

KOREANS GET YOUNGER IN AGE SYSTEM CHANGE

July 6th, 2023

WARM-UP QUESTIONS: *Discuss the following questions with your partner(s).*

1. Are you interested in Korea? What do you know about it?
2. Read the headline above. Have you heard this news story? If so, say what you know. If not, can you guess what it is about?

VOCABULARY: *Match the following vocabulary words with a description. Use a dictionary if you need to.*

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|------------------------|---|
| 1. Extreme | a) used to indicate that something might have prevented something else, but in fact it hasn't |
| 2. A thing of the past | b) suitable, correct |
| 3. Out-of-step | c) to keep |
| 4. Despite | d) different from the way others do things |
| 5. Retain | e) very large in degree |
| 6. Eligible | f) able to do or have something because of age or qualifications |
| 7. Appropriate | g) something that doesn't happen anymore |

LISTEN: *Listen to the audio track on eslnewsstories.com or to a reader of the text. Try to fill in the missing words. Then check your answers with the full text (below).*

In conversation with non-Koreans, Korean people have _____ had to explain two differing ages. One was their "Korean age" - the age used normally within Korea. The other, their "international age," was the same as is used in _____ countries around the world.

According to international age, as most people know, a baby is zero at birth and becomes one year old after exactly one year has _____. However, under the Korean age system, babies are one at birth and turn one year older at the new year. At its extreme, a baby born in late December could soon be two _____ the Korean age system, while their international age would be counted in days.

However, for Koreans, explaining the two ages will _____ become a thing of the past as their government recently passed laws to fully adopt the international age system. The government expects the change to reduce confusion and stop creating the _____ that Korea is out-of-step with the world.

For individual Koreans, the most immediate effect is getting younger. Thirty-year-olds, for example, suddenly find themselves twenty-eight or twenty-nine again.

Despite the legal change, Korea will retain one age-related _____. Koreans will become eligible for school, the military, and buying alcohol or cigarettes together with the rest of their age group on January 1st of the appropriate year.

WORD FORMS: Fill in different forms for the vocabulary from the article. Use a dictionary if you need to. Where there is an *x*, the word is unimportant for ESL students, has a different meaning, or does not exist. Sometimes there are multiple possible answers, and sometimes the adjective form is a past or present participle.

VERB	ADJECTIVE	ADVERB	NOUN
x	extreme		
retain			
x	eligible		
x	appropriate		

FULL STORY:

In conversation with non-Koreans, Korean people have often had to explain two differing ages. One was their "Korean age" - the age used normally within Korea. The other, their "international age," was the same as is used in most countries around the world.

According to international age, as most people know, a baby is zero at birth and becomes one year old after exactly one year has passed. However, under the Korean age system, babies are one at birth and turn one year older at the new year. At its extreme, a baby born in late December could soon be two under the Korean age system, while their international age would be counted in days.

However, for Koreans, explaining the two ages will gradually become a thing of the past as their government recently passed laws to fully adopt the international age system. The government expects the change to reduce confusion and stop creating the impression that Korea is out-of-step with the world.

For individual Koreans, the most immediate effect is getting younger. Thirty-year-olds, for example, suddenly find themselves twenty-eight or twenty-nine again.

Despite the legal change, Korea will retain one age-related practice. Koreans will become eligible for school, the military, and buying alcohol or cigarettes together with the rest of their age group on January 1st of the appropriate year.

Sources: reuters.com, theguardian.com
For source links, see the article on ESLNewsStories.com

COMPREHENSION: *Decide if the following are true (T) or false (F), and then discuss your answers with your partner(s).*

1. A new law makes Koreans older. (T / F)
2. Koreans have had to explain their age system because it was different from those in other countries. (T / F)
3. Koreans used to be considered one year old at birth . (T / F)
4. Going forward, Koreans will mainly use the same age system as they do in other countries. (T / F)

COMPLETE: *Re-order the following sentences. Capitalize certain words and add punctuation.*

1. getting / korea / is / way / age / counting / rid / of / of / one
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2. are / suddenly / koreans / all / younger
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DISCUSSION: *Discuss the following questions with your partner(s). Try to speak in sentences and ask follow-up questions.*

1. What did you think about this story? Was there any surprising information?
2. What is the best age to be, in your opinion?
3. Have you changed as you have aged? What is something about you that has changed, and what is something that has stayed the same?
4. Would you like to become a little younger, as many Koreans have recently?
5. What is something about your country that you have to explain to foreigners? Is it easy or hard to explain?
6. What ages bring big changes for people in your country? For example, when people can first drive a car.

