

# Some Patterns of Grammatical Change in Personal Pronouns

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**Song, Kyung-An & Heine, Bernd. (2017). Some Patterns of Grammatical Change in Personal Pronouns.** *The Linguistic Association of Korea Journal*, 25(1), 139-162. The main goal of the present paper is to reconstruct some of the dynamics underlying the rise and development of personal pronouns in general and of forms for pronominal address in particular. By looking at a number of languages from different parts of the world, we argue that there is a generalized mechanism which accounts for some regularities in this development. The mechanism has some implications for the grammatical structure of the languages concerned. It seems to be responsible for the rise of new grammatical forms and for the loss of other ones, whereby categories and the system of personal deixis are redefined. Another implication is that the processes described in the paper may give rise to polysemous coding, i.e. the forms used for indirect personal reference serve both in their old and new functions simultaneously.

**Key Words:** devaluation, honorific pronoun, indirect address, personal deixis, positioning, spatial deixis, T-form, V-form

## 1. Introduction

Recent research on the development of personal pronouns suggests that there are some general patterns shaping or influencing this development (Song, 2002; 2003; Heine & Song, 2010; 2011; Song & Heine, 2016). The present paper builds

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on this work, especially on the descriptive variables that have been proposed in Song & Heine (2016) to account for regularities in the development of personal pronouns by drawing on historically documented linguistic situations; we will use, on the other hand, the techniques of grammaticalization theory for proposing hypotheses on the changes and developments of personal pronouns (see e.g. Heine, Claudi & Hünnemeyer, 1991; Rhee, 1998; Hopper & Traugott, 2003). Our interest is thereby with expressions for speech participants, especially with address forms and second person pronouns.

## 2. Variables in the changes of personal pronouns

In this paper we are concerned personal pronouns, a sub-class of person markers used for the expression of personal deixis. As has been shown in more detail in Song & Heine (2016; see also Heine & Song, 2010; 2011), there are a number of terms and conventions that need to be distinguished for a better understanding of the use of personal pronouns. The first concerns the terms ‘speaker’ and ‘hearer’, which are the two basic participant roles in linguistic communication.

The second convention concerns the distinction between the two types of pronominal address forms established by Brown & Gilman (1968), namely a T-form and a V-form, French *tu* vs. *vous* being a paradigm example of this distinction. The T-form is concerned with solidarity, closeness and/or intimacy whereas the V-form is related with power, distance, and asymmetric social relations. The meaning of the two forms differs, however, from language to language.

Personal pronouns constitute a system for the expression of personal deixis: In the unmarked situation, the speaker refers to him- or herself with a first person pronoun and to the hearer with a second person pronoun. But there are also various alternative means available, and in order to find an appropriate expression, the speaker should *position* herself/himself, where ‘positioning’ means defining her/his social role relation vis-à-vis the hearer.

A survey of the literature on personal pronouns suggests that it is most of all the distinction between horizontal distance and vertical distance that plays a role

in positioning. Positioning is mainly based on the features of social status associated with the person concerned, but it may also be based on the role relationship between participants in some specific social setting (cf. Levinson, 1979: 207; 1983: 90; Domonkosi, 2010: 33).

*Horizontal distance* concerns degrees of relative closeness of horizontal social relation between participants of linguistic interaction. In other works it has been described in terms of degrees of politeness or formality (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Haase, 1994). The degrees of horizontal distance that are most relevant for pronominal address may be the ones distinguished in (1a). *Vertical distance*, by contrast, is associated with degrees of respect or social status.<sup>1)</sup> For our discussion it is the scale of social levels in (1b) that is most relevant.

(1) Degrees of social distance

- a. Horizontal distance: formal – neutral – informal
- b. Vertical distance: higher – equal – lower status

Variables associated with vertical distance can be ascribed features, like age and sex, or acquired features, such as social, political, religious, economic, or occupational status. Linguistic manifestations of vertical distance can be observed in role relations of all kinds, e.g. in the domain of the family (parents/ child), of vocation (employer/employee), or of political power (ruler/subject).

Finally, a notion that we will have to take into account in our analysis is that of *indirect personal reference* in pronominal address (IPR). This notion, which has been discussed in greater detail in Song & Heine (2016), stands in particular for a linguistic strategy employed in speaker-hearer interaction whereby a speaker uses a grammatical category for a purpose other than the one that category is dedicated to (e.g. Sökeland, 1980). In pronominal forms of address, IPR has the effect that concepts of personal deixis are expressed not by linguistic forms dedicated to this purpose but rather by other concepts. For instance, in the following example from Japanese, the concept of spatial deixis (*sochira* 'that side') is used to express a concept of personal deixis 'you'.<sup>2)</sup>

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1) We use the terms 'politeness' and 'respect' in a loose sense here, considering many of the different applications they have received (see e.g. Haase, 1994: 18).

2) In the history of the Japanese language the pronominal forms are very often devaluated and

(2) Japanese personal deixis *sochira* (Yamamoto, 2006: 112)

Sochira-san      no              go-tsugo              shidai      desu.  
 that.side-HON   GEN              HON-convenience   up.to      COP  
 'It depends on your convenience.'

The main linguistic strategies distinguished by Song & Heine (2016) are listed in (3).

- (3) Linguistic strategies used for coding IPR in pronominal singular address
- a. Plurification: Use a plural pronoun instead of the expected singular form
  - b. Spatial deixis: Use a concept of spatial deixis to express personal deixis
  - c. Non-deixis: Use a concept that has no deictic value (i.e. does not refer to direct speech participants)
  - d. Zero: Don't use any form, which concept of personal deixis is implied is specified by the context.

### 3. On the dynamics in the development of person markers

Our concern in this paper is with indirect personal reference (IPR), which involves the expression of some meaning by means of a linguistic category other than the one dedicated to that purpose. When such usage becomes regular, that is, is conventionalized, the outcome is linguistic change, in that the language concerned has acquired a new expression of personal deixis. The diachronic process involved is complex, and it can be captured by means of the context extension model sketched in Table 1. At Stage I there is a linguistic expression for any of the concepts listed in (3), such as a plural pronoun (3a), a concept of spatial deixis (3b), etc. In specific contexts (i.e., the bridging context of Stage II), a new meaning is foregrounded, namely that of a second person singular pronoun. At Stage III, this new meaning is extended to contexts where the old meaning no longer makes sense and, hence, the latter is backgrounded. Finally, at Stage IV the old meaning is lost and the new meaning is conventionalized – with the effect that there is now a new expression for second person singular address.

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eroded or replaced by the new forms (Song, 2011).

The goal of the paper is to demonstrate that indirect personal reference can be held responsible for the creation of a large variety of new forms of pronominal address, i.e. of new personal pronouns. A widespread effect of this process is what has been referred to as *devaluation* whereby a linguistic expression for a highly valued entity undergoes change by being used for less highly valued entities. Devaluation has been proposed to form one of the main principles of speaker-hearer dynamics (Song, 2002; 2003). It concerns almost invariably vertical distance (see (1b) of Section 2), in that a pronominal address form reserved for referents of, or a relationship associated with a higher social status, turns into a marker for referents of equal or lower social status.

Table 1. The extension model of grammaticalization (Heine, 2002)

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Resulting meaning</i>
I. Initial stage	Unconstrained	Source meaning
II. Bridging context	There is a new context triggering a new meaning	Target meaning foregrounded
III. Switch context	There is a new context which is incompatible with the source meaning	Source meaning backgrounded
IV. Conventionalization	The target meaning no longer needs to be supported by the context that gave rise to it; it may be used in new contexts	Target meaning only

While the motivation underlying this strategy may be complex, all evidence available suggests that the mechanism that triggers devaluation is a kind of social context manipulation (henceforth in short: context manipulation). With this term we refer to a differential combination of linguistic expressions with their contextual environment. For the purpose of the present paper we use the term more specifically for the extension of a pronominal address form from one position on the scales of social distance in (1) to another position, and typically from a position classified as being higher to a position classified as lower in terms of vertical distance (see (1b)). When such a manipulation is conventionalized the result is that that address form is 'devalued' by being used regularly for referents or relations of a lower social rank. As we will see below, however,

manipulation can also mean context restriction rather than extension. We hypothesize that there is a cross-linguistically widespread evolution of the kind proposed in (4).

(4) IPR > context manipulation > devaluation

The notions figuring in this scale are each of a different nature. IPR in the sense used here can be said to be a motivating factor (see Section 4), while the other two are not. Context manipulation may be described as a pragmatic mechanism, and devaluation is one possible outcome of context manipulation. In fact, devaluation can be understood to be an epiphenomenal product of the kind of context manipulation to be discussed below.

In the remainder of this section we will look at the evidence on which the hypothesis in (4) rests. To this end, a number of cases of diachronic change in the structure of personal deixis are discussed.

### 3.1. Plurification in early Europe

Our first case concerns the rise of V-pronouns in Europe: In the late Roman empire, the emperor used the plural pronoun *vos* ‘you, plural’ as a singular address form instead of the inherited singular pronoun *tu* ‘you, singular’ (Brown & Gilman 1968; Helmbrecht, 2005; Song, 2012). When *vos* was extended from the context of the Roman emperor to the nobility, devaluation set in: There now was a larger group of referents and hence, *vos* lost part of the distinguished social ‘value’ it once had.

Subsequently, there was a second phase of context extension, or generalization, of the plurification strategy. The process of extending the second person plural pronoun to use as a reverential singular address form, used within the nobility, had been replicated from Latin in a number of European languages (Helmbrecht, 2005). In medieval Europe then, use of the V-form was extended from higher social status to people having control over others, and from principal statal power to the family. By being extended from the nobility to all other social classes, the V-form lost much of its significance as a marker of a social distinction.

And there was a third phase of context generalization, leading from vertical to horizontal distance; in the phrasing of Held (1999: 24), it was a transfer from social rank to social value through the bourgeoisization of society. In central and western Europe, social hierarchy was gradually replaced by criteria such as psychological, affective components of proximity and familiarity. In a number of European languages, the V-form lost its vertical distance function as a marker of asymmetric social relations and was generalized in specific domains as a marker of symmetric and reciprocal horizontal relations, that is, speaker and hearer invariably exchanged either *V* or *T*. Parameters for the choice between *V* and *T* were now no longer based on vertical but rather on horizontal distance: Rather than higher vs. lower social status, they now concerned social or kinship relationship, degree of solidarity or familiarity.

Developments in German may show in more detail the nature of the last two phases of context extension. The first examples of the process from the second person plural pronoun *ir* 'you, plural' (Present-Day German *ihr*) to a V-pronoun, i.e. a honorific second person singular pronoun, are attested in Old High German: It is towards the end of the 9th century that the plural pronoun *ir* first appears for singular address, possibly replicated via clerical communication directly from Latin. That the earliest usage concerned IPR and vertical distance is suggested by the fact that the first attestation of *ir* with singular reference stems from a letter that the monk Otfrid von Weissenburg wrote somewhere between 863 and 871 AD to Bishop Salomo of Constance (Simon, 2003: 96). At the latest since the 11th century, *ir* was established as an asymmetric singular address form (suggestive of Stage II of the extension model of Table 1).

Throughout Middle High German, the use of *ir* remained optional, that is, use or non-use was not entirely predictable on the basis of sociolinguistic variables. In the literature of that time, e.g. the *Parzival* novel by Wolfram von Eschenbach and the *Nibelungenlied* (both ca. 1200 AD), the predominant parameter of usage was still vertical distance, involving distinctions of kinship, age, and economic status.

The second phase of context extension of German *ir* began in what might be called the democratization of *ir* during the Renaissance: In the 16th century, use of *ir* as an address form for vertical distance was extended from the upper and middle classes to the lower classes of society, thereby extending the range

of possible referents and leading towards massive generalization and devaluation of the V-pronoun (Simon, 2003: 107). The effect of this sociolinguistic process was that *ir* lost its exclusive meaning as a social marker. Subsequently, *ir* was replaced as a V-form of politeness and respect by the third person singular pronouns as the new V-forms of highest respect.

To conclude, the history of the European T/V-distinction offers a range of examples where plurification was employed as a means of marking IPR. First restricted to situations of vertical distance, plurification subsequently led to context generalization and devaluation and, hence, to semantic change in the pronominal system: With each manipulation to new social contexts, the V-form as a singular pronoun lost part of its semantic distinctiveness as a marker of social status relations. Since this development entailed an increase in the number of referents to which the V-form could be applied, this development has obviously entailed also an increase in the frequency of use of the V-form, but no information is available on this issue.

The theoretical endpoint of context extension and devaluation is reached when the V-form spreads to all conceivable contexts of second person singular address and eventually replaces the existing T-pronoun (Stage IV of conventionalization). This endpoint was in fact reached in England, where the development of *you* (and *ye*) provides an example of extreme context extension. Originating as a second person pronoun that acquired the function of a V-pronoun, its use was later on extended to all contexts where the T-pronoun *thou/thee* had been used earlier, to the extent that the latter was eliminated in the 18th century, surviving only in specific domains such as religious literature.

### 3.2. Non-deixis

Much of the same process of context manipulation followed by devaluation can be observed when strategies other than pluralization are involved. Since around the 15th century there was a new development in Europe. Instead of expressing politeness or respect by means of plural forms, it was now the non-deixis strategy that was activated, where respectful nominal expressions were introduced for signaling IPR (see (3c)).

A process of context manipulation similar to the one that we observed in



Section 3.1. now took place in a number of countries and languages between Portugal to the west and Germany to the east. In Portugal of the 15th century, the old V-pronoun *vós* ‘you’ had been devaluated to the extent that it had become inappropriate for purposes of vertical distance. The phrase *Vossa mercê* ‘Your Grace’, later on reduced to *você*, began to be used as a polite form of address for the king around 1460. Shortly thereafter, however, devaluation set in: Around 1490, use of *Vossa mercê* was extended as an address form for dukes, in the 16th century it was further extended to the bourgeois population, and in the 18th century it replaced the earlier V-pronoun *vós* as a polite and ceremonial form of address for singular referents (Merlan, 2006).

An extremely advanced development can be observed in Brazilian and Angolan Portuguese, where *você* has largely ousted the old T-pronoun, i.e. the second person singular pronoun *tu* ‘you, singular’, as a general second person pronoun (Merlan, 2006: 222ff; Travis & Silveira, 2009; Martelotta & Cezario, 2011). In Brazil, the pronominalization of *você* began presumably at the end of the 18th century although it was only in the 20th century that it replaced *tu* almost everywhere<sup>3</sup>). Especially in informal speech, the form *você* was reduced to *ocê* and *cê*. The developmental process of honorific 2nd person pronouns in Portuguese can be summarized as in Table 2.

Table 2. Developments of honorific 2nd person pronouns in Portuguese

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Changes of honorific forms</i>
Old Portuguese	• <i>vós</i> (plural ‘you’) as honorific form
15th century	• <i>Vossa mercê</i> (‘Your Grace’) for the king • <i>Vossa mercê</i> reduced to <i>você</i>
18th century	• The usual honorific form <i>vós</i> was replaced by <i>você</i>
20th century	• T-pronoun <i>tu</i> was also replaced by <i>você</i> in Brazilian. • <i>você</i> reduced to <i>ocê/cê</i>

In this Portuguese example we observe overall the same kind of process that characterized the earlier one where pluralization was the strategy employed. IPR in address forms started out at the highest level of social stratification, increa-

3) It is still possible to find the current use of the pronoun *tu* in certain specific interactional settings with third person singular agreement on the verb in Brazilian.

singly extending to lower levels, and from asymmetric vertical address to symmetric horizontal social relations. And in both examples there were cases where context manipulation has reached its logical endpoint, namely in English of the United Kingdom and in Portuguese of Brazil: The erstwhile honorific V-form lost all its associations with IPR, being used by everybody and everywhere.

Like in Portuguese (*Vossa mercê* > *você*), the non-deixis strategy had the effect that a noun phrase was grammaticalized to a second person pronoun in Spanish (*Vuestra Merced* 'Your Grace' > *Usted*), Italian (*La Vostra Signoria* 'Your Lordship' > *Lei*), or Dutch *Uwe Edelheid* 'Your Nobility' > *U*) (see Head, 1978: 185ff; Siewierska, 2004: 224)<sup>4</sup>. Speakers of German utilized the same strategy for IPR, but the outcome was different.

Around the transition from the 16th to the 17th century, German nominal forms such as *der Herr* ('the gentleman'), *die Jungfer* ('the damsel'), or *der Vater* ('the father') abounded for second person reference and were extended from third person reference to second person address, to the point that it was frequently unclear whether these expressions had second person or third person reference (cf. the bridging context of Stage II in Table 1). Nominal subject referents were taken up anaphorically by the corresponding personal pronouns *er* ('he') or *sie* ('she'), agreeing with their nominal antecedent in gender. Subsequently the nominal forms were omitted, and the former anaphoric pronouns *er* and *sie* turned into new second person address forms, expressing politeness and respect but triggering third person agreement. But there was rapid context manipulation and devaluation to the extent that the new second person pronouns *er* and *sie* were discarded around the middle of the 19th century<sup>5</sup>.

But the same strategy was employed once more by speakers of German slightly later in the 17th century, again leading from non-deictic noun phrases to honorific second person address forms (see (3c) of Section 2). Rather than the generic classifying nouns or kin terms that were used earlier, it was abstract honorific expressions denoting human traits or virtues that were recruited this time as a template for signaling IPR, such as *Gnaden* ('grace'), *Ehren* ('honor'), or

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4) In Romanian, a similar development can be observed, leading to new address forms for all categories of person and number (Merlan, 2006: 222-6).

5) They survived, however, in their old function as third person pronouns, being part of the paradigm of personal pronouns of Modern High German.

*Heilichkeit* ('holiness'), typically relating to salient status properties of the addressee. Thus, a teacher or scholar would be addressed e.g. as *Eure Weisheit* ('your wisdom'), or a prince as *Eure Majestät* ('your majesty'): "By appealing to the addressee's graciousness, mercy, majesty, holiness or other such flattering characteristics, ... the addressee is referenced indirectly via associated entities" (Listen, 1999: 57; quoted from Simon, 2003: 111).

Like in the case of the earlier address forms *er* and *sie*, the personal pronoun used to refer to nominal antecedents gradually turned from anaphoric to semantically defined second person honorific address pronouns. But rather than the third person singular pronouns, this time it was the third person plural pronoun *sie* that was gradually generalized for all nominal expressions. Roughly from the beginning of the 18th century onward, *Sie* (now distinguished orthographically from its source, the plural pronoun *sie* ('they')) had won out against the by now devalued singular pronouns and could occur without a nominal antecedent (Simon, 2003: 114). Around 1800, vertical distance gradually gave way to horizontal distance as a parameter and the use of *Sie* was extended from the upper classes to the middle class and from asymmetric to symmetric social relations (Simon, 2003: 121). Still, traces of asymmetric vertical distance have survived in Present-Day German, where e.g. teachers give the T-pronoun *du* to pupils (roughly until the age of 16) and are given the V-pronoun *Sie*.

Table 3. Developments of German honorific 2nd person pronouns

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Changes of honorific forms</i>
before 9th century	• no honorific pronoun
9th century	• <i>ir</i> (plural 'you') for honorific form
16th century	• <i>ir</i> was generalized and devaluated
17th century	• nominals like <i>Herr</i> ('gentleman') and their anaphoric forms <i>er</i> ('he'), <i>sie</i> ('she') for honorific forms • nominals and anaphoric forms devaluated
since 18th century	• 3rd person plural form <i>sie</i> ('they') for honorific form

To conclude, the German examples of non-deictic expressions just discussed also appear to be in support of the scenario proposed in (4). Both the development from the third person singular *er* ('he') and *sie* ('she'), and from third person plural *sie* ('they') to second person pronouns of honorification origi-

nate in nominal forms, and it is only via the omission of the nominal forms that the third person pronouns turned into second person pronouns (Simon, 2003). The developmental process of honorific 2nd person pronouns in European languages can be represented as in Table 3 with the example of German.

### 3.3. Reflexives

Processes of devaluation can also be observed in the languages of southeastern and eastern Asia, involving all the strategies distinguished in (3) of Section 2 (see Song, 2002; Heine & Song, 2010 for evidence). But it seems that in search for the most suitable conceptual pools for coding IPR, pluralization played a minor role, while spatial deixis and non-deixis provided the most important resources.

We may illustrate this with a few examples of the non-deixis strategy (see Section 2, (3c)), more specifically with reflexive pronouns. At all times of its documented history, reflexives have been recruited for expressing IPR in Japanese, and reflexives gave rise to a number of new second or first person pronouns. One example concerns the two etymologically related reflexives *ono* and *onore* ('self'): Both were reflexive forms in the 8th century but their use was later on extended to express hearer address. *onore* became a second person pronoun from the Heian period on (794-1192 AD), while *ono* gave rise to a second person pronoun in non-central dialects of Japanese (in the form *unu/una/ ona*; Whitman, 1999: 360). Another example from Japanese concerns the Standard Japanese reflexive form *jibun* ('self'). It may be used as a first person pronoun in certain contexts, and in the Kansai dialect area in Japan this context manipulation has been generalized: *jibun* generally acts as one of the ordinary personal pronouns for 'I' (Hinds, 1986: 124). We have no information on whether these cases of change from reflexive form to markers of personal deixis involved devaluation. But an extreme example of reflexives that were employed for signaling IPR and were subsequently devaluated can be found in Korean.

Korean is characterized by a highly stratified system of marking personal address; following Song (2002) we distinguish three levels of honorification, namely high, middle, and low.<sup>6</sup>) Avoiding direct personal deixis and searching

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6) Discussion is confined to singular uses of personal pronouns. Note further that, while Song

for appropriate means of indirect reference or address appears to be a common goal among speakers of Korean, and has always been in the attested history of the language. Up until roughly the 15th century, there were two personal pronouns that were neutral in terms of honorific levels (Kim, 1995: 47), namely first person *na* ('I')<sup>7)</sup> and second person *neo*('you').<sup>8)</sup> Table 4 summarizes this situation.<sup>9)</sup>

Table 4. Korean reflexive forms and singular personal pronouns of roughly the 16th century (Kim, 1995: 47; Song, 2002)

level of honorication	reflexive form	personal pronoun	
		1st person	2nd person
high/middle/low	<i>jeo</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>neo</i>

At least since the 16th century, the form *jeo* was used as a reflexive ('self') used for all honorific levels. *jeo* then underwent devaluation, being reduced to a form of the low level. Around the end of the 19th century, the contexts in which *jeo* was used were extended: *jeo* now could also express speaker reference and developed into a first person pronoun of the low level of honorification.

Towards the end of the 16th century, three new reflexive forms arose in Korean: *dangsin* became the marker of the high level, and *jagi* and *jane*, both becoming forms of the middle honorific level. By the mid 17th century, *jane* had been extended to the function of a second person pronoun of the middle level, but was further extended to the low level in the 20th century. When losing its function as a pronoun of the middle level, *jane* was restricted to use as a second

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(2002) is concerned with the development of the full paradigms of pronouns, we are restricted here to the development of individual items from reflexives to personal pronouns. We are also ignoring the fact that the reflexive pronouns themselves can be traced back to earlier noun phrases (see Song, 2002 for details), so that there is a more general grammaticalization chain of the kind: noun phrase > reflexive marker > personal pronoun.

7) This paper follows the literal transliteration scheme for academic papers of the standard romanization 2000 of the Korean Ministry of Culture, Tourism and Sports.

8) These two basic forms are believed to have developed from the same root which meant 'human' (Seo, 1989: 248f). They might have been opposed then to each other in combination with the representative basic vowels *-a* and *-eo* respectively.

9) According to Mikyung Ahn (p.c.) there were three second person pronouns in the 16th century, namely *neo*, *geudae* and *jane*.

person pronoun of the low level, side by side with the inherited pronoun *neo*. Eventually, by the second half of the 20th century, *jane* largely disappeared from the language, both as a reflexive and as a personal pronoun, but was retained as a pronoun of vertical distance, used to refer to or address someone younger or of lower position.

The same kind of change from reflexive to second person pronoun followed by devaluation took place a century later, though on a different level of honorification: By the end of the 18th century, *dangsin* had become a polysemous form, expressing not only reflexivity but also second person reference on the high level. More recently, in the course of the second half of the 20th century, however, *dangsin* changed from a high level to a middle level pronoun.

And finally, there was also the fourth reflexive that experienced a change from reflexive to personal pronoun: *jagi* acquired uses as a middle level pronoun, competing with the second person pronoun *geudae*, with the effect that the latter was ousted.

The outcome of this evolution by the second half of the 20th century can be summarized thus:<sup>10</sup> The Korean system of (singular) personal pronouns consisted mostly of forms that are both diachronically and synchronically reflexives - in other words, they are polysemous; cf. Table 5.

To conclude, the IPR strategy, using non-deictic expressions of reflexivity, had a dramatic effect on the evolution of the system of personal deixis in Korean: Within the last five centuries, Korean speakers have recurrently recruited reflexives as a means for expressing IPR, i.e. avoiding direct deictic address, and all forms concerned were grammaticalized to personal pronouns. The result is, first, that the system of first and second person reference in Present-Day Korean is dominated by pronouns that are historically reflexive forms. And second, since these forms have retained their earlier functions as reflexives, there is now substantial ambiguity.

In the historical sketch presented above there were a number of cases lending support to the hypothesis in (4), whereby context manipulation may give rise to a devaluation of the forms concerned.

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10) For space limitations we are ignoring here more recent developments (but see Song, 2002).

Table 5. Korean reflexive forms and singular personal pronouns, second half of the 20th century (Song, 2002; inherited pronouns are printed in bold)

<i>level of honorification</i>	<i>reflexive form</i>	<i>personal pronoun</i>	
		1st person	2nd person
high	<i>dangsin</i>	$\emptyset$	<i>dangsin</i>
middle	<i>jagi</i>	<b><i>na</i></b>	<i>jagi</i>
low	<i>jeo</i>	<i>jeo</i>	<b><i>neo</i></b>

### 3.4. Context manipulation without vertical distance

The term devaluation, as used in this paper, generally presupposes distinctions of vertical distance (cf. (1b)). Most of the cases discussed in the preceding sections concern developments in societies that were characterized by a high degree of socio-political stratification. In such societies, role relations were determined to a considerable extent by linguistic conventions reflecting vertical distance. The question is whether societies lacking a pronounced system of socio-political stratification might provide a challenge to the hypothesis in (4). We will now deal with this question by looking at the mechanism of context manipulation in a society of this kind.

This society is the modern nation state of Hungary. Hungarian has a fairly complex system of personal address forms<sup>11</sup>). There are five kinds of grammatical options for marking second person address ('you').<sup>12</sup> Whether, or to what extent, all these options are available to all members of the community does not become clear on the basis of the data available. One of these options, the personal pronoun *te* (plural *ti*), is classified by Domonkosi (2010) as a T-form signaling informal distance, being typically associated with close and intimate relationships. All others are V-forms, as we saw in Section 3. The paradigm V-forms are *ön* (plural *önök*) and *maga* (plural *maguk*), both triggering third person agreement. *Maga* dates back to the 18th century, but *ön*, arising in the 19th century, is considered traditionally to be the more respectful, official and

11) In the following we are relying on Domonkosi (2010) in our discussion of the situation in Hungarian.

12) In addition, there is an elaborate structure of nominal address forms, usually made up of a first name, a second name, or a title. This structure, which interacts with the grammatical system of personal deixis in multiple ways, must remain out of consideration here.

polite form, being typically associated with formal horizontal distance, though not with vertical distance.<sup>13)</sup>

The remaining two V-forms may occur on their own or combine with *ön* or *maga*. One is a zero form, also showing third person agreement, is classified as a V-form by Domonkosi (2010: 34, 39-40). It tends to be picked as an unmarked alternative in particular when the speaker is stuck with having to decide on which of the second person V-pronouns, *ön* or *maga*, is appropriate in a given situation. The other is the *tetsik*-form, documented since the early 18th century. This form, which consists of the auxiliary-like form of the verb *tetsikelés* ('to please'), has a horizontal distance value for people older than 35, expressing politeness and courtesy, but also a vertical distance value based on age when used as an address form by children.

Modern Hungarian appears to be characterized by a situation of change which has both a social and a geographical dimension. Change affects on the one hand the T-form *te* ('you'). Traditionally used for informal horizontal distance, signaling intimacy, *te* is experiencing a dramatic context manipulation from urban, intellectual to other social contexts. A sociolinguistic survey carried out by Domonkosi (2010: 36ff.) provides an indication of the demographic profile of the change: Only 13.9 % of the people interviewed aged over 55 years give *te* to their parents, while in the 35-55 age group it is 61.8 %, and in the 18-35 age group it amounts to 90.9 %.

Among younger speakers, the T-form is spreading beyond the family to equal but non-intimate relationships. It is even being used as a marker of positive politeness for addressing unfamiliar interlocutors of the same age or younger, such as shop assistants or waiters. In terms of our scale of horizontal distance (see (1a) above), the T-form appears to have been extended mainly from informal to neutral and to formal relations, that is, all along the scale of horizontal distance (Domonkosi, 2010: 36).<sup>14)</sup> The dynamics of this process is

13) "Without nominal elements to accompany it, the pronoun *ön* is used to address unfamiliar interlocutors, where the pronoun signals politeness expressed on the part of the speaker rather than indexing the social rank or position of the addressee" (Domonkosi, 2010: 39).

14) Domonkosi (2010: 37) observes that the T-form also signals "intimacy together with respect and difference in rank" when combined with an honorary kinship term, title or honorific expression. Whether this is suggestive of a vertical distance function is unclear; conceivably, the difference in rank is expressed by the nominal address form rather than



reflected, e.g., in the fact that among persons under 18, use of V-forms is now virtually extinct.

In much the same way as *te* is expanding its domain of use, that of the V-pronoun *maga* is shrinking. That *maga* is being devaluated is suggested by the fact that 59.4 % of Domonkosi's informants pointed out the negative and offensive role that *maga* plays, among informants under 35 it was even 81.3 %. The decline and devaluation of *maga* does not appear to have reached some rural areas, where *maga*, rather than *ön*, is still the only accepted V-pronoun.

Thus, there clearly is a correlation between the expansion of *te* and the recession of *maga*. The evidence available suggests that this process is not due to a push-chain effect of *te*. This evidence is based on the development of the V-pronoun *ön*. *Ön* is also affected by the decline of *maga*: The younger the age group, the more is *ön* expanding at the expense of *maga*. Thus, rather than to the extension of *te*, the decline of *maga* appears to be due to factors that are internal to the sociolinguistic value attributed to this pronoun. Like the extension of *te*, that of *ön* appears to proceed along the axis of horizontal distance, rather than that of vertical distance (Domonkosi, 2010: 39).

The development of the pronoun *maga* thus can be described as a kind of devaluation: At least in urban contexts, *maga* is losing its status as a polite V-form. And devaluation appears to be proceeding towards its extreme endpoint, in that *maga* increasingly turns into a marker of derogatory address.

#### 4. Discussion

In the preceding section we discussed a number of different cases of devaluation, sometimes resulting in 'pejoration'. Arguably the most conspicuous examples have been reported from Japanese. This language used to have an open class of nominal expressions used for second person address, and all of them appear to have had the same fate: Originally reserved for hearers of high rank, they underwent devaluation, first turning into stylistically neutral forms and eventually acquiring a pejorative function (Tanaka, 2009: 65; Song, 2011).

In addition to context manipulation it may also be increased frequency of

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the T-pronoun.

use that can contribute to devaluation (cf. Bybee & Hopper, 2001).<sup>15</sup> The extent to which these two factors are jointly involved in devaluation is an issue that requires much further research.

The mechanism discussed in this paper had various implications for the structure of languages concerned: It can be held responsible for the emergence of new grammatical forms and constructions and for the fact that existing categories and systems of personal deixis were redefined. But another implication was that in a number of cases it led to polysemous coding, in that the expression concerned now simultaneously serves both its old and its new function: With the application of the plurification strategy (3a), for example, French *vous* has become ambiguous between a second person plural function and a polite second person singular function (Section 3.1.), and the extension of the German pronoun *sie* ('they') from plural to polite singular V-pronoun (*Sie* 'you') resulted in a situation of stable ambiguity in spoken German (Section 3.2.). In Korean, ambiguity is perhaps even more dramatic in that, as a result of context extension, there is now a set of pronominal expressions that are used in much the same way for the expression of reflexivity and of personal deixis (Section 3.3.).

Ambiguity can be resolved when speakers introduce a new expression for the old function.<sup>16</sup> In some languages where plurification was used as a strategy this has been achieved by adding a plural marker to the old form. One example is provided by Basque in southwestern France. At an earlier stage in its history, Basque had *hi* as a second person singular pronoun and *zu* for second person plural. Presumably under Romance (Spanish and/or French) influence, *zu* was extended to uses as a formal/polite V-form for singular address. The pronoun *zu* thus was ambiguous, and speakers subsequently formed a new plural pronoun *zu-ek* by adding the plural marker *-ek* (Haase, 1992: 134).

The Dravidian language Tamil provides a similar example. There was a second person singular pronoun *nii*, with plural *niiṛ*. The latter became used as an

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15) For example, Keller suggests: "When the frequency of a polite expression increases, because of the intention to avoid impoliteness, it loses its markedness and thus its ability to express particular politeness. This is a well-known phenomenon of semantic inflation which occurs again and again in many languages (Keller, 1997: 16).

16) What exactly motivates the introduction of new expressions is an issue that could not be discussed in the paper due to lack of appropriate data.

honorific, and a second plural form was added, thereby restoring the old singular vs. plural distinction. In a second plurification cycle, the new plural pronoun *niirkal* also became an honorific, and *niir* appears to have undergone devaluation: It “fell out of frequent usage as being second-best on the politeness scale” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 200).

We were confronted with two contrasting kinds of change in the patterns of pronominal address: The situation of modern Hungarian, as sketched in Section 3.4., differs in most respects from those discussed in the Sections 3.1. - 3.3. One is tempted to hypothesize that the differences are due to the particular socio-political environments concerned, but testing this hypothesis is beyond the scope of this paper, which is restricted to linguistic analysis. Differences concern most of all context extension, which was determined primarily by vertical distance in earlier Europe and Korea. In Hungary, by contrast, context manipulation of both the T-pronoun *te* and the V-pronoun *ön* is restricted to the horizontal distance scale. As we noted in Section 3.4., there is also a kind of devaluation going on in Hungarian, involving the V-pronoun *maga*. But the trigger of change here does not appear to be context extension but rather its opposite, namely context reduction.

Finally, we proposed an evolutionary scale in (4) according to which there is some directionality in the diachronic evolution of personal pronouns, starting with indirect personal reference as a strategy and leading via context manipulation to devaluation. While not all the data presented were in support of a unidirectionality hypothesis, there was also no evidence that would clearly contradict this hypothesis.

Nevertheless, such evidence does exist. There is at least one case which suggests that an expression that had earlier undergone devaluation can subsequently experience social ‘revaluation’. In Section 3.1. we looked at the German pronoun *ir*, which was originally a second person plural pronoun (‘you, plural’) and after the 9th century was extended to usage as an honorific V-form for singular address. As from the 16th century, *ir* underwent massive devaluation, but around 1800 there was a development in the opposite direction: *ir* acquired uses as an address form of higher social status.

This process of ‘revaluation’ was presumably a product of language contact and the special socio-cultural situation of Germany at that time (Simon, 2003:

121). Around 1800, French was the language of higher culture and education, widely spoken in the upper classes of Germany. Like German *ir*, its French counterpart *vous* also served both as a second person plural pronoun and as a singular V-form, but unlike *ir*, French *vous* had not undergone devaluation. It is therefore conceivable that French *vous* provided an analogical model for a temporary 'revaluation' of German *ir*, thereby creating a situation of translational equivalence between the two languages (Heine & Kuteva, 2005: 222-5).<sup>17)</sup>

Irrespective of whether this case can be attributed to specific socio-cultural circumstances, revaluation appears to be a rare phenomenon and, as we argue in this paper, the scale in (4) represents cross-linguistically a robust tendency of grammatical change. At the same time, the discussions in the preceding sections show that each of the three factors figuring in this scale is largely independent of the other factors: indirect personal reference need not lead to grammaticalized context manipulation, and devaluation may also be due to forces other than context manipulation.

## 5. Conclusions

Based on a cross-linguistic survey, the present paper has shown that personal deixis, which is widely held to belong to the most conservative domains of grammar, is actually a highly dynamic part of language structure once it is looked at from a diachronic perspective of speaker-hearer interaction. The main factor responsible for this dynamics can be seen in the goal of interlocutors to find optimal ways of saying what is both socially appropriate and most advantageous for them in a given sociolinguistic context.

We were confronted with sociolinguistic situations and historical processes in different parts of the world involving contrasting patterns of language use. Nevertheless, our comparative survey suggests that motivations and the rhetorical strategies employed by speakers are similar across the languages examined. Similarities concern most of all the notions of indirect personal reference and devaluation, whose effects can be observed in a similar form irrespective of whether one is confronted with societies and languages in Europe or in eastern Asia.

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17) Concerning the notion 'translational equivalence', see Heine (2013).

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