Interpretation and Function of the Korean Demonstrative *ku*

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Cho, Hye-Sun. 1999. Interpretation and Function of the Korean Demonstrative *ku*. *Studies in Modern Grammar* 18, 71-90. In this paper, we present a cognitive-pragmatic view of a Korean demonstrative *ku* in discourse. The Korean demonstrative provides a good domain in which to analyze the relationship between deictic and anaphoric phenomena because *ku* can not be identified apart from the context in which it is used. The distinction between these two is interpreted in terms of the interaction between the context and the mental representation systems, using Givon's (1995) theory of contextual sources of definites. Contrary to the previous assumptions that Korean demonstrative pronouns are classified into three lines, this interaction manifests that any study of the Korean demonstrative *ku* should be conducted along five lines of description to avoid the pitfall of oversimplification. Hence *ku* can be interpreted by collaboration between the current visible speech context or the preceding context and the generally shared knowledge as well as the three kinds of basic contextual sources. This collaboration is required to identify the Korean demonstrative NP that does not have an explicit referent in the current or previous context. We also show that, under appropriate circumstances, *ku* can function like an English definite article.

I. Introduction

It is commonly acknowledged that deixis is a complex phenomenon constituting the basis of successful human communication. The notion of the speaker's utterance being anchored to a particular place and time is related to two concepts: reference and anaphora. It has also been noted by Fillmore (1975), Lyons (1977), Levinson (1983) and others that a deictic expression automatically refers to the entity to which it points, so that deixis entails reference. Simultaneously, deictic pointing should be distinguished from anaphora, the most common way of pointing in natural language (Lyons 1991). The prototypical deictic expressions are demonstratives.

Interpretation of demonstratives in discourse involves interaction of information in the context currently processed with information in a memory
representation of the previous discourse. Sometimes the need for interaction is explicitly marked, as when a sentence contains an anaphoric expression. But information that is not explicitly mentioned in a discourse can usually be included in a mental model by means of inferences from general knowledge acting in conjunction with the propositional representation (Stevenson 1996: 56). In a similar vein, we will discuss how mental models and contextual information interact during the course of comprehension.

Although there has been much research on Korean deictic reference (Chang, S.C. 1972, 1992; Chang, K.H. 1980;1) Lee Y.C. 1993; Lee, K.K. 1994), only a few studies show differences between the deictic and anaphoric uses (Lee, K.K. 1994). Deictic expressions do not refer to entities in the same way that anaphora refers back to the antecedents of entities. In deictic use, a demonstrative NP2 is interpreted on the basis of the visual situation in which the utterance is taking place, whereas in anaphoric use, it is identified on the basis of the preceding linguistic or discourse context. Clarification of the functional difference between these two is the first point which we must address in this study. To illustrate this distinction, consider (1), which A might utter in a situation where B is reading a book:3

(1) ku chayk caymi iss-ni?
    that book interesting be Q
    'Is that book interesting?'

In (1), though there is no linguistic antecedent for ku chayk, there is

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1 Chang (1980: 179) classifies deixis into the three lines: real deixis, signal deixis and conceptual deixis.
2 The term 'demonstrative NP' refers to a noun whose head is modified by ku.
3 In transcribing the Korean examples, the Yale Romanization system is adopted. The following abbreviations are used in the data:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acc</th>
<th>accusative</th>
<th>Dec</th>
<th>declarative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nom</td>
<td>nominative</td>
<td>Ftr</td>
<td>future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hon</td>
<td>honorific</td>
<td>Pst</td>
<td>past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>question morpheme</td>
<td>Pres</td>
<td>present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rel</td>
<td>relative</td>
<td>Top</td>
<td>topic'&quot;'</td>
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