

**Perceptual dialectology study of Korean  
focusing on authentic speakers of Gyeongsang dialect**

**Young Hwang  
Indiana University**

**Abstract**

Previous perceptual dialectology research on Korean has shown that Gyeongsang speakers display signs of linguistic insecurity and suffer from a dialect inferiority complex. The participants of these studies, however, were Gyeongsang expatriates living outside of the Gyeongsang region, either in Seoul or in the U.S., where most Korean speakers use Standard Korean. In order to address the gap in previous studies, the present study examines how “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers (that is, those living in the Gyeongsang region) perceive dialects in South Korea. The results of the present study reveal that Gyeongsang speakers living in Gyeongsang regions show positive attitudes toward their dialect. Although they judge their dialect less positively than Standard Korean because of the extraordinary authority of Standard Korean in South Korea, they generally perceive their dialect more positively than other regional dialects. Older speakers, in particular, demonstrate this tendency. The perceptual difference between Gyeongsang speakers living outside of the Gyeongsang regions and those living in the Gyeongsang regions suggest that an individual’s self-identity and living location influence his or her perception of a dialect.

**Keywords:** Gyeongsang dialect; Korean dialects; perceptual dialectology; language attitudes

**1. Introduction**

Perceptual dialectology is a branch of linguistics concerned with people’s perceptions of dialects and dialectal areas rather than the actual production of dialects. It explores where non-linguists believe dialect areas exist, the geographical extent of those areas, how non-linguists perceive dialects distinctively, and what attitudes non-linguists have toward different dialects (Preston 1999a).

Previous studies in perceptual dialectology conducted in the U.S. indicate that people have strong opinions about the number and placement of dialect regions (Preston 1989, 1999b; Clopper

2006), and these results have been corroborated by studies both at the national level (e.g. Preston 1999b; Fought 2002) and at the local level, such as in California (Bucholtz et al. 2007), Ohio (Benson 2003), and Washington (Evans 2011). Studies conducted in other parts of the world—such as in Japan (Long 1999), UK (Montgomery 2007), Germany (Dailey-O’Cain 1999), and France (Kuiper 1999)—have also corroborated these results.

Several studies conducted in Korea have found that Koreans also possess consistent beliefs about the number and placement of dialect regions in their country. Among these regions, the Gyeongsang dialect emerges as one of the most salient. As a result, it is associated with the most extreme attitudes. Long & Yim (2002), Jeon (2012), and Kang (2015) have shown that Koreans perceive six dialects in South Korea primarily divided by administrative provincial boundaries: Seoul/Gyeonggi (Standard Korean),<sup>1</sup> Gangwon, Chungcheong, Gyeongsang, Jeolla, and Jeju. From among the different dialects, Koreans most frequently identified the Gyeongsang dialect (which is spoken in the southeast region of Korea) even more frequently than Standard Korean, and they perceived it most saliently (Long & Yim 2002; Jeon 2012; Kang 2015).

### **1.1. Perceptual Dialectology in Korea**

Jeon (2012), the most extensive perceptual dialectology study on Korean to date, shows that the Gyeongsang dialect has the greatest perceptual salience among the dialects in Korea. Jeon (2012) conducted a “draw-a-map” task (Preston & Howe 1987), collecting hand-drawn maps from all six perceived dialect regions of South Korea. 436 participants were provided a blank map of Korea and asked to first draw a line around places where they believe people speak differently and then to provide names and comments about the dialect spoken in those areas. The labels that participants

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<sup>1</sup> Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect is considered Standard Korean since the National Institute of Korean Language defines Standard Korean as “the modern speech of Seoul generally used by well-cultivated people.”

provided on the maps were analyzed using the keywords technique (Garrett, Williams & Evans 2005; Evans 2010) and were categorized into seven groups according to the following features: *Standardness (Non-Standard and Standard)*, *Manner/Personality (Positive and Negative)*, *Intonation/Tone*, *Accent*, *Speed (Fast and Slow)*, *Gender Association (Masculine, Feminine, and Aegyo)*, and *Unintelligibility*. The results demonstrate that the Gyeongsang dialect was perceived most saliently, and six out of the seven categories were most strongly associated with the Gyeongsang dialect. Interestingly, even for some categories that consist of two or three opposing features (e.g. the *Positive* and *Negative* features in the *Manner/Personality* category, and the *Masculine*, *Feminine*, and *Aegyo* features in the *Gender Association* category), all the different features were most closely related to the Gyeongsang dialect despite their conflicting nature.

Since Jeon (2012) specifically focused upon the ways in which Koreans generally perceive language variation in Korea, the study did not investigate perceptual differences among distinct regional dialect speakers. However, studies such as Long & Yim (2002), Yim (1993), and a pilot study of Jeon (Jeon 2012) fill this research gap by examining how speakers of each dialect differently perceive Korea's dialects. These studies commonly show that Gyeongsang speakers perceive their home dialect negatively, unlike speakers of the other dialects.

Long & Yim (2002) analyze perceptual differences, specifically perceptions of the pleasantness of speech, among speakers from diverse dialect regions. The data collection was conducted in Seoul, and 372 university students from various dialect regions were asked to rank each dialect region in order of pleasantness. The results of this study report that regional dialect speakers tend to perceive the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect as most pleasant and their home dialect second most pleasant. Unlike the other dialect speakers, however, Gyeongsang speakers did not indicate their home dialect as pleasant. Yim (1993) also conducted a survey in Seoul on 1365 Korean speakers

from various regions. He surveyed the linguistic pride about their home dialect, and his results reveal that Gyeongsang speakers have less pride and affection for their home dialect than the other dialect speakers. Long & Yim (2002) and Yim (1993) both insist that Gyeongsang speakers suffer from a “dialect inferiority complex,” a term they define as a severe form of what Labov (1972) calls “linguistic insecurity.”

As an extension of Long & Yim (2002), Jeon conducted a pilot study in 2011 using the same methodology and reported the results in Jeon (2012). She surveyed 50 Korean expatriates from different regions in South Korea who were living in the United States. The results, which remain fairly consistent with the study by Long & Yim (2002), made four important findings, including: (1) most participants perceived the speech region labeled Seoul as the most pleasant; (2) most participants’ home dialect speech regions were also deemed pleasant; (3) most participants want to speak Standard Korean regardless of their home dialect variety; and (4) most participants from the Gyeongsang region comprehensively rated their home dialect fairly negatively in terms of intelligibility, pride, and likeability.

Long & Yim (2002), Yim (1993), and Jeon’s pilot study (Jeon 2012) all reveal that Gyeongsang dialect speakers show linguistic insecurity and have less pride and affection for their home dialect as compared to other dialect speakers. The data of these studies, however, were collected outside of the Gyeongsang region, either in Seoul or in the United States, where most Korean speakers use Standard Korean. In these regions, Gyeongsang speakers—who speak a perceptually salient dialect and face difficulty code-switching to Standard Korean—are in the linguistic minority.

## **1.2. Distinctiveness of the Gyeongsang dialect**

Many unique linguistic factors exist that make the Gyeongsang dialect perceptually salient, such as fewer contrasting vowel phonemes, differences in tense consonants, variation in lexical items,

and sentence final endings (Jeon 2012; Kang 2015). The most distinguishable feature, however, seems to be the Gyeongsang dialect's pitch accent system. Gyeongsang is the only dialect in South Korea that retains the tone system from Middle Korean while all the other dialects lost this tone system around the 17th century (Ramsey 1975; Lee & Ramsey 2000; Kenstowicz, Cho & Kim 2008). Because of pitch accent and other strong dialectal differences, Gyeongsang speakers have difficulty code-switching to Standard Korean and hiding their linguistic identity, which are relatively easy tasks for other dialect speakers. The inability to code-switch and hide linguistic identity also seems to influence the Gyeongsang dialect's conservative maintenance compared to other dialects. According to language attitude surveys conducted by the National Institute of Korean Language (2005, 2010, 2015), the rate of using Standard Korean has been gradually increasing. Around 30-50% of people reported that they use Standard Korean in the other local dialect regions, but in the Gyeongsang region, most people retain the Gyeongsang dialect as only around 6% of the speakers in the Gyeongsang region reported that they use Standard Korean.

An interview that Yim (1993) held with a male Gyeongsang speaker living in Seoul exhibits the social pressure that Gyeongsang expatriates experience as a result of the linguistic differences. The male Gyeongsang speaker said that Gyeongsang speakers have difficulty code-switching to Standard Korean because of their strong accent, and this causes Gyeongsang speakers living in Seoul to attract unwanted attention when they speak in public. Although the Gyeongsang dialect can play a positive role in providing linguistic solidarity in the Gyeongsang region, it can also prevent Gyeongsang expatriates who have left their hometowns from joining their new communities by revealing that they are from another region. Previous sociolinguistic studies such as Labov 1963 and 1966 provide evidence that individuals' social identities and attitudes influence their language. If Gyeongsang expatriates consider their home dialect an obstacle that prevents

them from belonging to a new community, we can assume that they would have different perceptions about their home dialect from “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers (i.e. lifelong residents living in the Gyeongsang region).

In order to have a better understanding of Gyeongsang speakers’ linguistic insecurity, Kang (2015) examines the perceptions of “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers, focusing on their attitudes toward Gyeongsang and Seoul/Gyeonggi (Standard) dialects. She conducted a draw-a-map task and language attitude questionnaire with 488 “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers. The results display that “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers exhibit regional pride for their home dialect alongside linguistic insecurity. Although Gyeongsang speakers evaluate their home dialect low on prestige factors (e.g. they believe the Gyeongsang dialect to be a less standard and classy form of Korean compared to the Seoul dialect, and they also perceive it to be less educated), they evaluated it high on social attractiveness factors (e.g. they believe the Gyeongsang dialect to be more likable, trustworthy, kind, warm, and modest than the Seoul dialect). Kang (2015) asserts that “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers feel affection for their home dialect, even if they recognize that it is not standard. Language attitude surveys conducted by the National Institute of Korean Language (2010, 2015) also collected data from Gyeongsang speakers living in the Gyeongsang region, revealing that the vast majority of such Gyeongsang speakers consider their home dialect positively just like other regional dialect speakers. These studies provide evidence that “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers have somewhat different attitudes than Gyeongsang expatriates toward their home dialect.

### **1.3. Gaps in existing research**

In order to fill the gaps in the previous studies, Kang (2015) and the language attitude surveys (National Institute of Korean Language 2010, 2015) examined the perceptions of “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers on their own dialect as well as Standard Korean. Some questions, however,

still remain about the ways in which “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers perceive other regional dialects. So as to better understand Gyeongsang speakers’ linguistic insecurity, researchers must examine Gyeongsang speakers’ perceptions about other regional dialects and then compare those perceptions to those of their home dialect. In addition, Jeon (2012) and Kang (2015) both assert that age difference influences people’s attitudes towards dialects; however, there has been little research examining the influence of age difference on perceptions of language variation in Korea. To address this deficiency, the present study investigates the perceptions of South Korean dialects among two different generations of “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers.

Previous studies such as Jeon 2012 and Kang 2015 used the keywords technique (Garrett et al. 2005; Evans 2010), which aggregates comments and labels provided by participants for the draw-a-map task and categorizes them according to their features. Although content analysis (e.g. keywords technique) is a necessary first step in conducting a quantitative language attitude study because it effectively shows which dialect regions are heavily associated with certain features, the method also poses limitations because it provides relatively little information for less salient dialect regions since most comments and labels target salient dialect regions. For instance, most categories of perceptual labels in Jeon 2012 are heavily associated with the Gyeongsang dialect, even for opposing features. Moreover, because most features are strongly linked to one or two dialects, it is difficult to determine how closely the rest of the dialects are associated with the features. The present study, therefore, uses a numerical scale in order to collect more information about the ways in which people perceive the less salient dialect regions and how strongly each feature is related to each dialect.

This study examines the ways in which two different generations of “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers perceive dialects in South Korea and aims to answer the following research questions: (1)

how many dialects do “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers believe exist in South Korea, and what do they call the different dialects; (2) what attitudes do they have toward dialects in South Korea; (3) does age affect how they perceive dialects; and (4) do they show signs of linguistics insecurity?

## **2. Research Methods**

### **2.1. Participants**

In order to examine the ways in which “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers perceive language variation in Korea and in order to take into account the ways in which age affects these perceptions, two groups—one composed of four younger native speakers of the Gyeongsang dialect and the other composed of four older native speakers of the Gyeongsang dialect—were recruited to participate in this study. Both groups included three females and one male. The younger speakers were in their 20s (mean age = 27) and the older speakers were in their 50s (mean age = 53). All participants were lifelong residents of the Gyeongsang region and had not lived outside of the region for more than a year. Additionally, all participants had Gyeongsang dialect-speaking parents who were born and raised in the Gyeongsang region. They were all well-educated (some with a college-level education or higher) and identified themselves as Gyeongsang speakers. All participants were interviewed in the Gyeongsang dialect by a female native speaker in her 20s.

### **2.2. Draw a map task**

The first task in this study is a draw-a-map task (Preston & Howe 1987), which examines where native Gyeongsang speakers perceive different regional dialect zones to be located and what those speakers call them. The participants were given a blank map of Korea with province boundaries included (adopted from Jeon 2012) and asked to first mark all places where they believe people speak differently in South Korea and to then provide names of the places they marked.

### 2.3. Language attitude task

The second task is a language attitude task, which analyzes the ways in which the attitudes and beliefs of “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers are associated with dialects in South Korea. For this task, participants were asked to rate the most frequently identified dialects from the draw-a-map task (as determined by the researcher). The seven categories most frequently associated with dialects in Korea that were presented in Jeon 2012 are adopted but also modified for this task. Specifically, the *Manner/Personality* category was changed to *Manner/Pleasantness* so that participants would have a clearer understanding of the feature. Then, the *Intonation/Tone* and the *Accent* categories were combined since Jeon (2012) reports that the results of these two categories were almost identical in her study. For the *Gender Association* category, the *Aegyo* feature was omitted because of its similarity to the *Feminine* feature. Lastly, *Urbanicity* was included as an additional category to identify how strongly people associate each dialect with the *Urban* and *Rural* features. All in all, this study used seven categories. Those categories and their related features are shown in (1) below.

#### (1) Seven categories used for language attitude task

1. Standardness (1: Standard to 4: Non-standard)
2. Manner/Pleasantness (1: Positive to 4: Negative)
3. Intonation/Tone/Accent (1: Soft to 4: Strong)
4. Speed (1: Slow to 4: Fast)
5. Gender Association (1: Feminine to 4: Masculine)
6. Intelligibility (1: Intelligible to 4: Unintelligible)
7. Urbanicity (1: Urban to 4: Rural)

In order to help participants have a better understanding of the features, the main keywords that Jeon (2012) used to code each feature were provided for each category. The keywords are shown in Table (1) below.

Table (1) Keywords used for language attitude task (adopted from Jeon 2012)

Categories	Features	Keywords
Standardness	Standard	standard language, speech of popular media, mainstream, cultured, educated, academic, professional, official, correct
	Non-Standard	different from standard, substandard, illiterate, uncultured, uneducated, incorrect
Manner/ Pleasantness	Positive	pleasant, honest, high-class, friendly, attractive, popular, impressive, rich
	Negative	unpleasant, unintelligent, lazy, clumsy, stingy, unfriendly, unattractive, rude, annoying
Intonation/ Tone/Accent	Strong Intonation/ Tone/Accent	strong, severe, noticeable, wavy, high and low, up and down, accent
Speed	Slow	slow, drawl, drawn out, takes a long time to speak
	Fast	Fast, short, hurried, like lightning
Gender Association	Feminine	cute, winsome, attractive, soft, smooth
	Masculine	tough, loud, crude, aggressive, blunt
Intelligibility	Unintelligible	Foreign, can't/difficult to understand, doesn't sound like Korean, words you don't know or will hear for the first time, like a different language
Urbanicity	Urban	sounds like it is spoken in urban areas
	Rural	sounds like it is spoken in rural areas

Participants were presented one category at a time (along with its associated keywords) so that they could clearly understand the features of the category. After each category and the associated keywords were given, participants were asked to rate each dialect on a scale of one to four. This process was repeated consistently across all seven categories.

#### 2.4. Follow-up interview

During both the draw-a-map and language attitude tasks, qualitative data were also collected via follow-up interviews in order to understand participants' intentions more clearly. For the draw-a-map task, participants were interviewed about the places they marked on the map, and for the language attitude task, they were interviewed about the scores they provided for each dialect. The comments they made about the dialects in South Korea will be discussed in the results and discussion section.

## **2.5. Demographic questions**

Once each participant completed the two tasks, they were asked to answer several demographic questions about their birth year, sex, educational background, dialect spoken, dialect of their parents, place lived outside of the Gyeongsang region, total time spent living outside of the Gyeongsang region, and their self-identity with a dialect.

## **3. Results and discussion**

### **3.1. Draw-a-map task**

The results show that participants divided the different speech zones mostly based on province or city boundaries and named the speech zones according to the corresponding province or city names. Similar to Jeon (2012), the most frequently identified dialects names were the six dialects associated with the provinces in South Korea: Seoul/Gyeonggi, Chungcheong, Gangwon, Gyeongsang, Jeolla, and Jeju dialects. Interestingly, all participants identified these six dialects, and most of them also mentioned dialectal differences within the Gyeongsang region. They either subdivided the Gyeongsang region into North and South or identified several cities where people speak differently. The most frequently mentioned city names were Daegu and Busan, the largest cities in the North and South Gyeongsang areas, respectively. Some participants mentioned more than five different cities in the Gyeongsang region where they believed people to speak differently. During the follow-up interview, they reported that they could notice the differences when they interact with people from the cities; however, they did not recognize them as distinct dialects. Although some participants perceived that people speak differently in some cities, they all agreed that the difference among cities simply reflects a variation within the Gyeongsang dialect. Some participants also reported that the Gyeongsang dialect seems to have greater variation than other dialects.

A few participants also mentioned that there is a dialectal difference within the Jeolla and/or Chungchung regions, but no one could specify the areas in which the differences exist. During the follow-up interviews, most participants mentioned limited knowledge about other dialects. Some participants also identified dialectal differences between Seoul (the capital city of South Korea) and the Gyeonggi region (the areas surrounding Seoul), but they generally agreed that people speak very similarly in these areas. It seems that participants generally have clearer ideas about dialectal differences in the Gyeongsang region than about other regions because they were born and raised in the Gyeongsang region.

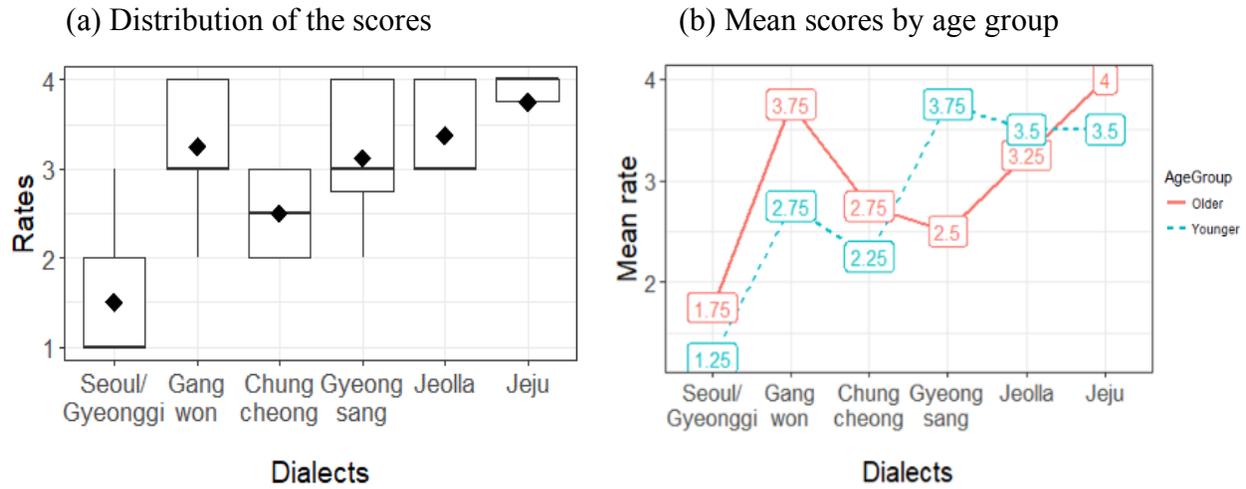
### **3.2. Language attitude task**

For the language attitude task, the six dialects that every participant identified were selected (i.e. Seoul/Gyeonggi, Chungcheong, Gangwon, Gyeongsang, Jeolla, and Jeju dialects), and participants were asked to rate each dialect according to the seven categories. The results of each category are presented below.

#### **3.2.1. *Standardness***

The *Standardness* category asked participants to rate how close each dialect is to Standard Korean (1: *Standard* to 4: *Non-standard*). Figure (2) illustrates the results of *Standardness* data from the present study. The boxplots in (2a) show the distribution of scores by region in the *Standardness* category, and the line graph in (2b) depicts the mean scores divided by age group. For the boxplots, the solid lines inside of the boxes mark the midpoints of the data (median), and the diamond shapes in the boxes represent the means. The boxes indicate the distributions of the middle 50% scores for the data, and the lines extending from the boxes indicate the minimum and maximum values of the scores. For the line graph, the solid line represents the mean scores of the older speakers, and the dotted line shows the mean scores of the younger speakers.

Figure (2) *Standardness* (1: *Standard* to 4: *Non-standard*)



The results reveal that participants perceived the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect to be the most standard; however, even if participants generally agreed that the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect was very close to standard, they did not perfectly identify it with Standard Korean. During the follow-up interviews, some participants commented that the Seoul/Gyeongsang dialect also has some linguistic characteristics that would not be considered standard. Preston (1999b) includes a similar observation in his folk typology of dialectal variation. He asserts that a standard exists in people's minds and that people can speak more or less standard, but no one actually speaks the standard besides (maybe) news broadcasters.

In addition, it seems that Gyeongsang speakers generally consider most regional dialects to be non-standard. That is, although Chuncheong dialect was perceived to be somewhat standard, Gangwon, Jeolla, and Jeju dialects as well as Gyeongsang dialect were closely linked to the feature *Non-standard*. Among them, the Jeju dialect was perceived to be least standard, which differs from the results in Long & Yim (2002) and Jeon (2012) that show non-standard labels to be heavily associated with the Gyeongsang dialect. During the follow-up interview, some participants said that the Jeju dialect cannot be considered standard because its vocabulary and sentence endings

are so different from Standard Korean that it sounds like a foreign language. They explained that the Jeju dialect is even unintelligible, thereby suggesting that unintelligibility strongly affects the result.

The mean differences between the younger and older speakers show that the perceptions of the two generations are somewhat different, especially regarding their home dialect. Younger speakers perceived the Gyeongsang dialect to be least standard, while older speakers perceived it to be second most standard. During the follow-up interviews, some older speakers mentioned that even if the Gyeongsang dialect has a strong accent, people have little difficulty communicating because its vocabulary and sentence endings are not very different from Standard Korean as compared to other dialects. Unlike the older speakers, however, some younger speakers reported that they rated the Gyeongsang dialect least standard because of its strong intonation. It appears that older speakers who have lived in the Gyeongsang region longer generally feel more pride and affection toward their home dialect than younger speakers.

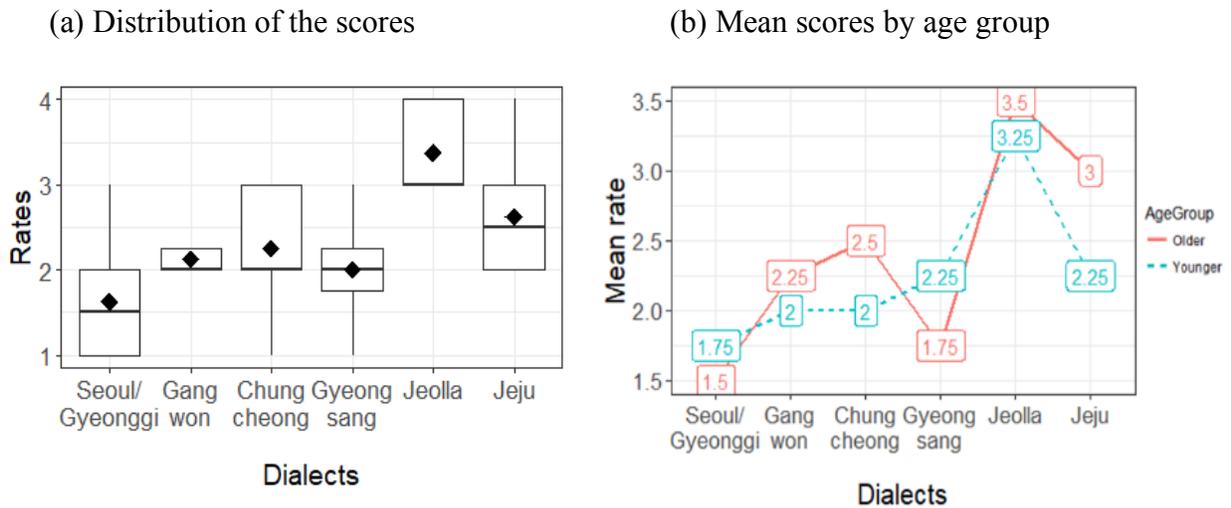
Additionally, younger speakers perceived the Chungcheong and Gangwon dialects spoken near the Seoul/Gyeonggi region to be more standard, whereas they perceived the dialects spoken in the regions relatively far from Seoul/Gyeonggi to be less standard. As a result, it seems that proximity to Seoul plays an important role in younger speakers' perceptions of dialects; however, in contrast to younger speakers, older speakers perceived the Gangwon and Jeju dialects to be least standard. During the follow-up interview, some older participants mentioned that the Gangwon dialect sounds like a language spoken in North Korea because of its accent, and the Jeju dialect sounds like a foreign language because of its unfamiliar lexical items, different sentence endings, and unintelligibility. As opposed to younger speakers, older speakers provided specific examples of

unique linguistic characteristics among the dialects. It seems that the older participants have more knowledge about different characteristics of the dialects in Korea.

### 3.2.2. Manner/Pleasantness

The results of the *Manner/Pleasantness* category show how Gyeongsang speakers positively (pleasantly) or negatively (unpleasantly) perceive the dialects spoken in South Korea. Figure (3a) displays the distribution of the data and (3b) presents the mean scores of the younger and older groups.

Figure (3) *Manner/Pleasantness* (1: Positive to 4: Negative)



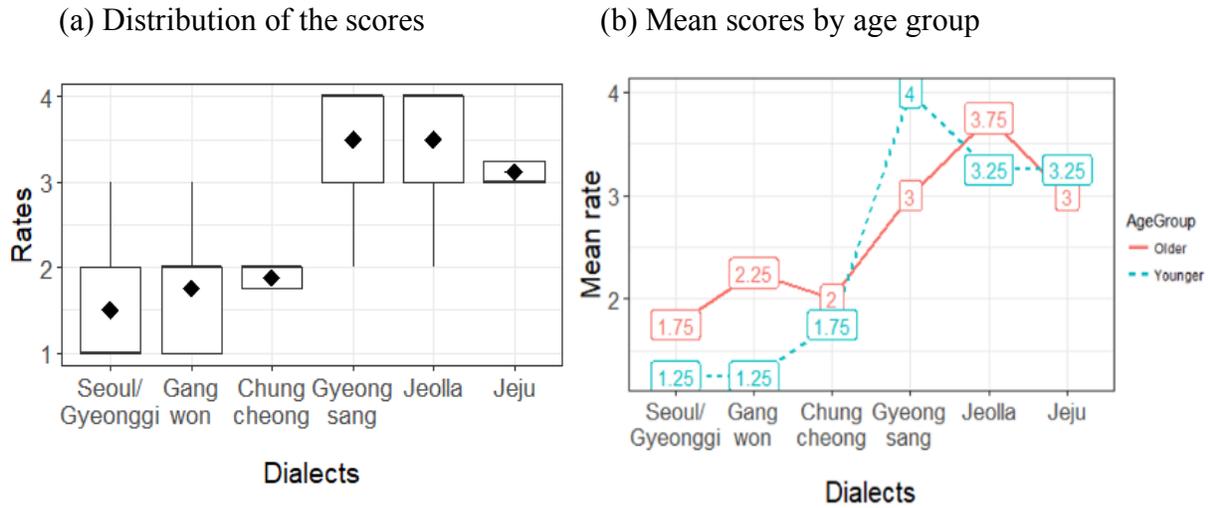
The overall results exhibit that participants judged the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect most positively and their home dialect second most positively. This differs from the results presented by Long & Yim (2002) and Yim (2013), in which Gyeongsang expatriates rated their home dialect more negatively than other regional dialects. The difference between the findings of the present study and those of Long & Yim (2002) and Yim (2013) provides evidence that the attitudes toward their home dialect is different between “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers and Gyeongsang expatriates. Although participants in the present study perceived most of the dialects in South Korea quite positively, the

Jeolla dialect was rated exceptionally negatively. Participants' negative rating of the Jeolla dialect corresponds with the results of Kang (2015), which show the negative emotional reactions of "authentic" Gyeongsang speakers toward the speech of Jeolla. Some participants in Kang's study revealed extremely negative emotional reactions towards the Jeolla dialect, writing labels such as "I don't want to even think about the dialect because it's disgusting," "It makes me want to throw up," "I'm burning with anger," and "I just don't like them, no reasons." Kang (2015) asserts that the regionalism between the Gyeongsang and Jeolla regions probably leads to this feeling of enmity and hostility. During the follow-up interviews of this present study, some participants also made negative comments about the Jeolla dialect, claiming that Jeolla dialect sounds like a language used by gangsters and that it is not pleasant to listen to. No big difference was observed between the group results, but older speakers generally consider Seoul/Gyeonggi and their home dialects more positively and the other dialects more negatively than younger speakers. This may show that older speakers feel stronger affection toward their home dialect.

### **3.2.3. *Intonation, Tone, and Accent***

The *Intonation, Tone, and Accent* category enables us to examine how strongly participants perceive intonation, tone, and accent in each dialect in South Korea. Figure (4a) shows the distribution of the overall scores and (4b) presents the mean scores of the two distinct age groups.

Figure (4) *Intonation, Tone and Accent* (1: *Soft* to 4: *Strong*)



The results reveal that participants considered the Seoul/Gyeonggi, Gangwon, and Chungcheong dialects to have soft intonation, tone, and accent, while the Jeolla, Gyeongang, and Jeju dialects have strong intonation, tone, and accent. This result parallels that of Jeon (2012), who found that participants associated *Strong Intonation/Tone* with the Gyeongang region and *Strong Accent* with the Jeolla, Gyeongang, and Jeju regions. From the follow-up interviews, we notice that the participants differentiate *Intonation/Tone* from *Accent*. Some participants mentioned that the Gyeongang dialect does not have a strong accent, but it does have strong intonation and tone, while the Jeolla and Jeju dialects do not have strong intonations and tones, but have strong accents.

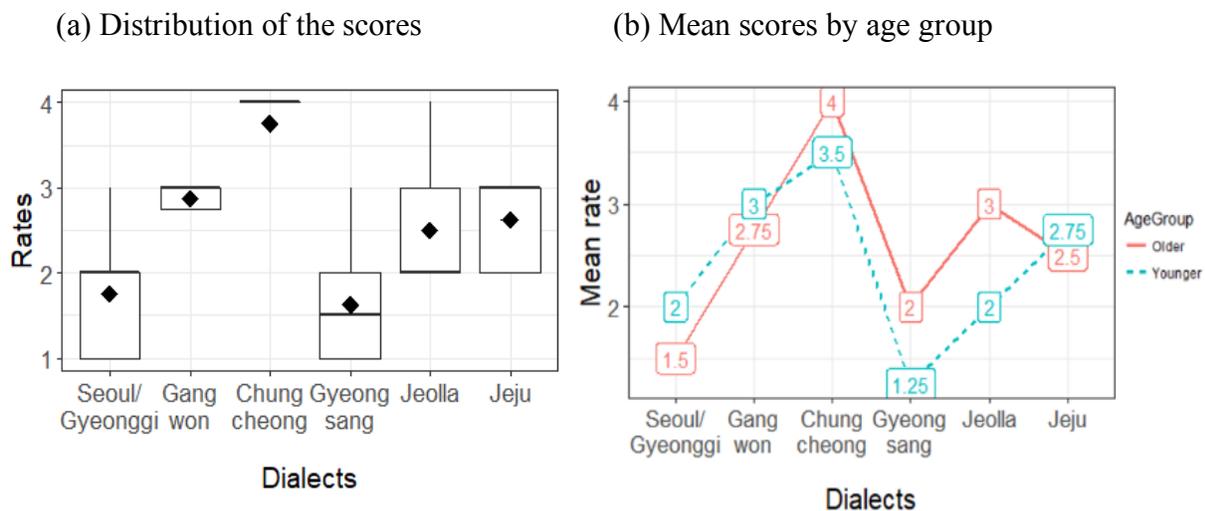
When analyzing the results of the younger and older groups, it becomes apparent that the older group perceived their own dialect to have weaker intonation, tone, and accent, while they perceived other dialects to have stronger intonation, tone, and accent as compared the younger group. During the follow-up interviews, an older participant said that all dialects have their own accent, though they are different in intensity. Another participant asserted that the Jeolla dialect has a particularly strong accent, and the Gangwon and Jeju dialects also have a considerable accent for those who use it natively. Some participants presented specific examples of each dialect. Unlike young

speakers, some of the older speakers gave specific examples of the accents of each dialect, which again suggests that they have more detailed knowledge of dialects in South Korea than younger speakers.

### 3.2.4. Speed

The *Speed* category asked participants to rate how fast or slow they perceive the dialects in South Korea to be spoken. The boxplots in (5a) chart the distribution of scores by region, and the line graph in (5b) depicts the mean scores divided by age group.

Figure (5) *Speed* (1: *Slow* to 4: *Fast*)



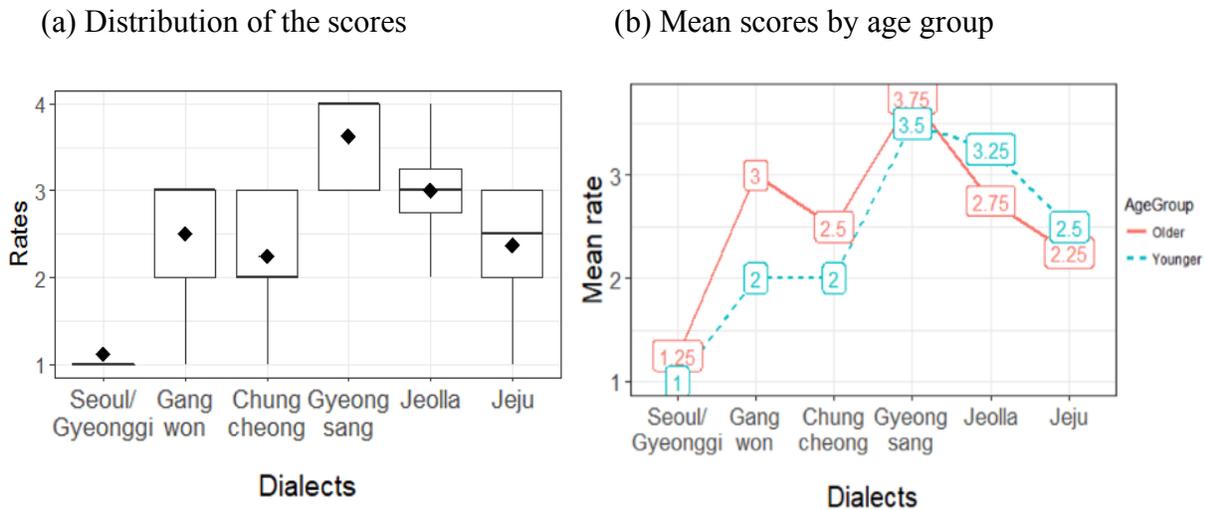
The results present that both the Seoul/Gyeonggi and Gyeongsang dialects were perceived to be fast, while the Chungcheong dialect was perceived to be very slow. The Gangwon, Jeolla, and Jeju dialects were perceived to have a moderate speech rate. These results are somewhat similar to the previous literature, such as Jeon (2012) and Kang (2015), which found that the Gyeongsang dialect is strongly associated with the feature *Fast* while the Chungcheong dialect is strongly associated with the feature *Slow*. However, there is one notable difference in the present study as compared to previous studies. Participants in the present study perceived the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect to be

very fast like the Gyeongsang dialect, while participants in previous studies never associated the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect with the feature *Fast*. It seems that “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers display affection for their dialect by equating their dialect with the Seoul/Gyeongsang dialect. There was no significant difference observed between the two age groups, but compared to older speakers, younger speakers tend to perceive the Jeolla and Gyeongsang dialects as faster.

### 3.2.5. Gender Association

The *Gender Association* category enables us to investigate which gender feature each dialect is associated with and how strongly they are related in the perceptions of “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers. The box plots in Figure (6b) present the distribution of the data, and the line graph in (6b) pictures the differences in mean scores between the age groups.

Figure (6) *Gender Association* (1: *Feminine* to 4: *Masculine*)



The mean scores indicate that the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect was very strongly linked to the feature *Feminine*, while the Gyeongsang dialect was closely linked to the feature *Masculine*. The Gangwon, Chungcheong, and Jeju dialects do not seem to be associated with either *Feminine* or *Masculine*. In Jeon (2012), the Gyeongsang dialect is heavily associated with both the features

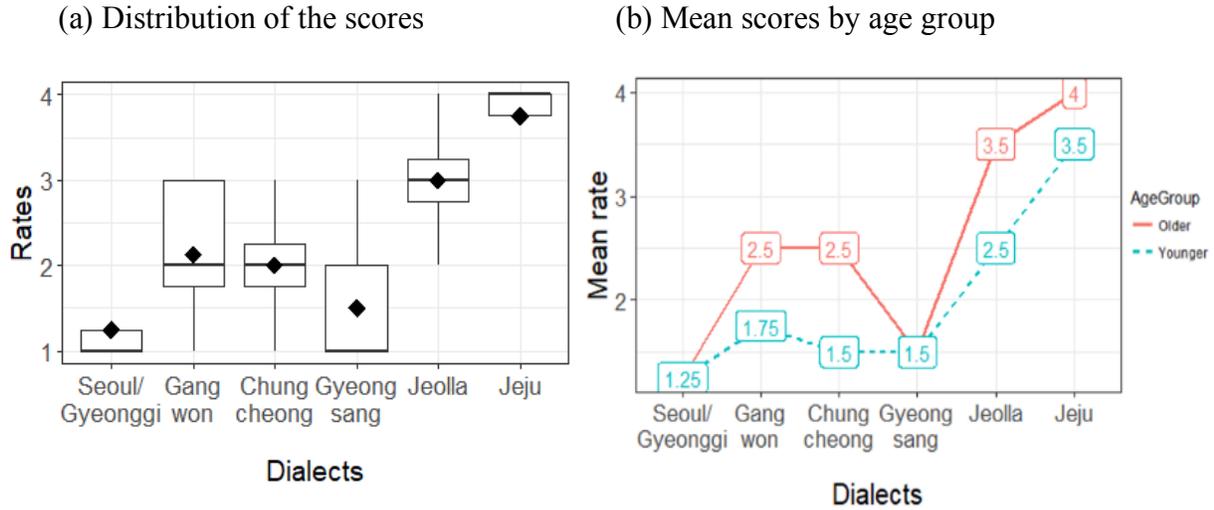
*Feminine* and *Masculine*. Participants of her research perceived that speech of female Gyeongsang speakers to be very feminine (cute) and the speech of male speakers to be masculine (tough). In contrast, the results of the present study reveal that “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers perceive their dialect mostly to be masculine. Some participants in this study mentioned that the Gyeongsang dialect might sound a bit rough and aggressive, though it is not intended to sound that way. These results reflect a mixture of Gyeongsang speakers’ dialect inferiority complex and affection for their dialect as shown in Kang (2015).

One difference that arose between the age groups is that older speakers perceived the Gangwon dialect to be more masculine than younger speakers perceived it to be. Older speakers most likely perceptually link the Gangwon dialect to the speech of North Korea, which was perceived to be aggressive, cold, stiff, and robotlike in Kang (2015). On the other hand, younger speakers, who are less familiar with the speech of North Korea, seem to link the Gangwon dialect to the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect because of their spatial proximity.

### **3.2.6. *Intelligibility***

The *Intelligibility* category investigates how easily Gyeongsang speakers understand the dialects in South Korea. Figure (7a) shows the distribution of the data, and (7b) depicts mean scores of the younger and older groups.

Figure (7) *Intelligibility* (1: *Intelligible* to 4: *Unintelligible*)

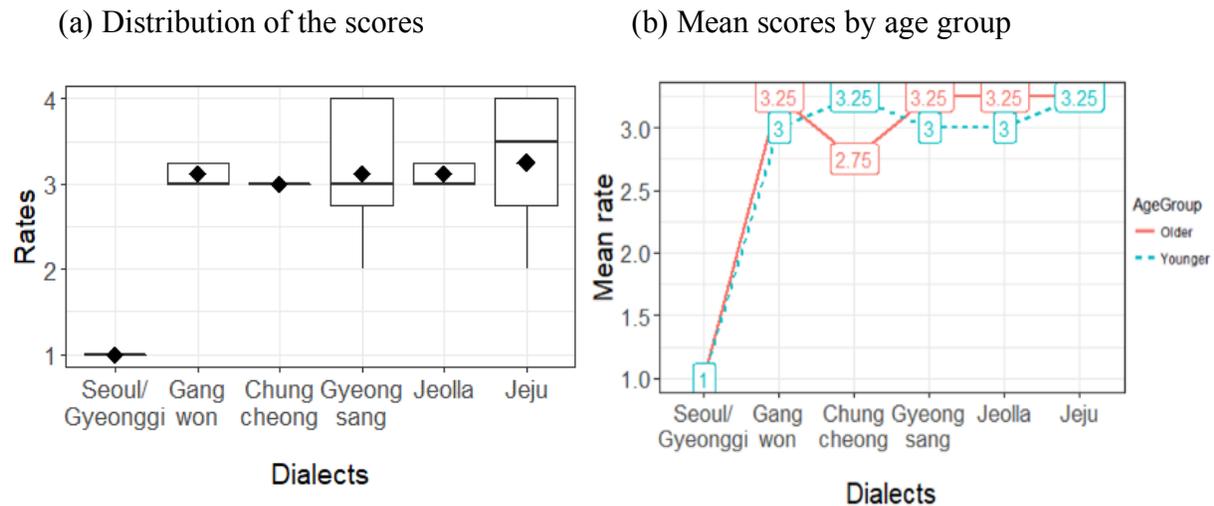


Interestingly, both younger and older participants perceived the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect to be the most intelligible, even compared to their own dialect. This is most likely because the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect is considered to be very close to the Standard Korean that participants are exposed to every day through television, radio, and various other media. The Gyeongsang dialect was rated as second most intelligible, and the mean scores are very similar to those of the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect. The Chungcheong and Gangwon dialects, which are spoken near the Seoul/Gyeonggi region, were also perceived as intelligible, especially for younger speakers. Participants closely linked the Jeolla and Jeju dialects to the feature *Unintelligible* and perceived the Jeju dialect as least intelligible. Although the unintelligibility of the Jeolla dialect is newly observed in this study. During the follow-up interview, some participants mentioned that the Jeju dialect sounds very unintelligible and sometimes even sounds like a foreign language, while the Jeolla dialect is only somewhat unintelligible because of its strong accent. The group results reveal that the older speakers generally perceived other regional dialects in South Korea to be less intelligible than the younger speakers.

### 3.2.7. Urbanicity

The most striking results were found in the *Urbanicity* category, which asked participants to rate each dialect as *Urban* or *Rural*. The boxplots in (8a) outline the distribution of scores by region, and the line graph in (8b) detail the mean scores divided by age group.

Figure (8) *Urbanicity* (1: *Urban* to 4: *Rural*)



Notably, every participant judged the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect to be very urban, making Seoul/Gyeonggi the only dialect to be associated with urbanity. These results seem related to the fact that the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect is considered to be Standard Korean. Regardless of the degree of urbanization in the regions, all regional dialects were perceived to be very rural with little difference in the mean scores. No big difference arose in the group results, and during the follow-up interview, most participants said that all dialects except for the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect sound a little rustic.

## 4. Summary and general discussion

The results of the draw-a-map task reveal that participants most frequently perceived six different dialects in South Korea, which followed the provincial boundaries and were named after the

provinces. Since participants were “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers, they were aware of the detailed dialectal differences within the Gyeongsang region. Although they mentioned several cities where they thought people speak differently, they still considered them as part of the Gyeongsang dialect. Some participants also mentioned the existence of the dialectal differences in other regions but could not specify the areas where the differences exist. Participants, therefore, had clearer ideas about dialectal differences within the Gyeongsang region since they have more opportunities to meet with people from the Gyeongsang region.

The results of the language attitude task provide insight into the ways in which attitudes and beliefs are associated with perceived dialects. The most noticeable trend is that “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers evaluated the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect (Standard Korean) very positively. Participants perceived the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect to be most standard, pleasant, soft, intelligible, and urban, while they perceived none of the other local dialects (including their home dialect) as positively. Interestingly, the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect was the only dialect to be perceived as very urban; all the other dialects were perceived to be very rural. The extraordinarily positive perception of the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect seems to be the result of the special status of Standard Korean in South Korea. In South Korea, the National Institute of Korean Language acts as a language regulator, which manages and controls Korean for language coherence. This institution has given overwhelming authority to Standard Korean by designating it as the language of education (Lee 2017). After independence from Japanese rule in 1945, Standard Korean became the official language of Korea, and it must be used not only in educational fields but also in all official documents and media. The Korean language curriculum in the past explicitly stated that the use of dialects should be consciously avoided (Nam 2010), and thus teachers and people with media-related jobs had to learn Standard Korean to work in their fields (Lee 2017). Because of the

absolute authority of Standard Korean, people using local dialects were regarded as uneducated, rural, or uncultured (Lee 2017).

Although participants did not judge their home dialect as positively as they did the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect, participants rated their home dialect more positively than other dialects. The Gyeongsang dialect was perceived to be most pleasant and intelligible among the regional dialects and more standard than most of the other regional dialects. This finding differs somewhat from the results of previous literature—such as Yim (1993), Long & Yim (2002), and a pilot study of Jeon (2012)—where Gyeongsang expatriates rated their home dialect fairly negatively in terms of pleasantness, intelligibility, pride, and likeability. The differences provide evidence that self-identity and living location affect Gyeongsang speakers' perceptions of their home dialect. For Gyeongsang speakers who identify themselves as belonging to the Gyeongsang region, the dialect can work positively by providing a common bond. For Gyeongsang expatriates who left their hometowns and are trying to belong to a new community; however, the dialect might act as a negative factor that causes heterogeneity.

Although the negative perception of regional dialects in South Korea has been gradually disappearing after South Korea launched the autonomous local government system in 1988 (Lee 2017), Standard Korean still has linguistic authority, and more than 75% of people want their children to use Standard Korean (National Institute of Korean Language 2015). Because of the negative attention that the regional dialects receive in Korea, local dialect speakers tend to avoid using their home dialect, especially in places like Seoul where Standard Korean is spoken predominantly. Kang 2010, a perceptual dialectology study conducted on speakers of the Chungcheong dialect, finds that around 40% of the participants reported that they had negative experiences when they had a conversation with Standard Korean speakers. Participants reported

that they tried to talk fast and imitate the Seoul dialect because they were often teased by Seoul speakers who would mimic the Chungcheong dialect, call the participants ‘hillbillies (촌놈),’ and make negative comments about the participants’ personalities after noticing that the participants were regional dialect speakers. Kim (2005) also reports that North Korean refugees in South Korea believe that the biggest obstacle to settlement in South Korea is the difference in dialects, even though linguists and experts on inter-Korean relations have confirmed that the languages between South and North Korea are not so different and that South and North Koreans have little difficulty communicating with each other. According to Kim (2006), North Korean refugees feel that they are discriminated against and blatantly ignored when people unwantedly notice that they are from North Korea because of their dialectal differences. In other words, the dialectal differences are not just language-specific because they eventually become a complex problem. Gyeongsang speakers who have salient linguistic differences compared to speakers of the other dialects have a harder time hiding their linguistic identities. This might make Gyeongsang expatriates have less positive attitudes toward their dialect and want to reject the speech style of their home dialect. As a result, the perception of language variation should take into account various aspects, such as situation, environment, attitudes, and social identity.

Another trend the results of the present study depicts is that the Jeolla dialect was perceived very negatively. In fact, participants perceived the Jeolla dialect to be non-standard, unpleasant, strongly accentuated, and unintelligible, revealing that the regionalism between the Gyeongsang and Jeolla regions causes negative perceptions. The Jeju dialect was also considered to be non-standard, accented, and unintelligible. Although both the Jeolla and Jeju dialects tended to be perceived negatively, participants were found to have different attitudes toward these dialects. In the follow-up interviews, participants mainly expressed negative feelings about the Jeolla dialect,

whereas they reported the Jeju dialect less negatively because they felt it to be less familiar and more like a foreign language. The Gangwon and Chungcheong dialects were generally perceived positively. The proximity to Seoul and the increasing use of Standard Korean in these regions (National Institute of Korean Language 2015) seemed to affect the positive perception.

The results of this study also demonstrate that age difference influences how people perceive dialects. In this study, younger speakers tended to perceive the Seoul/Gyeonggi dialect more positively and to evaluate their home dialect more negatively than older speakers. Younger speakers rated their home dialect as least standard, most accentuated, fastest, and most masculine, whereas older speakers rated it as second most standard, second most pleasant, and having a normal accent and normal speed. The results of the follow-up interviews also showed that older speakers have more pride in and affection for their home dialect than younger speakers, which might be because older speakers have lived in the Gyeongsang region much longer than younger speakers. Additionally, although younger speakers generally perceived the Gangwon dialect to be positive, older speakers perceived it to be less positive. Moreover, older speakers perceived the Gangwon dialect to be somewhat similar to the speech of North Korea and found it to be non-standard and masculine.

Previous perceptual dialectology studies on Korean (Long & Yim 2002; Yim 1993) have shown that Gyeongsang expatriates suffer from a “dialect inferiority complex,” which is a severe version of linguistic insecurity (Labov 1972). However, the results of this present study reveal that “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers generally show positive attitudes toward their own dialect. Although they show some degree of linguistic insecurity by perceiving their home dialect less positively than Standard Korean, the degree of linguistic insecurity was not serious since they perceived their home dialect more positively than other regional dialects. The perceptual

differences between “authentic” Gyeongsang speakers and Gyeongsang expatriates suggest that people’s self-identity and living location influence their perception of a dialect.

## 5. Conclusion

Previous perceptual dialectology and language attitude studies on Korean have shown that Gyeongsang speakers display signs of linguistic insecurity and suffer from a dialect inferiority complex; however, participants of these studies were Gyeongsang speakers living outside of Gyeongsang regions. The results of the present study reveal that Gyeongsang speakers living in Gyeongsang regions show positive attitudes toward their dialect. Although they judge their dialect less positively than Standard Korean, it is due to the extraordinary authority of Standard Korean in South Korea, and they generally perceive their dialect to be more positive than other regional dialects. This tendency was more strongly depicted among older speakers. The perceptual difference between Gyeongsang speakers living outside of the Gyeongsang regions and those living in the Gyeongsang regions suggest that people’s self-identity and living location influence their perception of a dialect.

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