VIEWPOINT SHIFTING IN KOREAN AND BULGARIAN: 
THE USE OF KINSHIP TERMS

Gwon-Jin Choi

1. Introduction

This study compares some aspects of the linguistic phenomenon of point-of-view shifting in Korean and Bulgarian. Though viewpoint shifting occurs in all persons, this article is concerned only with cases connected with direct participants in conversations.

2. Viewpoint shifting in Korean

Instead of personal pronouns Korean often uses nonpronominal substitutes, also called pseudo-pronouns. They are frequently used to express relationships between the speaker and the addressee or between the interlocutors and the referent.

2.1. First person

In certain language situations, mostly in conversations with children, kinship terms like hyŏng 'elder brother', oppa 'elder brother', önmi 'elder sister', nuna 'elder sister', ómma 'mammy', appa 'daddy', ajŏssi 'uncle', ajumma 'aunt', harabŏji 'grandfather', halmoni 'grandmother', etc. can replace the first person pronoun na 'I, me' when the speaker is of a higher social rank than the hearer. When the above-mentioned pseudo-pronominal forms are used in place of the real pronoun na 'I, me' when the speaker is of a higher social rank than the hearer. When the above-mentioned pseudo-pronominal forms are used in place of the real pronoun na 'I, me' when the speaker is of a higher social rank than the hearer. When the above-mentioned pseudo-pronominal forms are used in place of the real pronoun na 'I, me' when the speaker is of a higher social rank than the hearer.

(1) a. chongsu-ya, ómma-ga sathang chu-likke.
   Chongsu mammy sweets give will
   (Chongsu, mammy (= I) will give (you) sweets.)

   b. yŏnga-ya, appa-hanthe malhae pwa.
      Yŏnga daddy to tell try
      (Yŏnga, please tell daddy (= me).)

In the sentences above the kinship terms ómma and appa are used instead of the personal pronoun na. In these cases, use of the pseudo-pronominal forms instead of na is optional, but their use is more natural and more frequently encountered than that of the first person pronominal form na.
With the exception of the kinship terms ḏomma 'mammy' and appa 'daddy', which the speaker can use only when there exists a genetic kinship relationship between the interlocutors, other kinship terms like hyŏng, oppa, ḏonni, nuna, ajŏssi, ajumma, harabŏji, halmoni may be used even when there is no real kinship relationship between the interlocutors.

Sex and age play very important roles in the selection of the kinship term the speaker uses to refer to him/herself. In most cases the addressee is a child.

If the speaker is a man much older than the hearer and at the same time the hearer is a boy, the speaker has to address himself with the help of the word hyŏng 'elder brother', because only that term appropriately reflects a possible relationship of the interlocutors, i.e. the speaker may be able to be an elder brother to the hearer. The selection of the term is made from the point of view of the hearer.

If the speaker is a man much older than the hearer and the hearer is a girl, then the term for designating the speaker should be oppa. However, if the speaker is a woman and older than the hearer, and the hearer is a boy, the term for designating the speaker should be nuna. When the speaker is a woman and older than the hearer, and the hearer is a girl, the speaker has to choose the term ḏonni to designate herself.

But when the speaker thinks of him/herself as being old as an uncle (aunt) or the parents of the hearer, he or she is to refer to him/herself by selecting a kinship term which corresponds to the generation of the parents of the hearer, for example, ajŏssi 'uncle', samch'on 'uncle', ajumma 'aunt'.

In cases when the speaker thinks of him/herself as belonging to the same generation as the grandparents of the addressee, he or she is to choose one of the two kinship terms harabŏji 'grandpa', halmoni 'grandma' which corresponds to that generation, while taking into consideration his or her own sex.

In all cases where kinship terms are used instead of the first person pronoun na, viewpoint shifting takes place from the speaker to the hearer. The kinship terms used in these speech situations are words that express personal relationships from the point of view of the hearer, not of the speaker.

A similar phenomenon occurs with certain professional terms in Korean speech culture only the term for teacher sŏnsaengnim 'teacher' is used to designate the speaker. In this case the speaker is logically a teacher and the hearer(s) is a student.

Here is an example of a conversation between a teacher and a student.

!(2) a) student: sŏnsaengnim, i munje ottŏhke phurŏyo?
  (Sir, how can I solve this problem?)

b) teacher: sŏnsaengnim-i sŏlmyŏnghae chulke, chal tŭrŏr a!
  (The teacher (=I) will explain, listen carefully!)

In the above conversation, which is normally heard in school, the teacher designates him/herself by using the term sŏnsaengnim instead of the personal pronoun na. Here we can see a very interesting language phenomenon.

As is well-known, honorification is one of the most peculiar characteristics of the
Korean language. As Brown and Levinson (1978) points out, there are two components to the realization of deference: the speaker simultaneously humbles him/herself and raises the hearer(s).

At first glance the use of the term sŏnsonagnim, which is composed of a noun sŏnsonag 'teacher' and a honorific suffix nim, seems to break the general principle of honorification because it appears that the speaker is using a honorific term towards him/herself. But it is pragmatically well-formed when we take into consideration that viewpoint shifting has taken place, i.e. the speaker (the teacher) takes the point of view of the hearer (the student). In Korean, students always have to address themselves to their teacher with honorific forms like sŏnsonagnim. That is why in the aforementioned example the teacher designates him/herself with the honorific form sŏnsonagnim, thus taking the point of view of the student. It would not be a pragmatically well-formed sentence if a teacher were to refer to him/herself without the honorific suffix nim. No student in Korea would ever call his teacher only sŏnsona.

The term sŏnsonagnim is used to designate the speaker in conversations between teachers and students from the kindergarten to the highschool level. This form, however, is not found in higher educational institutions.

What is the effect, then, of viewpoint shifting? In conversations where viewpoint shifting takes place, empathy is expressed. In this way the speaker tries to say, understand and interpret things from the point of view of the hearer.

In cases where the speaker wants to keep the hearer at a distance, for example, when parents or teachers punish a child, or when they are angry with a child, they may use the real pronominal form na to denote themselves instead of the pseudo-pronominal forms which involve viewpoint shifting.

### 2.2. Second person

As is the case with the first person, point of view shifting occurs frequently with the second person. In one such case the speaker takes his or her child's point of view when speaking to his or her spouse, as in the following:

(3)  

a. (wife to husband)  

appa-ga chom hae chuseyo.  
daddy please do give  
(Daddy, please do it for me.)

b. (husband to wife)  

ömma-ga chom ch'aeck-ul ilg-ō chuji-gürae.  
mammy please book read give  
(Why doesn't mammy (=you) read the book for him?)

In the intended meaning of the above sentences, appa is not the speaker's father but the speaker's child's father, i.e. her husband. Likewise, in (b) ömma is not the speaker's mother but the speaker's child's mother, i.e. his wife. This kind of point-of-view shifting usually takes place when there is a third party present. And the third party is usually a child. If the third party is a family member, this sort of exchange seems to contribute to the
solidarity of the family.

In Korean there are special pseudo-pronoun forms for the second person which always involves viewpoint shifting, as in the following:

(4)  
\[ ab˘om-a, \quad òm˘om-a, \quad chamsi \quad tûrdo-nôra. \]

dad  
mammy  
while  
enter please  

(Dad, mammy, please come in for a while!)

In a context where the speaker of (4) is a grandparent and the addressees are his/her own son and his/her son's wife, i.e. his/her daughter-in-law, the speaker calls his/her son and daughter-in-law from the point of view of his grandchild. Superiors use the appellations \( ab˘om, \) òm˘om to address married sons and daughters-in-law who have a child. These appellations convey the speaker's friendly sentiments and at all times involve point-of-view shifting.

Viewpoint shifting may occur beyond the range of a family. For example,

(5)  
\[ òmma, \quad iccogûro \quad wasô \quad anj-ayo. \]

mammy  
here  
come  
sit please  

(Mammy, please come and sit down here!)

Let's assume that the sentence (5) is uttered in a public transportation facility. When a woman boards a subway train with a child, another woman offers her a seat by saying something similar to sentence (5). In such a case, the appellation òmma here does not denote the speaker's mother but it denotes the mother of the child, that is, the addressee herself. So it is evident that the speaker is taking the child's point of view in calling the woman òmma.

In Korean culture, middle-aged or elderly women prefer to call a younger woman with a child òmma, even when the two adults do not know each other.

Regarding the use of kinship terms when the interlocutors do not have any real kinship relationships, it is quite interesting to survey certain instances of the terms ajóssi 'uncle' and ajumma 'aunt' or ajumôni 'aunt', whose use entails indirect viewpoint shifting.

For example, in a store a middle-aged customer will often address him/herself to the seller by using the above-mentioned kinship terms, even though the seller may be much younger than the client him/herself. In this case the speaker uses those appellation forms, thus taking the viewpoint of a child who may not be present in the conversational situation. By using a kinship term which involves point-of-view shifting, the speaker reduces psychological distance between the interlocutors.

In comparison with the cases for the first person where viewpoint shifting is direct in so far as the speaker takes the viewpoint of the hearer, viewpoint shifting for the second person is indirect; the speaker takes the point of view of a third party who is not a participant in the speech act.

3. Viewpoint shifting in Bulgarian

In Bulgarian the pronominal forms are obligatory and are less often substituted with
nonpronominal forms than in Korean. Point-of-view shifting, however, takes place for all persons as in Korean.

3.1. First person

In the Bulgarian language there are different pronominal forms for person, number and gender (only for third person singular) and the conjugations of the verbs show person, number, voice, aspect, time and mood.

There are cases in which verbal forms for the second person are used in place of the speaker. For example:

\[(6)\]  
\[
\text{Tsyal den se grižish za deteto si chistish.}
\]
whole day take care of child the own clean
\[
\text{peresh i gotvish.}
\]
wash and cook
\[
\text{Nyamam nikakvo vreme za pochivka.}
\]
there is not time for rest

(Whole day (you=I) take care of the child, (you=I) clean, (you=I) do the laundry and (you=I) cook. (I) have no time for rest.)

In the above example the verbal forms designate the speaker him/herself, not the hearer at all. With the help of the transposed usage of the verbal forms the speaker incorporates the hearer into what he/she says, while taking the point of view of the hearer. In cases even when there is more than one hearer, the verbal forms are always in the second person singular and the pronominal form for the second person singular ti 'you' is omitted in the nominative case.

When the exiled Bulgarian king, Czar Simeon the Second, made a visit to Bulgaria on May 24, 1996, he said the following to journalists meeting him at Sofia Airport (as reported in the Bulgarian daily newspaper Standart on May 25, 1996):

\[(7)\]  
\[
\text{Može da se pochuvstvash tsar, kogato usetish lyubovта na napoda.}
\]
may feel czar when sense love the

of people

((You) may feel like a czar when (you) sense the love of the people.)

In Bulgarian, as in Korean, the speaker often uses kinship terms to refer to him/herself in conversations with children. Here are some illustrations.

\[(8)\]  
\[
\text{a) Mama shte ti ismie litseto.}
\]
mamma will you wash face the

(Mamma (=I) will wash your face.)

\[
\text{b) Ela pri baba.}
\]

come to grandma
(Come to grandma (=me).)

In such conversations the speaker does not emphasize him/herself but expresses familiarity or intimacy towards the addressee by employing a kinship term from the viewpoint of the hearer. The speaker can be the hearer's grandparents, parents, elder sister or elder brother.

There are, however, cases where the speaker does not have any real kinship relations with the hearer. For example, women will often address themselves to a child by using kinship terms like *lelya* 'aunt' or *baba* 'grandma'. And men will also often refer to themselves with kinship terms like *chicho* 'uncle' or *dyado* 'grandpa' in conversations with a child, even when he/she is not known by the speaker. In this way they show intimacy or friendly feeling towards the hearer.

### 3.2. Second person

Viewpoint shifting in Bulgarian occurs most saliently with vocative forms in conversations between an older person and a child.

Let's take a sentence with which a father addresses himself to his son:

(9) *Hapni si, tatko!*
    *eat daddy*  
    *(Eat, daddy (=son)!)*

In the above statement the father, taking the point-of-view of the hearer, calls his son by the term *tatko* 'daddy', not by the term *sinko* 'son'.

Let's take one more interchange, this time between a grandmother and a granddaughter:

(10) granddaughter: *babo, kakvo e tova?*  
     *grandma what is that*  
     *(grandma, what is that?)*

grandmother: *molya, kakvo kaza, babo?*  
             *pardon what said grandma*  
             *(Pardon, what did you say, granddaughter?)*

In (10) the speaker, i.e. the grandmother, calls her grandchild by the kinship term *babo* 'grandmother', which denotes a kinship relationship from the viewpoint of the hearer. (This point-of-view shifting, which is widely known as 'reverse addressing,' is one of the characteristics of the Bulgarian language and is also found in Rumanian, cf. R. Nitsolova 1986.)

By using this kind of point-of-view shifting the speaker emphasizes solidarity with the hearer and strongly expresses his/her affection toward the hearer, usually a child. This idea is well supported by additional evidence like tone of voice, intonation and gestures which the speaker uses to express his/her affectionate and close feelings. If the speaker calls
the hearer by name when he/she addresses him/her, this means that he/she wants to maintain a distance from the hearer, for example, when he/she is angry or wants to punish him/her.

There is one more type of viewpoint shifting. A son-in-law uses the appellations *dyado* 'grandpa' or *baba* 'grandma' to call his father-in-law or mother-in-law, respectively. By analogy with this, a daughter-in-law also uses these appellations to refer to her father-in-law or mother-in-law. These appellations entail indirect viewpoint shifting; the speaker takes the point-of-view of his/her own child when addressing his/her in-laws. But this indirect viewpoint shifting is not current in contemporary Bulgarian because it denotes some kind of distance between the speaker and the hearer. Now the young sons-in-law and daughters-in-law use forms like *tatko* 'daddy' or *mamo* 'mammy' which do not represent any viewpoint shifting at all.

4. Conclusion

In both Korean and Bulgarian point-of-view shifting phenomena are realized when a participant in a conversation wants to maintain or strengthen interpersonal relationships and solidarity. This statement is very well supported by the fact that the terms which are employed in viewpoint shifting in both languages are mostly kinship terms, through which endearment and empathy are transmitted from the speaker to the addressee.

References


