

# UNDERSTANDING KOREAN LANGUAGE IN RELATION WITH HINDI LANGUAGE

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Korean is spoken by about 70 million people. Although most speakers of Korean live on the Korean Peninsula and its adjacent islands, more than 5 million are scattered throughout the world. The Korean script which is now generally called *Han-geul* (한글) (which means 'The Great Script') was invented in 1443 under the reign of King Sejong (1418-1450), the fourth king of the Choson Dynasty.

The initial sounds (consonants) are represented by 17 letters of which there are five basic forms. The other initial letters were derived by adding strokes to the basic letters. No letters were invented for the final sounds, the initial letters being used for that purpose. The original *Humin Chong-um* text also explains that the medial sounds (vowels) are represented by 11 letters of which there are three basic forms.

After the promulgation of the Korean alphabet, its popularity gradually increased, particularly in modern times, to the point where it has replaced Chinese characters as the primary writing system altogether.

One of the more interesting characteristics of the Korean script is its syllabic grouping of the initial, medial and final letters. However, the Korean script is essentially different from such syllabic writing systems as Japanese Kana. It is an alphabetic system which is characterized by syllabic grouping.

The vocabulary of the Korean language is composed of indigenous words and loanwords, the latter being the result of contacts with other languages. The majority of the loanwords are of Chinese origin, often called Sino-Korean words, a reflection of several millennia of Chinese cultural influence on Korea. In modern Korean, native words are significantly outnumbered by Sino-Korean words. As a result, a dual system of native and Sino-Korean words pervades the Korean lexicon, including two sets of native numbers are used with the *shi* (ㄱ)(#) (the hour, i.e. *ahop shi* (오-십 ㄱ), "nine

o'clock") but Sino-Korean numerals are used with *bun* (분) (the minute, i.e. *gu bun* (七分) (九分), "nine minutes"). The process of modernization has resulted in a steady flow of Western words entering the Korean language. Technological and scientific terms represent the majority of these loanwords, although Western terms have been introduced into almost every field.

Some of the significant features of Hangeul script are:

- There are 24 letters 자모 (字母)(*jamo*) in the Korean alphabet: 14 consonants and 10 vowels. The letters are combined together into syllable blocks.
- The shapes of the the consonants g/k, n, s, m and ng are graphical representations of the speech organs used to pronounce them. Other consonants were created by adding extra lines to the basic shapes.
- The shapes of the the vowels are based on three elements: man (a vertical line), earth (a horizontal line) and heaven (a dot). In modern Hangeul the heavenly dot has mutated into a short line.
- Spaces are placed between words, which can be made up of one or more syllables.
- The sounds of some consonants change depending on whether they appear at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of a syllable.
- A number of Korean scholars have proposed an alternative method of writing *Hangeul* involving writing each letter in a line like in English, rather than grouping them into syllable blocks, but their efforts have been met with little interest or enthusiasm.
- In South Korea *hanja* are used to some extent in Korean texts.
- Korean can be written in vertical columns running from top to bottom and right to left, or in horizontal lines running from left to right.

Currently the relationship between India and Korea is on a boom point and there are several fields where India and Korea has joined hands and developing themselves through mutual support. Considering the large number of Koreans getting associated with India, different programmes about learning Korean language are started in many

Indian universities and other educational institutes. Also there are programmes of learning Hindi language in Korean universities in which considerable number of Korean students are enrolled. The purpose of all these programmes is fundamentally same – to consolidate the Indo-Korean relationship for the development of both nations, which is not a difficult task as both countries share same kind of tradition and same kind of culture. Moreover, the languages – Korean and Hindi, are fundamentally similar.

Both Korean and Hindi languages have same kind of structure. Thus they share several common grammatical models, sentence structures and expression. So it is obviously more comfortable and easier to understand Korean language through Hindi than through English, which belongs to the family of European languages and not Asian languages. Usually the books which Korean language students read in India are imported from Korea as there is no alternative choice for that. Those books are created as an international standard for Korean language learning which is applicable to any country. However the course books in Delhi University, Korean language department are particularly different from that standard as they use Hindi language instead of English to explain the pronunciation and other phonetic parts. Phonetically the two languages are close. Though Hindi contains certain hard accents Koreans can't pronounce easily. But a Korean word can phonetically be pronounced more perfectly in Hindi than in Romanization as show in the table below

1. '어' would be pronounced as औ and would sound as that of 'U' in 'duck'.
2. '으', being a kind of sound not available in Hindi, would be replaced by the either no sound or म sound. For example; either no sound in case of '가능' ( गाळंग ) or म sound in case of '홍행' ( हुंगहेंग ). You must be careful to read the pronunciation correct as उ sound is also for the vowel '우' like in '분' ( बुन ).
3. Pronunciation of the diphthong '워' would be given as औ and would sound as 'O' in 'one'.
4. Since we mentioned two standards for the vowel '으' above; no sound or उ sound, the diphthong '의' would also give two standards of pronunciation –

either no sound + ㅓ sound or ㅓ sound + ㅓ sound. For example, either no sound as that in ‘자의’ ( जाअई ) or ㅓ sound as that in ‘의미’ ( उइमी ).

Other pronunciations are:

애	ऐ	sound of ‘A’ in ‘jam’ (जैम)
에	ए	sound of ‘AI’ in ‘aim’ (एम)
왜	उए	sound of ‘UA’ in ‘situation’ (सिचुएशन)
와	वा	sound of ‘VA’ in ‘vass’ (वास)
위	वी	sound of ‘WHEA’ in ‘wheat’ (वीट)
외	वे	sound of ‘WA’ in ‘wales’ (वैल्स)
왜	वै	sound of ‘WE’ in ‘well’ (वैल)

These are not exact pronunciations of Korean language but compared to English Romanization, are much closer to the actual pronunciations. The other alphabets in Korean languages can also be pronounced much closer through Hindi pronunciation than through English Romanization. (As shown below)

Korean Alphabet	Hindi Pronunciation	English Romanization
ㄱ	क ग	k g
ㄴ	न	n
ㄷ	द त	d , t
ㄹ	र ल	r , l
ㅁ	म	m
ㅂ	ब प	b, p
ㅅ	स श	s, sh
ㅇ	अ अं	a, ng
ㅈ	ज	j
ㅊ	छ	ch
ㅋ	ख	kh

ㅊ	थ	th
ㅃ	फ	ph
ㅎ	ह	h
ㄱ	क	kk
ㄷ	त	tt
ㅂ	प	bb
ㅆ	स्स	ss
ㅈ	च	jj
ㅊ	आ	aa
ㅊ	या	ya
ㅊ	औ	oe
ㅊ	यौ	yeo
ㅊ	ओ	o
ㅊ	यो	yo
우	ड	u
유	दू	yu
으	उ	eu
이	ई	i
와	वा	ua
외	वे	we
워	वै	wo
의	उइ	eui
왜	वै	wae
워	उवे	ue
위	वी	wi
에	ए	e
애	ऐ	ae

Taking this Hindi standard for Korean pronunciation as a tool. Delhi University Text books have a localized standard made especially to create better understanding of the depth of the language in minds of Indian students.

Talking about being phonetically similar Korean language is more similar to South Indian languages than Hindi. Many words in Tamil and Malayalam language are phonetically similar to the words in Korean language having the same meaning. for

example, in Korean language when we have to call a person in a casual way we say iriwa (이리와) which is similar to calling a person casually in Tamil, that is ingewa. similarly the word amma, which is used to address mother in almost whole South India, is phonetically same with the Korean word 엄마 (eomma) that addresses mother in a casual way. Though in most of the languages the word for mother, more or less, phonetically sounds similar. But it is difficult to relate these similarities to the historical and cultural relationships between the two countries as there is no strong proof in this respect. But being the subcontinents in same Asia may I relate to the cultural, historical and linguistic similarities. Grammatically Korean and Japanese languages are also very similar to each other. Not to forget Chinese, that has been the base of the two languages. Most of the vocabularies are originated from the Traditional Chinese characters. thus it is correct to say that teaching an Asian language through another Asian language can create much deeper understanding of the linguistic sense and structure of the language than in the case where Asian language is taught through the medium of English or any other European language as they are grouped in a different family according to their phonetics, grammar and expressions.

Grammatically there are certain similarities between Hindi and Korean language. The most above of all is the basic sentence structure that is same in both the language. The subject comes first followed by the object and always ending with a verb. For example,

मैं अपने दोस्त को पत्र लिखता हूँ

저는 제 친구에게 편지를 씁니다

I write a letter to my friend

In cases of Korean and Hindi the positions of subject, object, verb possessive model and locative particle are same. Whereas in English the verb comes first and the locative particle 'TO' is preceded by the destination, 'MY FRIEND'. If you compare Hindi sentence and Korean sentence given above, you will find that each grammar model is place on the same position in both sentences. In fact it is just like as if you translated both the sentences word by word. Now let's analyze both the sentences together in comparison with English. This will hopefully give us a more accurate understanding of the grammar structure of two languages.

If we remove the subject from all the above sentences, the Hindi sentence will come out like this

अपने दोस्त को पत्र लिखता हूँ

Grammatically this sentence seems to be correct and conveys the full meaning of the context. The Korean sentence, when changed in the same manner comes out like this

제 친구에게 편지를 씁니다

This too has the same meaning even without the subject. It is grammatically correct. The English sentence, without subject, will come out like this

Write a letter to my friend

Grammatically this construction is not possible without the subject. This sentence is grammatically incorrect. Though if considered as a command it is grammatically correct but then it will have 'LETTER' as the subject.

Without a subject any sort of sentence construction in English is not possible. Whereas we have seen above that in Korean language, similar to Hindi language the sentence without a subject and with the same context is also possible.

Especially the sentences in English which have an equative model can never make any meaning if the subject is omitted. Whereas in Hindi and Korean such kind of sentence structure is grammatically possible. For example

हम विद्यालय जा रहे हैं

우리는 학교에 갑니다

We are going to school

If we see the three sentence above. In Hindi and Korean sentences we can omit the subject and still the sentence is grammatically correct with the same meaningful context. But in English at no cost we can omit the subject 'WE' because in this sentence, the verb is 'ARE' which is an equative model that has to accompany the subject.

In Korean language and Hindi language, the subject and object are identified with the subject particle and object particle. So by changing the positions of the subject in a sentence we can change the intention of the speaker. This doesn't happen very often in English

ये उपहार मैं अपने दादाजी को दूंगा → मैं अपने दादाजी को ये  
उपहार दूंगा

이 선물은 할아버지께 드릴게요 → 할아버지께  
이 선물을 드릴게요

I will give this gift to my grandfather → I will give this gift  
to my grandfather

In English, unlike Korean and Hindi, the subject can't be changed in the sentence. In Hindi and Korean sentence given above, you will notice the change in intention of the speaker with the change in the position of the subject. In first sentence, the GIFT is subject and it is emphasized whereas in second sentence, grandfather is the subject. In English both the sentences look same but the difference in the intention of the speaker in two sentences will be clearer from the respective questions made on the sentences above.

ये उपहार किसे देने ? → अपने दादाजी को क्या (उपहार) देने ?  
이 선물은 누구에게 할 거예요? → 누구에게 이 선물을 할 거  
예요?

To whom will you give this gift? → what (gift) will you give to your  
grandfather?



Thus it is clear from the above context that Korean and Hindi language have wider options for expressing the complicated situation or intentions whereas English does not satisfy the expressions of the speaker without proper grammar structure.

Taking into consideration the expressions in Hindi and Korean language, we find that there are certain expressions which are used in both of the languages for conveying same intentions. Especially the most considerable of these expressions are the expressions which combine two verbs together to state a particular intention of the speaker.

Being polite and ask a service from another person. – In English we usually say “please do this for me” and that’s the basic grammar pattern if we are asking a favor from someone. But in Hindi and Korean, such kind of expression is created by combining the respective form of verb with another verb ‘to give’, which shows particularly that intention of the speaker. For example:

मुझे पढ़ा दीजिए

저에게 가르쳐 주세요

Please teach me

As you can see that in Hindi and Korean the verb ‘to teach’ is combined with the verb ‘to give’ and thus created an expression for asking a favor from someone.

Another such expression is to be prepared with something from the very beginning. Here also Korean and Hindi languages have a particular expression where they combine any verb with the verb ‘to keep’.

परीक्षा पास है, पढ़ाई करके रखो

시험이 가까우니까 (공부해두세요/공부해놓으세요)

Exam is near, so be prepared with studies

Here the verb 'to study' is combined with the verb 'to keep' and this way the particular intention of the speaker is conveyed. English has a limited grammar structure and thus neither we can create such kind of complex construction in English nor through English can we explain accurately these complex constructions.

Also there is one more considerable characteristic of these expressions. Whenever they are changed into past or future tenses, only the last verb will change and the main verb will remain as it is.

उसने मुझे पढ़ा दिया

그는 저에게 가르쳐 주었습니다

He taught me

Lets take into consideration another expression where something was started a long ago and has continued till date. In this context, there is an expression in Hindi and Korean language which combines the main verb with the verb 'to come' in past tense to convey the intention mentioned above.

मैं पिछले १० साल से यहां रहता आया हूँ

나는 10년 전부터 여기에 살아 왔습니다

I have been living here since past 10 years

Also the main verb can be combined with the verb 'to go' to convey something that is still going on.

भारत की अर्थ व्यवस्था विकसित होती जा रही है

인도의 경제는 발전되어 가고 있습니다

The economy of India is developing

Hindi and Korean languages also share many similarities in basic structure of the language. For example in both of the languages, unlike English, there are honorific and

casual forms which are used to speak to the person suitable for them. While talking to a senior we use honorific form of speech in both Korean and Hindi.

to senior:                      खाना खा लीजिए → 진지를 잡수십시오

to fellow:                      खाना खा लो → 밥을 먹어요

to junior:                      खाना खा ले → 밥을 먹어라 (먹어)

In this way the three forms of speech are used in Hindi and Korean whereas in English, there is no such kind of complicated speech. This becomes further complicated where we talk to the second person about a third person. In that case we have to use the both honorific and casual speech according to the person to whom we are talking and the person about whom we are talking. This form has a little structural difference in Hindi and Korean but more or less it is similar. Let us understand this through an example:

CASE 1 – A is a student who says to B, his class fellow that teacher has come.

A to B : अध्यापक आ गए हैं

선생님이 오셨다

In case of Hindi language A has used honorific language, though talking to his class fellow. That is because the subject of the speech is a senior. In the case of Korean language, A has used the respective model particle in the sentence for the teacher. However the overall sentence is made in casual language because the listener and speaker are on the same level.

CASE 2 – A is a student who says to his teacher that B has come

A to teacher : B आ गए हैं

B가 왔습니다

In this case though A has not used the honorific form of the speech in both the

languages as the subject of the speech is not a senior, but he has used the formal form because the listener is a senior person.

This way it is very clear that Hindi and Korean languages are much more similar phonetically, grammatically, and also from the point of view of expression and basic language structure. This is difficult to say which similar origin these two languages share because Korean language has a base of traditional Chinese language whereas Hindi has evolved from the Sanskrit. And both Chinese and Sanskrit are independently evolved languages of a very ancient time period. But still the overall emphasis of the two languages – Hindi and Korean, brings them in a same family of languages. But since the two languages belong to same Asian continent and Korea and India have had a cultural and academic exchange in ancient time also, it may be possible that the two languages have also had some influence on each other and gradually have been developed in such manner.

Thus Korean language can be better understood through Hindi language as the expressions and vocabularies in Korean language are need not be explained as they got their equivalents in Hindi language. Thus it makes teaching and explaining the complicated structure of the language in a simpler and easier method.

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