

# The use of the Korean first person possessive pronoun *nay* vis-à-vis *wuli*

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This paper takes a corpus-driven approach to the Korean first person possessive pronoun *nay* with reference to its plural counterpart *wuli*. The examination of the frequent noun collocates of the two pronouns in Sejong Corpus reveals the close connection between *nay* and inalienable entities as well as persons lower than the speaker. Meanwhile, *wuli* is strongly coupled with places or organizations alongside persons higher than the speaker. Pragmatic principles account for the difference between the kinship term collocates of the two pronouns, such as Horn's (1984; 1989) R-principle or Levinson's (2000) M-principle. The non-prototypical singular use of *wuli* triggers a pragmatic effect of expressing, for example, affection. The frequent collocation of *nay* with foreign/loan nouns is a reflection of the tendency that people more interested in social mobility (younger generation and women) are more ready to employ *nay* rather than the singular *wuli* and to accept foreign/loan words. The meaning of *nay* emerging from its interaction with noun collocates is that it is closely connected with being inalienable, private, or unshared. Meanwhile, the singular meaning of *wuli* is pragmatically derived, which is construed as being grouped, deferent, or general.

**Keywords:** possessives, first person pronouns, non-prototypical, corpus-based approach, *nay*

## 1. Introduction

In Korean, the category of personal pronouns, especially, that of the first person pronouns, is highly contentious (e.g. see Lee & Ramsey 2001). As opposed to several European languages, which provided the model for pronouns, Korean has a large inventory of first person pronouns. Speakers choose these pronouns,

according to a variety of contextual factors including honorification (Lee 2018).<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the literature generally agrees there are at least four representative first person pronouns: *na* 'I', *ce* 'I-humble', *wuli* 'we' and *cehi* 'we-humble'. These first person pronouns have corresponding possessives.

Speakers select the two plain level pronouns, *wuli* and *na/nay*, depending on the number of speaker from a semantic point of view. These pronouns are linguistic expressions that convey the speaker's immediate access to himself or herself indexically or prototypically. However, in some cases, they can be employed non-indexically/non-prototypically. For example, speakers can use the plural form *wuli* to refer to a single speaker, as in *wuli pwuin* 'our wife' (e.g. Kim 2003; Yoon 2003, 2009; Lee Han-Gyu 2007; Choi 2012; Lee 2015). Much research attention has been paid to this intriguing phenomenon, which ranges from socio-pragmatic approaches to semantic approaches. The general consensus is that such use of *wuli* reflects an aspect of the Korean culture that values in-groupness or communalism.

In contrast, scholars have paid much less attention to the singular pronoun *nay* compared to *wuli*. This is probably because *nay* relatively lacks non-prototypical behavior in terms of the number. The scant research thus far has been based on language data constructed by the researchers' expertise and intuition on the Korean language. This paper attempts to depart from those existing studies by exploring corpus data. Specifically, this study investigates the use of the possessive pronoun *nay* with reference to its noun collocates in an established corpus, and thus explores how ordinary speakers employ *nay*, as opposed to *wuli*.

## 2. Background

### 2.1 Possession and possessive constructions

As is the case with many other concepts in language, the notion of possession is multifaceted. Hence, defining it is complicated (see e.g. Miller & Johnson-Laird 1976; Tayler 1989, 1996; Heine 2006; Dixon 2010; Aikhenvald 2012). Nevertheless, it is generally received that possession involves a possessor (Pr henceforth), a possessee (Pe henceforth) and the relation between the two. Possessive relations can be expressed either in a noun phrase (NP) or in a predicate structure. (e.g.

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1. The Standard Dictionary of Korean (<http://stdweb2.korean.go.kr/main.jsp>; SDK henceforth) has at least 138 first person pronoun entries. Compared to the other attested Asian languages, Korean has a larger number of first person pronouns. Japanese is claimed to have 51 (Tanaka 2012), or possibly many more (Christofaki 2018). Thai is found to have 27 (Siewierska 2004).

Aikhenvald 2012 and references therein). In English, for example, constructions (1) and (2) can express possessive relations.

- (1) my book
- (2) I have a book.

As this paper focuses on *nay* 'my' + noun constructions in Korean, my main focus will be on prenominal possessive constructions, as in construction (1). The relation between the Pr and Pe in (1) can be interpreted in various ways depending on the context. Traditional grammarians have set up taxonomies of these various possessives relations. Poutsma (1916: 41), for example, provides a list of the meanings of prenominal possessive constructions, some of which are presented in (3).

- (3) a. possession: my brother's book
- b. origin: the pheasant's nest
- c. subjective: Elizabeth's reign
- d. objective: Gordon's murder
- e. measure: an hour's interval
- f. apposition: Tweed's fair river

As Tayler (1996) points out, this type of taxonomic approach creates several problems. Most of all, the list is neither exhaustive nor clear-cut, without any definite criteria for the identification of the types. Without them, the same expression can be classified as belonging to different categories depending on the context. *Tom's mistake*, for example, can be construed as a subjective genitive, a genitive of origin, or a genitive of possession. Also, the taxonomic approaches do not show the conceptual relatedness between the possible diverse meanings of a prenominal possessive construction.

As alternatives to taxonomic approaches, some scholars have put forward radical accounts. They claim that the meaning of a possessive construction is semantically indeterminate. Therefore, its specific interpretation emerges through the fleshing out of this incomplete sense in the specific context (e.g. Kempson 1977; Sperber & Wilson 1986; Sinclair & Winckler 1991). Kempson (1977), for example, claims that the meaning conveyed by possessive constructions is the existence of some association between Pr and Pe. These radical approaches, however, do not account for the semantic relation- viz. possession- appearing as the most salient meaning of possessive constructions (Tayler 1989). Nor do they provide any explanations of the constraints on the use of possessive constructions.

Noticing the problems inherent in these two contrasting views, a group of scholars suggest using prototype accounts (e.g. Tayler 1989, 1996; Durieux 1990; Nikiforidou 1991). Nikiforidou (1991: 149) explains that the multiple meanings of the possessive morpheme comprise A STRUCTURED POLYSEMY, employing the

notion of metaphorical extensions proposed by Lakoff & Johnson (1980). According to Nikiforidou (1991), the multiple meanings are the metaphorical extension of the possession prototype.

Taylor (1996), on the other hand, suggests a gestalt-based approach which identifies the aspects presented in (4).

- (4) The possession gestalt
    - a. The possessor is a specific human being.
    - b. The possessed is an inanimate entity.
    - c. The relation is exclusive.
    - d. The possessor has exclusive rights of access to the possessed.
    - e. The possessed is typically an object of value.
    - f. The possessor's rights of access to the possessed are invested in him through a special transaction.
    - g. Typically, the possession relation is long term.
    - h. The possessed is typically located in the proximity of the possessor
- (modified from Taylor 1989: 340)

Taylor (1989) claims that different expressions utilize different aspects of the possession gestalt. For example, the English verb *own* highlights the legality of the possession relationship (4f), while the verb *have* focuses on the accessibility (4h).<sup>2</sup> These prototype-based approaches are not free from the criticism that they do not account for the saliency or coreness of some of the meanings carried by possessive constructions such as ownership, whole-part relation and kinship, as discussed by Dixon (2010) and Aikhenvald (2012). Nor are they able to explain why some extensions of possession are not acceptable.

Scholars like Dixon (2010) and Aikhenvald (2012), who study possession from cross-linguistic perspectives, suggest that among the various meanings possible with NP possessive constructions, the following are central or core meanings: ownership (*John's money*); whole-part relations (*John's head*); and kinship relations (*John's father*). In addition, more broad 'association' NPs contain the meaning relations. These would include attributions/properties in general (*Mary's honor*), orientation and location (*Mary's side*), and association in general (*Mary's doctor*). In this classification, the last category, association in general comprises of miscellaneous relations between Pr and Pe, whose specific readings are

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2. He further suggests the reference point function of the possession relation, which involves a subjectification of some facts of the possession. A prenominal possessive *John's car* does not simply encode the possession relation between the Pr and Pe. Rather, it "is to convey the accessibility of the target to the conceptualizer, given the reference point" (Taylor 1989: 351). That is, the accessibility of Pe to Pr is subjectified to the conceptualizer.

determined in context. These accounts also resort to the indeterminacy of possessive constructions as far as the category of association in general is concerned.

This study, which uses a data-based method, will adopt classification categories that emerge from the collected data. The existing categories will be renamed or revised with a few new categories added.

## 2.2 Possessive constructions and first person possessive pronouns in Korean

Literature on Korean possessive constructions has focused on the possessive/genitive case marker *-uy* 'of, -s' (e.g. Choi 1961; Kim 1987; Mok 2007; Yoon 2009; Kim 2012). Choi (1961) suggests twelve different meanings of *-uy* including possession, relation, product, and affiliation. As Kim (2012) correctly points out, however, taxonomic approaches like Choi (1961) cannot exhaust all possible meanings of *-uy*. Scholars generally agree that speakers can employ the marker to express the diverse meanings, as mentioned in § 2.1, except for the so-called objective and appositive meanings. That is, the meaning range covered by the marker *-uy* is narrower than the English possessive morpheme *-s*. The examples in (5) and (6) illustrate this difference between English and Korean.

- (5) Gordon's murder (=objective), Tweed's fair river (=apposition)  
(Poutsma 1916: 41)

- (6) \*Kodon-uy salin (Gordon's murder), \*hankang-uy kang (Hankang's river)<sup>3</sup>

Intensive research attention has been paid to the first person possessive pronouns in Korean, especially to the singular meaning of the first person plural pronoun *wuli* 'we, our' (Kim 2003; Yoon 2003, 2009; Lee Han-Gyu 2007; Choi 2012; Lee 2015). The gist of the issue is that the first person plural pronoun *wuli* can convey the singular meaning, as in (7).

- (7) *wuli* *nampyen/cipsalam/namcachinkwu*  
our husband/wife/boyfriend

Taken literally, with the proviso that *wuli* is a plural pronoun, expressions in (7) lead to the absurd interpretations of 'shared husband/wife/boyfriend'.

The views divide here concerning the semantics of *wuli*. Almost all studies on *wuli* claim that the singular meaning of *wuli* in Example (7) is pragmatically derived due to an aspect of Korean culture that appreciates in-group solidarity

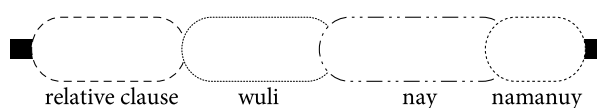
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3. For the transcription of the Korea data, the Yale Romanization was used. The abbreviations, which are borrowed and modified from Sohn (1999; 2013), are presented in the Abbreviations section.

(e.g. Kim 2003; Yoon 2003; Lee Han-Gyu 2007; Choi 2012).<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Yoon (2009) puts forward a linguistically-driven account, which shows that *wuli* in (7) is a singular pronoun and not a plural pronoun. He further explains that Korean possessive constructions are more constrained in allowing possible relations compared to English counterparts. He then suggests the semantic maps of the possessive constructions in English and Korean, as in Figure 1.



a. Semantic map of English possessive constructions



b. Semantic map of Korean possessive constructions

**Figure 1.** Semantic maps of English and Korean possessive constructions (Yoon 2009: 119)

Yoon's (2009) approach amounts to saying that *wuli* is semantically ambiguous between the plural meaning and the singular meaning. This argument entails several theoretical and practical drawbacks. First, the ambiguity thesis ought to be abandoned on the grounds of the parsimony of the sense, spelled out by Grice (1989: 47) as "Modified Occam's Razor: senses are not to be multiplied beyond necessity". Understood simply, this principle states that senses are multiplied only when necessary. Genuine ambiguity, such as lexical ambiguity, stems from unrelated meanings of what is apparently the same word, which renders the sentence semantically unrelated. In addition, if we follow the ambiguity thesis, the relatedness between the singular and plural uses cannot be captured. For these reasons, most Korean dictionaries do not register two separate entries for *wuli*. Instead, they register the singular meaning of *wuli* as one of the senses of *wuli* in specific contexts. We can view the singular meaning of *wuli* in (7) as a non-prototypical use of *wuli*, which can convey the speaker's affectionate/polite attitude towards the referent of the following noun.

4. It was found out by Yoon (2003) that other factors such as gender, age and region of origin have to do with the choice between the singular *wuli* and *nay*.

These non-prototypical uses of plural pronouns have been witnessed cross-linguistically (e.g. Jaszczolt 2013, 2016; Helmbrecht 2015; Lee 2015, 2018). Helmbrecht (2015) suggests cases in which speakers use first person pronouns non-prototypically, conveying the perspective of a person other than the speaker, as shown in (8) below.

- (8) Wie fühlen *wir* uns denn heute? (1PL > 2SG, German)  
How do we feel today? (Doctor or nurse in hospital to a patient)

In (8), the speaker must employ the plural pronoun to express his/her affectionate attitude, thus creating rapport between the interlocutors. If that function of a pronoun is extended, the pronoun could be utilized as a stance marker. Lee (2015) explores the possibility of the Korean *wuli* serving as a stance marker, as exemplified in (9).

- (9) *toykey insang kiphun kyenghem-iess-ko kulayse wuli ku*  
very impression deep experience-was-and so we that  
*itay tani-nun ay-ka iss-ess-nuntey*  
Ehwa University go-REL child-NM be-PST-but  
'It was a very impressive experience. So *wuli* there was an Ehwa university student ...'  
(Lee 2015: 74)

In (9), *wuli* does not carry any referential meanings at all. Instead, it allows the speaker to involve the hearer in the discourse by uniting the speaker and the hearer into a group.<sup>5</sup>

As opposed to *wuli*, its corresponding singular possessive pronoun *nay* has received little attention, except for in comparison with *wuli* (Kim 2003; Yoon 2003; Lee Han-Gyu 2007). Yoon (2009) proposes that the semantic map covered by *nay* in Korean is different from the English counterpart *my*, as revealed in Figure 1 above. Specifically, Korean *nay* is more geared towards the prototypical possession compared to English *my*, which allows exclusive possession, legal possession and occupation. The surveyed studies are based on the researchers' expertise and intuition on the Korean language. This paper departs from the previous research by adopting a corpus-driven approach. It aims to delve into the use of *nay* with reference to its noun collocates in an established corpus and thus explores how the pronoun under issue is actually employed by ordinary speakers vis-à-vis *wuli*.

5. One reviewer commented that the use of *wuli* in (9) may have to do with the interlocutors' background: the interlocutors can be members of Ehwa Womans University. The examination of the speaker information in the corpus, however, revealed that the speaker of (9) is a male lecturer in his thirties who has nothing to do with Ehwa Womans University.

3. Data collection and methods

The current study used the same search and analysis methods as Lee (2015). This study collected the research data from Sejong Corpus (<https://ithub.korean.go.kr/user/main.do>) published by the National Institute of the Korean Language. The corpus site provides two modes of corpora: the written and the spoken corpora. The written corpus has four different options: raw corpus, morphologically tagged corpus, morpho-semantically tagged corpus and syntactically tagged corpus. The spoken corpus has only the first two options. The current study selected the morphologically tagged spoken corpus because it facilitates the search of the target word and its collocates. Table 1 presents the detailed information of the used corpus.

Table 1. Information of the morphologically-tagged spoken corpus (Lee 2015: 64)

Files	Sentences (per file)	Words (per file)	Morphemes (per word)
200	216,718 (1,083)	805,606 (4,028)	1,618,529 (2)

Thereafter, we searched the right-most noun collocates of *nay*, which amounted to 879 tokens. We classified the culled collocates according to the categories employed in Lee (2015), such as place/organization, kinship term/social relation, abstract noun, concrete noun, body part, orientation, and proper noun. The results of analysis were then compared to those of Lee (2015) to investigate how the two first person possessives *nay* and *wuli* are employed in Korean.

4. Analysis and discussion

A total of 212 types were found as the right-most noun collocates of *nay*.<sup>6</sup> The most frequent collocates of *nay* include *sayngkak* ‘thought’, *ke/kes* ‘thing’, *tongsayng* ‘younger sibling’, *chinkwu* ‘friend’, and *mal* ‘language’. The collocates were then classified into the categories employed in Lee (2015), which are presented in the decreasing order of the number of member in Table 2.

6. The variants of the same word, such as *maum* ‘mind’/ *mam* ‘mind’ (shortened)’ are counted as the same type.



**Table 2.** Classification of the collocates of *nay*

Categories	Examples	No. of types (%)
Abstract noun (AN)	<i>nunglyek</i> 'ability', <i>kicwun</i> 'standard'	112 (53%)
Kinship term/ Social relation (KS)	<i>ttal</i> 'daughter', <i>cokha</i> 'nephew/niece'	38 (18%)
Concrete noun (CN)*	<i>mwulken</i> 'object', <i>moca</i> 'cap'	27 (13%)
Orientation (ORT)	<i>kyeth</i> 'side', <i>twi</i> 'back'	15 (7%)
Body part (BP)	<i>tali</i> 'leg', <i>elkwul</i> 'face'	15 (7%)
Place/Organization (PO)	<i>pang</i> 'room', <i>cip</i> 'house'	5 (2%)
Proper noun (PN)		0

\* The category of concrete nouns refer to nouns which indicate concrete objects and thus excludes nouns referring to family members, relatives, social relations, body parts and places/organizations

For comparison, Table 3 presents the classification of *wuli* collocates (Lee 2015).

**Table 3.** Classification of the collocates of *wuli* (Lee 2015: 65)

Categories	Examples	No. of types (%)
AN	<i>seyday</i> 'generation', <i>yenkwu</i> 'research'	98 (36%)
KS	<i>ttal</i> 'daughter', <i>samchon</i> 'uncle', <i>senpay</i> 'senior'	68 (25%)
PO	<i>cip</i> 'house', <i>pyengwen</i> 'hospital'	61 (22%)
CN	<i>kay</i> 'dog', <i>kyokwase</i> 'textbook'	14 (5%)
PN	<i>hitingkhu kamdok</i> 'Coach Hidink', <i>ko sensayngnim</i> 'Mr. Ko'	13 (5%)
ORT	<i>aph</i> 'front', <i>twi</i> 'back'	12 (4%)
BP	<i>nwun</i> 'eye', <i>ip</i> 'mouth'	9 (3%)

According to both tables, abstract nouns co-occur with the possessives most predominantly, followed by kinship terms/social relation nouns. The other categories show fairly similar distributional patterns except for two categories. First, the place/organization nouns much more frequently collocate with *wuli* than with *nay*. Furthermore, the types of place/organization nouns differ depending on the pronouns, as § 4.5 discusses in more detail below. Second, proper nouns, which can co-occur with *wuli* to express the affectionate attitude towards the referent, do not collocate with *nay*.

4.1 Top collocates of *wuli* and *nay*

The possessive *wuli* is predominantly followed by the noun *nala*, leading to the compound *wuli nala*.<sup>7</sup> In the case of *nay*, it is almost evenly accompanied by the nouns *sanggak* ‘thought’, *kes/ke* ‘thing’, *tongsayng* ‘younger sibling’ and *chinkwu* ‘friend’. The following sections compare the patterns the possessives *nay* and *wuli* show with the nouns in each category. Table 4 presents the top ten noun collocates of *nay* and *wuli*.

Table 4. Top ten noun collocates of *nay* and *wuli*

Collocates of <i>nay</i>	Freq.	Category	Collocates of <i>wuli</i>	Freq.	Category
<i>sayngkak</i> ‘thought’	55	AN	<i>nala</i> ‘country’	615	AN
<i>kes/ke</i> ‘thing’	53	CN, AN	<i>ttay</i> ‘time’	114	AN
<i>tongsayng</i> ‘younger sibling’	51	KS	<i>cip</i> ‘house’	81	PO
<i>chinkwu</i> ‘friend’	46	KS	<i>emmeni/emma</i> ‘mother/mom’	77	KS
<i>mal</i> ‘language’	23	AN	<i>hakkyo</i> ‘school’	58	PO
<i>namcachinkwu</i> ‘boyfriend’	17	KS	<i>oppa</i> ‘big brother’	56	KS
<i>maum/mam</i> ‘mind’	16	AN	<i>apeci/appa</i> ‘father/dad’	36	KS
<i>sengkyek</i> ‘personality’	14	AN	<i>hankwuk</i> ‘Korea’	35	AN
<i>aph</i> ‘front’	12	ORT	<i>kwa</i> ‘department’	35	PO
<i>kicwun</i> ‘standard’	10	AN	<i>enni</i> ‘big sister’	30	KS

4.2 Abstract and concrete nouns

When abstract nouns follow *nay* and *wuli*, the meanings they convey are similar. These meanings may be possessive, subjective, objective or attribute senses (à la Quirk et al. (1985)), as shown in (10) below.

- (10) a. *nay/wuli sanggak* ‘my/our thought’ → possessive  
b. *nay/wuli yenkwu* ‘my/our research’ → subjective

Lee (2015) discusses that when a noun follows *wuli*, it can sometimes mean ‘Korean’, as in (11).

7. As correctly pointed out by a reviewer, *wuli nala* is a solidified single word. That might be why it means ‘the country of Korea’. Even still, it does not pertain to the discussion of this paper, because the expression is mentioned only for its highest frequency in Lee (2015).

- (11) *ku-ka ... moksa-ka toy-ko kuliko wuli nala choycho-uy*  
 he-NM...pastor-NM become-and and our country first-of  
*senkyosa-ka toy-ess-ta*  
 missionary-NM become- PST-DC  
 'He became a pastor and then the first Korean missionary.' (Lee 2015: 68)

In Lee (2015), it was discussed that *wuli* means 'Korean' when it precedes a group of nouns including *nala* 'country', *mal* 'language' and *mwunhak* 'literature'. In contrast, no nouns with *nay* in the collected data are associated with the meaning, 'Korean'. This naturally follows from the fact that an individual cannot personally own the country of Korea, its language, or its literature. Nevertheless, it is often the case that the nouns such as *nala* 'country', *ttang* 'land' and *cokwuk* 'home country' collocate with *nay* to convey the speaker/writer's strong and affectionate personal bond with Korea. A Google search of *nay nala* returns a huge number of hits, one of which is presented in (12).

- (12) *komwunpata-to nay nala-nikka mokswum kel-ess-ci*  
 be tortured-even though my country-because life risk-PST-DC  
 'Even though I was tortured, I risked my life for my country.'<sup>8</sup>

Sentence (12) is reported to be uttered by a Korean-American who fought for the sake of the Korean independence during the Japanese colonial occupation. By using *nay nala* instead of *wuli nala*, he must have intended to express his affectionate attitude towards and/or strong bond with his home country.

In some cases, the same noun can denote different senses depending on the accompanying possessive. The noun *mal* 'language' can possess multiple meanings, as is the case with most lexical items. According to SDK, *mal* is defined to display various senses, some of which are presented in (13).

- (13) a. phonetic signs to express one's thoughts or feelings  
 b. act of expressing one's thoughts or feelings via phonetic signs  
 c. story with a specific theme or plot  
 d. cover term for words, phrases, sentences, etc.  
 e. cover term for rumors or gossips (My translations)

The definitions in (13) do not include the meaning of 'the Korean language', which can be conveyed by *mal* when combined with *wuli*. On the other hand, *mal* when accompanied with *nay* do not carry the meaning of 'the Korean language', surely because the Korean language is not for one person. Instead, *mal* in *nay mal*

8. The example was taken from [http://www.koreadaily.com/news/read.asp?art\\_id=4516247](http://www.koreadaily.com/news/read.asp?art_id=4516247). (Accessed on 2 March, 2017)

refers to one of the meanings presented in (13). Compare the different senses of *mal* in (14) and (15).

- (14) *i cohun achim-ilanun insa-ka ... wuli mal-uy yecel-ey*  
 this good morning-so called greeting-NM ... our language-of etiquette-in  
*cekcelha-n insa-i-nka ... saynggakha-e po-cio*  
 appropriate-REL greeting-be-whether ... think-and see-SUG  
 ‘Let’s think about whether the expression “good morning” is appropriate in the  
 Korean language.’ [Lecture on greeting etiquettes/2001/5CT\_0047.txt]<sup>9</sup>
- (15) *i suwnkan-ey nay mal-ul ... mos alaturun-nun-ta*  
 this moment-at my language-AC ... not understand-IND-DC  
 ‘(He) doesn’t understand what I am saying at this moment.’  
 [Conversation in a meeting/2003/7CT\_0025.txt]

Obviously *wuli mal* in (14) refers to the Korean language, while *nay mal* in (15) can roughly be translated into *what I say*.

Lee (2015) discusses that most concrete nouns preceded by the possessive *wuli* denote something Korean rather than the thing owned by a group of people referred to by *wuli*, which (16) illustrates.

- (16) *keki lamyen-un wuli lamyen-ilang talla-se kunkka toykey myen-twu*  
 there noodle-TOP our noodle-from different-and so very noodle-too  
*kanul-kwu toykey cca*  
 thin-and very salty  
 ‘Their lamyen is different from Korean lamyen. It is much thinner and saltier  
 (than Korean lamyen)’ (Lee 2015: 67)

The noodle in (16) means ‘Korean noodle’ as opposed to the foreign counterpart rather than the speakers’ noodle. In contrast, when concrete nouns are employed after *nay*, they refer to the possessions of the speaker. These include *kanguylok* ‘lecture note’, *ton* ‘money’, and *moca* ‘hat’.

Noticeably, foreign or loan words occur much more frequently with *nay* than with the possessive *wuli* in the collected data. There are a few foreign/loan words with *wuli* including *hompheyici* ‘homepage’ and *aphathu* ‘apartment complex’, whereas *nay* more readily co-occurs with foreign/loan words. Examples are *picen* ‘vision’, *sthuleysu*, ‘stress’, *waiphu* ‘wife’, *hayntuphon* ‘cell phone’, *khemphyuthe* ‘computer’ and *hadu* ‘hard drive’, as (17) shows below.

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9. The information in the square brackets indicates the topic, recording year and the name of the file from which the example is taken.

- (17) *nay khemphyuthe hadu-ey iss-nun kes-ul talun salam-i palo*  
 my computer-in hard drive-in be-REL thing-AC other person-NM right  
*tailaykthulo nay hatu-lo pat-ul swu iss-nun...*  
 directly my hard drive-to receive-REL possibility be-REL...  
 'It is possible that another person can receive what is in my hard drive into my  
 hard drive directly.' [Monologue on part-time jobs/2002/6CT\_0009.txt]

The raw token occurrences of foreign/loan words co-occurring with *nay* and *wuli* are 14 and 10, respectively. When the total token occurrences of nouns collocates (547 with *nay* vs. 824 with *wuli*) are taken into account, *nay* takes foreign/loan words much more freely than *wuli* does (14/547 (2.6%) with *nay* vs. 10/824 (1.2%) with *wuli*). The comparison of the percentage of foreign/loan word collocates of each possessive pronoun is presented in Figure 2.

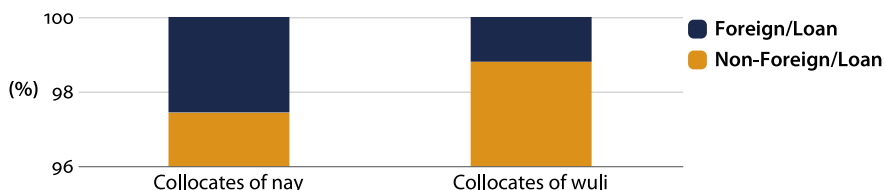


Figure 2. Comparison of foreign/loan word collocates of *nay* and *wuli*

*Wuli* can freely take foreign or loan words. However, as far as the current data are concerned, there is a stark discrepancy in the readiness of taking foreign or loan word collocates between *wuli* and *nay*, as discussed above. This observation is indirectly supported by the fact that the hits of *nay* + above mentioned foreign/loan nouns (vis. *vision*, *stress*, *wife*, *cellphone* and *computer*) outnumber those of *wuli* + these words in Google. It may have to do with the decreasing use of the singular *wuli*, as Yoon (2003) points out, which is attributable to the Korean society's shift towards individualization.

This shift tends to be more easily accepted by the people more interested in social mobility, like younger generations and women (e.g. Chambers 1992; Holmes 1992; Yoon 2003). We can view the stronger collocation between *nay* and foreign/loan words in a similar vein. Scholars propose that the use of foreign/loan words correlates with the age and gender of the speaker. Specifically, younger generations and female speakers are generally keener on the use of foreign and loan words (Lee Hong-Sik 2007; van der Vegt 2014). Subsequently, the use of *nay* resonates more with the use of foreign/loan words than the singular *wuli* does, because the use of *nay* is increasing compared to that of the singular *wuli*, especially among younger generations.

A more detailed investigation of the composition of the corpus supported this generational shift. The information of the age distribution of the interlocutors of the corpus is summarized in Figure 3.<sup>10</sup>

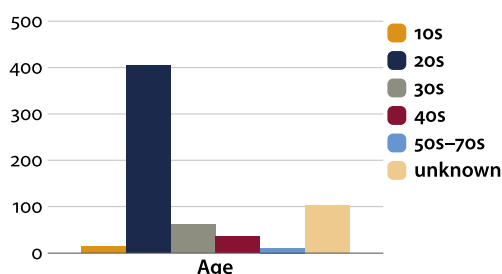


Figure 3. Age profile of the interlocutors

As revealed in Figure 3, most of the speakers (74%) were in their twenties and thirties, who are supposed to accept changes more readily than older generations do. This might account for the tendency of *nay* taking more foreign/loan words than *wuli*.<sup>11</sup>

### 4.3 Kinship terms and social relation nouns

Nouns referring to family members, relatives, and social relations rank second both with *nay* and *wuli*, as Tables 2 and 3 show above. Nevertheless, the types of nouns can differ with the two possessives. In the case of *wuli*, family member nouns, such as *emeni/emma* ‘mother/mom’, *apeci/appa* ‘father/dad’ and *enni* ‘elder sister’ belong to the top ten most frequent collocates. In contrast, *nay* frequently collocates with nouns such as *tongsayng* ‘younger sibling’, *chinkwu* ‘friend’, and *namcachinkwu* ‘boyfriend’. The referent of the noun collocating with *wuli* is someone who is related with more than one person. For example, the person referred to as *wuli emeni* ‘our mother’ can have more than one child. However, even when you are the only child of your parents, you can call your mother/father *wuli emeni/apeci* ‘our mother/father’.

10. I owe this to a reviewer who suggested that other factors may be at play, such as the age and gender of the speakers, in the preference for *nay* + foreign/loan word constructions.

11. The gender of the speakers was also looked into, which displayed that 55 percent of the speakers are female, while 38 percent of them are male (with 7 percent of unknowns). Presumably, as far as the current data are concerned, the gender of the interlocutors appears to influence the choice between *nay* and *wuli* with foreign/loan word as well, which can be investigated in future work.

The results in this paper accord with the observations in the literature, such as Shin (2000) and Yoon (2003), who propose that the choice between the singular *wuli* and *nay* is, to a great extent, modulated by the social hierarchy between the speaker and the referent of the noun. That is, when the referent is higher than the speaker socially or hierarchically, *wuli* is preferred. Otherwise, *nay* is preferred.

This tendency is pronounced more conspicuously when it comes to the social relation nouns. In the collected data, nouns such as *kyosuw-nim* 'professor-honorific', *cangkwan* 'minister', and *wencang-nim* 'director-honorific' collocate only with *wuli*. Nouns such as *hwupay* 'junior', *hwuimpyeng* 'replacement soldier', and *alayssalam* 'subordinate' tend to follow *nay*.

- (18) *khempyuthe-ka han-tay iss-nun ke-un wuli kyoswu-nim-hanthey*  
 computer-NM one-piece be-REL fact-TOP our professor-honorific-to  
*mwunce-ya*  
 problem-DC  
 'Having just one computer is a problem to the professor.'  
 [Telephone conversation/2003/7CT\_0034.txt]
- (19) *nay-ka payk kaci-l kaluchi-ess-e nay hwupay-hantey kuntey i*  
 I-NM 100 sorts-AC teach-PST-DC my junior-to but this  
*hwupay-nun mith-eyhantey kwusipahop-kkaci kaluchi-n ke-ya*  
 junior-TOP below-to 99-up to teach-REL fact-DC  
 'I taught 100 things to my junior. But this junior taught up to 99 things to his juniors.'  
 [Conversation about college clubs/2003/7CT\_0039.txt]

The examination of the extended context of the Example (18) reveals that the professor mentioned in (18) is not shared by the hearer. Therefore, *wuli* in (18) is the singular *wuli*. In that context, *wuli* is preferred much more than *nay*, because it is rarely allowed to refer to one's professor as my professor in Korean. In the collected data, words like *professor* and *president* never occur with *nay*, whereas nouns like *junior* or *subordinate* do not follow *wuli*.

Yoon (2009) explains this tendency using the semantic map approach, discussed in § 2.2 above. The person higher than the speaker possesses more power than the speaker and is hence less easy to control. These characteristics of the referred person render the possession relation between speaker and referent less prototypical, thus leading to the use of the singular *wuli* rather than *nay*. Rather, I claim that *wuli* is non-prototypically employed to reduce the speaker's onus of relating the higher person solely to the speaker by making it as if the referred person were related to a group of individuals. The non-prototypical use of *wuli* triggers this pragmatic effect, which does not arise when *nay* is employed. This phenomenon can be accounted for by contemporary pragmatic theories, such as Horn's (1984; 1989) R-principle or Levinson's (2000) M-principle. These theories

roughly mean that the use of a marked/nonstereotypical expression brings about an extra effect that cannot be obtained with the corresponding normal, stereotypical expression.

#### 4.4 Body part nouns

Previous studies, including Yoon (2003) and Lee Han-Gyu (2007), argue that the possessive *wuli* cannot occur with body part nouns because body parts are inalienable and hence cannot be shared. Nevertheless, Lee (2015) demonstrates that *wuli* can be accompanied by body part nouns with a generic meaning. That is, most of the body part nouns co-occurring with *wuli* refer to human body parts in general rather than the speakers' specific body parts. The examples in (20) illustrate this point.

- (20) *acwu cak-eyaman ilcho-ey i-man pen-ul ttel-keyss-ci... wuli*  
 very small-only if one second-per two- million time-AC vibrate-SUP-DC our  
*nwun-ey cenhye an poi-nun...*  
 eye-to at all not be seen-REL  
 'The smallest one would vibrate 2 million times per second. It is not visible to  
 human eyes.' (Lee 2015: 71)

This also can be accommodated by the pragmatic principles, such as Horn's (1984; 1989) R-principle or Levinson's (2000) M-principle. This is because the conflict between the plurality of *wuli*, which can imply sharedness, and the inalienability of body parts leads to a generic interpretation that is rarely possible with *nay*.

In contrast, the body part nouns following *nay* all refer to the speaker's body parts, as shown in (21) and (22).

- (21) A: *an po-ass-ta-nikka-nyo kulen ke*  
 not see-PST-DC-because-DC that thing  
 'I say I didn't watch that kind of stuff.'  
 B: *nay nwun-ul po-a an po-ass-e? cinccalwu?*  
 my eye-AC look-IM not see-PST-Q honestly?  
 'Look at my eyes! You didn't see it? Honestly?'  
 [Conversation between teacher and students/2002/6CT\_0057.txt]
- (22) *paykhwacem-un ... nay nwun-ey nemwu ta pissa po-ye*  
 department store-TOP ... my eye-to too all expensive look-DC  
 'Things in a department store all look too expensive to me.'  
 [Conversation about shopping/2002/5CT\_0015.txt]



In (21), the speaker literally uses the noun *nwun* ‘eye’. Hence, the noun phrase *nay nwun* ‘my eye’ refers to the speaker’s eyes. As discussed in cognitive linguistic literature, such as Lakoff & Johnson (1980), linguistic expressions can be used metaphorically or figuratively. As is well known, the concept of seeing is frequently deployed to convey the concept of understanding, which is illustrated in (22). What the speaker of (22) means must be that the prices of goods in a department store *are perceived to be* too high to the speaker. Still, the noun *nwun* ‘eye’ in (22) is the speaker’s perspective.

As far as body part nouns are concerned, the body parts co-occurring with *nay* belong to the speaker either literally or metaphorically. It is attributable to the fact that body parts entail the strongest inalienability.

#### 4.5 Place and organization (PO) nouns

PO nouns provide the venue where *wuli* and *nay* reveal a stark discrepancy. That is, *wuli* can frequently co-occur with PO nouns, while *nay* does not. This can be easily understood if we consider that POs are usually shared by groups of individuals. Still, a small number of PO nouns are found to collocate with *nay*, as (23) and (24) illustrate.

- (23) *nay kosiwen-un ani-nte nay chinkwu pang i-ess-e*<sup>12</sup>  
 my kosiwwen-TOP not-but my friend room be-PST-DC  
 ‘It was not my kosiwen, but my friend’s room.’  
 [Conversation about exams/2004/ 8CT\_0044.txt]
- (24) *nay pang chayk kath-un ke kentuli-nun ke... sileha-ess-nuntey*  
 my room book like-REL thing touch-REL thing hate-PST-but  
 ‘I didn’t like anybody to touch my stuff like books in my room, but ...’  
 [Conversation about family and love/2001/6CT\_0027.txt]
- (25) *kosiwen* ‘accommodation for examiners’, *kaceng* ‘home’, *pang* ‘room’, *ssai*  
 ‘Cyworld’,<sup>13</sup> *cip* ‘house’

12. “Gosiwon, or facilities packed with tiny one-room accommodations, used to cater to students who confined themselves to avoid distractions while studying for national exams. But it now functions as a home for recent college graduates who can’t afford to rent a house and even the homeless who scrap together enough money to pay a month’s rent”. (<http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com/news/article/article.aspx?aid=2963848>) (Accessed on 3 April, 2017)

13. Cyworld is a South Korean social network service that ended its service on September 31, 2015. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyworld>) (Accessed on 3 April, 2017)

(25) is the exhaustive list of PO nouns collocating with *nay* found in the data, most of which can follow *wuli* as well. Noticeably, the places referred to by such PO nouns as *kosiwen* and *pang* are regarded as private and thus seldom shared. Hence, the collocation between *nay* and these nouns is well licensed. Also the blog sites in Cyworld, which is called *ssai* in Korean, were mostly built and maintained individually, not collectively. For that reason, the PO noun *ssai* can naturally follow *nay*. Moreover, organization nouns rarely occur with *nay*. That is probably because an organization is established and maintained by a group of people rather than by an individual.

## 5. Summary and conclusions

This study presented a corpus-driven approach to the Korean first person possessive pronoun *nay* with reference to its plural counterpart *wuli*. By using corpus data, this paper departs from previous studies which mainly drew on invented data.

The examination of the top collocates of the two pronouns showed that *nay* is more closely related to inalienable entities. These include thought, mind, and personality, as well as persons lower than the speaker. On the other hand, *wuli* frequently collocates with places or organizations, including country, house, school, and even the country of Korea alongside persons higher than the speaker. The discrepancy of the kinship terms the two pronouns take was explained in terms of pragmatic principles such as Horn's (1984; 1989) R-principle, or Levinson's (2000) M-principle. The non-prototypical use of *wuli* for a singular reference was explained to trigger a pragmatic effect of expressing, for example, affection, which lacks in the use of *nay*.

It was shown that, as far as current data are concerned, *nay* more readily takes foreign or loan collocates. People who view Korean society from a more individual perspective, like the younger generation, adopt *nay* more than the singular *wuli* (Yoon 2003). They are also generally keener on accepting foreign or loan words (Lee Hong-Sik 2007). Thus, the strong collocation between *nay* and foreign/loan words can be buttressed. The examination of the correlation between *nay* and body part nouns supported the strongest inalienability of these nouns, as explained by previous research. It was also revealed that the types of place/organization nouns collocating with *nay* resonate with the characteristics of *nay*, which involve privacy and unsharedness.

The construal of *nay* emerging from its noun collocates is that it is mainly associated with being inalienable, private, or unshared, while the singular *wuli* is pragmatically derived to impart the connotation of groupness, affection, or generality.

## Sources

### 1. Sejong Corpus

The Sejong Corpus (<https://ithub.korean.go.kr/user/main.do>) is published by the National Institute of the Korean Language. The corpus site provides two modes of corpora: the written and the spoken corpora.

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## Abbreviations

AC	accusative	Q	interrogative
DC	declarative ending	QT	quotative marker
IM	imperative ending	REL	relativizer
IND	indicative	SUG	suggestion
NM	nominative	SUP	suppositive
PST	past tense particle	TOP	topic marker

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