

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Research

Language is a verbal tool for communication. Language is commonly defined by Djardjowidjojo (2008, p. 10) as *"a system of arbitrary sound symbols"* that is *"used by a group of community members to interact and identify something."* Each language symbol, whether word, phrase, clause, sentence, or discourse, has a specific meaning that may or may not change over time. Language changes as a result of social change. It has an impact on values in ways that are not fully understood. Language contains social values. Social values, on the other hand, are only equal to linguistic values if society is stable and unchanging. When society begins to change, language changes produce unique effects.

Sociolinguistics is a field of study that studies the interaction between language and social factors, such as social structure, social class, gender, ethnicity, and kinship (Florian Coulmas, 2013). Kinship is one of the social aspects that greatly affects language use and communication patterns in society. It studies how language can vary based on kinship, such as the language used within families, between generations, between husbands and wives, or in wider familial relationships, such as between brothers, cousins, and ancestors. Kinship systems are an interesting field to study. Kinship is a universal concept, as all people have connections with others through blood relations and marriage ties.

However, kinship systems vary between different groups of people. Each relationship can be considered a specific type of predicate.

Kinship is a concept that varies across different cultures and languages. There are differences in terms, hierarchies, and cultural expressions when discussing kinship in English and Korean. Remember that Korean has a more formal speech system and that the use of kinship words can vary depending on the situation and level of familiarity. Furthermore, in describing family relationships, kinship expressions in Korean are frequently more specific.

Kinship in English refers to a society's system of familial relationships and social connections. It includes terms and concepts for describing and identifying family members such as parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, and others. Kinship can be biological (based on blood relationships) or social (created through marriage, adoption, or other cultural practices). Kinship is a fundamental aspect of human society that varies by culture, with different languages using different terminologies and conventions to describe these relationships. It shapes how people relate to and support one another by influencing social roles, responsibilities, and interactions within families and communities.

Kinship is a complex system of familial relationships and social bonds that is deeply rooted in Korean culture. This system includes the terms used to address and identify family members, as well as family customs and rituals. The concept of family is extremely important in Korean society, and specific terms and conventions are used to denote various family relationships. Kinship in

Korea extends beyond blood ties and frequently includes marriage or adoption relationships. It is crucial in shaping social interactions, hierarchies, and obligations within the family and society as a whole.

According to Chony (as cited in Ali Imron 2005), the kinship system is explained not only through marital or family ties but also through blood relations. Furthermore, Chony revealed that the descent group, or lineage and, descent is the main key to the marriage system. The kinship system is a very important part of the social structure, which is a complex network of relationships based on blood or marriage relations. When it comes to blood relationships, it's evident that an individual is recognized as a relative when they share familial ties or connections with another person.

According to Lounsbury (as cited in Leech 1981), kinship terminology can be explained by gender, generation, and lineage. For example, "father" and "uncle" are used for males, while "mother" and "aunt" are used for females, indicating kinship based on gender. Kinship terminology is divided into three groups based on generation: (1) generations above the individual, (2) generations below the individual, and (3) generations parallel to the individual, with "ego" referring to the self. The lineage is divided into two parts: direct lineage (the vertical line in the family tree, such as grandparents) and parallel lineage (the horizontal line, such as uncles and aunts).

In the previous study, many researchers conducted studies on the analysis of kinship terms found in various regions. Munawirul Ahbar (2018) investigates the kinship terms in English and Malay Hamparan Perak to describe the

similarities and differences of kinship terms in English and Malay Hamparan Perak. The differences in kinship terms between English and Malay Hamparan Perak were related to age.

Chuanmao Tian (2018) describes the translation of kinship terms from Chinese into English from the perspective of relevance theory. Chinese terms, reflecting intricate family-centric social structures, proved more complex than English. The study highlighted the evolution of a highly structured system of descriptive kinship terms rooted in China's historical family interactions.

Monisha Sri Kanan et al. (2022) conducted kinship terms in Malay-English Translations: Culture and the Perspective of Equivalence Theory. The research found a higher frequency of functional equivalence in Malay cartoons, reflecting the cultural value of politeness and precise relationship distinctions. The study underlined the importance of considering cultural elements in translation for effective communication.

Inggit Laurenza et al. (2022) try to ethnolinguistically analyze the kinship terminology of two Chinese ethnic communities in Tangerang, namely Cina Benteng and Hakka (Khek). The researchers found that they both shared Sundanese kinship terms. Shared Sundanese terms indicated commonalities in consanguineal and affinal relationships, but differences emerged in terms for paternal and maternal grandparents. Specific terms for fathers and stepmothers were unique to the Khek community.

Nova Rina et al. (2018) analyze the kinship between the Minangkabau language and the Kerinci language of Sungai Penuh. Even though Minangkabau

Tapan Language and Kerinci Full River Language share a common language family, their isolation resulted in the development of distinct dialects. Lexicostatistical calculations demonstrated a significant 92.16% kinship between the two, leading to their classification as dialects within the same language.

This research has similarities with previous studies, but it still has differences and gaps from the previous studies. In the previous studies, the researchers used a movie, animation, book, conducting interviews with native speakers, or directing research to the area under study through observation as the object of the research. Besides, the previous studies were just focused on the differences in terminology and meanings between languages. So, I want to distinguish how kinship terms reflect cultural values and also the differences that occur because of gender in linguistic aspects.

This research explains how kinship terms work and what cultural meanings they have. To investigate this phenomenon, I examine the various types of kinship terms in English and Korean. For example, the Korean language recognizes different terms for older brother and sister; *hyeong* (*big brother if you are a boy*), *oppa* (*big brother if you are a girl*), *nuna* (*big sister if you are a boy*), and *eonni* (*big sister if you are a girl*). This motivated me to conduct research on the differences in kinship terms between English and Korean.

## 1.2 Limitation of the Problem

Based on Lounsbury's theory, the researcher intends to concentrate on exploring three aspects: (1) generations above the individual, (2) generations below the individual, and (3) generations parallel to the individual. The lineage can be categorized into two segments: the direct lineage (representing the vertical line in the family tree, like grandparents) and the collateral lineage (representing the horizontal line, such as uncles and aunts), which are related to the use of English and Korean kinship terms.

In this study, kinship terminology is restricted to the nuclear family unit, excluding extended family relationships. Within this narrow context, kinship terminology is primarily concerned with describing familial relationships that are directly related to the nuclear family structure. As a result, the research focuses on terms referring to immediate family members such as grandparents, parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, and cousins.

## 1.3 Research Questions

Based on the research background, the researcher tries to find the answer to the following questions:

- What are the similarities and differences between kinship terms in English and Korean?
- Are there any similarities in kinship terms based on gender, age, and generation?
- How do kinship terms reflect cultural values?

#### 1.4 Objective of the Research

The objectives of the research are as follows:

- To find the similarities and differences between kinship terms in English and Korean.
- To identify the types of kinship terms based on gender, age, and generation.
- To know how the kinship terms reflect cultural values.

