The Beginning Reading Instruction
in Korean and English

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One of the obvious aspects of the reading act (in most languages at least) is that, in some mysterious way, the knowledge a reader possesses of his language is called upon and made of use. There can be little question about this activity among most readers who are speakers of alphabetic language (Shuy 1977).

It is difficult to discuss the teaching method of reading without understanding the structure of language. To understand the features of language is more crucial at the onset of learning to read. Phonics teaching, linguistic approach, i.t.a. approach, and UNIFON etc. are the methods focused on the beginning reading and are all related to the problem of the language structure. The conclusion that the issue is no longer whether children should be taught (Anderson et al. 1985) comes eventually from understanding the structure of English.

English and Korean are the alphabetic languages. The rules of English will, in many ways, be similar to the rules of Korean. They
will also differ. Therefore, the teaching method of reading in English and Korean will, in many ways, be similar and also differ.

Korea had her own conventional method in teaching to read. Since 1945, even though they were not received originally and systematically, the methods of teaching reading in Korea have been influenced from America. The research on reading is rare or not scientific in Korea. Korea has many problems and confusions in beginning reading instruction.

To understand the teaching method and the problem in the beginning reading instruction of English is necessary in order to develop the appropriate method of beginning reading instruction in Korea. This paper will write how the structure of Korean is different from the structure of English, how the beginning reading method in Korean is different from that of English, and how the beginning reading instruction of Korean has been influenced from English.

1) Structure of the Korean Alphabet

The Korean language has an alphabetic writing system like English. This system, known as Humin Chugum (HC), was invented by King Sejong in 1443. This alphabet consisted of 28 characters, most of which were based on a symbolization of the speech organs (Yi, 1983). With the invention and the subsequent evolutionary development of this new writing system, the Korean language began to exhibit its unique characteristics which were distinctively different from the Chinese writing system. What is most remarkable about HC is that its