

Korean Language Students

Just Don't Get Any Credit

Classes Start at UNC, but remain unofficial.

By Alex Lee

Demand for Asian culture and language classes at the University is growing. The latest requests have been for Korean language classes, which started Sept. 27.

"Most of the demand has come from second-generation Korean American students," said Jennifer Whangbo, vice-president of the Korean American Students Association (KASA). "These students are interested in learning more about their heritage," she said.

The two people responsible for initiating the idea of Korean language classes were sisters Hye Kyung Yu and Hye Won Yu. Last fall, they presented their idea to KASA. The organization shared the sisters' interest in the creation of Korean language classes and formed a committee to oversee the endeavor.

The classes, which are still not official, have not come without a struggle. The new committee ran into difficulty when they learned that the University's linguistics department did not have the resources to create and support the classes. As a result, they sought the aid of IBM employee Sang Woo Lee, an active member of the Korean community who helped Duke's Korean language classes acquire funding.

"His help has been very crucial," Whangbo said. This past summer, he organized a voice recital to raise money, enlisting the help of two famous Korean singers, including Hans Choi, a gold medalist in the Tchiakovsky competition. The recital raised a little over \$3,000 for KASA, Whangbo said. That money is being used to pay for this year's classes.

Finding a teacher was the next obstacle that the students faced. After much searching, Lee found and convinced Kwinan Jeong, an education graduate student at North Carolina State University, to teach the new classes. Jeong, who arrived from Korea last year, taught at the Korean Language Institute of Yonsei University for three years.

"I took the job because of my love of teaching the Korean language to foreign students," she said.

There is a beginning level one class and a beginning level two class. Both meet for an hour and a half Tuesday evenings. The beginning level one class covers the Korean alphabet, basic grammar, vocabulary, basic greetings, reading and writing. The level two class focuses on the specifics of the Korean language, practical conversation and culture.

Students do not receive credit for the course since it is not an official class. But they say they enjoy learning Korean anyway.

Son Ho Yun, a senior economics major, took a Korean language class at Duke and wanted to continue learning at UNC. "I really enjoy the class, but because [the class] only meets once a week, we can't go at as fast a pace as I'd like," he said.

"KASA has a lot of hopes for the classes," Whangbo said. "Our two most important goals for the future include making the classes official and acquiring more funding."

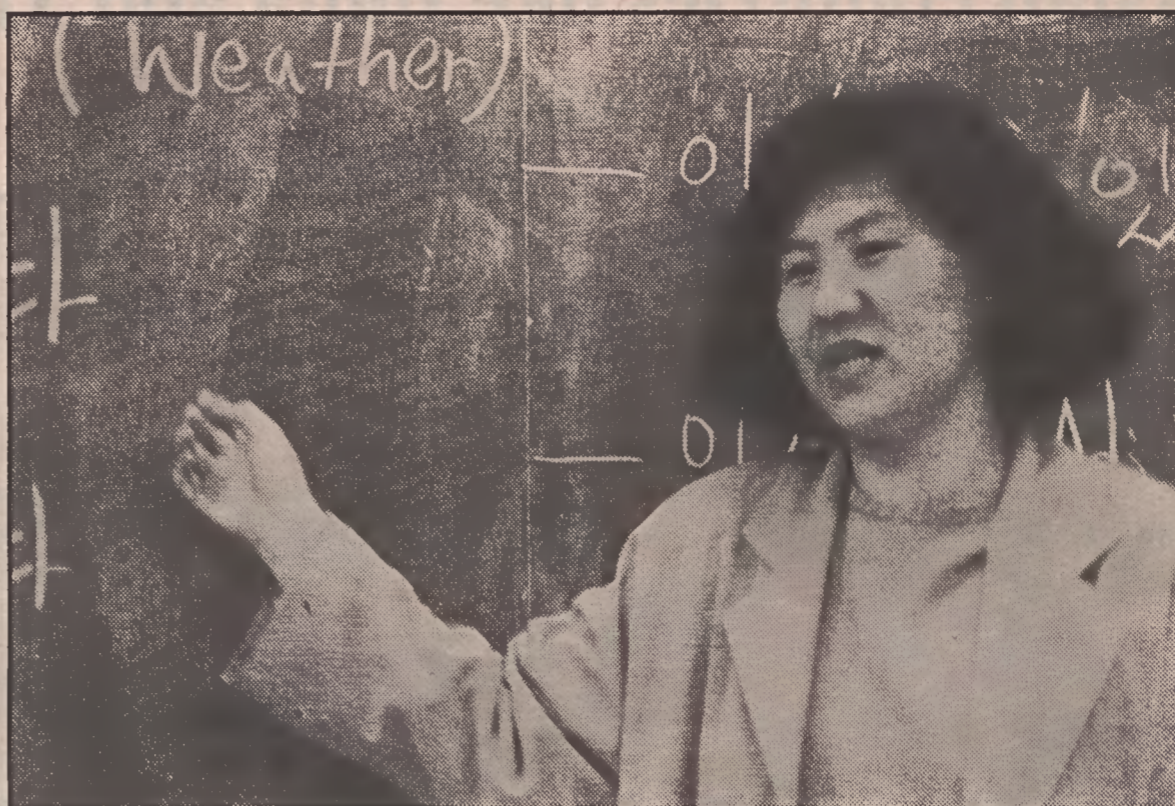
Over the summer, the issue was transferred from the linguistics department to the East Asian studies department. To meet their requirements for making the classes official, KASA must be able to support it for two full years.

Whangbo said the estimated cost is \$100,000. Toward that end, KASA is applying for a grant from the Korea Foundation in Seoul, which has provided about \$30,000 to Duke's Korean language program.

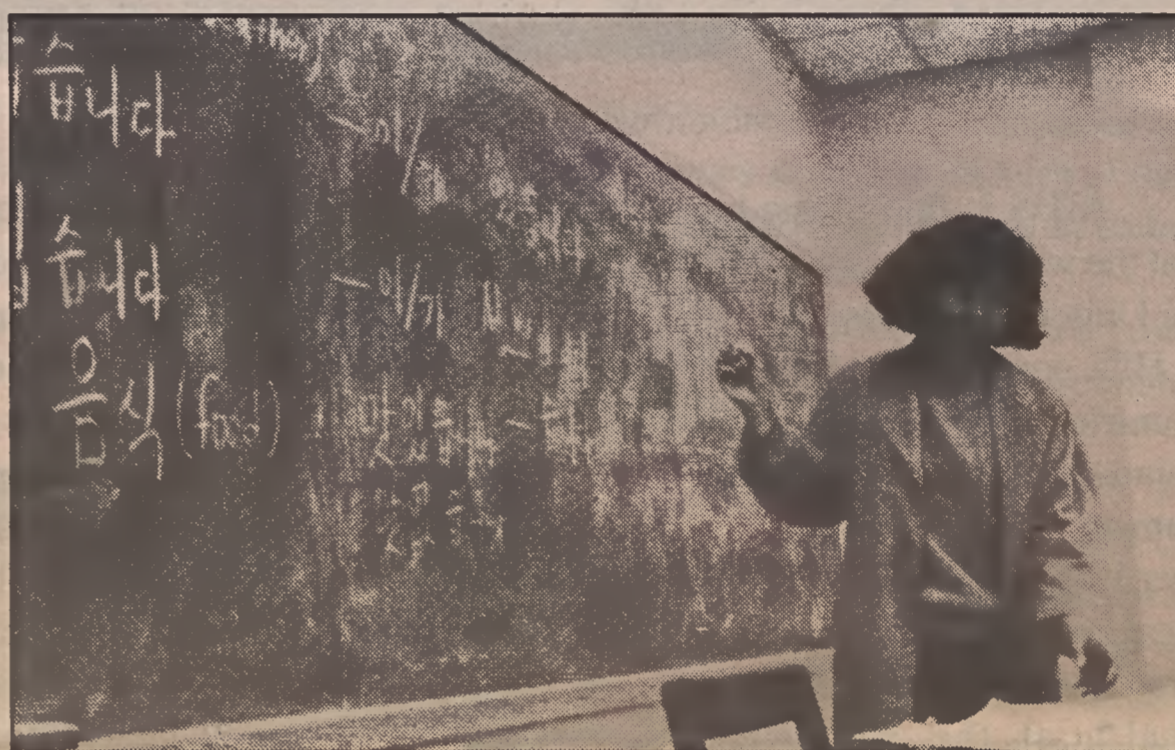
Although both goals may take a few years to achieve, the students remain hopeful, Whangbo said.

Anyone interested in signing up for the unofficial classes next semester should contact Jennifer Whangbo of KASA.

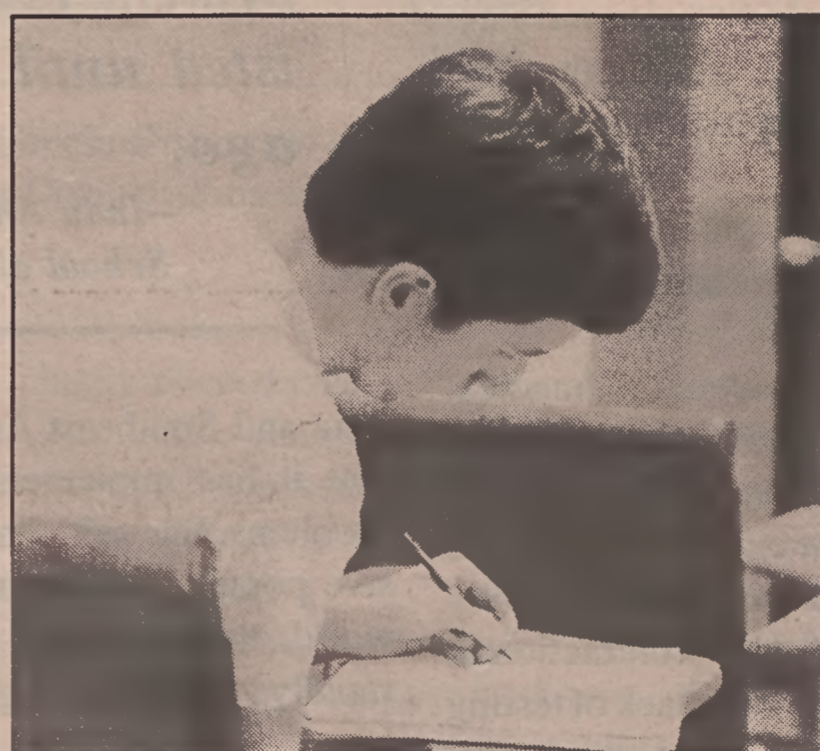
"I took the job because of my love of teaching the Korean language to foreign students."



Instructor Kwinan Jeong, who recently came to the U.S., teaches both levels of Korean classes offered on Tuesday evenings.



The beginning level one class covers the Korean alphabet, basic grammar, vocabulary, reading and writing, as well as basic greetings. The level two class focuses on the specifics of the Korean language, practical conversation and culture.



Stephen Snyder, a 1992 UNC graduate in mathematical sciences, carefully reviews his notes. Snyder is one of five beginning-level students studying Korean in Jeong's class.

