *nae-ga*   *gei-ya*
            1SG-SUB   gay-ASSR
            "I'm gay."

18   Guest: *ttolttol-a*
        Ddolddol-VOC

"Ddolddol!"

19 Creator: *mwo-n-ji*   *al-ji*
       what-ATTR-INCH   know-COMM
       "You know what I mean, right?"

20 Guest: *ireoeoke*
     like.this
     "Like thiiis"

21 Creator: *kkok pomulseon-eul* *geuryeo-ya-j-yo* *dasi* *han* *beon*
       surely parabola-OBJ draw-must-COMP-POL again one CL
       "You have to draw a parabola. One more time."

22 Guest: *ttolttol-a*
     Ddolddol-VOC
     "Ddolddol!"

23 Creator: *ireoh-ji*   *anh-a*   *geu-ji* **ijjok-*ae-deul***
       like.this-COMP   NEG-IR   that-COMM **this.way-kid-PL**
       geureoh-ji   *anh-a*
       like.that-COMP   NEG-IR
       "Are they not like this? Right. Aren't **'this way'** guys like that?"

In the above excerpt, we see queer identity is authorized by the action of drawing a parabola with their head while looking at someone who is calling you. In this segment of the video, the creator is asking the guest, a close friend of his, to call him repeatedly. In between each calling, he sets the scene for the next by telling which sexual identity he is representing. While acting 'straight', he simply moves his head in a straight line to the person calling. In contrast, when he is acting 'gay', he draws a parabola in the air with his head. In line 21, he suggests that one *has to* draw a parabola to signal the gayness in the path of one's gaze. When he uses *ijjok* in line 23, he rounds out the acting by asking, 'Aren't gays like this?' By using *ijjok* in this manner at the end of a round of dialogue, the creator effectively demonstrates that what came before is acting as a sort of shibboleth, in essence, a queer litmus test.

Later in the discussion, the guest proposes his own framework for authenticating gay identity. We can see this in the excerpt below:

Excerpt 7 (from Ddolddol, 2020b):

42   Guest: *na-neun*   *nunsseop-euro* *manhi*   *gubunhae-ss-geodeun*
                1SG-TOP   eyebrow-INS   a.lot   classify-PST-CORREL
                "I classify people by their eyebrows."

43   Creator: *eotteohge*
                    how
                    "How?"

44   Guest: *wae*   *yakgan*   ***ijjok***   *saram-deul*   *bo-myeon*   *nunsseop-i*
                why   slightly   **this.way**   person-PL   see-COND   eyebrow-SUB
                yakgan   *jom*   *neomu* *ddak*   *jeongdondoi-n*   *neukkim*
                slightly   little   really   exactly   done.up-ATTR   feeling
                it-neunde   *ilban-deul-i*   *an*   *ha-deo-ra-go*
                exist-CIRCUM   straight-PL-SUB   NEG   do-INTROS-RETROS-ASSR
                aye
                never
                "Because if you look at **'this way'** people, their eyebrows are like cleaned up, but straight guys don't get their eyebrows done, never."

Like the above excerpt, the guest also has his own way of discerning one's sexual orientation from visible actions. Through the state of one's eyebrows, instead of the way someone looks when called, the guest presents a mode of authentication of queer identity, equating nicely cared-for eyebrows with queerness and wild eyebrows with straightness. Here, once again, his use of *ijjok* serves to quantify the action of taking care of one's eyebrows as a way of authenticating or proving queer identity.

      While the above examples have shown that *ijjok* can be used to verify the queerness of others, one can also do this to their own identity. In these instances, the motivation for such self-authentication is somewhat self-serving; the person is attempting to prompt the other person to authenticate their identity through the use of in-group terms. We can see this in the example below:

Excerpt 8 (from Ddolddol, 2019):

29   *jeongongja-inde*   *jubyeon-e*   *gakkau-n*   ***ijjok***   *hyeong-i*
        major-CIRCUM   vicinity-LOC   close-ATTR   **this.way**   older.brother-SUB

> *nai-ga   jom   it-euse-yo*
> age-SUB   little   exist-HON-POL
> "I'm a (music) major and I have a close "**this way**" friend who's a bit older than me."

30   *geuregajigo   mwo   ireo-n   iyagi-deul-eul ha-myeon-eun*
     and.so   what   like.this-ATTR story-PL-TOP   do-COND-TOP
     jogeum   keokjeong   ani-n   geokjeong-eul
     little.bit   worry   NEG-ATTR   worry-OBJ
     ha-si-deo-ra-go-yo
     do-HON-RETROS-INTROS-ASSR-POL
     "And so when I talk to him about these things, he worries a bit."

In this example, the guest is describing his worries about the repercussions of coming out in the small, tight-knit professional music industry. He begins the conversation with talking about how he's always been aware of his sexuality but has only now come to a place where he feels comfortable enough in it to discuss it openly. While unaware of many things about the Korean queer community, partially due to the long time he spent closeted, he attempts to authenticate his queer identity, and subsequently his membership into the group by using *ijjok.* As a response, the creator repeatedly uses *gei* to refer to queerness. While done for specificity and emphasis, the creator's word choice also does two interesting things in regard to the guest's identity: it (1) authenticates the guest's queer identity while temporarily (2) denaturalizing (or denying) the guest's membership in the in-group. Through his word choice, the creator tries to affirm the guest's concerns and identities, reassuring him that it's normal to be worried about coming out, but that he shouldn't let that prevent him from engaging in queer life. On the other hand, the creator, by using *gei*, shows that while the guest is queer, he lacks some knowledge about certain terms and expression that would grant him in-group status. Luckily for the guest, he later takes the opportunity to teach him some, and in that moment, he then affirms his in-group status, having granted him the knowledge he needs. This is shown in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 9 (from Ddolddol, 2020a):

59   *eojetdeun   geuro-n   saram-deul-do   geu   eopgye-eseo*

anyways		like.that-ATTR		person-PL-also		that	industry-LOC

geureo-n   *ge*   *alryeo-ju-myeon-eun*   *gwingjanghi*
like.that-ATTR   thing   know-give-COND-TOP   extremely

wiheomha-n   *saram-deul*   *iss-neunde-do*
dangerous-ATTR   person-PL   exist-CIRCUM-also

"These are also people whose career might be jeopardized if people find out they are gay (beacuse they came out)."

60   *geureom*   *yeongihae-seo*   *iyu-ga*   *mweo-geteo-yo*
       and.so   brave-PRECED   reason-SUB   what-PRESUM-POL

       iyu-ga   *mwo-lkka*
       reason-SUB   what-shall

       "But still, for what reason do you think they are brave (and still go out to clubs)? What do you think that reason is?"

61   *geu-mankeum*   *nae-ga*   *gei*   *raipeu-reul*   *jeulgi-go*   *sip-go*
       that-extent   1SG-sub   gay   life-OBJ   enjoy-CONN   want-CONN

       "They want to enjoy gay life."

62   *gei*   *chingu-deul-irang*   *gati*   *gonggap*   *hyeonsang-eseo*
       gay   friend-PL-with   together   shared   reality-LOC

       uri   **mal-e**   *geureo-n*   *kki-do*   *buri-go*
       1PL.POSS   **word-LOC**   like.that-ATTR   talent-also   unload-CONN

       sip-go   *seuteureseu-reul*   *pul-go*   *sipeo-seo*
       want-CONN   stress-OBJ   relieve-CONN   want-REASON

       geureot-ge   *o-neun-geo-j-anh-a-yo*
       like.that-ADV   come-ATTR-thing-COMPL-NEG-IR-POL

       "They want to, in **our words**, be flamboyant with gay friends in a shared space and relieve stress. Isn't that why they come?"

In this example, we see the creator describing to the guest how he is not the only one whose career would be in jeopardy if he were to come out (Line 59). In a previous line, he described how he's seen doctors and lawyers, among other higher-profile occupations, come to gay clubs and participate in gay life. Due to the guest's lack of knowledge, as shown in Excerpt 3, the creator opts to use the more direct *gei* 'gay' in an effort to be clear in his explanation. He continued by asking the guest rhetorically why he thinks they do this in line 60. He answers in lines 61 and 62 that they want to enjoy gay life, be in community with gay friends, be flamboyant, and relieve stress. When he says this, however, he pauses before saying 'flamboyant' (line 62), saying *'in our words'* and then goes on to use the verb *kki burida*, which

literally means 'to unload talent,' but is often used to describe the quality of a gay man being flamboyant. By using this inclusive pronoun, he is not only taking the time to teach him a commonly used word in the Korean queer community, a word he'll need to know to be able to engage in queer life, but also showing that he is now apart of the in-group. In essence, this teaching moment, made clear through the creator's use of *gei* instead of *ijjok* for clarity, concluded with the creator bringing the guest into the in-group with his use of '*our*', and revoking his earlier denaturalization of the guest's in-group membership.

Another way *ijjok* is used in the authentication of queer identity is through restricting the amount of people who can access the content. This restriction is not a physical (or digital) restriction, but rather a restriction by way of knowledge. Many queer creators title their videos with *ijjok*. Through this use of *ijjok*, people outside of the queer community, who would know the literal meaning of the word, but would be unaware of the contexts from which queer identity is emerging from the locative phrase, are restricted via lack of knowledge from accessing the content. Now, that is not to say that someone couldn't infer the meaning of *ijjok* from watching the video. Additionally, by using *ijjok* in the titles of their videos, the creators are not attempting to prevent non-queer people from engaging with their content at all. Rather, by using *ijjok* as the queer signifier in the most public-facing aspect of their content, they are intentionally pre-authenticating the identities of their viewers; in other words, they are using *ijjok* to signal that their intended audience is queer people. We can see this in the excerpt below, which shows some of the video titles.

Excerpt 10 (from Jung-gu & Dong-gu #2, 2021; Gang Hakdu, 2020; Namgyu, 2019b):

(a) **gei**-*keopeul*   *Baep*   *dom-domi-wa*   *hamkke-ha-neun*
     gei-couple   Bapp   con-condom-with   together-do-ATTR
     geon-jeonha-n   **ijjok**   *saenghwal*   ♡   *feat. baelleonseugeim*
     safe-healthy-ATTR   **this.way**   life   ♡   featuring Balancegame

"Gay couple! Maintain a safe and healthy **"this way"** life with B-app and Condoms feat. Balancegame"

(b)   *geop-na*   *museou-n*   ***ijjok***   *hyeong-irang*   *manna-n*   *sseol*
             fear-come.out scary-ATTR   **this.way**   older.brother-with   meet-ATTR   story
             "The time I got scared meeting a scary **"this way"** guy[5]."

(c)   ***ijjok***   *sulbeongae-eseo*   *gong-pyo*   *piha-neun*   *beop*
             this.way   speed.dating-LOC   zero-points   avoid-ATTR   method
             "How to avoid scoring zero points at **"this way"** speed dating"

As you can see in the above titles, each one contains *ijjok*. While (a) contains a more widely salient marker of queer identity, *gei*, the other two do not. Additionally, each video contains a different message. The first video, (a), discusses specific condoms to ensure a safe gay sex life. Video (b) discusses a scary sexual encounter with a sexually curious straight guy. Video (c) discusses how to avoid failing at gay speed dating events. Each video deals with a specific topic pertinent to the Korean queer community. And through their use of *ijjok* in the titles, the creators are attempting to pre-authenticate the identities of their viewers of these particular videos by using in-group references.

5.4 *Ijjok* and the projection of social struggle onto abstract space

A more abstract function of *ijjok*, specifically, is the projection of the social alienation and erasure of queer Koreans onto abstract linguistic space. Using Gal and Irvine (2000)'s concept of fractal recursivity, I posit that the literal meaning of *ijjok* being 'this side' or 'this direction', not only serves to index and authenticate in-group membership in the queer community but by doing so through locative constructions, projects this struggle onto abstract space. In other words, the locative nature of *ijjok* is an abstract linguistic representation of the struggles of queer Koreans. Seo (2001) describes that the lack of social acknowledgment of the existence of homosexual identity through much of modern Korean history has afforded people with homoerotic desires with the 'privilege' of not having their 'civil rights' violated on account

of their sexual identity. However, he goes on to state that instead of a shared struggle in fighting

discrimination, Korean homosexuals have shared unhappiness; unhappiness that stems from the

complete social erasure of their existence on the public level. And as the homosexual community

has begun "to see itself in a more meaningful context as an 'oppressed minority,'" this repeated

opposition, now with a newfound sense of identity and social presence, has been projected onto

and reproduced in the language the Korean homosexual community, and now greater queer

communities, use to describe themselves.

As queer Koreans moved from a shared sense of invisibility and erasure to a state of self-

awareness and meaning, I posit that the term *ijjok* stems from the desire for a place in society

that was never granted to them. In addition to the very literal locative essence of the phrase, the

asymmetrical distribution of locative phrases in Korean queer discourse also supports that *ijjok*'s

queer indices stem from their sociocultural erasure. The default term to refer to heterosexuality

(which will be discussed in detail in the following section), as confirmed by both my own

observations and Seo (2001) is *ilban*, which means 'general', 'universal', 'normal', or 'straight'

in the context of sexuality. Despite an intense search, I have yet to observe an equivalent locative

refence to heterosexuality from queer speakers. This asymmetry in the application of the locative

phrases, in combination with the implications of *ilban*, may further confirm that the abstract

space carved out by *ijjok* stems from the erasure and subjugation felt by Korean queer people.

Some of the more concrete, spatial aspects of *ijjok* can be seen in the examples below. In

this first example, we can see the spatial aspects of *ijjok* play out in actual space.

Excerpt 11 (from Ddolddol, 2020b):

60	*botong-e*	*mwo*	*gei-deul-ina*	*botong-eui*	*iseongaeja*	*bun-deul-do*
	normally-LOC	what	gay-PL -or	normal-POSS	heterosexual	person-PL-also
	da	*seukaen-eul*	*ha-neunde*			
	all	scan-OBJ	do-CIRCUM			

"Normally gay guys and normal heterosexual people all don't scan…"

61 *gakkeumsik*   *seukaen-eul*   *ha-neun*   *bun-deul-i*   *it-neunde*
    sometimes   scan-OBJ   do-ATTR   person-PL-SUB   exist-CIRCUM
    "but sometimes there's someone who's scanning,"

62 *geureo-n*   *saram-deul-eun*   *ije*   *siseon-i*   *eodi-ro*
    like.that-ATTR   person-PL-TOP now   vision-SUB   where-INS
    ga-neunya
    go-depends
    "and depending on where that person's gaze goes…"

63 *mwo*   *gwaenchanh-eun*   *meotit-neun*   *namja-ga*   *iss-eo*   *geunde*
    what   okay-ATTR   cool-ATTR   man-SUB   exist-ASSR but
    jeo   *saram-do*   *jeo*   *saram-eul*   *chyeodabo-go iss-eo*
    that   person-also that   person-OBJ   stare-COMP   exist-ASSR
    "if there's a sexy guy and that person is staring at him…"

64 *namja-deul-eul*   *chyeodabo-go iss-eo*   *gereumyeon-eun*   *ije*
    man-PL-OBJ   stare-COMP   exist-ASSR   then-TOP   now
    ***ijjok**-i-n-ge*   *maj-neun*   *geot*   *gat-go*
    this.way-be-ATTR-thing   right-ATTR   thing   similar-CONN
    "And he's staring at guys, then I know that he is **'this way'**."

As shown in line 64, his use of *ijjok* not only marks this third-party referent as being gay but does so on the basis that he, as a gay man, has observed his actions and has deemed them, and subsequently the agent, to be gay as well. Thus, through his use of ijjok, he authenticates the other man's identity in relation to his own. What makes his authentication unique, however, is the way in which the abstract linguistic adequation is playing out in relation to physical space. The adequation of this fellow queer person staring at an attractive man literally brings them over to 'this side'.

In the next example of a spatial interpretation of *ijjok*, it is being used to contrast the identities of certain participants in the interaction.

Excerpt 12 (from Daenyeol, 2021b):

26 *jae-ga*   *daneo-reul*   *muleo-bo-l-geonde*   *yutyubeu-e*   *manji*   *nao-neun*
    1SG-SUB   word-OBJ   ask-see-ATTR-CIRCUM   YouTube-LOC   a.lot   come.out-ATTR
    ijjok   *yongeo han-beon*   *muleo-bo-lge*

	this.way	terms	one-CL		ask-see-will

"I'm going to ask you about some **"this way"** terms that appear on YouTube a lot."

In this situation, the producer of the show is explaining to the participants, one gay man and one straight man, that he will ask the straight man about some gay slang words that often appear on YouTube to test his knowledge as a friend of a gay person. The use of *ijjok* in Excerpt 10 serves a few functions. Firstly, the producer's use of *ijjok* groups him and the gay participant together, on both the basis of their shared queer identity as well as their supposed knowledge of these terms as members of the queer community. Subsequently, by grouping himself and the gay participant, the producer also effectively distinguished the straight participant as a non-member of the queer community.

By distinguishing the queer participants from the non-queer participant in the interaction through the use of an otherwise adequating word, *ijjok*, the producer effectively invokes the spatial aspect of the word in the interaction, saying 'I'm going to ask you about some *this side* terms.' The side in question, is of course, queerness, and by using *ijjok*, he is telling the straight participant that he is not on that side. This is further strengthened by the fact that the non-queer person was the addressee of the statement. It is worth noting, however, this statement was not made with malicious intent, but rather was a subconscious invocation of the locative elements of the phrase, and by proxy, all that represents. Later in the video, the same participant to whom the statement was addressed picks up on the locative metaphor and fills it in. We can see this in the excerpt below.

Excerpt 13 (from Daenyeol, 2021b):

96	*geureohge*	*keuge*	*gwansim-i*	*it-ji-neun*		*anh-ass-eo*
	like.that	big	interest-SUB	exist-COMP-TOP		NEG-PST-DECL

"I didn't really care."

97	*i*	*saram-eui*	*seonghyang-eun*	**geu**	***jjok**-i-guna*		*saram-mada*

this   person-POSS   preference-TOP   **that   way**-be-UNASSIM   person-every
dareu-l   su   iss-eunikka
different-ATTR ability exist-because
"I was like 'Oh this person's preferences are **"that way"**', since every person is
different."

In this excerpt, the straight participant is talking about his reaction to the time his friend came out

to him. To maintain the conversational harmony, he chooses to extend the locative metaphor,

acknowledging its queer nature and distinguishing himself from it by using the distal morpheme,

geu 'that', instead of the proximal morpheme *i* 'this'. This example is particularly interesting,

for, I have yet to encounter any queer speaker extend the locative metaphor in this way. This lack

of symmetry in the distribution would suggest that this abstract 'side' queer folks have carved for

themselves is just that, queer, and not meant to be extended to non-queer people.

5.5 *Ijjok*: subverting hegemony in queer self-reference?

The final function of *ijjok* I wish to posit in this paper is the subversion of the hegemony

of earlier queer self-reference terms. As described above and in Seo (2001), the first self-created

reference terms for the contemporary queer community as a distinct social group were *bogal* and

iban. *Bogal*, which is a backwards reading of an incredibly vulgar term for a prostitute, was the

first term widely used in the Korean queer community to reference themselves as a social group.

Seo describes the reason for such a vulgar self-reference term as being due to the over-

eroticization and dehumanization that surrounds queer sexual encounters, especially during the

earliest days of a self-aware queer community. The reclamation of such a vulgar word seems to

directly stem from the Korean queer community's view of themselves as an oppressed minority.

However, it seems that in the scope of Seo's article, the word *bogal* had already fallen out of use

in favor of a less vulgar alternative, *iban*.

Iban, which means 'different' or 'abnormal' (which bears a striking similarity to the

English 'queer'), has a corresponding reference to heterosexuality, *ilban*. As discussed above,

ilban means 'universal' or 'normal', and can also be used to mean 'first-class.' Likewise, *iban* can be used to mean 'second-class', a projection of the Korean queer community's perception of itself as an oppressed minority in a vertical relation to the more dominant heterosexual society. However, since the publication of Seo (2001)'s paper, this term has since fallen out of use in favor of *gei* and *ijjok* (All about LGBTQ, 2020, 00:10:00), the two most common references to gayness found in the current study. I argue that the rise of *ijjok* as a self-referential term for the Korean queer community in conjunction with the reduction in the use of *iban* is more than sheer coincidence. Since Seo's study, the Korean queer communities have changed drastically. In addition to more critical reflection about their status in Korean society, Phillips and Yi (2019) posit that identity activism has increased substantially, especially in Seoul and the surrounding areas. This increased reflection on their status in the wider Korean society, combined with the horizontal orientation of *ijjok*, correlates with a subversion of the intrinsically hegemonic *iban/ilban* paradigm. By shifting the relationship from a more vertical orientation to a more horizontal one, I argue the Korean queer community has begun to undo the inherent hegemonic discourses rooted in their earliest forms of self-reference as a social body.

5 Conclusions and future directions

As described above, a careful analysis of how the word *ijjok* 'this way/direction' is used in discourse enables us to understand how queer identity is constructed and challenged through interaction. Section 5.1 detailed how *ijjok* is used to adequate things to queer identity. As demonstrated in the selected examples, this can be done for a number of reasons, including for clarity, emphasis, or to qualify a detail in a story, among others. Section 5.2 discussed *ijjok* as way to maintain conversational harmony. As sexuality and sexual identity are considered highly taboo in Korean culture, *ijjok* embodies the principles of indirectness and transcendentality,

helping to ease the burden of discussing something so taboo, as shown in Excerpt 3, and thereby maintaining interpersonal relationships and conversational harmony. From there, Section 5.3 discussed the ways in which *ijjok* can be used to authenticate, or illegitimate, queer identity. This involves the invocation of an essentialist conception of who queer people are or how they are supposed to act. We saw this in Excerpts 6 and 7, where the creator and the guest discussed the ways in which they attempt to determine if someone is gay. In addition to this, we also saw the authorization functioning as a way of designating the intended audience for a video (Excerpt 8). Section 5.4 discussed how the locative nature of *ijjok* functions as a way for queer Koreans to project their struggles onto abstract space. And finally, Section 5.5 discussed how *ijjok* subverts the hegemony of earlier queer reference terms by displacing them and creating a horizontal, rather than vertical hierarchy of the Korean queer community within their own speech.

While each function outlined in Section 5 adds another layer of nuance to the lexically simple *ijjok* and English use, these resources work together to produce Korean queer identity in interaction. Within the study, I posited several possibilities for derivation and prominence of *ijjok* in Korean queer discourse, including the maintenance of conversational harmony, and subversion of hegemony. However, many questions remain about its full range of implications, along with other queer reference terms, in the greater Korean queer discourse. For example, a big question that remains is the ideologies that the speakers hold about their uses of *ijjok*. While this paper examines the uses of this term from an outside perspective, understanding how the speakers themselves feel about their language use would be invaluable to the understanding of this word in queer Korean discourse. Moreover, a subsequent question raised by the current study was how *ijjok* fits within the broader Korean queer lexicon.

The current study sought to begin to fill in the massive gap in research into Korea's vastly understudied queer communities. By shining a light on the linguistic practices of this particular group, the current study hopes to contribute to a greater understanding of the possibilities for queer identities and linguistic practices that fall outside the Western-centric, English-dominated research space. As mentioned previously, the vast majority of research into queer communities in Asia, or really anywhere that isn't a European or North American nation-state, has been limited in scope and often defined by a goal of fitting non-Western queer subjectivities into a Western model of sexual identities. By grounding the research in extensive ethnographic research, the current study sought to interpret the findings within the context from which they came, and to deconstruct orientalist ideas about queerness in a Korean context. As a foreigner looking in, my own view and interpretations of the data are limited, and as such, I hope this research inspires others, especially those who come from the Korean queer community, to further this research and provide their invaluable insights.

While the current study attempted to shed some light on Korea's vastly understudied queer communities, its scope was relatively narrow. In addition to only looking at the use of one term in detail, and a few others broadly in the construction of Korean queer identity, the current study also lacked a lot of nuances that can only be provided by more ethnographic research and the voices of those in the Korean queer community. A needed direction for future research will be the inclusion of more voices from the community into my analysis, grounding it more in the practices of the communities from whence it came. While I did consult native Korean speakers over the course of the study to clarify transcriptions or lexical ambiguity, the speakers around me were not queer, and as such, were only consulted for the aforementioned reasons. The inclusion of queer Korean voices within the work would thus be a logical and much-needed next step.

In addition to this, another direction for future research would be the English usage of the Korean queer community. In my observations, English usage, particularly in the various reference terms for different roles and archetypes within the queer community is uniquely complex and equally nuanced. As attested by Park (2009) and Rüdiger (2018) and others, the English language, and its competency in it holds a controversially prominent role in Korean society. Due to extensive and ongoing contact with the Anglophone world, English competency functions as a marker of prestige and status within Korean society (Rüdiger 2018, p. 184). However, as Park (2009) points out, brandishing one's English competency in the general public is seen as a sign of pretentiousness, and something that many often disclaim (p. 197-198). However, within the queer communities, the latter negative connation seems to be inconsequential. King (2016) suggests that this may be due to the 'escape' from the oppressive Korean society that English ability provides. However, the scope of the complex system of English words used within the Korean queer lexicon, as well as the history, and meanings associated with English in the Korean queer community deserve their due space.

Notes

1. The use of LGBTQ+ in this instance is to include non-normative gender identities in the legal ramifications of current sociopolitical landscapes in addition to queer sexual identities.
2. Transcripts are available upon request. Please contact the author for access.
3. All translations are original. If English subtitles were available, original translations were checked for accuracy. Korean text is transliterated according to the Revised

Romanization System. Additionally, the numbers in the excerpts reference the lines in the transcripts from which the excerpts were taken.

4. In this example, the vocative case will be transcribed with an exclamation point to try and replicate the effect of someone calling another person from across a space, as is discussed in the excerpt itself.

5. In this example, the word *hyeong* '(lit.) older brother' is translated as 'guy'. In other examples, it can be translated as 'friend' or 'partner', among other things. In Korean culture, sibling terms are often used to describe a person close to you, and the relationship described by the term *hyeong* or similar familial terms, and subsequently the English translation, is highly dependent upon the specific context.

Abbreviations
based on the system put forth by Park (2009)

ATTR	attributive
CIRCUM	circumstantial
CL	classifier
COMM	committal
COMP	complementizer
CONN	connective
CORREL	correlative
DAT	dative
DECL	declarative
DUB	dubitative
FOR	formal
HEARSAY	hearsay
IE	informal ending
INCH	inchoative
INS	instrumental
INTROS	introspective
IR	interrogative
LOC	locative
NEG	negative
OBJ	object
PL	plural
POL	polite
POSS	possessive
PRECED	precedence
PRESUM	presumptive
PROP	proposition
PST	past tense
RETROS	retrospective
SG	singular
SUB	subject
TOP	topic
UNASSIM	unassimilated
VOC	vocative

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