Korean Language & Culture

As seen in the translation industry

Introduction

The short e-book you are reading is part of our Korean Language & Culture week. Being true to the vision we have to be the bridge between East and the West we collected various interesting information from the Korean lifestyle and traditions. Gaining understanding of a country is one of the ways to improve your work with Korean language in your company. Alongside that, we aim to make it a pleasant experience by showing you some beautiful bits and pieces of the Korean culture.

We hope you will enjoy it!

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Hanbok

Our first choice is an example of traditional clothing. We have selected the Hanbok – a semi-formal or formal attire that Koreans dress during traditional occasions. The colors of the clothes are vibrant and the lines of the design are simple.

The Hanbok originates from back in time from the era of the Three Kingdoms. However, most of the traditional designs seen nowadays are matching the style of the late 1300's.

It was the daily wear of Koreans back then but in modern times it is mainly used on official occasions such as the Seollal or the Lunar new Year

About Korean Fonts

Desktop publishing is all around us. From the pamphlets and leaflets we receive when we walk into a shop, to brochures, magazines, and newspapers.

With a wide range of proponents claiming that print is dead, it may seem surprising to be focusing on the topic of desktop publishing (DTP), but professional DTP is, and will continue to be, a part of our lives as long as information needs to be disseminated.

In this blog post, we'll cover the topic of desktop publishing, and specifically, professional DTP as it relates to the Korean language and Korean fonts.

The Korean alphabet

Known as Hangul in South Korea, and as Chosongul in North Korea, the Korean alphabet may appear to share many similarities with Chinese and Japanese.

After all, the alphabet is characte-based. But, there are some significant differences.

The Korean alphabet, Hangul, was created relatively late, historically speaking, by King Sejong the Great.

Korean letters, or "jamo" (자모) comprise the alphabet, which in turn, consists of 14 consonants and 10 vowels.

The interesting thing about Korean letters is that they were very logically created, with some calling the alphabet as "the most perfect phonetic system" ever devised. And here's why.

Each shape of each letter is devised in such a way as to mirror the sound that they make. For example, consonants are written in a way that mirrors the shape of the mouth and the position of the tongue when making the sound.

On the other hand, vowels have been built onto a simplified

system of horizontal and vertical lines, making them easy to distinguish.

Syllabic blocks

The 24-letter South Korean alphabet is expressed in characters which are written from top to bottom, left to right, the latter of which is similar to English. However, that's where the similarities end.

The structure of a Korean word fits into what are called "syllabic blocks", which order the consonants and the vowels in an organized manner.

Each word fits into a block, depending on its length, the number of consonants and vowels in it, as well as its position.

There are a total of nine Korean syllabic blocks. They start out with the most simple to the most complex word structure.

Here they are:

Initial	Medial

Initial	
Medial	

Initial	
Medial 1	Medial 2

Initial	Medial
Final	

Initial	
Medial	
Final	

Initial	
Medial 1	Medial 2
Final	

Initial	
Medial 1	Medial 2
Final	

Initial	Medial
Final 1	Final 2

Initial	
Medial	
Final 1	Final 2

Initial	
Medial 1	Medial 2
Final 1	Final 2

Apart from these syllabic blocks in the Korean language, you also need to be aware that there are four other ways in which words can be structured.

This can be downward (e.g. 읍 eup), clockwise (e.g. 쌍 ssang), down-right-down (e.g. 된 doen), or left to right at the bottom (e.g. 밟 balp).

What is professional DTP?

The production of printed materials usually has a host of benefits such as increased productivity, reduced production costs, the ability to produce customized documents, overall improved appearance of documents, and so much more.

In brief, desktop publishing is a means of producing print materials with the aid of a printer which is connected to a computer.

This computer, in turn, utilizes special software to produce a whole host of printed materials to be printed and designed, with a quality that's similar to that of typeset books.

Where is desktop publishing mainly used?

As mentioned earlier, desktop publishing is used for a wide range of printed materials.

From the latest specials at your local grocery store, to political pamphlets, posters, postcards, leaflets, reports, documents, and even books, desktop publishing is an important element of getting the finally designed document to print.

In the Western world, which mainly uses English as the language medium, there are many software programs which enable for creative and innovative desktop publishing through the use of a wide range of fonts.

These fonts can create memorable experiences for the readers, and some fonts have even been associated with brands and brand awareness and recall, such as the Coca Cola brand for example.

It's a typeface that hasn't changed much over the past decade and even more and is easily recognizable across the world.

Where to find Korean fonts

With the Korean language, however, the issue of fonts can be a difficult task if you are a novice and don't know where to start.

Keeping in mind the Korean language's use of characters and the syllabic blocks discussed above, it's also important to know when, how and if to emphasize certain words and the font that will be chosen to emphasize this.

Luckily, there are several sources of Korean language fonts which you can use.

These sources include Google's selection of Korean fonts, Korea's search engine, Naver, as well as Naver's Hangul site, which offers the Nanum Pro font series.

Applying specific fonts to Korean characters

An interesting fact about Korean and the fonts used is that the italics font is not used in any print materials.

If you would like to place emphasis on a word, you can use bold typeface, single quotation marks, or underline the relevant word.

In the past, a single dot was used on top of the syllabic blocks to show emphasis, although this practice is no longer used as much.

Also important to keep in mind when working with Korean fonts is that there are three main categories of fonts, namely, "Batang" (background), "Dotum" (stand out), and "Gungsuhche" (Palace style). The latter imitates calligraphy-style writing.

Conclusion

Desktop publishing is a critical feature of our modern world as we disseminate information in a variety of ways to our intended audience.

Using catchy fonts might help you create and build your brand, and while this may seem relatively simple in the English-speaking world, the same is not always true for Korea.

Korea's alphabet, Hangul, is a very logically structured series of consonants and vowels and the use of syllabic blocs makes the language especially suited for learning maths.

Apart from this fact, however, you may need to access some Korean fonts to emphasize your message and employ creativity in your task.

In this blog post, we've offered some background information on the Korean alphabet and provided some useful resources for accessing Korean fonts.

We hope this information will help you with your next desktop publishing project!

Children's day in Korea

Children's day in Korea (May 5th) was firstly celebrated in 1923. The famous children's book writer Dr. Bang Jung-Hwan, says: "*Children are the future of our nation. Let's show respect for children. Children who grow up with ridicule and contempt from others will become people who disrespect others, while children who grow up with respect from others will become people who respect others in turn.*"

Chuseok

Autumn is on its way with its beautiful colors and the lovely lingering summer days. And in Korea it is time for one of their major harvest festivals. Chuseok (Korean: 추석; Hanja: 秋夕; [tɕʰu.sʌkˀ]) literally means "Autumn eve" and can also be referred to as the "great middle" As you may guess it is held approximately around the autumn equinox in early autumn.

So now for our colleagues in Korea it is time to visit their hometowns, pay homage to their ancestors, eat traditional food and drink national drinks...

Celadon

Greenware known as well under the name **Celadon** is a type of pottery, which originated from China but later transferred to other countries like Korea and Thailand. In Korea the celadon pottery produced between 918 - 1392 during the Goryeo Dynasty is considered one of the classic Korean porcelains along with the white porcelains created throughout the reign of the Joseon dynasty.

We have picked up a fine example from this period so you can lay your eyes on the beautiful art that it is...

Pansori

And what is a culture week without music?... We've chosen this one because the people who can perform this are considered "living national treasures". If you don't know what this is — it is a popular term for Holders of Important Intangible Cultural Properties or also called keepers.

Pansori (Korean: 판소리) is the art of musical storytelling performed by a singer and a drummer. Pansori is also recognized by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Translating "Eva Dislikes John" and Vice Versa

How difficult could it be?

The two seemingly inconspicuous sentences, "Eva dislikes John" and "John dislikes Eva" might seem easy to translate into the Korean language at first sight. After all, they each contain a subject, verb and an object. But translating Korean isn't as straightforward as it seems.

For example, the subject "Eva" in the first sentence ends in a vowel, while the object "John" ends in a consonant. In addition, in Korean, the verb always comes at the end of a sentence.

So a seemingly straightforward translation of these two sentences can actually become something more complex that machine translations simply cannot pick up and a human touch is required.

In this blog post, we'll provide some important translation insights that will help you with your Korean language translations.

Definite and indefinite articles

The English language has definite and indefinite articles which indicate whether the noun is known to the reader or not.

For example, there's a vast difference between the words "a banana" and "the banana".

"A banana" is something abstract, a non-concrete term that could refer to any banana in the world.

However, "the banana" is the one you're specifically referring to – it is known to you and might be in front of you or even in your hands.

In Korean, nouns are marked with the following markers: 이/가 and 은/는.

They appear at the end of the noun to indicate whether you're speaking about an indefinite or a definite noun.

이/가 is used to indicate an indefinite noun, whereas 은/는 is used to indicate a definite noun.

Addressing contrasts

While the contrast between definite and indefinite articles mentioned above might seem uncomplicated, the situation with 이/가 and 은/는 becomes a bit more complex when describing a contrast in a sentence.

The general rule is that 이/가 is used for general statements, whereas 은/는 is used for contrast.

Here is one example of how to apply this.

The sentences "Eva dislikes John" and "John dislikes Eva" are general statements, so 이/가 will be used at the end of the nouns.

On the other hand, if the two sentences above changed slightly to "Eva dislikes John, but John dislikes Eva", the ending of the nouns will contain the following Korean characters: 은/는.

Subject or description?

Another case where 이/가 and 은/는 come into play is when it comes to describing subjects or descriptions/actions.

Let's take a closer look at this:

Subject:

Q: Who is going to the shops?

A: Eva is going to the shops.

Action:

Q: What are you doing now?

A: I am reading.

In the first Q&A, the question's focus is on "who" is going to the shops, and the corresponding subject is "Eva". That's why 이/가 should be used there.

Meanwhile, in the second Q&A, the focus of the question is on the action being performed, so the corresponding participle should contain 은/는.

Verb conjugation

은/는 is used to show emphasis during a verb conjugation.

English auxiliary verbs like "can", "will" or "should" help the main verb.

In a similar manner, 은/는 is used in the Korean language to help modify verbs.

In the middle of sentences

We come to the last part of using Korean language participles.

When there is the case of several simple sentences that you'd like to combine into a single sentence, remember to always use 이/가 in the middle to join them.

Is it possible to automate email campaigns?

Email campaigns are becoming increasingly common in the business landscape with large, medium and small companies embarking on such campaigns to retain customers, offer promotions or inform clients of company developments.

But given the information that was discussed above, is it possible to automate email campaigns in Korea?

The short answer is that it would be a very difficult endeavour.

One of the first things that you will have to do is see whether the name of the person is in the subject of the sentence.

Then, you would need to determine whether the Korean name ends with a vowel or consonant.

Other factors to consider are the complexity of the email campaign's subject lines, as well as the importance of verb conjugation.

An email with a subject line of "Eva, we're offering you 50% OFF on our shoes!" will be translated differently to "John, we're offering you 50% OFF on our shoes!"

Translating the Korean language – it's not a straightforward affair

The Korean language has at least a thousand year old history.

While around 60% of the words come from Chinese, the Korean characters are very much different from those used in China.

Moreover, the Korean language is considered to be a language isolate, which means there is no other language that is similar to it in the world.

Translating Korean is no easy task and because of some of the cases with participles that were discussed above, machine translation can be a cumbersome and difficult task and can often lead to inaccuracies.

This is why the quality human touch is vital for Korean translations.

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