

Formats of Korean Authors' Names

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Because English is the international language of science, South Korean scientists prefer to publish their work in English-language journals. However, because of differences between the Korean language (Hangul) and English, non-Korean editors may be uncertain about how to list Korean authors' names. This article therefore describes the structure of Korean names, discusses their romanization, and presents observations and guidelines regarding formats of Korean authors' names in English-language scientific journals.

The Structure of Korean Names

Hangul has 24 letters: 14 consonants and 10 vowels. A syllable consisting of a consonant and a vowel is written as one character. Thus, the Hangul writing system, like the roman alphabet, can make many words by using a small number of letters. However, the sentence structure in Hangul differs from that in English: a Korean sentence contains a subject, then an object, and then a verb.

Like Western names, Korean names have two parts: a family name and a given name. However, the order differs. In Korean names, the family name traditionally comes first. It usually consists of one syllable, and the given name is usually two syllables. For example, my given name is Sunghee, and my family name is Han. In the Korean writing system, I write my name Han Sunghee.

There are exceptions. For example, some family names have two syllables, such as Hwangbo, Seon-u, and Namgung; and some given names have one syllable, such as Gu, as in Kim Gu, a Korean politician.

Because of the longstanding Chinese influence on Korea, most Korean people write their names in Chinese as well as

Korean characters. However, these days, many people write their children's names only in Korean.

When Koreans write their names in English, they generally follow the order of Western names, placing their given name first and their family name last. Sometimes this causes confusion because many Westerners know the traditional order of East Asian names and some media use Korean names in the original order. For example, *The Korea Times* (an English-language newspaper in South Korea) places the family name first and hyphenates the two syllables of the given name (for example, Kim Dae-jung). *The Economist*, *Time*, and *Newsweek* write Korean names with the family name first but without a hyphen in the given name (for example, Kim Dae Jung).

In scientific journals, South Korean scientists write their names in Western order. Sometimes they hyphenate their given name, and sometimes they do not. When the given name is separated by a hyphen or a space, each syllable is usually capitalized.

Romanizing Korean Names

Outside Korea, Korean names have commonly been written in English in the McCune-Reischauer system. It was officially used as the Korean romanization system from 1984 to 2000, when the South Korean government began using the Revised Romanization of Korean. The new system was released by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in South Korea.

The revised system was devised to overcome problems with the McCune-Reischauer system, which uses many breves and apostrophes and thus poses difficulties in keyboarding (example: j̇'n'ġ'm) and which does not reflect the phonetic characteristics of Hangul. The new system is based on standard Korean pronunciation and does not use breves and apostrophes.

There are about 300 Korean family names. The accompanying table presents

examples of some family names as written in Korean characters (Hangul), Chinese characters, the McCune-Reischauer system, and the Revised Romanization of Korean. The names are listed from most common to least common.

Most South Koreans still write their names in the McCune-Reischauer system because it has been used for several decades and so is familiar. The Korean government lacks authority to require people to write their names in the Revised Romanization of Korean. Transliteration of the same Korean name in different ways sometimes confuses both Western and Korean readers.

Romanization of Korean Names in Journals

To see how South Korean scientists write their names in English, I looked at six South Korean scientific journals in a variety of fields: *Bulletin of the Korean Chemical Society*, *Journal of the Korean Chemical Society*, *Journal of Korean Medical Science*, *Journal of the Korean Society of Oceanography*, *Journal of Microbiology*, and *Yonsei Medical Journal*.

None of the journals uses a specific system for romanizing Korean names. Authors write their names in whichever system they prefer. Some given names of authors are hyphenated, others are not. Such variation in ways of writing Korean names also occurs in English-language journals published in the West, such as Sung-Kil Lim, Hyun Chul Lee, and Hyeong Jin in *Archives of Internal Medicine*. However, all Korean names are placed with the given name first, followed by the family name. When given names are written as two separate words separated by a hyphen or a space, each word generally is capitalized. In references, given names are written in initials.

The following are some examples of Korean authors' names in journals:

- Examples containing given names with a hyphen:

SUNGHEE HAN wrote this article while a *Science Editor* intern.

Wook-Jin Chae (*Yonsei Medical Journal*), Tai-Hyoung Kim (*Bulletin of the Korean Chemical Society*), Jee-Young Park (*Journal of Korean Medical Science*), Jin-Sook Park (*Journal of Microbiology*), Kil-Joong Yoon (*Journal of the Korean Chemical Society*).

- Examples with given names as two separate words without a hyphen:

Jin Ho Hyun (*Journal of the Korean Chemical Society*), **Jung Ho Hyun** (*Journal of the Korean Society of Oceanography*), **Hye Soon Park** (*Journal of Korean Medical Science*).

- Examples with given names as one word without a hyphen:

Changyong Choi (*Bulletin of the Korean Chemical Society*), **Hyoshik Kwon** (*Journal of the Korean Chemical Society*), **Jongyoun Yi** (*Journal of Korean Medical Science*).

Despite the Revised Romanization of Korean, the Romanization of Korean names is not standardized yet. Even in the same journal, some Korean family names follow the McCune-Reischauer system (such as Yoon Seok Chang, *Journal of Korean Medical Science*), and others the Revised Romanization of Korean (such as Tae Jung Jang, *Journal of Korean Medical Science*). South Koreans write their names in English according to their personal preference.

Regardless of how the name of a Korean author is written, the given name should precede the family name for consistency

Common Korean Family Names in Korean, Chinese, and English

| Hangul | Chinese character | McCune Reischauer system | Revised Romanization of Korean |
|--------|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 김 | 金 | Kim | Gim |
| 리 이 | 李 | Lee, Rhee Yi | Ri I |
| 박 | 朴 | Park, Pak | Bak |
| 최 | 崔 | Choi | Choe |
| 정 | 鄭 丁 | Chong, Chung | Jeong |
| 강 | 姜 | Kang | Gang |
| 조 | 趙 曹 | Cho | Jo |
| 윤 | 尹 | Yoon | Yun |
| 장 | 張 | Chang | Jang |
| 안 | 安 | Ahn | An |
| 류 유 | 柳 劉 | Ryu Yoo | Ryu Yu |
| 차 | 車 | Cha | Cha |

with the usual format in English-language journals. Korean scientists should spell their names the same in all their scientific papers so that readers can recognize them as the same person. Korean authors are encouraged to use given names with a hyphen in English-language journals because that format might help to distinguish given names from family names. 🗣️

Reference

1. Han S. Science and science editing in South Korea. *Sci Ed* 2005;28:156-7.

Additional Resource

Romanization of Korean. www.korea.net/korea/kor_loca.asp?code=A020303. Accessed 2 April 2005.