The Korean Language

Iksop Lee and S. Robert Ramsey

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Preface

The project to produce a book on Korean began for me in the summer of 1993. The State University of New York at Stony Brook had just initiated a large-scale project to produce a series of publications on Korean culture, and a general work on the language was to be one of the first volumes in the series. At the time, I was a visiting scholar at Seoul National University. One day, around the middle of my stay on campus, my old friend and colleague Professor Lee Iksop approached me about the possibility of working with him and some other SNU scholars to create a work, in English, on the Korean language. I was immediately interested. For a number of years I had been planning to write a book on Korean, and this project seemed like a good opportunity to finally get that done. I had worked with Professor Lee before and looked forward to doing so again.

As it happened, I was living in the Hoam Residence of the university, and the general project supervisor from Stony Brook, Professor Park Sung Bae, was staying just a floor below me. It was a simple matter to get together and discuss the project. Professor Park and I had a pleasant meeting and in short order worked out an informal agreement. The idea was that Professor Lee and his Seoul National colleagues were to write a Korean-language manuscript describing the Korean language, and I was to translate and edit the work, doing what was necessary to make it into a book for the English-speaking world.

In less than a year, in the spring of 1994, I received a manuscript in the mail from Professor Lee. According to the explanation that arrived with it, the text had been produced by Professor Lee together with two other colleagues, Lee Sang Oak, a phonologist and linguistic historian, and Ch'ae Wan, a younger scholar specializing in morphology and syntax. It consisted of eight chapters. Chapters 1, 2, 6, and 8 had originally been written by Lee Iksop himself, while Lee Sang Oak had contributed drafts of chapters 3 and 7, and Ch'ae Wan drafts for chapters 4 and 5. Lee Iksop had then rewritten the entire text, aided by Ch'ae Wan's editorial help. The result was a manuscript with the cohesion of a work by a single author. The arrival of that manuscript marked the beginning of my active participation in the SNU-Stony Brook translation project and my own work on this book.

From the beginning, I saw my job as twofold. On the one hand, I was to produce an English-language source of information about the Korean language that was both informative and readable. But, on the other hand, I needed to present, in as faithful a way as I could, my Korean colleagues'

views about their language and society to this same English-speaking audience. Those two tasks were not always easy to reconcile. By saying this, I do not mean there was anything about those views that I necessarily disagreed with, or that they were linguistically inaccurate; on the contrary, I felt that the views of Korean scholars were often refreshingly independent of the hegemony of American-style linguistics. Korean ideas and approaches were certainly worth presenting to the English-speaking world. Rather, the challenge for me was one of intercultural communication. Emphases are often different. Discourse styles are certainly different. As a result, my procedure has all along been first to read and assimilate ideas and arguments, then, based upon those views, to write a new text in English. At times I have perhaps exercised editorial license to its outer limits, adding thoughts and materials from a variety of sources, rewriting sections—in one case a whole chapter—whenever I thought the changes would clarify or add interest. In this enterprise, I am grateful to Professor Lee and his colleagues for their trust and patient understanding. Still, in the end, I feel that I have presented their ideas sympathetically and without serious distortion. Both organizational structure and basic content remain Professor Lee's.

Let me give a simple example. On the first page of the introduction, under the heading of "Korean Writing," two sentences of the original Korean text were devoted to Hangŭl. The text stated simply that Hangŭl had been invented in 1443 and that since that time there had been rich records of phonemic writing in Korea. The remaining two pages of the section were given over to other matters, mainly a description of pre-alphabetic writing, covering points most ordinary Koreans do not know. My feeling was that, if anything about writing belonged in an introduction intended for Westerners, it was some mention of the cultural significance of Hangŭl. Of course, what I had to say was patently obvious to anyone native to Korean culture. Besides, a wonderfully detailed and rich analysis of Hangŭl followed, in the same text, in Chapter 2. Still, before plunging into details about history and orthographic practice, the English-speaking reader would, in my judgment, find a brief overview of Hangŭl in the introduction both useful and interesting. The change amounted to a difference in presentation, not basic facts.

A somewhat more serious change was what I ended up writing about Japanese loanwords. The Korean relationship with Japan is not an easy one to deal with for Koreans, but it becomes difficult for others to understand many things about the modern language without knowing something of what happened earlier in this century. We Americans, with our laissez-faire attitude about language, have great difficulty understanding why Koreans would care so much about word origins. Why on earth would they want to purge perfectly good words from their language just because the words happen to come from Japanese? (I suspect all Westerners with any knowledge of the two languages have thought about this matter.) In a discussion Professor Lee and I had about the subject one day, I remember vividly a poignant story he told me about how, as a first grader in a country school, he was given strict

orders to stop using his Korean name. Cultural and linguistic identity becomes more important to a people who have had theirs threatened.

I have not made many changes in the chapters on grammatical structure. However, on occasion I decided that certain additional information was necessary to clarify or round out the discussion. I supplemented chapter 3, "Phonology," for example, with some remarks about the morphophonemic processes detailed in Martin 1954, as well as basic information about certain classes of irregular verb stems. These irregular verbs are touched on in the text somewhat later, in the chapter on dialects, but it seemed particularly important to me that the non-Korean reader at least be exposed to these irregularities as part of an introduction to the phonology of the standard language. Elsewhere, in chapters 4, 5, and 6, I have added information from other sources, principally Martin 1992.

In the fall of 1995 Professor Lee came to the University of Maryland as a visiting scholar, and during the seven months he was here, he rewrote, among other things, much of what had been chapter 5. In the process, he separated that part of the text into two separate chapters; these are now chapters 5 and 6. Professor Lee also made changes in the text, deciding, for example, to present the copula as a type of inflecting stem alongside verbs and adjectives rather than as a unique type of nominal particle, which is how the copula is usually analyzed in traditional Korean grammars. For some of these decisions, I have added brief background remarks in the body of the text or in endnotes.

We also agreed that the chapter on history, chapter 8, needed to be expanded and rewritten, and that part of the editorial task fell to me. As a result of that decision, I wrote a new chapter organized along lines very much like those of the original draft but with greater illustrative detail and more background information. The views of Korean linguistic history presented there are largely those of Lee Ki-Moon 1972a, with supplementary information taken from a variety of other sources, but especially Martin 1992. In the section on Middle Korean grammar, I relied heavily on An and Yi 1990.

As a general introductory work, this book has two unusual chapters. Chapter 7, "Honorifics and Speech Styles," is a long but readable essay on how the Korean language reflects the structure of Korean society. Chapter 2, "Korean Writing," presents a great deal of information about writing practices in Korea that is otherwise not available in English.

My own orthographic choices are ones that have by now become common practice among Western Koreanists. In the body of the text, Korean words are transcribed in McCune-Reischauer Romanization. But there are two exceptions. One is that, when known, Korean personal names are written according to individual preferences; for example, I write "Lee Iksop" (in the Korean order of family name first) instead of "Yi Iksŏp." For bibliographic purposes, however, I revert to McCune. The other exception is very minor: the name of the Korean alphabet is written as *Hangŭl* instead of as *han'gŭl,* without the apostrophe used in McCune to show syllable boundary.

As all Koreanists know, the McCune-Reischauer system is an attempt to represent Korean sounds as heard by Westerners (read 'English speakers'), and its spellings are relatively independent of how the same words are written in Hangŭl. Yale Romanization, on the other hand, is the romanization of choice for linguists, because it is constructed to reflect linguistic structure. In addition, Hangŭl can be mapped fairly easily into Yale using the rules given in Martin 1992:9-12. For these reasons, I transcribe linguistic examples in a slightly modified version of Yale Romanization.

In the Yale system, word spacing is used much more liberally than in Hangŭl, and in a few cases I have altered Yale word spacing to reflect the Korean spellings more directly. For example, I write 'be clean' as *kkaykkus-hata* with a hyphen. Writing the form as two words, with a space, as is done in Yale Romanization *(kkaykkus hata),* would call into question the structural analysis described in chapter 4 (4.1). And, because of this choice, I also write other cases of noun plus *hata* with a hyphen, as in *salang-hata* 'to love'. Here *salang* 'love' is clearly an independent, separable noun, but Korean orthographic practice indicates that *salang-ha-* is a verb stem. I also write verbal forms such as 'gape' as *pel.ecita* instead of *pel.e cita*; I write *mek.eto* 'though one eats' instead of *mek.e to.* I generally follow Yale in setting off particles by spaces, but the compound particle *eyse,* for example, is written solid instead of as *ey se.* These are all rather minor changes, but they seemed to me to better fit the spirit of the Korean text. In any case, for comparative purposes and for the convenience of readers who prefer it, I have also transcribed the examples in Hangŭl in all the chapters following the introduction.

In accordance with usual linguistic practice, a form enclosed in angled brackets, for example, /sewul/, represents a phonemic analysis. Forms in square brackets, [səul], are phonetic transcriptions of the sounds. An asterisk is used whenever a phoneme, morpheme, or word is historically unattested and has been reconstructed. A raised ^{x} indicates that the phrase or sentence is ungrammatical, while a raised question mark, $^{?}$, shows that the expression is borderline grammatical or not quite idiomatic.

The phonetic symbols used in this work for vowels generally follow international standards (IPA), but some symbols have been altered to better fit an English-speaking audience. The consonant [j] for example, is used to represent a voiced palatal affricate (as in [kaji] 'eggplant'), while [y] is used for the palatal glide (as in [kyəul] 'winter'). A raised glottal stop is used to indicate a fortis, or reinforced, pronunciation: [t^{ʔ}al] 'daughter', while a raised *h* is used for aspiration: [t^{h}al] 'mask'.

A final remark about the nature of this work. In producing this volume, our intent has been to provide a general introduction to the Korean language that does not require specialized linguistic knowledge to read. That is the kind of work that has long been missing in the Western-language literature on Korea. But, at the same time, we have tried to avoid writing down or oversimplifying. In places, the discussion can be demanding, and the casual reader should feel free to skip over parts containing more detail

than is needed. The text can be read on different levels, and the chapters in any order, and we encourage readers to approach it in that spirit or in any other way they find useful or interesting. My rule of thumb has been to assume, in all chapters after the introduction, that the reader has some familiarity with the Korean language, but not necessarily an understanding of its structure. To assume less would have been patronizing, to assume more would not have been in keeping with the goals of this book.

—S. Robert Ramsey
College Park, Maryland

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1
Introduction

1.1 The Distribution of Korean

Korean is the language of all native-born inhabitants of the Korean peninsula. There are no varieties or dialects of this language so different they cannot be understood by all. The Korean people are fond of saying that they are a unified nation speaking one language, and linguistically it is clearly true. Korea itself may still be politically divided, but the people on both sides of the border speak one and the same language.

The Korean language has a relatively large number of speakers. Counting the 46.4 million people in South Korea and the 21.4 million in North Korea, the population of Korea today is almost 70 million, a number greater than the population of England or France. About the same number of people speak Korean as Italian. The size of the territory on which Korean is spoken may not be large, but in terms of the number of speakers, it ranks twelfth in the world.[1]

Korean is also spoken in overseas Korean communities, especially in China, North America, Japan, and the former Soviet Union. Today there are 1,460,000 people of Korean extraction in the United States, and another 730,000 in Japan. There are about 1,760,000 people belonging to the Korean nationality in China, and 500,000 in Russia and the former Soviet Union. In the larger communities in all of these places the Korean language maintains an existence. Korean-speaking populations are conspicuously active in New York and Los Angeles, where, among other things, Korean signs line the streets of "Korea Town," often as far as the eye can see. Korean-language newspapers, many of them printed locally, circulate widely. But even in smaller metropolitan areas across the length and breadth of the United States, Korean writing on signs, especially church signs, has become commonplace. In the former Soviet Union, language maintenance in Korean communities is reported to be higher than is the case with almost all other ethnic minorities.

Koreans in Japan, with large concentrations in the area around Osaka, are the only significant minority in that country; although 75 percent are Japanese-born, most remain legally aliens, a status that keeps them apart from the mainstream of Japanese society and fosters the maintenance of the Korean language. But the largest and most vigorous Korean-speaking

population anywhere in the world outside of Korea can be found in China. In the northeast, in the area centered around the Yanbian Autonomous Region, complete Korean institutions remain in place, including Korean-language schools up to the university level. In China, Korean is officially classified as a "major" minority language.

Elsewhere, outside of these larger concentrations of overseas Koreans, Korean-speaking communities are distributed worldwide, especially in South America. With the growing economic and political importance of Korea on the world scene, Korean has also become widely taught as a second language.

1.2 Korean Writing

The Korean alphabet is used by Koreans only, and only for writing the Korean language. As will be explained in chapter 2, it is unlike any other writing system in the world. It is also the only alphabet of any kind completely native to East Asia.

In South Korea, this national alphabet is called Hangŭl, which in popular usage can also mean 'the Korean language'. As a result, in overseas Korean communities settled by South Koreans, Korean schools are popularly referred to "Hangŭl schools." In North Korea, however, the name of the language, *Chosŏn-mal,* can in informal, unguarded speech serve as the name of the alphabet. The two usages may seem to be mirror images of each other, but they share the perception that the national writing system is the Korean language itself.

For Koreans, especially in the South, the alphabet is a powerful cultural icon. It is the very symbol of nation and national culture. Each year, 9 October is celebrated as "Alphabet Day," and King Sejong, the inventor of the alphabet, is honored in countless ways—his likeness appears on money and stamps; institutions, societies, streets, and the like carry his name. Much as American schoolchildren read Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, Korean schoolchildren read Sejong's essay on the alphabet. That this writing system is completely and uniquely Korean is enough to swell the pride of the nation. But that it is also one of the most remarkable writing systems ever invented[2] makes it fully deserving of attention in the wider world.

Thus, the Korean alphabet has unchallenged respect among Koreans as their native writing system. From the time they enter elementary school until they graduate college, Koreans study from books written in Hangŭl. Newspapers and magazines, fiction and poetry, books and journals in every professional field, government documents and legal codes—all are written in Hangŭl.

And yet, Koreans still sometimes write their language by mixing Chinese characters into the Hangŭl text. This mixed style of writing may seem

curious, considering the pride that Koreans take in their alphabet. But the use of Chinese characters follows a long and earlier tradition. Even after the invention of the alphabet, and until the end of the nineteenth century, most government documents and professional writings continued to be written entirely in Literary Chinese. Then, around the beginning of the twentieth century, writing reforms inspired by modernization and nationalism produced a true written Korean, and the form this style of writing took was one in which the alphabet was mixed with Chinese characters. The reasons for preserving this mixture were largely cultural because knowledge of Chinese writing was still seen as a measure of intellectual achievement and level of education. But the rationale given was often different. An enormous number of Sinitic morphemes had been borrowed into the Korean vocabulary, and writing them in Chinese rather than Hangŭl was believed to show meanings and etymologies more clearly.

Over the years, the arguments for and against Chinese characters have been repeated, attacked, and defended countless times, often with great passion. But, with the passing of time, the issue has become largely academic. For the use of Chinese characters, in mixed script or otherwise, has slowly, and naturally, waned. In North Korea, Chinese characters have been banned from use since 1949. In South Korea, too, the frequency with which Chinese characters appear has decreased dramatically in recent years. Newspapers and most professional writings still contain a mixture of Chinese characters, but the relative number of magazines and educational materials (even at the college level) that contain almost no Chinese characters has grown considerably. The proportion of books using Chinese characters is far smaller than that of books using only Hangŭl. Signs in Chinese, once common on stores almost everywhere in Seoul, are now largely restricted to Chinese restaurants and herbal medicine shops. This trend away from the use of Chinese characters is probably an indication that the number of people familiar with them has become smaller. It might also be part of the cause. In any case, Chinese characters are rapidly becoming as unfamiliar to Koreans as Greek letters are now to Americans.

In contrast, the use of Roman letters in Korea has increased in recent years. Such abbreviations and acronyms as FM, CD, VTR (Video Tape Recorder), KBS (Korean Broadcasting System), and MBC (Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation) have become commonplace in Korean publications. Koreans give only the Roman letters for these forms, which has resulted in a new kind of mixed script. English and pseudo-English can be found liberally sprinkled on shop signs (Donky Chicken) and billboards (Galloper Life, Wide Bongo) throughout Seoul and even smaller cities. But this trend, though driven by the movements of a larger world culture, in no way threatens the native writing system. No one would seriously advocate replacing Hangŭl with romanization.

The written history of Korean, in the most literal sense, is five and a half centuries old. The Korean alphabet, which has been in existence since

1443,[3] is the medium for unusually extensive and detailed phonological records of the language.

But even before the invention of the alphabet, Korea was a literate society. Chinese characters and Chinese writing had been imported from China at least by the early centuries of the Christian era, and Koreans very early on learned to write in Literary Chinese. At first, such things as record keeping may well have required the assistance of Chinese immigrants, but native specialists soon mastered the art. Literary Chinese may have been far removed from any variety of spoken Korean, but Koreans lived active and literate lives for many centuries with it as the written medium.

Koreans were more than simply users of this language. They were innovative and creative in what they did with it. It is known, for example, that Koreans were the first people in the world to use metal movable type. Records show that Koreans were using metal type to print books by A.D. 1234, and a copy of such a text from 1377 is preserved today in the Bibliothéque Nationale in Paris. Both dates are much earlier than Gutenberg's famous "invention" of around 1440. But the kind of East Asian printing that parallels what Gutenberg did is far older still. Xylography, the printing of a written text by means of wood blocks, was developed at least by the eighth century and became the common means of producing books in the tenth and eleventh centuries. The result was an expansion of knowledge in East Asia much like that caused by the European innovation—except that it occurred about half a millennium earlier. The oldest known sample of printing in the world, dating back at least to 751, has been found in Korea.

Literary activity on so many levels, even through the medium of Chinese characters, naturally involved the recording of the native, spoken language. In the Three Kingdoms period, Koreans developed the device of borrowing either the reading or the meaning of Chinese characters to record the names of local people and places. And in the Silla period, complete poems known as *hyangga* were written down using this method (cf. chapter 2). If these kinds of transcriptions are taken into consideration, Korean can be said to have been transcribed perhaps as early as the fifth century.

Transcriptions of Korean from this early period are rare, however. As time passed, Koreans must have begun to compose with more confidence in Literary Chinese, and attempts to represent the local language in writing occurred with less and less frequency. Only twenty-five *hyangga* still exist, and they are all extremely difficult to interpret. Other early attempts to write Korean are little more than fragments. The transcriptions in Chinese characters hint and tantalize, but they do not provide much concrete information about the sounds of earlier Korean. The first systematic records of the Korean language come only with the invention of the alphabet in the middle of the fifteenth century. It is from the texts of that period that the history of the Korean language, in its truest sense, begins.

1.3 The Origins of Korean

Where does the Korean language come from? Like the ancestry of the Korean people themselves, the origins of the Korean language have never been definitively established. But there are two widely accepted and interconnected theories about its genetic affinities. The first is that Korean is related to Japanese. The second, which perhaps subsumes the first, is that Korean is related to Altaic—Turkic, Mongolian, and Manchu-Tungus.

For a long time now—at least since their liberation from Japan—most Koreans have preferred to consider the latter relationship. Western writers have tended to compare Korean first with Japanese, but Korean scholars have tended to play down that possible relationship. In any case, consideration of the Japanese connection is unavoidable since in its larger formulation—"Macro-Altaic"—the Altaic family would include both Japanese and Korean.

The hypothesis that Korean is related to Altaic reinforces, and for the most part underlies, the widespread belief that the Korean people originated in central Asia. Many writers have described the ancestors of the Koreans as nomads living somewhere around Mongolia who subsequently migrated east and south into their final homeland on the Korean peninsula. Partly based on earlier linguistic scholarship and partly based on imagination, this version of Korean prehistory has given Koreans a feeling of kinship with horse-riding peoples of central Asia such as the Mongols.

Doubts about the relationship between Korean and Altaic seem to have grown recently in the West, to the point where many linguistic dictionaries and introductory texts now describe Korean as "a language whose genetic affinity is unknown." In his best-selling book *The Mother Tongue* (1990), Bill Bryson states this negative view even more strongly. In a general discussion of language origins, he asserts bluntly that, like Basque, Korean is "quite unrelated to any other known language" (p. 24). In Korea itself, however, the situation is completely different. There, most experts continue to believe strongly in an Altaic connection. It is obvious that Korean is similar in structure to Manchu, Mongolian, and other such northern languages, and when the great comparativist G. J. Ramstedt put forward the hypothesis that Korean had sprung from the same source as these other, Altaic languages, he found a sympathetic and responsive audience in Korea.[4] Even today, his publications (especially 1928, 1952, 1957) are among the works most frequently cited by Korean linguists.

The picture of this relationship painted by Koreans follows fairly closely that sketched by Ramstedt and, later, Poppe (1960). They reason that, although not as closely related to Turkic, Mongol, and (Manchu-)Tungus as these three branches are to each other, Korean nevertheless forms a larger language family with them and that, of the three, Korean has the closest relationship to the Tungusic branch of the family.

It has often been pointed out—by observers even before Ramstedt—

that the many resemblances between Korean and Altaic could hardly be accidental. There is first of all the overall, general structure. Like the Altaic languages, Korean is agglutinative, forming words by adding inflectional endings to the end of a stem. Then there is the matter of "vowel harmony"; Korean, especially in its older recorded stages, shows in the vocalism of endings combining with stems the kind of vowel concord typical of Altaic. Just as is true in Altaic, the liquid *l* (including [r]) cannot begin a word. There are no relative pronouns or conjunctions, verb endings performing the functions that those words usually do in Indo-European languages. All of these grammatical features characterize both Korean and Altaic.

But what is more important are the results obtained by comparing concrete lexical items and grammatical forms.[5] For example, it can be seen in comparisons such as that shown in (1) that Old Korean **a* corresponds to proto-Altaic **a:*

(1) Middle Korean *alay* 'below' (< **'al*), Evenki *alas* 'foot', Mongolian *ala* 'crotch', Old Turkic *al* 'downward', Middle Turkic *altïn* 'below'

In the lexical items shown in (2), Korean *p* corresponds to proto-Altaic **p* or **b*.[6]

(2) Middle Korean *puz-* 'pour', Manchu *fusu-* 'sprinkle water', Mongolian *üsür-* 'sprinkle, spill', Monguor *fusuru-* 'pour', Turkic *üskür-* 'spray with the mouth'.

In grammatical forms as well, some extremely suggestive correspondences have been found. For example, the Korean locative particle *lo,* which indicates directionality, can be compared to Old Turkic *rü* and Mongolian *ru,* for which proto-Altaic **ru/rü* has been reconstructed. More striking still are the correspondences of the verbal noun endings -**r,* -**m,* and -**n* with virtually identical endings in Korean. These point strongly to a genetic affinity between Korean and the Altaic languages.

In general, Korean scholars attribute more significance to these resemblances than do their Western colleagues. Even though Korean researchers are fully aware of the limitations caused by the lack of ancient records, they nevertheless believe strongly that, in all probability, Korean belongs to the Altaic family. They tend not to consider the possibility that it is related to some other language family besides Altaic. The conclusion reached by Lee Ki-Moon (1972a) is that, if Korean did not branch off from proto-Altaic, then, at the very least, both Korean and Altaic sprang from some common source. In Korean scholarly circles, it is this view that has prevailed.

In considering the relationships between the languages of East Asia, it is important to remember that Korean is not genetically related to Chinese. From very early on, Koreans used Chinese writing and consequently borrowed an enormous amount of vocabulary from Literary Chinese (cf. chapter 4), but this borrowing did not change where the language had come from. From the point of view of linguistic origin and genetic affinity, Korean is completely separate from Chinese. Chinese is believed to form a branch of what is known as the Sino-Tibetan family of languages, and no

one has ever seriously proposed that Korean could belong to that particular family.

With Japanese, however, the situation is different. As was mentioned above, the general structural characteristics of Japanese are almost identical to those of Korean. Concrete lexical and grammatical correspondences may be thin compared to this strikingly close structural resemblance, but there continues to be optimism about the possibility that the two languages might share a common genetic origin. Of course, it is considered even more difficult to establish the genealogy of Japanese than that of Korean. The probability that Japanese belongs to the Altaic family is believed to be somewhat less than that of Korean. Even G. J. Ramstedt and N. Poppe, who were enthusiastic advocates of a genetic relationship between Korean and Altaic, hesitated when it came to placing Japanese in the Altaic family. Moreover, there are also those who advocate a relationship with Austronesian for Japanese—a "southern hypothesis" as it were. However, it is still true that, among Japanese scholars, support is greatest for the hypothesis that Japanese belongs to the Altaic family and, at the same time, that it is most closely related to Korean.

1.4 The Structural Characteristics of Korean

Korean contrasts structurally with European languages such as English in a number of ways. First of all, in languages like English, the basic syntactic structure is SVO (subject-verb-object), while in Korean it is SOV (subject-object-verb). In other words, Korean is a verb-final language, a language in which the verb always comes at the end of the sentence.

As has already been mentioned, Korean is an agglutinative language. The function a noun has in a sentence is made overt by attaching one or more particles to it, as illustrated in (1), below. Since Korean particles are attached at the end of the noun, these grammatical elements are also known as "postpositions"; their functions often mirror those of English prepositions.

(1) a. Kangaci *ka* kwiyepta.
puppy SUBJ. cute
"The puppy is cute."
b. Kangaci *lul* cal tolpoala.
puppy OBJECT well look after
"Look after the puppy carefully."
c. Kangaci *eykey* mul *ul* cwuela.
puppy to water OBJ. give
"Give (to) the puppy (some) water."

Verbs, too, are formed through agglutination—that is, by attaching various

endings to the stem. For example, endings such as those in (2) show the tense of the verb. In (3), the endings show whether the sentence is a question, a statement, or a command. Other endings, as will be discussed later, are indicators of the style chosen to fit the situation and the person being addressed—in other words, they determine the speech level in the so-called honorific system. To a nonnative speaker the sheer number of verb endings can seem astonishing, and their functional load is great. It is sometimes said that what is important in English is expressed near the beginning of the sentence, while what is important in Korean is expressed at the end. Though somewhat of an oversimplification, there is still a measure of truth in that characterization. The complexity of the verb phrase gives Korean much of its expressive power.

(2) a. Kkoch i encey phi-*ni*?
flower SUBJ. when bloom?
"When do the flowers bloom?"
b. Kkoch i encey phi-*ess*-ni?
PAST?
"When did the flowers bloom?"

(3) a. Minho ka chayk ul ilk-*nunta*.
Minho SUBJ. book OBJ. read ing.
"Minho is reading a book."
b. Minho ka chayk ul ilk-*ni*?
?
"Is Minho reading a book?"
c. Minho ya chayk ul ilk-*ela*.
!
"Minho! Read the book!"

In Korean, adjectives are a subcategory of verbs. Sometimes called "descriptive verbs," they are composed of stem plus one or more endings, just as verbs are. In this way, Korean adjectives are completely different from English adjectives, which require a form of the verb "to be" to function as predicates.

(4) a. Matang i nelp-*ta*.
yard SUBJ. broad.
"The yard is big."
b. Matang i nelp-*ess-ta*.
PAST.
"The yard was big."
c. Matang i nelp-*ess-ni*?
PAST?
"Was the yard big?"

(5) a. Tongsayng un khi ka khu-*ta.*
sibling TOPIC height big.
"The younger sibling is tall."
b. Apeci nun khi ka khu-*si-ta.*
father TOPIC HONORIFIC.
"Father is tall."

There are well over four hundred verb endings in modern Korean,[7] and their functions range far beyond the marking of predication at the end of the sentence. As can be seen in the following simple examples, an ending can be used to express a variety of connective functions.

(6) a. Hanul un phulu-*ko* kwulum un huy-ta.
sky blue AND cloud white.
"The sky is blue, and the clouds are white."
b. Pi ka o-*myen* sophung ul yenki-haca.
rain come IF picnic put off-let's
"If it rains, let's put off the picnic."
c. Kiwun i eps-*uni* swiese kaca.
strength isn't BECAUSE resting go-let's
"Because I'm out of strength, let's rest before we go."

(7) a. nay ka cikum ilk-*nun* chayk
I now read ing book
"the book I'm reading now"
b. nay ka nayil ilk-*ul* chayk
tomorrow FUTURE
"the book I'm going to read tomorrow"
c. nay ka ecey ilk-*un* chayk
yesterday PAST
"the book I read yesterday"

The topic of the Korean verb ending will be treated in more detail later, in chapter 5; for now, one more example will be given to illustrate some of the functional diversity and complexity of these grammatical elements. In (8), all of the sentences can be translated into English as "How fast is (the speed of) light?" But even within virtually the same context, the sentences all have slightly different nuances of meaning; for in each, the ending placed on the verb indicates a different mood, or a different relationship between speaker and listener in a given social situation. Korean is a language in which the verb ending is extremely complex.

(8) a. Pich un elmana ppalu-*ni?*
light how-much fast
"How fast is light?"
[question to an intimate]

b. Pich un elmana ppalu-*nya?*
[didactic question to a subordinate]
c. Pich un elmana ppalu-*ci?*
[self-questioning, wondering, to an equal or subordinate]
d. Pich un elmana ppalu-*lkka?*
[wondering, marveling, to equal or subordinate, or to oneself]
e. Pich un elmana ppalu-*nka?*
[formal, distancing, to equal or subordinate, wondering to oneself]

In Korean, modifiers always precede what they modify. A modifying adjective comes in front of the noun, and an adverb comes before the verb. A modifying clause is put before the head noun.

This kind of syntactic order contrasts with that of languages like Thai or French, where most adjectives follow what they modify (*idée fixe; bête noire;* etc.). In English, some modifiers precede and some follow (*life's* secrets, the secrets *of life*), and the rules governing this syntactic ordering can often be complex. But in Korean the order modifier-modified is invariant. In English, a modifying clause ordinarily follows the head noun ("the book *that I read*"), but in Korean the clause always precedes (*nay ka ilkun chayk*). As mentioned above, the Korean morphemes corresponding to English *pre*positions are *post*positions. Thus, if English can be called a "prepositional language," then Korean is a "postpositional language." English is often said to be "right branching" because modifying clauses follow the head noun ("branching" to the right as they are customarily written); Korean, in contrast, is consistently "left branching."

A well-known and special characteristic of the Korean language is its so-called honorific system, something that has also, and more appropriately, been termed "speech protocol."[8] In Korean, for example, it would be unthinkable to use the same pronoun in the meaning of 'you' when talking to one's friend, parent, or teacher, and the matter is not just one of a choice like that of French *tu/vous* or German *du/Sie*. In Korean, using any pronoun at all to address one's father or teacher is taboo, strictly out of the question; in such cases, an appropriate title is used instead of a pronoun if the deictic cannot be completely omitted. Also, depending on the speaker's relationship to the subject of the sentence, the verb form in the predicate will change, as in (9). Still more basic is the speaker's relationship to the person being addressed, and the verb endings used in the conversation will change to conform with the social protocol. In (10) we see how a simple sentence like 'The bus is coming' can be expressed in four different ways; in other situations, as many as six relationships can be differentiated.

(9) a. Ai ka ttwi-nta.
child run ing
"The child is running."
b. Apeci ka ttwi-*si*-nta.
father
"Father's running."

(10)a. Pesu ka o-*nta*.
bus come
"The bus is coming."
[a college professor to his children, a young person, or an old, close friend]

b. Pesu ka o-*ney*.
"The bus is coming."
[a college professor to his graduate students]

c. Pesu ka *wayo* [= o-*ayo*].
"The bus is coming."
[a college professor to his wife or a young stranger]

d. Pesu ka o-*pnita*.
"The bus is coming."
[a college professor to his father, his old teacher, or an older stranger]

Moreover, if it were one's father, a teacher, the company president, or an older person who was coming instead of the bus, the honorific morpheme -si- would have to be inserted after the verb stem: *o-si-nta, o-si-ney,* etc.

In many cases, depending on the level of formality, special polite vocabulary will replace the usual lexical items. For example, what children and friends eat is *pap* '(cooked) rice'; what parents, teachers, and so on eat is *cinci*. The plain way to talk about the act of eating is *(pap ul) meknunta,* while the formal way is *(cinci lul) capswusinta,* replacing both noun and verb.

For anyone not native to the culture, the proper usage of such speech protocol is one of the most difficult aspects of the language to master. It is not simply a matter of choosing "polite" language, or "honorifics," but rather a matter of choosing a style that is appropriate. The style used must certainly be "polite" enough not to give offense, but using language appropriate to someone of a much higher rank than the person being addressed does not make the speaker seem more polite; rather, it might seem bumblingly laughable, or even insulting. At the very least, it would make the listener feel uncomfortable. The style of language chosen must be appropriate to the person spoken to, the person spoken about, and the situation. Koreans themselves worry constantly about such speech protocol, and many books continue to be sold, and lessons given, on the etiquette of speech. The situation is similar to that of Japanese, but of course the systems of the two languages differ from each other because of underlying sociolinguistic and cultural factors.

In the phonology of Korean, too, there are a number of salient characteristics worth noting from the perspective of the English speaker. We will mention a few of them here, and talk about the phonology in more detail in chapter 3. For example, we might quickly note that in the inventory of Korean consonants there are no labio-dentals like *f* or *v* or interdentals such as *θ* or *ð* (both written "th" in modern English).

There are no voicing distinctions in the Korean consonants. In other

words, there is no contrast between *p* and *b, t* and *d, k* and *g,* and so on. The uninitiated English speaker can see indirect evidence of that fact in the variant romanized spellings of Korean names. For example, the common surname usually spelled "Park" is sometimes spelled "Bark" instead. The choice of *p* or *b* to write the name is simply a matter of personal choice since there is no difference in Korean pronunciation for it to reflect. Similarly, *Paik* is the same name as *Baik, Pang* is the same name as *Bang, Kang* is the same as *Gang, Ku* is the same name as *Gu,* and so on.

Instead of voicing, Korean has a more unusual manner distinction in its obstruent system, a three-way contrast among lax (or "plain"), fortis (or "reinforced"), and aspirated. Koreans distinguish, for example, the three words *tal* 'moon', *ttal* 'daughter', and *thal* 'mask' by the quality of the initial consonant: The initial consonant of *tal* 'moon' is weakly articulated and released with a slight puff of air; the initial reinforced consonant of *ttal* 'daughter' is pronounced with great muscular tension throughout the vocal tract; and the aspirated initial of *thal* 'mask' is followed by very heavy aspiration before the voicing of the vowel begins. This three-way distinction, which over the past several decades has been the subject of numerous linguistic and acoustic studies, is probably the best-known feature of the Korean phonological system.

The consonants of Korean are never released in final position. For this reason, Koreans sometimes pronounce English words such as "hat" and "help" with a final, minimal vowel, *haythu* and *heylphu,* since it is only when a vowel follows the consonant that the consonant can be released. The extra vowel and syllable is the way to make the very audible, final or postconsonantal English consonant clear when loanwords like *kaymphu* 'camp' and *peylthu* 'belt' are accommodated into Korean.

2
Korean Writing

The Korean writing system is a true alphabet, with a symbol available for each consonant and vowel in the language.[1] It was invented in the fifteenth century by King Sejong, the fourth monarch of the Chosŏn dynasty.

The modern name of the Korean alphabet is *Hangŭl*. The word was coined around 1912 by the scholar-patriot Chu Sigyŏng, who found the name then in common use, *Ŏnmun* 'Vernacular (or Vulgar) Writing', distasteful. Chu wanted to give the alphabet and all other aspects of native culture a respect they had not been accorded before, and in proposing the new name, he explained that it was composed of the archaic Korean word *han*, which meant 'big, great', and *kul*, the native word for 'writing'. This literary coinage, 'Great Writing', thus gave the appearance of antiquity, while implying superiority over that other writing system then in use in Korea, Chinese.

But Chu also knew that the name *Hangŭl* would be primarily taken to mean 'Korean Writing' since *Han-* was the name many patriotic Koreans had come to prefer for Korean things. This latter interpretation prevailed, and today, with the exception of a few etymological scholars, the citizenry of South Korea all take *Hangŭl* to mean 'Korean Writing'. In North Korea, however, where any word with the element *Han-* in it suggests South Korea, the name *Hangŭl* is scrupulously avoided. How widely known the word is among the general populace in the North is a question yet to be answered.

In this chapter we will focus on the characteristics of the Korean alphabet, calling it "Hangŭl" in contexts where appropriate. We will examine its origin, the question of who invented it and when, how the letter forms were created, and the orthographic principles with which the letters are used. Finally, we will look briefly at the methods that were used to transcribe Korean before the invention of the alphabet.

2.1 The Letters of the Alphabet

There are twenty-four basic Hangŭl letters in use today, fourteen consonants and ten vowels. Sixteen additional symbols (five consonants and eleven vowels) are made by combining these basic letters.

In the table below, the basic letters are listed in alphabetical order. The order and the names of the consonants are those used in South Korea.

(In North Korea, different conventions are used.) The names of the vowels are their pronunciations in isolation.

(1) The Hangŭl Letters (Basic Letters)

Consonants							
Symbol:	ㄱ	ㄴ	ㄷ	ㄹ	ㅁ	ㅂ	ㅅ
	k	n	t	l	m	p	s
	[k/g]	[n]	[t/d]	[l/r]	[m]	[p/b]	[s]
Name:	기역	니은	디귿	리을	미음	비읍	시옷
	(kiyek)	(niun)	(tikut)	(liul)	(mium)	(piup)	(sios)
Symbol:	ㅇ	ㅈ	ㅊ	ㅋ	ㅌ	ㅍ	ㅎ
	(∅-/-ng)	c	ch	kh	th	ph	h
	[∅/ŋ]	[tʃ/j]	[tʃ^h]	[k^h]	[t^h]	[p^h]	[h]
Name:	이응	지읒	치읓	키읔	티읕	피읖	히응
	(iung)	(ciuc)	(chiuch)	(khiukh)	(thiuth)	(phiuph)	(hiuh)

Vowels						
Symbol:	ㅏ	ㅑ	ㅓ	ㅕ	ㅗ	ㅛ
	a	ya	e	ye	o	yo
	[a]	[ya]	[ə]	[yə]	[o]	[yo]
Symbol:	ㅜ	ㅠ	ㅡ	ㅣ		
	wu	yu	u	i		
	[u]	[yu]	[ɨ]	[i]		

As can be seen from the above chart, the consonant names were made up by using the consonant in question at the beginning and end of the word, as syllable onset and syllable coda. The system by which the names are constructed is regular and predictable, except for the consonants 기역 *(kiyek),* 디귿 *(tikut),* and 시옷 *(sios).*

The modern letter names, as well as their order in the alphabet, are based upon the 1527 Chinese-Korean glossary *Hunmong chahoe* (訓蒙字會, "Collection of Characters for Training the Unenlightened"). This glossary, a pedagogical work compiled by the famous teacher and language scholar, Ch'oe Sejin,[2] is the direct source for the modern names of eight of the consonants, including the three irregular ones. In the introduction to the glossary, Ch'oe arranged the Korean letters in what was to become the standard alphabetical order[3] and illustrated the pronunciation of each letter with one or more Chinese characters. For the eight consonants in question, he used two Chinese characters formulaically; *p,* for example, was illustrated with the two characters 非 *pi* and 邑 *up.* The combined reading of the two characters became the letter's name, *piup.* The same character formula produced the

names *niun, liul, mium,* and *iung.* However, the formula could not work for the consonants *k, t,* and *s,* since there were no Chinese characters read in Korean as **uk, *ut,* or **us.* By necessity, these names had to be exceptions. Therefore, Ch'oe illustrated *k* with the character 役 since its reading, *yek,* was a reasonably close approximation of **uk.* For *t* and *s,* however, the situation was somewhat different. There were no Chinese character readings at all that he could use, since (in Korean at least) none ended in *-t* or *-s.* And so, here he instructed that the characters were to be read with native glosses—that is, as Korean words. The Chinese character 末 used to illustrate the pronunciation of *t* was read as the Korean word *kut*[4] 'end'; the character 衣 used to illustrate *s* was read as *os* 'clothing'.

For the consonants *c, ch, kh, th, ph,* and *h,* which were not used at all in those days as syllable codas, Ch'oe changed the formula. These consonants were given readings in the *Hunmong chahoe* as initials with a single vowel, *ci, chi, khi, thi, phi,* and *hi.* It was only later, in the Unification of Hangŭl Orthography of 1933, that these names were regularized to follow the pattern of the other consonants; from then on, these consonants were *ciuc, chiuch,* and so on.

The symbols listed above are the basic Hangŭl letters. Let us now look at the sixteen additional symbols made by combining basic letters. The order of these complex alphabetic symbols is based upon the order of the basic letters. The names of the consonants are made by combining the word *ssang* 'double' with the name of the basic letter. For the complex vowels, the pronunciation serves directly as the name, just as it does for the basic vowel letters.

(2) The Hangŭl Letters (Complex Symbols)

Consonants					
Symbol:	ㄲ	ㄸ	ㅃ	ㅆ	ㅉ
	kk	tt	pp	ss	cc
	[kʔ]	[tʔ]	[pʔ]	[sʔ]	[ʧʔ]
Name:	쌍기역	쌍디귿	쌍비읍	쌍시옷	쌍지읒
	(ssang-kiyek)	(ssang-tikut)	(ssang-piup)	(ssang-sios)	(ssang-ciuc)

Vowels						
Symbol:	ㅐ	ㅒ	ㅔ	ㅖ	ㅘ	ㅙ
	(ㅏ+ㅣ)	(ㅑ+ㅣ)	(ㅓ+ㅣ)	(ㅕ+ㅣ)	(ㅗ+ㅏ)	(ㅗ+ㅏ+ㅣ)
	ay	yay	ey	yey	wa	way
	[ɛ]	[yɛ]	[e]	[ye]	[wa]	[wɛ]
Symbol:	ㅚ	ㅝ	ㅞ	ㅟ	ㅢ	
	(ㅗ+ㅣ)	(ㅜ+ㅓ)	(ㅜ+ㅓ+ㅣ)	(ㅜ+ㅣ)	(ㅡ+ㅣ)	
	oy	we	wey	wi	uy	
	[ö]	[wə]	[we]	[ü]	[ɨy]	

It is often said that there are twenty-four letters in the Korean alphabet, a number that only takes into account the basic letters. This view of the alphabet is a traditional one that comes down to us from the earliest record of the invention of the alphabet, an entry in the Annals of King Sejong (世宗實錄) for the year 1443 (or early 1444), where it was noted that the king had created the "28 letters" of the Korean alphabet. Those twenty-eight letters were the original basic symbols. In modern Korean, four of the twenty-eight are no longer used, leaving us with the twenty-four letters said to comprise the alphabet today.

At the time the alphabet was invented, those twenty-eight letters could be taken as basic because of the structural principles laid out for the alphabet. (These principles will be discussed below, in section 2.5.) The treatment reflected well the phonological structure of the language. But for the modern Korean sound system, there is no particular reason why the "basic" letters should be singled out for special treatment. It is true that the complex letters ㄲ, ㄸ, ㅃ, etc. (*kk, tt, pp, . . .*) are written with two symbols, but considering the fact that they represent unitary phonemes just as much as do ㅋ, ㅌ, ㅍ, and so on (*kh, th, ph, . . .*), they are phonologically just as "basic." Moreover, the vowel symbols ㅐ, ㅔ, ㅚ, and ㅟ *(ay, ey, oy,* and *wi)* consist of one of the basic symbols plus ㅣ *(i)* and are therefore considered complex. However, phonetically they represent single vowels [ɛ, e, ø, ü], while, in contrast, it is the "basic" vowel symbols ㅑ, ㅕ, ㅛ, and ㅠ *(ya, ye, yo,* and *yu)* that represent glide plus vowel combinations. The concept of the basic letter also has no special significance for the typewriter or computer keyboard. On standard Korean keyboards today, the consonants ㄲ, ㄸ, ㅃ, ㅆ, ㅉ *(kk, tt, pp, ss, cc)* and the vowels ㅒ, ㅖ, ㅙ, ㅞ *(ay, ey, yay, yey)* are typed with single, independent keystrokes and are thus treated the same as the "basic letters." It is probably closer to the truth to say that, instead of twenty-four letters, there are actually forty letters in the Korean alphabet.

In the alphabetical order used in most dictionaries, the basic letters and the complex letters are also not distinguished. The order found in the majority of South Korean works is as follows:[5]

(3) Hangŭl Alphabetical Order

Consonants

ㄱ	ㄲ	ㄴ	ㄷ	ㄸ	ㄹ	ㅁ	ㅂ	ㅃ	ㅅ
k	kk	n	t	tt	l	m	p	pp	s
ㅆ	ㅇ	ㅈ	ㅉ	ㅊ	ㅋ	ㅌ	ㅍ	ㅎ	
ss	Ø-/-ng	c	cc	ch	kh	th	ph	h	

Vowels

ㅏ	ㅐ	ㅑ	ㅒ	ㅓ	ㅔ	ㅕ	ㅖ	ㅗ	ㅘ	ㅙ
a	ay	ya	yay	e	ey	ye	yey	o	wa	way
ㅚ	ㅛ	ㅜ	ㅝ	ㅞ	ㅟ	ㅠ	ㅡ	ㅢ	ㅣ	
oy	yo	wu	we	wey	wi	yu	u	uy	i	

The Korean term for this arrangement is "*kanata* order" (가나다順). The term combines each of the first three consonants in the alphabet with the first vowel. In talking about Korean alphabetical order, it might seem more appropriate just to use the names of the first three letters, as Americans do when they say "abc *(ay-bee-cee)* order." But (as will be shown in the next section) although Hangŭl may be a true alphabet, it also has the characteristics of a syllabary. In other words, the letters are not written as separate units, one after the other, but rather are combined to form syllabic units. As Korean alphabetical order is actually used, each of the consonants is combined with each of the vowels in sequence before moving on to the next consonant. By combining each of the first three consonant letters with the first vowel, the name "*kanata* order" provides tacit recognition of the importance of these syllabic units.

2.2 Combining the Hangŭl Letters

Hangŭl orthography is unlike that of most other alphabets. The letters are not written one after the other in a line; rather, they are grouped together into syllables. Here are a few examples:

(1) a. ㄴㅏㅁㅜ → 나 무
n a m u na-mu 'tree'
b. ㅂㅗㄹㅣ → 보 리
p o l i po-li 'barley'
c. ㅁㅣㄴㄷㅡㄹㄹㅖ → 민 들 레
m i n t u l ley min-tul-ley 'dandelion'

This method of writing Hangŭl in syllables is one that has been used ever since the invention of the alphabet. The construction of syllables is based on several well-established principles. The first principle is that the vowels are divided into two types. One type consists of vertically shaped vowels written to the right of the initial consonant. The vowels ㅏ *(a),* ㅑ *(ya),* ㅓ *(e),* ㅕ *(ye),* and ㅣ *(i)* are in this category. Thus, the syllable *ka,* for example, is written like this: ㄱ *(k)* + ㅏ *(a)* → 가 *(ka)*. The other vowel type consists of horizontal symbols written below the initial consonant. The vowels in this second category include ㅗ *(o),* ㅛ *(yo),* ㅜ *(wu),* ㅠ *(yu),* and ㅡ *(u)*. Thus: ㄱ *(k)* + ㅗ *(o)* → 고 *(ko)*. Here are some additional examples contrasting the two types of vocalism:

Vowel to the right: 냐 *(nya),* 더 *(te),* 려 *(lye),* 시 *(si),* etc.
Vowel underneath: 뇨 *(nyo),* 두 *(twu),* 료 *(lyo),* 스 *(su),* etc.

The second orthographic principle used in writing Hangŭl is that every syllable must begin with an initial consonant. In case the actual syllable begins with a vowel, a "zero consonant," ㅇ , is used to preserve the canonical

shape, as shown in the examples given in (2), below. This practice is like that of writing an *alif* at the beginning of a word in Arabic (except that the Korean letter also appears in the middle of a word). The letter used as a zero consonant is the same one used to write *-ng,* but since the sound does not appear at the beginning of an orthographic syllable, the symbol can be used there without causing confusion.[6]

(2) a. ㅏ *(a)* + ㅜ *(wu)* → 아우 *awu* 'brother'
b. ㅠ *(yu)* + ㅓ *(we)* + ㄹ *(l)* → 유월 *yuwel* 'June'

Another orthographic principle is that when a consonant follows the consonant-vowel combination in the syllable, it is written at the bottom. A consonant used in this way has a special name, *patchim,* which means 'support' or 'underpinning'. Complex consonants and consonant clusters are also used in this way to "support" the syllable. In (3c), for example, the double consonant ㄲ *(kk)* forms a *ssang-patchim,* or 'double support', and the consonant cluster ㄹㄱ (lk) in (3d) is a *kyep-patchim* 'joint support'. Consonants written underneath are also called by the letter names; for the words in (3), for example, we find *mium-patchim* '*m*-support', *liul-patchim* '*l*-support', *ssang-kiek patchim* 'double-*k* support', and *liul-kiek patchim* '*lk*-support'.

(3) a. ㅂ *(p)* + ㅗ *(o)* + ㅁ *(m)* → 봄 *pom* 'spring'
b. ㄱ *(k)* + ㅕ *(ye)* + ㅇ (∅) + ㅜ *(wu)* + ㄹ (l) → 겨울 *kyewul* 'winter'
c. ㅂ *(p)* + ㅏ *(a)* + ㄲ *(kk)* → 밖 *pakk* 'outside'
d. ㅈ *(c)* + ㅣ *(i)* + ㄴ *(n)* + ㅎ *(h)* + ㅡ *(u)* + ㄹ *(l)* + ㄱ *(k)* → 진흙 *cinhulk* 'mud'

Because Hangŭl is written in syllables this way, it is usual to recognize these clusters of symbols as the basic, individual units of the writing system. Thus, Koreans think of 그림 *kulim* 'picture', for example, as consisting not of five units, but of two units.[7] The length of manuscripts is described in terms of the number of syllables, and when a document requires an answer of a certain length, it is the number of syllables, these groupings of letters, that is counted.

The composition of the syllable will be discussed later in more detail. We should note here, however, that there are more than a few problems arising from the fact that Hangŭl is written in syllables. There are advantages to the system, but there are also aspects that are undeniably troublesome. Perhaps the most serious difficulty arises when deciding on the alphabetical order of the entries in dictionaries. Here, the consonants written underneath the syllables as *patchim* require special treatment. If these consonants were treated as if they appeared in linear order after the vowel, the situation would be fairly straightforward and simple. The word *kaksi* 'bride' would be listed before *kahwun* 'family precepts', for example. But because the letters

are grouped into syllables and those syllables used as primary units of order, *ka-hwun* appears before *kak-si.*

(4) a. ㄱㅏㅎㅜㄴ (가훈) 'family precepts'
k a h wu n
b. ㄱㅏㄱㅅㅣ (각시) 'bride'
k a k s i

This fact shows that the ordering of Hangŭl letters is based upon the syllable as the primary unit of the orthography. A syllable with a final, *patchim* consonant is always ordered after the syllable without one. Accordingly, the ordering of words is determined by the shape of the first syllable, as shown in (5), below:

(5) 가 각 간 갇 갈 감 갑 갓 강 . . . 개 객 갠 . . . 거 걱 건 . . .
ka kak kan kat kal kam kap kas kang. . . kay kayk kayn. . . ke kek ken. . .

Complex consonants fit into the same order. Double consonants, such as those in 밖 *pakk* 'outside' and 있다 *issta* 'exists' follow the basic alphabetical order; for example, 각 *kak* 갂 *kakk* . . . 갓 *kas* 갔 *kass* . . . So do the "joint support" consonants, as shown by the example sequence given in (6):

(6) 달 닭 닮 닯 닳 담 답
tal talk talm talp talh tam tap

The problems arising out of writing in syllables are not confined to such questions of what to do with *patchim* consonants, however. There is also the difficulty presented by the "zero consonant," ㅇ. That consonant is not the same as the ㅇ that is written underneath the syllable as *patchim.* The zero consonant written in initial position in the syllable has no sound value, which raises the question of how it should be handled when sequencing the letters. For example, the word *aki* 'baby' by rights should be listed after the word *pha* 'scallion' in the dictionary, because the Hangŭl letter for *a* (ㅏ) comes after *ph* (ㅍ) in the alphabetical order. But because the syllabic orthography requires that the zero consonant ㅇ be written before the vowel, the word *aki* is written 아기, and treated as if it began with the same consonant that ends the word 강 *kang* 'river'; and so, just as the syllable 강 *kang* comes before the syllable 갚 *kaph* in the dictionary, the word 아기, *aki* comes before the word 파 *pha.* This inconsistent ordering is the one that is used in Korea today. The syllabic features of the Hangŭl writing system, as found in the so-called *kanata*-order, make Korean alphabetical order much less simple to use than that of the alphabetical order of the English writing system.

However, the grouping of the Hangŭl letters into syllables allows freedom in the direction in which the lines are written. Today, almost all books in Korea are written Western-syle, with the lines running from left to right

across the page. However, from the time the Korean alphabet was invented until the middle of the twentieth century, the writing in all texts was vertical, with the lines running from the top to the bottom of the page. Even today, newspapers occasionally preserve this traditional, vertical style of writing (though, in very recent years, far less than before), as do many shop signs and billboards. What gives Korean writing the flexibility to be written in different directions this way is the grouping of the letters into syllabic units. The syllabic units of Hangŭl can, in a natural way, be written horizontally or vertically—just as is the case with the syllabic and logographic writing used in China and Japan.

Today, writing in Korea is usually done horizontally (this contrasts with the situation in Japan, where the traditional vertical style of writing continues). In the future, under the influence of modern technology and the computer, horizontal writing will as a matter of course become even more widespread; still, it is an advantage of the Hangŭl writing system that it affords the freedom to choose which direction one writes in. The sign on a shop, according to the position that is convenient, may be placed horizontally or vertically, whatever is deemed aesthetic or eye-catching. An even more effective place where the two methods of writing are mixed together is on the covers of books. On the front of a book, the title is printed horizontally, while on the spine, the title is almost always written vertically, a practice that affords a convenient way to read the titles when the books are displayed in book stores and libraries. The result of this practice is that, unlike English titles, the title of a Korean book can be read from top to bottom with ease, without twisting the head to the left or right.

2.3 Orthography

Ever since the Korean alphabet was invented, there have been two points of controversy about the syllabic orthography. One is the question of which consonants can be written as *patchim* underneath the syllable. The other is the question of how to write a consonant found at the end of a noun or verb stem when it appears before a grammatical element beginning with a vowel; since the stem-final consonant in such cases is pronounced as the first sound of the following syllable, there is a choice to be made: Should the consonant be written *patchim*, keeping it an integral part of the last syllable of the stem, or should it be written as the initial consonant of the following syllable, the way it is actually pronounced?

Let us look for a moment at the first orthographic problem. The way Hangŭl is written today, any consonant can be written *patchim* to close the syllable. However, as will be explained in Chapter 3, Korean consonants are not pronounced with a release in this final position, and as a result, the distinctions between stops, fricatives, and affricates are neutralized there. This means that when written as *patchim*, the letters ㅅ, ㅈ, ㅊ, ㅋ, ㅌ, ㅍ, and ㅎ

(*s, c, ch, kh, th, ph,* and *h*) do not represent phonemically distinct consonants. For example, the letter ㅅ *(s)* written at the end of the syllable 빗 *(pis)* is pronounced the same as the letter ㄷ *(t)*, as are also the ㅈ *(c)* of 빚 *(pic)*, the ㅊ *(ch)* of 꽃 *(kkoch)*, and the ㅌ *(th)* of 밭 *(path)*. The pronunciation of all five of these letters is the same in that position. Similarly, ㅋ *(kh)* is pronounced like ㄱ *(k)*, and so on. If the neutralization were reflected in how the words were written and the consonants transcribed the way they were pronounced, the number of consonants that could be written *patchim* would be greatly restricted. However, modern Korean orthography does not take this neutralization into account. What is written represents not the actual pronunciation of the consonant in each phonological environment, but rather the basic, or underlying, form. In a word, the transcription is morphophonemic. In the following examples, the forms in (a) represent the actual phonemic shapes, while those in (b) represent how these words and phrases are written in Hangŭl:

(1)	a. pat to 'the field, too . . .';	pat-twuk 'the field dike'
	b. path to	path-twuk
	(밭도)	(밭둑)
(2)	a. kkot kwa 'flowers, and . . .';	kkot-pakwuni 'flower basket'
	b. kkoch kwa	kkoch-pakwuni
	(꽃과)	(꽃바구니)
(3)	a. teptolok 'until it covers . . .';	tepkay '(bed) covers'
	b. tephtolok	tephkay
	(덮도록)	(덮개)

The treatment is the same in the case of double consonants and consonant clusters. In the following examples, (a) again represents the phonemic shape, while (b) is the morphophonemic one written in Hangŭl:

(4)	a. pak kwa 'the outside and . . .'	kap to 'the price, too . . .'
	b. pakk kwa	kaps to
	(밖과)	(값도)
(5)	a. huk-temi 'a pile of dirt'	epta 'not have, exist'
	b. hulk-temi	epsta
	(흙더미)	(없다)

The difference between what is written and the actual pronunciation is especially great in forms where ㅎ *(h)* is used as *patchim.* In some cases, the difference is so great, it can be difficult to see how the identity of the underlying consonant was determined.

(6)	a. nokho 'place, and . . .';	nothaka 'having placed, . . .';	nonnunta 'places'
	b. nohko (놓고)	nohtaka (놓다가)	nohnunta (놓는다)

This morphophonemic orthography is not the only way Korean has been written, however. Transcribing the underlying forms was not standard practice until the early years of the twentieth century, when, following a number of orthographic experiments, the Unification of Hangŭl Orthography was established in 1933. Before that, from the time the Korean alphabet was invented until the beginning of the twentieth century, the orthographic rule that was followed in almost all texts[8] was the so-called Rule of Eight Final Sounds (八終聲法). According to this rule, only eight consonant letters, ㄱ, ㄴ, ㄷ, ㄹ, ㅁ, ㅂ, ㅅ, and ㅇ *(k, n, t, l, m, p, s, ng)*, could close the syllable as *patchim*. (And, in the latter part of this premodern era, only seven consonants were used, as the letter ㄷ *(t)* ceased being used in this position.) This older, traditional orthography reflected the neutralization mentioned above and thus transcribed the actual pronunciation more faithfully. In contrast, the modern orthography transcribes, as much as possible, each morpheme in a single, unvarying form. In other words, the old orthography was much more of what is known as a phonemic orthography, while the modern orthography is morphophonemic. The change in orthography thus represented a different concept of writing. The decision to allow any consonant to be written at the end of the syllable as *patchim* was a product of this newer way of thinking.

The decision whether to write phonemically or morphophonemically involves more than the neutralization mentioned above, however. There are also a number of related problems, such as that of assimilation. Let us look at some examples. (More details will be given in chapter 3.)

One type of assimilation occurs when a stop occurs before a nasal and the stop becomes nasalized.

(6)	a. kwung-mul 'broth'	mengnunta 'eats'
	b. kwuk-mul (국물)	meknunta (먹는다)
(7)	a. pam mata 'each field'	ennunta 'acquires'
	b. path mata (밭마다)	etnunta (얻는다)
(8)	a. im man 'just a leaf'	emnun 'being non-existent'
	b. iph man (잎만)	epsnun (없는)
(9)	a. kkom-mangwul 'flower bud'	wunnunta 'laughs'
	b. kkoch-mangwul (꽃망울)	wusnunta (웃는다)

Another kind of assimilation occurs when the nasal consonant *n* assimilates to an adjacent *l*.

(10)a.	welli 'principle'	tal-lim 'the dear moon'	hallunta 'licks'
b.	wenli	tal-nim	halthnunta
	(원리)	(달님)	(핥는다)

In a completely phonemic orthography, the forms given in (a) of the above examples would be those that were transcribed. However, none of these cases of assimilation are reflected in the modern Hangŭl orthography, and even the older, traditional orthography did not represent them completely.

Thus far we have looked at one of the two orthographic points in contention. Now let us turn to the other problem of Korean orthography, that of how to write a consonant at the end of a syllable when the following syllable begins with a vowel.

In the modern orthography, such consonants are almost always written as *patchim* at the end of the first syllable. However, in the early years following the invention of the Korean alphabet, the practice was to write the consonant at the beginning of the second syllable.[9] After that early period in the fifteenth century, there was a gradual tendency toward leaving the consonant at the end of the first syllable. But the general rule did not change until the Unification of Hangŭl Orthography in 1933, when the outline of today's modern orthography was adopted. Let us look at some examples of these two types of orthography. The forms in (11a) show how the noun *os* 'clothing' is written in today's orthography before a variety of particles beginning with a vowel, as well as before the copula *i(ta)*; (12a) shows the verb stem *cap-* 'grab' written with vowel-initial endings. The forms in (11b) and (12b) show how the earlier orthography worked.

(11)a.	옷이,	옷을,	옷으로,	옷에서,	옷이다
	os i	os ul	os ulo	os eyse	os ita
b.	오시,	오슬,	오스로,	오세서,	오시다
	o-si	o-sul	o-sulo	o-seyse	o-sita

(12)a.	잡아,	잡아라,	잡으니,	잡으면,	잡았다
	cap-a	cap-ala	cap-uni	cap-umyen	cap-assta
b.	자바,	자바라,	자브니,	자브면,	자밨다
	ca-pa	ca-pala	ca-puni	ca-pumyen	ca-passta

Of these two types of orthography, the older, traditional one reflects pronunciation more faithfully. From the phonological point of view, there is no syllable boundary dividing a *patchim* consonant and a following vowel, because the consonant is actually pronounced as the initial consonant of that second syllable. The reason for choosing the modern type of orthography

and writing the consonant *patchim* is to keep the spelling of the morpheme the same no matter how it is actually pronounced. As was mentioned above, the basic principle of today's Hangŭl orthography is to always write each morpheme with a single unchanging shape.

Not only does this modern orthographical rule apply to inflectional forms, as shown in the preceding examples, but it also applies to the morphemes within a derived word. For example, the two suffixes *-i* and *-um*,[10] are written as forms separate from the rest of the word, as can be seen in (13). However, the application of the rule in such cases is not absolute. Other, similar suffixes—such as *-em, -ay, -wung,* and *-umeli*—are not written separately, as we see in (14).

(13)a. 웃음 'laughter', 울음 'crying', 믿음 'belief', 얼음 'ice', 죽음 'death'
wus-um wul-um mit-um el-um cwuk-um
(*wus-* 'laugh', *wul-* 'cry', *mit-* 'believe', *el-* 'freeze', *cwuk-* 'die')
b. 높이 'height', 깊이 'depth', 길이 'length', 땀받이 'undershirt'
noph-i kiph-i kil-i ttam-pat-i
(*noph-* 'be high', *kiph-* 'be deep', *kil-* 'be long', *ttam-pat-* 'sweat-receive')

(14)a. 무덤 'grave', 마개 'stopper', 마중 'meeting', 귀머거리 'deaf person'
mu-tem ma-kay ma-cwung kwi-me-keli
(*mut-* 'bury', *mak-* 'stop', *mac-* 'meet' *kwi-mek-* 'be deaf')
b. 너무 'too much', 도로 'again', 불긋불긋 'reddish'
ne-mu to-lo pul-kus pul-kus
(*nem-* 'go over', *tol-* 'turn', *pulk-* 'be red')
c. 지붕 'roof', 바깥 'outside', 이파리 'small leaves', 끄트머리 'the end part'
ci-pung pa-kkath i-phali kku-thumeli
(*cip* 'house', *pakk* 'outside', *iph* 'leaf', *kkuth* 'end')
d. 미덥다 'be trustworthy', 우습다 'be laughable'
mi-tepta wu-supta
(*mit-* 'believe', *wus-* 'laugh')

The difference in the way these words are written has to do with the productivity of the suffix. While the suffixes *-um* and *-i* can be used relatively freely to derive nouns from verbs and adjectives, the others cannot. (Cf. chapter 4.) In the mind of the speaker (and the user of the orthography), the words *wus-um* 'laughter' and *noph-i* 'height' can be thought of as regular derivations of the verb *wus-* and the adjective *noph-,* much as are the predicative forms *wus-uni, wus-ela, noph-ase,* and *noph-umyen*. But words like *makay* 'stopper' and *mutem* 'grave' are not derived productively. The decision to write them without showing the suffix separated was based upon the assumption that most people think of them as single, indivisible words. Their etymologies were thought not to be obvious.

Here we can see that spellings were not always chosen to elucidate