

Small Group Discussion Topics for Korean Students

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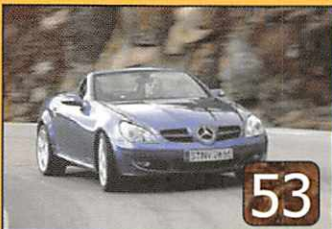
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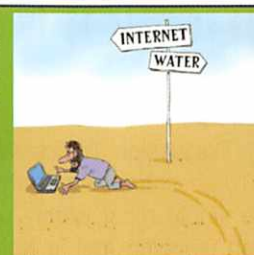


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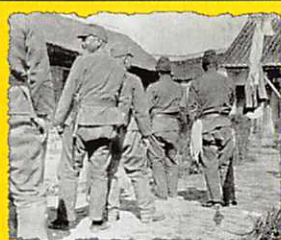
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INTRODUCTION

THE SGDT SERIES

The Small Group Discussion Topics series for university and high school students by Jack Martire is the single most widely used English conversation teaching tool in Korean universities, high schools and private English language institutes. Since the first edition was published in 1990 all three books in the series have steadily gained in popularity, collectively appearing on the Korean textbook bestseller list consistently since 1999.

Contributing to the popularity of the SGDT series has been its uniqueness as the only set of English conversation teaching materials designed specifically for Korean learners.

THE SEVENTH EDITION

This seventh edition of Small Group Discussion Topics for Korean Students is intended for students at the intermediate or advanced levels of English proficiency. The book contains 40 discussion topics which focus on political, economic, environmental and social issues of interest to Koreans in the early 21st century.

Some topics are more difficult to discuss than others since they require the use of more specialized vocabulary. For this reason teachers and group leaders should use discretion when assigning topics, keeping in mind the ability level of their particular group of students. They should also consider the complexity of language required to discuss those topics effectively. Assigning a topic whose discussion would require a level of proficiency greater than the students possess will tempt them to resort to the use of their native language.

THE TOPICS

Most topics deal with the normal everyday concerns of people everywhere, while others are clearly out of the range of normal daily conversation. The thing that all topics have in common is that they are highly controversial and invite argument to defend one's point of

view. What could be more boring than a discussion during which everybody agrees with everyone else on everything?

A word of caution: Some of the topics in this book contain content that could be viewed as critical of Korean society and may offend ultra-nationalistic students who would prefer to focus solely on the positive aspects of Korean life while ignoring the negative. They may particularly resent a foreign author writing about such sensitive issues concerning their country.

However, Koreans themselves, and not the author, actually chose the subject matter for this book because every topic in this book had already been written about in Korean English-language newspapers before the decision was made to include it.

THE ARTICLES

Each discussion topic is introduced by a 3-part article which focuses on one aspect of the problem or issue. In general, reading 1 provides background, reading 2 outlines the current state or condition, and reading 3 focuses on the future and/or solutions. Dividing the readings up into short segments makes it easier for students to organize their thoughts in preparation for the discussions that follow.

ENGLISH USAGE

North American spoken English usage and not the type of expressions normally found in English prose is used in the articles. This means that the grammar may not always be "by the book". Just as native English speakers often ignore the rules, no attempt to be grammatically perfect is made here either. "It's me" may not be acceptable grammatically, but one would be hard pressed to find many native speakers who would say "It is I".

THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The questions that follow each article are not reading comprehension questions. Instead, they refer to the discussion topic and

only make references to the article, assuming however, that it has been read and understood. It is important that the articles are not skipped over because there are references in the discussion questions to statements contained in the articles, and students are asked to agree, disagree, or elaborate.

VOCABULARY ENHANCEMENT

Because the readings expose students to a wide range of issues they are an effective tool for helping students develop a well-rounded speaking vocabulary. Some of the units expose students to subjects they may know little or nothing about, in which case the readings also serve as a learning tool.

Because space is limited, the readings can provide only a brief introduction to the topics, just enough to stimulate students to discuss. To find out more, students will have to research more deeply on their own. The purpose of the readings is not to provide a comprehensive treatment of the issues but simply to stimulate discussion.

SKEPTICAL STUDENTS

I have been accused more than once by skeptics of having used a Korean ghost writer to write this book. Some Koreans can't seem to conceive of any foreigner being intimate enough with Korean history and culture to write on topics like the ones included here. One brash young man wrote to ask, "*Who really wrote this book? Did you even read it!?*"

Well, before anybody writes to ask if I have

read the book, let me state unequivocally that I not only read it but wrote every word without the help of even one Korean.

I arrived in Korea three months before the Kwangju riot of 1980, long before today's college students were even born. So I lived through the tumultuous years that followed under the dictatorships of Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae Woo.

I watched first hand as Korea transformed itself from a country still in the throes of the Cold War with a nighttime curfew still in effect, into the world class nation that it is today. It is no exaggeration to say that I know more about recent Korean history than the students using my books because I experienced it first hand while they got it second hand.

While in Korea I lived among Koreans, and did things that foreigners never do...such as design and build a house in a rural village surrounded by rice fields. That experience taught me all I ever wanted to know about how Koreans thought, lived, and conducted business.

I lived in 5 different Busan "dongs" over a period of 13 years and in 3 Gyeonggi-do communities over a period of 5 years, half of them rural. So the suggestion that I must have had help from a Korean in writing this book is truly laughable.

Jack Martire

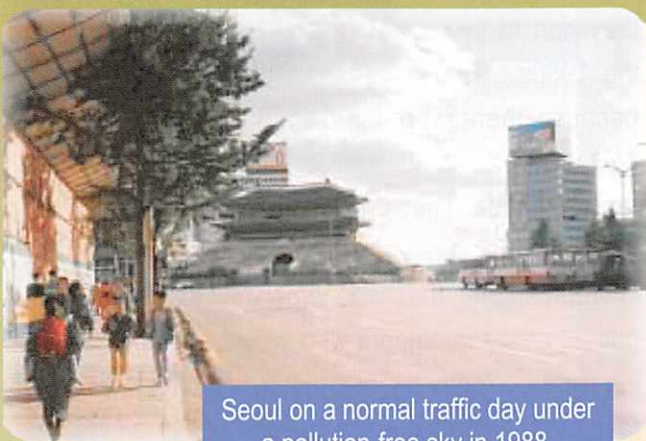


Kwangju, May 1980



Author Jack Martire's solar house being constructed in Busan's Kangdong-dong in the summer of 1983, and the completed house as it appeared in 1987, the same year that massive street demonstrations forced military dictator Chun Doo Hwan from power.

Korea Then and Now



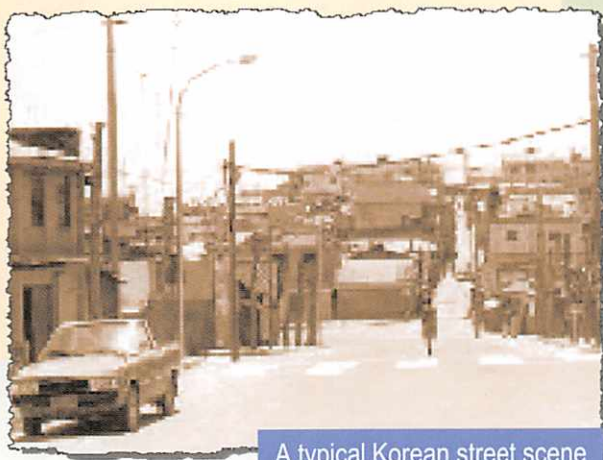
Seoul on a normal traffic day under a pollution-free sky in 1988.

Much has been written about Korea's rags to riches story and how much the country has changed in the past few decades, but Koreans under the age of 40 can't relate to that. If it were possible to rewind the clock to just before the 1988 Seoul Olympics, today's young generation would be shocked at what they would find—a military dictatorship government, a drab and dark environment, very few cars on the roads and no modern communication devices. Half of the Korean population had no telephones in the 1980s.

Until 1987 the only neon signs permitted in Korea were small neon crosses on churches or pharmacies. Any other use of neon was banned. The ban on neon was partly to save electricity and partly to protect the country from possible nighttime air attacks from the north.



There were only four TV channels in the 80s, and they all showed the same kinds of programs. The first 20-25 minutes of every news broadcast were devoted to images and news about Chun Doo Hwan or Roh Tae Woo, the military dictators of that period. All TV broadcasting was in black and white.



A typical Korean street scene in 1980. Count the cars.

Vocabulary

- **rag**s...**story**: very fast economic development
- **relate to**: can understand it well because of having experienced it
- **drab**: not colorful, boring
- **device**: some kind of tool made for a particular purpose
- **pharmacies**: stores where they sell medicine and drugs
- **broadcast**: put on radio or TV

A pharmacy in the UK





These phone booths were once **jammed** with people.

Keeping appointments and contacting people in 1988's Korea was a nightmare. There were no mobile phones or pocket pagers, so if you were sitting in a taxi or a bus stuck in traffic you had no way to let the other person that you'd be late. Missed appointments were **a way of life** in the '80s.

"Missed appointments were a way of life in the 1980s."

Many people didn't even have home phones because there was a long waiting list to have a phone installed. So the only way to contact anybody was by public pay phone, hoping that they would be at home.

There were always long lines of people waiting at public phone booths. Today they **stand idle** because everyone has a cell phone.

Today's **under 30 crowd** might starve to death if they had to live in the 1980s. That's because there were no fast food restau-



Korea's first fast food chain, since 1987

rants in Korea. They didn't start to enter Korea until 1987, one year before the 88 Seoul Olympics, and that was **primarily for the benefit of** the foreigners who would be visiting Korea. Today **every conceivable** foreign fast food chain plus some Korean ones can be found all over Korea.

Very few apartment buildings in the 1980s were higher than 12 stories because that's as high as fire truck ladders could reach. The ones being built today are 30- to 70-story **skyscrapers**, and most Koreans are not afraid to live in them.



The 69-story Samsung Tower Palace Town in Seoul

Vocabulary

- **(be) jammed**: crowded
- **(be) a...life**: happens all the time, day after day, it is very normal
- **to stand idle**: be unused
- **under...crowd**: anybody who is younger than 30 years old
- **primarily...of**: mostly for the convenience of
- **every conceivable**: every fast food chain that anybody can think of
- **skyscraper**: a building 20 stories or more in height