

KOREAN ACCENTED ENGLISH

Though Korean is spoken in both North and South Korea, the information in this breakdown is based on the accents of speakers from South Korea. The Korean accented English described here is also moving towards North American Sounds, rather than Standard British English or RP.

Korean Language Background

Korean is the official language of South Korea and North Korea. It is spoken by immigrant populations in New York, Los Angeles, DC, Toronto, Vancouver, Chicago, and other metropolitan areas. It is also one of the two official languages in the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in China, and is also spoken by immigrant groups in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Approximately 78 million people speak Korean worldwide. For over a millennium, Korean was written with adapted Chinese characters called Hanja. In the 15th century, a national writing system called Hangeul was commissioned by Sejong the Great, but it only came into widespread use in the 20th century.¹ Today Hangeul is the official writing system of the Korean Language.

Korean is a language Isolate, a language with no demonstrable genetic relationship with other languages.



¹ Lee, Ki-Moon Lee and S. Robert Ramsey. *A History of the Korean Language* (Cambridge University Press; 2011)

² http://www.rao-osan.com/osan-info/korea/Korea_brief.htm

CULTURAL NORMS of South Korea:

- Elders are respected. When greeting each other, younger people bow lower than the person older than them. When making a toast with an alcoholic beverage, your cup should not be higher than the cup of a person who is older than you.
- All males serve in the Korean Army for 18 months, when they are around college age.
- Family life is very important. Families bond around meals.
- Good manners, and politeness are highly valued.
- While Korean Americans are predominately Christian, the majority of the population in S. Korea does not identify with any religion.
- Blind dates are a regular practice, set up by family and friends.
- In South Korea there is a feeling of unity among people. It is favorable to blend in. The cultural norm in Korea is not to stand out from the crowd.
- “What is your blood type?” Is a frequently asked question. Blood type effects your personality, recommended diet, and recommended mate.
- Academics are highly valued in school. Korean students are expected to study for long, long hours. Many students study English in School in a very rigorous environment, where the focus is accuracy and correct grammar. This often leads to a steady, moderate pace of speaking with, pauses to make sure that each sentence will be executed correctly.

CULTURAL GESTURE:

- The overall use of the physical self, is very aligned and symmetrical. You may find that using symmetrical, direct, gestures helps you “land” your Korean accent.
- Bowing is the official formal and informal way to greet people. If you are playing a character who has been in North America for a while, it is interesting to consider whether or not they will have picked up handshaking or hugging, which are not common in S. Korea.
- When walking, there is more of a direct movement forward. (Many Americans sway side to side when they walk) Many recent immigrants from Korea that I have observed, tend to have their hips aligned with the ribcage, and their weight stays centered as they walk.
- The single finger pointing up, or all fingers pointing up “come here” gesture is only used to call animals in Korea, turn your hand down and wave your fingers toward the floor to call someone to come to you.
- Women almost always cover their mouths when they laugh.

ORAL POSTURE

Jaw: Jaw Height is relatively high, and there is some gentle jaw retraction.

Tongue: The back of the tongue arches slightly up toward the front of the soft palate.

Lips: The lips are relaxed. Imagine your lips as soft and pillow-like, available to round and release. There is a slight advancement of the lip corners and some engagement of the lip corners in towards the teeth. There is a softness to the articulation of the lips.

Soft Palate: The velum is relaxed and hanging. The back of tongue/ velum relationship is close.

FOCUS OF ARTICULATION / Points of Contact.

The focus of articulation is on the alveolar ridge. The tip of the tongue can rest behind the bottom front teeth, letting the blade of the tongue make consonants t, d, n, s, z, ʃ, ʒ, ʒ, ʒ, ʒ, and l. Try making t, d, n, s, z with the tongue blade, on the front of the alveolar ridge- flirting near the teeth.

FOCUS OF RESONANCE

There is a lot of resonance in the face for this accent. There is a lively bright quality to the resonance. The places of biggest buzz are the hairline, the cheeks, the sinuses, the back sinus- right above the soft palate. There is also a widening of resonance across the neck and shoulders. For men, there is also a focus of resonance in the solar plexus. The vocal quality is sometimes breathy.

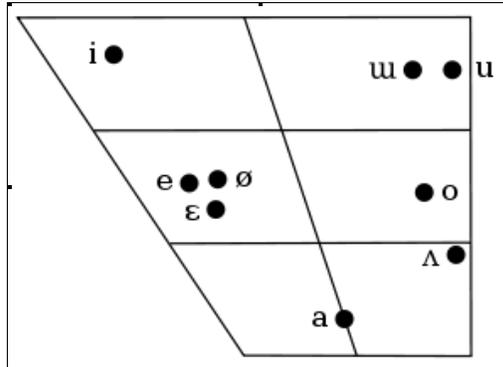
PROSODY: USE OF PITCH RATE AND VOLUME

Unlike Mandarin and Cantonese, Korean is not a “tonal language.” Korean follows many of the same intonation patterns as English (rising inflection for a question...) The rate of speech is moderate to slow, there is no rush. More care is paid to correct grammar, than speed of speaking. This may give you a feeling of inner life like a horse who is being pulled back by the grammar reigns. Your ideas are racing, but you have to pull back and slow down to find the correct grammar for them. This also gives a sense of control to the intonation patterns (sometimes speakers sound like they are reading, because of preplanned intonations). The more at ease the person feels, the faster they speak, and the more chaotic their intonations will be. Among friends, or alcohol-voices will fly freely with high highs and low lows, but at work, with your teacher, or around new people, the rate is steady, and intonations are gently melodic. There is a tendency to lose the last few words of a sentence to low volume and low pitch. Example “There are many things to see and ~~do there.~~ “ Words are stressed using pitch and duration. Speakers elongate operative words. The use of volume depends on the circumstance, and individual.

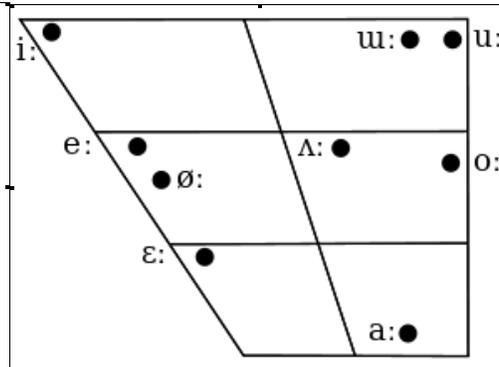
PHONETICS:

VOWELS of KOREAN LANGUAGE³

Short Vowels



Long Vowels



CONSONANTS OF KOREAN LANGUAGE⁴

	bilabial	labio-dental	dental	alveolar	post-alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
plosive	p p ^h b			t t ^h d			k k ^h g	
nasal	m			n			ŋ	
fricative				s z	ʃ ʒ			h
Affricate					tʃ dʒ			
tap				r				
approximant						j	ɥ	
lateral approximant				l				

Other consonants: w

Korean consonants have three principal positional allophones: initial, medial, and final. The same Hangeul character can represent 3 different allophones in initial, medial and final position. In Korean language the consonants in medial position are **voiced**, this will carry over into Korean accented English. Final consonants, with the exception of // are always **unvoiced**. If the final consonant is a stop-plosive, it will not release, making it a final stop- this will also carry over into Korean accented English.

KOREAN LANGUAGE CONSONANTS IN INITIAL, MEDIAL, and FINAL PLACE

Phoneme	ㄱ	ㅋ	ㆁ	ㅇ	ㄷ	ㅌ	ㅅ	ㅆ	ㅈ	ㅊ	ㅌ	ㅊ	ㄴ	ㄹ	ㅂ	ㅍ	ㅍ	ㅁ	ㅎ
Initial allophone	k	k ^h	ŋ		t	t ^h	s	s ^h	tʃ	tʃ ^h	t	tʃ	(n)	r	p	p ^h	p	m	h
Medial allophone	g	k ^h	ŋ	d	t	s	s ^h	dʒ	tʃ ^h	t	tʃ	n	r	b	p ^h	p	m	(h)	
Final allophone	k̚												l		p̚				

³ Lee, Hyun Bok (1999), "Korean", *Handbook of the IPA*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 120-122
⁴ Lee, Hyun Bok (1999), "Korean", *Handbook of the IPA*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 120-122

VOWELS:

Refer to the chart for more specific information about the position of these phonemes. The → symbol notates sounds moving towards a lighter Korean Accent. Sounds on the left are a strong accent, sounds on the right are a lighter accent. A slash indicates that either option could happen (either/or).

LEXICAL SET ⁶	General American	KOREAN Accented English
FLEECE	i	i
happY	i	ɨ
before	i/ɪ/ə prefix	ɨ / e
KIT	ɪ	ɨ
DRESS	ɛ	e → ε
TRAP/ BATH	æ	ε / a
commA	ə	ä → ə
STRUT	ʌ	ʌ
lettER	ɚ	ä → ɚ ⁵ / əɹ → ɚ (with slight rhoticity)
NURSE	ɝ	ʌ → ʌɹ → ɝ (with slight rhoticity)
GOOSE	u	u / w
FOOT	ʊ	w / ʊ
THOUGHT	ɔ / ɔ̃	ɔ → ʌ
CLOTH	ɔ / ɔ̃	ʌ → ʌ̃
LOT	ɑ	ʌ / ä
PALM	ɑ	ʌ / ä

⁵ Mi-Ryoung Kim and San Duanmu, "'Tense' and 'Lax' Stops in Korean", *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 13, 59–104, 2004

⁶ These words are JC Wells's Lexical Sets

DIPHTHONGS: Note- there are no diphthongs in Korean, this makes most diphthongs become monophthongs for many speakers moving into North American English. However, in some cases the speaker will use two distinct sounds, making a traditionally one syllable word into two syllables. For example, a two syllable “Choice” /tʃo.iʃ/.

Lexical Set	Gen. Am.	The → symbol notates sounds moving towards a lighter Korean Accent. Sounds on the left are a strong accent, sounds on the right are a lighter accent.
FACE	eɪ	ë
PRICE	aɪ	ä → ä ^l
GOAT	oʊ	ɔ → o:
CHOICE	ɔɪ	ɔi, (2 syllables) → o ^l
MOUTH	aʊ	ɔ

Diphthongs of R

		The phonetic pairs on the left hand side of this column will often be pronounced as two separate syllables.
NEAR	ɪə	i ^l / iə ^w → ə
SQUARE	ɛə	e ^l / eə ^w → eə
CURE	ʊə	u ^l → u ^l ə ^w → ə
NORTH/ FORCE	oə/ ɔə	ɔ → o ^l → o ^l ə
START	ɑə	ä → ä ^l

Triphthongs of R

admire fire	aɪə / aɪjə	äjɪ → äjə
power hour	aʊə/ aʊwə	äjɪ → äwə

CONSONANTS:

About Consonants:

Plosives are generally soft, with exceptions for emphasis, or intense situations.

Final consonants (excluding t, n, ŋ, k, m, p, and l, often get an “off glide” a short vowel that ends the word. This will usually happen at the end of a sentence. It can also sometimes happen in consonant combinations, for example “Secret” could become /'sɪk^uʃɪt/ “see-koo-rit”, because of the k/r combination. What vowel the off-glide is will depend on the shape of the articulators in the consonant- if it is a laminal alveolar consonant, the off-glide will be a front vowel. If it is a velar consonant, it will be a back vowel.

t, d, n, s, z, ʃ, ʒ, ʃ, ʒ, ɹ, and l are most often made with the blade of the tongue, not the tip. This brings a soft fricative release to t and d. The diacrit for the use of the tongue blade is a little square below the symbol. $\underset{◻}{t}$

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GEN AM	Example Words	Initial	Medial	Final	notes
p	pansy, dapper, lamp				
b	bee, cowboy, tube	$\underset{◻}{b}$		p	
t	tree, bitter, actor, eat	$\underset{◻}{t}$	$\underset{◻}{t}$	$\underset{◻}{t}$	
d	deer, meadow, pond	$\underset{◻}{d} / \underset{◻}{d}^z$	$\underset{◻}{d} / \underset{◻}{d}^z$	$\underset{◻}{t}$	
k	coat, acre, freak				
g	go, bigger, fog	$\underset{◻}{g}$		g	slight devoicing
m	mute, drummer, mom				
n	note, piano, noon				
ŋ	mango, singing				
f	friend, gaffer, life	p, $\phi \rightarrow f$	p, $\phi \rightarrow f$	p, $\phi \rightarrow f$	
v	vamp, river, live	$\beta \rightarrow v$	$\beta \rightarrow v$	β^v	
θ	thank, cathedral, myth	$\underset{◻}{s} \rightarrow \underset{◻}{\theta}$	$\underset{◻}{s} \rightarrow \underset{◻}{\theta}$	$\underset{◻}{s} \rightarrow \underset{◻}{\theta}$	
ð	those, wither, soothe	d^z	d^z	z^i	
s	see, festive, beasts	$\underset{◻}{s}$	$\underset{◻}{s}$	$\underset{◻}{s}^u / s^i$	

z	zeal, reason, jazz	ㄷ	z/3 → ㄷ	ㄷ ^w	
ʃ	shore, fashion, slash	ㅅ → ㅅ	ㅅ → ㅅ	ㅅ ⁱ	
ʒ	genre, passagio, garage	ㄷ → ㄷ	ㄷ → ㄷ	ㄷ ⁱ → ㄷ ⁱ	
tʃ	check, peaches, teach	ㅈ → ㅈ	ㅈ → ㅈ	ㅈ ^w → ㅈ ^w	
dʒ	judge, Folgers, sage	ㄸ	ㄸ	ㄸ ⁱ	
h	hello, mayhem				
ɹ	rear, berry	ㄹ	ㄹ / ㄹ	see vowels	practice a sound that is an alveolar approximant like /ɹ/ but narrow like //l/. That can be used in medial and final position for //l/.
l	leer, belly, tall	ㄹ	ㄹ / ㄹ	ㄹ → ㄹ	
j	you, feud				
w	wear, quiet				

WEBLINKS:

YOUTUBE PLAYLIST: KOREAN LANGUAGE

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLB97B6D06E07D9A33>

YOUTUBE PLAYLIST: KOREAN CULTURE

<http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL109445C5AFD2C7A0>

YOUTUBE PLAYLIST: KOREAN ACCENT

http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL95C0F92F7FE4E779&feature=mh_lolz

LOTS OF KOREAN ACCENTED ENGLISH FILES!

http://accent.gmu.edu/browse_language.php?function=find&language=korean

IDEA: <http://web.ku.edu/~idea/asia/korea/korea.htm>

Omniglot- Korean phrases with an audio file.

<http://omniglot.com/language/phrases/korean.php>

Omniglot- information about Korean Alphabet, and a recording of Hangul sounds.

<http://omniglot.com/writing/korean.htm>

information about Konglish

<http://koreanselfstudyisntflame.blogspot.com/2010/02/ultimate-konglish-list.html>

Native Phonetic Inventory: Korean

http://accent.gmu.edu/browse_native.php?function=detail&languageid=38

New Plays by Korean Americans, with Korean American Characters:

<http://www.scribd.com/doc/99327161/Seven-Contemporary-Plays-from-the-Korean-Diaspora-in-the-Americas-edited-by-Esther-Kim-Lee>

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