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Hangul Zoo: Alphabet Book on Korean Consonants

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Hangul Zoo
Alphabet Book on Korean Consonants

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2023

Abstract

This independent study is focused around the development of an original alphabet picture book (*Hangul Zoo*) that aims to support Native English Speakers with their learning of Korean as a second language. Those who have prior experience and knowledge of the English alphabet will benefit from using this book as a tool for bilingual learning. This book will help bilinguals be able to differentiate the two unique alphabets (English and Korean), while still making cross connections. While most alphabet books are catered towards children of ages birth through 5 and are often used in early childhood settings (daycares and preschools) for toddlers, *Hangul Zoo* is also meant for children and adults older than that. Through the use of playful imagery and alliteration, *Hangul Zoo* captures the consonant sounds of the Korean alphabet in a way that native English speakers can understand and recall. This “children’s” book also incorporates memorable illustrations and bright pops of color that appeal to the visual learners. Additionally, the story depicts a character who struggles with bilingualism, making the story relatable and applicable to many. This final project will discuss the value of having bilingualism represented through children’s literature as well as the impacts of representation on creating an inclusive and welcoming classroom environment for students.

To my niece and nephew: Harper and Declan

*I wish for you to grow in appreciation of your native language and
To always keep your desire to communicate fully with our family..*

*And other Korean Americans and those who would like to learn Korean...
I hope this book adds playfulness and joy to your pursuit of Korean literacy.*

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RATIONALE

Early Encounters with Hangul

Growing up as a Korean American, I never considered myself as being bilingual. The prefix “Bi” makes me think of equal counterparts. However, It always felt like one language was superior to the other. My first language was Korean because my parents predominantly spoke Korean at home. When I entered Preschool, I was admitted into ESL (English as a second language). I was one of the “ESL kids”, being pulled from classes to learn English with other children who spoke various different languages (none of which I was familiar with). We couldn’t really communicate with each other at first but it didn’t matter because we had one common goal. Our only goal was to learn English so that we could catch up to our other English speaking peers. There was no concept of bilingualism or efforts to keep us bilingual. In fact, I stopped going to ESL in the second grade. By then, I was fluent in English and was considered to be a Native English speaker. I was more reluctant to speak Korean and English became my preferred language of communication.

It was only natural, though. I was a product of an education system that was taught and accessed mainly in English. There was no translanguaging in the classrooms. This is not to discredit any of my early educators, it just wasn’t a priority at the time. Even in libraries, I rarely saw books written in the Korean language and the only time I was able to tap into Korean literacy was at home, when speaking to my family or memorizing the Korean alphabet with my grandfather. As much as I enjoyed the quality time spent with my grandfather, learning the Korean alphabet felt laborious. This was especially true since I had few opportunities to put my learning into practice. I never

spoke Korean at school and for sure never read or wrote it outside of practicing the basics at home. At most, I wrote my name and made random Korean-symbol-like scribbles, which wouldn't develop into actual words until I was much older. I didn't feel the need to learn Korean because I could already read and write in English and no one else around me was reading or writing in Korean. I was one of two Koreans in my entire school and what I wanted most was to fit in.

Despite all of this, being Korean was inevitably part of my identity, even as a child with little exposure to Korean outside her home. Even with limited resources, my elementary school teachers made an effort to create mirrors for me in the classroom. Grace Lin, describes in her TEDTalk how books can be a window for children into the world. "When the light hits the window just right, it can also be a mirror" (Lin, 2016). Grace talks about how she grew up in a community where there were very few Asians/ people who looked like her and that made her want to assimilate and pretend that she wasn't Asian. There was also no representation of Asians in any form of media that she had access to so it was easy for her to forget her roots. Books are a creative outlet for young children. The books that children read can set them on a path of respecting their self-worth as well as how they see and understand others who are not like them. As a child, I remember one of my most favorite books being The Empty Pot by Demi and The Korean Cinderella by Shirley Climo. Looking back, I didn't really know why I liked these books and read them over and over again. I realize now that I appreciated having images of characters that looked like me with the dark hair, round face, and dark brown eyes. Even at a young age, I knew I was Korean, and was proud to have a book to read that no one else could relate to as much as I did. I recognized the traditional dresses

(Hanboks) in The Korean Cinderella, from images in my home and admired the familiar architecture of the Joseon Era that I would see in dramas that my parents would watch. I also had a variety of texts in my reach that showed characters different from me. I felt like I was exposed to a rich variety of texts that taught me to appreciate culture and diversity. However, language (one of the most vital aspects that tie a group of people together) was one part of my identity that fell short.

Embracing Korean Literacy

I didn't have many opportunities to use the Korean language outside of basic conversations with my family until I entered College. Fortunately for me, my parents refused to let me speak English at home so my native tongue was still somewhat intact (I thank them for this). At City College, I joined a Korean Community Club. Many of the members were Study Abroad students and spoke mostly in Korean. Naturally, they were fluent in reading and writing in Korean and once again, I wanted to fit in. I was engaging more in Korean centered activities and speaking in Korean with my peers because now it was relevant to me through social media. At first, I was hesitant to use the Korean Alphabet but wanted to communicate in Korean. I texted in romanization (sounding out Korean words using the english alphabet). Eventually, I obtained the Korean Keyboard and began using texting as a tool to correct my spelling and grammar. I was actually surprised at how quickly I was able to learn and apply rules of writing and word formation in Korean. It was so natural to form words the way they sounded because of the way Korean letters sound just as they are read. Each letter has a 1:1 correspondence unlike the English alphabet, in which letters sometimes make different sounds depending on which word they are used in. In fact, this rule helped me to improve my speech in

Korean. There were many words I was saying wrong but I learned how to pronounce correctly by learning the spelling. By the time I graduated College, I felt confident enough to finally say that I was fluent in Korean, as well as literate, something I couldn't say when I was younger.

For so long, I thought that I didn't need to know Korean or that I already knew enough to get by and that was okay. It never occurred to me that without the opportunity to use language, I was risking the possibility of losing my bilingualism. This is evident in the way I wasn't actually saying words correctly prior to learning how to effectively use literacy. New research shows that simultaneous biliteracy instruction, in which instruction in various languages is given at the same time, actually improves children's application and understanding of both languages (Garcia, 2014).

For many second generation Korean Americans growing up in America, there is a push to learn English and once they have acquired that, some are sent to Hakwons (Korean schools) that teach them Korean in a very drilled, non authentic way that feels unnatural and textbook oriented. In addition, the time and context for these two languages are taught in isolation from one another. This has been the experience of many of my peers. I used to be flattered when people told me that I was good at Korean, despite never having gone to a Hakwon to learn Korean. Looking back, I realize knowing your home language should be the norm. Various modes of literacy that support multilingual students should be accessible and valued in their Education. In *What Teachers Need to Know About Language* by Lily Wong Fillmore (2000), the author discusses the language skills that children must acquire to be successful in school and in society and what teachers need to know to support their students in acquiring these skills. When Fillmore discusses

the role of the teacher in the classroom, they make a valid point that teachers sometimes make assumptions about children who don't communicate in ways that they would normally expect. It is important for teachers to select materials and texts that validate all types of language in the classroom and to design activities and an environment that expands on students' existing forms of expression and knowledge (Fillmore, 2000).

I want to teach people about the benefits of learning Korean and how useful the Korean alphabet could be. I believe it is an accessible writing system that can be applied to any form of speech and that there are many possibilities for children to access literacy in Korean, regardless of their cultural background. The intuitive design of the Korean alphabet that makes it user friendly as well as practical makes it possible for South Korea to have one of the highest literacy rates in the world with 98% of South Koreans over the age of 15 being able to read and write (Chung, 2013). I hope to support children like me to embrace the Korean language in the classroom through my original book, *Hangul Zoo*.

CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Introduction to Childhood Development

The intended audience for books that teach the alphabet are young readers, usually toddlers, but can be enjoyed by older children and adults who are learning a new language. Younger toddlers and babies can engage with the illustrations, colors, and simplicity of identifying letters in an alphabet with the help of an adult, while more sophisticated readers can use newly acquired alphabets and apply them to reading and writing. For this book project, my target audience is the upper elementary years (ages 7-11), as my book was inspired by my own experiences with language during those years of my life. At this age, children have the capacity to understand how cross languageing is

used and can appreciate the author's craft and writing techniques used in literature. They can read and access this book independently or discuss cultural concepts in a class discussion following a read aloud. For this reason, I will be discussing the developmental aspects of children in the middle childhood years and why my book: *Hangul Zoo* would be an appropriate reading tool for this age group.

Cognitive Development

Piaget's theory of cognitive development refers to the middle childhood years (ages 7-11) as the Concrete Operational Stage. During this stage of development, children develop the capacity to think systematically and symbolically, while referring to concrete objects and experiences. Prior to this stage, children are more illogical and are less likely to process non concrete information and material as effectively. (Crain, 2014). Once children enter the middle childhood years of cognitive function, they are able to apply new knowledge to their understanding of how things work in certain situations. This is due to their developing capacity for working memory, ability to focus, and use of effective memory strategies to assist their learning. They are also able to communicate their understanding as well as use logic and reasoning when it is presented to them.

My book: *Hangul Zoo*, is ideal for children in these stages of development because they are able to access their working memory to help them remember Korean letters and their corresponding sounds with the help of visual cues. They can understand that the physical symbol for the Korean letter is associated with a certain sound and easily apply that concept to reading and writing in Korean.

Social Emotional Development

During the middle childhood years, children experience many social developmental changes. During this time, they develop a need for social interactions as it becomes increasingly important for them to have friends. “Children overcome egocentrism as they interact less exclusively with adults and more with other children. They discover that whereas grownups seem to understand whatever is on their minds, their peers do not. Consequently, they learn to consider others’ viewpoints in order to make themselves understood” (Crain, 2014). Children become more aware of social cues and begin to recognize differences between themselves and others, both physically and culturally. Due to this, it is important for children to learn certain social skills such as cooperating with others, seeing things from other people’s perspective, and having social responsibilities. Children learn a lot about themselves and their own identities. They begin to appreciate their own unique culture and heritage as well as that of others. In order to promote positive social interactions and development in the classroom, children should have access to diverse learning experiences that teach them about different cultures and communities. Part of this starts with the classroom library, which should be catered to the different needs and experiences of students in the classroom.

Hangul Zoo is relatable for bilingual students in showing them that learning two languages can be challenging and frustrating. It shows students that it is okay to be frustrated and that it’s a great thing to have the ability to speak another language. It promotes appreciation for home languages and shows that heritage languages are as equally important as English. Having this book in the classroom also allows students who don’t speak the language easy access to learn the language, in addition to teaching about

Korean culture. One of the pages, Ξ is for Tiger Teaching Tai Kwon Do shows a popular Korean martial arts form. It gives non-Korean students a window to the Korean student's world and gives them something to relate to like the experience of going to the zoo and seeing fun animals do relatable human activities! Having a diverse collection of books in a classroom library promotes understanding and acceptance of differences, as children are innately curious and excited to learn about things that they aren't familiar with. In addition, everyone feels included and seen. My book is a fun way to get everyone to interact with the text and each other. A fun follow-up activity after reading the book could be to try writing some of the letters using sounds they hear in their name and sharing it with one another.

Language and Literacy

All children have the innate ability to acquire language and communicate with others. "Long before a child starts school, he or she has become an extremely sophisticated language- user, operating a system for self-expression and communication that no other creature, or computer, comes close to matching" (Yule, 2010). Unlike other animals that can also communicate with each other, humans are able to utilize and manipulate language resources as well as reflect on whether or not their messages are being communicated correctly. This is called the property of *reflexivity*, which explains how humans can use language to think and talk about language and how it is used. They can manipulate their language to send specific messages to communicate in a more sophisticated way. (Yule, 2010) Language is also arbitrary, meaning that there is no natural correlation between the words used in speech and writing, and the actual meaning of the words themselves. Language is not genetic or hereditary. Children acquire

language through social interactions and it is only meaningful to them when it applies to them and they are required to use it. Chris Lonsdale, who has developed a unique approach to learning language in a short amount of time describes the fundamental principles of successful language learning in his *TEDTalk: How to Learn Language in Six Months*. The major principles that Lonsdale describes refer to relevance, meaning, attention, and memory. When acquiring a new language, Lonsdale explains it is important to use language content that is relevant to you, use acquired language as a tool for communication right away (put it to practice), listen for comprehension (context matters), and to find ways to enjoy and be positive about language learning. These principles are important for language acquisition because it ensures that the language being required is useful and meaningful to the user.

Literacy, or the ability to read and write, provides children with the right tools for learning. It is also a form of expression, communication, inquiry into gathering and reinforcing new ideas. The basis of literacy starts with writing. Without written language/communication, there wouldn't be a need to read. Writing is described as the symbolic representation of the spoken language. It is represented through graphic symbols and is not easily acquired through exposure. Rather, it is something that has to be learned through consistent, conscious effort and practice. The basic skill of being able to produce and interpret written forms of language defines who is considered literate in society. Unfortunately, for some children who speak other languages at home, they may not be literate in their second language. "Not all languages have a written form and, even among people whose language has a well-established writing system, there are large numbers of individuals who cannot use the system" (Yule, 2010). Both English and Korean follow

the alphabetic writing system. An alphabet is used to describe a system of symbols that represent a sound or phoneme that can then be used to create any combinations of sounds.

Children are drawn to learning when the content is relevant to them and easy to learn. If they see it as a way to communicate with their peers, teachers, or family members, it will be meaningful to them. In addition, if learning is presented in a way that is fun, and easy to remember, they are more likely to engage positively, and remember new information. According to Yule's (2010) chapter on Second Language Acquisition and Learning in *The Study of Language*, children in the school age years are more likely to effectively acquire a new language because they are less affected by affective barriers such as self-consciousness of having an accent, or mispronouncing words, as well as a lack of empathy or relationship with another culture. Allowing children to be exposed to material in other languages early on can encourage them to pursue another language and pursue other experiences in the culture so that they grow in cultural appreciation and empathy for others.

Personal Childhood Experience

In my time at Bank Street, I learned that there was a multitude of books and stories meant for children to tap into literacy. Through my coursework at Bank Street, I was inspired to help children like me to have more interest in becoming literate in Korean as well as to share my language with other non Koreans. The ability to read and write is one that allows children to be confident learners and communicators. But what did it mean to be literate anyway? This was a question I never thought about because the answer seemed obvious: being able to read or write. But who was capable of reading and writing? And how could we correctly assess who is literate in the classroom? Did we

have the tools to accurately see which students were literate and to what extent? And did the students have the correct tools to be literate and successful in the classroom. I learned that there was so much more to literacy and biliteracy than I had ever thought about prior to my coursework at Bank Street.

It was in *EDUC 505: Language Acquisition and Learning in a Linguistically Diverse Society* with Tyler Jennings in Summer 2021, that I really began to explore what it meant to be multilingual and how invaluable it was to allow children to use all their modes of communication. In this course, I was introduced to the idea of translanguaging in classrooms. In Garcia's (2014) *The Translanguaging Classroom: Leveraging Students Bilingualism for Learning*, Garcia discusses the benefit of having bilingual students pull from all of their language resources in order to collaborate with their peers. She emphasizes the need to draw on bilingualism as a strength and not something that needs to be fixed. I believe that the practice of translanguaging classrooms is fundamental to changing the stigma around emergent bilinguals in schools and promoting inclusivity and language diversity in all children. By allowing children to lead and participate in linguistically diverse discussions, translate for each other, and solve problems using all of their language knowledge, it creates a welcoming school community that truly embodies the children that attend the school.

After reading Garcia's text and learning about the possibilities of how a class functions in a translanguaging setting, I knew I wanted to create opportunities for students like me to see their language represented in the classroom. English is often seen as a universal language that ties together people from various backgrounds in places where great diversity exists such as America. Despite there being more bilinguals in the

world than monolinguals, and more people educated in two languages than in exclusively English, there is still a seemingly superior status to being literate in English. Garcia mentions that school systems tend to “pathologize bilingualism” labeling students who are new to English as “English language learners”, and “limited English Proficient,” highlighting the English deficit rather than seeing the students as emergent bilinguals (Garcia, 2014). I could relate to this as I so desperately wanted to fit in and wanted only to speak English as a child.

Even though my teachers made efforts in displaying story book characters that were like me culturally and racially, they too spoke English according to how they were read or presented to me. I often wondered how different the story would have been/ felt had *The Korean Cinderella* been told or read in Korean with subtitles/translations so that my peers could understand the tone of the language and the sounds of the words being spoken in the native language. I believe that translated language can only portray a part of the meaning that is meant to be portrayed and there are intonations that don't often transfer seamlessly. I wish my peers could have experienced more of my culture through my language and that it may have been presented in a way that felt like the norm. I would have felt much more excited and confident in my bilingualism in Elementary School had it been exposed to me regularly in all aspects of my life, including in the classroom and with my peers. Maybe then I wouldn't have been reluctant to embrace the Korean language for several years before I finally needed it again. Because in a translanguaging classroom, my language (other than English) would have always been relevant.

EXISTING LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to Existing Literature Review

A truly powerful learning environment is one where powerful literature exists. Literature is an important part of children's development because it gives them the opportunity to discover their own self identities as well as embrace that of others. Having or not having the right balance of literature that serves as mirrors, windows, and sliding doors in the classroom library can make or break a child's experience with literacy. Not having enough books that act as mirrors (books that show characters and experiences that are like theirs) can impede one's self discovery and acceptance. Children want to be seen and heard, and having representation in the classroom library can be exciting and evidence that their experiences matter. Similarly, having windows (books that show characters and experiences different from theirs) is also important for growing acceptance and understanding of others. It also helps children with learning to appreciate diversity. In my experience, while I did have access to some (limited) literature that acted as mirrors and sliding doors in reference to my heritage, a part that was never truly filled in my childhood classrooms was access to books about language, the building block to literacy. While books that teach/show the Korean language exist, they rarely sit on shelves in the classroom. Alphabet books usually exist in early childhood settings and follow a very cookie-cutter style: present the letter, a word that starts with that letter, and a picture to go with that word. I longed for an alphabet book that tells a story and doesn't just belong in preschool. There is no rule that says alphabet books don't belong in an upper grade classroom but there had to be a way to make it more desirable for older students. Bilingual books also exist and are wonderful for cross-sharing to students that speak

different languages. Still, I found that students can only experience one of the two languages when reading them if they only know one of the languages. As I searched for existing literature, I found that it was challenging to find books that were able to meet the goal I strived for in creating my own book: blurring the line between two languages.

One of my many memories of learning Korean would be practicing our version of the ABC's: 가 나 다 라 마 바 사 아 하 (pronounced ga- na- da- ra- ma- ba- sa- ah- ja- cha- ka- ta- pa -ha) and rewriting the letters over and over. I remember thinking it was unnecessary because I would never use it for writing in school. It also took me some time to memorize which sounds belonged to which letter due to the fact that some Korean letters looked similar to letters of the English alphabet but made completely different sounds. For example, 나 looks like the uppercase letter N but makes a "n" sound and 에 looks like the upper case E but makes the "t" sound. Already having exposure to literacy in another language, it was challenging for me to disassociate the two alphabets. I always hoped for a way to connect my two languages and simultaneously practice my literacy skills without the confusion. Sadly, the resources available to me at the time were generally for people who already knew and could read some Korean (Korean alphabet/ bilingual books). As I searched for resources that could teach the Korean alphabet to someone bilingual like me in a fun engaging way, I felt defeated. In this section, I will be reviewing and critiquing the available resources for bilingual Korean-American students and how I aim to use my book, *Hangul Zoo*, to teach the Korean alphabet in a new, interesting, and memorable way that is different from the currently existing resources.

Alphabet Books

One major inspiration for my project was alphabet books for children. As a former preschool teacher, I am no stranger to the bright and colorful abundance of alphabet books that teach children the English alphabet. I also remember the alphabet charts hung in my bedroom as a child, one in English and one in Korean. As I was preparing to write my own picture book, I wondered what current alphabet books were available at local libraries. I was on a mission to visit local libraries to see what I could find that qualified as alphabet books teaching the Korean alphabet.

S, J. Y. (2019). *My first Korean alphabets: Picture book with English translations*. My First Picture Book Inc.

This alphabet book is part of a series that teaches beginner words in different languages with English translations. It is your typical alphabet book with a Korean letter on each page and a word that starts with that letter. It is followed by a picture to go along with the word. There is no correlation or common theme between the words that are being used to represent each letter. I would say it is made of several random categories. The words that are used for each letter are typically Korean words with the exception of some words that are the same in English and Korean. Underneath the Korean words (written in Korean), the romanization (pronunciation of the word) is written. Underneath the picture, the English word is written. For example, underneath the picture of a cat, it says *cat* in English. Underneath the word 고양이, it says (ko-yang-e). I appreciate the many ways this particular book makes language accessible such as showing how to pronounce the words, visibly showing the Korean words, the English translation

of the word, and a visual for further understanding. However, I imagine the spelling of some words pronounced in Korean would cause confusion in how to pronounce sounds for some letters. As a child, I would associate the spelling (ko-yang-e) to make the *c/k* sound like in cat. In actuality, the ㅋ in 고양이 makes more of a *G* sound. I thought that in my own book, I would want to keep the sounds consistent to support learners who were new to Korean sounds.

Bortecin Hakan Şan. (2011). *My first bilingual book. Animals: English-Korean*. Milet Publishing.

At the library, I found several of the *My First Bilingual Book* series in English-Korean. I am using the book about animals as reference. Even though this book is not technically an alphabet book, it falls under the same category with its simplicity and display of vocabulary with accompanying images. In this series, books are broken down into categories. The book names different objects within that category in both Korean and English. One critique I have for this series is that it requires children to be able to read both languages or parents to be able to read the words for the child. These books don't show you how to pronounce the words in Korean. Therefore, it is not user friendly for those who haven't learned Korean already.

Deneux, X. (2016). *Abc: Touch think learn*. Handprint Books.

Associating new material with visual cues is essential to learning a new language. I came across this interactive book by Xavier Deneux. It is not your everyday alphabet book. I immediately was thrilled to see Deneux had incorporated the letter within the imagery of the subject (similar to how I wanted

my letters to be a part of the image as well). Each page had cutouts and raised letters to add to the sensory experience for young children. Not only could they see the letter visually, but they could also feel the letters. The visuals also help support the working memory of the letters. Even though this book did not have any cohesive theme across the entire book, there was a cohesive illustration on each page. Each page had two letters and the images interacted on the page. For example, the C is seen in the curves of the clouds, which hovers over the water where D for Dolphins are swimming. This book was highly influential in the development of my personal book.

Bilingual Books

There are many benefits to being biliterate: “On an economic level, biliteracy translates into employment opportunities and differential pay. On a personal level, it promotes multicultural understanding and deepens one’s cultural roots. And, last but not least, on a neurological level, it promotes executive brain function such as the ability to organize, plan, and concentrate while blocking out irrelevant information” (Taylor, 2021). For people learning multiple languages at once, bilingual books serve as a necessary tool in helping them access literacy in their stronger language while having exposure to vocabulary and print in their less dominant languages. Most bilinguals have a more dominant language. When both languages are presented side by side, the lesser known language becomes less intimidating and vocabulary words can be acquired in both languages. Learners of a new language will feel more comfortable and included when being able to read in their preferred language and also feel empowered by seeing the value of their home language. But not all bilingual books are created equal and not all do

justice to the cause. “According to US publishing statistics, in 2018 there were more children’s books featuring animals and other non-human characters (27%) than all types of visible minorities combined (23%). Meanwhile, half of all children’s book protagonists were White. A good bilingual book should be committed to representing diversity and elevating other cultures” (Taylor, 2021). Fortunately, I discovered some amazing bilingual books that are representative of the characters they are depicting. In this section, I will be reviewing bilingual books that have inspired me to tap into my own bilingualism.

Kim, J. (2017). *Where's Halmoni?* LITTLE BIGFOOT.

Where's Halmoni? By Julie Kim, is a beautifully illustrated picture book that incorporates both English and Korean to tell the story of two grandchildren who unknowingly embark on an adventure to find their grandmother. The story has a modern twist that pulls from classic Korean folktales and creatures such as the *dokkebi* (Korean goblins), nine-tailed fox, and other talking animals. Unlike other bilingual books that have the entire story written in both languages, this story is written in English. However, in the magical world, characters only speak Korean to the children. Amusingly, the children in the story are bilingual and young children can relate to their reactions of not being able to understand all the words being said to them, feeling like the others spoke too fast, and trying to make sense of what they heard, making this story truly relatable. While someone who doesn’t know Korean wouldn’t be able to read the words said by other characters, they can draw on the context and imagery to understand the story.

There are also translations of what the Korean characters meant at the end of the story. Julie Kim creates the perfect balance between language and culture.

Park, L. S., & Lee, H. B. (2023). *Bee-Bim Bop!* Clarion Books.

Linda Sue Park's *Bee-Bim-Bop!* is a combination of poetry and storytelling that uses rhyme, onomatopoeia, and repetition to share the recipe for a traditional Korean dish: Bee-bim-bop (mixed rice). In this story, a little girl is eager to help her mom shop and cook Bee-bim-bop for the family. The book also shows some cultural values that are valued in Korean culture, such as family, communal eating, and helping out. This book does not use any Korean letters in the text. In fact, the only Korean word used was Bee-bim-bop, which is written in English. Still, this book serves as a mirror and sliding door for children who have similar traditions at home and value cooking and eating together as a family. It also serves as a window into Korean culture by allowing non-Koreans to learn about a new dish they may not have tried before and providing them with a recipe.

Park, K.(2017). *My first book of Korean words: An Abc rhyming book of Korean language and culture.* TUTTLE Publishing.

Kyubong Park uses his book to share Korean culture in a playful and creative way. Similarly to Bee-Bim-Bop, his book also uses rhyme to tell the story. Each page is dedicated to one word that tells of some tradition or shared experience of Korean culture. The word is written largely in Korean on the left side. In the rhyming part of the story, the word is romanized so as to not disturb the reader's flow by having them read in an unfamiliar language. There is also a

description on the right side of each page that gives some background information into the traditional/ cultural aspect of the word. The description helps readers understand Korean culture and why that word is meaningful to them.

All of these books did a wonderful job in making me feel represented and seen. I saw myself in the characters, the way they looked, in the food they ate, and the experiences they had. Overall, bilingual books hold so much power for those who can tap into two languages. They can make students feel proud of their bilingual capabilities and also encourage non-bilinguals by exposing them to unfamiliar text and words. The possibilities of using bilingual texts to aid translanguaging in the classroom are endless.

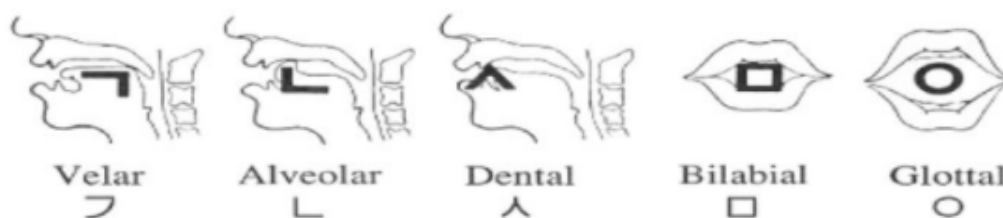
Why Hangeul Zoo?

The idea for this picture book truly stemmed from a memory of when my mother once told me “Korean is the most efficient alphabet to ever be created.” The Korean alphabet was invented in 1443 by King Sejong of the Yi Dynasty. In 1446, the alphabet was promulgated and taught to the whole nation. It has been called “one of the greatest intellectual achievements of humankind” and praised for being as simple to the sounds of the Korean language as it is effective and easy to learn (Kim, 1997). In the Korean alphabet, there are a total of 13 consonant letters. The first five basic consonant sounds (ㄱ ㅋ ㆁ ㄷ ㄹ) serve as the basis for the other 9 consonants (ㄷ ㄷ ㅌ ㅌ ㅌ ㅌ ㅌ ㅌ ㅌ), where additional lines are added based on the “placement of articulation in the oral cavity” (Jeon, 2019). In other words, the king designed the language to visually represent the shape of the tongue as it moves in the mouth when certain sounds are made. The Basic consonants represent the 5 articulators of speech: velars (root of the tongue), alveolars (body of the tongue/roof of mouth), bilabials (two lips), dentals (teeth), and

glottals (space between vocal cords). The image below represents the consonants in each category.

The Basic Consonant Letter Shapes of Hangeul

Velars:	ㄱ	ㅋ	ㆁ		
Alveolars:	ㄴ	ㄷ	ㄸ	ㄹ	ㄺ
Bilabials:	ㅍ	ㅂ	ㅃ	ㅍㅍ	
Dentals:	ㅅ	ㅆ	ㅈ	ㅊ	ㅉ
Glottals:	ㅇ	ㆁ			



As I thought about articulation and sounds, the split tongue of a snake came to mind as I imagined the ㅅ shape of the “s” sound in Korean. As a child, this was the first letter of the Korean alphabet that stuck with me because of how I imagined the snake tongue. When thinking about how to construct my own picture book for children, I wondered how interesting it would be to have visuals that represented each of the Korean letters using sounds we already knew in English. As mentioned in my review of existing literature, visual alphabet charts and books have always been in existence even when I was younger. Some of my favorites were when the letters themselves formed the objects they represented. I wanted to use the same fun visuals in my alphabet book, with a twist. It wouldn’t be Korean words representing the Korean alphabet. Instead, it would be English words that English speakers would already be familiar with, like how I

remembered the letter ㅅ by remembering the S in Snake. This would be adequate for people learning Korean as a second language. Thus, my original picture book, *Hangul Zoo* was born.

Introducing Hangul Zoo

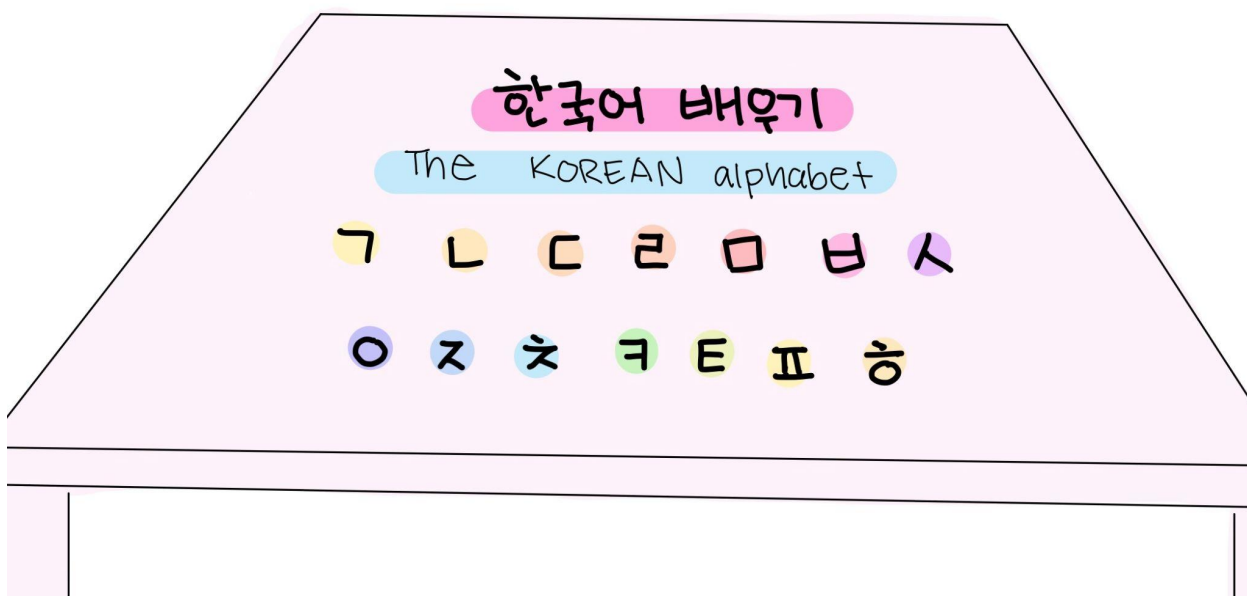
Hangul Zoo, written and illustrated by me, is a book inspired by my own childhood experiences of frustration with learning two different languages. It is also dedicated to my niece, who like me, is growing in a two language household. Only, her parents are both native English speakers, making the need for appropriate and engaging resources crucial to her journey of learning Korean. I want my niece to eventually be fluent in Korean and still connect with my parents/ her grandparents. The main character, Seunghee, is named after my niece, whose English name is Harper. I wanted my character to stay true to her Korean roots, so I kept the name Korean for my story.

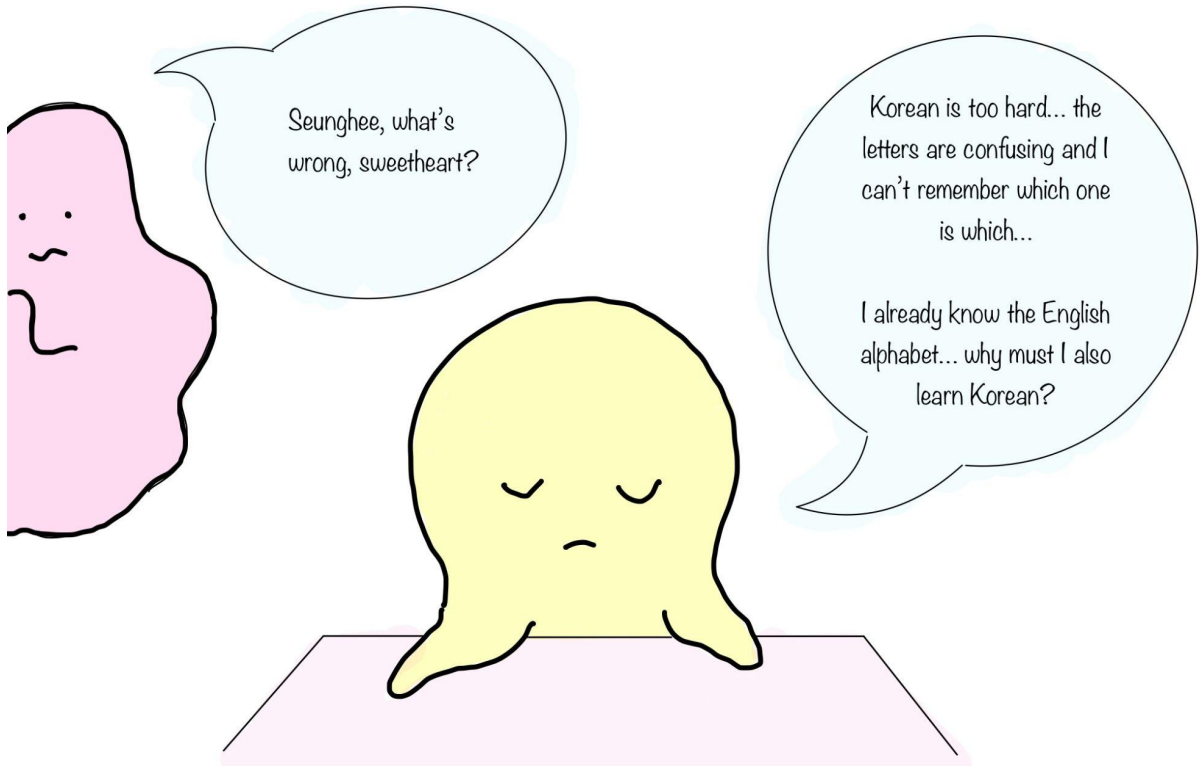
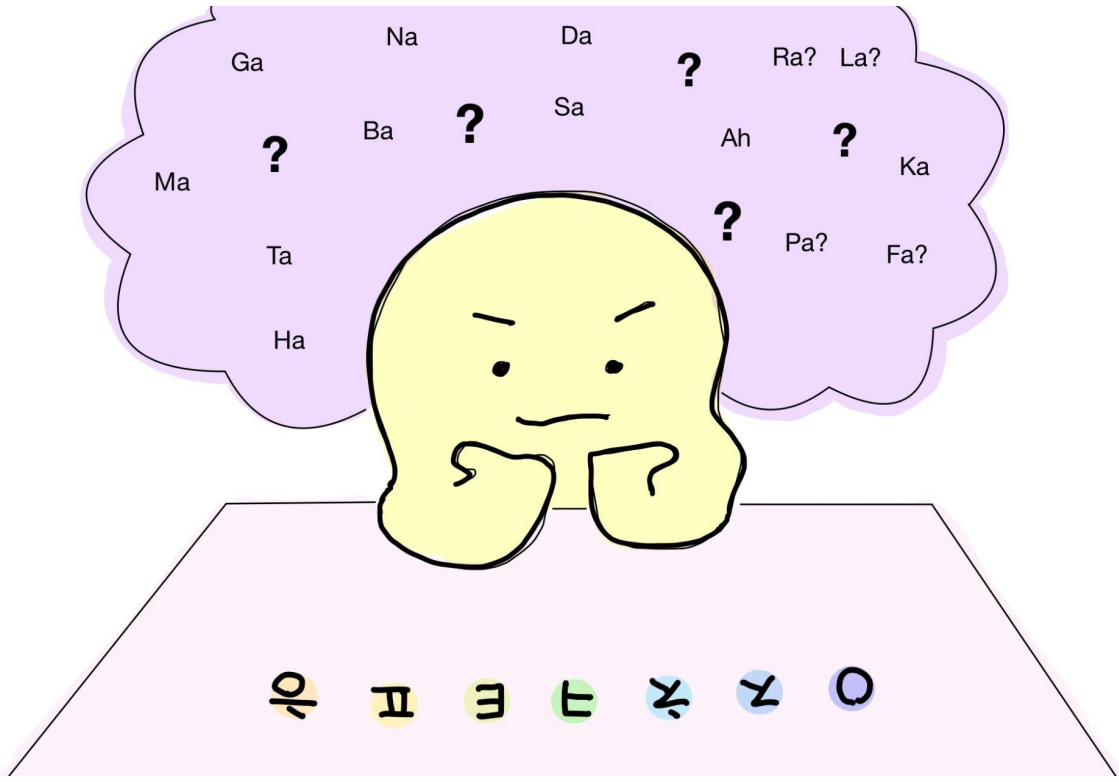
In the story, Seunghee is seen as being frustrated with the process of learning *Hangul*, the Korean alphabet. Her mother then suggests an unusual solution, going to the zoo with their grandmother! Her grandmother gives her some background information on the history of Hangul as they enter the zoo. Each page following their entrance is dedicated to one letter that is portrayed by an animal doing an action. For example, on page 9 of my book, the letter ㄱ makes the G sound. The letter is represented as Grasshopper is Going to the Garden. I used alliteration throughout my story in order to show which sound is being made as opposed to only making a connection to the English letter. This is because a letter in the English alphabet can make multiple sounds so I didn't want people to be confused when they see the Korean letter. Korean letters make one sound, which is easily heard in the repetition of sounds in the alliteration.

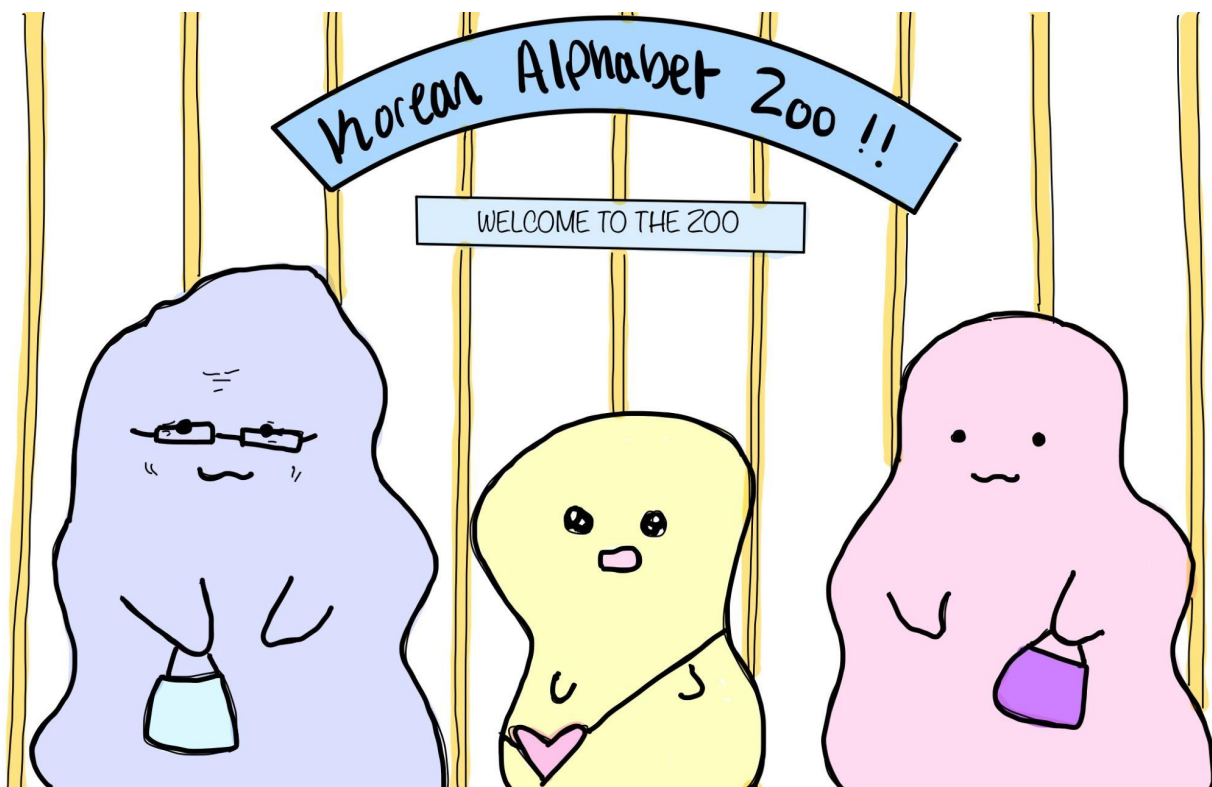
Additionally, I wanted each of the letters in my drawing to be seen within the action that the animal was making. In my illustration, the ㄷ is used as one of the grasshopper's legs. This is because the legs show the action of going. The grasshopper is seen going in the direction of the garden. When people read my book, I want them to remember the sentence, tied with the imagery of the Korean letter in the grasshopper's leg, to help them correlate that letter to that sound.

At the end of the story, Seunghye is no longer frustrated because of how the imagery has helped her to memorize the alphabet more easily. Unlike other alphabet books that jump straight into the alphabet visuals, I feel that my book brings a relatable issue for bilingual learners to light. Because people can relate to my character, I feel that my book is as equally engaging as it is informative. It also follows a story structure that appeals to all age groups by having a plot, chronological order, and problem/ solution to keep readers interested. I chose bright but soft colors to set the mood for my story and to attract young viewers to the playful illustrations.

ORIGINAL MATERIAL: *Hangul Zoo* by Alice Kang



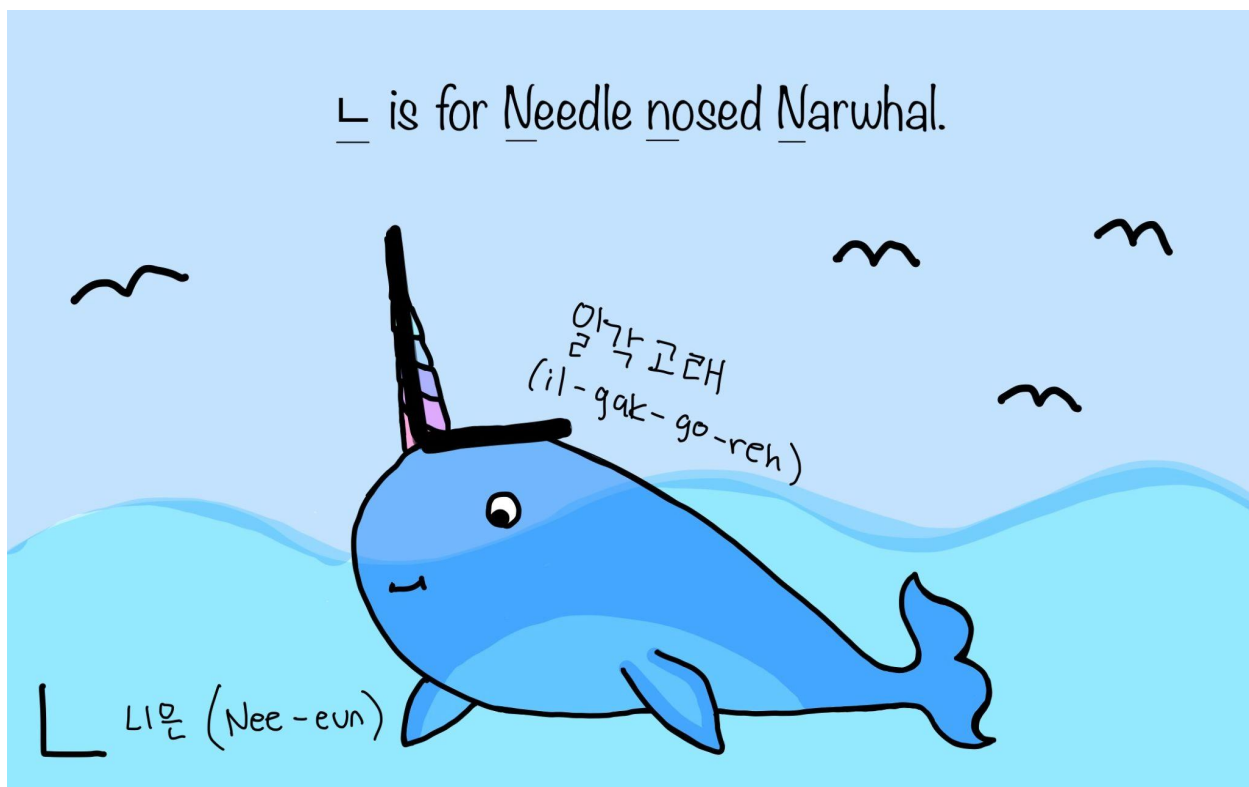
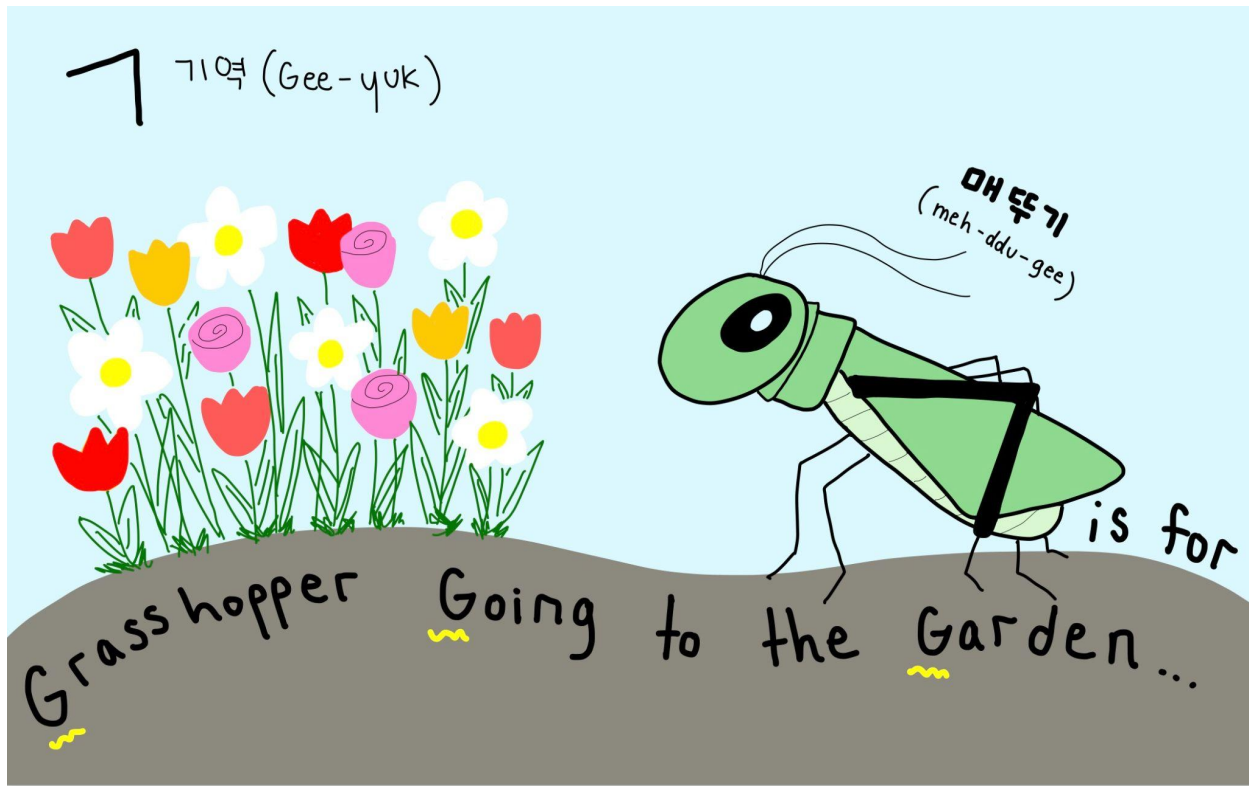


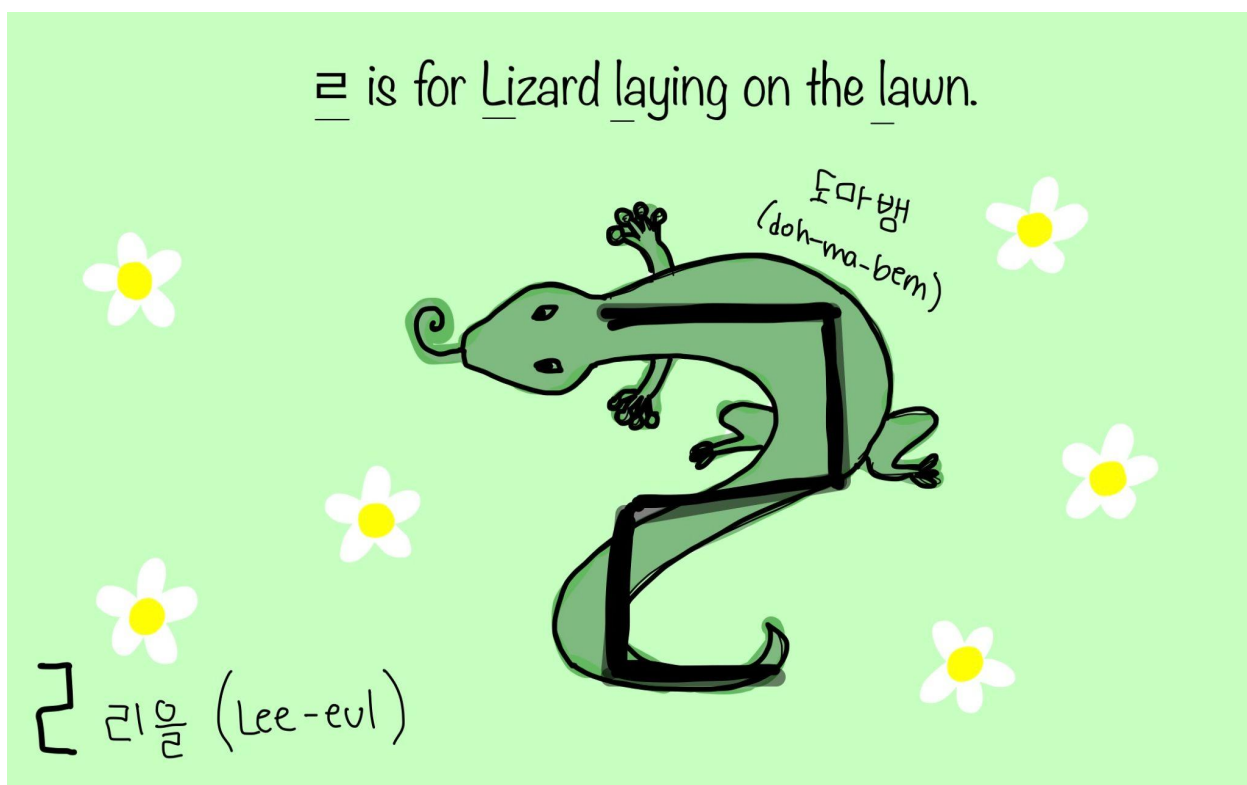
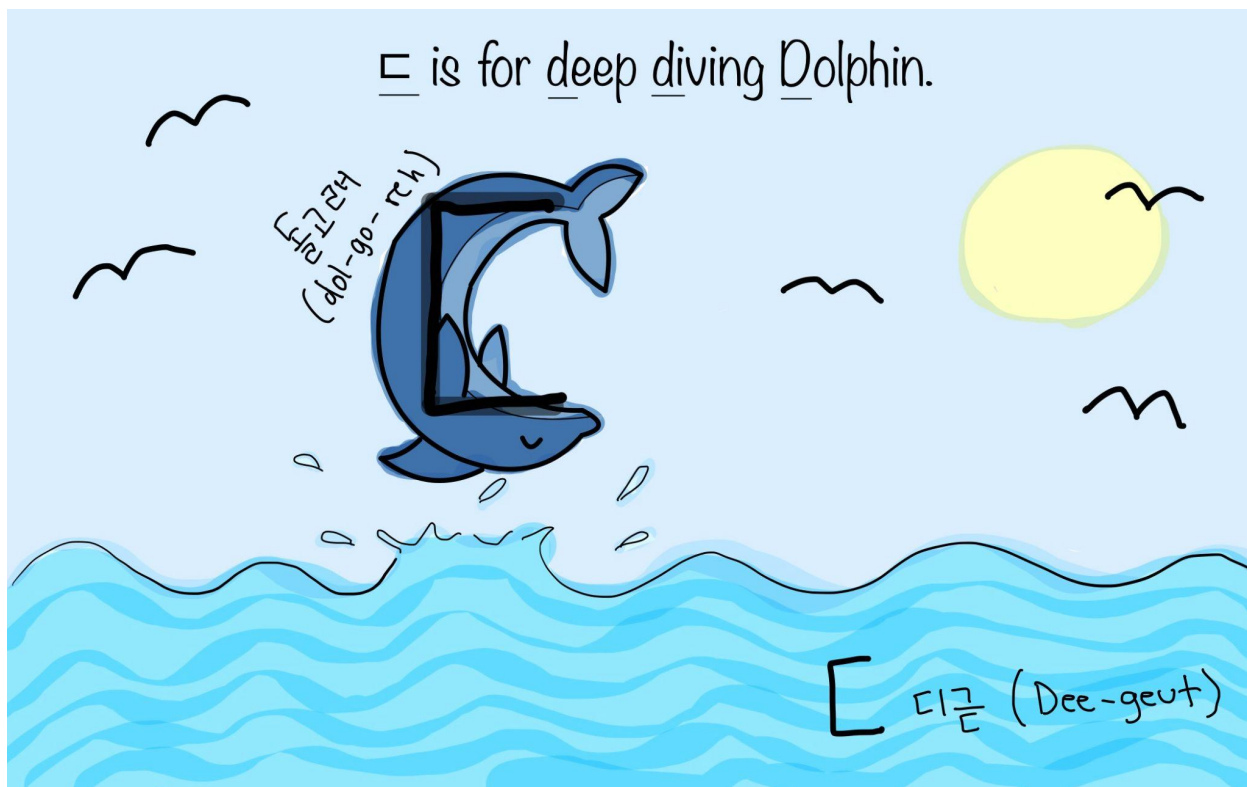




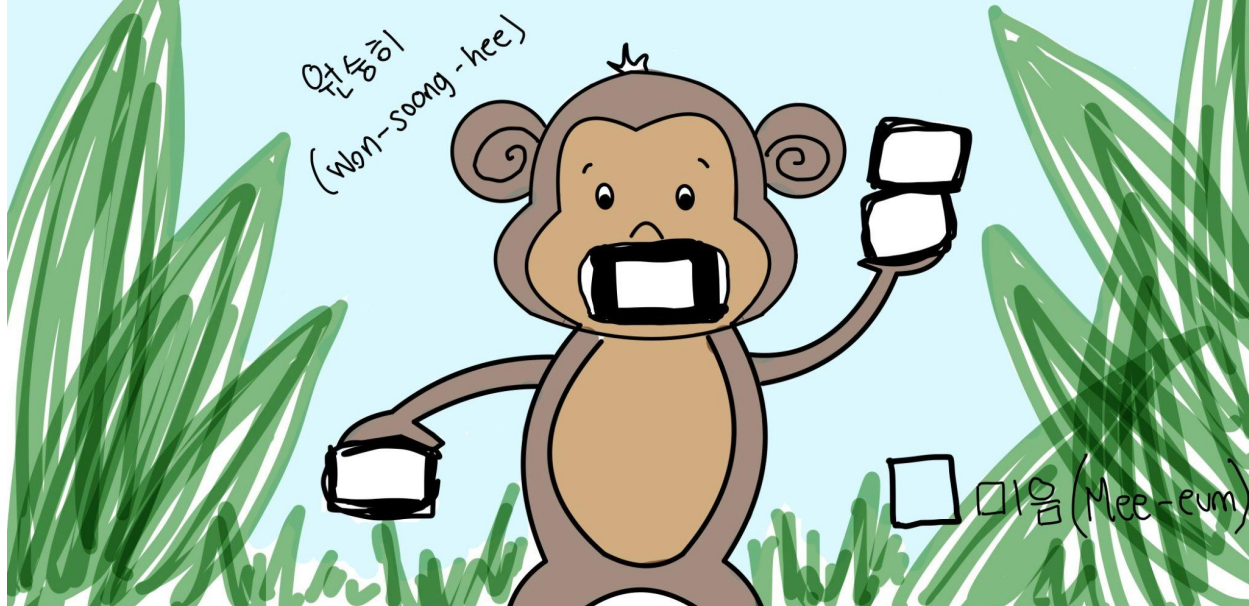
Seunghee, Hangeul (The Korean Alphabet) was created by King Sejong, the great! Hangeul is over 500 years old! I learned Hangeul from your great Halmeoni by watching animals in nature move. I even took your Umma to the zoo when she was a little girl. Would you like to learn Hangeul like your Umma and Halmeoni today?







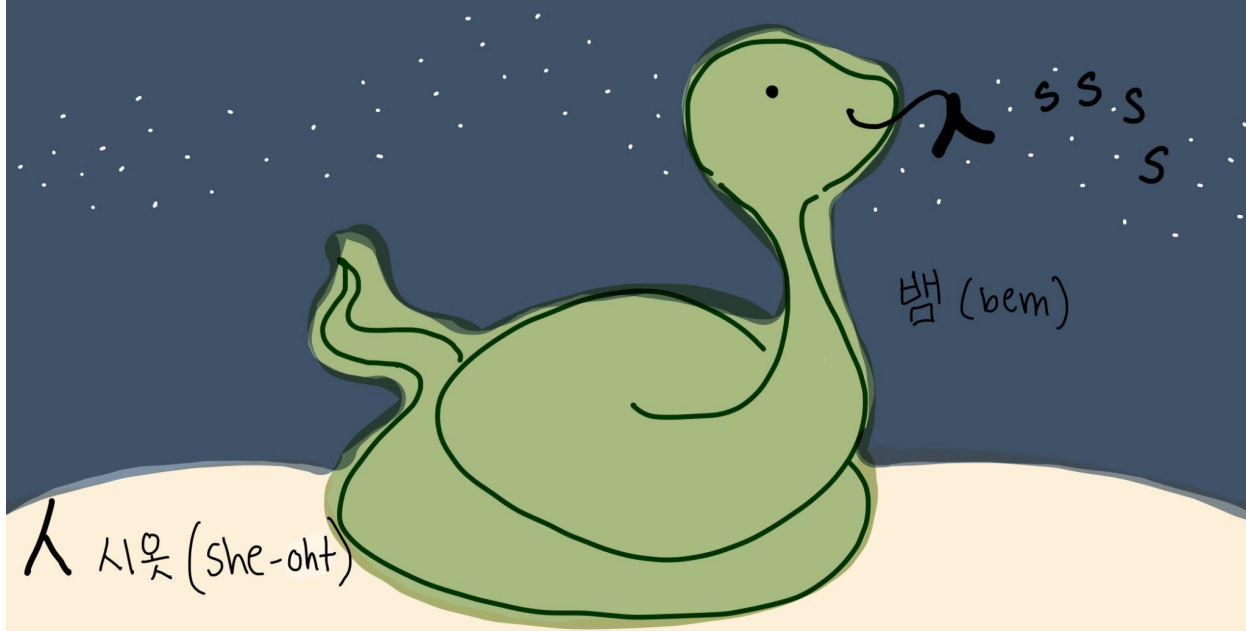
□ is for Monkey munching on marshmallows.



▣ is for Beaver biting on branches.



ㅅ is for Snake slithering in the sand.

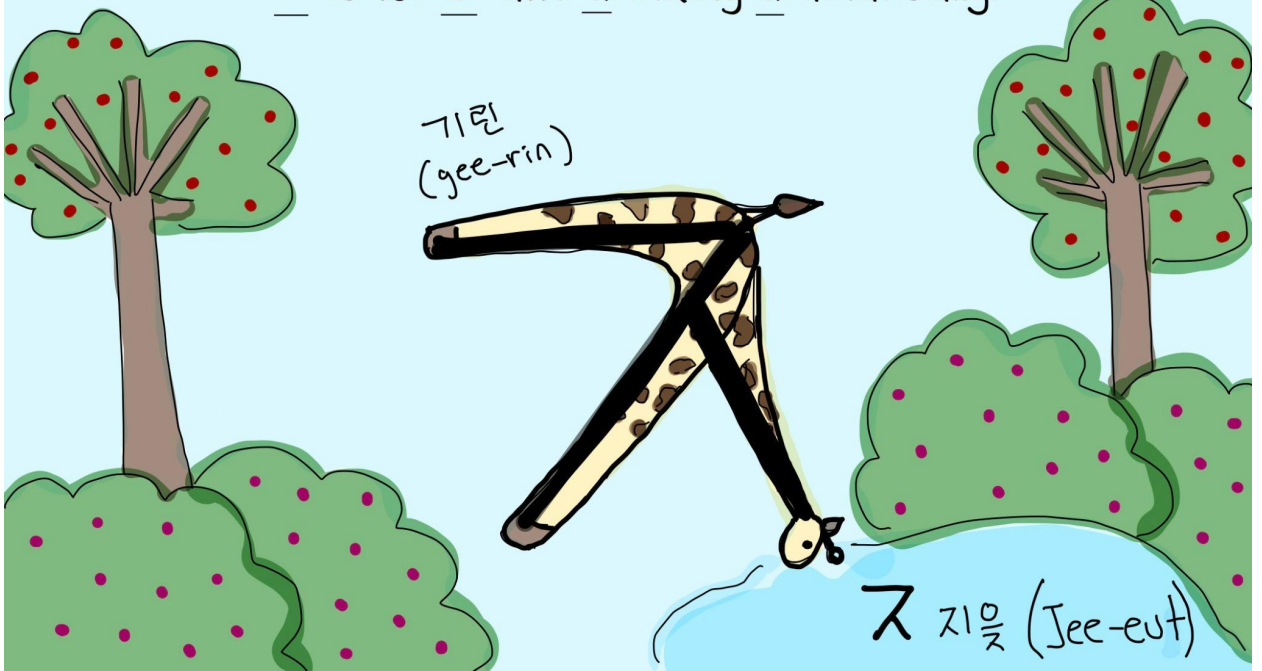


ㅇ is for one Owl eye winking at you.

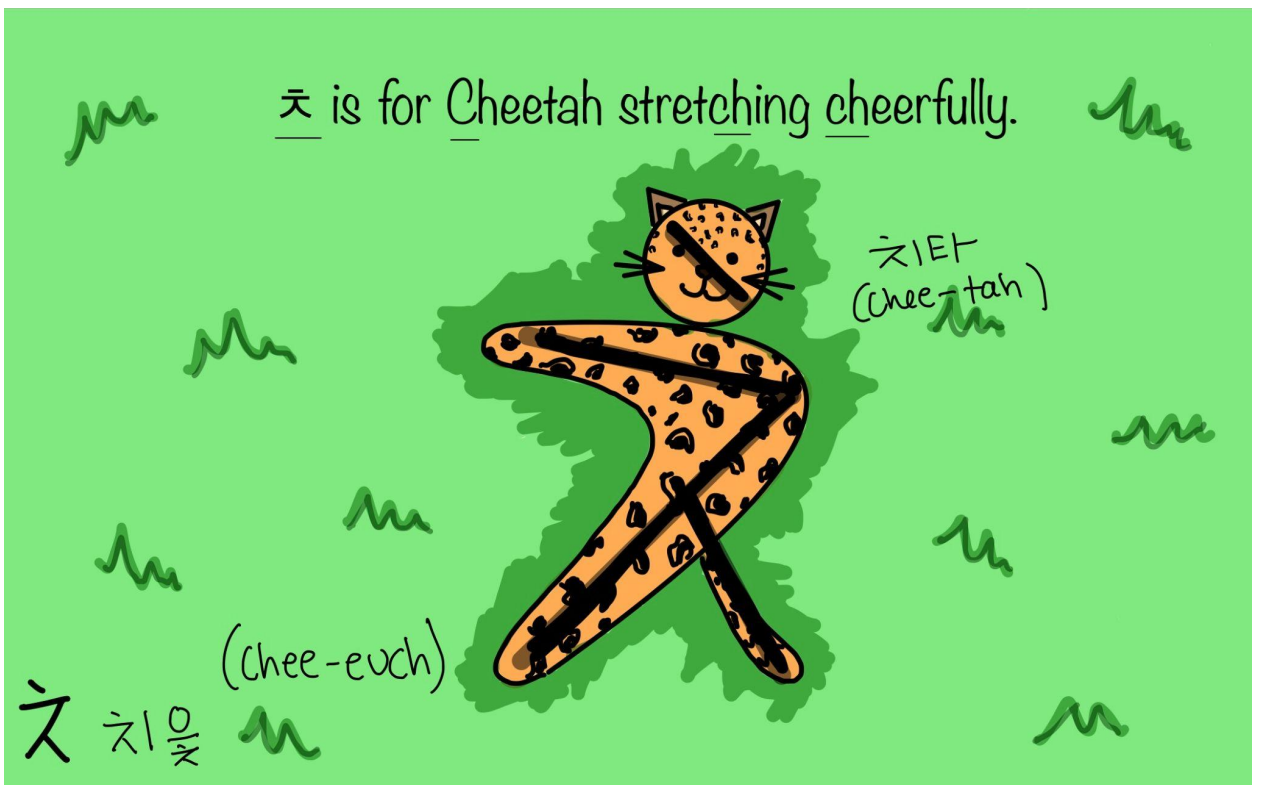
ㅇ is the most versatile letter of the Korean alphabet because it represents all vowel sounds in English such as a, e, i, o, u, y, and sometimes w, when paired with ending syllable sounds (Korean vowels).



ㅈ is for Giraffe drinking dramatically.

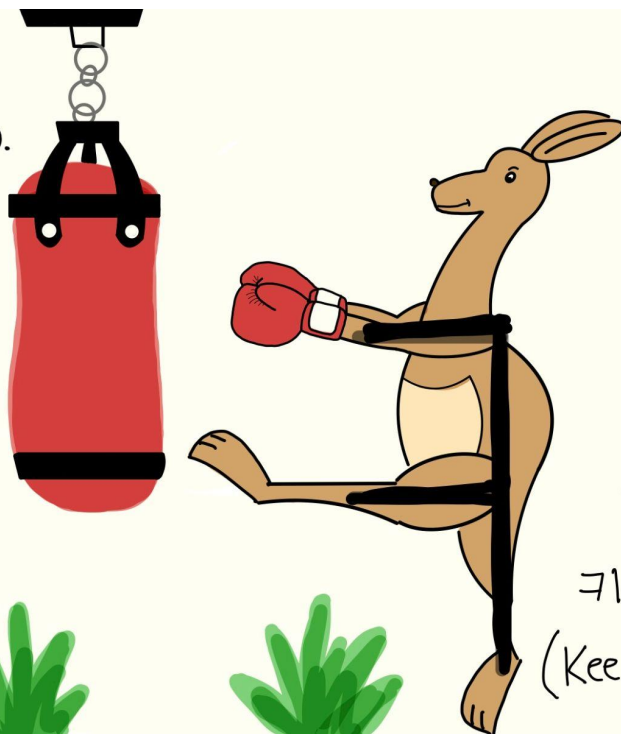


ㅈ is for Cheetah stretching cheerfully.



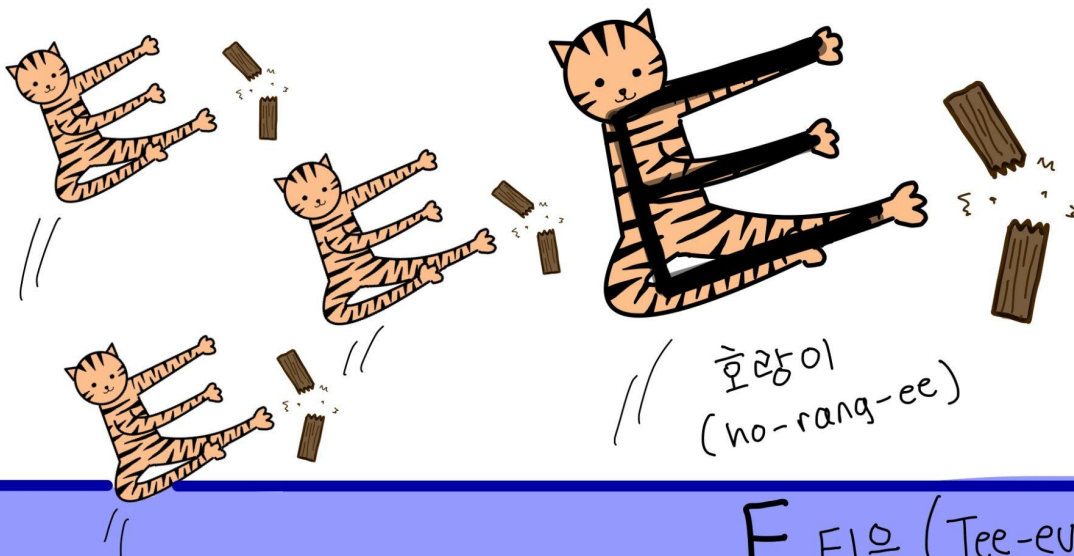
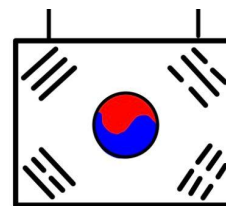
ㅋ is for Kickboxing Kangaroo.

캥거루
(Kang-uh-roo)



ㅋ
키익
(Kee-euk)

ㅌ is for Tiger teaching Tai Kwon Do.

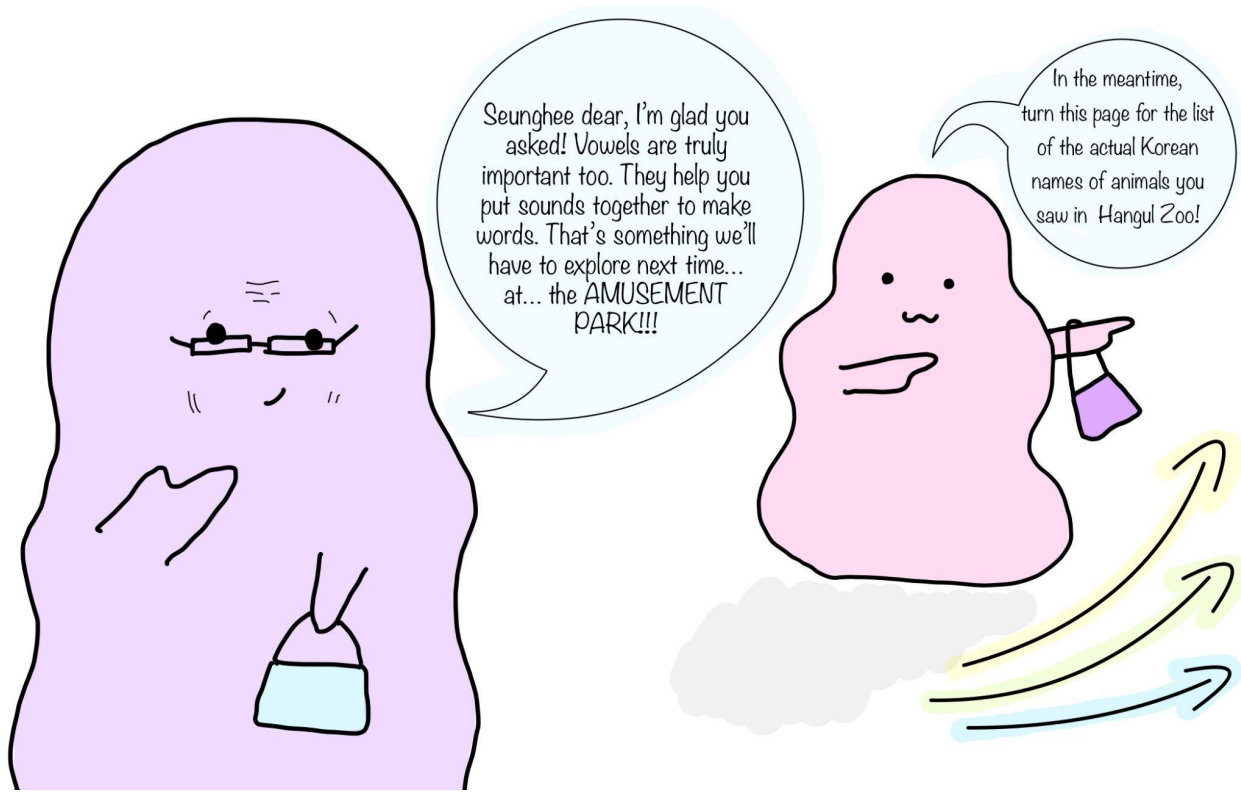


호랑이
(ho-rang-ee)

ㅌ 티읏 (Tee-eut)







Animals (동물)

(Korean Word Bank)

- Grasshopper.....메뚜기 (meh-ddu-gee)
- Narwhal.....일각고래 (il-gak-go-reh)
- Dolphin.....돌고래 (dol-go-reh)
- Lizard.....도마뱀 (doh-ma-bem)
- Monkey.....원숭이 (one-soong-ee)
- Beaver.....비버 (bee-buh)
- Snake.....뱀 (bem)

- Owl.....부엉이 (bu-ung-ee)
- Giraffe.....기린 (gee-rin)
- Cheetah.....치타 (chee-ta)
- Kangaroo.....캥거루 (kang-guh-roo)
- Tiger.....호랑이 (ho-rang-ee)
- Pig.....돼지 (dweh-jee)
- Hippopotamus.....하마 (ha-ma)

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

Currently, I am an upper elementary teacher at a public school in Manhattan. I work with Fourth Graders in a diverse neighborhood. However, a large portion of my student population speaks only English as opposed to having a second language. Therefore, teachers at my school teach only in English and we have bilingual resources in the school for English learners in the classroom. The recent increase in migrant families from Central America has challenged my school to support the needs of Spanish speaking students and families in different ways using language, both written and spoken. As I try to navigate having translations and ready-to-go phrases prepared for my Spanish speaking students, an ESL teacher at my school brought to my attention a valid point. Despite having a huge increase in predominantly Spanish speaking students, we have always had students from various backgrounds, but how come we weren't translating and displaying material in the classroom in other languages. Why not give students the opportunity to have exposure and connection to different languages as they experience outside of the classroom?

Recently, I read a story called *Where's Halmoni?* by Julie Kim as a class read aloud to my class. This is a bilingual read aloud that is targeted for children who can read in both English and Korean. I originally chose this read aloud because of the bright, fun, imagery. While I suspected some confusion due to the Korean words embedded throughout the story, I was surprised to see how captivated my students were even just listening to a language that they did not understand. Although there were no direct translations, I translated each Korean sentence to the best of my ability. They wanted to know what I was saying and quickly caught onto some repeated vocabulary words like

halmoni (grandma), and noona (big sister). At the end of the story, I noticed that there was a glossary of Korean words translated into English, similar to my own book, and my class eagerly repeated each word after me. It amazed me to see how young children are so excited by the unknown and unfamiliarity of learning a new language. Just the act of repetition was an engaging and exciting feat for my 9-10 year olds. In the story, there is one part where characters play “Gawi-Bawi-Bo,” which directly translated means: scissors, rock, and paper. Students were excited to practice playing and I continued to hear this chant throughout my week. My one Korean student observed as I read with a proud grin and also seemed intrigued by his classmates' focused attention. I have to say, it was one of the more memorable read-alouds where I had the most engagement from my entire class.

A few days after reading *Where's Halmoni?* I had the opportunity to try my own picture book with two students after school: one student in my class (Student A) and another student from a different 4th grade class who happened to be Korean (Student B). I was interested in their reaction and made them aware that this was a book written by me. During my read aloud, I could see that Student B was very excited to recognize the characters and pointed out that her own Korean name had the ㄱㅎ characters in it. We had a brief discussion about her name. She seemed proud that Student A was so interested as well. They shared their favorite illustrations and Student A looked for the page with the letter that her name started with. She identified it immediately thinking about how Lizard started with the L sound. I imagine if I had used the actual Korean words for the animals, it would not have been as easy for Student A to locate, since she

does not know Korean. This shows that my book is user friendly for non-Koreans. When I asked about their opinion, they both encouraged me to share it with the rest of our class.

I decided to test out my book, framing it as, *Now that we read one story in Korean, I wanted to teach you more about my language.* I didn't tell my class right away that I wrote this book, I wanted their honest opinion. I asked Student A to keep it a secret until after I read it. As I began reading my story *Hangul Zoo*, my class immediately reacted to the illustrations and blobs positively, they enjoyed the drawings and color palette. In one dialogue bubble, the mom references *Halmoni*, students perked up as I paused to ask them if they knew who mom was referring to. Eager arms flew up as students raced to say, *grandma*, a vocabulary word they recalled from the story *Where's Halmoni?* As I read page by page, I paused to ask questions like what sound does this letter/ character make? I also had them trace/draw the letter in the air. I also referred to the action of the animal in the drawing and pointed out how the letter could be found in the image. Students attentively repeated each sound after me as I read along the sentence. As we read, I was pleased with how much they enjoyed the illustrations and commented "I see it!" and "oh, that's so cool! I get it!" When I finally admitted that I had written the book, students applauded and said "Great job, Alice!", "I really like it!", "Wow, did you draw all the pictures too?" I felt proud and amazed that 4th graders were so accepting of my book.

I was really curious to see how my Korean student interacted with the book. I could see nods of approval as he read on with his classmates. When I went to him individually, he kindly suggested that I embed the vocabulary within the pages of my book as well as label the names of the letters I was using on each page. I reflected that

this was crucial feedback from a true bilingual student learning Korean, who would benefit from seeing the names of animals in both languages written simultaneously on the pages . He noted that he didn't know the names of some of the animals so he appreciated the glossary page but wished he saw more Korean text in the story. I thanked him for his feedback and planned to make those edits in my final draft.

Throughout the week, students came to me with questions about the Korean language. They even made references to KPOP, Korean food, and Korean culture. I was so excited that through the use of language and literature, they were immersed in curiosity. They openly embraced my culture and wanted me to know how much they admired it. For their Practice Menu (homework) that week, one creative writing assignment was to complete a sentence with a story. One of my students, (who is Albanian) came up with a plan to write their story entirely in Korean. I was touched by this gesture as they translated and wrote their story by hand in Korean (their handwriting being remarkable). She was so interested in the Korean language that she took the initiative to translate her work all on her own. I was once again shook by the power of language (and google translate).

Additionally, another student of mine used Chinese characters in his writing. They let me know that they took Chinese classes on the weekend and used some of the words they learned to write in their story. This made me think of how I could continuously honor my students' preferred modes of communication and help them to connect to those parts of their literacy identity. This is called codemeshing, a writing practice that can be explained by the blending of two or more languages in an integrated way in which both languages work together to create meaning. Both languages used in this practice are

equally valid and accepted in a classroom that practices translanguaging. These translanguaging pedagogies “encourage students to recruit all of their linguistic resources in literacy tasks, rather than separating languages” (Lee & Handsfield, 2018). I was seeing the benefit and meaning of allowing my students to have the ability to express themselves and use literacy in any way that was appropriate for them.

In Souto-Manning, et al.’s (2018) article, “What stories do my classroom and its materials tell? Preparing early childhood teachers to engage in equitable and inclusive teaching,” a preservice teacher shares an activity that involves trying on shoes that don’t fit comfortably. The activity describes the importance of students having the right tools and support that they need in order to fully participate and succeed. Having the wrong shoes made it difficult for students to focus and participate effectively. For me growing up, I didn’t have the “right shoes” to deepen my connection with my literacy roots. I want to make sure that my students do, by providing them with resources in the classroom that will help them feel empowered and proud of their cultural identities and bilingualism. “Students cannot experience success if they do not have the tools which allow them to have equal access. Do my students have the tools they need to participate in learning? To succeed?” (Souto-Manning, 2018) In the future, I hope to do more read-alouds in other languages and bring more community and diversity into my classroom, possibly by having parent volunteers read bilingual books to students in their home language or bring in parts of their culture/ teachings to the classroom. But for now, I feel that sharing my book with my students has opened new doors for them to feel excited about language and literacy.

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