

# Jejueo / 제주어

September 21, 2016

# Review

- The typical English and Korean terms for varieties do not neatly match up. These differences are important to remember when discussing variation in Korean.
- The Korean terms for variation carry certain connotations:
  - **Saturi** almost necessarily implies “non-standard”.
  - **Bangeon** is a bit more neutral, and suggests a more academic(?) distinction.
  - **Mal** seems to be a more generic term used when saturi and bangeon are not appropriate. It also suggests greater legitimacy.
- The issue of **intelligibility** seems to be less relevant for Korean dialectal distinctions, but it may play into the choice between saturi and bangeon.

# Dialect vs. Language

- Although the terms for varieties (or dialects) vary across languages, there is always a distinction made between **dialect** and **language**.
- The usage of these terms is a topic of great public interest, perhaps partly because people think a clear distinction exists.
- To be called a “language” implies both legitimacy and separateness, which is why the usage of these terms carries such strong political connotations.

# Popular distinctions

- “Chinese”: There are dozens of varieties of Chinese spoken in China, many of which are **mutually unintelligible**.
  - Some well-known examples are Cantonese (광동어/廣東話), Hokkien (복건어/福建話), and Hakka (객가어/客家話).
  - They use the same writing system in China, but it’s not possible to write all of these dialects in Chinese anyway. The choice of a writing system is, after all, partly a political decision.
  - These dialects do not all descend from a single, common ancestor, either. It is well known that the area of southern China in which these dialects are spoken was originally populated by non-Chinese people who spoke unrelated (Tai) languages.
  - However, these dialects are all spoken in land currently controlled by the PRC, which is concerned with maintaining national unity. Hence they are “dialects”, not “languages”.

# Popular distinctions

- Malay vs. Indonesian: These are essentially the same language. The Dutch colonizers of Indonesia chose to implement Malay as the administrative language, since it was already used by traders, even though it was not native to most of Indonesia.
- Thai vs. Laotian: These are genetically related languages, and are mutually intelligible, although they use different alphabets, and are official languages of different countries.
- Hindi vs. Urdu: These are also essentially the same language, but one is spoken in India and the other in Pakistan. They have different writing systems.

# What is “Jejueo”?

- The variety of Korean spoken on Jeju island.
- Jeju + eo (제주 + 어) = Jeju language

# Language loss

- O'Grady (2015) is concerned with the loss of Jejueo.
- When a language is lost, part of the culture is lost too.
- Currently 6000-7000 languages in the world
  - How many can you think of?
  - About 55% have less than 10,000 native speakers ([Ethnologue](#)).
  - Only one country in the world that speaks a single language – Any idea which one?
- Language **extinction** – when a language is no longer spoken
  - Half of the world's languages may become extinct by 2100.

# Degrees of endangerment (UNESCO)

- **Safe**: The language is spoken by all generations.
- **Vulnerable**: Most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain domains (e.g. home).
- **Definitely endangered**: Children no longer learn the language as a native language at home.
- **Severely endangered**: Grandparents speak the language; parents understand it but do not speak it to children or among themselves.
- **Critically endangered**: Only grandparents speak the language, and even they are only partial speakers.
- **Extinct**: Nobody speaks the language.



# Jejueo's current status

- Jejueo probably qualifies as “critically endangered”.
- 5,000-10,000 fluent speakers (out of 600,000 residents)
- O’Grady argues that the Korean government is obligated to protect Jejueo from extinction.
- 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage
  - Includes language
  - 119 cultural manifestations from Korea
  - The Korean government included 4 from Jeju, but Jejueo is not one of them.

# Is Jejueo even a language? Or a dialect?

- Linguists do not care much about the distinction between “dialect” and “language”, since we recognize that it is primarily political. But, if we have to make a distinction, we generally use the criterion of **mutual intelligibility**.
- O’Grady (2015) tested the intelligibility of Jejueo to listeners of other varieties of Korean.
  - 10 native speakers from Seoul, South Jeolla, South Gyeongsang, and Jeju
  - All between age 49 and 64

# The experiment

- Two fluent, native speakers of Jejueo watched and narrated the [Pear Story](#), a silent movie with no dialogue.
- Dialogues were cleaned up and combined into a single script, read by a different fluent, native speaker of Jejueo.
- Five segments from the beginning of the story were played individually for the listeners.
- After hearing each segment, the listeners were asked a simple comprehension question and scored for accuracy.

# Results

Jeju	Seoul	Jeolla	Gyeongsang
89.2%	12.0%	6.0%	5.3%

- Summary: Jejueo is indeed unintelligible to speakers from other regions.
- How is this evidence that Jejueo is a “language”?
- Do you think Jejueo is a language, or a dialect of Korean?
- Do you think Jejueo is worth saving? Why or why not?

# Homework

- Your course project group (but not topic) must be finalized by next Thursday, 9/28.
- You may get a head start on Meyerhoff Ch. 4.