

Mission: Teaching English

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Through the medium of teaching English as a foreign language, Adventist student missionaries are reaching a segment of Oriental society heretofore almost untouched by the church. The first formally organized English language school was started in Osaka, Japan, under the direction of Maurice Bascom. Since that initial opening of a school, similar institutions have sprung up in Kobe and Hiroshima, Japan; Seoul and Pusan, Korea; Bangkok and Haad Jai, Thailand; and Djakarta, Indonesia. Still more schools are in the planning stages.

English is the international language of governments embracing a population of 1.2 billion, or nearly a third of the world's population — the language of politics; of business and international trade; and of engineering, medicine, and education. The English language, therefore, is considered an essential mark of an educated man in the Orient today. This fact gives the Seventh-day Adventist church a unique opportunity to meet a need and at the same time introduce the church to the upper classes in the Orient.

When we planned the school in Seoul, we decided that the way to achieve maximum impact would be to have a first-class, academically sound school. So we brought in Irene Wakeham, whose Doctor of Philosophy degree from Stanford University was earned in linguistics, to help plan the program. Doctor Wakeham tested a sample group of Korean students to pinpoint the problems, and conducted a training session for the teachers.

The school is located in a new apartment/department-store/office complex located on the east edge of Seoul. The 8,000 feet of space secured there provides thirteen classrooms, an auditorium seating 175, a staffroom, offices, a student lounge, and a 100-station audioactive language laboratory. Originally we had hoped for 300 students; but we enrolled 723 and turned

away more than 300. Since that time the enrollment has grown to nearly 1,400. Students who complete the entire program study an hour and a half a day five days a week one full year. This in itself presents a particular opportunity for Adventist evangelism.

What kind of people choose to learn English at a Seventh-day Adventist language school? An analysis after one year of operation showed that 78.6 percent of the first-year students were college students or graduates. To be more precise, we had 65 who held advanced degrees, 75 who were currently enrolled in graduate schools, 1,090 college graduates, and 1,398 college students. Among these we taught 17 non-Adventist ministers, 142 teachers, 95 doctors, 161 nurses, 68 pharmacists, 80 engineers, 77 bankers, 45 army personnel (including the chief of chaplains of the Korean army), and 586 office workers.

The breakdown according to religions is of particular interest. There were only 130 Buddhists; 1,959, or 58.6 percent, listed themselves as having no religious affiliation. Thus it might seem that the educated people of Korea have abandoned Buddhism but have not accepted anything in its place.

The student missionary finds Koreans to be openminded, inquisitive, and receptive to gospel teaching. From one to three Bible classes are conducted every hour of the teaching day (which begins at seven in the morning and ends at nine at night). Tuition is charged for these classes, and students with a poor attendance record are dropped. But we have had consistently more applicants for these Bible classes than we have spaces available. Evangelistic meetings, many times conducted by student missionaries, are held in the school auditorium too. Twenty-three persons have been baptized as the result of these, and numerous other students are attending churches in the Seoul area.

Other benefits are realized by the church as a result of the student missionary program in Korea. During its first year of operation, the school paid back to the union conference 133 percent of the original investment made in the teaching center. Thus the original loan for establishing the school was paid off, and the institutional and worker tithe amounted to enough to support a full-time staff of six for one year.

Chun Hun Yoon, a man who had earned a degree in mechanical engineering from Seoul National University, came to the language school to improve his English skills so that he could pursue advanced study in the United States. At first he wasn't sure what to expect. But before long his teacher, Judy Miller (an education major, Loma Linda University) had

dispelled his reservations and convinced him that Seventh-day Adventist young people have something to offer. He enrolled in Judy's Bible class. The next term he attended evangelistic meetings conducted by Jack Reise (a graduate student, Loma Linda University).

One day as Jack was going to his office he saw Mr. Yoon standing outside the office door. Jack greeted Mr. Yoon and went on into his office. When he came back out, Mr. Yoon was still there. In fact, the next day as Jack went to his office after class, Mr. Yoon was there again! This time Jack invited him in. After the initial pleasantries, Mr. Yoon said, "Last term I studied in Miss Judy's Bible class. I'm studying in her class again this term. I have attended all of your evangelistic meetings." Then, becoming extremely nervous, he looked at the floor and at the ceiling. Finally he said, "Can I be baptized?" So Mr. Yoon was baptized. He is teaching mathematics and physics at the college secondary school while he studies theology.