

## The elephant that can speak Korean

3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2012



An elephant in Korea has become a language student. Koshik, a 22-year-old male elephant, is already fluent in speaking "elephantese," but he is now trying to learn the Korean language Hangul. A report about Koshik was printed in the

online journal "Current Biology". The author of the report is Dr Angela Stoeger-Horwath, who works at the University of Vienna in Austria. Researchers said Koshik has been listening to human speech for many years and has slowly learned to copy it. He can now say the Korean for hello, sit down, no, lie down, good, not yet, and yes. Dr Stoeger-Horwath asked 16 Koreans to listen to 47 recordings of Koshik. They could all understand what he was saying.

The researchers gave a few reasons why they think Koshik can talk. One possibility is that he has a very close relationship with his trainer, Kim Jong-gab. Mr Kim often sleeps near Koshik to keep him company. The trainer talks to him every day, so Koshik copied what he heard. Another is that the elephant is lonely and wants to communicate with people and have friends. The research team said the way Koshik makes sounds is very unusual - he uses his trunk to reproduce human speech. They said he is much better at making vowel sounds than consonant sounds. Trainer Kim Jong-gab said he has one more phrase that he wants to teach Koshik - "Saranghae," or "I love you."

Sources: Associated Press / The Korean Herald

### Writing

*It is wrong to try and teach animals to be like humans or even to have them in the home as pets. Discuss.*

### Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

*language student / fluent / elephantese / online / author / human speech / recordings / reason / relationship / trainer / lonely / communicate / vowels / consonant / I love you*

### True / False

- An elephant in Korea has become fluent in speaking Hangul. T / F
- The report about the elephant is only in newspapers and magazines. T / F
- The researcher who wrote the report is not Korean. T / F
- Sixteen Korean people listened to nearly 50 recordings of the elephant. T / F
- The elephant gets on very well with his trainer. T / F
- The researchers said the elephant has too many friends to be lonely. T / F
- The elephant can use vowels better than consonants. T / F
- The elephant can say, "I love you" in Korean. T / F

### Synonym Match

- |                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| 1. student     | a. writer        |
| 2. fluent      | b. causes        |
| 3. author      | c. follow        |
| 4. copy        | d. communicative |
| 5. understand  | e. unloved       |
| 6. reasons     | f. expression    |
| 7. communicate | g. learner       |
| 8. lonely      | h. interact      |
| 9. unusual     | i. imitate       |
| 10. phrase     | j. uncommon      |

### Discussion – Student A

- What advice would you give to Koshik to learn language?
- Should the zoo give Koshik some elephant friends?
- What do you think elephants would complain about?
- What is most difficult about learning English?
- What are your strong points in English?
- What would you like to teach Koshik?
- What questions would you like to ask an elephant?
- What do you think the elephant's answers would be?

## Phrase Match

- |                                       |                       |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. become a language                  | a. with his trainer   |
| 2. trying to learn the Korean         | b. speech             |
| 3. The author                         | c. what he was saying |
| 4. listening to human                 | d. vowel sounds       |
| 5. They could all understand          | e. why                |
| 6. The researchers gave a few reasons | f. student            |
| 7. he has a very close relationship   | g. of the report      |
| 8. the elephant is lonely and wants   | h. trunk              |
| 9. he uses his                        | i. language Hangul    |
| 10. he is much better at making       | j. to communicate     |

## Discussion – Student B

- What did you think when you read the headline?
- What 'elephant' words do you know?
- What do you think of the idea of talking animals?
- Would you like to be fluent in English?
- How difficult is it to learn a language? Why?
- What do you think elephants would talk about?
- Do you think animals will be able to speak in the future?
- Is it right or wrong to teach animals to speak?

## Spelling

- become a ngeualag student
- already teufnl in speaking
- online najlrno
- The truoa of the report
- listening to human hepcse
- drdsntuaen what he was saying
- The researchers gave a few soernas why
- a very close rostlneiipah
- ...to keep him oacpynm
- ...wants to tucnemioam with people
- very sualuun
- making lvowe sounds

### Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. d	3. a	4. i	5. c
6. b	7. h	8. e	9. j	10. f

## Role Play

**Koshik the elephant** - You love learning Korean. It helps you make friends. Think of three more reasons why Korean is useful for you. You want to learn the language more quickly. You also want to teach other elephants. You hate lions. You like your trainer, but learning Korean is the most important thing in your life.

**Koshik's trainer** - You love Koshik. He is your best friend. You don't want him to learn more Korean. If he becomes more famous, you will lose him. You don't like the Korean language teacher. You think you are the best person to teach Koshik. Think of three reasons why for this role play.

**The lion next door** - You really want to learn Korean. You want to talk to Koshik and become his friend. You are also very lonely. You also want to teach your lion friends Korean. Think of three reasons why lions would have a better life if they could speak Korean. You want the language teacher to teach you Hangul.

**A Korean language teacher** - You can make Koshik totally fluent. If you do this, you will become a world-famous Hangul teacher. You will be rich. Tell Koshik you are the best teacher. Think of three reasons why. Make sure you tell Koshik that you can teach him Korean quicker than his trainer can.

## Speaking – Animal Chat

Which animal would you most like to talk to? Rank these. Put the best at the top and share your rankings with different partners.

- |             |           |
|-------------|-----------|
| • lion      | • dolphin |
| • elephant  | • dog     |
| • ant       | • eagle   |
| • cockroach | • snake   |

### Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	F
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.