The Study of Person Reference in English and Korean*

Heechul Lee · Sejin Kim

(Chonbuk National University)

Lee, Heechul & Kim, Sejin. (2013). The Study of Person Reference in English and Korean. *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal, 21*(4), 147-164. Referring to persons comprises part of our everyday language usage. Among referring expressions are names, pronouns, professional titles, referential descriptions, kinship terms, and a combination of multiple reference forms. Schegloff (1996) describes the importance of sequential placement (first and subsequent) when it comes to person reference. The practices for referring to persons can perform more than one social action at the same time. With regard to preferences in the organization of reference to persons, Sacks and Schegloff (1979) propose the concepts of minimization and recipient design. It is claimed in this paper that Korean zero anaphora is an extreme case of minimization. The purpose of this study is to examine the practices for referring to non-present persons in English and Korean considering the compatibility and competition of both principles of minimization and recipient design and to focus on the application of two preferences in referring to persons in each language by using examples from other scholars' research, personal recordings, and movies.

Key Words: person reference, referring expression, minimization, recipient design

1. Introduction

With the increased interest in conversation analysis, the practice for referring to persons has been a debatable topic in socio-linguistics. Whether there are certain rules or preferences for referring to an individual and whether these

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rules are universal across different languages have been investigated. Sacks and Schegloff (1979, p.24) have found two preferences for person reference in conversation: ʼminimizationʼ and ʼrecipient designʼ. The principle of minimization is practiced when reference is preferredly done with a single reference form. The principle of recipient design is accomplished by speakersʼ using a referential form that is available and recognisable to recipients. There have been several research studies that demonstrate how these two preferences for referring expressions are applied to various languages such as English, Hebrew, and French (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979; Hacohen & Schegloff, 2006; Fornel, 1987).

While the preferences for minimization and recipient design are common in many languages, there are still exceptions and these are implemented in different ways in various languages. In Korean and English, for example, multiple referential terms can be used with different purposes. In these languages, a combination of name and kinship term can be used in order to achieve different aims. For instance, in English, the use of multiple reference forms as in ʼUncle Johnʼ[1] is employed for clarification and specification. On the other hand, in Korean, the idea of using the combined referential expressions such as ʼMi-seon, older sisterʼ and ʼChulsoo, older brotherʼ derives from the idea that Korea is regarded as one big family orientated community where neighbors are also considered as family members, especially when they are referred to (Lim, et al., 2005).

This paper investigates the practices for referring to non-present persons in English and Korean. In particular, the focus of this paper is on the application of two preferences in referring to persons in each language. This paper also covers when and why specific types of referring expressions are used and if there are cases where the preferences in the organisation of person reference are not applicable. For this purpose, examples are sampled from different research papers, personal recordings, and movies. The reason for this choice of data resources is in order to analyse natural conversation sets.

The results of this paper will be helpful in understanding how referential expressions are organised by English and Korean speakers. Although the preferences introduced in this paper are not always applicable to every situation

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1) In this research, the use of such terms as *uncle* and *aunt* is restricted to referring to kinship.

and every language, the paper will provide a good resource for understanding how persons are referred to in conversation.

2. Preferences in the choice of referring expressions

Before discussing the preferences in the organisation of reference to persons, it is important to understand what referential expressions speakers prefer. According to many researchers, speakers choose different referential expressions depending on the main character status (Clancy, 1980; Downing, 1996; Duranti, 1984). For example, the referent's age has a decisive effect on choosing the reference forms in Korean, but this does not matter so much in English. In addition, it is also crucial to check whether the referring practice involves other practices. For example, when Korean speakers refer to a person, they can carry out diverse interactional projects such as disagreement, responsibility, and attribution by overtly referring to themselves or recipients (Oh, 2007a). Schegloff (1996) questions this point as follows:

"How do speakers do reference to persons so as to accomplish, on the one hand, that nothing but referring is being done, and/or on the other hand that something else in addition to referring is being done by the talk practice which has been employed?" (p. 55)

Not only does referring practice affect the way speakers refer to a person, but other practices also do so. This paper will not cover all of the practices or factors that might affect referring practices in English and Korean, but it will introduce a couple of main practices and factors.

2.1 Referential choice in English

Speakers tend to use different referring expressions, according to the reference positions. A speaker may use a certain reference form when referring to a person at first, and then use a different reference form which was not used previously. In Schegloff's (1996) words, different referring expressions are

employed in the 'locally initial slot' and 'locally subsequent slot. In the case of English, names are mainly used in the initial position when referring to a person. According to Schegloff (1996), Speakers prefer to use names rather than to use referential descriptions. This is because a name is easily recognisable and is also a minimal reference form. In the following subsequent positions, pronouns are usually used as in "I saw *James* last night. *He* asked me if I want to go to the summer ball with him". In other words, names are 'locally initial reference forms' while pronouns are 'locally subsequent reference forms'. It is desirable for a locally initial reference form to be put in the initial slot. The use of a locally subsequent reference form is also the preferred use in the subsequent slot.

However, the mismatching of form and position happens in some cases. For example, an initial reference form is placed in the subsequent slot in a disagreeable environment (Schegloff, 1996). The following is an example which shows the use of an initial reference form at a subsequent reference position.

(1) Example from Schegloff (1996, p70)
 Curt: [Oxfrey (run-?)/(runnin?) I heard **Oxfrey** gotta new car.
 Gary: Hawkins is ru[nnin,
 Mike: [**Oxfrey**'s runnin the same car 'e run
      last year,=
 Phyllis: =Mike siz there wz a big fight down there las'night,

Mike, who is a recipient in this case, uses the same reference form that Curt already mentioned. This is because Mike is disagreeing with Curt's previous statement about Oxfrey's new car. In other words, by using the complex reference (or the mismatch of position and usage), Mike achieved two different interactional projects; reference and disagreement. Except in some cases where speakers or recipients intentionally use the mismatch of form and position, the simple reference (or the match of form and position) is usually implemented. As discussed earlier, native speakers of English refer to a person using a name first and then subsequently refer to him/her using a pronoun. In Korean, however, names are not always used as the initial reference forms and pronouns are not used as the subsequent reference forms either. Korean

speakers avoid referring to a person by just their names unless the referent is as old as or younger than the speaker (Oh, 2007b).

2.2 Referential choice in Korean

'Korean has a large set of address-reference terms which are sensitive to the degrees of social hierarchy and solidarity between the speaker and the addressee or the referent. (Oh, 2010, p.1221)' In other words, choosing referring expressions in Korean vary according to the referent that a speaker tries to refer to. There are three main referring expressions used in the first slot: names, kinship terms, and a combination of a name and kinship term. The first case is when the referred person is younger than a referrer or the referred person is as old as a referrer. In this case, speakers are inclined to use only names in the initial slot when referring to a person. In other words, this case is similar to English practice for referring to a person using a personal name. Secondly, if a referent is older than a referrer, a combination of name and kinship title is employed as in 'Chulsoo oppa' which literally means 'Chulsoo, older brother' in English. What is interesting is that a kinship term is used even if the referred person is not the speaker's relative. In Korea, people treat elders with respect and use the honorific form of language. The respecting practice toward elders is also achieved, along with the referring practice, when referring to a person who is older than the speaker. Moreover, the kinship terms are frequently used to refer to a non-present person in Korean. As mentioned earlier, Korea is a family orientated country and the concepts of family are highly valued. Hence, they are the main reasons for the developed kinship terms (Lim, et al., 2005). The importance of kinship terms in Korean is derived from the cultural notions of the link between respect for elders and kinship address terms.

Lastly, if a referred person is a relative of the speaker, the referred person is mentioned only by the kinship term. However in English, using only a kinship term might confuse a recipient unless the speaker has only one uncle or aunt. In order to solve this issue, English speakers use multiple reference forms when referring to a relative as in 'Uncle David' and 'Aunt Mary'. Unlike English, Korean has various and specified kinship terms that can be used as

reference forms (Lee, 2007; Wang, 2008). In particular, Lee (2007) points out that there is a wide range of referential kinship terms compared to the address terms. Korean speakers tend to make use of inclusive address terms rather than employ specified ones in a situation where the addressed person is co-present. For example, one address term *acessi* (which means a distant uncle in English) corresponds to several reference terms *dangswuk*, *ceycongswuk*, *samcongswuk*, and *sacongswuk* (all these refer to distant uncles). Thanks to the highly developed kinship terminology, Koreans can use only a kinship term when referring to a relative whilst English speakers use either a name or multiple reference forms that consist of a kinship term followed by a name.

When it comes to subsequent referring expressions, zero anaphora or quasi-pronouns are used in Korean. The main reason for this is that Korean does not have third-person pronouns such as 'he' or 'she' in English (Chang, 1978; Ree, 1975). Korean speakers tend to use zero anaphora if the referred person is easily recognisable in the context (Ryu, 2001). Also, third person pronouns can be replaced by Korean quasi-pronouns which consist of a demonstrative followed by a general noun (Oh, 2010). Korean has three demonstratives that are responsive to the distance between a speaker and a referent/addressee: '*i*', '*ku*', and '*ce*' are equivalent to 'this', 'that', and 'that over there' in English respectively. Among three kinds of demonstrative forms, *ku*-forms are mainly used when referring to a non-present person. The following example shows the use of *ku*-form as well as zero anaphora to refer to a person.

(2) Example from Oh (2007b, p209)
  C: *kulikwu ku osuthin-eyse hakwi ha-si-n*
    and   that Austin-LOC degree do-HON-ATTR
    Isencwu paksa-nim *ilakwu:*
    Isencwu doctor-HT called
        'And there is somebody called **Dr.Isencwu**, who got a
        degree at Austin'
        ku yaktay   *nao-si-n*
        that pharmacy:college graduate-HON-ATTR
        [*pwun   kyeysi-ketun-yo?*]

   person:HON exist:HON-CORREL-POL

'and graduated from the college of pharmacy.'

H: [*a* : : :]

                 'oh : : :'

C: *hyeng ama ana Ø?* *Molu-na.*

brother probably know:DUB not know-DUB

'You probably know Ø? or you don't.'

H: ***ku pwun**-i honca sasi-na?*

QP-NOM alone live:HON-INTERR

'Does **she** live alone?'

C: *yey yey toksin. acik.* ***ku pwun**-i hankwuk*

yes yes single yet QP-NOM Korea

ka-syess-eyo elma cen-ey.

go-HON:ANT-POL how before-TEM

'Yes, yes, (She's) single. So far. **She** went back to Korea some time ago.'

In this example, in the initial reference slot, a personal name 'Isencwu' followed by a professional title is used. Since the speaker is younger than the referred person, the speaker needs to use a name with a professional title or kinship term (in this case, a professional title is used). In the following reference positions, zero pronoun and *ku*-forms are used. Therefore, zero anaphora and *ku*-based quasi-pronouns are extensively used in Korean as locally subsequent reference forms following an initial reference form (Oh, 2007b).

3. Two preferences in the organisation of reference to persons

The preferences in reference organisation strongly relates to the preferences in the choice of referential expressions. Therefore, understanding the preferences in the choice of referential expressions is prerequisite for investigating the preferences in the organization of reference to persons. With regard to preferences in organisation, there are two main ways that speakers organise

person references. The first one is '*minimization*' and the second one is '*recipient design*' (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979, p.24). Although multiple reference forms are sometimes used, a single reference form is mainly used in conversation. In addition, Sacks and Schegloff (1979) indicate that a speaker uses a specific reference form for the purpose of recognitionals. These two preferences can be satisfied separately or concurrently. For instance, a speaker might use a first name for the sake of recognitionals particularly in English, since someone's first name is 'a basic sort for recognitionals' (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979, p24). The use of a name is a good example which illustrates the points of minimization and recipient design preferences. On the other hand, there are cases where those two preferences are not compatible with each other. This will be further explained in the next section. Preferences for minimization and recognitionals are relevant both in English and Korean. However, the ways in which these preferences are applied are slightly different in the two linguistic communities.

3.1 Compatibility of two preferences in English

The ways in which a person is referred to are unlimited and there are infinite reference forms. This gives people the freedom to choose from a number of reference terms. For example, speakers are able to refer to a person by using single or multiple reference forms; a speaker may say 'I had a supervision session with Beatrice, my module lecturer, the lecturer who is tall.' In this statement, the speaker uses a name, professional title, and referential description. Such a statement is restrictively used, so a speaker might prefer to say 'I had a supervision session with Beatrice' or 'I had a supervision session with a lecturer'. In this respect, speakers prefer to use a single reference form rather than to use multiple forms. This preference is called 'preference for minimization' (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979). In addition to minimization preference, the preference for recipient design is implemented to make sure the recipient knows the referent. In many cases, the preference for minimization is satisfied, along with the preference for recognition.

As discussed earlier, names for the initial reference place, and pronouns for the subsequent reference place are the main reference forms that speakers choose in English. These two forms are minimized forms and at the same time, recognisable.

3.2 Compatibility of two preferences in Korean

Similar to English, the use of names, kinship terms, quasi-pronouns, and zero anaphora illustrates the point that Korean speakers also opt to minimize reference forms and make them recognisable to recipients if possible. Korean speakers especially employ names or kinship terms in order to refer to a person economically according to the relationship between the referred person and the speaker. There is only a small difference between English and Korean reference organisation preferences. Compared to English, extreme minimization is used in that the zero pronouns occur frequently with no problem in Korean (Nakajima, 1990). The following examples show the use of zero anaphora and kinship term in Korean.

(3) Example from Han (2006, pp.1-2)
 U1: ***John**-un   enu   kwamok-ul   ceyil cohaha-ni?*
   John-TOP which subject-ACC most like-Q
   'Which subject does **John** like the most?'
 U2: *Ø   swuhak-ul ceyil cohahay.*
    (SBJ) math-ACC most like-DEC
    '**(He)** likes math the most.'

(4) Example from Korean movie 'Tae Guk Gi: The Brotherhood of War'
 A: *Cinsek-a!   Cinsek-a!   Keki se!*
   Jinsuk-VOC! Jinsuk-VOC! there stand!
   'Stop right there!'
 B: *Hyeng!*
   older brother!
   'Older brother!'
 A: ***oysamchon**-ney   kanun   kicha-nun*
   uncle on mother's side-to go-REL train-TOP
   ike-y   an-i-ya.
   this-NOM NEG-be-DEC
   'This is not a train going to **uncle**'s house.'

In (3), 'John' is the initial reference form at the initial slot. In the following

line, a zero pronoun is used, since the referent is retrievable from the previous statement. In (4), the kinship term '*oysamchon*' is used and it means 'an unmarried uncle on mother's side' in English. In this sense, the use of zero anaphora and kinship term illustrates that the minimization preference is also applied to Korean.

4. Incompatibility and its resolution

There are, however, certain occasions where two preferences do not co-exist. The first is when a speaker is not sure whether a recipient would recognise the referred person. Therefore, the speaker uses a '*try-marker*' (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979) with a rising intonation and a pause. Until a recipient recognises the referent, speakers use different reference terms step by step from a minimal reference form (or a try-marker) to multiple reference forms (or referential descriptions). In this sense, the term a speaker-initiation of try-marker can be coined, since a speaker initiates a try-marker.

(5) Example from Sacks & Schegloff (1979, p26)
A: ⋯well I was the only one other than
.hhh than the uhm (0.7) tch **Fords**?,
Uh **Mrs. Holmes Fords**?(0.8) You know uh
[the **the cellist**?
B: [Oh yes. She's she's the cellist.
A: Yes

In (5), A tries three times to have B recognise the person who is being referred to. At the first attempt in 'the uhm tch Fords?', A finds out that B does not identify the person referred to by the name 'Ford'. In other words, A cannot refer to the referent by her name, since the name is not recognisable to B (Schegloff, 1996). Then, A uses a full name with a rising intonation as in 'Uh Mrs. Holmes Fords? (0.8)' It is also followed by a pause for 0.8 seconds. This reference form with a rising intonation followed by a pause is try-marked (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979). Within the pause, B still does not recognise the referent,

which leads A to mention another referential expression 'the cellist'. With the 'the cellist' expression, B finally recognises the person who is being talked about. Therefore, A does not have to employ any other referential expressions to claim recognition from B.

The second occasion is when a recipient fails to find out who is being mentioned, although the speaker expects the recipient's recognition with the minimal reference form. (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979)). In (6) below, after the recipient starts to use a try-marker, *Who*, the speaker begins to use try-markers, *Eddy* and *ward*, subsequently. Try-markers are preferred over referential expressions. Therefore, the preference for minimization is maintained instead of the preference for recognition. The example (6) shows the use of a recipient-initiation of try-marker. Let us examine the example as follows:

(6) Example from Sacks & Schegloff (1979, p27)
A: Hello?
B: 'Lo,
B: Is shorty there,
A: Ooo Jest- **Who?**
B: **Eddy?**
B: Woo [**ward?**
A:　　　　[Oo jesta minnit.

So far, the evidence for the incompatibility of two preferences for minimization and recognition has been covered. In addition, approaches to solve the incompatibility issue and a few examples have been discussed. Besides these two main cases, there are more cases where the preference for minimization or recipient design is sacrificed for each other.

4.1 Minimization over recognition

As Sacks and Schegloff (1979) states, the preference for recognition is relatively more powerful than the preference for minimization. However, the minimization preference sometimes exercises its power over the recognition preference. Speakers' using indefinite pronouns under certain circumstances can

be the examples showing the preference of minimization over recognition. There are cases in which the speaker who knows the identity of a referent deliberately uses indefinite pronouns to make the hearer fail to recognise the referent. The speaker may also use indefinite pronouns when s/he thinks that the identification of the referent is not important. In other words, the speaker makes a choice of minimal reference forms over recognisable ones. In English, for instance, indefinite pronouns such as 'someone' and 'nobody' can be the examples that demonstrate that the recognition preference sometimes makes a concession to the minimization preference. In Korean, 'nwugwu' and 'etten salam' are equivalent to 'someone' in English.

4.2 Recognition over minimization

Levinson (1998) indicates that preference for minimization is relaxed until recognition is achieved in such cases where these two preferences conflict. There are exceptions to the principle of minimization. As previously discussed, there are some cases when people use names and kinship titles together in both English and Korean. However, English speakers and Korean speakers use two different terms of reference with different purposes. English speakers mention a name and a kinship title in order to differentiate and clarify the person discussed in the conversation. For example, people might prefer to say "Will you visit Uncle John tomorrow?" rather than to say "Will you visit uncle tomorrow?" or "Will you visit John tomorrow?" This is partly because there are not many different fine-grained kinship titles in English. One person might have more than one uncle or aunt. However, all of them are called "uncle/aunt" in English. This leads people to refer to an uncle or aunt by using a name as well as a kinship title. In this case, the purpose of using two different reference forms is to differentiate and clarify the person that the speaker mentions. Therefore, the principle of minimization is not implemented to seek the principle of recipient design. However, if clarification is not required as such in a conversation between friends, English speakers can employ only a kinship term as in 'I will spend a summer in Scarborough where my aunt lives.'

While English speakers use multiple reference forms when referring to a relative, Korean speakers use a single reference form following the principle of

minimization. Since there are many specified concepts for relatives in Korean, one kinship term is enough for a recipient to recognise a referred person. However, there are cases when a combination of a name and a kinship title is used in Korean conversation. In this case, the kinship term is not used to refer to kin. A speaker should refer to a person who is older than the speaker by using a name as well a kinship term as in 'Jiyoung, older sister'. The use of two reference forms in this case can be an exception to the preference of minimization. Although a recipient may be able to understand with a name only, the speaker still needs to add a kinship term. The following is a sample of a personal recording which shows the use of kinship terms in referring to a person.

(7) Example from personal recording

A: ***Ciyeng enni**-ney*   *pullat-eyse*
   Jiyoung older sister-POSS flat-LOC
   bab mek-ki-lo   *ha-yss-ci?*
   rice eat-NOML-CONN do-PST-Q
   'Are we supposed to eat dinner at **Jiyoung older sister**'s flat?'

B: *Ung.*
   yes
   'Yes.'

A: ***enni**-ney*   *pullat-i   edi-ya?*
   older sister-POSS flat-NOM where-Q
   'Where is the **sister**'s flat?'

B: *∅   Wentworth ti bullak-i-ya.*
   (SBJ) Wentworth D block-be-DEC
   '(**Her** flat is) D block at the Wentworth College.'

A: *∅   encey-kkaci ∅ o-lako   ∅ ha-yss-e?*
   (SBJ) when-by   come-CONN   do-PST-Q
    'Did (**she**) tell (you) when (we) should arrive there?'

B: *∅ yoli   kkutna-myen ∅ mwunca ∅ ha-ndako*
   cooking end-if   text   do-CONN
   ∅ ∅ ha-yss-e.
        do-PST-DEC
   (**She**) told (me) that (she) would text (us) when (**she**) finishes cooking.

As shown in the sample above, speaker A firstly refers to Ciyeng by using her name and kinship term '*enni*' which means 'older sister' in English. The interesting point in this example is that the kinship term is used without a name as a subsequent reference form while it is regarded as the initial reference form in the case of referring to a relative in Korean. Therefore, it is possible to see that kinship terms can be used as subsequent reference forms after the referent is introduced by a name in combination with a kinship title. However, the referent's name with a kin term is introduced at first and then it is not used as a reference form again. In the following lines, both A and B use null subjects and objects since the subjects and objects are retrievable from the context. In other words, using zero pronouns does not mean that Korean speakers avoid personal references in conversation.

5. Conclusion

This paper attempts to bring a contrastive perspective to the study of non-present person reference in English and Korean. Names and pronouns are extensively used for the purpose of referring to a person in English, while names, kinship terms, and quasi-pronouns are the main referential options that Korean speakers choose. Those referential expressions are employed at different positions in order to achieve different interactional projects. However in English, names are mostly used as initial reference forms and pronouns are subsequent reference forms. On the other hand, in Korean, names, kinship titles, and names in combination with kinship terms are employed to refer to a person at first. Moreover, quasi-pronouns (especially ku-forms) and zero anaphora are located in the subsequent slots.

When it comes to preferences in reference organisation, speakers are likely to make a reference to a person by using a minimal reference form and recognisable form. These are called 'minimization preference' and 'recipient design preference'. These two preferences are not always concurrently implemented, so sometimes the two preferences are in conflict. The use of a try-marker can be the solution to the incompatibility issue. However, recognition is more preferred than minimization. Through this paper, the preferences that

are relevant to English and Korean are highlighted. While there are similarities between reference practices in English and Korean, the preferences are sometimes carried out differently.

Although the preferences of third person references are well supported by research studies and by extensive examples, it is important to point out that the preferences covered in this paper are neither absolute rules nor universal preferences. This paper is based on the assumption that English and Korean speakers are willing to refer to a person in conversation by using several different types of reference forms. The preferences introduced in this paper may not always be implemented in every situation and every language. In this sense, further comparative research studies in person references are required in order to understand the various linguistic features that different languages have.

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Appendix. Abbreviations

ACC	Accusative particle
ANT	Anterior suffix
ATTR	Attributive
CONN	Connective
CORREL	Correlative
DEC	Declarative
DUB	Dubitative
HON	Honorific
HT	Honorific Title
INTERR	Interrogative
LOC	Locative particle
NEG	Negative particle
NOM	Nominative particle
NOML	Nominalizer
POSS	Possessive
POL	Polite suffix
PST	Past
QP	Quasi-Pronoun
REL	Relative
SBJ	Subjective
TEM	Temporal Marker
TOP	Topic particle
VOC	Vocative particle

Heechul Lee
Department of English Education
College of Education
Chonbuk National University
664-14 Tokchin-dong 1-ga, Jeonju, 561-756, Rep. of Korea
Phone: +82-63-270-2719
Email: hclee@jbnu.ac.kr

Sejin Kim
Graduate School of Education
Chonbuk National University
664-14 Tokchin-dong 1-ga, Jeonju, 561-756, Rep. of Korea
Email: sejin0502@hotmail.com