

Conversations

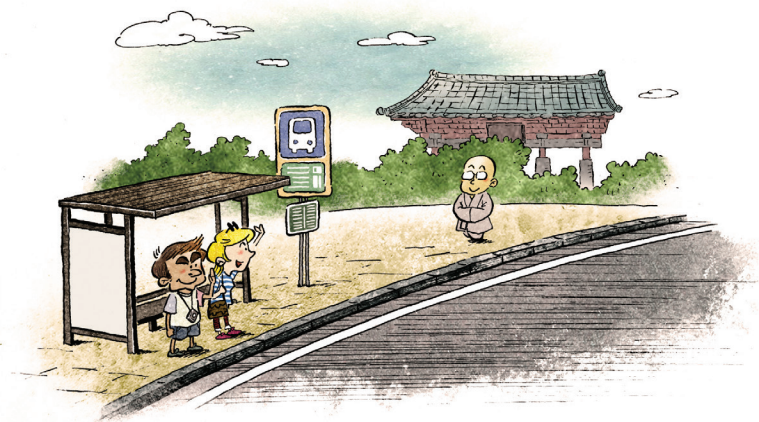




So one sunny spring day, Sara and Luca set off for their first visit to the traditional Korean temple, Muchak-sa on Heogong-san...

Conversation 1: Meeting

Sara and Luca meet at the bus stop near Muchak-sa Temple. They have made an appointment to meet Mumyeong Sunim who speaks English and who is well informed about temples. They see someone in grey with a shaved head coming to meet them and presume that this is the Sunim. They wave...





Luca: (*calls out*) Hi. We are here waiting for you.

Sara: Hi. We are longing to learn about Korean temples and temple life-style.

Sunim: Hello, and welcome. I am so happy you have come to visit, thank you. (*Turning to Sara.*) You must be Sara, we spoke on the phone. (*Turning to Luca.*) And this must be Luca. How do you do?

Luca and Sara: How do you do?

Sunim: My name is Mumyeong Sunim but as with all Sunims in Korea, no matter how old or how young, you call me Sunim. Before we go to the temple, I'd like to explain one or two things to you. As we live in a community, we have certain customs. When we greet one another, we put our palms together, called "hapjang" in Korean and do not wave.



Conversation 2: Doing Hapjang

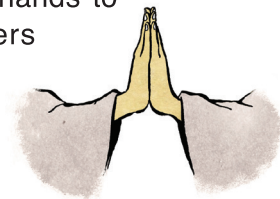
Sara: In Europe, people often kiss each other on the cheek three times. So, do you always use haptang as a greeting?



Sunim: *(laughing as she thinks of how it would look if all the Sunims greeted by kissing each other!)* Yes, we do, Sara, but it is HAPJANG, not Haptang. We greet that way even if we have lived together for 30 or even 100 years! Should I teach you how to do it?

Sara and Luca: Oh, yes, please! We do want to behave correctly when we visit a temple.

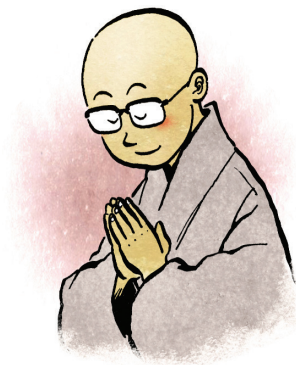
Sunim: Of course. In the standing posture, put your palms together and raise your hands to your chest like this. Your fingers should be in a vertical position and your wrists and elbows in a horizontal line. Your thumbs should touch your chest lightly.





Sara: Okay, I'll try it. How's this? Am I doing it right?

Sunim: Yes, that's very good, Sara.





Conversation 3: The Meaning of Hapjang

Luca: What does “hapjang” mean? What is the significance of it?

Sunim: First of all, in the temple we try to speak as little as possible and so this is the way of saying hello, thank you, yes, and good-bye.

Luca: That sounds like a good idea. I get really tired of saying “please” and “thank you.” But why do you put the two hands together like that? We usually shake hands with one hand.

Sunim: The right hand represents the Buddha’s mind and the left hand represents my mind. So, when I put the two together in hapjang it symbolizes uniting the Buddha’s mind with my mind. It means that I hope to be able to overcome my bad thinking and have a mind of wisdom and compassion like the Buddha.

Sara: By the way, do you know what shaking hands means? Westerners always shake hands with the right hand which means that they are not carrying a weapon to hurt the other person with.





Conversation 4: Formal Greeting

Luca: Oh, really? I didn't know that. How interesting. All our customs are so old.

Sunim: By the way, we usually do hapjang and a half bow whenever we meet anyone in the temple compound. Like this. (*Demonstrates*) Try it! (*They purposely bump into one another and do a half bow.*) That's right! Well done!

Sara: Thank you for teaching us hapjang and the meaning. But I would like to know more about training my mind, please do show us how.

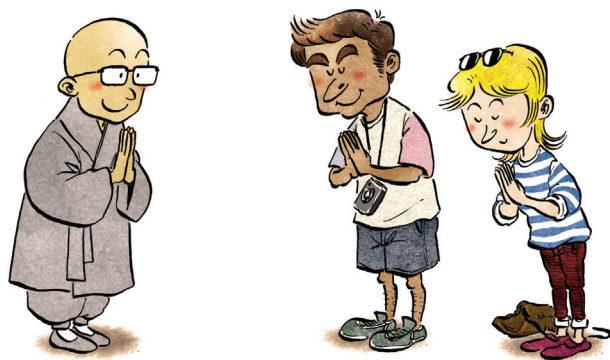
Sunim: Oh, if you are really interested I will definitely explain as best I can but for now we are going to visit the temple and so let us do that first. Then afterwards, we can study some of the teachings.

Sara: That means we are going to be visiting you a lot!

Sunim: Yes, maybe so and you are welcome. That is why you need to learn the rest of the temple etiquette, so that you will feel comfortable. For now, let us talk



about some cultural differences.





Conversation 5: Korean Culture

Sara: By the way, why do we need to discuss cultural differences?

Luca: Every country has its own customs and sometimes they are the opposite of what we are used to. When we don't know the customs, then there can be misunderstanding. Sometimes it is not easy to adjust to the customs of others, sometimes the customs are too different.

Sunim: You are right, Luca.

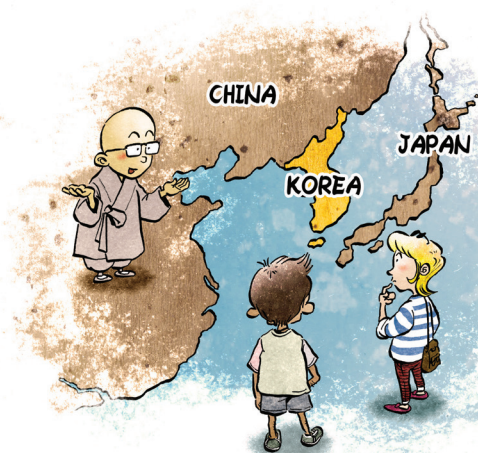
Sara: Where I come from, it is quite all right to blow your nose at the table. When I blew my nose the other day (the food was so hot) my Korean friends all freaked out. I was so embarrassed. I didn't know that you cannot do that here.

Sunim: Korea is a peninsula sandwiched between two much larger countries: Japan and China. Therefore, although Korea has been influenced by others, it has maintained certain ways of behavior and so preserved its unique culture. However, many young people no



longer follow those ways but in the temples we are dealing with traditional life.

Luca: I have seen such funny things. Once, when I was in the bathroom, they knocked at the door. I wondered why they wanted me to hurry.





REVIEW 1 — Here is a chance for you to have a look at what you have learnt. We have made some questions (answers are in the back of the book) and some ways for you to practice some of the expressions used. Please practice diligently so that your English tours become smooth and comfortable for everyone.

A. Questions:

1. How do Sara and Luca first greet the Sunim?

How should they greet the Sunim?

2. Why are Luca and Sara visiting the Sunim?

3. What does hapjang mean?

4. What are the two characteristics of the Buddha's mind?

5. Why does Korea have such different cultural habits?

B. Try these Expressions for Yourself!

Use the following expressions. We have given you some ideas but please, if you can, think of your own.



1. To be longing to do/go/be something/to see someone

- i) I am longing to go on holiday in the summer.
- ii) He said he is longing to see me.
- iii) Are you longing for dinner? I am, I'm hungry.

2. To speak on the phone to someone

- i) I spoke on the phone to my mother yesterday.
- ii) He spoke on the phone to me.
- iii) I need to speak on the phone to the gas company.

3. What does ... mean?

- i) What does "compassion" mean?
- ii) What do you mean by saying you don't want to...
- iii) We all wonder about the meaning of life.

4. To adjust to

- i) I need to adjust to my new mother-in-law, she is difficult!
- ii) Can you adjust to India? It's hot.
- iii) Please adjust this coat to fit me better.

5. Try it! That's right! Well done!

- i) It doesn't look very good, does it? But try it!
- ii) Hapjang not haptang. That's right!
- iii) You've learnt the three bows. Well done!