

The **Sounds** of  
**Korean**

This introduction to the sounds of Korean is designed for English-speaking students with no prior knowledge of the language, and includes online sound files, which demonstrate the sounds and pronunciation described. It will be an invaluable resource for students of Korean wanting to understand the basis of the current state of Korean phonetics and phonology, as well as for those studying Korean linguistics.

- Provides a complete and authoritative description and explanation of the current state of Korean phonetics and phonology
- Gives clear comparisons with English, and provides practical advice on pronunciation
- Provides a wealth of authentic Korean examples
- Each chapter contains exercises and *Did you know?* sections to help students put their knowledge into practice.

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## Preface

In learning a foreign language, it is essential to familiarise oneself with the sound properties of the language such as the inventory of sounds and phonological processes. Native speakers will acquire these naturally, but learners of the second language must learn them formally. This book aims to provide an introduction to the phonetics and phonology of Korean for those who study the Korean language and/or linguistics. More specifically, the target audience of this book consists both of academics in Korean Linguistics (or in Korean Studies or in linguistics) and of learners of Korean. Among the learners of Korean, this book is targeted particularly at learners of Korean who are familiar with English. Hence, comparison with English is also provided whenever necessary.

This book is rare in terms of being well balanced for these two audience groups. We believe that it will become the first comprehensive book to provide a complete and authoritative description and explanation of the current state of Korean phonetics and phonology.

Previous knowledge of the Korean language or linguistics will be beneficial to readers. We have provided the Korean alphabet with the revised Korean government romanisation or the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) transcription. We have adopted IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) description at the phonemic level for each word. Knowing the Korean alphabet will be a great help in following this book.

The website ([www.cambridge.org/shin](http://www.cambridge.org/shin)) will of course be a very useful/practical guide to the sound of Korean. Ample examples from the real use of contemporary spoken Korean form the key feature of this book – making it accessible to all those who are interested in the Korean language.

Each chapter contains two kinds of exercises – firstly, those which help the learner get used to practical pronunciation (i.e., experiment yourself/performance exercises); and secondly, exercises which encourage learners to evaluate

what they have learned about the sounds of Korean (i.e., content exercises). Not only this, each chapter has a very intriguing ‘Did you know?’ question, so that the learner can easily be exposed to how the Korean language is used on a day-to-day basis. In this book, we focus on Standard Seoul Korean pronunciation. Yet, whenever necessary, we have also included the synchronic and diachronic realisation of the sounds. The majority of Korean grammars and textbooks only provide a ‘normative’ or ‘written’ grammar, ignoring how the language is truly ‘spoken’. Our book focuses on Seoul Korean speakers’ ‘real’ pronunciation unless stated otherwise, but whenever comparison is needed, we also provide information regarding differences between dialects.

Finally, we would like to thank our husbands – Dr DoneSik Yoo, Dr Ian Kiaer and Dr Naehyun Kwon – for their full support in the process of writing this book. We are also grateful to Sookyoung Kwak, Marshall Craig, Deborah Smith and Matthew Hunter for their various editorial help. We thank our copy-editor Anna Oxbury for her wonderful work, and Helen Barton for her patience and encouragement throughout the project.

Notational conventions

- . syllable boundary
- | minor break boundary (phonological phrase boundary)
- || major break boundary (intonational phrase boundary)
- () eojeol ‘word phrase’ unit
- bound morpheme
- + morpheme boundary
- # word boundary
- ω phonological word boundary

Consonants

Korean alphabet	IPA	Korean alphabet	IPA	Korean alphabet	IPA
ㄱ	k	ㅇ	ŋ	ㄱ	k <sup>*</sup>
ㄴ	n	ㄷ	tɕ	ㄷ	t <sup>*</sup>
ㄷ	t	ㄸ	tɕ <sup>h</sup>	ㅌ	p <sup>*</sup>
ㄹ	l	ㅋ	k <sup>h</sup>	ㅍ	s <sup>*</sup>
ㅁ	m	ㅌ	t <sup>h</sup>	ㅊ	tɕ <sup>*</sup>
ㅂ	p	ㅍ	p <sup>h</sup>		
ㅅ	s	ㅎ	h		

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Notational conventions

Vowels					
Korean alphabet	IPA	Korean alphabet	IPA	Korean alphabet	IPA
ㅏ	ɑ	ㅓ	u	ㅗ/ㅛ/ㅜ	wɛ
ㅑ	ja	ㅕ	ju	ㅜ	wi
ㅓ	ʌ	ㅡ	ɯ	ㅓ	wɑ
ㅕ	ja	ㅣ	i	ㅜ	wʌ
ㅗ	o	ㅗ/ ㅛ	ɛ	ㅓ	ɯi
ㅛ	jo	ㅗ/ ㅛ	jɛ		

Except in special cases, all phonetic notation in this book uses broad transcription at the phonemic level.  
We follow in this book the Revised ROK Romanisation Convention.