

KOREAN

COUNTRY: Korea

POST: Seoul

More than 40 million people in North and South Korea (including settlements in Japan, USA and Hawaii) speak Korean. Many words have been adopted from Chinese but it is not a tonal language and therefore easier to pronounce.

The most important distinction of the Ural-Altai family of languages from either Chinese or Indo-European is its agglutinative structure of grammar. Words denoting ideas are as fixed as in Chinese. Unlike Chinese, there are cases and tenses as flexible as in any Indo-European language.

Politeness is an important feature of Korean life and culture. Customs such as bowing on meeting and parting are as important as speaking the language itself. When eating rice, hold the bowl containing bab (rice) in your left hand, and the chopsticks (chobun) in your right hand.

As Korea has advanced to take its place among modern industrial nations, it has adopted many English words by changing the pronunciation slightly. Some examples are: aiskrim/talksi/koktel pati. ice cream/taxi/cocktail party.