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## Foreword

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# Foreword

In this book, Nam Jee-sun exposes for the Korean public the results of a remarkable work of lexico-syntactic analysis of the Korean vocabulary, as a part of a larger program of description of the Korean language. She defined 5,300 lexical entries of adjectives with the aid of formal syntactic-semantic properties. The result constitutes an actual 'lexicon-grammar' of the corresponding Korean elementary sentences. In her analyses, she avoided creating artificial ambiguities, and her descriptions are free of superfluous terminology. By examining the results presented in this book, the reader will probably realise that purely formal solutions taking the form of abstract rules, disconnected from lexical entries, would never be able to account for the peculiarities she pointed out. Indeed, each adjective shows a unique global behaviour, to such an extent that the only descriptive solution can be based on a lexicon. Her syntactic-semantic tables, formalized in great detail, make up a substantial part of a future formal grammar of Korean. The precision of the description is such that the tables can be incorporated into text parsers with only format adaptations.

This book differs in several ways from most available grammars or monographies describing Korean either as a whole system or in some of its aspects. The author develops analyses and distinctions at a very fine level of perception of meanings of sentences, but she maintains the same level of detail and accuracy for *all* of the adjectives included in the scope of the book. This high standard of exhaustiveness and homogeneity comes from the lexicographical ambition of the book: the focus is not only on general rules, on syntactic constructions with some degree of productivity, but also on how each individual adjective, either frequent or rare, general-purpose or specialised, behaves with respect to them. Thus, for the syntactic tables printed in the book, it has been necessary to try each entry with each construction.

It is difficult, for a linguistic work that takes into account meaning, to ensure sufficient rigour and to avoid resorting to subjective appreciations that will vary from native speaker to native speaker, and even for the same person, from time to time. The properties and categories studied by Nam Jee-sun are more solid than that. They are explicitly defined by strict criteria, which are themselves chosen so as to be particularly operational and provide stable results. The first example in the book is the very definition of the set of adjectives under study. Most dictionaries and grammars resort to purely semantic intuitions to distinguish adjectives from intransitive verbs. Thus, they obtain divergent results by applying the same criterion. Unlike them, she relies on the value of the terminal declarative suffix, a purely formal criterion. For other properties, she inventively relies on the existence of complements, the distribution of the nominal content of arguments, the existence of syntactic variants... Nam Jee-sun assesses the applicability and reliability of all the criteria she tests, and explains the reasons of her choices. She avoids using several criteria for the same decision, which would lead her to paradoxes when the criteria point to divergent directions. This methodological aspect of the book may appear as unnecessarily technical to the non-specialist reader, but in my opinion it is one of its most valuable contributions, and what makes this book a really scientific one. After all, methodology is central in any research. Students in linguistics, in particular, will learn a lot from these discussions.

The inherent beauty of Nam Jee-sun's work lies in the classes of adjectives, since most of them turn out to be remarkably semantically homogeneous in spite of the formal rigour of their definitions. This is not by chance, of course: it is know-how.

Scholars of various domains will find useful information in Nam Jee-sun's book, including theoretical linguists, translators and authors of grammars, language handbooks, monolingual or bilingual dictionaries, and also specialists of natural language processing. As a matter of fact, the syntactic-semantic information required for text parsing and machine translation is exactly of the type of the tables printed in the book: lexical entries are distinguished in case of lexical ambiguity, their properties and syntactic constructions are specified, information is as formal as in a database, and the description encompasses a comprehensive set of words. This book will thus be a reference for those who manually construct language resources, and also for those who attempt to derive similar information from annotated corpora through automated, frequency-based analysis.

There are several examples, in the history of linguistics in Korea, of the application of unadapted foreign models to the Korean language, resulting in unsatisfactory descriptions. Nam Jee-sun's account of adjectives in Korean is far from having this drawback. Indeed, I am not aware, in any other language, of such a comprehensive, lexicon-oriented and formalised study of adjectives. On the contrary, authors of similar studies in other language will probably carefully read Nam Jee-sun's works. This should be a matter of pride for Korean linguistics.