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Teaching Culture through Language: Teaching Korean Kinship Terms in Korean in Foreign Language Classrooms

Introduction

In step with the current upsurge in the consumption of Korean cultural products around the globe,[1] a growing number of people are engaging in various forms of Korean language learning. An in-depth understanding of the Korean culture has become one of the key motivating factors and target goals of Korean language learning.[2] One interesting phenomenon learners may encounter through experiencing interactions between Korean people is the extensive use of kinship terms.

Korean kinship terms form a highly complex system, and the situation-appropriate selection of *terms of reference* (*chich'ing* 지칭; abbreviated as RT; used when talking about an individual) or *terms of address* (*hoch'ing* 호칭; abbreviated as AT; what one actually says to another individual during direct interaction) may cause confusion to learners of Korean as a foreign language (KFL). Kinships terms are also important bearers of cultural information, through which Korean society and social values are reflected. Although the topic of kinship terminology is approached by researchers from the fields of ethnography, anthropology, sociology or linguistics, proposing a typology or an analysis of kinship terms,[3] investigating the changing meanings of the terms,[4] or examining their (extended) usages,[5] little international research is addressing the KFL teaching context or emphasizing the cultural importance of teaching

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[1] Kim 2013, Kuwahara 2014, Lee–Nornes 2015, Jin 2016.

[2] For example, see Chan–Chi 2010, Lee 2018; for Hungarian context, see Hanó–Németh–Nguyen 2016.

[3] For example, see Kim 1967, Wang 1988, King 2006, Baik–Chae 2010, Osváth 2016.

[4] For example, see Kim 1998; Harkness 2015, Brown 2017.

[5] For example, see Pak 1975.

such terms to language learners, who are more than likely to encounter situations involving kinship terminology early into their language learning endeavor. The lack of a comprehensive study on Korean kinship terms and their cultural connotations, positioning them in the framework of culture teaching, while also taking KFL education into consideration has prompted the present study.

Focusing on the potentials for teaching culture in a KFL classroom, the following questions are proposed for closer examination in this study:

1. Why is it important to teach kinship terms to learners of Korean as a foreign language?

2. What aspects need to be considered when teaching Korean kinship terms to learners of Korean as a foreign language?

First, the study will provide a brief overview of the Korean kinship system itself, highlighting the unique features of the terminological system. Then building on this introduction, the relationship between kinship terms and culture will be examined in detail. The third part will look at different aspects of teaching kinship terms to learners of KFL with regard to the learners' development of cultural awareness.

Overview of the Korean kinship terminology

In the following, the kinship system will be briefly introduced with its general and more specific characteristics. The most frequently used ATs and RTs for kinship terms will be presented through tables in order to supplement the understanding of the system. Moreover, as the basis for future sections, the different usages of kinship terms will be discussed as well.

Kinship terminology system

In general, John A. Ballweg lists two fundamental functions of kinship terms: one is the ordering and classifying function, while the other is the function of designating the distance between selected individuals.[6] Thus, kinship terms provide a hypothetical "social grid", where individuals appear in relation to one another with the underlying social roles that are expected by their given position.

Kinship terms are one of the most common ATs and RTs used in the contemporary South Korean society.[7] As the Korean society may traditionally be described as a family-clan-centered society, where deeply-rooted values of

[6] Ballweg 1969: 84.

[7] Kim 1998: 271.

Confucianism are still quite prevalent, the active use of kinship terms in speech situations is widely observable. China's long-standing cultural influence is also evident in the choice of kinship terminology itself, since even native Korean ATs or RTs of close relatives have Sino-Korean equivalents, and the more distant relatives are generally referred to by terms of Sino-Korean origin exclusively.[8]

In the Korean kinship system, the descent is traced bilaterally *(cognatic kinship),* although historically male lines are more emphasized – an effect of the patriarchal Confucian traditions –, which is evident in the predominantly high number of terms appearing on the paternal side. The system primarily displays characteristics for the most descriptive type of kinship. Terminologically, the descriptive kinship patterns reflect the relationships among the kin members accurately; this means that not one relative is referenced identically. However, some features of the system point to a more classificatory type of kinship.[9] For example, the brothers of the father are usually addressed as *chakŭnabŏji* 작은아버지, if one is younger than the father, and *k'ŭnabŏji* 큰아버지, if one is older, which means that partially the same expression ('father', i.e. *abŏji* 아버지) is used for those individuals. Furthermore, parallel or cross cousins are addressed using the same terms as one's own siblings (*ŏnni* 언니*, oppa* 오빠*, nuna* 누나 or *hyŏng* 형). At the same time, as RTs, the distance from the self or speaker is often expressed with a mixture of the word 'cousin' and a term used for siblings (for example, *sach'onŏnni* 사촌언니, as in a female cousin who is older than the ego).[10]

The degree of relatedness is based on *ch'on* 촌 or the kinship space existing between individuals. The ego serves as the point of reference, and thus, the most immediate relatives, ego's parents are situated at a one *ch'on* distance from the ego, and ego's siblings are two *ch'on* removed from the ego. From three *ch'on*, i.e. ego's parents' siblings, *ch'on* (the word itself) enters the terminology. For instance, ego's uncles may be referred to or addressed as *samch'on* 삼촌*;* however, considerable variation exists here due to various factors (e.g. paternal or maternal side of the family, marital status).

The terminology system is often regarded as highly complex and particularly confusing for learners of KFL, and even for some native Korean people.[11]

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[8] Osváth 2016: 102.

[9] King 2006: 114–115. For more details on the six different kinship patterns, see Morgan 1877.

[10] Lee–Kim 1973: 37.

[11] You 2002: 307; Jeon 2012: 32.

Kinship terms of address and terms of reference

Kinship RTs and ATs are abundant, and the system's high complexity leads to the difficulty to choose contextually appropriate terms, since the choice between more options depends on various factors, which will be enumerated in a later section. The classification of relatives falls into two basic categories: consanguineal (related by blood) and affinal (related by marriage) relatives (*injok* 인족). Among consanguineal relatives, the descending, ascending and collateral lines are also differentiated; furthermore, the ascending line is divided into paternal consanguineal (*ch'injok* 친족) and maternal consanguineal (*wejok* 외족) relatives.

It is important to note that only those kin members are addressed by specific terms who are older or who occupy a higher kin status than the ego. When addressing younger members, personal names with the intimate vocative particle (*-a* -아 or *-ya* -야) are used, as long as the status-superiority condition is not violated. For example, if an 'uncle' is younger than the addresser, then he or she has to call him with an appropriate term for 'uncle'. There are certain exceptions to the practice of using personal names for younger members; they mainly concern some affinal relationships such as a husband addressing his younger brother's wife as *chesu* 제수 or a wife addressing her husband's younger brother as *toryŏng-nim* 도령님 among others. In the case of some descending relationships, both specific kin terms and personal names are used for addressing younger members, such as addressing one's own son as *adŭl* 아들.

As the present study adopts a synchronic approach and focuses primarily on the ascending lines, collateral and affinal relatives (where the ATs and RTs show a greater complexity), the following tables show a short summary of the currently widely used central ATs and RTs for older kin members, which also appear in KFL textbooks, based on Ross King and Kang So-san, Jeon Eun-joo.[12]

Term of address/ Term of reference		
father	abŏji/ abŏnim appa	아버지/아버님 아빠
mother	ŏmŏni/ŏmŏnim ŏmma	어머니/어머님 엄마

[12] King 2006: 101–117; Kang–Jeon 2013: 374–380. See also Park 1997 on Korean terms of address.

brother	hyŏng (male's older brother)	형
	oppa (female's older brother)	오빠
sister	nuna (male's older sister)	누나
	ŏnni (female's older sister)	언니

Table 1: Terms for the nuclear family

	Term of address/ Term of reference			
	PATERNAL RELATIVES		**MATERNAL RELATIVES**	
grandmother	halmŏni	할머니	oe-halmŏni	외할머니
grandfather	harabŏji	할아버지	oe-harabŏji	외할아버지
uncle	samch'on (before marriage)	삼촌	oe-samch'on	외삼촌
	chakŭnabŏji (younger brother after marriage)	작은아버지		
	k'ŭnabŏji (older brother after marriage)	큰아버지		
aunt	komo	고모	imo	이모
cousin as RT	sach'on	사촌	oe-sach'on	외사촌
cousin as AT	hyŏng (male's older male cousin)		형	
	oppa (female's older male cousin)		오빠	
	nuna (male's older female cousin)		누나	
	ŏnni (female's older female cousin)		언니	

Table 2: Terms for main paternal and maternal relatives

WIFE'S FAMILY					
Term of reference			Term of address		
mother-in-law	changmo	장모	mother	ŏmŏnim	어머님
father-in-law	changin	장인	father-in-law father	changin abŏnim	장인 아버님
sister-in-law	ch'ŏhyŏng (one's wife's elder sister)			처형	
	ch'ŏje (one's wife's younger sister)			처제	
brother-in-law	ch'ŏnam			처남	
OWN FAMILY					
Term of reference/Term of address					
sister-in-law	hyŏngsu (one's elder brother's wife)			형수	
	chesu (one's younger brother's wife)			제수	
brother-in-law	maehyŏng (one's elder sister's husband)			매형	
	maeje/maebu (one's younger sister's husband)			매제/매부	

Table 3: Terms for affinal relatives (husband's point of view)

HUSBAND'S FAMILY					
Term of reference			Term of address		
mother-in-law	shiŏmŏni	시어머니	mother	ŏmŏnim	어머님
father-in-law	shiabŏji	시아버지	father	abŏnim	아버님

sister-in-law	shinui	시누이	sister-in-law	hyŏngnim	형님
brother-in-law	shiajubŏni (older than husband)	시아주버니	brother-in-law	ajubŏni (older than husband)	어주버니
	shidongsaeng (younger than husband)	시동생	brother-in-law	toryŏnnim (younger than husband and unmarried)	도련님
OWN FAMILY					
Terms of reference/Terms of address					
sister-in-law		olk'e		올케	
brother-in-law		hyŏngbu (one's elder sister's husband)		형부	
		chebu (one's younger sister's husband)		제부	

Table 4: Terms for affinal relatives (wife's point of view)

Usages of kinship terms

Generally, three main usages of kinship terms can be distinguished: consanguineal, affinal and fictive usage. Consanguineal and affinal usages of kinship terms relate to addressing and referencing relatives by blood or by marriage, respectively. Within a kin group, personal names are regarded with little value compared with terms that include indexing the occupied position of a member in relation to the addresser. This also explains the widespread practices of *teknonymy* (addressing an adult individual in relation to their own children, i.e. as someone's father or as someone's mother, for example, 'Jŏngu's mother' *Jŏngu ŏmŏni* 정우 어머니) and *geononymy* (addressing an individual based on their place of residence, for example, 'Sŏul uncle' *Sŏul samch'ŏn* 서울 삼

촌) with regard to kinship terms.[13] Essentially, ATs, including kinship terms or titles of occupation, all serve a similar purpose in the Korean language because the use of personal names cannot sufficiently index the significant differences in social position between the addresser and the addressee.[14]

In the case of fictive usage, the use of kinship terms is extended beyond the family circle. More specifically, people of no actual blood, marriage or other legally recognized relations are referred to or addressed using these terms in order to evoke kin-like relationships.[15] Extending the kin terms to non-relatives is a frequently observable practice in the Korean society. Primarily, the following terms are extended for non-relatives: terms for siblings *(ŏnni, oppa, nuna, hyŏng),* terms for parents *(ŏmŏni, abŏji),* terms for parents' siblings (*imo*, *samch'ŏn*) terms for grandparents (*halmŏni*, *harabŏji* 할아버지) and *ajumŏni* 아주머니 (a female relative, similar in age to one's mother), *ajŏssi* 아저씨 (a male relative, similar in age to one's father).

Park Soon-Ham proposes four subcategories or sub-usages of pseudo-kinship.[16] First, the affectionate use of kinship terms refers to calling close friends of the family by kinship terms, as a form of remedy to placate the alienated "outsiders", i.e. individuals outside of the close-knit family unit. Similar practices are identifiable for instance in the Japanese language[17] or in the English language.[18] The second usage is the use of kinship terms in pseudo-family relations. Due to the prevailing Confucian disposition, Koreans have the tendency to categorize organized social institutions as a form of family, even without the involvement of affectionate feelings. One example of this would be an educational setting, where kinship terms may be adopted between junior and senior students.[19] Next, Park S. lists the euphemistic use of kinship terms. In this case, kinship terms are used to address near strangers from the lower social strata, typically, taxi drivers, deliverymen, cleaning staff and others. Therefore, the higher the social status, the less likely kinship terms will be used as a form of address. Finally, the euphemistic use of kinship terms involving the use of children's names to refer to and address individuals is mentioned. This practice is known as the previously mentioned *teknonymy*.

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[13] For more details on the practice *teknonymy* and *geononymy* see Lee–Kim 1973 and Ahn 2017.

[14] Ahn 2017: 414.

[15] Agha 2015: 402.

[16] Park 1975: 5–7.

[17] Norbeck–Befu 1958.

[18] Ballweg 1969.

[19] In educational settings, terms as 'senior' *sŏnbae* 선배 (optionally with the addition of the honorific suffix *–nim* -님) are also frequently adopted.

Korean kinship terms and culture

To deepen the understanding of the importance of kinship terms and their appropriate usage in reference and address, which comprises a crucial part of teaching kinship terms to KFL students, not only the linguistic system, but also the cultural factors that are intricately mingled with and reflected through language should be carefully examined.

The place of kinship terms in the Korean language

ATs, and among them kinship terms, provide one of the most basic tools for social interaction.[20] This statement particularly holds true for the Korean language. As Nicholas Harkness eloquently phrases, "[…] to know what to »call« someone is a guide to how to speak to someone, and to know how to speak to someone is a guide to how to behave with someone – to be with someone else."[21] Undoubtedly, considerable emphasis is given to ATs in the Korean language, because the language system as a whole, reflecting the culture and society, consists of an intricate system of honorifics in which formulating a sentence is hardly possible, if the speaker does not possess the situation-proper social information about the addressee or the referent, i.e. age, social status and in- or out-groupness. Thus, the nuanced social stratification is reflected in the well-developed linguistic system by tools of indexicality, such as various levels of sentence-endings, hierarchical sets of ATs and RTs, kinship terms, honorific suffixes, case particles and verbs. Korean speakers, on the basis of power and solidarity, strategically use these linguistic tools to achieve their communicative goals.

Cultural concepts and value orientation of Koreans

Among cultural factors influencing the use of kinship terms, significant attention should be devoted to the ideology of Confucianism and its values that have been permeating the Korean society for centuries, and which have produced discernible effects on even today's social and linguistic behavior of Korean people. Confucian ideology has first gained considerable influence on the Korean Peninsula during the Chosŏn Period (1392–1897), which provided a fertile ground for the strict hierarchical social relations and the sophisticated honorific language system to flourish. Emphasizing a division between the superior and inferior

[20] Wierzbicka 2015: 1.
[21] Harkness 2015: 308.

ranks of the social class system, Confucianism heavily relied on principles that entailed the determination to sustain harmonious and hierarchical relations among the members of society. *Samgangoryun* 삼강오륜 三綱五倫 or "three bonds and five relationships" formed the basis for interpersonal behaviors.[22] The five relations also comprise the three bonds, and out of the five, four stresses the subordination and obedience of those inferior in social status (sovereign-subject, parent-child, husband-wife, senior-junior).[23] Family represented the basic unit of society, where males lines were more emphasized, and typically first-born male heirs were entrusted with performing rituals to worship their ancestors in adherence to institutional guidelines.[24]

After the downfall of the Chosŏn Dynasty and the appearance of Western ideologies on the Korean Peninsula, the emphasis on the strict hierarchical social relationships has diminished, and a democratic class system has emerged with diluted ideas of Confucianism and a simplified honorific system. Despite the gradual shift in the value orientation of the Korean people to a relatively egalitarian consciousness, traditional values continue to persist in some way or form.

After examining the Confucian ideological background, which shaped the Korean society for a long time, let's delve into how this background translates into today's social characteristics that underlie the usage of kinship terms.

Based on the cultural dimensions proposed by Hofstede,[25] today's South Korea may be described as a slightly hierarchical and a strongly collectivist society, where people belong to different groups (family, extended family or other extended relationships), to which they are strongly committed. As previously mentioned, hierarchical interpersonal dependency propelled an asymmetry in the use of honorifics. In other words, specifically the Confucian principle of *changyuyusŏ* 장유유서 長幼有序, i.e. precedence of senior over junior, profoundly influenced the communication pattern of Koreans,[26] and as Hyejeong Ahn argues in relation to the present topic, it is even more pronounced with regard to "[…] address terms interwoven with the cultural metaphor of community members as kin".[27] This principle also serves as one of the bases for the practice that little value is associated with the use of personal names when

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[22] Pratt – Rutt – Hoare 1999: 469. More about Confucianism in Grayson 2002.

[23] Sohn 2006: 13.

[24] Pak–Cho 1995: 118.

[25] Cultural dimensions include power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus feminity, and uncertainty avoidance. The four basic dimensions were later supplemented by two additional dimensions: long term orientation versus short term normative orientation and indulgence versus restraint. Hofstede 2010; Hofstede (n.d.).

[26] Yum 1988: 374

[27] Ahn 2017: 412.

addressing persons older than the addresser. Violating this principle would also mean that the respect for someone older or someone in a higher social status is lost. Additionally, failing to properly index an individual would suggest an offense, which may lead to losing one's *face.*[28]

Eventually, the taboo of addressing older individuals by their personal names became pervasive, and to circumvent this taboo, a wide variety of ATs and RTs has been adopted, and the scope of usage of kinship terms was also extended beyond the consanguineal and affinal usages. The device of *teknonymy* and *geononymy* is commonly employed, as well. For example, the practice of *teknonymy* is traditionally so widespread among (married) women friends when they address each other (as someone's mother) that they usually do not even know each other's names.[29] In other situations involving *teknonymy*, when kinship terms are not immediately available due to the non-existence of a child, the desire to avoid uttering personal names may reach such an extent that the addresser resorts to using the name of the family's dog when referring to someone (for example, Micky's father *Mik'i abŏji* 미키 아버지).[30] This serves the purpose of avoiding inflicting offense by misaddressing someone, but it simultaneously conveys added warmth. Similarly, fictive use of kinship terms is noticeable in various other everyday communicative situations. For instance, the kin term 'aunt' *(imo)* is often used euphemistically to address older waitresses in family-run smaller restaurants. Also, an example for extending kinship terms in the affectionate way would be easily observable among younger in-group members: even a marginal age difference of one or two years may lead to asymmetrical address; therefore, terms for siblings *(ŏnni, oppa, nuna, hyŏng)* are widely adopted. This is often initiated by the younger members without being explicitly prompted to do so, with the intention to establish psychological closeness.[31]

The current use of kinship terms also reflects some changes or problematic issues arising in contemporary Korean culture and society. Minju Kim addresses the value depreciation of kin terms when addressing an unacquainted woman

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[28] *Face* or *ch'emyŏn* 체면, as a sociological concept, has been occupying an extremely central role in Korean society. De Mente explains *face* as the following, highlighting the time when the concept first gathered momentum during the Confucian Chosŏn Era:

"People became extremely sensitive to the behavior of others and to their own behavior because everything that was done or said impacted their highly honed sense of propriety, self-respect, and honor. Protecting and nurturing one's 'face' and the 'face' of one's family thus became an overriding challenge in Korea life and had a fundamental influence in the subsequent molding of the Korean language and culture in general. Chaemyeon […] or 'face saving', often took precedence over rationality, practicality, and truth." De Mente 2012: 22.

[29] Kim 2015: 564.

[30] Ahn 2017: 415; Jo–Nan–Lee 2019: 9.

[31] Lee–Cho 2013: 77.

(as 'older sister' *ŏnni*, 'aunt' *imo* or 'mother' *ŏmŏni*) in service sectors.[32] These kinship terms are in stark contrast with the generally job title-centered ATs used for men (e.g. 'company president' *sachangnim* 사장님), which points to asymmetrical practices between the two genders. Moreover, M. Kim also points out a semantic change: the recent quite disdainful usage of 'sister' *ŏnni*.[33]

In popular culture, older sibling terms (especially the terms used by the opposite sex: *oppa, nuna*) are extensively used in a fan–artist relationship. In a recent study analyzing authentic popular culture materials, Lucien Brown discusses the newly emerging *chronotopic* meanings of the sibling terms, i.e. new social practices anchored in time and space by the terms.[34] These new *chronotypes* entail covert meanings of a romantic and sexual nature, which are not recoverable from the original traditional connotations invoking social hierarchy (power) and kinship (solidarity).[35] Similarly to M. Kim, L. Brown also points out an apparent gender bias between the usages of *oppa* and *nuna*, as the latter mainly indicates a rather hyper-sexualized and illicit relation, while *oppa* is associated with more innocent images. The new meanings are viewed as a negotiation process between traditional morals, modern values and new discourses of gender equality. Additionally, the new meanings are also carriers of certain cultural images in their own right, which extends beyond the native Korean environment: *oppa* has become a trendy word for Korean male singers and actors, who possess pretty, effeminate features and an appeal to female audiences with a boy-next-door image.

Nowadays, Korean popular culture has reached not only the Asian, but also a global audience due to heavy popularizing and marketing measures in the name of strengthening South Korea's *soft power*. The international audiences became active consumers of cultural contents, and thus, they may encounter extended usages of kinship terms and semantic changes of these terms on a daily basis. Concerning KFL learning, such phenomenon and in general the underlying cultural connotations of kinship terms can hardly be ignored.

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[32] Kim 2015: 559.

[33] For more details about the semantic derogation of the term *ŏnni,* see Kim 2008. Kim investigates how the term for older sister has been adopted by older speakers to refer to younger women with lower occupational status (usually working in the service sector).

[34] Brown 2017: 1–10.

[35] The underlying process of conscious selection of Korean ATs proves to be a fascinating subject for researchers, who are attempting to rationalize the language speakers' choice in the terms of *power and solidarity semantics.* See for example Koh 2006.

Lee and Cho concisely define *power* and *solidarity* as the following: "'[p]ower' results from differences in age, sex, class, and/or role/occupation, whereas 'Solidarity' is generally thought of as the commonalities or symmetries shared by two people, e.g., the same school, hometown, company and of course, kinship." Lee–Cho 2013: 78. For more discussion on *power* and *solidarity* refer to Brown–Gilman 1960.

Aspects for consideration regarding the teaching of Korean kinship terms

When teaching outside the country of the target language – where daily direct contact with native speakers of Korean might not be possible and there is a heavy reliance on the native or nonnative teacher, teaching materials and other additional materials – there are several aspects that need to be considered when teaching kinship terms to learners of Korean. In the following, kinship terms in language textbooks, variations in kinship terminology and the method of approaching kinship terms will be examined in relation with the learners' culturally conscious development.

Intercultural competence development and kinship terms

By exploring the relation between kinship terms and culture in the above section, the importance of kinship terms as carriers of heavy cultural "loads" has been made evident. However, it is often reported that foreigners in contact with Korean people feel confused or embarrassed when trying (and failing) to find the appropriate ATs to address acquaintances, friends or colleagues.[36] The struggle may originate from a lack of knowledge or a lack of exposure to other forms of conceptualizations of kinship terms.[37] The differences in the use of ATs, RTs and kinship terms in different languages can lead to experiencing obstacles in communication or even result in misunderstandings. Furthermore, the conversation partner may regard the terms that are not situation-appropriate as a form of discourtesy, which can lead to the severance of personal ties. Even though, through the use of kinship terms, Korean cultural concepts, attitudes and values and thus Korean people's intricate web of cultural and mental worlds can be accessed, proper instruction is necessary to grasp these underlying cultural connotations and sometimes different cultural conceptualizations of certain kinship terms.

Today's globalized world provides a growing number of opportunities for intercultural encounters. For communication to be successful and effective in such encounters, one needs not only skills in a given foreign language, but also the ability or the competence to apply these skills appropriately to the actual cultural context. Culture constitutes an integral part of foreign language learning: a foreign language cannot be mastered and successfully used in intercultural communication without an understanding of the given cultural context.[38] Learn-

[36] Ahn 2017: 411.
[37] Sharifian 2013: 73.
[38] For example, see Kramsch 1993, Seelye 1993 and Agar 1994.

ing about culture is an indispensable aspect of foreign language classrooms. Therefore, learners of KFL in formal educational settings do need to be appropriately instructed in learning Korean culture, and among its many elements, Korean kinship terms as well. Understanding not only the characteristics of the language, but also demonstrating a knowledge of underlying concepts, attitudes and skills will contribute to having a good command of the language and to successfully reaching communicative goals in an intercultural setting. More and more focus is directed at the development of this competence, i.e. *intercultural communicative competence* (ICC).[39] Janet M. Bennett and Milton J. Bennett define ICC concisely as "the ability to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situations and to relate appropriately in a variety of cultural contexts."[40]

However, the new objective of developing this competence also requires teachers to assume a new, professional role to facilitate students' language learning process,[41] while assisting them to become successful intercultural speakers. Teachers can only successfully operationalize this objective, if they themselves are fully aware of the concepts, and if they are able to help their students from the standpoint of an intercultural mediator. Therefore, teachers of KFL – native and nonnative teachers alike – are also required to assume new roles in order to effectively teach kinship terms among other elements of culture to learners of Korean. Providing sufficient cultural knowledge and opportunities for students to acquire the necessary skills to use kinship terms appropriately are indeed largely dependent on the instruction of the teachers.

Kinship terms in KFL textbooks

While recognizing the central role of Korean language educators, who are primarily responsible for their students' culturally conscious development, the importance of language textbooks should not be neglected either, since much cultural content may be conveyed through textbooks. Textbooks are generally regarded as key constituents of any foreign language class as they provide

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[39] *Intercultural communicative competence* (ICC) has various components, among them there are *intercultural competence* (IC), linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence and discourse competence, redefined by Byram. Throughout the years, several models of IC were designed. Among these models, the most frequently cited remains Byram's model, specifically designed for the foreign language classroom. In Byram's model, five *savoirs* are differentiated: *savoirs* or knowledge, *savoir-comprendre* or skill of interpreting and relating, *savoir-apprendre/faire* or skill of discovery and interaction, *savoir être* or attitudes of openness and curiosity, and *savoir s'engager* or critical cultural awareness. Byram 1997: 57–63.

[40] Bennett–Bennett 2004: 149.

[41] Sercu 2005: 5.

guidance to reach classroom objectives and also determine classroom work.[42] Therefore, it is essential to examine how Korean kinship terms are presented in the currently available KFL textbooks.

Chang Yoon-jung examines the cultural content of three sets of major Korean language textbooks (from beginner to advanced level) published before the year 2000.[43] Through content analysis, the different forms of ATs and among them kinship terms were detected in dialogues, and the findings reveal that only two textbooks presented various ATs, while the remaining other textbook performed poorly. However, the results indicate that only a limited range of kinship terms was actually included among these ATs. Chang Y. generally calls for the inclusion of more diversified usages of ATs in dialogues to assist the understanding of these terms.

Kang S. and Jeon E., in their large-scale study analyzing KFL textbooks published by representative KFL institutions after the year 2000, aim to provide a report on the current status and issues of ATs and RTs as presented in language textbooks.[44] Overall an ambitious number of 35 textbooks (from seven main sets and all levels of proficiency) were meticulously analyzed with mixed-methods. The results reveal that only three (sets) of textbooks set the explicit goal of learning ATs and only one focusing on RTs as part of the syllabus, while the others do not specify such overt learning goals. Specifically, the majority of the set objectives concern the acquisition of kinship terms, when they are addressed in chapters about family. While it is considered positive that emphasis is laid on kinship terms, the otherwise low number indicates a general lack of attention with regard to kinship terms and other ATs or RTs. Moreover, the depth of topics seems to remain quite on the surface-level, and the exercises do not aid students to explore different usages of the terms. Only one textbook provides tasks, where different types of relations are introduced (e.g. family and personal

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[42] Davcheva–Sercu 2005: 90.

[43] The following Korean language textbooks were analyzed: *Han'gugŏ*한국어 [Korean] 1–6. (1992–1994, Yŏnsedaehakkyo han'gugŏhaktang); *Mari t'ŭinŭn han'gugŏ* 말이 트이는 한국어 [Pathfinder in Korean] 1–3. (1998–2000, Ihwayŏjadaehakkyo ŏnŏgyoyukyŏn'guwŏn); *Han'gugŏ(Korean through English)* 한국어(Korean through English) 1–3. (1992–2001, Sŏultaehakkyo ŏhakyŏn'guso). Chang, 2002: 27–48.

[44] The major textbooks analyzed were *Han'gugŏ* 한국어 [Korean] 1–6. (2001, Kyŏnghŭidaehakkyo); *Ch'injŏrhan han'gugŏ* 친절한 한국어 [Friendly Korean] 1–4. (2008, Pusandaehakkyo kukchegyoryugyoyugwŏn); *Han'gugŏ* 한국어 [Korean] 1–4. (2005, Sŏultaehakkyo ŏnŏgyoyugwŏn); *Paeugi shwiun han'gugŏ* 배우기 쉬운 한국어 [Easy to Learn Korean] 1–6. Sŏnggyunŏhagwŏn); *Han'gugŏ*한국어 [Korean] 1–6. (2006, Yŏnsedaehakkyo han'gugŏhaktang), *Mari t'ŭinŭn han'gugŏ* 말이 트이는 한국어 [Pathfinder in Korean] 1–5. (2001, Ihwayŏjadaehakkyo ŏnŏgyoyukyŏn'guwŏn); *Oeguginŭl wihan han'gugŏ* 외국인을 위한 한국어 [Korean for Foreigners] 1–4. (2007, Han'gugoegugŏdaehakkyo han'gugŏmunhwagyoyugwŏn). Kang–Jeon 2013: 363–389.

relations), and students are invited to make comparisons between kinship terms in their mother tongue and the Korean language.

Kang S. and Jeon E. also performed a frequency analysis of kinship terms used as ATs on the selected books and found that on average only seven or eight terms, primarily in relation to the immediate family, are presented in every textbook. They point out that the terms *ajumŏni* and *ajŏssi* appear in the case of a buyer-seller interaction exclusively. In a few cases, textbooks presented teknonymy by such forms as 'someone's father'. Concerning the presentation of kinship terms used as RTs, the situation is much more diverse on all levels of proficiency: numbers between 23 and 48 are reported, including terms of not only consanguineal but also a variety of affinal relations.[45] However, the analysis also reveals that some textbooks tend to create clusters of kinship terms by adding a number of them into a single chapter. The authors imply that this might be a potentially inefficient method, because it may overburden students. In another case, terms typically treated as a 'unit', e.g. the four alternative terms for older siblings, are introduced in different chapters, creating possible confusion. The authors conclude their study with several proposals for improvement, out of which one underlines the need for a systematic approach in the case of teaching kinship terms. They also emphasize the importance to teach terms with sufficient information about their usage in diverse situations.

Comparing the two studies, seemingly nothing essential has changed between different publications of major KFL textbooks concerning kinship terms. Although Kang S. and Jeon E. have conducted a much more in-depth study, even examining kinship terms as RTs, both findings imply that the range of usage of kinship terms is quite limited. The recommendation on the wider inclusion and diverse presentation of kinship terms by Kang S. and Jeon E. correlate with the previous suggestions by Chang. You Seok-Hoon, in a rare study dedicated to the teaching of kinship terms to KFL learners, also underlines the need for clear descriptions with diverse usage examples.[46] As kinship terms are one of the most frequently used ATs and RTs, it would be necessary to highlight their different usages through dialogues, exercises and, if possible, through other explanations in order to make kinship terms more approachable and to ease the learning process. By following a system of balance and relevance throughout all levels of proficiency, the introduction of new kinship terms would not overwhelm learners with an indigestible informational load, and by providing diversified dialogues or tasks (possibly by adopting a carefully

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[45] The most frequent terms found by Kang and Jeon form one of the bases for the tables in the overview about the kinship terminology system in the present study.

[46] You 2002: 313.

designed character repertoire), the learner would also feel more confident in their appropriate usage.

Teaching variations in kinship terminology

Presenting a diversified image of kinship terms in the language classroom is fundamental in understanding the existing variations of kinship terms. Several sociocultural factors influence the selection of kinship terms, and learners of Korean must consider the possible variations by assessing the context of an interaction.

Lee Kwang-Kyu and Kim Youngsook enumerate five factors or sources that lead to variations in kinship terminology.[47] One of these factors is the relative age of the participants of a communicative situation. For example, younger children would call their father with the shorter and more affective term *appa,* but as adults, the longer and more formal expression *abŏji* is preferred. Next is the gender of the addressee and the addresser: for instance, a girl would refer to an older, brother-like male figure as *opp*a, but on the other hand, a boy cannot use the same term in a similar situation for an older, brother-like male figure; he would have to use *hyŏng*. Another factor is the degree of formality. For example, older children and young adults will consider their immediate environment when making a choice between the familiar *ŏmma* and the formal *ŏmŏni,* when addressing or referencing their mother. Thus, *ŏmma* will be selected at home, while *ŏmŏni* will be used in an official situation. Social class may also constitute a source of variation. Lee K. and Kim Y. note that those in the upper social strata are keener on adopting formalities. Kinship categories also determine variation: for instance, the term for 'aunt' is different on the maternal *(imo)* and on the paternal side *(komo).* R. King adds two more dimensions: regional dialects and the marital status of the addressee.[48] The latter determines whether a father's younger brother will be called as *samch'ŏn* before marriage or as *chakŭnabŏji* after marriage.

Korean language learners must be properly instructed to acquire sufficient knowledge about the various usages of kinship terms and the above presented factors of variation (with maybe the exception of variations in regional dialects, which would be quite difficult to account for during language classes, where time constraint is always an issue), as these aspects determine the appropriate choice of kinship terms. For communication to be successful, the learner has to identify and weigh the given interactional clues to be able to make the correct decision.

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[47] Lee–Kim 1973: 33–34.
[48] King 2006: 108–110.

Further aspects for consideration

Teaching kinship terms to Korean language learners, who at first are not familiar with the cultural background and do not have a grasp of the highly nuanced honorific system, is a topic that should be handled sensitively. Naturally, exposure to new conceptualizations of different terms that may already be present in the learners' first language could lead to confusion or it could challenge the existing worldview of the learner. For example, see the four types of sibling terms with their various connotations and their English equivalents of 'brother' or 'sister'.

Investigating the use of honorifics in the Korean language, L. Brown reports that there are two conflicting views about the attitudes towards kinship terms among KFL learners.[49] One is positive and pertains to mainly exchange students, who find enjoyment in the adoption of kinship terms; however, professionals would rather avoid using such terms. Specifically, the older female learners are mentioned in connection with the term 'older brother' or *oppa*. As this term can take cultural connotations previously discussed, Western women find it difficult to identify with the submissive feminine role the use of the term may entail. They associate the term with a whiny prosody and cuteness, while also reporting confusion because the term can be used in a variety of contexts.

Observing such reactions, the importance of treating the topic of kinship terms with care should be recognized. Not only exposure, but also explanations of the cultural meanings are necessary to introduce kinship terms to learners.

Conclusion

The present study has sought to understand the importance of teaching kinship terms and to explore the different aspects of teaching these terms regarding the culturally conscious development of learners in a KFL learning environment. Kinship terminology forms a highly complicated system, which responds sensitively to the variations in interpersonal relationships and their immediate context. Through a brief overview of the characteristics of the terminology system, an insight has been gained as a basis for understanding the cultural background of the system. As one of the most frequently used ATs and RTs, the important status of kinship terms in the honorific system of the Korean language has been established. Addressing people properly is crucial in understanding how to behave with them. In order to be able to strategically use kinship terms, it should be acknowledged that these terms carry essential cultural information,

[49] Brown 2011: 141.

which have long-standing traditions, and reflect value orientations of Korean people. Confucian values were found to permeate the usages of kinship terms even today in the collectivist and slightly hierarchical Korean society.

Turning to the implications of these cultural connotations on the teaching of kinship terms, it was revealed that the diverse usages of these terms, especially beyond the consanguineal and affinal relationships, may lead to confusion, misunderstandings or even breakdowns in communication, as misaddressing someone could result in threatening someone's *face.* To avoid such situations, it is necessary to instruct learners of KFL appropriately. While focusing on the development of language skills in KFL classrooms, cultural instruction should not be overlooked either. It is important to emphasize new objectives of language courses that take *intercultural competence* development into consideration. Kinship terms form an essential sociocultural aspect of the language, and thus, fundamental knowledge should be conveyed and a platform to nurture skills and attitudes should be provided by the teacher, teaching materials and other possible forms of instruction to aid the students learning process toward becoming successful intercultural mediators. In the study, special attention has been given to kinship terms in Korean language textbooks; however, it was found that a systematic approach and even more diverse dialogues and tasks are necessary to demonstrate the various usages of kinship terms. In addition, teaching the sources of variation in terminology, as it directly affects the choice of terms is especially important. Handling the topic sensitively is another issue for consideration, because kinship terms may possess cultural conceptualizations entirely different from the learners' pre-existing notions, which may result in challenging learners' worldviews.

Following the semantic changes of kinship terms, while also focusing on the existing connotations is not an easy task. However, treating kinship terms in the greater system of the language i.e. dealing with all the implied cultural connotations of these and not simply as disparate words of vocabulary to be taught, will hopefully begin to be recognized by native and nonnative teachers of KFL alike.

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