Factors contributing to the popularity of the Korean language in the context of globalization

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Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za lingvistiku
Jezik i komunikacija u višejezičnom društvu (dvopredmetni)

Bruno Seferović

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Student/ica: Mentor/ica:

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Zadar, 2022.

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ABSTRACT

Factors contributing to the popularity of the Korean language in the context of globalization

In recent times, the interest in the Korean language and Korean culture has risen tremendously, with more people than ever showing interest in the Korean language. This thesis suggests that the reason behind the sudden popularity of Korean is due to mass worldwide consumption of content produced by the South Korean entertainment industry. It is primarily concerned with Korean pop music and Korean drama shows which are gaining international momentum with popular groups such as „BTS", „TWICE", „BLACKPINK", and shows such as "Squid Game", and "Crash Landing on You". This thesis researches the learnability of the Korean language by analysing and describing its grammatical components, which include morphology, word structure, writing and more. Emphasis is put on the psycholinguistic perspective towards language learnability, and my own experience with learning the Korean language. Korean is the national language and official language of North and South Korea, spoken natively by around 80 million people. It belongs to the Koreanic language family and has its own writing script called "Hangul" which is deemed phonetic. Among the factors that contribute to the growing popularity of the Korean language are: the linguistic characteristics of Korean, the attractiveness of the Korean music scene that follows its own way of management, has its own work ethic on the scene, content presentation, the relationship between artists and fans, its friendliness to the international audiences due to the inclusion of English in song lyrics, Korean drama series that often have a fairy tale plot whose actors are popular stars who are considered the Korean standard of beauty.

KEYWORDS: linguistics, Korean language, sociolinguistics, entertainment, management, globalization, learnability, history, psycholinguistics, morphology, syntax, pronunciation, vocabulary, media, content.

SAŽETAK

Čimbenici koji pridonose popularnosti korejskog jezika u kontekstu globalizacije

U posljednje vrijeme interes za korejskim jezikom i korejskom kulturom je značajno porastao te sve više ljudi pokazuje zanimanje za učenjem korejskog jezika. Ovaj rad sugerira da je razlog iznenadnog rasta u popularnosti korejskog jezika i korejske kulture povećana globalna gledanost i slušanost sadržaja korejske zabavne industrije. Prvenstveno se govori o korejskoj pop glazbi i korejskim serijama koje su privukle pažnju međunarodne publike s popularnim grupama poput „BTS", „TWICE", „BLACKPINK" te serija poput "Squid Game" i "Crash Landing on You". Ovaj rad istražuje karakteristike korejskog jezika koje mogu omogućiti lakše učenje jezika, analizirajući i opisujući gramatička svojstva jezika, koja uključuju morfologiju, red riječi u rečenici, pisanje i slično. Pridaje se pozornost psiholingvističkoj perspektivi učenja jezika i moje osobno iskustvo u učenju korejskog jezika. Korejski jezik je državni i službeni jezik Južne i Sjeverne Koreje te materinji jezik 80 milijuna ljudi. Pripada jezičnoj obitelji korejskih jezika i ima vlastito pismo zvano "Hangul" koje se često smatra fonetičkim pismom. Među čimbenike koji pridonose rastućoj popularnosti korejskog jezika navodimo: lingvističke karakteristike korejskog, privlačnost korejske glazbene scene koja slijedi vlastiti način upravljanja, ima vlastitu radnu etiku na sceni, prezentaciju sadržaja, odnos između izvođača i obožavatelja, prijateljsku nastrojenost međunarodnoj publici radi uključivanja engleskog jezika u tekstovima pjesama, korejske dramske serije koje često imaju bajkovitu radnju čiji su glumci popularne zvijezde koje se smatraju korejskim standardom ljepote.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: lingvistika, korejski jezik, sociolingvistika, zabavna industrija, održavanje, globalizacija, učljivost, povijest, psiholingvistika, morfologija, sintaksa, izgovor, vokabular, mediji, sadržaji.

Contents

1. Introduction

The aim of this final B.A. thesis is to identify and investigate possible linguistic, but also extra-linguistic factors that are responsible for the immense popularity of the Korean language and Korean culture around the world. In 2014, the National Institute of the Korean languages stated, citing references from Ethnologue, that the world's 13th most prevalent language is Korean, jumping 5 places up from the last released data where Korean was the 18th most used language in the world (Kim, 2014). It is spoken by around 75 million people (Martin, S.E., 2019). According to a 2022 language report from Ethnologue, Korean places 23rd as the language with the most total speakers worldwide, spoken by approximately 81.7 million people (David M., Eberhard, Simons, and Fennig, 2022). Duolingo, a popular language-learning app stated that 8 million people are actively trying to learn Korean using its services (Friedell, 2021). The King Sejong Institute is a South Korean cultural institute that teaches the Korean language around the world. The institute stated that 14 years ago, only 740 students in 3 countries were learning Korean through them, but now they teach 76,000 students in 82 countries (Friedell, 2021). From my personal experience, I found Korean to not be too difficult to pick up and learn. It was by no means easy, but it also was not as hard as I expected it to be. The increase in popularity of the Korean language globally is often assigned to the growing global boom of the Korean entertainment industry, a topic that is explored by Lee Sang-joon and Abe Mark Nomes in *Hallyu 2.0* (2015).

The western world has loved Asian entertainment for a long time now, considering the success of Japanese animation and music in the 90s. But unlike Japan which is still more actively than not gatekeeping its content to Japan, the South Korean government has invested a lot into expanding its entertainment content to the entire world. Another factor to consider when speaking about this topic is that Korean content often shows a glamourized world of modern technology, aesthetic lifestyle, and sort of a living paradise, which is additionally pushed by foreigners currently living in South Korea or Korean influencers online. This factor could be one of the responsible ones for the actual increase in popularity in Korea because people are likely to see these images and create a fantasy in their heads that they want to move and work in Korea, and so they start learning the language. A couple of more considerable factors are the parasocial relationship between Korean pop idols and their fans, where their fans will try their best to communicate in Korean so they can get noticed by their favorite idol on social media,

and Korean variety TV shows, which will feature the popular idols with an international audience. However, often they do not provide English subtitles to their videos, so that requires having to rely on your Korean language knowledge.

This thesis considers two specific factors to be supposedly responsible for the growing popularity of Korean: the Korean entertainment industry (an extra-linguistic factor) and the specific structure and learnability of the Korean language (a linguistic factor). In the first step, an overview of the beginnings of the Korean entertainment industry and its cumulative rise over the years will be given, followed by a discussion of how this is bringing the Korean language, Korean culture, and the nation of South Korea itself on the global front hold. This thesis will refer to previous research on this topic and it will use the existing scientific literature from fields of linguistics and sociology to further explain the history of the Korean entertainment industry with respect to the Korean language, how it first started spreading outside South Korea and how it became one of the fastest spreaders of media and culture and effected the popularity of the Korean language around the globe. In chapter 4, the methodology of this thesis will be presented and the methods used to gather data to answer the research questions will be presented as well. In chapter 5, the history of Korean will be laid out and then an overview of the Korean language and its linguistic structure will be given in order to discuss and analyse the linguistic factors that may be responsible for the popularity of Korean. In chapter 6, the history of the Korean entertainment industry will be presented, how it first started spreading outside of South Korea and how it is currently spreading outside of South Korea.

After an overview of the specific structure of Korean language, the respective historical background, and potential factors responsible for the rise of Korean is given on the basis of existing studies, the thesis will present a study of two types of data. The aim is to identify the previously established, and potentially further factors responsible for the increasing popularity and spread of Korean: 1. a qualitative analysis of media texts, and 2. a quantitative analysis of questionnaires distributed amongst people who are learning Korean in order to investigate and further explain the advancement and development of the Korean entertainment industry on the global scene and learners' attitudes towards Korean and learning motivation. By using media content analyses and statistical analysis from the questionnaire, the analysis will aim at finding out how the Korean cultural identity spread so widely and what about it is driving people into meeting the culture, studying the language, and watching Korean media content. A few factors that are expected to be important for the rise of Korean include the uniqueness and scale of their entertainment industry which motivates people to study Korean and the fact that Korean has a phonetic script that, once learned, enables speakers to read every word in Korean. The goal of

the thesis is to investigate the importance of the aforementioned factors and to further research how the current climate of globalization helped South Korea's cultural export to spread in the media and on a global scale.

2. Research questions

This study aims to investigate, by means of literature review, a questionnaire study and a media content analysis, factors that contribute to the growing popularity of the Korean language. There are not enough research papers published on this case, which is why further research is needed on this topic. This thesis aims to find out how the Korean entertainment industry has helped the Korean language to grow in popularity worldwide, and how it has helped contribute to the increased spread of Korean across the entire globe. Are learners of Korean learning Korean because they want to better understand the content they consume? Are they learning Korean because they believe there is a high demand right now for Korean proficiency in the world due to the export of its culture? What influence has the Korean entertainment industry had on the language itself? Another interesting topic of research is looking into how can the Korean entertainment industry contribute to further enhancing and supporting the learning of Korean and what are the things they already do in their shows that can make learning Korean easier.

A further set of research questions this thesis is interested in is the attitude of Korean learners towards Korean. Given the complexity of the Chinese tonal system and character system, and the three different writing systems, one of which has traditional Chinese characters, and varying enunciation in Japanese, learners of Korean might have picked Korean over the other two due to its simple phonetic writing system and (some would argue) easier pronunciation. It is a fact to say that once you know the Korean alphabet, you can read any word and any sentence in the language. Therefore, the thesis will research what is the learners' perception of Korean as a foreign language to study compared to other Asian languages.

This thesis will also further investigate the linguistic structure of the Korean language itself, and shed light on its grammar, vocabulary, and everything else that can contribute to its learnability. Does the linguistic structure of Korean make it an easier language to learn? How do the learners perceive Korean, and what is their attitude towards it? What are some of the encountered difficulties learners experienced whilst learning Korean? Lastly, after describing the linguistics of the Korean language and the way it's built, the results from the research with the participants' perception of the learnability of Korean will be compared to get a final answer

on whether Korean is truly easier to learn when compared to other Asian languages to learners of Korean, or not.

3. Previous research and basic concepts

Bok-rae Kim (2018) gives a closer short insight into the creation of Korean popular culture. The first time the term "popular culture" was used was in the daily Korean newspaper Chosun Ilbo on April 29, 1933, however, the concept of popular culture back then simply meant a culture that is enjoyed by a large number of people. When it comes to the discourse about high culture and low culture, South Koreans usually think of their popular culture as something that is of a low grade. They think of it as mass-produced and consumer goods commoditized by mass media compared to national, folk, and people's culture (Kim, 2018). When we talk about South Korean popular culture, it is important to mention the word Hallyu (한류) – literally meaning "Korean wave" or "flow of Korea". The term started to be used in the 1990s and what it encompasses is the global spread of South Korean culture and the Korean language. Kim (2018) further discusses the very beginnings of mass media on the Korean peninsula.

3.1.The role of Korea's entertainment industry

Modern media were first introduced to the Korean peninsula during the 20th century colonization of Korea by Japan. Therefore, it is not incorrect to say that what would later become Korean popular culture was originally influenced by Japanese popular culture (Kim, 2018). The first modern Korean newspaper was called "Hansung-sunbo" (한성순보) and it appeared in October 1883. The start of the recording industry and the introduction of the radio started the history of popular music. The first film media Korean people ever encountered was an advertisement by a British tobacco company in 1903, and the first Korean domestic film ever called "Loyal revenge" came out on October 27, 1919. When it comes to popular music, singer Yun's 1926 album "In Praise of Death" is considered to be the beginning of Korean popular music (Kim, 2018). "Trot" was the obsession among all Koreans in the early years of Korean popular culture. Trot is a specific Korean genre of music with repetitive rhythm, and vocal inflections and has influence from various music worldwide. Later on, trot would end up in the shade as Korean pop music was growing bigger, however, it is still massively enjoyed by elder Korean generations, and some youth likewise with new trot singers emerging annually.

The typical themes of trot music are either love and heartbreak between a man and a woman, or a lonely traveler going from place to place (Kim, 2018).

A listener of Korean pop music might find himself wondering why are there so many English words in its lyrics, or why do some songs go as far as to even have English titles. The reason for that would be the status of Korea after the liberation from Japan's power. During the late 1940s and 1950s, American popular culture and the English language became as mainstream as they can be in Korea. They followed American culture because to them, it was a sign of wealth and prosperity, which was much needed at the time as Korea was nothing more than a third-world country. So to satisfy the psychological needs of the people, artists started including English words in their songs (Kim, 2018).

In more recent history, Kim (2018) mentions the transformation of Korean culture from a hardware-oriented culture to a software-oriented culture during the late 80s and early 90s of the 20th century. In 1990, a new ministry of culture was created with the goal of establishing a cultural democracy. Helped by the fast urbanization of South Korea in the 1960s and 1970s, Korean people started to be aware of their consumer desire as mass consumers. Ryoo (2009) notes that South Korea is "the seventh-largest film market in the world" and that the "popularity of South Korean dramas and music has begun to compete with American and Japanese mass media markets and dominate Asia which found itself strong in the Hallyu wave". Kuwahara (2014) mentions that during the great IMF crisis in the late 90s, South Korean GDP fell by 7% in 1998 alone. The Korea Institute of Design Promotion and the Korea Creative Content Agency were then established when acting president Kim Dae-jung issued the Presidential Proclamation on Culture. To put it simply, it may be said that the government realized that exports of Korean popular culture could aid in the country's economic recovery and began awarding funding to numerous organizations that promoted Korean culture internationally in 2005.

As we are all witnesses to it, recently Korean media content has started spreading widely around the world. One of the more notable examples include the Parasite, a black comedy thriller film that was released in 2019. It is the first Korean movie to win the Oscar and the Palme d'Or. It is also critically acclaimed as the best film released in 2019, and one of the best films of the 21st century. An even more recent example is Squid Game, a Netflix survival drama series. As of now, Squid Game is the most-watched series Netflix has ever produced and it was the top viewed program in 94 countries. Other than films and shows, the Korean music scene is also receiving global attention, with popular bands such as BTS and BLACKPINK topping international charts with their Korean releases. Notably, BTS have been topping the worldwide known U.S. Billboard HOT 100 chart for singles and the TOP 200 chart for albums.

BLACKPINK have similarly made their entry into both, and both groups have multiple times broken each other's records for the most viewed YouTube videos in the first 24 hours of release and amassed a massive global fanbase. The role of the Korean entertainment industry on the spread of language is key, as it is through the viral Korean media that the language is spreading and becoming more popular.

3.2.The Korean language and its learnability

In linguistics, learnability can be defined as the qualities of a language that make the language be easier to acquire for the language's learners. With the fascinating finding that natural languages have a formal structure that can be analyzed with mathematical rigor, modern linguistic and learnability theory was born, but today the focus is on the idea that the language faculty is a biological organ that collaborates with other perceptual and conceptual systems (Fodor & Sakas, 2017). Pullum (2011) considers that "acquirability" could be a better label than "learnability" since many linguists consider that language is acquired through fast subconscious stimulation of an innate language-acquisition component in the brain rather than being learned entirely through interaction with the surroundings. Learnability research analyses the learner's fundamental resources, instead of focusing on the learner's growth route (Archibald, 1993).

As far as language research is considered, "A History of the Korean Language" by Lee Ki-Moon and S. Robert Ramsey published in 2011 gives an excellent insight into the historical background of Korean and how it developed into the language we are familiar with today. Lee has already written a book about the history of the Korean language, called "An Introduction to the History of Korean). The book was published in 1961 and was revised and reissued in 1972, after which it was translated to Japanese, English, and German. Lee's book served as the basis for their collaborative work but in "A History of the Korean Language" the authors focused on making the history of Korean accessible to English speakers and generally more straightforward. "One of the major issues regarding Korean historical linguistics is the question of genealogy and origin" (Lee and Ramsey, 2011). The most considered theories are the relationships between Korean and Altaic, and between Korean and Japanese. It is mentioned that Korean is compared to Altaic before it was even compared to Japanese. Regardless of the proposed theories, Korean genealogy is still relatively unknown (Lee and Ramsey, 2011).

The first point to note is that the majority of Silla Kingdom words documented in existing sources correlate to reflexes in the Middle Korean lexicon - noteworthy because they support the idea of Sillan being Old Korean. The second thing to know is how Chinese civilization's rising impact has influenced Korean vocabulary. The majority of Sinitic loanwords in Silla use were vocabulary produced from the regulated readings of dictionaries, rather than loanwords. These readings became the conventional "Eastern Sounds" employed in Middle Korean literature without any considerable extra influence from Chinese. As a consequence, today's Sino-Korean readings are based on Silla readings of Chinese characters (Lee & Ramsey, 2011).

The Contemporary Korean we know of today consists of a phonetic script called Hangul (한글), and a vocabulary comprising words that have native Korean origin and words that have Chinese origin, named Sino-Korean words. There are even two number systems; there is the native Korean one that only goes up to ninety-nine and is used for general daily-life (e.g. counting the number of people present in a group), and secondly, there is the Sino-Korean number system which is infinite and is used in mathematics, science, price naming, dates etc. The learnability of Korean itself is not a topic that has been widely researched by various scholars and linguists, so by further describing the linguistic structure of the language in the following chapters, and finally questioning the attitudes of Korean learners towards Korean, this thesis hopes to answer the questions of learnability which is also a question of learners' perceptions of the language and its complexity.

4. Methodology

This research paper deals with factors contributing to the rise in popularity of the Korean language. Collecting data in this research people is mostly done through literature review of Korean language books and journals, research articles regarding Korean and Hallyu, and Internet articles. In order to further investigate the cause and collect data on the factors, a questionnaire will be used to study the linguistic factors of the rise in popularity of Korean, such as: the motivation behind studying Korean, experience in Korean language learning and attitudes towards the Korean language of Korean language learners, how learners perceive the structure and learnability of the Korean language and how much it aided them in their learning process. Using a cross-sectional research design, an anonymous online survey will be conducted via *Google Forms* and it will be distributed using the social networking research sample, as the research paper hopes to investigate what motivated learners of Korean to study Korean, and

how did they feel whilst studying Korean etc. The questionnaire will also cover some of the extra-linguistic factors, like the topic of the Korean entertainment industry, whether learners are engaged in it or not (generally), as there can always be a chance some learners did not get motivated by the industry, but by Korean culture, history and other paradigms. The questionnaire will feature multiple answer questions, Likert-scale questions and open-end questions. The collected data from the questionnaire will be presented and analysed in the chapter relating to the results of the research.

Furthermore, in order to investigate what is it about what is considered to be the main factor in all of this, the Korean entertainment industry, that is making learners of Korean learn Korean, there will be a conducted media analysis through literature review of extra-linguistic factors relating to the Korean music entertainment content and Korean show entertainment content. This data will consist of some of the most popular Korean songs and Korean TV shows, from the early era of Hallyu until today, in order to get a greater image of how they are contributing to the popularity of Korean. With these analyses regarding to both the linguistic and the extra-linguistic factors, the research paper hopes to further shed light on how the Korean entertainment industry is contributing to the rise in popularity of Korean, and how can it help in sustaining the popularity, as well as how learners perceive the Korean language's linguistic structure and what do they think is responsible for the burst in popularity.

5. The Korean language

The Korean language (한국어, *hangugeo* in South Korea, 조선말, *chosunmal* in North Korea) is an East Asian language, the official language and national language of South Korea and North Korea. It belongs to the Koreanic language family which includes Korean and Jeju language (often considered a Korean dialect, but some claim it is different enough to be considered as an independent seperate language), however, some linguists argue that Korean is a language isolate. The standard form of Korean is called 표준어 *pyojuneo* in South Korea and 문화어 *munhwaeo* in North Korea. As mentioned previously, according to Ethnologue (2022), it is spoken natively by around 80 million people whose descent is mostly Korean.

5.1. The history of the Korean language

During the Three Kingdoms period of Korean history, where the kingdoms of Koguryeo, Baekje and Silla existed until the 7th century, there exist lexical fragments which indicate that the three languages spoken in them were different, but closely related. The Silla language of the Silla kingdom, is to be considered "Old Korean", note Lee and Ramsey (2011). The authors further explain that Silla eventually became the lingua franca of the Three Kingdoms, giving rise to Middle Korean and is considered to be the actual direct ancestor of contemporary Korean.

Idu, a scribal technique that dates back to the Three Kingdoms period was still used up until the 19th century. *Idu* was mostly used for annotating Chinese texts, but regardless it provided useful information about old Korean. The way *idu* works is that the person transcribing would first change the Chinese words into the Korean syntax, then they would add Korean function words written in Chinese characters. For Old Korean grammar, it provided information about particles and verb endings, some texts specifically hinted at 1st and 2nd person pronouns (Lee and Ramsey, 2011). Another method for written language was *hyangch'al*. (Lee and Ramsey, 2011).

There are two major information sources in regards to Early Middle Korean: a vocabulary list known as *Kyerim yusa* in which the Korean words on there were transcribed with phonogramic usage of Chinese characters; and the second piece of information is a 13th-century medical compilation called *Hyangyak kugeoppang* that contained local names for things which were used in herbal medicine (Lee and Ramsey, 2011). Lee and Ramsey (2011) further go on to mention another important source for EMK, which is the annotations of Chinese text: one method included using simplified Chinese characters known as *kugyeol* and writing them between the lines of Chinese, and the second method did not involve writing whatsoever, only tiny dots and angled lines were made (*kakp'il*).

Late Middle Korean is considered to be the the key historical era of the language, due to the texts being phonologically precise and consistent and the corpus being rich (Lee and Ramsey, 2011). In this period of the language, the writing system used today called *hangeul* was introduced for written language. However, Chinese characters still maintained a strict superiority over Hangul. According to Lee and Ramsey (2011), the Hangul texts of LMK can be argued as being the „finest premodern linguistic records in the entire world".

Early Modern Korean is considered by Lee and Ramsey (2011) to have lasted from the beginning of the 17th century to the end of the 19th century. Korean writing had drastically changed, as the tone-marking dots are now gone together with the triangle that was used to write the sound /z/. Consonant clusters were inconsistent and grammatical styles were also

changed (Lee and Ramsey, 2011). During the Early Modern Korean period, Koreans and the Korean language also started receiving influence from the West, which was just the mere early beginning of a Westernization that will hit the peninsula and the language centuries later.

After Early Modern Korean comes Contemporary Korean, in Korea's enlightenment period due to the extravagant opening of Korea to international technology and ways. During this time, there was a need for the creation of a standard language along with a unified spoken and written language. Contemporary Korean will be further discussed in the sub-chapters below.

5.2. The writing system

The Korean writing system is called Hangul (한글 [South Korea], 조선글 [North Korea]). The word *han* refers to a historical Korean word for „great" , the word *gul* is a Korean word for „writing", so Hangul would stand for „Great writing" (Song, 2006). However, in today's time, the original meaning of *han* is lost due to its homophonous nature with another word associated with Korea and Koreans, so now the name Hangul is generally understood as „Korean writing". This writing system was created by King Sejong in 1443 (Britannica, 2022) to help illiterate regular citizen Koreans. (Song, 2006).

Hangul has 14 basic consonants, and 10 basic vowels. Each and every letter has its stroke order, although it does not carry any major importance like in Chinese and Japanese. The basic set of consonants are:

Table 6.2. Basic Korean consonants in Hangul

Hangul	IPA transcription
ㄱ	/g/ /k/
ㄴ	/n/ /l/
ㄷ	/d/ /t/
ㄹ	/l/ /r/
ㅁ	/m/

ㅂ	/b/
	/p/
ㅅ	/ɕ/
	/s/
ㅇ	/Ø/
	/ŋ/
ㅈ	/dʑ/
ㅊ	/tɕʰ/
ㅋ	/k/
	/kʰ/
ㅌ	/t/
	/tʰ/
ㅍ	/p/
	/pʰ/
ㅎ	/h/

Based on Korean phonology, when a tense stop and a tense fricative are produced (where the speaker blocks the airstream at the place of articulation and the vocal cords) it is represented in Hangul by the doubling of consonants ㄱ,ㄷ,ㅂ,ㅅ,ㅈ (Song, 2006). In so, these consonants are then written as ㄲ,ㄸ,ㅃ,ㅆ,ㅉ and are transcribed in IPA as /kk/, /tt/, /pp/, /ss/, /cc/. E.g. 샀어 */sasseo/*; *I bought* - past simple tense of the verb 사다 (to buy).

Moving onto vowels, as mentioned previously, there are 10 basic vowels in Korean:

Table 6.2. Set of basic Korean vowels in Hangul

Hangul	IPA transcription
ㅏ	/a/
ㅑ	/ja/
ㅓ	/ə/
ㅕ	/jə/

ㅗ	/o/
ㅛ	/jo/
ㅜ	/u/
ㅠ	/ju/
ㅡ	/ɯ/
ㅣ	/i/

The complex Korean vowels are formed based on the basic vowels; e.g. the vowel ㅐ is a combination of the vowels ㅏ and the vowel ㅣ. The complex vowels in Korean are:

Table 6.2. Complex vowel letters in Korean

Hangul	IPA transcription
ㅐ	/ɛ/
ㅒ	/jɛ/
ㅔ	/e/
ㅖ	/je/
ㅘ	/wa/
ㅙ	/wɛ/
ㅚ	/we/
ㅝ	/wo/
ㅞ	/we/
ㅟ	/wi/
ㅢ	/ɯi/

Song (2006) names the creation of syllables in Korean "the Block Principle" because sounds are not occurring in isolation, but they are combined with more sounds to create these syllables – usually made of one vowel sound and consonant sounds. Consonants and vowels, when writing in Hangul, are put together to form an orthographic block. If we take the monosyllabic word *chaek*, meaning "book", one will not write it linearly, but they will be put into one graphic

block. In other words, *chaek* will not be written as ㅊ ㅐ ㄱ, but as 책. The word chimdae, meaning "bed", consists of two syllables – *chim* and *dae*, therefore it will be written as 침대. *Hwajangpum*, meaning makeup, consists of three syllables – *hwa*, *jang*, and *pum*, so it will be written as 화장품. Syllables play the most important role in Hangul's writing.

Unlike many other Asian languages with their script, Korean is officially written with spacing;

a) Min-ho ate an apple.

민호가 사과를 먹었어.

NOT 민호가사과를먹었어.

Even so, some Koreans prefer to write it together when sending text messages via their mobile phones.

Whilst talking about writing in Korean, romanization is also an important point to touch on. Simply put, romanization refers to the writing of Hangul letters in the Latin script, which makes it easier for Korean learners to initially recognize and read Korean. The McCune-Reischauer System, the Yale System, and the Revised Romanization System are the three most widely used romanization systems, according to Song (2006).

Table 6.2. Romanization of Hangul

Hangul consonants	Revised Romanization System	Hangul vowels	Revised Romanization System
ㄱ, ㄲ	g, k, kk	ㅏ	a
ㄴ	n	ㅐ	ae
ㄷ, ㄸ	d, t, tt	ㅑ	ya
ㄹ	l, r	ㅒ	yae
ㅁ	m	ㅓ	eo
ㅂ, ㅃ	b, p, pp	ㅔ	e
ㅅ, ㅆ	s, ss	ㅕ	yeo
ㅇ	When silent – no romanization When sounded - ng	ㅖ	ye
ㅈ, ㅉ	j, jj	ㅗ	o

ㅊ	ch	ㅘ	wa
ㅋ	k	ㅙ	wae
ㅌ	t	ㅚ	oe
ㅍ	p	ㅛ	yo
ㅎ	h	ㅜ	u
		ㅝ	wo
		ㅞ	we
		ㅟ	wi
		ㅠ	yu
		ㅡ	eu
		ㅢ	ui
		ㅣ	i

This table presented the romanization system developed by the South Korean government (Song, 2006), but there is practically no completely officialized set of romanization, e.g. the Korean name 찬우 can be romanized as Chan-u and as Chan-Woo, and both ways are correct.

As mentioned previously, Korean used to be written using Chinese characters, which in Korean are referred to as Hanja (한자), literally meaning "Chinese characters". Even though Hangul has been the official script in Korea since the 15th century, Chinese characters are still sometimes used today, usually in formal, and ceremonial settings. E.g. when writing about a deceased person, they will not write the Korean word for deceased 고인 in Hangul but will use the Hanja character representing that word – 故. In general, the usage of Hanja has been reduced a lot recently, and Song (2006) mentions that nowadays when Chinese characters are written, they are usually put in parentheses right after the words in Hangul (shown in example 3). There is another way Hanja can constitute a part of a sentence in Hangul (shown in example 2).

1. 남자의 외모

2. 男子의 外貌

3. 남자(男子)의 외모(外貌)

"Hanja" also plays a key role in Korean names (Song, 2006), as most Korean names' in Hangul are based on the Hanja equivalents, and as we know Chinese characters all carry a meaning, therefore Korean parents will carefully choose their child's name in correspondence to the meaning in Hanja. Additionally, all Korean people with a non-native Korean name have a name in Hanja characters. In the example of the name 은영, romanized as Eun-yeong, the character 은 (Eun) corresponds to 恩 (eun), meaning "kindness, mercy, charity" and is combined with 영 (Yeong) which corresponds to 英 (yeong) and means "flower, petal, brave, hero" (Campbell, n.d.). So we can say that, in their case, their parents named their child Eun-young wishing for the child to grow up a kind, brave hero.

5.3. Vocabulary

Around 40% of the Korean vocabulary is considered to be native Korean, and about 60% is traceable to Chinese, but these Korean words with Chinese origin (or simply called Sino-Korean) were borrowed before the end of first half of the 20th century, so they are now perceived to be fully „Korean" (Choo and Kwak, 2008). The native Korean words usually describe concepts related to everyday life (animals, plants, kinship, foods etc.) and the Sino-Korean words are common in scientific, societal, and administrative vocabulary (Choo and O'Grady, 1996). The common strategy in regards to word formation in Korean is combining two roots, morphemes with wordlike meanings, to create a compound or any other multiword expression. E.g. the Korean word for "fish" is 물고기, 물 means "water" and 고기 means "meat". Every time a Korean language learner picks up a new word, there's a chance they've also picked up some morphemes that go into making other words, according to Choo and O'Grady (1996). Choo and Kwak (2008) present a table of some native Korean versus Sino-Korean contrasting words, some of which I will put below:

Table 6.3. Native Korean versus Sino-Korean contrast (Choo and Kwak, 2008)

Native Korean	Sino-Korean	Meaning in English
몸무게 (*mommuge*)	체중 (*chejung*)	body weight
사람 (*saram*)	인간[1] (*ingan*)	person

---

[1] 인간 can be used instultingly

나이 (*nai*)	연령 (*yeonryeong*)	age
맨날 (*maennal*)	매일 (*maeil*)	every day
더운물 (*deounmul*)	온수 (*onsu*)	hot water
자리 (*jari*)	좌석 (*jwaseok*)	seat

To further explain the distinction in usage, if you want to buy a concert ticket for a concert that is being held in Korea. When you are picking your seat on the ticketing site, it will most likely not say 자리, but 좌석. The same applies if you went to a Korean doctor and had your weight checked, on your report it is not likely that it will say 몸무게, but 체중.

Western loan words end up contrasting with already existing Korean synonymous words, so the loan words are mostly connected with a more contemporary interpretation of the idea (Choo and Kwak, 2008). E.g; the native Korean word for dance is 춤, but they also use 댄스 (*daenseu*; dance). Some loan words however created a completely different meaning than their meaning in their original language; 빌라 (billa – villa; townhouse), 커닝 (keoning – cunning; cheting on an exam), 린스 (*rinseu* – rinse; conditioner) etc.

Choo and O'Grady (1996) make a distinction between two kinds of Korean compounds. One type is transparent compounds – typically described as those compounds where it is easier to see how the meanings of each morpheme contributes to the full meaning of the word. E.g. 군 means "army", and 인 means "person", therefore one can logically assume (and would be correct in doing so) that 군인 would mean "soldier". The second type of compounds are what Choo and O'Grady (1996) refer to as opaque or noncompositional compounds – there is no clear distinction in relation to the meaning of individual morphemes with the entire word.

Choo and Kwak (2008) mention that many longer compounds in Korean can be created by combining two-item compounds with other words; with 운전 (driving) – 운전면허 (driver's licence), 음주운전 (driving while under the influence of alcohol); with 속도 (speed) – 속도위반 (speed violation), 속도계 (speedometer), 제한속도 (speed limit). Furthermore in regards to compounds, Choo and O'Grady (1996) mention idiom compounds – express a

complete thought or proposition without being gramamtically complete sentences (견물생심 „see thing be born mind" a.k.a „seeing is wanting" in English, 금상첨화 "a flower on top of gold a.k.a added bonus, equivalent to „icing on the cake" in English), truncated compounds – usually shortened versions of longer words (사대 „college of education" from 사범 – teacher, 대학 – college), and hybrid compounds – compounds consisting of a native Korean and a Sino-Korean root (노래방 „karaoke room" from 노래 – native Korean for song, and 방 – Sino-Korean for „room")

In very recent times, abbreviations have become a very distinct part of contemporary Korean vocabulary, now more popular than ever. Korean teens and young adults will often shorten down certain phrases and long words to get their point across without saying too much. Such popular abbreviation slangs include: 갑분싸 (갑자기 분위기가 싸해짐 – „suddenly the atmosphere got awkward", often used as an adjective for people), 낄끼빠빠 (낄 때 끼고 빠질 때 빠져라 – "read the atmosphere", literally can be translated as „know when to say something and when to stay out")

When it comes to Internet-related vocabulary, Koreans will often write words without their consonants – also considered a type of abbreviation. E.g. ㄱㅅ from 감사합니다 meaning "thank you", ㅇㅇ from 응 meaning "yeah", ㅈ�É from 진짜 meaning „really" etc. Another thing worth mentioning is onomatopeia in written Korean on the Internet; ㅎㄷㄷ (후덜덜 – shaking), ㅠㅠ expresses a crying face, 오구오구 (doting on someone), 쩝쩝 (chewing sound), 두근두근 (heartbeat sound), 쏙닥쏙닥 (whispering), 깜빡 (blinking) etc. There is also an abundance of sound symbolism (Choo and Kwak, 2008); e.g. 쿵하는 솔이 들었어? – 'Did you hear the thudding noise?'

I personally consider these abbreviations and specific language use to be vital when wanting to communicate with a young Korean person online, especially when studying the language.

Reduplication is also worth mentioning when it comes to Korean vocabulary, as it is done to put emphasis (우리 **오래오래** 가자 – Let's be together for a long time), repetition (시험 결과 기다리느라 **조마조마**했어 – I felt uneasy waiting for the exam results), alternation or variety (티격태격 그만해 – Stop bickering), plurality (구석구석 검색해 – Search each and every corner) (Choo and Kwak, 2008).

5.4. Pronunciation

As mentioned before, Hangul is considered to be a phonetic script, and by knowing how to read Hangul, you can read every word in Korean. However, that does not mean that there aren't some specific instances where it's not strictly pronounced the way it is written. One specific case one should note is the consonant ㅇ. When writing Korean vowels, you must put the ㅇ consonant, often referred to as the "silent consonant" in front of the vowel. E.g. not ㅚ모, but 외모 – meaning "beauty". However, this consonant is only silent when at the beginning of a syllable block. If you put this consonant at the end of the block, it will be pronounced as /ŋ/. E.g. the Korean word for "king" is 왕; *wang;* /waŋ/. In this syllabic block, we have the complex vowel 와, where the ㅇ consonant is silent, due to it helping to form a vowel, but the ㅇ consonant, in the end, is pronounced as /ŋ/. Song (2006) names a distinction regarding stops which can be characterized using the examples: 불 /bul/ 'fire', 뿔 /ppul/ 'horn' , 풀 /pul/ 'grass'. Each consonant that appears at the end of a syllable in Hangul is pronounced at the beginning of the next syllable if it begins with a vowel, with the exceptions of ㅇ, and ㅎ – 앞에 is then pronounced as [a-pe]. ㅇ does not shift (영어 'English' is pronounced as /jən-ə/) and ㅎ is silent (낳아 - /na-a/) (Choo and O'Grady, 1996).

A type of phonetic modification, which is common in Korean, is the process of assimilation, which makes one sound similar or identical to the neighbouring sound (Choo and O'Grady, 1996). Sometimes there are even multiple processes happening to one word, Choo and O'Grady (1996) exemplify this using the word 낱말 (nat-mal). In this word, the /t/ will change its pronunciation due to the following nasal into /n/. However, that /n/ will also change to /m/ because of the following labial. In the end, 낱말 (nat-mal) is pronounced as (nam-mal). Choo and O'Grady (1996) go on further to exemplify a change involving 식량 where the pronunciation changes from 'shik-rjaŋ' to 'shik-nyaŋ' to 'shinnyaŋ'; [r] into [n] because of [k] and [k] into [ŋ] because of [n], and they list a table of more phonetic changes in Korean.

Table 5.4. Pronunciation guide for Korean (Choo and Grady, 1996)

Change	Example	Pronunciation
ㄴ as [l] when it is next to ㄹ	훈련 "training"	/hulljən/
ㄹ as [n] if the consonant before isn't ㄹ or ㄴ	공룡 "dinosaur"	/koŋnjoŋ/

ㅅ,ㄷ,ㅌ as [sh], [j], [ch] in front of 이	멋있어 "cool" 해돋이 "sunrise" 같이 "together"	/məɕiṣ̠ə/ /hɛdodʑi/ /katɕʰi/
ㄴ as [m] in fronf of a labial sound, as [ŋ] in front of a velar sound	신부 "bride" 연구 "research"	/ɕimbu/ /jəŋgu/
[p] or [pʰ] into [m] in front of a nasal [t] or [tʰ] into [n] in front of a nasal [k] or [kʰ] to [ŋ] in front of a nasal	앞문 "front door" 낱낱이 "each and every" 작년 "last year"	/ammun/ /nannatɕʰi/ /tɕaŋjən/
ㅂ as [b] between voiced sounds ㄷ as [d] between voiced sounds ㅈ as [j] between voiced sounds ㄱ as [g] between voiced sounds	바보 "fool" 도둑 "thief 재주 "talent" 가구 "furniture"	/pabo/ /toduk/ /tɕɛdʑu/ /kagu/
ㅂ+ㅎ/ㅎ+ㅂ as [pʰ] ㄷ+ㅎ/ㅎ+ㄷ as [tʰ] ㄱ+ㅎ/ㅎ+ㄱas [kʰ]	집합 "gathering" 놓다 "put" 녹화 "recording"	/tɕipʰap/ /notʰa/ /nokʰva/

5.5. Morphology

In Korean, there exist nouns, verbs, adjectives (which are further explained as not having the "traditional" role), adverbs, and particles, which function the same way they do in English. Noun phrases are made clear using particles that are attached to the end of preceding nouns (and that are also not separate words) so the NP roles can be easily and clearly identified (Song J.J., 2006). Korean has no case-ending system. These noun role-making particles include:

- 이 (for nouns with a consonant end) / 가 (for nouns with a vowel end) – used for marking the subject noun phrase
- 을 (for nouns with a consonant end) / 를 (for nouns with a vowel end) – used for marking the object (accusative)
- 에게/한테 – used for naming the receiver or giver

- 에/에서 – used for locations, equivalent to the English 'in/at', the distinction between them is that에서 is used when describing an action happening in a location
- 으로 (for nouns that end in a consonant) / 로 (for nouns with a vowel end) – instrumental and directional
- 와 (for nouns with a vowel end) / 과 (for nouns that end in a consonant) and 랑 (for nouns with a vowel end) / 이랑 (for nouns with a consonant end) – indicating a comitative, 와/과 are usually considered formal speech and 랑/이랑 are considered informal speech
- 의 – genitive, used to mark possession

E,g. 미연이 학교에서 너에게 선물과 향수를 줬어. In this sentence, translated as "Mi-yeon gave you a present and a perfume in school", Mi-yeon, pronoun 'you', present, perfume, and school are all nouns which are marked accordingly to their roles in the sentence. Following the Korean syntax: Miyeon (N, subject) in school (locative) to you (receiver) present (obj.) and (comitative) perfume (obj.) gave (V).

On the topic of Korean verbs, there are two things that are important to mention: firstly, it is doubted that the Korean language has a traditional linguistic adjective group (Kim M.J., 2007) and it is believed by many linguists that verbs and adjectives simultaneously function as each other; secondly, Korean functions as a language with honorifics, therefore there are also different verb endings based on formality. Contemporary Korean only makes use of subject honorification and speech style (Lee and Ramsey, 2011). These formality levels are based on sociolinguistic factors like whom the addresser is addressing, whether the addressee is a person older, in a higher social status etc. and if they are not, a.k.a the choice of which formality level to use is based on a hierarchial relationship between the people involved in the conversation (Choo, 1999).

Lee and Ramsey (2011) name six distinctive formality levels, exemplified below:

1. Plain: 누구니? 'Who are you?
2. 'Banmal': 누구야? 'Who are you'?
3. Familiar: 니가 하게 'You do it.'
4. Semiformal: 당신은 하겠소? 'Are you doing it?'
5. Polite: 하겠어요? 'Are you doing it?'
6. Formal: 하겠습니다. 'I will do it.'

However, out of these 6 formality levels, the familiar level and semiformal level are becoming obsolete very fast, and due to the making of the polite level only involving adding the particle 요 'yo' from the 'banmal' level, nowadays the inflectional system of honorifics is being reduced to only plain, 'banmal' and formal (Lee and Ramsey, 2011).

The dictionary form of Korean verbs is in the suffix 다 (하다 – do) and the infinitive form is in the suffix 기 (하기 – to do). Korean has the future tense (which is further divided into presumptive/indicative future and immediate future, sort of an English equivalent of will-future vs. going-to future), the present simple, the present continuous, the past simple, the past perfect, and the past tense. Verbs are also conjugated based on the honorific level you are giving them by assigning the verb endings. Verbs that before the dictionary form suffix have a consonant are conjugated with 아, those that have 이 are conjugated into 여, those that have 우 are conjugated into 워, those that have the 하다 ending are conjugated into 해.

Table 5.5. Conjugation of different regular verb groups through tenses

Verbs	Present Simple +ㄴ다 (-nda) or other marking	Present Continuous +고 있다 (-go itda)	Past Simple +ㅆ다 (-tda)	Past Continuous +고 있었다 (-go isseotda)	Past Perfect +ㅆ었다 (-sseotda)	Presumptive Future + 겠다 (-getda)	Imm. Future +을/ㄹ 거예요 (eul/l keoyeyo)
가다 (kada) to go	간다 (kanda) 가 (ka) I go	가고 있다 (kago itda) I am going	갔다 (katda) I went	가고 있었다 (kago isseotda) I was going	갔었다 (kasseotda) I had gone	가겠다 (kagetda) I will go	갈거예요 (kalkeoyeyo) I am going to go
밟다 (palbda) step	밟는다 (palbneunda) 밟아 (palba)	밟고 있다 (palbko itda)	밟았다 (palbatda)	밟고 있었다 (palbgo isseotda)	밟았었다 (palbasseotda) I had stepped	밟겠다 (palbgetda) I will step	밟을거예요 (palbeulkeoyeyo)

	I step	I am stepping	I stepped	I was stepping			I am going to step
마시다 (mashida) to drink	마신다 (mashinda) 마셔 (masyeo) I drink	마시고 있다 (mashigo itda) I am drinking	마셨다 (masyeotda) I drank	마시고 있었다 (mashigo isseotda) I was drinking	마셨었다 (masyeosseotda) I had drunk	마시겠다 (mashigetda) I will drink	마실거예요 (mashilkeoyeyo) I am going to drink
배우다 (paeuda) to learn	배운다 (paeunda) 배워 (paewo) I learn	배우고 있다 (paeugo itda) I am learning	배웠다 (paewotda) I learned	배우고 있었다 (paeugo isseotda) I was learning	배웠었다 (paewosseotda) I had learned	배우겠다 (paeugetda) I will learn	배울거예요 (paeulkeoyeyo) I am going to learn.
토하다 (tohada) to throw up	토한다 (tohanda) 토해 (tohae) I throw up	토하고 있다 (tohago itda) I am throwing up	토했다 (tohaetda) I threw up	토하고 있었다 (tohago isseotda) I was throwing up	토했었다 (tohaesseotda) I had thrown up	토하겠다 (tohagetda) I will throw up	토할거예요 (tohalkeoyeyo) I am going to throw up

As mentioned previously, it is up to debate whether traditional adjectives exist in Korean from a linguistic point of view, however Korean definitely has words which can be classified as such. Adjectives are usually in the form of -스럽다 (conjugated into 워), 하다 (conjugated as the verb form), and ㅂ다 (conjugated the same as adjectives ending in -스럽다), and are conjugated with verb endings to be used as such. There also exist the regular conjugation in the adjective+noun form. Just like verbs, adjectives will also take their honorific forms during conjugation.

(1)

자랑스럽다 *jarangseureopda* (to be proud): 자랑스러워 *jarangseurowo* (I am proud), 자랑스러웠어 *jarangseurowosseo* (I was proud), 자랑스러운 딸 *jarangseureoun ttal* (proud daughter).

(2)

행복하다 *haengbokhada* (to be happy): 행복해 *haengbokhae* (I am happy), 행복했어 *haengbokhaesseo* (I was happy), 행복한 아이 *haengbokhan ai* (happy child)

(3)

가볍다 *kabyeopta* (light): 가벼워 *kabyeowo* (It is light), 가벼웠어 *kabyeowosseo* (It was light), 가벼운 가방 *kabyeoun kabang* (light purse)

After giving examples of conjugations of Korean verbs and adjectives, one can start to understand why some linguists feel that there are no "traditional" adjectives in Korean. Another thing to note in relation to the verb-adjective relationship in Korean is turning a verb into an adjective using the ㄴ/은 particle (past), 는 particle (present) and ㄹ/을 particle (future).

움직이다 (to move): 움직인 인형 – the doll that moved; 움직이는 인형 – the doll that is moving, 움직일 인형 – the doll that will move.

5.6. Syntax

The Korean sentence structure is rather flexible, but the verb must always be at the sentence's end, and it is considered to be the most important part of a sentence (Song, 2006). In regards to noun phrases, they appear to be highly flexible in the word order (Kim, 2016). In general, however, Korean uses the SOV (subject-object-verb) in a basic sentence structure (seen in example 1), but unlike English, t enables the subject and object noun phrases to swap positions without changing the meaning (seen in example 2) of the sentence (Song, 2006).

(1) 수연이 (S) 책을 (O) 읽다 (V)

Soo-yeon reads a book; (lit.) Soo-yeon a book reads.

(2) 너를 (O) 내가 (S) 미워 (V)

I hate you; (lit.) You I hate.

Would actually be: 내가 너를 미워

However, there exist exceptions to this flexibility of NPs when it involves the copulas 'to be' (이다) and 'to become' (되다), which are referred to as double-nominative constructions by Song (2006) where the subject must always be in the first place (example 3 and 4).

(3) 민호가 변호사가 됐어.

'Min-ho became a lawyer' - grammatical

(4) 변호사가 미호가 됐어.

'A lawyer became Min-ho' – ungrammatical

Korean syntax changes slightly when phrases indicating time and locations are added in the sentence, and they are usually at the beginning of the sentence (5), but can also sometimes be put between the subject NP and object NP (example 6) (Song, 2006).

(5) **내일 수업실에서** 선생님이 시험을 줄거예요.

Tomorrow, in the classroom, the teacher, exam, is going to give.

The teacher is going to give an exam tomorrow in the classroom.

(6) 선생님이 **내일 수업실에서** 시험을 줄거예요.

The teacher, tomorrow, in the classroom, exam, is going to give.

The teacher is going to give an exam tomorrow in the classroom.

Other phrases, such as destination, beneficiary or recipient phrases, participation phrases etc. are usually put between the subject NP and object NP (Song, 2006). Modifying expressions are all placed before the expressions they are modifying which is a consistent part of Korean syntax (Song, 2006). To provide a short example: 귀여운$_{Adj}$ 강아지$_N$ (cute$_{Adj}$ puppy$_N$), 느리게$_{Adv}$ 걷는다$_V$ (walks$_V$ slowly$_{Adv}$).

Placement of modifying sentences in relation to time, location, reason (etc.) is a syntax pattern that is not flexible in Korean at all, the modifying sentences always come before the sentence that is being modified (Song, 2006). If we have the sentence 'There are no clouds because the sunrays are strong', this in Korean would be '햇빛이 쎄니까 (Because the sun is strong) 구름이 없다 (there are no clouds)'.

5.7. The learnability of Korean

One important concept to mention is learnability. Pinker (1979) defines the Learnability Condition as a successful acquisition theory that must be able to explain the acquisition of a language. There are also linguistic universals - a set of complicated and abstract rules that comprise an inbuilt Universal Grammar that cannot be acquired; it is presumed that the language learner is already aware of these universal principles (White, 1989).

5.7.1. The learnability of a language from a (psycho-)linguistic perspective

According to Haack (1978) to learn a formalized language, one must first learn to recognize the vocabulary or lexical pieces that make up the language. The learner must thereafter be able to recognize well-formed expressions. In foreign language vocabulary list-learning tests, nouns are considered to be the simplest to learn, then adjectives, verbs and adverbs (Rodgers, 1969). These are frequently specified either recursively or explicitly, and the definitions are given in the metalanguage of the formal language being learned rather than in the formal language itself (Haack, 1978). In this study, the concept of learnability will be operationalized through the questionnaire regarding learner attitudes towards Korean whilst they were studying the language.

Because various languages employ distinct sets of articulatory characteristics, trouble emerges when the foreign language learner encounters aspects that aren't used in the native tongue (Ellis & Beaton, 1993). The topic of the learnability of the Korean language itself has not been researched in depth. The study by O'Grady, Lee, Choo (2000) revealed that learners of Korean who speak English "favor subject relative clauses over direct object relatives" which indicates that "the deep embedding of the gap - that is, its structural distance from the head noun with which it is linked - is a crucial indicator of relative clause difficulty.". Ellis & Beaton (1993) denote a "linguistic hypothesis" in which "the similarity of a new word's phonological structure dictates its accuracy of repetition, with phonological frames generated from related vocabulary items in the learner's lexicon utilized to sustain the temporary phonological representation". Learnability, in a definition related to this thesis study, is a concept that deals with what about a specific language makes it easy or hard to acquire, based on its linguistic structure and the learners' lexicon including the languages they speak.

5.7.2. The learnability of Korean from my own language learning experience

As someone who has been actively studying Korean for 6 years now, I think Korean is a language not too difficult to acquire. It's definitely not the easiest language, but it's not the

hardest either. First off, as previously mentioned in the chapters above, once you learned the writing system you can relatively easy read and write Korean. The position of a word's phonemes and articulatory components in a spoken word affects how pronounceable it is, and this is true in both absolute and relative senses. (Ellis & Beaton, 1993). My personal experience is the following: In order to learn Korean, I had downloaded an app called HelloTalk, where the premise is that you put your native language and the language you want to learn, and it pairs you with people native of your goal language and who wish to learn your native language. This was about 2 years ago, and I exchanged several voice messages with native Korean speakers and received praise on my pronunciation, but looking back on my first couple of years of studying I know my accent was not so good.

In relation to grammar and syntax, the Korean syntax can be difficult for English speakers, but as a native speaker of Croatian, a language that I would say has quite a flexible sentence structure, it was not that difficult to get a hand on. The most difficult part about grammar have been all the particles which change nuances of your sentences, and building a complex sentence feels like stacking particles sometimes, which in hindsight it is. For example, the particle '네' is put at the end of a verb to express a surprise, the particle '구나' is put at the end of a verb to express surprise about something you knew was going to happen, but it still surprised you. There are various particles like this that can make grammar learning tricky, but in the long run they are very useful. My opinion of Korean language learning, and my process of learning, was first trying to acquire as much as I can of the grammar.

What I think is that once you can recognise the elements of a sentence like verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs etc. then you can also see what is attached to them (you can look up the meaning) and then you can correlate the position of the word (knowing the syntax) to the translation you are reading, or vice versa. For example, if you know that 을/를 is an object marker, then in the sentence '어제밤 나는 저녁을 먹었다 (Last night I had dinner)' you can recognise that 저녁 is the object, 어제밤 is the adverb of time since it comes before the subject 나 meaning 'I', and 먹었다 is the (past tense of the) verb 먹다, because you know the sentence structure is SOV so the verb always comes last. Vocabulary can be tricky to acquire due to co-existing Sino-Korean and native Korean words in the contemporary Korean vernacular, but once you get the hang of it you can understand which word to use when just like in English e.g. another word for song being 'track' – a specific example I remember when studying Korean was getting confused between the native Korean word for song '노래' and the Sino-Korean one

'곡' and I saw both being used often, so I never knew when to use which. But, soon later I realized that 노래 can equal to 'song' in English and '곡' can equal to 'track' in English.

In general, as there are not enough researches done on the topic of learnability of Korean, this paper will attempt at gaining an insight on the concept through a questionnaire study conducted on Korean learners of L1 Croatian.

6. The Korean entertainment industry

The current Korean entertainment industry consists of mainly Korean music, Korean TV shows (entertainment and dramas) and Korean movies. Once again we mention the term Hallyu (한류) – a name for the spreading of Korean entertainment globally, however Hallyu has also grown to incorporate Korean lifestyle as well (Kim, 2007). It has been over two decades since Hallyu became a cultural phenomenon, which first struck China and Japan before hitting the rest of the world. The impact of Koran celebrities is described in cultural studies, Kuwahara (2014) mentions that top Korean celebrities frequently promoted Korean beauty items throughout Asia, boosting sales - content sales managers at Korean networks work hard to find the most enticing actors and actresses, as well as those who are well-liked by local fans, to promote the drama locally. Managers for sales in Korean television channels emphasize the importance of casting in exported drama and many people feel that the Korean drama actors are the most important factor to evaluate before the storyline (Kuwahara, 2014). This is not only done with Korean actors, but popular and prominent Korean brands like Etude House, Innisfree, and even in recent times prominent Western companies like Dior, Louis Vuitton, Burberry etc. will hire Korean singers to be their ambassador or promote some of their newest products. The digital platforms that help spread Korean entertainment include mainly YouTube, where all the music videos, episode cuts, and other similar content are added; as well as Twitter, TikTok and Instagram which are famous for its subculture of "fandoms", organized groups of fans of celebrities which spread content about them.

According to Ryoo (2009), Hallyu got its start with the distribution of Korean TV dramas like "Winter Sonata" throughout Eastern Asia, particularly hugely well-liked in Uzbekistan, Japan, Taiwan, and Vietnam, driving audiences in Japan into somewhat of a frenzy when it was released and it was so successful in Japan that some would say it has helped mending South Korean and Japanese diplomatic relations more than the World Cup they co-hosted in 2002 (Ryoo, 2009). Full House, a drama from 2004, was exported to over 15 countries in Asia and got the highest numbers of ratings in those countries (Kuwahara, 2014). South Korean dramas

became popular content to sell in China, and the style and fashion of the characters in the shows became trending and popular to mimick. By 2000, one can say Korean wave was in its first full swing (Ryoo, 2009). The widespread popularity of Korean dramas opened the doors for their music to also get its own moment. Arguably one of the first Hallyu K-pop icons was the singer BoA, who instantly became popular in Korea as soon as she debuted. After promoting in South Korea for a couple of years, she was then sent to debut in Japan and she did so becoming one of the most well-known cross-cultural icons in the history of Korean entertainment, as her influence mended the tensions between South Korea and Japan (Ryoo, 2009).

After a while, the phenomenon of Hallyu started to die down, but soon enough it was back in the form of mostly Korean pop music this time, the early beginning of the "second" Hallyu wave marked by the release of 'Sorry Sorry' in 2009 by the group Super Junior. The rapid spread of K-pop products throughout the world was facilitated by the emergence of sociotechnological advances such as social media networking platforms and video sharing platforms (Lee and Nornes, 2015). This was the era of Kpop superstars, such as 2PM, Girls' Generation, SHINee, Wonder Girls, 2NE1, KARA, BEAST, Big Bang and etc. – groups meticulously planned by some of the most major South Korean entertainment companies such S.M., JYP, YG, etc. which quickly cemented their position in the worldwide entertainment business by integrating newly available digital technology and exploiting social media presence (Lee and Nornes, 2015). One can say that if the first Hallyu wave was led by Korean dramas, the second Hallyu wave in the late 2000s and early 2010s was led by Korean pop music. This was also the era where the globally viral smash hit 'Gangnam Style' by PSY succeeding in catching everyone's attention and love worldwide. The most powerful front-runners of Hallyu fandoms are online fan groups - Soompi and allkpop, multimedia online fan sites where a never-ending whirlwind of information, gossips, comments, etc. is broadcast, are head and shoulders above the others, and they have their own boards, stores, galleries and even music charts (Lee and Nornes, 2015).

Nowadays, it can be said we are talking about a third Hallyu wave, possibly the strongest one so far. With digital communication becoming more and more used, fastening the process of digital globalization and connecting all sides of the world with each other, and even more so due to the COVID-19 pandemic where multiple times the world "shut down", online content became more accessible than ever, which is where the Korean entertainment industry used its advantages extraordinarily in order to spread Korean entertainment further and more vast than ever. Acts like BTS are smashing records on the American Billboard charts, receiving tens of millions of views on their music videos in under 24 hours of release and trending all over social

media. Similair acts like BLACKPINK are also dominating the worldwide girl group scene at the moment, with each of its 4 members receiving a massive following on social media. In another instance, TWICE, which have amassed enormous success in South Korea and Japan have recedly held a sold-out U.S. tour. Movies like 'Parasite' have become worldwide critically acclaimed and watched by millions of people. 'Crash Landing on You', a Korean drama about a South Korean businesswoman falling for a North Korean soldier has mimicked the popularity, or even cultural syndrome of 'Winter Sonata' in Japan. In 2021, 'Squid Game' a commentary on the wealth disparity in South Korea, became the most watched Netflix original show in history.

This way, it can be argued that Hallyu is in its full power again and the Korean entertainment industry is striking the iron while it is still hot, and Hallyu is not showing any signs of slowing down any time soon. The more people are engaged in social media and digital content platforms, the chances of them encountering Korean entertainment content logically increase, which not only helps spread content but the language itself.

7. Media content analysis

The media content analysis is an approach I have developed myself. The aim of the analysis is to investigate what factors in Korean media content are contributing to the content's rising popularity outside of Korea. In the media content analysis, I will describe two types of media, a Korean pop song and a Korean drama, by the means of a lyrics/plot analysis and how that is appealing to people outside of Korea from a sociological point of view using existing literature. The media content analysis is related to initial research questions related to what is it about the Korean entertainment industry that is becoming so appealing worldwide. As the first part of the media content analysis, I have chosen to analyse "Gangnam Style", one of the most well-known viral songs in recent times due to its very general (some may say stereotypical) representation of the typical K-pop image worldwide, and music.. "Gangnam Style" is a song by PSY released in 2012. The term "Gangnam Style" is a neologism that stands for the way of life which is associated with the Gangnam area in Seoul, a district that is known to be one of the most lavish, luxurious, affluent areas in all of South Korea (Steinmetz, 2012). Barack Obama, the U.S. president at the time, used the popularity of "Gangnam Style" as an example of how Hallyu is "sweeping up" people globally.

Tan (2015) describes the music video of "Gangnam Style" as a "K-pop dance video full of fast cars, speed boats, pretty girls, ugly men, and horses.", and further adds that "its hybrid techno-

pop beats, rap rhythms, and synth sound effects epitomize the growing popularity of bubblegum K-pop.". The music video features cameos of other famous Korean musicians and entertainers. Many critiques argue that the music video for "Gangnam Style" is essentially mocking the life of the affluent Gangnam class, as well as their "lavish materialistic obsessions and a desire to mimic the Western Other" (Tan, 2015). Besides the coloristic chaotic music video and catchy lyrics, "Gangnam Style" just like most other K-pop songs features a catchy choreography that is easy to follow, the so-called "horse dance". From my personal experience, before every P.E. class in elementary school, my classmates and I would gather in the gym and do the "horse dance" or teach others how to do it.

Tan (2015) states that "Gangnam Style" is not any different from "other K-pop songs that have similar synth electronic sounds, repetitive gimmicks and token English phrases". Adorno (1941) states that popular music is simplified and characterised by the use of children's language like "Cry, Baby, Cry"), the melody is only selected out of a few tones and sound colours, which serve to represent fun and treat pop music listeners with an escape from adulthood. Not only does Psy use this "baby talk" in the repetitions such as "O-o-oppan Gangnam style" and "Hey Sexy Lady!", but the "horse dance" is also a representation of silliness, escape from adult monotony, having fun without caring about responsibilities, which is why the song appeals on a global level (Tan, 2015). Since K-pop is a willing participant in global interpellation, it has always included English words to assist with its "foreign" infiltration. Hey Sexy Lady uses this linguistic term in its opening sentence. Along with proving Adorno's (1941) notion of baby talk, the grammatically awkward sentence might be interpreted as merely another meaningless pop music statement, "Hey Sexy Lady" also serves as a tool for alienating the familiar and making the foreign familiar (Tan, 2015). Tan (2015) further argues that there is no requirement for linguistic understanding or context in "Gangnam Style", using Bauman's (2001) linking of culture and cultural identity as a department store where people are primarily consumers and so it is not important for them to know Korean and to comprehend the lyrics in Hangul because they just want to consume and enjoy the foreign content.

The lyrics of "Gangnam Style" are very simplistic, the song is about a man who describes himself in a "calm during the day, wild during the night" manner trying to find a woman of a similar style: "*A woman who is warm and humane during the day/A classy woman who knows how to enjoy the freedom of a cup of coffee/A woman whose heart gets hotter when night comes/A woman with that kind of twist. I'm a guy/A guy who is as warm as you during the day/A guy who one-shots his coffee before it even cools down/A guy whose heart bursts when night comes/That kind of guy*". In the Korean lyrics, there is a rhyme rhythm as in the lyrics regarding

the girl and guy because PSY repeats 여자 (woman) at the end of every line related to the girl, and 사나이 (guy) at the end of every line related to the guy, a pattern that is followed throughout the song. Specifically, he pronounces the 이 in 사나이 as /e/ instead of /i/ (*sanae* instead of *sanai*) to create another catchy pattern of the song. These lyrics allude to the afforementioned societal commentary of young adult affluent Gangnam residents. The prechorus is consisted of another repetition: "*Beautiful, loveable/Yes you, hey, yes you, hey*" repeated twice as the instrumentals are changing to prepare for the electronic beat drop, this part can be deemed as the only "singing" part of "Gangnam Style" as most of the song feels like statement making. In the chorus, we have the previously mentioned and analyzed repetitions of "Oppa is Gangnam Style" and "Hey sexy lady", which are made specifically to make themselves and the song stuck in the listeners' ears (in Korean – 후크송, hook song, subtype of songs that aim at catchiness). These types of lyrics are followed throughout the song until the end. In my opinion, it is enough to analyse Gangnam Style, as it is the most worldwide known example of classic fun Korean pop music, it contains all the notions a Korean pop song has, from styling, music video, music, hooks, catchiness and a light "shock factor" – one that just hooks you onto everything about the song.

For the second part of the media content analysis, I will talk about "Boys Over Flowers". "Boys Over Flowers" is a Korean television drama series broadcasted and released in 2009 as a drama adaption of a Japanese manga "Boys Over Flowers". The plot of this drama is centered on a working-class high-school student who wins a scholarship to a prestigious high-school full of only affluent students, where she gets bullied by a group of wealthy young men, but later starts dating one of them and earns friendship from the rest – a classic Cinderella story. The series is often regarded as having helped with the proliferation of Hallyu, earning high ratings in South Korea and becoming a phenomenon throughout Asia, bringing all its cast into immediate stardom (Jin, 2011).

One of the factors considered by Jin (2011) to be behind the massive success of "Boys Over Flowers" is the massive success of the original Japanese manga, the Japanese drama adaptation, and the Taiwanese drama adaptations, all having received success in Asia. The second factor is considered to be the production which mixes elements of the Korean drama fairy tale identity and the Japanese comic narrative (Jin, 2011). The director did not change much in the portrayal of the characters in the story, but he added more storyline to connect the characters, there is more sensational scenes, as well as the social setting of the drama which allowed the viewers to look at how the elites in Korea live like. This series gave new life to the term 꽃미남

(kkotminam: 꽃 meaning flower, 미남 meaning handsome man – a man as pretty as a flower that takes care of his looks), as it became such a phenomenon that Korean men started to care for their looks and engage in the *kkotminam* image – inspired by the 4 male leads in the series - which led to a rise in Korean men sporting expensive clothing and cosmetics, floral prints and buying pink clothes i.e. feminine style clothes (Lee, 2009). This is a parallel to be drawn with McLuhan's medium theory of communication, where he states that television, the Internet, technology all affect you and your behaviour (Littlejohn, Foss and Oetzel, 2011). Another relevant theory of communication is by Bourdieu, the theory of cultural production which consists of four main concepts: habitus, capital, field, and autonomy. Out of these concepts, the most important one for the person is habitus, which refers to the way one makes sense of the world, and it is formed by socialization and impacted by socioeconomics and social contexts (Littlejohn, Foss and Oetzel, 2011). Both feminine and masculine qualities can be pleased by the kkotminam's characteristics (Miyose & Engstrom, 2015).

"Boys Over Flowers" emphasizes the relationships (romantic and platonic), parties and fashion, with the settings being very luxurious and the music used in the show romanticizing the scenes, a fandom was created for the show and the fans eagerly waited for new episodes (Yasumoto, 2015).

Korean drama producers are known for making the hiring of conventionally most attractive actors and actresses a priority higher than the actual plot of the show itself, which is more evident in the past during the era of "Boys Over Flowers" than nowadays. It is for this reason that people used to start wanting to watch Korean shows – faces over plot. When you combine this aspect of the viewers together with the fact "Boys Over Flowers" is a classic Cinderella type of story that is hard to not fall for especially when you have a group of beautiful young adults on your screen, it is no wonder why it was so successful in Korea and outside. A plaudible theory of communication to connect with this statement is the cultivation theory by Gerbner and his colleagues – in short, heavy viewers of television are inclined to believe in a TV reality rather than how it is actually like in the real world (Littlejohn, Foss, and Oetzel, 2011). This theory connects with an active thought by many Korean content viewers, that all Korean men are as handsome, sweet as the male characters in Korean dramas, far from reality. A term that connects with this theory and this stance by the viewers is agendamelding – trying to create a personally satisfying image of the world (ibib).

The lines between the male lead and female lead also contain that special fairy tale lining that makes it easy for viewers to get immersed and swoon. Such example is when the male lead said "*I am announcing that from this day on, the sophomore Geum Jan-di from Class B is officially*

the girlfriend of Goo Jun-pyo"[2]. When viewers witness fairy tale moments like this through their screens, they get lost in the fictive world for a certain period of time which has effect on their actual emotions. This aspect can be connected with the transportation theory by Green and Brock, which describes what people do when they get lost in the narrative world (Littlejohn, Foss and Oetzel, 2011). In this specific example, people are moved from their everyday life into the fictive world of a poor regular high school girl Jan-di dating the most handsome, richest boy in the entire school Jun-pyo. Viewers start imagining themselves in Jan-di's position and start experiencing strong emotions. Littlejohn, Foss, and Oetzel (2011) state that transportation has important consequences for audiences, such as personal benefits (escaping our troubles, increased emotions, self-approvement), increased enjoyment, connection and interactions with the content being watched, and attitude changes in regards to the content being watched (like previously mentioned, South Korean men started to take care of their looks more during and after "Boys Over Flowers" was on air).

From the literature review provided, we can see that the analyzed pop song and the TV show are meticulously organized to attract the attention of consumers, whether they can understand or read Korean or not. The viewers can escape the reality of adulthood or their everyday life, and Korean songs and dramas provide them with that relief.

8. Questionnaire study

In order to empirically study attitudes towards Korean and the perception of Korean as a language and its learnability, and to see how the Korean entertainment industry can be a factor contributing to the global popularity of Korean, an online questionnaire via Google Forms was conducted, aimed at Croatian learners of Korean. Participants were asked to answer the basic demographic questions, after which the questionnaire focused on questions such as:

1. Perception of Korean as an easy or hard language to learn
2. Parts of Korean that were easier or harder to acquire
3. Psychotypology of Korean in relation to the participants' L1 (in this case Croatian)
4. Personal rating of proficiency in Korean
5. Participants' interest in and consumption of the Korean entertainment industry
6. Motivation for studying Korean

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[2] https://m.blog.naver.com/qwasqwas93/220833770342

7. Participants' thoughts on the biggest factor contributing to the growing popularity of Korean

9. Results

A total of fifty-six participants participated in this research. Most of the participants in the questionnaire are female (83,90%), followed by men (10,7%) and 3 participants answered that they are non-binary (5,4%), meaning they do not identify with any gender. I believe the number of female participants is so high, because the Korean music industry has a very high number of boy groups, and boy groups are traditionally and stereotypically liked by the female audience – especially in Kpop where it is common that male idols wear make up so more often than not, men are shunned for liking it. A large majority of the participants are between the ages of 18 and 24. (60,70%), followed by participants whose age is 25 and above (37.5%) and only one participant was under 18 (1,8%). There are zero participants who are in elementary school, 3,6% are in middle or high school. 14,3% have finished middle/high school, 39,3% are enrolled in a bachelor's program, 14,3% have finished a bachelor's program, 10,7% are currently enrolled in a master's program, 12,5% have finished a master's program, and 5,4% are in post master's studies or Ph.Ds.

The first question about the attitudes was: How long have you been studying Korean for?
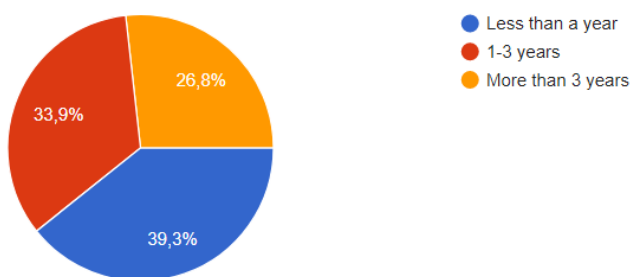
Figure 1. Duration of Korean studying

Most of the participants have been studying for less than a year (39,3%) or close to and above one year (33,9%).

In the following questions, I asked my participants to rate how easy or hard was Korean to learn based on their personal experience and expectations.
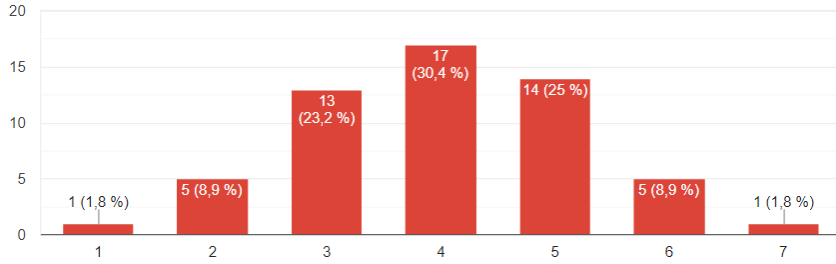
Figure 2. Measurement of the difficulty of Korean

The percentage of answers leaning to "easy" and "hard" is strikingly similar, but most participants (30,4%) chose that it was neither easy nor difficult.

The next two questions dealt with what aspect of Korean was easier to acquire, and what was harder.
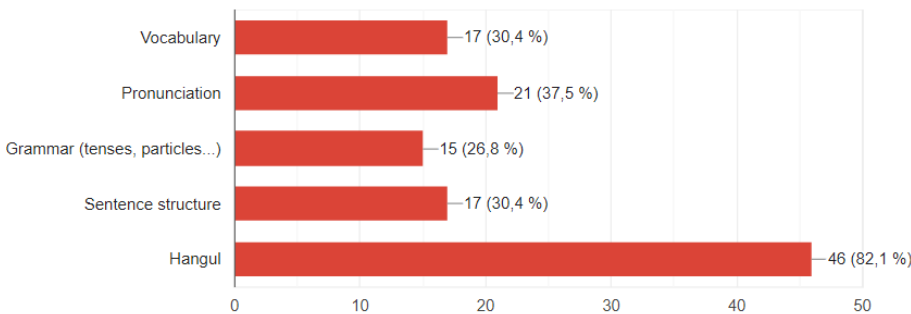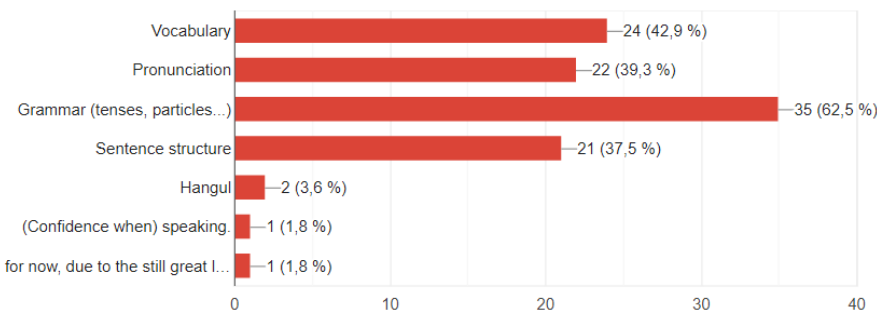

Figure 3. Aspect easier to acquire

Figure 4. Aspect harder to acquire.

82,1% of the participants chose that Hangul was the easiest acquire during their Korean studies, afterwards came pronunciation (37,5%), a tied score of 30,4% for vocabulary and sentence structure, and lastly grammar with 26.8%. On another hand, 62,5% of the participants chose that grammar was the hardest to acquire, followed by vocabulary (42,9%), pronunciation (39,3%), sentence structure (37,5%) and Hangul (3,6%). One participant stated that the hardest to acquire was also confidence when speaking, and another participant stated that all variables are hard for them.
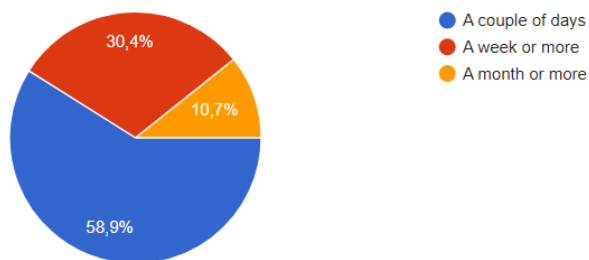
Figure 5. Duration of learning Hangul

It took 58,9% of participants a couple of days to learn Hangul, 30,4% stated that it took them more than a week, and 10,7% stated that it took them over a month.
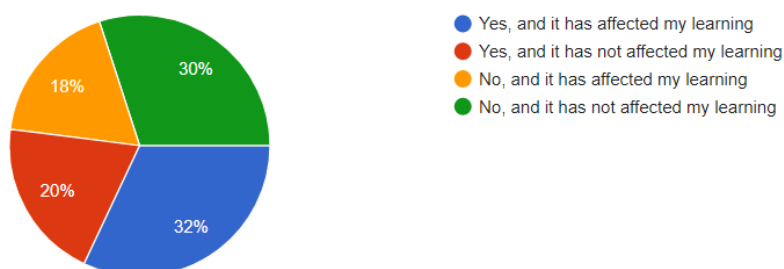
Figure 6. Similarity of Korean with L1

This question received somewhat similar percentages in answers, 32% of participants stated that they perceive Korean to be similar with their L1 and that it has affected their learning, while 30% of the participants stated that they do not perceive Korean to be similar with their L1, but that it has not affected their learning.

In regards to self-assessing their Korean proficiency using CEFR in reading and writing, a majority participants considers themselves A1 level (35,7%), 23,2% of the participants consider themselves A2, while 28.6% consider themselves B1 level. In terms of Korean proficiency in speaking and understanding, A1 was the highest choice (41,8%), followed by an equal percentage for A2 and B1 (25,5%). These results are visible from the figures below:
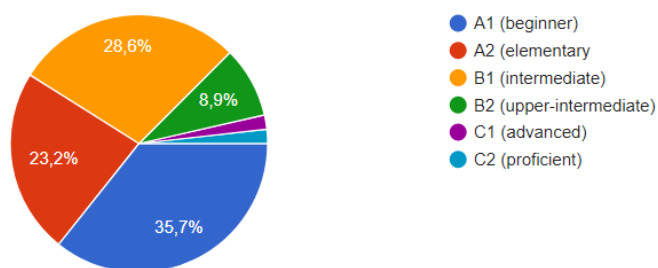
Figure 7. Korean proficiency in reading and writing (CEFR)
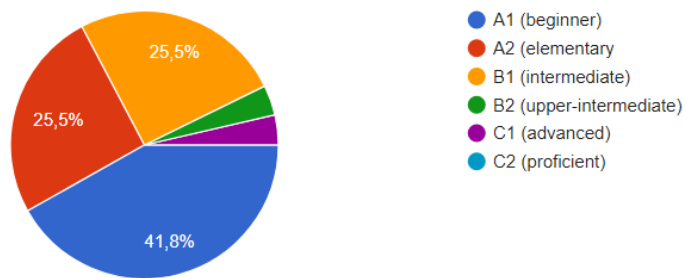
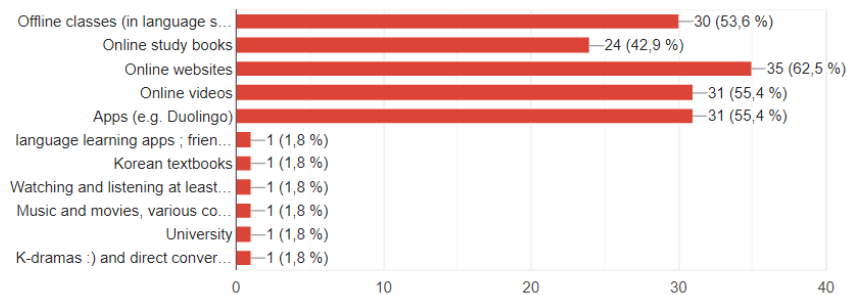Figure 8. Korean proficiency in speaking and understanding (CEFR)

Figure 9. Korean studying tools

Most of the participants used online tools to study Korean (62,5% online websites, 55,4% online videos, 55,4% applications, 42,9% online study books), while 53,6% also took offline classes. Some participants stated they also studied through watching Korean content.

Afterward, an open-end question was given to the participants where they had to write what parts of Korean are still struggling with, and as expected most answered grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. One participant mentioned they have dyslexia, so the studying process is much harder for them.
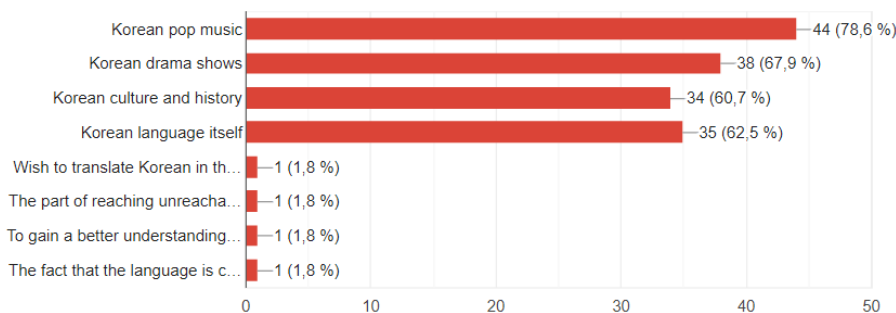
Figure 10. Motivation for studying Korean

The next multiple-choice question was about motivation. 78,6% of the participants answered that Korean pop music was their motivation, as well as 67,9% for Korean dramas. 60,7% also picked Korean culture and history, 62,5% picked just the Korean language itself was enough to motivate them. A couple of participants gave their own answers, mentioning wanting to translate Korean, their personal happiness, gaining a better understanding of Korean people, and Korean being completely different from their L1.
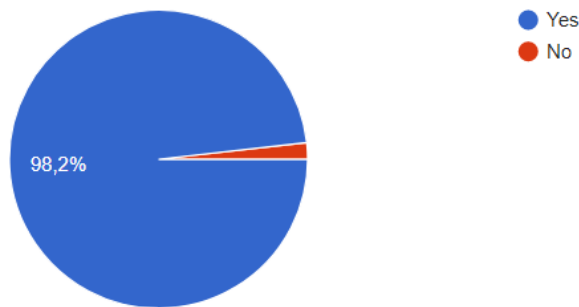
Figure 11. Engagement in Korean content

98,2% of the participants stated that they listen to K-pop and/or watch K-dramas.
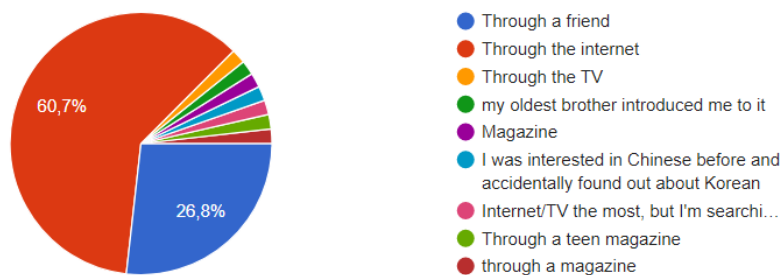

Figure 12. How did the participants find out about Korean content

60,7% of the participants discovered Korean content through the internet, 26,8% through a friend, the rest offered their own experiences.

Another open-end question was given to the participants where they were asked to write their first impression of Korean content, to which many answered that they were intriguied, amazed, considered it flashy and something new and fresh.
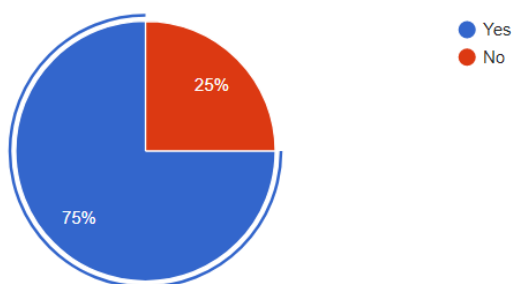

Figure 13. Would you say Korean entertainment is produced in a way that it aims to pique (arouse) interest in non-Koreans?

75% of the participants consider Korean entertainment to be produced specifically with the international audience in mind, while 25% disagree.
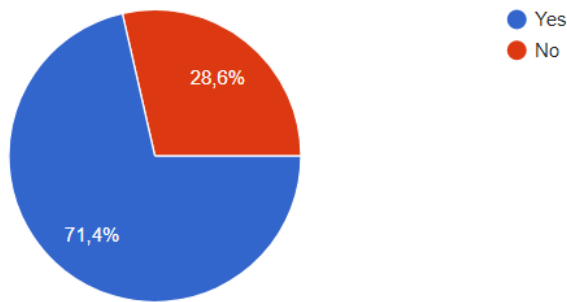
Figure 14. English subtitles are sometimes rather slow or non-existent for Korean content online. Would you say this was an additional factor that contributed to your start of Korean language learning?

71,4% of the participants consider the insufficient presence of English subtitles to have motivated them to study Korean.

When asked if they watch Korean content with subtitles or not, 69,6% of the participants answered that they always watch with subtitles, 28,6% watch with subtitles depending on which content they are consuming, and only 1 person (1,8%) said they do not need subtitles at all, evident from the figure below.
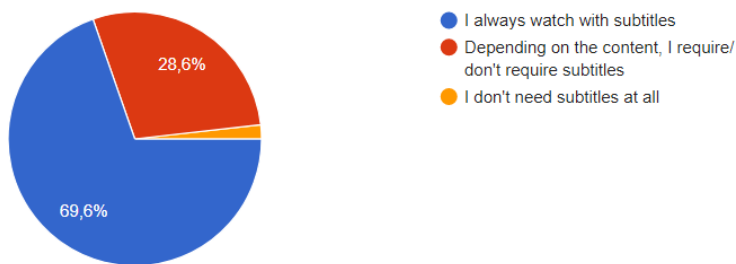

Figure 15. Watching Korean content with or without subtitles

When asked about their end-goal in studying Korean in an open-end question, most participants said they want to "just understand Korean fully" (want to become natives) and talk to natives, travel to Korea, or work in Korea one day in future.
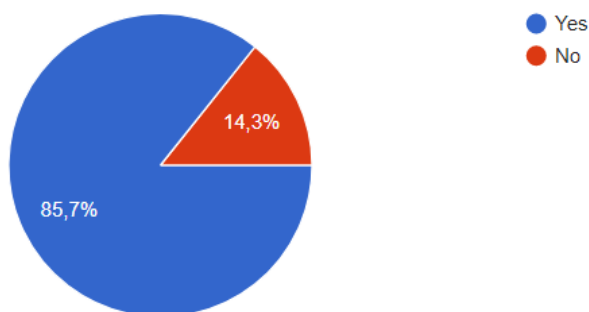

Figure 16. Would you say that learning Korean has become a global trend nowadays?

85,7% participants consider that learning Korean has become a global trend nowadays.

After this question, I asked them the final question about what do they think could be the biggest factor that contributes to the growing popularity of Korean, and most replied with simply K-pop or K-dramas and their growing popularity, but some wrote more in detail and I will quote some of those answers: "*In my opinion the biggest factor was their music and tv shows because they were an inspiration to me and to a lot of people I know to start learning their language. Also, their history and culture is very different then mine so that was a big factor because I wanted to understand their thinking better.*", "*Definitely the rise in popularity when it comes to Korean music and television. Every day, there is more content available in Korean online - eg. Netflix has started to buy licences for Korean dramas*", "*Good advertisement of their entertainment industry while everything is not available in English (or can't be translated well) and Hangul is easy to learn. In other words, lots of motivation and little difficulty when starting to study Korean.*", "*when you regularly consume content in a foreign language, you gradually begin to pick up some basics (such as common phrases and vocabulary). this ability makes you want to learn more and develop your hobby into a useful skill or challenge yourself and try to understand more*".

In general, most of the participants agree that it is the growing popularity of Korean pop and Korean dramas that is contributing to the growth in popularity of Korean worldwide. The implications of the results state a high correlation between the contribution of the Korean entertainment industry's popularity to the popularity of the Korean language. Not only are the majority of the Korean learning participants fans of Korean content, but 71% stated that the lack of subtitles motivated them for studying the language, and the majority also believe it is because of the popularity of the Korean entertainment industry that more people are studying Korean than ever. The majority's motivation to study Korean came from being fans of Korean pop or Korean shows, while a great number of participants also optioned for just the Korean language itself as their motivation. In regards to the linguistic factors, a couple of participants made the comparison that Korean is easier than other popular Asian languages like Chinese and Japanese. A total of 52% feel that Korean is similar to Croatian in linguistic structure (e.g. syntax), whether it has impacted their Korean learning or not. The Likert scale on how easy or difficult Korean was to learn was almost evenly spread out, with many participants feeling that it was neither too difficult nor too easy. Another linguistic factor in the learnability of Korean is Hangul, which most participants picked as the easiest part of studying Korean, out of which 58,9% stated it only took them a couple of days to learn Hangul, and an additional 30,4% stated it took them a week more. The summed-up results of the questionnaire study prove a strong argument that the learnability of Korean and the growing popularity of Korean music are

connected to boosting the popularity of the Korean language, with 85,7% of the participants stating they also feel like learning Korean is a global trend.

10. Conclusion

Ever since the first Hallyu wave in East and Southeast Asia, Korean content has grew in the number of followers, and with it has the number of people who are trying to learn the Korean language. The easy-to-follow, glamorous, dazzling Korean pop music sung by carefully manufactured groups by Korean entertainment companies, and heart-wrenching, romantic, funny, action-filled Korean dramas are causing billions of eyes and ears to turn to them and engage in what they have to offer. It is natural that the more people engage in content in one language, they will also grow a desire to learn something about the language, therefore people who engage in Korean content are likely to become interested in the Korean language itself, and some end up studying it for various reasons. Based on the literature review, the media content analysis and the questionnaire results of this thesis, it can be said that Korean pop music and Korean dramas are the biggest factors contributing to the growing popularity of Korean. It should be noted however, that although Korean pop songs and Korean TV shows represent general aspects of Korean culture (love for singing, specific customs, and plot lines), they still show a rather glorified image of the Korean society, which is considered to be conservative and closed to outsiders. The learnability of Korean itself is an additional factor that is contributing to its rise in popularity, as in the questionnaire most participants answered that Korean is neither too difficult or too easy to learn, some participants answering that they opted for learning Korean because it is "easier than Chinese and Japanese". As an Asian language with its own script, it can be stereotyped by people as "too hard to learn", but the specific linguistic features of the Korean language, such as the phonological script, no marked word-changing tones like in Chinese, make it not as difficult to acquire. When asked in the questionnaire what is contributing to the rise in popularity of Korean, one answer specifically said, "Good music + easier alphabet than Japanese and Chinese". Based on the results of the question regarding personal experience in learning Korean, most participants agreed that it was neither hard nor easy to learn, with the Likert-scale showing similar percentages for each of the remaining variables. Hangul was also deemed as easiest to learn by the participants, and as mentioned previously in this work, a person can read and pronounce anything in Korean once they learn Hangul. These linguistic and extra-linguistic factors contribute to the rise in popularity of Korean, whose popularity is constantly growing as Hallyu grows bigger and bigger, reaching

more people than ever due to the entire globe being connected through social media which currently carry the biggest responsibility of sharing Korean content and introducing the world with the Korean language and culture.

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