

# The Structure and Phonology of Mimetic Words in Korean and Japanese

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## I. Introduction

One of the most characteristic features of both Korean and Japanese languages is the extensive use of impressionistic mimetic words to add subtlety and extend the expressive range of everyday speech. Indeed, it is often frustrating to Korean and Japanese speakers of English that the English language seems to make it so difficult to introduce the shades of meaning and nuance one might want to express. Of course all languages, including English, do contain mimetic or onomatopoeic words, but when compared with the extensive and systematic use of mimesis in Korean and Japanese they seem poverty-stricken. S.E. Martin<sup>1)</sup> has made the interesting observation that the use of such impressionistic words in Korean corresponds "to the use of expressive gestures by speakers of European languages."

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1) Samuel E. Martin; *A Reference Grammar of Japanese*, New Haven : Yale University Press, 1975, pp. 1025.

The subject of sound symbolism has attracted a fair amount of scholarly attention by Korean and Japanese linguists,<sup>2)</sup> but other than Kong-On Kim<sup>3)</sup> none of these have published any work in English. The only Western linguist<sup>4)</sup> to deal analytically with this subject has been Samuel E. Martin, who published one paper on Korean phonetic symbolism over twenty years

- 2) On Korean mimesis see: Cho Kyu-Söl, "Ch'obyong Pusaüi Koch'al" (On Korean Replicated Adverbs), *Ömunhak* vol.3, 1958, pp. 71-95; Nam P'ung-Hyön, "15 Segi Kugöüi Ümsöng Sangjing Yörf'gu" (A Study of Sound Symbolism in 15th Century Korean), *Kugö Yön'gu* vol.13, 1965; Kang Hön-Kyu, "Ümsöng Sangjingwa 'Sense' mit 'Meaning' ui Punhwae Üihan Öhwihwakchang Yön'gu" (A Study of Lexial Extension by Differentiation in Sound Symbolism, Sense and Meaning), *Kugö Kyoyuk* vol.14, 1968, pp. 124-150; I Sung-Nyöng, "Kugö Ümsöng Sangjingnone Taehayö" (On Korean Sound Symbolism), *Önö* vol.3, 1978, pp. 1-18; I Yöng-Hüi, "Chejudo Pangönüi Sangjingö Yön'gu" (A Study of Symbolic Words in the Cheju Island Dialect), MA Thesis, Cheju National University, College of Education, 1982; Aoyama Hideo, "Gendai Chösengo no Giseigo" (Mimesis in Contemporary Korean), *Chösen Gakuhö* vol.65, 1972, pp. 29-118; Aoyama Hideo, "Chösengo no Hasei Gitaigo Shikö" (A Study of Derivative Mimesis in Korean), *Chösen Gakuhö* vol.72, 1974, pp. 1-65.

On Japanese mimesis see: Asano Tsuruko (ed.) *Giongo Gitaigo Jiten*, Tokyo, Kadokawa Shoten, 1978; Amanuma Yasushi, *Giongo Gitaigo Jiten*, Tokyo, Tökyödö, 1974; Shiraishi Daiji (ed.), *Giseigo Gitaigo Kan'yoku Jiten*, Tokyo, Tökyödö, 1982; Ishigaki Yukio, "Giseigo, Gitaigo no Gokösei to Gokei Henka" (Word Structure and Word Form Changes in Mimetic Words), *Gengo Seikatsu*, vol.171, 1965, pp. 30-39; Izumi Kunihisa, "Giseigo Gitaigo no Tokushitsu" (Characteristics of Mimetic Words), in Suzuki Takao (ed.) *Nihongo no Goi to Hyögen*, Tokyo, Taishukan, 1976, pp. 105-151; Kindaiichi Haruhiko, "Giongo Gitaigo Gaisetsu" (Outline of Mimetic Words) in Asano Tsuruko (1978), op.cit., pp. 3-25; Kobayashi Hideo, "Giongo to Giyögo" (Onomatopoeia and Mimetic Words), *Gengo Seikatsu* vol.171, 1965, pp. 18-29; Miyaji Yutaka, "Giongo Gitaigo no Keitairon Shökö" (On the Morphology of Mimetic Words), *Kokugogaku*, vol.115, 1978, pp. 33-39; Suzuki Masako, "Mukashi no Giseigo Gitaigo" (Mimetic Words of the Past), *Gengo Seikatsu*, vol.171, 1965, pp. 60-65; Tsuzuki Tsuneo, "Högen no Giseigo Gitaigo" (Mimetic Words in Dialects), *Gengo Seikatsu*, vol.171, 1965, pp. 40-49; Uehara Yukio, "Onsei no Hyöshösei ni tsuite" (On the Expressiveness of Linguistic Sounds), *Gengo Seikatsu*, vol.171, 1965, pp. 66-70.

- 3) Kim, Kong-On; "Sound Symbolism in Korean," *Journal of Linguistics* vol.13, 1977, pp. 67-75.
- 4) The French linguist Henri Frei published a paper in 1970 ("Cinquante Onomatopées Japonaises," in David Cohen, ed. *Mélanges Marcel Cohen*, The Hague, Mouton, 1970, pp. 359-367) which examined fifty Japanese mimetic words, but his concern was with the question of universal categories of sound symbolism and experiments with French-speaking students to determine whether they could correctly guess the meaning of the Japanese words. He was not concerned with the system of sound symbolism in the Japanese language itself.

ago,<sup>5)</sup> and discussed Japanese mimesis briefly in his *Reference Grammar of Japanese*.<sup>6)</sup> In none of these studies, whether in Korean, Japanese or English, has any comparison between the phonetic symbolism of the two languages been attempted.

In the present paper I will focus on the striking similarities between the two systems of mimesis in their structure and phonological variations, which may well indicate a genetic relationship between the two languages.

## II. Mimetic Word Forms

In both Korean and Japanese there are specific forms utilized for mimetic words, as well as systematic use of specific phonological features to create related sets of words and extend the range of connotative meanings.

All mimetic words are composed of a *base form* of one or two syllables, to which may be added various semantic *extenders*. These word forms are further modified by the use of systematic patterns of *consonant alternation* and *vowel alternation*.

### 1. Base Form

Two types of mimetic base form can be distinguished: (1) those which have a purely *mimetic* origin, without any etymological relationship to other standard lexemes; and (2) those which are *derivative*, primarily from verb or adjective stems. In both Korean and Japanese the first type predominate, but the second type are also significant and are formed by analogy utilizing the formal structure of the mimetic system.

Verbal and adjectival forms may in turn be generated from purely mimetic bases: in Korean by the affixation of *-kōrida*, *-taeda* and *-ida*, and the postnominal adjective *hada*; and by the use of *-tsuku*, *-meku* and *suru* in Japanese.

### 2. Extension of Mimetic Words

#### A. Suffixes in Korean

Korean utilizes a large number of one- or two-syllable suffixes as mimetic extenders. Cho<sup>7)</sup> lists fourteen endings (with their variants by consonant and vowel alternation), and I have identified more than thirty others. These various suffixes, as well as the syllable-final consonants, carry some degree of meaning, but more work must be done to identify all Korean mimetic suffixes and precisely determine their exact semantic range.

To take one example, a Korean speaker can build on the base /cal-/ by choosing any of several related suffixes to form the following words, all expressive of the sound or action "click": *calgadak*, *calgak*, *calgadang*, *calgang*, *calgūrang*. The first pair of words conveys a

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5) Samuel E. Martin; "Phonetic Symbolism in Korean," *American Studies in Altaic Linguistics*, Uralic and Altaic Series, vol.3, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962, pp. 177-189.

6) Martin (1975); op.cit.

7) Cho Kyu-sōl (1958); op.cit., p. 69

sharper or more abrupt sound or action, while the other three suggest a more metallic or reverberating quality. The disyllabic endings imply a more drawn-out action causing the sound, while the monosyllabic endings give the impression of a quicker completion of the sound or action.

With the use of a different suffix-initial mora an entirely different set of meanings is generated: *calbadak*, *calbak*, *calbadang*, *calbang*. Here the common meaning is "splash, plop." The first two words convey the impression of something falling into shallow water or mud, while with the second pair the depth of water is deeper.

### B. Extenders in Japanese

The actual number of extenders utilized in Japanese mimetic constructions is quite small compared to Korean, although they entail more complex processes than simple suffixation. These are (1) vowel lengthening, (2) glottalization, (3) gemination of medial obstruents and sibilants, (4) insertion of a postvocalic nasal /-n/ as either infix or suffix, and (5) suffixation of /-ri/. Vowel lengthening, glottalization and the addition of postvocalic /-n/ can be applied to either monosyllabic or disyllabic base forms, but the suffix /-ri/ cannot be used with a monosyllabic base.

Vowel lengthening is regularly utilized to express a greater duration of the sound or situation, or a broader expanse or volume of the condition being described. This feature may be applied to either monosyllable or disyllable base forms, but it may not be applied to both syllables of a disyllabic base.

Glottalization and gemination are often treated as a single device, but for comparative purposes it is perhaps more useful to treat them separately. Glottalization of a mimetic word has two main functions. At the end of a non-lengthened vowel it has the effect of expressing the quality of suddenness or abruptness, while it enhances the expansive quality when attached to a word with a lengthened vowel. When such a word is used alone as an exclamation or descriptively this feature is realized as a glottal stop. In other cases, as when used adverbially, it is followed by an obligatory particle /-to/, and then this feature is realized by the gemination of the following consonant /-t/. (*pa'* (open) suddenly. *pā* widely, broadly. *pā<sup>2</sup>-to* /pātto/ vastly. *pika'* flash! *pika'-to* /pikatto/ with a flash.)

Gemination of medial obstruents or sibilants functions to intensify the word or to convey the impression of sudden change or speed.

The addition of a postvocalic /-n/ is often utilized to convey either a reverberating or echoing quality to phonomimes, or a lingering quality to phenomimes. The suffix /-ri/ seems to convey a quality of completion. This suffix is often used together with gemination to express the completedness of a single act or an accomplished state. (*korori* with a roll. *nikkori* with a sudden smile.)

### C. Base Replication

In both Korean and Japanese replication is utilized as a device for semantic extension in mimetic constructions. Single forms (base with or without other extenders) in both languages convey the connotation of a single or limited sound/action or a temporary state, while replicated forms suggest a repetitious sound/action or continuing state. (J. *nikkori* with a smile. *niko-niko* smilingly. K. *singgüre* with a smile. *singgül-singgül* smilingly.)

Replicated forms may be of one, two or three syllables, with disyllables predominating in both languages. Simple monosyllable bases are commonly replicated in Korean (*chak-chak* clingingly, *col-jol* flowing smoothly), but in Japanese this is very uncommon without the application of postvocalic /-n/ and/or vowel lengthening (*shan-shan* actively; jinglingly. *shā-shā* flowing smoothly). Replicated trisyllables in both languages are found to be composed of base plus suffix (K. *ccalkkadak-ccalkkadak* clicking; slapping on. J. *shanari-shanari* gracefully, mincingly).

Replicated forms are primarily of a symmetrical AA or ABAB type, but in both languages disparate forms may occur as well. These may utilize two separate, but sometimes semantically related, mimetic bases (K. *singgŭl-bōnggŭl* smilingly. J. *chira-hora* sparsely, sporadically), or the modification of vowels or consonants in the reduplicated part (K. *ōngk'ŭm-sōngk'ŭm* with long strides. J. *kara-koro* clip-clop).

### 3. Phonological Alternation

Both Korean and Japanese languages make use of systematic patterns of phonological alternation to extend the connotational range of mimetic words (and in Korean this often applies to non-mimetic items as well). Two regular systems of phonological alternation exist in both languages: *vowel alternation* and *consonant alternation*. These two processes in Korean have been fairly well analyzed, but their Japanese counterparts have not yet attracted sufficient attention. Since both patterns are less pronounced in Japanese, I feel a comparison with the Korean language would help clarify their structure and parameters.

#### A. Vowel Alternation

Korean has a well-defined system of vowel harmony, in which vowels are traditionally grouped into two categories, "bright" and "dark," with one "neutral" vowel in between. Since the loss of the Middle Korean vowel /ʌ/ this system has become less "symmetrical," but still very much in evidence. The vowel harmony system of Middle Korean seems to have been as follows.<sup>8)</sup>

"Bright"	"Neutral"	"Dark"
ㅏ /a/		ㅓ /ō/
ㅓ /ʌ/	ㅣ /i/	ㅡ /ü/
ㅗ /o/		ㅜ /u/

The use of vowel alternation has been termed by Kim<sup>9)</sup> "diminutive shift," since the connotations associated with "bright" vowels include lightness, smallness and quickness, while the "dark" vowels carry implications of darkness, heaviness, largeness and ponderousness. Martin<sup>10)</sup> has termed these two categories "light isotopes" and "heavy isotopes", and identifies /a/, /ae/, /o/ and /oe/ as "light," /ō/, /e/ and /u/ as "heavy," and /ü/ and /i/ as either heavy or neutral.

8) Hō Ung; *Kugō Umunhak*, Seoul, Chongŭmsa, 1976.

9) Kim Kong-On (1977); op.cit., p. 69.

10) Martin (1962); op.cit., p. 183.

The majority of Korean mimetic words can be found in sets of “bright” and “dark” variants according to this system of symbolic vowel alternation. The full range of alternate pairs utilized in modern Korean mimetic constructions is as follows:<sup>11</sup> a-o (ㅏ-ㅓ), a-ü (ㅏ-ㅟ), a-i (ㅏ-ㅣ), ae-e (ㅏ-ㅓ), ae-üi (ㅏ-ㅟ), ae-i (ㅏ-ㅣ), ya-yö (ㅑ-ㅕ), ya-i (ㅑ-ㅣ), wa-wö (ㅘ-ㅚ), wae-we (ㅘ-ㅚ), o-u (ㅓ-ㅜ), oe-wi (ㅓ-ㅜ), yo-yu (ㅛ-ㅠ). Utilization of this system produces such word pairs as: *angh' üm-sangk' üm* (with short, brisk steps) *öngk' üm-söngk' üm* (with long strides); *k'ol-k'ol* (sound of a child sleeping peacefully) *k'ul-k'ul* (snoring of an adult).

Japanese scholars have long recognized a relative diminutive shift in their language as well, but instead of looking for vowel alternate pairs they have attempted to identify a total range of “semantic volume” on a single continuum. With a fair degree of success a “smallness-largeness” scale has been identified.<sup>12</sup> The two poles of this continuum seem to be unanimously agreed upon as /i/ for the “small” end and /o/ - /a/ for the “large” end (i-x-x-o-a). There is disagreement, however, concerning the relative positions of /e/ and /u/, which are seen to be somewhat “unsteady” in relation to each other, with two possibilities resulting: (i-e-u-o-a) and (i-u-e-o-a).

If, however, we consider the fact that Old Japanese had a system of vowel harmony, which has since been lost along with several earlier vowel forms, and if we compare the existing patterns of symbolic vowel alternation found in Japanese mimetic words with that of Korean, we may see that, instead of attempting to establish a single continuum of “semantic volume,” it might be much more fruitful to identify pairs of vowels on the basis of a diminutive shift.

The most common vowel alternation pair in Japanese mimesis seems to be /a/ - /o/, with such word pairs as the following:

*bara-bara/boro-boro* scatteringly, peltingly, in drops

*kari-kari/kori-kori* crisply, crunchingly

*beta-beta/beto-beto* stickily, clammily

A second common pair is /o/ - /u/:

*botsu-botsu/butsu-butsu* pimples, spotted

*gocha-gocha/gucha-gucha* in confusion, in disorder

*koro-koro/kuru-kuru* rolling, rattling / spinning, twirling

Less common, but still significant, is the pair /a/ - /i/:

*yota-yota/yochi-yochi* totteringly (adult/child)

*kara-kara/kari-kari* clatteringly / crunchingly

*kacha-kacha/kichi-kichi* rattling / creaking

The vowel /e/ seems to stand pretty much alone and is not normally to be found in paired form. This vowel carries a strong and singular connotation of its own, and can be found predominantly in words with a negative value: (*dere-dere* in a slovenly manner. *deko-deko*

11) Hō Ung (1976); op.cit., pp. 534-536.

12) Kobayashi Hideo; “Kokugo Shōchō-on no Kenkyū,” (orig. 1933), *Gengo Bigaku*, Kobayashi Hideo Chosakushū, 5, Tokyo, Misuzu, 1976, pp. 261-312. Uehara (1965); op.cit., pp. 66-70.

bulgingly; gaudily. *kerā-kerā* with shrill raucus laughter. *ken-ken* curtly, bluntly. *gē-gē* retching).

If this phoneme were to be considered the "neutral" vowel of an older system of vowel harmony, this might help clarify its seemingly "unsteady" position in any ranking system relative to other vowels. More work must be done in this area in order to map the full range of vowel alternation in Japanese mimesis, but it can be seen even with the preliminary data we now have that a system very similar to that of Korean word isotopes does exist.<sup>13)</sup>

### B. Consonant Alternation

The connotative range of mimetic words in both Korean and Japanese is regularly extended by a second device as well, that of consonant alternation. This system, referred to by Kim<sup>14)</sup> as "emphatic shift," has been thoroughly examined in Korean and to a lesser degree has been noted for Japanese. In Korean it has the effect of increasing the intensity of the word or the quality portrayed, while in Japanese the effect is rather closer to the diminutive shift with its associated connotations of heavy-light variation. Thus, in Korean there is a clear distinction in the functions of vowel alternation and consonant alternation, and their attributes are not interchangeable, while in the Japanese case this differentiation in meaning is not so clearly evident.

Consonant alternation in Korean involves the shift from the lenis or simple consonant, to its fortis or reinforced form, and to its aspirated form. Martin<sup>15)</sup> refers to the resultant word forms as simple, intensive and paraintensive, with the subjective impression conveyed by such forms being progressively emphatic.

simple	ㄱ	/k/	ㄷ	/t/	ㅍ	/p/	ㅅ	/s/	ㅈ	/c/		
intensive	ㄱㄱ	/kk/	ㄷㄷ	/tt/	ㅍㅍ	/pp/	ㅅㅅ	/ss/	ㅈㅈ	/cc/		
paraintensive	ㅋ	/kh/	ㅌ	/th/	ㅍㅎ	/ph	-	-	ㅅㅎ	/ch/	ㅎ	/h/

There is also the use of the simple-intensive alternation of /r/ - /ll/ (ㄹ - ㄹㄹ) in medial positions.

Both initial and medial consonants may be modified, producing a large number of alternate forms. The intensity of such variants increases (1) as the reinforcement of consonants moves from medial to initial position, and (2) as the reinforcement is repeated.<sup>16)</sup> This results in a series of related and progressively more emphatic mimetic words. The following series is an example, all with the core meaning of (1) click, (2) slap, (3) sticking tight: *cōlgōk*, *cōlkkōk*, *cōlkhōk*, *ccōlkkōk*, *chōlkkōk*, *chōlkhōk*. When combined with vowel alternation the above set would produce a parallel diminutive set (*calgak*, etc.).

In Japanese mimesis, consonant alternation takes the form of a voiceless-voiced contrast, with the voiceless form having the "lighter" connotation and the voiced alternate conveying a "heavier" connotation. These are all arranged in simple pairs with the exception of the /p/ - /b/ pair to which an unstressed /h/ alternate may sometimes be added. One exception to the voiceless-voiced alternation is the voiced bilabial nasal-plosive pair /m/ - /b/, which, although

13) The Japanese and Korean patterns of diminutive semantic shift are similar in form, but not in direction. In Japanese "smallness" is equated with /i/ and "largeness" with /a/, while in Korean the values are reversed.

14) Kim Kong-On (1977); op.cit., p. 73.

15) Martin (1962); op.cit., p. 182.

16) Ibid., p. 187.

not as common as the /p/ - /b/ alternation, is clearly of regular occurrence. Consonant alternation can be found in the following sets:

k - g	(h) - p - b
t - d	m - b
ch - j	s/sh - z/j

The following examples will illustrate the general pattern of Japanese consonant alternation:

**k - g**

*koro-koro* (small hard objects) rattling; rolling  
*goro-goro* (large heavy objects) rolling, tumbling, rumbling  
*kyoro-kyoro* with shifting eyes, looking around restlessly  
*gyoro-gyoro* with wide staring eyes, goggling, glaring

**t - d**

*tara-tara* dripping, trickling  
*dara-dara* dribbling, in drops; sluggishly, lazily  
*torori* liquidly, (boiled) to a pulp  
*dorori* viscidly, thickly, sloppily

**ts - dz = z**

*tsuka-tsuka* (speak) bluntly, directly, unceremoniously  
*zuka-zuka* (speak) bluntly, boldly, rudely

**ch - j**

*chara-chara* jinglingly; coquettishly  
*jara-jara* jinglingly; flirtingly, lewdly  
*chirori* (see) by chance, in a glimpse  
*jirori* with a sharp/darting glance

**h - p - b**

*hata-hata* flutteringly  
*pata-pata* flutteringly; (walk) patteringly  
*bata-bata* flapping, floundering; (walk) noisily, bustlingly

**m - b**

*mosa-mosa* unemptly, shaggily; sluggishly, awkwardly  
*bosa-bosa* unemptly, shaggily; sluggishly, awkwardly  
*musa' (to)* sulkily, with a sullen look  
*busu' (to)* sulkily, sullenly, glumly

**s/sh - z/j**

*sara-sara* with a dry rustling sound  
*shara-shara* rustling lightly; crunching lightly  
*zara-zara* rattling, rustling\* (of sand, dried beans, coins)  
*jara-jara* jingling (of coins, etc.)  
*suru-suru* slidingly, smoothly  
*zuru-zuru* draggingly



Both consonant alternation and vowel alternation can be combined, although not as consistently as in Korean, to produce such sets as the following:

*hara-hara* fluttering down, falling lightly in drops

*para-para* sprinklingly, scatteringly, in large drops

*bara-bara* scatteringly, peltingly, patteringly

*horo-horo* scatteringly, (tears) in drops

*poro-poro* in drops, copiously

*boro-boro* in heavy drops, copiously, heavily

*koro-koro* / *kuru-kuru* (small object) rolling/whirling lightly

*goro-goro* / *guru-guru* (large object) rolling/whirling heavily

*kari-kari* / *kori-kori* crunchingly

*gari-gari* / *gori-gori* scratchingly

In Japanese mimetic constructions consonant alternation is primarily found in initial positions and seldom regularly takes place medially (in contrast to Korean), although it is not totally absent: *moso-moso/mozo-mozo* itchingly, stirring restlessly; *gucha-gucha/guja-guja* sloppily, soppingly, messily.

Although gemination in Japanese mimetic constructions has been dealt with above as a device for base extension, it may also in some cases be seen to function rather like medial consonant alternation in Korean and can be compared with the Korean intensive form.

*saku-saku* crunching lightly

*zaku-zaku* crunching loudly

*zakku-zakku* crunching heavily

### C. Special phonological Features of Japanese Mimesis

There are two phonological features of mimesis in Japanese which distinguish it from the normal phonology of the language. These are the presence of word-initial /p/ and the gemination of medial voiced obstruents.

The occurrence of word-initial /p/ was common in Old Japanese, but in the course of the evolution of the language this phoneme was uniformly changed to /h/. In modern Japanese the use of initial /p/ in native words is confined to mimetic constructions, where it is very common; its other use being in foreign loan words. Can the phonology of Japanese mimesis therefore be seen as a conservative and archaic system, or merely as a special case within the language?

The occurrence of medial voiced obstruent geminates is similarly confined to mimetic constructions and to foreign loan words. Although not so common, the gemination of voiced obstruents in Japanese mimetic words is systematic and significant.

*basa-basa* flutteringly, rustlingly

*basa'-basa'(to)* / *basabbasatto* / fluttering roughly, flapping

*bashi-bashi* striking, cracking

*bashi'-bashi'(to)* / *bashibbashitto* / striking roughly and heavily

*tatta'(to)* (go) directly and quickly (one or two people)

*dadda'(to)* moving en masse, with a rush

### III. Possible Mimetic Cognates in Korean and Japanese

Not only are the general structural and phonological features of Korean and Japanese mimesis very similar, but an examination of the two mimetic vocabularies reveals a number of possible cognates, which further strengthens the hypothesis of their genetic relationship. The following are of few such possible cognates.

<i>t'öböök-t'öböök</i>	<i>tobo-tobo</i>	ploddingly, trudgingly
<i>tugün-dugün</i>	<i>doki-doki</i>	throbbing
<i>k'al-k'al</i>	<i>kara-kara</i>	with loud laughter
<i>nürin-nürit</i>	<i>noro-noro</i>	slowly, tardily
<i>ppök-ppök</i>	<i>puka-puka</i>	in puffs
<i>pöl-böl</i>	<i>buru-buru</i>	tremblingly
<i>pugül-bugül</i>	<i>buku-buku</i>	boiling briskly
<i>p'allak-p'allak</i>	<i>para-para</i>	flutteringly
<i>p'asak-p'asak</i>	<i>pasa-pasa</i>	dryly, crumblingly
<i>ssuk-ssuk</i>	<i>suku-suku</i>	(growing) rapidly
<i>sul-sul</i>	<i>sura-sura</i>	smoothly
<i>sül-sül</i>	<i>soro-soro</i>	little by little
<i>col-jol</i>	<i>choro-choro</i>	tricklingly, gurglingly
<i>chwak-chwak</i>	<i>zā-zā</i>	torrentially

### IV. Conclusion

As this preliminary examination of the structural and phonological features of Korean and Japanese mimesis has shown, striking similarities do exist. Further research is needed in a number of areas, however, before the full extent of this correspondence can be delineated.

First, a full data base must be acquired. Although three dictionaries of Japanese mimetic vocabulary have recently been published in Japan,<sup>17)</sup> no comparable dictionary exists for Korean mimesis, and no comparative lexicon of Korean and Japanese mimesis has yet been compiled. Only with a complete comparative lexicon can a rigorous search for cognates be undertaken.

Although space did not allow a survey of the syntactic and functional correspondences between the two mimetic systems, their similarities are no less striking than the structural and phonological ones. A detailed examination of this would further help establish the relationship between the two.

I have attempted to show how a comparative approach can help illuminate certain specific problems within Japanese mimesis, in this case the problem of the semantic range of vowels, not on the basis of an absolute continuum but rather as relative vowel pairs on the model of Korean word isotopes. It is anticipated that further comparative analysis will prove fruitful, not

17) Amanuma (1974); op.cit. Asano (1978); op.cit. Shiraishi (1982); op.cit.

only in relation to our understanding of the systematic nature of mimetic constructions in Korean and Japanese, but also in helping to clarify the actual relationship between the two languages.

## 한국어와 일본어의 음성상징어의 구조와 음운조직

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한국어와 일본어가 공통적으로 갖는 특이한 특질 가운데 하나는 음성상징어를 광범위하게 사용해서 일상어의 미묘한 점을 더해 주고, 또 표현력을 확장한다는 점이다. 이 두 언어가 갖는 이러한 특질은 이 두 나라에서 학술적인 관심을 크게 불러 일으키고 있다. 그럼에도 불구하고 영어로 쓰여진 것은 거의 없고, 이 두 언어 체계에 대한 비교 분석이 한국이든, 일본이든 기타 나라에서든지 학자들에 의해 시도되어야 한다.

이 두 언어에 있어서의 음성상징어의 구조를 살펴보면 두드러진 유사성이 밝혀지고, 또 본질적으로 상징적인 음운교차의 원리가 같다는 점을 알 수 있다. 그러므로 한국어와 일본어의 음성상징에 대한 연구와 관련된 비교 연구는 그 성과가 많으리라고 제안하는 바이다. 한 예를 보면 일본의 학자들은 음성 상징 구조에 있어서 상이한 모음이 다양한 의미론적인 가치를 지니고 있다는 점을 인식한 지가 오래 되었지만, 그들은 단일 연속체에 있는 모든 모음이 갖는 강도에 대한 절대적인 척도를 확립하고자 하는 데에만 노력해 왔다. 이 논문에서는 일본어의 음성 상징에 사용되는 모음교차의 실질적인 체계가, 근본적인 의미는 같지만 明・暗 관계라는 미묘한 의미의 차이를 갖는 한국어의 체계와 유사한 輕・重의 모음쌍에 대한 상대적인 체계라는 점을 제시하고자 한다.