



Seoul Headquarters of Seventh-Day Adventist Language School, Korea.

Photo courtesy of Seventh-Day Adventist Language School, Korea.

Seventh-Day Adventist Language School, Korea

HYUNG JIN LEE

Hyung Jin Lee graduated from the Department of Theology at Sahmyook University and then completed M.Div. at Andrews University in 2000. Since he first started at the Seoul Junior Institution in 2001, he has served as the vice director of the Philippine Training Institute, the director of the Seoul Junior Institution, and the vice director of the Gwanak English Village. Since 2013, he has served as the director of Yongin Institution. In 2019, he was appointed as the director of the SDA Language Institute and is striving for a new leap forward for the Institute.

Seventh-day Adventist Language School (SDA Language School) is a specialized language education institution that operates foreign language curriculums such as English, Chinese, and Japanese, and is a special missionary institution that expands the kingdom of God through educational work. The project, which began in 1969, has achieved remarkable growth over the past 50 years with the development of the Korean society, contributing greatly to the missionary expansion of the Korean Adventist Church. As of 2020, the SDA Language school has 60 employees in 14 branches, and its headquarters is located at 33 Mangwoo-ro 18-gil, dongdaemoon-gu, Seoul, Korea.¹

Organization

Three years before the language school began in Korea, the SDA Language Institute project first began in Japan. Maurice T. Bascom established an English Institute in Osaka, Japan in 1966.² At that time young Japanese people needed practical English education, so this work was a great success in Japan. Pastor Dean L. Hubbard, who entered Korea as a missionary in September 1966, served as the secretary of the Ministerial Department³ and confirmed that the English Institute was successfully operated in Japan. So, he made a plan to promote the same work in Korea.

Korea, which had a difficult time in the aftermath of the Korean War, activated overseas exports in the late 1960s. Due to these social changes, young Koreans tried to develop practical English skills. In response to this need, the Korean Union Mission decided to establish an English school in April 1969 and entrusted its practical responsibility to Pastor Dean L. Hubbard, the secretary of the Ministerial Department. Pastor Hubbard benchmarked the Evangelical Center in Osaka, Japan, and established the SDA Language Institute in Cheongnyangni, Seoul on September 22, 1969.⁴

When the Language Institute opened, Pastor Hubbard was the first director, and instructors who taught English were served by student missionaries.⁵ Founded in Cheongnyangni, the Language Institute started with an auditorium, a language practice room, and seven lecture rooms, and the number of the first enrolled students was about seven hundred.

History of the Institute

Since there were many people who wanted to study English, the language school was very successful as soon as it opened. In June 1970 the number of students increased to 1,200, and in February 1971 it increased to 1,300. Missionaries serving at the institute organized Bible classes for these students from September 1970 to teach the Bible and held an evangelical meeting for the seekers. In addition, on April 13, 1971, the Sabbath School, consisting of about ten employees and 50 students, was organized and the Language Institute Church began its operation.⁶

Pastor Hubbard returned to the United States on May 9, 1971, and Dr. Bascom took over as the director of the Language Institute on October 8, 1971. He was a person who built an Evangelical Center in Osaka, Japan, and established an English Institute in it. Under his vision, the Language Institute of the Korean Adventist Church was opened not only in Seoul but also in Busan (August 17, 1971) and Gwangju (March 17, 1973). By the end of 1974, the total number of students at the Language Institute reached 47,456.⁷

On March 5, 1975, Pastor David Scofield was appointed as the director of the Language Institute. Under his leadership the Language Institute built a three-storey building in Hwigyeong-dong, where Seoul Adventist Hospital was located, and moved its headquarters office and Seoul Language Institute to a new building in 1977. After that, Seoul Gangnam Institute (October 21, 1978), Daegu Institute (November 24, 1983), and Daejeon Institute (February 10, 1984) were newly established. In 1980 the number of registered students was recorded as 17,982.⁸

In March 1986 Pastor Sang-woo Han was appointed as the director of the Language Institute, establishing Korean leadership. Under his leadership Namyong Institute (August 17, 1989), Seomyeon Institute in Busan (November 23, 1989), Incheon Institute (March 10, 1989), Chuncheon Institute (May 8, 1989), Cheonan Institute (November 23, 1989), Jeju Institute (May 13, 1990), Sillim Institute in Seoul (March 4, 1991), Jeonju Institute (April 24, 1991), and South Daegu Institute (September 20, 1991) were newly established. In 1989 a Chinese course was opened and in 1991 a Japanese course was also opened. In this way, 14 academies were opened by 1991, and each institute led many people to the church while running a Bible class. From 1987 to 1991, a total of 832 people were baptized at 14 institutes.⁹

In the 1990s the number of institutes and registered students continued to increase, and missionary work through English education paid off surprisingly. The Language Institute also opened English schools in Beijing, China, and Sakhalin, Russia in 1992, and Spanish and Russian courses were also added in the Seoul main institute. Suwon Institute (June 11) and Cheonan Institute (December 21) were opened in 1993, and North Gwangju Institute (September 3) was opened in 1994. In 1995 the number of registered students at the Language Institute increased to 76,563.¹⁰

Pastor Ye-sik Kang was appointed as the director of the Language Institute at the 30th General Meeting of the Korean Union Conference held in December 1995.¹¹ He launched a junior English education program for children from 1996, which spread to 24 institutions by 1999. Thanks to this program, the number of enrolled students at the institute increased to 132,104 in 1999. From 1995 to 1999, 12 institutions were newly established, and more than one thousand students were baptized every year.¹²

Pastor Si-young Kim was appointed as the director of the Language Institute at the 31st General Meeting of the Korean Union Conference held in May 2000.¹³ Since 2001 he has held the "Bible Camp" every summer to lead many souls to the church. In 2002 an overseas training center was established in the Philippines, and overseas training programs were operated permanently. Meanwhile, the size of the Language Institute steadily increased,

and by the end of 2003, the number of registered students exceeded 200,000, and the number of employees also exceeded 1,200.¹⁴ Pastor Si-young Kim was reappointed as the director of the Language Institute at the 32nd General Meeting (2004).¹⁵ Thanks to his leadership, the Language Institute hosted "English Expo 2005" in 2005 and published "12 Steps," a magazine specializing in interactive English conversation in 2006. As a result of these efforts, the cumulative number of students exceeded 4,000,000 in 2009, achieving remarkable growth.¹⁶

On September 18, 2009, the Language Institute held a ceremony to mark the 40th anniversary of its opening. Along with this ceremony, the institute changed its Korean name from "Sahmyook Foreign Language Institute" to "SDA Education" and declared a vision for the future.¹⁷ Until now, the Language Institute has become a leading language education institution in Korea by operating programs such as OPIC, TESOL, and J-TOPEC, as well as a general English conversation program. The number of institutions has also grown remarkably, reaching 55. However, since 2010, the future prospects of the English Institution have become unclear due to changes in the domestic English education environment. The leaders of the academy sought management innovation and business diversification to solve this problem.

Pastor Gil-ho Choi, who was appointed as the ninth director of the Language Institute on September 3, 2014,¹⁸ following Kwang-je Lee (December 28, 2009) and Boo-kwon Cheon (December 29, 2011), was forced to focus all efforts to overcome the management crisis of the institute. In order to overcome the management crisis, he actively promoted management innovation and new projects in cooperation with all members. However, it was not easy to overcome the crisis caused by the reduction of the language market due to changes in Korean society. Due to the deterioration of management, many institutions have been closed since late 2016, and restructuring of workers has been carried out.¹⁹ As a result, the number of institutions was reduced to 12 in 2019.

In January 2019 the Korean Union Conference conducted innovative restructuring through the Committee of the Board of Management and appointed Pastor Hyung-jin Lee as the new director of the language institute. The SDA Language Institute of Korea held the 50th Anniversary Ceremony on September 21, 2019, to revive the 50-year-old academy tradition and leap back to the same educational missionary institution as the past. And a new vision was declared at the ceremony.²⁰

Role and Position in the Country

The SDA Language Institute run by the Korean Adventist Church has contributed greatly to leading English conversation education in Korean society. In the process of industrialization of the Korean society in the 1970s and 1980s, the language institute improved English conversation skills for many intellectuals. And from the late 1990s, junior English programs were introduced to lead English education for elementary and secondary school students. In particular, the SDA Language Institute received popular recognition in the field of English education, such as winning the Brand Grand Prize every year by providing excellent English education programs.²¹

The quality of English education conducted by the SDA Language Institute has also been recognized by the government. Therefore, the language institute entrusts and operates English villages established by local governments. In 2007 the language institute entrusted Yangpyeong English Village established in Yangpyeong by Gyeonggi-do and operated it until now, and in 2009 the English Village Gwanhak Camp, established by the Seoul Metropolitan Government, was entrusted and operated by the SDA Language Institute. In 2020 the language institute entrusted and operated the English Village Suyu Camp established by the Seoul Metropolitan Government.²² As such, SDA language institutions are gaining fame as institutions specializing in English education in the Korean society.

SDA Language Institute, along with Sahmyook University, is recognized as an excellent educational institution in Korean society, playing a role in enhancing the social image of the Korean Adventist Church. Through this role the institute is greatly contributing to the mission of the Korean Adventist Church. As mentioned in the description of history, the SDA Language Institute has taught the Bible to students through the "Bible Class," through which numerous people have been baptized and become Adventists. Even now this history of winning souls continues in the work of the language institute.

List of Directors

Dean L. Hubbard (1969-1971); Maurice T. Bascom (1971-1975); David Scofield (1975-1986); Sang-woo Han (1986-1995); Ye-sik Kang (1995-2000); Si-young Kim (2000-2009); Kwang-je Lee (2009-2011); Boo-Kwon Jeon (2011-2014); Gil-ho Choi (2014-2019); Hyung-jin Lee (2019-Present).

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NOTES

1. *The Church Address Book of Korean Union Conference* (Seoul: Korean Union Conference, 2021), 60-63.
2. Duane S. Johnson, "Student Missionaries Assist Osaka Evangelistic Center," *ARH*, June 22, 1967, 32.
3. *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (1985), 124.
4. *Church Compass*. January 1970, 1, 2.
5. Student missionaries were students of the Adventist Church in the United States who participated in the Student Missionary Movement, which began at Columbia Union College in 1959. R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1979), 551, 552.
6. *Church Compass*. May 1971, 4.
7. "A Report of SDA Language Institute," *Minutes of the 25th General Meeting of Korean Union Mission* (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1974).
8. "A Report of SDA Language Institute," *Minutes of the 27th General Meeting of Korean Union Mission* (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1983).
9. "A Report of SDA Language Institute," *Minutes of the 29th General Meeting of Korean Union Mission* (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1991).
10. "A Report of SDA Language Institute," *Minutes of the 30th General Meeting of Korean Union Mission* (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 1995).
11. *Church Compass*. January 1996, 7.
12. "A Report of SDA Language Institute," *Minutes of the 31st General Meeting of Korean Union Mission* (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 2000).
13. *Church Compass*. July 2000, 14, 15.
14. "A Report of SDA Language Institute," *Minutes of the 32nd General Meeting of Korean Union Mission* (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 2004).
15. *Church Compass*. January 2005, 20.
16. "A Report of SDA Language Institute," *Minutes of the 33rd General Meeting of Korean Union Mission* (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 2009).
17. [Korean Adventist News Center](#). September 22, 2009.
18. [Korean Adventist News Center](#). October 12, 2014.
19. [Korean Adventist News Center](#). November 28, 2016.
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21. "A Report of SDA Language Institute," *Minutes of the 33rd General Meeting of Korean Union Mission* (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 2009).

22. "A Report of SDA Language Institute," *Minutes of the 36th General Meeting of Korean Union Mission* (Seoul: Korean Union Mission, 2020).

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