

Second Edition



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Basic Korean

A Grammar and Workbook

Andrew Sangpil Byon

BASIC KOREAN

The revised second edition of *Basic Korean: A Grammar and Workbook* is an accessible reference grammar and workbook in one volume. The text can be used in conjunction with any primary textbook, both as a practice book to reinforce learning and as a reference guide to the basics of Korean grammar.

This book is comprised of 26 units covering the key aspects of Korean grammar students would expect to encounter in their first year of learning the language. Grammatical descriptions are followed by examples and exercises which allow students to reinforce and consolidate their learning. This new edition has been updated and enhanced to include more varied exercises and contemporary vocabulary and dialogues.

Clearly presented and user-friendly, *Basic Korean* provides readers with the essential tools to express themselves in a wide variety of situations, making it an ideal reference grammar and practice resource for both beginners and students with some knowledge of the language.

Andrew Sangpil Byon is Associate Professor of Korean Studies at the State University of New York at Albany, USA.

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BASIC KOREAN

A Grammar and Workbook

Second edition

Andrew Sangpil Byon

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PREFACE

Basic Korean: A Grammar and Workbook (Second Edition), like its sister volume, *Intermediate Korean (Second Edition)*, provides an accessible reference grammar, grammatical explanations, and grammatical exercises in a single volume. This book is designed for two groups: English-speaking adults independently learning Korean as a foreign language (KFL) who intend to maintain and strengthen their knowledge of essential Korean grammar; and classroom-based learners who are looking for supplemental grammatical explanations and exercises.

As an introductory reference grammar, this book differs from existing KFL materials whose primary purpose is to help learners acquire basic cultural knowledge and language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Furthermore, the layout of this book differs from existing KFL materials. For example, a typical KFL textbook chapter may include model dialogues followed by vocabulary lists with pronunciation rules and spelling, grammatical explanations, cultural notes, and exercises. In contrast, every unit of this book focuses on presenting concise grammatical explanations, followed by relevant exercises.

In addition, in its layout and exposition of grammatical topics, this book does not adopt a functional–situational approach. Rather it is organized according to grammatical categories such as nouns, pronouns, particles, numbers, verbs, adjectives, and so on. Each unit includes exercises specially designed to reinforce the target grammatical points. In this way, learners can use this book both as a reference grammar and for practice material.

This new edition has been revised and updated. Revisions include, but are not limited to, the following additions:

1. A unit on sentence-final endings ~지요, ~군요, ~네, ~잖아요, has been added.
2. In contrast to the first edition, the sections on “key vocabulary for unit exercises” are now organized and grouped according to grammatical categories such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives or according to themes such as food, family, and body parts. Furthermore, efforts have been made to shorten vocabulary lists, reduce long translation exercises, and add more varied exercises.
3. The second edition continues to present all Korean entries in Hangul (the Korean alphabet) with English translations to facilitate understanding. When translating Korean entries into English, efforts were made to reflect the Korean meaning as closely as possible. Consequently, some learners may feel certain English translations do not always reflect typical English usage. However, the direct transla-

tion approach was employed for pedagogical purposes. Because Hangul is used throughout, learners must familiarize themselves with Hangul in Unit 1 before reading the rest of the book. In order to help readers accustom themselves to reading Hangul, the first two units also provide romanization of Korean terms. All romanized Hangul is presented in square brackets.

4. In this book, I have adopted the use of the Revised Romanization of Korean, the official Korean language romanization system in South Korea (published by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2000).

Vowel romanization

V	ㅏ	ㅑ	ㅓ	ㅕ	ㅗ	ㅛ	ㅜ	ㅠ	ㅡ	ㅣ
R.	a	ae	ya	yae	eo	e	yeo	yeo	o	i

(V – Vowel; R – Romanization)

Consonant romanization

C	ㄱ	ㅋ	ㄴ	ㄷ	ㄹ	ㅁ	ㅂ	ㅅ	ㅆ	ㅇ	ㅈ	ㅊ	ㅌ	ㅍ	ㅎ
R.	W.I.	g	kk	n	d	tt	r	m	b	pp	s	ss	-	j	jj
	W.F.	k	k	n	t	-	l	m	p	-	t	t	ng	t	-

(C – Consonant; R – Romanization; W.I. – Word initial position; W.F. – Word final position)

5. There was no vocabulary index in the first edition, forcing readers to flip through pages if they could not remember a word from an earlier unit. Consequently, a vocabulary index has been added to the second edition. Each entry in the index includes romanization of the Korean word, the parts of speech, and the word's English meaning.

In updating this second edition, I have been fortunate to have the assistance of many people. I am grateful to anonymous reviewers for their constructive and valuable comments. I would like to express sincere gratitude to the editorial and production teams of Routledge, Samantha Vale Noya and Rosie McEwan, for their advice and support throughout the process.

Of course, I bear all responsibility for any shortcomings and remaining errors.

UNIT 1

Hangul (the Korean alphabet)

The Korean writing system “Hangul” is one of the most scientific and systematic writing systems in the world. Hangul comprises an alphabet of 21 vowel and 19 consonant symbols. The system was invented in 1443 by King Sejong the Great and his group of royal scholars during the Chosun dynasty of Korea (1392–1910). This unit introduces individual vowel and consonant symbols and discusses how each symbol is assembled into syllables to spell Korean words.

Vowels

Hangul has a total of 21 vowel symbols. Among them are 11 basic vowel and ten double vowel symbols. The basic vowel symbols include:

- ㅏ [a] (as in father)
- ㅑ [eo] (as in uh-oh)
- ㅓ [o] (as in home)
- ㅕ [u] (as in bo)
- ㅗ [eu] (as in pull)
- ㅛ [i] (as in feet)
- ㅜ [ae] (as in care)
- ㅠ [e] (as in met)
- ㅡ [oe] (as in wet)
- ㅣ [wi] (as in we are the world)
- ㅟ [ui] (u as in pull, followed by ee as in feet, but said quickly as one sound)

Ten double vowel symbols are made by either adding an additional stroke to some of the above basic vowel symbols or by combining basic vowel symbols. For example, by adding a stroke to ㅏ [a], you get ㅛ [ya]. The following six double vowel symbols result from adding an additional stroke (in this case the *y* sound) to the first six vowel symbols listed above:

- ㅛ [ya] (as in yard)
- ㅜ [yeo] (as in yonder)
- ㅟ [yo] (as in yoga)

ㅠ	[yu] (as in <u>you</u>)
ㅟ	[yae] (as in <u>y</u> ankie)
예	[ye] (as in <u>y</u> es)

Another four double vowel symbols are made by combining basic vowel symbols. For example, combining ㅓ [o] and ㅏ [a] produces ㅑ [wa]:

ㅑ	[wa] (as in <u>w</u> ine)
ㅓ	[wo] (as in <u>w</u> onder)
ㅕ	[wae] (as in <u>w</u> ait)
ㅖ	[we] (as in <u>w</u> hen)

Notice that the above four double vowel symbols have the *w* sound.

You may also wonder whether other vowel symbols can be combined. However, there are vowel symbols that cannot be combined together. For instance, ㅓ [o] does not combine with ㅓ [eo] or ㅕ [e], and ㅓ [u] does not combine with ㅏ [a] or ㅕ [ae]. This is because of the Korean vowel harmony principle.

In Korean, the two vowel symbols ㅏ [a] and ㅓ [o] are called “bright vowels” because they sound sonorous to native speakers. Since the vowel symbols such as ㅕ [wae], ㅑ [wa], ㅕ [ae], and ㅕ [yae] were derived from ㅏ [a] and ㅓ [o] by either adding a stroke or combining them, these vowel symbols are also considered “bright vowels.” On the other hand, ㅓ [eo] and ㅓ [u] are considered “dark vowels” along with ㅓ [wo], ㅖ [we], and ㅕ [ye]. Furthermore, ㅣ [i] and ㅡ [eu] are called “neutral vowels.” The vowel harmony principle prohibits the combination of bright and dark vowel symbols.

Consonants

Hangul has 19 consonant symbols, as shown below:

ㅍ	[b/p] (as in <u>p</u> ark, but relaxed)
ㅑ	[p] (as in <u>p</u> ill, aspirated)
ㅑ	[pp] (as in <u>s</u> peak, tense)
ㅑ	[d/t] (as in <u>t</u> all, but relaxed)
ㅑ	[t] (as in <u>t</u> alk, aspirated)
ㅑ	[tt] (as in <u>s</u> team, tense)
ㅑ	[s] (as in <u>s</u> oul)
ㅑ	[ss] (as in <u>s</u> ea)
ㅑ	[j] (as in <u>ch</u> ill, but relaxed)
ㅑ	[ch] (as in <u>ch</u> ange, aspirated)
ㅑ	[jj] (as in <u>m</u> idget, tense)
ㅑ	[g/k] (as in <u>k</u> iss, but relaxed)
ㅑ	[k] (as in <u>k</u> ing, aspirated)
ㅑ	[kk] (as in <u>s</u> kill, tense)
ㅑ	[m] (as in <u>m</u> other)
ㅑ	[n] (as in <u>n</u> ose)

- ㅇ [ng] (as in king)
- ㄹ [l/r] (l as in lung or r as in the Spanish r)
- ㅎ [h] (as in hope)

How to combine consonants with vowel symbols

The basic unit of a Korean letter is the syllable. A complete Korean written letter must have at least one consonant and one vowel symbol. The combinations of vowel and consonant symbols are fivefold.

First, like “a” in English, a syllable may consist of only one vowel sound. Although the syllable in this case consists of only one vowel and is pronounced like “a,” in Korean you still need to start the syllable with a consonant symbol. To do this, you use the Korean consonant ㅇ. The ㅇ symbol is special in that it is used as a “zero-value consonant” when it appears before a vowel. It functions as a placeholder located at the beginning of a syllable. Therefore, the letter “a” should be written in Korean as ㅏ rather than ㅑ. Let’s take another example. When writing a syllable for the sound “yo,” you should write 요 not ㅠ. Again, although the syllable is pronounced “yo” (without any spoken consonant), you still have to start with the zero consonant ㅇ.

Second, a syllable, like “on” in English or 온 in Korean, may consist of a vowel followed by a consonant. Third, a syllable, like the English “go” or 고 in Korean, may consist of a consonant followed by a vowel. Fourth, a syllable may consist of a consonant followed by a vowel and an additional consonant or consonants. Examples of this include the English word “dam” or 담 and “host” or host [heuk].

The position of the vowel symbols is either to the right of or below the initial consonant symbol, as in 미 [mi] and 노 [no]. If the syllable has a consonant after a vowel symbol, it is always below the vowel, as in 민 [min] and 녹 [nok].

There are a few more things to bear in mind. First, a Korean syllable never starts with two consonants (as in the English word “clip”). In addition, a three-symbol syllable (consonant-vowel-consonant(s)) appears more crowded and compacted than a two-symbol syllable (consonant-vowel). However, no matter how many symbols it may contain, each syllable should look about the same size. For instance, the size of the following two letters is about the same: 나 [na] and heuk [heuk]. Another thing to remember is that, as in English, the spelling of Korean words does not always overlap with their pronunciation.

Finally, bear in mind that dictionary entries, directories, and word lists are listed in the following order:

Vowels (21 symbols):

ㅏ [a], ㅑ [ae], ㅓ [ya], ㅕ [yae], ㅗ [eo], ㅛ [e], ㅜ [yeo], ㅠ [ye], ㅛ [o], ㅜ [wa], ㅟ [wae], ㅟ [oe], ㅟ [yo], ㅟ [u], ㅟ [wo], ㅟ [we], ㅟ [wi], ㅟ [yu], ㅟ [eu], ㅟ [ui], ㅟ [i]

Consonants (19 symbols):

ㄱ [g/k], ㅋ [kk], ㄴ [n], ㄷ [d/t], ㅌ [tt], ㄹ [r/l], ㅁ [m], ㅂ [b/p], ㅅ [pp], ㅈ [s], ㅊ [ss], ㅇ [ng], ㅊ [j], ㅊ [jj], ㅊ [ch], ㅋ [k], ㅌ [t], ㅍ [p], ㅎ [h]

EXERCISES

Exercise 1.1

Circle the vowel symbol that is pronounced differently from the others.

테, 다, 대

Exercise 1.2

Circle the vowel symbol that is pronounced differently from the others.

패, 피, 귀

Exercise 1.3

Circle the vowel symbol that is not a “bright vowel.”

ㅏ, ㅓ, ㅗ, ㅜ, ㅝ, ㅞ

Exercise 1.4

Circle the vowel symbol that is not a “dark vowel.”

ㅓ, ㅗ, ㅜ, ㅝ, ㅞ, ㅟ

Exercise 1.5

The following list contains English loanwords used in Korean. Match each word with its English equivalent (camera, jazz, taxi, romance, hot dog, Starbucks, quiz, coat, bus, sandwich, hamburger, and coffee).

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| 1. 버스 | 2. 커피 |
| 3. 코트 | 4. 재즈 |
| 5. 퀴즈 | 6. 로맨스 |
| 7. 택시 | 8. 스타벅스 |
| 9. 핫도그 | 10. 샌드위치 |
| 11. 햄버거 | 12. 카메라 |

Exercise 1.6

The following is a list of countries written in Hangul. Write the English name for each country.

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| 1. 브라질 | 2. 스페인 |
| 3. 노르웨이 | 4. 핀란드 |
| 5. 필리핀 | 6. 이탈리아 |
| 7. 프랑스 | 8. 잉글랜드 |
| 9. 캐나다 | 10. 멕시코 |

Exercise 1.7

The following is a list of cities written in Hangul. Write the English name for each city.

- | | |
|-----------|----------|
| 1. 뉴욕 | 2. 시드니 |
| 3. 샌프란시스코 | 4. 런던 |
| 5. 파리 | 6. 서울 |
| 7. 마드리드 | 8. 라스베가스 |
| 9. 뉴델리 | 10. 리스본 |

Exercise 1.8

Match the English name of the country with the corresponding Korean name in the following list:

포르투갈, 사우디 아라비아, 뉴질랜드, 아르헨티나, 이집트, 인디아, 러시아, 오스트레일리아, 이스라엘, 헝가리

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| 1. Russia | 2. Egypt |
| 3. Portugal | 4. Hungary |
| 5. Saudi Arabia | 6. New Zealand |
| 7. Argentina | 8. India |
| 9. Australia | 10. Israel |

Exercise 1.9

Match the English name of the city with the corresponding Korean name in the following list:

오슬로	헬싱키	모스크바	로마	토쿄
상하이	방콕	카이로	멕시코시티	리오데 자네이로

- | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Shanghai | 2. Cairo |
| 3. Rio de Janeiro | 4. Tokyo |
| 5. Moscow | 6. Helsinki |
| 7. Rome | 8. Oslo |
| 9. Bangkok | 10. Mexico City |

Exercise 1.10

The following list contains the names of some world-famous people. Write their names in English.

- | | |
|-------------|--------------|
| 1. 지미 카터 | 2. 조지 부쉬 |
| 3. 애브래햄 링컨 | 4. 조지 와싱턴 |
| 5. 윈스턴 처칠 | 6. 토머스 에디슨 |
| 7. 빌 클린턴 | 8. 리오나르도 다빈치 |
| 9. 엘비스 프레슬리 | 10. 존 레논 |

Exercise 1.11

The following English words are used as loanwords in Korean. Match the English words with their corresponding Korean words in the following list: 스키, 쿠키, 나이프, 펜, 모니터, 텔레비전, 카드, 팝송, 바나나, 피자, 오렌지, 샴푸

- | | |
|---------------|------------|
| 1. Monitor | 2. Shampoo |
| 3. Pizza | 4. Ski |
| 5. Television | 6. Pen |
| 7. Card | 8. Cookie |
| 9. Pop song | 10. Knife |
| 11. Banana | 12. Orange |

UNIT 2

Characteristics of the Korean language

Word order

English is a subject-verb-object (SVO) language. For example, in the sentence “Andrew studies Korean,” “Andrew” is the subject, “studies” is the verb, and “Korean” is the object. Korean, on the other hand, is a subject-object-verb (SOV) language. Because of this, the above sentence is translated as 앤드류가 한국어를 공부해요 (Andrew-ga hangugeo-reul gongbuhaeoyo) or “Andrew Korean studies.” In Korean, verbs and adjectives appear at the end of the sentence. All other elements such as nouns, adverbs, and numbers appear before verbs and/or adjectives. In addition, modifiers, including adverbs, demonstratives, and relative clauses, appear before the modified words.

Consider the following sentence: “Peter studies history at the library in the afternoon.” In this example, we know that “Peter” is the subject because it comes before the verb “studies,” and “history” is the object because it appears after the verb. Furthermore, note that extra elements such as “at the library” and “in the afternoon” are placed after the object. In English, prepositions always appear before nouns, as in “at the library.”

In Korean, on the other hand, the word order of this sentence is 피터가 도서관에서 역사를 공부해요 [Peter-ga doseogwan-eseo yeoksa-reul gongbuhaeoyo] “Peter library-at history studies.” Instead of prepositions, Korean has particles that always come after nouns. For example, we know that 피터 “Peter” is the subject because it is marked by the subject particle 가 [ga]. 도서관 [doseogwan] is the location because it is marked by the locative particle 에서 [eseo]. Finally, 역사 [yeoksa] is the object because it is marked by the object particle 를 [reul]. Consider the following example:

앤드류가 집에서 점심을 먹어요. [Andrew-ga jip-eseo jeomsim-eul meokeoyo]
Andrew eats lunch at home.

In the above sentence, the subject particle 가 [ga] marks 앤드류 “Andrew” as the subject of the sentence. The location particle 에서 [eseo] marks 집 [jip] as the location. Finally, the object particle 을 [eul] marks 점심 [jeomsim] as the object of the sentence.

Because particles identify whether a noun is the subject or object of a particular sentence, Korean is not always required to follow the SOV pattern. In fact, Korean nouns can be arranged in multiple ways. For example, the following six sentences all mean “Andrew eats lunch at home.”

앤드류가 집에서 점심을 먹어요. Andrew home-at lunch eats.
 앤드류가 점심을 집에서 먹어요. Andrew lunch home-at eats.
 집에서 앤드류가 점심을 먹어요. Home-at Andrew lunch eats.
 집에서 점심을 앤드류가 먹어요. Home-at lunch Andrew eats.
 점심을 앤드류가 집에서 먹어요. Lunch Andrew home-at eats.
 점심을 집에서 앤드류가 먹어요. Lunch home-at Andrew eats.

The fact that Korean nouns can be freely arranged marks an important difference from English, where word order typically determines grammatical relationships. In Korean, word order only affects the meaning of the sentence when certain particles are missing. This often occurs in everyday speech.

Furthermore, for delimiting the importance of a particular noun, tone and emphasis are often used in English. In Korean, however, the importance of a noun can be emphasized by changing its position in the sentence. For example, more important elements can be placed near the verb and less essential elements can be moved to the beginning of the sentence. As we will see in later units, the meaning of the noun can also be denoted using special particles such as the topic particle 은 [eun] /는 [neun].

Context-oriented language

In Korean, the most important elements tend to cluster toward the end of the sentence. Analogously, the further a word is from the end of the sentence, the less important it is. Indeed, in some cases less important words can be omitted altogether. Because of this, Korean sentences do not always require a stated subject or object. As long as the sentence contains a verb or an adjective, it is correct and natural in conversation, as in 먹어요 [meokeoyo] “eat.” Consider the following examples:

안녕하십니까? [annyeonghasimnikka] How are you?
 are peaceful

뭐 공부하세요? [mwo gongbuhaseyo] What do you study?
 what study

감사합니다. [gamsahamnida] Thank you.
 gratitude do

Note that none of the above expressions contains the first- or second-person pronoun. In these cases, context determines the omission. This is because, unlike

English, Korean is a context-oriented language and, unless they are indispensable, contextually understood elements may be omitted.

General-to-specific language

Korean is a “general-to-specific” or “big-to-small” language. In other words, Koreans provide more general information before more specific information. For example, Koreans say or write their surnames before their given names, as in 김정민 “Kim Jeongmin.”

Furthermore, when writing an address, they write the name of the country, followed by the province, city, street, house number, and the name of the receiver:

대한민국, 경기도, 서울시, 금천구, 독산동 113, 김정민
[daehanminguk, gyeonggido, seoulsi, geumcheongu, doksandong 113, Kim Jeongmin]
Republic of Korea, Gyeonggi Province, Seoul, Geumcheon-District, Doksan 113, Kim Jeongmin

When writing a date, the year comes first, followed by the month and the day:

2007년 8월 5일 (2007-year, 8-month, 5-day)

Honorific language

In Korean, grammatical elements known as honorifics are used to express attitudes of respect, humility, and formality towards the person being referred to or addressed.

For example, Koreans use hierarchical address-reference terms such as titles and various speech levels to indicate the level of politeness, intimacy, and formality of a given conversation. In addition, they use humble pronoun forms such as 저 [jeo] “first-person singular” and 저희 [jeohui] “first-person plural” to indicate humility. Moreover, Koreans use the honorific suffix ~시 [si] and euphemistic words to express respect toward subjects of higher social status. The following examples illustrate how Korean honorifics work:

- (a) 어제 우리 모임에 와 줘서 고마웠어.
[eoje uri moim-e wa jwoseo gomawosseo]
(I) appreciated that you came to our meeting yesterday.
- (b) 어제 저희 모임에 와 주셔서 고맙습니다.
[eoje jeohui moim-e wa juseyoseo gomawotseumnida]
(I) appreciated that you came to our meeting yesterday.

In the above examples, the referential meaning of the sentences is the same. However, their social meanings differ. In the first sentence, the use of the plain

first-person pronoun, 우리 [uri], the absence of the honorific suffix ~시 [si], and the use of the intimate speech level ~어 [eo] indicate that the speaker is likely addressing a person of either equal (= power) or lower status (– power) whom he/she knows well (– distance). Because this sentence lacks proper honorific elements, it would appear rude in a formal situation if it was used by a lower-status person such as a college student addressing a higher-status person such as a professor.

To make the first sentence socially appropriate in a + power situation where someone is talking to someone of higher status, one should change 우리 [uri], the first-person plural genitive pronoun, to 저희 [jeohui], the humble first-person plural genitive pronoun, as shown in the second sentence. In addition, the honorific suffix ~시 [si] should be added to the gerundive verb 줘서 [jwoseo] “giving (me)” making 주셔서 [jusyeseo] and thereby transforming it into an honorific verb. Finally, it is necessary to use the formal speech level sentence-ending ~습니다 [seumnida] to change 고마웠어 [gomawosseu] “(I) appreciated” to 고마웠습니다 [gomawotseumnida] in the formal speech level. The above examples illustrate how honorifics in Korean function as indicators of social status. In addition, they demonstrate that how an utterance is said is more important than what it said.

EXERCISES

Exercise 2.1

Circle whether the following statements are true or false.

Example: In English, prepositions always appear before nouns, as in *at home*.
(T/F)

1. In Korean, verbs and adjectives appear at the end of the sentence. (T/F)
2. In Korean, nouns, adverbs, and numbers, appear after verbs and/or adjectives. (T/F)
3. In Korean, what appears at the very beginning of the sentence is most important. (T/F)
4. In Korean, word order typically determines grammatical relationships. (T/F)
5. Instead of English prepositions, Korean has particles that always come before nouns. (T/F)
6. Korean sentences do not always follow the SOV pattern. (T/F)
7. Word order affects the Korean language only when certain particles are missing in sentences. (T/F)
8. Korean sentences that have no subject or object but just verbs are grammatically correct and natural in conversation. (T/F)
9. In Korean, different forms of expressions are used depending on who you are talking to or talking about. (T/F)

Exercise 2.2

Write each component of the sentence in the SOV word order.

Example: 한국어를 (the Korean language) 공부해요 (studies) 수잔이 (Susan)
 = 수잔이 한국어를 공부해요.

1. 조깅 해요 (jogs), 마이클이 (Michael), 운동장에서 (at track)
2. 조앤이 (Joan), 먹어요 (eats), 점심을 (the lunch)
3. 농구를 (basketball), 티모티가 (Timothy), 해요 (plays)
4. 텔레비전을 (television), 봐요 (watches), 브루스가 (Bruce)
5. 마크가 (Mark), 만들어요 (makes), 스파게티를 (spaghetti)
6. 자요 (sleeps), 집에서 (at home), 다이앤이 (Diane)
7. 이야기해요 (talks), 필립한테 (to Philip), 캐롤이 (Carol)
8. 커피를 (coffee), 테디가 (Teddy), 마셔요 (drinks)
9. 학교에 (to school), 가요 (goes), 찰스가 (Charles)
10. 토니가 (Tony), 쳐요 (plays), 피아노를 (piano)

Exercise 2.3

Arrange the following elements according to the Korean convention.

Example: 18 July, 2007
 = 2007, July 18

1. 24 December, 2005
2. Sumi Kim
3. 712-9 Hankuk Street, Jung District, Seoul, Kyonggi Province, Republic of Korea
4. Daesung Lee
5. 18 May, 1977
6. Kyonggi Providence, Republic of Korea, Kangnam District, 81-3 Taehan Street, Seoul

UNIT 3

Nouns

Words and word classes

Words are basic units that constitute a sentence. Each word in a sentence has a different function. Based on its grammatical function, each word is categorized into different classes such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and so on. Korean has the following word classes:

1. Nouns
2. Pronouns
3. Particles (that attach to a noun and indicate grammatical relationships or add special meanings)
4. Numbers and counters
5. Verbs (that indicate action or progress)
6. Adjectives (that indicate state or quality)
7. Copula (that indicate an equational expression such as *이다* “be” and *아니다* “be not”)
8. Adverbs
9. Prenouns (that appear before a noun, like English demonstratives such as this, that, these, and those)

In general, these Korean words fall into two categories: inflected words and uninflected words. Inflection refers to the process of adding affixes to the original word in order to indicate grammatical features such as tense, number, aspect, and person. Adding affixes changes the shape of the original word in the process; however, it does not change its form class.

For example, the English word “go” becomes “goes” with the addition of the affix “-es” or “study” changes to “studied” with the affix “-ed.” Note that although inflected verbs gain additional grammatical features such as the past tense, their class does not change. In other words, in the above examples, “go” and “study” remain verbs.

In Korean, only verbs and adjectives are inflected. Nouns, pronouns, numbers, adverbs, and pre-nouns, on the other hand, are not. These different classes of words will be discussed in detail throughout this book. This unit, however, focuses

on nouns. In general, nouns refer to names of thing, qualities, places, people, or actions. Nouns often serve as the subject and/or object of verbs and/or adjectives.

Three groups of Korean nouns

There are three components that constitute Korean nouns: native Korean words (about 35%); Sino-Korean words (about 60%); and loan words (about 5%). In general, native Korean words indicate ideas that are essential to human life and/or associated with traditional Korean culture. For instance, native Korean words are used for body parts, family relationships, natural objects, personal pronouns, terms for agriculture and fishery, and honorific expressions.

어깨 shoulder	손 hand
어머니 mother	우리 we
강 river	밥 rice

The second group consists of Sino-Korean words. In general, Sino-Korean words express abstract, scholarly, and complex ideas.

학생 (學生) student	대답 (對答) response
문화 (文化) culture	언어 (言語) language
찬성 (贊成) agreement	직업 (職業) job

The third group consists of loan words. These are mostly borrowed from English.

박스 box	스키 ski
팀 team	애플 apple
도넛 donut	테이프 tape

You may encounter native Korean, Sino-Korean, and loan words with comparable meanings. In such situations, the meaning of the native Korean word tends to be informal, colloquial, and traditional; that of Sino-Korean words tends to be formal and academic; and that of the loan words tends to be stylish and modern.

	Native Korean	Sino-Korean	Loan words
bakery	빵집	제과점	베이커리
dance	춤	무용	댄스
store	가게	상점	마트

Formation of nouns

Morphemes are the smallest units of meaningful speech. Korean nouns can be comprised of either a single morpheme, such as 나무 “tree,” 산 “mountain,” 새 “bird,”

물 “water,” or a combination of morphemes such as 화산 “volcano” (화 “fire” + 산 “mountain”) and 소고기 “beef” (소 “cow” + 고기 “meat”).

Nouns consisting of more than two morphemes are normally formed through either a derivational or a compounding process. The derivational formation takes an affix, which normally appears in a noun and/or a predicate (e.g., a verb and/or an adjective). This affix can be either a prefix or a suffix. Prefixes refer to affixes that appear before the word and suffixes refer to affixes that appear after the word.

Derivational prefixes:

- Native Korean prefix (e.g., 만 “first”)
 - 맏아들 “the first son” = 만 “first” + 아들 “son”
 - 맏딸 “the first daughter” = 만 “first” + 딸 “daughter”
- Sino-Korean prefix (e.g., 신 [新] “new”)
 - 신학기 “a new semester” = 신 [新] “new” + 학기 [學期] “semester”
 - 신인 “a new comer” = 신 [新] “new” + 인 [人] “person”

Derivational suffixes:

- Native Korean suffix (e.g., 꾀 “doer”)
 - 장사꾼 “business man” = 장사 “business” + 꾀 “doer”
 - 일꾼 “worker” = 일 “work” + 꾀 “doer”
- Sino-Korean suffix (e.g., 학 [學] “study”)
 - 한국학 “Korean Studies” = 한국 [韓國] “Korea” + 학 [學] “study”
 - 수학 “mathematics” = 수 [數] “number” + 학 [學] “study”
- Nouns, derived from verbs (e.g., 이/기 “act”)
 - 벌이 “income” = 벌 “earn” + 이 “act”
 - 먹기 “eating” = 먹 “eat” + 기 “act”
- Nouns, derived from adjectives (e.g., 이/기 “quality”)
 - 크기 “size” = 크 “big” + 기 “quality”
 - 길이 “length” = 길 “long” + 이 “quality”

As seen above, derivation is a useful way to understand how a word can be developed into another word with an affix which carries an additional meaning.

On the other hand, compound nouns consist of two or more independent morphemes. They are divided into native and Sino-Korean compound nouns:

Native compound words:

- noun + noun
 - 눈물 “tears” = 눈 “eye” + 물 “water”
 - 물개 “seal” = 물 “water” + 개 “dog”

- adverb + noun
 - 곱슬머리 “curly hairs” = 곱슬 “curved” + 머리 “hair”
 - 산들바람 “gentle breeze” = 산들 “gentle” + 바람 “wind”
- noun + predicate + nominalizer
 - 목걸이 “necklace” = 목 “neck” + 걸 “hang” + 이 “act”
 - 본보기 “model” = 본 “example” + 보 “look” + 기 “act”
- predicate + noun
 - 늦잠 “oversleeping” = 늦 “late” + 잠 “sleeping”
 - 고드름 “icicle” = 곧 “straight” + 얼음 “ice”
- clause + noun
 - 찬물 “cold water” = 찬 “cold” + 물 “water”
 - 못난이 “stupid person” = 못난 “ugly” + 이 “person”

Sino-Korean compound words:

- Sino-Korean word + Sino-Korean word
 - 부모 “parents” = 부 [父] “father” + 모 [母] “mother”
 - 천지 “the world” = 천 [天] “heaven” + 지 [地] “earth”

Furthermore, Korean has a group of special nouns that always appear before other nouns and are used to modify or describe them. Examples include 무슨 음식 “*what kind of food*,” 이 책 “*this book*,” 그 사람 “*that man*,” and 어느 식당 “*which restaurant*.” These nouns are called “prenouns” and are similar to English words such as “that,” “this,” and “which.”

Some nouns only appear after pre-nouns. These special nouns are sometimes called “bound nouns” and cannot be used by themselves. They are always used with pre-nouns. Examples of bound nouns are 이 곳 “*this place*,” 그 분 “*that person*,” 저 것 “*that thing*,” and so on. Prenouns and bound nouns are discussed in detail in Unit 22.

Some characteristics of Korean nouns

Marking plurality

English has strict rules in respect to marking plurality. For example, when referring to multiple items, the plural marker “s” is used. Korean, on the other hand, is less strict about marking number. Indeed, it does not have this grammatical category at all. For example, the Korean noun 연필 “pencil” can be translated into English as: pencil, a pencil, the pencil, some pencils, the pencils, and pencils. If required, Korean can indicate plurality through the suffix 들. This suffix can be attached after a countable noun. However, its usage is not mandatory, and it is used for highlighting the plurality of a particular noun.