

THE GW INSTITUTE FOR KOREAN STUDIES

# SIGNATURE CONFERENCE

“THE LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE OF K-POP: GLOBAL IMPACT AND PEDAGOGICAL OPPORTUNITIES”



Friday, March 21st at 9:30 a.m.  
Elliott School of International Affairs, Lindner Family Commons, Room 602 (6th Floor), Washington, D.C.  
Virtual via Zoom

Institute for Korean Studies  
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

East Asia National Resource Center  
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

## The GW Institute for Korean Studies Signature Conference:

Friday, March 21, 2025  
9:30 A.M. – 3:30 P.M. (EDT)  
10:30 P.M. - 4:30 A.M. (KST)

Hybrid Event  
ESIA, Lindner Family Commons, Room 602 (6<sup>th</sup> Floor)  
Elliott School of International Affairs  
1957 E Street NW, Washington, DC, 20052  
Virtual via Zoom

## ◇ EVENT DESCRIPTION

According to statistics from the Modern Language Association, Korean experienced the highest increase in enrollments among commonly taught languages. Enrollments rose from 8,449 in fall 2009 to 13,936 in fall 2016, and further to 19,270 in fall 2021. Notably, from 2016 to 2021, while enrollments in most languages declined, Korean, Hebrew, and American Sign Language saw increases. Specifically, Biblical Hebrew programs grew by 9.1%, whereas Korean language programs surged by 38.3%. Over the period from 2009 to 2021, Korean enrollments increased by 128%, marking the most significant growth among foreign languages taught in colleges.

This surge is attributed to the global influence of Korea's popular culture, which has sparked widespread interest across diverse age groups. The popularity of Korea's soft culture has naturally extended to the language. The Korean music industry, with its primary audience being Korean speakers, has seen its transnational popularity bring people of various ethnic backgrounds into contact with the Korean language. Recent studies indicate that engagement with target popular culture positively impacts students' motivation to learn. This conference aims to bring together scholars and researchers to discuss the linguistic influence of Korea's popular culture and explore its pedagogical applications.

## ◇ PROGRAM

<b>March 21st (Fri)</b>	
	<b>Welcoming and Opening Remarks</b>
9:45 A.M. EDT	<b>Celeste Arrington</b> , Professor of Korean Studies, George Washington University <b>Dorothy Ko</b> , Professor Emeritus of Korean Language and Culture and International Affairs, George Washington University
	<b>Morning Session</b>

<p>10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M. EDT</p>	<p><u>Moderator</u> <b>Miok Pak</b>, Associate Professor of Korean Linguistics and Language, George Washington University</p> <p><u>Speakers</u> <b>Hanae Kim</b>, Lecturer for Korean Studies, University of Illinois Chicago “Learning through Fandom: K-pop’s Influence on Korean Language Learners”</p> <p><b>Jieun Kiaer</b>, Young Bin Min-KF Professor of Korean Linguistics, University of Oxford “The Rise of the Language of Hallyu: The Language of K-Fandom and Global Influence”</p> <p><b>Sang-Seok Yoon</b>, Assistant Professor of Korean Linguistics, University of Iowa “Korean Language Usage Among Americans: The Impact of Korean Pop Culture on Language Acquisition and Communication”</p> <p><b>Soyoung Kang</b>, Professor of Korean, Carleton University “Effective use of a Korean drama in raising awareness of Korean speech styles and address terms in intermediate-level Korean classes”</p>
<p>12:00 P.M. - 1:30 P.M. EDT</p>	<p><b>Lunch</b></p>
	<p><b>Afternoon Session</b></p>
<p>1:30 P.M. - 2:30 P.M. EDT</p>	<p><u>Moderator</u> <b>Insung Ko</b>, Teaching Assistant Professor in Korean Language, George Washington University</p> <p><u>Speakers</u> <b>Jihye Moon</b>, Assistant Professor of Korean, George Mason University “Engaging Learners in Cultural Translation through Korean Pop Culture”</p> <p><b>Joowon Suh</b>, Director of the Korean Language Program, Columbia University “Expanding Sociolinguistic Inquiry into K-pop: The Case of BTS”</p> <p><b>Young-mee Yu Cho</b>, Professor of Korean, Rutgers University “Language Unleashed in K-Pop: A Linguistic Revolution and Korean Language Education”</p>

	<b>Roundtable Discussion</b>
3:00 P.M. - 3:30 P.M. EDT	<p><u>Moderator</u> <b>Miok Pak</b>, Associate Professor of Korean Linguistics and Language, George Washington University</p>

◇ WELCOMING REMARKS



**Celeste Arrington** is Korea Foundation Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at GW. She is the Director of the GW Institute for Korea Studies and Co-Director of the East Asia National Resource Center (2024-present). She specializes in comparative public policy, law and social change, lawyers, and governance, with a regional focus on the Koreas and Japan. She is also interested in Northeast Asian security, North Korean human rights, and transnational activism. Her first book was *Accidental Activists: Victim Movements and Governmental Accountability in Japan and South Korea* (Cornell, 2016). She has published numerous articles and, with Patricia Goedde, she co-edited *Rights Claiming in South Korea* (Cambridge, 2021). Her next book, forthcoming in Cambridge's *Studies in Law and Society* series, analyzes the legalistic turn in Korean and Japanese regulatory style through paired case studies related to tobacco control and disability rights. She received a PhD from UC Berkeley, an MPhil from the University of Cambridge, and an AB from Princeton University. She has been a fellow at Harvard, the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, and the Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich. GW's Office of the Vice President for Research awarded her the 2021 Early Career Research Scholar Award. Her article with Claudia Kim won the 2023 Asian Law and Society Association's distinguished article award.



**YOUNG-KEY KIM-RENAUD** is Professor Emeritus of Korean Language and Culture and International Affairs, and Senior Advisor to the Institute for Korean Studies at George Washington University, where she taught for 32 years and served as Chair of the East Asian Languages and Literatures Department for the last 12 years of her tenure before retiring in 2015. As a pioneer in teaching Korean as a foreign language and in Korean linguistics, she has published 13 books and numerous articles on Korean linguistics and

Korean humanities. She served as President of the International Circle of Korean Linguistics (1990-92) and as Editor-in-Chief of its journal, *Korean Linguistics* (2002-14). Organizer of major cultural and academic events, she is the recipient of prestigious grants and prizes including three Fulbright awards, the Republic of Korea Order of Cultural Merit, and the Samsung Bichumi Award (Women of the Year) in Korea.

◇ **SPEAKERS (Alphabetical Order)**



**YOUNG-MEE YU CHO** is Professor of Korean at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey and published *Integrated Korean* (2000-2021), *Korean Photographs in the William Elliot Griffis Collection* (2019), *Teaching Korean as a Foreign Language* (2021), *You Call That Music?!* (2022), *Rereading Chang Lee Wook* (2022), and *Korea Letters in the Griffis Collection* (2024).



**SOYOUNG KANG** is Instructor of Korean at the School of Linguistics and Language Studies, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. She studied English Language and Linguistics in Korea and earned a PhD in Linguistics from Ohio State University (thesis title: “Effects of prosody and context on the comprehension of syntactic ambiguity in English and Korea”). Her research interests include effects of intonation on syntactic ambiguity, L2 speech perception and acquisition, Korean teaching pedagogy, and English/Korean translation.



**JIEUN KIAER** is the YBM KF Professor of Korean Linguistics at the University of Oxford. She widely publishes on Korean linguistics, translanguaging, and the linguistic influence of Korean popular culture across global boundaries. Her research focuses on fandom language learning, the emergence of Korean-English, and digital communication. She also serves as a Korean Consultant for the Oxford English Dictionary. Her works, including *The Language of Hallyu: More than Polite* (2023, Routledge), *Translingual Words* (2018, Routledge), *Fandom Language Learning* (2025, Bloomsbury, with Alfred Lo), *Emergence of Korean English: How Korea’s Dynamic English is Born* (2023, Routledge, with H. Ahn), and *Whose Language Is English?* (2024), provide insights into the evolving nature of Korean as a global language.



**HANAE KIM, Ph.D.**, is Lecturer and Coordinator for Korean Studies in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Illinois Chicago, specializing in Korean language education. Her research interests encompass Korean as a world language education, heritage language education, Korean language teacher preparation, in-and-out-of-school learning, and the impact of K-pop and media on language learning. She also focuses on peer learning among students, the role of peer and parent support, and school-community collaboration.



**DR. JIHYE MOON** is Assistant Professor of Korean in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages at George Mason University. She has been committed to building the curriculum for the new BA program in Korea, conducting a program evaluation, and developing numerous content-based Korean language, linguistics, and translation courses for Korean majors. Moon was recognized for her excellence in teaching and invited to serve as an inaugural faculty fellow to bridge the gap between curriculum and career for student success at the university. She holds her Ph.D. in Second Language Acquisition from the University of Maryland, College Park and served as the Foreign Language Reviewer at the American Councils for International Education in Washington D.C. for several years. She was awarded the federal grant to run the Project Global Officer Korean Program at George Mason University, an initiative of the Defense Language and National Security Education Office to promote critical language education in the U.S. Moon in the review editor of *Epic Korean* textbook series intended for K-12 learners of Korean as well as the lead author of *Topics in Korean Language and Culture* (Routledge, 2024) designed for students pursuing Korean studies in higher education and beyond.



**JOOWON SUH** is Senior Lecturer and Director of the Korean Language Program in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures. Before joining Columbia in 2017, she taught at Princeton University as Director of the Korean Language Program. She co-authored the KLEAR Integrated Korean Workbook Series *Beginning 1 & 2* (2019) and *Intermediate 1 & 2* (2020) and revised its Textbook Series 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Editions, published by the University of Hawaii Press. Her upcoming edited volume, *BTS and Languages: K-pop Transcending Language and Communication* (Routledge), is set to be published in 2025. She served as the President of the American Association of Teachers of Korean (2018-2021). Her research interests include Korean linguistics and language pedagogy, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and interlanguage pragmatics.



**DR. SANG-SEOK YOON** is Assistant Professor of Korean linguistics at the University of Iowa, specializing in teaching Korean as a second or foreign language and the pragmatics of the Korean language. He is dedicated to making the Korean language and culture more accessible to learners. Dr. Yoon is one of the authors of the Integrated Korean textbook series, published by the University of Hawaii Press, a widely recognized resource for Korean language learners worldwide.

#### ◇ MODERATORS (Alphabetical Order)



**INSUNG KO** is Teaching Assistant Professor in Korean Language in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures at the George Washington University. He used to teach Korean language at various levels at Washington University in St. Louis, Middlebury School of Korean, and University of Michigan. His research interests are in Korean linguistics, second language phonetics, second language pedagogy, and language testing.



**MIOK PAK** is Associate Professor of Korean Linguistics and Language in the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures at George Washington University. She received her PhD in theoretical linguistics from Georgetown University. Her research covers a wide variety of topics in syntax, semantics, and pragmatics and their interfaces. She has several publications in major linguistics journals on topics such as clause types, interpretation of the subject in jussive clauses, speaker and addressee and their social relations in syntax and semantics, honorifics and politeness and their grammatical change. She published a co-edited volume, *Speaker, Addressee, and Social Relation* (Glossa Special Collections 2022) and co-authored *The Routledge Courses in Business Korean* (Routledge 2019).

#### ◇ ABSTRACTS (Alphabetical Order)

**Young-mee Cho**, “Language Unleashed in K-Pop: A Linguistic Revolution and Korean Language Education”

In the presentation, I will focus on the emerging features of rhythm and musicality in the new linguistic landscape of contemporary Korean language and their pedagogical implications in Korean language education. With the advent of “the online era” in the late 1990s, the texture and the sound of contemporary Korean language have undergone an irreversible change. K-Pop was born from one such linguistic revolution. I will explore how K-Pop has been able to build a creative space to experiment with this new American import and to find ways to subvert censorship and finally to give birth to Korean rap. Whether underground or mainstream, there were hardly any non-accidental rhymes until 1997, due to the unique challenges of adapting Korean syntax and prosody to a typical 4-beat hip-hop track. After three decades of negotiating linguistic and cultural tensions, successful rappers have seamlessly created internal and multi-word rhymes, flow and storytelling.

In addition, there are dramatic changes occurring in word formation, two of which are especially noteworthy. First, new word-formation processes have been adopted even in formal registers: 1) combining loan words and native morphemes; 2) using acronyms. Second, sound-symbolic vocabulary now functions as an open category. New usages are created from existing non-mimetic words, while sound-symbolic adverbs are used independently in space-limited contexts, such as headlines and texting.

This shift of attention to increasingly diversifying Korean language is aligned with major shifts taking place across in second language education, namely, the attention to the everyday and authentic. In addition, the post-structuralist approaches to language education attempt to overcome many constraints imposed by Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) by privileging fluid and uniquely individualistic language practices of multilingual speakers through cultivating SL identities (Block, 2007), symbolic competence (Kramsch, 2006), multiliteracies (Allen & Paesani, 2010), and translanguaging (Garcia & Wei, 2014).

**Soyoung Kang**, “Effective use of a Korean drama in raising awareness of Korean speech styles and address terms in intermediate-level Korean classes”

Given that address terms and speech styles are such an integral part of Korean linguistic features, many Korean educators will agree that textbooks and classroom instruction are limited and inadequate in explaining and teaching the complex system of Korean address terms and speech styles (Lee & Ramsey (2000) identify up to 14 different address terms, for example). In addition to limited class time, textbook conversations and participants in them rarely represent the dynamic nature of using address terms and speech style. Oftentimes, many conversations involve only two or three participants with the same style used by all participants, and also without any shift in speech styles, which is often observed in native speakers’ speech.

It is not surprising that Korean dramas can provide authentic and realistic resources for these complex features with multiple characters with different social and age backgrounds and ever-evolving relationships among characters and different situations. While previous studies have used Korean dramas for various purposes (Brown 2013, Chong 2020, Song 2019), this study selected a drama that can illustrate typical or strategic selection of speech styles and show examples of any shift of such styles that reflect interlocuters’ emotions or intentions. The selected drama, “Search



www (검색어를 입력하라)” depicts three female lead characters, who work in two companies that differ in terms of work environment and the way people interact with each other including their speech. In addition, the three main characters go through changes in their interpersonal relationships among themselves as well as with other people. As such, this drama provides authentic contexts regarding what types of speech styles are typically used in a specific situation with different participants with different social positions, and as relationships evolve and characters are placed in diverse situations, the drama shows plenty of examples where frequent switch of speech styles can be observed.

Watching this drama was used for the 2nd year Korean students who had learned to use the polite ending (‘요’) but not panmal (half-speech), although they knew the difference between the two styles. As such, rather than being used as materials for language learning, this drama was used to make them aware of the complex nature of Korean speech styles and address terms. Students had to watch two episodes per week as a homework assignment and answer four or five questions in English prepared by the instructor. Two out of those questions were about address terms and speech styles, specifically asking students to note contexts where specific address terms and speech styles were used and think about how the differences in addressing terms and speech styles can affect the workplace environment and interpersonal relationships. The other questions were about colloquial expressions such as 밀당, 양다리, 띠동갑, or 어장관리 or social phenomena that reflect the current lifestyle of Koreans such as 탕수육 부먹 짝먹 논쟁. Students’ feedback was overall very positive; they enjoyed doing this assignment as the drama theme and various topics in it were interesting and thought-provoking and the questions they had to answer made them pay attention to structures and forms that otherwise would have been ignored or passed without thinking. In addition, despite the lack of in-depth class discussions or overt instructions, some of the students were able to gain insights into the usage of different speech styles and the conditions for the shift of speech styles. Overall, this study demonstrated the pedagogical effectiveness of drama watching on Korean speech styles and address terms even without explicit teaching on these topics. While this was initially used as self-study materials amid the pandemic time, it can be fully developed into full classroom discussions and teaching materials with additional in-class activities.

**Jjeun Kiaer**, “The Rise of the Language of Hallyu: The Language of K-Fandom and Global Influence”

In this talk, I will discuss the rise of translingual words, the birth and growth of the language of Hallyu, and the crucial roles of social media and AI in these developments. The linguistic influence of Korean popular culture, particularly K-dramas, has transcended global boundaries, becoming a significant force in shaping contemporary language trends. The language of Hallyu has grown organically through its global K-fandom, with users integrating Korean words and expressions into everyday language worldwide. K-dramas serve as a primary vehicle for disseminating Korean culture and language, introducing viewers to nuanced phrases, colloquialisms, and hybrid words that blend Korean with English and other languages. Terms like "oppa," "unni," and "daebak" have gained international recognition, often appearing in digital communication, social media, and informal spoken language.

My work explores the rise of trans-lingual, trans-cultural words, as highlighted in my book *Translingual Words* (Kiaer, 2018). These words transcend language boundaries, creating new forms of communication that resonate globally. The role of social media platforms and AI technologies in amplifying and normalizing these linguistic elements will also be examined, showing how digital spaces facilitate the rapid spread of the language of Hallyu. This rise is further evidenced by the inclusion of several Korean words in authoritative language references, such as the Oxford English Dictionary. *The Language of Hallyu: More than Polite* (Kiaer, 2023) further discusses how these expressions go beyond simple politeness, reflecting complex cultural meanings and social norms. As Korean popular culture continues to thrive, its linguistic influence will likely expand, reshaping how global audiences engage with language.

**Hanae Kim, Ph.D.**, “Learning through Fandom: K-pop’s Influence on Korean Language Learners”

This qualitative case study explores how an interest in Korean popular culture shapes the motivation and commitment of non-Korean heritage learners in studying the Korean language. The study was conducted between February 2020 and March 2021 and it focused on six students at a large urban state university in the US Midwest. I used multiple qualitative methods such as online surveys, one-to-one interviews, and observations to explore how participants’ engagement with Korean popular culture fostered their dedication to learning the Korean language both within their university and beyond. Participants were students at this university at the time of this study and they were selected for their diverse backgrounds (ethnicity, school year, major, length of exposure to K-pop, involvement in campus, Korean language learning experience, etc.). The study highlights how my participants engagement with Korean popular culture extended far beyond its entertainment value. While initially drawn to storylines, actor/actresses, quality of the shows, K-pop songs, choreographies and artists; the learners also developed a deep interest in Korean language, culture, history, and society. Given the limited opportunities to study Korea in formal education settings, Korean popular culture and transnational media and literacies from the Internet were the primary sources of information about Korea. Their passion for Korean popular culture also led them to actively seek formal learning opportunities, such as enrolling in Korea-related courses, joining student organizations, and attending Korea-focused events on campus. These in-person K-pop affinity spaces created a sense of belonging and provided a platform for deeper cultural and linguistic exploration. The findings of this study emphasize the role of Korean popular culture in sustaining learners’ long-term motivation and commitment to language learning. I believe that school can better nurture students’ long-term commitment to language learning when we bridge the gap between students’ passions and academic endeavors.

**Jihye Moon**, “Engaging Learners in Cultural Translation through Korean Pop Culture”

Teaching a foreign language through translation once shunned has gained renewed attention in our increasingly globalized world. Translanguaging has become a common practice in multilingual classrooms beyond the use of pedagogical translation in second or foreign language classrooms. With the rise of South Korean pop culture, international fans and Korean learners who alike are constantly exposed to diversified multimodal content are naturally engaged in translation as a

linguistic and cultural process. One remarkable phenomenon is that consumers themselves have become an active agent or contributor of source text translation. Translation is no longer seen as a mere tool to find linguistic equivalents but rather as a process of being engaged in the dialogue between two cultures. This study examines how the global dissemination of Korean pop culture has influenced translation practices and perspectives while highlighting the significance of cultural translation as a powerful tool to enhance Korean learners' intercultural communicative competence in a transnational age. The study also proposes how translation can be integrated into Korean language instruction and curriculum.

**Joowon Suh**, "Expanding Sociolinguistic Inquiry into K-pop: The Case of BTS"

K-pop, the leading genre of Hallyu, the Korean Wave, has long been an appealing and stimulating research topic in Korean linguistics and language pedagogy. For instance, linguists focus on language variations and changes reflected in K-pop lyrics, such as the use of English in Korean lyrics and its impact on the Korean language. Language professionals pay attention to Kpop's linguistic and cultural impact on learners' motivations and learning processes, as well as its pedagogical uses and values. With the rise of digital culture in the global pop culture market, the affordances of social media and new interactive technologies, and the increasing digital fluency of consumers, such interests and focuses need to be revisited, reevaluated, and expanded. It is urgent for professionals in the field to adapt to this changing landscape and be motivated and inspired by the new opportunities it presents.

This paper aims to extend the research and pedagogical inquiries into K-pop by exploring key sociolinguistic issues related to BTS, the unparalleled global K-pop phenomenon. The paper showcases examples of language mixing, language contact, and translanguaging practices represented in BTS's music and the discourses surrounding their fandom and BTS-related contents, products, and environments. The data are drawn from their songs, lyrics, interviews, artist-fan interactions, and the languages involving BTS consumers, such as reaction videos, advertisements, and commercials. Examining these highly localized and distinctively stylized languages of BTS and the multilingual and multicultural communication surrounding the BTS phenomenon can make meaningful contributions to the sociolinguistic understanding of hybrid language use, multimodal competence, and digital and media literacy in this rapidly globalizing world. It also underscores the interdisciplinarity of (socio)linguistics, language pedagogy, media studies, and cultural studies. As Y. Kim (2023) aptly put it, the data based on K-pop and BTS provide us with "a mediating pedagogical tool that is subject to polysemic interpretation, dominant ideology and negotiated reading" (p.3).

**Sang-Seok Yoon**, "Korean Language Usage Among Americans: The Impact of Korean Pop Culture on Language Acquisition and Communication"

This study explores the increasing influence of the Korean language among Americans, particularly in online communities centered around Korean pop culture. Traditionally, Korean

was primarily spoken by Korean immigrants in the U.S., but it has since become the 10th most studied foreign language in higher education, according to the MLA report of 2023. With the global rise of Korean pop culture—especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and through platforms like Netflix—more Americans have been drawn to Korean dramas, K-pop, and related media, resulting in greater recognition of Korean culture in the U.S. Online communities such as Soompi, Viki, and Dramafever have emerged, where fans of Korean pop culture discuss K-culture content and exchange information. Although English dominates most discussions, members frequently incorporate Romanized Korean words, particularly in conversations about K-pop, K-dramas, and Korean online gaming. These discussions reflect the growing global influence of Korean culture, with Americans adopting elements of the language, though this trend remains somewhat limited to specific communities. Nonetheless, the incorporation of Korean vocabulary in these forums underscores the increasing cultural exchange fostered by the popularity of Korean media.

This study analyzed how Korean words and expressions are used by English-speaking users in online discussions and how Korean pop culture, especially K-pop and K-dramas, motivates American fans to engage with the language. The analysis revealed several key trends in the use of Korean language in these online communities. First, traditional words like kimchi, taekwondo, and chaebol have long been familiar to Americans, but newer expressions, such as maknae (youngest member), aegyo (cuteness), and sasaeng (obsessive fans), are increasingly integrated into everyday discourse. Second, honorifics and terms of address from Korean culture are frequently adopted, especially when fans refer to idols or characters, reflecting a deep engagement with cultural nuances. Additionally, culturally specific terms such as hanbok or chuseok are integrated into discussions, showcasing how users incorporate Korean customs into their conversations. There has also been a phenomenon of “reverse-imported” Konglish such as paiting! (fighting) ‘Go!, Come on!’, where hybridized English-Korean terms are used by English speakers, further blending the two languages. New slang tied to Korean pop culture is emerging, with these phrases gaining traction both in online forums and mainstream conversations. In gaming communities, particularly those centered around Korean esports players, unique expressions have been adopted, emphasizing Korea’s influence on global gaming culture. Lastly, several Korean words and expressions have made their way into foreign media, further demonstrating the widespread reach of Korean language and culture globally.

*This event is on the record and open to the public.*