Learn to Read Korean: An Introduction to *Hangul* 한글

Zev Handel, University of Washington

IPAC ’16
May 12, 2016 — Busan, Korea
Chinese oracle bones

- 3250 yrs before present
- divination records of Shang dynasty kings
- cattle scapulae and turtle plastrons
- partially deciphered
- one of four *ex nihilo* inventions of writing by our species; the only one still in use
mǎ ‘horse’

Oracle Bone Graph
mǎ ‘horse’

Oracle Bone Graph

Modern Graph
Gwanggaeto Stele (414)
Early Writing in Korea

Classical Chinese

Vernacular Korean
Sejong the Great (1397-1450)
Sejong the Great

₩10,000 bill
The Korean Alphabet

Correct Sounds for Enlightening the People
- Invented 1443
- Promulgated 1446
The Korean Alphabet

- Designed on scientific principles
  - phonetics
  - phonology
  - (cosmology)
- “The wise can learn it in a morning, the stupid in a week.”
The Korean Alphabet
Alveolar Sounds

n, d, t, l
same place of articulation

Alveolar Ridge

l : n
c : d
e : t
z : l
Letter Shape Principles

letter shapes derived from single base form

Let's see:

\[ L : n \]
\[ + : d \]
\[ + : t \]
\[ + : l \]
Letter Shape Principles

Sound
\( g \)  Letter

Sound
\( k \)  Letter

\( \rightarrow \)
Syllable Block Principles

B U S A N

Billy Tan

[Text in Korean characters]
Two Syllables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>뷃</td>
<td>트</td>
<td>스</td>
<td>간</td>
<td>래</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Syllable Block Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 부 | 산 | 시나라 | 부산 | 부산
Busan: “Cauldron Hill”
Use of Hangul

- Following its invention, Hangul was not widely used until the early 20th century.
- Classical Chinese, written in Chinese characters, remained the standard written language from the 15th through 19th centuries.
- Written Korean supplanted Classical Chinese only in the 20th century.
- Written Korean used a mixed-script system of Chinese characters and Hangul until quite recently.
21

朝鮮日報

蘇, 極東에 軍需品 대량비축
항공기 90% 이상 최신에 3世代型 배치
미사일 潛艦 7척으로 보강

「月刊 낙시」 창간 5

民正, 公薦 기준

院外人士에도 적응

中高生 校服 차용화, 再考論
The *Chosun Ilbo*  
April 11, 1984  

Chinese characters  
and  
Hangul syllable blocks  
combine to write Korean words
Only one Chinese character on all these signs!
## Korean syllables

### Table of Korean Syllables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initial Consonant</td>
<td>Medial Vowel</td>
<td>Final Consonant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;five&quot;</td>
<td>o</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;bu of Busan&quot;</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>u</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;ul of Seoul&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td>u</td>
<td>l</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;san of Busan&quot;</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Korean written syllables

A written syllable block is structured this way:

- **Initial** at the top or top left: s
- **Vowel** below or right of initial: a
- **Final** at bottom: n
Korean written syllables

A written syllable block is structured this way:

- **Initial** at the top or top left
- **Vowel** below or right of initial
- **Final** at bottom
Vertical Vowel

To read a written syllable block, use the handout to find

- **Initial** in Table 2a
- **Vowel** in Table 2b
- **Final** in Table 2c

Then combine the results: *san*
Horizontal Vowel

To read a written syllable block, use the handout to find

- **Initial** in Table 2a
- **Vowel** in Table 2b
- **Final** in Table 2c

Then combine the results: *son*
Practice: Identify word

브루칩

beul
Practice: Identify word

beul  lu
Practice: Identify word

What does it mean?

beul  lu  chip
Answer

부루치

beul lu chip

‘Blue-chip (stock)’
Initials vs. Finals

Table 2a

b
eul

lu

chip

Table 2c

row 6
Practice transcribing and identifying Korean words (names or English borrowings)

Remember!
- When ㅇ appears in initial position, it represents no sound and is not transcribed, e.g. 인 in.
- eo is like English hum, bud
- ae is like English head, bell
- eu is like English good, put
# Thank You!

![Periodic Table of Hangul](image)

---

**Consonants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consonants</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>g, k, b, p</td>
<td>Hanmang (第一群) - The first group of consonants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j, z, t, d</td>
<td>Hanmang (第二群) - The second group of consonants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m, n, ng</td>
<td>Hangul (第三群) - The third group of consonants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vowels**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowels</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eo, oo, ee</td>
<td>Vowel sounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Hangul clusters**

- **Hangul clusters** are combinations of consonants and vowels.
- **Hangul** is the Korean script used for writing the Korean language.
- **Clusters** include a consonant and a vowel, or two consonants.

---

**Examples**

- **HANGUL** (한글) - Korean script
- **HAN** (한) - Korean
- **GUL** (글) - Korean

---

**Hangul pronunciation**

- **Initials** (Initial) are the first sound of a word.
- **Medial** (Medial) are the middle sound of a word.
- **Finals** (Final) are the last sound of a word.

---

**Further learning**

- **Hangul lessons** are available online for those interested in learning more about the Korean language.
- **Language courses** can be found at local language centers or online platforms.

---

[1] The International Phonetic Alphabet
[2] Hangul (한국어) - Korean
[3] Hangul (한글) - Korean script
[4] Hangul (한자) - Korean characters

---

*Copyright 2023. All rights reserved. Any unauthorized use without prior consent is strictly prohibited.*
Practice transcribing and identifying Korean words (names or English borrowings)

Remember!

- When ㅇ appears in initial position, it represents no sound and is not transcribed, e.g. 인 in.
- eo is like English hum, bud
- ae is like English head, bell
- eu is like English good, put
Supplementary material follows
This slide intentionally left blank
## Tense consonants and double letters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>plain</th>
<th>tense</th>
<th>aspirated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>불 bul ‘fire’</td>
<td>뿌 ppul ‘horn’</td>
<td>풀 pul ‘grass’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>달 dal ‘moon’</td>
<td>딸 ttal ‘daughter’</td>
<td>탈 tal ‘mask’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>짐 jim ‘luggage’</td>
<td>짜 jjim ‘steamed’</td>
<td>침 chim ‘saliva’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>살 sal ‘flesh’</td>
<td>쌀 ssal ‘rice’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Same letter, different sounds

Why does ṝ write b at the beginning of a word and p at the end?
Why does ṣ write g at the beginning of a word and k at the end?
This kind of systematic variation in pronunciation of sounds depending on word position is common in languages.
Consider Standard German guten tag ‘good day’. The first <g> writes a g sound, the second a k sound.
Cosmological influences

- The shapes of the three core vowels are based on Chinese cosmology:
  - ⬝ round Heaven (now obsolete)
  - ⬛ flat Earth
  - ⬦ upright Man

- These three shapes combine to form basic vowel letters like ㅗ o and ㅜ u. (See statue of Sejong)

- An added stroke represents a diphthong beginning with y like ㅛ yo and ㅠ yu.
THE LETTERFORMS OF HAN’GŬL CONSONANTS

Labial | Lingual | Dental | Molar | Glottal

Labial (Bilabial)  □  □  □  □
Lingual (Apical)  □  □  □  □
Dental (Sibilant)  □  □  □  □
Molar (Dorsal/Velar)  □  □  □  □
Glottal (Laryngeal)  □  □  □  □

41
## Exercise 1

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. 부산</td>
<td>____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 서울</td>
<td>____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 인천</td>
<td>____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. 포항</td>
<td>____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. 세종</td>
<td>____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. 평양</td>
<td>____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. 현대</td>
<td>____________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 1: Answers

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. 부산</td>
<td>Busan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 서울</td>
<td>Seoul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 인천</td>
<td>Incheon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. 포항</td>
<td>Pohang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. 세종</td>
<td>Sejong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. 평양</td>
<td>Pyeongyang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. 현대</td>
<td>Hyeondae</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exercise 2

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
a. 이온 |   |
b. 웹홀 |   |
c. 게놈 |   |
d. 인터넷 |   |
e. 블랙홀 |   |
f. 컴퓨터 |   |
g. 칩 |   |
h. 에너지 |   |
i. 빔라인 |   |
Exercise 2: Answers

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. 이온</td>
<td>ion (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 웜홀</td>
<td>womhol (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 게놈</td>
<td>genom (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. 인터넷</td>
<td>inteonet (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. 블랙홀</td>
<td>beullaekhol (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. 컴퓨터</td>
<td>keompyuteo (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. 칩</td>
<td>chip (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. 에너지</td>
<td>eneoji (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. 빔라인</td>
<td>bimlain (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>