Research and teaching statement

My research and teaching interests focus on phonology, writing studies, and cognitive linguistics, with an interest in their application to pedagogy and teaching methods. In fact, much of my research agenda is driven by my interest in applying linguistics and educational psychology to language pedagogy, with a desire to improve English education in Korea. My multifaceted background in theoretical linguistics, applied linguistics, educational psychology, and psycholinguistics (language processing) come together very nicely in defining my research interests and teaching focus. As an empiricist, I believe that the best theories and research are those that have not only explanatory power, but also applicability in the real world, and thus, to language pedagogy. As a teacher, I hope to provide more intuitive and practical guidance to teachers regarding English structure, style, and speaking to teachers, especially in areas that Korean learners find problematic, and this can be best achieved when pedagogical materials and training are well informed linguistically and psychologically. As a teacher, I also believe in the value of interactive learning, which is a general paradigm that subsumes communicative and task-based language teaching. In teaching my students, and in English education in Korea, my desire is to promote interactive teaching methods that lead to deeper, more substantive, and more conceptual learning, rather than rote, superficial learning. This includes teaching my students through interactive activities and inductive learning methods.

My research began in theoretical phonology, such as Optimality Theory, where I researched Chinese tone patterns and English stress patterns. I began to feel that theoretical linguistics faced some limitations, and my interest in a real-world basis for research and practical applications (e.g., pedagogical applications) of linguistic research led me to text linguistics, psycholinguistics, and cognitive linguistics. In my doctoral research, my various interests converged in my study of Chinese character processing, and the various phonological, semantic, and lexical factors involved in character reading; this will lead to future journal submissions, which I plan to write up and submit next year. Since earning my Ph.D., however, English applied linguistics and education have been my primary focus, rather than Chinese. My doctoral research has nonetheless provided a solid foundation for my current and future research.

My interest in text linguistics was inspired by my teaching of academic writing, and my research began with L2 writing research based on comparisons of L1 and L2 writing corpora. I have published one paper (in a KCI journal) on Koreans’ use of connectives (i.e., connectors or transitionals), where I found underuse and overuse of certain transitional devices such as contrastive markers, ‘there is/are,’ enumerative markers, focus markers like ‘especially,’ and others. I have another paper under review (at a Scopus journal), where I found some similar patterns with Chinese ESL writers, and have data for another paper involving a more detailed analysis of Koreans’ use of contrastive markers, which will be submitted to an SSCI journal. In all this work, I will pioneered the use of loglinear / logistic regression in my statistical analysis, which is more suitable for lexical
frequency data, and which has not been used in such studies before. I hope to extend this work further into developing more pedagogical applications for teaching writing.

I will to extend this research focus of mine into studying Korean L2 writers’ use of definite and indefinite articles with corpus based studies and statistical analyses, and by drawing from cognitive linguistics to inform my research. The goals are to identify patterns of Koreans’ article errors based on cognitive semantic criteria (e.g., criteria for concreteness and discourse topic-focus flow), as well as intuitions of native writers and native English writing teachers. My hope is to develop better methods for teaching article use and writing skills to Koreans. Articles are seemingly intractable for Korean ESL/EFL learners, the commonly available materials (i.e., for teachers, learners, and materials developers) on this are not helpful, and articles are poorly understood linguistically. I have started working on a different approach to understanding and teaching the article system, drawing from cognitive semantic categories of discourse referents and from psycholinguistic research on semantic categories, to better clarify the different types of meanings and nuances expressed by the article system. Incidentally, a little-know fact is that native English speakers sometimes differ in their judgments of article use, due to differing assumptions of the nuances expressed, and I have collected native speaker data on this, which I plan to analyze. Then through initial corpus and survey studies to develop the system, and then through pedagogical studies to test it, I hope to formulate better materials and methods for teaching definite / indefinite articles to ESL/EFL learners.

One prospect that I look forward to at X University lies in the fact that the position entails teaching phonology. This would enable me to resume my previous interest in applied phonological research. I intend for my research to lead to better methods of presenting and communicatively practicing the phonological features that Korean students find so problematic, including the complex sound-spelling patterns and stress patterns. I have done some research on sentence stress (i.e., nuclear stress / tone, with one KCI paper published on this), and plan to research this more, leading to a couple of papers to be submitted to international journals in the near future. I would like to develop methods for teaching lexical stress patterns to higher level learners. I have started developing a system based on presentation of different, separate patterns (Germanic, Latin, Greek, French stress patterns in English), and more specifically, the patterns of Latin stress that fall often on penults and antepenults, which are also affected by strong and neutral suffixes. However, these patterns are not so clear-cut, as some higher frequency Latinate words have assumed Germanic patterns, and some French and Greek words have assumed other stress patterns as well. It seems that lexical frequency and other factors play a role as well. For teaching stress and sound patterns, a cognitive linguistic approach based on quasi-linguistic categories in the lexicon would be a useful approach for not only linguistic analysis, but also for presenting these patterns to students in a more simplified manner.

My previous work at the Center for Teaching and Learning at Korea University meshed well with my TESOL background. In coaching professors and graduate students, I found that many find the English-mediated instruction (EMI) requirements (whereby professors are required to teach in English) to be a source of stress and difficulty. This thus entails motivation problems, such as extrinsic and performance based motivation. I have published one SSCI paper on EMI (regarding graduate students), with two more SSCI papers in the works (also regarding graduate students, one on language needs, and one on our center’s academic English program for students). I also plan to write a couple of studies on language issues that Korean professors face in the EMI context (from data
that I have collected). This research introduced me to the motivational problems of English learners in Korea, and the affective problems with English that Korean learners face. Since EMI is less prevalent outside of Seoul, I envision transitioning later to research on affective issues of Korean EFL learners at the primary, secondary, or tertiary school levels – research that might lead to developing some helpful methods for teachers for helping students become more independent and motivated learners of English, and to for helping demotivated and unsuccessful students to catch up in their English skills and to regain their motivation, by means of more communicative, interactive, and prosocial learning methods.

In my pedagogical research, I would like to explore the application of cognitive linguistics and language pedagogy. Such approach can provide useful analyses of English grammar and pronunciation that would be readily applicable to ESL/EFL teaching and teacher training. I see generative linguistics and cognitive linguistics as both necessary and complementary; the former can explain constituent structure, while the latter can provide intuitive explanations of the meaning and function of grammar structures, which can lead to practical applications to help teachers and learners. These applications, such as better ways to teach problematic aspects of English to students, will also fit very well with improving and implementing communicative approaches to language teaching in Korea. Cognitive approaches, for example, can provide helpful explanations of prepositions, phrasal verbs, determiners, and stress patterns, which can be combined with communicative teaching methods for Korean learners. I can develop educational materials, and along with my students, conduct pedagogical research to provide them hands-on learning in education, materials and lesson design, and applied linguistics.

In summary, my research will focus on (1) applied phonological research and interactive teaching methods for phonology; (2) text linguistics, including connectors and determiners; cognitively based, communicative and interactive methods to improve learners’ motivation and strategies of learners; and (3) in methods and materials that are more linguistically informed and suitable for communicative language instruction and active learning methods, and thus, methods for adapting and implementing communicative language teaching more widely in Korean schools and universities. These will be the goals of my research.

**Research agenda**
The following pages summarize my research agenda for the next few years.

**First year**
1. Article to be submitted on graduate student EMI program by the Center for Teaching & Learning at Korea University
2. Article to be submitted on Koreans’ use of contrastive markers (target: *J. Second Language Writing*)
3. Article on sentence stress to be submitted to a Scopus / international journal
4. Research on definite/indefinite articles: L1 & L2 corpus study of error types by semantic category
5. Submitting two articles based on doctoral dissertation
Second and third years

6. A study on using genre analysis in teaching English academic writing, based partly on already collected data (target: Scopus journal)

7. Corpus based studies of determiner (‘a, the’) patterns, including native speaker variability

8. Begin pedagogical research on a system for teaching definite / indefinite articles with student subjects

9. Corpus based study of lexical stress patterns – Germanic, Latinate, Greek, and French patterns, their distributions, and lexical frequency effects

10. Another article on sentence stress patterns, e.g., contrastive / emphatic stress

Fourth year and beyond

11. Survey studies of motivation and language learning strategies of EFL/ESL students (e.g., undergraduate students)

12. Developing learning methods or programs for students demotivated toward English, e.g., communicative and active learning methods, language strategy counseling

13. Developing and testing communicative methods of explaining and teaching phrasal verbs and verbal compounds (including pronunciation patterns)

14. Continued work in quasi-experimental research on teaching methods for articles and other issues

15. Further research on analyzing and teaching lexical stress and sound-spelling patterns

16. Developing interactive teaching methods for English phonemes

17. Developing communicative methods for English speaking, listening and presentation skills