**General Information**
- spoken in North and South Korean, each with various dialects and a different standard form
- spoken by about 66,305,890 people (www.ethnologue.com), mostly in N. and S. Korea
- possibly related to Japanese (and possibly belongs to Altaic language family)
- uses the *Hangeul* alphabet to write

**Location**

![Location Map](image1)

![Location Map](image2)
Phonetics/Phonology

Korean has a three-way *phonemic* distinction for plosive sounds: unaspirated lenis (i.e. lax), unaspirated fortis (i.e. tense), and aspirated. All are voiceless, though the lenis plosives become voiced in certain environments (see below).

Korean has two *phonemic* dental fricatives, which differ in their intensity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>plosives</th>
<th>bilabial</th>
<th>dental/alveolar</th>
<th>palatal</th>
<th>velar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lenis</td>
<td>p ㅂ</td>
<td>t ㄷ</td>
<td>c ㅈ</td>
<td>k ㄱ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fortis</td>
<td>pp ㅃ</td>
<td>tt ㄸ</td>
<td>cc ㅉ</td>
<td>kk ㄲ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aspirated</td>
<td>pʰ ㅍ</td>
<td>tʰ ㅌ</td>
<td>cʰ ㅊ</td>
<td>kʰ ㅋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fricatives</td>
<td>non-tense</td>
<td>s ㅅ</td>
<td>ss ㅆ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tension</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ss ㅆ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hangeul    | Yale Romanization | Phonetic | Gloss
---|---|---|---
방 | pang | [paŋ] | ‘room’
팡 | phang | [pʰaŋ] | (sound of popping; e.g. a balloon)
빵 | ppang | [ppaŋ] | ‘bread’
달 | tal | [tal] | ‘moon’
탈 | thal | [tʰal] | ‘mask’
탈 | ttal | [ttal] | ‘daughter’
장 | cang | [caŋ] | ‘intestines’; ‘sauce, paste’
창 | chang | [cʰaŋ] | ‘window’
짱 | ccang | [ccaŋ] | ‘best, awesome’ (slang)
검 | kem | [kəm] | ‘sword’
컴 | khem | [kʰəm] | abbreviation for ‘computer’
굳 | kkem | [kkəm] | ‘gum’
살 | sal | [sal] | skin
쌀 | ssal | [ssal] | uncooked rice
**Phonological Rules**

- Below are examples of some sound changes using the morpheme /kkoch/ ‘flower’\(^1,2,3\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Korean script</th>
<th>phonemic representation</th>
<th>phonetic transcription</th>
<th>gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. 꽃</td>
<td>/kkoc(^h)/ flower</td>
<td>[kkot]</td>
<td>‘flower’ (root)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. 꽃이</td>
<td>/kkoc(^h)-i/ flower-NOM</td>
<td>[kko.c(^h)i]</td>
<td>‘flower’ (as subject of verb)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. 꽃도</td>
<td>/kkoc(^h)-to/ flower-also</td>
<td>[kkot.tto]</td>
<td>‘flower also’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. 꽃나무</td>
<td>/kkoc(^h)+namu/ flower+tree</td>
<td>[kkon.na.mu]</td>
<td>‘flower tree’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. 꽃무늬</td>
<td>/kkoc(^h)+munij/ flower+design</td>
<td>[kkom.mu.ni]</td>
<td>‘floral design’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. 꽃송이</td>
<td>/kkoc(^h)+so(^n)i/ flower+blossom</td>
<td>[kkos.so(^n)i]</td>
<td>‘blossom’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. 꽃병</td>
<td>/kkoc(^h)+pyo(^n)/ flower+bottle</td>
<td>[kkop.pyo(^n)]</td>
<td>‘flower vase’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. 꽃가루</td>
<td>/kkoc(^h)+kanu/ flower+powder</td>
<td>[kkok.kka.ru]</td>
<td>‘pollen’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. 꽃이</td>
<td>/kkoc(^h)-ita/ flower-be</td>
<td>[kko.c(^h).i.da]</td>
<td>‘It is a flower.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. 꽃앞</td>
<td>/kkoc(^h)+aph/ flower+front</td>
<td>[kko.dap]</td>
<td>‘in front of the flower’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. 꽃잎</td>
<td>/kkoc(^h)+ip(^b)/ flower+leaf</td>
<td>/kkoŋ.ip]</td>
<td>‘(flower) petal’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^1\) The symbols + and – are used distinctively. The + symbol indicates a morpheme boundary in compound words, whereas the – symbol indicates a morpheme boundary between a stem and an affix.

\(^2\) Abbreviations used: NOM = nominative case, Q = question marker, V = verb marker, ADV = adverb marker, C = consonant, N = nasal consonant

Below are some (not all) common sound changes in Korean.

- coda neutralization (cf. a, j, k)
  - all plosives/fricatives are unreleased in the environments __C, #, +
    - all bilabial plosives → unreleased bilabial [p’]
    - all dental and palatal plosives and fricatives → unreleased dental [t’]
    - all velar plosives → unreleased velar [k’]

  - /nat/ → [nat] ‘cereal grains’
  - /natʰ/ → [nat] ‘piece, unit’
  - /nas/ → [nat] ‘sickle’
  - /nac/ → [nat] ‘daytime’
  - /nacʰ/ → [nat] ‘face’

- nasalization (cf. d, e, k)
  - all consonants (except ɾ) become nasal in the environment __N

  - /kipʰ-ni/ → [kim.ni] ‘Is it deep?’
  - deep-Q

- assimilation (cf. d, e, f, g, h, k)

- epenthesis (i.e. insertion of a vowel or consonant)
  - (k) has /n/ epenthesis + assimilation

    - /kkocʰ+ipʰ/ → kkot+ip → kkot+nip → kkot+nip → [kkoɲ.nip]

- tensification (cf. c, f, g, h)
  - lenis plosives + fricative /s/ become their tense counterparts after plosives or fricatives

    - /kaps-i/ → [kap.ssi] ‘price’ (as subject of verb)
      - price+NOM
    - /kipʰ-ta/ → [kip.tta] ‘to be deep’
      - deep-V
    - /nic+ke/ → [nit.kke] ‘late’ (adverb)
      - late+ADV

- voicing
  - lenis plosives become voiced between voiced sounds

    - /papo/ → [pabo] ‘idiot’
    - /kalpi/ → [kalbi] ‘spare ribs’
    - /panci/ → [panji] ‘ring’