2016 Research Enhancement Grant Application (Division of Arts and Humanities)

Title: The Sound and Grammar of Jeju Korean
Name: Seongyeon Ko
E-mail: Seongyeon.Ko@qc.cuny.edu
Department: Classical, Middle Eastern, and Asian Languages & Cultures

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project aims to collect data of Jeju, an endangered Koreanic language to be used to produce an illustration of its sound structure and further develop a larger project to eventually publish a comprehensive grammar of the language.

Jeju Korean

Jeju Korean is a regional variety of Korean, spoken mainly on Jeju Island by approximately 5,000 to 10,000 fluent speakers as well as in the Osaka area in Japan by some diasporic Jeju speakers. Traditionally considered a regional dialect of Korean, it is almost unintelligible with other “mainland” varieties of Korean and, therefore, is often treated as a separate language nowadays. In 2010, UNESCO designated it as one of the world’s “critically endangered languages” based on the fact that the Jeju language was spoken largely by elderly speakers in their 70s or older primarily in informal settings and rapidly falling out of use under the influence of Standard Korean. In fact, younger speakers speak a kind of “mixed” language of the Standard Korean and the Jeju Korean. Born and raised in Jeju Island before my college education, I was one of those younger speakers of the “mixed” language. And this is one of the major reasons that I became a linguist who have felt obliged to conduct research on this particular vernacular.

Jeju Korean has been of much interest to both historical/comparative linguist group and general linguist group. First, it maintains various archaic properties of Middle Korean or earlier stage. For example, it retains the modern equivalent of Middle Korean vowel /ʌ/ in its vowel inventory. Lost in all other dialects, this vowel has been viewed as the “missing link” to the Middle Korean vowel harmony phenomenon. Along with this archaic vowel, Jeju Korean retains many obsolete vocabulary items that are no longer used in other Korean varieties. What is more intriguing about Jeju is that it displays a highly unique morphological system such as a whole different paradigm of verbal endings from that of mainland Korean dialects. Delving into these archaic and peculiar aspects of Jeju Korean may reveal clues to the long-debated genealogical or typological connection between Korean and other neighboring “Altaic” languages in the vast Northeast Asian region.

Jeju Korean shows some interesting characteristics from a general linguistic point of view as well. It has a unique phonological phenomenon, the so-called “consonant copy”, in which a morpheme-final consonant is copied and placed in the initial position of the following syllable. This phenomenon has
drawn much attention from general phonologists. However, their analyses are all drawn on a very limited set of data published in a few articles written by the same author. This situation calls for a full scale fieldwork investigation of the phenomenon, across regions, generations, and individuals, as well as with more fine-tuned linguistic settings on the copying and non-copying environments. Another interesting aspect of Jeju is that adjectives can be marked with a progressive ending, which is impossible in mainland varieties.

The local community and scholars of Jeju Korean are making various efforts to document and revive the language, which includes the publication of dictionaries, descriptive grammars, and research articles. However, these are all written in Korean and, as a result, are, not very accessible to historical/comparative and general linguists outside of Korea. There are almost no descriptions of the sound and grammar structure of Jeju written in English. The only grammatical sketch written in English can be found in Jieun Kiaer’s (University of Oxford) book *Jeju Language and Tales from the Edge of the Korean Peninsula*, but it is far from accurate and complete from my native speaker’s point of view.

**Work Plan**

If selected, I will visit Korea, both Seoul and Jeju, in August 2016. First, I will visit Seoul National University to meet the two most renowned Jeju Korean experts: Prof. Seungcheol Jeong (historical phonology) and Sook-Young Moon (grammar) in the prestigious Department of Korean Language and Linguistics for consultation and to collect published and unpublished language and linguistic materials of Jeju. After this, I will go to Jeju Island, meet with a local expert Prof. Yeongbong Kang at Jeju National University, and collect written and spoken data as well as audio and video materials with the help of Prof. Kang. This will include fieldwork research with local fluent speakers in rural areas for at least three full days. After returning to the U.S. I will perform a phonetic and phonological analysis of the sound structure of the language in the fall of the same year.

**Expected Outcomes**

The direct outcome of this project will be a description of the sound structure of Jeju. In particular, I aim to publish an IPA illustration of Jeju, a short article in the Journal of the International Phonetic Association (JIPA) that will describe the consonants, vowels, prosodic features, and some notable phonological phenomena.

Using the language materials and published articles and grammars I collect from Seoul and Jeju, I will also start to write a concise grammar of Jeju, aiming at publishing it in LINCOM EUROPA’s *Languages of the World / Materials* series. At the same time, I will write proposals to external funding sources such as ELDP (Endangered Languages Documentation Programme, administered by SOAS, University of London, UK), NEH-NSF Documenting Endangered Languages Fellowships, and the Academy of Korean Studies for more extensive fieldwork studies and, as a result, a comprehensive grammar of Jeju in the following years.
## BUDGET AND JUSTIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>Budget Item</th>
<th>Amount (Whole Dollars)</th>
<th>Brief Justification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>Air fare (round trip): JFK ↔ Incheon (Seoul) &amp; Seoul ↔ Jeju</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Honorarium</td>
<td>$700</td>
<td>Gift cards for experts (4 people X $50) and language consultants (Max. 5 people X $100 for 4 to 5 hours consultation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Accommodation</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>I will stay for 3 nights at Hoam Guest House of Seoul National University to use the library and meet two professors/experts on Jeju Korean. (Standard room rate: 104,500 KRW/night) When I am in Jeju Island, I will stay at my parents’ house with no expense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Meals and other incidentals</td>
<td>$280</td>
<td>Meals and other incidentals for 10 days (4 days in Seoul and 6 days in Jeju): 28 meals total X $15/meal = $280 (Cf. The official per diem rate is $115 per day.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Purchase of books and published materials</td>
<td>$300</td>
<td>Dictionaries, grammars, other published Jeju language materials</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 6        | Supplies and Equipment             | $300                   | • Portable scanner with autofeed dock ($100)  
• Photocopies of unscannable materials ($100)  
• External hard drive (SSD, 250GB) with cover ($100)                                                                                     |
| 7        | Supplies and Equipment             | $800                   | • Marantz Professional PMD661MKII ($500)  
• A high-end unidirectional condenser microphone + pop filter + portable stand/tripod ($300)  
• Alternatively, I may be able to rent the recording equipment from, e.g., Seoul National University, although this would not be ideal. |
|          | Total                              | $4,680                 |                                                                                                                                                  |
APPENDIX D: Curriculum Vitae

Dr. Seongyeon Ko

ACADEMIC POSITION
2012-present  Assistant Professor of Korean, CMAL, Queens College, CUNY

EDUCATION
2012  Ph.D. in Linguistics, Cornell University
2002  M.A. in Linguistics, Seoul National University, Seoul, Korea
2000  B.A. in Linguistics, Seoul National University; Seoul, Korea

PUBLICATIONS

Books

Chapters in Edited Volumes
2014  Huh Woong sensaynguy cwungsey kwuge umwun yenkwuwa hyenday enehak [Professor Huh Woong’s phonological research on Middle Korean and contemporary linguistics]. In *Huh Woong sensayng hakmuwun saylopkey ilki [New interpretations of Professor Huh Woong’s scholarship]*. 259-303. [In Korean]

Refereed Journal Papers
2012  (with Hijo Kang) In search of the acoustic correlates of tongue root retraction in three Altaic languages: Western Buriat, Tsongol Buriat, and Ewen. *Altai Hakpo* 22. Altaic
Society of Korea. 179-203.


2010 Cwungseykwuke moumchevyeyuyu taylip wikyeywa ku pyenhwa [Contrastive hierarchy and its change in the Middle Korean vowel system]. Eoneohag (Linguistics) 56. Linguistic Society of Korea. 87-118. [In Korean]

Refereed Conference Proceedings


FELLOWSHIPS


RESEARCH & INSTITUTIONAL GRANTS

2016 (With Mari Fujimoto and Xiao Li) “CMAL Initiative: Hybridizing East Asian Language Courses”

2015 Korea Foundation grant for the establishment of Korean literature professorship at Queens College ($146,063) [2016-2019]

2015 PSC-CUNY research award (Traditional A: $3,500): “The Phonetics and Phonology of Korean: Data, References, and Indexes”

2014 PSC-CUNY research award (Traditional A: $3,500): “Materials of Nanai - a severely endangered Tungusic language”

2013 Start-up research grant for a second-year faculty ($3,000), Queens College

2012 Start-up research grant for a first-year faculty ($5,000), Queens College