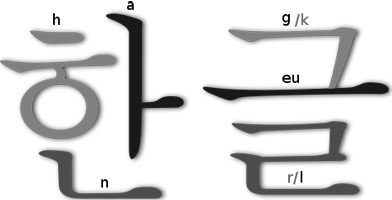
**Language in South Korea**

As daunting as it seems, living and working in Korea without former knowledge of Korean is not that difficult.

In your classroom you are not supposed to use ANY Korean so students are forced to communicate with you exclusively in English. For all intents and purposes this seems to work quite well. There are times when you need more moves than a mime at the circus but you are still able to communicate quite effectively without any skills in Korean.

The beauty of the matter is that if you are interested in learning Korean, getting the basics is really quite easy.

**Korean Language Breakdown**

Korean is an unusual language in that no one is exactly sure of its origins.  
  
The most widely accepted theory is that Korean is a member of the Ural-Altaic family of languages, which also includes Turkish, Finnish, Mongolian and Hungarian.  
  
In reality Korean has far more in common with Japanese and Chinese than it does with Mongolian or European languages, and many Korean words have Chinese origins. Korea also uses two numeric systems, one of which is Chinese based.

[**Read more...**](http://www.footprintsrecruiting.com/language-in-south-korea/94-korean-language-breakdown)

[**List of Korean Language Programs**](http://www.footprintsrecruiting.com/language-in-south-korea/95-list-of-korean-language-programs)

[Korea Information](http://www.footprintsrecruiting.com/component/content/section/15) - [Korean Language](http://www.footprintsrecruiting.com/language-in-south-korea)

**Useful sites for studying Korean:**

* <http://www.learnkorean.com/>
* <http://yuldo.net/language.htm>
* Sogang University Korean Program: <http://korean.sogang.ac.kr/>
* Online Korean classes: <http://www.declan-software.com/korean.htm>
* An introduction to Korean: <http://www.langintro.com/kintro/>

[**List of Korean Language Programs**](http://www.footprintsrecruiting.com/language-in-south-korea/95-list-of-korean-language-programs)

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  [](http://www.langintro.com/kintro/)](http://www.langintro.com/kintro/)

**Learning Korean**

This perspective is from someone who is living in a relatively small city (half a million) in South Korea where English is not widely spoken with much fluency:

Every now and then I run across someone who can speak English well, I am sure the experience in bigger cities may be different. But even if you live in Seoul you will probably travel somewhere else at some point so I still think knowing the basics is important.****

The first thing you need to know is you **can** live here without speaking a word of Korean, but after a while you might get tired of pointing and grunting like a caveman.

In my opinion to improve the quality of your life you should learn the alphabet so you can read bus schedules, menus etc, if there is no English. In addition both the Chinese and Korean number systems so you can recognize times and prices when spoken to you. This is practical for movie tickets, asking how much something is, getting times for buses and other various things.

I believe I would have learned a lot more by taking a formal class than private instruction to learn Korean, but that is just me. Other than that some of the basic living phrases, like goodbye, hello, how much, asking for something or asking for more of something, and I am sorry I don't speak Korean are very helpful and in my opinion will improve the quality of your life here.

I also recommend that you learn the most polite ways to talk you can always go down in formality but it can be embarrassing if you insult someone by talking too casually to them. Respect for elders, even if they are just a year older is very important. Part of the problem for me learning the language was the people at my small institute (I was the only foreign teacher) had no idea why I would want to learn any Korean and were not helpful or supportive of me learning at all. This really discouraged me for a long time. Don't listen to people if they tell you this (why are they learning English??).

Even though I don't know that much Korean, I find that my day is a lot more pleasant when I can communicate on a basic level and don't feel like a total idiot when I have to go and do something.

People respect you a lot more I think when you are at least trying. There are some great books and tapes out there too, for learning Korean and understanding Korean culture.

Just remember how much or how little Korean you decide to learn is up to you!

**Make Happy Time: Engrish in Korea**

by [Tamara Povarchook](http://www.footprintsrecruiting.com/about-footprints/footprints-staff/1213-tamara-povarchook),

One of my favourite things about Asia was the plethora of poorly written English signs, menus and merchandise that were either the result of mistranslation, or full of grammar and spelling errors. I always had my camera with me on any outing, as I never knew when I might stumble upon another hilarious addition to my Facebook album.

One of the first instances of Engrish I recall was when my friend and I wandered into a church on one of our random afternoon adventures in Seoul. There, we discovered this poster on a bulletin board:

|  |
| --- |
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To Koreans, “Brad” and “bread” sound exactly the same, and there is no differentiation between the sounds /p/ and /f/. Linguistically, this error makes sense, though I’m sure Brad Pitt himself would get a good chuckle out of seeing this poster. My Korean colleague translated this for me, and it happens to be an ad for a Bible Study class. The ad mentions the bread of God, which of course is the flesh of Christ. I’m still a little confused by Brad Pitt’s apparent connection to Jesus, but if nothing else, that face would certainly encourage people to take the class!

The topic of bread leads me to the restaurant industry, and the interesting items that one can come across on a menu. The mistranslation of said items often made them sound quite unappetizing or just plain confusing. Here are some examples from my dining experiences:

|  |
| --- |
| 2012-04_Tamara_150-2 |
| Personally, I think I’d prefer some alcohol in my liquefied bear. |

Also spotted on menus: “Ice Beberage”   
                                         “Srarberry Magarita”  
                                         “Family Set: Pork cutlet, Omlet rice, Spaphetti”   
                                         “Nude a big fried shrimp”   
                                         “Steamed Shot Ribs A Meal of Fixed.”

Now, don’t even get me started on the shirts that are produced and worn over there! Children walk around sporting curse words on their chests, and little old ladies sell t-shirts with horrendously inappropriate images and phrases on them. Then you have the shirts that display a paragraph of nonsense written in the smallest font – it seems they just like to flaunt English words as a fashion statement.  
  
Here’s a befuddling shirt I came across on one of many shopping trips:  


Well there you have it – a brief look into language gone wrong! There are several websites and blogs devoted to the wonderful world of Engrish. A quick Google search will lead to many examples from Korea, as well as China and other countries.  
  
Enjoy! (Or should I say: Make happy time!)

**Learn Korean**

[](http://www.kqzyfj.com/qj97dlurlt8D9HGACA8A9IBDDI9)

Korean is not an easy language to learn but hey, neither is English.  The great thing about learning Korean while you are teaching English is that you will come to empathise with your students about some of the challenges in learning a second language.  Learning Korean will also help you identify how the Korean language is structured which may help you in identifying areas in language learning where your students are struggling.

If you're going to teach in Korea for a year having some skill with Korean language is going to be incredibly useful in your day to day life but there is another tremendous benefit.  By learning Korean, your students and virtually every Korean person you meet will be impressed by the fact that you are actually taking an active interest in Korean culture by way of learning Korean.  Get started before you go, order the Rosetta Stone Korean Language learning set and take it with you or get it shipped to wherever you are.