

## The Generic Interpretation of Demonstratives and Pronouns in Korean\* \*\*

Hyunjung Park  
(Songwon University)

Park, Hyunjung. “The Generic Interpretation of Demonstratives and Pronouns in Korean.” *Studies in English Language & Literature* 49.2 (2023): 167-192. In this paper, I discuss the possibility of generic interpretation of demonstratives and pronouns in Korean. Following Bowdle and Ward’s (1995) and Choi’s (2014) analyses concerning English and Greek, the current study proposes that demonstratives and pronouns in Korean can be interpreted generically like those in English and Greek depending on the context and shows that such a proposal is further supported by the results of statistical analysis from the experiment. Focusing on the two constructions, i.e. Demonstrative-Noun Construction (DNC) and Pronoun-Noun Construction (PNC), more importantly, this paper shows that the kind specificity in conformity with the taxonomic level of the noun components of DNCs and PNCs in Korean plays a crucial role with regard to the occurrence of the generic meaning, in the sense of Bowdle and Ward (1995). In fact, the topic of the current study seems to have not received much attention and have been rarely dealt with by Korean linguists. In this sense, findings from the current analysis can help us look into other aspects of the semantic role of demonstratives and pronouns in Korean and offer the new perspective in terms of the semantics of the two elements. (Songwon University)

**Key Words:** kind specificity, category variability, context, demonstrative, pronoun

---

\* An earlier and smaller version of this paper was presented at LSS (The Linguistic Science Society) at Kyungpook National University in February 2021. I thank the audience for questions and comments. I would like to thank three anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and helpful suggestions. All remaining errors are my own.

\*\* This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2019S1A5B5A07105474).

## I. Introduction

Concerning the main function of demonstratives and pronouns in many languages, it seems general to assume that the former is used to specify the distance of something in space or time in relation to the speaker and the latter is used to replace nouns. More specifically, demonstratives are typically deictic and pronouns are, in particular, most frequently used to indicate a class of items (like *we/you* in the case of English) referred to as personal pronouns, as illustrated in (1).

- (1) a. **this** book / **that** book  
b. **We** are students.

In (1a), demonstratives in English, *this* and *that* show the deictic function and *we* in (1b) is the plural first-person pronoun in English and replaces a certain noun expression.

This paper, however, shows that there exists the semantic aspect which the two elements, i.e. demonstratives and pronouns, have in common in Korean. That is, both the Demonstrative-Noun Construction (DNC) which is composed of a demonstrative like *i* ‘this’, *ku* ‘the’, *ce* ‘that’ and a noun and the Pronoun-Noun Construction (PNC) which consists of a personal pronoun like *wuli* ‘we’, *kutul* ‘they’ and a noun can be interpreted generically in Korean noun phrase. The current study on such an intriguing phenomenon is based on Bowdle and Ward (1995) that discusses the generic DNC in English and Choi (2014) that captures the same semantic property in the PNC in English as well as the DNC and the PNC in Greek.

To justify the fact that demonstratives and pronouns can receive the generic interpretation under the appropriate context in Korean nominal phrases, an experiment in which subjects were asked to evaluate a variety of generic statements was conducted. Results from the experiment show that demonstratives and pronouns

in Korean can deliver the generic meaning considerably in that each total average rating of demonstrative and pronoun is above 3.5 out of 5.

The present study on possibility of generic meaning of demonstratives and pronouns in Korean, to the best of my knowledge, seems to have been rarely dealt with by Korean linguists. Therefore, findings from the current analysis can shed light on the new perspective in terms of the semantic role of demonstratives and pronouns in Korean nominal phrases.

This paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, I describe the theoretical assumptions that can be regarded as the starting point of this paper. In Section 3, I address the experiment that was conducted in order to investigate the hypothesis that demonstratives and pronouns in Korean permit the generic interpretation like those in English and Greek. In Section 4, I present results from the experiment and discuss the semantic property of demonstratives and pronouns that can denote a kind in a certain context of Korean nominal structure, focusing on the kind specificity by the taxonomic level of the noun, which plays a crucial role with regard to the occurrence of the generic meaning. In Section 5, I conclude the discussion.

## II. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Bowdle and Ward's (1995) Generic Demonstratives

Bowdle and Ward (henceforth, B&W) (1995) proposes that a noun phrase which includes a demonstrative and a noun-i.e. DNC-in English allows the generic reading, as shown in (2) (Bowdle and Ward 1995: 32).

(2) A: My roommate just bought a Labrador.

B: **Those Labradors** make great pets.

In the given context in (2), the utterance by B is involved in the property of making great pets of the kind Labrador, but not of a specific group of Labradors. Thus, B's utterance can lead to the reading that Labradors *in general* make great pets.

Regarding the demonstratives that can receive the generic interpretation, more significantly, B&W suggests that the felicity of generic demonstratives is determined depending on the specificity of the kind being referred to. Following Rosch et al. (1976), concerning the kind specificity that is captured by folk taxonomies, B&W addresses three levels of categorization; the superordinate, basic, and subordinate levels. The superordinate level is the most general and consists of relatively heterogeneous sets of items. For instance, *animal* that includes members as various as dogs, birds, and fish belongs to this level. The basic level displays an intermediate degree of inclusiveness, and maximizes within-category similarity and minimizes between-category similarity. Hence, *dog*, which quite differs from other kinds of animals such as birds/fish but is relatively similar to each other, is the basic level. The subordinate level is the most specific and is classified as relatively homogeneous sets of items. In the case of *Labrador*, it is even more similar to each other than members of *dog* of the basic level and thus it belongs to the subordinate level.

B&W claims that the generic meaning of demonstratives is most acceptable with members of the subordinate category such as *Labrador*. This argument is closely related with category variability. As superordinate levels move to subordinate levels, the number of salient internal contrast sets is reduced steadily. This means that category variability is lowest for subordinates. According to B&W, the genericity by demonstratives implicates that members of the kind are all alike. Consider the examples in (3) (adapted from Bowdle and Ward 1995: 35).

- (3) a. A: I'm thinking about buying a new car.  
       B: #**Those cars** can be expensive.
- b. A: I'm thinking about buying a new sportscar.  
       B: **Those sportscars** can be expensive.

In (3a), the use of *those cars* as generics is infelicitous since the word ‘car’ is the basic level that is different from other kinds of vehicles such as bus but is relatively similar to each other. In other words, the kind specificity is rather low and hence, the genericity is not reflected efficiently. By contrast, the noun, ‘sportscar’ being referenced in (3b) is more specific since it is far more analogous to each other than members of the basic level category ‘car’. Thus, B’s utterance seems to facilitate the generic interpretation.<sup>1</sup> This respect can be more explicitly observed in the examples of kind that are identical in concept or indistinguishable in the function, as presented in (4) (Bowdle and Ward 1995: 38).

- (4) A: My roommate owns an IBM ThinkPad.  
 B1: **Those IBM ThinkPads** are pretty versatile.  
 B2: **That IBM ThinkPad** is pretty versatile.

In (4), the two utterances by B1 and B2 of singular and plural demonstratives can be all accepted as a statement about the kind IBM ThinkPad. B&W accounts for this reason in relation to the variability. That is, as the variability of the kind being referred to approaches zero, the contrast between singular and plural demonstratives disappears.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, B&W concludes that the genericity of demonstratives is closely connected with the variability of the category.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> B&W addresses, in fact, that the variability of the category in question is not a static property. For instance, a dog expert who can distinguish among various types of Labrador would probably realize that *those Labradors* is quite odd as the generic statement. However, contrastively, a person who has limited knowledge of dogs might find that *those dogs* is very natural as the generic meaning. Actually, B&W accepts this fact that the generic interpretation of demonstratives can be dynamic depending on a certain situation, but B&W’s analysis shows that the generic interpretation of demonstratives is indeed possible on the basis of the conditions that the study suggests.

<sup>2</sup> According to B&W, this constraint accounts for why singular generic demonstratives are in general odd/infelicitous when the kind referred to is a natural kind (e.g., Labrador), even when the category cannot be further subdivided. That is, B&W points out that people have the knowledge that two members of any given species will not be exactly alike concerning natural kinds.

<sup>3</sup> To examine their hypothesis, B&W conducted an experiment in which participants were asked to rate a series of generic statements on a scale of 1 (very odd) to 5 (very natural), based on two taxonomic

## 2.2 Choi's (2014) Analysis

Choi (2014) agrees on Bowdle and Ward's (1995) proposal with regard to the generic demonstratives in English and presents more diverse generic sentences by the combination of the demonstrative and the noun, as shown in (5) (Choi 2014: 51).

- (5) a. **These/Those generative syntacticians** appeared in the late 1950s.  
 b. **These/Those linguists** come in many subtypes such as syntacticians, phonologists, semanticists, etc.  
 c. **These/Those linguists** study the structure of sentences in a scientific way.

We can say that the English examples in (5) all deliver the generic meaning in the given context. Put differently, the expression, *generative syntacticians* in (5a) implies generative syntacticians as a class, and the noun, *linguists* in (5b) and (5c) also has the same semantic implication, i.e. linguists as a class.<sup>4</sup> More interestingly, Choi shows that the generic interpretation of demonstratives is allowed in Greek as well, providing the various concrete examples. Consider the examples in (6) and (7) (Choi 2014: 53-54).

---

levels of category: one is a basic level category and the other is a subordinate. The experiment shows the result that generic sentences containing DNCs are relatively even more natural for subordinate level ( $m=4.01$ ) than for basic ( $m=2.83$ ). Therefore, building on the result of experiment, B&W concludes that DNCs and category variability information have the strong interaction each other for the genericity.

<sup>4</sup> Choi claims that the examples in (5) pattern with the generic sentence that has the bare plural NP, which is a well-known type of generic NP, as its subject.

- (i) *Kind predicate:*  
 a. **Domestic dogs** appeared 100.000 years ago.  
*Taxonomy:*  
 b. Dogs come in many sizes.  
*Characterizing sentence:*  
 c. **Dogs** have four legs. (Choi 2014: 52)

The sentences in (i) are all generic ones that their subjects are bare plural NPs. The examples in (5) show exactly the same properties as those of generic sentences shown in (i).

- (6) **Afti i iPhones** einai ekpliktika, *Greek*  
 these the iPhones be.3PL.PRES amazing  
 thelo ki ego na agoraso ena.  
 want.1SG and I to buy.1SG.PRES one  
 ‘These iPhones are amazing, I want to buy one, too.’
- (7) a. **Afti/Ekini i genetistes glossologi** emfanistikan sta teli tis  
 these/those the generative linguists appear.3PL.PST in end the  
 dekaetias tou 50.  
 decade the 50  
 ‘These/Those generative linguists appeared in the late 1950s.’
- b. **Afti/Ekini i glossologi** ehoun polles eksidikefsis  
 these/those the linguists have.3PL.PRES many specializations  
 opos fonologos, simasiologos, klp.  
 such.as phonologist semanticist etc  
 ‘These/Those linguists come in many subtypes such as phonologists, semanticists,  
 etc.’
- c. **Afti/Ekini i glossologi** meletoun glosses me enan  
 these/those the linguists study.3PL.PRES languages in a  
 epistimoniko tropo.  
 scientific way  
 ‘These/Those linguists study languages in a scientific way.’

In (6), the DNC, i.e. *Afti i iPhones* ‘These iPhones’ in Greek denotes the kind iPhone, but not specific individual iPhones under the given context. The sentences in (7) that are Greek counterpart of English examples in (5) can be also all construed generically. More importantly, Choi expands the assumption on the genericity of demonstratives in Greek and English into the semantic area of pronouns in the two languages. That is, Choi finds out the fact that the semantic property of genericity of the DNC in Greek and English occurs in the PNC of the two languages as well.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Choi (2014) analyzes the syntactic and semantic parallels between the PNC and the DNC based on data primarily drawn from Greek and English, and concludes that the PNC and the DNC have some syntactic and semantic similarities in common. According to Choi, especially, concerning the semantic side, the demonstratives and pronouns in Greek and English can receive the generic interpretation, and

Consider the examples in (8) and (9) (Choi 2014: 57-58).

(8) *kind predicate:*

a. **We generative syntacticians** appeared in the late 1950s.

*Taxonomy:*

b. **We linguists** come in many types such as syntacticians, phonologists, etc.

*Characterizing sentence:*

c. **We syntacticians** study the structure of sentences in a scientific way.

(9) *Kind predicate:*

a. **Emis i genetistes glossologi** emfanistikame sta teli tis dekaetias tou 50.  
we the generative linguists appear.3PL.PST in end the decade the 50  
'We generative linguists appeared in the late 1950s.'

b. **Esis i genetistes glossologi** emfanistikate sta teli tis dekaetias tou 50.  
you the generative linguists appear.3PL.PST in end the decade the 50  
'You generative linguists appeared in the late 1950s.'

*Taxonomy:*

c. **Emis i glossologi** ehoume polles eksidikefsis opos fonologos,  
we the linguists have.1PL.PRES many specializations such.as phonologist  
simasiologos, klp.  
semanticist etc

'We linguists come in many subtypes such as phonologists, semanticists, etc.'

d. **Esis i glossologi** chete polles eksidikefsis  
you the linguists have.2PL.PRES many specializations  
opos fonologos, simasiologos, klp.  
such.as phonologist semanticist etc

'You linguists come in many subtypes such as phonologists, semanticists, etc.'

*Characterizing sentence:*

e. **Emis i glossologi** meletame glosses me enan  
we the linguists study.1PL.PRES languages in a  
epistimoniko tropo.  
scientific way

'We linguists study languages in a scientific way.'

---

this fact is corroborated by lots of empirical evidence.



f. *Esis i glossologi meletate glosses me enan*  
 you the linguists study.2PL.PRES languages in a  
 epistimoniko tropo.  
 scientific way  
 ‘You linguists study languages in a scientific way.’

The examples in (8) and (9) are the English and Greek cases of PNC in term of the generic interpretation. The sentences in (8) are the PNCs that are combined with the plural first-person pronoun ‘we’ in English and those in (9) are the PNCs that are combined with the plural first-person and second-person pronouns, *emis* ‘we’ and *esis* ‘you’ in Greek. Interestingly, all the sentences of English and Greek in (8) and (9) exhibit the identical pattern with the generic sentences that have the bare plural NP as their subject, represented in (i) of footnote 4. In short, based on the relevant empirical evidence, Choi (2014) draws the conclusion that the DNC and the PNC in Greek and English can be interpreted generically when the two constructions are under the appropriate generic context.<sup>6</sup>

### III. Experiment

#### 3.1 The Genericity of Korean Demonstratives and Pronouns

In the previous section, we reviewed Bowdle and Ward’s (1995) and Choi’s (2014) analyses on the availability of generic interpretation of demonstratives and pronouns in Greek and English. The current study captures the fact that exactly the

---

<sup>6</sup> Compared to Bowdle and Ward (1995) that conducted the experiment so as to test the effect of expectation on genericity of demonstratives, Choi argues the availability of generic interpretation of demonstratives and pronouns only in context-based perspective without the relevant experiment. However, this paper considers that Choi’s analysis based on the generic context is considerably persuasive and rational by a great deal of empirical evidence in English and Greek.

same phenomenon occurs in Korean DNCs and PNCs, as shown in (10) and (11) below.

(10) *kind predicate*:

- a. **i/ce sayngseng thongsalonca-tul-un** 1950nyentay hwupan-ey nathanass-ta.  
 these/those generative syntactician-PL-Top 1950s late-in(Prep) appear-pst-Dc.  
 ‘These/Those generative syntacticians appeared in the late 1950s.’

*Taxonomy*:

- b. **i/ce enehakca-tul-un** thongsalonca, umwunlonca tungkwa kathun manhun  
 these/those linguist-PL-Top syntactician phonologist etc. as such many  
 hyengthay-ka iss-ta.  
 type -Nom exist-Dc.  
 ‘These/Those linguists come in many types such as syntacticians, phonologists, etc.’

*Characterizing sentence*:

- c. **i/ce thongsalonca-tul-un** kwahakcekin pangpep-ulo mwuncang-uy kwuco-lul  
 these/those syntactician-PL-Top scientific way-in(Prep) sentence-Gen structure -Acc  
 yen-kwu-han-ta.  
 study-pres-Dc.  
 ‘These/Those syntacticians study the structure of sentences in a scientific way.’

(11) *kind predicate*:

- a. **wuli/tangsini(-tul) sayngseng thongsalonca-tul-un** 1950nyentay hwupan-ey  
 we/you-PL generative syntactician-PL-Top 1950s late-in(Prep)  
 nathanass-ta.  
 appear-pst-Dc.  
 ‘We/You generative syntacticians appeared in the late 1950s.’

*Taxonomy*:

- b. **wuli/tangsini(-tul) enehakca-tul-un** thongsalonca, umwunlonca tungkwa kathun  
 we/you-PL linguist-PL-Top syntactician phonologist etc. as such  
 manhun hyengthay-ka iss-ta.  
 many type -Nom exist-Dc.  
 ‘We/You linguists come in many types such as syntacticians, phonologists, etc.’

*Characterizing sentence*:

- c. **wuli/tangsini(-tul) thongsalonca-tul-un** kwahakcekin pangpep-ulo mwuncang-uy  
 we/you syntactician-PL-Top scientific way-in(Prep) sentence-Gen

kwuco-lul yen-kwu-han-ta.

structure–Acc study-pres-Dc.

‘We/You syntacticians study the structure of sentences in a scientific way.’

The examples in (10) and (11) show the sentences that include DNCs and PNCs in Korean. In (10), each example corresponds to generic sentences of DNCs of English and Greek represented in (5a-c) and (7a-c) and the examples in (11) are also Korean counterparts of generic sentences of PNCs of English and Greek shown in (8a-c) and (9a-f) in Section 2. Intriguingly, it seems clear that Korean DNCs and PNCs in (10) and (11) behave exactly the same way as the English and Greek cases in the given contexts. In addition, it seems that Korean DNCs whose noun component is not the human but the object can denote the kind, as in the English and Greek cases in (3), (4), and (6). And, this fact applies to Korean PNCs as well. Let us look at the relevant examples below.

- (12) a. *i/ce samseng kaylleksi eysu23 hyutayphon-un* 2023nyen-ey chwulsitoyess-ta.  
 this/that Samsung Galaxy S23 cellphone–Top 2023 year–in(Prep) release-pst-Dc.  
 ‘This/That cellphone of Samsung Galaxy S23 was released in 2023.’
- b. *i/ce samseng kaylleksi eysu23 hyutayphon-tul-un* 2023nyen-ey  
 these/those Samsung Galaxy S23 cellphone PL–Top 2023 year–in(Prep)  
 chwulsitoyess-ta.  
 release-pst-Dc.  
 ‘These/Those cellphones of Samsung Galaxy S23 were released in 2023.’
- c. *tangsin samseng kaylleksi eysu23 hyutayphon-un* 2023nyen-ey chwulsitoyess-ta.  
 you(Sg.) Samsung Galaxy S23 cellphone–Top 2023 year–in(Prep) release-pst-Dc.  
 ‘Your cellphone of Samsung Galaxy S23 was released in 2023.’
- d. *wuli samseng kaylleksi eysu23 hyutayphon-tul-un* 2023nyen-ey chwulsitoyess-ta.  
 we Samsung Galaxy S23 cellphone PL–Top 2023 year–in(Prep) release-pst-Dc.  
 ‘Our cellphones of Samsung Galaxy S23 were released in 2023.’

The examples in (12a-d) show DNCs and PNCs in Korean that have the object, i.e. *samseng kaylleksi eysu23 hyutayphon* ‘cellphone of Samsung Galaxy S23’, as

their nominal element.<sup>7</sup> All the sentences in (12a-d) tell us the possibility of a kind interpretation for the two constructions. Note that the nominal element, *samseng kaylleksi eysu23 hyutayphon* ‘cellphone of Samsung Galaxy S23’ of PNCs shown in (12a-d) is zero in variability of the kind. As addressed in the preceding section, the kind that is identical in concept or indistinguishable in the function is never variable and thus the kind/object being referred to is most specific. More significantly, this semantic property seems to lead to possibility of generic interpretation for the noun component in question.

Consequently, on the basis of a variety of Korean data so far, this paper suggests that demonstratives and pronouns in Korean can be used generically like English and Greek. Especially, accepting Bowdle and Ward’s (1995) and Choi’s (2014) analyses, this study proposes that the factors which make DNCs and PNCs interpreted generically in Korean are specificity/variability of kind being referenced and the (generic) context in a given situation. The current study predicts that if there exist such factors sufficiently in the given sentence, the generic meaning can occur in Korean DNCs and PNCs.

### 3.2 Method

To examine the validity of the prediction of this study, an experiment was

---

<sup>7</sup> Concerning the English translation of pronominal elements, i.e. *tangsin* ‘you’, *wuli* ‘we’, in (12c) and (12d), there is one thing that has to be noted here. Adopting Furuya (2008) and Den Dikken (2006), Park (2019) assumes that a (personal) pronoun and a noun form a predication relationship as a small clause and that the pronoun plays a role as a subject and the noun as a predicate in Korean nominal structure. In developing the syntactic structure of PNCs of predication in Korean, Park essentially divides the predicative structure into the two types; RP1 and RP2 structure. In particular, Park posits that the R2 head bears the possessive feature, [poss] since it shows the semantic relation of predicate of possession between the pronoun and noun in Korean PNC. Following Park’s (2019) analysis, in this paper, *tangsin* ‘you’, *wuli* ‘we’, in (12c) and (12d) in the main text are translated into *your* and *our*, respectively, in English because the semantic relation between the pronoun and noun is the predicate of possession of R2 head. For relevant discussion and more details on the small clause and Korean RP1/2 structures of RP theory, see Den Dikken (2006) and Park (2019).

conducted. The experiment was designed to investigate how natural the generic interpretation of Korean DNCs and PNCs in the given context is. Seventeen native speakers of Korean participated in the experiment.<sup>8</sup> In this task, participants were asked to rate a variety of generic statements that consisted of twenty items where each construction of DNC and PNC had ten statements. This experiment was conducted by using a web-based judgment task in which participants' responses were collected through Google Forms. Hence, each participant was asked to sit in front of a computer in his/her house and then to evaluate the naturalness for genericity of each statement on a scale of 1 (very odd/unnatural) to 5 (very natural). When each item was shown on the computer screen, participants selected one of scale points 1 to 5. Example items used in the experiment are illustrated in (13).<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Regarding the number of participants in the experiment, I admit that it may not be sufficient. Thus, I cannot but explain the reason in this space. Actually, the task was fulfilled during the peak of pandemic of COVID-19. The participants were undergraduate students who were freshmen in my class. Since the experiment was a kind of survey study, at first, I had to get the consent for participation from all of them. Due to the COVID-19, the guidelines and the request for participation in the study were delivered via the Zoom. Finally, among a total of eighty students, only seventeen students agreed to take part in the study and completed all the tasks. These subjects sincerely responded and did their best for this experiment. Therefore, even though the subjects can be somewhat small in number, it seems that the results from experiment are meaningful with respect to analysis on genericity of demonstratives and pronouns that the ordinary Koreans recognize, as seen in Tables represented in subsection 3.3 in the main text later. Concerning the experimental methodology conducted via Google Forms, an anonymous reviewer points out that this methodology could lead to misunderstood or erroneous responses due to the absence of real-time clarification or instant feedback. In addition, he/she also mentions that the participants may not have fully comprehended the complex linguistic concept of study since they are undergraduate students. I accept that such issues may rise. Therefore, in order to minimize such concerns, I instructed the participants of the current study including the concept of genericity, roles of demonstratives and pronouns in languages, the relevant examples, etc. before the experiment for two hours although it was carried out via the Zoom. It was tough times, but the results of experiment shown in Section 4 tell us that such efforts have not been in vain since the results verify the hypothesis of this study. However, as the suggestion of the reviewer, in future research it will be better to select a participant pool more familiar with the subject matter or to provide a comprehensive training module before the experiment for much more robust generalizations of the findings in the study.

<sup>9</sup> In this study, following Kim et al. (2010) and Hong (2010), Korean demonstratives are classified into three types, *i* 'this', *ku* 'the', *ce* 'that' unlike English ones, i.e., this, that. Also, Kim calls Korean pronominal expression, *ku* determinant and suggests that this element corresponds to the determiner in

- (13) a. A: *chelswu-ka pangkum cintoskay han mali-lul sass-tay.*  
 Chelswu-Nom just Cintoskay one CL-Acc buy-pst-Dc.  
 ‘Chelswu just bought a Cintoskay.’
- B: *ung, tulesse. ku cintoskay-tul-un cwuin-eykey chwungsenghakilo*  
*yeah hear-pst the Cintoskay-PL-Top owner-to(Prep) be loyal*  
*yumyenghay.*  
*be famous-Dc.*  
 ‘Yeah, I heard. The Cintoskays are famous for being loyal to their owner.’
- b. *wuli enhakca-tul-un tayanghan enecalyo-lul pwunsek, thamkwuhan-ta.*  
 we linguist-PL-Top various linguistic data-Acc analyze explore-pre-Dc.  
 ‘We linguists analyze and explore various linguistic data.’

(13a) is a brief conversation between two speakers, A and B, and (13b) is just a kind of statement. In this task, such conversations as (13a) were designed to indicate that B’s utterance which comes after A’s utterance is a following generic statement about a particular category which is concerned with the noun component of DNC. In the same vein, the statements like (13b) involved the generic sentence of a single specific member of category of the nominal element in PNC.

Ultimately, noun components of the items of Korean DNCs and PNCs used in this task were comprised of the subordinate level category in which category variability is lowest, resulting in being most specific, under the appropriate generic context.

## IV. Results and Discussion

### 4.1 The Generic Interpretation of Demonstratives in Korean

The result of experiment on genericity of Korean DNCs is shown in Table 1.<sup>10,11</sup>

---

English. Adopting Kim’s proposal, in this paper, *ku* is translated into ‘the’ in English.

Table 1. Average rating of the naturalness of generic interpretation of Korean DNCs

Items (DNCs)	Mean	SD
<i>ku cintoskaytul</i> ‘the Cintoskays’	3.58	1.33
<i>ce cakun chatul</i> ‘those small cars’	3.47	1.24
<i>i phali pakheythu ttalki kheyikhu 3ho</i> ‘this strawberry cake No.3 of Paris Baguette’	3.76	1.35
<i>ku suphochukhatul</i> ‘the sportscars’	3.88	0.75
<i>ku topeylimantul</i> ‘the Dobermanns’	3.88	1.27
<i>ku peysukhin lapinsu aisukhulim</i> ‘the Baskin Robbins ice cream’	3.93	1.14
<i>ce samsengkaylleksi eysu21 hyutayphon</i> ‘that cellphone of Samsung Galaxy S21’	4.17	0.98
<i>ce pheylusian koyangi</i> ‘that Persian cat’	3.88	1.07
<i>i supheyinsan wisukhi</i> ‘this Spanish whisky’	3.58	1.49
<i>i pantalkom</i> ‘this Asiatic black bear’	4.06	1.14

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation (SD) of each item of DNC used in the experiment as the descriptive statistics. Average ratings of ten Korean DNCs range from 4.17 to 3.47 out of 5. Except for one item, all items are above 3.50 out of 5. Interestingly, the item under 3.50, *ce cakun chatul* ‘those small cars’ is somewhat lower than other items in kind specificity and hence its category variability can be higher than that of other items. This fact indicates that

<sup>10</sup> The whole lists of statements used in the experiment are presented in appendix at the end of this paper.

<sup>11</sup> In Table 1, some noun components in DNCs are singular forms. As mentioned in (4) in the main text, when the kind being referred to is conceptually identical or functionally indistinguishable, the contrast between singular and plural demonstratives disappears. In other words, according to B&W, as the variability approaches zero, the generic interpretation of demonstratives (whether they are singular or plural) becomes possible. Thus, based on such a B&W’s proposal, this task employs subordinates in which category variability are lowest as the levels of categorization of items (whether they are human or not) in order to examine that this constraint identically applies to cognitive system of Koreans.

B&W's constraints in terms of specificity and variability in the genericity of demonstratives can equally apply to Korean demonstratives as well. Furthermore, the item that is highest in the average rating is *ce samsengkaylleksi eysu21 hyutayphon* 'that cellphone of Samsung Galaxy S21', and it can be zero in the variability since it is unchangeable artifact that is conceptually identical or functionally indistinguishable by design. This finding further supports that B&W's proposal fits for demonstratives in Korean. In brief, from the above facts, it seems reasonable to think that demonstratives in Korean can receive the generic interpretation when they are put under the constraint of kind specificity and the appropriate context.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.2 The Generic Interpretation of Pronouns in Korean

Table 2 below shows the result of experiment on genericity of Korean PNCs.<sup>13</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> Even though only DNCs are shown in Table 1 for reasons of space, we can check the full details of statements that are used generically in the given context in Appendix later.

<sup>13</sup> With regard to items of PNC in Table 2, this paper follows Park's (2019) analysis (Cf. footnote 7). Park proposes some restrictions related to the selection between the pronominal subject and its NP predicate in the RP structure of PNCs in Korean. In particular, in the case of RP2 structure, the R2 head can take both singular and plural nouns as its NP predicate, and the object/thing as well as human/animal can be the NP predicate of R2 head. Moreover, Park suggests that in Korean singular pronouns like *tangsin* 'you', *kunye* 'she' are partially allowed as the pronominal subject in RP structure of PNCs. Thus, in items in Table 2, some PNCs of RP2 structure that shows the semantic relation of predicate of possession have the singular form as their noun components, and some pronominal elements also take the singular form. Regarding the relevant issues, see Park (2019).



Table 2. Average rating of the naturalness of generic interpretation of Korean PNCs

Items (PNCs)	Mean	SD
<i>wu-li enehakcatul</i> 'we linguists'	4.29	0.95
<i>kutul sipeylian hesukhitul</i> 'they Siberian Huskys'	2.75	1.39
<i>wu-li phalkongsan makkelli</i> 'our Phalkongsan Makkelli'	3.47	1.19
<i>tangsin kyengceyhakcatul</i> 'you economists'	3.70	1.31
<i>kutul sayngsengthongsaloncatul</i> 'they generative syntacticians'	3	1.45
<i>wuli payktwusan holangi</i> 'our Payktwusan tiger'	3.94	1.16
<i>tangsin phulangusan paykphotocwu</i> 'your French white wine'	2.82	1.09
<i>wuli hanpok</i> 'our Hanpok'	4.52	1.03
<i>tangsin mokkeli</i> 'your necklace'	3.88	1.02
<i>kutul ppalkan suphochukha</i> 'their red sportscar'	2.88	1.13

The result on the naturalness of generic interpretation of Korean PNCs shows that the average ratings are rather low compared to that of Korean DNCs. This naturally means that generic statements are more natural for DNCs than for PNCs in Korean. However, the above fact shows that even though the average ratings of PNCs are lower than those of DNCs, all items except for the three items are above 3 out of 5, implying that Korean PNCs sufficiently bear the possibility of genericity just like Korean DNCs as well. The item in which the average rating is highest is *wuli hanpok* 'our Hanpok' ( $m=4.52$ ) and this result, intriguingly, seems to be explained by the constraint concerning the generic demonstrative proposed by B&W. According to B&W, generic DNCs must represent a kind assumed to be already familiar to the hearer under a certain context. In this sense, *hanpok* is the Korean traditional clothes that are most familiar for Koreans and at the same time, it can be most specific object. Thus, participants may recognize *wuli hanpok* as a single kind. From this finding, we can draw the significant fact that the constraint for DNCs can

be also used for PNCs in the genericity in a certain context.<sup>14</sup> Regarding the three items, i.e., *sipeylian hesukhitul* ‘Siberian Huskys’, *phulangSusan paykphotocwu* ‘French white wine’, *suphochukha* ‘sportscar’, under 3 out of 5, I would like to leave this issue for future research because these items are recognized somewhat unnaturally in the genericity despite their high kind specificity under the appropriate context. This remaining question requires a great deal of extensive research in semantics of Korean DP, hence I will not pursue answer to this question in this page. Nonetheless, Table 2 shows that it can be overall possible that PNCs receive the generic interpretation like the case of DNCs in Korean.

#### 4.3 New Perspective in Semantics of Demonstratives and Pronouns in Korean

As discussed in the previous subsections 4.1 and 4.2, it seems adequate to assume that in Korean, demonstratives and pronouns can be used generically. More significantly, the following result shows the more meaningful fact.

Table 3. Total average rating of the naturalness of generic interpretation of Korean DNCs and PNCs

Item	Total Mean
DNCs (Demonstrative-Noun Constructions)	3.81
PNCs (Pronoun-Noun Constructions)	3.52

As indicated in Table 3, both Korean DNCs and PNCs are above 3.50 out of 5 in the total average ratings of the naturalness of generic interpretation. That is, the above result ultimately shows that Korean demonstratives and pronouns can be quite used in yielding the generic meaning depending on the given context. More importantly, the result points out that the demonstrative can be construed more naturally than the pronoun in the genericity in Korean nominal structures.

<sup>14</sup> In Appendix, entire statements for PNCs are represented in detail.

Consequently, based on the empirical evidence from the experiment and the relevant discussion so far, it seems that the prediction of the current study is borne out. In short, in regards to semantics of demonstratives and pronouns in Korean, the analysis pursued in this paper provides the new perspective that has not been almost handled by Korean linguists in the literature in the semantic property of the two elements and makes us have a new insight with respect to the nature of demonstratives and pronouns in semantics.

Building on the positive result of the current study, future research aims to explore cognitive responses of Korean L2 learners for the genericity of demonstratives and pronouns in Korean to test the effect of expectation proposed in the current study more universally.

## V. Conclusion

In this paper, I examined the possibility of generic interpretation of demonstratives and pronouns in Korean. Based on the empirical evidence by statistical analysis from the experiment, the prediction of the current study was further supported. That is, this study showed that Korean DNCs (Demonstrative-Noun Constructions) and PNCs (Pronoun-Noun Constructions) bear the semantic property of genericity under certain conditions, i.e., kind specificity/category variability, and generic context, on the basis of Bowdle and Ward's (1995) and Choi's (2014) analyses. However, the small sample size of the experiment seems to remain a significant limitation. For this reason, I would like to regard the findings from the current study as indications suggesting the possibility of a generic interpretation of demonstratives and pronouns in Korean. Building on the findings from the current analysis, I intend to improve the experimental design along with a larger, more informed sample in future research.

Thus far, there has been extensive research on demonstratives and pronouns in

many languages (Postal 1966, Benveniste 1971, Huang 1984, Ritter 1995, Brugè 1996, 2002, Bernstein 1997, Noguchi 1997, Campbell 1998, Diessel 1999, Panagiotis 2000, 2002, Déchaine et al. 2002, Harley and Ritter 2002, Grohmann et al. 2004, 2005, Giusti 2005, Kratzer 2009, Guardiano 2012, Hale 2018, among others). Korean nominal structures have been also investigated steadily as one of the most popular topics among Korean syntacticians (Jo 2000, Suh 2005, Park 2009, Hong 2010, An 2014, 2018, among others). However, except for Bowdle and Ward (1995) and Choi (2014), the topic explored in the current study seems to have not received much attention by most linguists until recently. In particular, any Korean linguists that have studied Korean noun phrases seem to have not paid attention to such unique semantic properties of demonstratives and pronouns in Korean pursued in the current study. In this respect, we can say that the current proposal provides a new viewpoint on Korean demonstratives and pronouns that has not been attempted in the previous studies.

Based on the findings from the current analysis, the subsequent research aims to further clarify the possibility of the generic interpretation of demonstratives and pronouns in Korean through the scrutiny of cognitive responses of Korean L2 learners as well as Koreans, increasing the sample size of experiment for more validity and reliability of the study. I believe that the results from this study shed a new insight into the syntactic structure of Korean nominal phrase that the semantic features of genericity of Korean demonstratives and pronouns are reflected. I will pursue the investigation of this issue in future research.

## Appendix

The items exhibited in (I) and (II) below are the statements used in the experiment. Among a total of 20 statements, (I) contains 10 statements associated with the DNC (Demonstrative-Noun Construction) and (II) also contains 10

statements associated with the PNC (Pronoun-Noun Construction).

(I) Demonstrative Cases

(i) A: chelswu-ka pangkum cintoskay han mali-lul sass-tay.

Chelswu-Nom just Cintoskay one CL-Acc buy-pst-Dc.

‘Chelswu just bought a Cintoskay.’

B: ung, tulesse. **ku cintoskay-tul-un** cwuin-eykey chwungsenghakilo

yeah hear-pst the Cintoskay-PL-Top owner-to(Prep) be loyal

yumyenghay.

be famous-Dc.

‘Yeah, I heard. The Cintoskays are famous for being loyal to their owner.’

(ii) A: ceki ippun cakun cha pwass-ni?

over there pretty small car see-pst-Q

‘Did you see a pretty small car over there?’

B: ung, kulentey, **ce cakun cha-tul-un** wihem-hay.

yeah, by the way, that small car-PL-Top dangerous-Dc.

‘Yeah, by the way, that small cars are dangerous.’

(iii) A: na-nun sayngil phathi-lul wihay phali pakeythu-ese

I-Nom birthday party-Acc for-Prep Paris Baguette at-Prep

ttalki kheyikhu-lul cwumwunhay-sse.

strawberry cake -Acc order -pst-Dc.

‘I ordered the strawberry cake for the birthday party at Paris Baguette.’

B: kulaysskwuni! **i phali pakeythu ttalki kheyikhu samho-nun**

do-pat this Paris Baguette strawberry cake No.3 -Top

yocum ceyil cal phallin-tay.

these days most well be sold -Dc.

‘You did! these days, this strawberry cake No.3 of Paris Baguette is sold the most.’

(iv) A: yenghuy-nun say su-phochukha-lul salyeko sayngkak-cwung-i-lay.

Yenghu-Top new sportscar-Acc will buy think -prog-Dc.

‘Yenghu is thinking about buying a new sportscar.’

B: **ku suphochukha-tul-un** pissal-theyn-tey.

the sportscar-PL-Top expensive can be-Dc.

‘The sportscars can be expensive.’

- (v) A: *nay kay-ka ecey topeyluman-hanthey kongkyek-tang-haysse.*  
 my dog-Nom yesterday Dobermann by-Prep attack -pass-pst-Dc.  
 ‘My dog was attacked by a Dobermann yesterday.’  
 B: **ku topeyluman-tul-un** *acwu sanawe.*  
 the Dobermann-PL-Top very violent-Dc.  
 ‘The Dobermanns are very violent.’
- (vi) A: *na-nun phathi-eyse peysukhin lapinsu aisukhulim-ul taycephal-kke-ya.*  
 I-Top party at-Prep Baskin Robbins ice cream-Acc serve-future-Dc.  
 ‘I will serve Baskin Robbins ice cream at the party.’  
 B: *cohun sayngkak-ya! ku peysukhin lapinsu aisukhulim-un motwu-lul*  
 good idea -Dc. the Baskin Robbins ice cream-Top crowd-Acc  
*culkep-key hay.*  
 pleased make -Dc.  
 ‘Good idea! The Baskin Robbins ice cream makes the crowd pleased.’
- (vii) A: *nay chinkwu-nun ceki poinun choysin samseng kaylleksi eysu 21*  
 my friend-Top there displayed the newest Samsung Galaxy S21  
*hyutayphon-i iss-e.*  
 cellphone-Nom have-Dc.  
 ‘My friend has a newest cellphone of Samsung Galaxy S21 displayed over there.’  
 B: **ce samseng kaylleksi eysu 21 hyutayphon-un** *yuyonghan ki-nung-i*  
 that Samsung Galaxy S21 cellphone-Top useful function-Nom  
*mwuci manhta-ko tulesse.*  
 so many-Conj hear-pst-Dc.  
 ‘I heard that that cellphone of Samsung Galaxy S21 has so many useful  
 functions.’
- (viii) **ce pheylusian koyangi-nun** *cuwin-tul-eykey ippumpatnun kello cal*  
 that Persian cat -Top owner-PL from-Prep be loved -Conj well  
*allyecye isse.*  
 well-known-Dc.  
 ‘It is well known that that Persian cat is loved so much by owners.’
- (ix) **i supheyinsan wisukhi-nun** *yak 100 nyen ceney cheum mantule-cyesse.*  
 this Spanish whisky-Top about 100 year ago for the first time make-pass-pst-Dc.  
 ‘This Spanish whisky was made for the first time about 100 years ago.’
- (x) *kulim sokuy i pantalkom-un kot myelcongwikiey nohyeisstay.*

picture in-Prep this Asiatic black bear-Top soon endangered-Dc.

‘This Asiatic black bear in the picture is endangered soon.’

(II) The Cases of Pronoun

(i) **wuli enehakca-tul-un** tayanganhan ene calyo-lul pwunsek, thamkwuhan-ta.

we linguist-PL-Top a variety of linguistic data-Acc analyze explore-Dc.

‘We linguists analyze and explore a variety of linguistic data.’

(ii) **kutul sipeylian hesukhi-tul-un** mwuchek yengli-ha-ta.

they Siberian Husky-PL-Top very smart-Cop-Dc.

‘They Siberian Huskys are very smart.’

(iii) **wuli phalkongsan makkelli-nun** yocum cenkwukcekulo inki-lul

we Phalkongsan Makkelli-Top these days national wide popularity-Acc

kkulkoiss-ta.

gain-Dc.

‘These days, our Phalkongsan Makkelli gains national wide popularity.’

(iv) **tangsın kyengceyhakca-tul-un** caytheykhu-ey nunghanka-yo?

you(PL) economist-PL-Top investment techniques at-Prep good-Cop-Q

‘Are you economists good at investment techniques?’

(v) **kutul sayngsengthongsalonca-tul-un** 1950 nyentay hwupan-ey hakkyey-ey

they generative syntactician-PL-Top 1950s late in-Prep academic circles in-Prep

nathanass-ta.

appear-pst-Dc.

‘They generative syntacticians appeared in academic circles in the late 1950s.’

(vi) **wuli payktwusan holangi-nun** seykyey-eyse kacang yongmayngha-ta.

we Payktwusan tiger-Top world in-Prep the most brave-Cop-Dc.

‘Our Payktwusan tiger is bravest in the world.’

(vii) **tangsın phulangusan paykphotoewu-nun** elmana cal phallina-yo?

you(Sg.) French white wine-Top how well be sold-Q

‘How is your French white wine sold well?’

(viii) **wuli hanpok-un** seykyey-eyse kacang alumtawun centhong uysang-i-ta.

we Hanpok-Top world in-Prep the most beautiful traditional clothes-Cop-Dc.

‘Our Hanpok is the most beautiful traditional clothes in the world.’

(ix) **tangsın makkelli-nun** icyey onlain mol-eyse phwumceltwayss-ta.

you(Sg.) necklace-Top now online store at-Prep sold out -pst-Dc.

‘Your necklace was sold out at online stores now.’

- (x) **kutul ppalkan suphochukha**-nun hyencay sicang-eyse choykouy  
 they red sportscar-Top at present market in-prep the best  
 phanmayhunghayng tolphwungul ilukhikoiss-ta.  
 sales success be sensational -Dc.  
 ‘Their red sportscar is sensational as the best sales success in the market  
 at present.’

### Works Cited

- An, Duk-Ho. “Genitive case in Korean and its implications for noun phrase structure.” *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 23 (2014): 361-392.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “On the word order of numeral quantifier constructions.” *Studia Linguistica* 72.3 (2018): 662-686.
- Benveniste, Émile. *The nature of pronouns*. Problems in general linguistics Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971. 217-222.
- Bernstein, Judy. “Demonstratives and reinforcers in Romance and Germanic languages.” *Lingua* 102 (1997): 87-113.
- Bowdle, Brian, and Gregory Ward. *Generic Demonstratives*. In Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society, Linguistics Department, University of California, Berkeley, CA. 1995. 32-43.
- Brugè, Laura. “Demonstrative movement in Spanish: a comparative approach”. *University of Venice Working Papers in Linguistics* 6 (1996): 1-53.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The position of demonstratives in the extended nominal projection in functional structure*. In DP and IP: The cartography of syntactic structures, Vol. 1, ed. G. Cinque, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. 15-53.
- Campbell, Richard. “A null pronominal in the noun phrase.” *Linguistic Inquiry* 29 (1998): 153-160.
- Choi, Jaehoon. *Pronoun-Noun Constructions and the syntax of DP*. Doctoral Dissertation, The University of Arizona, 2014.
- Déchainé, Rose-Marie, and Martina Wiltschko. “Decomposing pronouns.” *Linguistic Inquiry* 33 (2002): 409-442.
- Diessel, Holger. *Demonstratives. Form, function, and grammaticalization*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999.
- Den Dikken, Marcel. *Relators and linkers: the syntax of predication, predicate inversion, and copulas*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006.



- Furuya, Kaori. "DP hypothesis or Japanese 'bare' noun phrases." *University of Pennsylvania Working Papers in Linguistics* 14.1 (2008): 149-162.
- Giusti, Giuliana. *At the left periphery of the Rumanian noun phrase*. In Proceedings of the Tense and Aspect Conference, 2005. 23-49.
- Grohmann, K. Kleantes, and Panagiotidis, Phoevos. *Demonstrative doubling in Modern Greek*. In University of Maryland Working Papers in Linguistics 13, ed. P. Chandra, T. Fujii, U. Soltan, M. Yoshida, University of Maryland, College Park, MD. 2004. 109-131.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *An anti-locality approach to MG demonstratives*. In Contributions to the 30th Incontro di Grammatica Generativa. ed. L. Brugè, G. Giusti, N. Munaro, W. Schweikert, G. Turano, Cafoscarina, Venice. 2005. 243-263.
- Guardiano, Cristina. 2012. "Demonstratives, word order and the DP between syntax and semantics: Crosslinguistic remarks." *Studies in Greek Linguistics* 32 (2012): 100-115.
- Hale, John, Jixing Li, Murielle Fabre, and Wen-Ming Luh. *The role of syntax during pronoun resolution: evidence from fMRI*. In Proceedings of the eighth workshop on cognitive aspects of computational language learning and processing, 2018. 56-64.
- Harley, Heidi. and Ritter, Elizabeth. "Person and number in pronouns: a feature-geometric analysis." *Language* 78 (2002): 482-526.
- Hong, Yong-Tcheol. "Peripheral nominal modifiers and noun phrase structure in Korean." *Studies in Generative Grammar* 20 (2010): 27-50.
- Huang, James. "On the distribution and reference of empty pronouns." *Linguistic Inquiry* 15 (1984): 531-574.
- Jo, Mi-Jeung. "Nominal functional categories in Korean: a comparative study with language with DP." *Studies in Generative Grammar* 10.2 (2000): 427-451.
- Kim, Jong-Bok, Nam-Geun Lee, and Yae-sheik Lee. *Word order and NP structure in Korean: a constraint based approach*. In Proceedings of Pacific Asia Conference on Language, Information and Computation 24, 2010. 183-192.
- Kratzer, Angelika. "Making a pronoun: Fake indexicals as windows into the properties of pronouns." *Linguistic Inquiry* 40 (2009): 187-237.
- Noguchi, Tohru. "Two types of pronouns and visible binding." *Language* 43 (1997): 770-797.
- Park, Hyunjung. *The Syntax of DP in Korean*. Doctoral Dissertation, Kyungpook National University, 2019.
- Park, So-Yong. "The syntax of numeral classifiers: a small clause inside a DP." *Language Research* 45.2 (2009): 203-230.
- Panagiotidis, Phoevos. "Demonstrative determiners and operators: The case of MG." *Lingua* 110 (2000): 717-742.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Pronouns, clitics and empty nouns*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2002.

- Postal, Paul. *On so-called 'pronouns' in English*. In Georgetown university monograph series on languages and linguistics, Vol 19, ed. F. Dinneen, Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 1966. 177-206.
- Ritter, Elizabeth. "On the syntactic category of pronouns and agreement." *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 13 (1995): 405-443.
- Rosch, Eleanor, Carolyn B Mervis, Wayne D Gray, David M Johnson, and Penny Boyes-Braem. "Basic objects in natural categories." *Cognitive Psychology* 8 (1976): 382-439.
- Suh, Eugenia. "The nominal phrase in Korean: the role of D in a "determiner-less" language." *Toronto Working Papers in Linguistics* 25 (2005): 10-19.

Park, Hyunjung (Songwon University / Assistant Professor)

Address: (61756) Division of Liberal Arts, Songwon University, Songam-ro 73, Nam-gu, Gwangju, Korea.

Email: [hjpark@songwon.ac.kr](mailto:hjpark@songwon.ac.kr)

Received: March 31, 2023 / Revised: May 15, 2023 / Accepted: May 21, 2023