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Traces Through History

Kinship of Korean

Would it be possible to talk to people without difficulty if we went back several hundred years in a time machine?

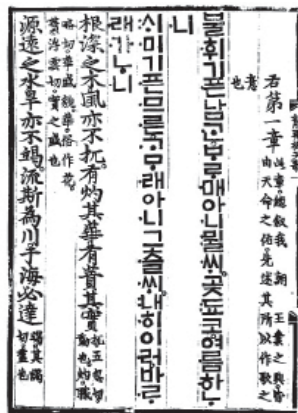
Language undergoes gradual changes over time, for it is not static. One famous Korean book in the 15th century, *Yongbieo-cheonga* (“Songs of the Dragons Flying to Heaven”), includes the following culturally significant sentence.

불휘 기픈 남근 브락매 아니 월찌 곳 도쿄 여름 하느니

This phrase is interpreted as meaning, “Since a tree with deep

roots does not sway in the wind, it blossoms abundantly and bears plentiful fruit.” Contemporary Korean native speakers find it difficult to understand this sentence upon first reading it. The word ‘불휘[pulhwi]’ has since changed into ‘뿌리[p’uri]’ (root); ‘꽃 [kot]’ into ‘꽃[k’ot]’ (flower); and ‘여름[jɾim]’ into ‘열매[jɾlmæ]’ (fruit). However, the word ‘뭍썩[mwils’æ]’ is no longer used. The vowel ‘ㅛ,’ seen in ‘남근[namgan]’ and ‘박래매[paramæ],’ is not used in contemporary Korean, either. As can be seen, this sentence encompasses many differences from the contemporary Korean language.

So what language did the ancestors of Koreans use, if we go back even farther? It would not be easy to guess what the language



» Yongbieocheonga

might have looked like in the prehistoric era. In order to satisfy our curiosity, we need to examine the kinship ties between Korean and other languages.

Despite many studies and much research, the genealogy of the Korean language is still controversial. One of the most persuasive argu-



ments is that it is a philological relative of Mongolian, Manchu, or the Turkic languages. There is also another argument that Korean is related to the Japanese language, which is not only geographically adjacent but also grammatically similar. There is, however, no real evidence to substantiate this claim. While Korea is adjacent to China, there is no genealogical relationship between the two countries’ languages.

The Korean Language: Changing over Time

The languages of the Korean peninsula have been divided into the northern *Buyeo* family and the southern *Han* family; these were followed in history by the Three Kingdoms era of *Goguryeo*, *Baekje*,



and *Silla*. However, it is difficult to know precisely what form the language took in those days due to a lack of historical records.

The capital city of the *Silla Dynasty*, *Gyeongju*, became the center of the language after *Silla* unified the Three Kingdoms of the Korean Peninsula in 668. The dual vocabulary system combining the indigenous language with Sino-Korean words started as trade with China increased during the Three Kingdoms era.

The center of the language moved to *Gaeseong*, the capital of *Goryeo*, which was established after the collapse of *Unified Silla*. The language

» The Shift in the Center of the Korean Language



of *Goryeo* is thought to be a successor of that of *Unified Silla*. Although the capital of the peninsula moved again to *Hanyang* (modern Seoul) after the establishment of the *Joseon Dynasty*, there were few differences between the languages in both regions, *Gaeseong* and *Hanyang*, due to their geographical proximity.

Middle Korean

Middle Korean is the name given to the language from the 10th century, when *Goryeo* was established, to the late 16th century and the *Imjin War*. The proportion of Sino-Korean words in the Korean vocabulary rapidly increased during the Middle Korean period. There had been no native writing system with which the Korean language could be transcribed in the Early Middle Ages, and citizens had to perform double duty by speaking Korean but writing with Chinese characters.

Unlike in the contemporary Korean language spoken in Seoul, tone was used to differentiate meanings in Middle Korean words. In addition, vowel harmony, one of the distinctive characteristics of the Korean language, was followed more strictly than it is today.

A highly developed honorific system is also one of the char-

acteristics of the Korean language, and the honorific rules were much more compli-cated during this period than those in Contemporary Korean. Some loanwords from Mongolian and the *Yeojin* language were adopted as it became common at the time to have contact with people from neighboring countries.

Since Modern Korean

The Korean language underwent a big change around the 17th century. The term Modern Korean refers to the Korean spoken from the early 17th to late 19th centuries, a period of approximately 300 years. Tonal contrasts and the vowel ‘ㆍ’ ([ɐ]; [a] with additional lip rounding) from Middle Korean were no longer used during this period, and grammar became simplified when juxtaposed with Middle Korean.



The term Contemporary Korean refers to the Korean spoken from the late 19th century to today. During this relatively short period of approximately 100 years, the language has undergone quite a few changes. The enlightenment period, from the 1880s to just before 1920, emphasized the unity of written and spoken Korean. This not only helped people realize the importance of the language and its letters, but also did away with the habit of using Chinese characters, allowing for the exclusive use of *Hangeul*.

Use of the Korean language faced a challenge during the Japanese colonial era from 1910 to 1945. A number of Japanese words arrived during this period, and the specter of the Japanese language has lingered ever since. For political reasons, the peninsula had to be divided into South and North following independence, which has resulted in some differentiation between the forms of the language spoken in those areas.

Since the start of the Korean War in the year 1950, Seoul has experienced a great influx of refugees from many places, and various dialects have influenced the standard Korean spoken there. Additionally, the proportion of Western loanwords has increased with greater contact in social, economic, cultural, and educational interchange.

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Korean Dialects

Branches Derived from a Root

Korea is one of the few countries where most people speak the same language. The Korean Peninsula, including both South and North Korea, totals 223,273 square kilometers in area, according to figures from 2008. This area is not large, ranking 84th out of more than 200 countries.

Then do all Koreans really speak the same language? The answer can be found by examining the words for *fly* and the expressions for *I am all right* in the different provinces.

Regardless of how the language began, its form changed when cultural exchanges were cut off for lengthy periods of time due

» 'Dialectal variants for '개구리[kæɡuri]'(frog)

Dialect	Province
개구락지 [kæɡurakʰi]	Chungcheong
먹저구리 [mɛkʰɟʌɡuri]	Gangwon
먹자귀 [mjɛkʰɟʌɡwi]	Pyeongnam
먹장구 [mɛkʰɟʌɡɡu]	Hwanghae
개굴테기 [kæɡultegi]	Jeonbuk
개고레기 [kæɡoregi]	Jeonnam
가개비 [kagæbi]	Jeju

» Dialectal variations on the expression 'I am all right'

Dialect	Province
괜찮습니다 [kʌnʰɟʌns'ɪmnida]	Seoul
일 없구만유 [il'ɛpk'umanju]	Chungcheong
똥어라 [twes'ɛra]	Jeolla
개안타 [kæantʰa]	Gyeongsang

» Dialects of '개구리[kæɡuri]'

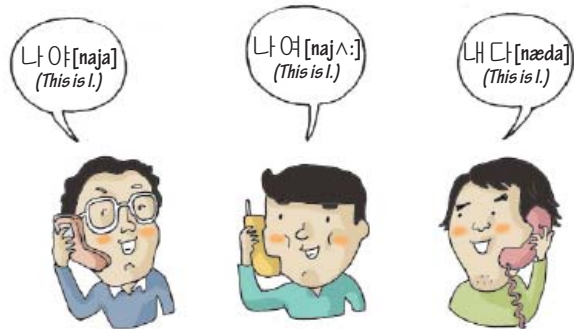


to natural barriers like mountains and rivers. These forms that take shape and begin to differ within the same communicative range are called dialects. The Korean language includes all dialects of the Korean Peninsula and its islands. These Korean dialects exhibit differences not only in their word meanings but also in the expressions they use.

Characteristics of Korean Dialects

Korean dialects can be divided into *Hamgyeong-do*, *Pyeongnan-do*, *Jungbu*, *Jeolla-do*, *Gyeongsang-do*, and *Jeju-do* forms based on their phonology, grammar, and vocabulary.

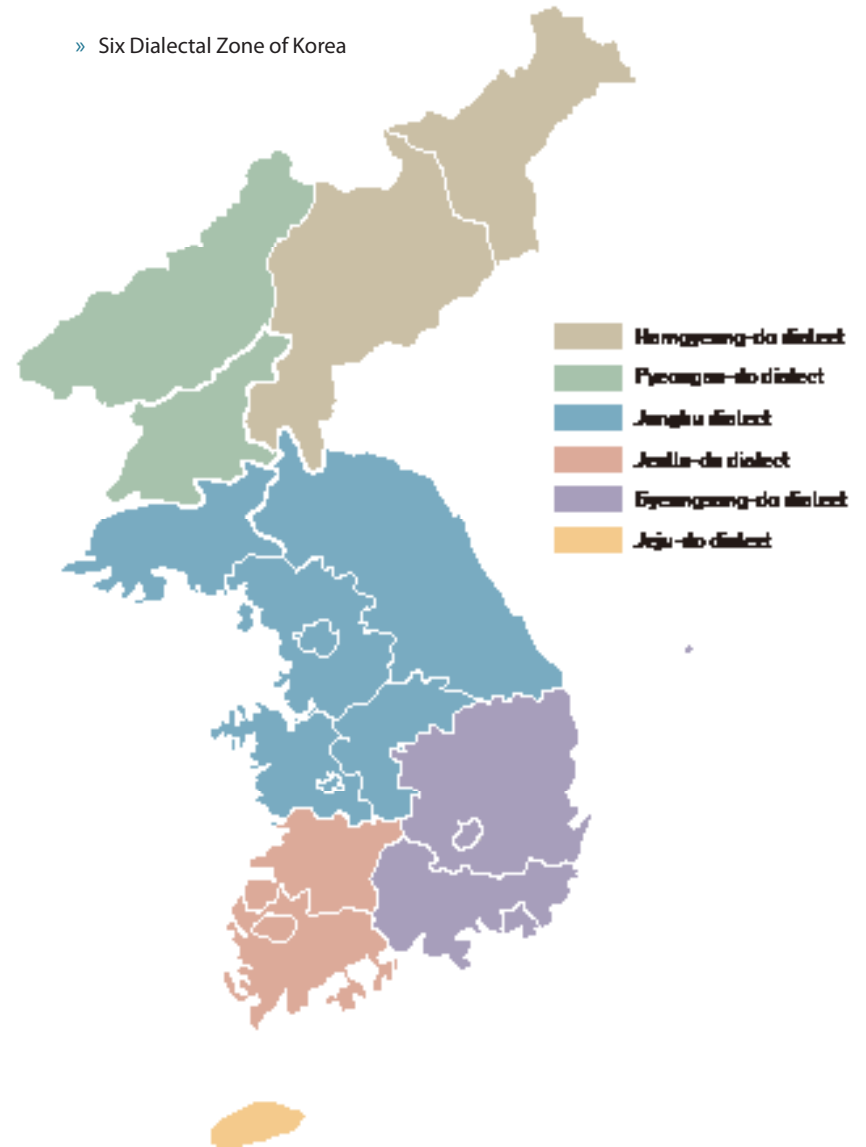
Jungbu dialects are used in *Gyeonggi-do*, including *Seoul*, as well



as the *Hwanghae-do*, *Gangwon-do*, and *Chungcheong-do* regions. The *Chungcheong-do* dialect is not very different from that of Seoul, due to the two regions' geographic proximity. One of its characteristics is to add the prolonged endings '-유[ju:],' '-슈[ʃu:],' '-여[ɾə:],' and '-오[ɾə:]' to the end of predicates. The rate of speech is somewhat slow and relaxed, which makes it sound gentle and refined.

The *Jeolla-do* dialect is characterized by brevity, giving a crude but pleasantly earthy impression through the use of the suffix '-잉[ɪŋ]' at the end of predicates. This '-잉[ɪŋ]' ending corresponds to the '-응[ɪŋ]' ending used in Seoul, though its usage is broader than is the case for '-응[ɪŋ]'. In *Jeolla-do*, there is also a tendency to pronounce the first syllable emphatically: compare the Seoul pronunciation of '가죽[kadʌk]' (*leather*) to '까죽[kʰadʌk]' in *Jeolla-*

» Six Dialectal Zone of Korea



do; ‘두부[tubu]’(tofu) in Seoul vs. ‘뚜부[t’ubu]’ in *Jeolla-do*; or ‘도랑[toran]’(ditch) vs. ‘또랑[t’oran].’ The quality of vowels is generally similar to that seen in Seoul.

The *Gyeongsang-do* dialect is relatively fast-paced and has clear inflective sounds. It can sound somewhat unfriendly to people from other provinces. It has the fewest vowels among all the dialects, which can make it difficult to distinguish ‘ㅈ[æ]’ from ‘ㄱ[e],’ or ‘ㅊ[ʌ]’ from ‘ㅊ[ɨ],’ and it does not have the diphthongs ‘ㅓ[ɨ],’ ‘ㅗ[wæ],’ or ‘ㅜ[we].’ People in certain regions are unable to pronounce ‘ㅅ[s],’ so they pronounce it as ‘ㅈ[s].’

The *Pyeongang-do* dialect has strong intonation, which results in an unfriendly image for the speaker. In contrast with the Seoul dialect, alveolar sounds are not usually palatalized(e.g., ‘덜그릇[tɨgɨrit]’(pottery) and ‘티다[t’ida]’(to hit), which are pronounced ‘질그

릇[tɨgɨrit]’ and ‘치다[t’ida]’ in Seoul), and the consonant ‘ㄴ[n]’ is used before the vowel ‘ㅣ[ɨ]’ in the first syllable(e.g., ‘닐곱[nɨlgop]’(seven), which is pronounced ‘일곱[ilgop]’ in Seoul).

The *Hamgyeong-do* dialect distinguishes words by their tones as in *Gyeongsang-do*, but it is not exactly the same. It is fast-paced, and in many cases a sentence can end with ‘-둥[tuŋ],’ ‘-지비[tɨbi],’ or ‘-구마[k’uma].’

The *Jeju-do* dialect is unique because it formed far away from Seoul, but is also separated from other forms of Korean due to the island location. It is generally fast-paced and brief. It still uses the vowel ‘ㅓ[ɨ],’ which no longer appears in contemporary Korean. Some examples are the words ‘다리[tari]’(bridge), ‘나물[namu]’(vegetable), and ‘쌀[s’a]’(rice). This dialect also has a number of unique words reflecting local color, such as ‘비바리[pibari]’(virgin), ‘구덕[kudak]’(basket), and ‘오름[orim]’(mountain).



Communication Between Dialects

The dialectal tweaks to the Korean language do not prevent communication between members of two regions. These slight differences have been greatly reduced due to nationwide broadcasts

and similarities in public education, as well as the development of transportation and telecommunications surmounting geographic barriers. At the same time, standard Korean is mainly spoken in



official situations such as in broadcasts and education, while local dialects are more likely to be spoken among locals. The dialects are also frequently used in literature, films, or drama in order to express situations with localized imagery.

Value of Dialect

There was once a time when dialects were regarded as something inferior and vulgar. However, a dialect has quite a few positive aspects, in that it not only maintains the purity of the language as well as the inherent emotions and cultural diversity of a region for a long time, but also enriches the vocabulary of Korean on the whole. There have even been movements to preserve endangered dialects, including the *Jeju-do* dialect.

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Division of the Korean Language

Why Have the Languages of South and North Korea Become Different?

It has been more than 60 years since the Korean Peninsula was divided into North and South in 1945 due to discrepancies in political views. North and South Korea have a strong spirit of community because they are not only composed of people who share a single ethnicity but also populations that communicate with the same language. However, people have been unable to freely visit others in the opposing country since the division of the peninsula. There was almost no opportunity for communication among ordinary people because any kind of exchange via

newspaper, broadcast, telephone, or Internet was completely blocked. The lack of communication between North and South Korea resulted in differences in their languages.

‘Standard Korean’ and ‘Cultural Korean’

For official purposes, South Korea currently uses “Standard Korean,” which is mainly based on the Seoul dialect. On the other



» South and North Korea

hand, North Korea has been using “Cultural Korean,” based on the Pyongyang dialect. In the early stages of division, North Korea also accepted the Seoul variety as a standard language, but it independently began to use Cultural Korean based on the Pyongyang dialect in the 1960s.

Because of geographical distance, the languages have

fundamental dialectal differences. Not only the regional difference but also a difference in attitudes toward the languages has contributed to a widening of the gap between the South and North Korean varieties of the Korean language.

In South Korea, there was no political involvement in the nation’s language use. The country has continuously undertaken a campaign to purify the Korean language, but the use of the language was mostly up to the speaker. On the other hand, North Korea has defined the language as “a strong weapon for revolution and the construction of communism” and regarded it as a means to realize the *Juche* (“self-reliance”) idea. The North showed a much more aggressive attitude than the South with regard to language policy.

North Korea Emphasizes Use of Indigenous Words

One of the representative language policies undertaken by North Korea is the “Vocabulary Cleansing Project.” The main purpose of this project is to convert Sino-Korean words or loanwords into indigenously based words in order to help establish independence, as well as to promote development of the nation’s language.

As a result, the government has devoted considerable energy to purifying words, from general terms to jargon in every area, and it has been very active in distribution as well. For instance, in the area of sports South Korea uses loanwords like ‘레드카드[redikadi]’ (*red card in soccer*), ‘케이오[k'eio]’ (*KO in boxing*), and ‘드리블[tiribil]’ (*dribbling in volleyball*), while North Korea has changed them, respectively, to ‘빨간딱지[p'algant'aktj'i],’ ‘완전넘어뜨리기[wandŋannam'at'irigi],’ and ‘두번치기[tubantŋ'igi].’ This language policy is one of the reasons why the languages of both countries have developed along dissimilar lines.



Difference in Adopting Loanwords

Even though North Korea is less accepting of loanwords than the South, loanwords are not completely excluded from the Northern dictionary. Most North Korean loanwords come from politically allied Russia, while South Korea has adopted most of its loanwords from English following independence from Japan. Terms for referring to certain objects and the names of foreign places are pronounced in the English style in the South, but in the Russian style in the North.

South Korean Loanwords		North Korean Loanwords	
트랙터 [t'iræktʰʌ]	tractor	뜨락또르 [t'irakt'ori]	трактор
캠페인 [k'æmp'ein]	campaign	깜빠니아 [k'amp'aniya]	кампания
불도저 [puldŋʌ]	bulldozer	불도젤 [puldŋel]	бульдозер
그룹 [kirup]	group	그루빠 [kirup'a]	группа
러시아 [rʌsia]	Russia	로씨야 [ros'ija]	Россия

Same Word, Different Meaning

Meanwhile, some words with the same form have different usages or meanings in South and North Korea. For example, the word



‘어버이[ʌbʌi]’ means *parents* in the South, but in the North it is a symbolic word referring to “*Kim Il-sung*, the national founder of North Korea.” Another word, ‘궁전[kuŋdʒʌn],’ means *palace of a king* in the South, whereas in the North it means “a building equipped with athletic and cultural facilities for children or workers for political and cultural purposes.” General terms in the South such as ‘여사[jʌsa]’ (*Madam*), ‘선물[sʌnmul]’ (*gift*), ‘자제[tʃʌdʒe]’ (*child*), and ‘택[tæk]’ (*residence*) are regarded in North Korea as special terms that are supposed to be used only toward relatives of *Kim Il-sung* or toward party members.

South and North Korea have each coined new terms to describe new phenomena appearing in different areas of society since the

division of the peninsula. The North has created such words as ‘밥공장[pap'ongdʒan]’ (*a factory producing meals for laborers*), ‘인민배우[inminbæu]’ (*a movie star who made a special contribution to building up the socialist state*), and ‘평양속도[pʰjʌŋjʌŋsokt'o]’ (*a very rapid speed – this term was coined during the construction of Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea*), while the South has coined ‘새내기[sænægi]’ (*freshman*), ‘가사도우미[kasadoumi]’ (*housemaid*), and ‘교통체증[kjotʰoŋtʰedʒiŋ]’ (*traffic congestion*).

Difference in Ways of Speaking and Attitudes

The languages of North and South Korea differ not only in their vocabulary but in their pronunciation, pitch, and writing style. Many North Koreans speak with a higher pitch, at a somewhat



faster speed, and with a louder voice than South Koreans. The writing style of the North gives a combatant and inflammatory impression, mainly due to the use of short sentences.

Attitudes in speaking also differ between North and South. South Koreans generally use euphemisms as a polite way of refusing something. On the other hand, North Koreans have the habit of using clear and direct expressions so that the counterpart does not get confused.

Efforts to Overcome Differences

The languages of North and South Korea have developed separately, which has both resulted in differences in words, expressions, and styles of writing and caused dialectal divergences ever since the peninsula was divided. However, both countries remain within a single language community, as their languages have evolved within a commu-



nicable range. In addition, interchange between the two countries is becoming more active. They are making constant joint efforts to overcome differences in their language varieties. One example of this is a recent joint project of publishing a North and South Korean dictionary.

12

Polite Korean Language

Honorifics

Courtesy is one of the most essential aspects of Korean culture. Because of this, Korea has been called “the country of courteous people in the East” since long ago. This has been reflected in language use, which has led to development of the language’s honorific system.

Most speakers distinguish honorific expressions from general vocabulary when they speak Korean. The nouns ‘택[tæk],’ ‘진지 [ʧindʒi],’ ‘생신[sæŋʃin],’ and ‘성함[sæŋham]’ are honorific forms of the words ‘집[ʧip]’ (*house*), ‘밥[pap]’ (*meal*), ‘생일[sæŋil]’ (*birthday*), and ‘이름[irim]’ (*name*), respectively. The verbs ‘잡수시다[ʧapsuʃida]

Meaning	Ordinary Word	Honorific Form
house	집 [tʃip]	댁 [tæŋk]
meal	밥 [pap]	진지 [tʃindʒi]
birthday	생일 [sæŋil]	생신 [sæŋʃin]
name	이름 [irim]	성함 [sʌŋham]
to eat	먹다 [mʌkt'a]	잡수시다 [tʃaps'uʃida]
to sleep	자다 [tʃada]	주무시다 [tʃumuʃida]
to exist	있다 [itt'a]	계시다 [kjeʃida]
to die	죽다 [tʃukt'a]	돌아가시다 [toragaʃida]

ʃida], '주무시다[tʃumuʃida], '계시다[kjeʃida], and '돌아가시다[toragaʃida] are honorific forms of '먹다[mʌkt'a] (to eat), '자다[tʃada] (to sleep), '있다[itt'a] (to exist), and '죽다[tʃukt'a] (to die), respectively. These honorifics are not used with younger people, but with older people. For instance, if you say '밥을 먹다[pabil mʌkt'a] (to have a meal), this is a general expression, whereas it becomes an honorific form meaning the same things when you say '진지를 잡수시다[tʃindʒiril tʃaps'uʃida].'

In order to indicate the listener's superior status, the speaker sometimes uses special humble forms. The first person pronouns

'저[tʃʌ] (I) and '저희[tʃʌhi] (we) are humble forms of '나[na] and '우리[uri], respectively. The verb '여쭙다[jʌtʃ'uda] (to ask) is used when humbly speaking to a listener superior in status. Another verb, '뵙다[popt'a] (to meet) is a humble expression used when the speaker meets someone superior in status. There are still other words used to address or refer to someone superior in status.

Honorific Rules in Grammar

We cannot say that the honorific system is unique to the Korean language, since most languages have some form or another of respectful language. The high degree of development in the honorific system of the Korean language is reflected not only in the use of honorific words but also in the application of honorific rules in grammar.

The methods used to indicate the listener's superior status and the subject's superior status are different. In order to indicate the superior status of the subject of the sentence, the suffix '-(으)시-[ʌ]ʃi] needs to be added to the predicate, while the endings '-습니 다[simnida] and '-요[jo] are added to the predicate to reflect the listener's superior status. For example, if you add '-으시-[ʌ]ʃi] to the

verb ‘잡다[ʧʌpt’a]’ (*to hold*) to form ‘잡-으시-다[ʧʌp-i-si-da]’ in the sentence ‘선생님이 손을 잡다[sʌnsæŋnimi sonil ʧʌpt’a]’ (*The teacher holds my hand*), it serves to mark the superior status of the subject ‘선생님[sʌnsæŋnim]’ (*teacher*). And if you add ‘-습니다[simnida]’ to the verb ‘잡다[ʧʌpt’a]’ to form ‘잡습니다[ʧʌps’imnida],’ it indicates the superior status of the listener or counterpart.

Different Ways of Indicating the Listener’s Superior Status

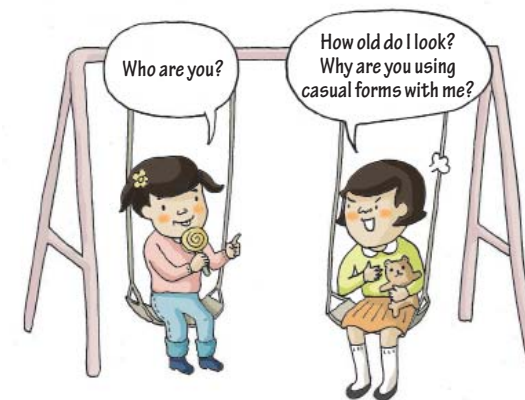
Of the two methods, the use of expressions to show respect for the listener or audience is especially highly developed in the Korean language. There are four to five speech levels, depending on the degree of respect shown to the audience, ranging from the highest level to the lowest level.

The speech levels are grouped into two categories: formal speech (in official situations) and informal speech (with the same age group in unofficial situations). The former involves use of the ending ‘-습니다[simnida]’ at the end of the predicate, while the latter is characterized by use of the ending ‘-요[jo].’ For instance, the form ‘먹습니다[mʌks’imnida],’ from the verb ‘먹다[mʌkt’a]’ (*to eat*), is a formal expression, whereas ‘먹어요[mʌgʌjo]’ is an informal

expression that can be used with close friends.

Use of Honorifics When the Listener Is Older

The honorific system is usually used when someone is talking to an older person. Age is an important criterion in determining use of the honorific system. A younger person generally uses honorifics when speaking to an older person. However, an older person cannot always use informal expressions when talking to a younger person. You should not speak informally when you first meet a younger person unless you are close to him or her. Adults of similar ages usually use honorifics when they first meet each other, and they start speaking informally upon mutual agreement after becoming closer.

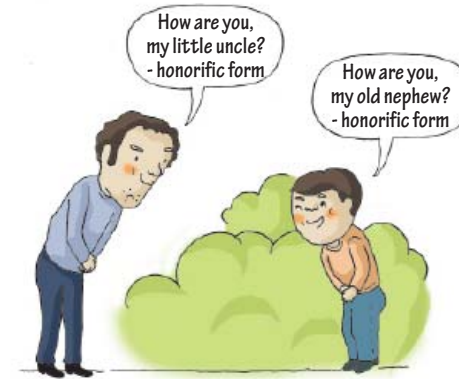


Relationship Between Age and Position at Work

Relative status at work is usually important in certain communities, such as the military or civil offices, where the hierarchy is very rigidly defined, but a young person in a higher position is not expected to use informal speech with a subordinate who is far older than him or her. One's position at work or relationship with school classmates also influences the speech level used. People of lower position are supposed to use honorific forms with those superior in status. It is general practice to use honorifics mutually when relative status conflicts with age differences.

Honorifics and the Age of Relatives

The hierarchy among relatives is an important criterion in determining appropriate use of speech levels. *Hangnyeol* is an indicator that shows how many generations have passed since a shared ancestor. Koreans have traditionally regarded the order of *Hangnyeol* as significant in family relationships. It is traditional etiquette not to speak informally to young person if his or her *Hangnyeol* is higher than the speaker's. However, there has been a recent tendency for people not to obey the honorific rules based



on the difference in *Hangnyeol* as awareness of the concept of *Hangnyeol* has been diluted.

Context Is Important

Proper speech levels are also determined by whether the situation is official or not. Honorific speech is always expected in formal situations such as media broadcasts and lectures, or in public speaking, regardless of the aforementioned factors. Primary school teachers are supposed to use honorific forms with students during class. Even close friends should not use informal speech in official settings such as seminars and broadcasts.

Korean honorific expressions are to be used even toward family

members of those who are superior in status. The wife of a teacher or older person is referred to as ‘사모님[samonim]’ in honorific mode, and their son and daughter become ‘아드님[adinim]’ and ‘[[다님[t’anim],’ respectively. The terms used for *wife*, *son*, and *daughter* in casual conversation are ‘부인[puin],’ ‘아들[adil],’ and ‘딸[t’a].’ However, a person’s possessions should not be referred to in the honorific form.

The honorific system has become simplified compared to the way it was in the past, but it is still so complicated that following rules can seem challenging. This is one of the biggest difficulties for non-native speakers who wish to learn Korean.



13

When Addressing Others

How to Address Others

There is a rich variety of Korean expressions used when addressing or referring to someone. The English pronoun *you* corresponds to two different forms in French: *tu*, the general form, and *vous*, the honorific form. However, in English the pronoun *you* can be used to address not only your friend, but also your teacher, parent, or even the President. However, the Korean language specifies proper words to be used depending on the listener’s position at work, gender, family relationship, or degree of closeness. Therefore, it can be offensive to the listener, or your parents may be blamed for not providing you with a proper education, if you fail to use the

expressions properly.

How to Call Someone by Name

Koreans generally do not call people by their names unless the speaker is a friend, colleague, or superior of the listener. A person of inferior status is expected not to refer to a person of superior status by name without his or her title. The second person pronoun can be used when addressing one's counterpart, but different words should be used based on the speech level.

The order of a person's full name in English is the given name followed by the family name, but Koreans write the family name before the given name, as in '김[kim]-진호[jinho].' Close friends call each other by given names only. If

someone says his or her friend's full name, the friend will feel a sense of distance or formality. The honorific nouns '씨[sɪ]' or '님[nim]' (Mr./Mrs./Ms.) need to come after the full name ('김진호 님[kimjinho nim]' or '김진호 씨



[kimjinho sɪ]' when one is addressing someone distant or when a service employee is calling a customer.

When a parent addresses his or her child, only the first name is used, as in "Jinho!" If the parent uses the family names as well –"Kim Jinho!"– this indicates that the parent wishes to assert his or her authority. Conversely, it can also mean that the parent is treating the child as a friend without conveying any sense of authority.

Titles

At work or school, people with titles such as '선생[sansaeng]' (teacher), '사장[sadjaŋ]' (president), '과장[kwadjaŋ]' (manager), and '감독[kamdok]' (director) can be addressed by attaching the honorific suffix '-님[nim]' to their titles without their names: '선생님[sansaengnim]', '사장님[sadjaŋnim]', '과장님[kwadjaŋnim]', and '감독님[kamdongnim].' Their family name or full name can be placed prior to the titles. For instance, either '김 선생님[kim sansaengnim]' (Teacher Kim) or '김진호 선생님[kimjinho sansaengnim]' (Teacher Kim Jinho) is possible.

People who entered a school or company earlier or who are



superior in academic or technical attainments are often called ‘선배님[sɔnbænim].’ The suffix ‘-씨[s’i]’ has a similar meaning to ‘-님[nim],’ but cannot be added to a title; it is attached to a person’s name, as in ‘김진호 씨[kimtʃ'inho s’i].’ If you say ‘진호 씨[tʃ'inho s’i]’ without the family name, the expression becomes less formal. On the other hand, if you use it with only the family name, as in ‘김 씨[kim s’i],’ it can be interpreted as indicating that the listener’s social position is somewhat low.

How to Address Your Relatives

Traditionally, Korean families were large, with several generations living in a single household. As a result, the terminology used to

refer to blood ties and relatives through marriage is particularly well developed. There are various words related to family relationships, such as ‘부모[pumo]’ (*parents*), ‘자식[tʃaʃik]’ (*child*), ‘며느리[mjɔniri]’ (*daughter-in-law*), ‘사위[sawi]’ (*son-in-law*), ‘부부[pubu]’ (*married couple*), ‘형제[hjɔŋdʑe]’ (*brother*), ‘자매[tʃamæ]’ (*sister*), ‘남매[nammæ]’ (*brother and sister*), and ‘시댁[ʃidæk]’ (*husband’s family*). The English word *aunt* is translated as ‘큰어머니[k’inɔmɔni]’ (*father’s older brother’s wife*), ‘작은어머니[tʃaginɔmɔni]’ (*father’s younger brother’s wife*), ‘이모[imo]’ (*mother’s sister*), ‘고모[komo]’ (*father’s sister*), and so on, depending on the family relationship.

The words used to address brothers and sisters also differ depending on age and gender. The English words *brother* and *sister* indicate nothing about the gender of the speaker. In Korean,

Korean	English
형[hjɔŋ]	brother
오빠[op’a]	
누나[nuna]	sister
언니[ɔnni]	

however, a younger brother calls his older brother ‘형[hjɔŋ],’ while a younger sister calls her older brother ‘오빠[op’a].’ A younger brother calls his older sister ‘누나[nuna],’ but a younger sister calls her older sister ‘언니[ɔnni].’

Father is translated as ‘아버지[abɔdʑi],’ and *mother* as ‘어머니[ɔmɔni].’ You call your own father and mother ‘아빠[ap’a]’ (*dad*) and

‘엄마[ʌmma]’ (*mom*) when you are young, but you do not use these when you become an adult. The honorific suffix ‘-님[nim]’ can be attached to these nouns(‘아버님[abʌnim]’ and ‘어머님[ʌmmaɳim]’), and this form is frequently used when you are referring to another person’s parents or your own parents after they have passed away.

Husbands and wives frequently call each other ‘여보[jʌbo],’ regardless of gender. When they have a child, they can use the name of their child, plus “father” or “mother,” as in ‘(child’s name) 아버지[abʌdʌi]’ or ‘(child’s name) 어머니[ʌmmaɳi],’ to refer to their spouse. When they get older, the husband can call his wife ‘임자[imʌa],’ and the wife can call her husband ‘영감[jʌŋgam].’

Great value has traditionally been placed on a person’s name in Korea, and this is why people do not usually call someone by his or her given name. When spelling your parent’s or teacher’s name



to others, you do not spell it outright, but add ‘자[tʃ’a]’ after each syllable of the given name. For instance, if your father’s name is ‘김철호[kimtʃʰʌho],’ you have to spell it “김, 철 자, 호 자[kim tʃʰʌ tʃʰa ho tʃʰa].”

Are Koreans All Relatives?

In many cases, the words used to refer to family members are also used toward other people in daily life. The noun ‘아주머니[adʌumɳi]’ (*aunt*) originally refers to a woman who is a sibling of one’s parents, but the same word is used generally to address a married woman. Likewise, the noun ‘아저씨[adʌsʰi]’ technically refers to a man who is a sibling of one’s parents, but it is generally used to address an adult male.

The nouns ‘할아버지[hʌrabʌdʌi]’ and ‘할머니[hʌlmɳni]’ originally mean grandfather and grandmother, but both words are widely used to address senior citizens. The nouns ‘형[hjʌŋ],’ ‘오빠[opʰa],’ ‘언니[ʌnni],’ and ‘누나[nuna]’ also have original uses within the family, but have come to be used to anybody who is a close friend and near the speaker’s age.

Young women sometimes call their boyfriend ‘오빠[opʰa]’ if he is

older. An older waitress is often called ‘아주머니 [aʃumani],’ and a close friend’s parents can be called ‘아버님 [abanim]’ and ‘어머님 [emanim].’

Other expressions, such as ‘학생 [haksaeŋ]’ (*student*) and ‘사장님 [sacjanim]’ (*president*) are also frequently used in daily life. 학생 is used by an adult talking to a student he or she does not know when, for example, asking for directions, and 사장님 is used not only for any kind of owner of a shop or company but also for male customers in a restaurant or a pub.

It is not easy even for Koreans to use the proper expressions for addressing and referring to others, since the rules are so complicated. However, misunderstandings can sometimes cause arguments between people.



14

Promises for Communication

What Led to 'Basic Act on the Korean Language'?

Language is social in its nature. One cannot arbitrarily change language, since it is a social promise made among those who use it. When such a social promise has been naturally established over a long period of time, people follow rules by unspoken agreement. People also avoid difficulties in communication without much in the way of regulation. This reinforces use of the language.

However, frequent contact with other languages stemming from developments in transportation and telecommunication, coupled with rapid social changes, can give rise to communication problems. The Korean nation must establish reasonable policies



in order to handle this crisis effectively. The Korean government has enacted the “Basic Act on the Korean Language” in order to provide effective support to these policies.

Although *Hangeul* and the Korean language are two of the most vital factors identifying Koreans, corresponding stipulated rules have been regarded as insignificant. The “Regulation on the Exclusive Use of *Hangeul*” was proclaimed in 1948, but was practically invalid after only a few years. Other regulations related to *Hangeul* and the Korean language have been scattered throughout different pieces of legislation. The Basic Act on the Korean Language has been in effect since July following

its promulgation in January 2005; its goal is to facilitate the correct use of the Korean language, to lay the foundation for the language’s development, and eventually to make contributions to development of the culture.

What Does the Basic Act on the Korean Language Say?

Above all else, the Basic Act on the Korean Language defines the status of the Korean language as the official language of the Republic of Korea, and defines *Hangeul* as the native writing system of the Korean language. In addition, it demands that Koreans speak the Korean language in their daily lives; that the language conform to Korean orthography; and that foreign vocabulary items be converted into simple Korean words. It also insists that official documents and instruments, as well as other documents, be written in *Hangeul*. Finally, the nation has been carrying out various projects necessary to support the dissemination of the Korean language overseas, which includes support for Korean language textbooks aimed at overseas Koreans and non-native speakers, as well as the training of Korean language experts.



What is Korean Language Standard for?

Certain regulations on words and writing do exist in the Korean language, although these have not all been made as official as the Basic Act on the Korean Language. Korea was under the rule of Japan in the 1930s. During this period, a spelling system was created by a private organization in order to overcome confusions related to words and writing. This system became the foundation for the rules governing Korean words and writing.

From the time of the invention of *Hangeul* to the end of the 19th century, no written rules for Korean spelling existed. Use of the idiom among ordinary citizens became voluntary and subject to modification. Due to the lack of guidance, it became an arduous

task to identify which words and written forms were correct. The morpheme-based spelling tradition from the invention of *Hangeul* had not been maintained. Toward the end of the 19th century, the degree of confusion in the language's spelling became severe. Fortunately enough, however, *Hangeul* was recognized by the end of the 19th century as an appropriate formula to meet the needs of the new era. The demand had begun for a standardized spelling system for the purpose of publishing textbooks and Korean dictionaries.

What Are the Elements of the Korean Language Standard?

The Korean language standard on words and writing is divided into one system for the language and another for the characters (or spelling). The system for the language is called “Standard Language Rules” and includes rules on standard vocabulary and pronunciation. The system for characters is called the “Rules of Korean Orthography.” The standard for loanwords is called “Loanword Orthography,” and the system for Romanization of the Korean language is governed by the “System for Romanization.”

The regulations do not share the same dates of implementation.

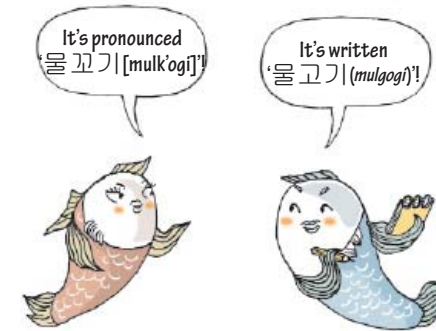
The currently operating Rules of Korean Orthography and Standard Language Rules were promulgated in 1988 and have been in effect since 1989. Loanword Orthography was revised in 1986 for the sake of convenient use for Koreans. The System for Romanization was implemented in 2000.

Korean Language Standard

- Rules of Korean Orthography (legislated in 1933, revised in 1989)
- Standard Language Rules (first provided in 1936, legislated in 1989)
- Loanword Orthography (legislated in 1940, last revision in 1984)
- The System for Romanization (legislated in 1948, last revision in 2000)

What Is the Content of the Korean Language Standard?

The Rules of Korean Orthography defines precise guidelines for writing standard Korean, and accuracy rules dictate written forms. For instance, Koreans pronounce the word ‘물고기’ (*fish*) as ‘물꼬기’ ([mulk’ogi]). The word derives from ‘물’ [mul] (*water*) and ‘고기’ [kogi] (*meat*), but the spelling does not reflect the change in pronunciation. The Rules of Korean Orthography include not only rules for spelling, but also for spacing and punctuation in their appendix. *Hangeul* should be written with a space placed between



each word.

Standard Language Rules explains, “Standard Korean refers to the contemporary Seoul variation widely spoken among the educated population.” This criterion is used to determine which words are part of the standard vocabulary, and multiple standard vocabulary items are accepted if two or more forms are widely used to refer to the same object.

Loanword Orthography prescribes the method for writing loanwords in *Hangeul*. Several ways of spelling the same loanword have been in competition with one another, since the Korean language has a variety of syllables, but this system allows only the 24 letters currently used in the Korean language. The *Hangeul* spelling of a loanword is based on the original sound of the word, but exceptions are allowed when a certain way of spelling has

become standard practice.

The System for Romanization stipulates how to write Korean words using Roman characters. The rule is that *Hangeul* characters are converted into corresponding Roman characters, based on standard pronunciation, so that they can be clearly understood. However, sometimes a single Korean sound requires the combination of two or more Roman characters. For instance, the Korean vowel ‘ㅓ’ is Romanized as ‘a,’ and ‘ㅜ’ as ‘o,’ but ‘ㅓ’ does not have any corresponding single vowel in Roman characters. Therefore, ‘ㅓ’ is written as ‘eo’ in Romanized Korean.



15

The Korean Language in the World

People Who Wish to Learn Korean

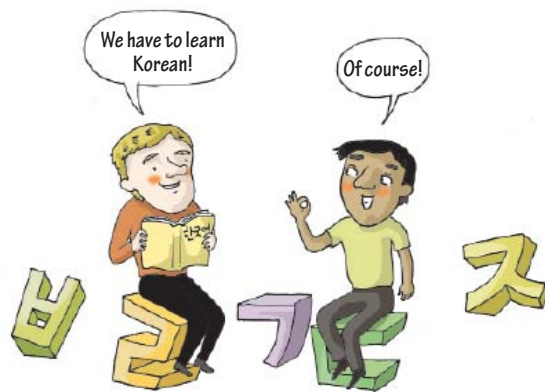
Traditionally, the Korean language has only been spoken by native speakers residing on the peninsula or living abroad. However, the population of Korean-speaking people ranks highly in the world, and the number of non-native speakers who wish to learn the language has been steadily increasing as Korea's political, economic, and cultural status has risen.

An increasing number of people have developed the desire to study the Korean language as they have become acquainted with the country through Korean movies and soap operas or as they have gotten accustomed to Korean culture while enjoying the

singing of Korean songs. Initially, immigrant workers studied the language in an effort to gain employment in Korea. However, the purposes of study have since diversified – people are studying in order to attend Korean schools or get a job at the overseas office of a Korean company, or because of their attraction to Korean culture, as well as a host of other reasons.

Where the Korean Language Is Taught

In 2004, there were 20 Chinese universities that had established Korean language departments, but by 2009 the numbers were up to around 70. A Korean language program has been appearing on NHK, the national broadcasting station of Japan. There are more than 3,000 Korean language institutes in Japan, including private institutes. According to the Ministry of Education, Culture,



Sports, Science and Technology of Japan, some 286 middle and high schools teach Korean as a foreign language. More than 15 universities have Korean language departments, and the number of Korean majors in Mongolian has risen to approximately 3,000.

The number of learners from Asian countries besides China and Japan that are geographically close to Korea has increased. Meanwhile, a number of colleges and universities have been establishing Korean language departments in the Middle East, Africa, and Eastern Europe.

The University of Warsaw, one of the best universities in Poland, established a Korean language department in 1983, the first university in Eastern Europe to do so. In 1995, Bulgaria's Sofia University established its own Korean language department, and Ain Shams University in Egypt followed suit in 2005. Currently, ten universities in nine countries in the Middle East and Africa, including Morocco, Tunisia, and Jordan, are offering Korean classes. A total of 742 universities in 64 countries offer Korean classes or have a Korean language department, and there are more than 2,000 Korean language education institutes around the world.

Status of the Korean Language in the World

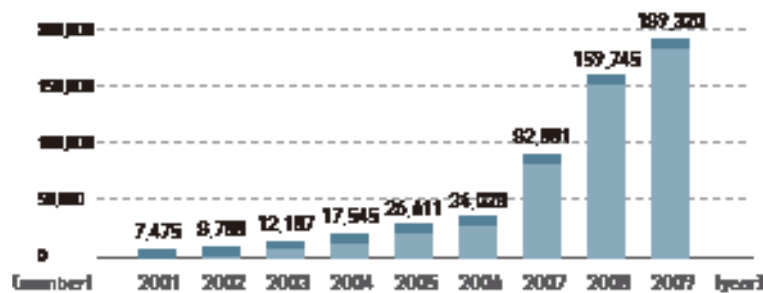
Since 1990, UNESCO has been conducting an annual selection of individuals or groups that have contributed to the eradication of illiteracy and, especially, the development and dissemination of a developing



Award Ceremony for the King Sejong Literacy Prize(UNESCO)

country's native language, and awarding them the "King Sejong Literacy Prize" in honor of the king's contributions to literacy. The name was proposed by the Korean government in June 1989, and the prize has been awarded on September 8 – International Literacy Day – of every year since 1990.

UNESCO designated the *Hunminjeongeum* as a Memory of



» The number of TOPIK examinees

the World Register in 1997, and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) congress held on September 28, 2007, adopted Korean as an official language in the Patent Cooperation Treaty(PCT). As a result, the Korean language has finally entered the line of international official languages.

The high degree of interest in the Korean language can be confirmed if we look at the rapidly increasing number of people taking the Test of Proficiency in Korean(TOPIK). The Institute for Curriculum and Evaluation offers this examination twice a year to non-native speakers of Korean and to Koreans living abroad. The number of examinees was 2,274 when the program began in 1997 and had risen to over 180,000 by 2009.

Many high school students in the US take a college entrance exam called the SAT. In 1997, an SAT Subject Test for the Korean



language was added as demand for the language increased. It was the ninth foreign language to be adopted by the SAT. The number of examinees has consistently increased, and in 2008 the number of students taking the Korean Subject Test ranked 4th after Spanish, French, and Chinese. At the same time, Korean guidebooks are available now in some of the most famous museums and galleries in the USA and Europe.

Efforts to Disseminate the Korean Language

Despite South Korea having diplomatic relations with more than 180 countries in all, only 64 countries have held university courses in Korean. Additionally, only one or two Korean classes are available in such large countries as Spain, Italy, and Brazil.

People's interest in the Korean language has developed out of factors such as positive feelings toward the country and a trust in Korean products. As a consequence, the nation has been making concrete efforts toward the dissemination of the Korean language. One good example is the establishment of the International Korean Language Foundation for the purpose of dissemination and education for non-native speakers. The government has been

promoting the *Sejong Hakdang* as a unified brand of individual Korean language education centers in order to disseminate and promote the Korean language both domestically and internationally. It has been planning to expand the number of these schools in Europe, America, and Africa by 2015. Currently, most are centered in Asia. The Korea Fellowship Program sponsored by the Korea Foundation, which dispatches fellows overseas for the promotion of Korean studies, has also been increasing every year.



16

Future of the Korean Language

The Crisis Once Faced by the Korean Language

The Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages and the National Geographic Society of the USA, which has been making efforts to preserve the endangered languages of the world, reported that one language disappears from the world every couple of weeks. The Worldwatch Institute, a private environmental organization, predicted in its 2008 report on the “extinction of the world’s languages” that around 6,100 of the languages currently existing in the world would disappear by 2100. The reasons given for language extinction included war, large-scale massacres, deadly natural disasters, and language policies concentrated on specific languages



» Atlas of Endangered Languages (UNESCO)

such as English and Chinese.

According to the UNESCO Atlas of Endangered Languages, which was published in order to raise awareness among policy-makers, speaker communities, and the general public about language threats and the need to safeguard the world's linguistic diversity, the Korean language is fortunately not among those in danger of extinction within the near future.

However, there was a time in the fact when the Korean language was in jeopardy. During the Japanese colonial period, Korea was required to publish all textbooks except for Korean language texts in Japanese, and to write all documents regarding administration

and law in Japanese. The Korean language, deprived of status as an official language, was only used in daily life.

In 1938, Japan changed its colonial language policy from coexistence of Korean and Japanese to the exclusive use of Japanese. The very status of Korean as a language of everyday life was also in danger due to measures such as the abolishment of *Hangeul* newspaper in 1940. Despite the harsh ordeal of Japanese suppression, Koreans made continuous efforts to preserve *Hangeul* and spoken Korean by carrying on the publication of Korean dictionaries and other materials. As a result, the language was preserved for use again after independence from Japan.



The Crisis Now Faced by the Korean Language

An excessive emphasis on English has recently become a threat to the Korean language. More than ever, English is viewed as a bridge toward globalization, and it has gained in importance in Korea as a means of communication in the global society. Many local governments are scrambling to build English villages, and most parents are encouraging their children to learn English in their primary school years, or even in preschool, due to an early English education boom.

Numerous universities are offering classes in English, and many college students have been traveling to English-speaking countries to participate in English study programs. It is now a requirement to have a high score on the TOEIC or TOEFL to get the job one is interested in.



This trend has had a major impact on everyday language as well. The street is filled with English signboards, and the names of TV programs and companies tend to be in English. Korean pop songs also contain quite a lot of English lyrics.

One extreme example of English worship is the debate over the official use of English for communication. Proponents of this insist that English be used officially alongside Korean. Some colleges and companies have been implementing the official use of English within the community.

The Future of *Hangeul* and Korean

Words and writing play an important role in enhancing economic effects as well as improving the image of a country. In this respect, *Hangeul* is a precious gift that the Koreans of the 21st century have embraced. *Hangeul* will perform a major role in the era of knowledge and information in the 21st century.

Many countries have been competing to be the best in producing convenient and fast information devices. *Hangeul* is one of the reasons that Korea has been able to lead the way in developing small devices that can process large amounts of

information in short periods of time. *Hangeul* is more than seven times as effective in computer-based tasks than Japanese kana or Chinese characters. Because of this, the Presidential Council on Nation Branding has named *Hangeul* as one of the most important nationally branded products in the culture industry. In addition, it has been making continued efforts to promote the standing of *Hangeul* by developing related cultural products.

Hangeul has emerged as a new motif in culture and the arts. The unique and sophisticated qualities of the various design products using *Hangeul* have attracted attention not only from Koreans but from a worldwide audience. *Hangeul* characters are usually rectangular in shape because the vowels and consonants

are assembled to make a single syllable. The way it uses its inherent qualities to create unconventional beauty is also one of the visual strengths of *Hangeul*. You will have more opportunities to appreciate costumes, accessories, and ornaments made with *Hangeul* designs everywhere you go in the future.

In order to help people understand the Korean language and *Hangeul* and shed new light on their significance lives of Korean people, the Korean government is planning the construction of a *Hangeul* museum. With a target opening date set for 2012, efforts are currently under way to design the building and assemble items for display.



» Design Products Using *Hangeul*



» Aerial Diagram of the *Hangeul* Museum

Websites for *Hangeul* and the Korean Language

1. *Hangeul* and the Korean Language

Digital Hangeul Museum(디지털 한글 박물관)
www.hangeulmuseum.or.kr

Foundation for Korean Language & Culture in USA(한국어진흥재단)
www.klacusa.org

International Korean Language Foundation(한국어세계화재단)
www.glokorean.org

The National Institute of the Korean Language(국립국어원)
www.korean.go.kr

Nuri-Sejonghakdang(누리 세종 학당)
www.sejonghakdang.org

Standard Korean Dictionary(표준국어대사전)
stdweb2.korean.go.kr

21st Century Sejong Project(21세기 세종 계획)
www.sejong.or.kr

2. Korean Language Education Centers

Catholic University(가톨릭대학교 한국어교육센터)
klec.cuk.ac.kr

Chungbuk National University(충북대학교 국제교육원)
cie.chungbuk.ac.kr

Ewha Womans University(이화여자대학교 언어교육원)
ile.ewha.ac.kr

Hallym University(한림대학교 한국어교육센터)
www.klec.or.kr

Hankuk University of Foreign Studies(한국외국어대학교 한국어문화교육원)
www.hufs.ac.kr/hufskorean

Hongik University(홍익대학교 국제언어교육원)
huniv.hongik.ac.kr/~korean

Hoseo University(호서대학교 국제교육원)
ieec.hoseo.edu

Information & Communication University(한국정보통신대학교 국제교육센터)
cie.icu.ac.kr

KBS(KBS 한국어진흥원)
www.kbsas.com

Keimyung University(계명대학교 국제교육센터)
intlcenter.kmu.ac.kr

Konkuk University(건국대학교 언어교육원)
kffi.konkuk.ac.kr

Korea University(고려대학교 한국어문화센터)
klcc.korea.ac.kr

Korean Language & Culture Foundation(한국언어문화연구원)
www.kolang.or.kr

Kyunghee University(경희대학교 국제교육원)
www.ile.ac.kr

Paichai University(배재대학교 한국어교육원)
koreanclass.pcu.ac.kr

Pusan National University(부산대학교 국제언어교육원)
pnuls.pusan.ac.kr

Sangmyung University(상명대학교 한국언어문화교육원)
cklc.smu.ac.kr

Seoul National University(서울대학교 언어교육원)
lei.snu.ac.kr

Sunmoon University(선문대학교 한국어교육원)
kli.sunmoon.ac.kr

Yonsei University(연세대학교 언어교육원)
ilre.yonsei.ac.kr

3. Korean Language Societies and Research Institutes

Association for Korean Linguistics(한국어학회)
www.koling.org

Hangeul Society(한글학회)
www.hangeul.or.kr

International Association for Korean Language Education
(국제한국어교육학회)
www.iakle.com

Korean Association for Lexicography(한국사전학회)
korealex.org/sobis/korealex.jsp

Korean Language Research Circle(한말연구학회)
www.hanmal.or.kr

Society of Korean Dialect(한국방언학회)
www.sokodia.or.kr

Society of Korean Language & Literature(국어국문학회)
www.korlanlit.or.kr

Society of Korean Language Education(한국어교육학회)
www.koredu.org

Society of Korean Linguistics(국어학회)
www.skl.or.kr

Society of Korean Semantics(한국어어미학회)
www.semantics.or.kr



