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Perceptions of Time in Korean and English

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Time is one of the most important but hard-to-understand concepts of nonverbal communication. We perceive, use, structure, interpret, and react to messages of time, in most cases, without consciousness. As Hickson and Stacks (1989: 175) argue, chronemics, the study of time, is a significant area of nonverbal communication because we generally perceive our actions and reactions as a time sequence. Out of various aspects related to time, the two representative contrasts--earliness vs. lateness and newness vs. oldness--and major differences between Korean and English cultures with respect to them will be presented in this research paper. As the difference in the perception and use of time between Korean and English speakers is typically reflected on their metaphorical use of time, there will be some comparative discussion of Korean and English metaphorical expressions of time.

A person's perception of time is manifested in a variety of manners as it is concerned with double components like earliness versus lateness and newness versus oldness, and for each of those qualities different values are attached according to the customs or practices of the given culture. The Americans' concept of punctuality and their prejudice against oldness will be contrasted with the traditional Koreans' concept of leisureliness and their respect for the oldness. Such differences in the concept of time-related values cause differences in the verbal and nonverbal communication patterns, which may lead misunderstanding or even conflict between Korean and American people. This study will discuss the significance of time with its different aspects favored in each culture and supported by the language system and thus provide a clue for each culture to understand the other culture.

The significance of time in communication

For most of us, though we cannot perceive its existence as a physical entity that occupies a certain area of space, time is an object we should constantly pay attention to in our modern life. Punctuality is the basic requirement for any of us to be accepted as a respectful member of a given community. Hickson and Stacks (1989: 291) notes that to be late for an interview is the same as not showing up. If we are late for a date or meeting, we feel we have to apologize to the person who waited for us. To be late for an important meeting with a customer or a prospective buyer may cause a serious consequence of losing any further chance to retain business with the customer or buyer. Also, if we are not wary of time passing, we may miss the scheduled bus, train, or airplane.

Life on earth is closely interwoven with the cycles of the day and night and the ebb and flow of the tides. In the temperate zone, there is a typical change of seasons along with the change of the direction and strength of the sunshine and winds. Plants bud out and bloom in spring, grow to the full during the summer, and fruits and crops ripen in fall. The last phase of the year, winter, marks the end of one cycle of a typical plant life, nothing alive revealed on the surface with the cold snow dominating the earth. This change of natural phenomena is reflected on the human society and life style, which in turn influences the particular society's communication pattern. The movement of the hands of a clock showing the exact hour and minute would not have any meaning to us if there is no human activity or natural change attached at the specific time shown on the clock. Thus, the concept of time, one of the most significant components in human communication is closely connected with the natural phenomena and life style of the given society.

From the beginning, humans have been tied to seasons that keep changing and have been dependent on the forces and rhythms of nature. In the agricultural society when the growth of crops is subject to the change of seasons, about which people cannot do anything, people have to keep track of the flow of the nature. But with Thomas Edison's invention of electrical light, which removed the difference between day and night, people could use time much more freely and flexibly. Time to work as well as time to play has tremendously increased and accordingly, the concept of time has changed. People can buy things at convenience stores that open 24 hours a day or commodities are made in factories that have laborers work in shifts around the clock to keep the machines move without letup. The proverb 'Time is money' started to make its real sense. The more time people work, the more money they can make. People started to forget that time is life, rather than money; the purpose of life has become unremitting and painful labor rather than leisurely and joyous hours of creative work.

Edward Hall (1959:1), the pioneer scholar on nonverbal communication, starts his book on silent language, cultural factors that influence the individual behind his back, without his knowledge, with a chapter title, "The Voices of Time." He asserts the significance of time as a means of communication as follows:

Time talks. It speaks more plainly than words. The message it conveys comes through loud and clear. Because it is manipulated less consciously, it is subject to less distortion than the spoken language. It can shout the truth where words lie.

In this description of time as a communication tool, he adopts the terms of language usage to time: "Time talks. It speaks . . . It can shout the truth . . ."

As time is an invisible entity that may be calculated or accounted for only through some artificial media like a clock or a calendar, it is not so easy to do research about the true nature of it. However, for the study of its significance in nonverbal communication time may be factored out through various behavioral patterns people show in an interaction with other people.

A person's perception of time is manifested in a variety of manners as it is concerned with double components like earliness versus lateness and newness versus oldness, and for each of those qualities different values are attached according to the customs or practices of the given culture.

Early vs. Late

The contrast between earliness and lateness is about the time sequence in which the focus is the objective flow of time rather than the person's own age. We give focus on how we personally use time and how we perceive time. This aspect is to be interpreted in its individual and psychological orientation. Individuals can have different concepts of earliness and lateness in accordance with each person's life style; the morning person has a radically different concept of earliness vs. lateness from the person who has a habit of starting the day late and going to bed late at night. The different types of starting and finishing the day at different points of time may be attributed to different biorhythms or internal clocks each person has: the physical cycle, the sensitivity cycle, and the intellectual cycle (Hickson and Stacks 1989: 192). It may cause serious conflicts or problems when a morning person, or "a sparrow type," who is biologically more active in the morning, has to work or interact with a night person, "an owl type," who is

biologically more active in the evening.

Thomas Bruneau notes that time is best equated with change and that change is variation of *process* and *duration* and that chronemics is the study of the dynamic interrelationships of both process and duration. He defines duration as a property with a spatializing tendency and process and further suggests that "time is inherently personal, and that we view it as consisting of many things, most of which revolve around becoming and being." (Bruneau 1986; indirectly quoted through Hickson and Stacks 1989: 183-184) Becoming, as noted by Bruneau, is related to the process of time and being is related to the duration of the category of time we become.

English has the proverb "The early bird catches the worm," which encourages people to be diligent and start work early in the morning and it conveys a positive connotation for being diligent, in other words, for producing more or changing, hopefully in the better way, in greater degree than the person who is lazy. Diligence, along with the related values like independence and responsibility, is a character of a person valued the highest in the American society that emphasizes the individual's effort to achieve a goal, in many cases, material success, without depending on other people and it does not distinguish between men and women. Punctuality is regarded as a very important condition required of anybody for any meeting in the American society. In relation to the American people's keen awareness of time schedule, Richmond and McCroskey (200:181) states like the following:

Americans are very schedule-driven people. Much of our communication, both verbal and nonverbal, is a result of a time schedule. We can see our scheduling mania in a variety of ways. For example, our schools, classrooms, and businesses are on schedules; it is the rare institution that isn't. Our workplaces have schedules. We schedule appointments with others and for ourselves. We eat at a certain time. We sleep at a certain time. We vacation at a certain time. If we miss that time, we miss our vacations because the other time factors have priority. We set priorities based on how much time a person or element in the work environment deserves.

The present-day Westernized Korean society shows a similar pattern of awareness of time as many institutions that are operating in Korea at present are adopted from the Western example with its strict time schedule. Schools, companies, factories, hotels, and stores have their own time schedule for everyone concerned to follow in order to operate smoothly. Thus, punctuality or diligence that is required to be punctual is regarded as the basic condition to be accepted as a respectful member in the particular community.

On the other hand, in the traditional Korean society with no such modern institutions, there was no concept like punctuality and diligence was considered a virtue mainly for women or servants who have to do manual work. There is a folk poem *shijo* written by Nam Ku-man, popular with *seonbi*, the traditional noble class of people in Chosun dynasty, which urges a child servant to get up early to work in the field.

Dongchang-i park-ass-nenya nogojiri ujiji-n-ta
 east window-SUB brighten-Past-Q skylark cries
 'Is the east window bright with the morning sun? Skylarks are singing.'
 so chi-nen ahae-nen sanggi ani il-ess-ne-hya
 ox raising boy-SUB yet not rise up-PAST-Q
 'Hasn't the servant child yet risen up?'

jae neomeo sarae kin bat-el eonje kal-lyeo hanani
 hill over furrow long field-OBJ when plow-will do-Q
 'When is he going to plow the field of long furrows over the hill?'

This poem has the form of asking questions and the questions are directed to a child servant. The person who asks questions about the daybreak, and wonders why the servant boy has not yet gotten up and started working in the field does not have to work as his social status is high and maybe his job is just to write poems and enjoy his life without any laborious work.

Diligence that requires early rising and laborious work of some person in the lower social status, thus, was not such a desirable virtue accorded to *yangban* of higher class in the traditional Korean society. Diligence was a desirable quality required only of women in the kitchen or lower class laborers, not of men who were even forbidden to enter the kitchen in the traditional Korean house or *yangban* of higher class who did not have to do physical labor. In other words, it was assumed that diligence was a quality that applied to the physical labor, which was supposed to be the job of people of low class. This attitude is reflected on the vocabulary items of the language: the Korean adjective *bujireonhata* ('to be diligent') applies mostly to women rather than men. Korean has a variation of *bujireonhata*, which is only used to women: *bajireonhata*, as it has a connotation of moving hands very rapidly and efficiently in some manual labor like preparing food, sewing, cleaning, or washing.

This pattern of language usage in Korean different from English is an example that confirms the Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis of linguistic relativity which argues that language provides the conceptual categories that influence how its speakers' perceptions are encoded and stored (F. Jandt 2004: 151). The basic assumption for the linguistic relativity hypothesis is that culture is controlled by and controls language. One of the most important implications of this hypothesis is that 'the difference between languages is not what can be said but what is relatively easy to say.'

This traditional attitude toward the quality of diligence began to change drastically with the end of Chosun dynasty and the beginning of the modern industry under the despotic rule by President Park Jeong-Hee, which was preceded by painful suffering and sacrifices of many Korean people during the Japanese Occupation for 36 years from 1909 to 1945 and Korean War from 1950 to 1953. President Park, determined to enhance the national economy with the slogan of *Jal sal-a bose*, meaning 'Let's live a good life,' urged people to work hard and move quickly to achieve a given goal of production. Although President Park's rule was authoritarian based on military power and far from regular democracy, it was accepted without any serious protest by most Korean citizens because it was the topmost priority to escape the suffering and poverty after the wars. Thus, the speed was the highest value for every job done. The expression *ppali ppali* meaning 'Hurry up! Quick, quick!' started to be widely used by Korean workers employed in various factories or companies of the newly developed manufacturing industry.

The phenomenon of urgent demand for immediate gratification of one's wants or needs widespread in Korean society is to be interpreted as a combination of the newly introduced Western idea of punctuality and the impatience on the part of a majority of people who feel they deserve to be treated as the past privileged class of *yangban*, reasoning that now everybody is equal and there is no reason why anyone should wait and endure to gratify one's wants or needs.

Trichotomy of psychological time orientation

Hall (1959) refers to three time orientations in relation to their impact on communication: psychological, biological, and cultural. Out of the trichotomy of time orientations psychological time orientation is again classified into three categories: past-oriented, present-oriented, and future-oriented (Richmond and McCroskey 2003: 182).

It is suggested that past-oriented people place high regard on the past, the reliving of past events, and cherishing past happenings. Cultures that have a past-oriented philosophy are likely to apply past events to new situations if the new occurrences resemble their past experiences. Thus, both English and Korean proverbs like the following refer to such a habit of people:

Korean proverb:

jara po-ko nola-n kasem sot ttukkeong po-ko
snapping turtle see-CONJ be frightened-MOD heart pot cover see-CONJ
nola-nta
be frightened-SE

'The heart that was frightened to see a turtle is frightened to see a pot cover.'

English proverb:

"Once bitten, twice shy."

"The burnt child dreads the fire."

Past-oriented people tend to use the past to shape or judge the present events or situations. These societies have respect for older persons and listen to what their seniors have to say regarding the past. The longer history a culture has, the more past-oriented the people tend to become; the youth have a lot to learn from the old people who are supposed to have greater wisdom and more life experiences than the youth. In this sense, the traditional Korean and Chinese cultures with Confucianism that emphasizes the respect for the older people are very much past-oriented. The objective time sequence is closely related to oldness vs. newness people feel and respond to.

Present-oriented people live for today and they focus on 'here and now.' They advocate the motto of 'Carpe diem,' or 'Seize the day,' saying, "You only live today once, so don't waste it. Life is made up of special moments, many of which happen when caution is thrown to the wind and people take action and seize the day." (Ron Clark, 2003:156) They try not to analyze the event, searching for a precedent in the past or anticipating a potential result in the future. They live for the immediate duration of the event, rather than for the event as a process with a past or future.

Future-oriented people base today's behavior on what they believe will occur in the future. They believe that they have to prepare themselves for the goal of the future and willingly sacrifice the comfort of today for a glorious future. Many Korean parents who are ready to sacrifice their own pleasant life may be classified as future-oriented; it is a unique phenomenon that the father sends his wife with his child abroad, especially to an English-spoken country, while he stays at home working hard to support them. The father's dream is to allow his child to get the best education while sacrificing his own comfort for the future of his child, which is equated to the future of his whole family. The father who sacrifices himself in his special phenomenon unique to Korea is called "Wild

Goose Dad" alluding to the extraordinary disposition of wild geese to take care of their family.

Thus, the future-orientedness of the Korean father who sends his child abroad for the brighter future is not just about a tendency understood in terms of time orientation; it is closely related to the collectivistic Korean culture that puts the family before the individual.

A past- or future-oriented person in one situation may change his or her attitude to that of present orientation in another; any one tendency is not a fixed character of a person that applies at all times for every possible situation. A person usually shows a present-oriented attitude in certain situations, for example, when he or she gets together with a very good friend in a rare occasion to celebrate a happy turn of an event like a close friend's promotion, release from military service, birthday parties or wedding ceremonies. On such occasions, however past- or future-oriented in other situations, a person may show a present-oriented attitude, shouting "Eat, drink, and enjoy yourselves. Don't worry about tomorrow. Let's have fun. Time like this will never come again!"

Thus, the trichotomy of psychological time orientation is not a strict division of different types of people that may apply across-the-board; it is to be understood as showing a general tendency of the given culture or individual.

New vs. Old

David Inglis (2005:39) describes the difficulty of understanding other cultures like the following:

It is often difficult for anyone who lives within a particular culture to realize how odd that culture, and the effects it has on individuals' mind sets and actions, can seem to those not brought up within that culture. Each person exists to a greater or lesser degree like a fish in their own cultural water, generally taking for granted and regarding as simply 'natural' the cultural forces which are constantly present in their everyday thoughts and actions.

The ways in which we operate on a daily basis are profoundly shaped by the cultural forces surrounding us, which keep changing in accordance with the scientific and technological development as well as political systems. The influence of mass media, instant messaging and the Internet to the general pattern of communication is also crucial in that people around the world who have an access to the Internet as well as mass media are likely to have similar dispositions particularly characteristic of the modern West.

According to Lee Kyu-Tae (2000:104), President Bill Clinton, in his inaugural address, used the word "new" for 23 times in 22 minutes. Lee Kyu-Tae, who wrote a series of insightful articles about Korean culture in comparison with other cultures, observed that American people are characterized as having a special taste for newness--new food, new clothes, a new house, new inventions. He attributes Americans' preference for new things to their short history: as they do not have a long history to rely on, they keep pursuing something new. It was called New World when the first Americans immigrated to the land which was inhabited by American Indians. They had to build a new house with their own hands and keep exploring frontiers and find new means of life.

The first settlers from the *Mayflower* came to America "not primarily for gain or even livelihood, though they accepted both from God with gratitude, but to create His kingdom on earth." (Paul Johnson 1997:28) Thus, it is widely agreed among historians

that their strong faith in Christianity combined with pioneer spirit they trained themselves to acquire while exploring new frontiers in the New World played a crucial role in creating the present-day American culture. It is a well-known fact that Americans are in general much more independent than Koreans. In American homes, young children, from the early age, are trained to decide on their own and it is taken for granted that the moment they entered college they leave their parents and start their own life without any financial assistance or interference from their parents. This is possible because of the American individualism, which holds that 'each person must earn a living, must earn the love and respect of his peers, must earn the self-esteem and the happiness that make life worth living' (Raymie Stata, 1992). So American people are not afraid of starting a new way of life and they find challenges an important opportunity to prove their ability.

Lee Kyu-Tae used a term "Neoism" to describe the American people's taste for newness and insisted that this respect for newness has contributed to the outstanding development of the United States of America. He contrasted the American Neoism with the Korean people's tendency to respect the old, which may be observed in various areas like interpersonal relationship, ancestor worship, native Korean people show special respect toward old people, old customs, and various fermented food like kimchi.

Koreans' strong disposition to show respect to old people is revealed in their habit of confirming the age difference when two people meet for the first time. The Korean language has a systematic set of kinship terms that elaborately distinguish the young from the old as well as the male from the female. Instead of two-word expressions like English 'elder brother' and 'elder sister' in contrast with 'younger brother' and 'younger sister,' Korean has developed separate terms for the elder brother or sister, each varying according to the gender of the two parties concerned: *hyeong* (elder brother) and *nuna* (elder sister) for a male; *oppa* (elder brother) and *eonni* (elder sister) for a female. It is a strictly observed custom to address one's elder siblings using such special kinship terms and never to use the given name, as in the Western culture. Even the first-born of the twins who were given birth on the same day retains his or her strict order and the second-born who was born later than the first by a second should pay respect to his or her elder sibling by using special terms for the elder brother or sister, instead of the given name.

The most respectful person in terms of age and gender is one's grandfather, *harabeoji* in Korean. As shown in the following example sentence, the term *harabeoji* (grandfather or an old man) is used not only for real-life family relationship but for the most respectful person that has the most power or wisdom.

(1) ke keo-n jeolday an-doe. seonsaengnim anila seonsaengnim
 that thing-TOP absolutely not possible. teacher instead of teacher
 harabeoji-ka wa-do an-doe.
 grandfather-SUB come-though not possible.

"It cannot be done. Even though your teacher, or rather, the teacher's grandfather come, it cannot be done."

The term *harabeoji* in this sentence does not refer to the real grandfather of a teacher, just a commonly used expression to emphasize that something is not possible no matter what and the one who is supposed to assume the highest extreme position is *harabeoji*, the grandfather, who is the most aged and accordingly, the wisest.

The term *seonsaengnim* (teacher) also reveals the respect of the old age as the

Chinese character for *seonsaeng*--□□--means 'to be born earlier.' Thus, the teacher is basically the person who is older than the student; the teacher deserves to be respected by the student due to his older age. The term *seonbae(nim)* for one's senior member of a school or a company also expresses the same ideology for the respect of older age.

Such a distinct status of the older people of course requires them to live an exemplary life that may be regarded as a role model to the young people or people who follow them in almost every aspect of life. The Korean proverb 'witmul-i marg-eya araetmul-i marg-ta' (The upper stream should be clear to make the lower stream clear, too.; A servant is only as honest as his master.) is one of the most commonly quoted when a senior official who is expected to show an exemplary conduct commits some mistakes or crimes. By relying on the senior for guidance in life, the junior find it very easy to evade blame or responsibility for their own job. A fit Korean proverb to describe such a mind set of youngsters is the following:

jal toe-myeon nae that-iyo, mot toe-myeon josang that-irota
 well become-if me due-be-CONJ, badly become-if ancestor due-be-SE
 '(People say) that if it turns good, it's me who has done it; if it turns bad, it is due to
 the ancestor.'

Furthermore, the Korean respect of the old age is typically manifested in the elaborately developed system of language that varies with the relative age difference between the speaker, the hearer, and the referent. This honorific system is not just a variation of some isolated vocabulary items; it is about every clause or sentence structures we use in the conversation. There are at least five different styles of sentential endings that vary with the relative age difference as well as with the degree of intimacy or the relative difference in social status. Thus, in order to carry out the conversation or interaction without any violation of language code, Koreans have to confirm the age difference of their interactants.

Not only in the language practice but also in everyday life the age difference has an important function to determine the right behavior. The juniors should show their respect to their seniors by saluting, bowing, yielding the comfortable or better seat, or waiting for their seniors to start eating at table. The juniors may not drink or smoke before their seniors. To share the same drink of alcohol, the juniors are at least expected to turn their heads to show their respect for their seniors at the table.

Double Standard for the Value of Diligence in the Korean Culture

With regard to the value of diligence, it is remarkable that the Korean culture has double standards. While diligence is a recommended virtue for a group of people who are lower in social hierarchy in the traditional Korean society with a strict division of class according to age, gender, and social status, it is considered a shame for the higher class of people, or *yangban*, to make things or do some manual labor, which requires diligence. Thus, in the traditional Korean society lower class people like servants, maids or wives are urged to move their hands and feet quickly to serve their master or husband while *yangban* must not engage himself in any manual labor.

Such double standards seem to be the natural consequence of the Confucian ideology that strictly divides people into separate classes: master vs. subject, father vs. son, elder brother vs. younger brother, husband vs. wife, and senior friend vs. junior friend. Of course, the ultimate goal of Confucian ideology is to establish a harmonious

society in which the junior partner owes the senior respect and obedience, while the senior owes the junior partner protection and consideration (Hofstede 2001: 354). However, the reality is that the people in the more powerful class exploit or abuse those in the weak class.

One of the most revealing examples that show this double standard still works in the present democratic Korean society is the so-called Myungjeol syndrome most Korean wives suffer at the two major festivals observed in Korea: Chuseok, the Full-moon Festival on the 15th August of the lunar calendar, and Seol, the New Year's Day in the lunar calendar.

Communication problems related to different perceptions of time

Different perceptions of time and its related social norms cause some serious misunderstanding and breakup of communication between Koreans and non-Koreans, especially, Western people. Two representative examples concerning the respect for the aged people and punctuality will be presented below.

Westerners who are not accustomed to the cultural background of the Korean people feel embarrassed when they are questioned of their age; they do not understand that their Korean friend just wanted to clarify the basic condition for carrying out smooth conversation and courteous behavior. The basic Korean language structure requires the information of the relative social status in terms of age, social hierarchy, intimacy, and gender and except for obvious cases like between teacher and student, parent and child, or husband and wife, in order to conduct smooth verbal communication. When it is not clear which of the interactants is the older one for whom honorific sentence endings as well as other special vocabulary items should be used, the conversation cannot go on smoothly.

Another case of miscommunication because of different concepts of time is about punctuality. "Korean time" is a term used in the past to refer to a notorious habit of the Koreans who did not feel any obligation to keep the time of appointment or meeting schedule with someone. In the traditional Korean society, people of lower social status had to keep the time of appointment or meeting schedule with someone of higher social status. They took it for granted that they had to appear much earlier than the appointed time and it was never acceptable to be late or not to wait for someone of higher social status to appear. That was the rule of conduct that applied only to the people of lower status; the people of higher social status were immune to such obligations and they felt free to use their time as they liked. Thus, people of higher status in the traditional Korean society lacked the concept of punctuality because they did not have to be concerned about time-keeping; all affairs were arranged to proceed whenever they liked.

Metaphorical Expressions for Time

In general, metaphors are adopted for describing abstract ideas difficult to perceive through our senses - such as time, love, life, ideas, theories, morality, mind, anger, fear, politics, society, communication, God and religion. A target domain of a metaphor is characterized by a number of source domains, as has been widely accepted by researchers working on metaphor like Lakoff & Johnson (1980) and Kövecses (1991). Kövecses (2000, 82) asserts that 'a source domain contributes not randomly selected but predetermined conceptual materials agreed upon by a community of speakers to the range of target domains to which it applies.' Metaphor is not merely a decorative device of language, not related to the human thought and culture. Rather, metaphor is a central

signal that represents the peculiarity of language and culture.

Time is one of the most abstract but essential concept in our human life, and each culture has developed different sets of metaphor for the reference of time. In Korean, metaphorical expressions about time reveal that the concept of time is likely to be transferred to entities that can be perceived directly through our senses: animals to capture or to be chased by, food, money or possessions, water, a container of some liquid, medicine, and clothes.

Time as an animal to capture or to be chased by

As shown in the following examples, time is perceived as an animal that chases a person or an animal that people try to capture.

- (2) a. shikan-ey jjotki-ta
time - by chase - SE
'to be chased by time'
- b. kihoe-lel jab-ta
chance - OBJ catch-SE
'to catch a chance'
- c. ttai-lel notchi-ta
time-O miss-SE
'to miss an opportunity'
- d. shikan ka-nen jul mol-at-ta
time go-MOD COMP ignorant-PATS-SE
'(I) didn't know that time had passed.'
- (3) a. Seize the opportunity.
b. Don't miss the good chance.
c. Take time while time is, for time will away.
d. As for daily stress, Siegel suggests becoming so involved with what you love to do -- a hobby (in his case, painting) or your work -- that you lose track of time

Time in this category is perceived both as an animal that is not easy to capture and an animal that chases us and they are used in two very different situations. The former is about a precious opportunity we cannot afford to miss; the latter is about some urgent occurrence or deadline we should keep and we feel stressful about. If we feel a rare chance is likely to disappear, we say that we should not lose it as if it were an animal that escapes very quickly. When we are busy doing several things at the same time, we express that we are being chased by time as if time is a scary animal that would hunt and devour us.

In both Korean and English, time is often perceived as an animal or prey that we desire to capture but not so easy to do so. Thus, we say that we lose or miss a good chance or an opportunity such as a time to marry, to get education, or to have a meal the same way we miss a fleeing animal.

Korean and English are contrasted in the kinds of animals they use to describe rapid or busy movements of people. While a beaver or a bee as well as a tail of an animal are commonly used in English to refer to a person diligently engaged in work, a special

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kind of bird named *choksae* (bunting) is used in disapproval about a person who moves very quickly. Consider the following Korean and English examples.

- (4) *choksae bangjeong-el tteol-ta*
bunting fuss-OBJ act-SE
- (5) a. She's working her tail off.
 - b. We met a semi-retired motorcycle engineer beavering away in his garage at home.
 - c. a busy bee

Time as a living existence that wields great power

Time is treated as a mighty existence that wields great power over weak human beings. We, weak human beings, cannot protest the almighty power of an absolute God-like existence: no one on earth can challenge and stop the flow of time. There are many English expressions that treat time as a mighty person who can work or a god-like existence capable enough to accomplish lots of important things:

- (6) a. I only know that time has worked with its axe over my features.
 - b. She says time hasn't diminished the empty feeling inside of her.
 - c. A year has done nothing to erase these images from my mind.
 - d. Two days later found me at Rome.
 - e. Mornings in the mountains tend to dawn bright and clear, while afternoons often bring rain.
 - f. We don't know what the future will bring.
 - g. The past year had taken a heavy toll on him, but he didn't appreciate seeing proof in the mirror.
 - h. Time has transformed Warrick's work into art

Examples in (6) pose time or a certain period of time as the agent that has created some consequences. Thus, time itself is regarded as a powerful existence that possesses intellect or mind. This is an example of personification that is frequently used in English rhetorics.

Time is also perceived as an agent that affects the patient and in that case, specific activities or happenings that occur during a given period of time are posed as the agent. Consider the following examples:

- (7) a. More than 50 years of Fabian socialism has got India nowhere economically.
 - b. The years of heavy work at Hyundai's car plant had given her husband an ulcer.
 - c. Decades of oil spills, acid rain from gas flares, and the stripping away of mangroves for pipelines have killed off fish.
 - d. A few more minutes of wandering aimlessly around a waking midtown actually landed me at the front door of the Elias-Clark building.
 - e. Even my 12 summers cowboying in the United States left me ill-prepared to copy some of their feats of horsemanship.

f. A solid hour of shouting had reduced his voice to a raspy growl.

In each of the examples in (7) it is not time itself that has brought about some consequences; it is specific activities conducted during the specified period of time. They show that the power of time is realized through the activities or happenings that occur during the period of time; they confirm the truth that time itself is just an abstract or arbitrary index that makes it easy to record or remember each of those activities or happenings.

The manner of division of time can also be the topic of our discourse as the following examples show:

- (8) a. Another week will make a year.
 b. You should plan to sleep for an hour during the day. That extra hour can make a big difference.

Time is even regarded as a wise and intelligent person with a good eyesight who can speak, teach, or observe happenings. Samples examples are shown below:

- (9) a. Time will tell whether this is a legitimate and effective response to terrorism.
 b. This year has seen a big increase in road accidents. // 1981 saw major riots in several cities in the UK. // The last 40 years have seen important changes in public attitudes to social and moral issues. // The fifth century saw the end of the Roman Empire in the West.
 c. The past 20-some years have witnessed unprecedented prosperity that saw the tech boom in Silicon Valley and rapid growth in the fields of medicine and science. // The period 1880-1914 witnessed a revolution in English education. // The twentieth century has witnessed the advent of technology that permits both the unwritten storage of speech and, to some extent, the external, nonverbal monitoring of unspoken thought (for example, dreams).
 d. An afternoon spent with one Iraqi army brigade in west Baghdad showed that while it occasionally was poor at communicating, it was capable of carrying out basic military functions.
 e. Each of these tough moments teaches an important lesson needed throughout life--that actions produce consequences.
 f. The function of genius is not to give new answers, but to pose new questions -- which time and mediocrity can solve.

At times, time is felt to be some animal to kill as it has to be done with; we have to pass time waiting for some important event to happen:

- (10) a. Indian railway stations are wonderful places for killing time in
 b. shikan jukiki-lonen internet game-I choigo-ya.
 Time killing-for-TOP Internet game-SUB the best-be-SE
 'For killing time, the Internet game is the best.'

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Time is also used to refer to oldness of some tradition or heritage; anyway, no one knows when time first starts to work:

- (11) a. No one knew how long the tradition had been in operation in the village. It was popularly thought to be as old as time.
- b. The standing stones had been part of the village landscape for as long as anyone could remember. They were thought to be as old as time.
- c. Witchcraft practices are as old as time, although their very existence is denied by some modern thinking.

The next examples describe time as a kind of intellectual existence that willfully stretches or gives pressure to human beings:

- (12) a. She thought time had gone into one of its long, slow, taffy-like stretches.
- b. He feels the constant pressure of time as he strives to accomplish so many different things
- c. That constant tension of man-made time gripped me in a vice.

Korean language patterns are radically different from this personification pattern very commonly used in English. Except for expressions like “seweol-i yak-ita,” meaning “Time is the medicine,” or “shikan-i haekyeolhae julkeota,” meaning “Time will solve (the problem),” the Korean language lacks any expressions, equivalent to the English counterparts, which posit time as some intelligent existence like a person or God. This may be explained based on the typical property of the Korean language that does not allow nonhuman entities to be used as the subject of a sentence with a transitive verb that requires an object that gets a certain impact by the subject. For example, the Korean version for the common English question “What brought you here?” is not “mueossi neolel ili derywatni?,” a word-by-word translation of the English version but “neo yeoki we watni?” (Why did you come here?) In other words, Koreans tend to perceive an event or situation as a relationship of cause of effect but just a series of happenings that occur one after another without any clear cause-effect relationship between them.

English proverbs that treat time as an intelligent existence

English has many proverbs in which time is treated as if it is a mighty and intelligent existence that wields a great influence to the human life:

- (13) a. Patience and time accomplish more than force and violence.
- b. Patience, money, and time bring all things to pass.
- c. Time and tide wait for no man.
- d. Time is generally the best doctor.
- e. Time is the best counsellor.
- f. Time is the greatest inventor.
- g. Time is the great teacher.
- h. Time is the rider that breaks youth.
- i. Time is a great healer.
- j. Time will show a plan.

- k. Time will soften.
- l. Time works great changes.
- m. Time tries all things.

Time as food

Time is also perceived as food we take, and it is interesting that the commonly used Korean expression designating the act of eating time is confined to the act of eating after catching, with the verb, 'jab-ta' (to catch). Consider the following example.

- (14) talen il-el hadaga shikan-el ta jab-a meok-eo beory-eot-ta
 else affair-OBJ doing time-OBJ all catch-CONJ eat-CONJ throw-PAST-SE
 '(I) have caught and eaten up all the time doing something else.' (I have spent all the time doing something else.)

It is interesting that for a similar situation where people take up too much time, English uses the verb 'swallow,' as shown in the following example.

- (15) Campaigning swallows up a lot of time without guaranteeing success.
 -Well, another year is almost under the belt.

Here, the activity of campaigning, rather than the person, is used as the subject that swallows up a lot of time. It is typical for English to use nonhuman subjects with verbs that refer to the behavior a human or at least an animal may assume.¹⁾

Time as a precious thing to use or spend

As the proverb, "Procrastination is the thief of time" shows, time is treated as if it were a valuable thing with limited reserves, thus we have to use or save it very carefully, not wasting it. The following examples reveal this perception of time as a consumable entity that we use:

- (16) Time conceived as a limited resource we have to guard:
- a. Assignments engage most of a student's time.
 - b. How much time does that leave us? // We might as well go ahead and have some adventures while there's a little time left.
 - c. From there it would be an hour or so to the 1120-metre summit, giving us time to retrace our steps to Little Ramsay Bay, our departure point, by late afternoon. // Nunn reasoned that sanctions should be given as much time to work as they required // to give unsparingly of one's time and money. // I was a job searcher where I had nothing else to give my family but myself and my time.
 - d. Take your time. We have plenty of time. // I have taken an individual, company by company approach, taking time to build relationships based on trust. // Broken bones always take time [=a long time] to mend. // She didn't even take the time to wish me good morning. // I walked slowly, taking my time, stepping on dead wet leaves that flattened beneath my feet.
 - e. Official engagements take up about 50% of his time.

(17) Time, like money, conceived as an entity to spend and one easy to waste, so it needs to be saved or used sparingly:

- a. Diners spend most of their time gazing around with their mouths wide open. // They spent an immense amount of time getting the engine into perfect condition. // It involved spending a lot of time queuing
- b. She'd obviously gone through this dozens of times already, had little faith that I was any different from the rest, and as a result wouldn't be wasting much time with me. // Can you give me one good reason why the receptionist cannot tell me that there will be a long wait, and give me the option of rescheduling to avoid wasting my time? // He had had at least ten calls that morning, every one of them a waste of time. // Quit wasting my time!
- c. A large refrigerator means fewer time-consuming trips to the grocery store. the victories are time-consuming and costly
- d. The school play cost us much time and effort.
- e. A washing machine is a time-saver.
- f. If you have time to spare, please help me with this work.

(18) Time conceived as a physical item to enjoy or have:

- a. We don't enjoy our time together at all,
- b. We had a stupendous time at the party. // We had a pleasant time, except for the weather. // I haven't had time to go shopping. // Weatherwise, we are going to have a bad time this winter. // Since she had no time to have the car fixed, Mildred telephoned for a taxi.

We at times create or find some specific kind of time, as the following example shows:

- (19) a. You will usually make better time on the interstate highways and in open country than in congested urban areas or the mountains.
- b. There will be a question on the American War of Independence in the exam if I don't find time to review it.

Time is also conceived as some possessions to which we may claim the rights or demand:

- (20) a. When competing claims on time force a reassessment, the issue for most women isn't whether to keep working; it's how to balance work with the rest of life.
- b. Doing it properly makes considerable demands on our time.

English has various pair constructions where two words with a similar meaning are used in sequence instead of single word and it is suggestive that the word 'time' is frequently used in couple with words like 'fortune, place, effort, cost, money, breath, opportunity, space, use, etc.' as shown in sample examples below:

- (21) a. Somehow these rituals were then transmitted intact down to the present, profiting from that immunity to time and fortune which the university, like an ancient tar pit, confers on everything that unwittingly lumbers into it and dies.
- b. The Band-Aid solution is actually the best kind of solution because it involves solving a problem with the minimum amount of effort and time and cost. // We appreciate your interest in our project and the time and effort you took in preparing your bid.
- c. But attributing this or that to a civilization now and then saves time and breath.
- d. We are deeply grateful to everyone who gave their time and money to the charity. // Steve, we are never going to get a good price for this house unless we put some time and money into fixing the slipshod interior.
- e. She needed a place where women were relaxed, receptive to new ideas, and had the time and opportunity to hear something new.
- f. Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans. // Make sure you know the arrangements - the time and the place.
- g. the feeling of having outgrown time and space altogether
- h. unmarred by time or use

One more image of time that is not discussed here is water or river that keeps flowing without cessation. This is the most basic percept everybody has about the time while they witness the incessant rotation or change of time in terms of day and night, different seasons, years, centuries, or ages. Sometimes people feel very weak about the relentless passage of time and other times they feel that they can make time work for themselves or use them as money.

The western culture represented in English tends to perceive time as some physical possessions we are free to use or save for the future; Koreans, in contrast, seem to regard time not as some materials to use but as part of nature we should adapt ourselves to. Koreans like to say that time flows very well, or the time for something has arrived instead of saying that they use time doing something. This difference seems to be a reflection of basic cultural differences between the two societies.

Time as Communication

The significance of time in communication is often likened to that of spoken language. Hall and Hall (1990:18) use the term 'language of time' in discussing the function of time in intercultural communication. Americans' practice for the language of time is characterized as follows:

For Americans, the use of appointment-schedule time reveals how people feel about each other, how significant their business is, and where they rank in the status system. Treatment of time can also convey a powerful form of insult. Furthermore, because the rules are informal, they operate largely out-of-awareness and, as a consequence, are less subject to conscious manipulation than language.

It is not just for Americans that the use of appointment-schedule time reveals the nature of people's interaction and the participants' relative position in the status system. The status system is not only about the business situation with discrete roles or official ranks assigned; it is also about how the participants are close to each other, how important one thinks of the other party, thus deserving special treatment or consideration. Societies like Korea with a long history and steeped in Confucianism have more complicated status systems, which is reflected in verbal and nonverbal communication.

Store keepers whose purpose is to have as many customers as possible visit their store or the person who wants to attract the other's attention or like him or her try to show how much they are ready to gratify the customers' or the other's desire or needs. A typical store keeper greets a visitor to his or her store with a smile or remarks like "Eoseo oseyo" in Korean literally meaning "Come in quickly." This expression shows that it is the most inconvenient or even insulting to have to wait to get a service. They feel they have to apologize if they have the customer wait and the typical remark is "Sorry to have you wait. (kidarishikey hayseo jwesonghamnita)" The verb for 'sorry' should be 'jwesonghamnita' which sounds much more polite than commonly used 'mianhamnita.'

Also, there is an interesting idiomatic expression in Korean that describes how promptly the wife or children rush out of the room to welcome or meet some high-ranking person, mostly male members of the family like the husband, son, son-in-law, grandfather, father or father-in-law: "beoseon bal-lo ttwi-eo naga-ta", literally meaning "to rush out only with beoseon (traditional Korean socks) on." That is, they show how happy or eager they are to meet the person that they have been waiting for. They could not delay a second finding their shoes to put on even though it is unsanitary to step down on the ground without wearing shoes. It shows that the person is much more important than to keep oneself clean or comfortable.

Thus, it is considered insulting to have a higher-ranking person wait. The world-famous Korean phrase "ppali ppali" meaning "quick, quick" may be the natural consequence of the people relatively lower in their social status feeling that they have to fulfill the desire or wants of their boss, customer, father, husband, or son without delay. The irony is that the high-ranking person himself never shows any urgency in his attitude. It is not considered befitting for a man, who is to be slow and steady in his movement as a person of age.²⁾ High-ranking people like a master, father, husband, or son are supposed to walk or move leisurely, never running or rushing in a hurry, no matter what happens.

It is in this line of thought that in the traditional Korean society manual labor was regarded as disgraceful. The strict division of classes that separates the *yangban*, the ruling class whose job is to read books or documents and govern from the common people most of whom are farmers naturally gave rise to the system of jobs with relatively higher and lower values. The lowest ranking job in this system was to trade things, preceded by farming and manufacturing various things. Traders were assumed to have interest only in making profits, sometimes even telling lies about the things they sell. Time was almost as important as money for traders because their goal was to get as many customers as possible within the given time.

While there are lots of traditional value systems retained in everyday language usage as well as nonverbal modes of communication, it is also true that there is no culture that does not change or adapt to the development of the outer conditions. Thus, people in the globalized world in contact with people from other cultures should stay alert to the

smallest change of the world and reflect on their own identity and culture so as to be able to retain their own identity while having harmonious relationship with people from other cultures.

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- 1) Further examples where nonhuman subjects are used with the verb 'swallow' are as follows:
 - a. The whole building was swallowed up by the flames.
 - b. The increase in travel costs swallowed up our pay increase.
 - c. Everything was swallowed up by the darkness.

- 2) The Korean expression for such an attitude is 'jeomjantha' which originates in 'jeorm-ji antha' meaning 'not young.' This shows that traditionally a young person is not highly respected.