



Korea Times photo by Shim Hyun-choi

"I'm very interested in promoting the Korean language among countries with which Korea's cultural and economic ties have been growing rapidly."

NIIED chief pledges to upgrade Korean teaching abroad

By Na Jeong-ju

An increasing number of foreigners are learning Korean as a second language as K-pop culture is gaining popularity overseas.

Applications for the Test of Proficiency in Korean (TOPIK), administered by the National Institute for International Education (NIIED), have also increased sharply as the exam has become a must for foreigners who want to study and work here.

The institute's President Ha Tae-yun says it is time to upgrade the test and provide better textbooks and teaching materials abroad to make Korean a more widely-accepted language.

"One of my imminent tasks is to publish textbooks in various languages and provide customized study tools to global learners to meet the growing demand for TOPIK," Ha said in an interview.

"That's also to reflect Korea's growing influence on the global stage. Korean language education abroad is important from cultural and diplomatic aspects as well."

Teaching Korean globally

Since Ha, a career diplomat, took the helm of the institute in late October, he has focused on moving forward in its three ongoing projects — promoting the Korean language abroad, selecting foreign beneficiaries of state scholarships and promoting English education at public schools.

The institute's role will become even greater in the future as more foreigners are expected to practice Korean and the country's global presence will continue to grow, Ha said.

The NIIED, now located in Daehangno, Seoul, plans to move to a larger complex in Bundang, Gyeonggi Province, by 2015 to ensure more effective management of the projects. The education ministry is now pushing for a revision of laws to expand the institute's functions at home and abroad.

"I'm very interested in promoting the Korean language among countries with which Korea's cultural and economic ties have been growing rapidly. The planned upgrade of TOPIK and the publication of customized textbooks are aimed at helping people there learn our language in an easier and more comfortable way," Ha said.

By 2015, the institute will add a speaking section to TOPIK, which currently has two sections — one for vocabulary, grammar and writing and the other for listening and reading. It also plans to introduce an Internet-based test in the long term.

The changes reflect concerns that the test is focusing on only grammar and vocabulary rather than evaluating practical conversation skills. The consistency of difficulty levels has also often been questioned. Some test-takers have called for the institute to develop a better tool so that Korean language learners can be properly evaluated.

Providing better textbooks to global learners is also a big task for Ha.

Despite the government's efforts to boost the quality and professionalism of Korean language teachers abroad, many Korean language teachers abroad have complained of the lack of appropriate textbooks they can use.

Currently, most textbooks used by them are ones that are targeted to children and teenagers and produced for ethnic Korean students, not for foreigners. The education ministry recently published for the first time Korean language textbooks from level one to six targeting learners from English-speaking nations. But textbooks customized to countries using other languages and with different cultures are still needed.

"What I believe is that each country has a different culture so the language textbooks should also be customized. I'm committed to resolving the problem," Ha said.

The institute is now demanding TOPIK scores from those who are studying on the state scholarship program, called the Global Korean Scholarship (GKS). It has been talking with universities and firms to promote the use of the test in evaluating proficiency of Korean language among foreign applicants, Ha said.

"TOPIK is closely related to GKS. We plan to expand the scholarship program to help local universities to draw top-rated students from around the world," the president said.

English education

One of the institute's flagship pro-

grams is to choose English teachers among ethnic Koreans and native speakers abroad and give them teaching jobs at public schools nationwide.

Under the Teach and Learn in Korea (TaLK) program, thousands of ethnic Korean students have visited the country and taught English in elementary schools in rural areas since 2008.

It is also running the English Program in Korea (EPIK) to hire native English teachers for primary and secondary schools nationwide.

Ha expressed concerns about the moves by regional educational offices to reduce the number of native English teachers, saying students in provincial areas still don't have chances to learn from native speakers.

He suggested that English education has been on the backburner as educational offices have readjusted their spending plans following the implementation of free school meal program.

The education ministry is also focusing on increasing the number of Korean teachers qualified to teach English in English, rather than just picking more native English teachers.

Despite such a policy shift, demand for quality English education will continue to grow, Ha said.

"Native English teachers have greatly contributed to upgrading English education here. We should be grateful for them," Ha said. "I will make every effort to protect their teaching jobs. The TaLK and EPIK programs will be the centerpiece of upgrading English edu-

cation here."

He said the NIIED plans to strengthen its on-the-job training for native English teachers to settle more smoothly here, providing them with chances to learn about Korean culture.

According to the education ministry, such teaching programs can also be solutions to growing household spending on English education.

The ministry said more than 15 trillion won is being spent annually on private English education, which more than 90 percent of elementary school students receive.

"English proficiency has become more important in entering a good college and getting a good job. However, most children can't learn at private institutes as tuition is too expensive," said a ministry official. "We hope the TaLK and EPIK programs will be helpful in addressing the so-called English education divide between students in big cities and those in rural areas."

So far, thousands of native teachers have participated in the programs.

The institute said the programs provide students in rural areas the rare opportunity to learn from native teachers. It's a unique experience for Korean teachers as well.

"The native teachers are special guests to residents. Parents are happy about their children taking lessons from native teachers and playing with them. Korean teachers also can exchange teaching methods with the native teachers," Ha said.

jk@koreatimes.co.kr

Who is Ha Tae-yun?



Ha Tae-yun, president of the National Institute for International Education (NIIED), is a career diplomat who has carried out missions in a number of countries, including Japan, South Africa, the United Kingdom and Iraq.

A native of Gwangju, the 53-year-old started working at the foreign ministry after passing the state exam to select diplomats in 1979. He majored in public administration at Sungkyunkwan University in Seoul.

Ha was dispatched to Cheong Wa Dae to help form the Kim Dae-jung administration's international policies after Kim was elected president in late 1997. He also served as a secretary for Kim in 2007.

Two years later, Ha became the country's ambassador to Iraq and led missions to help rebuild the war-torn nation. He was named the NIIED president in October this year.

English Phone Conversation
마법의 영어세계!

24시 전화영어회화방

- 사전약속 → 필요없음 (하루종일 24시간 365일)
- 접속횟수 → 무제한 (자유시간에 학습 가능)
- 대화시간 → 무제한 (시간 제한 없이 Speaking 및 Listening)
- 강사, 회원 → 대기즉시연결 (강사/회원이 필요 시 대기하며 한국 어디서나 즉시 연결)

모든 통신 수단이 모두 사용 가능 (스카이프, 인터넷 전화, 모바일 등)

특별적인 가격 월 55,000원 (연회원 50% DC)
* 불만족 시 7일 이내 조건없이 즉시 환불

- 분야별 비즈니스 영어연습이 가능합니다. (예, 법률, 세무, 회계, 외환, 무역, 관세, 인사, 영업, 컨설팅)
- 학문분야별 전문 용어로 Speaking(토의/토론) 연습이 가능합니다.
- 일상 회화를 부차적인 학습 및 연습을 할 수 있습니다. (예, 해외여행, 친목회, 쇼핑, 일상 생활영어 등 개인맞춤형으로.)

휴먼넷의 장 점

지금 당장 아래 번호를 돌려보세요!
☎(02)3420-1700
H.P: 011-9071-4204
상당원 휴대전화번호(연중무휴)
www.humanet.co.kr

Kbarlin
DEUTSCHES WIRTSCHAUS

Authentic German Cuisine in the Heart of Seoul
Tel: 02-724-2715 / 080-023-6969

Subscribe to
THE KOREA TIMES

Call **02-724-2715 / 080-023-6969**

E-mail **subscription@koreatimes.co.kr**

To subscribe online, visit
www.koreatimes.co.kr

Indian Restaurant Chakra

Grand Gala Christmas Buffet
December 24th & 25th
From 12 Midnight

All-U-Can-Eat Special Christmas Meal
(Adult, Child & Toddler)

Join the fun!!!
Dress up in Christmas Colors & win Surprise gifts

Santa Claus coming to Chakra!!!
Surprise visit to all branches

All for 20,000 won

@Hannamdong • Itaewon • Suwon branches

Email: reservation@chakra.co.kr
Tel: 02-796-1149 (Kor) 02-796-2255 (Eng)
www.chakra.co.kr