

S-face

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Understanding Ethnic Koreans, the World, and Japan, through the Korean Language

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Uncovering the Traits of a Living, Breathing Language

Speaking in broad terms, my specialty is sociolinguistics, specifically Korean linguistics and dialectology. There are 2 major approaches to analyzing language: deductive and inductive, but my research is mainly performed using inductive analyses. In other words, I observe how the language is used in daily life situations, and analyze what kinds of situations it is being used in, and by what kinds of people. This allows me to uncover traits of the language. I perform my research in this way because I believe that language cannot be analyzed without seeing how it is used in real situations by real speakers, or without listening to their actual speech.

For example, I have previously recorded the daily conversations of 84 speakers of Japanese and Koreans, and analyzed them using discourse analysis. By performing this analysis, interestingly I discovered that expressions in Japanese which are meant to encourage the opposite party to speak, could be confusing and hard to understand when spoken in Korean. Although in many situations direct translations could be performed between both languages, I realized that when using expressions at an operating level, there were a large number of differences. I think this raises an extremely important question regarding the tendency to focus on the similarities between the 2 languages. As I have continued this research, I have become confident of the importance of considering language at the level that it is actually implemented at.

The Number of People Who Speak Korean as their First Language is Almost the Same as the Number of Italian Speakers Worldwide!

Currently I am performing investigations and research into the use of Korean by ethnic Koreans throughout the world, not just its use within Korea itself.

The term "ethnic Koreans" is a general one used to refer to those who speak Korean as their first language. In addition to the 75 million speakers of Korean in the North and South of the Korean Peninsula, there are also 7.43 million speakers of the language throughout the rest of the world. Besides the Korean Peninsula, the greatest concentration of speakers of Korean is in China, with 1.8 million speakers residing there, centered around 3 provinces in the north east of the country. This is followed by the United States, with 1.7 million speakers, and Japan with 500,000. The remaining 500,000 speakers are scattered throughout Russia, central Asia, and the former Soviet Union (according to statistics as of 2010). In terms of total number of speakers, Korean is ranked between 13th to 15th worldwide, approximately the same as the number of speakers of Italian. Both the Korean language and ethnic Koreans have more of a global presence than we would probably assume.

Ethnic Koreans have spread throughout the globe in repeated waves of migration, all while experiencing colonization, the Korean War, and the division of their nation. It's for this reason that, in order to gain an overall understanding of ethnic Koreans, it is invaluable to have a grasp of how geographically broad the community is.



Collecting Examples of Korean throughout the World to Gain a Deeper Understanding of the Ethnic Koreans

Regardless of whether the news is bad, such as problems in North Korea, or positive, such as the boom in popularity of Korean culture, current issues occurring on the Korean Peninsula are very relevant to the people of Japan.

However, considering that, as Japanese, the people of Korea are our closest neighbors, how much do we really know about them? Both the Korean language and ethnic Koreans have even more of a global presence than we would probably assume.

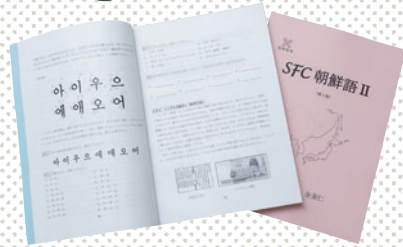
Assistant Professor Takeya Takagi has been performing field work around the world, deepening our understanding of ethnic Koreans through discourse analyses of the Korean language in areas it is spoken.

Fieldwork



Assistant Professor Takeya Takagi performs fieldwork related to investigating dialects. His investigations involve recording natural conversations between 2 speakers of the dialect in question. In order to create a state of mind in the subjects that is as close as possible to an everyday situation, particular attention is paid to the atmosphere when recording.

Original Texts



Authored 2 original text books: "SFC Chosengo I/II" (Written by Takeya Takagi and Taein Kim), which are being used for Korean language courses at Shonan Fujisawa Campus (SFC). By mastering these 2 books, learners should be proficient enough in Korean to pass level 3 of the Korean Language Proficiency Test. The books are designed to pique the intellectual curiosity of students, and are based around SFC core concept of "multilingualism."

Seminar



Takeya Takagi's seminar primarily revolve around research presentations, Q&A sessions, and debates regarding Korean culture and society. He aims to unveil the cultural and social characteristics of these regions through analyzing them from the perspectives of language, education, lifestyle, communication, history, etc.

A Goal of Archiving the Cultural Materials Collected during Investigations and Research

My field work involves visiting areas where ethnic Koreans live and recording the daily conversations they have with other individuals who speak Korean as a first language. I aim to use this work to uncover linguistic and cultural traits while taking into consideration the relationship and situation that led to the conversation being recorded. In particular, when investigating ethnic Koreans living abroad, I aim to record as many conversations from first generation immigrants as possible. This is because the following generations are influenced by changes to their lifestyle, and their linguistic traits become diluted. This reason in particular is why my investigations and research are a battle against time.

My investigation into Korean spoken in urban areas of China like Liaoning, Jilin, Beijing, and Guangzho for my research is now complete. My plan is to continue this investigation in other areas such as Heilongjiang and Inner Mongolia. After my work in these areas is completed, I want to move on to the Koryo-saram who inhabit counties formerly belonging to the former Soviet Union, and American-Korean communities. Looking towards Japan, the numbers of Koreans living in our country already make up more than 5% of the population. Investigating and describing Japanese-Koreans is something that needs to be performed as quickly as possible. From a mid to long-term perspective, I would like to create digital archives of the materials gained during these investigations, and ensure they are stored in a way that allows as many people to access them as possible. In the future I hope to comprehensively verify these materials, and explore the interactions of the Korean language and ethnic Koreans with other ethnicities and cultures throughout the world, to see what kinds of diversity this has brought about.



Profile
Takeya Takagi
Assistant Professor, Faculty of Policy Management, Keio University. Graduated as a specialist of Korean language from the School of Foreign Studies at the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Completed a doctoral course at the University of Tokyo's Graduate School of Humanities and Sociology. In 2016, won the Chosen Academic Society's Research Encouragement Award. Areas of expertise include Korean language studies, sociolinguistics, and dialectology. Ph.D. in Literature.

Please visit S-face website for details!

There are more articles and video of Takeya Takagi.

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