Korean

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Contents

0. Basics

0.1 Korean Alphabet (한글)

0.1.1 Introduction

Hangul (한글) is the writing system used for the Korean language. Similarly to Latin, it is a **phonetic alphabet** unlike Chinese or Japanese, which are logographic scripts.

0.1.2 Basic Structure

Each character represents a **syllable** or **syllabic block**, and each syllable is composed of individual letters called **jamo (자므)**, which represent consonants or **jaeum (자음)** and vowels or **moeum (모음)**, read from left to right and top to bottom.

There are a total of 14 basic consonants and 10 monophthong vowels, following 5 double consonants and 11 additional vowels formed by combining two monophthongs in the same syllable (diphthongs).

Each syllable typically consists of:

- An initial consonant (**Choseong 초성**)

- A medial vowel (**Jungseong 중성**)

- An optional final consonant (**Jongseong 종성**)

Something to note is that the vowels ㅏ, ㅓ, ㅑ, ㅕ, ㅐ, ㅔ, ㅖ and ㅒ are written to the **right** of the initial consonant, while the rest are written to the **bottom**.

Throughout this text, in order to facilitate the learning process, all Hangul writing will be written with the following format:

<div align="center">

annyeonghaseyo
안녕하세요

</div>

Or, in case there is the need for translation:

<div align="center">

annyeonghaseyo
안녕하세요
hello

</div>

Here's a table for the possible initial, medial and final letters:

Initials 초성

한글	Latin	IPA	Key
ㄱ	g	/k/	D
ㄲ	kk	/k̚/	⇧D
ㄴ	n	/n/	S
ㄷ	d	/t/	E
ㄸ	tt	/t̚/	⇧E
ㄹ	r	/ɾ/	F
ㅁ	m	/m/	A
ㅂ	b	/p/	Q
ㅃ	pp	/p̚/	⇧Q
ㅅ	s	/s/	T
ㅆ	ss	/s̚/	⇧T
ㅇ			X
ㅈ	j	/tɕ/	W
ㅉ	jj	/tɕ̚/	⇧W
ㅊ	ch	/tɕʰ/	C
ㅋ	k	/kʰ/	Z
ㅌ	t	/tʰ/	X
ㅍ	p	/pʰ/	V
ㅎ	h	/h/	G

Medials 중성

한글	Latin	IPA	Key
ㅏ	a	/a/	K
ㅐ	ae	/ɛ/	O
ㅑ	ya	/ja/	I
ㅒ	yae	/jɛ/	⇧O
ㅓ	eo	/ʌ/	J
ㅔ	e	/e/	P
ㅕ	yeo	/jʌ/	U
ㅖ	ye	/je/	⇧P
ㅗ	o	/o/	H
ㅘ	wa	/wa/	
ㅙ	wae	/wɛ/	
ㅚ	oe	/ø/	
ㅛ	yo	/jo/	Y
ㅜ	u	/u/	N
ㅝ	wo	/wo/	
ㅞ	we	/wɛ/	
ㅟ	wi	/wi/	
ㅠ	yu	/ju/	B
ㅡ	eu	/ɯ/	M
ㅢ	ui	/ɯi/	
ㅣ	i	/i/	L

Finals 종성 (Optional)

Normal Finals

한글	Latin	IPA
ㄱ	g	/k̚/
ㄴ	n	/n/
ㄷ	d	/t̚/
ㄹ	l	/l/
ㅁ	m	/m/
ㅂ	b	/p̚/
ㅅ	s	/t̚/
ㅇ	ng	/ŋ/
ㅈ	j	/t̚/
ㅊ	ch	/t̚/
ㅋ	k	/k̚/
ㅌ	t	/t̚/
ㅍ	p	/p̚/
ㅎ	h	/t̚/

Double/Complex Finals

한글	Latin	IPA
ㄲ	kk	/k̚/
ㄳ	gs	/k̚/
ㄵ	nj	/n/
ㄶ	nh	/n/
ㄺ	lg	/k̚/
ㄻ	lm	/m/
ㄼ	lb	/p̚/
ㄽ	ls	/t̚/
ㄾ	lt	/t̚/
ㄿ	lp	/p̚/
ㅄ	bs	/p̚/
ㅆ	ss	/t̚/

0.1.3 Vowels

Bright, Dark and Neutral Vowels

Hangul vowels follow a certain harmony which is applied when forming them

Bright Vowels 양성모음 : ㅏ, ㅗ and ㆍ[1]

Dark Vowels 음성모음 : ㅓ, ㅜ and ㅡ[2]

Neutral Vowels 중성모음 : ㅣ

This is really useful for when trying to study etymologies or sound symbolism, since words were often associated what type of vowel do they use[3].

Here we can see how compound monophthongs are formed:

ㅐ = ㅏ + ㅣ (Bright)   ㅒ = ㅣ + ㅐ (Bright)

ㅔ = ㅓ + ㅣ (Dark)   ㅖ = ㅣ + ㅔ (Dark)

Then, based on these "basic vowels", we have the rest of the diphthongs as a combination of bright+bright or dark+dark:

ㅛ = ㅣ + ㅗ (Bright)   ㅘ = ㅗ + ㅏ (Bright)   ㅞ = ㅜ + ㅔ (Dark)

ㅕ = ㅣ + ㅓ (Dark)   ㅙ = ㅗ + ㅐ (Bright)

ㅑ = ㅣ + ㅏ (Bright)   ㅚ = ㅗ + ㅣ (Bright)   ㅟ = ㅜ + ㅣ (Dark)

ㅠ = ㅣ + ㅜ (Dark)   ㅝ = ㅜ + ㅓ (Dark)   ㅢ = ㅡ + ㅣ (Dark)

There are also certain vowels that are considered extinct or obsolete, but you may see them in older texts

ㆎ = ㆍ + ㅣ (Bright)   ㆉ = ㅛ + ㅣ (Bright)   ㆌ = ㅠ + ㅣ (Dark)

This text will use this concept when talking about grammatical rules, although it is mostly an interesting fact about how Korean phonology is formed, it is absolutely optional to learn about this and I don't think Korean schools even teach about this concept.

0.2 Grammar

Now that we know how to read Korean text, we will need to learn how to process a Korean phrase, which is why we need to understand some linguistical definitions beforehand.

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[1] ㆍ is an extinct character called 아래아 (araea / lower a)

[2] ㅡ is considered both partially dark and partially neutral

[3] Fun fact: 남자 (namja / man) uses bright vowels and 여자 (yeoja / woman) uses dark vowels

0.2.1   Morphenes

Words are made up of *morphenes* or *morphological units.* A morpheme can be an individual word (free morphenes) or parts of a word (bound morphemenes). Korean is an *agglutinative* language, which means that it combines morphemes in order to form a word.

In Korean, there are three types of morphenes: **stems** (어근 ^(eogeun)); **particles** (조사 ^(josa)); and **affixes**[4] (both derivational (접사 ^(jeobsa)) and inflectional (어미 ^(eomi))).

0.2.2   Function and Lexical Words

Each word can be broadly classified into two categories: Lexical and Function words:

- Lexical are "content" words, which means that they contribute to the meaning of the sentence (nouns, adjectives, numbers, etc.).

- Functional words are words that are used to express grammatical relationships among other words within a sentence (pronouns, prepositions, particles, etc.).

0.2.3   Syntactic Order

Languages set a specific order when structuring a sentence. Unlike English, which follows an $Subject - Verb - Object$ order, Korean follows $Subject - Object - Verb$ ordering.

0.3   Speech Levels

All verbs conjugations in the Korean language have distinct paradigms depending on the level of formality *(informal vs formal)* and politeness *(low vs high)* towards the listener, which are the following:

Higher Levels

하소서체 ^(hasoseo-che) [5][6] Very formally polite, used to address royalty or in religious texts.

하십시오체 ^(hasipsio-che) Formally polite, used to address colleagues in formal settings or between strangers at the start of a conversation.

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[4]Affixes are bound morphemes that modify the meaning or grammatical function of a word and are always attached to another morpheme, like "ing" in learn*ing*

[5]**Etymology** 체 ^(che) Comes from the word *style*, *form* or *body* in Sino-Korean.

[6]**Etymology** 하 ^(ha) Comes from the non-honorific imperative form of the verb *to do* 하다 ^(hada)

Middle levels

haeyo-che
해요체   Casually polite, used between strangers and colleagues.

hao-che
하오체   Formally neutral, used in signs or among civil servants and the older generation.

hage-che
하게체   Neutral, used for those under one's authority.

Lower levels

haera-che
해라체   Formally impolite, used with close friends or relatives and by adults to children.

hae-che
해체   Casually impolite or intimate, Between close friends and relatives.

However, there are a lot of levels that are either archaic or contextually limited, so this text will be focusing only on: **해체** , **해라체** , **해요체** , **하십시오체** and will be called *informal low*, *formal low*, *informal high* and *formal high* respectively for convenience and because they cover 99% of real-life usage.

0.4   The Book's Structure

This text has the intention of being read in any order, so there might be repeated information. However, in order to avoid redundancy, the text will assume you've read and understood this chapter and will not repeat any information explained in said chapter.

It is worth warning that this text will try to use the least amount of words possible. This is due to the fact that adding new unnecessary vocabulary may result overwhelming for the learning process of a specific section.

Also, even though this text will only teach Korean, it was structured as a "blueprint" for any language I wanted to learn and with the purpose of learning and putting into practice linguistics. Therefore, you can use this text as a way of structuring your learning process while learning a new language.

1. Core Lexical Categories

1.1 Verbs

1.1.1 Endings

When conjugating a verb, we always take into account the dictionary form of a word, which will always end in 다 [da], this is what we call in English the *citation form* or *lemma*, maybe you could compare it with the "to" in words like "to go", "to eat", and so on. If we remove this 다, we get what we call the *stem* of the verb.

Grammatical Mood Endings

The English language is quite reserved with these endings, you have present, past, past participle and continous, and in order to express these moods, we use an auxiliary verb at the start of the verb (I *should* go, I *was* going, I *could* go, and so on). In Korean, there are different endings for each grammatical mood, and it could be quite tedious compared to English.

Depending on the grammatical mood 형 [hyeong] **form** of the sentence, each level has a specific ending. The four most important grammatical moods and the ones explained in further detail are *indicative, interrogative, imperative and propositive.*

In order to make this text as light as possible, the grammatical rules won't be explained with much detail[1], it is recommended to use sites or conjugating dictionaries that are built for that purpose, and trying to build knowledge by experience rather by memorizing some *very* specific rules.

Here are some tables with these grammatical moods in action with its most simple rules:

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[1]I want to justify my lazyness by saying that there are over 40 basic endings and over 400 different combinations

Declarative 평서형

Level	Ending	Rule (ends with)	Examples (present)
IL	−아 −어	bright vowel → −아 otherwise → −어	gada → ga 가다 → 가 meogda → meogeo 먹다 → 먹어
IH	−아요 −어요	bright vowel → −아요 otherwise → −어요	gada → gayo 가다 → 가요 meogda → meogeoyo 먹다 → 먹어요
FL	−ㄴ아 −응다	vowel → −ㄴ다 consonant → −는다	gada → ganda 가다 → 간다 meogda → meogneunda 먹다 → 먹는다
FH	−ㅂ니다 −습니다	vowel → −ㅂ니다 consonant → −습니다	gada → gabnida 가다 → 갑니다 meogda → meogseubnida 먹다 → 먹습니다

Interrogative 의문형

Level	Ending	Rule (ends with)	Examples (present)
IL	−니? −어?	bright vowel → −니? otherwise → −어?	gada → gani? 가다 → 가니? meogda → meogeo? 먹다 → 먹어?
IH	−아요? −어요?	bright vowel → −아요? otherwise → −어요?	gada → gayo? 가다 → 가요? meogda → meogeoyo? 먹다 → 먹어요?
FL	−느냐? −냐?	vowel → −느냐? consonant → −냐?	gada → ganya? 가다 → 가냐? meogda → meogneunya 먹다 → 먹느냐?
FH	−ㅂ니까? −습니까?	vowel → −ㅂ니까? consonant → −습니까?	gada → gabnikka 가다 → 갑니까? meogda → meogseubnikka? 먹다 → 먹습니까?

Imperative 명령형

Level	Ending	Rule (ends with)	Examples (present)
IL	–아라 –어라	bright vowel → –아라 otherwise → –어라	gada / gala 가다 → 가라 meogda / meogeola 먹다 → 먹어라
IH	–세요 –으세요	bright vowel → –세요 otherwise → –으세요	gada / gaseyo 가다 → 가세요 meogda / meogeuseyo 먹다 → 먹으세요
FL[a]	–아라 –어라	vowel → –아라 consonant → –어라	gada / gala 가다 → 가라 meogda / meogeola 먹다 → 먹어라
FH	–십시오 –으십시오	vowel → –십시오 consonant → –으십시오	gada / gasibsio 가다 → 가십시오 meogda / meogeosibsio 먹다 → 먹으십시오

[a]Note that, in this grammatical mood, it sounds exactly the same as in *informal low*

Propositive 청유형

Level	Ending	Rule (ends with)	Examples (present)
IL	–자		gada / gaja 가다 → 가자 meogda / meogja 먹다 → 먹자
IH	–아요 –어요	bright vowel → –아요 otherwise → –어요	gada / gayo 가다 → 가요 meogda / meogeoyo 먹다 → 먹어요
FL	–게		gada / gage 가다 → 가게 meogda / meogge 먹다 → 먹게
FH	–ㅂ시다 –읍시다	vowel → –ㅂ시다 consonant → –읍시다	gada / gabnida 가다 → 갑시다 meogda / meogeubnida 먹다 → 먹읍시다

1.2   Numbering

Korean has two distinct numbering systems: **Native and Sino**[2]. Each is used in different contexts:

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[2]Sino refers to Korean words of Chinese origin

Sino vs Native		
	Sino	**Native**
Range	0–∞	1–99
Formality	More formal	More casual
Use	Abstract, precise things	Familiar, natural things
Counting	×	✓
Hour	×	✓
Minutes / Seconds	✓	×
Dates	✓	×
Phone numbers	✓	×
Money	✓	×
Floor numbers	✓	×
Math / Units	✓	×

1.2.1 Sino

Similarly to English, Sino-Korean combines the numbers 1 to 9 to form greater magnitudes. Here is the list of numbers from 0 to 9:

0. 영 (yeong) 2. 이 (i) 4. 사 (sa) 6. 육 (yuk) 8. 팔 (pal)

1. 일 (il) 3. 삼 (sam) 5. 오 (o) 7. 칠 (chil) 9. 구 (gu)

If we want to add a digit, it is almost exactly like English. For example, if we want to say 94, we say ninety-four *(nine-ten-four)*. In Korean, we say 구십사 (gusipsa / 9-10-4). This is the list of some magnitudes:

10. 십 (sip) 1000. 천 (cheon) 100000. 십만 (sipman) 10000000. 천만 (cheonman)

100. 백 (baek) 10000. 만 (man) 1000000. 백만 (baekman) 100000000. 억 (eok)

Note that unlike English, in which we divide every 3 zeroes (100,000 is a hundred **thousand** ($100 * 10^3$)), in Korean we divide every 4 zeroes (100,000 is 십만 ($10 * 10^4$)).

Also it is worth noting that these numbers should be written like we do in English, using the **Arabic numeric** symbols. This helps when understanding the difference between Sino and Native: If we would intuitively write them using numbers *(12, 5)*, then we use Sino, if we would write them how they are spelled *(twelve, five)* we use Native.

1.2.2 Native

Fortunately, the Native numbering system only goes from 1 to 99, and then it starts counting exactly like Sino.

1. 하나 (hana)   3. 셋 (set)   5. 다섯 (daseot)   7. 일곱 (ilgop)   9. 아홉 (ahop)

2. 둘 (dul)   4. 넷 (net)   6. 여섯 (yeoseot)   8. 여덟 (yeodeol)

However, instead of counting magnitudes like in English, since it has such a limited range, it has specific words for 20, 30, 40, and so on

10. 열 (yeol)   30. 서른 (seoreun)   50. 쉰 (swin)   70. 일흔 (ilheun)   90. 아흔 (aheun)

20. 스물 (seumul)   40. 마흔 (maheun)   60. 예순 (yesun)   80. 여든 (yeodeun)

2. Functional Categories

2.1 Pronouns

Pronouns are words that replace nouns in a sentence, and they can be divided into two groups: **personal** and **demonstrative**.

- **Personal pronouns** are words that are associated to a specific grammatical person (*I, you, they, he, etc.*). These words can be categorized in two sections: the person (*first, second or third*) and the number (*singular or plural*). In Korean, personal pronouns are divided between **informal** and **polite or formal** context.

- **Demonstrative pronouns** are words that point to specific things[1] (*this, that, these or those*). These words can be categorized in two sections: the distance (*proximal, medial or distal*) and the number (*singular or plural*). Note that in English there aren't any differences between medial and distal demosntrative pronouns, although one could accentuate the distance by adding "over there" to the pronoun (*that* versus *that over there*).

Personal Pronouns

Person	Num.	Informal	Formal
1st	SG	na 나 **I**	jeo 저
2nd	SG	neo 너 **You**	geujjok 그쪽
3rd	SG (M)	geu 그 **He**	geubun 그분
	SG (F)	geunyeo 그녀 **She**	geubun 그분
	SG (O)	geugeot 그것 **It**	
1st	PL	uri 우리 **We**	jeohui 저희
2nd	PL	neohui 너희 **You**	yeoreobun 여러분
3rd	PL	geudeul 그들 **They**	geubundeul 그분들

Demonstrative Pronouns

Dist.	Num.	
Prox.	SG	igeot 이것 **this**
Med.	SG	geugeot 그것 **that**
Dist.	SG	jeogeot 저것 **that**
Prox.	PL	igeotdeul 이것들 [a] **these**
Med.	PL	geugeotdeul 그것들 **those**
Dist.	PL	jeogeotdeul 저것들 **those**

[a] deul
들 is a *plural marker*

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[1]**Etymology** geot
것 comes from the word *thing*

2.2   Particles

Korean relies heavily on particles to show each word's grammatical role, here are some examples[2] with literal translation

Role	Particle	Example	Meaning
Subject	이 / 가	*jega* 제**가** (I) *sagwa***reul** 사과**를** (apple) *meogeoyo* 먹어요 (eat)	**I** eat an **apple**
Topic	은 / 는	*je***neun** 저**는** (I) *sagwa***reul** 사과**를** (apple) *meogeoyo* 먹어요 (eat)	**As for me, I** eat an **apple**
Object	을 / 를	*jega* 제**가** (I) *sagwa***reul** 사과**를** (apple) *meogeoyo* 먹어요 (eat)	**I** eat an **apple**
Possession	의	*jega* 제**가** (I) *si***nui** 신**의** (God's) *sagwa***reul** 사과**를** (apple) *meogeoyo* 먹어요 (eat)	**I** eat God**'s apple**
Location	에서	*jega* 제**가** (I) *jeongwon***eseo** 정원**에서** (at the garden) *sagwa***reul** 사과**를** (apple) *meogeoyo* 먹어요 (eat)	**I** eat an **apple at** the garden

In informal speech, these particles are often dropped if the context is clear. Also note that there are much more particles than the ones in this table, however, they will be explained in their respective sections.

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[2]With the particles: use left if ends in a consonant, right if it ends in a vowel