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Korean

A Comprehensive Grammar

Jaehoon Yeon and Lucien Brown



Korean

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A Comprehensive Grammar

Second Edition

 **Jaehoon Yeon and
Lucien Brown**

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Preface to the second edition

This revised edition of *Korean: A Comprehensive Grammar* is a thorough reference guide to Korean grammar updated based on the latest research. The level of description that the revised book offers of Korean grammatical constructions throughout is perhaps unrivalled by other English-language publications in the field. Revisions from the first edition include:

- A separate chapter on honorifics, reflecting new research in this field
- Updated descriptions of Korean grammar taking into account the latest research in functional syntax, pragmatics and language variation and change
- More low-frequency grammar patterns have been added

With the exception of chapter 1 (which provides an introduction to the Korean language), the book is organized according to grammatical categories. In turn, we look at nouns, nominal forms, pronouns and numbers (chapter 2), case particles (chapter 3), verbs (chapter 4), support (or ‘auxiliary’) verbs (chapter 5), honorifics and politeness (chapter 6), verbal connectives (chapter 7), modifiers (chapter 8), sentence endings (chapter 9), quotations (chapter 10) and other word classes (chapter 11). In cases where a grammatical pattern may belong to more than one category, the pattern is allotted to the category that it fits best and is then cross-referenced under the other possible category. Three indexes are included at the back of the book: a grammatical patterns index (in Korean), an English equivalents index and a general index.

As readers who already have some familiarity with the language will know, the way that Korean is spoken (or written) will vary greatly depending on whom you are talking (or writing) to. This phenomenon – and the use of honorifics and speech styles – is covered in Chapter 6. Elsewhere, the common practice has been to represent examples in the so-called ‘polite’ speech style wherever possible. At times, the inclusion of other speech styles is necessitated by the fact that the grammatical construction being described or the example being given is more ‘natural’ in another style rather than the ‘polite’.

We would like to express our thanks to many people who provided us with various forms of comments and feedback on the first edition. We are particularly indebted to Professor Hyo-Sang Lee at Indiana University Bloomington for his numerous insightful comments. Thanks also to Professor Hee Rak Chae at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies for providing us with a list of corrections, and Professor Jung Soo Mok at University of Seoul for writing a useful review. We would like to thank Dr. Adam Zulawnik for his help compiling the index.

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Introduction to the Korean Language

I.1 Characteristic features of Korean

Overview

Korean is a language with approximately 82 million speakers which include 51 million in South Korea, 25 million in North Korea, and nearly 6 million outside of Korea – mainly in China, the US, Japan, and central Asia (the former U.S.S.R). The data used in this book represents the standard Seoul speech in the Central dialectal zone. Due to its prevalence in education and the media, Standard Seoul Korean is intelligible across South Korea. Although the post-1945 division between North and South Korea and their different language policies have made the two Koreas linguistically divergent, North and South Korean languages are mutually intelligible.

Korean has a number of characteristic features that distinguish it from other languages, particularly English and European languages. For example, Korean has neither the definite nor indefinite article (such as ‘the’ and ‘a/an’ in English). There is no sharp distinction of gender and plurality of a noun. There is no special distinction for the third-person present singular in a verb. There is no conspicuous accent for a word, although there are some accents in a sentence and these vary according to the region of the country. As a general rule, Korean usually puts stress on the first syllable of a word.

The linguistic affinity of Korean to other languages is still disputable. The most convincing hypothesis about its origin is the Altaic

hypothesis, that is Korean is one of the Altaic languages along with Mongolian, Turkic and Manchu-Tungus. The difficulty of reconstructing genetic ties to other languages is mainly due to the lack of evidence of written data.

1.1.1 Word classes

As in any language, Korean words can be classified into several different classes according to the way they are used.

Korean **verbs** minimally consist of a **base** and an **ending**. The base cannot stand alone without an ending, and endings can be added to the base to alter the meaning in various ways, including the expression of tense:

먹어요. *I am eating.*

먹었어요. *I ate.*

먹겠어요. *I will eat.*

In the examples above, the verb base in each sentence is the same. It means ‘eat’ – and its base is 먹-. However, by attaching three different endings, three different meanings are produced.

While languages such as English have a separate category of adjectives (and use these adjectives in combination with the verb ‘to be’ – ‘He is tall’, etc.), in Korean adjectives can be considered a subset of verbs. These are known as **descriptive verbs**, whereas other verbs (that typically depict an action) are known as **processive verbs**. In most ways, descriptive verbs behave the same as processive verbs and can take a lot of the same endings:

예뻐요. *[She, it, etc.] is pretty.*

예뻐었어요. *[She, it, etc.] was pretty.*

예쁘겠어요. *[She, it, etc.] will be pretty.*

However, there are some differences in the way that descriptive and processive verbs operate. These differences are summarized later in this book (refer to 4.1.1). The major properties of Korean verbs are discussed in Chapter 4.

Unlike verbs, Korean **nouns** can be used with no endings attached to them. Instead, **particles** are added to show the relationship between the noun and the rest of the sentence (especially the verb). In the following sentence, 가 marks 민수 as being the grammatical subject of the sentence (i.e., the person performing the action connoted in the verb) and 를 marks 오징어 ‘squid’ as being the grammatical object (i.e., the thing having the action connoted by the verb performed on it). Without these markers, the sentence could (in context) be taken to mean that it was the squid that ate Minsu rather than the other way around!

민수가	오징어를	먹었어요	
Minsu	squid	ate	<i>Minsu ate squid.</i>

Korean nouns are described in more depth in Chapter 2 and particles are discussed in Chapter 3. Korean also contains more minor word classes (such as adnouns and adverbs), which are explained in Chapter 10.

1.1.2 Word order: Korean is an SOV language

The basic (i.e., most frequent, neutral and canonical) word order of Korean can be described as SOV: Subject-Object-Verb. With the verb coming after rather than before the object, this makes Korean word order quite different from English:

English:	Minsu	ate	kimchi
	SUBJECT	VERB	OBJECT
Korean:	민수가	김치를	먹었어요
	Minsu	kimchi	ate
	SUBJECT	OBJECT	VERB

As an SOV language, Korean has several other features which are typical of such languages (but different to English). These features are summarized below.

1.1.2.1 Flexible word order

Although the word order presented above is the most typical, Korean word order can actually be quite flexible. In addition to

‘Minsu kimchi ate’, it is quite possible to also say ‘kimchi Minsu ate’.

김치는	민수가	먹었어요
Kimchi	Minsu	Ate
OBJECT	SUBJECT	VERB

As in the example above, when a non-subject element is moved to the start of the sentence, it often takes the topic particle 는 rather than the object particle 를 (refer to 3.2.2).

So how do speakers choose which word order to use? As a general rule of thumb, the noun that conveys new or added knowledge to the hearer will come closer to the verb, whereas nouns that represent already mentioned or entertained information may come at the start of the sentence. By this logic, if a speaker asks ‘what did 민수 eat?’, the interlocutor will put 민수 at the start of the answer and the type of food (김치) before the verb. Conversely, if a speaker asks ‘who ate the kimchi?’, the order of the nouns will be reversed, as shown here:

- A: 민수는 뭐 먹었어요? WHAT did Minsu eat?
 B: (민수는) 김치를 먹었어요. Minsu ate KIMCHI (new information)
- A: 누가 김치를 먹었어요? WHO ate the kimchi?
 B: (김치는) 민수가 먹었어요. MINSU ate the kimchi

Like in the above examples, as long as the verb is properly placed at the end of the sentence, the position of the remaining words is relatively free. Although, technically speaking the verb should always come last in a Korean sentence, in real speech this is not always the case. On occasions, other elements may be heard following the verb:

- 내 친구는 뛰어갔어요, 집으로. *My friend ran to his house.*
 나는 영화를 보았어요, 어제 여기서. *I saw Yonghi, yesterday here.*

As in these examples, once a complete sentence has been uttered, it may be supplemented with further constituents which appear after the verb. This tends to happen when the speaker realizes that he/she has omitted important information from the sentence or

when, judging from the hearer's reaction, he/she realizes that more clarification is needed. Although such word order is considered nonstandard and does not appear in writing, it can frequently be heard in casual speech.

1.1.2.2 *The postpositional characteristic of Korean*

Another distinctive feature of Korean which is connected to its SOV word order is the fact that it has postpositions (that come after the noun) rather than prepositions (which come before the noun). Rather than saying 'at school' as in English, Korean speakers say 'school-at':

민수가	학교에	있어요.
Minsu-subject	school-at	is

Minsu is at school.

In addition to postpositions that are the equivalent of English prepositions, Korean uses particles attached to the end of nouns to mark their grammatical function, as noted above. As well as particles coming after nouns, typical of languages with an SOV language, Korean also attaches suffixes (or verb endings) to the end of verbs. Although it is true that English also has suffixes that attach to verbs (e.g., works, worked, working, eaten), these suffixes in English are few in number, whereas in Korean they are numerous.

민수가	산에서	뱀을	잡 <u>았</u> 어요.
Minsu- <u>subject</u>	mountain- <u>on</u>	snake- <u>object</u>	catch- <u>past tense-polite</u>

Minsu caught a snake on the mountain.

선생님 <u>은</u>	좋 <u>으</u> 시 <u>었</u> 겠 <u>습</u> 니다.
You (lit. 'teacher')- <u>topic</u>	happy- <u>honorific-past-must-formal</u>

You must have been happy.

As we can see, particles must come after the noun, and verbal suffixes must be attached behind the stem. Also, it is clear that two or more particles may follow the noun, and, as you can see in the

last example above, even as many as four verb endings may attach to a verb stem. It is to this extent that in Korean important items are established at the very end of the sentence.

1.1.2.3 *The position of complements*

In Korean, words that complement or modify (i.e., elaborate, describe, clarify, identify, delimit) a noun always and without exception come before the noun in question:

Adnoun (refer to 11.1)	<u>다른</u> other	사람 person	<i>another person</i>
Possessive + Noun	<u>민호의</u> Minho's	담배 cigarettes	<i>Minho's cigarettes</i>
Modifying clause + Noun	<u>마신</u> drink	술 alcohol	<i>the alcohol that I drank</i>
Adverb + Verb	<u>빨리</u> quickly	갔어요 went	<i>went quickly</i>

On this point, Korean differs from Indo-European languages, in which the modifier may also follow the modified. In particular, note how the last two patterns listed above result in different word orders than those found in English.

1.1.2.4 *Interrogative word order*

In Korean, the word order in yes/no interrogatives (questions) does not change from that of statements. Unlike in English, the position of subject and verb does not alter. In fact, in certain styles of speech (refer to 6.1), the same sentence can be interpreted as a statement or as an interrogative purely depending on intonation:

민수가 집에 가요

Minsu is going home. (with falling intonation)

Is Minsu going home? (with rising intonation)

In so-called wh-questions, the question word (where, why, when, what, etc.) does not need to come at the beginning of the sentence (as it typically does in English). Usually, it stays in the same place where the ‘missing’ information being asked for would be included in the corresponding answer. In the following examples, see how the Korean word for ‘what’ in the question appears in the same position as ‘fruit’ in the answer. Also note how this is not the case in English, where ‘what’ moves to initial position.

A: 민수가 지금 무엇을 사고 있어요? ***What** is Minsu buying now?*

B: 민수는 지금 과일을 사고 있어요. *Minsu is buying **fruit** now.*

1.1.3 An intricate system of honorific categories

Although every language has different registers and levels of politeness, in few languages is this system encoded in an elaborate system of honorifics as it is in Korean. Along with Japanese, Korean is one of the few languages in which the speaker can systematically encode his/her social relationship with the hearer and people he/she is talking about (and between different people he/she is talking about) through the addition of grammatical markers and special sets of vocabulary. When speaking Korean, it is practically impossible to utter a single sentence without bearing in mind your social position in relation to the hearer and people you are referring to (i.e., comparative age and rank, level of intimacy, etc.).

Honorifics can commonly be broken into two groups: hearer honorifics and referent honorifics. Hearer honorifics – more frequently referred to as ‘speech styles’ in the case of Korean (refer to 6.1) index the relationship between the speaker and the hearer (and/or immediate audience). In Korean, this is achieved by a range of six different ‘speech styles’. As a taster of this, when addressing an intimate of similar age or younger (or a child), the speaker may apply the ‘intimate’ speech style as in the sentence below, which consists of the -어 verb ending:

버스가 벌써 갔어 *The bus has gone (intimate speech style)*

dropped from the sentence. On this point Korean differs from Indo-European languages, in which – apart from certain grammatically sanctioned drops (for example, ‘you’ does not need to be included in English imperatives such as ‘go home!’) – the subject should normatively be present in order to produce a well-formed sentence. To be sure, English speakers sometimes drop major constituents too (consider examples such as ‘Hope this helps!’ or ‘Going home?’), but such utterances always sound casual and may not be considered as complete, well-formed sentences. In Korean, however, dropping major constituents is highly frequent and usually does not result in any question that the sentence is incomplete or poorly formed.

The general rule is that major constituents such as subjects and objects can be dropped when these can easily be worked out from context. For example, when two acquaintances meet by chance on the street, the following question is understood as meaning ‘where are you going?’ even though there is no explicit mention of ‘you’:

어디 가요? *Where are [you] going?*

With this dropping of constituents, many Korean sentences contain nothing but a verb. In the following, unless a different contextual frame is in operation, the sentence will normally be understood as referring to the first person:

먹었어요. *I've eaten.*

Although including the subject (and/or object) is hardly ever incorrect, in many cases it seems superfluous and could even sound clumsy.

1.2 Korean script and pronunciation

Overview

Korean is written using an alphabetic writing system known both in South Korea and internationally as Hangeul (한글) but in North Korea as *Chosŏngul* (조선글). Unlike the majority of writing systems that came into being through a process of evolution, Hangeul is a deliberate invention dating back to the 15th century (1443). The invention of Hangeul is attributed to

King Sejong the Great, who was the fourth King of the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910).

Although Korean people today exclusively use Hangeul in most everyday writing activities, Korean can also be written in a mixed script combining this phonemic system with logographic Chinese characters, known in Korean as *Hancha* (한자; 漢字). In South Korea, the use of *Hancha* has greatly decreased in recent years and is now mainly limited to sporadic use in broadsheet newspapers and some academic publications. North Korea does not use Chinese characters at all.

There are several different systems for rendering Korean in the Roman script. When Romanizations are given in this book (such as for the word *Hancha* above), they typically appear in the McCune-Reischauer system, as this is generally the most convenient for native English speakers. It should be noted however that South Korea has now stopped using this system in favour of the Revised Romanization system.

The current section provides a concise introduction to Hangeul and the sounds of Korean that are associated to it. It should be noted that the pronunciations given are based on the ‘standard’ language of Seoul. This may at times differ from the pronunciations you will hear in real everyday conversation, particularly from Koreans who speak regional dialects.

1.2.1 Basic principles of Hangeul writing

Hangeul is an alphabetic writing system. This means that vowels and consonants are represented with letter-like symbols. Modern Korean has a total of 24 basic letter shapes, which extends to 40 when one includes compound letters.

The current section introduces the names of the characters and the way that they are written syllabically.

1.2.1.1 Letter names and dictionary order

The Hangeul letters are summarized in the following table, with their names and sorted by the normal South Korean dictionary order.

Regarding the names of consonants, note that these are normally composed of two syllables that are most commonly formed as follows, taking ㅁ as an example:

First syllable: Character in question, followed by the vowel ‘ㅣ’
(e.g., for ㅁ, ‘ㅁㅣ’)

Second syllable: The Character in question, preceded by the vowel ‘으’
(e.g., for ㅁ, ‘으ㅁ’)

Note that the consonant names 기억, 디귄 and 시읏 are exceptions to this formula. However, in North Korea, these exceptions have been abolished and the regular 기읍, 디읃 and 시읏 are used instead.

Regarding the dictionary order of characters, note that consonants and vowels have separate sequences. The consonant sequence has priority, and letters in the same line appear in sequence after the left-most letter:

Consonant signs (with names)		Vowels			
ㄱ (기억)	ㄲ (쌍기억)	ㅏ		ㅑ	ㅓ
ㄴ (니읃)		ㅕ		ㅗ	ㅛ
ㄷ (디귄)	ㄸ (쌍디귄)	ㅜ	ㅝ	ㅟ	ㅠ
ㄹ (리읃)		ㅡ	ㅜ	ㅟ	ㅠ
ㅁ (미읃)		ㅣ		ㅑ	
ㅂ (비읃)	ㅃ (쌍비읃)				
ㅅ (시읏)	ㅆ (쌍시읏)				
ㅇ (이읃)					
ㅈ (지읏)	ㅉ (쌍지읏)				
ㅊ (치읏)					
ㅋ (키읃)					
ㅌ (티읃)					
ㅍ (피읃)					
ㅎ (히읃)					

1.2.1.2 Writing syllabically


Although Hangeul has individual letters for consonants and vowels, these ‘letters’ are not written in a linear fashion such as in the

Roman alphabet. Instead, they are grouped together into square syllable blocks according to the following principles:

- 1 Each syllable block must begin with a consonant sign. Where a spoken syllable begins with a vowel, the absence of the initial consonant is written with the 'zero' letter ㅇ:

<i>Spoken</i>	<i>Written</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
[a-u]	아우	younger brother/sister
[o-i]	오이	Cucumber




- 2 The consonant letter (represented below as 'C') is placed either to the left or above the sign for the following vowel ('V'), depending on the vowel sign's shape, resulting in two possible patterns:

when vowel sign is vertical	CV	아	버	지
when vowel sign is horizontal		주	유	소







Note that in the case of [Horizontal + Vertical] vowel letter compounds (과, 꽤, 괴, 거, 깨, 기, -), where the horizontal letter represents a w-like sound, the initial consonant sign appears in the empty top left corner:

when vowel sign is vertical and horizontal		외	과
--	--	---	---

- 3 A syllable-final consonant letter is always written underneath the initial consonant-vowel grouping, with height adjustments for a square end product:

when vowel sign is vertical		정	말
when vowel sign is horizontal		음	운
when vowel sign is vertical and horizontal		원	

- 4 There are no Hangul blocks with two initial consonant signs (except for the double consonant letters ㄲ, ㄸ, ㅃ, ㅆ, ㅉ). There are, however, some Hangul blocks with two final consonant signs written at the bottom:

when vowel sign is vertical			
when vowel sign is horizontal			

Note, however, that due to restrictions against consonant clusters, both of these consonants can only be pronounced if they are followed by a vowel (refer to 1.2.3.1, 1.2.3.2).

1.2.2 *Hangul pronunciation guide*

The current section provides basic guidelines regarding how each of the 40 Hangul letter shapes should most normally be pronounced. Note, however, that there are a number of changes between the way that Korean is written and the way that it is pronounced. Although some basic sound changes are dealt with in this section, the majority of irregular pronunciations are described in the next section (refer to 1.2.3).

1.2.2.1 *Simple vowels*

In terms of their graphic representation, it can be said that Korean has six simple vowel shapes (ㅏ, ㅑ, ㅓ, ㅕ, ㅗ, ㅛ). However, in terms of phonetics, ㅚ and ㅜㅝ should also be included as simple vowels since they are pronounced as such in contemporary Korean even though they historically originate in the combinations [ㅏ+ㅑ] and [ㅑ+ㅓ]. This means that phonetically Korean has eight vowels, although this typically reduces to seven since most speakers pronounce ㅚ and ㅜㅝ identically (see below).

Since any Hangul block must begin with a consonant symbol, syllables that begin with a vowel in pronunciation are written with the zero symbol ‘ㅇ’ to the left or above the vowel sign. Written in syllable-block form, the eight simple vowels are as follows.

For each vowel, we give an English equivalent, the relevant phonetic symbol and how the vowel is represented in the McCune-Reischauer system of Romanization:

	<i>English parallels</i>	<i>Phonetic symbol</i>	<i>McCune-Reischauer</i>
ㅏ	A in <i>father</i>	[ɑ]	a
ㅑ	British English: O in <i>often</i> American English: U in <i>burn</i>	[ʌ]	ö
ㅓ	O in <i>core</i>	[o]	o
ㅕ	like OO in <i>moon</i>	[u]	u
ㅛ	like U in <i>urgh!</i>	[ʊ]	ũ
ㅜ	EE in <i>feet</i> (but usually shorter!)	[i]	i
ㅠ	British English: A in <i>care</i> American English: A in <i>apple</i>	[æ]	ae
ㅡ	E in <i>bed</i>	[ɛ]	e

It should be noted that many native speakers of Korean (particularly younger generations) do not differentiate between ㅜ and ㅠ and pronounce both of these as a sound somewhere between the two.

1.2.2.2 Y-vowels

Korean has six Y-vowels that consist of a ‘y’-like sound before a simple vowel. The Y vowels are written by adding one additional short stroke to the relevant simple vowel signs. Written in syllable-block form, the Y vowels are as follows:

<i>Hangul sign</i>	<i>English Parallels</i>	<i>Phonetic symbol</i>	<i>McCune-Reischauer</i>
Simple Y-vowel			
ㅑ	ㅑㅑ YA in <i>yahoo</i>	[ja]	ya
ㅓ	ㅓㅓ British English: Yo in <i>yob</i> American Eng: YEA in <i>yearn</i>	[jʌ]	yö

오	요	YO in <i>yoga</i>	[jo]	yo
우	유	YOU in <i>youth</i>	[ju]	yu
애	예	British English: YA in <i>yay!</i> American Eng: YA in <i>yak</i>	[jæ]	yae
에	예	like YE in <i>yet</i> or <i>yes</i>	[jɛ]	ye

Many native speakers of Korean (particularly younger generations) do not differentiate between 애 and 예 and pronounce both of these as a sound somewhere between the two.

1.2.2.3 W-vowels

Korean has six W-vowels that consist of a ‘w’-like sound (as in English *was*) before a simple vowel. The W vowels are written by combining the horizontal letters ㅏ [o] or ㅜ [u] with one of the vertical letters ㅓ, ㅕ, ㅗ, ㅛ and ㅛ. Their pronunciation is generally what one would expect from these combinations, except for the W vowel that is written as [ㅏㅓ] but usually pronounced as [wɛ].

<i>Hangul sign</i>	<i>English parallels</i>	<i>Phonetic symbol</i>	<i>McCune-Reischauer</i>	
Elements W-vowel				
오+ㅏ	와	British Eng: WA in <i>wag</i> Am Eng: WA in <i>swan</i>	[wa]	wa
우+ㅜ	워	like WO in <i>wonder</i>	[wʌ]	wō
오+ㅓ	왜	like WEA in <i>wear</i>	[wæ]	wæ
우+ㅓ	웨	like WE in <i>wet</i>	[wɛ]	we
오+ㅓ	외	usually like WE in <i>wet</i>	[wɛ]	oe
우+ㅓ	위	like WEE in <i>weep</i>	[wi]	wi

Not only do native speakers tend to pronounce 왜 and 외 the same, but many speakers (particularly younger generations) do not differentiate between these two and 왜.

Note that, although 외 and 위 are pronounced as [wɛ] and [wi] by the majority of speakers of Seoul Korean, these are not the

original pronunciations of these vowels. Historically, 외 and 위 were pronounced in accordance with the way that they are written as combinations of [o] and [u] followed by a ‘y’-like sound [j]. These complex vowels then transformed into the simple vowels [ö] (similar to the German ö umlaut) and 위 as [ü] (similar to the vowel sound in French ‘rue’ or ‘tu’), before finally changing into the pronunciations we know today. You may still hear 외 and 위 pronounced as [ö] and [ü] by some older speakers.

1.2.2.4 The compound vowel 의

Korean has one complex vowel, 의, which consists of a glide from 으 [i] to 이 [i] (and which is romanized in the McCune-Reischauer system as *üi*). However, this vowel is only ever pronounced in this way when it occurs at the start of a word without being preceded by any consonant. In other positions, it is pronounced the same as ‘이’ (i.e., like EE in feet). These two pronunciations are summarized below:

Position	Pronunciation	Examples
Word-initial (at the start of a word, with no preceding consonant)	Quick glide from [으] to [이]	의자 = [으이자]/ [ii-ja]
Not word-initial (after consonant or in second or later syllable)	[이] only	떡고 = [띠고]/ [tti-ko] 거의 = [거이]/[ka-i]

Also, bear in mind that 의 typically takes on the irregular pronunciation of 에 (i.e., like E in *bed*) when it appears as the possessive particle 의 (refer to 3.2.3). In the most complex of examples, 의 may be pronounced in three different ways within one short phrase:

written as: 민주주의의 의의

pronounced as:

[민주주이에 의이]

the significance of democracy

Even when 의 appear in initial position, you may sometimes hear it pronounced as a simple vowel (i.e., like 으 or 이), particularly in dialectal speech.

1.2.2.5 Basic consonants

Korean has ten basic consonants that are presented in the table below. As can be seen, the first four consonants have separate ‘voiced’ and ‘unvoiced’ pronunciations. These will be explained below.

<i>Sign</i>	<i>(Name)</i>	<i>English Parallels</i>	<i>Phonetic symbol(s)</i>	<i>McCune-Reischauer</i>
		<i>When unvoiced:</i>	<i>When voiced:</i>	
ㅂ	(비읍)	P, as in <i>park</i> , but more relaxed	B, as in <i>about</i>	[p]/[b] p, b
ㄷ	(디귤)	T, as in <i>tall</i> , but more relaxed	D, as in <i>idea</i>	[t]/[d] t, d
ㅈ	(지읒)	CH, as in <i>child</i> , but more relaxed	J, as in <i>injury</i>	[tʃ]/[dʒ] ch, j
ㄱ	(기역)	K, as in <i>kill</i> , but more relaxed	G, as in <i>again</i>	[k]/[g] k, g
ㅅ	(시옷)	S, as in <i>sky</i> , but more relaxed		[s] s [ʃ] sh
		or SH as in <i>shin</i> (see below)		
ㅁ	(미읍)	M, as in <i>mother</i>		[m] m
ㄴ	(니은)	N, as in <i>net</i>		[n] n
ㅇ	(이응)	NG, as in <i>sing</i>		[ŋ] ng
ㄹ	(리을)	Tongue-flap R as in Scottish <i>rock</i> or <i>Mary</i>		[ɾ] r [l] l
		or Tongue-tip L in British <i>let</i> or <i>lip</i> (see below)		
ㅎ	(히읗)	H, as in <i>hack</i> or <i>hope</i> , but with much heavier breath release		[h] h

Further notes regarding the pronunciation of these consonants are as follows:

1. Pronunciation of ㅂ, ㅌ, ㅍ, ㅍ

As shown in the above table, the primary pronunciation of these is similar to English P, T, CH and K. Like P, T, CH and K, they are unvoiced (i.e., pronounced without voice sounds in the vocal cords). However, **unlike** English P, T, CH and K, they are unaspirated (pronounced followed by no or very little release of air). To approximate the Korean pronunciations, attempt to pronounce the corresponding English sounds **without** a following puff of air.

However, the table also shows that these consonants can – in some environments – become voiced (i.e., pronounced **with** voice sounds in the vocal cords) and thus sound similar to the English B, D, J and G respectively. This happens under the following conditions:

- 1 When the consonant occurs between two vowels. Note how, in the following examples, the first appearance of the consonant is unvoiced and the second (between two vowels) is voiced:

<i>Hangul</i>	<i>McCune-Reischauer</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
마보	pabo	fool
도둑	toduk	thief
자주	chaju	often
고기	kogi	meat

- 2 When the consonant occurs after the voiced consonants ㅁ, ㄴ, ㅇ and ㄹ:

갈비	kalbi	ribs
침대	ch'imdae	bed
안주	anju	appetizers
경기	kyōngi	game, match

2. Pronunciation of ㅅ

The basic pronunciation of ㅅ is akin to that of S in English, if somewhat weaker. Whereas in English the tongue is grooved,

making a narrow path for the airflow and producing more hissing, in Korean the tongue is flattened out and relaxed. Perhaps due to this more relaxed tongue shape, when ㅅ occurs before ‘ㅣ’, any of the Y-vowels or 위, its pronunciation softens to SH:

사실	sashil	<i>truth, fact</i>
샤워	shawö	<i>shower</i>
쉼표	shwimp'yo	<i>a pause</i>

3. Pronunciation of ㅇ

As previously noted, when ㅇ occurs at the start of syllable, it is a ‘zero consonant’ that is not pronounced. The pronunciation as NG [ŋ] only applies when it occurs at the bottom of a syllable block:

영양	Yöngyang	<i>nutrition</i>
잉어	ing-ö	<i>a carp</i>

4. Pronunciation of ㄹ

ㄹ has multiple pronunciations depending on where it appears in a word:

- 1 When it occurs between vowels (such as in 보라 *purple* or 머리 *head*), it is pronounced as ‘tongue-flap’ R. ‘Tongue-flap’ R is pronounced by briefly tapping the front of the tongue against the bone ridge behind the teeth, slightly behind the position used for [t] or [d]. Although there is no equivalent sound in most varieties of English, Scottish English, Japanese and Spanish have similar sounds.
- 2 When it is pronounced at the end of a syllable (비율 *ratio*) or when it occurs twice in succession (빌려요 *borrow*), it is pronounced as ‘tongue-tip’ L. ‘Tongue-tip’ L is pronounced by pressing the front of the tongue against the bone ridge behind the teeth, as in British *let* or *lip* (but not *lack* or *all*, which involve the whole tongue).
- 3 ㄹ does not tend to occur at the start of Korean words. In fact when Sino-Korean words starting with a character featuring an initial ㄹ, this ㄹ drops (for example, 이론 *theory*) or changes to ㄴ (for example, 노동 *labour*). Note that this rule does not apply in North Korea (where you will see words such as 리론 and 로동). Any words that do start with initial ㄹ tend to be

of foreign origins, such as 라면 *ramen* and 립스틱 *lipstick*. In such cases, ㄹ is most typically pronounced as ‘tongue-flap’ R, but you may also hear it pronounced as ‘tongue-tip’ L (particularly in words such as 립스틱 *lipstick* where the underlying English word starts with an L).

1.2.2.6 Aspirated consonants

In addition to its simple consonants, Korean has two other consonant sets. The first are the four Aspirated Consonants ㅍ, ㅌ, ㅊ, and ㅋ. These are the aspirated equivalents of ㅂ, ㄷ, ㅈ and ㄱ. Traditional descriptions claim that ㅍ/ㅌ/ㅊ/ㅋ are differentiated from ㅂ/ㄷ/ㅈ/ㄱ since they are pronounced accompanied by a heavy puff of air (this is what ‘aspirated’ means). However, more recent descriptions (for example, refer to Kang 2014) show that many speakers (particularly younger generations) pronounce both ㅂ/ㄷ/ㅈ/ㄱ and ㅍ/ㅌ/ㅊ/ㅋ with similar levels of air output and that the more important distinction is that ㅍ/ㅌ/ㅊ/ㅋ are pronounced with higher pitch on the following vowel.

Unlike ㅂ/ㄷ/ㅈ/ㄱ, ㅍ/ㅌ/ㅊ/ㅋ never become voiced.

Sign	(Name)	English parallels	Phonetic symbol	MR Romanization
ㅍ	(피읖)	P, as in <i>park</i>	[p ^h]	p'
ㅌ	(티읖)	T, as in <i>talk</i>	[t ^h]	t'
ㅊ	(치읓)	CH, as in <i>chat</i>	[tʃ ^h]	ch'
ㅋ	(키읓)	K, as in <i>kill</i>	[k ^h]	k'

1.2.2.7 Tensed or ‘Double’ consonants

Korean also has five tensed consonants, which are written with the five ‘double’ consonant letters ㅃ, ㅆ, ㅉ, ㅄ, and ㅈㅈ. These are pronounced by putting the mouth into the same position as that for the simple counterpart, holding the mouth tense and tight in that position, and then suddenly releasing the sound with virtually no voice and little aspiration (breath release). The following vowel takes high pitch.

The tensed ‘double’ consonants of Korean have no close parallel in English. They are, however, somewhat similar to Italian double

consonants (PP, TT, CC) and to Japanese tensed consonants. As for English pronunciation, the closest we get to Korean **ㅃ**, **ㅌ**, **ㄸ** are English P, T, K when they appear after S (as in ‘spy’, ‘style’ and ‘sky’), which are also pronounced without aspiration (breath release), but much less tensing. Korean **ㅆ** is also somewhat similar to English TCH in words such as ‘matching’, but more tense and with no puff of air. As for Korean **ㅅ**, the best parallel is a succession of English words finishing and starting on S, such as ‘mass suicide’, with a strong volume increase on the second S.

<i>Sign</i>	<i>(Name)</i>	<i>English parallels</i>	<i>Phonetic symbol</i>	<i>MR Romanization</i>
ㅃ	(쌍비읍)	P, as in <i>spy</i> , but with more tensing	[pp]/[p̚]	pp
ㅌ	(쌍디귤)	T, as in <i>style</i> , but with much more tensing	[tt]/[t̚]	tt
ㄸ	(쌍지읒)	TCH, as in <i>matching</i> , but with tensing and no breath release	[tʃ̚]/[t͡ʃ̚]	tch
ㅆ	(쌍시읒)	S+S, as in <i>mass suicide</i> , but with initial tensing and later volume increase	[ss]/[s̚]	ss
ㄸ	(쌍기역)	K, as in <i>sky</i> , but with much more tensing	[kk]/[k̚]	kk

1.2.3 Pronunciation changes

The pronunciation of Korean is complicated by a number of changes between how it is written and how it is actually pronounced. The reason for these spelling-pronunciation irregularities is that modern Hangul spellings are not supposed to be strict transcriptions of pronunciations, but representations of underlying forms.

1.2.3.1 Pronunciation of syllable-final consonants

Generally speaking Korean consonants may appear both at the beginning or the end of a syllable. However, they are only pronounced fully according to the pronunciations detailed above (refer to 1.2.2.4, 1.2.2.5, 1.2.2.6) when they appear at the start of a syllable. When they are pronounced at the end of a syllable, they lose much of their sound mass and distinctiveness.

The reason for this is that Korean final consonants are never released. Non-release means that the speaker puts his/her mouth into the position for the consonant, but then tenses up the mouth, and finishes by relaxing it again without producing any sound. With the consonants ㅍ *p*, ㅌ *t* and ㅋ *k* this produces pronunciations quite different from English, where the corresponding sounds rely on the release of sound (and a puff of air). If you ask a Korean speaker to read the Korean words below, you should immediately feel this difference. In fact, you may find it hard to hear the final consonants at all.

<i>Korean word</i>		<i>Compare with the English ...</i>
국	<i>soup</i>	cook
밥	<i>rice</i>	pap
곧	<i>immediately</i>	cot

The non-release of final consonants means that many of the distinctions between consonant sounds are lost. Without being released, many of the distinctive features of consonant sounds simply cannot be realized. This includes the plain consonants ㅈ *ch*, ㅅ *s* and ㅎ *h* and all of the aspirated and tensed consonants. Thus, although these consonants may be *written* in final position (except for ㅃ *pp*, ㅆ *tt* and ㅈ *tch*), they can never be *pronounced* in final position. Instead, as shown in the table below, these consonants are pronounced according to the closest possible non-released sound (i.e. the sound which is produced by the same part of the mouth).

<i>Written consonant</i>	<i>Pronunciation in final position</i>	<i>Example</i>
ㄹ	ㄹ	팔 <i>arm</i>
ㄴ	ㄴ	은 <i>silver</i>

ㅁ	ㅁ	몸 <i>body</i>
ㅇ	ㅇ	용 <i>dragon</i>
ㅂ	ㅂ	집 <i>house</i>
ㅍ		짚 [집] <i>straw</i>
ㅃ	ㅃ	받- <i>receive</i>
ㅌ		같- [간] <i>be the same</i>
ㅈ		갖- [간] <i>have, hold</i>
ㅊ		살갓 [살간] <i>complexion, skin</i>
ㅊ		등갓 [등간] <i>lampshade</i>
ㅆ		갔- [간] <i>went [past stem of 'go']</i>
ㅎ		히읃 [히읃] (<i>name of letter ㅎ</i>)
ㄱ	ㄱ	역 <i>station</i>
ㄲ		엮- [역] <i>compile, weave</i>
ㅋ		넋 [넋] <i>around, about</i>

Note that although ㅎ is conventionally listed as being pronounced as ㅃ in final position, the only word where this is actually the case is 히읃. This should be considered as a convention for pronouncing the name of this letter, rather than as a general sound rule. In other cases where ㅎ occurs at the end of a syllable (e.g., in verb bases such as 좋- ‘good’ and 많- ‘many’) it is not pronounced at all (refer to 1.2.3.9), although it may affect the pronunciation of any consonants that follow it (refer to 1.2.3.10).

What is written as a final consonant of one syllable block can in some cases be pronounced as the opening sound of the *next* syllable block (refer to 1.2.3.3). In such cases, the full pronunciation can be maintained.

1.2.3.2 Simplification of consonant clusters

A ‘consonant cluster’ refers to instances in which two or more consonants appear in succession without any vowel sounds between them (examples in English include strike, helps, crisps).

In Korean pronunciation, consonant clusters are not allowed. However, clusters of two consonants do sometimes appear in writing

in final consonant position. In such cases, one of the sounds must always drop (or otherwise move to another syllable through ‘re-syllabification’ (refer to 1.2.3.3)). Luckily, knowing which consonant drops and which is pronounced is usually totally predictable, as shown in the following table. Note however, that for the combinations ㄹ *lk* and ㅍ *lp*, some speakers may pronounce the ㄹ *l* rather than the prescribed ㄱ *k* or ㅍ *p* in certain words.

Consonant cluster	Sound pronounced	Example
ㄱ	ㄱ	넋 [넉] <i>soul, spirit</i>
ㄴ	ㄴ	많- [만-] <i>be many</i>
ㄹ	ㄹ	끓- [삼] <i>boil</i>
ㄷ	ㄷ	외궤 [외궤] <i>single way track</i>
ㄹ	ㅇ [ㅂ]	읊- [읍] <i>recite</i>
ㅍ	ㅍ	값 [갑] <i>price</i>
ㄴ	ㄴ	앉- [안] <i>sit</i>
ㄹ	ㄱ	읽- [익] <i>read</i>
		맑- [막] <i>clear</i> – but frequently pronounced as [말]
ㄹ	ㅍ	밟- [밥] <i>step on</i>
		넓- [넙] <i>wide</i> – but frequently pronounced as [널]
ㄹ	ㄷ	핥- [할] <i>lick</i>
ㄹ	ㄷ	뚫- [뚫] <i>bore [a hole]</i>

1.2.3.3 Re-syllabification

Re-syllabification refers to the process whereby a consonant is written at the end of one syllable block but pronounced at the start of the next syllable. This happens whenever one syllable block ends in a consonant and the following syllable has no opening consonant sound. The two exceptions to this rule are ㅇ *ng* and ㅎ *h*. ㅇ *ng* cannot become the opening sound of the following syllable block

because *ng* can only appear as a final consonant sound. As for *ㅎ*, it does not get pronounced at all in such cases (for example, 좋아요 ‘good’ is pronounced as *cho-a-yo*, not *cho-ha-yo*).

Here are some basic examples of nouns that show re-syllabification:

<i>How it is written</i>	<i>How it is pronounced</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
독일	[도길]	Germany
언어	[어너]	language
신인	[시닌]	new person (i.e., newcomer, ‘new face’, etc.)

As in the above examples, most nouns that show re-syllabification are Sino-Korean words composed of compounds of two or more elements originating from separate Chinese characters (for example, 신인 ‘new person’ is composed of the elements 신 (新) ‘new’ and 인 (人) ‘person’). The words are written to reflect the base forms of these two separate elements (i.e., 신-인) rather than pronunciation (i.e. 시-닌).

Re-syllabification also occurs when particles (refer to Chapter 3) (with no opening consonant sound) and the copula (refer to 4.1.4) are attached to nouns (ending in a consonant) and when verb endings (with no opening consonant sound) are attached to verb stems (ending in a consonant):

<i>Written</i>	<i>Pronunciation</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
한국 <u>이</u>	[한구기]	Korea- subject
물 <u>을</u>	[무를]	water- object
약 <u>이에요</u>	[야기에요]	medicine- copula
입 <u>어서</u>	[이버서]	wear -아/어서 verb ending (refer to 7.1.1)
입 <u>으면</u>	[이브면]	wear -(으)면 verb ending (refer to 7.5.1)

The rule of re-syllabification can be said to override the rules regarding the pronunciation of syllable-final consonants described above (refer to 1.2.3.1). If a consonant can be re-syllabified, it can naturally be rendered according to its full pronunciation. For this reason, adding a particle (with no opening consonant sound) or the copula to a noun (ending in a consonant) and adding verb endings (with

no opening consonant sound) to verb stems (ending in a consonant) allow the final nouns to ‘recover’ their original pronunciation.

<i>Original noun</i>	<i>Noun + particle/copula</i>
짚 [집] <i>straw</i>	짚 <u>이</u> [지피] <i>straw-subject</i>
낫 [날] <i>sickle</i>	낫 <u>으로</u> [나스로] <i>sickle-instrumental</i>
<i>Verb stem</i>	<i>Verb + ending</i>
같- <i>be the same</i>	같 <u>아서</u> [가타서] <i>be the same</i> -아/어서 (refer to 7.1.1)
갔- <i>went [past stem of ‘go’]</i>	갔 <u>으면</u> [가쓰면] <i>went -(으)면</i> (refer to 7.5.1)

The rule of re-syllabification also overrides the rules regarding the simplification of consonant clusters. If a consonant cluster is followed by a vowel at the start of the next syllable, the first consonant of the cluster can be pronounced as the final sound of the current syllable and the second consonant of the cluster can simply move across to the next syllable. This also allows for sounds at the end of nouns and verb stems to be ‘recovered’ when certain particles, the copula and verb endings are added:

<i>Original noun</i>	<i>Noun + particle/copula</i>
넋 [넉] <i>soul, spirit</i>	넋 <u>을</u> [넉슬] <i>spirit-object</i>
값 [갑] <i>price</i>	값 <u>으로</u> [갑스로] <i>price-instrumental</i>
<i>Verb stem</i>	<i>Verb + ending</i>
삶- <i>boil</i>	삶 <u>아서</u> [살마서] <i>boil -아/어서 verb ending</i> (refer to 7.1.1)
읽- <i>read</i>	읽 <u>으면</u> [일그면] <i>read -(으)면 verb ending</i> (refer to 7.5.1)

1.2.3.4 Nasal assimilation

‘Assimilation’ refers to a phonological change whereby a sound ‘assimilates’ to become similar to a neighbouring sound.

What is known as nasal assimilation happens when a stop consonant (i.e., a consonant whose sound is formed by slowing down or stopping the flow of air through the mouth before being released

with an expulsion of breath and sound – in Korean, ㄱ *k*, ㅋ *k'*, ㄲ *kk*, ㄷ *t*, ㅌ *t'*, ㄸ *tt*, ㅂ *p*, ㅃ *p'*, ㅍㅍ *pp*) occurs before a nasal consonant (i.e., a consonant produced through the nose with the mouth closed – in Korean ㄴ *n*, ㅁ *m*, ㅇ *ng*, although ㅇ *ng* does not apply here as it never appears in initial position). When this happens, the stop consonant assimilates to the nasal sound that is produced using the same point of articulation:

ㄱ <i>k</i> , ㅋ <i>k'</i> , ㄲ <i>kk</i>	→	ㅇ <i>ng</i>
ㄷ <i>t</i> , ㅌ <i>t'</i> , ㄸ <i>tt</i>	→	ㄴ <i>n</i>
ㅂ <i>p</i> , ㅃ <i>p'</i> , ㅍㅍ <i>pp</i>	→	ㅁ <i>m</i>

Here are some examples of these changes:

ㄱ <i>k</i> , ㅋ <i>k'</i> , ㄲ <i>kk</i>	→	ㅇ <i>ng</i>	
국물	→	[궁물]	<i>broth</i>
먹는다	→	[멍는다]	<i>eat</i>
부엌만	→	[부엌만]	<i>kitchen-<u>only</u></i>
묶는다	→	[퐁는다]	<i>tie</i>
ㄷ <i>t</i> , ㅌ <i>t'</i> , ㄸ <i>tt</i>	→	ㄴ <i>n</i>	
받는다	→	[반는다]	<i>receive</i>
붙는다	→	[분는다]	<i>stick to</i>
ㅂ <i>p</i> , ㅃ <i>p'</i> , ㅍㅍ <i>pp</i>	→	ㅁ <i>m</i>	
범망	→	[범망]	<i>net of the law</i>
돕는다	→	[돔는다]	<i>help</i> <i>[plain speech style]</i>
앞마당	→	[암마당]	<i>front yard</i>
없는다	→	[엄는다]	<i>not exist-<u>modifier</u></i> <i>(refer to 8.1.2)</i>

The final example shows the results of two pronunciation changes. The consonant cluster at the end of the first syllable first simplifies to ㅂ *p* (없는다 → 엄는다) (refer to 1.2.3.2). Then, ㅂ *p* assimilates to ㅁ *m* (엄는다 → 엄는다).

In casual speech, one further type of nasal assimilation may occur. This involves the nasal ㄴ *n* changing to another nasal sound, either ㅇ *ng* ㅁ or *m*. This happens when ㄴ *n* occurs before consonants pronounced using the same point of articulation as ㅇ *ng* or ㅁ *m*, namely ㄱ *k* (in the case of ㅇ *ng*) and ㅂ *p* and ㅁ *m* itself (in the case of ㅁ). Put more simply, ㄴ *n* changes to ㅇ *ng* before ㄱ *k*, and ㄴ *n* changes to ㅁ before ㅂ *p* or ㅁ *m*:

ㄴ <i>n</i>	→	ㅇ <i>ng</i>	
한국어	→	[향구거]	<i>Korean language</i>
ㄴ <i>n</i>	→	ㅁ <i>m</i>	
난방	→	[남방]	<i>heating</i>
신문	→	[심문]	<i>newspaper</i>

1.2.3.5 ㄹ *r/l* pronounced as ㄴ *n*

The appearance and pronunciation of ㄹ *r/l* is quite restricted in Korean. As noted above (refer to 1.2.2.5), ㄹ *r/l* rarely occurs at the start of Korean words. In addition, when it occurs in the middle of words, ㄹ *r/l* only tends to be retain its original pronunciation after vowels, after another ㄹ *r/l* and after ㄴ (refer to 1.2.3.6). When it occurs after consonants such as ㅁ *m* and ㅇ *ng*, its pronunciation changes to ㄴ *n*:

ㅁㄹ	→	ㅁㄴ	
금리	→	[금니]	<i>interest on money</i>
담론	→	[담논]	<i>discussion</i>
ㅇㄹ	→	ㅇㄴ	
등록	→	[등녹]	<i>registration</i>
영리	→	[영니]	<i>profit, gain</i>

In cases where the preceding consonant is ㅂ *p*, ㄱ *k* or ㅈ (or any other consonants that neutralize to ㅂ *p*, ㄱ *k* or ㅈ (refer to 1.2.3.1)), the change from ㄹ *l* to ㄴ *n* (or the anticipation of it) triggers nasal assimilation (refer to 1.2.3.4) on the preceding consonant. This means that ㅂ *p* is pronounced as ㅁ *m*, ㅈ *t* is pronounced as ㄴ *n* and ㄱ *k* is pronounced as ㅇ *ng*:

ㄱㄹ	→	ㅇㄹ	
독립	→	[동닙]	<i>independence</i>
ㄷㄹ	→	ㄴㄹ	
꽃룸	→	[꼰눔]*	<i>flower-room</i>
ㅂㄹ	→	ㅁㄹ	
압력	→	[암녁]	<i>pressure</i>

*The ㄷㄹ combination is not commonly found in contemporary Korean.

1.2.3.6 ㄴ n pronounced as ㄹ l

One important exception to the rule described in the previous section (whereby ㄹ *l* changes to ㄴ *n* after other consonants) occurs when ㄹ *l* meets ㄴ *n* itself. In these cases, it is ㄴ *n* that changes to ㄹ *l*. In other words, the combination ㄴㄹ is pronounced as ㄹㄹ:

ㄴㄹ	→	ㄹㄹ	
난로	→	[날로]	<i>heater</i>
신라	→	[실라]	<i>Shilla (name of Kingdom on Korean peninsula)</i>

This change also occurs when the order of ㄴ *n* and ㄹ *l* is reversed. ㄹㄴ is also pronounced as ㄹㄹ:

ㄹㄴ	→	ㄹㄹ	
칼날	→	[칼랄]	<i>knife blade</i>
핥는다	→	[할른다]*	<i>lick</i>

*The ㄹㄹ consonant cluster simplifies to ㄹ

It should be noted, however, that the rule whereby ㄴㄹ is pronounced as ㄹㄹ only applies to word-internal cases (i.e., when ㄴ precedes ㄹ within a word). When ㄴ *n* occurs at the end of a word and this word then takes a suffix beginning with ㄹ, the combination is most commonly pronounced as ㄴㄴ (although you may here some speakers use ㄹㄹ).

Original word ending in ㄴ	Word plus suffix starting with ㄷ	Pronunciation
입원 <i>hospitalization</i>	입원료 <i>hospital expenses</i>	[이원뇨]
신문 <i>newspaper</i>	신문로 'newspaper street'	[신문노]

1.2.3.7 Palatalization of ㄷ t and ㅌ t'

When ㄷ t or ㅌ t' occurs before the vowel ㅣ i, the pronunciation becomes 'palatalized'. Basically, this means that ㄷ t and ㅌ t' change to ㅈ ch and ㅊ ch' respectively. Note however, that this change *only* occurs when the ㄷ t or ㅌ t' is at the end of a word or stem and the ㅣ is part of a suffix, verb ending, particle or the copula. It does *not* occur elsewhere (for example, in words such as 어디 *where*, 마디 *joint*, 티 *speck*).

ㄷ → ㅈ

해돋이 → [해도지] *sunrise* [해 sun + 돋- rise + suffix -이]

말이 → [마지] *first born* [말- eldest + 이 person]

굳이 → [구지] *firmly* [굳- firm + adverb ending -이]

ㅌ → ㅊ

밭이 → [바치] *field (subject)* [밭 field + subject particle 이]

술이면 → [소치면] *if it's a kettle* [술 kettle + copula 이 + (으)면]

같이 → [가치] *together* [같- 'be the same' + adverb ending -이]

As well as occurring before ㅣ i, this process also occurs before y-vowels:

ㅌ → ㅊ

붙여요 → [부쳐요] *stick* [붙- be stuck + causative 이 + 어요]

A slightly more complicated thing happens when a final-position ㄷ t is followed by a suffix starting in 히 hi. The combination of ㄷ t and 히 h creates the aspirated ㅌ t' through a process of aspiration (refer to 1.2.3.10). This then becomes palatalized to produce ㅊ ch':

닫히	→	츠	
닫히-	→	[다치-]	<i>be shut</i> [닫- shut + passive -히]
굳히-	→	[구치-]	<i>harden</i> [굳- be hard + causative -히]

1.2.3.8 ㄴ addition

In some complex words (i.e., words made up of two or more meaningful units such as the English *flowerpot* (*flower+pot*) or *undo* (*un+do*)) in which the second part of the compound begins with ㄹ or any of the y-vowels, an extra ㄴ is added in pronunciation.

For some words, the addition of ㄴ is reflected in Hangeul spelling (for example, 앞니 *front tooth*). In other cases, there is no clue in the spelling that tells us that ㄴ has to be added:

담요	→	[담뇨]	<i>blanket</i>
한여름	→	[한너름]	<i>midsummer</i>
면양말	→	[면냥말]	<i>cotton socks</i>

When the first element of the compound ends in a stop consonant (i.e., ㄱ *k*, ㅋ *k'*, ㄲ *kk*, ㄷ *t*, ㅌ *t'*, ㄸ *tt*, ㅍ *p*, ㅑ *p'*, ㅑㅑ *pp*), the addition of ㄴ triggers nasal assimilation (refer to 1.2.3.4):

ㄱ/ㅋ/ㄲ + ㄴ	→	ㅇㄴ	
내복약	→	[내봉낙]	<i>internal medicine</i>
부엌일	→	[부엌닐]	<i>kitchen work</i>
ㄷ/ㅌ/ㄸ + ㄴ	→	ㄴㄴ	
꽃잎	→	[꼰닙]*	<i>petal</i>
깨잎	→	[겐닙]*	<i>sesame leaf</i>

* Here, ㅌ and ㅑ at the end of the respective first syllables are both pronounced as ㄷ in the original components 꽃 and 깨- respectively. (refer to 1.2.3.1)

ㅑ/ㅑㅑ/ㅑㅑ + ㄴ	→	ㅑㄴ	
앞일	→	[암닐]	<i>the future</i>
영업용	→	[영엄똥]	<i>business use/purposes</i>

1.2.3.9 *ㅎ h reduction*

Full deletion of *ㅎ h* is obligatory when it occurs at the end of a verb base in front of a vowel sound. In words such as the following, *ㅎ* is never pronounced.

좋아요	→	[조아요]	<i>is good</i>
많아요	→	[마나요]	<i>is many</i>

Note, however, that the presence of *ㅎ h* at the end of the base will trigger aspiration when verb endings starting with certain consonants are added (refer to 1.2.3.10).

In addition, when *ㅎ* occurs between voiced sounds (i.e., all vowels and/or the consonants *ㅁ m*, *ㄴ n*, *ㅇ ng*, *ㄹ r*), it is pronounced very weakly or is even lost entirely in fast everyday speech:

영화	→	[영와]	<i>film, movie</i>
여행	→	[여앵]	<i>travel</i>
미안합니다	→	[미아남니다]	<i>I'm sorry</i>
전화	→	[저놔]	<i>telephoning</i>

1.2.3.10 *Aspiration*

When *ㅎ h* occurs next to the basic consonants *ㄱ k*, *ㄷ t*, *ㅍ p* and *ㅈ ch*, it causes them to change into their aspirated counterparts *ㅋ k'*, *ㅌ t'*, *ㅍ p'* and *ㅊ ch'* respectively (*ㅎ h* is then not pronounced as a separate sound).

This aspiration process can occur both when *ㅎ h* precedes or follows the basic consonant in question. In the first set of examples, *ㅎ h* precedes the consonant:

ㅎㄱ	→	ㅋ	
그렇게	→	[그러케]	<i>like that</i>
ㅎㄷ	→	ㅌ	
좋다	→	[조타]	<i>is good</i>
ㅎㅍ	→	ㅍ	[this combination is not found in modern Korean]

pronunciation of final consonants (refer to 1.2.3.1) or simplification of consonant clusters (refer to 1.2.3.2):

<i>Spelling</i>		<i>Sound change</i>		<i>Reinforcement</i>	
옆집	→	엃집	→	[엃쩍]	<i>next door</i>
꽃바구니	→	꼇바구니	→	[꼇빠구니]	<i>flower basket</i>
<i>Spelling</i>		<i>Simplified cluster</i>		<i>Reinforcement</i>	
닭살	→	닥살	→	[닥쌀]	<i>goose bumps</i>
없다	→	엃다	→	[엃따]	<i>not exist</i>

Reinforcement does not usually occur after a nasal consonant (i.e., ㄴ *n*, ㅁ *m*, ㅇ *ng*). However, the exception to this is when the nasal sound in question occurs at the end of a verb stem and an ending beginning with a plain consonant is added to it:

신고	→	[싣꼬]	<i>report + -꼬 (refer to 7.3.1)</i>
다듬다가	→	[다듬따가]	<i>trim, refine + -다가 (refer to 7.3.11)</i>

A more complicated variety of reinforcement can occur in complex nouns (i.e., nouns composed of two or more morphemes). This first of all happens in complex nouns in which the two elements are linked together by the addition of the so-called ‘genitive s’ (사이시옷) – an additional ㅅ *s* written at the bottom of the syllable. Although written as ㅅ *s*, it is never pronounced as such (at least not in the modern language). All that it does is to cause the following plain consonants to become reinforced:

사잇길	→	[사이낄]	<i>the way between</i>
배길	→	[배낄]	<i>shipping route</i>
종잇장	→	[종이짱]	<i>sheet of paper</i>
텃밭	→	[터뵤]	<i>backyard vegetable plot</i>

The ‘genitive s’ can only be written when the first element in the complex noun ends in a vowel. However, ‘genitive s’ may be phonologically present in complex nouns that end in a consonant as well (although Hangeul orthography does not allow

it to be written). Due to this, other compounds may also see tensing on the second element with no indication at all in the spelling:

안방	→	[안뻥]	<i>inner room</i>
안과	→	[안짜]	<i>opticians; eye clinic</i>
눈동자	→	[눈똥자]	<i>pupil (of eye)</i>
잠보	→	[잠뽀]	<i>sleepyhead</i>
김밥	→	[김뻥]	<i>rice rolled in seaweed</i>
강가	→	[강까]	<i>riverside</i>

Non-predictable tensing may also occur in other complex nouns where there is no etymological evidence of there being a ‘genitive s’:

한자	→	[한짜]	<i>Chinese characters</i>
글자	→	[글짜]	<i>letters</i>
문법	→	[문뻥]	<i>grammar</i>
산보	→	[산뽀]	<i>a stroll</i>
조건	→	[조껌]	<i>condition</i>
인기	→	[인끼]	<i>popularity</i>
결정	→	[결뽕]	<i>decision</i>

Chapter 2

Nouns, nominal forms, pronouns and numbers

2.1 Nouns

Overview

The current sub-chapter provides important information regarding the grammatical appearance of Korean nouns.

Section one considers three points on which Korean nouns differ greatly from their counterparts in English and other European languages: the absence of articles, the limited appearance of number and the lack of importance of gender. Section two then considers an important category of noun that requires further comment: bound nouns.

One important feature of Korean nouns not covered in this chapter is the fact that some Korean nouns have a separate ‘honorific’ form. This situation is discussed in the chapter on honorifics (6.2.3)

2.1.1 Lack of articles, number and gender

Unlike many European languages, Korean does not have articles (such as ‘a/an’ and ‘the’ in English), does not typically mark number (i.e., whether a noun is singular or plural) and does not usually mark gender (as in European languages such as French, German, Spanish and Russian). On these points, however, Korean is similar to other East Asian languages such as Chinese and Japanese.

Although the lack of these categories can sometimes be disorienting to European learners, Korean has ways to express these meanings where necessary.

2.1.1.1 Lack of articles

Due to the lack of articles, a Korean sentence such as the following can be ambiguous regarding whether the ‘man’ that Yumi met is a specific man (the man) or an unspecified man (a man)

어제 유미가 남자를 만났어요.

Yesterday, Yumi met the man. / Yesterday, Yumi met a man.

However, where need be, Korean can use other resources to tell us whether a specific man or an unspecified man is being talked about. For definite reference (‘the man’), 그 ‘that’ (or, according to context, 이 ‘this’) can be used:

어제 유미가 그 남자를 만났어요.

Yesterday, Yumi met the man.

For indefinite reference (‘a man’), 한 ‘one’ or 어떤 ‘some (kind of)’ can be used:

어제 유미가 어떤 남자를 만났어요.

Yesterday, Yumi met a man.

2.1.1.2 Lack of number

Since Korean nouns are not normally marked for number, it is often unclear (unless there is a clarifying context), whether the speaker is talking about a single item or plural items. In the following sentence, ‘책’ could translate as ‘book’ or ‘books’:

책이 있어요. *I've got a book. / I've got some books.*

However, if it is necessary to specify that what is being talked about is not a single item but plural items, Korean does have a grammatical marker that can fulfil this function: the plural marker 들 (refer to 3.3.1). The following sentence can only mean that I have ‘books’, not that I have ‘a book’:

책들이 있어요. *I've got some books.*

Another way to make a noun plural is to use a number expression (refer to 2.4). Note that when one of these number expressions is used, since this makes it obvious that what you are talking about is plural (or singular), the plural marker is not normally used.