

The Organic Principle of the International Korean Phonetic Alphabet

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Abstract

Based on the articulatory phonetic (or organic) principle, the Korean alphabet of 28 letters as invented by King Sejong in 1443 is not only systematic and scientifically oriented but also easy to learn and use in everyday life of the Korean people. The International Korean Phonetic Alphabet was devised by the present writer in 1971 by applying the organic principle much more extensively. Accordingly, the IKPA symbols are just as simple and easy to learn and memorize as the Korean alphabet, and at the same time they are much more consistent and logical than the IPA symbols which, having been derived mainly from Roman and Greek letters, are unsystematic mass of letters except in one respect, i.e., retroflex symbols. This paper describes the organic principles exploited in devising the International Korean Phonetic Alphabet and assesses its advantages.

1. What is the Use of Phonetic Alphabet?

The phonetic alphabet is an indispensable basic tool in the following areas:

- 1) Phonetic and linguistics studies of languages,
- 2) Native and foreign language teaching and learning,
- 3) Phonetic study of dialect pronunciation,
- 4) Speech science:synthesis and recognition,
- 5) Contrastive study of sounds of languages,
- 6) Speech therapy: diagnosis and treatment,

etc.

2. International Phonetic Alphabet(IPA)

The IPA is no doubt the most widely used and at the same time, highly successful phonetic alphabet. However IPA, based mainly on Roman and Greek letters, has some disadvantages and drawbacks. For one thing, no formal interrelationship can be found in IPA between the phonetic symbols representing homorganic sounds such as p/b, t/d, k/g, s/z, f/v, etc. This makes it very hard for beginners to learn the IPA symbols and use them in research and teaching.

Roman: [a, i, e, o, u, p, t, k, s, z, f, x] etc.

Greek : [ϕ, β, γ, θ, χ] etc.

Modified : [ə, ε, æ, ø, ʃ, ʒ, ɛ, ʧ]

3. Earlier Attempts to Devise Universal Phonetic Alphabets

Serious attempts have been made by phoneticians and linguists in the past to devise universal alphabet. Notable among them are Bell, Sweet, Jespersen etc. Their attempts were highly rewarding and yet their ideas were all short-lived, due largely to what Professor Eugenie Henderson described as "lack of royal authority and blessing" which Hangeul enjoyed.

4. Hangeul(Korean Alphabet): Excellent Writing System for the Korean Language but Not Sufficient as an International Phonetic Alphabet.

Hangeul is no doubt a highly successful writing system for the Korean language but it leaves much to be desired before it can be utilized as a truly international phonetic alphabet. For instance, there is no way to notate voiced/voiceless distinction separately or to distinguish labial and labio-dental articulation in Hangeul writing.

f/p: face/pace -> 페이스; fine/pine -> 파인
 /d: they/day -> 데이; v/b: visit/busy -> 비지트/비지,
 z/dʒ: zipper/jeep-> 지퍼/지프, (visa -> 비자)
 l/r: lice/rice -> 라이쓰, ʒ/dʒ: leisure/ledger->레저

5. Principles of IKPA

The basic principles embodied in the making of the Korean Phonetic Alphabet are as follows:

- 1) To Use all Hangwl letters in current use,
- 2) To Revive the extinct letters (from Hunminjeongeum),
- 3) To Devise new symbols based on the basic principles of Hunminjeongeum,
- 4) To Represent homorganic sounds mnemonically and systematically,
- 5) To Devise diacritical marks to enrich the phonetic representation.

6. Organic Principles Extensively Exploited in Deriving Indispensable Symbols.

- 1) In deriving voiced symbols from voiceless ones.
- 2) In deriving palatalized symbols from non-palatalised ones.
- 3) In deriving retroflex symbols from non-retroflex ones.

- 4) In deriving fricative symbols from homorganic plosive ones.
- 5) In deriving uvular symbols from velr symbols.

7. Advantages of International Korean Phonetic Alphabet

- 1) IKPA represents the shape and/or articulating action of the organs of speech, just like Hangeul(Korean Alphabet), i.e., Organic phonetic alphabet.
- 2) Represent the place and manner of articulation in a consistent manner,
- 3) Homorganic symbols share the common element,
- 4) Easy to learn, teach and memorize.
- 5) Potentiality to serve as a truly universal phonetic alphabet common to all races and nations,

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International Korean Phonetic Alphabet
<닿소리 / Consonants>

위 치 Place	두 입술 Bi-la bial	입술 이 Labio dent	이- 잇몸 Dental/ alveolar	혀 말음 Retro- flex	뒤 잇몸 Post- alveo	잇몸 입천장 Alveo/ palat	생입 천장 Pala- tal	여린 입천장 Velar	목 젓 Uvular	목 구멍 Pharyn- geal	소리 문 Glott- tal
터짐소리 Plosive	ㅂ ㅃ b p		ㄷ ㅌ d t	ㄸ ㅊ dʰ tʰ			ㄱ ㅋ k c	ㆁ ㆏ ŋ kh	㆑ ㆒ q		ㅇ ?
터갈소리 Affricate					ㄷㅈ ㄷㅊ dʒ dʒʰ						
갈이소리 Fricative	ㅍ ㅑ p β	ㅍ ㅑ f v	ㅅ ㅆ ㅈ ㅊ s z	ㅅ ㅆ ㅈ ㅊ ʃ ʒ	ㅅ ㅆ ㅈ ㅊ ʃ ʒ	ㅅ ㅆ ㅈ ㅊ ʃ ʒ	ㅅ ㅆ ㅈ ㅊ ʃ ʒ	ㅅ ㅆ ㅈ ㅊ x y	ㅅ ㅆ ㅈ ㅊ x β	ㅅ ㅆ ㅈ ㅊ h ʕ	ㅎ ㅎ h fi
콧 소리 Nasal	ㅁ m	ㅂ m	ㄴ n	ㄴ n			ㄴ n	ㅇ ŋ	ㅇ ŋ		
혀옆소리 Lateral			ㄹ l	ㄹ l			ㄹ l				
굴림소리 Rolled			ㄹ r						ㄹ R		
뒤집소리 Flapped			ㄹ r	ㄹ r					ㄹ R		
지속음 반모음 Approximant	ㄹ ㅁ w ɸ	ㄴ ㅁ ɳ ɳ	ㄹ ㅁ ɹ ɹ				ㄹ ㅁ l j	ㄹ ㅁ w y	ㄹ ㅁ ɳ ɳ		

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International Korean Phonetic Alphabet
<홀소리 / Vowel>

모 음 Vowels	원 순 Rounded			앞 Front		가은 Central		뒤 back	
닫힌(Close)	기 y	우 u	우 u	ㅣ i	기 y	ㅣ i	우 u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u
반닫힌(Half-close)	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u
반열린(Half-open)	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u
열린(Open)	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u	ㅜ u

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