



# **Understanding Korean Culture and Korean Students**

**February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013**

**By Silk Lee**

**ESOL teacher**

**Franklin Forest Elementary**

**Troup County Schools**

# Agenda

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## ▶ Understanding Korea

1. Korean Stereotypes
2. Statistics and Facts about Korea
3. Confucianism
4. Korean Culture: Etiquettes/ Names and Titles/ Taboos

## ▶ Understanding Korean Parents and Korean Students

1. Korean Community in the USA
  2. Korean Parents
  3. Korean Students
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# Top 10 Korean Stereotypes

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1. Koreans are short.
2. Koreans are good at math.
3. Koreans look alike.
4. Koreans eat dog meat.
5. Koreans are hot-tempered or rude.
6. Koreans like to have plastic surgery.
7. Koreans know martial arts.
8. Koreans look young.
9. Koreans are obsessed with video games.
10. Koreans like golf.



# Do you recognize these?

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# Do you recognize these?

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# Do you recognize these?

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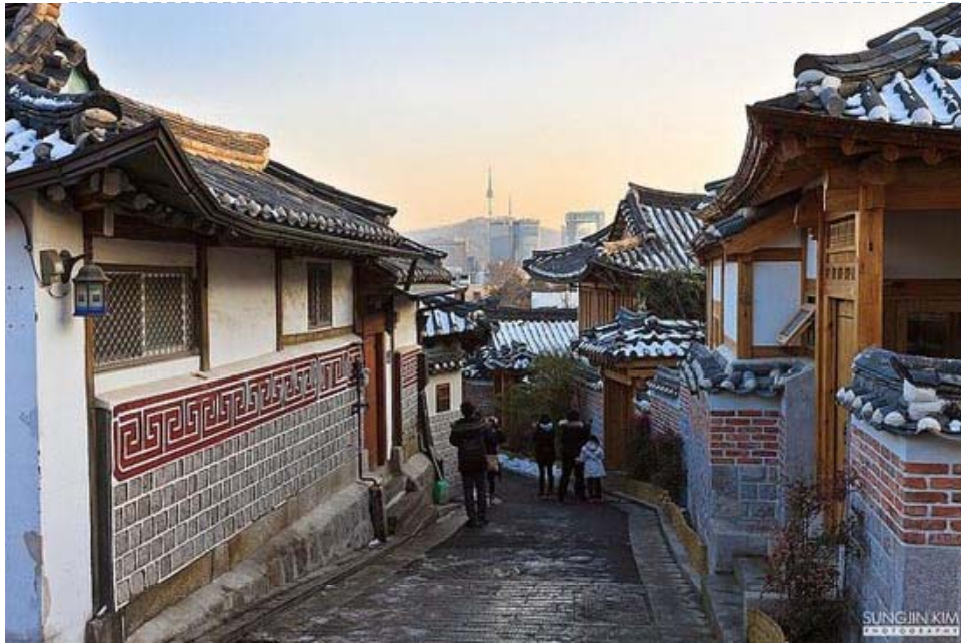
Yuna Kim, Olympic Gold medalist



Ban Ki Moon (Secretary-General of the UN) & Psy



# Do you recognize these?



# Statistics about Korea

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- ▶ **Location:** Eastern Asia, southern half of the Korean Peninsula bordering the East Sea and the Yellow Sea
- ▶ **Capital:** Seoul
- ▶ **Population: Korea** 48,754,657 (July 2011)  
US 307,212,123 (July 2010 )
- ▶ **Ethnic Make-up:** homogeneous (except for about 20,000 Chinese)
- ▶ **Religions:** no affiliation 46%, Christian 26%, Buddhist 26%, Confucianist 1%, other 1%





# ASIA



North Korea shown by satellite at Night - clearly a nation in the dark





# Fun facts about Korea

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- ▶ **Korea is one of the world's hardest working country.** According to a 2008 ranking by OECD (the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development), Koreans work the longest hours per year, on average, out of every other OECD member.
- ▶ The average Korean works about 39 percent more hours per week than the average American.
- ▶ The school year in South Korea is 220 days long, compared with 180 days in the U.S.



# Fun facts about Korea

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- ▶ **Age is counted differently.** When a Korean is born, they are automatically considered one year old. Koreans consider themselves one year older on January 1st.
- ▶ **Koreans live "vertically"**, while most Americans live "horizontally." Many Koreans live in condos and apartment buildings with 15-20 stories.
- ▶ Most homes in Korea are equipped with **heated floors.**
- ▶ **Coffee in Korea is a big deal.** In Seoul, almost one in every two buildings has a coffee shop.





# High rise apartments in Seoul



Starbucks in Seoul: the only Starbucks with the sign written in Korean.



# Fun facts about Korea

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## ▶ **Fast-paced lifestyle:**

- ❖ Korea has the highest rate of broadband Internet access in the world.
- ❖ Korea was the first country in the world to provide high-speed internet access to every primary, junior, and high school.
- ❖ McDonald's Korea has delivery service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- ❖ “Quick Service.” :When people need to send something urgently, they call up a number. The “Quick Service Man” comes on a motor cycle and picks the item up and delivers it to the destination within a couple of hours.





# McDonald's Delivery service



# “Quick Service Man”

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# Confucianism

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- ▶ The teachings of Confucius describe the position of the individual in Korean society.
  - ▶ Confucianism stresses duty, loyalty, honor, filial piety, respect for age and seniority, and sincerity.
  - ▶ It stresses the obligations of people towards one another based upon their relationship.
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# Confucianism

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## Five Sets of Human Relationship

- ▶ 1. Justice and righteousness should mark the relations between **sovereign and subject**.
  - ▶ 2. There should be proper rapport between **father and son**.
  - ▶ 3. Separation of function between **husband and wife**.
  - ▶ 4. The **younger** should give priority to the **elder**.
  - ▶ 5. Faith and trust should reign over relationships between **friends**.
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# Etiquette

- ▶ Koreans are very status conscious.
- ▶ Their speech behavior reflects the hierarchical relationship between social actors.
- ▶ Position titles such as "professor," "manager," "director," and "president" are used in combination with the honorific suffix *nim* to address a social superior.
- ▶ Employees often refer to each other by titles such as "office manager Kim" or "accountant Park," even outside the workplace.



# Names and Titles

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- ▶ Korean names usually have three parts.

Lee (Family) + Dong (Shared Given) + Sung (Given).

- ▶ It is considered very **impolite** to address a Korean with his or her first name except among former classmates and other very close friends.
- ▶ Americans should address a Korean with Mr., Mrs., Miss + family name.



# Is it normal in Korea?

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**1. To shake hands when we meet someone for the first time.**

Normal, but not necessary. Bowing is more appropriate, especially when greeting employers or older people.

**2. To kiss on both cheeks when we greet or say goodbye to a friend.**

Strange and impolite. Koreans are not big kissers, especially in public.

**3. To take someone out to dinner (and pay) for a celebration.**

Normal and expected. Koreans love to socialize and celebrate around food.

**4. To be slightly late for business or work meetings.**

Rude and impolite. Definitely a big no-no.





# Is it normal in Korea?

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- ▶ **5. For men to cook, clean or do other household work.**  
Strange. Koreans maintain traditional household roles where men work outside the house and woman inside.
- 6. To interrupt people when talking.**  
Impolite.
- 7. To give gifts to teachers, doctors, or employers.**  
Normal and expected.
- 8. To invite people to your home.**  
Normal and expected. Bring a gift if you visit for the first time.
- 9. To ask guests to leave when it gets late or if you are busy.**  
Impolite and rude
- 10. To publicly disagree with people older than yourself.**  
Rude and impolite. Doesn't matter if you know better, or think you do. Hierarchy and age is more important than knowledge.





# Cross-cultural Communication

An Example of Different Meanings of the Same Gesture

UK & USA = O.K.

JAPAN = MONEY

Korea = Money

RUSSIA = ZERO

BRAZIL = INSULT



# Korean Body Language

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- ▶ While Americans snap their fingers, Koreans hit their knees to signify that they have come up with a good idea.
- ▶ Pointing with your index finger is considered rude and Koreans will not point at the other person even in an argument, instead they will point to the sky.
- ▶ Koreans also rub their hands when asking for forgiveness.
- ▶ Another unique body language in the Korean culture is the pinky finger, which is sometimes used when making a promise or to signify a mistress.



# Taboos in Korea

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- ▶ Koreans consider it a personal violation to be touched by someone who is not a relative or close friend. Avoid touching, patting or back slapping a Korean.
- ▶ Direct eye contact between junior and senior businesspeople should be avoided. This is seen as impolite or even as a challenge.
- ▶ Always pass and receive objects with your right hand (supported by the left hand at the wrist or forearm) or with two hands.
- ▶ To beckon someone, extend your arm, palm down, and move your fingers in a scratching motion. Never point with your index finger.



# Taboos in Korea

- ▶ The number “4” is considered extremely unlucky, to the point where most buildings in Korea do not have a 4th floor. (ex: hospital elevator)

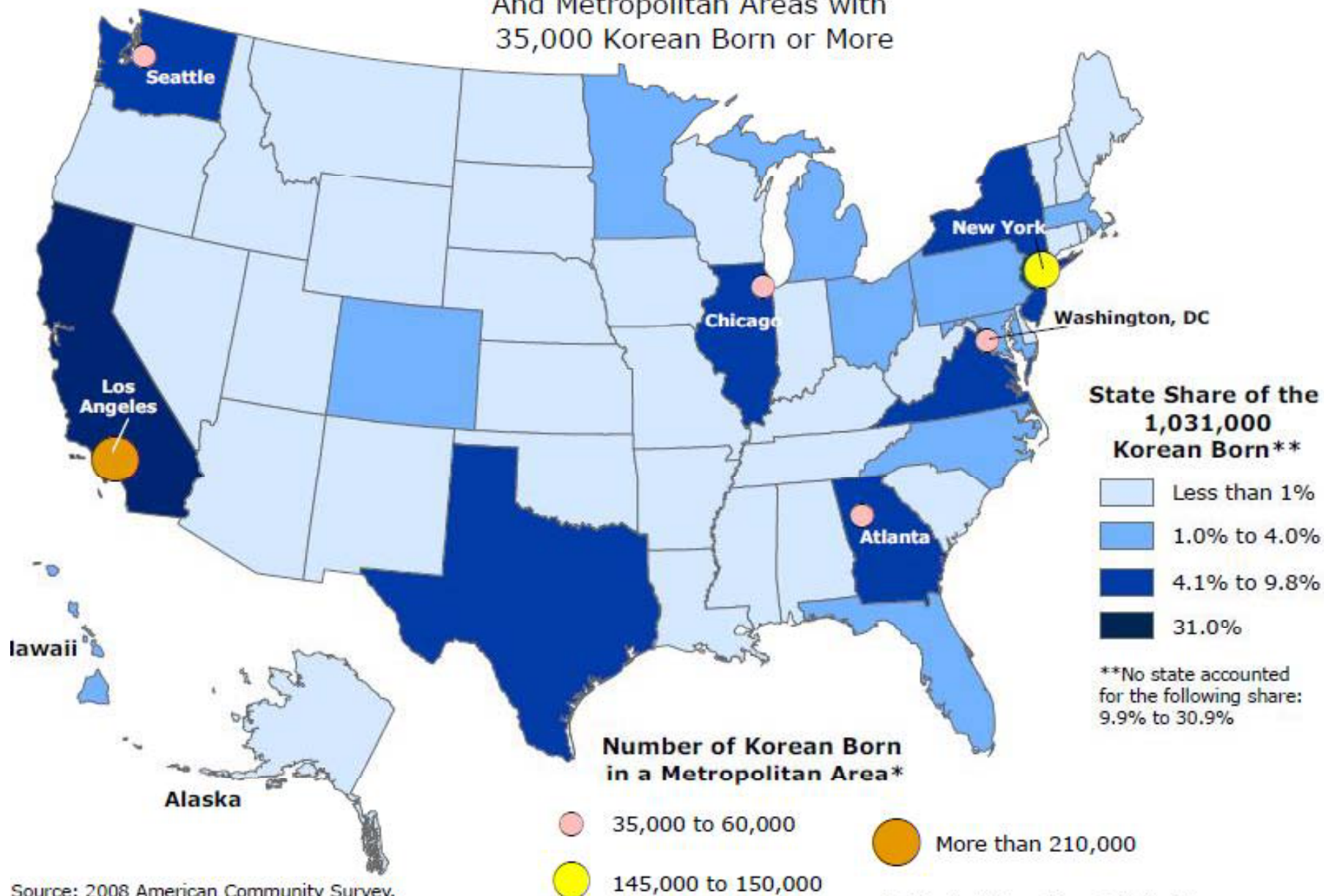
4 = 사 死 (death)

- ▶ Writing a person’s name in red ink is wrong because it symbolizes death or imprisonment.



# State Proportion of the Korean-Born Population in the United States

And Metropolitan Areas with 35,000 Korean Born or More







# Koreans in the US

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- ▶ According to the 2010 census, there were approximately **1.7 million people of Korean descent living in the United States**. It is the fifth largest Asian American subgroup, after the Chinese American, Filipino American, Indian American, and Vietnamese American communities.
  - ▶ According to the latest Open Doors research, there are **75,065 Korean students in the US colleges**. **Korea is the third country with the highest number of students in America**, preceded by India and China.
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# Koreans in Georgia



- ▶ **Between 1990 and 2000**, Georgia was home to the fastest-growing Korean community in the U.S., **growing at a rate of 88.2% over that decade.** (1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics)
- ▶ The most recent census figures show Duluth's Asian population grew at about 23 percent. **Between 2000 and 2010, there was an 82 percent growth in the Asian American in Georgia.** Korean Americans account for a large portion of that growth.
- ▶ **Kia's investment in West Point, Georgia** in 2006 represents the largest single investment by an international company in Georgia. With a capital investment of \$1.2 billion, the Kia facility employs over 3,000 Georgians.



# Korean Community

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1. **First generation immigrants** came to America for a variety of reasons (American dream) – family reunions, fleeing from the threat of war, better employment opportunities, and a good education for themselves or their children.
  2. **1.5 (one-point-five) generations immigrants** are born in Korea and educated in the U.S. Their cross-cultural conflicts are less serious than those of their parents.
  3. **Second and third generations Koreans** are already acculturated to mainstream culture with little or no involvement with the Korean community.
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# Korean Parents

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## I. Korean parents value education very much:

- ▶ Many parents are willing to pay tutors to help their children be successful in their academics.
- ▶ It is the norm for families to spend average 15% of the household income on after-school tutoring (private institutes) in Seoul.
- ▶ In Korea, the best education means a sacrifice for parents
- ▶ **3,000 Bows for the Korean College Entrance Exam:** Buddhist parents in Korea are praying for their children's success in the upcoming college entrance exam. In a special ceremony that begins at 6 p.m. and lasts until four in the morning, devoted parents complete three thousand bows.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cif46iyDcuUousand bows .>

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# Korean Parents

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3. Korean parents typically support school, understand the necessity of parent involvement, and praise their children for achieving high academic marks.
  4. Korean parents share their children's grades with other families and grades can be seen as a reflection of the family's reputation.
  5. While the high expectation for children explains the outstanding success of many Korean students in the US, it also affects problems for underperformers, causing conflicts between parents and children.
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# “Korean Parents” by Randy Newman

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- ▶ [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8\\_DeMpg\\_b\\_o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_DeMpg_b_o)





# Korean Students

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## **Korean students have a high regard for their teachers:**

- ▶ Korean students avoid telling a teacher that they do not know an answer or do not understand class material.
  - ▶ Korean students are generally quiet, avoid eye contact, and remain silent instead of initiating conversations with a teacher.
  - ▶ Korean Proverb: “An empty cart rattles loudly.”
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# Challenges Korean Students Face

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- ▶ Lack of relevant academic/cultural background for classes
- ▶ Listening difficulties
- ▶ Speaking problems: They fear not being understood, not being able to respond rapidly or correctly, and not being able to say what they mean.
- ▶ Reading comprehension and reading speed problems: new vocabulary, idioms, usage, grammar, punctuation, spelling problems
- ▶ Rhetorical differences: What may appear to Americans as disorganized, illogical, or wordy written expression may be perfectly acceptable academic prose in Korean culture.



## The differences between English and Korean

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- ▶ **Pronunciation:** Several English consonant sounds do not exist in Korean. /θ/ /ð/ /v/ /f/
  - ▶ **Verbs:** Korean does not conjugate verbs using agreement with the subject. *He like .. instead of he likes.*
  - ▶ **Grammar: Subject-Object-Verb** word order.
  - ▶ Grammatical categories in Korean have no clear correspondence with those of English. Ex: *My daughter doesn't come to school today because she is illness. (noun-adjective)*
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## The differences between English and Korean

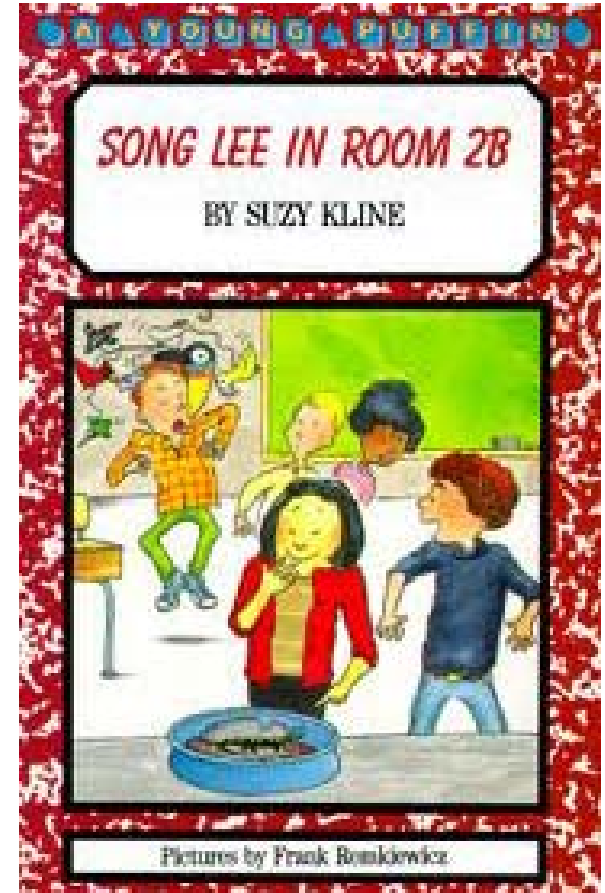
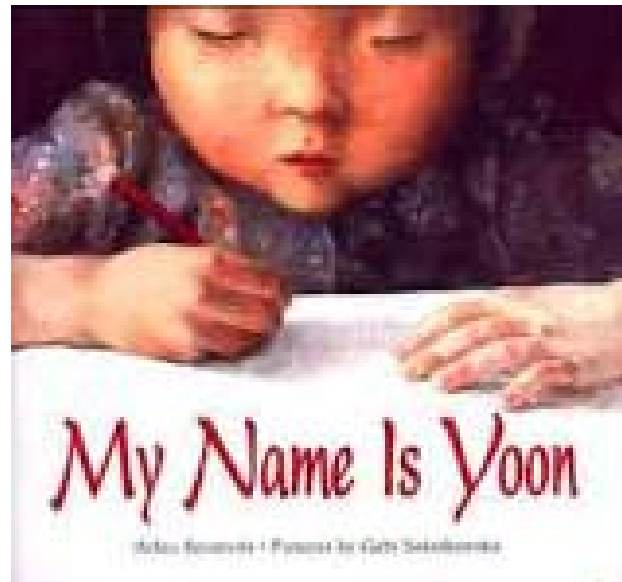
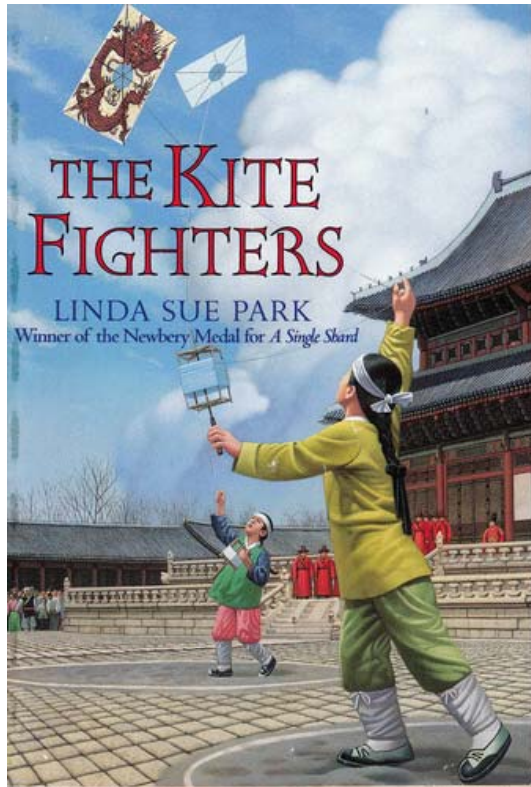
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- ▶ **Pronouns:** The Korean language does not have gender specific pronouns. (He? She?)
- ▶ **Articles:** The Korean language does not have definite or indefinite articles. (a? the?)
- ▶ **Plurals:** There are no specific plural consonant endings to show plural nouns from singular nouns. (ex: Book? Books?)
- ▶ **Negative questions:** English negative questions confuse Koreans. (ex: Aren't you hungry? **Yes**, I'm **not** hungry.)



# Children's books with Korean Characters

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**Diversity** is not about  
how we differ.

**Diversity** is about  
embracing one another's  
uniqueness.

(Ola Joseph: Author/ Speaker/ Trainer from Africa)





# Bi Bim Bap

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# Resources

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- ▶ <http://magz-englishtips.blogspot.com>
- ▶ <http://www.sandiego.edu/cultures/korean/teachingkorean.htm>
- ▶ <http://www.library.ca.gov/services/docs/korean.pdf>
- ▶ <http://thestar.com.my/metro/story.asp?file=/2012/3/10/central/10873029&sec=central>

