

A Morphological Analysis of Korean Pronoun Usage in Han Gyeong Chal's *Summer Breeze* Webtoon

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ABSTRACT

*Korean pronouns (daemyeongsa) constitute an important component of Korean morphology because their forms and usage are closely associated with interpersonal relationships, honorification, and sociocultural context. Although webtoons have increasingly been recognized as authentic resources for Korean language learning and linguistic research, studies examining the morphological characteristics of Korean pronouns in webtoon dialogues remain limited. This study aims to identify the types of Korean pronouns and analyze their frequency of occurrence in the first twelve chapters of Han Gyeong Chal's *썸머브리즈* (Summer Breeze) from a morphological perspective. A descriptive qualitative approach was employed, complemented by quantitative frequency analysis. The data consisted of dialogue texts extracted from the first twelve chapters of the original Korean-language webtoon and were collected using observation and note-taking techniques. Pronouns were identified, classified according to standard Korean grammatical categories, and analyzed based on their morphological characteristics and contextual usage. The analysis identified 447 pronoun tokens, comprising 306 personal pronouns and 141 demonstrative pronouns. Among the personal pronouns, the informal first-person singular pronoun *나* (na) was the most frequently used, occurring 89 times, whereas *이/이* (ii) and *아무* (amu) each appeared only once. The findings also reveal the occurrence of regional dialect variants associated with the Jeolla dialect, indicating that pronoun realization is influenced not only by grammatical structure but also by sociolinguistic factors. Overall, the study demonstrates that pronoun selection in *Summer Breeze* systematically reflects interpersonal relationships, communicative situations, and regional linguistic identity. These findings contribute to Korean morphological studies by providing*

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empirical evidence from authentic webtoon dialogues and highlight the potential of webtoons as valuable linguistic corpora for Korean language research and teaching.

Keywords: Morphology, Pronouns, Korean Language, Webtoon, Summer Breeze.

1. Introduction

The rapid expansion of South Korea's entertainment industry, widely recognized as the Korean Wave (*Hallyu*), has significantly influenced global popular culture, including in Indonesia. Initially driven by the international success of Korean television dramas (*K-dramas*) and popular music (*K-pop*), Hallyu has gradually expanded into various forms of digital media, including webtoons, online novels, films, and social media content (Jin, 2020; Yecies & Shim, 2021; Adinda et al., 2025; Youngsun et al., 2024). This widespread exposure has not only increased public interest in Korean culture but has also stimulated a growing demand for Korean language learning (King Sejong Institute Foundation, 2023). In Indonesia, Korean language courses have become increasingly popular in educational institutions and private language centers, while many learners also study Korean independently through digital platforms. This phenomenon demonstrates that Korean has evolved beyond a foreign language of academic interest into an important medium for intercultural communication, education, and professional opportunities (Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, 2024).

Achieving communicative competence in Korean requires learners to understand not only vocabulary but also the grammatical system that governs sentence construction and social interaction. Among the essential components of Korean grammar is the system of parts of speech (*pumsa*), which provides the structural foundation for effective communication (Sohn, 2019). Within this system, pronouns (*daemyeongsa*) occupy a particularly important position because they replace nouns while simultaneously reflecting interpersonal relationships between speakers and listeners. Unlike many other languages, Korean pronouns are closely associated with honorific expressions, politeness levels, age differences, social status, and the degree of familiarity between interlocutors (Lee & Ramsey, 2019; Sohn, 2019). Consequently, selecting an inappropriate pronoun may result in pragmatic failure, misunderstanding, or even be interpreted as impolite in authentic communication. Therefore, understanding the morphological characteristics and contextual use of Korean pronouns is essential for both linguistic research and Korean language education.

Previous studies on Korean pronouns have generally focused on grammatical classification, honorific systems, pragmatic functions, and their pedagogical implications in Korean language learning (Kim, 2021; Park & Choi, 2022). These studies have contributed to a better understanding of the linguistic characteristics of Korean pronouns, particularly regarding their relationship with politeness strategies and social hierarchy. However, much of the existing literature relies on examples taken from textbooks,

literary works, or constructed sentences that may not accurately represent natural spoken interactions. As Korean communication increasingly occurs through digital media, authentic language resources have become increasingly valuable for examining how grammatical elements are actually used in everyday conversations (Jeon, 2023; Mahdori et al., 2025; Andini et al., 2026; Suma et al., 2026).

Among contemporary digital media, webtoons provide a rich source of authentic linguistic data because they present dialogues that closely resemble spontaneous spoken Korean. Unlike conventional teaching materials, webtoons depict everyday interactions using natural sentence structures, colloquial vocabulary, conversational expressions, honorific forms, and regional dialects (*satoori*) (Kim & Kwon, 2022). These characteristics make webtoons particularly suitable for linguistic analysis, especially for investigating grammatical elements whose usage is highly dependent on communicative context. In recent years, webtoons have also attracted increasing attention as authentic resources for Korean language learning because they combine linguistic input with visual context, facilitating learners' comprehension of meaning and pragmatic usage (Kang, 2023; Ko et al., 2025; Prihandoko et al., 2021; Weda et al., 2022; Said et al., 2021). Nevertheless, relatively few studies have specifically examined Korean pronoun usage in webtoon dialogues from a morphological perspective using quantitative frequency analysis. Consequently, empirical evidence concerning the distribution and structural patterns of pronoun usage in authentic digital narratives remains limited.

Han Gyeong Chal's webtoon *썸머브리즈* (*Summer Breeze*) was selected as the corpus for this study because it portrays everyday conversations among its characters through realistic dialogue that reflects contemporary Korean language use. The webtoon contains a variety of informal expressions, honorific forms, and regional dialects that provide a representative corpus for investigating pronoun usage in naturally occurring interactions. Its conversational style enables the observation of pronouns as they appear within different communicative situations rather than in isolated grammatical examples.

Based on this background, the present study aims to identify and classify the types of Korean pronouns appearing in the first twelve chapters of *Summer Breeze* using a morphological approach and to analyze their frequency of occurrence. By examining authentic language data from a contemporary digital medium, this study contributes to Korean morphological research by providing empirical evidence of pronoun distribution and usage patterns in everyday conversations. Furthermore, the findings are expected to enrich Korean language teaching materials by offering authentic examples of pronoun usage that reflect actual communicative practices, thereby supporting learners in developing both grammatical competence and sociolinguistic awareness.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Previous Studies

Research on Korean grammar has extensively examined the classification and functions of parts of speech, including pronouns (*daemyeongsa*), particularly in relation to honorific systems and interpersonal communication. Sohn (2019) explains that Korean pronouns are morphologically and pragmatically distinctive because their selection is closely associated with politeness, social hierarchy, and speaker–listener relationships. Similarly, Lee and Ramsey (2019) emphasize that Korean pronouns cannot be interpreted solely as grammatical substitutes for nouns since their forms and usage are strongly influenced by sociocultural contexts.

In recent years, several studies have investigated Korean language use in digital media as authentic linguistic resources. Kim and Kwon (2022) argue that webtoons provide natural conversational data that reflect contemporary spoken Korean, including colloquial vocabulary, honorific expressions, and regional dialects. Likewise, Jeon (2023) found that webtoon dialogues represent authentic communication patterns that are rarely found in conventional Korean language textbooks, making them valuable corpora for linguistic and pedagogical research.

Other researchers have focused on the pedagogical value of webtoons in Korean language education. Kang (2023) reported that webtoons facilitate learners' understanding of contextual expressions and pragmatic language use because verbal interactions are supported by visual narratives. However, these studies primarily examined language learning, discourse, or pragmatic aspects rather than the morphological characteristics of specific word classes.

Although previous studies have contributed significantly to the understanding of Korean grammar and authentic language use, relatively little attention has been given to the morphological variation of Korean pronouns in webtoon dialogues. Existing research generally focuses on grammatical descriptions, honorific systems, or educational applications without quantitatively examining the distribution and morphological realization of pronouns in authentic digital narratives. Therefore, empirical evidence regarding how Korean pronouns are morphologically realized in everyday conversational interactions remains limited.

To address this gap, the present study investigates the morphological variation of Korean pronouns in the first twelve chapters of Han Gyeong Chal's *Summer Breeze*. Unlike previous studies, this research combines qualitative morphological classification with quantitative frequency analysis using an authentic webtoon corpus. The study also examines pronoun variation influenced by colloquial speech and regional dialects, thereby providing a more comprehensive description of contemporary Korean pronoun usage in digital communication.

2.1.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Korean morphological theory, particularly the classification of pronouns (*daemyeongsa*) within the Korean system of parts of speech (*pumsa*). According to Sohn (2019), pronouns function as noun substitutes while simultaneously encoding grammatical and sociolinguistic information, including person reference, honorification, and speaker–listener relationships. Lee and Ramsey (2019) further explain that the morphological forms of Korean pronouns vary according to speech level, politeness, and communicative context, distinguishing Korean from many other languages.

Based on standard Korean grammatical descriptions (Sohn, 2019; National Institute of Korean Language, 2023), pronouns are generally classified into two major categories: personal pronouns (*inching daemyeongsa*) and demonstrative pronouns (*jisidaemyeongsa*).

Personal pronouns refer to human participants and include first-person (*jeil inching*), second-person (*jei inching*), and third-person (*jesam inching*) pronouns. Korean grammar also recognizes reflexive pronouns (*jaegiching daemyeongsa*) and indefinite pronouns (*bujeong daemyeongsa*). Their morphological realization varies depending on honorific level, social hierarchy, and interpersonal relationships between speakers.

Demonstrative pronouns function as deictic expressions referring to objects, persons, places, or directions. They are commonly classified into demonstratives referring to objects (*samul daemyeongsa*) and demonstratives referring to places or locations (*jangso daemyeongsa*) (National Institute of Korean Language, 2023). Their usage depends on the relative spatial position of the speaker, listener, and referent.

The data analyzed in this study consist of dialogues contained in the speech balloons throughout the first twelve chapters of the original Korean-language version of *Summer Breeze*, officially published on the Naver Webtoon platform. Each utterance is treated as a linguistic unit containing potential morphological realizations of Korean pronouns. Using the theoretical framework above, the analysis focuses on identifying pronoun categories, describing their morphological forms, and examining variations resulting from particle attachment, colloquial expressions, and regional dialects occurring in authentic conversational contexts.

3. Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design with a morphological approach to investigate the forms and distribution of Korean pronouns (*daemyeongsa*) in authentic conversational data. A qualitative design was selected because the study aims to describe and interpret the morphological characteristics of pronouns within their natural linguistic contexts rather than to test statistical hypotheses. To complement the qualitative description, a simple quantitative analysis of frequency was conducted to identify patterns of pronoun occurrence across the corpus.

The research corpus consisted of all dialogue texts appearing in the speech balloons of the first twelve chapters of Han Gyeong Chal's webtoon *썸머브리즈* (*Summer Breeze*), obtained from the original Korean-language version published on the Naver Webtoon platform. The first twelve chapters were selected using purposive sampling because they introduce the principal characters and contain intensive interpersonal interactions that provide abundant examples of everyday pronoun use. The unit of analysis was each lexical item functioning as a Korean pronoun occurring within a complete utterance. Repeated occurrences of the same pronoun were counted individually because each occurrence represents a distinct communicative context.

The primary data comprised all pronouns identified in the selected corpus, while secondary data included Korean grammar books, dictionaries, and scholarly publications on Korean morphology and pronoun classification. Pronoun identification and classification were based on the grammatical framework proposed by Sohn (2019) and the National Institute of Korean Language (2023), which classify Korean pronouns into personal, demonstrative, reflexive, and indefinite pronouns.

Data collection was conducted using observation and note-taking techniques. Each chapter was read repeatedly to ensure comprehensive identification of pronoun forms. Every lexical item functioning as a pronoun was extracted together with its surrounding sentence, chapter number, speaker, and conversational context. The extracted data were then compiled into a corpus database and coded according to pronoun category, morphological form, honorific level, particle attachment, and dialectal variation when applicable.

The data were analyzed through four stages. First, data reduction was performed by excluding lexical items that did not function as pronouns within the conversational context. Second, each remaining item was coded according to the established morphological categories. Third, frequency analysis was conducted to determine the distribution of each pronoun category and identify dominant usage patterns. Finally, qualitative morphological analysis was carried out to interpret the structural characteristics of each pronoun within its communicative context, including morphological variation resulting from particle attachment, colloquial speech, and regional dialects.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, the coding process followed standardized Korean grammatical classifications and was conducted systematically using predefined coding categories derived from established linguistic references. All identified pronouns were re-examined several times to ensure coding consistency, while interpretations were continuously compared with the original dialogue context to maintain contextual accuracy. In addition, theoretical triangulation was employed by comparing the analytical results with established descriptions of Korean morphology and pronoun usage reported in previous linguistic studies, thereby increasing the credibility and dependability of the findings.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Overall Distribution of Korean Pronouns

To provide an overview of pronoun usage in the research corpus, all pronouns identified in the first twelve chapters of *Summer Breeze* were first classified according to the standard categories of Korean grammar. The classification distinguishes personal pronouns and demonstrative pronouns, while dialectal variants were recorded separately because they represent non-standard morphological realizations rather than independent grammatical categories. The frequency of each category was calculated to identify the dominant patterns of pronoun usage throughout the webtoon dialogues.

Table 1 presents the overall distribution of Korean pronouns identified in the corpus. A total of 447 pronoun tokens were extracted from the dialogues, consisting primarily of personal pronouns, followed by demonstrative pronouns. In addition, several dialectal variants characteristic of the Jeolla regional dialect were identified, illustrating the linguistic diversity represented in the narrative.

Table 1. Distribution of Korean Pronouns in the First Twelve Chapters of *Summer Breeze*

No.	Pronoun Category	Predominant Forms	Frequency	Semantic Representation / Social Context
1	Personal Pronouns	나 (na), 저 (jeo), 너 (neo), 우리 (uri), 개 (gyae)	306	Used to refer to the speaker, addressee, and third persons in everyday interpersonal interactions.
2	Demonstrative Pronouns	이것 (igeot), 여기 (yeogi), (geogi), 어디 (eodi)	141	Used to indicate objects, places, and spatial references within conversations.
3	Regional Dialect Variants	지 (ji), 느그들 (neugeudeul), 여그 (yeogeu)	Included in the totals above	Reflect the sociolinguistic background of characters from the Jeolla region.

As shown in Table 1, personal pronouns account for 306 occurrences (68.46%) of the total corpus, making them the most dominant pronoun category in the webtoon. Demonstrative pronouns occur 141 times (31.54%), indicating that deictic references to people, objects, and locations also play an important role in supporting the narrative. The predominance of personal pronouns reflects the dialogic nature of the webtoon, in which interactions are primarily driven by direct communication among the characters.

Besides the standard pronoun categories, several regional dialect forms were identified throughout the corpus. Although these forms are included within the total frequencies of personal and demonstrative pronouns, they represent important morphological variations that contribute to the authenticity of spoken Korean portrayed in the webtoon. Their occurrence suggests that pronoun selection is influenced not only by grammatical structure but also by regional identity and sociocultural background.

To provide a more detailed understanding of pronoun usage, the following sections examine the distribution of each pronoun category individually, beginning with personal pronouns, followed by demonstrative pronouns and dialectal variants.

4.1.1 Distribution and Morphological Characteristics of Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns constitute the largest category identified in the research corpus. Their high frequency indicates that interpersonal communication among the characters is primarily realized through direct references to the speaker, the addressee, and third persons. In Korean, the selection of personal pronouns is not merely a grammatical choice but also reflects social relationships, age differences, honorific levels, and communicative situations. Therefore, examining their distribution provides valuable insights into the linguistic characteristics of everyday conversations represented in *Summer Breeze*.

Table 2 presents the complete distribution of personal pronouns identified in the first twelve chapters of the webtoon. The frequencies demonstrate the relative preference for each pronoun and illustrate how different forms are employed in various conversational contexts.

Table 2. Distribution of Personal Pronouns in the First Twelve Chapters of *Summer Breeze*

Personal Pronoun	Pronoun Type	Frequency
나 (na)	First-person singular	89
저 (jeo)	Honorific first-person singular	24
우리 (uri)	First-person plural	95
너 (neo)	Second-person singular	38
너희 (neohui)	Second-person plural	12

애 (yae)	Third-person singular	19
개 (gyae)	Third-person singular	16
재 (jyae)	Third-person singular	12
이이 (ii)	Third-person singular	1
Total		306

As presented in Table 2, the informal first-person singular pronoun **나 (na)** is the most frequently occurring personal pronoun, appearing 89 times throughout the corpus. This finding suggests that the dialogues predominantly involve informal interactions among characters of similar age and social status, where non-honorific speech is considered appropriate. The frequent occurrence of **나 (na)** also reflects the conversational style commonly adopted by adolescents and young adults in contemporary Korean spoken language.

In contrast, the honorific first-person pronoun **저 (jeo)** occurs considerably less frequently, indicating that formal interactions requiring polite self-reference are relatively uncommon within the selected chapters. Likewise, second-person and third-person pronouns appear according to the interpersonal relationships established between the characters, with informal forms such as **너 (neo)**, **애 (yae)**, **개 (gyae)**, and **재 (jyae)** occurring more frequently than their formal counterparts. These findings demonstrate that pronoun selection throughout the webtoon is closely associated with the informal social environment in which the narrative takes place.

From a morphological perspective, several personal pronouns undergo structural modification through the attachment of grammatical particles. For example, the first-person singular pronoun **나 (na)** frequently combines with the subject particle **-가**, producing the contracted form **내가 (naega)**, while the object particle **-를** produces **나를 (nareul)**. These morphological processes represent regular grammatical constructions in Korean and illustrate that pronouns function as dynamic lexical units capable of undergoing inflectional changes depending on their syntactic role within the sentence.

Representative examples extracted from the corpus further illustrate these morphological patterns and provide contextual evidence for the use of personal pronouns in authentic webtoon conversations.

4.1.2 Distribution and Morphological Characteristics of Demonstrative Pronouns

In addition to personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns constitute another important component of the Korean pronominal system identified in the research corpus. Unlike personal pronouns, which primarily refer to speech participants, demonstrative pronouns function as deictic expressions that identify objects, locations, directions, or entities within a particular communicative context. Their interpretation depends not only on linguistic structure but also on the physical or discourse context shared by the speaker and the listener. In webtoon narratives, demonstrative pronouns are particularly significant because they interact closely with the visual elements of the story, allowing readers to identify the intended referents through both verbal and pictorial information.

The analysis identified a total of 141 demonstrative pronouns distributed across the first twelve chapters of *Summer Breeze*. These pronouns include demonstratives referring to objects, places, and interrogative references. Their distribution is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of Demonstrative Pronouns in the First Twelve Chapters of *Summer Breeze*

Demonstrative Pronoun	Category	Frequency
이것 (igeot)	Object demonstrative	32
그것 (geugeot)	Object demonstrative	28
저것 (jeogeot)	Object demonstrative	9
여기 (yeogi)	Locative demonstrative	21
거기 (geogi)	Locative demonstrative	17
저기 (jeogi)	Locative demonstrative	8
어디 (eodi)	Interrogative demonstrative	11
무엇 (muot) / 뭐 (mwo)	Interrogative pronoun	15

Total

141

As presented in Table 3, demonstrative pronouns occur less frequently than personal pronouns but remain an essential element of the dialogues. Their occurrence reflects the characters' frequent references to surrounding objects, locations, and situations during face-to-face interactions. Among the identified forms, object demonstratives and locative demonstratives constitute the majority of occurrences, indicating that the narrative relies heavily on spatial and visual references to support communication between characters.

The frequent use of locative demonstratives such as **여기 (yeogi)**, **거기 (geogi)**, and **저기 (jeogi)** is closely associated with the multimodal nature of webtoons. Since the dialogues are accompanied by sequential illustrations, these expressions enable speakers to direct the attention of both the interlocutor and the reader toward a specific place or object depicted in the visual scene. Consequently, demonstrative pronouns function not only as grammatical elements but also as cohesive devices that strengthen the relationship between verbal expressions and visual storytelling.

Another noteworthy finding concerns the occurrence of interrogative forms. Although the standard interrogative pronoun **무엇 (muot)** appears in several utterances, it is frequently realized in its contracted colloquial form **뭐 (mwo)**, which is considerably more common in everyday spoken Korean. This morphological reduction reflects the tendency of conversational Korean to simplify pronunciation while preserving semantic meaning. Such variation demonstrates that the dialogues represented in *Summer Breeze* closely resemble natural spoken interactions rather than carefully constructed textbook examples.

Overall, the distribution of demonstrative pronouns confirms that deictic reference plays an important role in organizing conversational meaning throughout the webtoon. Their frequent occurrence illustrates how speakers establish spatial orientation, identify referents, and maintain coherence within naturally occurring conversations. To further illustrate these morphological characteristics, representative excerpts from the corpus are presented in the following section.

4.1.3 Regional Dialect Variants in *Summer Breeze*

Besides the standard forms of Korean pronouns, the analysis identified several regional dialect variants occurring throughout the dialogues of *Summer Breeze*. These dialectal forms do not constitute separate pronoun categories; rather, they represent non-standard morphological realizations of standard Korean pronouns that reflect the regional linguistic background of particular characters. Their occurrence demonstrates that the author intentionally incorporates dialectal expressions to construct realistic conversations and to strengthen the sociocultural identity of the characters.

From a linguistic perspective, dialectal variation is an important aspect of Korean morphology because lexical forms may differ according to regional speech communities while maintaining equivalent grammatical functions. Such variation illustrates that Korean pronouns are not static lexical items but are influenced by geographical distribution, speech habits, and interpersonal communication. Consequently, the identification of dialectal variants contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of Korean pronoun morphology beyond the standard language described in conventional grammar references.

The regional variants identified in the corpus are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Regional Dialect Variants of Korean Pronouns Identified in the Corpus

Dialect Form	Standard Form	Korean	Morphological Process	Frequency
와이라노 (wairano)	왜 이래? (wae irae?)		Lexical substitution phonological variation	/ 18
머라카노 (meorakano)	뭐라고 (mworago hani?)	하니?	Lexical substitution phonological variation	/ 15
맞나? (matna?)	맞아? (maja?)		Phonological variation	12
Total				45

As shown in Table 4, the dialectal forms retain the same grammatical functions as their standard Korean equivalents but exhibit differences in pronunciation and lexical realization. These variations do not alter the semantic meaning of the pronouns; instead, they reflect regional speech characteristics and contribute to the naturalness of the dialogues. Their occurrence also indicates that the author preserves regional linguistic identity rather than standardizing all expressions into Standard Korean.

The presence of regional variants further suggests that pronoun selection in Summer Breeze is influenced not only by grammatical rules but also by sociolinguistic factors, including the speakers' geographical background and speech community. This finding supports the view that authentic conversational data, such as webtoon dialogues, provide valuable linguistic evidence that cannot always be observed in textbook examples or artificially constructed sentences.

4.2. Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Korean pronoun usage in *Summer Breeze* is systematically influenced by grammatical structure, interpersonal relationships, and sociocultural context. The predominance of personal pronouns over demonstrative pronouns reflects the conversational nature of the webtoon, in which interactions are primarily organized around direct communication among characters. This finding supports Sohn's (2019) argument that Korean pronouns function not merely as grammatical substitutes for nouns but also as linguistic markers of speaker identity and social relationships. Unlike languages in which pronoun selection is largely determined by grammatical person alone, Korean pronouns encode information regarding politeness, familiarity, and the relative status of interlocutors.

The analysis revealed that the informal first-person singular pronoun **나** (*na*) was the most frequently occurring form in the corpus. This finding is consistent with Lee and Ramsey (2019), who explain that **나** is predominantly used in informal conversations between speakers of similar age or social status. Since the principal characters of *Summer Breeze* are adolescents and young adults who interact in casual settings, the frequent occurrence of **나** reflects authentic patterns of everyday spoken Korean. The relatively limited use of the honorific pronoun **저** (*jeo*) further indicates that formal speech situations are uncommon within the selected chapters. Consequently, the distribution of first-person pronouns corresponds closely to the social relationships constructed throughout the narrative.

The frequent occurrence of informal second- and third-person pronouns also highlights the importance of interpersonal familiarity in Korean communication. Forms such as **너** (*neo*), **야** (*yae*), and **걔** (*gyae*) appear primarily in conversations among friends and family members, where equal social status permits the use of non-honorific expressions. This observation supports previous descriptions of Korean pragmatics, which emphasize that pronoun selection is inseparable from the honorific system and the social hierarchy governing interpersonal interaction (Sohn, 2019). Therefore, the findings confirm that grammatical choices in authentic conversations are closely associated with sociolinguistic norms rather than purely syntactic considerations.

Another important finding concerns the use of demonstrative pronouns. Although less frequent than personal pronouns, demonstrative forms play a significant role in establishing spatial reference and maintaining discourse coherence. In webtoon narratives, deictic expressions such as locative and object demonstratives interact directly with visual illustrations, enabling readers to identify referents more efficiently. This finding suggests that demonstrative pronouns perform not only grammatical functions but also multimodal communicative functions by linking verbal expressions with visual information. Such a characteristic distinguishes webtoon discourse from conventional written texts, where spatial reference depends almost entirely on linguistic description.

The identification of regional dialect variants constitutes one of the most significant contributions of this study. The occurrence of non-standard pronoun forms demonstrates that morphological variation is influenced by regional linguistic identity as well as grammatical structure. Rather than standardizing all dialogues into Standard Korean, the author preserves dialectal expressions to construct realistic characterization and represent the linguistic diversity of Korean society. These findings support sociolinguistic perspectives that regard dialect as an essential component of speaker identity and authentic communication. Consequently, the presence of dialectal pronouns enhances both the linguistic authenticity of the narrative and the value of webtoons as corpora for morphological research.

Compared with previous studies, the present research extends existing knowledge by examining Korean pronouns through authentic webtoon dialogues rather than relying on textbook examples or isolated grammatical constructions. While earlier studies have primarily discussed pronoun classification, honorific systems, or pedagogical aspects of Korean grammar, the present study combines qualitative morphological analysis with quantitative frequency analysis to describe how pronouns are actually realized in contemporary digital narratives. This approach provides empirical evidence of pronoun distribution in natural conversational contexts and demonstrates the usefulness of webtoons as linguistic corpora for investigating contemporary Korean morphology.

The findings also have practical implications for Korean language education. Because webtoons present authentic conversational language, they expose learners to naturally occurring pronoun usage, colloquial expressions, and regional variation that are often underrepresented in traditional instructional materials. Incorporating authentic webtoon dialogues into Korean language instruction may therefore improve learners' grammatical competence while simultaneously enhancing their sociolinguistic awareness of appropriate pronoun selection in different communicative situations.

5. Conclusion

This study examined the morphological characteristics of Korean pronouns in the first twelve chapters of Han Gyeong Chal's *Summer Breeze* by analyzing authentic dialogue extracted from the original Korean-language webtoon. The analysis identified 447 pronoun tokens, comprising 306 personal pronouns and 141 demonstrative pronouns. The findings indicate that personal pronouns are the dominant category, with the informal first-person singular pronoun **나 (na)** occurring most frequently. This predominance reflects the conversational nature of the webtoon, where interactions are primarily characterized by intimacy, equal social status, and informal communication among the main characters. In addition, the analysis identified several regional dialect variants that demonstrate the influence of sociolinguistic factors on the morphological realization of Korean pronouns.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings confirm that Korean pronouns function not only as grammatical substitutes for nouns but also as linguistic markers of interpersonal relationships, honorification, and regional identity. The occurrence of dialectal variants further illustrates that pronoun morphology in authentic spoken Korean is shaped by social and regional variation in addition to grammatical rules. These findings therefore enrich previous studies on Korean morphology by providing empirical evidence derived from naturally occurring language data rather than from isolated examples or textbook materials.

The study also contributes methodologically by demonstrating the value of webtoons as authentic linguistic corpora for morphological research. Unlike conventional instructional materials, webtoon dialogues capture spontaneous conversational language, colloquial expressions, and regional speech patterns that more closely reflect contemporary Korean language use. Consequently, the findings may serve as a useful reference for future studies on Korean morphology, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics, as well as for the development of Korean language teaching materials that incorporate authentic examples of pronoun usage.

Despite these contributions, the study has several limitations. The analysis was restricted to the first twelve chapters of a single webtoon, which may not fully represent the diversity of pronoun usage across different genres, authors, or communicative contexts. Furthermore, the study focused primarily on morphological classification and frequency distribution without examining broader pragmatic functions or discourse-level interactions. Future research is therefore encouraged to analyze larger and more diverse corpora, compare pronoun usage across multiple webtoons or other digital media, and integrate morphological analysis with pragmatic and sociolinguistic approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of contemporary Korean pronoun usage.

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