

Developing an Achievement Test  
for an Intermediate Class at a Korean Heritage Language School

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### Abstract

This paper describes the rationale, validity, reliability and scoring system for an achievement test, which was developed by its author, for an intermediate class at Korean Cultural School, a Korean heritage language school. It describes the school, the class, and the students first. Then, it moves on to the test items, describing each of them in detail. Reflections that actually show how the author as a test developer felt writing the test are there as well. It also has appendixes in the end that include the actual test and the rubric.

*Keywords:* Korean Cultural School, low intermediate class, achievement test, mid-term exam, test items, scoring

## Developing an Achievement Test

for an Intermediate Class at a Korean Heritage Language School

### **Introduction**

An achievement test developed here is particularly for a low intermediate class at Korean Cultural School, one of the Korean Heritage Language Schools, located in Honolulu, Hawaii. At Korean Cultural School, Korean language and culture are taught mostly to the second generation of Korean immigrants. There are four classes or levels offered at the school: basic, beginning, low intermediate and upper intermediate. There are two semesters a year and each semester is sixteen-week long. The classes are held once a week on every Saturday and each class lasts for an hour and a half. Some problems the school has are that it is not systematic in a way of designing curriculum or lessons because of non-professional voluntary teachers; the school lacks of materials due to its insufficient fund and lack of Korean language teaching materials developed for children in general; and the school is held only once a week to teach a language, which is too short.

This test will be used as a mid-term exam only for the low intermediate class, which is consisted of seven heritage students who are mostly elementary school students, except for one 44-year-old adult. All of the students have at least one parent or grandparent who speaks Korean as a first language and have attended the school for at least two years. They have relatively good

listening skill because their parents speak to them in Korean at home and they can also read Korean without understanding meaning because Korean language is easy to read after learning the sounds of its alphabet, Hangeul(한글). So, they mostly need help with vocabulary words with correct spelling, instructional grammar, speaking, and writing. The reason they need help with vocabulary with correct spelling and instructional grammar is that students tend to think they know everything about Korean because they can somehow communicate in Korean at home; however, what they say and write are from what they have picked up from what they have heard and many times they make mistakes in grammar due to the complexity of Korean grammar system.

Reflecting the circumstances described above, students in the low intermediate class at the Korean Cultural School have reviewed Hangeul(한글) and learned about some basic vocabulary including three different ways of counting numbers from one to ten, basic sentence structures (Subject-Object-Verb), usage of some particles, useful classroom phrases and writing a brief self-introduction, on which students will be tested. Everything that has been covered in the class will appear on the test in six different sections: listening, vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing, and speaking. And, at the end of the test after seven weeks of instruction, the degree of learning will be determined and reported to the students, their parents, and the teacher.

**Some of the Example Test Items and Rating Rubrics**  
**with Explanation of Rationale, Validity and Reliability**

A full test is in Appendix 1.

### Section 1: Listening

Listening section is consisted of two items which require students to listen to a classroom phrase for each item and pick the corresponding picture that best describes the phrase. Each phrase will be said twice by the examiner. And each item is worth 2 points, making 4 points in total for the whole section. Listening section contributes a relatively small amount to the total score because students were already good at listening when they first entered the class; therefore listening section was not practiced so much separately in class.

#### Sample item:

Listen to the classroom phrases carefully and circle the corresponding picture that best describes the phrase. Each phrase will be said twice. – 4 points (2 points each)

1. ①



②



③



④



### Section 2: Vocabulary

Vocabulary section is consisted of five items which require students to write vocabulary words with correct spelling. It takes up the most points, 34 points, out of all of the six sections because many activities were done in the class for vocabulary. Due to students' level, they

learned many basic vocabulary words, rather than other skills, so that they can use them when they are ready to learn more productive skills. That is why the vocabulary section is relatively larger than other sections. And each item more in detail with grading system will be explained below with sample items.

The first item in the vocabulary section asks students to fill in the blanks with correct missing Hangeul(한글) in the correct order. This should be relatively easy for the students' level so they are worth only 1 point each. But, many times, students tend to forget the correct order, so 1 point from the total score for this item will be deducted for misplaced alphabets no matter how many are misplaced. This item is to just check if they remember Korean basic alphabet system so most students are expected to get this one correct.

#### Sample Item:

Fill in the blanks with correct 한글 or words.

한글 - 6 points

The missing 한글 needs to be **in order**.

(자음)	ㄱ	ㄴ	ㄷ		ㅁ		ㅅ	ㅇ	ㅈ		ㅋ	ㅌ		ㅎ
(모음)	ㅏ	ㅑ	ㅓ			ㅕ	ㅗ	ㅛ	ㅜ	ㅠ	ㅡ	ㅣ		

The second item requires students to write the date including the year in Korean, which was covered in the first few classes and practiced for every worksheet they turn in to the teacher.

Students are expected to use the correct terms that Koreans use to write the date, but do not have to write the numerals in Korean because number words for thousands and tens are not covered in the class yet. Each word for year, month and day will be worth 2 points and 0.5 points will be deducted for spelling mistake. And 2 points out of the 6 total scores will be deducted for the wrong order of the year, month and day. 2 points are a lot compared to the 6 total score but because writing the date was practiced a lot in the class, students are expected to get it correct.

Sample item:

Write today's date including the year in Korean. **Do not** write out numbers in Korean. Keep them in Arabic. – 6 points

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The third item requires students to write the number in Korean. Out of the three ways of counting numbers in Korean, the specific way the examiner is looking for, which is the basic, is given so that it does not confuse examinees. This item is to check if students remember how to write the number with correct spelling. Each number is worth 2 points and 0.5 points will be deducted for every spelling mistake.

Sample item:

Numbers below are 지은's secret code for her credit card. To use the card, she has to write the number in Korean. Help her be able to use the card by writing the numbers below in Korean (in Sino-Korean way). – 8 points (2 points each)

9 3 8 6 \_\_\_\_\_

The fourth item asks students to write numbers in counting form. This is worth 3 points, which is more than for the other items in the same section because numbers in counting form are different from those of regular and a little more difficult. 0.5 points will be deducted for the errors made by spelling mistake. And this item does not only test Korean numbering system for the counting purpose, but also incorporate Korean culture that candles on a birthday cake represent the birthday person's age, which was discussed in class.

Sample item:

Guess how old the birthday boy or girl is by counting the candles on his or her birthday cake and write the age in Korean. – 6 points (3 points each)



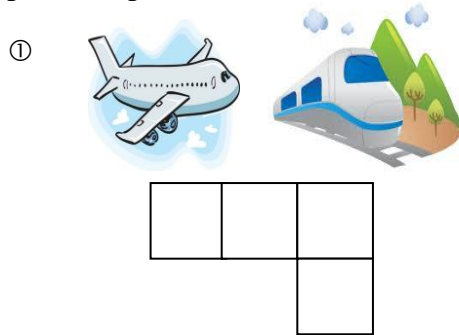
\_\_\_\_\_ 살

The last item in the vocabulary section gives students some pictures and English words so that students have to write them in Korean with correct spelling. This is to check if students remember the basic vocabulary covered in class. Each word is worth 2 points and 0.5 points will be deducted for the spelling mistake. And this item is in a form of crossword puzzles because students have practiced the crossword puzzle for some of the vocabulary words for their homework before and also students can get a hint at least for the first or the last syllable.



Sample item:

Complete the crossword puzzle by looking at the provided pictures or English words. – 8 points (2 points each)



### Section 3: Grammar

There are two parts in the grammar section. The first section requires students to pick the right particle out of two given ones. All of the sentences should be understandable for students because they are in basic sentence structure with vocabulary words that were learned in class but not used in the other test items. For this item, students get to pick, rather than write it by themselves, because particles are generally difficult concepts in grammar and they only have practiced that way in the class yet. Each item is worth 2 points. And the second part asks students to put the parts of a sentence in the correct order. It is testing students if they know the basic Korean sentence structure or not. Each item is worth 3 points because it has been covered many times in class so students should know it as a very basic and important concept. There are no partial credits for both parts of the grammar section.

Sample item:

Pick the correct particle and write it in the blank. – 6 points (2 points each)

- ① 나는 선생님  좋아요.  
(이, 가)

Put the parts of a sentence in the correct order. – 6 points (3 points each)

- ① 언니는        합니다.        숙제를
- 

#### Section 4: Reading

Reading was practiced relatively less in the class. Mostly, it was practiced as a homework assignment. And that is why reading section is comparatively smaller like the listening section. In this section, students will read a short text that was written by the teacher with simple sentence structures and vocabulary words that were learned in class. Then, they will answer two reading comprehension questions, which are in a multiple-choice form. Each item is worth 2 points.

#### Sample item:

Read the following text carefully and answer the comprehension questions by circling the answer. – 4 points (2 points each)

우리 엄마는 과일 장사를 합니다.  
오늘은 소나기 때문에 손님이 없었습니다.  
그래서 엄마와 나는 일찍 집에 갔습니다.  
나는 자전거를 탈 줄도 알고 또 좋아하기 때문에 자전거를 타고 싶었지만,  
소나기 때문에 버스를 타고 집에 갔습니다.

가게에 왜 손님이 없었나요?

- ① 과일 때문에    ② 소나기 때문에    ③ 엄마 때문에    ④ 자전거 때문에

#### Section 5: Writing

Writing a brief self-introduction was a main task that students have practiced in the class.

Most of the vocabulary words and grammar were related to the sentences that can be used for a self-introduction. That is why writing section is very large in this achievement test. It is worth 28 points in total. Students are required to write a full self-introduction that includes their name, age, school and grade level, where they live, with whom they live with, what they like, and what they want to be in the future, in order. Seven sentences with the correct spelling and grammar will be worth 28 points, meaning each sentence is worth 4 points. 0.2 points will be deducted for spelling mistake and 1 point will be deducted for grammar, such as particles and verb endings, or sentence order mistakes. The writing section will test students' understanding and ability to apply what they have learned.

Sample item:

Write a self-introduction including your name; age; school and grade level; in where you live; with whom you live; what you like; and what you want to be, **in order**. Make sure to include every item listed because each item counts. – 28 points (4 points each sentence)

### Section 6: Speaking

Students will be pulled one by one and take the speaking section outside of the classroom during the exam period. They will only get to answer three questions asked by the examiner. They will not get to ask due to the time limit given for the exam. The questions will be about self-introduction, such as “What’s your name,” “How old are you,” and “Where do you live?” All of these were practiced in class. The first question is worth 2 points because it is fairly

easy, but the other two will be worth 3 points because particles are needed to be in their answer, which is not easy for non-native speakers to use. For scoring, students' answers will be transcribed in Korean by the examiner on the scoring sheet and graded later to make the work short and easy during the exam period. For each question, 2 points will be deducted for not answering to the asked question; 1 point will be deducted for not using the correct particle or not ending the sentence properly using appropriate sentence ender. Other things like speed of the speech will not be counted against the score, considering language level of the students.

Scoring sheet for speaking section is in Appendix 2.

### **Reflections**

Even though I finished developing a whole achievement test, the validity and the reliability will not be ensured until the tests are actually distributed to the students and the results are gathered. Therefore, I cannot be sure if this test is good or bad yet. However, many of my classmates in the same testing class said that it looked good so co-workers comments might ensure a small part of the validity. And now, I totally understand the need of pilot tests, which are good to ensure validity and reliability, but actually hard to conduct for these small tests.

I am sure that it was interesting experience; however, developing a test was not an easy job, requiring so much more time and efforts than I expected. Considering every detail about the school, class, students, language contents and scoring were not easy. Out of all, assigning scores

for each item, maintaining fairness for every possible situation, was the most difficult. It was because I had to think of every situation students might make mistake and also assign scores that would make the total score a neat number. But, I am proud of myself going through hard steps and make it through.

I think I did the achievement test presented here is practically good because I tried to keep in mind the things that I have learned from the testing course. I tried to write it as neat as possible, organize it clearly and make every item relevant to what students have learned in class. I also avoided using ambiguity, double negatives or trick questions. And I also reviewed it so many times to stay away from errors or mistakes. However, there should be some errors or mistakes because it was my first time to develop a full test like this. Nonetheless, it was a very valuable experience.

Appendix 1

중 간 고 사 ( /90)

날짜:  
이름:

I. 듣기 (Listening) – 4 points in total

Listen to the classroom phrases carefully and circle the corresponding picture that best describes the phrase. Each phrase will be said twice – 4 points (2 points each)

1. ① ② ③ ④

2. ① ② ③ ④

II. 단어 (Vocabulary) – 34 points in total

Fill in the blanks with correct 한글 or words.

1. 한글 – 6 points

The missing 한글 needs to be **in order**.

(자음) 

ㄱ	ㄴ	ㄷ		ㄹ		ㅅ	ㅇ	ㅈ		ㅋ	ㅌ		ㅎ
---	---	---	--	---	--	---	---	---	--	---	---	--	---

(모음) 

ㅏ	ㅑ	ㅓ			ㅕ	ㅗ	ㅛ	ㅜ	ㅠ	ㅡ	ㅣ
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2. Write today's date including the year in Korean. **Do not** write out numbers in Korean. Keep them in Arabic. – 6 points

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Numbers below are 지은's secret code for her credit card. To use the card, she has to write the number in Korean. Help her be able to use the card by writing the numbers below in Korean (in Sino-Korean way). – 8 points (2 points each)

9 3 8 6 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Guess how old the birthday boy or girl is by counting the candles on his or her birthday cake and write the age in Korean. – 6 points (3 points each)



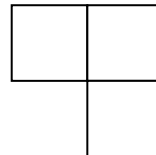
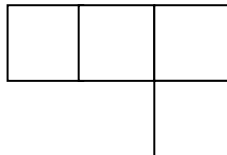
\_\_\_\_\_ 살

\_\_\_\_\_ 살

5. Complete the crossword puzzle by looking at the provided pictures or English words. – 8 points (2 points each)



② AGE  
NAME



**III. 문법 (Grammar) – 12 points in total**

1. Pick the correct particle and write it in the blank. – 6 points (2 points each)

① 나는 선생님  좋아요.  
(이, 가)

② 토끼  빨리 달려요.  
(은, 는)

③ 엄마는 사과  바나나를 좋아해요.  
(를, 와)

2. Put the parts of a sentence in the correct order. – 6 points (3 points each)

① 언니는          합니다.          숙제를

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② 사진을          나는          찍습니다.

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#### IV. 읽기 (Reading) – 4 points in total

Read the following text carefully and answer the comprehension questions by circling the answer. – 4 points (2 points each)

우리 엄마는 과일 장사를 합니다.

오늘은 소나기 때문에 손님이 없었습니다.

그래서 엄마와 나는 일찍 집에 갔습니다.

나는 자전거를 탈 줄도 알고 또 좋아하기 때문에 자전거를 타고 싶었지만,  
소나기 때문에 버스를 타고 집에 갔습니다.

1. 가게에 왜 손님이 없었나요?

① 과일 때문에    ② 소나기 때문에    ③ 엄마 때문에    ④ 자전거 때문에

2. 글쓴이는 무엇을 타고 싶어 했나요?

① 소나기    ② 자동차    ③ 버스    ④ 자전거



**V. 쓰기 (Writing) – 28 points in total**

Write a self-introduction including your name; age; school and grade level; in where you live; with whom you live; what you like; and what you want to be, **in order**. Make sure to include every item listed because each item counts. – 28 points (4 points each sentence)

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**VI. 말하기 (Speaking) – 8 points**

Each of you will be called and pulled out one by one during the exam. When it is your turn, come out and answer to the examiner’s questions in a full sentence. Leave the blanks below empty because they are for the examiners to record your score.

1. (2 points) \_\_\_\_\_      2. (3 points) \_\_\_\_\_      3. (3 points) \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2

## VI. 말하기 (Speaking) 평가지

학생 이름		점수			총점	기타
		1. 이름이 뭐예요?	2. 몇 살 이에요?	3. 어디에 살아요?		
1.	점수	/2	/3	/3	/8	
	Transcription					
2.	점수	/2	/3	/3	/8	
	Transcription					
3.	점수	/2	/3	/3	/8	
	Transcription					
4.	점수	/2	/3	/3	/8	
	Transcription					
5.	점수	/2	/3	/3	/8	
	Transcription					
6.	점수	/2	/3	/3	/8	
	Transcription					
7.	점수	/2	/3	/3	/8	
	Transcription					