

Research Trends in the Conceptual History of *Gukeo* (國語) in Korea

韓國國語研究的動態

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1. Introduction

This study gives an overview of how research on the conceptual history of *gukeo* in Korea has been undertaken, including its outcome and future tasks. It also describes the conceptual history of *gukeo* to some extent. *Gukeo* (國語) has two meanings in the Korean language: first, it refers to “the language which the people of a country use”; second, it means “the language of Korea, the word which Koreans use to refer to their own language.” In principle, its basic focus is on the concept of national language (“the language which the people of a country use”), but it is a very important part of the conceptual history of *gukeo* to see how the concept of “Korean language” became part of the concept of *gukeo*. Other

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countries with languages derived from Chinese characters also use the local pronunciation of 國語 as both a common noun and a proper noun. It is part of the conceptual history of *gukeo* to investigate what influence the traditional Chinese vocabulary in these countries exerted on the formation of modern concepts, in particular the national language.

Research on conceptual history usually focuses on dynamic concepts which not only incorporate past experiences but also are connected to the future. Such research traces historical changes in the vocabulary associated with the concept in question in combination with the social and political history of the people who develop the concept. Korean conceptual history has sought to understand the research theories, methodologies, and outcomes of Western conceptual history; much emphasis is placed on showing how conceptual propagation, collision, agglutination, formation and appropriation took place when Korea was undergoing many social, political, economical, and cultural changes. However, Korean conceptual history is distinct in that it also devotes a good deal of attention to the influence of Chinese characters in the development of East Asian culture. The conceptual history of *gukeo* is typical in this respect.

The term *gukeo* appeared in the literature of ancient times, but its meaning has varied considerably since then. It is not sufficient to simply assert that the past concept of *gukeo* is different from the present one. The question is what common elements it has maintained, and how it has been transformed up until now by social and cultural changes.

It can be said that until recently, research on the concept of *gukeo* was usually undertaken in the context of the larger framework of modernization. As not only past generations who experienced modernization but also present researchers who study modernity share an awareness that the modern state and *gukeo* are bound together by

a common destiny, researchers in a variety of fields such as politics, social studies, history, literature, and linguistics have shown great interest in the concept of *gukeo*. For example, literary research on *gukeo* has been concerned with the formation, language and writing style of modern literature. Due to the number of different approaches adopted by researchers in different fields, a comprehensive study on the concept of *gukeo* has not yet appeared. This essay attempts to take the first steps toward such a study by providing a basic framework for description of the conceptual history of *gukeo*.

I begin with an overview of how the modern concept of *gukeo* is used today in Korea. Using this as a standard, I go on to examine how aspects of the concept have varied over time. I also take a look at the differences between Korean *gukeo* and other Chinese-derived national languages and survey some of the main arguments about the conceptual study of *gukeo* in Korea. Lastly, I consider future tasks needed for the synthetic explanation of *gukeo* in light of the unique history of the concept.

2. *Gukeo* in the Present

The two meanings of *gukeo* were mentioned in passing above. I will now examine in a more concrete way both the denotations and connotations of *gukeo* recognized in Korea at present. By understanding the present concept and comparing it with *gukeo* as an early modern term, I will examine some standard views of the concept of *gukeo*.

The present definition of *gukeo* is described in the following ways in the *Standard Korean Language Dictionary*, Korean-language textbooks, and the Framework Act on the National Language.

*Standard Korean Language Dictionary (SKLD)***guk eo** (國語) (noun)

[1] the language which the people of a country use ≡ national language bangeo (邦語). [2] the language of Korea, the word which Korean people employ to designate their own language.¹

The *SKLD* gives two meanings for *guk eo*: the national language and the Korean language. Remarkably, the use of the term to mean “Korean language” is restricted to Koreans. For them, the two meanings of *guk eo* as national language and Korean language have the same denotation, so the single term can refer to both meanings.

Framework Act on the National Language

The Framework Act was enacted in 2005 to promote the use of the national language and provide a foundation for its development and preservation, and has been revised several times since. It defines *guk eo* as follows.

Article 3 1. “Guk eo” refers to the Korean language that is the official language of Korea.²

¹ Of course, *hanguk eo* (Korean language) is also defined in *SKLD* as follows.

hanguk eo (韓國語) [han:--] (noun) 『language』

The language that Koreans use. An agglutinative language in form and Altaic in language family. It is used in the Korean peninsula and its annexed islands including Jeju-do. Its word order is subject, object (or complement), predicate, and the modifier is located before the modified. ≡ hangukmal, hanmal, haneo.

The definition of *hanguk eo* focuses on factual aspects such as typology and language family, and there is no restriction on the term’s users.

² The Framework Act on the National Language is significant for a number of reasons: it integrates all the relevant acts about national language, it enables the government and local governments to appoint officials responsible for issues of national language, it sets up a law which gives teaching qualification to teachers of Korean language, it resolves to test people’s linguistic ability, it sets up

The Framework Act defines *gukeo* as the Korean language and declares it the official language of Korea both internally and externally. In Article 2 (“Basic Idea”) it states, “The country and its people should be aware that *gukeo* is the most precious cultural heritage and the driving force for cultural creation, and should make a positive effort to both preserve and develop it to establish the identity of national culture and to bequeath it to posterity.” Also, *hangeul* is our own letters that write *gukeo* (Article 3, 2nd Clause), official documents should be written in *hangeul* (Article 14), and the government designates and commemorates Hangeul Day (October 9) in order to show at home and abroad the creativity and science of *hangeul* and promote people’s love for it (Article 20). The Framework Act includes *hangeul* in *gukeo* as national culture.

Furthermore, Article 4 states that “the national government and local governments should respond positively to the changing environment of language use; they should strive to improve people’s ability of speech and preserve and develop *gukeo* including regional languages; they should establish policies to enable people who have difficulty using language because of some mental and physical handicaps to use *gukeo* in a comfortable way.” It includes “regional languages” in the denotation of *gukeo*. As an official language generally refers to the standard language, it is open to dispute that *gukeo* as an official language should include regional languages. However, many people and experts may agree that regional languages are part of *gukeo*. To better understand the concept of *gukeo*, it is necessary to clarify the relationship between official language,

counseling centers for Korean language to promote people’s linguistic ability, it standardizes technical terms, and so on. There was surely a plan for the development of Korean language, but this Framework Act is more effective in that it requires the minister of culture and sports to make a plan every five years and report its result to the National Assembly.

standard language, and regional languages (dialects).

Korean Language Textbooks and Curricula

Curricula have been revised several times since the First Curriculum was enacted in 1954; the present curriculum is the Seventh. There is no direct definition of *gukgeo* in the Curriculum, but it is possible to infer its views on the concept by examining what the Seventh Curriculum has to say about the educational goals of Korean language class.

Educational Goals of Korean Language Class in the Seventh Curriculum

Korean language class enables students to understand the nature of linguistic activities, language and literature in their entirety, and consider the context, object and content comprehensively, and use Korean language effectively and correctly, and grasp Korean literature appropriately, and acquire the competence and attitude to contribute to the development of Korean language and the progress of national linguistic culture.

1. Students will acquire basic knowledge about linguistic activities, language and literature, at the same time developing their ability to apply it to various situations for the use of Korean language.
2. Students will cultivate critical ability to understand various data, and express their thoughts and emotions creatively on the basis of correct and effective principles and observations about the use of Korean language.
3. Students will become interested in the world of Korean language, and have a positive attitude for the development

of Korean language and the creation of national linguistic culture.³

Although the concept of *gukeo* as defined by public institutions can differ from that used in everyday life, the official use is, in general, the standard that everyday use should comply with. The above official definitions can be summarized as follows.

Elements of the modern concept of *gukeo*:

- (1) official language of Korea
- (2) used by all people (regardless of expertise or handicap)
- (3) part of national culture
- (4) written in *hangeul*
- (5) regional languages (dialects) included

(1) is directly connected with the formation of the modern state and encompasses all the other elements, especially standardization and verbal rules. (2) means that the language is actually used by all people, all people can understand any technical terms, and all people can use the language in spite of any physical handicap. This shows that *gukeo* is used as both everyday language and the language of intellectuals. (3) assumes a historical relationship between *gukeo* and the nation and shows that both language as a medium and its expressive results (for example, literature) are contained in the concept of *gukeo*. It also suggests the common destiny of language and nation. (4) has provoked continuous controversy since the formative years of modernity, that is, the issue about *hangeul* and Chinese characters as regards *eonmunilchi* (言文一致), the unity of speech and writing.

³ *Teacher's Guide for Korean Language Class* (Elementary School, 1st Grade), Korean Ministry of Education, 19.

(5) refers to standardization, normalization and abstraction, yet suggests that regional languages (dialects) should be included in *gukeo*.

The conceptual elements of *gukeo* listed above varied historically and became settled when *gukeo* developed into a modern language. Research on the conceptual history of *gukeo* in Korea has generally focused on these elements. With respect to the ideology of modern nation-state formation, many studies have pursued themes like standardization, abstraction, language use and the state, individual ranking, collapse of diglossis, etc.⁴ Though desirable, it is not easy to summarize the state of current research on each element due to a lack of in-depth understanding of prior studies. Therefore, I have chosen instead to examine several individual studies that have significantly impacted the course of research.

3. Major Studies

Japanese scholars were actively researching the conceptual history of *gukeo* in the 1990s; under their influence, Korean scholars took up the topic seriously around the year 2000. Before the appearance of full-fledged research, however, there was active discussion about the process by which Korean modern language was formed and settled, mostly among researchers of Korean literature. Although there was already some contemplation of *gukeo* from the standpoint of Korean linguistic history, its focus was on the interpretation of traditional usage seen in bibliographic data. Accordingly, I divide the following survey into two

⁴ Hae-ryeong Lee (2005: 352) has suggested that “the destiny of the modern language, which was witnessed by the movement for *hangeul* in the colonial period and the controversy over our language from 1945 up to now, is the reality in which ‘language’ cannot become a meaningful agenda of a society without considering the advancement of a state or an individual.”

categories by subject: Korean linguistic history and conceptual history.

3.1. Research on Korean Linguistic History

Korean linguistics seeks to explain the characteristics of Korean language with reference to sound, form, grammar and vocabulary. It divides the history of the language into four periods (ancient, medieval, modern, contemporary) and provides historical explanations for each. Though it tries to explain the successive changes in Korean language, it does not grant qualitative identity to modern language. Its interest is not in the political and cultural causes of changes in language users but rather in the changes of the language itself. Research on the history of Korean linguistics, which examines how the study of Korean language has progressed over time, focuses on describing the achievements of leading scholars in the field. However, the achievements and scholars worthy of investigation are relatively rare because the study of Korean language was not accompanied by any modern system. Thus, research on Korean linguistic history extends all the way back to King Sejong's *Hunminjeongeum* (訓民正音), the 1446 document that created the *hangeul* script.

Is the *gukeo* of *Hunminjeongeum* indeed identical to that of the contemporary or modern age? Most Korean linguists would probably answer "Yes." However, it is not easy to make a definite statement about how people lived in the days when *hangeul* was first conceived. We have to inquire into whether those people conceived of *gukeo* as an official language and a part of national culture and thought that all the people should use it equally. There are many terms which were used in each period to refer to Korean language; in particular, the term *bangeon* (方言) has been consistently used since ancient times. Conceptual approaches to

these terms were made by Baek Duhyeon (2004) and Jeong Seungcheol (2011).

Baek (2004) examines the usage of terms referring to Korean language in literature like ancient historical records and *Hunminjeongeum*, considering their meanings and implication. He explains the conceptual connections between terms like *jineo* (辰語), *garaeo* (加羅語), *buyeosokeo* (夫餘俗語), *ryeoeo* (麗語), *bangeon* (方言), *hyangeo* (鄉語), and *eoneo* (諺語) and national conceptions of which meanings they contain, giving basic interpretations faithful to context.

Jeong (2011) says that *bangeon*, which once referred to “a language of the frontier of China,” came to designate “a language of a certain country” in the early years of enlightenment, and then finally indicated “a local language” under the modern foreign influences such as bilingual dictionaries and the Japanese language. He explains the process by which its meaning became limited in connection with the “standard language” which appeared with great force in the Japanese colonial era. Therefore, it can be inferred that Korean language was regarded as “a language of the frontier” which had a hierarchical relation with the Chinese language, and this connotation would not vary much even if the term referring to Korean language were *gukeo*.

However, according to many studies on *Hunminjeongeum* by researchers including Lee Sungnyeong (1958), Lee Gimun (1972), Kim Wanjin (1972), and An Byeonghui (2007), King Sejong objectified Korean language and had awareness in some measure similar to modern consciousness in that he invented *hangeul* to “enable everyone to use letters conveniently in everyday life.” It is a problem to be re-examined in relation to the standardization of the pronunciation of Chinese characters.

What is indispensable for the research on *gukeo* in the respect of

the history of Korean linguistics is the study of figures like Yu Giljun, Ji Seokyeong, Ju Sigyeong, Kim Gysik, Lee Gyugyeong, Lee Neunghwa, An Jasan, and others. Most existing studies, though focused mainly on what they contributed to the study of Korean language, can provide much information necessary to describe the conceptual history of *gukeo*. The research on *hangeul* and *eonmunilchi* relates especially directly to the conceptual history of *gukeo*.⁵

3.2. Research on the Conceptual History of *Gukeo*

Early research on the conceptual history of *gukeo* took two forms: one dealt with the subject as part of the study of modern concepts like state, nation, and subject, while the other focused on language and style through the study of modern literature.⁶ With the advent of comprehensive studies of the conceptual history and research on Korean language policies, there appeared research on the conceptual history of *gukeo* from a linguistic perspective.

Early on, the literary study of the conceptual history of *gukeo* was

⁵ See also Lee Gimun (1970), Ko Yeong-geun (1985), Gu Bongwan (2003), Jeong Seungcheol (2005, 2009, 2012), and the Society for Korean Language and Literary Research and the Society for Korean Language and Literature (coedited) (2003).

⁶ For example, while commenting on the process by which the basis of Korean nationalism changed from culture to pedigree, Park Chanseung (2010) explains that cultural nationalism stressed the importance of national spirit, Korean language, Korean history, founding father Dangun, and so on. Shin Yongha (1977) discusses the “nationalism of language and literature.” Song Hogeun (2011)’s discussion of “the structural transformation of the public sphere” is worthy of notice as it pertains to the use of Korean language. He argues that language contributed to education and enlightenment, creating literary people who were not the objects of edification but subjects with a sense of independence. Song also suggests that these literary people created a new public sphere where knowledge and power were separated.

closely related to the modern style of writing. In 2005, issues 70 and 71 of *Yeoksabipyong* (Historical Criticism) examined the formation of modern language in Korea, China, and Japan under the title of “The Birth of Modern Language.” This project was intended to consider how closely the idea of *eonmunilchi* (unifying speech and writing) accorded with the historical reality and what correlation existed between that idea and all the ideologies surrounding the nation-state or imagined community; it also examined the question of for whom and by whom the modern language came into existence. Along with an essay discussing the multi-layered process of *eonmunilchi* in Japan and China, it carried two essays on Korean language, “The Movement for *Hangeul* and the Ideology of Modern Language” and “The Formation of Modern Language and the Linguistic Strategy of the Media: The Correlations between Language, Media, the Colonial System, and Modern Literature.” These two essays, written by literary scholars, discuss *hangeul* and media. Their arguments may be summarized as follows.

Lee Hyeryeong (2005) considers the symbols of *hangeul* as modern language and shows, within the structure of various powers among states, classes and regions, its characteristics as revealed in its education, spelling system, and standardization. He emphasizes the consistent modernization of *hangeul* from the Japanese colonial period on and suggests a periodical division for comparison: the end of the Joseon Dynasty, the Japanese colonial period (including the 1920s, when the linguistic projects for modernization like cultural nationalism, arrangement of the spelling system, and inspection for standard language were begun, and the 1940s of military rule), the period after liberation (eradication of illiteracy and modernization), and the present (boosting of the international status of *hangeul* and Korean language).

Han Gihyeong (2005) focuses on the influence of media and literature on modernization. In particular, looking into media whose key figures were Choe Namseon and Lee Gwangsu, he reconstructs the process by which *simunche* was adapted both to embrace the upper and the lower classes and to accommodate the vocabulary of modern civilization, and by which literary language using *simunche* established itself as the nucleus of modern language. While shedding light on the organic correlation between linguistic style, genre, translated words, etc. and the “modern nation” or the usefulness of modern knowledge, he brings back one of the formative scenes of Korean language as modern language.

From the perspective of literary research, the primary things associated with the birth of *gukeo* are first, the expressive style of media and second, cultural nationalism and the expansion of literacy. Mun Hyeyun (2008) discusses the literary research on the conceptual history of *gukeo* in a more synthetic way in his *Modernity of Literary Language*. Most literary researchers think that the modernization of national language happened thanks to the influence of the efforts to innovate and unify the writing style of literature and media as well as a variety of social and political elements.

There are likewise many cases of the innovation of writing style in the research of Korean linguists, but a new approach appears with a regular conceptual study. Cho Taerin (1997) surveys the ideological characteristics of the Joseon Language Society’s campaign for language and literature and considers its nationalism as a combination of organic nationalism and modernism. That is, getting out of the existing approach of resistant nationalism, Cho explains Korean linguistic nationalism through a combination of linguistic idealism and linguistic instrumentalism. His study devotes more attention to the functional nature of language, not just

its symbolic nature, to elucidate the modern formation of *gukeo*.

Cho (2006) takes one step further toward the conceptual study of *gukeo*. In this study, the author clarifies the meaning of concepts relevant to *gukeo* like *gongtongeo* (common language), *pyojuneo* (standard language), *gukmineo* (people's language), *gongyongeo* (official language), *gukgaeo* (national language), and others, and attempts to reveal the specificity of Korean *gukeo* in comparison with its Japanese counterpart, *kokugo*. It concludes that various meanings are inherent in *gukeo* in a complex way, such as “people's spirit and the essential standard for national character” (*gukmineo*), “the standard language crucial for modern capitalistic production and the formation of a nation-state” (*pyojuneo*), “the language responsible for public practical functions” (*gongyongeo*) and “the language whose status and function are sanctioned by the state” (*gukgaeo*).⁷ The author suggests that the Japanese logic of *kokugo*, which links state, nation and language all in one, made an impact on the conceptual formation of *gukeo*. Research like this tries to explain the modern concept of *gukeo* within the typical framework of conceptual history studies. As it is limited to general explanation, what is wanting in this study is when and how these complex meanings were attached to the concept of *gukeo* and what interference from the traditional concept of *gukeo* was involved in the process.

Kim Byeongmun (2012), whose study may be the first doctorate thesis in this field, follows the approach of conceptual history to do an in-

⁷ Cho Taerin (2006:387) gives different usages for the two terms: *gukmineo* can also refer to a language (there might be more than one language in one state) of a community which does not establish itself as a modern nation-state, while *gukeo* (*kokugo*) can only refer to the language of a community which establishes itself as a nation-state, either independently or through merger with other communities.

depth and synthetic study on Ju Sigyeong's research on Korean language, which has been up to now handled by many scholars only as part of the discussion about the modern formation of *gukeo*. His conceptual study tries to answer the ontological question of how the existence of *gukeo* is conceived. Based on an analysis of several works by Ju Sigyeong which demonstrates that Ju regarded *gukeo* as "an entity which has a national origin as well as an orderly system," Kim conceives of an abstract and objectified form of *gukeo*. More specifically, he analyzes the changes in both in the usage of *gukeo* and the writing style, the characteristics of grammatical description, the understanding of the layers of *munjang*, and so on, concluding with a discussion of the modern linguistic consciousness of Ju Sigyeong. Kim's study contributes much to the overall discussion about the modern conceptual formation of Korean language, as Ju Sigyeong was a key figure in that area.

As surveyed above, the linguistic studies on the conceptual history of *gukeo*, extending beyond the previous studies on writing style, came to discuss modern consciousness about Korean language in itself. For example, regarding the equal and homogeneous subject of use which is a distinct feature of modern *gukeo*, earlier studies argued that it was formed through the development and dissemination of media, while studies like Kim Byeongmun's (2012) introduce *gukeo* on the level of abstract language and insist that the subject of use was formed by scholars who study and teach it. In the future, it seems that the study of the conceptual history of *gukeo* will be further developed by synthesizing research results from these various fields.

4. Conclusion

I have examined the research trends in the conceptual history of *gukeo* in Korea. The modern concept of *gukeo* includes a variety of elements like *gukgaeo* or *gongyongeo*, the nation (homogeneous, with equal subjects), national culture, spelling of *hangeul*, integration of local languages, and so forth. According to the current body of research, most of these elements were integrated into the concept of *gukeo* in the modern era. An objectified *gukeo* was necessary for national language education and writing in *hangeul*, and the present form of *gukeo* came into existence via this process. As of today, results in various fields including social and political studies, literary studies of writing style, and Korean linguistic history have contributed to this conclusion. Although each study's focus varies, the synthesis of various studies on *eonmunilchi*, the formation of the subject, the development of media using Korean language, the education and standardization of Korean language, the rules of language, and other topics will make it possible to describe a more in-depth and complex conceptual history of *gukeo*.

Eonmunilchi, the effort to unify speech and writing, has followed a complex trajectory from writing in the old Korean language through various mixed usage of Korean and Chinese characters to the formation of *simunche*. It is necessary to verify the success of *eonmunilchi* by comparing the writing styles of various reading books used in education.

There is a tendency to believe that the users of the Korean language became more homogeneous and equal when the illiteracy rate got lower. However, when one considers that colonial rule arrived before the campaign for *hangeul* could bear any fruit and that the class of people who used Japanese rose to the top of the social hierarchy, the dissemination of

hangeul cannot adequately explain the formation of a population literate in Korean. Due to wide variations in the language, it takes considerable effort to understand the qualitative changes in the Korean-speaking population from the late 19th century to the times before and after liberation. And the study of Ju Sigyeong's ideas about Korean language, which assumed an equal and homogeneous spoken language, should undergo a close examination to verify what relevance it has to the actual formation of the subject. In a similar vein, careful consideration should be given to the matter of people's common usage, that is, whether the direction of propagation was from the upper class to the public through educational enlightenment or the linguistic usage by the public was disseminated to the upper class.

Korean language education had a big impact on the formation of modern *gukeo* in that it provided a way of conceiving an objectified form of *gukeo*. However, it cannot be said that the modern Korean language came into being as a result of a paradigmatic shift if the education took only part of the people as its object. Otherwise, it would make no difference if it was the Japanese Governor-General instead of the Korean population that carried out the education.⁸ It is a mistake to deny the need to check whether studies done from a nationalistic viewpoint miss some relevant facts, although the linguistic studies of Ju Sigyeong, disputes about the Korean language seen in newspapers, the activities of the Joseon Language Society, and other themes investigated by such studies testify to the big impact that Korean language education had on the formation of modern *gukeo*.

The standardization of Korean and the criteria for language and

⁸ Mitsui Takashi (2010) discusses the Japanese-led Korean language education of the colonial period.

literature can be said to be both the process and the outcome of the formation of modern *guk eo*. Detailed consideration has been given to the history of how the spelling system was established and the inspection for a standard language was done. There are also a considerable number of studies that examine the need to form a community, disseminate Korean language, and identify the nationalism, ethnocentrism, and Japanese imperialism inherent in this process. It is still necessary to consider what relevance the investigation of local languages by Japanese scholars in the colonial era and the recent endeavor to preserve them have for the standardization and criteria for language and literature, and what impact they may have had on the concept of *guk eo*.

For a synthetic description of the conceptual history of *guk eo*, it is important to not only integrate previous research findings but also to supplement them with some of the ideas discussed above. Issues that require further study include the following.

More attention should be given to the comparative study of the conceptual histories of the national languages of different East Asian countries. Substantial research has already been done by Japanese scholars, but it is very rare for Korean scholars to study the conceptual history of *guk eo* in comparison with the cases of other countries in East Asia. As each country's everyday usage of language varies, each country's campaign to unify speech and writing showed qualitative differences in the process of modernization. Accordingly, comparative research among East Asian countries is needed to clarify both the specificity and universality of the formation of modern Korean *guk eo*.⁹

⁹ Furthermore, it will ultimately be necessary to investigate the differences between the conceptual formation of national languages in the Chinese and Latin cultural spheres.

The problem of whether *gukeo* and *bangeon* were really synonyms in the Middle Ages also deserves significant attention.¹⁰ That is, we should verify what influence the *gukeo* of the Middle Ages had on the conceptual formation of modern *gukeo* and clarify whether the modern concept of *gukeo* was an early modern invention or merely an extension of the medieval concept.

Lastly, there remains the issue of whether the contemporary concept of *gukeo* is really the same as the early modern one, whether we are still in the process of modernization, or whether we have already entered the age of post-modernization. As alluded to above, there is a strong argument that we should preserve local languages and use Chinese characters, and also an argument against using the term *gukeo*.¹¹ Arguments over the national language after the social and political reunification of the divided Korean peninsula, the language of overseas Koreans, the education of foreigners in Korean, and other issues are influencing the concept and usage of *gukeo*. Also to be considered is the possible shift from escaping the lingua franca of the Chinese cultural sphere to accepting a Chinese-based lingua

¹⁰ The signifiers of *bangeon* and *gukeo*, having their origin in China, underwent different conceptual transformations in each country in the Chinese cultural sphere. It is generally said that modern concepts were propagated from Japan through China to Korea, but we should take into account other possibilities like reverse process or mutual influence.

¹¹ There are arguments against the term of *gukeo* for reasons like problems with respect to ideological background and practical use. Ko Gilseob (2003:60-61) criticizes the term of *gukeo* as “the vestige of Japanese imperialism” which represents “nationalistic ideology.” Mun Seongjun (2003:73-74) also takes a critical view of the term not only because it conceals “strong ethnocentrism and nationalism,” “hegemonism and colonialism” but also because it is unreasonable to differentiate “Korean language as native language” from “Korean language as foreign language.” Criticism about the terms of *hangukeo* and *gukeo* can also be found in Park Yeongsun (1997:1). See Cho Taerin (2006:388).

franca again. Supplementing the shortcomings of existing studies, these considerations will contribute much to the description of the conceptual history of *gukeo*.

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