



connexions interview with
KIM YANGSOOK

Transcript of the interview with Kim Yangsook, from the Republic of Korea. Kim Yangsook is president and owner of HansemEUG, Inc. She is also president of the Korea Technical Communicators Association.

This interview was recorded for issue 2(1). It was conducted by Quan Zhou, via Skype, on December 4, 2014.

The video recording of this interview is available on the *connexions* Vimeo channel at <https://vimeo.com/115741816>

Can you describe your present career in light of international professional communication?

I am the owner and CEO of HansemEUG. My company develops user manuals for consumer electronic products, such as smartphones, tablet, digital camera, and printer, and so on. And localize the content into multiple languages—more than 40 languages.

I founded my company in 1990 with just only one assistant. Now, I employ more than 170 staff, and we are the biggest company in this field in Korea. I am also the president of KTCA, or the Korea Technical Communication Association, the most representative organization in this field in Korea. KTCA is a nonprofit, and we support



CONNEXIONS • INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION JOURNAL

2014, 2(1), 167-171

ISSN 2325-6044

workers in this field to improve their expertise, and to improve the social awareness of this industry.

What previous experience in international professional communication, if any, has prepared you for your present career?

I studied English in university. I started working as a technical writer for an American manufacturer of digital electronic products. My job is to write contents for user manuals in English. So, my university and career background allowed me start this business—my business.

What would you say are particular accomplishments of international professional communication practice, research, and/or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

I think the biggest accomplishment of the technical communication field in Korea is the rapid growth within a very short period, from scratch. In general, technical communication industry grows with the manufacturing industry. You know, to sell the products, manuals should accompany the products. When I first started my career about 30 years ago, the manufacturing industry in Korea was only at a development stage and the TC industry nearly did not exist. So, I had to learn everything from scratch and from hands-on experience. But, as our manufacturing industry has developed very fast within the last few decades, our TC industry has also developed very fast, together with the manufacturing industry. I believe this growth is very unique, because unlike the manufacturing industry, the Korea TC industry grew fast, without any support from government or any other source, such as the universities or institutions. I think this is the biggest accomplishment of Korea's TC industry so far.

What would you say are some challenges of international professional communication practice, research, and/or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

I think there are two main challenges to the TC industry in Korea. One is that our technical writers need to write manuals in English if the products are targeted to

overseas market to make the manual to be used a source text for localization. The most, you know, the most common language to be used as a source text for multiple language and localization is English. But, unlike other languages, other European languages, or Latin languages, Korean language has a really different, totally different language structure and grammar from English. So, if you translate Korean to English to make it as a source text for multiple language localization, the quality of the source text cannot be guaranteed. As a result, the quality of a multiple languages translation from it suffers. To solve this problem, most Korean technical writers write the source text in English from the beginning. But, you know, as non-native speakers, it is always a challenge for the Korean writers to write quality English manuals.

Another challenge is that it is really hard to discover young applicants who can write in English very well. You know, it is very difficult to find people who can write well in English, and it is even more difficult to find people with good English skills who want to enter this industry. Why? Because the TC industry in Korea is relatively new and not very developed in Korea, so the social awareness for the profession and expertise is very low—not high. It is a challenge for us to discover and attract those young qualified people into our industry. These are many challenges to this industry.

How do you see technology or changes in technology impacting, maintaining, or altering international professional communication practice, research, and/or pedagogy in your region of the world or elsewhere?

Generally speaking, the TC industry is really sensitive to changes in technology. If the technology changes how users get information, we also need to change how we develop, how we present instruction for use. The technology changes our working environment, too. We make use of up-to-date tools and systems, including authoring tools, editing tools, content management system, translation memory system, project management systems, and so on. Recently, the most significant trend for our industry is a transition from print manuals to mobile-oriented manuals. We need to develop contents that we can use on both papers and mobile devices. So, file format conversion technology, such as single source, multiple publishing solution, has become very important in our

industry, these days. It is really important that our industry always keeps pace with the new technology.

What kinds of international and intercultural experiences and skill sets has higher education taught students to help them transition to industry? In what ways could higher education do a better job preparing the next generation of graduates for international professional communication?

Unfortunately, in my country, there is almost no university curriculum for technical communication. I think there is a lot to teach at universities for the newcomers to this industry, such as professional writing, international standards, usability, localization, and useful tools—many things. It is unfortunate for our industry—for our local industry—that these basic skills cannot be learned at the university level. I know there are few technical writing courses in Korea for engineering students, but no proper bachelor or master's program is offered yet. But, recently, I can sense some change and positive movement from schools, but still, we have too few educational programs for our industry in Korea.

What has industry done well to help higher education teach international and intercultural experiences and skill sets, or to help their own employees develop such experiences and skill sets? What else might industry do to help prepare the next generation of graduates for international professional communication?

As I explained before, because there is no support from universities or government, here in Korea, it is up to the industry or individual companies to train our own employees from the beginning. We train them on the job. We teach them how to use necessary tools, and let them experience the information development cycle in the working field. After that, we support them to learn more professional knowledge, such as international standards and regulations for manuals, risk assessment, user research, usability, new technology, and so on.

As a president of KTCA, I try my best to support the TC industry in Korea to grow. We train TC professionals and encourage them to share knowledge. Recently, we

also cooperate with universities to help them develop proper academic programs for technical communications. ■

About the Interviewee

Kim Yangsook from Suwon, South Korea, is president of Hansem EUG, Inc., a content development and localization company with clients in different parts of the world. She is president of the Korea Technical Communicators Association.

Email. yskim@ezuserguide.com

URL. <http://www.ezuserguide.com/en/index.html>

Contact.

HansemEUG
24, Gwongwang-ro 142beon-gil
Paldal-gu, Suwon-si, Gyeonggi-do
South Korea