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Korean

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The variety of Korean spoken in and around Seoul, on which the following phonetic description is based, is widely recognized as the standard language of the Korean peninsula. It differs from the speech of Pyongyang in North Korea, however, in phonetic features such as vowel and consonant qualities, vowel length, accent, rhythm and intonation.

Consonants

	Bilabial	Labio-dent.	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p p^h b			t t^h d			k k^h g	
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Fricative		f		s z				h
Affricate					c c^h ɟ			
Lateral Approx.				l				

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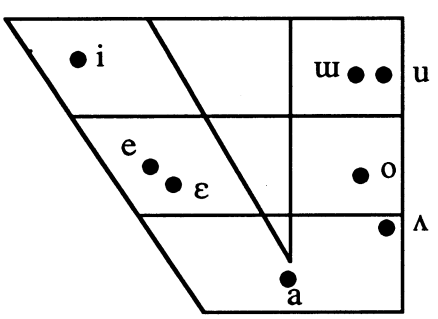
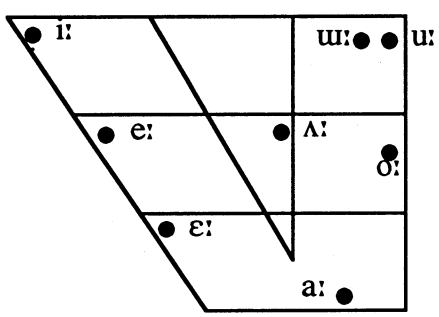
p	pal	sucking'	t	tal	'daughter'	k	kal	'spreading'
pʰ	pʰal	'arm'	tʰ	tʰal	'riding'	kʰ	kʰal	'knife'
b	bal	'foot'	d	dal	'moon'	g	gal	'going'
m	mal	'horse'	n	nal	'day'	ŋ	baŋ	'room'
			s	sal	'rice'	h	hal	'doing'
			z	zal	'flesh'			
			c	cal	'squeezing'			
			cʰ	cʰal	'kicking'			
			ɟ	ɟal	'well'			
			l	balam	'wind'			

Vowels

a) Monophthongs

Korean can be considered as having nine vowel qualities, which occur distinctively long or short. The vowel /ø(ː)/ is usually pronounced as [we] in Seoul speech although there are also words with /we/ not derived from /ø/. In view of the overwhelming tendency of Seoul speakers to pronounce a diphthong instead of /ø/, it may be more appropriate to postulate a system of only 8 vowel qualities in modern standard Korean, and only this number are shown on the vowel charts. Vowel qualities are affected to a great extent by vowel quantity. Long vowels are pronounced with a more peripheral quality than the corresponding short ones, which are centralised or lowered. Long and short /ʌ(ː)/ show the greatest quality difference: short /ʌ/ is a mid-open back unrounded vowel but long /ʌː/ is realized as a central vowel [əː].





Short			Long		
i	ziɟaŋ	'hunger',	iː	'ziːɟaŋ	'market'
e	buˈzane	'to Busan' (Pusan)	eː	'beːda	'to cut'
ɛ	thɛˈjaŋ	'sun'	ɛː	'thɛːdo	'attitude'
a	'mal	'horse'	aː	'maːl	'speech'
o	'baːbo	'fool'	oː	'boːzu	'salary'
u	guˈli	'bronze'	uː	'zuːbag	'watermelon'
ʌ	'bʌl	'punishment'	ʌː	'bʌːl	'bee'
ɯ	'ʌːlɯn	'seniors'	ɯː	'ɯːmzig	'food'
ø	'gjoːhø	'church'	øː	'øːtʰu	'overcoat'
	'gjoːhwe			'weːtʰu	

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b) Diphthongs

[j, w] are considered to be components of diphthongs rather than separate consonants.

			/wi /	dwi	'back'	/ɯi /	ɯi'za 'doctor'
/je/	je'zan	'budget'	/we/	gwe	'box'		
/je/	jɛ'gi	'story'	/wɛ/	wɛ	'why'		
/ja/	ja'gu	'baseball'	/wa/	gwa'il	'fruits'		
/jo/	gjo'za	'teacher'					
/ju/	ju'li	'glass'					
/jʌ/	jʌ'gi	'here'	/wʌ/	mwʌ	'what'		

Stress

Stress placement is predictable in Korean. In words of more than one syllable it is initial when the first syllable is a heavy syllable, i.e. one which either contains a long vowel or has a syllable-final consonant because of the presence of an intervocalic consonant sequence. All other words of more than one syllable are accented on the second syllable. An accented syllable is longer and louder than an unaccented one.

1) Words with accent on the first syllable:

a) long vowel in the first syllable:

/ˈgaːʝan/ 'disguise', /ˈshʌːli/ 'acting head'

b) Closed first syllable:

/ˈzanzu/ 'landscape', /ˈcʰulgu/ 'exit'

c) long vowel and closed first syllable:

/ˈzaːnzu/ 'arithmetic', /ˈgaːmza/ 'thanks'

2) Words with accent on the second syllable

/gaˈʝan/ 'most', /zɑˈli/ 'frost', /zaˈdali/ 'ladder'

Conventions

/b, d, g/ are voiceless unaspirated (or slightly aspirated) lenis plosives [b̥, d̥, g̊] syllable-initially but are regularly realized as voiced sounds in intervocalic position. /ʝ/ shows the same voicing variation. /z/ is a lenis voiceless alveolar fricative. It is sometimes realized as voiced [z] intervocalically, especially when preceded by a nasal as in /gaːmza/ 'thanks' and /inza/ 'greetings' spoken in an informal style. /p, t. k, c, s/ are voiceless unaspirated fortis sounds syllable-initially, produced with a partially constricted glottis and additional subglottal pressure. /pʰ tʰ, kʰ, cʰ/ are strongly aspirated voiceless sounds syllable-initially.

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In syllable-final position /b, p, p^h/ are realized as a voiceless bilabial stop without plosion, [$p^\urcorner$], /d, t, t^h, ɟ, c, c^h/ are realized as a voiceless alveolar stop without plosion, [$t^\urcorner$], and /g, k, k^h/ are realized as a voiceless velar stop without plosion, [$k^\urcorner$]. The four sonorants /m, n, ŋ, l/ are the only other consonants which can occur syllable-finally.

/ɟ, c, c^h/ are voiceless alveolopalatal affricates syllable-initially. /z/ and /s/ are realized as alveolopalatal fricatives [$ɕ^h$], [ɕ] when followed by /i/ or a diphthong beginning with [j]. /h/ is [ç] before /i/ and [j], [x] before /ɯ/, [ɦ] between voiced sounds and [h] elsewhere. /n/ is [ɲ] before /i/ and [j], and [n] elsewhere. /l/ is [ɾ] intervocalically, but [l] or [l̚] syllable-finally, and [ʎ] before /i/ or [j]; /ll/ is [ll] or [lʎ], according to the vowel context.

Transcription of recorded passage

ba'lamgwa 'hɛnnimi zʌ'lo hi'mi 'dʌ 'ze:dago da't^{h}ugo i'sɯl tɛ, 'han na'gɯnega ta'tɯt^{h}an 'we:t^{h}ulɯl 'ibko 'gʌ:lʌ wa'sɯmnida. gɯ'dɯlɯn nu'gudɯnɟi na'gɯneɯi 'we:t^{h}ulɯl 'mʌnɟʌ 'bʌdkinɯn niga hi'mi 'dʌ 'ze:dago ha'gilo 'gjʌlcʌŋhɛsɯmnida. bugp^{h}uŋɯn 'himkʌd bu'lʌsɯna 'bu:lmjʌn 'bu:lsulog na'gɯnɛnɯn 'we:t^{h}ulɯl 'dandanhi jʌ'mjʌsɯmnida. gɯ 'tɛe 'hɛnnimi tɯ'gʌun hɛ'pic^{h}ɯl ga'manhi nɛ'ljʌ 'cø:ni na'gɯnenɯn 'we:t^{h}ulɯl 'ʌllɯn bʌ'zʌsɯmnida. i'lihajʌ 'bugphuŋɯn 'hɛnnini 'du:lcuŋe hi'mi 'dʌ 'ze:dago 'inɟʌnhaɟi a'nɯl su 'ʌ:bsʌsɯmnida.

Orthographic version

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