

# Recognition of the Language Movements of Foreign Countries in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Korea

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## 1. Research Theme

This study seeks to examine the influence from foreign countries' language movements to that of Korea in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. World-widely the early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the linguistic upheavals according to the advent of the nation-state, the boundary of which tends to fit the linguistic borderlines. Although there was no physical change of the borderline, early 20<sup>th</sup> century Korea aimed to withdraw the traditional tributary relations with China. At the same time Korea tried to abolish the use of Chinese writing and to increase the use of Hangul and also standardize the Korean language as an official language of the modern nation-state. The linguistic changes throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century Korea are referred to as Hangul Movement. As the linguistic unification and codification (the making of 'the national language') was the common goal of the modern nation-states, each state refers to each other's case and use the certain aspect of foreign cases to deal with its own linguistic problems. We will examine how the Korean intellectuals of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century made arguments with the foreign countries' language movements in order to solve the difficulties they faced.

Until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the language typically used in official written situations was Classical Chinese although the former King Sejong had created Hangul in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Not only linguistically but also culturally Korea was under the strong influence from China which was considered as the center of the world according to the traditional East Asian worldview. However amid the spread of the nation-state system in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, King Gojong declared that Korea's official language is Korean, and every official document should be written in Hangul or the mixture of Hangul and Chinese characters. From then, the use of Hangul and the research on Hangul and Korean language rapidly increased until the Korean language was able to be used as a full-fledged modern language. However, there still were objections against the sole use of Hangul because of the deeply rooted tradition of Classical Chinese writing and also of the Korean language's lack of codified orthography, grammar, and vocabulary. The advocates of Hangul writing published articles on the language movements of various foreign countries including Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Holland, Germany, England, the USA, Turkey, China, and Japan in order to put Korea's Hangul Movement in a general stream of linguistic development. This study explores the articles published in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century magazines and newspapers and illustrates the recognition of foreign language movements in three respects: 1) the superiority of phonogram over ideogram, 2) the role of language in the development of cultural identity and nation states, 3) the construction of the successful models of language modernization.

## 2. Research Material

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