

**Politics of language and identity:  
Korean speakers in the peripheries of the national and  
transnational**

Monday, March 26, 2:00-5:00 pm  
Smith Warehouse Bay 4 C105  
Ahmadieh Family Lecture Hall

The ecology of languages has been profoundly impacted by language standardization in modern nation-states, global and regional migration and displacement of people, and the unprecedented dominance and spread of English, resulting in numerous ethnolinguistic groups placed in peril. This symposium presents research concerned with language diversity, language rights and language practices intersecting with political climate and population shifts. The invited talks focus on language revitalization, language contact and change, and identity construction/contestation revolving around Korean.

Speakers:

William O'Grady (Univ. of Hawaii)

"What to do about Jeju? Language and Identity in Contemporary Korea"

Simon Barnes-Sadler (Univ. of London)

"Defining and Distinguishing Transplanted Varieties of Korean: Koryo Mar and Vernacular Yanbian Korean"

Ji-Yeon O. Jo (UNC-CH)

"Shifting Affective Linguascapes: Languages, Nations, and Migration"

Discussant:

Julie Tetel Andresen (Duke University)

Sponsors:

Duke Korea Forum, Asian/Pacific Studies Institute, Dept of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

## Abstracts of the talks

WILLIAM O'GRADY

Professor, Department of Linguistics, University of Hawaii at Manoa

### **“What to do about Jejueo? Language and Identity in Contemporary Korea”**

Recent work has documented the existence of a second indigenous language in the Republic of Korea. Jejueo, spoken for centuries on Jeju Island, is so dramatically different that it cannot be understood by Koreans on the mainland and therefore deserves to be considered an independent language. This turn of events has been met with both confusion and hostility in some quarters, since it challenges a traditional pillar of Korea's sense of national identity—the existence of a single shared language. The time has come for Koreans to confront important questions about diversity, cultural heritage, language policy and minority rights, which are made all the more urgent by the fact that Jejueo is critically endangered and will soon be lost forever if immediate measures are not taken to preserve it.

SIMON BARNES-SADLER

Research Fellow, Department of East Asian Languages and Culture, SOAS, University of London

### **“Defining and Distinguishing Transplanted Varieties of Korean: Koryo Mar and Vernacular Yanbian Korean”**

Korean has been spoken in diaspora by communities currently living in Jilin Province, China and Central Asia since the mid-19th century. This paper summarises the history and current disposition of these communities and the development of their varieties of Korean (VYK and KM, respectively). Historical and linguistic evidence links them to the North East of the Korean peninsula, but despite their common origins they have several synchronic points of linguistic difference. Drawing on interviews with community members, we found that linguistic features previously identified as characteristic of each of these varieties in fact appear variably in both, however, aggregate statistical analyses allow us to distinguish between KM and VYK data and to identify features which are particularly influential in this process. In addition to the emergence of new varieties of Korean in transplanted contexts, this paper touches upon other issues surrounding the globalisation of Korean, such as language contact and language maintenance.

JI-YEON O. JO

Associate Professor, Department of Asian Studies, UNC Chapel Hill

### **“Shifting Affective Linguascapes: Languages, Nations, and Migration”**

Korean as a heritage language influences and is influenced by legacy migrants' (also known as ethnic return migrants) membership status and affective belonging both in the diaspora and in South Korea. In this paper, I trace the politics and policies that have affected the Korean language learning and teaching in the diaspora and incorporate legacy migrants' own narratives about their linguistic experiences in South Korea. Their stories provide an opportunity to illuminate the affective dimension as it relates to the heritage language and challenge us to move beyond proficiency-oriented understandings of language. I scrutinize the affective dimension of language, giving particular attention to the notions of proficiency and authenticity, which often lend certain meaning to and shape legacy migrant relationships with the heritage language during their homing experiences. This paper explores how the meaning and value of languages, especially heritage languages, are interpreted differently by the returnees and by South Korean society.