

## THE HISTORY OF THE STUDY OF KOREAN DIALECTS

Toshturdiyeva Shokhista

Uzbekistan State World Languages University

Korean Philology

shoxistatoshturdiyeva@gmail.com

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20399200>

**Abstract:** This study examines when the investigation of Korean dialects began, identifies the early historical texts in which information about dialects appears, and analyzes the major domains through which dialects have been systematically studied. Particular attention is given to the classification of dialectology into its principal research areas and the development of methodological approaches within the field.

**Keywords:** dialect; dialectology; synchronic; diachronic; print publications; electronic publications

Korean regional dialects have been formed over long historical periods and have preserved their distinctive phonetic, grammatical, and lexical features up to the present day. In studying their historical development, it is essential to rely not only on spoken language data but also on written sources, particularly examples from 15th-century Korean writing and literature.

• Texts from the Old Joseon and Goguryeo periods:

황조가 (Hwangjoga, “Song of the Yellow Birds”)

翩翩黃鳥 펄펄 나는 저 꾀꼬리

雌雄相依 암수 서로 정답구나

念我之獨 외 로울사 이내 몸은

誰其與歸 누와 함께 돌아갈꼬<sup>1</sup>

This poem was composed by King Yuri of the Goguryeo Kingdom, who wrote it while longing for his wife, and it is dated to 17 BCE. If we focus on the word “누” in the fourth line, it is considered a dialectal form associated with the Jeolla region, meaning “you”<sup>2</sup>. Although this poem was later transcribed from Chinese characters into Korean, the question remains as to why it was rendered specifically in the Jeolla dialect.

훈민정음 해례본 (1446). This work provides a detailed explanation of the newly created Korean writing system, Hangeul, including its letters and their pronunciation. In this work, explanatory notes are provided regarding the pronunciation of certain sounds. Through these explanations, it is possible to obtain information about regional differences in pronunciation, that is, about dialectal variation. For example, concerning the vowel 아 (a), it is stated: “이 글자는 입을 크게 벌리고 소리내며, 서울 사람들은 이를 ‘아’라고 발음한다” (“This letter is pronounced with the mouth opened wide, and the people of Seoul pronounce it as ‘a’”). This description provides information on how the vowel /a/ is articulated by speakers in Seoul, implying that its pronunciation may differ in other regions. Similarly, for the vowel 어 (eo), the text explains: “이 글자는 입을 조금 벌리고 소리내며, 경상도 사람들은 이를 ‘어’라고 발음한다” (“This letter is pronounced with the mouth slightly open, and the people of Gyeongsang-

<sup>1</sup> <https://namu.wiki/w>

<sup>2</sup> <https://wordrow.kr/amp/>



do pronounce it as ‘eo’”). This explanation offers insight into how the vowel ‘eo’ is realized by speakers in Gyeongsang-do (the southeastern region of Korea)<sup>3</sup>.

These observations suggest that certain dialects have preserved elements of the ancient phonetic system of the Korean language in a continuous manner up to the present day, whereas in the standard language these sounds have undergone systematic normalization over the past centuries. From this perspective, Korean dialects can be regarded not only as regional variants of the contemporary language system but also as forms of historical-linguistic memory.

In the article entitled “The History of the Dialect Sourcebook Publication in Korea” by 정승철, the development of dialect material compilations in Korea is systematically outlined in a chronological framework. First, based on the mode of publication, the history of Korean dialect sourcebooks is divided into two major periods: the print publication period (until 2000) and the electronic publication period (after 2000). Furthermore, considering the objectives and significance of the compiled dialect materials, the print publication period is subdivided into three stages, with reference to the 1960s and the late 1980s:

#### 1. Print publication period (until 2000):

- a) The stage of collecting and organizing dialect forms as auxiliary materials for research on the history of the Korean language (until the 1960s);
- b) The stage of collecting and organizing dialect forms as materials for the study of individual dialects and the history of the Korean language (1960s to the mid-1980s);
- c) The stage of collecting and organizing dialect forms as materials for theories of dialect differentiation and for the study of individual dialects (late 1980s to the 1990s).

#### 2. Electronic publication period (after the 2000s):

In summary, it can be observed that prior to 2000, dialect material compilations were largely structured in accordance with the research directions of Korean dialectology. However, after 2000, these compilations were published with considerably less direct connection to such specific research orientations<sup>4</sup>.

If we begin the study of modern Korean dialects with the work of the renowned Japanese linguist Ogura Shinpei (오구라 신페이, 1913), it becomes evident that scholarly research on this topic has a history of more than a century. In the early stages, Japanese scholars conducted traditional dialectological studies based on the historical theories and methodologies of linguistics. These studies attempted to systematically classify Korean dialects according to their geographical distribution and phonological characteristics. As a representative example of this approach, one may cite Ogura Shinpei’s work entitled “제주도 방언 1, 2, 3” (“Jeju Island Dialect 1, 2, 3”). By the 1950s and 1960s, more systematic dialectological research began to emerge. From the 1970s onward, dialect studies were increasingly conducted within the framework of transformational-generative grammar theory and methodology<sup>5</sup>. These later studies, grounded in generative grammar, focused on the syntactic properties of Korean dialects as well as the syntactic differences between standard language norms and regional varieties. In particular, they examined variations in sentence structure and word order across specific dialects. Considering that the study of dialects spans more than a century, it is essential to clarify what aspects have been investigated during this period, which issues remain insufficiently explored, which dimensions of dialectology have been thoroughly studied, and which areas should be prioritized by future researchers. In this regard, Choi Myeong-ok (1998, 2003, 2005) conducted a

<sup>3</sup> <https://namu.wiki/w>

<sup>4</sup> 정승철. 한국 방언자료집 편찬의 역사. 한국방언학회. 2014. 8 쪽.

<sup>5</sup> 강희숙, 한국어 방언 연구의 성과와 전망. 조선대학교 국어국문학과. 2015. 9 쪽.



series of discussions and proposed that dialectology be examined across seven distinct research domains. Choi Myeong-ok did not merely classify dialectology into these domains; he also elaborated on the theoretical foundations, objectives, and methodologies of each field. According to his framework, dialectology should be divided into the following areas:

### 1. Synchronic Dialectology (공시 방언론)

This field examines the state of dialects at a specific point in time.

- **Dialect Geography / Dialect Delimitation (방언구획론):** the theory of identifying and delineating dialect regions. This field focuses on identifying and categorizing dialects used within a particular language by distinguishing them as separate linguistic units based on their regional usage. The main objective is to classify dialects employed in a given research area into independent language units or major dialect groups.
- **Contrastive Dialectology (대비방언론):** the comparative analysis of dialects. This area studies the similarities and differences between two dialects. Its purpose is to analyze the language system by comparing dialects and identifying their common and distinctive features.
- **Contact Dialectology (접촉방언론):** the study of interaction and contact between dialects. This field examines the changes that occur when two dialects come into contact with one another. Its objective is to investigate the emergence of new dialectal features resulting from such interaction and to determine the causes of these changes.
- **Individual Dialect Studies (개별방언론):** the study of specific dialects, including:
  - (**사회방언론**): a sociolinguistic approach to dialects. This field studies dialectal variation influenced by external social factors. Its objective is to analyze dialect differences in relation to social variables such as social class, age, gender, occupation, level of education, and economic status;
  - (**지역방언론**): the study of geographically defined dialects (**공시지역방언론, 통시지역 방언론**). This area focuses on linguistic changes that arise due to internal factors within a language. It aims to analyze dialect classification and to study synchronic (present-day) changes within the language system.

### 2. Diachronic Dialectology (통시 방언론)

This field investigates how dialects change over time.

- **Geographical Dialectology (지리방언론).** This area examines the geographical distribution of linguistic elements and features. It aims to identify phonetic, morphological, and syntactic characteristics that are distributed geographically and to explain their spatial patterns.
- **Comparative Dialectology (비교방언론).** This field involves the comparison of two or more dialect systems in order to study their development and changes. Its objective is to investigate patterns of language change both individually and collectively, and to explain the processes of dialect evolution.
- **Dialect and Culture Studies (방언문화론):** the relationship between dialect and culture<sup>6</sup>. This area focuses on classifying dialects as independent systems shaped by both internal and external factors. Its objective is to classify dialects within a language or across languages and to explain their structural organization and distribution.

#### Foydalanilgan adabiyotlar:

1. 정승철. 한국 방언자료집 편찬의 역사. 한국방언학회. 2014.
2. 강희숙, 한국어 방언 연구의 성과와 전망. 조선대학교 국어국문학과. 2015.

#### Foydalanilgan internet saytlari:

<sup>6</sup> 강희숙, 한국어 방언 연구의 성과와 전망. 조선대학교 국어국문학과. 2015. 11 쪽



1. <https://namu.wiki/w>
2. <https://wordrow.kr/amp>

