Theories on the Mixed Use of Korean and Chinese Characters

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1. Introduction

The use of characters in Korea began with the adoption of Chinese characters from ancient China. It is, however, not clear exactly how and when they were introduced into Korea. Considering the establishment of the four Chinese districts (漢四君) in the Northern part of Korea, it is reasonable to assume that Chinese characters were adopted in the first century. In the early period, characters were supposed to have been used only as an aid to understanding and practicing classical Chinese, notably as in the so-called Chinese character culture circle: Japan and Vietnam. Generally, the use of characters was prompted by the need to translate spoken Korean into classical Chinese. It was a difficult job especially in the initial stages when knowledge of the Chinese characters and classical Chinese was poor. Indeed, the translation may in many cases have incorrectly represented spoken Korean. Consequently, it was necessary to devise a more comprehensive system of characters for Korean. To meet this requirement, the sound and meaning of Chinese characters were adopted to describe Korean proper nouns *Idu* (吏讀) and *Hyangch'al* (鄉札) are examples of this method.

However, as King Sejong observed in *Hunminjongeum*, Chinese characters were not appropriate as a writing system for the Korean language. To overcome this difficulty, *Han'gul* (the Korean alphabet) was devised in 1446. *Han’gul* consists of

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phonetic symbols which correspond to the sound system of the Korean language. While *Idu* (or *Hyangch’al*) was simply a variant of the system of Chinese characters, *Han’gül* was a completely new system, which was devised specifically to serve as a means of writing the Korean language.

The force of habit and tradition was sufficient to ensure that the task of replacing an old writing system with a new one would by no means be an easy one. Although the royal authority promoted the spread of *Han’gül*, it was not widely used for official purposes. Classical Chinese and *Idu* were still common in the official use of characters while *Han’gül* served as an aid for the study of classical Chinese and was used chiefly by women.

In the so-called Enlightenment period around the end of the 19th century, the writing system in Korea as well as a number of other aspects of Korean culture reached a turning period. With the *Kapo Reform* of 1894, *Han’gül* came to be used in official papers and in a royal decree issued on November 21, 1894, it was stipulated that all regulations and royal decrees be written in *Kungmun* i.e. *Han’gül*. Observing this regulation, King Kojong’s message of independence to the ancestral temple of the royal family was written in *Han’gül*, along with the translation into a mixed text of *Han’gül* and Chinese characters. Afterwards, however, regulations written exclusively in *Han’gül* were exceptional, and most of them used *Han’gül* together with Chinese characters. As for the newspapers, the *Tongnip Shinmun* (1896) and the *Cheguk Shinmun* (1898) were published exclusively in *Han’gül*, while *The Choyangbo* (1896), the *Hwangsong Shinmun* (1898), the *Taehan maeti Shinbo* (1905) and others used *Han’gül* together with Chinese characters. That is, they used the method of mixed use. Similarly, in public life the mixed use of *Han’gül* and Chinese characters was in common practice, a trend which continued through the period of Japanese occupation.

Even after the Liberation, this tradition persisted and mixed use became something of a received standard in everyday life. In education (particularly in primary and secondary schools), textbooks were, however, written exclusively in *Han’gül*. Official documents were also required, by regulation, to be written in *Han’gül*. The resulting confusion has persisted and leads us to some fundamental questions. First of all, should we ignore the tradition and the actual practice in everyday social life and eliminate Chinese characters from the curricula of the elementary and secondary schools? Secondly, we should consider the fact that it is a common trend in Japan and China to put various regulations in Chinese characters for the purpose of their population and mechanization. In Korea, however, periodicals and newspapers use Chinese characters without any restriction. Should
we leave the matter to take its own course? These questions must be answered. As an attempt to provide a basis for the solution to the problem of Chinese characters, this article will review the background to and the substance of the various policies which have been adopted to put into practice in Korea over 36 years since the Liberation of this country from Japanese colonialism.

2. Chinese Characters: Education and Policy

During the Japanese occupation, the Japanese government, as a part of its colonial policy, attempted to wipe out the Korean language. Koreans were forced to use Japanese in school and Korean was abolished as a subject of study (1941). It was prohibited to use Han'gŭl and the Korean language in everyday life. With the Japanese defeat in 1945, however, Korean and Han'gŭl were used freely and their use became a symbol of the Liberation. The renaissance of the Korean language in education prompted a strong demand for textbooks and teachers. A private organization Chosŏn Hakhoe (The Korean language Society), now Han'gŭl Hakhoe (The Korean Linguistic Society) attempted to meet the demand by publishing various kinds of Korean textbooks and by offering short courses on Han'gŭl. But the activity of this organization was very limited in its scope and the U.S. Military Government Office in Korea had no choice but to step in, marking the first time that the government interfered with the matter of how to do things with Chinese characters. The conclusion reached at that time is still in effect with just one minor modification and it may be of interest to review the situation which existed and the decisions which were taken at that time.

The Education department of the U.S. Military Government Office established the Korea Education Council, an advisory organization, to decide the general orientation of education in Korea. The Council was composed of 80 leading individuals from within the country. The Council consisted of ten section committees which dealt with different topics; for example, educational ideology,

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1 In Japan 1850 Chinese characters were chosen as the characters for common use. On October 1, 1981, they added 95 characters. Now the Chinese characters in common use total 1945. The limitation of use is very strict. In Mainland China, characters have also been simplified and those with many strokes replaced by homonymous ones with a few strokes. For example, a family name '蔵' 'Tae' has been replaced by '代,' 'Tae.' With this adventurous undertaking they attempted to reduce the number of characters.

2 I am indebted to Ch'oe Hyŏn-bae (1968), Lee Bung-ho (1969, 1974), The Han'gŭl Hakhoe 'The Korean Linguistic Society' (1971), and Kim Min-su (1973)
educational systems, educational administration, etc. The problem of textbooks was handled by the ninth section which made the following decision on the issue of what characters were to be used in textbooks:

Chinese characters will go out of use. Textbooks of the primary and secondary schools will be written exclusively in Han’gíl and, if necessary, Chinese characters may be inserted in parentheses.

This resolution was discussed at the general meeting and adopted by majority vote on December 8, 1945. At that time, the method of horizontal writing (from left to right) was also adopted. The U.S. Military Government Office proclaimed these resolutions without any revision, which was the first official decision on the issue of the exclusive use of Han’gíl. The relevant parts of the decision are as follows:

Matters of the abolition of Chinese characters.

1. In principle, Han’gíl must be used in primary and secondary schools and Chinese characters are not to be used.
2. In regular textbooks, as a transitional measure, Chinese characters may be used as annotations for Han’gíl so that they may be compared with each other.
3. In middle school such courses as Modern Chinese and Classical Chinese will be included in the regular curricula, so that students may promote the cultural, economic, and political relationships with China. This will help them to appreciate oriental classics. Chinese numerals may be mixed with Han’gíl.
4. To forward the plan of the disease of Chinese characters, governmental official papers, place names, and persons’ names will be written in Han’gíl (if necessary, however, Han’gíl may be annotated with Chinese characters).

According to these decisions, the U.S. Military Government Office published textbooks exclusively in Han’gíl. Chinese characters were inserted in parentheses when necessary. Textbooks were continually published in this way after the formation of a new government on August 15, 1948. Moreover, on October 9 in the same year, the government promulgated Law and Ordinance No. 6, which required all official papers to be written in the same manner. It reads as follows:

Official papers in the Republic of Korea will be written exclusively in Han’gíl.

Condition: For the time being, if necessary, Chinese characters may be used in combination.

In reality, however, the law applied only to the government’s official papers. It was not effective for the use of characters among the general public. In newspapers, periodicals, and other publications, Chinese characters were still used without any
limitation. Particularly, the mixed use of Han'gül and Chinese characters in newspapers was a major threat to the policy of the exclusive use of Han'gül in schools and public offices. To make the matter worse, the Law No. 6 was not put in to full operation even in governmental offices with the exception of the Ministry of Education. To deal with this situation, the Ministry of Education began by selecting 1,300 Chinese characters as “tentatively allowed Chinese characters” in November, 1957. In December, the ministry submitted to the Cabinet Council “A Proposal for the Promotion of the Exclusive Use of Han'gül” and “A Revision of the Law of the Exclusive Use of Han'gül”. On the basis of these proposals, the Cabinet meeting adopted a document entitled “Matter of Active Promotion of the Exclusive Use of Han'gül”. Its content was as follows:

1. Purpose: Until the related laws are revised and the enforcement ordinance is legislated, the exclusive use of Han'gül is actively promoted in accordance with the present program.
2. Revision of law: The Minister of Education legislates the law and ordinance No. 6 (on the exclusive use of Han'gül) and its enforcement ordinance.
3. Necessary measures for the central administrative organization will follow what will be decided separately.
4. Signboards are written in Han'gül.
5. Public notices and announcements will be made in Han'gül.
6. All public materials will be published in Han'gül.
7. The Minister of Public Information will issue an ordinance that all periodicals be published exclusively in Han'gül from January 1, 1958.
8. The Minister of Education will issue an ordinance that all books should be published exclusively in Han'gül from January 1, 1958.
9. If required to avoid possible confusion in cases of proper nouns and scientific terms, Chinese characters may be inserted in parentheses.

For an effective promotion of the program, the government prepared “Main principles for the exclusive use of Han'gül” and distributed it to all government agencies. According to the principles, Han'gül was to be used exclusively in official papers, governmental publications, signboards, and official seals. It also suggested that private organizations follow governmental practice. In this regard, the Ministry of Home Affairs set up an “Encouragement Period of Han’gül Signboards” (August 21-27, 1958) and advised store owners to hang out Han’gül signs. Thanks to this effort, Chinese signboards in the business quarters were replaced by Han’gül ones within a short period of time.

The matter of Han’gül signboards and other items of the “principles” were put
into operation under the control of the government authorities. Paragraph 2, however, could not be acted upon because public opinion was against the policy. At that time, the Liberal Party government advocated freedom of scholarship and of the press. Thus, the government could not take disciplinary action against the use of characters without violating these very freedoms. As a result of this and because of theoretical objections, it was not considered feasible to revise. In February, 1962, the government organized the Special Council for the Exclusive Use of Han’gul under the control of the Ministry of Education. The Council was to examine Sino-Korean words and other words of foreign origin, and render them into easy ones. The Council issued its Report No. 5 in August, 1963 and was then disbanded. In November, 1965, the Ministry of Government Administration drafted and announced a “Revised Law concerning the Exclusive Use of Han’gul”. This law consisted of seven articles and a regulation. Article 3 prescribes that all official papers should be horizontally (from left to right) written in Han’gul in the form of disentangled alphabet from October 9, 1970. Even at that time, however, not everyone liked the exclusive use of Han’gul. Thus, the prescription of the disentanglement method induced some strong objections. Some of those who agreed with exclusive use were against the disentanglement method. Consequently, the draft of the Ministry of Government Administration could not be fixed as a law.

The authorities concerned, however, stood firm in their resolution on exclusive use. In particular, President Park Chung-hee had firm convictions on the issue. Following his instructions, the Cabinet in May 1968 adopted the Five Year Plan (1968-1972) on the matter of exclusive use of Han’gul. Its purpose was to ensure that all public office papers and publications would be in Han’gul and that people would use it exclusively in everyday life. The target year for achieving this was 1973. In October, 1968, President Park advanced the plan by three years. He instructed the Cabinet to ensure not only that all papers in the government administration, legislation, and justice administration, but also all paperwork and civil petitions be written exclusively in Han’gul. He also instructed the Cabinet to urge the press and publishers to use Han’gul. In accordance with these instructions which took for the form of 7 clauses, the Prime Minister sent “Instruction, No. 68” to all public service personnel, urging that the exclusive use of Han’gul be put into full and complete operation as of January 1, 1970. Thus, Clause 1 of Article 7 of “Regulations Concerning Governmental Papers” was to be ignored and Chinese characters were not to be used even in parentheses.

It is important to note that the President’s instruction was not only a compulsory regulation for government offices, but also an encouragement for the press and the
publishing industry. According to the Five-year Plan, by the end of 1968 governmental and general publications would use only 2,000 Chinese characters and by the end of 1969 only 1,300. The number of Chinese characters would then gradually decrease until in 1973, when only Han’gül would be used. (Cf. Clause (1) & (2)) Following this plan, the press used 2,000 characters selected by the Korea Newspapers Association as of January 1, 1969. However, they could not decrease the number below 2,000, and in 1973, the goal year, they still mixed Han’gül with Chinese characters. This indicates that the government’s encouragement was not faithfully followed. In August, 1977, President Park told the Minister of Education: “It is not right to eliminate all the Chinese characters that are actually used. It is not right to insist on an increase in their number, either.” Thereafter, the exclusive use of Han’gül was limited only to government offices. This policy is still in effect, but a part of it has actually never been implemented. In governmental public notices we often see mixed use of Han’gül and Chinese characters. Sometimes captions in Chinese characters appear on TV. The number of Chinese characters used in press and publishing circles, however, has been consistently decreased, a result of self-regulation rather than governmental encouragement. This is also one of the reasons why the language policy of the government is criticized as being inconsistent.

The exclusive use of Han’gül has also been a problem in primary and secondary education. Immediately after the Liberation, the Chos’ön Education Council decided on the exclusive use of Han’gül and this policy has not yet changed. However, there is no restriction on the use of Chinese characters in our actual social life. The situation is a sort of antinomy. Thus, in the 1960s and 1970s, the problem of Chinese characters in school education was serious as the public opinion was against the educational policy requiring exclusive use of Han’gül. It was pointed out that the mixed use of the two characters in social life must not be ignored and in September, 1965, it was decided to include Chinese characters into the newly revised textbooks as follows: 600 characters for primary school, 400 for middle school, and 300 for high school. In accordance with this decision, the revised textbooks of primary school included 602 characters (201 for the 4th grade, 201 for the 5th grade, and 200 for the 6th grade). In middle school textbooks revised in 1966, 1,000 characters were used, and in the high school textbooks revised in 1968,

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3. In connection with the Chinese characters on TV, the Han’gül Haghoe submitted a recommendation to the Ministry of Culture and Information, the Korea Broadcasting Station, Munhwa Broadcasting Company and the Korea Broadcasting Ethics Commission suggested that captions be written in Han’gül. But Chinese characters have not completely disappeared.
1,300 characters were included. In 1968, however, President Park issued the “Seven Phrases on the Exclusive Use of Han’gül”, the sixth phrase of which instructed that all the Chinese characters should be eliminated from textbooks at every level. Following this instruction, the curricula were revised in September, 1969, and Chinese characters were removed from all textbooks.

In July of 1970, the Korea Research Association of Language Education was founded and took a position in favour of the use of Chinese characters in schools. The association claimed that it was too early to use Han’gül only. With the establishment of the association Chinese characters in education became a renewed issue of the 1970s. In August of 1971, the Association and other scholarly societies recommended the revival of teaching Chinese characters. The Prime Minister consulted the National Academy of Science on this proposal and the academy supported it as did the press. In October, 1971, the matter was discussed in the course of a parliamentary inspection of the Ministry of Education and February, 1972, the Ministry of Education decided to revive Chinese characters and to bring in ‘Classical Chinese’ as a subject. The ministry announced the principles of selection for Chinese characters to be taught in secondary school, and in June, 1972, 1,800 characters were chosen as the basic Chinese characters to be taught. In July, 1974, the ministry announced that secondary school textbooks would be revised from 1975 in such a way that Chinese characters would be written side by side with Han’gül. At the same time, there was a strong movement against the revival of the Chinese character education. The ministry made it clear that Chinese characters would not be taught in primary school, while in secondary school, Chinese characters were taught through the subject of ‘Classical Chinese’. In the study of ‘Korean Language’ an exclusive use of Han’gül was strongly urged. Nonetheless, the Korea Research Association of Language Education tried to revive active teaching of Chinese characters, a natural development in view of the fact that there were no restrictions on the use of Chinese characters in social life.

So far, we have examined the policies of the authorities concerned on the problem of Chinese characters. While these authorities have adhered to the principle of exclusive use of Han’gül, they have not been consistent in the execution of their policies. On the issue of teaching Chinese characters, it is necessary that a reasonable policy be established as soon as possible. To this end, various discussions on the problem of Chinese characters are summarized below.
3. Discussions on the Problems of Teaching Chinese Characters

Depending upon the policy decision of the authorities and upon their views on teaching Chinese characters, problems of teaching Chinese characters have been periodically discussed in different ways. Taking into account fragmentary discussions, the issue has produced more books than any other single subject although most of them have repeated similar theories. We will examine the relevant books in chronological order.


Chŏng objectively reviews the pros and cons of the exclusive use of Han'gıl immediately after the Liberation and he suggests a reasonable solution: Chinese characters should be eliminated little by little. Chŏng's is the first single volume on the problem of Chinese characters and is an objective presentation of a number of theories. Its reasonable conclusion caused a great sensation in the discussion of the Chinese character problem. Let us review the contents of the book.

First of all, Chŏng lists fourteen reasons why Chinese characters should not be abolished. One of them says, somewhat absurdly, that we may reach the divine power through Chinese characters. Others are, however, considered to be quite reasonable. For example, one of the reasons states that not using Chinese characters will entail the destruction of the origin of Oriental civilization. It would become difficult for us to cooperate culturally with other oriental countries such as China, and the Korean language would be in confusion as a result of the problem of Sino-Korean words. This observation still sounds reasonable, and hence it is often cited in arguing against the exclusive use of Han'gıl. Then, Chŏng lists twenty reasons why we must not use Chinese characters. For instance, Chinese characters are inefficient and unpopular, they once caused a national ruin; Han'gıl is superior and contributes to nourishing national independence. Most important of them all is that Chinese characters are inefficient in actual practice. Chŏng gives eight reasons for this inefficiency. For instance, we have difficulty in learning and using them because of the large number of characters and strokes. They include so many homonyms and synonyms. Sometimes the sounds of characters are not clear. Moreover, there are multi-sound characters and multi-meaning ones.

As a solution to the problem, Chŏng proposes a theory of step by step disuse. He says that the permissive policy of the use of Chinese characters is an abandonment
of our cultural improvement but that the complete disuse of them is not realistic. He claims that we are not ready to give them up and that we need to learn them in order to learn how to best abolish them. We need to temporarily use a limited number of them before abandoning them totally. His suggestions are as follows:

First, limitation of the period of use. We must adjust and spread the Korean language over a five to ten year period. In this period, classics must be translated and published, scientific terms must be fixed, and many science books should be published. Then, we can phase out Chinese characters.

Second, limitation of the period of use. We need to stop describing non Sino-Korean words in Chinese characters. Signboards and railroad station names must be written in Han‘gül. In describing place names and persons’ names, Chinese characters are to be eliminated little by little. Similar action should be taken in census registration.

Third, avoidance of duplication. That is, we should not repeat our native word after a Sino-Korean one with the same meaning. For example, 「石橋돌다리」'sokkyo todari' stone-bridge', 「楽水물」'yaksu mul' mineral water', etc. are non-scientific, martistic, and inefficient, and hence should be avoided.

Fourth, limitation of the number of characters. Considering the frequency of everyday use, we need to limit the number of Chinese characters for practical use up to 1,500 or 2,000 and let people use them for the purpose of legal, political, and cultural writing. These are to be used for education in secondary school and college. The number will be decreased little by little, and eventually Han‘gül will be exclusively used.

Fifth, limitation of the strokes. We encourage the use of simplified characters. These are efficient in learning, reading, and writing. Thus, these are to be used during the transitional period until complete disuse.

Sixth, limitation of Sino-Korean words. We have no choice but to use Sino-Korean words which do not have counterparts in pure Korean. In other cases, we should use native words, eliminating their Sino-Korean counterparts. Examples: kŏmŏrt (leech), yŏwu (fox), k’ong (bean), etc.

Seventh, disuse of the Japanese-style Sino-Korean words. Sino-Japanese words should not be used. Examples: 「小販」'somaes:retail sale'; 「仲介人」'chunggaem:go-between', 「原価」'won’ga:prime cost', 「白墨」'paengmuk:chalk', and 「切手」'chôlsu:stamp'. These should be replaced by their Sino-Korean counterparts, sanmae, kŏgan, pon’ga, punp’ul, and up’yo, respectively.

In this way, Chŏng insists on the eventual phasing out of Chinese characters, but suggests that they be abolished little by little. His proposals are related not only to
Chinese characters but also to Sino-Korean words and his suggestions are valued very highly. Nonetheless, it is regrettable that his proposals were not seriously studied because of the objections of the more extreme supporters of exclusive use of Han’gul. Since then, thirty-five years have passed, but the exclusive use of Han’gul is still a serious problem to be solved. Contrary to the claim of the extremists, we can say that Chŏng’s proposal was not too conservative and now worth reconsidering.


As Ch’oe notes in the preface, he began considering and insisting on the exclusive use of Han’gul from his middle school days in the 19th century. He himself put the principle into practice all his life. As a member of the Chosŏn (i.e., Korea) Education Council, he acted as a central figure in shaping the resolution regarding the disuse of Chinese characters. When the Ministry of Education published textbooks in Han’gul, he was the director of the Textbook Compilation Bureau. He wrote this book in order to provide the theoretical framework for the exclusive use of Han’gul and the horizontal writing method in the form of a disentangled alphabet. In the first half of the book, Ch’oe discusses the necessity of abandoning Chinese characters and in the second half he discusses a writing system in the form of a disentangled alphabet. As the title of the book indicates, he intended to bring about a revolution in the use of characters. His theory on the disuse of Chinese characters discussed in the first half has become the classic theory of the supporters (around Han’gul Hakhoe <The Korean Linguistic Society>) of the exclusive use of Han’gul.

As important reasons for abandoning Chinese characters, Ch’oe lists three intrinsic shortcomings and five actual negative results. The shortcomings are as follows: First, a great deal of energy and time is required to learn Chinese characters. Second, they cause inconvenience to printers. Third, it is impossible to systematize them for the type-writer. Negative results are as follows: First, the Korean people have needlessly expended considerable energy in learning Chinese characters. Second, the Korean language has been daunted. Third, due to our excessive emulation worship of foreign powers we have lost our self-respect. Fourth, we could not bring our creative talent into full play. Fifth, the use of

Chinese characters is responsible for the high rate illiteracy (80%). He claims that these shortcomings are mainly due to the fact that the system consists of many characters and strokes and the fact that it is a system foreign to Korea. Thus, we are obliged to use Han'gul which better fits our sound system. His theory of disuse of Chinese characters is perfectly logical. However, his claim that they do harm to us because they are foreign characters is a leap in argument. Also, it is groundless to claim that the characters are responsible for creating the worship of foreign powers in our national spirit. The extreme supporters of the exclusive use of Han'gul emphasize that Chinese characters belong to a foreign language and hence that they must not be used. People with such views are often called ultra-nationalists. This whole phenomenon does more harm than good to the movement for the exclusive use of Han'gul.

Ch’oe next lists six positive outcomes which are claimed to result from abandoning Chinese characters and which argue against their continued use. First, the exclusive use of Han’gul would help the general public advance in knowledge and improve life. Second, we would be free of the need to struggle the more difficult characters. Third, we can promote science education using Han’gul only, thereby work towards a distinctive Korean contribution to science and culture. Fourth, native words can be naturally enriched without Chinese influence. Fifth, the abandonment of Chinese characters is a natural step in the development of a national characters. Sixth, we are now in a historical period in which we need to let Han’gul assume an important mission of cultural development. The first four points seem to be reasonable while the last two reasons seem somewhat futile. These cannot be directly gained from the actual use of specific characters.

After that, Ch’oe lists twelve possible objections to the cast for abandoning Chinese characters and criticizes all of them one by one. First, although it is often claimed that Chinese characters must be used because they are our cultural background, the long-established usage of them must be abolished in the interest of an efficient writing system. Second, it is claimed that Chinese characters are impressive, implicative, and expressive; however, they are too homonymous. Third, it is suggested that disuse will disconnect us from the Oriental culture. The culture, however, can be transmitted through translation and the teaching of classical Chinese. Fourth, some people worry about the destruction of the Oriental culture and morality. But the culture and morality are not related to the forms of Chinese characters. Fifth, they say that Chinese characters are commonly used in the Orient. But it is important to establish an independent culture. Sixth, it is observed that there would be confusion in the Korean language if we abolished Chinese
characters and eliminated Sino-Korean words. But we do not intend to eliminate Sino-Korean words. Seventh, they say that we cannot know the origin and real meaning of a word. The origin and meaning of words, however, can be understood without Chinese characters. Eighth, it is claimed that the knowledge of Chinese characters enables us to understand many Sino-Korean words. Considering such examples as hakkyo ‘school’ and sŏnsaeng ‘teacher’, we can see that the claim is superficial and mechanistic sophistry. Ninth, some suggest a limited use of Chinese characters. However, it is impossible to determine which characters should be chosen and with Han’gŭl we have no difficulty at all. Tenth, the disuse of Chinese characters is often misunderstood as an authoritarian prohibition. But there is no formal prohibition. Eleventh, Chinese characters are convenient. They are not convenient for the growing new generation which must learn them. Twelfth, since Chinese characters are used in social life, abandoning them is not realistic. But we must be liberated from the heavy burden of difficult characters. Furthermore, the most opportune time to abolish them is immediately after the post-liberation period, when the general knowledge of Chinese characters is not extensive. Ch’oe notes that the first two points are reasonable but that he cannot agree with the remaining reasons. Some of these twelve reasons have, however, been the focus of many discussions such as: the claim that Chinese characters are a part of our culture (first point); the connection with Oriental culture (third); the comprehension of the origin and real meaning of a word (seventh); the word-building power of Chinese characters (eighth); the theory of limited use (ninth), and the phasing out period (twelfth).

Finally, Ch’oe suggests a detailed phasing out plan. First, in primary and secondary education, Chinese characters are not to be used. Second, as a matter of principle, they are not to be used in colleges. Third, in secondary schools, Chinese characters are to be taught in the context of Modern Chinese or Classical Chinese instruction. Fourth, only Han’gŭl is to be used in textbooks of secondary schools. If necessary, however, Chinese characters may be used alongside of Han’gŭl. Fifth, official papers are to be written in Han’gŭl. Sixth, proper nouns should be written in Han’gŭl. Seventh, scientific papers are to be written in Han’gŭl except for quotations. Eighth, newspapers, periodicals, and regular books are to use only Han’gŭl. Although Chinese characters again may be used together with Han’gŭl if necessary. Ninth, Oriental classics are to be translated into Han’gŭl. In short, he suggests that Han’gŭl be used in education, everyday life, official papers, and scientific papers but Chinese characters may be used in parentheses if required.

Although Ch’oe’s book was written immediately after the Liberation, it discusses
almost all the important points in this debate. It clearly, however, pursues or reflects
the author's nationalistic and idealistic point of view.

3) Cho, Yun-je, *Urgent Problems of Education in the Korean
Language*, Seoul: Munhwadang, 1947

Cho has raised a strong objection to abandoning of Chinese characters at the
Choson Education Council. In this book, he explains reasons for his objection. This
book, however, as the title indicates, discusses the general problems of Korean
language education. First of all, he tries to define the Korean language. Then, he
discusses the nature of Korean language education and related problems. The
problem of Chinese characters is treated as a problem of the national language.
Thus, this book does not treat only the problem of Chinese characters but does help
the reader understand the claims of those who objected to abandoning the
characters.

To summarize Cho's claims, he is in principle against Chinese characters but
objects to phasing them out without professional study and a detailed plan. Japan
has studied the problem for several decades without arriving at any plausible
solution. Thus, the matter cannot be taken lightly. The decision of the Choson
Education Council was an ad hoc one. Almost all of our literary works are in
classical Chinese and not one of them has been translated into the Korean language.
Furthermore, Chinese characters are used in social life which makes it too
premature to abandon them in primary education. If they really do harm to the
national language policy, they should be eliminated step by step, not abruptly. The
first step is to carry out fundamental study of the problem. The second step is to set
up detailed plans. The third step is to sensitize the population, while at the same
time planning the phase out process. It may take several decades to eliminate
Chinese characters which have been used for the last 2,000 years. We must be more
careful in the treatment of the matter.

As an alternative to the immediate abandonment, we can select which Chinese
characters should be adopted for common use. Cho suggests that about 1,000
characters be used in education. These can be easily learned, and they will not
interfere with cultural development and these may indeed contribute to Korean
language education. For example, if we learn only '道路' 'toro:road' and '水平
線' 'sup'yongsŏn:horizon', then we will automatically understand the meaning of
the following words: '水道' 'suto:waterway', '水路' 'suro:waterway', '路線'
'nosŏn:route', '線路' 'sŏnro:track', etc. Under a system of exclusive use of
Han'gŭl, these words would have to be learned separately. If we use Chinese
characters well, we can easily coin new words which are needed to represent new things and ideas. For this reason, he suggests that we decide on which Chinese characters should be put into common use.

This book emphasizes that the issue must be carefully deliberated and it argues for the restricted use of Chinese characters. That is, Chinese characters can be effectively used for Korean language education and for the coinage of new words. Therefore, they should be eliminated only in a step by step manner. Ch'ŏng T'ae-jin also argues for the step by step method of elimination but he thinks that Chinese characters can be abolished in five or ten years while Cho thinks that the process will take longer than ten years. He claims that understanding and using classical Chinese will help us to understand and use the Korean language well. For this reason, his book has been criticized by those who argue for the exclusive use of Han'gŭl.


The policy to disuse Chinese characters initiated by the U.S. Government Office was still in operation after the establishment of the new Korean Government on August 15, 1948. This book was published in order to help people to eliminate Chinese characters not only from the educational and other governmental administrations but also from general national life. Although the compiler of the book is credited to the Ministry of Education, it was actually written by Ch'oe Hyŏn-bae and its content is the same as that of his *Revolution of Characters.* Later, Ch'oe(1958) quotes the content with the following note: “This is my lecture draft which was prepared immediately after the Liberation, and published in the name of the Ministry of Education of the U.S. Military Government Office in August, 1948”. Let us just look at the table of contents.

I. Why abandon Chinese characters?

(1) To conserve energy and time of the people; (2) For education in scientific technology and living capacity, (3) Inconvenience to printers; (4) For the establishment of public culture and a democratic country, (5) for the fair and natural development of the Korean language; (6) From the historical point of view, abandonment is a necessary measure; (7) From the historical and developmental point of view, Han'gŭl is adequate

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5 When this book was published, the following rebuttal was published in Han'gŭl, 12. 4(Oct., 1974) Lee Chŏng-hak “Present problems of education of the Korean language—Turning down Professor Cho Yun-je’s inadequate theory”
to express our new culture

II Words to those with opposite views

(1) Abolition of Chinese characters is not abolition of Sino-Korean words, (2) Is it true that the meaning of Sino-Korean words cannot be understood without Chinese characters?, (3) Problems of homonyms; (4) Problems of the tradition of Oriental culture; (5) On the claim that science cannot be studied, (6) Problems with the restricted use of Chinese characters; (7) On the problem of the phase out period

III Methods of Phasing out Chinese Characters

IV Conclusion. Significance of the new policy on characters along with the establishment of a new country.

In particular, this book argues against the theory of restricted use of Chinese characters and claims that the restricted use theory is similar to the restriction of personal property which is impossible. It notes that the policy failed in Japan. However, it is not right to compare Chinese characters with personal property. If it were right, then the disuse of Chinese characters would be a sort of abandonment of one’s property right. Moreover, in Japan, with the entry into common use of Chinese characters in 1946, the restricted use theory has been successful. According to the book, disuse is not a prohibition. It just aims to eliminate them from education and official papers. The book claims that Chinese characters must be abolished at a time when the general public had the Japanese oriented knowledge of them. However, at that time general knowledge of the Korean language and Han'gül was poor. Chŏng T'ae-ju noted that we need time to refine and spread the Korean language which it seems to indicate that the time was too early.


In the preface Pak notes that the book was written to stop the exclusive use of Han'gül by proving exclusive use to be illogical. He claims that he discusses the matter from a point of view different from that of others and that he investigates the nature of Han'gül and Chinese characters. His theory, however, does not seem to be very different from Cho Yun-je’s argument. The only difference lies in that he does not presuppose the eventual exclusive use of Han'gül and in fact, he argues against the step-by-step elimination. Instead, he discusses the mixed use of Han'gül and Chinese characters. For the future of the Korean language, he argues, mixed use is a reasonable strategy.

In chapter 1, Pak supposes a possible situation that would result from the exclusive use of Han'gül and attempts to show the impracticality of the complete
abandonment of Chinese characters. Knowledge of Chinese characters is required for a correct understanding and use of the Korean language. Without that knowledge we will have confusion with the homonymic Sino-Korean words. A dictionary of the Korean language without Chinese characters in parentheses would not fulfill its function. Moreover, such a Sino-Korean word as 「國語」(the national language—the Korean language) would be written as 「구어」‘kukö’ in Han’gül. With a consideration of Chinese characters, however, the word came to be transcribed as 「국어」. Even if we transcribe Sino-Korean words in Han’gül in this manner, we are actually not practicing the exclusive use of Han’gül. Therefore, he claims that Chinese characters must be used. Chapter 2 is the main body of this book. This chapter discusses the nature of Chinese characters and Han’gül, and positively argues for the mixed use. Chinese characters, being pictographs, represent the so-called visible language. Seeing the shape of a character, we can understand its meaning. They possess a strong power of comage. Thus, one who knows Chinese characters can easily comprehend Sino-Korean words. On the other hand, Han’gül is phonetic. It lacks the ideographic function. Han’gül is not enough to transcribe all the words of the Korean language. Therefore, we need to mix Chinese characters which are pictographs and Han’gül that is phonetic.

Chapter 3 (Justification), Chapter 4 (Disoriented exclusive use of Han’gül), Chapter 5 (Future of the Korean language), and Chapter 6 (Various ideas) discuss the exclusive use of Han’gül and related problems from various points of view. It is often claimed, Pak observes, that we must exclusively use Han’gül because it is our script. Pak claims that Chinese characters belong to our script, too. Many of the Western countries use the Roman alphabet even though they did not create the letters. Are they worshipers of their powerful neighbors? If we stick to the exclusive use of Han’gül and avoid the use of Sino-Korean words, words of Western origin would come into the Korean language. The tendency is evidenced by such words as 「pürrip’inɡ」‘briefing’, 「ssemına」 ‘seminar’, 「ssenssōsǔ」 ‘census’, etc. Thus, the exclusive use of Han’gül will result in confusion in the future of the Korean language. For the purpose of mechanical use, Han’gül is convenient. Characters, however, do not exist only for the printing machine; we cannot think of the transformation of characters to accommodate machines. It is true that printing in Chinese characters requires energy and time. The work, however, deserves to be done because it adds to the convenience of many readers.

In the above discussion, it seems to be true that the knowledge of Chinese characters is needed for the comprehension of Sino-Korean words, that the moral justification of the exclusive use of Han’gül is not persuasive, and that exclusive use
will result in a flood of foreign words. On the other hand, it is an overgeneralization to equate the exclusive use of Han'gıl with the elimination of Chinese characters. Pak claims that with the knowledge of Sino-Korean words one can fully comprehend the Korean language. This is also a hasty conclusion. Pak says that Chinese characters are ‘visible’ and that Han’gıl can never be used for ideographic purposes. This is also something of a conclusion. In summary, this book reflects an objection of the aged to the exclusive use of Han’gıl.


As the subtitle indicates, this book discusses various policies of the authorities concerned on the exclusive use of Han’gıl from the Liberation through to October, 1969. Since the book carefully surveys relevant materials, it will help the readers to understand the problem of Chinese characters in a historical perspective Yi does not put forward his own theory. Let us look at the concluding part of the book.

For the last twenty years there have been various proposals on the exclusive use of Han’gıl. Nonetheless, exclusive use is not in full operation and there is still room for debate on the issue. Reasons for this unhappy situation are as follows: First, the laws governing exclusive use have been vague. Second, there has been no consistency in putting policies into practice. Third, there is no governmental organ or personnel responsible for language policy. Fourth, there was no preliminary research. Fifth, policies are mainly set up by Han’gıl HaKhoe ‘The Korean Linguistic society’ Sixth, the scope of exclusive use has been frequently changed. Seventh, there is attempt to reply to the objections of the press. Eighth, there is no cooperation between the governmental offices and the general public. These reasons deserve to re-examined. The problem of Chinese characters must be handled by an expert organization dealing with language policy. The organization should collect general opinions and prepare a comprehensive plan, which can be consistently put into practice in cooperation with the public.


As the title indicates, this book discusses problems of the Korean language and characters for description. But the central part of the book is dedicated to the problem of Chinese characters. The book is a compilation of published papers. Nam’s consistent claim in this book is that the immediate exclusive use of Han’gıl
is impossible and that the teaching of Chinese characters is necessary. He established the Research Association of Language Education in Korea. He strongly argues for the mixed use and teaching of Chinese characters and this book provides a theoretical ground for his claim. We will review his discussions on exclusive use and the related problem of education in Chinese characters.

Exclusive use is theoretically appropriate, but its immediate practice will cause many difficulties. We are not yet ready for exclusive use. Moreover, in social life mixed use is very common. Before using Han’gul exclusively we need to set up policies for proper nouns. Otherwise, we never be able to deal with the homonym problem. Persons with different surname (e.g., 「姜」’kang’ and 「康」 ’kang’) will become the so-called Han’gul clansmen of the same surname 「姜」 ’kang’. Similar phenomena can be observed with other homonymic characters. Thus, the exclusive use of Han’gul will result in confusion. Furthermore, in social life people actually mix Chinese characters with Han’gul and public opinion prefers mixed use. The Hankuk Ilbo, one of Korea’s daily newspapers, carried an interesting article on June 25, 1962. The newspaper conducted a survey of public opinion on the use Chinese characters in newspaper articles. The survey was conducted as follows: articles were selected from the political page and from the society page and were put into three categories. In the first category, Chinese characters were used without any limitation (over 50%). In the second type, about 25% of the article was in Chinese characters. The third type was entirely in Han’gul. Readers were required to mark the easiest one to read. The result is shown in the following diagram.

From the result we can conclude that the exclusive use of Han’gul is not justified only on the basis of the convenience of printing. Therefore, exclusive use cannot be adopted immediately.

Although Nam argues against the immediate exclusive use, he does not suggest that Chinese characters be used without any restriction. He supports the mixed use of the Chinese characters for common use. The mixed use has several advantages. First, for effective reading comprehension, Sino-Korean words must be written in Chinese characters. Second, for an easy distinction of homonyms these must be written in Chinese characters. Furthermore, we need to make use of the effective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Chinese character (over 50%)</th>
<th>Chinese character (25%)</th>
<th>Han’gul</th>
<th>No answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political article</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society article</td>
<td>38.6%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
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method of coinage and contraction of words which Chinese characters provide. However, the use of them without any restriction would do harm. Therefore, it is necessary to select certain Chinese characters for common use on the basis of public opinion and the counsel of a variety of people.

Related to the above discussions, the importance of teaching Chinese characters is repeatedly emphasized. Reasons are as follows: First, Sino-Korean words also belong to the Korean language. Half of the vocabulary of our language consists of Sino-Korean words. Thus, teaching Chinese characters is directly related to Korean language education. Second, the traditional culture of Korea and other Oriental countries originates from Chinese characters. It is necessary to understand the culture of Chinese characters for the succession and development of the traditional culture. Therefore, Chinese characters must be taught not only in primary and secondary schools but also in professional schools. Third, through the teaching of Chinese characters we can avoid confusion in the Korean language. Suppose Chinese characters are not taught. For instance, 「國利民福」 will be written in Han’gul as 「국리민복」 ‘kungnimunbok’. This kind of writing will cause confusion in the transcription of Sino-Korean words in Han’gul. Confusion is also expected in the pronunciation of Sino-Korean words. From the Sino-Korean words written in Han’gul, we would not be able to tell the length of sounds. To make the matter worse, there would appear lots of newly coined Han’gul-style words for Sino-Korean and other foreign words. Between July, 1962 and August, 1963, the Special Council for the Exclusive Use of Han’gul coined such Han’gul words as anaemusôm jaengt ‘wife-be-afraid-man’ (for the Sino-Korean word, 「恐妻家」 ‘kongch’ oga:’wife-pobe’), soejul ‘iron-line’ (for 「鐵脈」 ‘kwangmaek:’mineral vein’), and mani nai dak ‘many-(egg) giving-hen’ (for 「多産鶏」 ‘tasan’gye:’prolific hen’). These are somewhat forced. The phenomenon presages possible confusion. In order to avoid confusion and to let people feel a sense of intimacy with the Korean language, Chinese characters must be taught in school.

So far, we have examined Nam’s discussion of the problem of Chinese characters. Taking the present state of the use of characters into consideration, we have to resolve the problem little by little. Chinese characters must be taught regardless of problems of the exclusive use of Han’gul. It is necessary to select certain Chinese characters for common use. In 1967, the Korea Newspapers Association selected 2,000 Chinese characters to be used in newspapers from 1968. Today this limitation is not observed at all. Most of all, the limitation regulation has not been followed in the description of proper nouns. The problem of proper nouns causes difficulties in fixing the Chinese characters for common use. One or two
characters of a person's name may not be included in the Chinese characters for common use. If this happens, his resistance will differ in its nature from the temporary opposition. He might muster against the exclusive use of Han’gül. Similarly, place names may give rise to a serious problem. Therefore, the problem of Chinese characters must be resolved with a careful study. For this reason, Nam proposes to establish the National Research Institute for the Korean language as a permanent organization.

As for surveys of public opinions on the exclusive use of Han’gül, the results may differ depending upon the method of survey. For example, The Seoul Sinmun, a local daily newspaper, reported the result of its survey on November 22, 1969. On the issue of the exclusive use of Han’gül in newspaper articles, the result was as follows: Good, 70.29% ; Bad, 22.77% ; No answer, 6.94%. We must obviously be careful in using the result of any survey for any theory.


This book was written with a view to encourage the governmental policy on the exclusive use of Han’gül put in effect in 1970. Ch’oe died after completing the manuscript and the book was posthumously published. As its subtitle 'Dispel suspicions of the opposers' indicates, the book mainly aims to criticize contrary opinions. Before that he discusses the reasons and the necessity of exclusive use of Han’gül. His theory is not different from that introduced in his book, Revolution of Characters. In this book, however, theories on the exclusive use are well ordered and the book proves answers to new opposing opinions. But there is no particular content that need to be introduced here. Let us just look at the table of contents.

Part I  Reasons for the Exclusive Use of Han’gül  (1) For the real effects of education; (2) For mechanization; (3) For the creative development of the traditional culture; (4) To follow the principles of the development of characters; (5) To meet the demands of the times; (6) To nourish the spirits of our independent national self-respect; (7) To fulfill the historical mission of our national restoration

Part II. Suspicions on the Exclusive Use of Han’gül  (1) Character suspicion; (2) The Korean Inlanguage suspicion; (3) Educational suspicion; (4) Scientific suspicion; (5) Cultural suspicion, (6) Suspicion on exclusive use; (7) Suspicion on mechanization; (8) Suspicion on time, (9) Suspicion on the government's decisive action on exclusive use.

Part III  Practice of the Exclusive Use of Han’gül
9) Oh, Chi-ho. *Important Misunderstandings on the Korean Language.*

Oh, an artist, wrote essays against the exclusive use of *Han’gûl* and this book is a compilation of those essays. The subtitle is ‘A Study on the Decrease of Korean Children’s Thinking Faculty and its Causes’ He claims that the exclusive use of *Han’gûl* in education is responsible for the low scholastic ability of Korean students. Since children do not learn Chinese characters, they cannot understand the Korean language correctly and they lack the ability to use it well. This is the decisive reason for the decrease of children’s thinking faculty. The book aims to clarify the characteristics of the Korean language and Chinese characters. Because he is not an expert, there is a lack of theoretical rigour in his argument but, his essays do express an artist’s frank opinion on the issue.

First of all, he claims that the Korean language consists of Sino-Korean words and native ones. In the discourse and writing of our daily life more than 90% of the words used are Sino-Korean ones. He claims that sentences of the Korean language consists of Sino-Korean words and particles. Without Chinese characters, Sino-Korean words cannot exist. Chinese characters are ideographs, the shapes of which represent meaning. Homonyms can be distinguished by writing in Chinese characters Since Chinese characters possess powerful coning capacity, with 3,000 characters we can construct 600,000 words. If these are written in Chinese characters and if we know 3,000 characters, we can easily comprehend 600,000 Sino-Korean words without learning them individually. According to Oh’s theory, the abolition of Chinese characters means the abolition of Sino-Korean words. The elimination of Sino-Korean words resulted in the elimination of the language faculty from Korean children. It is concluded that the elimination of the language faculty is responsible for the lack of thinking faculty. There are some exaggerations in his theory. for example, he says that with 3,000 characters 600,000 words can be coined, that if one does not know Chinese characters he cannot know Sino-Korean words, and that the knowledge of Sino-Korean words is the faculty of the Korean language. Considering the number of words listed in a dictionary of the Korean language, it is clear that 600,000 is just a fictitious number. Even without the knowledge of Chinese characters, children can understand such Sino-Korean words.

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6 Cf. “Examination of cause for the decrease of primary school children’s scholastic ability”, in *Kyoyuk p’yonhon ‘Education Reviews’* (April, 1971) As important factors, this article mentions admission to middle school without examination, teachers’ lack of faith, and new teaching methods.
as taemun ‘gate’, chadongch’a ‘automobile’, and hakkyo ‘school’. In some cases, the meanings of characters involved in a Sino-Korean word are not enough to render the exact meaning of the word. Examples: kuxsu「國手」‘national champion (of chess)’, imoyak「二毛作」‘semi-annual crops’, cheja「弟子」‘disciple’, etc. Generally, it is true that the meaning of a Sino-Korean word may be conjectured on the basis of the characters. But this does not necessarily mean the commanding capacity of the Sino-Korean word. Moreover, language capacity includes knowledge of the grammatical system, in addition to the commanding ability of words. Therefore, it is a theoretical leap to equate the knowledge of Sino-Korean words with the language faculty. The book is significant in that it insists on the necessity of teaching Chinese characters.


In this book, Kim systematically discuss problems of the Korean language, characters, and language education. He objectively surveys the problem of Chinese characters and suggests a solution. He lists reference works in chronological order and adds an appendix of relevant data. His own opinion is expressed in the concluding part of the book.

On the issue of the exclusive use of Han’gōl, Kim does not make his position clear. In principle, however, he seems to support it. Let me summarize the main points of his conclusion.

First, exclusive use is put in practice for the general public, while mixed use is allowed in more learned circles. Second, we should establish areas of study of Sino-Korean words and Chinese classics. Regardless of specialized field of study, Chinese characters must be taught in the basic courses. Third, proper nouns such as place name and persons’ names should be written in Han’gōl. Fourth, we need to simplify the complex regulations with regard to writing Han’gōl. Fifth, there must be an organization which will be responsible for the planning and practice of the exclusive use of Han’gōl. The plans should be implemented with the support of the authorities concerned. However, he says, it will take several decades to prepare and set up necessary measures. Kim argues against immediate exclusive use. He suggests that exclusive use be carried out in a step by step policy and wants to restrict exclusive use to the general public.

Kim’s view seems very conservative. His suggestions on the special organization, prior preparation, and accompanying measures sound natural and reasonable. He claims that it will take several decades to prepare necessary measures, but he fails to
provide any evidence for the claim.


This book is a collection of essays on the Korean language and use of characters. The problem of Chinese characters is discussed in Part II. He claims that the exclusive use of Han’gul must be put into operation as soon as possible and that classical Chinese must be more effectively taught. His main points are collectively expressed in his essay, “Chinese characters must be abolished and the abolition is not difficult” (originally published in Han’gul, No.143). He systematizes a theory on the exclusive use of Han’gul, incorporating the theories discussed in the works by Ch’oe Hyŏn-bae and Chŏng T’ae-jin. Let us look at the table of contents and discuss his particular claims.

I Chinese characters must be abolished
   (1) Charm and harm of Chinese characters, (2) Printing and mechanization, (3) Abolition movements of Chinese characters in other countries
II. It is not difficult to abolish Chinese characters
   (4) Abolition of Sino-Korean words and the problem of description, (5) Power to coin new words; (6) Problem of reading efficiency; (7) Is it difficult to understand meaning?, (8) Is the abolition of Chinese characters a revolution of characters?, (9) Limited use and place names and persons’ names; (10) Present rules of spelling and the abolition of Chinese characters; (11) Problem of the succession of tradition.
III.. Things to be done after the abolition.

The Chinese character system includes too many letters and strokes. It is difficult to learn and use them correctly. They cause difficulties in the mechanization of characters. Thus, they must be abandoned. Disuse, however, does not mean the abolition of Sino-Korean words. They can be easily understood even if they are written in Han’gul. But this observation is not new. He does not claim that the exclusive use of Han’gul promotes the creative development of our national culture, the cultivation of a spirit of independence and self-respect, or the establishment of our national self-reliance. This means that his arguments are not based on ultranationalism. He notes that available dictionaries of Chinese characters are not good enough for the effective teaching and learning of Chinese characters. He observes that the exclusive use of Han’gul is not a revolution of characters (Cf. Ch’oe, Hyŏn-bae. *Revolution of Characters*). He criticizes those who claim that the
time is not yet ripe for the exclusive use. He says that exclusive use is result of a prior preparation which has been going on for the last 500 years. He anticipates no problem at all with the immediate exclusive use of Han’gul. When exclusive use is put in practice, we will need to do a study of the shape of printing types. We need to promote reading efficiency by establishing the horizontal writing system to be used in all publications. In short, the book refines previous theories on exclusive use. The book, however, does not solve all the problems.

First, let us return to the problem of time of the exclusive use. Is there really no problem if we use only Han’gul in newspapers and books immediately? One or two daily newspapers tried to use only Han’gul, but they eventually returned to the method of mixed use. This is not merely a matter of the publishers’. This fact indicates that most readers still prefer papers which have adopted a mixed use policy. To publish a newspaper in Han’gul, there ought to be careful prior preparation for editing and typesetting and the same is true for regular books. Now, let us consider the problem of the teaching Chinese characters. Huh claims that characters must be learned as early as possible, that the time spent in learning Chinese characters must be used in learning words of the Korean language, and that the tradition can be inherited through translation. Considering the fact that most words of the Korean language are Sino-Korean ones and that Sino-Korean words can be efficiently taught through Chinese characters, it seems necessary to teach Chinese characters irrespective of the exclusive use of Han’gul. Teaching classical Chinese is different from teaching Chinese characters. By the term ‘translation’ here is meant that books written in classical Chinese are translated into Han’gul. For those who finish compulsory education under the policy of the exclusive use of Han’gul, the books published under the mixed use policy will be useless. The tradition cannot be inherited through translation. Thus, the exclusive use of Han’gul and the teaching of Chinese characters should not be mutually exclusive, but rather should stand in a close relationship. In other words, exclusive use cannot but presuppose the teaching of Chinese characters.

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7 The Honam Sunmin (Kwangju) and The Seoul Sunmin are good examples. Particularly, The Honam Sunmin adopted the method of horizontal writing in Chinese characters from August, 1947 till October, 1956. The attempt failed. Today, only a few university papers and children’s newspapers are published in Han’gul.

Yu has consistently argued against the exclusive use of Han'gîl. For this matter, he was divested of his professorship at Ch'ungnam National University in December, 1968, by a disciplinary committee of the Ministry of Education. This book is a compilation of his essays published in various journals. In his essay, "Scientific Examination of Problems of Chinese Characters" (originally published in *Taegu University Research Papers* 3, 1962), Yu discusses the exclusive use of Han'gîl. Let us examine the arguments which he sets out the essay.

Yu's objections to the exclusive use have something in common with the objections raised by other scholars. For example, he claims that Sino-Korean words must be written in Chinese characters in order to be correctly comprehended, that if one knows only ten Chinese characters he can automatically understand 800 Sino-Korean words, and that if one knows 3,000 characters he may interpret an indefinite number of Sino-Korean words. He thinks that we make use of Chinese characters because they are the best characters. If something is recorded in Chinese characters it can be comprehended regardless of time and place. On the other hand, what is written in phonetic symbols such as Roman letters may be restricted by time and place. Since Roman letters are phonetic symbols, their writing systems may vary with each language with which they are used. Moreover, every truth lies in Chinese characters. For example, in the letter *۰* 'wang:king' there lies a great law going through with the three major elements of the universe, i.e. *천* 'ch'ŏn:sky', '地' "ch'ŭ:earth", and *人* 'in:human being'. In this way, Chinese characters include the traditional Oriental thoughts and arts, including the art of calligraphy. Thus, he claims, Chinese characters must not be abolished. On the theory of the limited use of Chinese characters, he first notes that it is difficult to set up the standard of limitation. He also notes that the limitation may result in possible misuse of Chinese characters. Thus, he strongly argues against the abolition of Chinese characters.

Some parts of his argument run contrary to the basic notions of linguistics and the theory of orthography. Although there are many advantages of the use of Chinese characters, it is also true that they cause various difficulties as repeatedly noted by many scholars. They cannot excel Han'gîl in popularity and mechanization. And they must be evaluated on the basis of their function as a means of language description. There might have been some philosophical considerations in constructing Chinese characters. In the everyday use of language, however, such knowledge is not necessary. In the use of the character *۰*, we have only to know...
that it means *ungūm* 'king' and it is pronounced as ‘*wang*’. Explaining the etymology of the characters need only be of interest to the specialist. The philosophical background of characters, if any, will be explained by Oriental philosopher. It is true that Chinese characters contributed to the improvement of the Korean language. Thus, Yu says, it is morally ungrateful to abandon them. This is an emotional debate and should be allowed to influence the debate on merits. In short, *this book is a representation of the thoughts of those who have profound knowledge of classical Chinese and Oriental philosophy.*

So far, we have surveyed all the relevant discussions on the problem of Chinese characters which is of course related to the issue of the exclusive use of *Han’gūl*. I think that we have examined all the important arguments although there no doubt exist many other short works which deal with the problem. These are however likely reflected in one or two of the books we have examined and our survey can therefore be regarded as a comprehensive one. Taking this survey and the present state of affairs into consideration, I would like to present a concluding discussion on the problem of Chinese characters.

### 4. Measures and Prospects

We have surveyed policies and views on the problem of Chinese characters. After the Liberation the great principle of the exclusive use of *Han’gūl* was considered for adoption as legislation. Compulsory education using *Han’gūl* has been similarly adopted. In reality, however, Chinese characters are still used. At one point the governmental authorities concerned had plans to put exclusive use into practice. But this could not but have been limited to official documents and recently, even this practice seems to have been relaxed. The estrangement between education and society still exists. On the problem of Chinese characters there has been a lot of discussion. On the one hand, it is claimed that we must use only *Han’gūl* for popularity and efficiency. On the other hand, some people claim that Chinese characters must be allowed to be used together with *Han’gūl* for the sake of traditional culture. There have as well been absurd claims. One was that we must use *Han’gūl* because it is our script, another that we must mix *Han’gūl* and Chinese characters because we cannot conceive of the Korean language without Chinese characters. In this way two opposing claims have been repeated for the last half century. Incorporating all the opinions without prejudice, we have to work out a reasonable policy.

However, policies tend to be idealistic as was the idea of moving to exclusive use
of Han’gŭl immediately after the Liberation. A policy which ignores common usage can never be successful. Considering the conservatism in the use of the writing system, in devising the policy on the problem of Chinese characters we have to think of the actual use of the writing system. Let us examine the use of Chinese characters in newspaper articles.

Today, the number of Chinese characters in newspapers is tending decrease. This is evidenced by the proportion of Chinese characters to Han’gŭl in newspaper articles. On September 27, 1969, all the evening papers carried an interview with U. S. President Nixon. 8 The number of Chinese characters was as follows: The Kyŏnghyang Shinmun, 12 Chinese characters out of a total of 102 characters (11.8%); The Taehan Ilbo & The Shuma Ilbo each, 24 out of 93 (26.2%); The Dong-A Ilbo, 29 out of 64 (45.3%); The Choongang Ilbo, 35 out of 102 (34.3%). In the case of the Dong-A Ilbo numerals were written in Chinese characters thereby accounting for the high percentage. If we exclude numerals, the number drops to 23 (35.6%). On March 25, 1981, newspapers carried articles summarizing the general election. The number of Chinese characters in those articles was as follows: The Dong-A Ilbo, 2 Chinese characters out of a total (1%); The Chosŏn Ilbo, 36 out of 322 (11.2%); The Hankuk Ilbo, 13 out of 152 (8.6%). The proportion of Chinese characters to Han’gŭl has significantly decreased in about ten years. This time The Dong-A Ilbo used Arabic numerals and the only two Chinese characters were 「總選」 ‘general election’.

This trend of decrease can also be observed in popular magazines and books, a fact which may be interpreted in several ways. The important point, however, is that such publications are widely read by general readers. Here, we can see that reading efficiency will not be hindered by the exclusive use of Han’gŭl. It seems reasonable to assume that reading efficiency depends upon education and habit. In the Han’gŭl translations of English and American novels, place names written in Han’gŭl sound strange to those who are familiar with English. They, however, sound natural to the general readers as if they were physiographical words. This fact is also accounted for by the same assumption.

In newspaper headlines however the proportion of the use of Chinese characters is high. 9 In the 1969 Nixon article the statistics were as follows: The Kyŏnghyang Shinmun, 22 Chinese characters out of a total of 46 characters (47.8%); The Taehan Ilbo, 9 out of 23 (39.1%); The Shin-a Ilbo 20 out of 26 (76.9%); The Dong-A Ilbo, 20

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8 Cf. A Study on Han’gŭl Newspapers (Vol 1, 1969): I insert the percentage in parentheses.
9 Cf. Note 8.
out of 37 (54.1%); The Choongang Ilbo, 33 out of 56 (58.9%). In the 1981 article, the proportions were: The Dong-A Ilbo, 21 out of 45 (46.7%); The Choson Ilbo, 7 out of 29 (24.1%); The Hankuk Ilbo, 18 out of 61 (29.5%). The fact indicates that Chinese characters may have visible effects. This is why they use many Chinese characters in the title. The tendency of decrease, however, can be observed in the title, too. Ten years ago Han’gul and Chinese characters were mixed half-and-half. Now they are mixed at the ratio of 3 to 1.

If the number of Chinese characters use in newspapers continues to decrease, one could reasonably expect Han’gul to eventually be used exclusively in newspaper articles. This however unlikely to occur. Although it is true that the number of Chinese characters has been decreased, there is no limitation on their selection. On January 1, 1969, the Korea Newspapers Association selected and announced 2,000 Chinese characters for common use. At the same time the Association decided to limit the use of Chinese characters in newspapers. But the decision was not adhered to. The number of printing types each newspaper company possesses tells the story.

As of October, 1969, a newspaper company in Korea generally possessed 2,600 kinds of Han’gul types, 5,500-6,000 kinds of Chinese characters types, about 500 kinds of Roman letters and punctuation mark types; altogether 8,600-9,100 kinds of types. The situation is the same today. For example, as of September, 1981, The Choson Ilbo11 possessed 2,100 kinds of Han’gul types, 7,000 kinds of Chinese character types, 2,000 kinds of Roman letters, Japanese letters, and punctuation mark types. To see how many types these are let us compare this number of types with that of an English newspaper company. An English newspaper company generally possesses 600 kinds of types for 10 sorts of type shapes. If we consider two shapes of types, Ming-style and Gothic type, then the total number of types a Korean newspaper company may possess will double the above mentioned number. If we consider the Ming-style types alone a Korean newspaper company possesses 15 times as many types as an English newspaper company. If we consider both Ming-style and Gothic type, then the former possesses 30 times as many types as the latter. The fact that a Korean newspaper company has 5,500-7,000 kinds of Chinese character types of the same style indicates that all of these can be used in

10 Cf. Note 8. The book actually reports that there are 5,000 kinds of Roman letters and punctuation mark types for 5,000 read 500.

11 The investigation on printing types and typepicking in the Choson Ilbo company and Pojinge Publisher was made in September, 1981. I thank Mr. Pang Kye-song, Manager of The Choson Ilbo and Mr. Huh Kang, Editor in chief of Pojinge for their kind help.
the production of newspapers. Every kind of Chinese character types appears in newspaper articles.

Place names are proper nouns. Generally, proper nouns are written in Chinese characters. Although place names are often written in Han’gül, persons’ names are as a rule written in Chinese characters. In articles, a person’s name is written in Chinese characters, no matter how rare the characters may be. Sometimes it must be clear what “they” refers to Chinese characters created in Korea are used, for example 「_BOOK」 and 「_BOOK」 (The Chosŏn Ilbo November 1, 1981). We cannot figure out the meaning of the latter and it is not clear whether it is pronounced as ‘mal’ or as ‘tul’. Sometimes very rare and odd Chinese characters are used and without consulting a dictionary, it is difficult to know their meaning and pronunciation. For easier comprehension by all, persons’ names should be written in Chinese characters. Although there may be persons of the same name, no confusion would arise because in Korea occupation and address are often provided along with the name.

In short, except for a person’s name and artistic title, today’s newspapers are written almost entirely in Han’gül. If the rule of describing a person’s name in Chinese characters is relaxed and some appropriate measures are established for captions, then there seem to be no serious problems in publishing newspapers exclusively in Han’gül. If they are published in Han’gül, it will be possible to produce them quickly and they will secure more readers than they do now. It will take a long time to select types and to set them if articles are written in Han’gül and Chinese characters. Whereas if they are written exclusively in Han’gül, the production time will be significantly shortened. In The Chosŏn Ilbo company, I learned that 20 types may be selected in a minute in the case of a regular article.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manuscript</th>
<th>Proportion of Chinese characters</th>
<th>Types picked in a minute</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Han’gül</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han’gül &amp; Restricted Chinese characters</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Han’gül &amp; Unrestricted Chinese characters</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 the pronunciation of 「_BOOK」 is ‘tul’. In describing a person’s name ‘mal’ has been traditionally 「_BOOK」 or 「_BOOK」 (Cf Tong uk susok samkang haengsil yeóyódo, 1617) However, it is possible to pronounce it as ‘mal’ by analogy with 「_BOOK」.

13 The Hankuk Ilbo company developed a CRT editing machine, which can handle 4,500 characters. The machine can typeset up to 120 characters of Han’gül, Roman letters, numerals, and Chinese characters in a minute (Cf. The Hankuk Ilbo October 9, 1981) Without Chinese characters, the speed
the case of a serial novel, however, 25 types may be picked. A similar phenomenon can be observed in any local printing company. In Pajinje, one of the local printers, the typepicking speed is as follows:

In a newspaper company, where either linotype or the traditional method is used, Chinese characters are a burden on the producer. A newspaper without Chinese characters will appeal to most readers.

If we consider the present state of the use of characters and recall the stages of the debate, the need to provide a reasonable solution to the problem of Chinese characters is an obvious one. Here, however, rather than suggest a final solution, I would prefer here to propose some directions for future study. A counsel of a variety of experts and intellectuals will be required and it is possible to suggest a plausible direction by synthesizing the above discussions. A measure on the problem of Chinese characters must be devised on the basis of the actual use of characters and the compulsory education. In works of scholars, professional technicians, and artists, and in regular periodicals, the extent to which they use characters should be left to their own judgment. In higher education, the use of Chinese characters must be allowed just as the use of other foreign languages is allowed. Although it is true that the number of Chinese characters used in professional works and in higher education has significantly decreased, the exclusive use of Han’gül should not be forcibly demanded. As for the use of characters among the general public and the matter of compulsory education, however, the problem of Chinese characters must be dealt with in an even handed consistent manner.

In the everyday writing system, the exclusive use of Han’gül is both possible and necessary. As we discussed above, Chinese characters are rarely used in newspapers with the except of proper nouns. The same is true in popular magazines and general publications. If the authorities and the general public make a real effort, the exclusive use of Han’gül will be put into practice. Exclusive use is desirable for the effective use of characters and for the promotion of cultural development. We should try to transcribe proper nouns in Han’gül. The so-called Chinese characters for common use including strange letters should be written in Han’gül as well.

We may expect confusion when all proper nouns are written in Han’gül. For example, two place names ‘광주’ and ‘광주’ will become identical in Han’gül as ‘kwangju’ but such confusion is frequently found in any phonetic language. In the standard language, two words may be distinguished in terms of the length of the vowel sounds although it is not always possible. Two railroad station names ‘문산’ (on Seoul-sindu line) ‘Munsan’ and ‘문산’ (Kyŏngnam province-
Ch’uugnam province line) ‘Munsan’ are distinct in Chinese characters. But, in ordinary speech and electro communication they are not distinguishable. To avoid confusion the latter ‘Munsan’ was changed to ‘南文山’ ‘South Munsan’. In this manner confusion can be appropriately avoided. In the case of a place name, we can add the name of the province to which the place belongs. In the case of a person’s name, we can add his occupation or other relevant information. In Germany, there are two cities with the same name Frankfurt. To avoid confusion, one of them is officially called Frankfurt am Main, the other is Frankfurt ander Oder. Similarly, the Southern old city Freiburg is called Freiburg im Breisgau to be distinguished from Freiburg on the Elbe Riverside.

Homonymic common nouns give rise to a similar problem. Homonymic Sino-Korean words, if written in Chinese characters, can be easily distinguished. Today in newspapers and popular magazines, such homonymic words and proper nouns are often written in Chinese characters. In captions of articles which abbreviated words are frequently used, such words as ‘民顧’ ‘civil service council’, ‘民怨’ ‘Public enemy’, ‘軍’ ‘army’, ‘性’ ‘sex’, ‘入’ ‘college entrance’, ‘高入’ ‘high school entrance’, ‘生放’ ‘live broadcasting’, ‘禁輸’ ‘export (or import) prohibition; ‘世銀’ ‘world bank’, ‘地自法’ ‘local self-government law’, ‘言基法’ ‘basic press and speech law’, ‘對美’ ‘toward America’, ‘對英’ ‘toward England’, ‘韓印’ ‘Korea and India’, etc. are rarely written in Han’gul. In phonetic language, homonymic words that cause problems tend to be replaced by other words or they are appended with additional explanations. In the exclusive use of Han’gul, the problem of homonymic words cannot but be adjusted in a similar way. Intentionally or accidently, in works such as novels written exclusively in Han’gul the above mentioned method has been used. If the exclusive use of Han’gul is put into full practice in the life of the general public, we may meld written and spoken language into a single entity. To the extent which mixed use persists in our life, this unity of speech and writing can never be achieved. This will be a great advantage of the exclusive use of Han’gul.

Next, we need to devise a measure to represent the visible effects that Chinese characters may have. This is particularly necessary for the captions of articles. A comprehensive study on the shape of printing types is urgently needed. The shapes of the Han’gul consonants (ᴠ, ᴜ, ᵇ, ᵂ etc.) are all much the same. The shapes of vowels are divided into two major groups. One group of vowels (̃, ᴜ, ᴦ, ᴳ, ᵄ, ᴴ etc.) is based on a vertical line. The others ( Twig, ᴤ, ᴦ, ᴧ etc.) are based on a horizontal line. As can be seen, the shapes of Han’gul characters are relatively simple. A Han’gul title may fail to present an immediate visible effect and may
make the readers feel tired. Therefore, we need to improve the shape of Han’gul types. Let us consider the problem of Sino-Korean words. The condensed expressive power of Sino-Korean words can be appreciated when they are written in Chinese characters. Written in Han’gul, it is necessary to devise a fundamental strategy for editing and typesetting not only in newspapers but also in other publications.

Finally, let us examine the problem of compulsory learning of Chinese characters in school. It is generally understood that education points to the future and has the function of social adaptation. Through education, the cultural tradition is inherited and we must not neglect this positive aspect. The problem of compulsory education in Chinese characters and the exclusive use of Han’gul enjoy a mutually beneficial relationship. Almost one half of the vocabulary of the Korean language is Sino-Korean. Thus, for a better education in the Korean language, teaching Chinese characters is necessary. Furthermore, the knowledge of Chinese character is required for the preservation of our traditional culture. It is also necessary for one to function effectively in society where Chinese characters are commonly used. Those who finish only those years of schooling which are compulsory should be able to read and understand any materials written in Han’gul and Chinese characters since the enlightenment period. It is clear that education in Chinese characters will play an important role in communication with China and Japan, both of which belong to the so-called Chinese character culture circle. To sum up, Chinese characters must be taught in school not because we need the mixed method in actual life, but because we have to comprehend the materials in which Chinese characters are mixed with Han’gul. In Chinese character education, we have to decide how many characters and what shape of letters should be taught. The Ministry of Education and the Korean Newspapers Association have selected certain Chinese characters for common use. As for the shape, there are two kinds. original form and simplified form. In 1967, the Council of the Korean Language discussed the matter of simplified Chinese characters in detail. The simplified forms have been used in this country and today in Japan and mainland China they are used in lieu of the original forms. Thus, the simplified forms should also be taught. These problems and the necessary curricula must be examined by experts. If Chinese characters are taught during the period of compulsory education with careful preparation, any negative aspects brought about by the exclusive use of Han’gul may be surmounted. The problem of Chinese characters in the Korean language can be solved by the exclusive use of Han’gul in our everyday life and by teaching Chinese characters as a part of primary education.
Considering the conservatism in the use of the writing system, the above solution is far from radical. Today some newspaper articles are written almost exclusively in Han’gül. The absolute exclusive use of Han’gül, however, is a risk. After the Liberation one or two daily newspapers tried it but failed (cf. Note 7) Thus, before the suggested solution is put into practice, we need to devise an elaborate plan in whose preparation experts, writers, the press, and other related intellectuals must actively participate. It is also necessary to establish an independent organization.

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**GLOSSARY**

Chang Ki-gŏn 장기건
Chang Yong-hak 장용학
Cheguk Shunmun 帝國新聞
Cho Yun-je 趙潤濟
Ch’oe Hyŏn-bae 崔鉉培
Chong T’ae-jin 丁泰鎬
*Chosŏn Ilbo* 朝鮮日報

Chosŏn hakhoe 朝鮮語學會
Choyangbo 조양보
*Choongang Ilbo* 中央日報
*Dong-A Ilbo* 東亞日報
Ham Won-gyong 합원경
Han’gıl 천글
Han’gıl Hakhoe 한글學會
Hankuk Ilbo  韓國日報
Honam Shinmun  湖南新聞
Huh Kang  基康
Huh Woong  基榮
Hunmin jongum  訓民正音
Hwangsong Shinmun  皇城新聞
Hyangch’al  鄉札
Idu  李读
Kabo  甲午
Kim Min-su  金敏洙
Kyŏnghyang Shinmun  京鄉新聞
Kungmun  國文
Lee Ki-moon  李基文
Mun Chae-an  文才安
Nam Kwang-u  南廣祐
Oh Chi-ho  姜之湖
Pang Kye-sŏng  朴基聖
Pak Chŏng-sŏ  朴定緒
Ryu Che-han  庫哲漢
Seoul Shinmun  師大新聞
Shina Ilbo  新亞日報
Taehan maeil Shinbo  大韓每日新報
Tongnip Shinmun  獨立新聞
Yi Chŏng-hak  李承赫
Yi Sung-nyŏng  李崇寧
Yi Ung-ho  李永浩
Yi Yong-ju  李永洙
Yu Chŏng-gi  柳正基
Yu Chong-ho  柳中浩