

Korean by Ho-min Sohn. London and New York: Routledge, 1994. xvii, 584 pp. Descriptive Grammars.

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Korean is a descriptive grammar book for language teachers, students, and scholars of Korean linguistics. Since *Korean* is a comprehensive reference book which provides a broad and detailed description of the structure of the language in a theory-neutral manner, it is useful to Korean linguists of any theoretical orientation, while still extremely accessible to students studying the language beyond the elementary level.

Korean is one of a series of *Descriptive Grammars* edited by Bernard Comrie, and follows the basic framework of the *Questionnaire*¹ designed by Comrie and Smith (1977) as a detailed guide for cross-linguistic analyses. Thus, all of the descriptive grammars of the series (e.g., Gulf Arabic, Finnish, Tamil, Japanese) have identical or near identical chapter headings, sub-headings, and sub-sub-headings. Chapter headings are arranged in the following order: Chapter 1, Syntax; Chapter 2, Morphology; Chapter 3, Phonology; Chapter 4, Ideophones and Interjections; and Chapter 5, Lexicon. Given that the framework was set up for linguists to compare languages, I would also like to review this book by comparing it with another in the series, *Japanese* by John Hinds (1986). I chose these two books since both languages are hypothesized to belong to the Altaic language family as pointed out by both H. Sohn (1994, p. 1) and Hinds (1986, p. v). Students or scholars interested in both languages could use these two books as a departure point for comparative studies in almost any area of linguistics, from tense and aspect studies to interjections and socio-linguistics.

Korean was published in 1994, eight years following the publication of *Japanese*, and, therefore includes developments in terms of the series format (cf. Martin, 1988). In the more recent *Korean*, an editorial statement is provided by Comrie which summarizes the purpose and background of the *Descriptive Language Series*. Also, H. Sohn has added a very useful index and the table of contents seems to be more detailed than that of *Japanese*, so that now particular linguistic topics are more readily searchable. Perhaps the addition of an index of Korean expressions and constructions would make this an even more useful reference book, since there is no way to locate specific grammatical forms in Korean. For example, if one were searching for the possible sentence structures or contexts in which *ci(yo)* (an interactional particle) is used, one would virtually have to guess under which sub-section it would appear and begin the search from

there.

Chapters 1 and 2 contain the two main areas of focus, comprising a full two thirds of the book. One of the interesting points in Chapter 1 is the discussion of the phenomenon of "(*ko*) *ha* deletion," under "Direct speech and quoted speech." It would be helpful if there were some additional discussion about the motivations behind this deletion, such as whether it is socio-culturally conditioned. Current views on this phenomenon seem to vary somewhat. S. Sohn (1994) analyzes the deletion of the verb *ha* at sentence final position indicating that its omission brings about a new meaning, subjectification (cf. Traugott, 1989), suggesting that the quotative marker *ko* without *ha* is 'highly charged with the speaker's affect or a way to increase the strength of the speaker's assertion (i.e., 'reinforcement'). According to S. Sohn, the deletion of the reporting verb *ha* at sentence final position creates a new grammatical category, i.e., sentence-final particle. H. Sohn points out that the deletion of *ha* acts as a softening mechanism.

The nature of emphasis is also discussed in Chapter 1. In comparing both *Japanese* and *Korean*, it is noted that emphasis is achieved by means of the following strategies: 1) repetition, 2) the addition of a variety of "uptoners" (Sohn, 1994, p. 180), such as particles, auxiliaries (e.g., *-te shimau* for Japanese or *-al-e pelita* for Korean, both of which can serve as intensifiers of main verbs), or adverbs (e.g., *zenzen* (J) or *cenhye* (K) 'not at all'), or 3) the use of suprasegmental devices, such as changes in voice quality, vowel lengthening, etc. Under the same section, *Korean* points out that the notions of 'new' or 'given' information are often significant in affording topic prominence (p. 182), which is also operative in Japanese, but not mentioned in this section in Hinds (1986).

Chapter 2, Morphology, is the second main focus of this book. This chapter deals with inflectional and derivational morphology. Under inflection, verb morphology such as tense, aspect, and mood are examined. As noted in both *Korean* and *Japanese*, both languages have a verbal suffix slot which is relevant to both tense and aspect. When this slot is filled with the past tense suffix, *-ess* for Korean and *-ta* for Japanese, it typically expresses simple past or present perfect aspect. When the slot has a ZERO marking in Korean or *-ru* in Japanese, it expresses non-past. What is interesting is that in the case of Korean, this slot may be filled with two past tense suffixes (i.e., *-ess-ess*) to denote the pluperfect. In Japanese, the pluperfect is formed by the combination of such features as the main verb plus verbal gerundive *-te* plus the completive auxiliary *shimau* plus auxiliary verb *iru* as in *moo tabete shimatte ita*, 'I had already eaten,' but never by a double past marking, as in Korean.

In the aspect section, one could find more possibilities for comparative studies such as the various grammatical devices for expressing progressive aspect: In Korean, it is expressed by the construction *-ko issta* ('main verb plus *ko* 'a conjunctive suffix'² plus the existential verb *issta*), and in Japanese, by *-te iru* (main verb plus *-te*, the verbal gerund marker, plus the existential verb *iru*).

Japanese *-te iru*, however, can also be used to express resultative aspect, while Korean uses a slightly different device (i. e., an intransitive V + *-al-e* 'a combining form suffix'³ plus *issta.*). Facts such as these provide evidence that the semantic or aspectual scope of particular grammatical forms is not identical in Korean and Japanese. As Shibatani (1994) points out, "differences like these may offer clearer insights on those aspects of [a] phenomenon that may not be directly observable in single-language studies (p. 42)."

In the mood section, H. Sohn's *Korean* is much more comprehensive than Hinds' *Japanese*. For example, H. Sohn lists eight expressions in the section "Degree of Certainty," compared to the two expressions listed in the same section in *Japanese*. Also one more Korean evidential expression *moyang i-ta* 'it seems' could be added to this list as it is similar to the expression *kes kath-ta*.⁴

It can be seen from just the few examples presented thus far that although many of the grammatical categories and functions of particular constructions are parallel and described in more or less the same manner for each language, what the author of each has chosen to highlight as significant seems to differ according to the individual author's perspectives.

In Chapter 3, Phonology, H. Sohn provides an elaborately detailed discussion of the phonological system in Korean. By virtue of the depth of the discussion and the range of topics covered, this section will be useful not only for students and scholars of the Korean language, but also for general specialists in phonology. Since the Korean phonological system is much more complex than that of Japanese, this section is far more comprehensive than the chapter in *Japanese*.

H. Sohn's treatment of ideophones in Chapter 4, "Ideophones and Interjections" is revealing and will be particularly helpful to non-native speakers who are unfamiliar with this type of sound symbolism. In fact, this section makes for fascinating reading for language specialists and non-specialists alike. As noted by H. Sohn, Korean is rich in this type of expression, having some 4,000 linguistic items which express some type of sound symbolism. These are categorized into three basic kinds: those which imitate sounds occurring in nature (e.g., *meng meng* 'bow wow'), those which express a physical quality of the external world (e.g., *ccintuk-ccintuk* 'gluey, sticky'), and those which express internal states or feelings (e.g., *maysuk-maysuk* 'nauseated'), although, according to H. Sohn, the last two tend to be grouped together, perhaps since they are not sounds imitating sounds but rather sounds expressing qualities of other senses or feelings. Examples of Japanese counterparts to this phenomenon would include expressions such as *hin hin* 'neigh of a horse' and *mukamuka* 'feeling nauseated.' The number of these expressions provided in *Japanese* is about one half the number in *Korean*.

This striking difference in the number of entries between the two books is also evident in the next section, "Interjections," with the Korean entries numbering approximately 140 in contrast with the 30 in *Japanese*. For the

latter, the entire list is provided (pp. 522-526) alphabetically, from *aa* (exclamation used when something goes wrong) to *yey* (used for calling a child), the definitions of which are provided in Martin et al. (1967). Since this is a long and comprehensive list, a few of the entries could be considered as somewhat archaic in modern day usage, and others have a more restricted usage than noted by the Martin et al. definition. For example, *ye-po-si-p-si-o* is no longer used as the expression when answering the phone (i.e., 'hello'), having been replaced by *ye-po-sey-yo* and *eme*, which is not listed, rather than *ema*, is used to show one's surprise or fright. Also, this is used only by females, rather than 'usually by females' as noted in the parentheses next to the entry *ema* (p. 524). Since interjections can be social indexes, it would seem that a more up-to-date set of definitions might be helpful here.

Korean is a long-awaited comprehensive grammar book which treats all of the major aspects of Korean grammar in depth, from syntax and morphology, to phonology and sound symbolism, using perspectives of grammar as well as sociolinguistics to illustrate these constructions. H. Sohn has produced an excellent reference text which will prove useful to a large audience of language teachers, students, and linguists. It will also be delightful reading to the non-specialist whose interest in language in general may be still at the level of curiosity.

NOTES

- 1 The entire *Questionnaire* originally appeared as *Lingua*, vol. 42 (1977), no. 1.
- 2 See Lukoff (1982).
- 3 Also from Lukoff (1982)
- 4 See Kawanishi (1991).

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