

## LINGUOCULTURAL FEATURES OF KOREAN DORAMS

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The article is devoted to the issues of linguoculturology as a discipline that investigates the reflection and consolidation of culture in language and speech. Since language and culture are inseparably interconnected, language functions not only as a means of communication but also as a fundamental mechanism for the preservation and transmission of cultural knowledge, norms, values, and symbols. It is precisely through language that an individual directly enters culture, assimilates its behavioral models, conceptualizes the world, and forms an identity as a bearer of a particular mentality. In the context of a globalized media environment, audiovisual translation acquires special relevance as a means of intercultural communication. It encompasses the process of rendering the meaning of multimodal texts-films, television series, K-dramas, documentaries, and others-from one language into another, taking into account both verbal and non-verbal components. Particular attention has been devoted to the analysis of the linguocultural specificities of Korean dramas, especially through the prism of character language, sociocultural codes, globalization influences, stereotyping, and mechanisms of linguistic mediation. Based on practical analysis, it has been established that K-dramas serve as a powerful medium of representing Korean culture, capable of shaping linguocultural perceptions among foreign audiences. The analysis of Korean dramas demonstrates that the characters' speech vividly reflects key linguocultural concepts, social codes, and linguistic realities. Such notions as 효 (filial piety), 정 (emotional attachment), 눈치 (social sensitivity), 체면 (face-saving), 한 (suppressed sorrow), and 우리 (collective identity) convey the depth of the Korean mentality. In forms of address, speech styles, and lexical choices, respect for hierarchy, roles, and age becomes evident. Globalization processes account for the active penetration of Anglicisms, slang, and code-switching, which reflect contemporary linguistic hybridity. K-dramas contribute to the dissemination of linguistic elements beyond Korea: viewers acquire vocabulary, speech formulas, and cultural practices. Special attention has also been paid to stereotypes that are reinforced through the linguistic behavior of characters. The findings of the study have practical significance for the teaching of the Korean language, translation studies, intercultural communication, and the exploration of audiovisual genres. The research confirms that K-dramas perform not only an entertaining function but also foster the development of linguocultural awareness among global audiences, actively contributing to the diffusion of linguistic realities.

## ЛІНГВОКУЛЬТУРОЛОГІЧНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ КОРЕЙСЬКИХ ДОРАМ

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**Ключові слова:** *корейські дорами, лінгвокультурологія, культурні концепти, мовна поведінка, стереотипи, аудіовізуальний переклад.*

У статті розглянуто лінгвокультурологічні особливості сучасних корейських дорам як важливого феномену масової культури Республіки Корея. Розглянуто питання лінгвокультурології як науки, яка досліджує відображення та закріплення культури в мові та мовленні, оскільки мова і культура нерозривно пов'язані між собою, мова виступає не лише засобом комунікації, а й основним механізмом збереження і трансляції культурних знань, норм, цінностей, символів. Саме через мову особистість безпосередньо входить у культуру, засвоює її моделі поведінки, уявлення про світ і формується як носій певної ментальності. В умовах глобалізованого медіапростору аудіовізуальний переклад набуває особливої актуальності як засіб міжкультурної комунікації. Він охоплює процес передачі змісту мультимодальних текстів – фільмів, телесеріалів, дорам, документалістики тощо – з однієї мови на іншу із врахуванням вербальних і невербальних компонентів. Особливу увагу було приділено аналізу лінгвокультурологічних особливостей корейських дорам саме крізь призму мови персонажів, соціокультурних кодів, глобалізаційних впливів, стереотипізації та механізмів мовної трансляції. На основі практичного аналізу було встановлено, що дорами виступають потужним засобом репрезентації корейської культури, здатним формувати лінгвокультурні уявлення іноземної аудиторії. Аналіз корейських дорам засвідчив, що в мові персонажів яскраво відображаються ключові лінгвокультурні концепти, соціальні коди та мовні реалії. Через такі поняття, як 효 (шанування батьків), 정 (емоційна прив'язаність), 눈치 (соціальна чутливість), 체면 (збереження обличчя), 한 (пригнічений біль), 우리 (колективна ідентичність), передається глибина корейської ментальності. У звертаннях, стилях мовлення та виборі слів виявляється повага до ієрархії, ролей і віку. Глобалізаційні процеси зумовлюють активне проникнення англіцизмів, сленгу та код-світчингу, що відображає сучасну мовну гібридність. Дорами сприяють поширенню мовних елементів за межі Кореї: глядачі засвоюють лексику, мовні формули та культурні звички. Окрему увагу приділено стереотипам, які фіксуються через мовну поведінку героїв. Результати дослідження мають прикладне значення для викладання корейської мови, перекладознавства, міжкультурної комунікації та вивчення аудіовізуальних жанрів. Дослідження підтверджує, що дорами несуть не лише розважальну функцію, а й формують лінгвокультурну свідомість глобального глядача, й активно сприяють поширенню мовних реалій.

**Introduction.** In the 21st century, Korean television dramas (K-dramas) have become a global cultural phenomenon, transcending national boundaries and gaining international recognition. Their popularity can be attributed not only to captivating storylines but also to their unique representation of Korean society, values, and traditions. More than simple entertainment, K-dramas are a reflection of Korea's linguocultural identity, serving as a powerful tool for transmitting cultural codes to both domestic and foreign audiences. **The aim** of this paper is to examine the linguocultural features embedded in K-drama discourse and analyze how language reflects cultural values such as hierarchy, collectivism, filial piety, emotional attachment, and social awareness. By doing so, the study contributes to a broader understanding of Korean culture and its global reception.

**Materials and methods.** This research employs a linguocultural and discourse-analytic approach. The primary material includes selected Korean dramas *Goblin* (도깨비), *Welcome to Samdal-ri* (웰컴투 삼달리), *When life gives you tangerines* (폭삭 속았수다), *My Dearest Nemesis* (그놈은 흑염룡), *Sunbae, Don't Put on That Lipstick* (선배 그 립스틱 바르지 마요). The analysis focuses on language practices within these dramas, including honorifics, forms of address, and cultural concepts expressed linguistically. Secondary sources such as works by Lee (2019), Choi (2004), Han (2005), and Mustafha (2020) provide a theoretical framework. The methodological framework is grounded in the principles of contemporary linguoculturology, translation studies, sociolinguistics, cultural studies, cognitive linguistics, and intercultural hermeneutics. The study employs methods of analysis and synthesis to investigate characters' linguistic behavior and communicative styles; observation to analyze verbal interaction; qualitative content analysis of dramas; interpretation of linguocultural concepts and their impact on audience reception; comparison of translated dialogues with the original; as well as descriptive and contextual analysis. Elements of qualitative sociolinguistic research are also applied to examine audience linguistic behavior in intercultural contexts.

**Results and discussion.** One of the defining features of Korean dramas as a cultural product is their ability to convey mental models through the authentic speech of characters. Dialogues reveal profound linguocultural concepts that embody traditional values, emotional orientations, social norms, and communicative strategies of Korean society. This section focuses on a practical analysis of such concepts, based on authentic excerpts from K-dramas. A central concept is 효 (*hyo*, 孝) filial

piety, rooted in Confucian ethics, which prescribes unconditional respect for parents and elders. In Korean society, respect for parental authority is considered a moral duty, even at the cost of personal sacrifice. Unlike blind obedience, it is perceived as a means of preserving familial harmony and is viewed as an act of love and generational devotion (Bedford, 2021: 10). In *When Life Gives You Tangerines*, the long-term relationship between Kim Myeon and Yeonbom collapses not due to personal conflict, but because of the mother's disapproval. Yeonbom does not actively decide to end the relationship he is simply unable to oppose his mother's will and protect his love. In Western culture, marriage is often seen as a decision between two individuals, but in traditional Korean society it is regarded as a union of families, where the parental voice especially that of the mother of a son is decisive. Here, the concept of 효 shapes the hero's choice of silent submission over individual pursuit of love. Equally significant is 정 (*jeong*, 情) a deeply rooted emotional bond encompassing warmth, affection, benevolence, and unspoken care. 정 develops gradually through shared experiences and continuous empathy (Chung, 2005: 47). In daily life, it is expressed in small acts—such as a market vendor adding extra produce or a mother serving more food to guests. In K-dramas, it emerges in expressions like “정이 들어버렸어” (“I have grown attached”) or “정 없게 왜 이래?” (“Why are you being so heartless?”). A vivid example of 정 is seen in *When Life Gives You Tangerines*, where the elder Minok tells the heroine Esun: “If I have raised them for ten years, whether they are crabs or turtles, they are my children. Is blood what matters? No, it is 정.” This illustrates the idea that true bonds arise not through biological ties but through years of care, shared life, and emotional investment. 정 thus serves as the foundation of interpersonal relationships in Korean society, reflecting collectivist values and the ethos of social responsibility (Chung, 2005: 47). Other key cultural concepts include 치 (*nunchi*) social sensitivity, tact, and the ability to “read the atmosphere” and 한 (*han*, 恨) a deeply ingrained emotion of sorrow and resentment born of historical and personal suffering (Robertson, 2019: 103). These concepts are vividly embedded in the narrative structure and linguistic practices of K-dramas, shaping both character interaction and audience interpretation. In the drama *Hometown Cha-Cha-Cha*, the female protagonist asks a stranger numerous questions, failing to notice his reluctance to continue the conversation. He remarks: “눈치가 좀 없는 타입이구나” – “You must be the type who lacks nunchi.” This constitutes a critique of her lack of intuition and attentiveness. The concept of nunchi (눈치), denoting intuitive sensitivity and

the ability to grasp the communicative context, is central to understanding both verbal and non-verbal behavior in Korean culture. Its significance is rooted in the Confucian tradition, which emphasizes restraint, indirectness, minimal expressiveness, and the ability to adapt one's behavior to the social environment. Korean society places a high value on brevity of speech, cautious judgment, and emotional self-control, especially in interactions with adults or superiors. Overt emotional expression, verbosity, and directness may be perceived as signs of immaturity or even frivolity. Within such a sociocultural framework, *nunchi* becomes an essential skill for maintaining harmonious relationships, avoiding conflict, and adhering to social norms. Expressions such as “*눈치가 없다*” (“he/she has no *nunchi*”) function as critical remarks, pointing to insensitivity, an inability to understand the situation, or a failure to “read the room.” Such an evaluation carries a highly negative connotation, characterizing the individual as tactless, inconsiderate, or socially inept. Conversely, the phrase “*눈치가 빠르다*” (“you have quick *nunchi*”) serves as a compliment, highlighting attentiveness, perceptiveness, and a high degree of social intelligence. Another deeply embedded cultural concept is *han* (한, 恨), a suppressed emotion that combines sorrow, anger, longing, and helplessness in the face of injustice. *Han* operates on both historical and personal levels: as repressed grievance, unresolved resentment, or the inability to articulate one's pain. It has become a key element of Korean cinematography, where directors skillfully weave it into narratives as an emotional and cultural foundation (Gao, 2024: 269). In many dramas, characters choose silence over open protest—an attitude shaped by social pressure and Confucian notions of hierarchy. Korean national cinema consistently revisits collective traumas associated with colonization, the Korean War, military dictatorship, and social inequality arising from rapid industrialization. (Lee, 2019: 152). Silent suffering that cannot be verbalized constitutes the very essence of *han*. The phenomenon is also associated with *hwabyeong* (화병), a psychosomatic disorder arising from the long-term suppression of emotions. Equally significant is the concept of *uri* (우리, “we/our”), which represents collective identity and plays a crucial role in shaping the Korean linguistic worldview. In contrast to the individualistic orientation typical of Western cultures, Korean society prioritizes group belonging, often substituting “our” for “my”: *uri* omma (“our mother”), *uri* hwesa (“our company”), *uri* jip (“our home”), even when the interlocutor has no direct connection to the referent. The use of *uri*, however, extends beyond mere reference to group

ownership; it also functions as an emotional marker of closeness, acceptance, and belonging (Yoon, 2016: 98). In the drama *Goblin* (도깨비), this is illustrated poignantly when the female character, speaking about the male protagonist, asks: “우리 아저씨 어디 데려가시게요? 나 그거 좀 민감한데?” (“Where are you taking my uncle? That’s rather sensitive for me.”). Deeply moved, the protagonist repeats to himself: “...‘우리’라고...했다...” (“...she said ‘our’...”). This linguistic act is far from accidental: it symbolizes the moment the hero ceases to be an outsider and becomes “one of us.” The use of *uri* here is not merely grammatical; it functions as an expression of inner acceptance, emotional belonging, and relational intimacy. For the character, this seemingly simple phrase carries profound significance as it affirms his importance in the life of another person. In such contexts, *uri* signifies not only collective possession but, more importantly, emotional inclusion, warmth, and reciprocal recognition. The concept of *chemyon* (체면, 體面) the preservation of face, dignity, social image, and reputation (Choi, 2005: 47) occupies a central place in Korean society. Maintaining “face” implies not only leaving a positive impression and avoiding public disgrace, but also encompasses symbolic acts related to social status, ethical integrity, and moral worth. *Chemyon* thus signifies both justice and honor, enabling an individual to act with dignity before others. Common expressions include “*체면을 세워야지*” (“one must preserve face”) and “*체면이 없다*” (“to have no dignity”), which underscore its relevance in daily discourse.

One of the core elements of Korean linguistic culture is a highly developed system of speech etiquette, reflecting social hierarchies, age and status differences, degrees of intimacy, and role-specific situations. In Korean dramas, this etiquette manifests through grammatical constructions of politeness, appropriate speech levels, forms of address, and kinship or social terms. Such practices constitute a socio-cultural code that is readily understood by native speakers but often challenging for interpretation by audiences from other cultures.

Korean society operates within a vertical perception of social relations, where each interaction defines who is the “senior” (*wi saram*, 위 사람) and who is the “junior” (*arae saram*, 아래 사람) (Han, 2005: 148). This distinction influences the choice of speech style—*jondaetmal* (존댓말, polite speech) or *banmal* (반말, informal speech). For instance, in the drama *The Black Dragon* (그놈은 흑염룡), the female protagonist, although older in age than her supervisor, consistently addresses him respectfully as “*본부장님*” (Head of Department), while he refers to her as “*백팀장님*” (Team Leader Baek). Despite her seniority in age, the occupational

hierarchy determines her speech style. This reflects the cultural norm of prioritizing positional authority over biological age and demonstrates how characters in dramas adhere to linguistic discipline aligned with corporate structures. In *Welcome to Samdal-ri* (웰컴투 삼달리), an employee informs her superior: “실장님, 기자들이 실장님 주소 알아낸 거 같아요” (“Director, it seems the reporters have discovered your address”). The suffix *-nim* attached to the title is obligatory as a marker of respect. Without this suffix, the address would be considered rude or disrespectful. In this scene, the polite formulation functions as a professional warning, while simultaneously underscoring the subordinate’s position and maintenance of social distance, even in a critical situation. Another example occurs when her father comments: “아, 후배를 혼냈다고?” (“Oh, you scolded your junior colleague?”). Here the term *hube* (후배) denoting a junior colleague or student highlights relational hierarchy. Importantly, *hube* does not merely mean a younger person in age but refers specifically to someone with less experience within a shared organization, school, or company. It contrasts with *sonbe* (선배), a senior in experience. Even when individuals are the same age, the one with longer tenure becomes the *seonbae*, while the other is the *hube*. In dramas, such terms function not only as forms of address but also as significant indicators of relationships. Seniors (*sonbe*) typically expect deference, the use of polite speech (*jondemal*), and obedience from *hube*. Conversely, a *sonbe* may employ more informal language toward a *hube*, sometimes even adopting a patronizing tone. Narratives frequently depict conflicts or moments of socialization when a *hube* has yet to learn how to meet these cultural expectations. The drama *Chaebol vs. Detective* (재벌x형사) illustrates this further: in one scene, a character uses the informal yet respectful term *hyungnim* (형님, “older brother”) to address someone who is not a blood relative, signaling emotional closeness. In another scene, however, the same protagonist admonishes his partner, who responds: “반말하지 말라고 했습니다” (“I told you not to speak to me informally”). This highlights that *jondaetmal* is not merely a grammatical formality but a clear social boundary. The dialogue emphasizes the importance of maintaining distance between colleagues who have not yet established familiarity, rendering the use of *banmal* without permission unacceptable. Similarly, in *Sunbae, Don’t Put on That Lipstick* (선배 그 립스틱 바르지 마요), a younger colleague addresses his senior as *sonbenim* - a combination of the status-based honorific *sonbe* and the respectful suffix *-nim*. This compound form underscores both professional hierarchy and the requirement of politeness in

workplace interaction. The line “선배님이 가르쳐줬죠” (“It was you who taught me, *sonbe*”) reflects both respect and emotional closeness: it acknowledges authority while simultaneously reaffirming hierarchical relations, even in informal settings such as a work-related conversation after a meeting. The address *sonbe* functions as a culturally rich linguistic code. It designates not only age or position but a specific social role of seniority within a professional or academic community. A *sonbe* is someone who has been in the organization longer, has greater experience, and therefore expects recognition and respect (Mustafha, 2020: 32). Importantly, *sonbe* does not necessarily imply formal authority; rather, it denotes symbolic authority grounded in experience and time spent within the structure. Korean dramas often depict the emotionally complex relationships between *sonbe* and *hube*. These may take the form of mentorship or latent tension. Juniors are frequently cautious about overstepping boundaries of familiarity, even when closer interpersonal ties develop. Conversely, *sonbes* often display indulgence, signaling informality that underscores their status and experience. In this context, the title *선배님* (*sonbenim*) functions as a safeguard of distance and mutual respect, even in cases of personal sympathy or potential romantic interest. For adequate intercultural understanding, it is crucial to interpret *sonbe* not merely as “senior colleague,” but as a socially significant figure within a linguistic hierarchy that integrates etiquette and social expectations. Another illustrative example is the drama “Something in the Rain” (밥 잘 사주는 예쁜 누나), where the male protagonist consistently addresses an older female character as *누나* (*noona*), which literally means “older sister.” Although they are not related, the form of address conveys intimacy, warmth, and tenderness. When the male lead says “누나가 더 예뻐” (“Noona is prettier”), foreign viewers may misinterpret the relationship as that of siblings, thereby experiencing cultural dissonance. For this reason, adequate translation requires either retaining the original term *noona* providing communicative adaptation with explanatory notes, particularly in subtitles. This example confirms that terms such as *noona*, *hyeong*, *oppa*, and *onni* serve not merely to indicate age and gender, but also to fulfill important emotional, cultural, and interpersonal functions. They shape expectations, communication styles, and the perception of relationships within Korean society. In a broader linguocultural context, such linguistic behavior demonstrates how language reflects and reinforces cultural values. Through forms of address, speech styles, and politeness strategies, core features of Korean culture hierarchy, respect for seniors,

collectivism, and role-consciousness are manifested. Speakers of Western languages often struggle to understand why characters address one another not by personal names but by kinship terms, positions, or titles. For instance, translating “Something in the Rain” as “Pretty Sister” may mislead viewers, suggesting incestuous overtones. In fact, *noona* does not always denote blood relations but rather a socially codified role expressed through language. Elements such as the alternation between *존댓말* (polite speech) and *반말* (casual speech), as well as the use of titles and kinship-based forms of address, act as social signals that shape the audience’s interpretation of character relationships. For intercultural viewers, these signals are often lost in translation, especially when dubbing fails to reflect contextual nuances. Authentic reproduction of linguistic etiquette in subtitles or adapted translations is thus essential for accurate cultural reception.

**Conclusions.** Korean dramas, as significant instruments of cultural representation, construct multilayered yet often generalized images of national culture. The linguistic behavior of characters is one of the primary means of conveying social norms, values, and expectations. Speech patterns encode not only individual traits but also stereotypical perceptions of typical social roles. As a result, foreign audiences, lacking other cultural references, tend to perceive these linguistic models as realistic portrayals. The analysis of Korean dramas demonstrates that character speech vividly reflects key linguocultural concepts, social codes, and linguistic realities. Through notions such as *효* (filial piety), *정* (emotional attachment), *눈치* (social sensitivity), *체면* (face-saving), *한* (suppressed grief), and *우리* (collective identity), the depth of Korean mentality is communicated. In forms of address, speech styles, and lexical choices, respect for hierarchy, roles, and age is revealed. Processes of globalization have introduced Anglicisms, slang, and code-switching, reflecting contemporary linguistic hybridity. Dramas contribute to the diffusion of these linguistic elements beyond Korea, as audiences acquire vocabulary, speech formulas, and cultural habits. Thus, the language of Korean dramas functions not only as a means of artistic expression but also as an effective channel of intercultural communication and the formation of a new linguocultural consciousness.

Future research may explore further the linguistic representation of cultural and conceptual categories in Korean cinematic discourse.

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