

Steven S. Bammel's

KOREAN HANDBOOK FOR TRANSLATION AGENCIES

Basics of Korean Writing, Translation Style
Guide, Project Quoting Guidelines and
Frequently Asked Terms and Phrases



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[I] INTRODUCTION

Hello!

It has been a great privilege to work in the translation field over the last twelve years. The vast majority of my business (both Korean>English and English>Korean) comes from full-service, multi-lingual translation agencies throughout North America and the world and I deeply appreciate the support that you, my agency clients, provide me.

I've come across many different types of projects in diverse formats and styles, and during this time, I've seen certain questions, blind spots and situations arise over and over in my interactions with clients.

The purpose of this guide is to give you a basic familiarity with certain aspects of written Korean so that you can quote Korean projects to your clients more profitably, save time in your work, answer client questions knowledgeably and provide higher-quality deliveries by understanding Korean formatting and stylistic issues – regardless of whether you use my services or the services of other Korean linguists.

For up-to-date information on my services, you can always visit Agency.KoreanConsulting.com for pricing, profiles and other free resources.

Happy translating!



Steven S. Bammel

Certified Korean Translator
Korean Consulting & Translation Service, Inc.

PS - Feel free to email me if you'd like to discuss anything in this book. I will gladly respond and try to reflect your feedback in the next edition.



Contact me anytime

My preferred method of communication is email to sbammel@koreanconsulting.com

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[[I]] BASICS OF KOREAN WRITING

Quick-and-Dirty Comparison between Korean and Japanese/Chinese

There are many similarities between Korean and Japanese in terms of word order, grammar and origin so a lot of what you have heard about Japanese probably applies to Korean, too.

"Hangul" and "hanja" are to Korean what "kana" and "kanji" are to Japanese. However, there are important differences. Far less "hanja" is used in Korean than "kanji" in Japanese and phonetic rules of "hangul" are completely unrelated to the structure of "kana". Furthermore, the "kanji" of Japan mostly uses simplified Chinese characters, whereas Korean "hanja" uses traditional Chinese characters.

Structurally, Korean and Chinese are very different. Korean makes some use of Chinese characters and many Korean words are of Chinese origin, but the grammar and style are totally different.

Unlike Chinese and Japanese which do not insert spacing within the text, Korean has a well-developed concept of words and inter-word spacing.

HANGUL AND HANJA

"Hangeul" (also spelled "hangul") is the Korean word for the alphabet invented in Korea by a group of scholars between 1444 and 1446 on the order of King Sejong to bring reading and writing to the masses. Prior to the development of "hangeul", the Korean language was represented using Chinese characters, so the invention of "hangeul" greatly improved literacy.

However, Chinese characters (called "hanja" in Korean) have not been completely eliminated from the language. Though most Korean texts today are written exclusively in "hangeul", Chinese characters are occasionally added in parenthesis within the text to clarify meaning. Even today, a few erudite texts are still written primarily in Chinese characters interspersed with "hangeul" when there is no "hanja" to represent what the writer wants to say. Roughly 70% of Korean words have a Chinese origin which can be represented with "hanja".

Modern Korean is almost always written left-to-right/top-to-bottom, just like English. However, text in tables is often written vertically top-to-bottom. Classical Korean was written up-to-down and right-to-left.

LETTERS ARE THE BUILDING BLOCKS

The Korean alphabet contains 26 phonetic letters – 14 consonants and 10 vowels. In the table below, each is shown with commonly used English renderings in parenthesis, with the preferred official spelling being expressed in red font where applicable.

	Basic	Combined
Consonants	ㄱ (g, k), ㄴ (n), ㄷ (d, t), ㄹ (r, l), ㅁ (m), ㅂ (b, p), ㅅ (s, sh), ㅇ (silent, ng), ㅈ (j, z), ㅋ (k), ㆁ (t), ㅍ (p), ㅊ (ch), ㅎ (h)	ㄲ (gg, kk, g, k), ㄸ (dd, tt, d, t), ㅃ (bb, pp, b, p), ㅆ (jj, j, z)
	ㅏ (a), ㅑ (ya), ㅓ (eo, u, o), ㅕ (yeo, yu), ㅗ (o), ㅛ (yo), ㅜ (oo, u, woo), ㅠ (yoo, yu), ㅡ (eu, u), ㅣ (i, e)	ㅐ (ae, a), ㅑ (yae, ya), ㅓ (e), ㅕ (ye), ㅗ (oi, way), ㅜ (ui, wee), ㅠ (eui, wee), ㅟ (ueo, wo), ㅞ (wae, wa), ㅚ (wa, oa)

LETTERS MAKE CHARACTERS

Each Korean character is a full syllable made up of at least two letters, one of which is a vowel. Pronunciation generally starts from the left/top-left of the character and trends toward the right/bottom-right. A syllable can have multiple consonants and basic or combined vowels.

Examples: 강(gang) = ㄱ(g) + ㅏ(a) + ㅇ(ng)
 오(oh) = ㅇ(silent) + ㅗ(oh)
 활(hoal) = ㅎ(h) + ㅗ(o) + ㅏ(a) + ㄹ(l)

CHARACTERS MAKE WORDS

Korean is made up of words, just like English. However, there are important differences. In Korean, tags are attached to the ends (or even inserted in the middle) of words to indicate various grammatical cases, honorific relationships or levels of formality. This means that the same word can appear differently in different contexts and grammatical cases.

Examples: 집 = "house"
 집이 = house as the subject
 집을 = house as the object
 집에 = house as a destination
 댁 = house of a respected person

Furthermore, the spellings of these tags can change depending on the last letter of the previous character. (This is analogous to the English case of "a" and "an". We say "a computer" or "an apple" depending on the first letter of the next word.)

Best Practices Tip

Apparent wording and spelling inconsistencies to a non-Korean speaker may not actually be wrong. It's a good idea to ask the linguist if you have doubts.

Best Practices Tip

You cannot just do a reckless global find-and-replace through a Korean document to change a term. Adjacent characters may also need to be revised, too.

Best Practices Tip

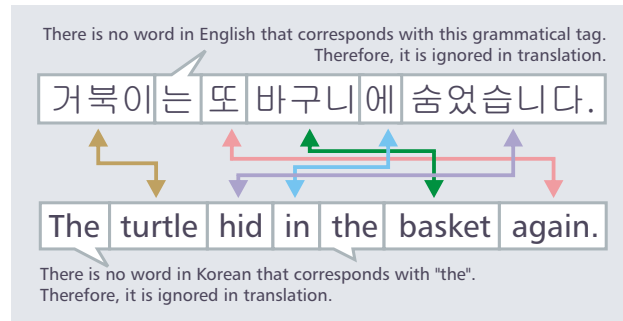
Do not, under any circumstances, divide an English sentence into two parts and ask that each half be translated into Korean independently (or vice-versa!) Because of the dramatically different grammatical structures, this will often lead to non-sensical translations.

WORDS MAKE SENTENCES

The grammatical structure of Korean is radically different than English. In many cases, when translating between the languages, it almost seems like you have to start at the end of a sentence and translate backward in order to produce a proper sentence in the target language.

Basic Word Order:	English: Subject - Verb - Object Korean: Subject - Object - Verb
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In the following example, each word has been linked to its equivalent in the other language to demonstrate how non-linear the relationship is between English and Korean.



Best Practices Tip

Look for consistency of endings in Korean paragraphs. They don't all end the same way, but many do and a single document should use the same level of formality throughout, except in special circumstances.

SENTENCE STYLES VARY DEPENDING ON THE SITUATION

The concepts of formality and respect are well-developed in Korean. This is one of the most difficult issues for foreigners to fully master when learning Korean. There are multiple sentence ending styles depending on the type of document and the relationships between the writer/speaker and reader/listener.

The following examples show several ways of translating the present tense of the verb "translate". All have the same meaning but different connotations of formality and respect.

번역합니다	번역하십시오	번역해요	번역하세요
번역한다	번역하신다	번역해	번역하시오

[III] KOREAN TRANSLATION STYLE GUIDE

DIMENSIONS

Korean does not generally take more or less space on a page than English. However, Korean fits more neatly into vertical spaces than English, so formatting can be a challenge when translating Korean documents into English that are full of tables and forms. Likewise, translating into PowerPoint can be quite time-consuming.

LINE BREAKS

When typesetting Korean, it does not matter whether a word is split at the end of the line as long as the paragraph is right- and left-justified. In this case, it is not necessary to place a hyphen to indicate the split word. If the paragraph is not right-justified, don't split words between lines and make sure they stay whole.

When typesetting titles in Korean, it would be best to try to keep whole words together on the same line, but even there, you'd be hard-pressed to find a Korean reviewer that will consider it a serious issue even if words are split. Again, the key here is to right- and left-justify the text.

CAPITALIZATION

Korean does not use capitalization and so English capitalization cannot be represented in Korean.

DIALECTS OF KOREAN

Standard Korean used in Seoul is the only acceptable form of written Korean for 99.9% of translation projects.

Of course, the North Koreans would disagree with this and the dialects of South and North Korea have changed a lot over the years such that they are really two different dialects now. But considering that there is virtually no translation being commissioned for the North Korean market, it is safe to ignore the North Korean dialect in all cases.

In South Korea, there are three major regional dialects, mostly differing from the Seoul standard in terms of spoken accent, but none of these would be considered a proper form of written Korean for any kind of business, legal or technical purpose.

Clients will sometimes ask that a particular translation be matched to a specific overseas Korean community, such as Korean-Americans or Korean-Australians, but regardless of the way overseas Koreans have come to mix their spoken Korean with the local language, the only acceptable written version of Korean in these communities would also be the Seoul standard.

This keeps things simple since it means that there is only one dialect of Korean that you need to be concerned about for your Korean translation project.

Best Practices Tip

Leave room in your budget for a formatting fee on translations with complicated forms, tables and graphs. PowerPoint files also require additional charges sometimes.

Best Practices Tip

As a rule of thumb, Korean documents will look better and be easier to review if you right- and left-justify the text and do not worry about line breaks in the text.

Best Practices Tip

If all-caps were used in a section of English for emphasis, this should be recreated in the Korean using underlining, italics or bold font.

Best Practices Tip

1. When working outside of Microsoft Office and Adobe PDF documents, the typesetting of Korean, Japanese and Chinese is best left to a typesetter with the experience and software to do the work right.

2. To make sure you can handle Korean fonts in Word, go back to your original Microsoft Office CD and install the Asian Fonts Pack. This will give you full access to the Microsoft Office documents delivered by your Korean, Japanese and Chinese language vendors.

3. When sending files for a typesetting job in an Asian language, you should still include all English fonts. This is very important because it allows the typesetter to get an accurate view of the English document formatting when typesetting into the new language.

4. Also, when typesetting a document where the source files are on a Mac, make sure everything, including fonts, is compressed into a .sit file before sending. Otherwise, all fonts will be corrupted beyond repair and cleaning up some of the graphics will also be a time-consuming chore for the typesetter.

FONTS

The fonts of Western European languages are single-byte. But like Japanese and Chinese, Korean uses double-byte fonts because of the huge number of possible combinations of characters.

Therefore, the file sizes for Korean fonts are always MUCH larger than for Western European languages and the Korean fonts are not always compatible in all platforms and software. Fortunately, the English version of Microsoft Office has fully supported Korean since version 2000 so Word files seldom present difficulties.

The following is a table of four main Korean fonts installed standard with Microsoft Office. The most common of these is Batang.

Korean Font (Name in Korean)	Comparable English Font	Example
Batang (바탕)	Times New Roman	안녕하세요
Gullim (굴림)	Arial	안녕하세요
Gungseo (궁서)	Times New Roman	안녕하세요
Dodum (돋움)	Arial	안녕하세요

MEASUREMENTS

The metric system is used in Korea and so it is often a good idea to convert. Unusual measurement names are often just left in English.

Examples:	English Source	Korean Translation
	6 feet	1.83 미터 (6 피트)
	1600 rpm	1600 rpm

DATES

Korean months of the year are denoted only by numbers (Month 1, Month 2, etc.) and the sequence of writing dates is [year], [month], [day].

Examples:	English Source	Korean Translation
		2008.05.17
		08.05.17
	June 17, 2005	2008년 5월 17일
		08년 5월 17일

Best Practices Tip

Clients are forever asking me why the symbol "&" wasn't translated in English > Korean jobs. However, the symbol "&" is an acceptable representation in Korean of the English word "and", just like in English!

NUMBERS

Korean uses the same number system that we use in English. However, it also has several native number units that are used commonly. Therefore, translations of numbers from English to Korean can look wrong if not properly understood.

Examples:	English Source	Korean Translation
	Ten thousand	1만
	560,000	56만
	6.5 billion	650억
	1 trillion	1조

PUNCTUATION AND SPACING

Korean generally uses the same punctuation and symbols as we use in English.

Sentence spacing is also similar to English. However, one notable exception is the spacing around parenthesis. In some cases, there should not be a space between a parenthesis and the nearest character outside it; other times there is a space. The rules for it are based on Korean grammatical rules which I won't try to explain here. In many cases, it will even look inconsistent when it is really just fine.

COMPANIES, BRANDS AND OTHER CORPORATE PROPER NAMES

Translate to Korean if a well-known Korean version exists. Otherwise, leave in English or translate/transliterate it and then put the English in parentheses after.

Examples:	English Source	Korean Translation
	Yahoo!	야후!
	Microsoft	마이크로소프트
	HP	HP
	Tyco	Tyco
	Supersonic Flight Systems	Supersonic Flight Systems OR 슈퍼소닉 플라이트 시스템즈 (Supersonic Flight Systems)
	Green Seal Standard	Green Seal Standard OR Green Seal 의 표준

Best Practices Tip

Correct spacing in Korean around parenthesis often looks funky and inconsistent to English speakers. Feel free to bug your linguist for confirmation if you feel uncomfortable with how it looks, but expect to get a response back saying it's OK.

Best Practices Tip

Nearly every Korean company has a version of their name in English which is usually found on their web site. If possible, try to use that preferred English name when translating from Korean to English, even if not a correct literal translation.

Best Practices Tip

Koreans often have a preferred spelling of their name in English. If available, use it. Otherwise, it is best to follow standard rules when transliterating from Korean to English.

NAMES OF PEOPLE

Just leaving English names in English is the simplest method. It is also perfectly acceptable. Some translators prefer to transliterate names into Korean and then put the English name in parenthesis immediately after the first instance.

Examples:	English Source	Korean Translation
	Jim Smith	짐 스미스
	Steven Bammel	Steven Bammel OR 스티븐 바멜 (Steven Bammel)
	Martin J. Peterson	마틴 J. 피터션

TECHNICAL WORDS

Most English technical words have Korean equivalents. If they don't, then the most common convention is to transliterate them into Korean and then put the English word in parenthesis immediately after the first instance. In some cases, if the translator is concerned that the Korean word may not be as easily recognizable to a reader who is likely familiar with the terminology in English anyway, he may even just leave the word in English.

Examples:	English Source	Korean Translation
	bortezomib	bortezomib OR 보르테조미트(bortezomib)
	titanium dioxide	이산화티타늄

ADDRESSES

Addresses in Korea are written in nearly reverse order from English. The following example demonstrates.

English Address	Korean Address
2534 Cheyenne St. Irving, Texas 75062	미국 텍사스주 어빙시 샤이엔 스트리트 2534번지 (우: 75062)
English address if written in Korean word order	
USA Texas Irving Cheyenne Street 2534 (Zip: 75062)	

In most documents, it's best to just leave the address in English since the US post office would never deliver a letter to an address written in Korean. However, the exception to this is business cards. Most clients prefer to see the Korean side of their business card written fully in Korean. Since the English on the back will have the correct English address anyway, it seems best to go ahead and translate business card addresses as a means of satisfying clients.

JOB TITLES

Some job titles are tougher to translate than others. It often makes sense to provide a Korean translation and then leave the corresponding English in parenthesis after the first instance. In particular, due to the difference in Korean corporate structure, top-ranking job titles can be particularly tough, with "director" having a variety of possible translations depending on the situation.

Examples:	English Source	Korean Translation
	President & CEO	사장 겸 CEO
	Director	디렉터 OR 이사 OR other
	Manager	부장 OR 과장 OR 책임자 OR other

WORDS WRITTEN IN CHINESE CHARACTERS

It is highly unlikely that a linguist will deliver an English>Korean translation that includes a lot of Chinese characters. However, from time to time, a particular Korean word's meaning could be difficult to understand or even have a homonym with which it may be confused in the context. In such cases, the translator may write the word with Chinese characters in parenthesis after the Korean word so that readers can get the full and clear meaning of the word.

Examples:	English Source	Korean Translation
	Integrity of Our Company's Information & Property Items	당사의 정보 및 재산 항목(項)들의 무결성

Best Practices Tip

When assigning us to translate a business card, please provide as much context as possible regarding the job title. Don't assume an easy, direct translation exists.

Special Note:

For a very long list of job titles with their translations, see [VI] Korean Terms for Business Cards in this Handbook.

Best Practices Tip

The two Chinese characters in the address here denote "state" and "city", respectively and I think including these characters makes the address look a little classier. It's certainly not required though.

[IV] QUOTING KOREAN>ENGLISH JOBS

As a very approximate rule of thumb, 2 Korean characters translate into 1 English word and 1 Korean word translates into 2 English words.

If your client requests a quote to translate a Korean document into English, you may find it difficult to estimate the final English word count. Some translators use a conversion rate of 1.5-2.0 Korean words/English word but I find this to be extremely unreliable and just eyeballing the document yields the best results for me.

If you're not comfortable quoting a price to your client on an unknown final English word count, contact me in advance about the project. I will take responsibility for the word-count risk with a "fixed price quote" that will not increase (or decrease) based on the final word count.

If you are estimating a final translated English word count from a Korean document, I suggest multiplying the Korean word count by two to get an estimated English word count that is probably going to be a bit higher than the actual final English word count, which gives you a margin of safety on your budget. And when doing your calculations, be extra careful not to get Korean "characters" and Korean "words" mixed up.

WHY WE DON'T PRICE ON A PER-KOREAN-WORD BASIS

An agency client sent me this recently:

"We are trying to standardize our pricing and base everything on source words. I understand for into English documents, you usually charge based on the target English word count or based on a flat rate that is agreed upon in advance. Would you mind providing a per-character rate for into English translation based on the number of source characters? Assume this will only apply when we have an MS Word document or something with live, selectable text."

Here's what I wrote back:

"There are a lot of extra issues with basing K>E jobs on a per-character rate. The first is simply that very few (perhaps just 10-20%) of K>E jobs come to us with editable source files; most everything is scanned from hardcopy, it seems. But beyond that, to count characters then calculates numbers on a per digit basis, too, and when English words are mixed in, it further raises the character count and thus the job price. Adjusting for this is an imprecise science and makes for a difficult process.

The other issue, which is also not negligible, is that the conversion rates between English and Korean are not stable and so to account for the extra risk factor in this would require a per-character Korean rate that would generally be higher than our current rates, since we do everything internally on a per-English-word rate..

An alternative to this is to ask for a quote in advance on jobs where you/your client don't want to take a word count risk. I could then give you a fixed price on which you could base your pricing to your client.

I hope this is helpful."

[V] FREQUENTLY ASKED KOREAN PHRASES

English	Korean	Comments/Context
Merry Christmas!	즐거운 성탄!	Not commonly used, but a literal and usable translation
Happy New Year!	새해 복 많이 받으세요!	Most common end-of-year greeting
Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!	즐거운 성탄과 새해 복 많이 받으세요!	Combination of the above two. Not commonly used, but a literal and usable translation
Happy Holidays!	행복한 연말연시 되세요!	Literal: "Happy end of this year and beginning of next". Best phrase for a greeting card where the meaning needs to be broader than just "Happy New Year!"
Thank you	감사합니다	
Hello	안녕하세요	
Welcome (to a store)	어서 오십시오	Literal: "Come on in!"
Welcome (to an event, city)	오신 것을 환영합니다	Literal: "We welcome your coming"
Welcome (to a web site)	방문해 주셔서 감사합니다	Literal: "Thank you for visiting"
Happy Birthday!	생일 축하합니다!	

Options

If you're reading this in softcopy form, then [click here for a Zip file](#) that contains all of these phrases with multiple fonts, as well as the business card terms in the next section, in both Word and Illustrators formats.

If you're reading this in hardcopy form, then download the book as an eBook to get the link from Agency.KoreanConsulting.com

[VI] KOREAN TERMS FOR BUSINESS CARDS

CONTACT INFORMATION

English	Korean
Telephone, Tel, Phone (T, P)	전화
Direct telephone (D)	직통 전화
Direct (D)	직통
Office telephone (O)	사무실 전화
Office(O)	사무실
Home telephone (H)	주택 전화
Home (H)	주택
Main, Main telephone (M)	대표전화
Ext., Extension (E)	내선
Fax (F)	팩스
Cell, Mobile (C, M)	휴대폰
Pager (P)	호출기
Beeper (B)	삐삐
Email, E-Mail (E)	이메일
Website	웹사이트
Internet	인터넷
Toll-free phone	수신자 부담전화
TTY (teletypewriter)	청각장애이용 문자전화

PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATIONS

English	Korean
Doctor or Philosophy, Doctor of Education, etc. (Ph.D., EDD, Dr.)	박사
Master of Arts, Master of Science, etc. (MA, MS)	석사
Master of Business Administration (MBA)	경영학 석사
Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, etc. (BA, BS)	학사
Chartered Public Accountant (CPA)	공인회계사
Attorney, Lawyer, (Esq.)	변호사
Professional Engineer (PE)	전문 엔지니어
Medical Doctor (MD)	의학박사
Registered Nurses (RN)	공인 간호사

EDUCATION JOB TITLES

English	Korean
School Headmaster	학교장
University President	총장
Dean	학장
Department Dean	학과장
Professor	교수
Associate Professor	부교수
Assistant Professor	조교수
Teacher	선생, 교사
Instructor	강사

MISCELLANEOUS

English	Korean
Consultant	컨설턴트
Adviser	고문
Accountant	회계사
Author, Writer	작가
Musician	가수
Judge	판사
Secretary	비서
Pastor, Minister (Rev.)	목사

ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS

English	Korean
Company	회사
Incorporated, Corporation	(주식회사)
Limited Liability (LLC)	유한책임회사
Partnership	파트너쉽

GOVERNMENT JOB TITLES

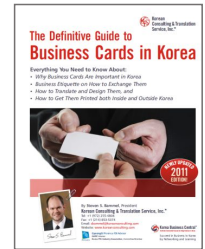
English	Korean
Governor (of a state)	주지사
Governor (of a province)	도지사
National Senator	상원위원
National Congressperson	하원위원
State Senator	주의회 상원
State Congressman	주의회 하원
Mayor	시장
City Councilperson	시의원

BUSINESS JOB TITLES

English	Korean
Chairman	회장
Vice-Chairman	부회장
President	사장
Senior Vice-President	선임 부사장
Vice-President	부사장
Executive Senior Managing Director	전무이사
Senior Managing Director	전무
Managing Director	상무
Director (as standard rank in company hierarchy or as a member of the board of directors)	이사
Director (other cases)	디렉터, 부장, 임원
General Manager	부장
Deputy General Manager	차장
Manager	과장
Assistant Manager	대리
Representative Director	대표이사
Chief Executive Officer	최고경영책임자
Chief Operating Officer	최고운영책임자
Chief Financial Officer	최고재무책임자
Chief Marketing Officer	최고 마케팅 책임자
Chief Technology Officer	최고기술책임자
The person who is head of the company but where a formal title is not given	대표
Branch Head	지사장
Office Head	처장, 실장
Team Head	팀장
Founder	설립자
Co-Founder	공동 설립자
Owner	소유자
Co-Owner	공동 소유자
Partner	파트너
Managing Partner (generic)	경영담당 파트너
Managing Partner (law firm)	대표변호사
General Counsel	법률고문
Executive	임원
Employee, Staff	직원

More information

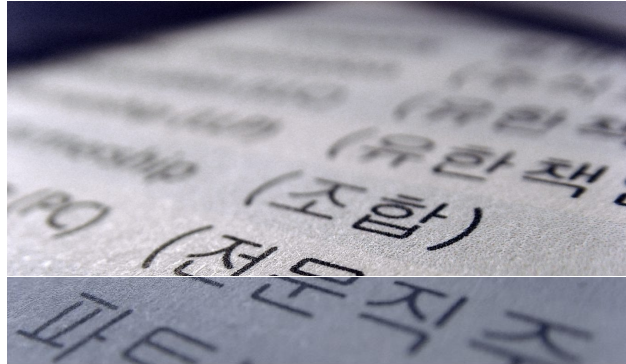
For a much more comprehensive discussion on Korean job titles, see my ebook *The Definitive Guide to Business Cards in Korea*.



Steven S. Bammel's


KOREAN HANDBOOK FOR TRANSLATION AGENCIES

Basics of Korean Writing, Translation Style Guide, Project Quoting Guidelines and
Frequently Asked Terms and Phrases



Fourth Edition

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